MINNESOTA WOMEN'S PRESS

Let's Get Physical

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Sponsored Content

Children's Mental Health

BIPOC Mental Health Awareness

A cultural approach to Children's Mental Health

Contributed by Twanna Anderson, MACMH Community Engagement & Special Projects Director

It's July, the month dedicated to bringing attention to the distinctive aspects of BIPOC mental health. We invite you to join us in raising awareness and understanding of the importance of cultural approaches to children's mental health.

Throughout the month, MACMH will present podcasts from our Cultural Providers Network and spotlight Community Partners who focus on this work. There are many challenges to address:

What is the Impact of historical trauma on BIPOC mental health and how can we create safe environments to discuss what this means for our children? Historical trauma is the emotional and mental scars passed down through generations because of big traumas like genocides, slavery, pandemics, massacres, cultural suppression, discrimination, and forced relocations. Historical trauma can affect people's beliefs, how they see the world, and who they are.

How can we collectively begin to embrace ancestral healing techniques for BIPOC Mental Wellness? Traditional healing practices can be an important tool for mental health professionals to use when working with clients seeking to heal from trauma and address mental health issues. Providers can seek knowledge of these techniques and incorporate ancestral healing practices into their work, depending on their client's cultural and spiritual traditions. This approach can also be a catalyst for BIPOC communities to reclaim their Identities through healing and empowerment.

Embracing traditions and customs provides a bridge of support to BIPOC mental wellbeing and fosters cultural resilience. Our conversations throughout BIPOC Mental Health Awareness Month will explore these topics and so much more. We look forward to having you join the discussion. See you on YouTube!

MINNESOTA ASSOCIATION FOR children's mental health

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July is BIPOC Mental Health Awareness Month

YouTube

MACMH is producing two informational and inspiring podcast series throughout July joined by industry professionals and community partners discussing unique challenges faced by BIPOC children in Minnesota. We'll share resources available to families and caregivers to support their mental health journey. Subscribe to our YouTube Channel to be notified when there is new content.

CPN Cultural Providers Network

MINNESOTA ASSOCIATION FOR children's mental health

MACMH'S Community Podcast Series

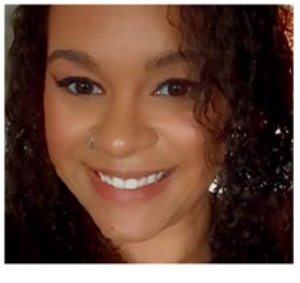
Podcast Series

A culturally specific podcast series focused on children's mental health. We're discussing new perspectives, learnings, and opportunities to the field.

Dr. Joel Hetler
Retired Clinical Psychologist and Founder of the Cultural Providers Network

Maria Moua
Licensed Marriage & Family Therapist and founder of her private practice, Maria Moua Therapy

Lambers Fisher
Licensed Marriage & Family Therapist & national speaker on multicultural awareness & diversity



Jade Miles
Licensed Professional Clinical Counselor & BIPOC Specialist at Fernbrook Family Center

Black Boys Healing

There are mental health issues specific to young Black boys that are not being addressed. Black boys need permission, encouragement, and safe spaces to be vulnerable. In this four-part series, our panel will discuss and provide tangible instruction on how we can work together to heal our communities.

The panel (clockwise from upper left): Bobby Arnold, Sam Simmons, Jamil Stamschoror-Lott, Leo Howard III, and Keem Anderson.

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PHOTO SARAH WHITING

"I'd rather regret the risks that didn't work out than the chances I didn't take at all."

— Simone Biles, Olympic gymnast

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Minnesota Women's Press has been sharing the stories of women since 1985, as one of the longest continuously published feminist platforms in the country. It is distributed free at 460 locations.

Our mission: Authentic community-based journalism that amplifies and inspires the stories, action steps, and leadership of powerful, everyday women (cis and trans) and nonbinary people.

Our vision: We all are parts of a greater whole. Our stronger future will be built from the collective energy of people who shift narratives to effect change.

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Cover: Marla Khan-Schwartz. Photo by Sarah Whiting. See story on page 8.

Minnesota Women's Press earned six 2023 awards from the Minnesota Newspaper Association, including community service leadership.

Upcoming magazine topics include Aging Bodies (September), Intergenerational (October)

Driven to Make Our Own Spaces

by Mikki Morrissette

As always with our themes, there were multiple approaches to take with this issue's topic. When we originally envisioned this theme at our annual staff retreat in September, the idea was to write about the state's professional women athletes. The stories that emerged as we began to pull ideas together for this issue, however, paint a picture of the ways that women are incorporating movement, fitness, and team camaraderie into their day-to-day lives.

- Marla Khan-Schwartz, for example, was diagnosed with breast cancer at 35. She found fellow survivors who train and compete together in dragon boat racing.
- Carla McClellan is a newly retired firefighter who shares what she did over the course of her career to stay physically and mentally sharp.
- We glimpse the inside of a women's sports bar — the third in the country and the first in the Midwest.
- We learn how physical activity inspires the imaginative working life of prolific Minnesota author Kate DiCamillo.
- Emily Ford shares thoughts about her upcoming adventure, aiming to be the second Black woman to finish the grueling Iditarod race with her sled dogs.

At womenspress.com, you will find a photo gallery from staff photographer Sarah Whiting focused on the post-championship celebration of the new Minnesota team in the Pro Women's Hockey League. Defender Nikki Nightengale, pictured on previous page, shares a few thoughts about her journey to this whirlwind year.

On a Personal Note

My career started in sports writing, when the community newspaper editor in Prior Lake — Bev Simonson — gave me a job at age 16 covering high school sports. I knew nothing about sports, but I was eager to get into journalism, so she opened a door.

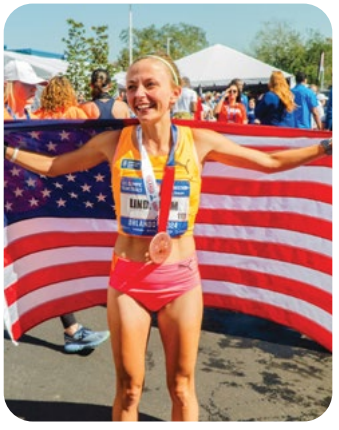
I recently looked up Bev's 2014 obituary and discovered that, decades ago, she had been a member of the Minnesota Women's Press Association (MWPA). Says magazine co-founder Mollie Hoben, the association was a women's advocacy group that supported media surveys to remind people of how rarely women's names were mentioned in the news — the impetus for the creation of this publication.

A 1999 media guidebook, *Covering the Community*, pointed out why the research findings were important: "Leaving out 52 percent of the population and vast numbers of minorities and special groups is a dangerous practice in a democracy."

To support our uniquely diverse media — which is suffering financially as most print publications are — please become a Badass member. womenspress.com/be-a-badass

Why Sports Matter to Me

compiled by Sophia Kulow



COURTESY PHOTO

Dakotah Lindwurm, Olympic Marathon

During my freshman year of high school, I was pretty horrible at running. That's why I fell in love with it so quickly. It forced me to practice quite a bit. When I'm not good at something, it lights a fire under me.

Towards the end of my junior year, I was looking at colleges. I couldn't imagine a life without being on a running team. I found Northern State in South Dakota, reached out to the college coach, and said, "Here are my times. I know that's not really what you'd like to see from an athlete, but I'll work really hard." I started as a college walk-on.

When I neared the end of my college career, my coach thought I could be a successful marathoner and even qualify for the Olympic trials. I was all in from that moment.

I've found success at each level by running farther and competing in longer races. The biggest challenge has been convincing others that I would be successful. To make the Olympics, I had to convince my current coach, Chris Lundstrom, that although I'm not your typical athlete, I'll get there.

When I was younger, my mom would say, "Dakotah, I don't know what you're gonna do in this world, but it's gonna be something really, really great." She planted a seed in my mind. If I kept trying, I'd do something great.

PHOTO ADAM KAZILSKY

Alexandera Houchin, Mountain Biking

My introduction to cycling came through urban bike commuting. It was just a form of transportation to get to and from work. That turned into long-distance road bike touring around the country.

I got curious about what riding on dirt was like and bought a mountain bike off Craigslist. In 2018, I did my first long-distance mountain bike–specific race, called the Colorado Trail Race. I fell in love with riding mountain bikes.

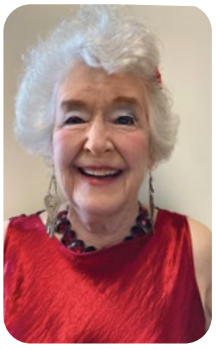
It evolved into a spiritual space for me. I've used bike travel as a way to deepen understanding of my own identity — who I am and what it means, especially in the context of being a Native woman.

I didn't go into it with the intention of creating ceremony, but I slowly started dressing up with earrings and other jewelry, bringing my medicine pouch, and including other parts of my indigenous self in this non-native space.

This year, I'm focusing on trauma within my identity and trying to mourn so that I can heal. I have long days by myself where I can ugly cry, I can laugh, and I can have no reaction to the emotions that I'm feeling at all. The hope is that I come out the other side as a lighter and better version of myself.

It's hard to have to look at yourself. These races are so honest — you cannot hide, you cannot lie to yourself, you cannot escape. You have to face who you are and what you've put into it.

COURTESY PHOTO



Barb Franklin, Belly Dancing

In 1969, I lived in Baltimore and became a member of the Maryland Company of Middle Eastern Dancers. After I moved to Minnesota, I discovered Cassandra Shore's teaching. I am a member of the Khazanah Dance Ensemble she founded in 2013 for dancers over 40.

Belly dancing is great exercise. It helps me overcome problems with my joints. I may have fatigue — I am 80 years old — but I keep dancing. I listen, and then express the rhythm and feel of the music. I aspire to control each part of my body — to move just one part of the body clearly without moving the rest of me. It helps that I love dressing up and being in bright, shiny things.

We often dance at festivals and in long-term care facilities. I am with a great bunch of women who have become friends.

theguildofmiddleeasterndance.org

COURTESY PHOTO

Jennifer Gisslen Lee, Swimming

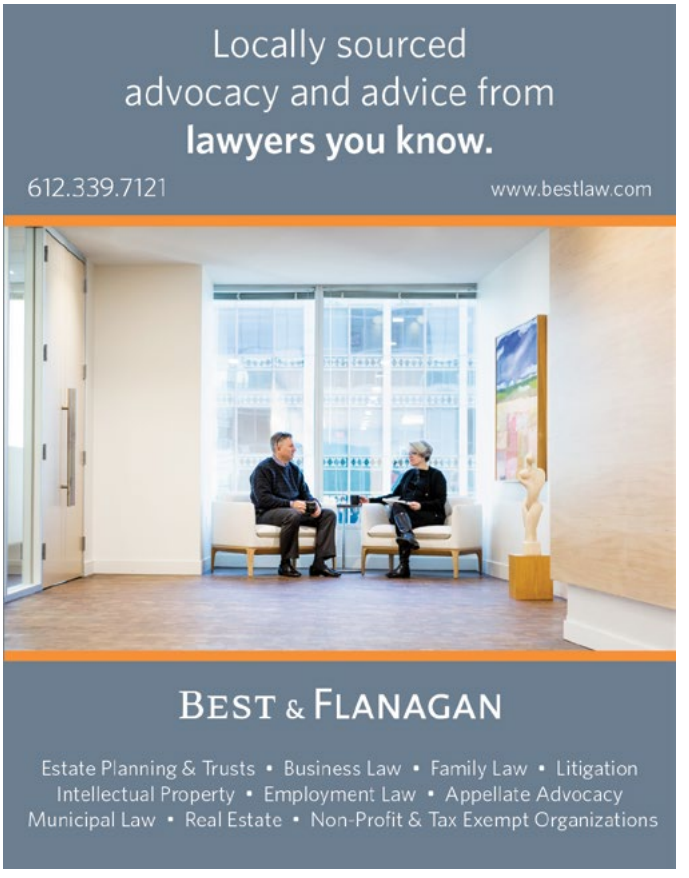
I returned to a gym recently after several years away. My mind and body were craving a place to swim. My shoulders constantly felt creaky and achy and tight, and swimming was the only thing I could think of that might relieve some of that.

Being in the water takes me back to my youth. The family near us put in an above-ground pool. Their youngest girl was my age, so I got additional access. We would hold our breath and dive to the bottom and do as many laps as we could, and our skin would turn a dark-golden color by mid-summer. We smelled of chlorine. The colors of our swimsuits faded fast from repeated use.

Learning how to swim, and swimming competitively for a handful of years, is one of the life skills that I'm most grateful for. I can come back to it after years and years away, and my body remembers the motions. My mind relaxes and drifts back to those happy years of my childhood. It feels like yesterday when I'm in the pool, even though at least 30 years have passed. MWP

Next month's theme is focused on Asian American voices. The Tapestry question: "How do you experience racism?" Send to editor@womenspress.com by July 10.

Find a young woman's perspective on adapted sports online at womenspress.com/tapestry



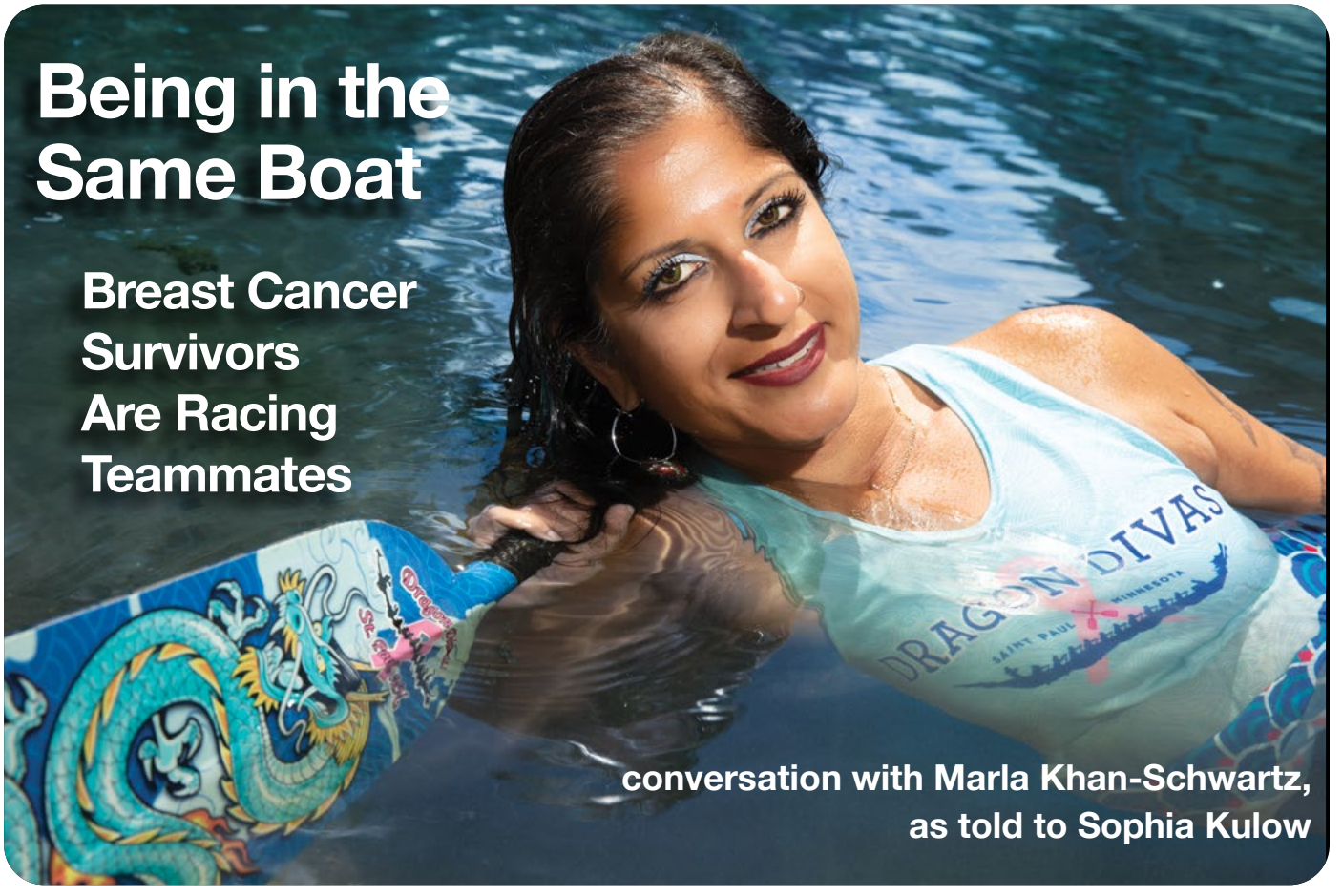


PHOTO SARAH WHITING

Being in the Same Boat

Breast Cancer Survivors Are Racing Teammates

conversation with Marla Khan-Schwartz, as told to Sophia Kulow

At one time, breast cancer survivors, especially those who had lymph nodes removed, were advised not to use their upper body for anything strenuous. In 1996, however, a Canadian doctor tested that concept and found that breast cancer survivors who did strength training for the repetitive motion of dragon boating had a better quality of life. Research reveals the value of exercise for cancer survivors.

Tell us about the journey that led you to dragon boats.

Never in my wildest dreams did I think I would be part of a competitive sports team. My accomplishments in high school were academic — orchestra and Science Olympiad.

I've been a full-time social worker for almost 20 years. I love it. I specialize mostly with adult mental health clients who live in nursing facilities, and streamlining folks from institutions into safer places with community-based services. I've also been trained at the FEMA facility in Alabama for emergency response tasks.

I'm a breast cancer survivor. I was diagnosed when I was 35. Cancer can sometimes leave you with a hot mess of anxiety. Am I going to get sick again? It's also really hard, after you are technically in remission and after the fast-paced treatment regimen, to be left with all of your emotions. It's almost like you lost a second full-time job. What do you do with those emotions when you are no longer too busy for them?

In college, I started running a little. About three days after chemo stopped, when I started to feel better, I ran, bald, around the Lake Nokomis area. It helped curb nausea and symptoms from the chemo. I'm moving into my twelfth year of remission this year.

In October 2022, I was at a routine oncology appointment. They had a library of resources. I saw the brochure for Dragon Divas, with a picture of a boat and a big cancer ribbon on the front. I learned about a local team of breast cancer survivors. The team doesn't care how old you are or what your prior sports experience has been.

It also doesn't matter what stage of cancer you are in. There are active paddlers who have metastatic breast cancer, people who have survived for decades, and people who completed treatment last year. Our age range, I believe, is currently from [survivors in their] 30s to [a woman who is] 89.

How has this been challenging, and an act of healing?

I felt welcomed immediately when I joined the team. The biggest challenge was learning the timing, so you don't hit the paddle in front or behind. I also needed to learn the different

calls: drag your paddles, draw, sit ready, paddles up, go. The first six paddles of the race are important. They can make or break how quickly the boat can lift and increase speed. We paddle to the beat of the drum during a race.

I was told to forget anything I might know about canoeing, rowing, and kayaking, because this is a totally different way of moving through the water.

Anyone who has breast cancer has a completely different story from the next person. However, we have this commonality that brings us all together. During our practices, we have a chance to talk about anything we want to say. Often people will talk about good things that are happening in their life. We talk about people we've lost over time. There's also something about being on the water that's healing, especially because we've all gone through cancer.

At practice on Saturday mornings, it is very quiet. When we get on the water and start paddling, the only thing we hear is the moving water. Sometimes our coach will have us close our eyes to build confidence in our paddling technique.

It is empowering to listen to how we all work together as a team by listening to how the water is moving beneath us.

On Monday night practices, we often get beautiful sunsets. It's nice to see another day go by. When [you go] through breast cancer treatment, and you are stuck in that pattern of ambiguity for so long, you don't know if there is going to be another day. Looking at that sunset, I feel lucky that I'm able to see it.

I've learned that it's not about winning, but about showing up, supporting my teammates, and learning from them. It also has helped show my family that I can survive after cancer. For my kids to be able to see me race means everything.

During a race day, there is usually a flower ceremony honoring breast cancer survivors. We throw petals or flowers into the water to honor survivors and those we have lost. We're planning to compete in France in 2026, for the International Breast Cancer Festival. There will be thousands of other women who have gone through breast cancer treatment.

As a woman of color, participating in this sport resonates with me, not just from the lens of inclusivity, but because of how the health benefits of dragon boat paddling can potentially help reduce health disparities. I would love to see other women of color and breast cancer survivors join a team. MWP

Details

- Phalen festival in Saint Paul, July 13, dragonfestival.org
- facebook.com/DragonDivas
- dragondivasmn.org

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Minnesotan Aims to Be Second Black Woman to Finish Iditarod

submitted by Emily Ford

In April, I finished the last of a series of qualifying races that enables me to compete in the highly competitive 2025 Alaskan Iditarod race. I will attempt to become the second Black woman to cross the southern route of Alaska with a team of sled dogs, traveling more than 1,000 miles.

As a long-form race, there will be little sleep and tough terrain. It's just you out there, taking care of 16 dogs. All of them need new booties at every stop — that means I will take off and put on 64 dog booties every time we stop. It might seem like a small task, but not when you are tired and cold.

PHOTO WHITNEY MCLAREN, MUSHINGPHOTOS.COM

Emily Ford hugs Laurakins and Rolls Royce after her finish at the 2024 Kobuk 440, which qualified her to compete in the 2025 Iditarod.

I also expect the race will be the most beautiful thing I've ever done. Alaska in the winter, along the interior and the coast, is mesmerizing.

After my partner Anna and I met, she found the kennel we now live at part-time in Alaska. The kennel owner, Kathy Fredrick, was looking for handlers for the 2023 season, and chooses all of the dogs that live at the kennel, with a keen eye for good leaders and well-bred dogs.

We have 36 dogs that we take care of. I am particularly keen on the "luxury car" litter. Four siblings — Rolls Royce, Beamer, Lamborghini (Lambo), and Porsche — have become a staple on the race team. We will aim to run 2,000 miles together before the start of the Iditarod.

I started off my adventuring life as a solo backpacker. I grew up in Brooklyn Park, but spent time on my grandparents' farm in northern Minnesota. That prepared me for brutal snowstorms and ripping winds that created snow drifts that would swallow my little-kid body whole, if not for snowshoes to help me float. My mom was a classic Midwestern mother who bundled her kids up and brought us outdoors no matter the weather.

Eventually, I was spending 69 days hiking 1,200 miles through the Ice Age Trail, among others, and never questioned my ability to do so, because I was set up to believe that I could achieve anything. I love the sacred space that is the wilderness; no tree, stream, or wolf cares about my gender, my race, or where I land on the economic spectrum.

I have always considered dogs my best friends, and sought out dog-sitting jobs from college professors. On my website, I describe the personality of all of our dogs. Gabby is retired from racing, and recently turned 13. I love her so much.

Running with sled dogs is a slight departure from solo backpacking, but not as much as you think — you are not with other humans, living with full self-sufficiency in the backcountry, and do all troubleshooting on your own.

Now that I have qualified for the Iditarod, this summer is all about fundraising. The whole season will cost about $50,000. I pay for food, vet bills, flights, and much more. I have a flexible job, thankfully, and will return to Alaska from Minnesota in the fall for training.

If you are interested in sponsoring a dog's food, harnesses, entry fee, or flight home after the race, visit emilyontrail.com to learn more.

PHOTO SARAH WHITING

The Inner and Outer Life of a Firefighter

conversation with Carla McClellan, as told to Mikki Morrissette

Back in 1994, I decided to try out for the fire department along with a woman I trained with at the gym. She was applying in Saint Paul; I wanted to apply in Minneapolis. Her test came up first. This really strong woman broke her leg during the test. I thought to myself, "I'm not going to try for a job where you break your leg taking a test."

It took me a few years to recover from that. In 1999, I was working in Richfield as a dispatcher. Every time the firefighters would come back from calls, I would be full of questions about what they did on the job. Some of them encouraged me to try out. I didn't tell my dad, who was a firefighter in the Air Force, because he wouldn't want that life for me. But I went through the testing process in Minneapolis with thousands of people (unlike now, when the numbers have dwindled).

I didn't think I stood a chance, competing against more than a thousand (mostly) men in that room. The Women's Firefighters Association did prep work with me on the side; partly to make sure I could pass the physical test. Back then, you had to pull up a ladder, pull a hose up two flights of stairs, chop as many times and as hard as you could, and start a raggedy old pull saw. You had to drag a dummy with gear, which was about 180 pounds, through a maze to simulate taking him out of the building. You had to throw a fan, which was about 50 pounds, up to the window and hang it.

As I recall, if you did the physical test in under four minutes, you got 100 percent. I did it in about 3:40, so I passed the physical part. Then I had to pass a psychological exam, a drug test, and an interview with a panel of eight people.

I got the big letter that said I passed. Then I had to tell my dad. He was very concerned. His history of the fire department included unexplained incidents where Black firefighters died or were severely injured. He told me point blank, "Those guys will throw you down the fire pole."

The pay as a cadet is minuscule. You have to spend five days a week, eight hours a day, going through mandatory training in the classroom. They have you squeeze through tunnels, to make sure you're not afraid of that experience. They test you on ladders and heights.

After that, I went through Minneapolis training to learn rules. Back then, there was a 40-foot ladder you would raise straight up into the air, fully extended skyward. Candidates held ropes from four corners of the elevated ladder as a firefighter — being tested for comfort with heights — had to climb up, go over the top, then climb down the other side. A few people got stuck at the top and had to quit.

You had to learn hazmat training, how to use a self-contained breathing apparatus — then they sent you out to learn the truck.

I invited my dad to graduation. He was super worried, because during his time in the 1950s and 1960s, the fire

department was mostly white males. It still was when I joined, but I would do the best job I could and stay in good shape to work as hard as everyone else out there.

Running Into Danger

Growing up with my sister, there were things that scared her that I was not afraid of. My sister says I've always been this way. Our school bus crashed into a car once. I asked the driver to let me out. I ran over to the car and checked on the lady the bus had run into. My sister says I moved so fast; I didn't even hesitate.

Another time, when I was about 13 years old, she was cooking hamburgers while I was in the other room. I heard her scream and saw flames reflected off the wall in the kitchen. She had started a grease fire. She was pouring water on it; I threw a lid and some flour on it. The only fear I had was wondering if my sister was okay, and how much trouble we would be in when our parents got home. I guess I've always thought about safety, and helping people — I'm just wired that way.

If you think about things too much, yes, it's scary. But I could train and focus. I even learned meditation to get my brain wired right about going into difficult environments.

Staying Fit

To stay in shape on the job, many of the guys would run. For me it was lifting. I always wanted to put more than 45-pound plates on the leg press.

But you do have to honor your body. I ruptured my Achilles on a call when I was running up stairs, requiring multiple surgeries. There were hernias. Back injuries. I spent a lot of time at the hospital thinking I would not be able to go back to work.

I thought about how many times athletes have to come back from injuries. They have to train again and again. I realized I just had to have that mentality too. It's a beautiful thing. You just strengthen and keep going.

My colleagues were always testing me, so I had to be mentally tough as well. I was sent to one of the roughest firehouses in the city, where the Vietnam vets worked. I walked into the station like Miss Sunshine and simply asked what they wanted me to do. That might have helped me gain respect. I knew I might be mentally stronger than some, and physically stronger than others, so I simply made myself part of the team. Some of them were waiting for an opportunity to make me quit.

One of the Vietnam vets scared everyone; people said he was the meanest guy they knew. He took me aside one day and showed me hose-handling techniques. A fire hose can have 150 pounds of pressure behind it. He said, "You're not that big, and it's a challenge for me, so I'm going to show you what I do, to keep it from flying out of your hands and knocking you over."

That was beautiful. Later I was able to show younger kids the same techniques.

In Retirement

My oldest nephew has cerebral palsy and needs full care. I am newly retired, and I intend to help my family out. My father recently got on dialysis, so three times a week I take him to appointments. I help out my in-laws. There is just so much to do. I get up at 6am to work out. When I was working, 24-hour shifts ate up a big chunk of time.

No matter which station I was at, I met the neighbors. I loved sharing the energy of the fire department with the people, because we're planted in the middle of their neighborhood.

I took peer classes, and touched base with all the police officers and other firefighters to see how they were doing, because we're all part of this whole big system that runs the City of Minneapolis. I felt hugely honored to be a part of that system that protects our neighbors.

Even though I busted my butt every day, I think about all the connections and all the wonderful things that have happened around that job. There are so many kids who remember me who I don't even remember.

I always have Martin Luther King Jr.'s words in my head — how many people have sacrificed so many things before me. I'm driven by something bigger, trying to be the light for other people who are having a dark day. That is what it comes down to. MWP

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A Bar of Their Own

PHOTO SARAH WHITING

reported by Amy Gage

A Bar of Their Own is humming on a midweek evening a few months after the pioneering space opened on Franklin Avenue in Minneapolis. The all-day waitlists and standing-room-only crowds have lessened a bit, except for big events like the Professional Women's Hockey League (PWHL), a Lynx basketball or Aurora soccer game, or an ultimate frisbee watch party.

"Lots of athletes come in," says Jillian Hiscock, who invites favorites like Rebekkah Brunson, Billie Jean King, and Emma Greco to add their names to the signature wall.

Only the third women's sports bar in the country — and the first in the Midwest — A Bar of Their Own emanates a friendly, feel-good, female-focused spirit rarely found amid the forced exuberance of most bars. At the front door is a cut-out face shot of Maya Moore, the Minnesota Lynx player inducted into the Women's Basketball Hall of Fame. Women's hockey jerseys and other sports photos adorn the walls, including the iconic shot of then–Minnesota Gophers point guard Lindsay Whalen wrapped in a friendly headlock by center Janelle McCarville.

Each of the 12 television sets — five above the bar and seven in the adjoining dining room — is tuned to women's sports. And only women's sports. It may be the new Pro Volleyball Federation; a WNBA game featuring top NCAA recruits Kamilla Cardoso and Angel Reese; a college softball game; or, as it was in May, PWHL Minnesota's games en route to winning the 2024 national championship.

"If you prioritize the most excluded folks, you benefit everyone," says Hiscock, 41, a lifelong sports fan who participated in tennis, gymnastics. and softball at Mankato West High School. One of her Scarlets jerseys hangs on the wall.

What "Welcoming" Means

While Hiscock kept the classic wooden bar and the "Established 1979" floor plate from the previous neighborhood hangout, Tracy's Saloon, nearly everything else has changed. She brightened the dark walls, stocked the gender-neutral restrooms with free menstrual hygiene products, and created food and drink menus amenable to various tastes and preferences.

Alongside the usual beef burgers are turkey and vegan varieties, plus four salads with protein choices. "It's not just bar food," Hiscock says. "It comes down to inclusivity."

That goes for drinks, as well. Sixteen of the 18 beers on tap are brands that are "owned, made, or led" by women, nonbinary people, or trans folks. Those who want an NA beverage can choose from four mocktails.

The least tangible aspect of A Bar of Their Own might also be the most intentional: the sheer joy of the place, the feeling of being welcome, and wanted.

Hiscock asks each prospective employee to "demonstrate an example of how they've created inclusive spaces." A Code of Conduct is posted on the website and displayed throughout the bar: "Everyone at A Bar of Their Own should be safe from harm." Forbidden behaviors include biased language, sexual misconduct, and "abuse of power."

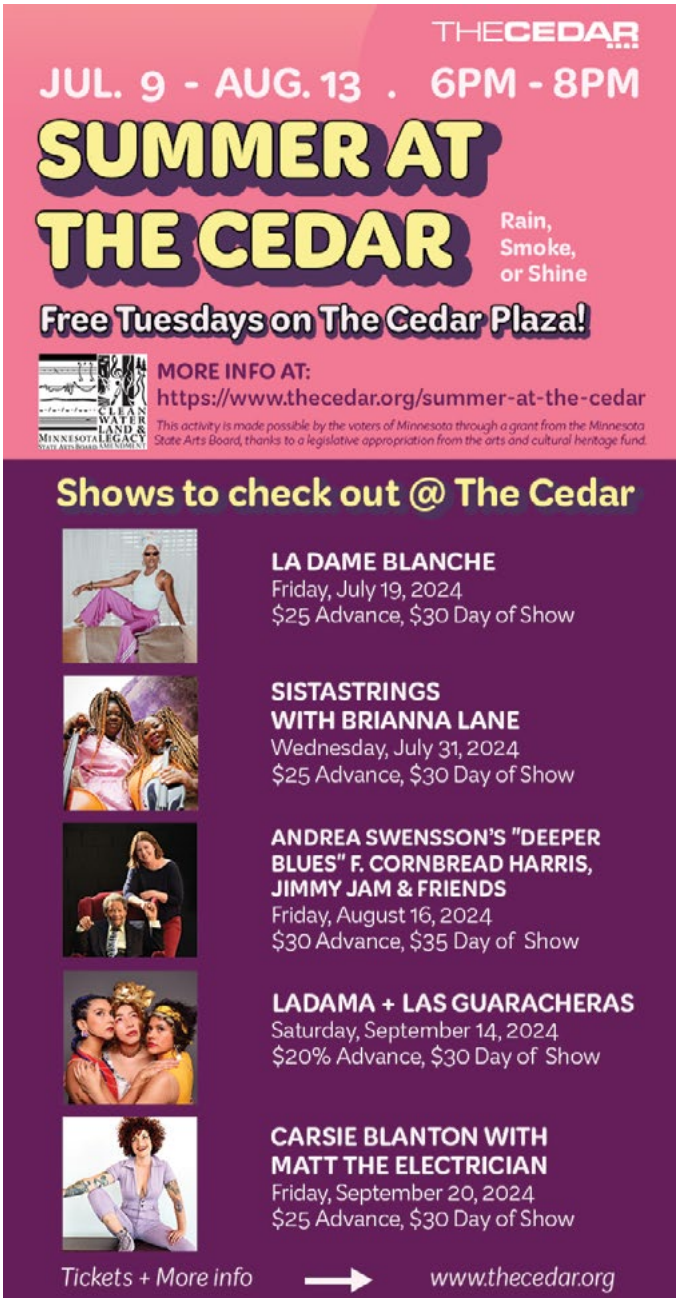
There has been some anonymous criticism of the bar, Hiscock says — a social media comment that "nobody watches women's sports," an anti-trans "Keep Female Sports Female" sticker plastered to a front window — but the more than 8,000 online fans are standing up to it.

Not for Women Only

Interviewed during the Minnesota Timberwolves postseason run, Hiscock sidestepped whether she'd ever screen men's sports, even though she welcomes all gender identities, including men, in her establishment. More important to her is the volume of calls from people accustomed to not finding their favorite women's sports on TV, wondering whether a particular game is being aired. "It's not easy to be a women's sports fan," Hiscock says.

A Bar of Their Own host Kristen Hutchison, 33, played rugby in college and is a competitive rower. "My whole life I never thought there would be women's sports on TV in a public place," says Hutchison, who is also a medical writer. Older women customers tell her they didn't get the opportunity to practice or play as girls. Hutchison relishes seeing parents bring in their daughters.

Hiscock grins when asked what prepared her to run a socially progressive bar: "I'm a woman accustomed to being underestimated and overlooked." MWP



Kate DiCamillo's Writing Life Is Fueled by Walking

reported by Maria Ries

There likely would be fewer Kate DiCamillo books in the world if it were not for her daily walks zigzagging through Minneapolis. Movement gives her the distance to see a story with fresh eyes and the perspective to evaluate her work. "I'll do multiple [writing] sessions, so to go out and walk in between really helps clarify things," she says.

The acclaimed author logs six miles a day with her mini goldendoodle Ramona, and later walks two more miles solo, meandering through her neighborhood. Moving her legs moves her brain, she says, shaking out solutions for plot points and character development.

"I'm walking around muttering as I walk. Ramona will turn her head and [indicate], 'Are you talking to me?'" says DiCamillo. "I find it's very helpful [to my writing]: paying attention, seeing the world, connecting yourself to the world, to the people around you, to the trees around you. There's a great saying some monk once said: *solvitur ambulando.* That's Latin for 'It shall be solved through walking.' The answer will come about what to do next in the story."

PHOTO COURTESY CANDLEWICK PRESS

Kate DiCamillo with Ramona

2024 already has been a busy year for DiCamillo, including the release of a novel called *Ferris* and the first book in an early-reader trilogy, *Orris and Timble*, which *Publishers Weekly* likened to *Frog and Toad*.

DiCamillo lives near Lake Harriet, but prefers quieter residential routes, mixing it up each day in order to prioritize muttering over socializing. She describes Minnesota as "absolutely central" to her success as a writer. DiCamillo has written more than 30 books for young readers, and has sold more than 44 million copies. She is one of a handful of writers who has won two Newbery Medals, which she keeps in the back of a desk drawer.

All those stories have unspooled on looping squares of sidewalk. DiCamillo walks whenever she can. If it's raining, she dons her rain jacket and rain boots. If it's snowing, she slips into snow boots with cleat-like bottoms.

"Just yesterday, I had a wonderful insight as I was walking in the evening," she says. "It wasn't a problem solved as much as a door that opened in a story that I'm working on. That kind of thing happens all the time for me when I'm walking."

It's been 24 years since *Because of Winn-Dixie* catapulted her into national recognition. She continues to hunt for the details to make a story sing. For instance, her bestselling pig protagonist Mercy Watson's love for buttered toast came from an impassioned tangent DiCamillo's friend went on as the author drove her to the airport.

"She started to talk about the virtues of toast and how it should have a great deal of butter and how it should be spread to the edges," says DiCamillo. "I knew something had been missing from that story, and that was it. I've learned to pay attention to when the details come up. I write it down. Sometimes it will be years until I actually use it, but I know enough to know, 'That's a thing.'"

Her passion for storytelling is a balm for troubled times. "We need stories to remind ourselves who we are," DiCamillo says. "I think it's more important now."

Orris and Timble, for example, flowed from a desire DiCamillo felt during the pandemic to make readers feel safe. "It provided that comfort and love when I was making it," she says, "and then it provides that comfort and love to the reader."

Far from a solitary and sedate life, she indicates, writing requires movement of the body, heart, and mind. DiCamillo says she's never lost her inner child. "I remember it all so clearly: the magic, all that sense of possibility and also terror. Everything is so vivid."

She relates to Beverly Cleary, who gave an interview when she turned 100. "She was talking about how that inner child is right here, on the surface. I thought: 'That's the way it is for me too.'"

DiCamillo, now 60, receives fan mail from young readers. Candlewick, her publisher, sends her 30 to 50 letters a week.

Even when it's raining, even when the writing is hard — and she says it usually is — DiCamillo keeps walking and writing, propelled by a sense of gratitude for her rich creative work. "I can't believe how lucky I am," she says. "I found what I'm supposed to do, I get to do it, and I get paid to do it. Unbelievable." MWP

What's New at womenspress.com

story development designed for stronger conversations about statewide values, solutions, and action steps

PHOTO MIKKI MORRISSETTE

Minnesota senators Zaynab Mohamed and Clare Oumou Verbeten; Kelly Morrison (who is running for U.S. Senate this year); and Minnesota representative candidate Huldah Hiltsley

"Empowered Women Voters and Candidates Unite"

Lieutenant Governor Peggy Flanagan, U.S. Congresswoman Angie Craig, and Texas-based advocate Amanda Zurawski were among the women who spoke at a June Women Winning fundraiser. The event was designed to help launch 2024 pro-choice candidates in Minnesota, several of whom are trying to unseat anti-choice candidates in Greater Minnesota.

Zurawski shared her experience in an anti-choice state. She was not allowed to have reproductive health care after complications at 18 weeks led to membrane rupture and the certain loss "of our baby girl" in utero. "It took three days, and then a near-death crash into septic shock, before my doctor could finally provide the health care that I needed," Zurawksi said. "I was transferred to the ICU. My family flew in from Indiana because they were told they weren't sure whether I was going to make it through the night."

womenspress.com/diversity-in-politics-series

"We have to understand that health care doesn't just happen within the hospital or clinic or health care delivery setting. A larger percentage of our health and well-being comes from the social environment in which we live."

— Dr. Rachel Hardeman, at "Let's Talk About Black Women and Mental Health" forum

womenspress.com/collective-health

PHOTO MIKKI MORRISSETTE

Dr. Catherine Squire, Dr. Rachel Hardeman, Dr. Taiyon Coleman, and KRSM radio host Andrea Pierre at our June 2 forum

Quotes from a Documentary About Housing First

- "If you don't want affordable housing in your backyard, you're going to end up with homeless people in your front yard."
- "Would you hire me if I didn't have a place to take a bath?"
- "I was hit by a drunk driver. My first surgery cost me $47,000. That bankrupted me." MMP

Find the story at womenspress.com/housing

Also see ongoing coverage at womenspress.com/addressing-gender-based-violence-series

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COURTESY PHOTO

How to Help Small Farmers

reported by Demetria Dickinson

Noreen Thomas (l) with her daughter-in-law Melany, who is living in the farmhouse with her family — fifth and sixth generations of family ownership.

The Minnesota Department of Agriculture's Emerging Farmers Office (EFO) was created three years ago to help solve some of the problems that small farmers face. Patrice Bailey, assistant commissioner of the EFO, says that these problems include access to money, land, mental health support, and insurance. Challenges can be even greater when the farmer is an immigrant, or is not familiar with the jargon used in documents like grant applications. "It becomes a huge barrier of understanding," Bailey says.

Noreen Thomas, who operates Doubting Thomas Farms, lists additional challenges for small producers. The lack of accessible packaging infrastructure means that she and her employees need to package their products by hand. When small farmers do have access to equipment, it's old, difficult to use, and usually needs parts that are hard to get. "You're not going to buy new equipment. You can't afford it," says Thomas.

The economy of scale means that big companies provide goods that are cheaper and more convenient than those of small producers. Thomas says that greenwashing — pretending that a product is environmentally friendly — is also used to lure consumers away from small producers.

"If [a package] says 'farmer-owned,'" she says, "ask for names and whether the farmers are regional or local. If they can't name [the farmers], it's greenwashing."

Maisie Ganzler recently published *You Can't Market Manure at Lunchtime*. Written for brands attempting leadership in sustainability, the book explains problems that arise when small farms attempt to make wholesale connections. These include lack of land, which prevents scale-up; lack of truck drivers, limiting the frequency of deliveries; and incompatibility with delayed corporate payment schedules. "A farm grossing $500,000 would struggle to support a family without an additional source of income," Ganzler writes. "A small business won't survive paying all its expenses today and getting its revenue six months later."

Organic farms, which promote ecological balance, have additional challenges. The work, fees, and requirements for organic certification can be a significant barrier, says Thomas.

Ganzler recounts in her book a conversation with a farmer about the difficulty of complying with organic regulations: "I have one field. If I get a fungal outbreak, I need to be able to use a fungicide as an emergency measure. I can't afford to [till back into the ground] an entire season's worth of produce to maintain organic certification."

She writes that "requiring a small farmer to do the requisite record-keeping for organic certification, pay the certification fee, and tie their hands completely so they [can] never ever use pesticides or fungicides, might be counter to ensuring their success."

continued on next page

Many people in the agricultural sector point to community-supported agriculture programs (CSAs) as a solution to the problems faced by small farmers. This is a great way for consumers to get regular deliveries of fresh produce while supporting local farms. because it can "reduce financial risk, increase stability, and build relationships" for farmers, says Assistant Commissioner Bailey.

But Thomas, who has contributed to CSAs in partnership with other farmers, says that it is a young person's project that "takes an incredible amount of energy and tenacity." Selling wholesale to restaurants, schools, co-ops, and other institutions can be a better option, she suggests.

Rachel Wandrei, Minnesota Grown's marketing manager, says the organization is a partnership between the Department of Agriculture and over 1,300 farms and farmers markets around the state. It provides a license and a unifying brand for farmers whose products are at least 80 percent grown and raised in Minnesota.

Doubting Thomas Farms is a participant, using the packaging cost-share program. Thomas says that local, informal connections between farmers are essential, especially as support to young women farmers. Local collaborations allow small farmers to share shipping costs, teach each other how to use old equipment, and help each other with applications for loans, grants, and certifications. "Women learn by community," she says. MWP

Minnesota drivers renewing their license plates can pay extra for an agriculture-specific plate to support Minnesota's 4-H and Future Farmers of America.

Noreen Thomas urges consumers to promote favorite farmers on social media. "It's important to vote with your dollar. You're making a decision on how the land is treated, who will farm the land, how the animals are treated."

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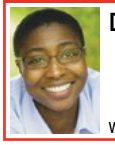
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Grace & Grit: A Dance Compilation

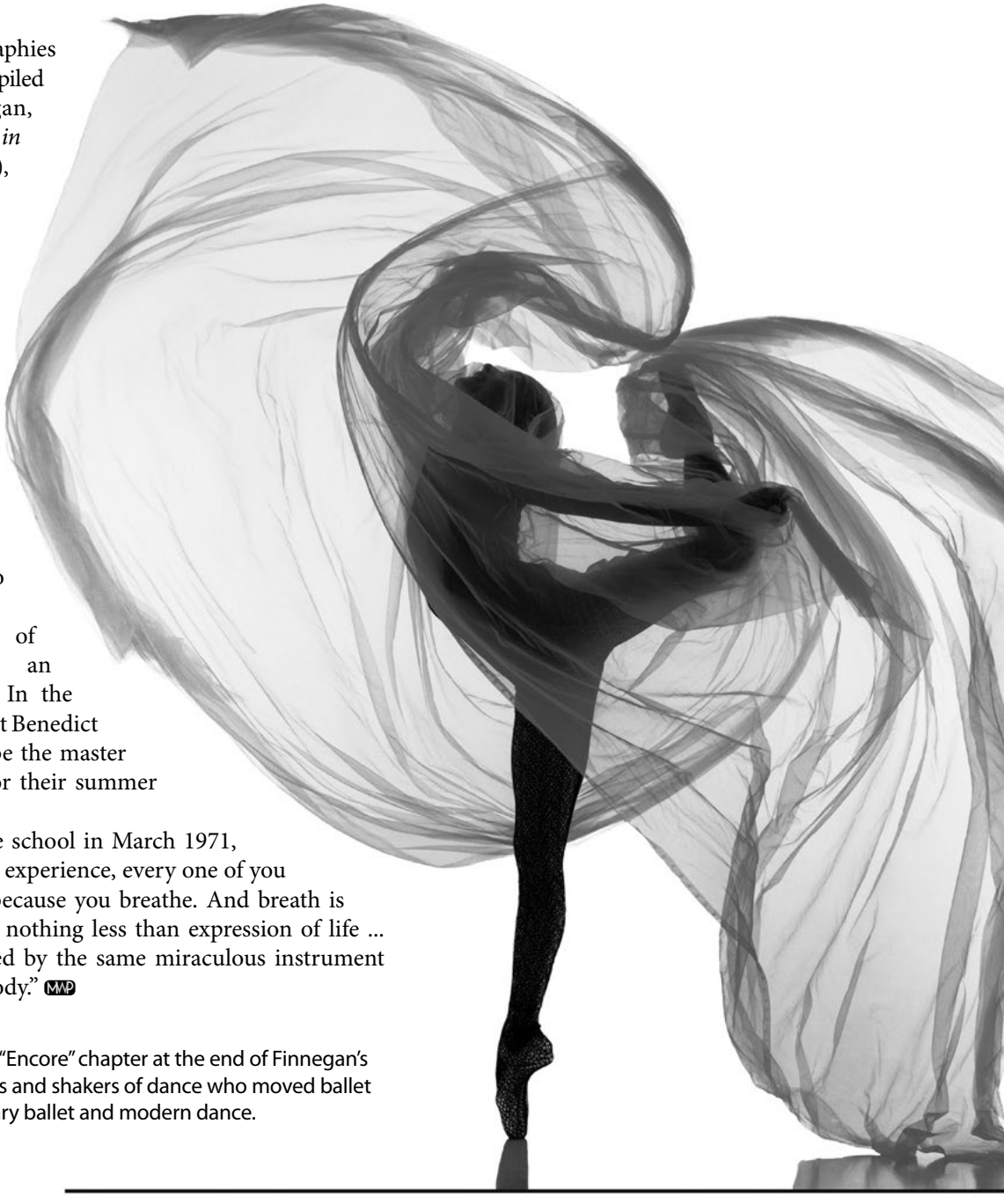
Among the short biographies in an encyclopedia compiled by Georgia Finnegan, *Grace & Grit: A History of Ballet in Minnesota* (Afton Press, 2024), is the story of Margret Dietz (1913–1972), a German-born expressionist dancer, choreographer, and teacher who "continued to dance to keep her spirit lifted as the dark shadows of Hitler's control deepened."

She and 12 other anti-Nazi dancers were required to entertain officers at the Russian front. Dietz was the only one to return alive. Eventually she immigrated to the U.S.

In 1966, the University of Minnesota offered Dietz an associate professor position. In the early 1970s, the College of Saint Benedict in St. Joseph invited her to be the master teacher and choreographer for their summer workshops.

In a convocation talk at the school in March 1971, Dietz said: "Experience or no experience, every one of you has a relationship to dance, because you breathe. And breath is movement, and movement is nothing less than expression of life ... Your movements are produced by the same miraculous instrument the dancer uses: the human body." MMP

The story of Dietz is found in the "Encore" chapter at the end of Finnegan's book, about the historical movers and shakers of dance who moved ballet beyond the barre to contemporary ballet and modern dance.



Sally Rousse, co-founder of James Sewell Ballet, 1993, from *Grace & Grit*. Photo by Erik Saulitis.

WIN A WEEKEND AT ARC RETREAT COMMUNITY

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