

‘Wellness care’ may help you

Many patients see wellness care as helpful for a few limited problems, maybe for some simple back pain or mild stress or anxiety. But patients who really “get with the program” and follow through with the treatment and lifestyle changes can make significant improvements, often eliminating or reducing their reliance on medications.

When she started care, “Judy” was a 67-year-old taking five medications. She’d taken a drug for high blood pressure for 15 years, one for depression for nine years, one for back and leg pain for seven years, another for arthritis for about a year, and the last for allergies, which she’d taken for about 20 years.

Despite all these meds — or perhaps because of them — she still did not feel well. She complained of chronic fatigue. Multiple tests did not reveal the cause — she was not anemic or diabetic, and her thyroid tests were normal. She also had heartburn, still complained of back and leg pain, enough to interfere with her sleep some nights, and depression.

The goal of wellness care is to treat the cause of the problem, as much as possible. It was found she had poor adrenal function, which can cause high blood pressure, and she was given a supplement to support the adrenals. This supplement worked a little too well; her fatigue worsened, initially. But the reason for this was surprising — her blood pressure normalized, and now her medication was pushing it too low. Working with her family doctor, she quickly reduced the dose of the blood pressure meds, and within a month, she was able to stop taking them completely.

We also suggested she move to a low-carb diet, taking special care to eliminate wheat. I have seen many patients benefit from this approach, and she was no exception; within a few months she had lost almost 20 pounds, without making any other lifestyle changes. The heartburn and other digestive problems also began to improve. At the six-week mark, she reported it was about 60 percent improved.

Although there was some improvement right off, the fatigue was slower to resolve. By four months it was improved about 50 percent, and it took about six months total for her to feel her energy was back to normal.

The back and leg pain were treated with chiropractic care, including low back traction and then acupuncture. She’s reduced the pain medication dose from daily to once every three days, without worsening pain, and continued to improve.



MICHAEL NOONAN



Shaw and Tenney owner Steven P. Holt (left) chats with oar and paddle craftsman Brad Wright at an Orono workshop on Tuesday.

Facing transition

Family businesses plot course toward retirement

BY MEG HASKELL
BDN STAFF

BANGOR — Theresa Soucy was in her mid-30s when she started picking up occasional management duties at Frank’s Bakery, the business her grandfather Frank Soucy founded in 1945, along with his two sons, Joseph — Theresa Soucy’s father — and Frank Jr.

Before long, in the mid-1980s, Soucy was a fixture at the bustling bakery and her parents were spending more and more time at their second home in Florida.

“It was becoming obvious it was time for my dad to retire,” Soucy, one of five siblings, said in a recent interview. “I told him, ‘Either sell out to Uncle Frank, or let’s buy him out.’”

And in 1989, her uncle sold his share of the business to his semi-retired brother, and Soucy, now 66, officially took over the management. When her father died the following year, she and her four siblings inherited the bakery.

Over time, under Soucy’s watchful management, they have made many changes at what is now called Frank’s Bake Shop & Custom Catering. They tripled the physical space, added an inviting sit-down cafe, boosted the retail selections, computerized some routine business operations and outsourced others, updated essential equipment and reconfigured the catering side to focus on smaller, more intimate functions.



Nancy Forster talks in her Bangor office in the Dyke Center for Family Business at Husson University recently.

These days, Soucy’s sister Bernadette Gaspar oversees the bakery operations. Their brother Dick Soucy takes care of maintenance. Two other siblings live out of state but remain engaged in business decisions.

“We have a strong, strong business. ... Sometimes at night, I drive by the building and I ask myself, ‘How in the hell did we accomplish this?’” said Theresa Soucy.

A generation approaches retirement

From large employers such as L.L. Bean and Lee Auto Malls to local corner convenience markets, the great majority of businesses in Maine are, like Frank’s Bake Shop & Custom Catering, family-owned. And with the aging and impending retirement of their leaders, many of these family businesses face a major transition.

According to the Maine office of the federal Small Business Administration, in 2014, there were an estimated 147,000 registered businesses in the Pine Tree State. About 142,200 of these were designated “small

businesses” with 500 or fewer employees, accounting for about 60 percent of Maine’s workforce. In Maine, 22 percent of all workers are employed by companies with fewer than 20 workers.

Larger companies typically develop formal business strategies that include succession planning. But experts say that among smaller family businesses — those with 50 or fewer employees — few have a fleshed-out plan for passing the torch when the present owners retire. The smaller the business, the less likely it is to have a succession plan.

“Small business owners will usually answer ‘never’ when they’re asked when they’re planning to retire,” said Nancy Forster-Holt, a professor in the College of Business and executive director of the Richard E. Dyke Center for Family Business at Husson University in Bangor.

Sometimes that’s because they haven’t developed a retirement nest-egg that allows them to step down, she said.

“But often, it’s because they’re doing what they like and they don’t really want to stop.”
See Retire, Page C2

Connections to the past help make a house a home

“What are these?” I asked, reaching to the dusty top shelf of the guest room closet. A rolled bundle of sturdy, colorful fabric filled my arms.

“They’re ... rugs,” Douglas answered, looking over my shoulder. “Janet put them away in here because the cats were sharpening their claws on them.”

I rolled the bundle out between us on the floor. There were two scatter rugs, one slightly smaller than the other. A folksy, geometric pattern, hand-hooked in brilliant cotton pastels: pink, turquoise, blue, green. They were bright, and breathtaking. One thing was clear: These beauties weren’t going back in the closet.

I’ve been settling into Douglas’ circa 1872 house since spring 2013, when we agreed it was time to throw caution to the wind and move on from “dating” into full-blown, midlife cohabitation. And ever since then, he has gently corrected me whenever I refer to it as “his” house. Even after we married last September, I still sometimes slip up.

“It’s our house,” he says, firmly. And I like that, of course — what woman would not want to claim this solid, sunlit place for her own? And I do claim it, bit by bit — if not as my house, technically, then as my home, which it surely is. But it’s a slow process, and that feels right to me.

Douglas and his late wife, Janet, bought this house about 10 years ago. It had been long neglected and was a bit of an eyesore. They poured buckets of time, work, money, love and creativity into making it their home. They did all the hard, dirty work first — tore out interior walls and ceilings, insulated, rewired, updated the plumbing, rebuilt the bathrooms, redesigned the entry and the staircase, installed all new sheetrock, refinished the old wood floors and replaced all the doors and windows. They scraped the original clapboard exterior and painted it a clear, sunflower yellow with primer and two finish coats.

Then they started painting the rooms. Douglas says it was Janet who selected the interior colors. Unlike any place I’ve ever lived, there’s not an off-white or pale beige wall to be found. Instead, almost every space glows with rich color.

My home office is a head-clearing pistachio green; the living room a dusky, gingery red. Our bedroom walls are two shades of calm, Pacific blue. The back guest room, where we were sorting through the storage closet, is a lilac so deep and generous it seems to summon a fragrant, late-May breeze. These jewel-tone colors are impossible to ignore, and yet somehow they feel completely right and satisfying in this old house.

The brilliantly hued rugs rolled up protectively and stashed in the closet reflect that same, surprising aesthetic — Janet’s unconventional eye for color and design.

Janet died with pancreatic cancer in 2011, at the age of 51. She was many things I am not: a native Newfoundlander, a conservative dresser, organized, athletic, disciplined and private. I’m not sure we would’ve been close, had we ever met. But I know I would have admired her and the life she had built for herself, including her high standards, her determined career path and the remarkable man she chose to marry — now my own, dear Douglas.

As for the rugs, Douglas thinks Janet may have purchased them on a trip home to Newfoundland. It’s hard to tell if they’re old or made by a contemporary crafter. I plan to find out what I can about them, have them cleaned and put into shape, and hang them on the color-drenched walls of my home — our home — where they’ll be easy to admire and safe from the cats.

This house is not a museum, or a shrine. It’s the home I now share with my husband, our families, our friends and a small menagerie of pets. It becomes more my own with every passing season and celebration. But I’m deeply mindful of Janet’s presence



MEG HASKELL

Deep-water exercise helping seniors stay fit

BY MEG HASKELL
BDN STAFF

BANGOR — Let’s say you’re an older adult looking to maintain or improve your fitness this winter. You have a lot of good options. You could bundle up and head outside for a brisk walk or jog every day, braving the elements and the icy sidewalks. You might squeeze into your workout gear and work up a sweat at the local gym, or buy a treadmill for your TV room.

But you also could pull your bathing suit out of the bottom drawer and join a group of friendly seniors in the pool at the Bangor Y for a challenging workout that’s guaranteed to get your heart pumping and your toes splashing. On a recent frosty morning, about a dozen people showed up for an hour of deep-water exercise, accented with music, good humor and camaraderie and led by 37-year-old instructor Jodi Veneziano.

“The water can feel a little chilly at first,” she advised a newcomer, “but once you get in and start moving, it won’t feel cold at all.”

Veneziano said exercising in water has several benefits over land-based workouts. Primarily, the water both supports and cushions muscles and joints, protecting against strains and injuries. But the water also creates resistance, so even the gentlest action provides a cardiovascular benefit and a challenge to your muscles. And it can be adapted for a greater or lesser challenge, depending on individual goals and abilities.

Because it’s low-impact, water exercise is ideal for seniors with arthritis or chronic pain or who are recovering from an injury or joint replacement. It is often recommended as part of a rehab program after a heart attack, stroke or surgery. It’s great for circulation, flexibility, and calorie-burning.

But many people opt for pool exercise because it’s just more fun than the alternatives.

“It gives you a good, all-over workout,” said 69-year-old Tim Rice of Bangor. “We can all do it and still have a good time, and that’s almost more important than the workout.”

Buoyed by wide flotation belts, the class members warmed up with a quick, upright “jog”



Jodi Veneziano of Hermon teaches Aqua Jog at the Bangor YMCA recently, demonstrating an exercise with water weights at the side of the pool.

around the deep pool, chatting and joking with each other as they circled. An overhead soundtrack provided by group member John Raeder, a retired forester, pumped out the oldies — Martha and the Vandellas, the Rolling Stones, the Monkees. Many people gleefully sang along.

After a few minutes, they lined up facing Veneziano, who stood poolside wearing workout clothes and a headset so she could be heard over the music. She led them through a succession of familiar exercises — pushups, bicycle kicks, crunches, even the

dreaded burpee — all adapted for the water. Many in the class grasped styrofoam “weights,” which actually weighed almost nothing but did increase resistance in the water.

The class wrapped up with a cooldown for the students and an impressive Zumba demonstration by instructor Veneziano.

There were several newcomers in the class, including 61-year-old Mary Jane Shaw of Hermon, who signed up after retiring recently from a 34-year career with the Air National Guard.

See Exercise, Page C2