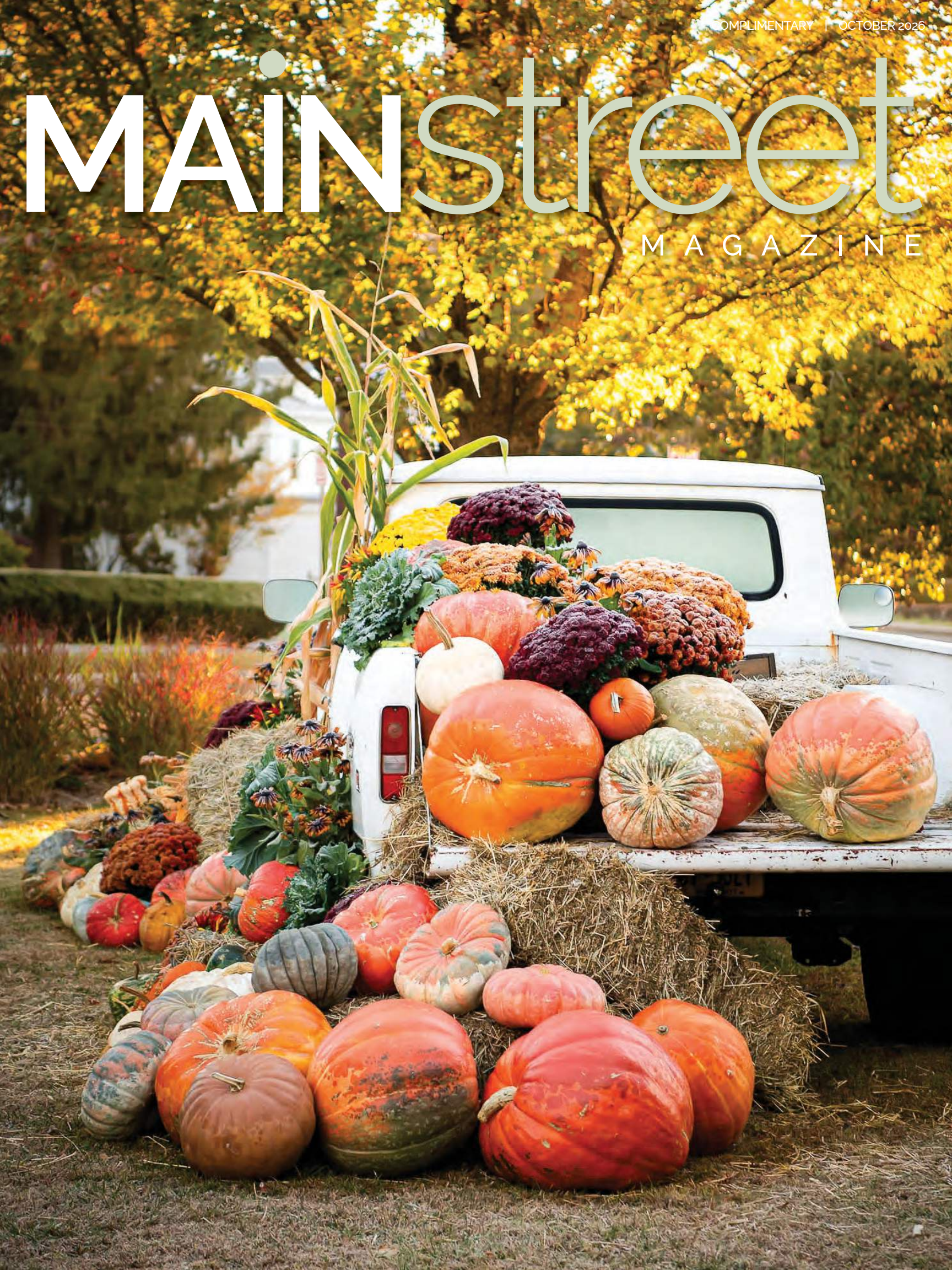


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A trick or treat?

Avid *Main Street* readers know that I love this time of year. For those who are new here: for me, nothing beats the crispness of the autumn air, the beautiful light we only get this time of year, and the coolness of the overnight temperatures with the just right temps during the days ... oh man, nothing beats this time of year! And I didn't even talk about apple picking, apple cider donuts, or anything of the sort. Oh yes, and then there are also all of the fall-related activities, the cozy sweaters you wait all year to wear, and all of the Halloween fun. As for the pumpkin-spice flavored things, however, I will pass on those things. No thanks.

It's always a bit of a question as to what type of autumn we shall get. Will it be a trick or treat this year? Will the leaves fall early? Will we have a rainy month? Will it get really cold and fast, or will it be 80°F on Halloween like it was a few years ago? It's always a surprise to see if we will get treated or tricked. I personally would love nothing more than crisp evenings and just-warm enough days with beautiful sunlight while the leaves take their time changing. So yes, there is my request officially put out to the Universe.

In the meantime, while the weather gods decide what to grace us with, there is plenty to do to keep busy! Barbara has done a fabulous round-up of appropriately timed activities that you can do in the region. Regina also got together with the folks at the Headless Horseman and so if you're brave enough to venture their way, you are sure to be entertained! Of course not all of our content this month revolves around the time of year. Christine dove into how AI is impacting real estate, and she also caught up with the owner of The Wish House and shared her story along with all of the amazing products she offers at her amazing store.

For the collectors out there, Jesse shares his personal card collection story. If you see him, maybe ask him what happened to his Beatles cards; I wonder what they'd be worth today. Regina was busy writing for us this month, because in addition to talking to the fine folks at the Headless Horseman, she also penned two health articles because October is not only Breast Cancer Awareness Month, but it is also Mental Health Awareness Month. I highly encourage everyone to take a moment to read and educate themselves so that we can all continue to stay vigilant when it comes to our health. We also have a number of other fabulous articles but I've run out of room to say more about them here, so go on! Flip the page and dive into it all. Thanks for reading!

– Thorunn Kristjansdottir

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OCTOBER 2026

Celebrating and decorating for the season.
Photo by Olivia Valentine

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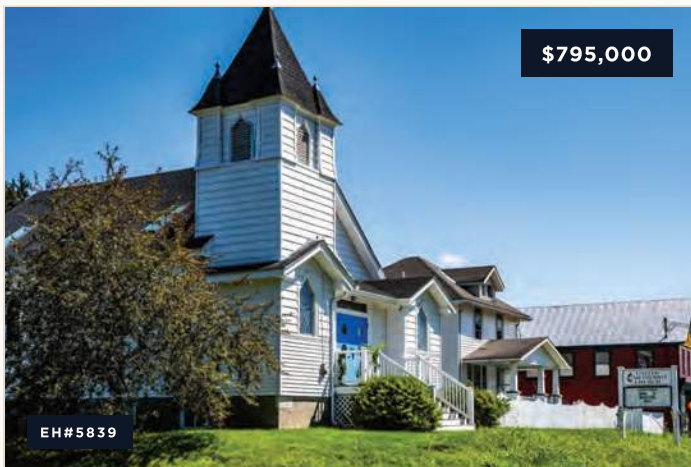


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A TANGLE OF THREAD

STACY BOGDONOFF

By Leora Armstrong
info@mainstreetmag.com

Stacy Bogdonoff's studio is an Aladdin's cave of found objects, jewels, fabric, and thread, each in its place, waiting to be bought into another life through one of her pieces. Bogdonoff is a mixed-media artist, pulling together paper, fabric, print making, stitching, and painting into an art collage. Threads are left unfinished, like sentences allowing the work to wander further into another piece. The connection throughout her work discusses place, home, and past, bought into being in a contemporary sustainable practice. The unraveled hem of a fine muslin petticoat shows the stain of time, which has become a line through the work. The marks of life in the materiality engage with each other despite coming from obscure beginnings. Delicate stitching holds everything in place, weavings printed and sewn work side by side, and the holes left on pages of book all give a deep sense of age and narrative throughout her work, stories retold in the thread.

What are your earliest memories of making art?

I was always that arts-and-crafts kid. Jerry Saltz once asked on Instagram, "How did you know when you were an artist?" The answer came to me immediately; I realized it when I enjoyed making book report covers more than

writing book reports. I often veered towards the creative aspect of each project. In Girl Scouts and youth groups, I gravitated straight to the bulletin boards and the craft projects.

My mom was very present, and she did a lot of needlework, sewing, weaving, embroidery, macramé, and Bargello, which is a herringbone, V-shaped repetitive embroidery stitch that was popular in the 1970s. Toward the end of my time in high school she opened a needlecraft store; her work was beautiful and careful, and she taught for years. She set me up with an embroidery hoop and cross-stitch before I was ten, so working with needles and fiber comes second nature to me.

It's interesting how much of that gets set in childhood. You started your career as a painter working with photography, can you expand on that?

I went to Syracuse University for a BFA. Back then there wasn't the kind of interdisciplinary "material exploration" major that schools offer now, so you had to choose: illustration, weaving, sculpture, or silkscreen. I chose painting and photography, focused on two-dimensional work. I didn't stick with it afterward, but I've always been a maker, even while I was building a career elsewhere and earning a living.

Those were the days of rolling your own film onto a spool, developing it in a darkroom, and printing in trays that smelled wonderful and were

probably toxic. I loved it, but I didn't keep it up. When I found time and space I got into jewelry and metal-working instead, which I could do without a big studio. I've just always loved making things with my hands and figuring out how to get from an idea to a finished object.

You had a long career as a chef before returning to art full-time. Can you tell us about your journey?

I waitressed to support myself as an artist right out of college and ended up subbing in a restaurant kitchen because kitchens are chaotic and they need extra hands. The chef told me I was good at working with food and should investigate it seriously, so I enrolled at the Culinary Institute of America up in Hyde Park, NY, an 18-month program. I kept my loft in the city, worked in a restaurant on the weekends, and rode the Metro-North up along the Hudson every Sunday to finish the program.

After a few years working in restaurants, in 1980 I opened what's best described as a gourmet prepared-food shop and catering company on Third Avenue between 78th and 79th Streets, on the Upper East Side of Manhattan, which is almost unimaginable now. We ran it as a retail storefront for fifteen years, then shifted to catering only for another 10, as what people now call a "commissary kitchen" since you're no longer open to walk-in customers. Giving up the

retail side was honestly a relief. Retail on the avenue became prohibitively expensive, and you find yourself arguing with people over a quarter pound of chicken salad.

I eventually sold my share of the business, and as I was under a non-compete clause, I was out of food entirely. But I still wanted to work, so believe it or not, I went into childhood literacy education. I started by volunteering in the city one day a week, tutoring elementary school kids in reading. One day a week became two, then more, and the director of the program suggested I should take it seriously. So I went back to college, where I was the oldest person in my class, and earned a master's in childhood literacy. I spent close to a decade working with K-through-5 kids who had language-based learning differences, what we'd now call dyslexia, helping some of them learn to read and find placement in schools built for that kind of learner. It was a hugely energetic and satisfying time.

What a fantastic shift. So what motivates your practice now?

It's a visceral thing. You're drawn to certain materials and processes for no fully explainable reason. I never loved painting, the drag of the brush on canvas. What I love is the feel and sound of a needle popping through taut linen. I love the slow pace of stitching, I love the texture of fiber — I always have. My mother sewed; I

collected vintage clothing for years. I love a bound buttonhole, a covered button, a 1940s suit lined in crêpe with a cuff fully tacked down. I love a quilt back, a torn hem, the tangle of thread when you're lucky enough, taking apart an old pair of pants, to have it pull free in just one motion.

Visually, I've always loved buildings in New York where old signage has been scrubbed off and old houses with water stains on the ceiling, creaky floors, and layers of wallpaper in the closets. I've been a flea market person forever. I love the endpapers of books and the little holes left where they're bound. It's material and process and surface that I've always been drawn to. I call myself a mixed-media artist because really paper is but a step away from fiber, and fiber a step away from paper. Many Japanese washi papers are made from mulberry plants. ... they're all one and the same.

Similarly: seeing and feeling, and following a thread, pun intended. There is a tangibility of working with my hands. When something speaks to me — the dust that comes off of a torn sheet or a black-on-black printing process — I know that's a concept I could work with. I have been a maker all my life. My palette is muted, pulling from the subtlety of aged objects, which are often loaded with another narrative.

LA: Yes, found objects always have a narrative, which is their appeal, and threading that into our work is a huge part of the process. What brought you to this area in Kent?

Nothing art related at all. While I was at the Culinary Institute, jobs were posted on index cards on a bulletin board. One said, "Cooks needed, weekend work, an hour away." Five of us piled into a van and ended up cooking at Club Getaway in Kent, CT, back in '78 or '79, a kind of poor man's Club Med for singles. We'd arrive on Friday night, cook a huge salad buffet on Saturday for busloads

of guests, do a barbecue Saturday night (and party with the guests after the barbecue, of course), and then get up and do brunch on Sunday before driving back to the CIA. A couple of years later, a customer at my store mentioned they were renting a house in Kent, CT, and I realized I knew exactly where that was. My partner and I toured a few towns and ended up renting in Warren, Washington, Sherman, and Milton for four years. Eventually we bought a home in 1987. I've owned property in this area for almost 40 years now and bought my current house about 10 years ago. I've never not loved it here. My brother and sister both followed me up, even though we have no family history in this area at all.

Who are your artistic inspirations, and if you could steal or beg a piece of work to live with what would it be?

El Anatsui's work stops me in my tracks, I remember first seeing his work maybe 12 or 14 years ago and being floored. Ruth Asawa's recent retrospective at MOMA was extraordinary too. Going further back, there's a trio of weavers I return to constantly: Lenore Tawney, Olga de Amaral, and Anni Albers. And there's Gerhard Richter. Truthfully, I'm not precious about sticking only to fiber artists.



Above: *Read/Red Between the Lines*. 2025. 31" x 24". Vintage textiles, waxed linen, silk stitching.

Below: *Shelter20*. 2020. Cotton, wire, paper, lacquer.

Opposite page: Stacy in her studio.



Continued on next page ..



Top, left: *Nine Ovals*. 2020. 22" x 20". Linen, wire, paper, silk, flax.

Right: *Printed Matter*. 30" x 27". Handmade nets, mono-printed; silk stitching.

Above, left: *Gold 2*. 2026. 36" x 36". Silk, paper, cotton, amber shellac.

Right: *Split Level*. 2022. 24" x 18". Vintage linen, netting, silk.

I love Gerhard Richter because his smudged, layered surfaces feel fibrous to me, almost like pixels before pixels existed, like a faded poster, and of course Olga de Amaral's gold weavings are gorgeous.

I also follow younger artists. Emily Krause, still in her thirties, is a painter who rolls and folds her canvases to get repetitive, scraped-looking imagery. I saw a show of hers downtown this past year. Kenny Nguyen works with strips of silk binding tape, the kind a seamstress would use in tailoring. He lays the strips out, paints them, lets them shift slightly, and then stitches them down to canvas so they wave a bit off the surface. I've watched him emerge from a small alleyway gallery in Chelsea to having work in the lobby of the *New York Times* building. Teri Figliuzzi is a friend who works with plants through photographic methods; I love her work. And Caroline Burton is a painter who makes print-like paintings that are dark and monochromatic and reference crocheted blankets.

Funny about stealing a piece of art! I thought immediately of the recent art heist at the Louvre. But honestly one of Olga de Amaral's gold-painted weavings. Or a piece by El Anatsui. I'd just need the room, and I promise to keep the light off it.

Do you have a project you're most proud of?

My recent two-person show at Judy Black was a real goal realized. What I want now is to keep putting work into small shows, ideally solo or two-person, so people can see a complete body of work together in one place, where the full narrative comes through. I sold four or five pieces from that show, and two have since gone on to group shows, one this past August in Bridgeport, CT, and one in Chelsea, NY.

What do you have coming up?

I've come to think in one-year chunks: what do I want to achieve this year? Currently I have two upcoming shows. In December, I have a large wall of my own at the Kent Art Association, and I have been invited by the Norfolk Library in Norfolk, CT, to show my work in April.

The new body of work has a through-line back to the Judy Black show. It'll be two-dimensional, a handleable scale, and I'm sticking with the same palette – linens, drop cloth, canvas, sepia, and shellac. I sold my two most recent woven pieces and found I missed them, so I'm making another, a little differently this time. Each series is like a line of cars, not identical, but clearly related – a small departure, not a leap.

I love being alone in my studio. I was the oldest of four, and I ran a business with 50 employees for 25 years. I've had enough decisions by committee to last a lifetime. Now I want to walk into my studio, put on a podcast, and get on with my own day.

What's the best piece of advice you've been given that you could share?

Make the art you want to see and trust yourself. If 100 people walk past my work and 95 don't say a word, I don't care. What keeps me going is the five who stop and tell me they love it. The artists I admire most keep their eye on that, not on the crowd. Beyond that, it's less a single piece of advice than something friends and fellow artists repeat to each other constantly: just keep working. You win some,

you lose some – just keep working. Keep exploring and find new ways to express yourself.

I don't want to sound saccharine, but I feel genuinely lucky, at this point in life, to have the resources to do this: time, enough money, space, and engagement. I don't love the words "passionate" or "inspired". I think they're overused, especially applied to women. I prefer "engaged". My mind is constantly engaged ... I'm thinking about a piece of linen with a crease down the middle, or I'm thinking about the ghost print I get when I print a crumpled paint-soaked piece of paper. That bent wire I just picked-up off the sidewalk? I think about that. I have an ongoing conversation, in my head and with my hands, all the time, and it's something I'm very grateful for.

I don't keep a proper sketchbook, but I have endless 'to do' lists, and I'm forever jotting down snippets of ideas throughout the day. When I finish a piece, I write a short story to accompany it and tie it to its title. The art and the story are small and detailed, and I share with the viewer what I was thinking about and feeling while I created the art.

As I walk away, I think of all the stories that Bogdonoff has gathered in her studio, where the paper came from, the linens sourced through a vintage Vera Wang dress, picked up for its luminous fabric, and the paper left on the tin tiles, each narrating another story – each found object cared for and given a new lease on life through her work. Nothing is more valuable than its neighbor, a seed as precious as a gem stone. So, when walking through a thrift shop or on a trail, do not discard the objects; think about how they can live on in a new guise. •

You can see more of Bogdonoff's work at The Kent Art Association show in December 2026 and at the Norfolk Library show April 4 -29, 2027. In the meantime, visit her website: stacybogdonoff.com. Email: sbogdonoff@gmail.com. Find her on Instagram: [@stacybogdonoffshop](https://www.instagram.com/stacybogdonoffshop).

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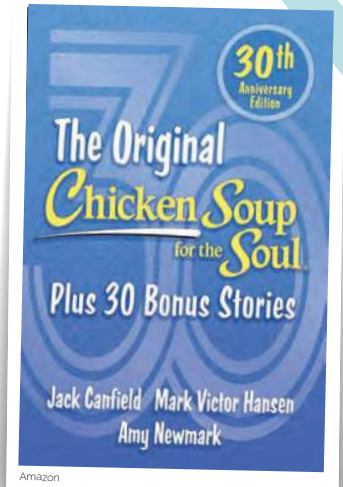


OCTOBER MUSTS

to eat



Millbrook Winery. I know, I know. I've already shared a Millbrook Winery "to drink" in this section, but I went back to the winery. And it was so good that I had to talk about it again. We went on a gorgeous Saturday night and they had a jazz band playing under the tent on the lawn. There was a local pizza vendor making amazingly delicious pizzas from a brick oven. There was also a food truck serving all kinds of goodies. And then, of course, there was the wine. The delicious wine. We grabbed a couple of persona-sized pies, depicted here is their Margherita. While my husband waited for those, I went to the wine window and I got some rose before grabbing a table on the patio. Can I just tell you how peaceful and enjoyable it is sitting there, enjoying fantastic live music, eating freshly-made and locally made food, while sipping on what has quickly become my favorite rose? I wasn't the only one who felt this way, because there were so many people there from all walks of life doing the exact same thing: having an amazing evening.



to watch

Teenage Wasteland. This 2025 documentary recently became available on Netflix and it was quite eye opening! It hits close to home as well whereas it documents a group of high school students from 1991 to 1997 and their teacher in Middletown, NY. Their English teacher offered a media-based English course where students created all forms of content, but then he suggested they look into their local dump. What ensues is years of research and video footage captured by the teacher and his students where they ultimately uncovered and exposed the existence of a toxic waste dump in their town. The footage and watching the story unfold was incredibly moving and shocking in so many ways starting with what these kids uncovering and then proved it. They were Erin Brockovich before Erin Brockovich was Erin Brockovich (if that makes sense). Secondly, watching these young people become the people they were meant to become was pretty remarkable.



TO READ

Chicken Soup for the Soul 30th Anniversary Edition: Plus 30 Bonus Stories by Amy Newmark, Jack Canfield, Mark Victor Hansen. A dear friend gifted me a copy of this book some 20 years ago. It is one of the most eye-opening books that I've ever read and its messaging has stuck with me ever since. It is no wonder that this is a classic *New York Times* bestseller and according to *USA Today*, one of the top five books in the past quarter century "that leave a legacy." So it's not just my life that this book helped shape, but this bestseller continues to change lives around the world. As the book's description states, "Rediscover the power of inspiration with timeless stories about the everyday miracles that illuminate the best of the human spirit. Whether you're discovering *Chicken Soup for the Soul* for the first time, or you are a long-time fan, this book will inspire you to be a better person, reach for your highest potential, overcome your challenges, improve your relationships, and embrace the world around you."

To do

The Sheep & Wool Festival. The annual Sheep & Wool Festival, held at the Dutchess County Fairgrounds in Rhinebeck, NY every year, will take place this October 17 and 18. As the Festival's website states: "For almost 50 years, the New York State Sheep & Wool Festival has brought together fiber enthusiasts, shepherds, artisans, educators, and curious newcomers for a weekend unlike any other. ... the festival features hundreds of vendors, hands-on workshops, livestock exhibits, fleece competitions, demonstrations, and special events celebrating fiber arts and agriculture. Whether you're an experienced maker, a working shepherd, or simply looking for a unique fall tradition, there's something here to inspire, learn, and enjoy." To see all of the vendors, workshops, exhibits, and so much more, you can visit their website sheepandwool.com for the full schedule of events, you can even pre-purchase your ticket on their website. As an okay knitter and a sometimes fiber artist, I'm excited to explore this year's Festival and all that it has to offer. Here's hoping that I'll stumble upon some amazing yarn, funnel cake, and meet some friendly and incredible people.





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The free spirit of Cornwall

BIANKA LANGNER GRIGGS, CREATOR OF THE WISH HOUSE, WEST CORNWALL, CT



By Christine Bates
info@mainstreetmag.com

To appreciate bohemian West Cornwall, cross the covered bridge over the Housatonic River and follow the historic main street, past the electric bicycle shop, up to the porch and front door of The Wish House. The entry is filled with a colorful, crowded assortment of hanging lanterns, scarves, housewares, rugs, cards, and books. Behind the counter is the petite dynamo, Bianka Langner Griggs, who manages every aspect of the store's rooms of colorful merchandise. Most days you can find Bianka helping customers, answering the phone, and rearranging inventory.

Main Street Magazine picked a quiet, rainy weekday afternoon to talk to Bianka about her vision for the store and the town of Cornwall. For nearly three decades, she has curated her retail sanctuary inside the terracotta-colored house at 413 Sharon-Goshen Turnpike. The store is part global bazaar, part community living room, and part

fine-art incubator, filled with an eclectic mix of international housewares, tactile books, and artisan-made apparel. Yet her real products have always been connection and community.

Berlin to West Cornwall. How did that happen?

After graduating, I came to New York City as an au pair for a wonderful family with a country house in Cornwall. I was able to attend classes at the Fashion Institute of Technology, where the professors brought real life experiences to the class room. I returned to Germany and saved enough money to return full time as a student at FIT. Everything began to fall into place. After working several years for a well-known, respected theatrical costume designer in New York, I returned to Germany as an employee of the famous Schiller Theater working as a costume design assistant. When it closed in 1993 after the reunification of Germany, I came back to New York living on German unemployment and met my future husband Richard while jogging in Cornwall.

How did Wish House get started?

My husband's cousin's wife created Wish House next to the bicycle shop in 1994, and I took it over from her in 1997. The concept changed overnight from English tea party, teddy bears, pastels, and painted furniture to bolder, contemporary artisan designs and moved up the street into this building. Between the rent, paying off the purchase, and changing the stock, the first year was really tough. I never give up on a challenge.

Do you have a vision for the store?

I want everyone to find something beautiful and unexpected in the store. I don't just cater to weekenders – the store is open every day except Monday. I want everyone to aspire to a beautiful, exciting, creative life. Good design does not have to be expensive – think of IKEA, which I grew up with. I have never been caught up in trends – we have never had Beanie Babies.

Continued on next page ...

Left: Bianka Langner Griggs holding up a beaded cell phone necklace by German artist Ina Seifart.

Center: A bubble wrap dress Bianka designed for a runway show benefiting the Little Guild hangs in back of the store.

Right: Wish House's entry is an introduction to the variety of eclectic merchandise within the store.

All photos by Christine Bates.



Top and below: There's something for everyone at Wish House, from toys, clothing, and books for young children to Liberty fabric bathrobes.

Above: Wish House on the main street of West Cornwall welcomes visitors to Cornwall.

All photos by Christine Bates.

And I'll leave the high-end and vintage to other people. Here everything is colorful, and nothing is a necessity.

How do you find products?

You always have to look for new suppliers as divorce, death, and misfortune eliminate ones you may have worked with for years. In the old days everyone went to the Gift Show at the Javits Center in New York City. It was expensive for vendors, with union rules that stifled creativity. Then a new, curated show, Shoppe Object, arrived with merchandise from all over the world. They have two shows a year in the Starrett-Lehigh building downtown.

Many vendors now use the wholesale Faire internet platform. They have products from everywhere, and minimum orders can be small. It's easy to shop on your laptop.

What are some of your favorite lines?

I always try to source products locally. Roland Pine from the Hudson Valley makes pine-scented candles and fragrances. Elizabeth Grubaugh, also from the Hudson Valley, designs

distinctive paper products. Clothing is an important part of our business, maybe 25%. I love the classic style of Porto from Italy and Compania Fantastica from Spain. I've brought scarves back from Germany in my suitcase that are unlike anything you can find here. What I don't have is handmade pottery because we have great local potters here and antiques because I lack the expertise required.

Who are your customers?

They are local and from far away. Edgy hipsters and the women from the firemen's auxiliary. Younger weekend families from the city. People come in to look, and sometimes they buy. Our children's section of clothing, games, and books attracts a lot of grandparents.

Does Wish House have an ecommerce site?

We tried selling on the Internet, but it lacks the context and feel of the store. We abandoned that effort. It just didn't work for us. But our website is important to update customers on what is happening here and in the Town of Cornwall.

Is Wish House profitable?

Business ebbs and flows. I don't believe it's necessary to always grow. The economy is always shifting, and we adjust. My goal is not to make as much money as possible but to continue to be a part of this community.

How has West Cornwall changed in the thirty years you've been here?

West Cornwall had a grocery store until 2007 and multiple restaurants and even night life. It used to be more lively.

You have the reputation as a community catalyst. What is your contribution?

I started the Farmer's Market at the side of the store, which became hugely

popular. It even inspired a second Farm Market. Our Saturday market is a gathering point with amazing music and local food. Community is really important to me, and I'm very involved in supporting it. I'm on the Town of Cornwall Economic Development Commission, which works on attracting small business to the town. Young people are coming here pursuing dreams like The Local, a market collective for farmers and artists, and Tommy Eucalitto's Coltsfoot Farm, which makes award-winning cheese. I contribute a percentage of sales to The Little Guild animal shelter and offer discounts to our amazing fire department. Souterrain downstairs is a kind of cultural center.

What is Souterrain?

Souterrain is the gallery on the ground floor of Wish House. It features artwork by local artists. It has been getting a fresh coat of paint and reopened on September 26 with photos by Kathy Bozzuti-Jones. The gallery always participates in the Cornwall Open Studio tour in September with a pop-out show of local artists. Souterrain has its own website at souterraingallery.net with links to the artists that have exhibited here. ●

To learn more about Bianka Langner Griggs and The Wish House visit them at 413 Sharon-Goshen Turnpike in West Cornwall, CT. You can also visit them online at wish-house.com or call (860) 672-2969. You can also find them on Facebook.



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Applesauce

RAISIN CAKE

By Olivia Valentine with
Caroline Markonic
info@mainstreetmag.com

Yes, we are still in cake mode. I mentioned last month that we were going to tweak this cake recipe, and we did. After a few changes, we think it is finally a winner and worth sharing. Three attempts in all. You know what they say, “the third time is the charm!”

We couldn't get the frosting out of our minds because it pairs so beautifully with the applesauce cake. On our first attempt we all commented on how awesome the frosting was and how, even though the cake was over-baked and not quite hitting all the notes, the combination still worked really well. The warm spices, the sweetness from the applesauce, and the creaminess of the frosting make this cake taste and smell like the most perfect fall day.

Toasting the walnuts also takes this cake over the top. They add a nice depth of flavor and a little crunch that really makes a difference. But, speaking from experience, I have forgotten the walnuts on the stove more than once and burned them. So, keep a watchful eye on them! They toast quickly, and nuts are way too expensive to waste.

Applesauce raisin cake ingredients

½ cup unsalted butter, softened
½ cup vegetable oil
1 cup light brown sugar, packed

2 large eggs, room temperature
1 teaspoon vanilla
1½ cups unsweetened applesauce
2 cups cake flour
1 teaspoon baking soda
1 teaspoon baking powder
½ teaspoon salt
1½ teaspoons ground cinnamon
½ teaspoon ground nutmeg
¼ teaspoon ground cloves
½ cup chopped walnuts, toasted
1 cup raisins

Directions

Preheat the oven to 350°F. Grease an 8"x8" metal baking pan, or line it with parchment paper for easy removal.

Toast chopped walnuts for a few minutes to bring out flavor. Pour very hot water over the raisins and soak for at least 10 minutes while working on the batter.

In a large mixing bowl, beat together the softened butter, vegetable oil, and brown sugar until smooth and well combined. Add the eggs, one at a time, beating well after each addition. Mix in the applesauce and vanilla until fully incorporated.

In a separate bowl, whisk together the cake flour, baking soda, baking powder, salt, cinnamon, nutmeg, and cloves.

Gradually add the dry ingredients to the wet ingredients, mixing just until no streaks of flour remain. Do not overmix.



Drain the raisins well and fold them in with the chopped walnuts until evenly distributed.

Spread the batter evenly into the prepared pan and bake for 30-40 minutes, or until a toothpick inserted into the center comes out clean or with just a few moist crumbs.

Allow the cake to cool completely before frosting.

Brown butter-cream cheese frosting ingredients

½ cup unsalted butter
8 ounces full-fat cream cheese, softened
3 cups powdered sugar
½ teaspoon cinnamon
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
Pinch of salt

Directions

Place the butter in a medium saucepan over medium heat. Once melted, continue cooking, stirring constantly and scraping the bottom of the pan. The butter will begin to foam, then the milk solids will turn golden brown and develop a rich, nutty aroma.

Immediately pour the browned

butter into a heatproof bowl, making sure to scrape in all of the flavorful browned bits. Let it cool until it returns to a soft, spreadable consistency. It should not be warm or liquid, but it also shouldn't be cold and firm.

In a large bowl, beat together the browned butter and softened cream cheese until smooth and creamy.

Gradually add the powdered sugar, then the vanilla extract and a pinch of salt. Beat until light and fluffy.

Spread generously over the cooled cake.

As always, enjoy! ●

Olivia and Caroline are enthusiastic foodies and bakers who are constantly in the kitchen, as well as explorers who create their own adventures in our area – and did we mention they are mother and daughter? Follow Olivia on Instagram to see her many creations at @oliviaavvalentine.



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Real Estate Artificial Intelligence

HOW AI CAN HELP YOU BUY, SELL, OR RENOVATE YOUR HOUSE

By Christine Bates
info@mainstreetmag.com

For decades, buying, selling, building, or renovating a home has been an emotional endeavor, a leap of faith. It is a process historically governed by gut feelings, weekend open houses, Zillow surfing, estimates from contractors, advice from architects, and the opinions of estate agents.

In the complex housing landscape of 2026, the traditional process of real estate transaction is undergoing a profound and irreversible transformation. Artificial intelligence has moved out of the realm of experimental tech to fundamentally change how properties are valued, marketed, and purchased. From predictive pricing models to virtual renovation tools, AI is quietly dismantling the old way of doing business, turning significant financial decisions into a data-driven science.

The end of the gut-feeling valuation

Historically, pricing a home relied heavily on a real estate agent's local knowledge and a retrospective look at comparable sales available on MLS databases, the "comps". It was as much an art as it was a science, subject to human bias and the changing twists of the market, especially in rural and second-home markets. Today, that subjective guesswork is being rapidly replaced by precision mathematics. Automated valuation models, or AVMs, have evolved dramatically. They no longer just pull public tax records and square footage; they now synthesize millions of data points in real time.

Modern AI systems evaluate macroeconomic trends, neighborhood development plans, school district micro-shifts, and even the future impact of pending infrastructure projects. Perhaps most impressively, AI now utilizes advanced computer vision to analyze listing photos. Instead of simply noting the presence of a kitchen, algorithms can instantly recognize premium features like quartz countertops, hardwood floors, or high-end fixtures, while simultaneously detecting subtle signs of structural neglect like water stains or outdated electrical panels. This level of visual analysis has brought the margin of error for automated property valuations down to roughly three percent, a stark improvement over the five to fifteen percent variance traditionally seen with appraisals. For sellers, this means hitting the sweet spot of competitive yet profitable pricing from day one. For buyers, it provides an objective shield against overpaying in a volatile market.

The buyer's new digital confidant

For today's house hunter, the search no longer begins by calling an agent or driving around desired neighborhoods looking for "FOR SALE" signs. It begins with a prompt. A staggering 82% of Americans now use AI for housing market information, and over half of all buyers use AI specifically to search for homes and estimate their financial obligations. Platforms powered by advanced large language models, like ChatGPT and Gemini, have become the new digital confidants for prospective homeowners.

Buyers are increasingly utilizing these tools to validate information, decode dense real estate jargon, and perform complex financial scenario planning before ever reaching out to



a human professional. They treat conversational AI as a safe, judgment-free zone to ask basic questions. "What exactly is escrow?" or "How does a buydown work?" AI is also fundamentally changing how properties are discovered. Rather than checking boxes on a rigid search filter, buyers can now use natural language to describe their ideal life: "Find me a mid-century modern home within a 40-minute commute to downtown, near highly rated elementary schools, with a backyard suitable for a large dog." The AI curates a hyper-personalized list of properties that genuinely align with the buyer's lifestyle, filtering out the noise and saving countless hours of scrolling.

Augmented reality and the instant renovation

Once a buyer finds a potential match, AI completely redefines the viewing experience. Empty rooms or outdated decor have long been the death knell for otherwise promising listings, as

Side by side of photos of what the façade of this Millerton, NY home looks like (top), and what Gemini imagined with a new façade (above).

Continued on next page ..

many buyers struggle to visualize a property's true potential. In 2026, AI-driven platforms like Maket and various augmented reality tools are eliminating that imagination gap.

With a few taps on a tablet or a quick session in a VR headset, a prospective buyer standing in a cramped, dark living room can watch the space transform. AI instantly generates photorealistic renderings of what the room would look like with the dividing wall knocked down, a fresh coat of neutral paint replacing blue walls, and modern Scandinavian furniture. It can calculate the estimated cost of these renovations on the spot, pulling from local labor and material rates. This immediate, visual gratification is a powerful psychological tool. It accelerates the emotional connection between a buyer and a property, effectively turning a “fixer-upper” into a customized dream home before an offer is even drafted.

However, this visual wizardry comes with its own set of ethical pitfalls. The ease with which images can be manipulated has led to a rise in highly deceptive listing photos. It is increasingly common to see AI-altered “twilight” photos, where an otherwise gloomy exterior is digitally painted with a breathtaking sunset or power lines and neighborhood blemishes are seamlessly erased. As AI blurs the line between reality and digital enhancement, buyers are finding that physical due diligence is more critical than ever.

The seller's strategic advantage and the automation debate

For sellers and their agents, AI is acting as a hyper-efficient back-office

powerhouse. Predictive analytics are deployed to identify potential buyers before they even know they are ready to move. By analyzing vast oceans of data – search history, online engagement, and behavioral patterns – AI can pinpoint individuals who are actively looking for specific property types, allowing for laser-targeted marketing campaigns that drastically reduce wasted advertising spending.

Furthermore, early deployments of AI in real estate operations have shown massive efficiency gains. Chatbots and automated systems are handling tenant requests, scheduling showings, and responding to leads in a matter of seconds, leading to exponentially higher conversion rates for leasing and sales.

This automation has inevitably sparked a fierce debate about the future role of the real estate agent. On digital forums and social media, stories periodically surface of sellers bypassing the traditional commission structure entirely, and utilizing AI to draft listings, manage showings, and even negotiate contracts. (For example, read *The New York Times*' technology journalist Stuart Thompson's article on selling his Hudson Valley house for \$643,000 using Gemini instead of a real estate agent.) Tech-savvy younger generations, comfortable with AI and highly skeptical of traditional gatekeepers, are increasingly probing the limits of how much of a transaction can be automated.

The irreplaceable human element

Yet, despite the breathtaking advancements in artificial intelligence, the consensus among industry experts and consumers remains remarkably consistent. AI is an exceptional tool for processing data, but it is profoundly incapable of experiencing the physical and emotional realities of a home.

An algorithm cannot tell you how the morning light moves through a kitchen, nor can it smell the faint, undeniable scent of a damp basement. It does not notice the awkward layout quirk that forces you to walk through



AI staging suggestions for the author's kitchen included replacing counters with white quartz, changing out island flowers, decluttering (of course!), and adding sconces, pendant lights, and a rug.

a bathroom to get to a bedroom. Real estate transactions live in the murky area of human emotion and desires and localized nuance – areas where AI currently falls apart.

This is why even as the adoption of AI skyrockets, real estate agents remain the most trusted source of housing information. The most successful transactions in 2026 are not born from algorithms working in isolation, but from the synthesis of AI precision and human empathy. The modern real estate professional is evolving into a tech-enabled advisor. They use AI to handle the heavy lifting – the valuations, the marketing, and the initial lead filtering – freeing them up to focus on the deeply human aspects of the job: managing anxiety, solving complex physical problems, and aggressively negotiating on their client's behalf.

A symbiotic future

The integration of artificial intelligence into real estate is no longer a speculative future; it is becoming the operational standard. It has raised the bar across the entire industry, creating a landscape where buyers are vastly more informed, sellers are far more strategic, and renovators understand alternatives and costs up front.

The process of buying and selling a

house will only become more streamlined and predictive. AI will continue to demystify the financial complexities of mortgages, forecast neighborhood appreciation with startling accuracy, and generate breathtaking virtual tours. But at the end of the day, a house is more than an asset class; it is the backdrop for human life. The algorithms can help us find the perfect coordinates, calculate the optimal price, and digitally furnish the living room. But crossing the threshold, turning the key, and deciding that a structure is finally a home? That will always remain a distinctly personal journey. •

Christine Bates, real estate advisor with William Pitt Sotheby's International Realty, Licensed in CT and NY. Opinions expressed are those of the author alone.



AI analyzed this photo of a cedar roof and concluded “Based on the visual evidence, this cedar shake roof is in poor, failing condition and is at or very near the end of its functional lifespan.”



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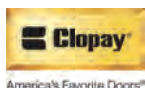
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The Haunted Fortress



Willowbrook Farm

By Barbara Peduzzi
info@mainstreetmag.com

From ghosts and ghouls galore to carved rows of corn to displays that put your porch pumpkin to shame, there are a host of places nearby to get you into Halloween mode. Several of those combine spooky seasonal traditions and the work of artists and artisans to make their places uniquely part of the season's fun and fear.

Artists make haunted houses places to scream with fright and delight

While some haunted houses rely on animatronics for their effects, we found two using artists' work and ghoulish volunteers to create 'oohs' and 'eeks'.

Peter Wing's Haunted Fortress

This haunted house, in Stanfordville, NY, may be the only one designed, built, and run for years by a noted artist. In 1996, Wing approached the town about a spot to put on a haunted event. They settled on the former highway department property along the banks of Wappingers Creek, and he went to work.

Just as for his castle, now a B&B run by his wife, Wing recycled found objects to create structures such as a church made from highway project rubble. According to Head Ghouls committee chairman Greg Arent,

"He was building it as the artist he was, using a lot of things, including materials he found dumpster diving at the transfer station." He admitted that the experience, "may leave people a little unsettled," but, he says, "it lets the mind do the scaring."

A half-mile trail starts at a junkyard and winds to a mansion, opera house, train yard, witch's tree, scarecrow path, graveyard, and village. New this year, Ye Olde Schoolhouse comes next, then the bottomless pit, cave, and finally the scientist's laboratory.

An unguided walk, for over age 18 only, goes along a swamp beside Wappinger's Creek, where, "You don't know if there's anything in the brush, and if there is you don't know where."

"It's not like the Headless Horseman," Arent explained, and it's not recommended for those under 13. "It's more of a spooky, creepy atmosphere."

Volunteers of all ages include a lot of repeat performers. "One has a Boris Karloff voice, very creepy!" Arent gleefully said, "Kids in scenes ... nothing like a bunch of kids walking around looking at your elbows. Freaks people out!"

"Jump scares" are not done, because they do not want anyone falling. Many people find the Bottomless Pit especially disturbing, as it appears to be, "way off the ground". We promised not to disclose its secret.

Two days are set aside for sensory

friendly shows, with no scary sounds, creepy actors, or strobe lights. Arent said his favorite experience with this was a group of persons with Down syndrome. He described having to hold one person's hand going across the bridge, after which they said they loved it, but "would never do it again!"

Arent closed with, "Wing wrote on a wall in the Blue Barn, 'Silence is creepy. You don't need to be loud or obnoxious to be scary.'"

Haunted Fortress runs weekends starting October 2 but won't be on the 31st, "so our young actors can trick or treat." The sensory-friendly events will be afternoons on October 2 and 18.

Residency artists create the Haunted Barn

The Haunted Barn began as the Haunted Mill, at the Wassaic Project in Wassaic, NY in 2013. The artists creating it start months ahead to make their sections.

Persons accepted for the residency program running June through September are commissioned to make Halloween-inspired installations that are family friendly and suitable for PG-13 and under. The artists get a stipend towards materials and producing their work, which can take from a week to a month to install.

Development and communications assistant Cassandra Gonzalez explained that the project tries to priori-

tize artists who are creative self-starters to make works that are inventive and show the best use of the space.

Each will have a stall in the former livestock auction's Luther Barn. Giving a preview of their works, Gonzales listed a Grimm's Fairy Tales forest, a large mock-Rorschach test, and a puppet performance exploring the theme of walking.

There is not a specific theme, she explained, "They're just walking into a gallery space, which is transformed into sight-specific installations. Those can range from really beautiful puppets to a place for kids to get candy."

"People really appreciate how family friendly it is; they call it a lot of fun," Gonzalez said, adding that they try to prioritize the local community, "The firehouse makes hot dogs for free."

"People who may not have been in the mill or barn, but remember them from the past, will be surprised at what the space has been transformed into, without changing the historical architecture or history of it," she continued, praising the co-directors, who "have done a really good job."

They're not going away soon, Gonzalez stated, since crowds get bigger and bigger. She said, "We're just grateful people show up and are excited about bringing their kids." Anyone dealing with a wheelchair should con-

Continued on next page ...

tact them to learn about accessibility. The Haunted Barn is open October 23, 24, and 25. The Monster's Ball, for adults only, will be October 21, at The Lantern in Wassaic, NY.

Get lost in a corn maze

Mazes, or labyrinths, date back to ancient Greeks, Romans, and medieval monks. In 1993, Earl Beal, inspired by his father's maze designs for Knoebel's Amusement Resort, cut the first known full-size corn maze. Guinness World Record lists the largest at 65.8 acres, made by Luc Pellitier in La Pocatiere, Quebec.

Most cover several acres, in a pattern telling a story or following a theme that can't be seen from within. Photos taken from above show people where they traced and retraced their steps while finding their way through and out of it.

Casey Swift says the corn maze at Willowbrook Farm in Millerton, NY, is hand crafted, which "makes it better than any other around here. No AI or GPS."

It all began when, "About five or six years ago owner Ken Beneke had an extra field and decided that's what he was gonna do with it."

This year's theme is America's 250th Anniversary. Swift is an art teacher and drew a design including the years and a liberty bell. "Ken drives a lawn mower amazingly," she raved, adding that he holds the drawing as he drives and mows to interpret the pattern, "He's very good at it." He then re-cuts every two to three weeks, to keep the paths neat.

Last year, trying to encourage young artists, they chose a haunted design, "One little boy designed it for us. He's coming back to see if my

design is as good as his!"

Lots of people come every year, Swift said: "They love to know in advance what it's gonna be." All ages enjoy it, kids the most, she reported, but parents do, too.

They provide a map to help guests find their way out and don't let anyone in after dark: "We haven't lost anybody yet!"

"It's just a traditional corn maze," Swift finished with. When the maze closes the 'plain old cow corn' is chopped to feed livestock through the winter.

Willowbrook Farm Corn Maze is open Labor Day through November 1.

Jack-o'-lanterns light up the season

Jack-o'-lanterns are thought to have originated in Ireland and Great Britain, to represent spirits, supernatural beings, or Christian souls in Purgatory or to ward off evil spirits. Using them for Halloween decorations in this country developed through Celtic immigrants' root vegetable carving traditions.

Hand-carved jack-o'-lanterns Blaze

Perhaps the most classic and widely read Halloween story is Washington Irving's "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow." A pumpkin plays a feature role in that, so it should come as no surprise that The Great Jack-O-Lantern Blaze® at Van Cortlandt Manor in Croton-On-Hudson, NY is a highlight of 'Sleepy Hollow Country's' attractions for the season.

A team of local artisans individually handcarve the thousands of jack-o'-lanterns that illuminate the buildings and grounds of the National His-



Photo by Joshua Simpson, courtesy of the Wassaic Project and Jeff Barnett-Winsby.

toric Landmark. Elaborate displays in a host of configurations set up by professionals create 'a sensational atmosphere filled with wonder' rather than scary scenes.

This year's trail is the longest in Blaze history. New exhibits include the Creature Feature Forest, with classic movie monsters carved from pumpkins paying tribute to the mid-1900s drive-in movie theater on the manor grounds. Classic children's stories get a whole new glow in Literary Lane, while an interactive dance party takes place on the regal manor house lawn.

The favorite for all ages runs September 18 through November 8.

Naumkeag pumpkin show is 'gently spooky'

The historic home and gardens of Naumkeag in Stockbridge, MA are part of The Trustees of Reservations. The Incredible Naumkeag Pumpkin Show started in 2019 to open the grounds between the end of summer and holiday Winterlights.

About 100 of the over 1,500 pumpkins displayed are real, hand carved by volunteers and replaced weekly. The rest, also hand carved, are of foam product Funkin. Long-time volunteers bring their own designs to life.

Pumpkin arrangements, along with miles of lights, hundreds of seasonal gourds and live mums, plus cauldrons, cobwebs, fairy houses, and volcanos fill the estate gardens. The entrance to the house is decorated as the 'Hall of Faces.' Some areas feature *Star Wars*, Disney, and other themes.

The show is rated 'gently spooky,'

but earlier hours have been added this year for younger children who might not like an after-dark experience.

Time Out New York named the show the best Halloween event in America in 2025. Pro tip from Mary Dettloff, director of public relations for The Trustees: book a ticket for just before sunset to watch the property 'glow up' as it gets dark!

Sculptures adorn unlikely scene

Where's the place you'd least expect to find unique, often one-of-a-kind sculpture pieces, without a crowd or entrance fee, and where you can linger as long as you want – or as long as you dare?

A cemetery. When would be a more perfect time to have a boo-tiful experience exploring one than this month? While the work today may be more precise, artisans of past decades and centuries created elaborate headstones and monuments rivaling sculptures in museums. Flowers, urns, scrollwork, pillars and patterns, angels and artwork adorn squared, stacked, short, and tall pieces. Flowing script writes commentary on the interred person, or poems and scriptures.

Working on another story, we found ourselves wandering through Irondale Cemetery in Millerton to enjoy many of the tombstones. Go see what you find, but you may want to leave well before dark!

These are just a few of the places to find your Halloween spirit. Check websites or Facebook pages for addresses and times, and go see what the artists have created to help get your "BOO!" on. •



Photo by Barbara Peduzzi

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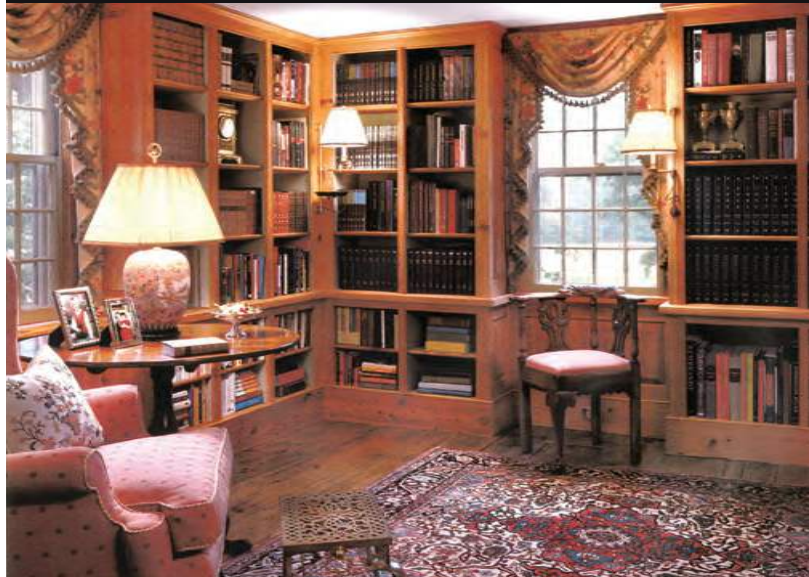
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A playground for artists

By Dominique DeVito
info@mainstreetmag.com

Remember when a playground was nothing but a world of fun ways to be? When you didn't overthink what you wanted to do first or how well it would go, you just started doing it? Swinging, climbing, digging in the sand, going up and down the sliding board? Letting the experience take you wherever you wanted to go next?

That's what Super-Stories is like.

You enter the space at 2 Chatham Street in Kinderhook for a Makers Space session and see rows of tables and chairs loaded up with paint sticks, glue, containers of scrap paper, and small buckets of brushes. Along the walls are more bins and boxes brimming with materials for artistic inspiration.

You're given a choice of black or white paper to start, and you can do with it whatever you like. Draw on it. Paint on it. Stick things to it. Write on it. Rip it. Use things that are on the table, or explore bins around the room.

It's a playground for artists.

With lots of examples of peoples' creations on the walls and on every exposed surface, the room says, "Have fun. See what happens. Safe space. Be prepared for joy."

Thank you, Grace & Ramiro

What makes Super Stories this kind of place? The artists who created it: Grace Lang and Ramiro Davaro-Comas.

Grace grew up in Bedford Hills, NY, the youngest of four children in a household where, she says, "there was always an appreciation for art." She went to Parsons School of Design in New York and made New York her home for many years, eventually working at a gallery in Brooklyn, while also working as a freelance artist and muralist.

Ramiro was born in Argentina and traveled back and forth from there to the US as he was growing up. He studied business at the University of Massachusetts in Amherst, and moved to New York in 2013. An avid skateboarder who also loved making art, he used his business skills to build an art career, gravitating toward creating art in public spaces for and by the public – murals. He founded Dripped on the Road, the first traveling muralist residency program in the US.

Grace and Ramiro met in New York through their mutual interest in art but really got to know each other when Grace joined Ramiro in some mural projects. "Before creating murals with kids, we both worked as muralists on our own, all over," Grace says. "Painting murals is a way to feel like part of a community as an artist. But when we did our first mural with kids in the Bronx," she continues, "that really inspired us to change the way we thought about making art."

From the Big City to the open country

Grace's parents moved to Kinderhook in 2009, so Grace got to know the area through frequent visits. When the opportunity to buy a house came up for Grace and Ramiro in 2017, they took it. They were weekenders until 2020, when, like many others, COVID moved them to Kinderhook full-time.

"I realized that artists end up in this area because it offers space," Grace says. "Space to breathe, space to create big if you want to."

Grace took an online masters program in educational psychology at St. Rose in Albany, further solidifying her interest in art education for children. She spent a lot of time getting creative with her young niece and nephew during COVID. She worked in the education department at Art Omi in Ghent, and she and Ramiro continued to create murals.



As the work with murals continued, they realized that they didn't want to just put their own ideas up on walls. "Creating a mural is a way for everyone from a particular community to be involved," Grace says. "At a school, for example, it means asking the students what they want to have represented, designing the mural together, and then creating it. It's quite the collaborative process."

Creating with and for kids

Through their projects, they realized the area was hungry for programming for kids. In 2022, they launched Super-Stories. In 2023, they bought the building at 2 Chatham Street in Kinderhook that was the former Rock

Continued on next page ...

Above: Ramiro, Otis, and Grace with her piece, 'Big Fun' at Super-Stories on 2 Kinderhook Street.

Next page: Artistic expression abounds in murals and other kids' creations prompted by Grace and Ramiro.

Photos courtesy of Super-Stories.



Shop. It is now the arts education space.

“We named the business out of our ideas to do collaborative projects, not necessarily art-based but intended to help people tell their stories,” Grace says. Here’s their vision statement: “Super-Stories is committed to providing both free and paid art-making opportunities in our Makers Space and through off-site programming. We trust the power of public art to communicate with broad audiences and feel these large-scale artworks are most compelling when they center the voices of students. Our mural collaborations and other hands-on art workshops offer young people the chance to build confidence, focus, and critical thinking skills. The spaces in which we teach will always be safe, accepting, and socially inclusive. We believe in the ripple effect of sharing knowledge: If you know something, teach it!”

I visited the Makers Space on a summer Saturday. Summer maker hours go from 10am to noon. The space was full soon after the doors opened. Many of the visitors were repeat attendees – adults and their kids, ranging in age from toddlers to

teens. It was clear this was something they looked forward to, with kids getting into seats and getting started right away, a parent or two along with them. Grace was up front to welcome them and get them started. Ramiro arrived later with their son, Otis, who is three.

“Our goal,” Ramiro says, “is to make sure art is accessible to anyone of any skill. People can come in here and do their thing,” he continues. Beyond the creative time in the space, Super-Stories is making waves in the community. They partner with local schools so that students can get community service credit for hours volunteering at the space. Ramiro continues to make murals; he’s booked into July of 2027!

Super busy

Super-Stories promotes their fun, creative programs for the fall through their website calendar and monthly newsletter. They offer an Adult Art Club on one Thursday night a month, from 6 to 8pm. There’s a monthly Fiber Arts Meet-Up called the OK Knitters. There are one-off creative gatherings, such as Painted Stains, a “clothing-transformation workshop” held on a Sunday afternoon in September, or the Metal in Motion workshop with local artist Amelia

Toelke, where attendees will be able to get creative with all kinds of wire and other pieces of metal. They typically offer two free weekend workshops each month!

Super-Stories is launching an After School Art Club on Wednesdays starting in early October for children age six and older. A seven-week-long class called Mixed Media Makers will be held on Thursdays from 3:30-5pm. When I asked Grace about their plans for Super-Stories, she said, “We’re not looking for a bigger space, but we’d like to increase the programming, especially for after school and school breaks.” She adds, “We know adults are energized in this space, too, so we want to offer something for them. And we like it when local teaching artists lead workshops here.”

Ramiro calculates he has collaborated with about 10,000 kids with the mural projects to date – and he’s still going strong. Grace is curating the increased programming at the space. Both of them are practicing artists themselves, as well as raising a son and expecting another child. They’re busy applying for grants to keep their non-profit going (they accept donations!). How do they manage?

Their enthusiasm and energy are testaments to the infectious joy that comes from being creative, especially in community. “It’s a special thing,” Ramiro says, “for kids to be allowed to play and experiment with no expecta-

tions, where they’re not interacting with a digital device.” Grace adds, “We love getting to know people here through making art alongside them, and then seeing them out in our community.” They also love Columbia County. “Art Omi through the seasons,” Grace says, “and taking walks at Ooms.” They appreciate the strong arts scene here, and that if they need “a big dose of art,” they can easily get into New York City.

Super talented

Theirs is a super story, and if you are looking to let your creative side stretch and play, join them. Their website is full of information, including lots of photos of the murals they’ve collaborated on, what kids have created in the Makers Space, other projects they’ve been involved in, and of course, a monthly calendar of programming. It’s super-stories.org. You can – and should – also follow them on Instagram, [@_superstories_](https://www.instagram.com/_superstories_), where you’ll also find links to their individual IG pages. There’s also a wonderful YouTube video interview with them done for the PBS series “A House of Arts.” Find it at [youtube.com/watch?v=AALtKvIPE0w](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AALtKvIPE0w). •

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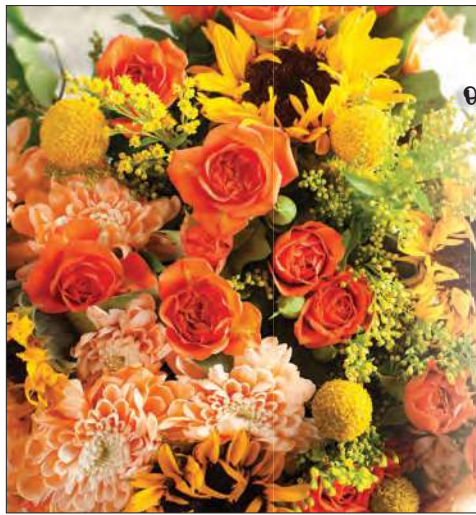
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THE HEADLESS HORSEMAN

Halloween is the second most celebrated event of the year. Here is one reason why.

From the witches, ghosts, and mummy costumes of yesteryear to the wildly popular demon hunters and *Wicked*-inspired costumes of last year, Halloween invites us to dress up and make believe. It's all about transforming ourselves into someone else. We're only limited by our imaginations.

By Regina Molaro
info@mainstreetmag.com

What one dinner led to

Michael Jubie, co-founder of Headless Horseman Hayrides and Haunted Attractions in Ulster Park, NY, a true Halloween destination, certainly knows a thing or two about the art of disguise. A retired detective, he worked as a mounted patrol commander for the Kingston, NY police department for 25 years. A self-described "Halloween enthusiast," he found a perfect match in his wife, Nancy, a registered nurse who also has a passion for the macabre and horses.

"I always loved Halloween. When I was a detective, I did a lot of disguise work. Some people shy away and don't want to put on fake eyebrows and moustaches, but to me, it was part of doing a good job for the police department," said Michael.

Prior to launching Headless Horseman Hayrides and Haunted Attractions 35 years ago, Michael and Nancy ran a horse and carriage business for weddings, funerals, parties, and other occasions.

"We were out to dinner one night with friends. The topic evolved from horse-drawn carriages to Halloween hayrides. The longer the dinner went on, the better the idea sounded," said Michael. Soon after, he called a college friend who worked as a realtor and discovered that there was a 65-acre plot of land available in Ulster Park.

The evolution

What began nearly four decades ago with one hayride attraction and 35 employees has evolved into an experience that includes 13 attractions and employs nearly 300 people. The list of jobs on the payroll ranges from actors and makeup artists to carpenters and landscapers. Staff work year-round to create the haunted event.

The Headless Horseman's annual award-winning haunted event draws scare enthusiasts from all over the Hudson Valley as well as five surrounding states and beyond. Its reach has even managed to cross oceans. "We just sold tickets in the UK and the Netherlands," said Michael.

Making headlines

The destination has received lots of accolades. *America Haunts* has named Headless Horseman Hayrides and Haunted Attractions one of the Best Haunted Houses in America. The Halloween destination has been featured on *Good Morning America*, *TIME*, and *The Today Show*.

CNBC included the Hudson Valley locale on its short list of the seven scariest haunted houses in America. The Headless Horseman was also spotlighted on *Nightline*, *The Travel Channel*, and *CBS Evening News*, among other media outlets.

The event is a *Hudson Valley Magazine* Best of Hudson Valley winner and was awarded a Tripadvisor Travelers' Choice Award.

"I received a call from the Dutchess County Chamber of Commerce. They told me that a Chinese travel channel wanted to do a story on us. Although it was difficult navigating the time differences and language, it was a great experience," said Michael.

Continued on next page ...



All photos depicted in this article are courtesy of Headless Horseman Hayrides and Haunted Attractions.

And the theme is...

This year's theme: The Cursed Earth of Crow Hollow.

The 2026 season kicked off on September 26 and concludes on Halloween night.

Every year, the theatrical Halloween production comes alive via elaborate costumes, professional makeup artists, engaging animations, intriguing illusions, and special effects, many created by American Made Monster Studios, which is Headless Horseman's sister company.

"Many people from other haunted attractions tell us that they really enjoy seeing the monsters that nobody else has ever seen," said Michael.

Reviews range from, "This is by far the best and most intense experience we have had. Next year we will plan an entire weekend around it" to "The best haunted attraction I've ever been to! The sets and animatronics were incredible, and the live actors did a great job."

The Halloween journey begins on a haunted hayride that takes guests through 13 sets that span a one-mile course. "It's like a traveling play. When you go to a Broadway show, the play unfolds in front of you. Here, you sit on a wagon, which takes you to 13 Hollywood quality sets and actors," said Michael.

The Headless Horseman is the star of the show, along with a live black horse who charges the wagon. The grounds include Crow Hollow Village, walking trails, a two-acre corn maze, themed haunted houses, and magic show, as well as fire features and other illusions.

The highly detailed, story-driven scenarios for 2026 include The Cursed Earth of Crow Hollow, Crow Hollow Candy Company, Skinner Motel, The Feeding, Mother's Manor and more. Find out more about Headless Horseman Hayrides and Haunted Attractions at headlesshorseman.com.

Be forewarned

Due to the fright factor, this event is not recommended for children under the age of 13. One ticket – 13 attractions. For ticket price information please see headlesshorseman.com/tickets.

Group discounts are only available for groups of 15 or more guests under one reservation on October 2, 9, 16, 18, and 30. Email info@headlesshorseman.com for information.

The beautiful setting includes The Horseman's Tavern, which sells food as well as beer and wine. A donut shop, Deadly Donuts starts with 1,000 apple cider donuts ready to be enjoyed. There are several gift and food shops on the grounds, including The Chocolate Lab, Magic Moon Gift Shop, and Scare Wear, which sells t-shirts, sweatshirts, and hats.

For children under 12 years old

Children's Day – A Tiny Taste of Terror takes place on October 3 and October 17 (October 4 and 18 are rain dates). All the monsters are friendly on Children's Day. There is the Magic Moon Maze, Haunted Gardens, Witch Hazel's Halloween House, and The Dino Zone. Meet friendly characters such as Frankenstein and The Headless Horseman and his live horse. Music and other activities complete Children's Day.

For Children's Day price information, please see headlesshorseman.com/tickets.

Winter Holiday Event – It's more than lights

At the end of fright season, all 65 acres transform from scary to merry creating the holiday event, A Frosty Fest. Enjoy the drive-thru experience in the comfort of your own vehicle. Park and walk inside and meet Mr. & Mrs. Frosty, dance with the Gingerbread Man, and see other holiday characters. Frosty Fest is decorated with over one million holiday lights.

Then there's the Haunted Holiday Event. To bring you back to scary, they have a one-night haunted holiday event, Frostbite. •

Headless Horseman Hayrides and Haunted Attractions is located at 778 Broadway, Route 9W in Ulster Park, NY. Call (845) 339-2666, or for more information, email info@headlesshorseman.com or visit headlesshorseman.com.



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Anthony van Dyck, *Portrait of Margaret Lemon* (detail), c. 1638,
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It's breast cancer awareness month

Think pink

By Regina Molaro
info@mainstreetmag.com

October marks Breast Cancer Awareness Month, which has a goal to educate the public on risk factors, promote early detection through regular screenings, and raise funds for research. Its symbol, the pink ribbon, will pop up everywhere this month – from New York's Empire State Building to beauty and cosmetic brands, from national retail chains and e-commerce sites to professional sports organizations, including the NFL, NBA, and beyond. Of course, the ribbon will also appear at health-care locations from coast to coast.

This month, there are plenty of opportunities to join the pink-ribbon movement to raise funds, support those affected by breast cancer, and help ensure more individuals have access to the support and resources they need.

Many groups including the National Breast Cancer Foundation and Susan G. Komen have coordinated resources and local community events as well. Look for some in your region by visiting nationalbreastcancer.org and komen.org, respectively. None in your area? There are also virtual events.

Looking to host your own awareness event this October? Become an NBCF Community Ambassador to access free training, resources, and educational materials to help support breast health in your local community. For more, visit nationalbreastcancer.org.

Mammos are key

Those at average risk for breast cancer should have a mammogram every year starting at age 40. A mammogram is a low-dose X-ray picture of the breast used to detect early signs of breast cancer. A screening mammogram

is a routine test for people with no breast symptoms to find cancer early before it can be felt, while a diagnostic mammogram is a detailed test used to check a new lump, or when there's pain, nipple discharge, or an unusual spot found on a screening test.

Every year, women across America go for their mammogram exams. Often considered one of the most stressful healthcare visits of routine care, many women dread going.

Beyond the fear of diagnosis, many women say they experience physical pain and discomfort as well as a surge of anxiety while awaiting the results. False positives (when a test incorrectly indicates the presence of disease that a patient does not have) from previous visits or past visits that induced pain only fuel the fear and anxiety.

The stats

According to BreastCancer.org, approximately 13% of women in the US will develop invasive breast cancer at some point in their lifetime. That also means that about 87% of women will never have breast cancer. A person's risk changes based on age, family history, genetics, and lifestyle choices.

According to the American Cancer Society, breast cancer is the most common cancer in women in the US besides skin cancers. It accounts for about 1 in 3 new cancers in women each year.

While advances in screening and treatment have reduced the overall risk of death from the disease, unfortunately the number of people diagnosed with breast cancer continues to

Continued on next page ...

rise. One report, published in *CA: A Cancer Journal for Clinicians*, revealed that breast cancer incidence increased by 1% per year between 2012 and 2021. According to BreastCancer.org, that uptick is largely driven by diagnoses of localized-stage and hormone receptor-positive disease.

The highest increases were in women younger than 50 years old (1.4% per year) and Hispanic (1.6% per year) or Asian American and Pacific Islander (2.6% per year) women. Researchers believe that some of the rising cases may be due to people getting less physical activity, drinking alcohol, and having fewer kids.

BreastCancer.org states that this year, approximately 321,910 women will be diagnosed with invasive breast cancer and 60,730 women will be diagnosed with ductal carcinoma in situ (DCIS), which is non-invasive (does not spread). It's important to note that about 66% of breast cancer cases are diagnosed at a localized stage – before the cancer has spread outside of the breast – when treatments tend to work better.

Some more numbers: The median age at the time of diagnosis is 62, meaning half of women diagnosed with breast cancer are younger than 62 and half are older. While historically breast cancer diagnoses have been relatively rare in younger women, cases have been rising in recent years. In 2024, researchers estimated that 16% of women with breast cancer were younger than 50 years of age. This year, about 42,140 women will die from the disease.

Risk factors

According to Susan G. Komen, the two most common risk factors are being born female and getting older. A woman's risk of breast cancer nearly doubles if she has a first-degree relative (a mother, sister, or daughter)

who has been diagnosed. Approximately 15% of women who get breast cancer have a family member diagnosed with it.

Genetics also play a role. About 5% to 10% of breast cancers can be linked to known gene mutations inherited from one's mother or father. Mutations in the BRCA1 and BRCA2 genes are the most common.

On average, women with a BRCA1 mutation have up to a 72% lifetime risk of developing breast cancer. Women with a BRCA2 mutation have up to a 69% risk. Breast cancer that is positive for the BRCA1 or BRCA2 mutations tends to develop more often in younger women.

About 85% of breast cancers occur in women who have no family history of breast cancer. These occur due to genetic mutations that happen during the aging process and life in general, rather than inherited mutations.

Let's talk about men

Though rare – the average lifetime risk of a man getting breast cancer is less than 1% – breast cancer can occur in men. In 2026, researchers estimate about 2,670 new cases of invasive breast cancer will be diagnosed in men, and about 530 men will die from the disease. Black men have the highest incidence of male breast cancer and death. In men, BRCA2 mutations are associated with a lifetime breast cancer risk of about 6.8%; BRCA1 mutations are a less frequent cause.

Prevention

While about 5-10 percent of breast cancer cases in the US are related to an inherited gene mutation, most cases are linked to other factors – including lifestyle. Susan G. Komen suggests a few ways to incorporate healthy habits, which could also lower your risk. Here are some tips.

Keep trim: Being overweight or obese after menopause can increase a woman's breast cancer risk by 30-60 percent. That's because fat cells make

estrogen after menopause, and higher levels of estrogen are associated with a higher risk of breast cancer after menopause.

Work out: Women who get regular physical activity have about a 10-20 percent lower risk of breast cancer than women who don't. Fortunately, you don't need an intense exercise routine to get the benefits. Activity equal to walking 30 minutes a day may lower your risk.

Cut alcohol intake: One study found that women who had 2-3 alcoholic drinks per day had a 20 percent higher risk of breast cancer than women who didn't drink. Women are advised to limit alcohol intake to less than one drink a day and men to less than two drinks a day.

Eat fruit and veggies: Studies show eating fruit and veggies may slightly decrease the risk of some breast cancers. Eat produce high in carotenoids, the natural orange-red food pigments found in melons, carrots, sweet potatoes, and squash. Studies show women with high blood levels of carotenoids have a decreased risk of breast cancer. In general, fruits and vegetables are the best sources of carotenoids (rather than supplements) as supplements may have some health risks.

Limit saturated fat and trans fat: The types of fat we eat may play a role in breast cancer risk. A study of nearly 320,000 European women pointed to a slight correlation between breast cancer incidence and a high intake of saturated fat, which is abundant in foods such as red meat and full-fat dairy. Trans fats, frequently found in baked snacks and other processed foods, may also raise breast cancer risk. While dietary fats undergo further study, consider opting for the healthy unsaturated fat found in food such as nuts, seeds, olive and canola oils, avocados, and fatty fish.

Be smoke-free: Tobacco smoke has at least 250 harmful chemicals, at least 69 of which have been shown to cause cancer. There's growing evidence that smoking may slightly increase breast cancer risk. If you smoke, there are health benefits to quitting at any age. Stopping, or not starting, is one of the best things you can do.

Breastfeed if you can: Breastfeeding has many positive benefits for women throughout their lives. In addition to reducing the risk of breast cancer, especially in premenopausal women, studies show it lowers the risk of Type 2 diabetes and ovarian cancer.

Finally, limit the hormones: Menopausal hormone therapy is approved for short-term relief of menopausal symptoms. Women who take estrogen plus progestin to relieve these symptoms increase their risk. Fortunately, when they stop MHT, their risk declines, returning to normal levels within 5-10 years. If you are considering MHT, talk with your doctor about the risks and benefits.

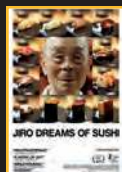
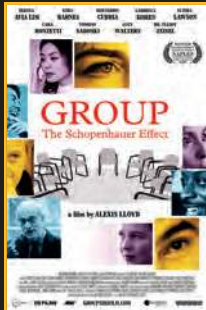
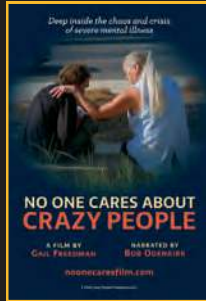
Destress before the test

Fortunately, there are ways to make the mammogram experience less stressful. First, ask a trusted person to go with you for emotional support in the waiting room. Some friends book their appointments together, so they have a buddy with them in the waiting room and on the commute to and from the appointment. Wear a separate top and bottom so you only need to remove your shirt, and remember not to wear deodorant, lotion, or powder, as these can show up on the X-ray.

While at the appointment, tell the staff if you feel nervous so they can walk you through each step gently. Breathe deeply. Focus on slow inhales and longer exhales to release tension in your shoulders. And remember the actual scan takes only 10 to 15 minutes. Attach a fun reward to your mammogram routine – go shopping; indulge in your favorite costly coffee; or schedule a post-test manicure and pedicure, massage, or chill yoga class. Finally, try to view mammograms as part of your regular health routine. ●



OCTOBER EVENTS

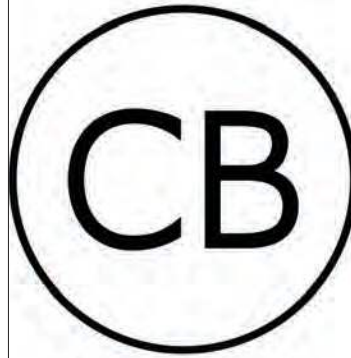


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Trading cards

By Jesse DeGroodt
info@mainstreetmag.com

“Daddddd, can we go to the mall???” It’s son number two, beseeching me to convey him and his older brother to the mall 30 miles from where I’ve horizontally parked myself on the chesterfield after a day of assiduously applying my nose to the grindstone. “Jimmy’s mom says new cards are in!”

New cards. In this case, we’re talking Pokémon cards, which I’ll admit to not understanding at all, but I sure do get the idea behind collecting cards. Do I want to roust myself and do this? Why not? Besides, it’s always good to keep in mind that these two young people who claim to be my children, with the four beady eyes focused squarely upon me, will (well, let’s hope it doesn’t come to this) one day choose my nursing home. Into the family jalopy and off we head to the mall, where one of the boys’ friend’s moms manages a shop that purveys, among 40,000 other trinkets and gee-gaws, Pokémon cards, and who’s happy as a clam to alert us to the latest shipment of the things.

The desired outcome of this excursion would be a Charizard ... or a Blastoise, a Venusaur, a Snorlax, or, of course, a Pikachu. Even a relative

doofus such as the dad of these highly motivated, obsessed young banshees collectors knew enough to hope for a Pikachu.

Growing a collection

Although my personal experience with the true collecting of cards wound down the deeper into my teens I advanced, which I suspect is the way it works with most, there were years when my dad was wont to say that I spent so much time with my baseball cards that I knew what each player had for breakfast that day. In my early days of collecting, he was my conduit to making the collection grow, as I relied on him to fetch on home a pack or two of my heroes, accompanied by the requisite stick of gum roughly the same consistency as our kitchen’s linoleum floor. You would hope against hope that the “gum” hadn’t gone rogue and essentially destroyed the one card against which it had spent its time imprisoned in its waxy jail.

One episode stands out in a big way inside my cranium decades later. I was around the age of eight. My dad, not a penurious man but certainly no spendthrift, and I were in the local “convenience” store before there ever was such a thing. On the counter adjacent to the register sat a display of

that year’s baseball cards, with maybe six or seven packs remaining. You may be able to discern how shocked I was that he bought them all by the very fact that I recall this in stark relief: there’s my dad, the store proprietor, and yours truly with his eyes no doubt out on springs, salivating over these things in the store, and then the white Olds Cutlass we climbed into to return home as I clutched the packs in my grubby little mitts, deferring the gratification of opening them until we arrived home.

How “value” grew over time

I was particularly rabid about baseball cards, with some football and basketball thrown in, but it was not difficult to make the leap to getting my head around the Pokémon attraction. We won’t talk about the stack of Beatles cards that somehow drifted away, likely because in those days the band was part of the landscape and failed to engender the sort of unbridled rapture they would if that stack suddenly rematerialized in my presence. I can’t imagine what their value might be today, although I’ll bet eBay could tell me, were I to hazard a look.

But the “value” was never in their monetary value, not in the Beatles cards or any of the others. Not at the

time. And who knew, at the time, that a card in pristine condition, the art absolutely centered, ungoobered-up in any way, was what you wanted, anything else being considered flawed goods in one respect or another and therefore caused the card to lose some of its “value?” For sure, no one knew that having grown up in the era when a card might just as well wind up serving as a noise-making device in the spokes of your bicycle wheels as playing a part in your retirement plan.

Toucstones of the collection

“What have we come to?” I asked myself the day I decided to remove my very much diminished – in terms of raw numbers – collection of cards, from the premises. It’s bizarre to me why I’d felt compelled to place certain prized baseball cards in my safe deposit box. Yet here we have landed, in this overwrought collectors’ environment that probably deserves its own listing on the New York Stock Exchange.

Certain cards have become touchstones over the course of my life. We can start with the most perfectest, bestest, sweetest cards ever: The Johnny Bench and the Tom Seaver from

Continued on next page ...



the 1970 Topps set, the set that was the apex of my collecting existence. Instant classics, as they say. It didn't hurt, of course, that the set memorialized the 1969 World Champion New York Mets for all eternity.

A new card standard

The 1971 Topps cards set a new standard in my world with the use of action photos. The 1971 Bud Harrelson depicts a mélange of baseball activity: There's Harrelson, of course, tagging out what appears to be a sliding Joe Morgan at second, with pitcher Nolan Ryan signaling his approval of the play, second baseman Ken Boswell backing it up, and the ump, dressed like an 1870s businessman, in perfect position to make the call. It's a beauty. Hardly important that you wouldn't be able to identify Harrelson on the street using advanced facial recognition techniques based on the photograph on that card.

The '71 Topps cards were simply gorgeous, if you ask me, and what made them so was the deep black border, the same thing that made it tough to maintain a pristine set, as it was susceptible to any random fingernail or passing zephyr that might cause a scratch. Somehow, I managed to keep that set reasonably intact, and thankfully so. The set came in handy when I tried my hand at selling insurance, which by itself had to be close to the dumbest idea I've ever concocted,

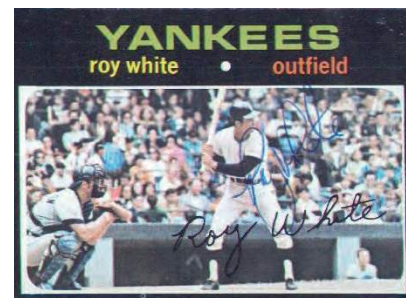
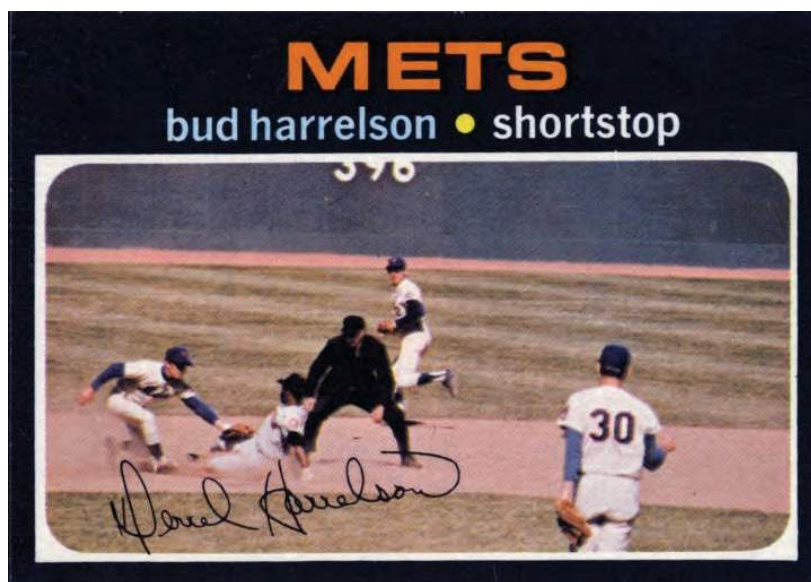
and there've been some real doozies. In order to cover things like diapers and whatnot, I sold the set for \$600. Nowadays, says the dimwitted AI thing that pops up in the web browser search, a complete set in good shape apparently can go for between \$20 and \$26,000. Nearly unlimited diapers!

Might I add that it didn't hurt that my mom, who of course was the best mom ever anywhere, was a true princess: She was the mom that didn't chuck out my cards, as was the fate of so many a collection. Yay, mom!

Local connections and favorites

A personal favorite in the card collecting world is of a minor leaguer who never quite reached the majors. Wasn't I surprised a few years back to discover the card of Ghent native Dan Prior, who threw so hard his pitches sounded like an agitated hive of bees going by, for sale online. We played a bunch of sandlot ball together, as well as on my first Little League All-Star team — it sure was handy to have him on the mound for that operation, particularly for me as third baseman. That card was clearly safer in my hands than in that of the sales agent.

In my time of serious collecting, autographs on a card were deemed verboten, totally taboo, viewed as having spent time in a leper colony. Something has changed. It appears an entire industry has grown up around



autographed cards. Well, whaddya know? With estimates of upwards of 11 million folks now collecting autographs on cards, apparently, I made the right mistake way back when I set about doing just that for a couple years, before college and life and all that foolishness encroached on my hobby.

To autograph or to not?

Then there's regular ol' autograph collecting on anything one happens to have in their midst. While my first baseball hero was a Mets pitcher by the name of Dennis Ribant, who put up a decent year on Willets Point before being traded away following that '66 season, next year who would appear but Tom Seaver, to whom my allegiance would almost immediately transfer.

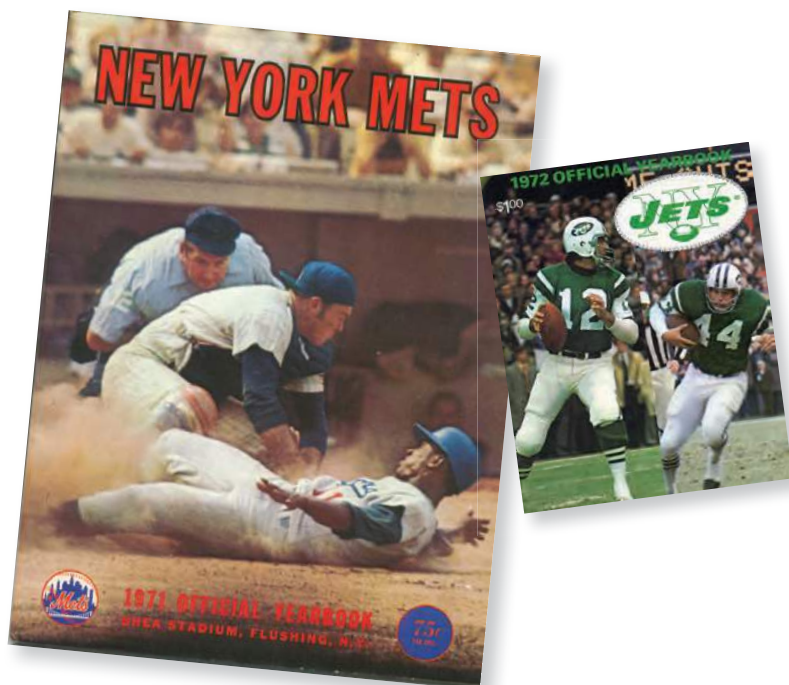
In 1968, as our little clan found itself in Shea Stadium box seats on the first base side, who should appear but Seaver, signing autographs. After failing to enlist my dad to go down and get an autograph for me, I summoned all the courage my little self could summon and waded in. Mission accomplished, but upon returning to my seat I realized he was still signing. Back I went with my glove in hand.

Upon reaching the front of the line, I handed it over. Seaver, who'd not looked up, said quietly, "Some of us are coming back for seconds." Busted!

This isn't quite how it went when Tommy "Old Reliable" Henrich, who played outfield on Yankees teams of the 1930s and '40s, checked into the hotel where I toiled. As he completed the sign-in process, I asked if he'd mind signing something if I brought it in the next morning. Sure, for \$10, he tells me (this at a time when I was busy not selling insurance and instead selling parts of my card collection).

No way, Jose. But there was more than one way to skin this cat. Upon check-out, his sign-in sheet, complete with signature, magically followed me home. Old Reliable would go on to live to the age of 96, some 25 years after this episode, leading me to suspect he somehow saw his way through without my 10-spot.

Nowadays, I'm led to believe, card scarcity is a creation of the manufacturer, not something that occurs organically through the ravages of time, whether that be from moms defenestrating whole collections or simply reckless endangerment. Innocence lost. •





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THE FEAST ... AND THE ASSUMPTION

By CB Wismar
info@mainstreetmag.com

We all have them. The “go to” places we favor when cooking just doesn’t fit into our evening plans, and being able to grab a table, or a couple seats at the bar, means we’re in for a bit of light conversation, a choreographed glance at the menu, and, more often than not, the fallback order. (No apology needed if your “local” is the McDonalds’ drive-through in Canaan.)

Comfortably seated, we listen, half-hearing, while the “specials” are rattled off, then we order and relax while the kitchen does their presumed magic. The theme song from *Cheers* seeps into a corner of our memory, and we start talking about the weather ... or the lawn ... or tomorrow’s imaginary schedule.

Until, we don’t.

Reality slams into us like a blast of cold air. It’s the night that “the local” is closed. Since we still have no interest in firing up the grill or doing “refrigerator review,” we pile into the dirty Subaru and decide which way to point the car, knowing that whatever place will be graced with our presence will be somewhere that we can’t recite the menu or likely know our server’s first name, marital prospects, and college major.

Quick Response

Luck holds, and we find a parking spot, humbly approach the host’s bunker, and discover that, in fact, there is a table that will accommodate our party. As we take our seats, we check to see places pre-set with cutlery, neatly folded napkins, requisite water glasses, and ... a plastic stand displaying a printed square filled with squiggles, curls, and dots.

Of course we know what it is. It’s a “QR Code.” “Quick Response.” They seem to be ubiquitous. When in the city, they glare back at us off bus sides. They’re emblazoned on the circulars that clog the mailbox each week. They flash on our TV screens with the pleasant suggestion – “Simply scan the QR code” – just as they disappear into the next droning plea to buy a car, or deodorant, or life insurance.

Since there are no menus on the table, the small print under the code informs us that this is the menu. It’s assumed that we will simply scan and scroll through the offerings before the server finds their way back to the table to invite our selections. If you’re of a certain age and sensibility, the only hope you have is that a) there’s someone in your party familiar with the dynamics of QR code reading or b)

there’s a pre-teenager at the next table who will, at their parents’ insistence, assist in navigating this strange new world with minimal embarrassment.

A quote that transcends

Some weeks ago, a quote appeared in the daily tsunami of online gibberish that invited not just a read, but a quick copy and investigation. Fortunately, there was an attribution with the quote, so we were able to track down the likely author. Deborah Martinson, PhD, teaches writing and rhetoric at Occidental College. She’s penned several books focused on women who have made significant impacts on society. The quote transcends gender and age and resonates through the restaurant as willing patrons struggle with their cell phones, trying to determine whether the pastrami reuben comes with fries or cole slaw.

“A society that forces a 90-year-old to use a smartphone in order to access basic rights is not a modern society; it is a society that has decided to cast aside its own elders.”

Understand, the unfamiliar terrain of a local restaurant is really quite a benign landscape. Medical appointments. Tax bills. Pharmacy refills. The

implications there are much more critical and the potential impact much greater. One can always politely ask the server if there’s fish and chips on the menu tonight or if one can substitute a salad for fries ... but not being able to connect with a primary physician (the phone call immediately goes to a pre-recorded message that assures us that “our options have recently changed”) or to order refills for type 2 diabetes medications takes on a bit more dramatic impact.

We blushingly admit that the title of this escapade is a play on words. August 15 is the Feast of the Assumption for the Roman Catholic Church. It also corresponds with the blessing of the harvest as summer fades into autumn and the crops are ready. It is, after all, a celebration of hope ... which leads us to this additional clip from Dr. Martinson:

“When we leave behind those who came before us, we are not evolving. We are merely becoming more comfortable – and more selfish.”

We hope that we will make every effort not to leave anyone behind – technology triumphs, quick responses, or not.

And, yes. Apparently, you can substitute a salad for the fries. •



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October focus:

Mental health awareness

By Regina Molaro
info@mainstreetmag.com

In recent years, there's been much discussion about mental health. From anxiety to depression, it seems like so many people – at least those with the resources to do so – have turned to therapy as a solution. From politics to finances and family life to the pandemic, there's no shortage of situations that cause stress.

Stress is a natural, normal physical and emotional response to the challenges, changes, and demands of everyday life. For some the stress is fleeting and manageable, but for others it becomes severe and impacts daily life.

In the dark: Depression

The National Institutes of Health reports that major depression is one of the most common mental disorders in the US. For some, it can result in severe impairments that interfere with or limit one's ability to carry out major life activities.

The NIH referenced the 2021 National Survey on Drug Use and Health's definition of a major depressive episode, which is widely based on the fifth edition of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*.

It defines major depression as a period of at least two weeks when a person experienced a depressed mood or loss of interest or pleasure in daily activities and had most specified symptoms, such as problems with sleep, eating, energy, concentration, or self-worth. No exclusions were made for major depressive episode symptoms caused by medical illness, substance use disorders, or medication.

According to the NIH in 2021, an estimated 21 million adults in the United States had at least one major depressive episode during the year. This represents 8.3% of all American adults.

The State of Mental Health in America 2025 report by Mental

Health America, a national non-profit dedicated to the promotion of mental health, well-being, and illness prevention, stated that 46 percent of Americans will meet the criteria for a diagnosable mental health condition sometime in their life. Half of those people will develop conditions by the age of 14.

Other stats from MHA: Approximately 42.5 million US adults have anxiety disorders; these disorders are among the most common mental illnesses in America. The report included numbers on depression. It stated that 22.5 million US adults had major depression, 4.8 million youth (ages 12 to 17) had major depression, and 3.6 million youth had severe depression.

Crisis mode

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the US is currently in a mental health crisis. Although this is being experienced by people of all ages, the CDC states that it is especially prevalent among young people.

Let's look at classrooms across America. Approximately 40% of students had persistent feelings of sadness or hopelessness, 20% of students seriously considered attempting suicide, and 9% attempted suicide.

Although this trend was observed prior to the pandemic, the CDC says COVID-19-related factors further exacerbated the issue. In addition, drug overdose and suicide remain leading causes of deaths in the US. These deaths, often associated with mental distress, continue to impact families and communities in a variety of ways – from socially to emotionally and economically.

Continued on next page ...

Getting help

Help is on the way. October is recognized as National Depression and Mental Health Screening Month. It's time to focus on education, early detection, and reducing the stigma around mental health conditions.

This month, we also have Mental Illness Awareness Week, which is celebrated during the first full week of October. Led by the National Alliance on Mental Illness, its mission is to raise public awareness.

Thanks to NAMI's advocacy, Congress recognized the need to raise awareness and address mental health challenges. In 1990, it officially established Mental Illness Awareness Week. Every year since then, communities from coast to coast have joined forces to raise awareness, fight stigma, and support mental health.

This month, there's also World Mental Health Day, observed globally on October 10 with an aim to mobilize support and highlight critical global mental health themes. Organizations and individuals use the day to educate the public about mental health conditions and remove social stigma. On this day, stakeholders also push for better mental health policies, improved care access, and increased funding.

This year's theme is "Lived Experiences Heard: Real Voices, Real Change." It highlights the importance of listening to people who navigate mental health challenges firsthand to drive better policies, break down stigma, and create inclusive support systems. Join the movement by spreading awareness via the campaign materials or sharing supportive resources on social media. Tune in. Be

sure to listen and engage. Attend local or global virtual events that center around personal stories and advocacy. Another component is seeking support. If you or someone you know needs mental health assistance, be sure to utilize local resources or national helplines.

Types of mental illness

It's important to know that mental illnesses include many different conditions that vary in degree of severity, ranging from mild to moderate and severe. Two broad categories are used to describe these conditions. They include any mental illness (AMI) and serious mental illness (SMI).

AMI encompasses all recognized mental illnesses. It is defined as a mental, behavioral, or emotional disorder. It can vary in impact, ranging from no impairment to mild, moderate, and even severe impairment. Generalized anxiety disorder fits into the AMI category.

Now, let's look at SMI. Defined as a mental, behavioral, or emotional disorder, SMIs result in serious functional impairment, which substantially interferes with or limits one or more major life activities. The burden of mental illnesses is particularly concentrated among those who experience disability due to SMI. Schizophrenia is an example of an SMI.

Signs and symptoms

NAMI explains that deciphering the difference between expected behaviors and potential signs of a mental illness isn't always easy. "There's no easy test that can let someone know if there is mental illness or if actions and thoughts might be typical behaviors

of a person or the result of a physical illness," it states.

According to the organization, each illness has its own symptoms, but common signs of mental illness in adults and adolescents can include excessive worrying or fear, feeling excessively sad or low, confused thinking or problems concentrating and learning, extreme mood changes including uncontrollable "highs" or feelings of euphoria, or prolonged or strong feelings of irritability or anger. Other signs include avoiding friends and social activities, difficulties understanding or relating to other people, changes in sleeping habits or feeling tired and low energy, changes in eating habits such as increased hunger or lack of appetite, and changes in sex drive.

There's also difficulty perceiving reality (delusions or hallucinations, in which a person experiences and senses things that don't exist in objective reality) inability to perceive changes in one's own feelings, behavior or personality ("lack of insight" or anosognosia); overuse of alcohol or drugs; and multiple physical ailments without obvious causes such as headaches, stomach aches, or vague and ongoing "aches and pains".

Other signs: Thinking about suicide, an inability to carry out daily activities or handle daily problems and stress, and an intense fear of weight gain or concern with appearance.

Mental health conditions can also begin to develop in young children. Because they're still learning how to identify and talk about thoughts and emotions, their most obvious symptoms are behavioral.

Symptoms in children may include changes in school performance; excessive worry or anxiety, for instance fighting to avoid bed or school; hyperactive behavior; frequent nightmares; frequent disobedience or aggression; and frequent temper tantrums.

Resources are available

Although millions of adults and youth experience depression, a significant portion delay or avoid seeking care. Most people who actively seek treatment experience meaningful improvements.

Luckily, resources are available for those who are suffering. Screening tools help bridge the gap between noticing persistent symptoms such as changes in sleep, prolonged sadness, or loss of interest, and connecting with a professional. Crisis hotlines and immediate support lines are also available.

NAMI's 2026 Mental Health Awareness Month theme invites everyone to join NAMI in speaking up against mental health stigma. This month provides a chance to stand with your community and show that no one struggles alone.

NAMI believes that by sharing our lived experiences, learning from each other's experiences, and building strong community connections, we can challenge stigma and create spaces where people are supported, understood, and find healing. It also believes that stigma grows in silence. That's why the organization encourages everyone to share their story. Be the reason someone realizes that they don't have to face this alone: share your story by submitting a video or submitting a written story via nami.org/stay-connected/events/awareness-events/mental-health-awareness-month/.

The organization also encourages you to break the silence about your own experience, challenge, or a stigma you've faced. It all starts with speaking our truths. The site offers sample social media captions such as "Mental Illness Awareness Week is here!" This year's theme is "Community: Supporting Mental Well-Being Together. We're stronger when we lift each other up" and "Mental health journeys are better together." This #MIAW, find your people in the NAMI community. First time joining? There's space for you. Tag someone who needs connection too."

Use the hashtag #MHAM #YouAreNotAlone •

Connect for free with a NAMI Helpline specialist or a Teen & Young Adult Helpline specialist. Available Monday through Friday, 10am to 10pm est. The NAMI Helpline is also available at (800) 950-NAMI (6264), text "Helpline" to 62640 or email helpline@nami.org.



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