

Astor

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VOL 9, ISSUE 1 – 2020

Raising Chickens

FOR FOOD,
COMPANIONSHIP
AND MORE!

Bronx Bound Books

THE BOOK STORE
THAT COMES TO YOU

Lady Gaga's

BORN THIS WAY
FOUNDATION

#BeKind21

COVID-19

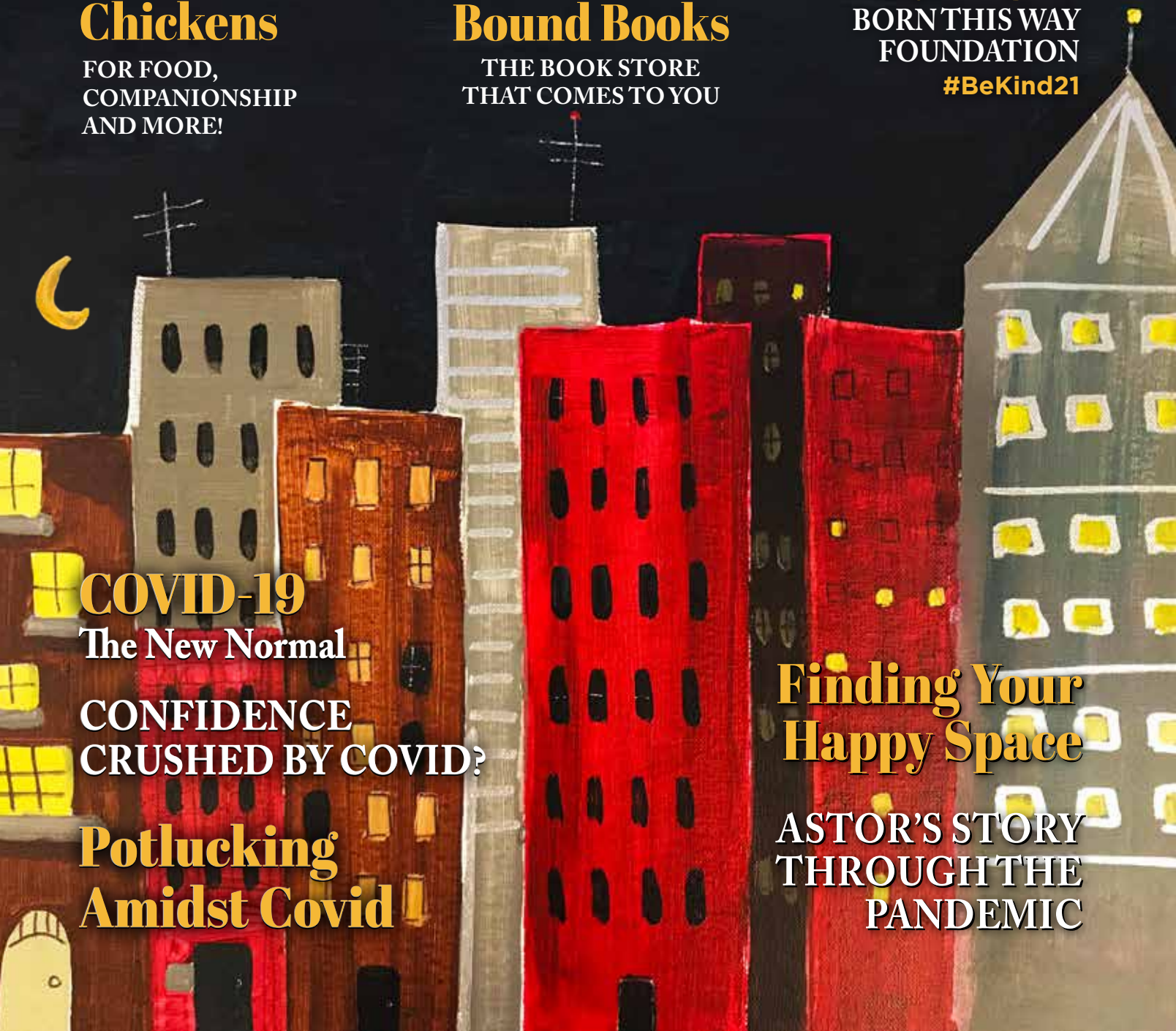
The New Normal

CONFIDENCE
CRUSHED BY COVID?

Potlucking
Amidst Covid

Finding Your
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ASTOR'S STORY
THROUGH THE
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A painting created
by a student in Astor's
Expressive Arts Program

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Contributors

Astor

...BECAUSE EVERY CHILD
DESERVES A CHILDHOOD

MARI GARCIA

Mari Garcia is a hotel sales & marketing expert, with extensive experience leading both on-site and remote teams. In her 14 years with Hilton Worldwide, she directed the sales & marketing efforts for various key assets including opening the Conrad Miami, leading a number of brand transitions of Blackstone owned assets, and repositioning the Hilton Aruba. Her forte is driving revenues with strategic and focused sales execution. Mari earned a bachelor's degree from Cornell University's School of Hotel Administration.

Outside of her love for hotels, Mari is fond of architecture, art, wine & travel, with the ultimate adventure involving a combination of all four of these. Mari and her partner are very happy to call the Hudson Valley their second home.

MOLLIE MAGARINO

Mollie Magarino is a Human Resources Coordinator for Astor. She has a husband and two children at home and spends most of her spare time attempting to keep them fed and happy. She was born and raised in Mississippi, but has called New York's beautiful Hudson Valley "home" for the past 12 years. She has been writing short stories and poetry for as long as her memory extends, and is constantly absorbed in the pursuit of new ways to infuse joy and optimism into everyday life.

MELINDA VAN FLEET

Melinda Van Fleet is a multi-passionate success coach, speaker, writer, and business consultant who helps women believe in themselves and take action. Melinda believes many women are stuck and not living their best lives - and they can! Utilizing her over 25 years of experience building businesses, and her passion for working with people, Melinda teaches women real life tools they can use to improve their relationships, increase productivity, and approach each day with a sense of purpose.

Prior to launching her speaking, coaching and consulting business, Melinda rose to the top of her industry as a successful senior buyer in the corporate world as well as a top performing sales rep. She accomplished this while helping her husband launch his extremely successful business, Good Karma Sportfishing. Now, she helps others achieve their goals and dreams too.

Melinda, and her husband Ryan, will be co-authors in the soon to be released 4th Annual International Best Selling Brilliant Breakthroughs For The Small Business Owner. What did they write about? Confidence.

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Astor magazine furthers the mission of Astor Services for Children & Families. The unique combination of services Astor provides to its clients is the basis for a publication with two goals: to use Astor's experience with children and families under stress as guidelines to benefit all families facing the challenges of raising children; and to draw upon the great strengths and assets of the regions (i.e., Hudson Valley, New York City, etc.) to help families fully realize their values and goals. This free publication is distributed online and available on our website www.astorservices.org.

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Welcome to Astor Magazine

Astor is working diligently to create an environment that promotes awareness, well-being, and action towards social justice.

Systemic, racial, and socioeconomic inequalities have been plaguing our nation for centuries. Recent events like the deaths of Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, and George Floyd (and many more) and the disproportionate effect the COVID-19 pandemic has had on the Black, Hispanic, and Native American communities, have brought renewed attention and set in motion a global movement against racism.

As Director of Clinical Training and Chair of our Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Advisory Council, I have had the opportunity to engage in critical discussions around how systemic, racial, and socioeconomic inequalities impact the health of our staff and clients, and I am proud to say that Astor is working diligently to create an environment that promotes awareness, well-being, and action towards social justice.

We now know that Black and Latino communities across the nation have been diagnosed with and are dying of COVID-19 at disproportionately higher rates than other communities and as an organization are committed to community engagement and healing. It is essential that we identify and address the social conditions that create these health disparities. Black and Latino communities historically suffer from lack of access to health care, unemployment, racism, and discrimination, as well as additional health concerns and social barriers.

Knowing that these are some of the driving forces behind existing health disparities requires us to think critically about how we design and deliver our services as well as how we develop our staff to carry out the day to day work in our communities. Astor's leadership and DEI Advisory Council have begun this process by actively engaging in self-reflection and learning around these topics. This will be an ongoing part of a larger strategic plan we develop - weaving diversity, equity, and inclusion into the fabric of our agency's culture. It is also critical that we recognize social justice as part of our responsibility to one another, not only in our work, but in our personal lives. We all have the power to learn about systemic inequality, to initiate a dialogue with colleagues, friends, and families around these issues, and to take action as individuals who care for the greater good.

I look forward to ongoing opportunities for dialogue around social justice at Astor and in our communities and I hope you can find ways to participate as well!

It is my honor to present to you the Autumn 2020 issue of Astor Magazine. I encourage you to read through the articles in this issue, some highlighting the impact of COVID-19 on young people to creative ways individuals and organizations are coping with the pandemic. Please take a moment to peruse all the services Astor provides to meet the needs of children, adolescents and families, and how Astor "pivoted" its mental health to tele-mental health services during this time.



Raven Maldonado-Brown, LMHC
Director of Clinical Training
Chair - Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion Advisory Council

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What to read next...



ADULT RECOMMENDATION

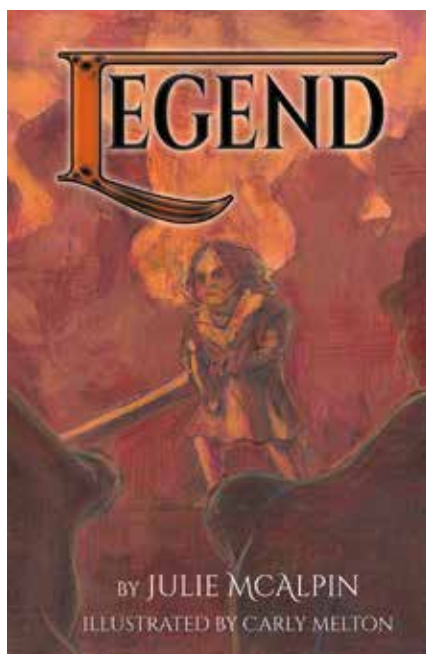
The Girl Who Fell From the Sky

by Heidi Durrow

This novel tells the story of Rachel Morse who is sent to live with her paternal grandmother after a terrible accident happened to her family. Her mother was Danish and her father was African-American; the story describes her journey to understand her identity as she realizes that her brown skin and blue eyes set her apart from each of her parents' race.

Through revealing character development and unique story-telling (through different perspectives), this book is an enjoyable read but is most dynamic when exploring Rachel's racial identity as she grapples with growing up in the U.S.

– Reviewed by
Robert LaColla
Astor Employee



CHILD RECOMMENDATION

Legend

by Julie McAlpin

Legend is a story about a child born into a dark world in need of light and kindness. She fights a brave battle against the forces of darkness and loses her left foot and three fingers to the “sticky tentacles.” But when her determination and kindness finally win the battle, she is gifted with a wooden foot for walking, a fin for swimming in the ocean, and feathers for flying with the birds.

Legend is an inspirational story of overcoming the odds, a love letter to everyone who faces challenges and unique abilities, and a reminder that kindness is a strength that is needed to give light to the world.

– Reviewed by
Mollie Magarino
Astor Employee

HAVE A BOOK TO SUGGEST?

If you have a book that you want to share, let us know.

Send us an email to
ascheinert@astorservices.org



BRONX BOUND

Dream *for* the books

Every great story starts with a compelling back story.
The launch of Bronx Bound Books is no different.

Bronx Bound Books is the dream and vision of founder Latanya DeVaughn who looked to create a bookstore on wheels (aka a bookmobile) that would travel the streets of the Bronx to bring literature and the love of reading to neighborhoods that need it the most. This mobile bookstore brings the magic and splendor of reading directly to the community through various community events, virtual book readings and discussions. It has been a dream and aspiration to Latanya for many years and her drive and tenacity is slowly turning her vision into a reality.

The story of Bronx Bound Books started back in 2008 when Latanya's love of reading led her to finding her way into the literary community in NYC; by hosting a local open mic night called Urban Voices Heard Presents: Write Out Loud. She gave local artists the opportunity to present their work and add to the vibrancy of arts in the City. While hosting the local open mics, organizing various writing workshops and working hand in hand with various nonprofit organizations,

shelters, and children's programs, she knew something was missing.

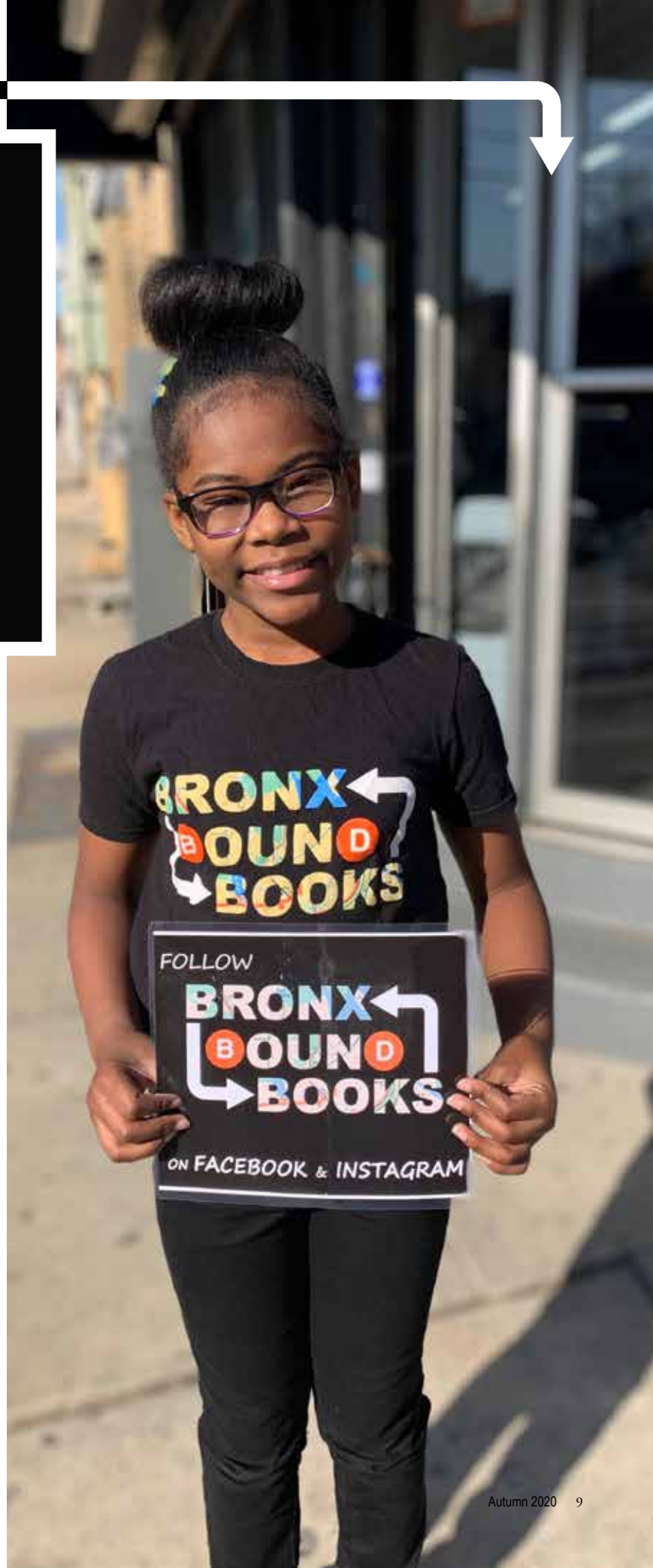
One day, Latanya noticed a bookstore right in her neighborhood "Books in the Hood," and upon entering, learned that the owner was also her son's school teacher. At that moment she realized she was not alone in wanting more for her community, feeding her dream of owning a bookstore. She moved her open mic from Manhattan to "Books in The Hood" and every second Saturday of the month, she packed the bookstore with poets and performers from around NYC and Westchester. It slowly grew in popularity until sadly a few years later, "Books in The Hood" closed down.

Latanya's dream of owning a bookstore was still in the back of her mind, but she also feared it would wind up closing down like so many others. With rents rising and gentrification seeping into the Bronx, her dream was slowly morphing into an impossible dream.



BRONX BOUND BOOKS

by Jeannine Mendez



However, in 2019, Latanya took a leap of faith and committed to her vision of turning a school bus into a bookstore that would travel all around the Bronx passing out books to the community.

“Every neighborhood deserves a bookstore, even if it’s just for one day,”

said Latanya. She wants Bronx Bound Books to be “the bookstore that comes to you.”

Since officially launching her business, Latanya realized she is not the only one longing for a literary resource in her community.

“The people of the Bronx love books!”

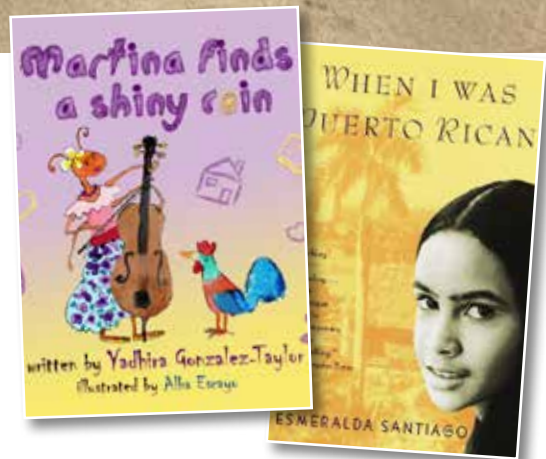
They want access to books and arts and are always happy to see her table at events. Things were going great with the only obstacle facing her at the time being she did not have a physical bus to take her bookstore on the road. Latanya was relying on family, friends and U-Haul trucks to transport her throughout the Bronx to events and to pick up book donations. Driven as she was, she did not let that stop her and spent most of her week traveling to events and picking up and sorting donations to ensure that she provides the richest array of reading options to the community when she sees them. Then the pandemic hit.





COVID-19's impact truly forced her to reimagine an already reimagined concept (a bookstore on wheels). At first, she thought about giving up. For the first few weeks of the shelter in place/quarantine, Latanya was discouraged and totally unmotivated to pursue the mission of Bronx Bound Books. She planned on taking her business to the next level this past summer, to really create a footprint in the Bronx. Her heart was broken until she remembered that one of her goals was to launch a virtual reading series later in the year. As if she had read her mind, her dear friend and children's author Yadhira Gonzalez-Taylor asked to read her book "Martina Finds a Shiny Coin" to her online audience. After that, she was swarmed with people wanting to share their favorite stories.

A vision that was meant to bring the love of books and reading to the community on wheels, morphed into satisfying that goal via the World Wide Web and Zoom. In the months since the pandemic, Latanya



has hosted a number of virtual book readings and discussions with prominent authors and poets including "When I Was Puerto Rican" author Esmeralda Santiago. Although her original vision has not come to fruition quite as she planned, she is providing much needed joy and magic to many virtual readers. The biggest lesson she has learned throughout her journey is that during tough times, one must have faith and remember their "why."

The community has shown up in ways that she could not have imagined and she



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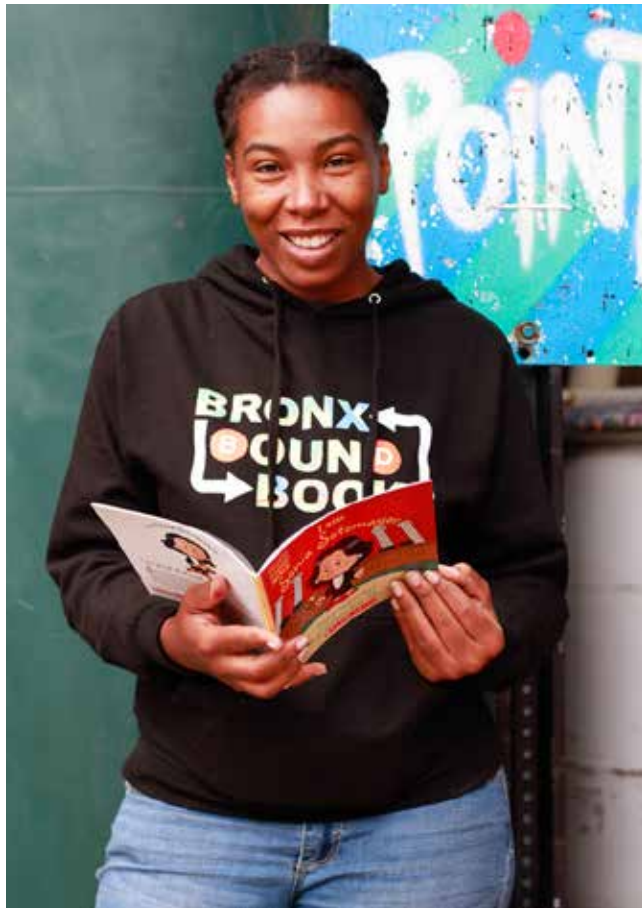
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is truly grateful. Her goal of purchasing a bus to take her bookstore on the road is still very present and she hopes to attain it in the coming year. Until then, she looks forward to continuing to engage Bronx and City residents of all ages in the wonder and splendor of books and literature, if currently only online.

To learn more about Bronx Bound Books and to see the variety of books available, visit https://bookshop.org/shop/bronx_bound_books and follow her on social media at #BronxBoundBooks on Instagram and at BronxBoundBooks on Facebook.

MONTANO'S SHOES

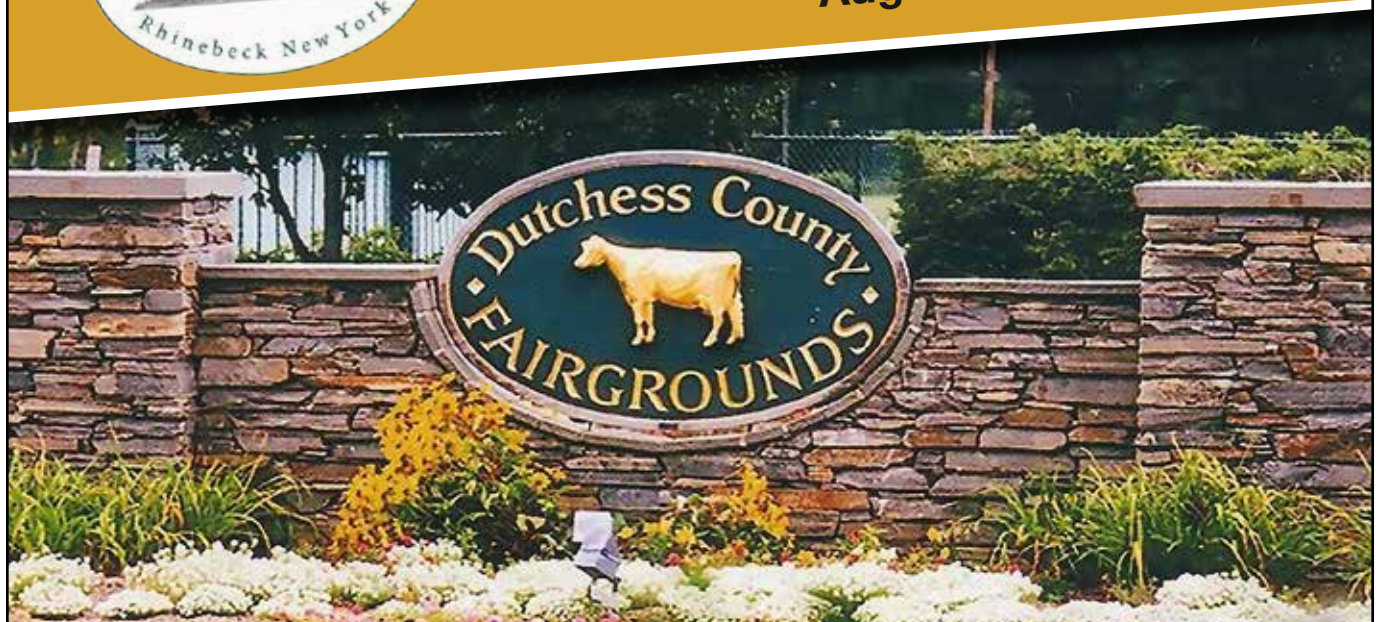
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#BeKind21

IN A TIME OF UNCERTAINTY

CHOOSE TO BUILD A HABIT *of* KINDNESS



WITH

BORN THIS WAY FOUNDATION

by Jeannine Mendez

FOUNDED BY LADY GAGA AND HER MOTHER CYNTHIA GERMANOTTA

We currently find ourselves in uncertain times where as a nation, we are fighting a pandemic that goes way beyond COVID-19 and also includes the mental and emotional health of our most vulnerable population – our youth. By providing direct services for more than 65 years, Astor knows too well the impact mental and behavioral challenges can have on children and families who are struggling through these tough times.

#BeKind21

We learned of #BeKind21, a powerful campaign, launched by Born This Way Foundation, a nationwide nonprofit founded in 2012 by music pioneer and mental health advocate Lady Gaga and her mother Cynthia Germanotta. We spoke to Executive Director Maya Enista Smith to learn more about the Foundation and its goal of creating a kinder and braver world to support the mental and emotional wellness of people by putting their needs, ideas, and voices in the forefront. Astor reached out to see how, as a community, we can work together to bridge the gaps that currently exist when it comes to the wellbeing of our youth.

A conversation with
Maya Enista Smith
Executive Director of
Born This Way Foundation

Can you provide a little background on the creation of Born This Way Foundation and the work that it does for the community? What was the thought or purpose around its creation and what do you think has been its biggest impact or contribution since its founding?

Born This Way Foundation was created to make kindness cool, to validate the emotions of young people, and to eliminate the stigma around mental health. Early in her career, Lady Gaga was very open about her mental health journey, and in doing so, she began hearing from young people all over the world with similar stories. The Foundation grew out of her passion to help young people be better equipped than she felt she was to deal with the struggles all young people experience growing up.

Who do you serve and how can organizations, like Astor, partner with you in your advocacy and outreach?

Our work centers around young people – validating their emotions, amplifying their voices, and helping connect them to the resources they need to thrive. We know from our research, young people want to empower themselves with the knowledge and skills to support their own wellness – and learn how to help a friend in need. Our initiatives, partnerships, and conversations at the Foundation are designed to ensure that when young people experience mental health challenges, they know more about the resources and support they need to overcome the effects of those experiences. Right now, people – young people especially – are living with a lot of fear,

uncertainty, and a lack of control. Our work around cultivating kindness offers a way of coping and healing. We recognize the inextricable link between kindness and quieting fear, between kindness and the grief associated with unimaginable loss, between kindness and propelling action in service to others, between kindness and survival.

That said, the world needs your kindness. This is why we're pleased to welcome Astor, and any person, of any age, to join our community. That could be as simple as performing a small act of kindness, contributing to our **ChannelKindness.org** platform, or sharing our message broadly.

How has the Foundation dealt with the COVID-19 pandemic and what are some lessons that you have learned?

Our work is more important now than ever. Throughout the pandemic, we have been listening to young people and their experiences during these times, and through the support of our partners, we're continuing to help connect them to the resources they need and responding to today's environment by highlighting the many ways kindness is actionable.

We're also now urgently responding to a mental health epidemic within the pandemic, as a recent CDC study shows

one-in-four young adults between the ages of 18 and 24 say they've considered suicide in the previous month, and more than 40% have experienced a mental or behavioral health condition connected to the pandemic.

Kindness is urgently needed to help turn this statistic around. Though these numbers seem hopeless, the smallest act of kindness and connection can change someone's life.

We're encouraging people to remain socially connected to prevent isolation and loneliness, and continuing to model healthy, open conversations about mental health. Checking in on our loved ones is one of the kindest things we can do – making sure they understand they are loved, they matter, and we need them here.

Can you tell us more about your #BeKind21 and #BeKindBeThere campaigns and how partners can work with you to replicate it year-round?

Our #BeKind21 campaign was born out of the worry that a mother (me!) had

about her son starting school in a new environment and being met with kindness. This campaign was an opportunity to create and spread kindness in his new community, and I couldn't have imagined how much #BeKind21 would now mean to me, to our team at Born This Way Foundation, and to so many globally in its third year.

#BeKind21 encourages young people, families, employers, teachers, and community members to practice an act of kindness each day from September 1 – September 21 each year. We invite schools, colleges, corporate and nonprofit partners, and more to take part, sharing their experiences along the way on social media and amplifying stories that demonstrate the possibility of small actions to drive profound impact grounded in the transformative power of kindness.



BORN THIS WAY/ FOUNDATION

Despite these difficult times, there is an opportunity to build resilience. We are seeing it every day, but we still have a lot of work to do.

#BeKind21 has been uniquely designed to be responsive to today's movements, to showcase that kindness is not an empty gesture; rather, kindness is a verb. To be kind is to prioritize your mental wellness and recognize that your feelings are valid. To be kind is to advocate for a world that values, validates, and respects all people.

This year to date, over 5.2 million participants from around the world generated over 112 million acts of kindness. Anyone and everyone can learn more and get involved by taking the pledge at www.bornthisway.foundation/BeKind21, and we welcome you to incorporate the practice into your daily lives beyond September 21st – as kindness knows no season!

#BeKindBeThere kicked off this Spring, offering resources for young people to better recognize when someone might be struggling with their mental health and learn the skills needed to safely support them. We invite everyone to visit bethere.org, a platform created by our friends at Jack.org, and learn how





to help a peer who might be struggling and be kind by being there for a peer, a loved one, or yourself.

Can you tell us more about your recently released CHANNEL KINDNESS co-authored by Lady Gaga, her mother Cynthia Germanotta, and young people? What was the thinking behind the concept and the process of compiling the stories?

As our co-founder, Lady Gaga, shared in the past, spreading kindness is the inspiration for her life's work and art.

Over the past few years, we've heard stories of kindness, bravery, and utter resilience from youth across the globe on our ChannelKindness.org platform and felt it was time to highlight them in a book to further amplify their voices.

These stories are authored by young change makers who are making a difference in their communities and proving that kindness is truly

transformational. Today's young people are inclusive, they're advocates, they're taking care of their mental health and that of their peers, and passionately supporting each other. This book affirms what we already know to be true – young people and their kindness are changing the world.

By highlighting everyday acts of kindness through the book, we hope it provides inspiration to young people that need it and encourages everyone to join us in our mission of creating a kinder, braver world. To learn more, visit: ChannelKindness.org

In a time when a large proportion of our nation is grappling with new realities and 'new normals,' Born This Way has been steadfast in creating initiatives and building awareness about the need for mental health supports, both online and offline, to encourage and build communities that understand and prioritize mental and emotional wellness.

ch



raising chickens

by Amy Joy Scheinert

**A source of food,
companionship,
entertainment,
and learning.**

Chickens have gained in popularity in recent years and even more so during the COVID-19 pandemic. With so many more people spending time at home, some folks who have long considered raising backyard chickens are taking their first steps.





Chickens lay eggs in an array of colors including shades of blue, green, brown and white depending on the breed.

Chickens are relatively easy to keep whether you live on a large property or a small parcel.

The basics of chicken care are pretty straightforward. One needs to provide the birds with food, water, and shelter – protection from the elements and predators is very important. A secure coop and run are essential and will not only save your chickens' lives – but save you a lot of heartache. Chickens are vulnerable to both terrestrial and aerial predators and need to be protected from a wide range of animals, including dogs, hawks, fox, and even bears.

There are many different varieties of chickens, so one must choose what works best for them – for egg color, size and temperament. For children, the Bantam or “banties,” are a good choice as they are easier to hold. You can visit a hatchery website to be introduced to the many different breeds and learn more about their traits.

Chickens can provide a fun hobby for adults and children alike. “I enjoy how they get so excited when they see us coming and we let them out to roam the yard,” shared Michelle Fuoco who began raising chickens earlier this year. “They make us smile and laugh and that is critical during these times.”



Silkie are a good breed for children. They have a friendly temperament and soft, fluffy feathers.

Organizations, such as 4-H, provide a great introduction to caring for animals and teaching children about responsibility.

“There was probably nothing better to prepare me for the rigor of adult responsibilities than the routine of getting up in the morning to feed the chickens,”

said Mei Rao, a member of Dutchess County 4-H who has been raising chickens for 11 years.

“Showing my chickens and conversations with the public at the county fair exponentially improved my public speaking skills, which improved my grades at school and my presentation skills for a science fair,” Rao continued.

“4-H has taught me public speaking, how to learn, how to teach, and how to care for a community,” said fellow 4-H member Ilse Kollmar, age 17, who has raised chickens since she was six-years-old. “The responsibility is great for children to learn how to take care of another creature.”

Chickens have been used as therapy animals. Jane Rodd, Dutchess County, NY 4-H Youth Development Program Leader has organized visits to local organizations to provide opportunities for children to benefit from connecting to animals. “Having animals interact with people, especially children who have challenges in their lives, has been proven through research to have significant benefits to health. It is a very heartwarming experience,” explains Rodd. Learn more about Dutchess County, NY 4-H by visiting <http://ccedutchess.org/youth-4-h>.

Raising chickens can not only provide a food source but can offer comfort and a learning experience for children. As 4-H member Mei Rao states in reference to predator proofing her coop, “If you can outsmart a fox, you’ll do just fine in the real world.”





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Coping with COVID

Max dreams of
sardine spread.

Pottwucking

A M I D S T C O V I D

A photograph of a woman with long brown hair, wearing a white long-sleeved shirt and dark pants, walking away from the camera on a dirt path through a forest. She is carrying a large white tote bag with green trim in her left hand and a black leash in her right. A black and white dog with a red harness is walking on the path in the foreground, facing left. The path is surrounded by green foliage and trees.

Summer LePree
and Lola on
the path to
Jane's house.

Pottwucking

by Mari Garcia

I look forward each year to spending part of the summer in the Hudson Valley, away from the Miami heat, and to the change of scenery from the Florida landscape.

My partner and I have a house on Overlook Mountain, in the beautiful village of Woodstock, NY, which grants us some respite from city life as well as time to share with our wonderful Woodstock neighbors.

Shortly after we bought our house five years ago, a woman knocked at our door with her dog Max to introduce herself.

“Hi, I’m Jane Brody,” she began. We soon found out that we were both Cornell graduates and our careers shared a common connection with food, mine in hospitality and hers in health and science. This July we arrived by car from Miami, and Jane was already here from the City. On her daily evening walks with Max, she often stops to share a physically distanced conversation on our deck. It was during one of those stops that she proposed a potluck “supper” on her deck.

When you have dinner with Jane Brody, healthy cookbook author and New York Times Personal Health columnist, you expect a healthy meal will be shared, and that is just what took place during our mid-August gathering. She did not disclose in full detail her menu, other than it would include a bean salad and “two small hors” and asked us to bring “something simple to throw on the grill.”



Jane Brody prepares her bean salad recipe.



Recognizing your audience is always important and knowing Jane would appreciate my using the gorgeous local produce available this time of year from our local vendors and the Woodstock Farm Festival, I opted for wild salmon from Sunflower Market marinated with equal parts of tamari and Westwind Orchards NY Maple Syrup, and a simple healthy dessert of Cashewtopia Strawberry Gelato with a piece of semi dark chocolate from Fruition (both which are local). I also picked up three seven grain rolls from Bread Alone, to be heated on the BBQ.

The temperature was cool and crisp on the night of our dinner, and our assigned items were easy enough to carry on the short walk to Jane's house. When we arrived, the promised hors d'oeuvres, and a delicious sardine spread, were waiting on a small cocktail table, with seating thoughtfully arranged six feet apart.

For dinner, a black bean and corn salad married perfectly with the salmon entree. As it turned out, for dessert Jane had prepared a fruit salad of fresh blueberries, mangoes and cherries, which we served with the cashew-based gelato and topped off with a piece of Fruition chocolate. Dinner preparation overall proved to be light and easy, allowing us to focus on great conversation.

I had the chance to make Jane's black bean and corn salad recipe the following week when we invited other neighbors to our deck for dinner. I boiled two ears of corn the evening before and tossed the rest of the salad items together the morning of our get-together. It is so easy to make and I was delighted with the outcome. I felt that I might have come close to replicating Jane's magic touch, and we agreed to add this to our go-to list of summer recipes.

Recipes on the following page.





**Mari, Jane and
Summer at their
potluck dinner.**

Sardine Spread

Modified from Nutrition Action

¼ cup finely chopped grape tomatoes
Juice and zest of ¼ lemon
Few slices of shallot, finely chopped
Pinch of salt
1 can of boneless skinless sardines in olive oil, mashed

Mix all ingredients together in a bowl. Serve with wedges of red, sweet pepper or gluten-free or whole wheat crackers.

Salmon

*Adapted from Joe LePree, owner of
Uncle's Restaurant in Islamorada, Florida Keys*

Salmon, King salmon preferred
Tamari or Soy Sauce
Maple Syrup
Garlic, 2 cloves diced or crushed
Freshly ground pepper
Lemon, optional

Marinate salmon in a mixture of equal parts tamari (or soy sauce) and one-part maple syrup, a clove or two of garlic, and some fresh ground black pepper. Marinate in a large freezer bag for at least 30 minutes, or up to a few hours.

Heat grill to medium high. Oil the grates well to prevent sticking. Put salmon skin side up on covered grill for 3-4 minutes (depending on thickness of fillet). Do not move the fillet during this period. Then use spatula and tongs to carefully flip to skin side down and grill on lower heat for another 3-4 minutes. Remove from grill and let sit for a few minutes before serving. Squeeze fresh lemon on salmon before serving.



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Black Bean and Corn Salad

Adapted from a Diabetes Magazine

1 15-oz can black beans, drained & rinsed
1 cup or more fresh corn kernels
1 red bell pepper, small dice
4 scallions, finely chopped
2 T. cider vinegar
2 T. honey
½ t. salt
½ t. ground mustard
½ t. ground cumin
1/8 t. cayenne pepper

Put all ingredients in a bowl and mix together. If you like it spicier, add more cayenne or use finely ground red pepper flakes. Best if made several hours ahead for flavors to meld.



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THE NEW NORMAL



by
Richmond
Arce

**THE “NEW NORMAL” HAS BECOME A PHRASE
SYNONYMOUS WITH OUR EVERYDAY LIFE AS OF LATE.
IT DOESN’T MEAN THE SAME THING FOR EVERYONE.**

Often we hear, “We are all in the same boat, same storm,” but is that the case? Everyone is affected by Covid in different ways. For many of us it is the inconvenience of not being able to go to our favorite restaurant, shopping with friends, the theater; but for some it is wondering when we will get to see friends again, hug, or have a hot meal at school.

For those of us with children, we are seeing the new normal take on many shapes, such as virtual and distant learning, tele-health and face-time playdates. Our children are living in the future that some of us of a certain age were promised in our youth decades ago; robots delivering groceries, teachers on a screen like a hologram, playing with friends in another country without leaving our bedroom, and visiting the doctor via a virtual platform. Sounds like a great futuristic Sci-fi, but, these are at the base of the “new normal.”

Now that this is the current situation for a majority of children and adults around the U.S. and the World, we are seeing how this futuristic living may not be the greatest thing for our physical and mental health. Contact with friends in person has never seemed so valuable. Kids are now wanting more “reality” playtime as they are getting a glimpse at living in a virtual world, it is all just pixels and pantomime when they are on a virtual playdate. In a time where we are fighting the war on “screen time,” we find ourselves even more at odds with this struggle.

We are on the “new normal tilt-a-whirl” and much like the real “tilt-a-whirl,” we just don’t know when the spinning will stop!

So, we decided to hear directly from young people through a series of questions, on how they are coping with their “new normal.” As expected, we learned how some are advancing while others are struggling to cope during this time:



Gabriella

3rd grade student in the Bronx

Do you find it is easier or harder to work from home?

I found it harder because when we needed help, our parents did not know how to do the work the way the teacher showed us. They would explain it a different way and that was confusing and we would get points off because it was not the way we were supposed to do it. It was also harder because we did not have good internet so our Zooms would freeze and kick us off.

How has "hanging out" with your friends changed?

I didn't see my friends the whole time I was home. We tried to Zoom a few times, but it was hard to get everyone's attention because they were playing and doing other stuff while on the Zoom. Everybody was scared to go out so we stayed home for most of the pandemic.



Samantha

5th grade student in the Bronx

What are you most looking forward to as the school year begins?

I look forward to making new friends and seeing old friends in-person.

Are you going fully remote, hybrid or in-person?

In-person five days a week.

Do you find it is easier or harder to work from home?

Harder because at home you have to stay on the Zoom all day but in school, you can interact with your friends and teachers. I am a very social person so being home was no fun.

What are some of your frustrations?

It was really hard to follow math online since I did not have my teacher to explain it to me. I missed seeing my friends and hugging people. I'm a hugger so socially distancing is hard for me.



Kristina

8th grade student in the Bronx

Do you find it is easier or harder to work from home?

Harder because whenever you had a question about an assignment, you had to email your teacher and they did not respond right away. It was easier for me to concentrate, but also harder because I had to pay better attention to what I was doing.

How has "hanging out" with your friends changed?

All our hanging out was through Facetime, Snap Chat and Instagram.

What have you had the opportunity to do that you would not have done if things had not changed?

I was able to spend more quality time with my family. I was also able to take online classes and become certified in CPR & First Aid and start my own business.

What are some of your frustrations?

The amount and timing that assignments were due since I had to work harder on time management to make sure I spread them out. My Internet made Zooms hard at times and not many of my classmates would join so my teachers would have to repeat a lot and I was left to learn a lot on my own through Google and YouTube.



Kaya

High School Senior in the Hudson Valley

What impact has the pandemic had on you physically, socially, emotionally?

Socially and emotionally – Not being able to be with my friends. Physically- I am an athlete. I found not playing sports directly affected not only my physical well-being, but also my mental.

What was most difficult about remote learning?

Getting myself motivated in the morning. Often times I would find myself debating whether or not I wanted to get out of bed or just hide in my room and Netflix all day. When it came to schoolwork, in the beginning it was very confusing and disorganized. But I give major props to my school for getting it together so quickly. My teachers were very good at making sure that we had the tools we needed. They often reached out to check in on us and make sure we were really understanding the work.

Honestly, without the support of my teachers the work would have been unbearable.

What is your Senior year looking like so far?

The fact that there are no Fall sports has been really difficult. As a high school athlete, your Senior year is the highlight of your athletic career. I am happy to be back in class physically, and am enjoying it for as long as it lasts.

Has your perspective changed on anything given the current state of our country?

Yes. I never imagined my life could change so quickly and drastically. It has been a hard adjustment. I don't even know if I am fully adjusted. Daily things change and I find myself in a constant state of flux. Biggest takeaway for me at this point, is take nothing for granted. I never realized how life could change in an instant!

Advice for fellow students?

For my fellow students, I can't encourage them enough to ask questions! Teachers are the most valuable resource we have for learning. They are working harder than ever to make sure that we succeed. Send an email, schedule a tutoring session. Communicate with your parents, friends, and teachers. Stay active! I know this is what help pull me out of the Netflix funk. If we go back to all remote learning, make sure to schedule time to either get outside and run, hike or play and if its winter get creative and workout indoors!



Ashley

College Freshman at Lynn University in Florida

The Pandemic hit during the Spring of your Senior year. Aside from the obvious, what was the one of the toughest things for you?

One of the hardest things for me to deal with, was the reality that what myself and all of my friends had imagined for our Senior year had changed overnight. The Senior year milestones, Prom, Senior Skip day, and all of the age-old traditions for Seniors. Realizing this and not being able to be with friends during this time was really the hardest. Senior year is one of the first major markers in one's life. I felt alone and really struggled with not knowing how long we would be affected.

What has the start of College been like?

Leaving a small town to go to college in Florida has been an eye opener. When I got to campus, Florida was just really at the height of the pandemic. So it seems as though I am starting all over again with the quarantine and stay at home, social distance, etc. I will say that my school is taking Covid very seriously. Our classes are both in-person and virtual. The in-person classes are all socially distanced, and limited to just 12 students in class. We all wear masks, and for the most part I have witnessed everyone being respectful of the guidelines.

What has been the biggest challenge so far?

I am a social person. I am really finding it difficult to not be social. We are sequestered to our dorm rooms, and can only hang out with our suite mate. If you are found in a dorm that is not yours, there are consequences. It's hard, but I am well aware of why they are so strict. The other challenge that I face almost daily, is managing my expectations. Much like my Senior year in high school, we are in a state of what happens next? So, I find myself really trying to manage the day and not think too far ahead. Taking it day by day.

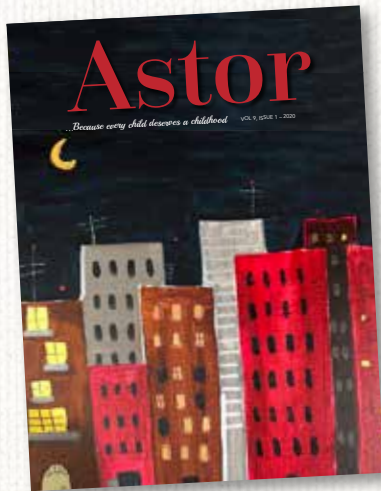
How are you taking it day by day?

Well what I have realized is that, I can't let Covid define my college experience. I can't think about all the things that have changed, guidelines, and so on. I think about the things that I can enjoy and the experiences that are still available to me. I am fortunate to be going to school in Florida. The beach isn't too far from campus. I have managed to make it there with friends, we all meet there and maintain our social distance. We still have fun!

So, we can see that kids of all ages are facing the struggles that we deem apparent. Their approaches at learning, problem solving, and adapting are all different. It is clear that across the board, social engagement in the physical sense is so important. Keeping a routine, open communication, and managing what we can control.

Taking it one day at a time. Keeping the faith, knowing that our kids are resilient and brave. They look to us for guidance, but often times we should look to them to build up our own courage. The “new normal” will be forever changing for each of us. It is up to us on how we define it.

The artwork on our cover was painted by a child in Astor's Expressive Arts Program



Meet Angelo and watch as he paints “Skyline” which was featured in our Virtual Art Show this fall.

Watch Online
<https://bit.ly/2TMqabY>



Astor's Expressive Arts Program encourages children to enter a creative space where they receive guidance and artistic support to “say” what cannot always be said with words.

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We would like to thank all of the dedicated essential workers who keep Astor and our community safe and functioning. We appreciate you! Thank you from Astor Services.



Confidence Crushed By Covid?

Three Steps To Get You Back On Track Fast

By Melinda Van Fleet

When quarantine started in March, I thought, “Yep, this will all be over by June, the latest.” Wow, was I wrong! This inactivity has become a whole new way of life. A lot of people are stuck inside all day. Some of us aren’t seeing our friends like we used to. Many people’s daily routines are still upside down or in an “I don’t know” pattern.

Heck, some of us may not be showering, may have gained weight or rarely put on “real clothes.” I was in that bucket. After two months at home eating Oreos and grilled cheese every day, I looked in the mirror and wasn’t happy. I had lost confidence in my discipline, and my appearance. I was crushed. I needed to regroup and regroup fast.

How can we help ourselves if we are struggling, and how can we help others?

Confidence helps you manage your life. Managing your life feels good. We all like to feel good. It’s a simple equation, but not always the easiest to accomplish.

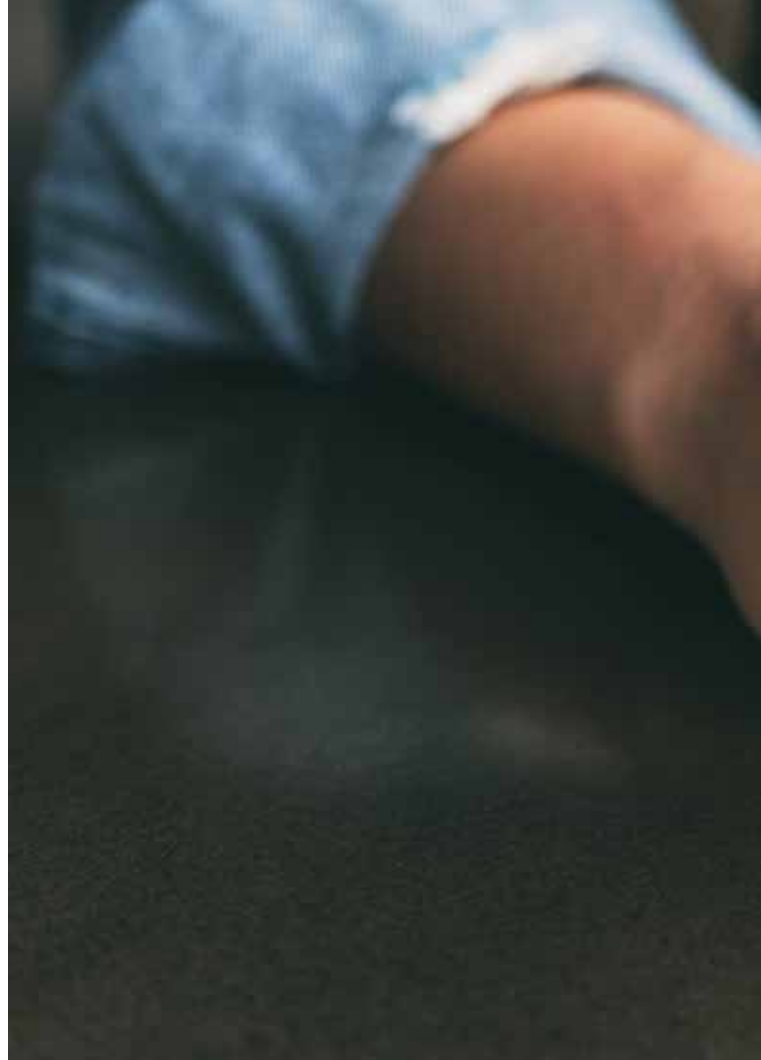
Some of the aspects of confidence are:

- You dare to set boundaries and stand up for yourself.
- You take risks and push through fear to help you move forward.
- You are OK laughing at yourself (and laughter feels good).

I love this quote by the Dalai Lama,

“With realization in one’s potential and self-confidence in one’s ability, one can build a better world.”

When you understand the aspects of having confidence, you are limitless. But the trick is, how does one build or regain their confidence? Especially when so many people have been discouraged or lack the motivation to try?



STEP 01

Take time to recognize good aspects of yourself or past accomplishments.

We all have done hard things and moved through challenging situations, but often don't give ourselves credit or remember them. You can use your accomplishments as a starting point in building confidence.

STEP 02

Put together your list of desires, goals, plans, and focus.

How can you get there? Who do you need to call or email? Is there someone you admire or can inspire you to keep motivated? A friend, a coach, a family member? What book do you need to read or course do you need to take?

Get a plan together. Use a journal, notepad, computer, or find tools to help you organize and start.

STEP 03

Commit to doing it.

Many people have goals but don't do anything about them. They may think of them, refer to them, but they don't take action.

Even one small step a day can lead you down the right path. That small step can introduce you to someone that can help or spur a new idea. Even if it's a wrong path, it's a step towards learning and growing.



A goal without a plan is just a wish.

– Antoine de Saint Exupery

.....

These steps build upon each other, they compound, and then a year or two later (or maybe sooner), you will be amazed at what can transpire. Change only happens when you do it. Decide to commit and make the changes so you can build or rebuild your confidence.

When your confidence improves, you have control over what you envision for your life.

I want to envision the best life possible. Don't you?



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Happy Space



happy home

Tips to finding your Happy Space

by Mollie Magarino

When so many of us left work on March 13th, we didn't realize we would be stuck at home for so long. We talked and joked nervously with our co-workers and thought that we might be back in our offices in a couple of weeks. Instead, we remained at home, our "temporary" workspaces becoming ever more permanent.

The kitchen table is a permanent desk, piled with papers and files; that extra guest room is an office now, or maybe we work with our laptop sitting on a tray table on the bed. So now the question is, "Can I be happy and productive working here?"





The past few months have given me a new definition for the term “happy home.” I have always had this philosophy that when you dress well, whatever that means to you, you start the day at a higher level of self-confidence and joy. When I feel like I look good, I feel good about myself.

Whatever happens in the course of the day, whatever pitfalls or disappointments I may face, I end up in a better mood and with a higher self-esteem than I might otherwise have. This philosophy has now translated to the surroundings in which I find myself every day.

I begin my mornings in the kitchen with a fresh pot of coffee. I boil water and pour it over my favorite coffee in a copper and

glass French press and then I take a second to breathe in the morning air in my favorite space in the house. The coffee pot, my favorite mug, my sugar and creamer set. I chose everything around me in this kitchen because it makes me happy. I slowly and mindfully stir my coffee and I am smiling before I ever sit down at my laptop.

When I sit at the kitchen table and begin my day’s work, surrounded by what I think is beautiful, I begin with an amount of joy that can only come (for me) from existing in a beautiful space. I start the day in a good place so that no matter what happens, I will end up a little happier, a little less stressed, and a little more hopeful. This is hugely important to me; that when I look around, I see... happiness.

For other people, finding joy in your new workspace may look a little different. Maybe you need a clean, empty space where your mind can feel free and less cluttered. Dr. Gail Brenner, author of *The End of Self-Help* writes in an article on her website about joyful living. Number two in her “Ten Steps to Mastering the Art of Joyful Living” is to “clean up.”

Living with clutter that can make us feel disgusted or anxious is a life devoid of joy. When you make time to fix those things in your surroundings that keep you from feeling happy, to clear that clutter or mess,

“You are making the space for joy, peace, and happiness to illuminate your life.”



Finding a space that makes you happy and works for you is a personal thing, unique to each of us. Maybe you need a bowl of chips next to your computer, or maybe you have moved the dog's bed next to your chair for hourly cuddle breaks. Whatever it is that fills you with comfort and joy, I hope you are able to find it so that every morning when you ready yourself for the day, you will start by smiling.

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Astor's Story Through the Pandemic

No one could have imagined that we would be going through a pandemic during this time; coupled with the rise of social and racial justice rallies throughout the county.

Astor was able to “pivot” to address the challenges COVID-19 posed for our nation and Astor; while being mindful and purposeful to address the impact the social and racial issues have on our clients and staff.

Astor quickly “pivoted” on how we work with our children and families. The staff came together, worked collaboratively and seamlessly, to ensure our children and families were able to continue with their services and other support they receive from us.

Within days, we were able to transition over 600 staff members to work remotely! In addition, we were able to close most of our physical locations except for the Residence, which is a 24-hour/day program and some of our community-based programs.

We were able to quickly move to a tele-mental health system because we have been providing these services since 2016 in the Bronx and were positioned to expand in the Hudson Valley. The loosening of governmental regulations regarding tele-mental health during this time, also enabled us to quickly move all of our Outpatient Clinics to this model, and it positioned us to quickly accept new clients.

In addition, knowing that our clients would have questions, we immediately implemented a Client Hotline (1-866-ASTOR01). This hotline is continues to be open 24 hours per day and is monitored consistently.

Our message continues to be, we are open for our current clients and are accepting new clients, as we know the pandemic has caused a great deal of stress for so many.

Since mid-March, we have provided over 90,000 tele-mental health sessions (approximately 50k in the Bronx 40k in the Hudson Valley); and have admitted more than 2,150 new clients, demonstrating the significance of, and urgent need for, the critical mental health services we provide to children and families during this trying time. We also surveyed our families twice thus far, to learn how the virtual services are working to very high positive feedback. We also know, however, that some need in-person or a hybrid of services, which we are providing.

As we continue to navigate this surreal time and adjust our delivery of service that includes hybrid – in person and virtual, we at Astor want you to know that we are here for you! We offer an array of mental health and educational services for children and families. Please contact our hotline or visit our website: **www.astorservices.org**.

STORY OF SUCCESS:

Sometimes in the midst of doing our work, we do not always know the immediate impact we are making on lives. On Friday, April 3, 2020, a parent reminded us of just that, when she reached out to us, unsolicited, with the following message. It was a reminder that we are indeed changing lives!

After about 18 months of Outpatient Therapy in Rhinebeck and patiently awaiting a psych appointment for our daughter, we finally have one on April 6. In the midst of this pandemic, your response to allow for remote services has left our family feeling better supported in helping our child with her anger and frustration. Cassidy Robishaw has been a wonderful therapist, working to support our child, responding to our concerns and following up on my advocacy requests. We have only met with Jenn Dittrochio twice so far but needed her crisis support today. She was wonderful and



also connected me to Jocelyn for help, who was also wonderful.

While the diagnosis remains unconfirmed, we feel like we have a neurologist, therapist and soon a psychiatrist, who can help us across the continuum.

Thank you for working diligently to provide services during this difficult time to so many in need.



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Jose Jalandoni | 973.709.2429

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FLEET MANAGEMENT

Get to know Astor

Astor Services for Children & Families promotes the well-being of children, adolescents and their families through a range of services and programs.

Outpatient Clinics

Provide evidence based, trauma-informed individual and family therapy to help children manage emotional and behavioral difficulties in their local community. Serving Bronx, Dutchess, and Ulster counties.

SYNC - Serving Youth in Their Community

Offers a wide array of home, school, and community-based services tailored to meet the behavioral and emotional health needs of each child with their family's voice and wishes at the forefront of service delivery. Serving Bronx, Dutchess, Orange, Putnam, Rockland, Sullivan, Ulster, and Westchester counties.

Head Start & Early Childhood

Promotes school readiness of children from zero to age five from low-income families by enhancing their cognitive, social, and emotional development. These services include center-based classrooms, special education, and home visiting. Serving Dutchess County.

School-Based Mental Health

Provides skill building, treatment, case management and other support services for children and their families in their local school. Serving Bronx, Dutchess, and Ulster counties.

Prevention

Helps to keep families together and children safe through provision of home-based skill building and crisis intervention services. Serving Bronx, Dutchess, and Orange counties.



Care Management

Provides care coordination to Health Home eligible children. A care manager links, supports, and oversees access to services/systems a child and family may need to improve overall health. Bronx, Dutchess, Orange, Putnam, Rockland, Sullivan, Ulster, Westchester, Delaware, Greene, and Columbia counties.

Home-Based Crisis Intervention

Provides short-term crisis support and treatment for children and their families to avoid a higher level of care. Dutchess and Ulster counties.

Day Treatment

Provides long-term clinical treatment and education to youth with serious behavioral difficulties in a school setting. Serving Bronx, Dutchess, and Ulster counties.

Partial Hospitalization

Provides short-term clinical services to adolescents in danger of needing a higher level of care or transitioning from a higher level of care. Serving Dutchess, Ulster, and Orange counties.

Therapeutic Foster Care

Combines the best of traditional foster care with a progressive model that creates a supportive therapeutic environment for the child. This is an ideal step-down program for a child in residential care. Serving Dutchess, Orange, Putnam, Rockland, Sullivan, Ulster, and Westchester counties.



Residential - Residential Treatment Center/ Residential Treatment Facility

Provide therapeutic services in a nurturing environment to children with serious mental health and behavioral concerns. The needs of the children and their families are met through a program model that is family centered and trauma informed. Serving all of New York State.

Astor Learning Center

Provides day student services to children ages 5 through 14 who are experiencing emotional and educational challenges. Day students reside at home while attending a more structured educational program. All students receive support to help them return successfully to their local districts. Serving the Hudson Valley.



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NFP proudly supports Astor Services for Children and Families. We share your passion for creating and delivering high quality children's behavioral health and educational services to meet the current and growing needs of the community.

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Here are some ways you can help Astor further our mission of ensuring every child has a childhood:

EVENTS

The Children's Foundation of Astor hosts fundraisers throughout the year to raise awareness and much needed funds for our various programs and services in the Hudson Valley and the Bronx. We welcome everyone to attend and have the opportunity to meet our wonderful kids and staff and really see Astor in action. Sponsorship and volunteer opportunities are also available. For the latest list of events, visit www.astorservices.org/event.

You can follow Astor on social media to learn more about upcoming events.

ADOPT-A-FAMILY PROGRAM

Astor's Adopt-A-Family program matches children and families in need with donors who are able to purchase gifts. Monetary donations and gift card donations are also welcomed. To learn more about Astor's Adopt-A-Family program, please

visit our website at astorservices.org/adopt-a-family

ASTOR'S CHILDREN'S WISHLIST

Astor serves an average of 10,000 children annually through our various programs, and many of their families are in need of basic items. To help, Astor has created a wishlist of items that would really make a difference in the lives of the children we serve. Varying from basic needs like hygiene items to school and art supplies, no gift donation is too big or too small and will go directly to the children we serve. To donate, visit our Amazon wishlist at: <http://a.co/eyLMJnf>.

AMAZON SMILE

Astor has partnered with the Amazon Smile program where Amazon donates 0.5% of the price of eligible Amazon Smile purchases back to Astor Services for

Children & Families. This program is a wonderful way to give back by doing your regular Amazon shopping. To learn more and enroll, visit smile.amazon.com and be sure to select Astor Services for Children & Families as your charitable foundation. It's that easy and you will make a difference in the lives of our kids.

RITE AID KID CENTS

Support Astor by participating in Rite Aid's KidCents Program. Wellness+ members can round up every purchase to the nearest dollar, giving kids in need a chance for better lives and brighter futures. To sign up with KidCents and support Astor, visit www.KidCents.com.

DONATE

You can support the work and mission of Astor by visiting www.astorservices.org/donate. Make your online donation today!

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**Children Are
Our Future.
Astor Helps
Them Thrive.**



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