

Next Month
Celebrating Life

Healthcare Marketer's

Exchange

"Where Healthcare Marketers Connect"

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Self-Expression

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BulletinHealthcare,
A Cision Company

Brielle Facciollo

CMI Media Group

Rebecca Gamsby

CMI Media Group

Neil Levine

Varitage Brew Works,
Formerly at Regeneron

Mario Nacinovich

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Directorie™

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PeerDirect

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Dear Healthcare Marketer,

What makes you feel fully alive? For me, I would say travel, Broadway shows, singing, playing and winning at blackjack, phone photography, concerts, and being a social director.

I've been thinking a lot lately about how I want to spend my retirement years and considering what I could add to my repertoire to fill my days with joy. I recently went to a concert in Montclair featuring nonprofessional singers. The group is called Rock Voices and it's made up of people who just love to sing. They weren't the best I've ever heard, but the joy on their faces made me want to join this group in the fall. They put on a concert three times a year and dedicate the admission proceeds to a charity. The charity they picked for this concert was an after-school program in Montclair, NJ, started by a mom who wanted her autistic son to have friends.

I've also given thought to my bucket list. I would like to attend special events around the world, including Oktoberfest in Germany, the tulips in the Netherlands, the NCAA March Madness Final Four, and the Christmas markets throughout Europe. Finally, in honor of my dad, I would like to attend the Masters. Some of these are probably unreachable, but I can dream. And who knows just how many of those dreams can come true?

This issue is a celebration of the ways we express ourselves. Whether it's a passion project, a side gig, or ways in which we relax and unwind, you'll read about dreams that have become reality and endeavors that make people feel fully alive.

Though playing music is not his primary profession, **Trevor Deal** shares his love for and journey through the world of music that was part of his life for as long as he can remember. **Erika Sinner** tells about how the loss of her beloved Shar Pei, Kingston, led to her writing the book *Pets Are Family*, and advocating for greater awareness of pet grief. **Brielle Facciollo** discovered the joy of expressing thoughts, feelings, and experiences through the color, shape, and form of art. **Leo Tyska** found his way to triathlons, running, and organizing running and walking clubs as a means of staying fit and making friends. **Rebecca Gamsby** takes her love of dance one giant step further, using a hula hoop and fire to become a work of art. **Brian Wagner** tried his hand at photography during "after work hours," but with the pandemic came public interest in his photos, and a second career was born. **Mario Nacinovich** has found self-expression as a writer on the canvas of Medium, his online home for evolving self-awareness and identity. And **Neil Levine**, Founder of Varitage Brew Works, tells his tale of overcoming the obstacles to open a brewery he's proud of, while extending his invitation to folks in the industry to "come on over!"

So how do you express yourself? Through this lineup of inspiring stories, you just might be moved to take the next step toward your passion project. And speaking of inspiring...Don't miss the AMM Nexus Awards Celebration on May 9. Get your tickets now at www.ammonline.org. Look forward to seeing you there!

Here's to living life to the fullest,

Nancy



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HUMANITARIAN RECOGNITION ISSUE



Let's inspire one another and honor those who do good!

Nominate yourself or a colleague through a short questionnaire we provide, and we'll conduct a simple interview. We also welcome articles about company efforts to support their communities and charitable causes.

It's super easy – Just fill out the short questionnaire on our site hmexchange.com/humanitarian.html or click the QR code.

Don't be shy! Nominate yourself or someone else to spread the cause.



Questions? Contact Nancy at naleonard@hmexchange.com or call 973-420-1192.

*Winner chosen through a random drawing. We'll send \$250 to the winner's charity of choice.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

ONWARD & UPWARD

promotions • additions

AbbVie has announced the appointment of **Sara Belanger** as Senior District Manager, BOTOX Therapeutic.

American Association of Nurse Anesthesiology has announced the promotion of **Julie Bedingfield** to Marketing Manager. She can be reached at Jbed821@gmail.com.

Astellas Pharma has announced the appointments of **Andrew Lewis** as Vice President, Head of Corporate Communications, and **Jeff Sears** as Global Head, Strategy and Operations, Communications and Investor Relations. They can be reached at Andrew.lewis@astellas.com and Jeffrey.sears@astellas.com, respectively.

AstraZeneca has announced the appointment of **Jenny Smuland** as Associate Director, Channel Excellence and Media Lead (US OBU). She can be reached at Jenny.smuland@astrazeneca.com.

BGB Group has announced the appointment of **Nicholas Delyani** as Account Supervisor. He can be reached at ndelyani@bgbgroup.com.

Butler/Till has announced the appointment of **Mike Della Porta** as Chief Technology Officer. He can be reached at mdellaporta@butlertill.com.

CMI Media Group has announced the promotion of **Mark Pappas** to Executive Vice President, Innovation. The company has also announced the following appointments: **Jennifer Lynch** as Director, Media; **Victoria Bertini** and **Christopher Hermann** as Associate Analysts, SEM; **April Daniele** as Director, Programmatic; **Brittany Hernandez** as Associate Director, Video Investment; **India Hicks** and **Lauren Geitz** as Analysts, Business Insights; **Rodney N'guessan** as Associate Analyst, Paid Social; **Matthew Sakadalan** as Director, Innovation; **Olu Akinpelu** as Associate Analyst, Client Finance; **Ellen Verbitsky**, **Ariana Azzaro**, **Melodie Geraghty**, **Jillian Carruthers**, **Janice Stevens**, **Barry Sharifi**, **Annarose Vallone**, **Grace Trakofler**, **Kristina Testa**, **Isabel Fernandez**, **Autumn Crocker**, **Patrick O'Brien**, **Emily Schultz**, **Logan May**, **Ashley Krzton**, **Victoria Queyquep**, and **Nathan Diener** as Associate Engagement Planners.

Compas has announced the appointment of **Yul Ruiz** as IT Administrative Specialist.

ConcentricLife has announced the promotions of **Victoria Ross** to Vice President, Group Account Supervisor, **Kinoia Fredericksen** to Senior Copywriter, **Drew Stevens** to Proofreader, and **Kyra Hu** to Integrated Producer.

DDB Health New York has announced the appointment of **Blair Mandel** as Vice President, Account Director.

Eversana Intouch has announced the appointment of **Katarzyna Kubacki** as Associate Creative Director. Promoted at the company was **Tony Malik** to Senior Vice President, Client Services. He can be reached at tony.malik@eversana.com.

Evolution Health Group, LLC, has announced the appointment of **Chris Mycek** as Vice President, Enterprise Solutions. He can be reached at Chris.mycek@evolutionhealthgroup.com.

GoodRx has announced the appointments of **Lyndi M. Hirsch** as Vice President, Marketing, and **Russell Valle** as Vice President, Manufacturer Solutions. They can be reached at Lyndi.hirsch@goodrx.com and Russell.valle@goodrx.com, respectively.

Guideline Central has announced the appointment of **Leslie Dubin** as Director, Guidelines Business Development. She can be reached at LDubin@GuidelineCentral.com.

Havas Health & You has announced the appointment of **John Ponsoll** as Global Client Director. He can be reached at John.Ponsoll@havas.com.

Health Monitor Network has announced the promotion of **Gwen Park** to Senior Vice President, Pharmaceutical Sales.

Inizio Evoke has announced the promotion of **Oliver Johnston** to President, CX.

Iqvia has announced the appointment of **Chad Smith** as Agency Enablement. He can be reached at chad.smith@iqvia.com.

Klick Health has announced the appointment of **Brad Einarsen** as Senior Vice President, Strategic Futures. **Brad** can be reached at beinarsen@klick.com. Also joining the company is **Josie Huerta** as Vice President, Creative Director, and **Ariel Weiss** as Associate Creative Director. **Ariel** can be reached at Asweiss0@gmail.com.

McCann Health New York has announced the promotions of **Elise Albright** to Account Director, **Evan Bunin** to Strategic Planning Supervisor, and **Sid Chadha** to Senior Media Planner. They can be reached at Elise.albright@mccannhealth.com, evanbunin@gmail.com, and Sid.chadha@mccannhealth.com, respectively.

Organon has announced the appointment of **Bianca Kroupa** as Associate Director, Innovation Programs and Implementation. She can be reached at Bianca.kroupa@organon.com.

Pfizer has announced the appointments of **Navin Katyal** as U.S. Primary Care President, **Lauren Sacks** as Director, Integrated Media Strategy, Migraine Portfolio, **Jen Alper** as Senior Director, US Migraine Consumer Lead, **Nikki Tuck Russo** as Marketing Director, Vaccines, Global Prevenar Pediatric Franchise Strategy, and **Jennifer Ghith** as Generative AI Content Team Lead.

Phreesia Life Sciences has announced the promotion of **Mackenzie Grasso** to Marketing Manager. She can be reached at mgrasso@phreesia.com.

Publicis Health Media has announced the promotion of **Rob Shiers** to Director, Strategy. He can be reached at rob.shiers@publicishealthmedia.com.

SOLVE(D), an IPG Health Company, has announced the appointment of **Lindsay Dinan** as Vice President, Director, Business Development. She can be reached at Lindsay.dinan@solved.health.

NEW & NOTEWORTHY

awards • mergers • approvals

Cardinal Health, Inc., has announced an agreement to buy **Specialty Networks**. The acquisition will expand its offering in therapeutic areas and increases its data and research opportunities with biopharmaceutical manufacturers.

Novo Nordisk is increasing its footprint in the obesity market. The pharma firm's parent company, **Novo Holdings**, is acquiring contract drug manufacturer, **Catalent**. The move is designed to boost production of **Novo** weight-loss drug, **Wegovy**.

Real Chemistry has announced the expansion of its medical education, medical affairs, and healthcare provider (HCP) communications capability through the acquisition of **Avant Healthcare**.

Swoop has launched conversational AI. They are addressing the need for real-time engagement between pharma brands and their audiences to enhance their digital presence and customer interactions.

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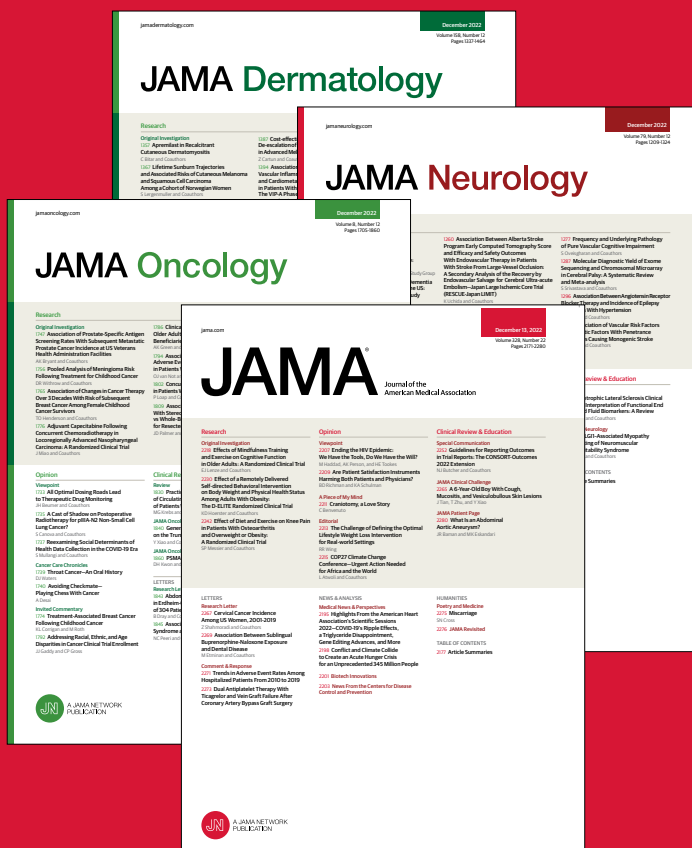
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BWags Photography – An Unfolding Journey

BY BRIAN WAGNER

As a true Gemini, the zodiac sign characterized by twins, I also lead two work lives. One hat I wear is as Vice President, Product Management, for CMI Media Group, a leading healthcare media agency. There my days are focused on our proprietary suite of audience development, insights, media planning, and activation products.

When I log out of my work laptop, not only do I switch hats, both proverbially and literally (as proper gentleman hats have become my personal branding cue), I also switch over to my photography equipment tapping into my creative visionary career as a photo artist.

PHOTOGRAPHY ART STARTS

Many nights after work, I would drive over to the local, over-300-year-old historic farm, about 12 minutes from my home. I photographed the barn buildings, landscape, and gorgeous sunsets. Then, I would return home to post-process and share on social media. At the start of the pandemic, residents started to message me with interest in buying large-size prints of my landscape, sunset, and waterscape photography art.

ART UNFOLDING

Hence, a new chapter began. I established myself as a Bucks County photography artist, launching what has become BWags Photography, now in my fourth year. My photo-art career story continues to unfold. I have established relationships with two photography production studios to support my growing clientele. I've also received custom shoot requests for automotive, special events, and pro-bono shoots supporting community fundraising events like runs and silent auctions.

GAINING MOMENTUM

To my surprise, in the fall of 2021, I was contacted by a regional magazine publisher. Upon seeing my social media posts, they wanted to buy and run one of my Delaware River waterscape photographs for their two-page River View spread. That relationship quickly grew into a contract photography scenario supporting new stories, including securing a regular quarterly feature, Barn Beautiful, plus getting my first cover-shoot story, and more two-page waterscape and terra firma landscape spread requests. I've just celebrated my third-year milestone, having photos in each issue, and have now just completed my third contract

shoot for a second regional magazine publisher who is also running select land- and waterscape photographs.

During this time, I had joined two area camera clubs to develop my technical skills and knowledge set. By doing such, I was offered the opportunity to submit works into photography judging competitions in which I have taken an assortment of 1st, 2nd, 3rd, and honorable mention ribbons.

A TALE OF TWO TALENTS

While many might regard my two lives – as advertiser and as photographer – to be worlds apart, left brain and right brain, they are actually very much connected. While the physical tools are vastly different, the strategies, the processes and pathways, even documentation are very much the same. Each task requires an objective, strategy, set of tactics, an audience, documents (project briefs, estimates, contracts, invoices), project timelines, and status check-ins to be met with, and an end-deliverable.

Being blessed with this ability and having a creative vision greatly supports my primary professional world by exercising and building the unique blend of right and left brain, or technical and creative vision to see the whole...the gestalt. This has helped me navigate around hurdles and, as I call it, solution engineering on the spot. I can see the forest, the trees, the leaves, and the dust particles. The latter was an insight for my first historic barn shoot [see photo at left].



Capturing an insight, the owner recalled as a child, "The rays of light pouring through the portholes catching the swirling dust particles in the light beams."

THE ART OF GIVING BACK

Having this opportunity to align both worlds has also opened doors to giving back to my community. I give through donations of time to photograph charity events. I also donate competition photographs to support charitable silent auctions that raise money for worthy causes. In addition, through my agency, CMI Media Group, and their philanthropic relationship in the Philadelphia community, I was offered a rewarding opportunity. I created and conducted an internship program mentoring inner city high school students at Liguori Academy – Photography as a Career and Teaching Creative Vision – this past spring and fall semesters. This has allowed me to give the gift of education and frame young minds to prepare them for their futures. Plus, as I witnessed Zoom/Teams screen fatigue

Photography *(Continued from page 6)*

over the pandemic, I opened my photo catalog to my CMI colleagues to jazz up their screen presence.

MY SIDE GIG FOUND ME

At the start of the pandemic, it was a form of mental health Rx and hope that I was able to deliver through my creative vision (no prescription required, ha-ha). Plus, it made me feel good – getting away from my home office desk, getting out each night to view and capture Mother Nature’s sunset performances. Imagine the feeling I had when strangers began writing to ask about the location of the photograph and their interest in buying prints. They wanted not just the digital file, but actual large-size prints. That was surreal to me. I’m certainly an extrovert, but this produced a new sense of self, and was a humbling experience.

The energy level is the high. The unexpected outcome is the juice. Of course, when out shooting and then sitting in front of my laptop in post-process (using Lightroom – NOTE: no photo-shop acrobatics, what I see is what is

captured), I really get amped up seeing the image and the storytelling of the shot come to life.

I try to get out to photograph a few times a week. Whether it be sunsets at my favorite local historic pre-severed farm, or from the pedestrian path of local Delaware River bridge crossings capturing the reflections of the sunset, or at car shows which I love most, or at any of my other favorite and soon-to-be discovered locations.



Brian Wagner is Vice President, Product Management, CMI Media Group. He can be reached at BWagner@cmimediagroup.com.

Contact **Brian** about photography at BWags.Photography@gmail.com or 917-751-0012. Check out his digital photo-art galleries at brianwagner.smugmug.com. Follow him on Instagram: [instagram.com/stories/bwags.photography](https://www.instagram.com/stories/bwags.photography).

Hoop Dance: Ever-Evolving Self-Expression

BY REBECCA GAMSBY

I grew up listening to music, going to concerts, and not-so-successfully learning to play instruments. My prospect of self-expression through music didn’t seem like the right path for me, but I did love to dance.

ENTER THE HULA HOOP

I started to hoop dance in college at a school gym in Greenwich Village. The instructor loved jam bands and encouraged us to use all the space of the basketball court. We learned tricks, twirls, and how to express ourselves through dance by moving our hoops and bodies to the music. Since that time, I’ve had several teachers, and each had their favorite music, flare, and style.

Getting more confident with expressing myself through hoop dance, I started to participate in some events. The first was hoop walking in the New York City Dance Parade with a group of hoopers. After that, I did a solo performance at a Family Day Street Fair in the Financial District with a different hoop group. And I hooped onstage while my brother DJ’d A Video Game Con in New Jersey.

BRING ON LED

Sometime during this journey, I learned about LED hoops, and I was sold! LED adds a whole new level to hoop dance expression. The hoops come in many color options,

some more high tech than others. Being able to hoop at night, and be seen, offers up new possibilities! I love bringing the LED hoop to music festivals. It’s the perfect combination of all types of music, a lot of space, and a built-in audience.

FIRE, OF COURSE!

The obvious next step in my path was fire. Harnessing an element and spinning it around your body at will is an awesome and powerful feeling. Fire is thought to have the qualities of energy, assertiveness, and passion, all things to draw upon and bring into a fire hoop dance. You need to be more mindful to start, but then the flow takes over and you can let everything go.

What I love is there’s no right or wrong way to hoop dance. Allow the music and the moment to take over, clear your mind, and the moves come from within. You become a work of art.



A still from Rebecca’s video submission to the CMI Media Group and Compas employee talent show.



Rebecca Gamsby is Supervisor, Engagement Planning, CMI Media Group. She is based in the Cherry Hill, NJ, office and can be reached at rgamsby@cmimediagroup.com and 856-382-2151.

Medium for Writing

BY MARIO NACINOVICH

Over the past three decades of my professional life, writing has been my steadfast companion and fortress of solitude on this obstreperous journey of discovery. Writing has been more than just a skill or a means of communication. It has evolved into a profound form of my own self-expression, a mirror reflecting the intricate array of my thoughts, emotions, and vast experiences. The act of putting words together has never been a labor. It is a therapeutic ritual, a way to unravel and unearth the labyrinth of my own mind.

A PLATFORM FOR MY WRITING

On December 18, 2022, Medium became my new canvas for self-expression. It's an online home for anyone to "share insightful perspectives, useful knowledge, and life wisdom with the world," as the site puts it. Writing on Medium absorbed my fears, dreams, and confessions, bearing witness to the raw authenticity of my inner world with my initial posting "Faith and Experience in Business." (tinyurl.com/Nacinovich-FaithInBusiness).

INVITING VULNERABILITY

Each entry since that has been an additional brushstroke on the canvas of my identity, shaping and reshaping the contours of my self-awareness and allowing family, colleagues, and complete strangers access. Writing for me, in its purest form, has always been a sacred space where vulnerability was not a weakness, but a source of unparalleled strength. This is best illustrated in my expression on "Embracing Vulnerability," where I shared that "we face challenges that demand perseverance, determination, and push new boundaries of unwavering resilience." (tinyurl.com/Nacinovich-Vulnerability).

WRITING THAT MIRRORS PERSONAL GROWTH

As the past year of self-expression through writing unfolded, the content mirrored the mosaic of personal growth. The written word offers clarity in times of confusion and has been a palpable chronicle of my ever-changing self.

"It is all too easy to ignore the great beauty and richness that surrounds us in the maelstrom of our daily lives. We rush through our days, consumed with our desires, duties, and deadlines, and we frequently fail to appreciate the majesty of life." This quote is from *In Appreciation of Life's Grandeur* (tinyurl.com/Nacinovich-LifesGrandeur), which was memorialized with gratitude for the life and teachings of Fr. William J. O'Malley, S.J. It has never been more apparent how one simply cannot ignore the influence of external factors on the trajectory of one's writing journey. Any of our relationships, both those that are fleeting or enduring, have left indelible imprints on the parchment of our lives.

"We must commit to exploring the essence of thankfulness and humility, that inner urge that demands we appreciate the incredible fortune of simply being." This passage

was written through tear-stained eyes – a relic of emotional archaeology which all too often had overlooked life's grandeur when it was calling me to "reconnect with the wonders and the people that surround us."

The ebb and flow of human connections has since inundated my self-expression in the inked narratives of my recent writing. A short piece that exemplifies this was "Creating that Ripple Effect" (tinyurl.com/Nacinovich-RippleEffect), which conveys the impact of choosing to inspire, empower, and stand for others and how this extends far beyond individual interactions.

GOING DEEPER

Writing renders it possible for me to delve into the recesses and realms of knowledge we dismiss or overlook each day. It has afforded me access and invited me to question and challenge my own preconceptions. The written self-expression has become a vehicle for critical thinking. It's a conduit through which I could engage with ideas and contribute to intellectual discourse, if only talking to myself and the letters emerging on the screen in front of me, at times. My hope is for others to become more self-aware, as a minimum goal. The precision of language, the art of persuasion, and the ability to communicate effectively are all paramount in my professional career as a healthcare communicator and pharmaceutical marketer. Writing, in this professional context, is a means to influence, inform, and assert one's voice in a cacophony of facts and varying values and opinions.


TRUTH IN PERSONAL NARRATIVES

My writing is the purest form of freedom, not a quest for some external affirmation. Likes, comments, and shares in my self-expression are not metrics of any validation. There are no blurred lines between my authentic self-expression and some curated persona. The intrinsic value of my writing is a form of personal catharsis. The diaphanous nature of language allows me to capture ephemeral moments, distill complex emotions, and crystallize the intangible facets of my own engagement in this human experience. The written word is my vessel for introspection and the unguarded passage through which I may attempt to articulate the nuances of my inner world.

As I look ahead to the unwritten chapters of my life, I am grateful for the enduring companionship of the written word – a loyal confidant, a silent witness, and a timeless form of self-expression.



Mario and Antoinette "Toni" Nacinovich
25th Anniversary.

 **Mario Nacinovich** is Vice President, Marketing, Théa Pharma, Inc., the United States subsidiary of Laboratoires Théa. He can be reached a LinkedIn: linkedin.com/in/nacinovich.

Mario has also authored a number of books, articles editorials, and textbook chapters. Find his writing on Medium medium.com/@nacinovich

“It’s Only Rock ‘N’ Roll (But I Like It)”

BY TREVOR DEAL

“Without music, life would be a mistake.”

– FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE

For as long as I can remember, I’ve always loved music. There are so many pictures of me as a kid pretending to play various instruments and/or putting on shows for my family. Like most people, I have countless memories tied to various songs over my life that remind me of both the good and the bad. But I was also very lucky to have been born into a family of musicians, who encouraged me to develop that love into a talent and means of self-expression.

A LEGACY OF MUSIC

It still took me a good 13 years before I had the courage to pick up a real instrument and learn. Prior to that, it was just singing and pretending! The first instrument I learned to play was the trumpet, as my grandfather, great-grandfather, and uncle all played. They were real musicians who played gigs and got paid. They also gave lessons and taught others how to play. Despite their efforts, I wasn’t interested in the trumpet even though I gave it a shot. The upside was that I learned the basics of music theory (and how to read music), which were the building blocks for what was to come later.

PICKING UP GUITAR

At age 14, I decided I wanted to learn how to play guitar. After years of watching MTV and countless hours listening to the radio, vinyl, and cassettes, I became obsessed with the newest format for music at the time: CDs. It was 1989 and while CDs had technically been around since the early ‘80s, they didn’t start to overtake other formats until the late ‘80s/early ‘90s.

It was about this time that my grandfather showed me the basic notes on guitar. My uncle then taught me a few chords and I was on my way! I was suddenly impressed by all the music my parents’ generation listened to and started buying CDs of the Beatles, The Rolling Stones, and Led Zeppelin. I found *Guitar Magazine* at the newsstand (before the Internet), which had sheet music for all the songs I was listening to. I quickly took the foundational lessons from my family and started teaching myself guitar. One of my best friends at the time was on the same path, so we would get together and teach each other how to



Me “playing” guitar at age three (1978).



Me playing guitar with my band BINGE (2021).

play solos using basic blues/rock scales. We were doing our best to mimic Jimi Hendrix and failing miserably (yet still enjoying the process)!

BANDS AND GIGS

A few years later, grunge/alternative rock hit and I fell in love with bands like Pearl Jam, Nirvana, Soundgarden, and Alice in Chains. My friends and I started a band in high school called Harper’s Rags and covered our favorite songs, while writing our own music too. I started a new band in college called Jack Tripper and we put out our own CD of original music while playing gigs at The Stone Pony, Elbow Room, and CBGB. From there, I went on to teach kids how to play guitar at a local studio. It was so rewarding.

THE MUSIC KEEPS PLAYING

Many years later, after having kids, I formed a new band of local dads who needed a healthy outlet and a way to express ourselves outside of the house. We called it BINGE and played rock/pop covers at local bars and fundraisers for over 10 years. I reunited with my old high school band during the pandemic (virtually) to record new original music, which we distributed on all the streaming services. I was also asked to play a series of virtual solo shows during the early quarantine days. Along

the way, I taught myself how to play drums, bass, and a little piano, too. I’m currently working on a solo project – a one-man band, where I can sing and play guitar a few times a year at bars down the shore in Long Beach Island, New Jersey, and at home in Cranford, NJ.

YOU CAN DO IT, TOO

I’m grateful for the past 35 years of playing music. It’s a true blessing and I can’t imagine my life without it. It’s allowed me to express my emotions, blow off steam, build confidence and perseverance, and find friends, while discovering my place in the world. But you don’t have to be born into it. Anyone can do it and at any age! All you need is a desire to learn and the patience to be bad before you’re good. But it will eventually pay off and you will have found yourself a new talent/skill you can use as a means of self-expression, while spreading joy and happiness to others.



Trevor Deal is Account Manager, Bulletin-Healthcare, A Cision Company. He can be reached at trevor.deal@cision.com or 908-463-3825.

The Art of Expression

BY BRIELLE FACCIOLLO

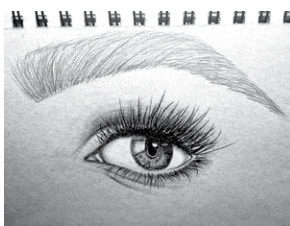
Art gives us the ability to express ourselves in ways that nothing else can! Not only do outlets for self-expression give us windows into ourselves, but they give us the space to de-stress and allow our minds to relax. This is one of the main reasons I fell in love with art.

MEDIUMS AND MINDSETS

Art allows us to convey our thoughts, feelings, and experiences without words. We can use colors, shapes, and forms to express our unique perspectives and emotions. Whether the medium is acrylic paint, resin, charcoal pencils, or even photography, any form engages my creative side. I believe when our creative and emotional abilities are tapped into, the rest of our life can be potentially influenced by this. When my mind is free to think clearly and creatively while painting or drawing, I find myself stepping away from the art with a clearer mindset and thus able to make better decisions, creatively think at work, or even have an elevated mood. Who wouldn't want that!

MOTHER-DAUGHTER CONNECTION

I first showed an interest in art at a young age, when I would watch my mother draw. Her graceful movements and the way she brought the paper to life with her pencil captivated me. I was mesmerized by the way she could create something beautiful out of nothing but lines and shapes. As I watched, I became hooked. I started drawing alongside her, and it became our special bonding time. Her passion for art ignited a spark in me, and I realized that I, too, could express myself in this magical way.



I've yet to figure out why, but eyes are one of my favorite things to draw.

ART HAS POWER

Watching Mom draw inspired me to explore my own creativity, and it's a memory I cherish to this day. Being a source of inspiration, joy, and comfort, art brings color and meaning to my life. Through art, I can explore new worlds, share my emotions, and connect with others on a deeper level. It's a form of therapy that helps me navigate through life's ups and downs, providing a sense of purpose and fulfillment. Art is a constant source of wonder and fascination, igniting my imagination and creativity. It's a part of who I am, shaping my identity and allowing me to leave a piece of myself in everything I create. Ultimately, I love art because it has the power to

transform, uplift, and make the world a more beautiful and meaningful place.

Art also plays a vital role in our society by sparking creativity, inspiring innovation, and fostering cultural understanding. It enriches our lives by providing a platform for diverse voices and perspectives to be heard and appreciated. Through art, we can explore history, challenge societal norms, and promote social change. It also contributes to our economy through various industries such as entertainment, design, and advertising.

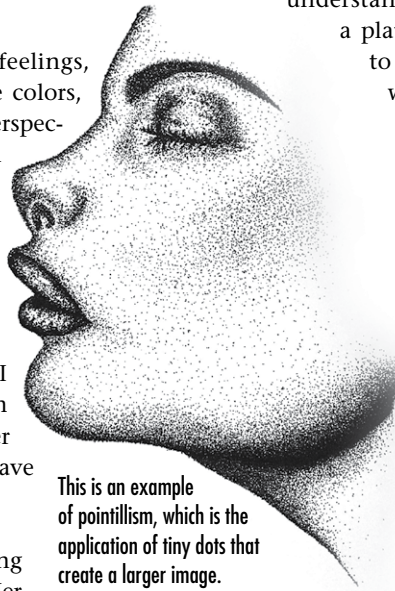
ART IN COMMUNITY

Additionally, art enhances our well-being by offering avenues for self-expression, relaxation, and emotional healing. It brings people together, stimulates dialogue, and creates a sense of community and belonging. Art also preserves and celebrates our cultural heritage, ensuring that our traditions and stories are passed down to future generations. Ultimately, art is a reflection of our humanity, shaping our soci-

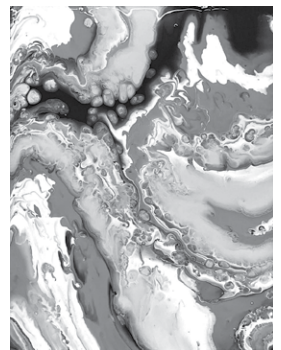
ety and leaving a lasting impact on the world around us.

MEANINGFUL COMMUNICATION

All in all, to me art is the best form of self-expression because it allows us to communicate our thoughts, emotions, and experiences in a deeply personal and unique way. No matter which form, art provides a limitless canvas for our creativity to flourish. It transcends language barriers and speaks directly to the heart, enabling us to share our innermost selves with the world. Art empowers us to express our individuality, explore our identities, and connect with others on a profound level, making it an incredibly powerful and fulfilling means of communication.



This is an example of pointillism, which is the application of tiny dots that create a larger image.



Fluid art is a technique I recently started to pick up. It creates abstract pieces with flowing, liquid-like patterns.



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Benefits of Running Beyond Fitness

BY LEO TYSKA

I've been running for almost 30 years. I'm trying to run a marathon in all 50 states. So far, I've completed 46 states. I've also ran the full Ironman Triathlon two times and I'm the founder of two walking/running clubs. I wanted to share a few positive things I've observed through the years. Maybe it will inspire you to give running/walking a try – and consider joining a club.

THE BEGINNING

My fraternity put on a small triathlon every year and I decided to sign up for this after I graduated college. To get in shape, I decided to join a running group. The members were extremely friendly and they seemed to be glass-is-half-full types of people. We would go for a run, then meet



Life is not a spectator sport.

for coffee afterwards. It was so much fun. I liked the social aspect of it. I made a point to try to meet up with them every week. They made me accountable and happy.

WALKING/RUNNING CLUB PERKS

I moved away and missed working out with my friends. I decided to start my own club. I did this two times. I started a walking/running club in Illinois and then in Florida. Both clubs are extremely successful. We meet up every Saturday to walk or run, then we go out for coffee at a local mom-and-pop business.

I started these clubs with the idea of meeting people and finding people to work out with. However, I've found these clubs do so much more. Here are some of my observations about running with a club and running in general.

- The members look forward to our main Saturday 8 a.m. walk/run. I've heard from many people it is the highlight of their week. I think that coffee is the clincher. This is how deep friendships start.
- Members have lost their job, lost a family member, got a divorce, etc. Many people have told me that the running group has helped them get through their tough times.
- The club has a big social impact. It has helped people find friends, get a job, help their son or daughter get a job, etc.
- If I'm stressed or having a bad day, I know if I go for a run, it will help change my demeanor and I look at things in a different way when I get done.

- A psychiatrist I run with told me he will prescribe his patients to go for a walk or run, walk in the sunlight, run through a forest, etc.

FROM THE MOUTHS OF RUNNERS

I asked my fellow runners to share what they appreciated about running and walking. Here's what they had to say.

- "I have found that it is important to locate something to put my mind to in terms of accomplishment and to take my mind off of other topics. The running club gave me something to look forward to each week. Clubs of this nature are generally full of positive people who can support you in times of need."
- "Running helps me attack those everyday demons."
- "Running with a group allows you to take your mind off of problems, stresses, and negative events in your life (i.e., job loss or marital problems). The social situation of group running allows for an open exchange of experiences, problems, successes, and failures."
- "Running alone is a different experience. It's quiet time for introspection and self-examination. It's a time to develop plans and reflect on past actions free from outside comments."
- "Running has provided me with a routine and structure that I desperately needed. Focusing on my breath and rhythm of my steps helped in practicing mindfulness while running."
- "Running helped me feel a sense of achievement. Tracking my progress and celebrating my wins helped me become more confident in myself. This translated into other areas of my life."
- "Joining a running group and running with them helped me build a social connection and helped me so much with my depression – as I now had people who cared for me and supported me."
- "Running provided me with a healthy coping mechanism when I was stressed instead of negative ones like eating unhealthy food, drinking, or binge-watching TV."

I have seen so much good come from these walking and running clubs. I know it may be intimidating to get started. It's also intimidating to join a group. My advice is to get a new pair of shoes and just put one foot in front of the other. Don't worry about if you are fast or slow and don't compare yourself to other people.

Just trying to Pay it Forward.



Leo Tyska is Senior Sales Director, PeerDirect. He can be reached at leo.tyska@peerdirect.com or 847-971-9860.

Unveiling Vulnerability: A CEO's Rallying Call for Change

BY ERIKA SINNER

As the CEO of a life science commercialization company, I've learned the power of vulnerability and the need for open discussions. And my passion for sharing these realities has grown through recent personal experience.

Last year, the heartbreaking loss of our Shar Pei, Kingston, to Hemangiosarcoma within a week challenged me to not hide my grief and showed me I couldn't maintain my normal routine. I questioned if anyone would understand the depth of my pain, dismissing it as merely losing a pet. This is my inspiration in speaking out, why I wrote the article here in *The Exchange* in January, and why I've written the book, *Pets Are Family*. It's not just about sharing the cute photos of our pets, but also about showing up for each other when it's hard.

HOW DO WE SUPPORT ONE ANOTHER?

Even within my own company, where I have always had a focus not only on pets, but also prioritizing human beings first. We are all so much more than our job titles and what we do for a living. Yet, there were still misunderstandings on how to support me and my emotions upon my return, after losing Kingston. There were awkward meetings and, in some cases, a collective silence pretending nothing had happened. I learned quickly after speaking with some of my team that no one really knows what to do when someone loses a pet.

ACKNOWLEDGING GRIEF

My personal loss inspired me to advocate for pet bereavement leave, a cause I'm championing in my upcoming book, *Pets Are Family*, slated for release March 21, Kingston's birthday. This book isn't just my story. It's a rallying call for change, aiming to instill more empathy in the workplace and shed light on our shared human experiences. Grieving carries a unique weight, deeply felt. It's a constant companion that becomes even more apparent during holidays or any firsts but is consistently present in the everyday where you expect to see your furry family member. Yet, there's an unspoken pressure to quickly return to normalcy in our society.

Through my journey, I learned I can lead with more vulnerability both professionally, and also personally. I learned what self-care really looks like. It's not just spa days, a bath, going for a walk. It's about honoring your feelings, advocating for yourself, and also being vulnerable.

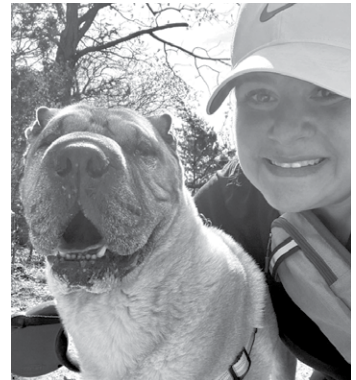
TAKING SPACE WHEN YOU NEED IT

Here are four texts I learned to send in the wake of grief without regret. They may help you too.

- **Changing your mind:** "Hi Jane, I hope you're having a great day. I wanted to reach out and be honest with you. I need to change my plans because I'm feeling drained and need to rest. I know this might be unex-

pected, but I hope you can appreciate my honesty. Let's chat and figure out a better time to catch up."

- **Invites you just aren't up for:** "I can't make it. I'm going through a tough time right now."
- **Someone calls and you're not up for it:** "Thanks for thinking of me. I wish I could chat right now, but I'm running on fumes and need to take some time to recharge. Can we talk tomorrow when I'll be more alert and able to engage in a meaningful conversation?"
- **Asking for what you need:** "Dear John, I'm going through a tough time, and I'm realizing that I need some emotional support. Would you be available to talk or meet up sometime soon? Your friendship means a lot to me, and having someone to lean on during difficult moments would be incredibly comforting. Let me know if you're available. Thanks for listening."



Kingston and Erika on their last hike together.

Your friends and family will appreciate your openness, and it shows you value your relationship enough to communicate your feelings sincerely.

FROM MY HEART

My heartfelt message is simple: honor your emotions. If you're reading this, remember you're not alone. Whatever you're going through, someone else may be grappling with similar emotions within your own circle of family and friends, silently struggling.

Losing Kingston illuminated a responsibility and ignited action. First to bring awareness to the impact of losing a pet, but also to lead by example and be vulnerable in openly discussing my emotional journey. We can't normalize something if we don't talk about it.

To follow my journey, please sign up for updates on my website. Feel free to reach out via email or connect with me on social media. Your stories inspire me to keep moving forward.



Erika Sinner is CEO and Founder of Directorie™. She can be reached at esinner@directorie.com. Follow her and her pets @erika_sinner and @crazy4pei. Sign up for Erika's updates here www.petsarefamily.info.



A BREWERY BLOOMS IN BLOOMFIELD

BY NEIL LEVINE

When last I wrote about our brewery – Varitage Brew Works, in Bloomfield, New Jersey – in January of 2022, I thought we were maybe six or seven months away from our opening. Talk about the best laid plans of mice and men going awry. When Mark Costa, my business partner and our founder and brewer, and I started this project, folks who had already gone through it said it would take about twice as long and cost twice as much as we had planned. Boy were they right.

OVERCOMING OBSTACLES

What happened? The biggest issue we faced was a change in landlords. Varitage Brew Works is located on the ground floor of a residential building in downtown Bloomfield, along with other commercial tenants. Interestingly, the residential and commercial spaces have different owners. In our case, the entity that owned the commercial space where we leased decided to sell the property. While the deal was being negotiated, the work that the landlord needed to do in order for us to begin our work was delayed. Then the process of bringing the new landlord up to speed further delayed the start.

A SPACE WE'RE PROUD OF

Once that happened, things actually moved relatively swiftly. The new landlords did their work and then we began ours. We were really excited the day our equipment finally arrived after being stored at the manufacturer for what seemed like an eternity. Our general contractor and everyone else who worked on getting the space ready for us did an incredible job. We really had to do a lot. The space we were moving into was a vanilla box with absolutely nothing in it. We constructed two bathrooms, a coldbox to store the finished beer, and a bar. The bar itself is a source of some pride. We splurged a little and custom built it out of a wood called Black Limba from Brazil. It has been the subject of many compliments from our customers. Finally, our permitting process, from both the town and the state, was remarkably smooth. At last, we were ready to brew some beer.

WELCOME, NICO!

The first beer brewed commercially in Bloomfield was an amber ale called Nico. One side benefit of our delay in opening is that in June of 2022, Mark and his wife Katie had a baby boy, Nico, and Mark got to spend a lot of quality time with him. The beer Mark chose to brew first is named in his honor. From there, it was a mad rush to make more beer. We wanted to ensure we had enough beer

on hand when we opened. We had heard horror stories of breweries running out of beer as soon as they opened, and we didn't want that to happen to us.

BUILDING OUR FOLLOWING DESPITE DELAYS

Our final task prior to opening was to hire a staff of beer-tenders to pour our beer. Within a few days of Mark posting that we were looking for people, we had identified the team that would take us to opening day. Social media also was a significant factor in our keeping the buzz about Varitage Brew Works alive during the long period of our construction. We would often give updates on Instagram, Facebook, and even LinkedIn about where we stood in the process. Now we have a large number of folks following us on all those platforms. We also hired an excellent videographer to film our progress. If you go to our website (www.varitagebeer.com), there are links to YouTube videos showing you how Varitage unfolded.

OPENING!

After a soft opening for friends and family to work out the kinks in our systems, we had our Grand Opening the weekend before Halloween. It was a crazy weekend, but in a good way. Since then, things have been going very well. As we move into 2024, we are looking forward to having a very good year.

We currently have 11 beers on tap ranging from our Terra Costa Lager and Varitage Premium Pale Lager to three different IPAs. We also have a stout named after the Watsessing neighborhood of Bloomfield. Our Holidays on Broad Street is a Porter made with peppermint and chocolate. It was made in collaboration with Holsten's, a Bloomfield landmark, familiar to viewers of *The Sopranos*. Going forward, Mark has a schedule of beers to be brewed during the year in a variety of styles.

C'MON OVER

As I said when last I wrote, now that we are open, I hope to see my friends and colleagues from the industry at Varitage to enjoy a pint. We've already had a few visitors you may be familiar with, including Nancy Leonard, Publisher of *The Exchange*, Bernie Beck, retired from Pfizer, Juan Falla, a pharma consultant, Anne Beck of SSCG, and Joe Beck.



Opening Weekend at Varitage Brew Works.



Neil Levine is former Executive Director of Marketing for EYLEA at Regeneron, now Co-Founder, CFO, and COO of Varitage Brew Works, 58 Washington Street, Bloomfield, NJ 07003. He can be reached at neil@varitagebeer.com or 917-697-6326.

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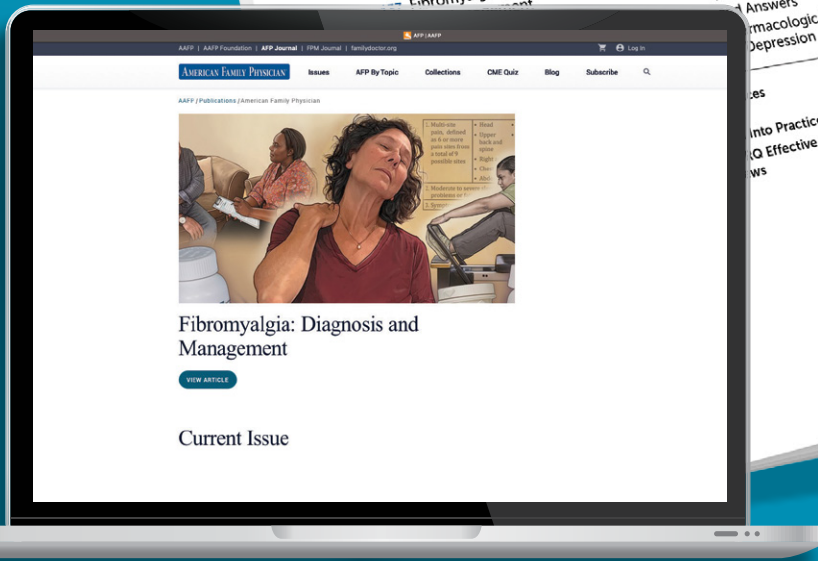
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