



THE LINK

May 2026



A Note from our Founders...

Oh, what a night! Next Chapter members attended **Menopause the Musical 2** on April 8th at **The Palace Theatre** in Stamford, a hilarious and heartfelt look at the joys of menopause and friendship — plus hot flashes, mood swings, and memory lapses! The musical was preceded by dinner at **Flinders**. A fun time was had by all!

April showers bring May flowers! Next Chapter closed out the month with a fun night of florals featuring **Petals & Prosecco**, a floral design workshop curated by **Lisa Raffaelli**, a Next Chapter member. Lisa shared tips and tricks on how to design amazing floral arrangements while members enjoyed lite bites and sipped on prosecco. Everyone left with a beautiful Spring bouquet. Thanks, Lisa, for sharing your talent and creativity!

This month's **Worth It!** interview features Next Chapter member, **Stephanie Cleary**, an International Board Certified Lactation Consultant. Stephanie shares her journey from software engineer and business manager to Lactation Consultant while raising her family in Greenwich.

Read about Stephanie's personal story, the wisdom she gained along the way and what makes the path she chose Worth It!

Join us in celebrating Stephanie and her Next Chapter!

Hope to see you at one of our upcoming events in May!

Anne & Mary Beth

Read On for...

Worth It!

Photo Gallery
from
Menopause the
Musical 2
&
Petals &
Prosecco

Membership
Update

Upcoming
Events

Refer a Friend!

WORTH IT!

AN INTERVIEW WITH NEXT CHAPTER MEMBER, STEPHANIE CLEARY



THE PIVOT

What was happening in your life or career that made you realize it was time for a change - even if the path ahead wasn't yet clear?

I spent 20 years in corporate America as a software engineer and business manager. I was at HBO when hbo.com first went live and later served as an Associate Director at UBS. When my department was dismantled during the 2008 financial crisis, I chose not to return to that world. My children were in elementary school, and the transition provided the space I needed to find my next chapter. I was actually in the process of applying for a Master's in Education to become a math teacher when a friend mentioned the idea of becoming a lactation consultant. In that moment, everything clicked. I decided right then to pursue becoming a lactation consultant and never looked back.

THE RESISTANCE

What fears, doubts, or practical concerns did you have to work through before taking that leap?

Surprisingly, it wasn't about doubt; once I set my sights on this path, I was all in. The primary challenge was the timeline. It took four years of study and clinical requirements to earn my board certification. It was a significant shift to move from a two-decade career in software engineering to a clinical profession centered on hands-on care, but I was ready for the challenge.

THE AHA

Was there a moment - big or small - when you knew you had made the right decision?

The first "Aha" moment came through the work itself—the profound feeling of helping a mother reach her goals and seeing the immediate impact that support has on a family's well-being. The second came when I realized I didn't have to leave my technical skills behind. After years of writing systems for major corporations, I wrote my own Electronic Health Record (EHR) and custom booking schedule (on greenwichlactation.com) to run my business. Powering a human-centered practice with systems I built myself confirmed that I had successfully merged my past expertise with my new passion.

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2)

THE GROWTH

How has stepping into this new chapter changed how you see yourself--professionally, personally, and creatively?

It has completely redefined my understanding of professional freedom. I've transitioned from being an employee to an owner, managing everything from patient care to complex business operations. My practice has grown to include private office visits, home visits, and virtual consultations, alongside my role at Valley Pediatrics. This journey has shown me that I can successfully navigate the complexities of the healthcare insurance market while maintaining the clinical integrity of my practice.

THE WORTH IT

Looking back now, what makes this pivot "worth it" and what would you say to a woman standing at the edge of her own next chapter?

Ultimately, what makes it worth it is the look on a woman's face when things are finally going smoothly with her new baby—that relief is everything. Having the autonomy of my own business has given me the flexibility to enjoy a true work-life balance while helping thousands of families over the years.

By accepting insurance, I've been able to make clinical care accessible to the community while growing my practice on my own terms. To any woman standing at the edge of her own next chapter: your previous career isn't "lost time." I still use my software engineering background every day to run my business efficiently. Take the tools you already have and apply them to the life you actually want to lead.

Stephanie Cleary is an International Board Certified Lactation Consultant (IBCLC)—the premier clinical credential in lactation care. She has been in practice since 2013, serving families across Lower Fairfield County and Westchester County. A software engineer turned clinical specialist, Stephanie is the current President of the Tri-State Breastfeeding Association and a long-time La Leche League Leader in Greenwich. In addition to her private practice, Greenwich Lactation Services, she has served as the staff Lactation Consultant at Valley Pediatrics of Greenwich with Dr. Juan since 2017. Through expert, evidence-based support in-office, in-home, and via telehealth, she helps parents navigate the complexities of infant feeding with confidence.

Check out our photo gallery of recent events on the following page



APRIL EVENTS

Menopause The Musical 2 April 8th



Petals & Prosecco April 20th



Membership Update

Next Chapter is better and more fun with friends! Please continue to spread the word and help us expand our community!



All new members will electronically receive a New Member Welcome Packet.. You will be asked to complete a profile and include a headshot as well as provide contact information and fun facts to share with fellow members. The Membership Circle, our new member directory is being developed and will be live on our website in the coming months.



EMAIL:INFO@NEXTCHAPTERNETWORK.NET

WWW.NEXTCHAPTERNETWORK.NET

Upcoming Events

*****HOT FLASH*****

GIRLS MOVIE NIGHT



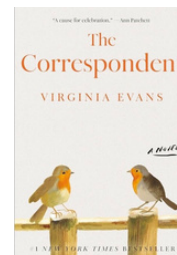
Join us on **Monday, May 4th at 7pm at AMC Port Chester** and enjoy a night of fun and fashion! Meet at the theatre at 6:45pm to purchase tickets. Interested in pre-movie dinner? Meet at **McShane's Bar & Restaurant** (123 N. Broadway, Port Chester at 5:15pm.

SEE YOU THERE!

May 7th - Book Club

Kick-Off

Greenwich Boat Club - 6:30pm



May 18th - Game Night

**Greenwich Boat Club
6:30pm**

Join us for an old fashioned game of charades and chardonnay!

NC BULLETIN BOARD

Job Opportunity

J. McLAUGHLIN

J. McLaughlin in Greenwich is currently looking to bring on a friendly, sales-driven associate to join their team. The ideal candidate enjoys building relationships with customers, has a strong sense of personal style, and thrives in a community-focused retail environment.

If you or someone you know is interested in a fun, flexible, customer-focused role with a friendly team please reach out to Kristin. Kkidder@jmclaughlin.com

You are “Worth It”!

Everyone has a story and we’d love you to tell yours! Be a part of Next Chapter’s **Worth It** series and share **YOUR** Next Chapter journey. Inspiring and supporting one another is what Next Chapter is all about!

Interested?

Please reach out and let us know at info@nextchapternetwork.net.

Calling All Members



In our continued quest to cultivate connections amongst our members, we are designing a Member Directory and need your help!

To be included, please send a head shot to info@nextchapternetwork.net and complete a member profile on the link below:

<https://forms.gle/qdsiaXNqYaCgwA7d6>

The directory will live on the Next Chapter website on a password-protected page. Once completed it will be a great resource to keep conversations and connections active!

We look forward to receiving your materials! Help us continue to build our community!

