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Living

December 2025



Chef
Genevieve Meli

with son Leonardo
and husband Greg



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Sharing Stories from the Heart This Season

Dear neighbors,

Lifelong East Fishkill residents like me are sure to have fond memories of The Stockyard, a beloved restaurant that once stood in town—maybe even my favorite prime rib dinner with a side of spud fries: potato wedges baked with mozzarella cheese and ranch dressing. This issue's cover family has close ties to that local favorite. Genevieve Meli remembers working the coat check and longing to be in the kitchen, where her father was the chef. Today, she's living out her dreams as an instructor at the Culinary Institute of America, guiding aspiring bakers and pastry chefs.

Genevieve's story is also one of homecoming. She now lives in and gardens at the very farmhouse that captivated her as a child, glimpsed from the car window on drives to the Stormville Flea Market with her parents. She's authored two cookbooks and is mom to Leo—another dream come true.

We're also proud to honor the late Dietrich Brengelmann in this month's Hometown Hero feature. You might recognize his last name, as his daughter-in-law works for the East Fishkill Highway Department and can be found all spring and summer beautifying our town and watering

the flowers. She also plays an important role in keeping the hundreds of Hometown Hero banners clean and organized as they come down this season to make way for holiday decorations.

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See you around town,
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My AQMAI Family

By Anthony Quattrochi
Anthony Quattrochi's Martial Arts Institute



As a bald, generally clean-shaven, t-shirt wearing, maybe more-muscular-than-some man in the U.S., I've gotten a lot of pretty obvious comparisons in my adult life to some familiar faces. Mr. Clean comes up frequently, though I gave up on the earring years ago. (It's hard to grapple when you give someone an easy handle to pull on!)

I've got no beef with Mr. Clean; the dude looks good, but I do freely confess that I enjoy the action hero comparisons a whole lot more. Bruce Willis, Jason Statham and Vin Diesel are probably the big three that I get in the "Hey, you know you kinda look like..." category.



I'm going to confess that I've only watched the first film in "The Fast and the Furious" franchise, but I've seen enough clips and memes to catch the "drift." It's clear to hear that the word "family" comes up a lot when Vin's Dominic Toretto speaks—so maybe that's another thing we have in common.

I found a video on YouTube that claimed to list all the iterations of his family-based phrases, and some of them that resonated particularly with me were "We're family now," "There's all kinds of family," and "Never mess with a man's family."

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FAMILY FUN

I like to think that when you join my school, you feel like you've become part of a group where everyone is invested in you and your well-being. I don't mean that we're just focused on teaching you martial arts and getting you safely to Black Belt. We love getting to know moms and dads, siblings, friends, stories about your life out of the dojo, your interests and your plans. We have family game nights and parties, we participate in charity events together, we donate blood for the community, and we support each other through the highs and lows. We expect respect and discipline on and off the mat, but we see each other as more than students and teachers, and I'm proud of that. We're family now.

It's very fun for me to have family units train together at my school. What often starts off as a parent enrolling one child in class becomes the parent enrolling more children, and then becoming a student themselves. We have little brothers and sisters in the waiting room anxiously waiting for that 4th birthday, which allows them to finally hop on the mat. Many of them already have their picture ID cards made, which will be the card they use for their entire time here, immortalizing them as two-year-olds, regardless of the rank they achieve. My families are frequently here for a long time, and I'm honored to see so many of their milestones. More meaningfully to me, besides simply hearing about events, I'm often included to mark occasions, celebratory or sad, as a member of the extended family. "There are all kinds of families."

LEARNING SELF-DEFENSE

Obviously, I run a martial arts school. My main goal is to teach my students to defend themselves and their families from danger, whether that's avoiding the start of the fight or just having to be the one to finish it. I hear stories from the kids about being bullied in school, and sometimes actually having a physical altercation. I hear stories from the adult students and parents about being in high-tension situations or shady environments and having some reassurance that they know what to do. It's terrible that they have these stories to tell, but I'm proud to have passed on skills to help people that I care about. "Never mess with a man's family." I've quoted Vin here a few times, and I like what I think he's trying to say, so I'll take the comparisons gladly. (And I'll try to catch a few more of the movies!)

I'd like to add in another of my favorite "family" quotes (this one isn't Vin's), and I hope you take it to heart. If you or someone in your family is interested in learning self-defense, I sincerely invite you to visit my school. You'll see from my students, their families, and our staff that "When you're here, you're family." I'm going to improve on the Olive Garden, if that's even possible, by adding, "and when you're not here, you're still family." Always.

Now I'm really hungry! I hope to see you on the mat—or at dinner—soon!

Happy Holidays to everyone, and my deepest thanks to all those who have been my students throughout the years. Teaching you has been the gift I receive day after day.

Learn more about Anthony Quattrochi's Martial Arts Institute at AQMAI.com, and contact the dojo at aqkkjj@gmail.com or 845-297-2188. ♦



A young boy in a white shirt and black shorts is shown in mid-swing, hitting a tennis ball with a racket. The background is a tennis court with a net. The Taconic logo, featuring the word "TACONIC" in large blue letters with "SPORT & RACQUET" below it, is overlaid on the image. Below the logo, the words "JUNIOR TENNIS ACADEMY" are written in large blue letters. A hexagonal inset on the right shows a woman in a blue dress playing tennis. A yellow button at the bottom left says "LEARN MORE" with a right-pointing arrow. The website "WWW.TACONICRACQUET.COM" and phone number "845-226-8485" are at the bottom right.

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Dietrich Brengelmann

By Jeanne Cotroneo Darrow



In an era when courage was judged not only on battlefields but also in the quiet resolve to forge a new life in a foreign country, Dietrich Brengelmann stands as a symbol of the immigrant spirit that helped shape America.

Born the youngest of six brothers on a large family farm in northwest Germany, Dietrich's early life was centered on hard work and family values. The Brengelmann farm, which remains in the family today, laid the foundation for the work ethic that would guide him throughout his remarkable life.

At just 19 years old, with little more than determination and the clothes on his back, Dietrich immigrated to New York in 1930. He joined two older brothers who had made the journey two years earlier, and together they carved out a living in their new homeland. The three brothers stuck together, finding work as domestic servants for wealthy families in the New York area—a humble beginning that would lead to extraordinary service.

Dietrich became a U.S. citizen in 1935 and by 1941 had worked his way up to a position as a chauffeur for a wealthy family in Bronxville, N.Y. But world events would soon call him to a different kind of service.



ANSWERING THE CALL

When World War II began and Dietrich was drafted, he made a decision that revealed his character: he enlisted rather than wait to be called up. Although he didn't talk much about his reasons, he hoped the war would end soon so he could go back to rebuilding his normal life in America.

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Dietrich served in the U.S. Army, from 1942 to 1946, during WWII.



He and Anneliese married on Jan. 15, 1944, and then raised two sons.



He completed his basic training at Fort Dix, N.J., and then at Fort Warren in Cheyenne, Wyo., where he is pictured in 1943.

Dietrich's military journey began with basic training at Fort Dix, N.J., then continued with additional training at Fort Warren in Cheyenne, Wyo. After that, he was deployed to the Southwest Pacific, serving in New Guinea with the 3751 Army Quartermaster Corps.

His service was both vital and demanding. Dietrich drove trucks filled with supplies to Army units scattered across the challenging terrain of New Guinea, repaired trucks and other essential equipment, and kept the supply lines moving—work that was crucial to the war effort but often went unnoticed. He advanced to the rank of Technician Fifth Grade (TEC 5), a rank recognizing enlisted soldiers with specialized technical skills, similar to Corporal but without command authority, demonstrating his skill and dependability. He received several honors, including the American Campaign Medal, the Asiatic-Pacific Campaign Medal, and the World War II Victory Medal.

LOVE ACROSS CONTINENTS

Even during wartime, love persevered. While serving, Dietrich met his future bride, Anneliese Joedicke, in Asbury Park on the New Jersey Shore, where both worked as domestic servants for different wealthy families with summer homes. Their shared German background created an instant bond—she had immigrated from Germany in 1938, understanding the challenges and hopes that came with starting over in America.

Their romance blossomed despite the uncertainty of war. On Jan. 15, 1944, while Dietrich was still in the Army, they married in New Jersey. Just months later, in August 1944, he deployed to New Guinea. The couple faced their separation with the same determination that had brought them both to America, and Dietrich returned in December 1945, receiving his discharge in January 1946. ♦

BUILDING THE AMERICAN DREAM

Post-war life brought new challenges and opportunities. Dietrich and Anneliese created a family together, raising two sons and eventually welcoming two grandchildren

and two great-grandchildren. Being a WWII veteran helped him buy a home in Yonkers, N.Y., using his GI benefits to get a loan. The home remains in the family.

For many years, Dietrich worked as an independent salesman for the Fuller Brush Company, going door-to-door selling housewares, cleaning tools, and personal hygiene products—honest work that required the same persistence that carried him through immigration and military service. Seeking better financial stability for his growing family, Dietrich, with the help of a kind neighbor, joined the nascent International Union of Operating Engineers in New York City and began a job in Connecticut working for the American Can Company as a sewer plant engineer, which helped him support his family and cover his bills.

A LIFE WELL LIVED

Beyond his professional achievements, Dietrich was a man of many talents and interests. He was proficient in home improvement projects, often transforming his living space with his own hands. His German farm upbringing was evident in his love of gardening during the summer months. He enjoyed cooking, brought friends together over poker games, and even worked as a professional bartender—skills that showed his ability to connect with people from all walks of life.

All the work and stress of his life, however, eventually caught up with him. Sadly, just before he was about to retire, Dietrich passed away in 1981 at age 69, leaving a loving family and a community that remains grateful for his service. ♦

He earned numerous commendations, including several medals, for his service.



Champagne and Beyond: Great Sparkling Wines That Won't Break the Bank



By Patricia Cornwell, *Viscount Wines & Liquor*



Good news, everyone: it seems like most of us have caught on to the fact that sparkling wine isn't just for special occasions. It's an excellent pairing for everything from sushi to fried chicken and waffles, tasting menus, and of course your big dinners. Bubbles whenever, wherever!

STAFF PICKS—CHAMPAGNE

Many hear the word champagne and automatically think dollar signs, but that is not the case. Look for brands you've never heard of before. They tend to be smaller houses and have a price range under \$50. All of their hard work and money are going into the bottle and not into endorsements. Below are some of our favorites.

Colcombet Brut Eclat NV, \$39.99. Made with equal parts Chardonnay, Pinot Meunier, and Pinot Noir, this full-bodied champagne is bright and silky—long on the palate with small, very fine bubbles, plenty of fruit, and very aromatic. It's got a ripe fruit character with notes of ripe peach and apricot. Its long length and acidity give freshness and an excellent balance.

Andre Chemin Brut Rose NV, \$42.99. Made from hand-harvested sustainable grapes, Pinot Noir and Chardonnay. It is beautiful and expressive of red berry and brioche with refreshing minerality and an expansive palate driven by fine bubbles.

STAFF PICKS—ALTERNATIVES

While Champagne might get top billing among the cast of sparklers, there are plenty of alternatives from around the world that reflect their regions. Prosecco and Cava have surged in popularity in the past decade, as have impressive New World bottlings and French Cremants.

Bonnamy Cremant de Loire Brut Rose NV, France, \$17.99. This juicy yet dry sparkling wine pairs with just about any cuisine. This 100% Cabernet Franc lends a bit of earthiness to the wine's bright berry nuances.

90+ Cellars Brut Prosecco NV, Italy, \$11.99. Aromas of fresh peaches leap from the glass along with hints of honeysuckle and melon. Once sipped, a shower of foamy bubbles dances soulfully on the tip of your tongue then bursts into a medley of crisp citrus fruit.

Covalli Prosecco Rose NV, Italy, \$9.99. Offering a light coral pink presentation with a lively bead, it possesses aromas of white peach, strawberry, and white flowers. Bursting with flavors of raspberry, apple, and strawberry that entice the tongue, this fresh and harmonious offering aligns well with fresh fruit plates, ceviche, and Panettone.



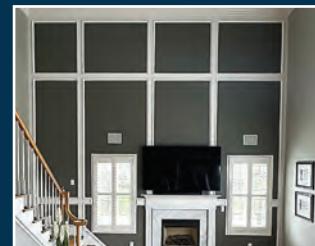
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Nit del Foc Brut Cava NV, Spain, \$15.99. This blend of Macabeo and Chardonnay is straw yellow in color with greenish tones. Aromas of white fruit and citrus notes stand out with a background of very elegant confectionery. In the mouth it is round and easy on the palate. Its effervescence envelops the palate, leaving a long finish with crisp notes of ripe fruit.

Dibon Brut Cava Rose NV, Spain, \$14.99. This 100% Garnacha is dry and crisp with notes of raspberry, blackcurrant, and strawberry on the nose and palate. It is characterized by bright red fruit flavors, pleasant bubbles, and hints of citrus, peach, and apricot, with a refreshing acidity and a long finish.

Karatta Brut NV, Australia, \$19.99. This blend of Pinot Noir and Chardonnay has notes of grapefruit, sherbet, and citrus blossom with high acidity and a medium body. It is described as elegant, bright, and fun with a low sweetness and a flavor profile that makes it a versatile food pairing.

Chandon Brut Rose NV, California, \$24.99. A blend of Chardonnay, Pinot Noir, and Pinot Meunier with notes of fresh strawberry and cherry, this bubbly is perfect for sipping all year long with or without food.

So be a little adventurous and try any of these or other sparklers with your favorite dishes. You might be surprised how well that cheeseburger works with a chilled bottle of Brut. ♦



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Chef *Genevieve Meli* Food, Family, Farmhouse, and Fortitude

By Jeanne Cotroneo Darrow
Photos by Louisa Vilardi

Saturday morning sunlight spills through the wide windows of Genevieve Meli's 1800s Stormville farmhouse, catching the gleam of polished wood beams and the well-worn floors beneath them. Outside, rows of vegetables stretch toward the sky, along with patches of flowers, including her award-winning gladiolas, as she tends to her young fruit trees—apples, Asian pears, plums, and cherries—her four-year-old son Leonardo by her side.

"This house always called to me," says the chef, cookbook author, and baking and pastry arts instructor at the Culinary Institute of America (CIA). "When I was little, coming to the Stormville Flea Market with my family, I would pass it and think, *someday*. Now my son gets to grow up here. It feels like a dream."

Living in her farmhouse is not her only dream come true.

GROWING UP IN THE KITCHEN

Genevieve's life began in Hopewell Junction, where both sides of her family lived close by. She grew up steeped in the rhythms of restaurant life—her family owned The Stockyard (now home to Daddy O's), where her father was the chef, her aunts waitressed, her grandfather managed the front of house, her sister bussed tables,

and young Genevieve found her place at coat check on New Year's Eve. "I wasn't allowed in the kitchen," she recalls. Her father discouraged her from pursuing restaurant work, knowing too well the demands of the job—the long hours, the sacrifices, the physical toll.

Then, the day before she was to begin as a freshman at Our Lady of Lourdes High School, tragedy struck: her father was killed in a motorcycle accident at just 42. "The only thing I really have from him is his John Jay varsity jacket," she says softly.

Those who know her well realize, though, she has something else of her father's: his culinary skills and passion.

Growing up, her favorite childhood toys were cookie cutters, tea sets, and sheets of foil she'd fold into pretend plates and bowls. On weekends, she would spread out doilies, serve yogurt in cups, and create menus for imaginary guests. "It's always been who I am," she says.

At 14, Genevieve would ride her bike to her first job at a local pizza shop to make breakfast sandwiches. Soon



Chef Genevieve Meli with her husband, Greg, and their son, Leonardo, outside their historic Stormville farmhouse.

after, she moved into professional pastry kitchens, working at the Pastry Garden in Poughkeepsie. Her mom, a long-time IBM employee, encouraged Genevieve to chase her artistic dream.

BAKING AND PASTRY ARTIST

So she enrolled at CIA, earned an associate degree in baking and pastry arts, and returned later in her career to earn a bachelor's in food business leadership. Living on campus, she immersed herself in her craft, traveling most weekends to New York City to work for free in Michelin-star kitchens. "I would absorb everything," she says. "Even today, I use techniques that I learned back then. It was life-changing."

Her résumé soon read like a guidebook to New York's culinary elite: Craft, Café Boulud, Restaurant Daniel, Jacques Torres Chocolate, and Le Bernardin, where "Eric Ripert is a big deal and yet his kitchen was so calm," shares Genevieve, coming from kitchens where shouting was the culture."

LIFE IN THE FOOD INDUSTRY

The restaurant world was exhilarating—but also exhausting. "Normally you work 15, even 21 hours a day," Genevieve says. And as a woman, she faced another challenge: navigating male-dominated kitchens. "I was working with 25 pastry chefs, most of them men with big egos. And then the culinary chefs—also men. It was very intense."

She rose quickly, earning accolades, including recognition on the "30 Under 30" list. She was the youngest-ever chef to earn

the Certified Master Baker (CMB) designation. But behind the professional success, her health was faltering. Genevieve was battling lupus and endometriosis, autoimmune conditions that left her hospitalized and forced her to quit restaurant jobs she loved.

"When I got the 30 under 30, I was at my worst," she admits. "I was so sick that I had to quit my job."

Genevieve was thrilled to find a new direction in teaching at CIA. "My class makes the desserts for all the on-campus restaurants," a job that gives her flexibility as a mom. "It's seven hours and you're done."

Teaching has become a joy she never anticipated. "I love it when my students finally get it—when it clicks in that 'aha' moment."

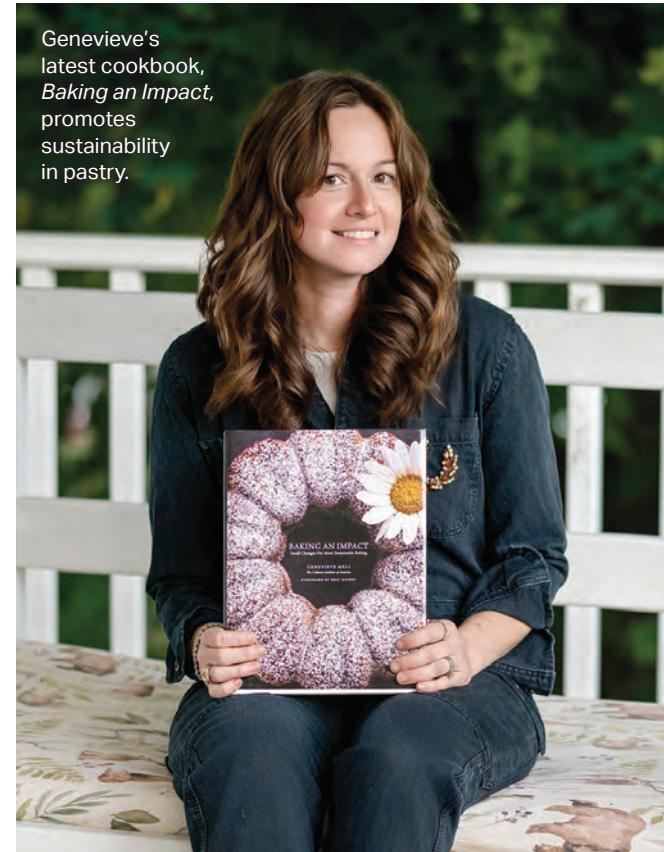
COOKBOOK AUTHOR

Alongside teaching, Genevieve has become a cookbook author. Her first book, *Sweet Nature* (2016), was inspired by New York City, with each chapter representing a different neighborhood and each dish plated to reflect the natural world. In October 2024, CIA Press published her second book, *Baking an Impact*, with a foreword by none other than Eric Ripert. The book emphasizes sustainability in pastry, urging readers to make small ingredient swaps with big ripple effects.

"If we can get people to change just one or two ingredients in their recipes, and they get used to it, then we can keep adding more changes," she explains. "That one little change, multiplied, can have a huge impact."

She hopes to write more, including a holiday baking cookbook now in the proposal stage. Like her bread dough, her stardom keeps rising, as she appears in

continued on page 14



Leonardo brings endless joy and curiosity to life on the family's homestead.

the Netflix series, *Next Gen Chef*, as a proctor of the competition filmed on the CIA campus.

THE FARMHOUSE DREAM

In 2015, Genevieve and Greg, her former New York City apartment roommate turned husband, moved to Beacon to prioritize her health. Six years later, they moved into the farmhouse—the very one she had admired as a child. Greg, a social worker and therapist, also volunteers as an EMT. “He has no free time,” Genevieve says affectionately. “This past weekend, he did 12 hours on the ambulance, then came home, ate, and went straight to bed. That’s just who he is.”

Inspired by Greg’s service, she joined the Stormville Fire Company Auxiliary. “My first event was the 2025 Easter pancake breakfast, and it was a wonderful way to connect with the community,” she says.

With any free time she has left, Genevieve throws herself into her garden—nurturing vegetables, berries, and herbs alongside hydrangeas, lilies, and gladiolas. “When you plant a seed, you’re committing to patience, to care, to the process,” she reflects. “It’s the same with cooking. You don’t rush it—you honor it.”

A NEW SEASON OF LIFE

Healthier than she has been in years, she credits lifestyle changes and the birth of her son, who is the center of her world. “He’s only going to be little for a short time, and I want to be present for it,” she says.

Her goals are straightforward: stay healthy, raise her son, keep writing, and expand her homestead. “I’d love to do a couple more books. But really,” she adds, glancing up at her home, “I just want to stay healthy and raise Leo here, in this house, on this beautiful land.” ♦



Genevieve and son Leonardo share a playful baking moment in their kitchen.



The 1800s farmhouse Genevieve once admired as a girl is now home to her growing family.

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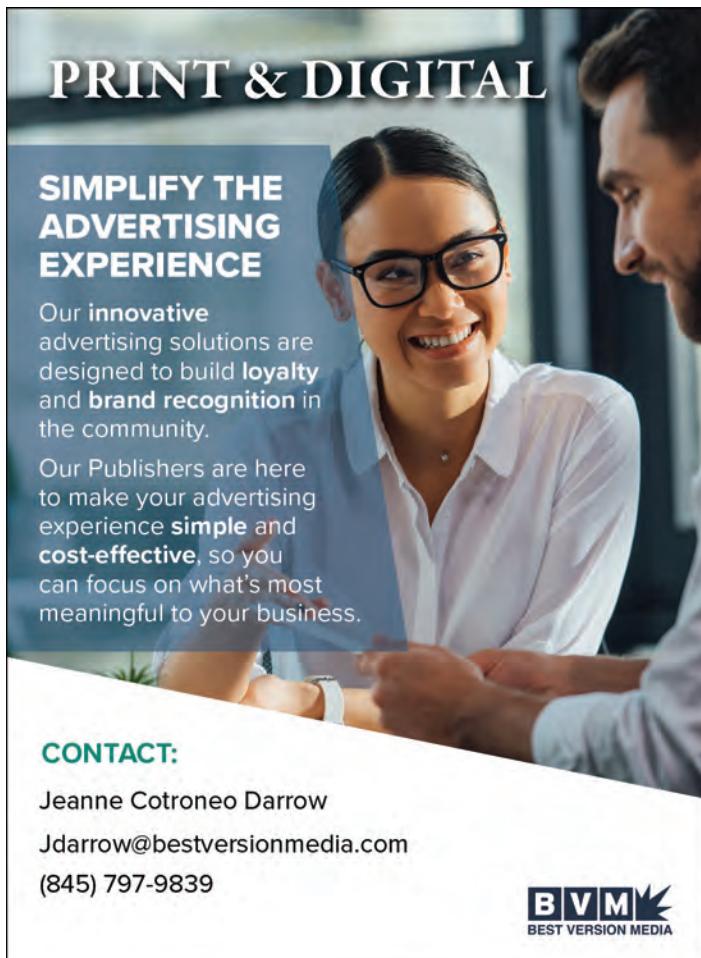


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Happy Holidays from Hannoush!

By Danielle Panessa, Store Manager
Hannoush Jewelers



Tis the season to show our appreciation to each and every one of you for supporting our small, family-owned, and -operated business. In the new year, we'll celebrate our 10th year at our flagship location. We look forward to a huge customer appreciation celebration to thank you all for your continued support.

While a huge milestone, we can't forget where we started, in the Poughkeepsie Galleria over 20 years ago—and acknowledge the staff who helped us reach this point. Our success wouldn't be possible without the dedication and hard work of our small but mighty, unstoppable team, whose customer service is unmatched by any other jewelry store in the Hudson Valley. Let us reintroduce ourselves!

Store Manager Danielle has been part of the Hannoush-Halpy family since 2012. What began as a part-time sales associate role quickly progressed to Pandora Specialist, to full-time fine jewelry sales, to a lead diamond expert. Her eagerness to learn has helped her grow into the leader she is today. Beyond being a trusted jeweler, she is also a friend to many clients and has a special passion for helping young clients start new chapters with engagement rings and custom designs. She brings their imaginations to life by blending traditional designs and craftsmanship with a modern twist. Danielle, with an eye for trending styles and client preferences, is also the main buyer for all jewelry and diamonds. She gets to try them on before they hit the floor to make sure they sparkle the brightest, "because someone has to do it," she laughs.

Danielle's favorite holiday pick in the store is a showstopping 10-carat tennis necklace in white gold. The store stocks plenty of tennis-style necklaces in both natural and lab-grown diamonds to suit a variety of budgets.

Sales Associate Jeffrey has been with Hannoush for more than 10 years and in the industry for more than 20. He brings a wealth of knowledge to clients, including early career experience at Kay and Zales, which helps him articulate

Photos courtesy of Hannoush Jewelers



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Bring in an unwrapped toy for the Poughkeepsie Children's Home by Dec. 13 and receive 10% off any service!

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our superior quality compared to large chain stores. His expertise includes watches—including on-site sizing, battery replacement, and larger repairs—and bridal design. He is known for guiding future grooms through their decision-making process. **Fun fact:** Jeff designed his wife's first engagement ring with the owner, Michael, while Jeff was working at Zales, which was above us in the mall! We ultimately brought him on board after that. Jeff is a proud husband, father, and dog and cat dad who keeps us grounded in family heritage.

Jeff's favorite in-store piece is a new holiday release by Alor: a double stainless-steel men's cable bracelet in black PVD with two-tone, 18K white and yellow gold stations and a bar of diamonds. It pairs perfectly with any of our Citizen watches. If you need help shopping for your special guy this season, come see Jeff!

Meg, known as our gem girl, joined our team more than 2.5 years ago and has been in the industry for more than nine years. As Danielle's right hand, she wears many hats—besides her signature vibrant pink hair. Our social media guru, she completely revamped our Instagram and TikTok presence and is our website builder and photographer. She also in charge of all jewelry repairs, including inspecting and diagnosing every piece before and after every repair or stone setting. She is passionate about gemstones and custom design—and a visionary when it comes to refreshing and repurposing old jewelry. Her style and upbeat personality make every day fun and enjoyable.

Meg's favorite pick is from our favorite brand, Shy Creation. She is obsessed with the double-diamond wave stud earrings in 14k white gold. Stunning from every angle, they can be worn casually or at a fancy event. Come see the collection, launched just in time for the holidays, of beautiful pieces that can be mixed, matched, or layered.

Colleen, our sweetest part-timer, has been with us for a year already! With Hannoush's background from the early days of the Newburgh location, she brings



continued on page 18

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incredible styling skills to helping our clients select pieces for themselves or a special someone. She spent 32 years with Ethan Allen helping clients design and style their homes, experience that deepens her ability to connect with clients, understand their backgrounds, and learn their styles. She's been building her clientele day by day, focusing on our wedding band department, helping brides and grooms in finding the perfect match. From selecting precious gold options to custom-making men's rings with our Lashbrook Designs in-store ring builder, she's the person to see for your wedding band needs! We call her our store mom because of her gentle and calming approach with both clients and colleagues. We appreciate her eagerness to learn and her passion for turning client dreams into reality!

Colleen's in-store pick is also from Shy Creation: a stunning, two-tone yellow and white gold east-to-west bezel-set composite emerald-cut diamond halo necklace on a gold cable chain. The perfect statement piece on its own, this necklace also has an adjustable chain for stacking and layering. We have curated a whole collection of Shy pieces to match this one, since the emerald cut is client favorite in both our fashion and bridal lines. With our complementary gift wrapping, it's the perfect holiday gift!

Manuel is our incredible jeweler behind all your repairing, refurbishing, and diamond setting. He joined us in 2020 after Covid hit our industry hard and the jewelry factory where he worked ultimately closed. That factory was known for setting and finishing pieces from highly respected names such as Harry Winston and Tiffany & Co. So, his background is elite when it comes to quality. We are grateful he is here full time, four days a week, in his own jewelers' room, where clients can see him work. If you need pieces fixed, rhodium plated, diamonds set, or lost ones replaced, drop them off so Manuel can work his magic!

While clients are our "why," our staff is the heart and soul of our business, keeping every aspect running smoothly. Each of us brings something different to the team, working hard together to always deliver the highest-quality products, service, and experience to everyone who walks through our doors so they want to return for every future occasion.

We can't wait to see you in the store and to thank you from the bottom of our hearts for always thinking of us for all your jewelry needs, especially during the holiday season! We wish you a happy and healthy holiday and a prosperous new year! XO ♦



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Grow Your Way to Lower Energy Bills

Smart Tree Planting Can Cut Heating and Cooling Costs by Up to 30%

Step outside on a sunny day and stand in the open for a few minutes. Then move under a leafy tree. The temperature difference is striking—and the same principle applies to your home.

Strategic tree planting can reduce your heating and cooling costs by as much as 30%, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture. In fact, the right trees in the right places can deliver the cooling equivalent of ten room-sized air conditioners running for 20 hours a day.

SHADE WHERE IT COUNTS

When it comes to cooling your home, location matters:

East Side: Morning sun is mild, so trees planted here provide little impact on your energy use.

Southeast, Southwest, and West: These are your prime shading zones. Trees in these areas block intense sunlight during late morning through afternoon—the hottest part of the day. The west side, in particular, takes the brunt of the summer sun and offers the biggest savings.

South Side: Trees planted directly south won't offer much shade when the sun is high, unless they're very tall and planted at least 30 feet away.

CHOOSE THE RIGHT TREES

Opt for tall, deciduous trees—those that lose their leaves in winter. Their dense summer foliage shades your home during hot months, while bare branches let sunlight in during winter for natural warmth. Research from the U.S. Forest Service suggests planting these trees within 40 feet of your house for maximum benefit.

BLOCK THE WINTER WINDS

Evergreen trees planted to the north and northwest act as natural windbreaks. These living walls slow down frigid gusts, keeping your home warmer and your heating bills lower. Make sure the windbreak extends beyond the width of your home to prevent cold air from slipping around the edges.

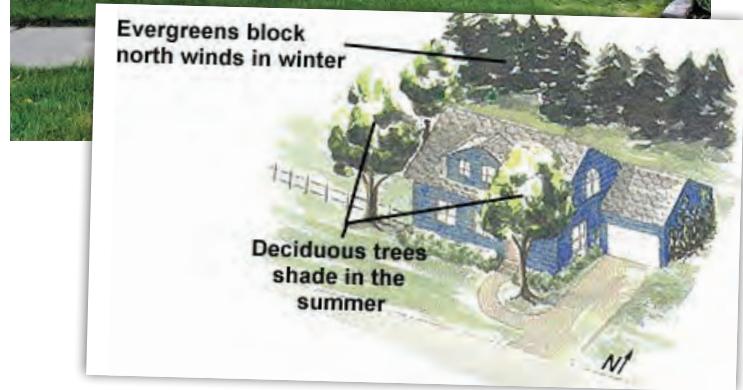
GIVE YOUR A/C A LITTLE SHADE

Even your air conditioner benefits from having greenery nearby. A well-placed shrub or small tree can shade the unit and improve its efficiency by up to 10%, saving additional energy without blocking airflow.

PLANT TREES; SAVE FOR YEARS

With thoughtful placement and the right mix of trees, you'll enjoy cooler summers, warmer winters, and a more beautiful landscape—all while trimming your utility bills. ♦

By Matthew Sabellico
Sabellico Greenhouses & Florist



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Photos courtesy of Sabellico Greenhouse & Florist

The Health Benefits of Pickleball: A Sport for Every Body



By Brian Vigorita
Hudson Valley Pickleball & Golf Center



Pickleball has quickly become one of America's fastest-growing sports—and for good reason. It's fun, social, easy to learn, and offers surprising physical and mental health benefits for players of all ages and fitness levels. Whether you're a seasoned athlete, a retiree looking to stay active, or a family seeking a new way to connect, pickleball provides an ideal blend of exercise, competition, and community.

A FULL-BODY WORKOUT THAT'S EASY ON THE JOINTS

Unlike high-impact sports such as tennis or basketball, pickleball's smaller court and lighter paddle make it more accessible for players who want a great workout without the strain. The quick bursts of movement, changes in direction, and extended rallies engage the legs, core, and upper body—improving coordination, balance, and agility. Because the game can be played at varying intensities, participants can tailor their level of activity, making it a sustainable fitness option for people of all ages.

CARDIOVASCULAR AND CALORIE-BURNING BENEFITS

Despite its friendly reputation, pickleball is a legitimate cardio workout. Studies show that an hour of moderate to vigorous pickleball can burn between 400 and 600 calories, depending on intensity. The constant motion raises heart rate and builds endurance, helping reduce the risk of heart disease and improving overall cardiovascular health. It's the kind of workout that doesn't feel like exercise—you're simply having fun while breaking a sweat.

Photos courtesy of Hudson Valley Pickleball and Golf Center

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BOOSTING MENTAL HEALTH AND SOCIAL CONNECTION

One of pickleball's most underrated benefits is its impact on mental well-being. The game's social nature encourages laughter, teamwork, and camaraderie—powerful antidotes to stress and loneliness. Research has linked regular pickleball play to reduced symptoms of depression and anxiety, thanks to the combination of physical activity, human connection, and mental engagement required to track and anticipate each shot.

A SPORT FOR EVERY GENERATION

Pickleball bridges generations in a way few sports can. Families can play together, seniors can stay active, and young athletes can sharpen reflexes and coordination. The rules are simple, the gear is minimal, and players can pick up the basics in just one session. It's also one of the most inclusive sports around—adaptable for players with mobility challenges and welcoming to newcomers at every level.

WHY THE CRAZE KEEPS GROWING

Beyond health and fitness, pickleball's explosive popularity comes from its sense of community. Local facilities, leagues, and tournaments are sprouting up everywhere, turning simple games into thriving social events. It's not just about who wins or loses; it's about connecting through play.

EXPERIENCE IT AT HUDSON VALLEY PICKLEBALL & GOLF

For those ready to experience the excitement firsthand, **Hudson Valley Pickleball & Golf** offers a premier indoor destination to play year-round. With professional-grade courts, leagues, lessons, open play, and a vibrant lounge atmosphere, it's more than just a place to play—it's a place to belong. Whether you're picking up a paddle for the first time or looking to sharpen your skills, Hudson Valley Pickleball & Golf invites you to join the movement, meet new friends, and discover how good healthy fun can feel. ♦


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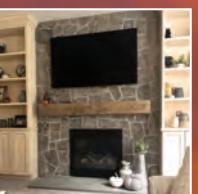
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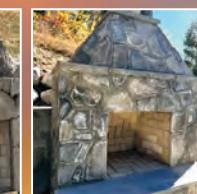
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@47 Fairfax Rd., Fishkill
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BrielleGraceBCF.org

Through Dec. 10

TOYS FOR TOTS

@East Fishkill Community Library
The library is accepting new, unwrapped toys, games and books for Toys for Tots.
EFLibrary.org

Through Dec. 17

HOLIDAY POP-UP SHOP

@Arts Mid-Hudson, 696 Dutchess Tpk., Poughkeepsie
Items from more than 65 Hudson Valley artists and makers. Tues.-Fri., 10am-5pm; Sat., 10am-2pm. ArtsMidHudson.org

Through Dec. 28

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Sample different wines and liquors each week.
Visit ViscountWines.com/events for calendar.

Sundays

HOLIDAY HUNT

@Locust Grove Estate, Poughkeepsie
Search the historic mansion for clues to this holiday-themed scavenger hunt.
10am-3pm. LGNY.org

Dec. 3, 13, 17, 27

LINE DANCING

@Hudson Valley Pickleball & Golf Ctr., Poughkeepsie

Throw on your boots and dance to country and mixed music hits.
Wed., \$5 cover; Sat., \$10.
HVPickleball.com

Fri., Dec. 5

EGC DANCE HOLIDAY SHOW

@Putnam Valley High School, Putnam Valley
EGC Dance Center's annual holiday performance featuring an original story of candy coming to life. 6:30pm.
Visit EGCDanceCenter.com for tickets.

Sat., Dec. 6, & 20

KARAOKE

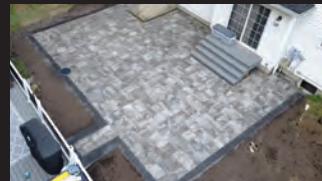
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Sat., Dec. 6

SINTERKLAAS DAY

@Mesier Homestead, Wappingers Falls

Discover the history of Sinterklaas and early Dutch holiday traditions with sweets and a visit from St. Nicholas. Designed for elementary school-age children. 11am; 12:15pm; 1:30pm. Advance tickets suggested.

WappingersHistoricalSociety.org

Sat., Dec. 6

A CHRISTMAS CAROL

@Rhinebeck High School

Join the Northern Dutchess Symphony Orchestra for the Dickens classic. Actor Jason Dempsey narrates, accompanied by carols and original music. 4pm. NDSOrchestra.org

Sat., Dec. 6

EAST FISHKILL HOLIDAY CELEBRATION

@East Fishkill Community Center

A celebration for town residents, including a tree lighting, menorah lighting, snacks, and a visit from Santa. 5-7pm.

EastFishkillRecreation.com

Sat. & Sun., Dec. 6 & 7

WEST POINT HOLIDAY CONCERT

@Eisenhower Hall Theatre, West Point

Get in the spirit with the West Point Band as they perform holiday favorites. 2pm.

Reserve free tickets at WestPointBand.com

Sat. & Sun., Dec. 6 & 7

LIVING NATIVITY

@Hopewell Reformed Church, Hopewell Jct.

Drive through a telling of the Christmas story with live actors and animals. 4:30-7pm.

hrcra.org

Sun., Dec. 7

WINTER GOLF OPEN

@Hudson Valley Pickleball & Golf Ctr., Poughkeepsie

Grab a partner and take on the course in a 2-man, best-ball showdown to win the top prize of \$1,000. Tee times begin at 9am.

HVPickleball.com

Sun., Dec. 7

CHRISTMAS OPEN HOUSE

@Brinckerhoff House Historic Site, Hopewell Jct.

Celebrate with cider, eggnog, and treats in the decorated Dutch farmhouse; crafts, music, and shopping in the general store; and a visit with Santa and his reingoa. \$5 and a canned good for a local food pantry is appreciated. 1-4pm. EastFishkillHistoricalSociety.org

Fri., Dec. 12

FINE MOTOR STORYTIME

@East Fishkill Community Library

Children ages 3-5 are invited for storytime followed by activities that encourage fine motor development (some not appropriate for younger siblings due to complexity or materials/tools used). 10:45-11:30am.

EFLibrary.org

Fri., Dec. 12

WOMEN'S SELF-DEFENSE SEMINAR

@Anthony Quattrochi's Martial Arts Institute, Wappingers Falls

Hands-on lessons in threat prevention, safety and escape strategies from our Martial Arts Expert Contributor. \$20/person. 7-8:30 pm. Call (845) 298-2177 or email aqkkjj@gmail.com to register. Walk-ins welcome.

AQMAI.com

Sat., Dec. 13

WREATHS ACROSS AMERICA

@Fishkill Rural Cemetery, 801 Rt. 9, Fishkill; @St. Denis Cemetery, Hopewell Jct.

Volunteers remember those who served by placing holiday wreaths on the graves of Veterans. 10am.

To volunteer or sponsor a wreath, visit WreathsAcrossAmerica.org

Sun., Dec. 14

HOLIDAY TEA

@Brinckerhoff House Historic Site, Hopewell Jct.

Teas, finger sandwiches, and desserts will be served at decorated tables in the farmhouse. \$20 adults; \$10 children under 13. Limited seating. To reserve, contact Jan Bushey at (845) 242-5794. 12-6pm

Sun., Dec. 21

FAMILY FREE NIGHT

@Mid-Hudson Discovery Museum, Poughkeepsie

Free admission for families with children ages 0-12. Parent supervision required. 5:30-7:30pm. MHDM.org

Sunday, Dec. 28

HUDSON VALLEY FREE DAY

@Dia Beacon

Hudson Valley residents receive free admission to view the museum's collection of contemporary art.

10am-5pm. DiaArt.org.

Please check with event venues for up-to-date information.

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East Fishkill

Living 1749

Photo by Louisa Vilardi



From her Stormville kitchen to the classroom, Chef Genevieve Meli shares her passion for good food and a good life (see cover story).



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