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MO ONLINE 3-27-19 ISSUE | Mt. Olive Online



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BUDD LAKE WOMAN ANNOUNCES RUN FOR MO COUNCIL

By Cheryl Conway

More women are making their way in entering the political arena, such as Irene Sergonis of Budd Lake, who is running for a seat on the Mt. Olive Township Council.

Sergonis, a democrat, announced her candidacy at the Mount Olive Democratic Committee monthly meeting held 7 p.m. at the Mt. Olive Public Library, on March 13, the same month that people around the globe are recognizing women for National Women's History Month and International Women's Month. This is her first run for a political office.

A resident since 1980, 62-year old Sergonis has been involved with Mount Olive Democrats since it was rejuvenated in May 2017. She currently serves as a committee member for District 13 and attends Mt. Olive Twp. Council meetings to raise concerns that are brought to her attention by her community, she explains.

Having raised, with her husband Sergio, three kids in town- Angela, Rita and Michael- Sergonis says she now has the time to dedicate to hold a political office.

"My kids were over for my birthday and they tried to talk me into running for town council," explains Sergonis at the meeting. "I think to myself, 'it's always been about the kids for me.'" Through her children's interests, Sergonis has been involved in the Girl Scouts, Boy Scouts and calls herself "the volleyball mom." She was actually instrumental in starting the volleyball program in Mt. Olive in April 2000, in which she spent 10 years running it through Mt. Olive Recreation, she says. Known as the Mt. Olive Volleyball Association, the coed club grew from five teams of 42 participants, to more than 200 players by the end of her final year running it, says Sergonis who works full time in the payroll human resources department for Ronetco Supermarkets.

Sergonis had voiced her concerns to get a landfill closed and designated as a Superfund site between 1980 and 1983, when she first moved into town.

Through Mt. Olive Park Partners from 2002-2009, Sergonis served as secretary and treasurer and helped raise money to develop Turkey Brook Park.

Outside of Mt. Olive, Sergonis is a member of the St. Andrew Greek Orthodox Church in Randolph in which she has served as a Sunday School teacher, volunteer for Greek festival, and member of the Women's Group which provides philanthropic outreach to those less fortunate; and visits Faith

Kitchen at the Trinity Lutheran Church in Dover to help feed hot meals to 70-100 people every fourth Saturday of the month.

As she develops her campaign, Sergonis is preparing her platform of concerning issues.

"We need to work on making this town better," she says at the meeting. "I'd like to speak up for the kids and the environment."

She concludes, "I've been blessed with a husband who supports me," says Sergonis.

"I'm really excited about your run for council," comments Shelly Morningstar, municipal chair of the Mt. Olive Democrats.

Like other candidates running for office, Sergonis must file by April 1, by 4 p.m., with 53 signatures in hand. For the upcoming 2020 election, three council seats and the mayoral seat are up for grabs in Mt. Olive.

Welcome readers to the 12th issue of Mt. Olive Online. Get MO news online today! Advertise with us!

MO Online Features Local Women In Month of March

Help share her success story

The month of March is known for quite a few things such as the start of spring, March Madness for college basketball fans, Daylight Savings, St. Patrick's Day and Purim. At a national level, March has been recognized in so many various ways such as National Craft Month, National Kidney Month, Red Cross Month, Music in Our Schools Month, National Nutrition Month, National Puppy Day, National Peanut Month, International Waffle Month, to name a few.

While puppies, and peanut butter, music and basketball are loved by many, women are also recognized in the month of March- both nationally and internationally with National Women's History Month and International Women's Day, celebrated annually on March 8 as a focal point in the movement for women's rights and women's achievements.

Each year centers around a different theme such as Time is Now: Rural and urban activists transforming women's lives in 2018; Women in the Changing World of Work: Planet 50-50 by 2030 in 2017; Equality for Women is Progress for All in 2014; and Empower Rural Women, End Poverty and Hunger in 2012.

For this year, the International Women's Day 2019 campaign theme is <u>#BalanceforBetter</u>, which is a call-to-action for driving gender balance across the world, according to the International Women's Day

website.

Although International Women's Day is celebrated annually on March 8, the <u>global campaign</u> <u>theme</u> continues all year long to encourage action.

According to Wikipedia, International Women's Day dates back to Feb. 28, 1909, when the <u>Socialist</u> <u>Party of America</u> organized a Women's Day in <u>New York</u>; the <u>1910 International Socialist Woman's</u> <u>Conference</u> suggested a Women's Day be held annually. March 8 then became a national holiday in Soviet Russia in 1917, after women gained suffrage there, and then grew internationally in 1975 when the United Nations adopted the day.

Today, International Women's Day is a public holiday recognized in some countries. Some plans protests that day, others celebrate womanhood.

To celebrate National Women's History Month and International Women's Day, *Mt. Olive Online* would like to recognize local women and their achievements, whether small or great. Throughout the month of March, this publication has been featuring women from Flanders and Budd Lake who have made some kind of impact or change, or have gone above and beyond in making a difference.

Give a shout out to any women in town who have earned respect or admiration by submitting a brief description/write up about this woman and how she is a standout. Photos accepted too. Email <u>editor@mtoliveonline.today</u>.

LOCAL WOMEN SHINE

Local Female Pastor Leads By Example



By Cheryl Conway

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When it comes to pastors in the Christian Church, women still have a ways to go as far as gender equality.

Rev. Serena Gideon Rice, 42, is one of few women to make her mark as a religious leader in the Christian denomination. She is the pastor of Abiding Peace Lutheran Church in Budd Lake.

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"I began serving the church in 2016 as the part-time Vicar (the Lutheran term for a pastor-intraining), and became the pastor in September 2018, once I was ordained," explains Rice.

"My path to ordained ministry has definitely been longer and more winding than it probably would have been if I were a man," she admits. "Although the Lutheran church in America has been ordaining women for almost 50 years, since 1970, I grew up in the non-denominational Evangelical branch of the Christian church and there was a definite taboo against women serving as pastors." Despite the odds, Rice decided to follow her calling early on.

"I felt a call to the church from my early teens, but my context made it unthinkable to pursue becoming a pastor," says Rice. "Instead, my first career was what I liked to call "nontraditional ministry."

She did all the studies for pastoral work, earning her Master of Divinity Degree from Princeton Theological Seminary; as well as a master's in social work from Rutgers. From there, Rice worked for

more than 10 years as a social worker, focusing on research and policy relating to problems of poverty.

"It was important and meaningful work, and I don't regret any of that time," says Rice. "It was absolutely God's work, and it gave me incalculable experience and insight that makes me a much better pastor now. But I am also deeply grateful to have found the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, first as my spiritual home, and now as the denomination that affirms and supports my vocation.

"That support is not universal across other branches of the American church, even in 2019, and I have experienced some negative responses to my role as a female clergy person," says Rice, "although many other responses are delighted and embracing, including from my congregation." She says having an affirming denomination, with women serving as bishop both for the New Jersey Synod and the ELCA as a whole "makes a difference. And I am deeply grateful for all the women who have gone before me in following the call to serve the church as pastors."

Outside of the church, Rice is married with two children.

"I like to say that "pastors are people too," says Rice. "My life is full of typical 40-something-mom things. I have two great children- Alaina 11 and Maddox 9- with my husband of 18 years, Tyler. I help out at their schools when I can, support them in their various activities, and try to keep up with all the laundry. Our family enjoys travelling, and we actually lived in Italy for three years when the kids were really young. For my own mental and physical health I do yoga, take long walks, and write a bit of poetry. And I enjoy an impromptu living room dance party to Kids Bop every once in a while." Although Rice lives a distance from Mt. Olive, she has "deeply appreciated the opportunities to connect and work with other local clergy both through the Mt. Olive Clergy Association, and through the new Mt. Olive Interfaith Alliance, which I helped to start with the leaders from United Presbyterian Church of Flanders and the Islamic Society of North Jersey in 2017.

"I enjoy the chance to learn from them, to plan community worship services, to work together to raise money for the local food pantry and local families in need, and to begin to develop communitybuilding opportunities across our various faith traditions," says Rice. As the tragedy in NZ last week has reminded us all, interfaith support and community togetherness are vitally important to fight the destructive trends of prejudice and white nationalism in our world."

When recognizing women for their accomplishments, especially in March during National Women's History Month and International Women's Day, Rice says representation plays a part. "Representation has a power that cannot be duplicated by anything else," says Rice. "It is much easier for girls and young women to imagine limitless futures for themselves when they hear the stories of other women who have achieved great things. I know this from my own life. I felt the call of God in my life from a young age, but I just couldn't imagine becoming a pastor until I joined a church with a woman pastor. Even as an adult, in my late 30s, I had to see someone who looked like me doing this work before I could say to myself 'Right! I could actually do that!'

"The reality is that there are many fields where maleness is still the unchallenged norm, and this hurts everybody - men and women alike - because it reduces the talent pool, and with it the range of ideas and innovations that leaders can offer," says Rice. "We need to raise up examples of women as a

balance to the dominant narratives and to make sure that all the people who are gifted and equipped to lead have that chance."

To younger women with a mission in finding success, Rice advises: "I think it's important to both know your value and to always stay ready to learn," says Rice. "There can be a lot of pressure on women, especially younger women, to undersell ourselves and not be too "pushy." But this does not really serve the interests of the organizations we are in, and it certainly doesn't help us. If we know what we can do, we need to be unashamed to speak up and act. The balance is to also know what we don't know, and always stay curious about how we can keep learning. It's never weakness to say "I don't know" if we really don't know. It's a chance to learn something new, so that we can keep growing."

Mother And Wife Tops Her Many Hats For This Local Woman



By Cheryl Conway

Fraida Malka Shusterman, 42, of Flanders has a full plate when it comes to her role as a mother, wife, teacher and co-director of a local Jewish center.

"I love what I do as a mother, teacher, and Rebbetzin (wife/teacher of a rabbi)," says Shusterman, codirector of the Chabad Jewish Center in Mt. Olive for 14 years, along with her husband Rabbi Yaacov Shusterman.

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"I describe myself as a Gluten free (celiac) mother of nine children thank God: Shmuli, Mushka, Mendel, Tzvi, Esther, Zalmy, Dovid, Levi, and Chava, ages 1-18," says Shusterman. "I taught in the private school sector for 17 years, am Orton-Gillingham trained."

With the chabad, "We service the Jewish community in the area offering educational and holiday programs to enhance Jewish life," explains Shusterman. "I love to cook, bake (especially Challa, of course), sing, act, write, teach, hike, take walks with my kids, and spend time outdoors. I like a good laugh and a good coffee."

Like other women across the globe, Shusterman explains why she thinks it is important to recognize women and their accomplishments, especially by having National Women's History Month and International Women's Month.

"Women throughout history have been and still are the foundation of the home," says Shusterman. "The future generation is dependent on the mother, the woman. They are the ones who educate and nurture the children. This is the most important and primary job a woman can hold and a woman should be recognized for this role that she carries."

She offers her advice to other women: "When a woman is in tune with her essence and realizes that she has the gift to be a nurturer and an educator, and then maximizes this gift with God's help, that is true success. Try to be the best wife and mother that you can be and keep the peace in your home. That will bring inner happiness and success."

She takes her job seriously when it comes to raising children.

"Raising children to be well balanced, mentchen, and givers is not an easy job...it's actually very challenging," says Shusterman. "My husband and I know that this is our priority- to raise the next generation of Jews. When you know that this is your job, you put all your energy into it, and pray to God for success."

Local Woman Applauds Foremothers In Shaping Her Successes



By Cheryl Conway

Marilyn Foushée, 49, of Mt. Olive is thankful for the women before her that helped paved the way toward her achievements.

For the past 28 years, Foushee has worked as a Global IT Compliance Analyst for Chubb Insurance. Outside of the workforce she is the mother of two college students, Brittany, a senior Neuroscience major at Boston University; and Brandon, a sophomore photography major at Pratt. With her love for baking she even started her own baking business: Expressions by Marilyn. "I have a passion for baking and creating personalized unique edible cakes and cupcakes arrangements," says Foushee, who features many of per personal creations on her Facebook page. "I took a couple of cake decorating courses at the Michael's craft store in ITC and made plenty of Mt. Olive friends," she says. "Surprisingly in the interim, I discovered this artistic skill I had. It is a great creative outlet for me and gives me satisfaction when I see the joy on people's faces to see a cake tailored specifically for them."

In her spare time, she says, "I'm very active, love to work out enjoy the outdoors and eat healthy." Women, like Foushee, are being recognized in March in honor of National Women's History Month and International Women's Month.

"It is important to recognize National Women's History Month," agrees Foushee. "In the United States with the feminist movement of the 1960s, women began to enter the workforce in great numbers which is not that long ago. I was only 5 months old at the end of that decade and can say I have come a long way due to the women that paved the road before us.

"International Women's Month is just as important as I obtained my political science degree from Ithaca College and had the opportunity to intern internationally in Parliament, Great Britain under the reign of Margaret Thatcher, known as the Iron Lady; she was a role model internationally for many women."

Also, "In my long standing career with Chubb I have traveled extensively to several countries throughout Europe, Latin America and Asia and it's empowering to come into contact with so many incredible women in their own right in different countries and vast cultures," adds Foushee. In her advice to other women, Foushee says: "Take advantage of the momentum that woman have created in the workforce in all avenues of professionalism and continue to be supportive of one another and always strive to break new grounds."

MO WOMEN RECOGNIZED

Local Woman Finds Strength To Lead In Male-Dominated Field



By Cheryl Conway

When it comes to working in the field of technology, women still tend to be the minority, but that was not stopping Laura Marie Hars from Budd Lake who was recently promoted to a cybersecurity director. "I work for BDO LLP which is an accounting firm," says Hars. "I work in their consulting division as a cybersecurity director. I started there in 2016 as a senior manager and was promoted to director last year."

Her road to success did not come easy.

"Information technology has been a male dominated field for many years, I am not sure why that is, perhaps professions associated with math and science have always been traditionally male, I'm not sure," says Hars. "Many times during my career I would attend meeting of five, 10, 15 or 20 people and be the only woman in the meeting. Oddly enough I became involved in this field by accident. My first job out of college I was put into a "management training program." The management team at the company decided because I majored in psychology that I was "analytical" and thus would be a good fit to be a systems analyst where there were many openings. Thus this is how I began a career in Information Technology (IT).

"Although I did return to social work after my first child was born, I eventually gravitated back to technology and worked at a local hospital in their IT department for 10 years," explains Hars. "This job was a wonderful "mom job." The hospital was incredibly flexible, and after my second child was born, they allowed me to work part-time and have a work life balance. Additionally they were very open to giving me the opportunity to develop technical skills and I was trained to be an application developer. Although it was a wonderful job, after 10 years I decided that I needed more of a challenge. "I left my hospital position to go and work for a defense contractor," continues Hars. "This position was where I encountered the biggest challenge being a woman. I was a telecommuter and not in an office so I believe that limited my ability to really connect with people and develop critical

relationships with my co-workers. It was great to be working from home and able to attend daytime events at my children's school but professionally this decision limited my upward mobility. I do not regret the decision however as I had the best of both worlds. I was able to continue in my career and also be at home so that I was available to attend school activities in the middle of the day and be there when my kids came home from school. I had some other positions and now I am a cybersecurity consultant."

Regarding cybersecurity, Hars specializes in Identity and Access Management, Governance Risk and Compliance and Data Loss Prevention.

"I have two certifications from the NSA and am currently studying to obtain my CISM," she says. "I recently wrote a chapter on the importance of Identity & Access Management for a book my leader Gregory Garrett rote entitled "Cybersecurity in the Digital Age: Tools, Techniques & Best Practices." While there were challenges along the way in her male-dominated profession, Hars learned to juggle it all as a wife and mother to three boys: Matthew, Stephen and Nicholas- and even found time to muscle in another profession as an exercise instructor. Since 1997, Hars has been teaching classes with Mt. Olive Recreation and has helped to reshape the lives of many local women by promoting strength, better fitness and healthier lives.

"I was an employee for many years but now I am an independent contractor," says Hars. "I started initially running exercise classes in local schools or churches but in 1999 when the Mt Olive Senior Center was built I started to hold classes there. She officially started the Mt Olive Exercise program in February of 2003.

"I wanted to start a program for people who did not like going to a gym," says Hars. "Many people are not necessarily comfortable in a gym. They prefer smaller classes in a more private location. Although the senior center is meant to be a meeting room, the township has allowed me to store weights, steps and other exercise equipment there. It is not like a fitness studio in a gym where people can walk past the room and watch you exercise so people are often less intimidated exercising there. I wanted to teach classes where I could provide more personal attention to the participants."

Strength in Numbers

"I started the program with only five ladies as participants but over time the membership grew," says Hars. "From 2003 until 2012, I taught all the classes myself offering a different class every day: Step, Kickboxing, Pilates, Cardio Intervals, Strength Training and other specialty classes. In 2012, I became a consultant and started travelling for my job so I recruited three other local instructors to assist in teaching the classes. I believe this change really added diversity to the program because now we had different women teaching with different teaching styles and talents. I think Mt. Olive is the only town in Morris County with this type of an exercise program with classes six days a week and four different instructors."

In her yearly special event, the "Biggest Loser Challenge," Hars says "I have seen women lose as much as 40 pounds in that program with the average loss being around 20 pounds. This challenge program was inspired by one woman, Denise Washington, who lost 75 pounds in one year in the Mt. Olive Exercise program."

Hars supports the recognition of women, especially in March.

"Although things have changed a great deal for women regarding equality in the workforce, I believe we still have a long way to go," says Hars. "Women's History Month is meant to celebrate the accomplishments of women in many areas ranging from raising children and caring for the home to education and advancements in the workplace and also of course political achievements. To me International Women's Day is a time to celebrate and embrace our cultural differences and to reflect on the rich heritage of our ancestors who came to this country from so many other places. Our country is a melting pot of so many people from so many nations and during International Women's Month we can celebrate that diversity."

In her advice to younger women, Hars says, "I would encourage young women entering college to consider technical professions if that is truly what interests them. Mt Olive high school has a program where you can spend a day with someone in a particular profession to see if that profession interests you and I think all high school students should take advantage of that. Take the time to explore your interests. I would never have thought I would be an IT person when I was in high school but when I started doing the work, I found I really loved it, so it's important to think broadly and try different things. If you are undecided regarding what you want to do then perhaps enter college without declaring a major and take different courses as your electives to discover areas that might appeal to you. Also if it's possible try and get an internship at the end of your freshman year so that each summer you can try different professional areas.

To young mothers, Hars says, "stay in your profession, even if it's only part-time so that you keep your skills current and you are still relevant in the work place. It's tough to balance being a working mother but with good support from your spouse and even extended family and friends (grandmothers, grandfathers, aunts, uncles, neighbors), it can be done. My mother helped raise my kids by watching them two days a week while I worked and it was wonderful. My boys were very close to her. Also a neighbor and I "kid –swapped" on another day. I watched her daughter one day a week and she watched my middle son one day a week."

Hars concludes, "I think it's important to follow your passions but as I shared from my own experience, you may have areas of interest that you have yet to discover. Don't underestimate your abilities, if you believe you can do it, then you will make it happen. It's difficult to balance family and work but I think raising independent, self-sufficient children is important. Once your children are in high school and college you may find that you have more time for yourself so take that time to do the things you really want to do. I have a friend who became a nurse when she was over 50 and said it was the best decision she ever made. It's also important as you age to make time to exercise not just for weight loss but for heart, bone and brain health. Studies have shown that people who exercise regularly are more alert, live longer and are happier."

Local Teacher Carries Kindness In Her Journey



By Cheryl Conway

As a local second grade teacher, 56 year old Ann Moehrle Scotland enjoys sharing the stories of amazing historic women with her students.

"One of my best studies is sharing in biographies," says Scotland, teacher at Chester M. Stephens Elementary School in Budd Lake for 33 years. "We read about amazing women such as Harriet Tubman, Anne Frank, Helen Keller, Annie Sullivan, Ruby Bridges, and Rosa Parks to name a few. "Such inspiration is drawn from their life stories," says Scotland of Great Meadows. "It was their day to day choices towards humanity that came across the pages and into our hearts. The children refer back to them all of the time. They understand the legacy of these individuals."

While it is important to recognize women and their accomplishments, especially by having National Women's History Month and International Women's Month, Scotland says "It is important to highlight all individuals that contribute to this world in a meaningful way. Our youth needs this hope... it becomes contagious.

"When we recognize women that offer their light in a beautiful way, we are presenting an image of what can be contributed as well as accomplished in this world," says Scotland. "I think it is most meaningful to celebrate the day to day moments that add up to a significant purpose. Too many times we celebrate the wrong things~ we want to make sure we feature what is valuable for the hearts and minds of the next generation."

Scotland began teaching in 1984 as a kindergarten teacher in a private school in Morris Plains. In January of 1987, she was hired to work for the Mt. Olive School District and have been there ever since.

"I have been employed for 35 years, teaching 33 of those years because I took a year off when I had both my son and daughter," says Scotland.

While females make up a good majority in the education field, Scotland says she still faced challenges. "I would say my most challenging years were when my own children were younger and managing their care along with my work responsibilities," says Scotland. "During those years, you are balancing all that you do every hour of every day."

Scotland and her husband have two children, a 28 year old son David who lives in Colorado with his wife Hannah; and a 26 year old daughter, Samantha who lives in Pennsylvania.

"I am grateful and proud to be their mom," says Scotland, who also loves to travel and spend time with friends and family.

"I am simple in that I embrace the core qualities in life~ faith, love, and service," says Scotland. "I will always care, believe and want to continue to grow. I want to honor all of my blessings that I have been

offered with meaningful actions. I am truly grateful for the people and opportunities that have been extended to me over the years. I would like my response to those gifts to be a reflection of something good, something useful, something that gives back."

Scotland is grateful to have been hired at CMS by the person that the school is actually names after. "Ironically, Mr. Stephens was the man that hired me and took a chance on me," she says. "At the time, there were plenty of applications and very few openings. I will forever be grateful for the opportunity he provided and ultimately the gift that was bestowed upon my life. I am overwhelmed thinking about it. Being a teacher was a life-long dream of mine. I never considered anything else. He opened that door for me and now I open the door every day to a building that carries his name in remembrance of his legacy. I do so proudly, with gratitude and with a smile.

"Teaching is an opportunity to give back, support and build futures," adds Scotland. "I would like to be that person that when my students see me they are "reminded" of the basics in life... such as kindness. There is such promise and strength in that. I know it will come in handy as they face the challenges that they are approaching in life. It is usually a part of the solution... why not make it a part of my lessons. I want them to know I believe in them and that the "simplicities" that we sometimes overlook are what brings us joy in life. When they are able to blend wisdom with things such as kindness, integrity, courage and respect~ magical. I want them to experience that! It goes without saying that academically I would like to see each of my students reach their highest potential but that impending talent doesn't reach its peak without good character. I will never teach one without the other."

In regards to kindness and character, Scotland is recognized for developing Rainbow Connections 14 years ago. It all began with Kermit The Frog and the idea of bringing awareness to kindness and its importance.

"It was a simple unexpected moment in the classroom that turned into something life changing for me and in turn for all of my students thereafter," says Scotland. "As the lesson grew I was made aware of what it is to really teach. Children need to be able to connect with and have ownership in their accomplishments. They need to recognize the validity of their effort. This moment allowed for that and they created a voice for themselves that grew with time and walked out of the building into their day to day living.

"They saw "Rainbow Connections" in books they read, extended Rainbow Connections using writing skills, and recognized the importance of "Rainbow Connections" when collaborating with peers or simply playing on the playground," she explains.

From there, the Kindness Tour was created as a CMS 2nd Grade Field Trip. The current seniors at MOHS were the first to take such a journey. This year's Kindness Tour is set for April 5.

"The lesson continues and touches each soul differently but you can't miss the unity of the moment," she says. "The entire community is involved... administration, teachers, parents, students, alumni... etc. My best lesson ever... together we sure can make a difference with kindness. It is up to all of us to use our skills and talents in such a manner. What promise the world has if we could get this right." Scotland offers advice to her female peers.

"Listen, forgive and be kind to yourself and others," says Scotland. "Be patient and give it time~ you will find your way. Hang on tight and embrace the journey, it truly is beautiful."

Mind Plays Role In Woman's Success In Profession and Life



By Cheryl Conway

This 64-year old resident of Hackettstown pays no mind to any obstacle that may hinder her from success.

If anything, she does just the opposite and uses her mind to achieve in every step she takes. Longtime Mt. Olive resident Denise Washington is one of those unbelievable women admired by anyone who meets her. Some of her most shining moments have included losing close to 100 pounds through the Mt. Olive Recreation Exercise program at the age of 54; competing in five half marathons since 2010; working her way up to a divisional trainer in coding and operations; and returning to school for a bachelor's degree in psychology with a minor in women's gender studies.

When Washington sees an opportunity, she makes up her mind and just does it.

"If your mind says do a plank, finish a marathon, start a new career," Washington says 'why not?" "If you say 'no' and there's doubt, it's not going to happen. It's all in your mind.

"It's not the smartest person who really gets to where she wants to go; it's that person who can make up their mind and then figure it out," says Washington.

Going back to school for her bachelor's degree has been one of Washington's latest endeavors. Between 1973 and 1975, Washington attended Tufts University in Boston but did not complete a degree.

"I was declaring majors every other day," from economics to psychology. "I was not sure, was not a fit."

After a 10 week course one summer, Washington was hired as a biller at an infertility center, and sold Mary Kay for four years.

"I was one of those red coat people," says Washington, but "got paid" instead of driving the red Mary Kay car, back then.

Professional Coder

In 2005, Washington took an exam in coding and earned her certification. Working as a medical coder since then, she earned her way up to supervisor for finance and patient services at the Institute for

Reproductive Medicine and Science in Livingston.

After working for five years as a coding supervisor at Zelis Healthcare in Bedminster, Washington was promoted two months ago to divisional trainer for coding and operations there.

"I was tired of being a coding supervisor," says Washington, so when a position opened for a trainer, Washington stepped on up.

On top of her full time profession, Washington has been teaching people coding mostly on the weekends since 2017 with the American Academy of Certified Professional Coders.

"I'm loving every minute of it," she says about teaching. This was "one of the first things I did after George passed." Being married to George for 27 years and having two children together, Washington's marriage and their family was her priority.

Always encouraging her to go after her goals-her husband said to her "Now is going to be the time to do all the things you put aside. He knew I wanted to do that at least 10 years prior."

Her husband was also the one to encourage her to sign up for a three month membership with the Mt. Olive Recreation Dept. in 2007. Before joining, Washington weighed 250 pounds and wore a size 22 pants; after one year of aerobics at the Mt. Olive Senior Center, she lost 75 pounds and then another 10 pounds her second year, taking her down to a size 14 and winner of the 2009 Biggest Loser Contest.

Since losing 100 pounds, Washington has had many people approach her, asking for advice. There were "50 people coming to my office a day," she says. This led her to training people to complete marathons and walking, and to personally take some classes in sports and nutrition, health and wellness at Rutgers University.

Washington's love for fitness grew and she became an avid spinner and participant of marathons. In May 2018, Washington competed in her most recent half marathon, walking 13.1 miles in the Super Hero in Morristown. She is currently studying through Aerobic Fitness Association of America (AFAA) to become a certified spin instructor.

Back To School

In June 2014, Washington decided to return to school. She attended County College of Morris in Randolph and two-and-a-half years later, earned an associate's degree in liberal arts. She wanted to continue her studies by attending Rutgers University but she knew driving to Piscataway for evening classes after working full time would be too much.

But then a new program opened up two months later, in Sept. 2014, called Rutgers Statewide, which has allowed Washington to continue her education by attending classes taught by Rutgers faculty right at CCM. "That fell in my lap," says Washington.

Her plan is to graduate in June 2020, as she decided to take her time taking six to nine credits each semester, with all that she has going on between teaching a coding class of up to 10 students and working full time.

"It's a lot of prep work," she says about her teaching. "I couldn't do that and take credits and do well. I'm very protective of my GPA." She takes classes in the evening or online.

"Online gives me flexibility," says Washington. "I do well with that."

Her appreciation of the mind, and the power it can bring, has led her to pursue a bachelor's in psychology, with a minor in women and gender studies.

She says she "Enjoyed the working of the mind; that's such an important organ. The human mind did intrigue me."

Her goal is to branch off and go into grief counseling, says Washington, in order to help older women who have to deal with loss. "Services are helpful but difficult finding them," she admits. With the loss of her mother in 2011, just eight months after her father died, Washington says "I didn't have a chance to grieve," as George was ill.

In 2016, "when he passed, I was grieving for everybody. I had to take time off."

Finding new things to involve herself with, setting goals and putting her mind to achieve has helped shape Washington's success.

Having joined Toastmasters in November 2018, Washington recently auditioned on camera and was waiting to hear if she was selected as a seminar speaker at an upcoming conference. Toastmasters International is a non-profit educational organization that teachers skills in leadership and public speaking.

She also works as a literacy volunteer, since 2013, through the Morris County Literacy Volunteers, teaching others how to read.

Washington applauds the expanding role women have taken over the years and shares her understanding, offering some advice to her female peers, both younger and older.

"Women are the changing engine," says Washington. "Large changes in most cultures come from women; a person raised by a person who gave that sensibility."

Washington credits her mom in giving her that sensibility.

"You are mirroring her life," someone told her. Washington's mother decided to learn how to swim at the age of 60, and then went off to become a senior Olympian specializing in the breast stroke. "We are mothers, we are sisters, we are the ones driving the change; any government change is coming from women," Washington explains.

To younger women, she says "Take advantage of everything out there now. Fail often, fail forward; don't be afraid to fail. You take that and go forward with that.

"To women my age, it's not over yet."

LOCAL EQUESTRIAN TURNS HER PASSION INTO PROFESSION



By Cheryl Conway

This May will mark a year since one local woman took the reins in running her own business as a dressage rider and trainer.

There is something about horses that took Mallory Chambers of Flanders by her breeches and motivated her to start Chambers Equine Performance in Califon. The 23 year-old professional

equestrian launched her business in May 2018.

Riding horses since she was seven, and working at the same horse farm since she was 12, Chambers galloped at the chance to become an entrepreneur in a field she was most passionate about.

"I was kind of born with it," says Chambers. "I loved horses for as long as I can remember. When we lived in Michigan, I never touched a horse...but I was like horses, horse horses. I think it's ingrained in me; it's just there. Nobody in my family rides, I was never near a farm."

Born in Kalamazoo, Mich., Chambers was raised in Flanders when her family moved up to Mt. Olive in 2003 so her father would be close to his work in Peapack, she explains.

One day her mother surprised her and said "let's go for a bike ride to look at horses," she says. They rode to a farm on Tinc Rd. so she could touch the horses over the fence. "So I knocked on the door and asked if I could work there."

Says Chambers, "I just loved horses; I found my niche there," at the horse farm. Instead of paying her for any chores that she did at the farm, the owners gave her free riding lessons.

Strapped by her love for horses, Chambers got her first horse a few months later when "they shipped in a couple of babies," she explains. "I fell in love with one of the babies and I convinced my father to let me have one of the babies; so we bought her and trained her."

An Appaloosa American horse breed, Chestnut in color, Chambers named her Bella Max. She kept her at the Tinc farm, down the road from her home, and then moved her to Drakestown Equestrian in Long Valley. In March 2014, however, when the horse was only 11 years old, Chambers had to put her down, because of colic.

Work At The Farm

Home-schooled, Chambers would find the time to visit the Tinc farm for two years, from the time she was eight years old to ten years old, to help clean stalls, give horses water and hay and take an hour riding lesson, she explains.

A natural at the saddle, Chambers was introduced to dressage at the age of 12 when she became a working student in 2007 at a second farm, Flying Change Farm in Califon, under the guidance of Heather Mason.

Chambers got linked to Mason through the church she was attending at the time. When her parents were members of Clinton Church of the Nazarene in Clinton, Chambers' mom befriended Mason's mom, Phyllis, when she learned that "Heather rides!" says Chambers, and "asked if I could work there," she explains.

Mason became Chambers' trainer.

Chambers would work at the farm as much as she could to feed the horses, help get them ready for riders, "turn them out" by taking them out to their pens, and get them ready for their workout for the day.

In September 2014, a few months after Chambers' lost her first horse, she got her second horse - a nine year old male Hanoverian, she named Gallant. He is now 14 years old and she keeps him at Flying Change Farm, one of the farms she uses as her home base for her business. Her other home base farm for her business is at Finderne Horse Farm in Oldwick.

"Mallory enjoys bringing out the best in horse and rider, while watching each progress towards individualized goals," she states on her website.

With a bachelor's in Equine Studies with a concentration in Equine Science from Centenary University in Hackettstown, that she earned in 2018, Chambers has both the experience and knowledge to provide the best in equestrian services to both horse and clients, with years of training, "watching and observing; by being a sponge," she says.

She provides a customized training program to suit the needs of the horse and the goals of the rider. Her current clientele consists of 12 client horses, ranging in age from three to 21; and eight student riders, between the ages of 26 and 63.

For those who seek training services, Chambers focuses on rider position, correct use of aids, fitness for both horse and rider and accuracy.

"Mallory has extensive experience with many different breeds and levels of riders, as well as starting young horses and rehabilitation of horses coming off injury, illness, or prolonged time off regular work," as it states on her website.

One of her services includes training rides in which "I will ride clients' horses and train them.

She also provides rehabilitation rides. If a horse is coming off an injury, it needs to be brought back slowly so she provides a personalized rehab schedule.

In addition, Chambers provides riding lessons; sales and purchases; clinics in which she teaches riders all day long; catch riding; test riding in which she will show a horse if a rider is not able to; coaching at shows; show braids in which she braids a horse's mane; and body clipping.

Expert In Dressage

What is dressage? "It's dancing with your horse," explains Chambers. At competitions, riders and their horses are judged at different levels as they perform a variety of movements.

"Every movement we get judged one to 10," explains Chambers, who has won hundreds of ribbons and awards since she began competing "with a couple of shows here and there" at the age of nine. In 2014, Chambers stepped up her game by competing in even more dressage shows.

She travels "pretty far," during show season between April and November, to various horse competitions such as those in Ohio, Illinois, Kentucky, Virginia, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, North Carolina and Colorado.

"You walk into my house and they are everywhere," she says about her ribbons, all for dressage. Her greatest accomplishment was in July 2016 at the Fei North American Young Riders Championship in Colorado when she won Team Gold, with gold medals for the team, in dressage. This competition was for riders aged 16-21.

Chambers most recent accomplishment was recognized this past Feb. 24 at the 2018 year-end awards dinner and banquet held at Copper Hill Country Club in Ringoes, to celebrate all the year-end award winners from N.J. At the event sponsored by ESDCTA, Eastern States Dressage and Combined Training Association, she and her horse Gallant were recognized as champion and reserved champion, achieving both first and second place.

Chambers shares some of the finer skills needed in dressage: Accuracy when it comes to geometry with figures and set patterns; posture of the horse and rider; and fluency. "You want to be fluid and

graceful," says Chambers.

Competition In The Ring

Besides facing competition as a professional rider, Chambers also competes with other equestrian businesses.

"There's a lot of competition going around in the Northern N.J. area," says Chambers. "I do my best to set myself apart; to go out of my way to make my clients and horse happy. I usually let my riding do the talking."

She also makes herself available when needed.

"I do my best to accommodate everybody," says Chambers, working after hours if needed. Hours are flexible, six days a week, Monday through Saturday.

Chambers also goes the extra mile to make sure her horses are the best they can be.

"I go out of my way to make sure my horses are fit," says Chambers. "I make sure they are happy, if they are fit and doing the work correctly."

Personality counts too.

"I guess I'm personable," she says.

https://mountoliveonline.today/mo-online-3-27-19-issue

Working at a job that one loves, and providing the best service possible, instead of horsing around, makes all the difference.

"Training in general is what I enjoy," says Chambers, and "the horses." Most rewarding is seeing the "trading process with dressage. It's fun to start at the

bottom and work your way to the top.... You can look back and see how far you've come."

Her ultimate goal is to own her own farm "where I have horses in training, instead of going barn to barn to barn," she says.

For pricing and more information, go to chambersequineperformance.com; or email chambers.malloryf@gmail.com.

PHOTO GALLERY



LOCAL PRODUCER DRAWS A CROWD AT PILOT SCREENING

By Cheryl Conway

After a successful night with close to 500 viewers that came out last month to watch a pilot screening of a new docuseries, a local producer is hopeful that one of the networks will pick it up. The public was invited to the Cinepolis Theater in Succasunna on Thursday, Feb. 28, to attend the screening of the pilot episode of "War Heroes." Budd Lake Producer Jack Thomas Smith- along with the 14th Hour Foundation, the Sgt. Ryan E. Doltz Memorial Foundation and Fox Trail Productionsorganized the event to provide a sneak peek at a docuseries being written for television. "War Heroes," hosted by Benghazi Hero Kris Paronto, personalizes American soldiers by sharing their real-life stories at home and abroad.

"We're trying to tell the story of the soldiers," says award-winning filmmaker Smith at the screening. Smith is one of the executive producers of "War Heroes," along with his fiancée Mandy del Rio, a TV show host and producer; and film/TV producer Glenn Nevola.

This pilot episode features local fallen solider Sgt. Ryan E. Doltz of Mine Hill who lost his life at the age of 26 in Baghdad, Iraq, on June 5, 2004. Doltz was a graduate of the Virginia Military Institute (VMI) and served in the New Jersey National Guard.

In the episode, Paronto meets with Doltz's family, friends, and those who served with him in Iraq to share his story and personal experiences.

After realizing how many were interested in attending, the producers added on a second screening to accommodate viewers.

The first show at 8 p.m. was "almost a sellout," with 260 seats filled; and the 9 p.m. show was about half full, says Smith. "The line was out the door for the first screening."

Smith was pleased with the turnout and the responses he received from those in the audience.

"I hope we did ok with Ryan," says Smith at the screening, in sharing his story. "It was a leap of faith for them [the Doltz family] to trust us. The Doltz family are amazing people; if the show gets picked up there are thousands of stories.

"The crowd really appreciated what we did," says Smith in a post interview. Some were so filled by their emotions: "A few people that couldn't even talk; one burst out crying, I think he knew Ryan." Among those in attendance were family and friends of the Doltz family, members of Ryan Doltz' unit, military and the general public.

One of Doltz' friends from VMI, Charlie Bunting of Hoboken, attended the screening and were asked to say a few words to the audience. Bunting, 39, was president of his class and student body at the time, and his father retired Lt. General Josiah Bunting III was the VMI superintendent from 1996-2004. "He had such a positive, wonderful sense of humor and attitude," Bunting says of Doltz. "He cared

about what was important."

Doltz was killed on Saturday, June 5, 2004, when the vehicle he was driving hit an IED as they were returning to their base. Bunting was also in Iraq at that time.

"I was working with a special operations unit elsewhere when he was killed," says Bunting. "I didn't know he was killed until I got home," at the end of the year.

Loss of Doltz lingers with Bunting.

"It's natural to get yourself choked up," says Bunting at the screening. "When I'm feeling sad," he says he thinks about what "Ryan would say." While on his way out to attend a concert in Brooklyn recently he saw a pamphlet about the annual Doltz' foundation dinner to honor his friend and "it just kind of made me well up."

He thought "if I have to find a way- I have to stop this before I let it ruin my night- I thought about what would Ryan say? He would say, 'Charlie go have a great time at the concert man.' He'd say, 'Dude that band is awesome, go have fun.' I can still hear his voice. Our friends are in our corner; they are rooting for us.

"When I have a challenge or feel sad this is what I do," shares Bunting.

As a producer with Coalition Films, Bunting was impressed with the pilot.

"I found it very moving," says Bunting. "This is something everyone should see. This isn't a video game." It is a "real story" about an American patriot who was killed and how his family dealt with their loss; about "a mom getting a folded flag handed to her at Arlington."

Watching it, not only as a friend of Doltz, but from the eyes of a producer, Bunting says it "was excellently done; the music, the host and his tone struck me as being very compelling. This doesn't need any polishing. I thought this was first class.

"It's not the overly dramatic story," says Bunting. "It's a young American hero and the loss to his family."

Proceeds from the screening were supposed to be split by Paronto's 14th Foundation and the Sgt. Ryan E. Doltz Memorial Foundation, but Paronto donated his share to the Doltz foundation.

"He's just a class act; great guy," says Smith, about Paronto, a former Army Ranger from the 2nd Battalion who was part of the CIA annex security team that responded to the Sept. 11, 2012 terrorist attack on the U.S. Special Mission in Benghazi, Libya, helping to save more than 20 lives while fighting off terrorists for more than 13 hours.

His story is told in the book "13 Hours" written by Mitchell Zuckoff and his five surviving annex security team members.

Paronto's 14th Hour Foundation raises and disperses funds to help the lives and futures of veterans, military contractor personnel and first responders that have served and sacrificed to protect the American homeland.

At the screening "He was out there the whole night doing a meet and greet," says Smith, and decided to donate his share to the Sgt. Ryan E. Doltz Memorial Foundation, a 501(c)(3) corporation that memorializes and honors the memory of the Doltz; provides scholarships; assists worthy individuals and charitable organizations through fundraising, and private donations.

Post Screening Plans

Since the screening, Smith has been working with the other two producers to cut a 90 minute trailer that touches on the Doltz episode and the concept behind the War Heroes" docuseries, to send to "All the networks."

"The challenge is to cut a trailer that's catchy," says Smith, "to keep viewers watching, but make it true to the story. We will pitch it to them and see if they catch it."

If so, Smith says "we have really a lot of great stories," of other war heroes to share...real stories that can raise awareness to Americans about the effects of war on families and friends of soldiers injured or killed.

"People need to see what happens as a result" of wars, says Bunting. "It ended up killing our best and brightest," such as Ryan Doltz, "a wonderful bright patriotic young man. This is a human story," and people "need to see who Ryan was. All of America can watch this and appreciate it and learn from it."

Local Veteran Supports Series

"I hope it reaches a lot of people and brings that awareness," says 34-year old David Vargas of Budd Lake, who attended the screening.

Vargas, who met Doltz in 2003 at the N.J. National Guard before being deployed to Iraq, helps to share Doltz' story as one of the interviewees in the pilot.

At the age of 19, Vargas served in the same unit as Doltz but was assigned to a different platoon; his older brother, Dario, was on Doltz's team and was in the same vehicle when Doltz was killed.

"He took the back end of the blast," explains Vargas, and was injured; Doltz was seated in the front and was killed along with their team leader Sgt. Humberto Timoteo.

"It's been quite some time since I was able to speak about this," says Vargas. "I felt like I owed it to Ryan," to attend the screening. "I wanted to see how they did in making his legacy live on; it's like reliving the day remembering the good and the bad."

Vargas "was humbled and proud" to take part in the screening and help to share Doltz' story. He says he was "humbled to have known Ryan; Ryan was such an amazing person. He was contagious to everyone; it showed in the screening, everyone felt so a part of it."

He says his parents and family "have done such a great job in carrying on his legacy," with the work of the foundation and now the "War Heroes" episode.

As a driver and specialist from 2001-2008, Vargas says "our mission was the same as everyone else's. We patrolled, we trained, we maintained their security and sought out the bad guys and threats. It's very important to be able to show the world what it was these guys and girls go through by signing on that dotted line."

Sharing these war stories, of these heroes, is necessary as "People need to be aware of what it is that happened in real life and long lasting affects; stories on those killed and those who came back and struggled" or are now homeless, says Vargas who was awarded the purple heart along with his brother.

"Young kids growing up, they need to know what it is....not everything is rainbow and butterflies," says Vargas. "Jack is doing a great job and continues to do a great job. I hope it reaches a lot of people and brings awareness.

"Every soldier had a different story with different views and different opinions," concludes Vargas. For more information, go to www.warheroestv.com.

Pictured in photo: From left is Executive Producer Glenn Nevola, show host Kris Paronto and Co-Producer Jack Thomas Smith.

PHOTO GALLERY



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MARCH ON OVER TO THE LIBRARY FOR EVENTS

Learn How To Speak Italian At Library

Interested in learning to speak Italian? Join Domenico Tancredi for a 10 week Standard Italian Class being offered at the Mt. Olive Public Library. The class will cover: How to ask for something? How to ask where something is? How much something is? How to say you like something?

Classes are on Tuesdays, starting April 2 through June 11, from 6:30 p.m.-8:30 p.m. in the Gathering Room. No class on April 23. For those who miss more than two classes, they will forfeit their space. Class is limited to 10 adults.

Registration required. Call 973-691-8686 ext. 106 or go to www.mopl.org to register.



MC SHERIFF AND DIGNITARIES GATHER FOR PRAYER

Morris County Sheriff James M. Gannon joined nearly 500 people – some Muslims he has been friends with since childhood – for prayers and a unity walk on Sunday, March 17, organized by the Morris County Islamic Centers in memory of the March 15 murders of worshipping Muslims at two mosques in New Zealand.

Gannon was the main law enforcement speaker at the event at Jam-E-Masjid Islamic Center in Boonton, his hometown, and he reassured the crowd that his office will always be ready to protect and defend people of all faiths against acts of terrorism.

Gul B. Khan, vice president of Jam-E. Masjid Islamic Center, said Gannon immediately deployed tactical resources to protect all mosques in Morris County during Friday prayers after hearing about the New Zealand attacks. The sheriff also directed officers to conduct extra patrols around Morris County's Jewish houses of worship and schools.

Members of the Morris County Sheriff's Emergency Response Team (SERT), K-9 Unit and Bomb Squad, along with Boonton police, provided a significant police presence during Sunday's prayers and remarks within the mosque and along the walk route from the mosque past Town Hall and back. The mood of the event was upbeat, with many embraces and handshakes and signs of solidarity like one marcher's placard that read: "I (heart) my Muslim neighbors."

"Sheriff Gannon is like a member of our family," said Khan. "He's always there for u." Shannon shared his official statement: "The savagery inflicted on people praying at two mosques in Christchurch, New Zealand, while they were engaged in private, peaceful acts of their religious faith only heightens the resolve of the Morris County Sheriff's Office and other law enforcement agencies to protect all houses of worship, schools and institutions from acts of terrorism.

"No person – no matter the race, ethnicity or faith – should fear kneeling or bowing their head in prayer nor fear playing at school, dancing at a concert or walking on a sidewalk. Freedom to live without fear or as a target of hate is a desire we all share as people of the human race.

"As the Morris County Sheriff, I join the Morris County Islamic Centers in standing up for peace and denouncing the unforgiveable hatred that led to the murders of 50 people and wounding of at least 20 others in New Zealand.

"The Morris County Sheriff's Office, Morris County police chiefs and the Morris County Prosecutor's Office stand by and in front of all members of its religious communities. We are united with good people of all faiths and will continue to work relentlessly as warriors to protect the community from violence."

At Sunday's event – where Boonton Police Chief David Mayhood, Montville Police Chief Andrew Caggiano and Rockaway Borough Police Chief Conrad Pepperman also pledged continued support for the Muslim community –Gannon asked for a moment of silence.

Gannon said, "A moment of silence for the people of New Zealand. A moment of silence for people of the Islamic faith. A moment of silence for all people of faith. We can't let terrorism divert us from praying to who we want to pray to. As the sheriff, as our elected officials here, as police, we're not going to allow that."

Gannon credited all law enforcement agencies in Morris County, particularly local police who know their communities, for being part of a blanket of protection against violent acts. Gannon praised Mt. Olive Police Chief Steve Beecher for deploying extra resources to protect the mosque within that municipality.

The sheriff reassured the crowd: "I just want you to know, you're in good shape here in Morris County."

The 317 houses of worship within Morris County's boundaries specifically are contained in a program under which extra resources are deployed at holiday times, occasions of special religious observances, and when people of particular faiths are targeted for violence.

"This today is about love," said Gannon. "This today is about peace. We're not going to let New Zealand shape us. And I'm going to ensure that. And the county prosecutor is going to ensure that. And all the elected officials here are going to ensure that. So, you're in a good place."

Other dignitaries at the event included U.S. Congresswoman Mikie Sherrill, N.J. State Assemblyman Anthony Bucco, Morris County Freeholders John Krickus and Doug Cabana, Parsippany Mayor Michael Soriano and Boonton Mayor Matthew DiLauri.

PHOTO GALLERY

Chapel Serving Fish & Chips Dinner

Join in at the First Presbyterian Church's Chapel in Hackettstown on Friday, April 26, from 5 p.m.-7 p.m., for the "Tastefully British" Fish & Chips Dinner.

Tickets are \$15 for adults; and \$8 for children under 12.

Advanced ticket purchase is required! For tickets, call Ellen at 908-637-6236.

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