

Between Mountains

MAGAZINE



**25 YEARS LATER:
WHAT I CARRIED HOME
FROM GROUND ZERO**

by Damian Battinelli

**THE AMBASSADOR
OF AMPLITUDE**
by Brian Giebel

ART SPARK: VOLUME 2
by Amy Guglielmo

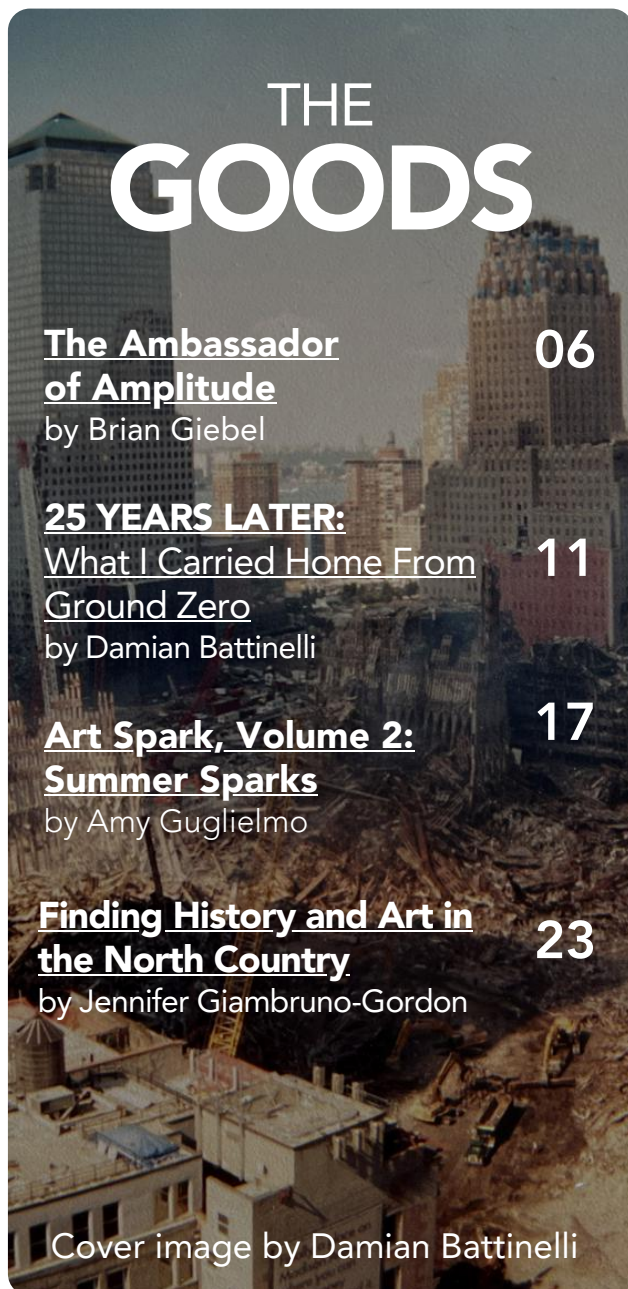
**FINDING HISTORY
AND ART IN THE
NORTH COUNTRY**
by Jennifer Giambruno-Gordon

INTO THE GRAY

life isn't black and white.

If you see yourself in these pages, you belong here.
If you don't yet, stay awhile, you might be surprised.

We're really glad you're here!



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is a publication by **Your Space Between, Inc.**
tax-exempt 501(C)(3) nonprofit organization
Tax ID Number: 99-4362867

EDITOR'S NOTE

ISSUE TWO

This time of year always gets me thinking about gratitude.

The days are getting shorter and the mornings are getting cooler. Soon, the leaves will begin to change and another season will be behind us.

It is easy to focus on what we want next. A new job. A new relationship. A new place. A new chapter. We can spend so much time looking ahead that we forget to appreciate what is already around us.

That is the feeling I wanted to bring into this issue of Between Mountains.

There is a lot to be grateful for, even when life has been difficult. The people who stayed. The friends who checked in. The memories that still make us smile. The places that became home. The experiences that changed us.

For me, this issue carries another layer of meaning.

September 11th marks 25 years since the attacks on our country. I decided to share my own experience at Ground Zero in this issue.

I've carried that experience with me for 25 years and had no idea how much those days would become a part of the person I would eventually become. Writing about it brought back a lot of memories and it gave me an opportunity to finally put some of those memories into words.

I know I am not the only person who has carried something for a long time without talking about it.

That is one of the reasons I believe stories matter.

As summer comes to a close, take a look around. Think about the people, places, memories and experiences you are grateful for.

Thank you for reading Between Mountains.

TSgt. Damian Battinelli, USAF (Ret.)

We hold
space
for more than
coffee.

We hold
space
for *people.*



In times when things feel overwhelming, community can be a lifeline, and no one should have to navigate that alone.

We are committed to being a safe, welcoming place where you can simply be, without judgment and without pressure. Strength lives in connection, in kindness, and in the courage to reach out or sit beside someone who needs it.

Coffee. **Connection.** Community.

Thank you for being part of our story.



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Always. ♥



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Rentable Studio Space
for movement, creativity,
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The Ambassador of Amplitude

by **Brian Giebel**

photos by Damian Battinelli

Mountain-riding,
road-racing,
long-distance cycling,
Ironman and Tinman triathlons,
snowshoeing,
classic and skate-style
cross-country,
and downhill skiing,
kite, snow, and skate boarding,
downwinding,
wing and pump foiling,
63-year-old
retired vice principal
has to “get his wiggles out,”
which takes all day
some days.
And going outside
in the Adirondacks
to play
on trails,

and roads,
and slopes,
and lakes,
is always the best way,
especially when he has wind,
or snow,
or waves!

Mike White has done it all in the Adirondacks.

Unless someone says otherwise,
I’ll promise he’s traversed more ground, water, and sky
in the North Country,
without a motor,
than anyone else alive.

There are other accomplished
runners and riders
and hunters and hikers here.
And great ones too.
But White adds a dimension
to athletic exploration
of the Adirondack Coast,
with amplitude.

Not altitude.

AMPLITUDE.

A word I am embarrassed by,
but must now use;
because plenty of athletes go up and down
mountains
and discover something new
about their place or person
from the lack of oxygen,
or change of view.

But very few leap into new elevations,
in search of fresh perspectives,
and sensations,
and learn to glide and fly,
the way White strives to.

"I came to the Adirondacks for college and a big
draw for SUNY Plattsburgh was

a. My grades weren't that good
and

b. White Face Mountain
because I was really into skiing."

"For me, Whiteface Mountain is just a beautiful
mountain," White says with boyish wonder. "I made
a living out of skiing there." He was a High school
ski coach and worked full or part-time at the ski
school for 20 years.

White attended elementary and middle school in
Panama and Colombia, and knew nothing of Lake
Champlain before attending SUNY. So when he
moved to Plattsburgh from the Albany area at age



Mike White.

18, White couldn't have anticipated that he would
launch so many amplitude and endurance race
adventures, ski or snowshoe down all 46 of the
Adirondack High Peaks, or become an influential
force in the windsport community, all while working
in education and raising a family.

Because that's the nature and beauty of youthful
naivete:

Without a fully-formed frontal lobe, the lack of
awareness and fear is quite freeing. We can follow
our curiosity and stumble into possibilities, allowing
our love of someone or some thing, some place or
activity, to shape our community or determine our
destiny.

That's part of White's story. So he cannot separate
his love of the North Country from the athletic
practices he is passionate about. This is the place he
met his wife, made a life and family, and pursues
sports others call extreme.

He came north to ski, but watersports changed the
ways he enjoys and explores his surroundings,
dramatically.

"Some of the local skiers introduced me to the new
sport of windsurfing." It was 1981. "Lake Champlain
is fantastic. The wind is really appealing to windsport
enthusiasts."

"I got hooked and haven't stopped since."

White helped Robin Keysor convert a garage in the



back of the Northway Motel into a surf shop, Maui North, that sold clothing, windsurfing gear, and skateboards.

“The minute you're up on foil, it is frictionless. I tell people it is like riding a magic carpet.”

“They were starting to mass produce epoxy boards, and the booms went from wood to aluminum, so it was more accessible.”

Since then, wind and watersports have evolved tremendously thanks to advances in technology. As kites were introduced, windsurfers started kiteboarding, and athletes like White took to the air. Accessing new elevations added a way for them to express themselves artistically.

“For me, most of it was about dancing and being smooth. When it comes to skiing and snowboarding it's all about making that perfect carve. It's all about making it look easy and making it look pretty.” White says.

“On the water I really enjoy the jumping aspect of it. When it comes to kiting it's all about doing tricks. When people look at you from the shore it looks like you're dancing, so for me it's extremely appealing.”

So sports are art?

“Yes, there's no doubt about it!”

Personal style proves that athletes are artists, I believe. If spectators can identify someone without relying on the name or number on a jersey, that's a unique expression of self. Creating a new trick? Personalizing technique? Using natural surroundings as canvas and one's body to paint a scene? Film it with a GoPro and set the video to music? THAT IS ART!

“You can see a speck way at the top of a ski

slope, and know who it is just by the way they move. It's the same thing on water,” White says

In the decades since athletes like White took to the water and air, technology has allowed them to progress consistently, as artists and athletes. Their hearts and minds open with every new possibility. Embracing new tools to harness the power of wind and waves challenges them to adapt. It enables them to probe new dimensions and expand their horizons, quite literally.

“It's just been a natural progression. I started windsurfing back in the 80s, and then in 2010, I started kiting and in 2018, I got my first foil board, which I used with the kite”

“In 2022, I started wingfoiling and around the same time I started downwinding.”

It's White's latest obsession. An occupation that he enjoys on Lake Champlain, and in the Sea of Cortez. Downwinders glide long distances across open water, in the same direction as the wind and waves. They employ a foil to capture wave energy below the surface, and ride non-breaking swells.

It requires preparation, planning, skill, and a deep understanding of the environment, because the best swells often form far from shore, in extreme conditions most prefer to avoid.

“Most times, like winter hiking, you're out there on your own, totally exposed, at the mercy of the elements. That's just the way I like it. That's my happy place.”

Before cruising downwind, he pushes upwind, into the swells, with help from Mother Nature or technology. Some athletes use a paddle, a battery-powered prop attached to the foil, or a wing. Lately, White employs a portable, packable parachute called a "parawing" to get to where he

needs to be. Then he dances up, down, and across the “bumps.” For hours. For days.

“Downwind riders don’t call them waves. They call them bumps.”

“You ride the bumps in downwinding, and it’s like bottomless powder skiing.” White’s enthusiasm is clear.

“Back in the day I used to look at those rollers, even back in the 80s, those rollers in Plattsburgh Bay can be over your head. I used to think, ‘God, it would be so great to ride those!’ But there was no way. We didn’t have the ability or the gear to do it.”

Now he can ride from Crab Island to Plattsburgh City Beach when a big south wind makes the bumps rise and roll. The foil lifts the board above the water to hover and glide weightlessly, silently.

“The minute you’re up on foil, it is frictionless. I tell people it is like riding a magic carpet.”

Without surface resistance, the water pushes White from bump to bump with ease. He can use his speed to circle back, reconnect with bumps behind him, recycle his momentum, and ride endlessly.

“You’re just hovering above the water. There is zero wake. The noise just fades away. And if you are in clear water you can see everything beneath you.”

“You’re basically losing a sense. You lose that sense of feel, of touching the water. But you gain a dimension because you have so many angles and so many pivot points.”

“So basically what you need to do is adjust your body and your memory to deal without the sounds and focus on that new dimension.”

For the past 45 years, White’s athletic exploration of the North Country has been extensive. And obsessive, admittedly.

“I’m not sure if my obsession is healthy or not.” White says. But he seems to be running to something, more than escaping.

When we are immersed in nature, and constantly challenged by what we are doing, there’s really no time to reflect or think. Flow is its own dimension, one where we are intensely focused and present. It’s a slow motion space where we become more attuned to our bodies and surroundings. That’s why extreme sports are so exhilarating, and so addicting.

Certainly White is curious about his surroundings and his own abilities. And there’s also a desire to challenge and express himself creatively. **He documents his journey beautifully.** in ways that demonstrate his artistry and reveal that he loves what he is doing.

Thanks to windsports, White is part of a close-knit community. He has sponsors and followers. And he is known to share and teach, to help others feel what he is feeling. So while many of his pursuits are done in solitude, White is the Adirondack’s ambassador of amplitude.

“You’re out there against the elements in the middle of nowhere there’s no one around. That’s my go to spot. That’s my perfect day.” ■






Clinton County, NY Coalition to Prevent Suicide

An open coalition, serving Clinton County, that provides education and resources to prevent every possible suicide.

The goal being ZERO suicides.

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autism alliance
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Our mission is to enrich the lives of individuals and families in the autism community by providing resources, creating opportunities for connection, and advocating for an inclusive world where everyone can thrive.

How We Help:

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- Offer educational workshops and conferences on autism and related topics
- Host community events to promote inclusion and socialization
- Provide small grants to local individuals and organizations
- Partner with local organizations to increase our impact



**Champlain Valley
Family Center**

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20 Ampersand Drive
Plattsburgh, NY 12901

Hours:
Monday-Thursday 8:00am-8:00pm
Friday 8:00am-5:00pm

At **Champlain Valley Family Center (CVFC)**, we're dedicated to reducing the stigma around mental health and addiction. By fostering education, open dialogue, and outreach through community events, we create an environment in all of our locations where everyone feels empowered to seek help without fear of judgment. Together, we're building understanding, challenging stereotypes, and promoting healing for all.

CVFC is a private, non-profit, community-based organization. We are dedicated to providing behavioral health treatment, prevention, education, and related support programs to promote the well-being and quality of life for the residents of Clinton County, NY.

[VISIT](#)

Twenty-Five Years Later: What I Carried Home from Ground Zero

Story and photos by **Damian Battinelli**

I was 20 years old, working in the electronics department at Walmart in Plattsburgh, New York, and serving in the Air National Guard when the planes hit.

I remember turning all the televisions on display to the news as the story unfolded and turning the radios to Howard Stern, who, surprisingly, was doing an excellent job of reporting what was happening. Like everyone else, I was trying to make sense of something that seemed impossible to comprehend.

I had joined the Guard in 1999, when the country wasn't at war and didn't feel particularly dangerous. Operation Desert Storm had ended eight years earlier. I wanted to serve, but I also wanted help paying for college. Military service was familiar to me since several members of my family had served, including my father, who was an Air Force officer.

My first military unit was the 105th AW, Stewart Air National Guard base in Newburgh, New York, where my military job



A photo I snapped with a disposable camera the day before I went back home to Plattsburgh, NY.

was graphic design. I lived in Plattsburgh and normally made the long trip south once a month for my military duties. I never imagined that two years after raising my right hand, I would be called to New York City for my first deployment because America had been attacked.

At 10:28 am the second tower fell.

Shortly after, my name came over the store's PA system. I was asked to report to the back office. When I walked in, my store manager was standing there with tears in her eyes. She handed me the telephone. On the other end was my First Sergeant. I was being told to report to my unit in Newburgh.

I remember racing home, completely overwhelmed, trying to figure out what I needed to pack. I was so nervous that I couldn't think straight. At one point, I was actually throwing my girlfriend's clothes into my bag instead of my own.

I drove south toward New York City on I-87 in

my Pontiac 6000 whose clear coat would peel off in the wind, at times looking like it was snowing behind me. The highway was filled with military Humvees and trucks, New York State Police, and emergency vehicles of every kind. It felt like a scene out of a movie. I remember looking around at the convoy of vehicles and thinking about how out of place I must've looked.

Communication was another strange part of those days. The infrastructure was overwhelmed by the sheer number of people trying to communicate, and for long stretches we were essentially cut off.

I wasn't trained to be a firefighter, a police officer, or a rescue worker. Now I was being sent to New York City and eventually learning I was to provide security at the site. It was a pretty significant change in job description.

We made temporary quarters at Fort Hamilton in Brooklyn, and I remember the first day we bused into the city. The bus made its way through Manhattan, and I caught a glimpse of the pile through the window. It was only for a split second, but I froze. I would eventually stand at the base of that pile, but that first glimpse from the window is something I have never forgotten. It rocked me to my core.

As we continued toward the site, I remember seeing forklifts working along the streets, prying abandoned cars off the asphalt. The heat had been so intense that the tires had melted to the pavement, leaving them essentially stuck where they had been left.



My daily attire while providing security at the site.

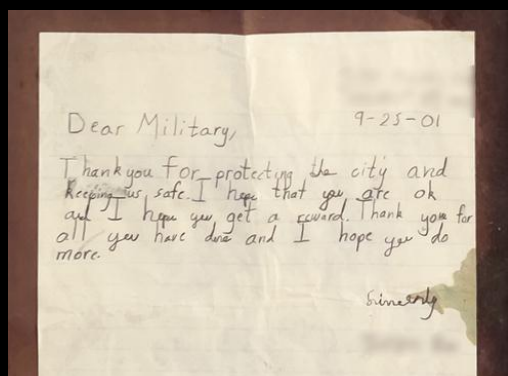
The devastation, the dust, the smell, the odd silence; it was beyond anything I had experienced in my life. I was there to do a job, but I had no idea how deeply those two weeks would stay with me or how much of my life would eventually be shaped by them.

Volunteers were handing out McDonald's breakfast bags as we walked past them on our way to our positions at the site. This seemed to be a daily occurrence. One morning, I received a bag and found a letter from an elementary school child tucked inside.

The child had written to thank us for showing up.

He had glued the letter to a piece of black construction paper, creating a frame around it. Sitting there on a curb, eating the food and reading those words, something broke open inside me. It was the first time I remember crying during the deployment. I had been surrounded by destruction and death, but

somehow the innocence and gratitude of that child's letter finally got through.



I still have it.

Years later, I actually found the child who wrote it. By then, that elementary school student was an adult. I reached out to him and thanked him for what he had written all those years earlier. He responded, and we had a short conversation. I told him how much that letter had meant to me then, and how much it still means to me today.

My father was living in Newburgh at the time and eventually came down to New York City with his 35mm camera. With permission, I was able to get him through the barriers so he could see the site up close. I remember watching him take it all in.



My father was always so proud of his children.

He gasped, buckled, and dropped to his knees.

I grabbed him and helped him back up, and almost immediately he stood again, as if he was determined not to let me see how much it had affected him. He had tears streaming down his face.

He didn't even take a picture.

I don't think he expected to see what he saw. Neither did I.

My father passed away just over three years later, and we never really talked about that day.

Two weeks after I left New York City, I returned home expecting to feel relieved, but instead I felt completely lost. I was depressed in a way I didn't understand, and I felt profoundly alone. I had experienced something that seemed impossible to explain to people who weren't there. I didn't know anyone from my hometown who had responded to the attacks in the same way I had, and I didn't look for them either. I had naively determined there was nobody nearby who could look at me and simply say, "I know."

So I went back to life. Or at least, I tried.

Trauma has a way of taking you back to a place you haven't seen in decades and making it feel like no time has passed at all. To this day, I still find myself going back to that pile. Not physically, of course.

For years, I didn't have the language to explain what was happening inside me. I thought I was supposed to be able to handle it. I was in the military, and I believed that if I

just pushed forward, eventually I would be okay.

I wasn't.

There were mental health breakdowns, hospital stays for suicidal thoughts, and periods of profound depression. I became very good at carrying things that I should have been talking about. Eventually, I sought help after I could no longer fight off the suicidal thoughts.

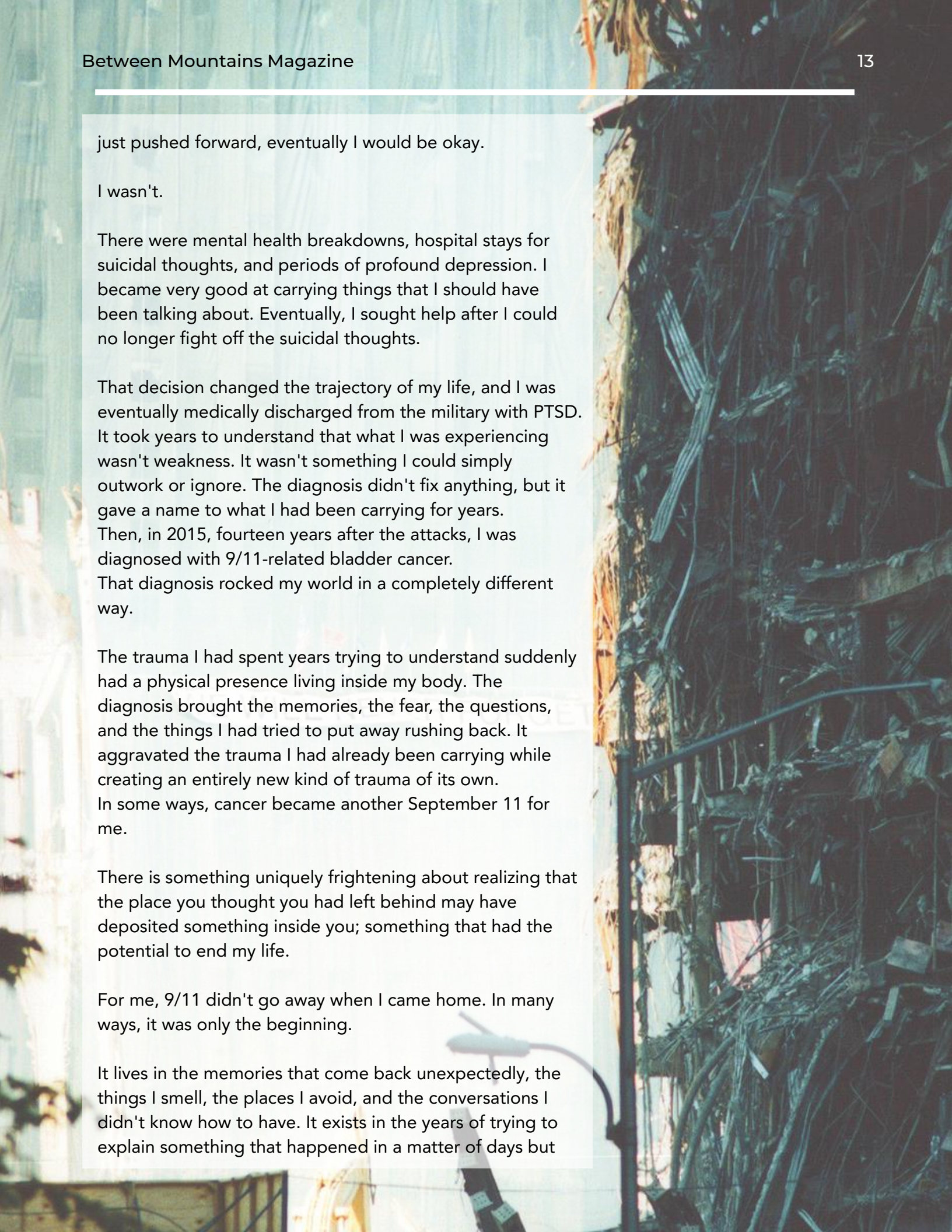
That decision changed the trajectory of my life, and I was eventually medically discharged from the military with PTSD. It took years to understand that what I was experiencing wasn't weakness. It wasn't something I could simply outwork or ignore. The diagnosis didn't fix anything, but it gave a name to what I had been carrying for years. Then, in 2015, fourteen years after the attacks, I was diagnosed with 9/11-related bladder cancer. That diagnosis rocked my world in a completely different way.

The trauma I had spent years trying to understand suddenly had a physical presence living inside my body. The diagnosis brought the memories, the fear, the questions, and the things I had tried to put away rushing back. It aggravated the trauma I had already been carrying while creating an entirely new kind of trauma of its own. In some ways, cancer became another September 11 for me.

There is something uniquely frightening about realizing that the place you thought you had left behind may have deposited something inside you; something that had the potential to end my life.

For me, 9/11 didn't go away when I came home. In many ways, it was only the beginning.

It lives in the memories that come back unexpectedly, the things I smell, the places I avoid, and the conversations I didn't know how to have. It exists in the years of trying to explain something that happened in a matter of days but



somehow continued happening inside me for decades.

Sometimes, it exists in a doctor's office, with a long camera snaking through my genitals and into my bladder while I hear words I never expected to hear.

September 11 is often remembered through photographs of the towers, the smoke rising over Manhattan, the flags, the memorials, and the names. Those images matter. They should never be forgotten.

But there is another September 11 that exists in the lives of the people who were there.

Over the years, I have watched other North Country responders become sick. A few have even died from illnesses connected to 9/11. Every time it happens, not only is it heartbreaking, but it instantly throws me back to those days; the days at Ground Zero and dealing with my own illness.

Twenty-five years later, I'm cancer-free and no longer that kid sitting on that curb, eating breakfast and trying not to cry. But that kid is still part of me, and I think about him often.

I wish I could go back and tell him something I didn't understand then: You will not have to carry this alone.

And asking for help doesn't erase your strength. Sometimes, it is the strongest thing you can do.

I have lived my adult life in the shadow of 9/11, and yet I have also learned that surviving something doesn't mean I have to be defined by it.

For many of us, September 11 didn't end that day, and it didn't end when the last responder left New York. It became a story we carried home.

Some of us are still learning how to tell it.

I am one of them. ■





STAY

A multi-location, pet portrait fundraising event!

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The **STAY FUNDRAISER** was born from a deeply empathetic approach to suicide prevention and mental health support, inspired by the simplicity and effectiveness of the dog command "stay."

Just as this command encourages a dog to remain present and grounded, the STAY initiative uses this familiar phrase as a powerful, symbolic message to individuals struggling with suicidal thoughts.

Vital resources and support at every event reinforcing the message that they are not alone and that their lives are valuable.



Art Spark, Volume 2 Summer Sparks

with Amy Guglielmo

“Copies, copying. Herein lay the education of most of the great masters.”
– Eugène Delacroix

In the book (and film) *The Odyssey*, the character Mentor is a friend of Odysseus who offers guidance and shares wisdom. In art, mentors include teachers and other artists willing to impart their knowledge and methods. But what can you do if you want to be an artist or simply make art, and you don't have access to mentors or teachers?

Throughout history, many famous artists (and writers) learned their craft by copying and studying the works of artists who came before them. Painters like Vincent van Gogh, Edgar Degas, Mary Cassatt, and Henri Matisse spent hours in museums making marks that mimicked the masters. So if you don't have someone who will show you how, there are still opportunities to learn from the best.

We romanticise being original, but you don't sit down and paint a masterpiece on your first try. You don't create a song or learn to play an instrument without practicing other people's music.

To write, you must first learn how to read. And to paint, you must first learn how to see. What if learning from other artists helps us to find our own way? As an art teacher to students of all ages, I taught people how to make art in the style of famous artists. As a mentor, I'm giving you permission to find some art that inspires you and go make a copy!

“The artist ought first to exercise his hand by copying drawings from the hand of a good master.”
— Leonardo da Vinci



Me and Meredith Jacobs when we made a "Monet Garden" mural with her elementary art students at Saranac.

Diane Fine

Printmaker

Tap to watch Amy's special interview with Diane Fine inside her studio.



BONUS INTERVIEW!

The artist I'm talking about in this issue has been my mentor since I was a curious, budding artist, just learning about different art techniques. In 1990, I signed up for a printmaking class at SUNY Plattsburgh where Diane Fine was a new professor. The class and Diane piqued my interest in art and started a friendship that has lasted over 36 years. In class, Diane introduced us to different artists, taught us about techniques, and encouraged collaboration. I signed up for three more of her classes and learned values that I carry with me today. But Diane's greatest gift was the encouragement she gave her students. She taught us how to play and see. For all that, I am grateful.

For our chat, Diane and I met at her new studio space, a former church and Masonic Hall, in West Chazy, New York. She plans to offer workshops and organize other events for the community when the renovations are complete. We talked about the importance of sharing art and how we can't help but be inspired by the people around us. This is my conversation with Diane about her art story. ➡

What is printmaking?

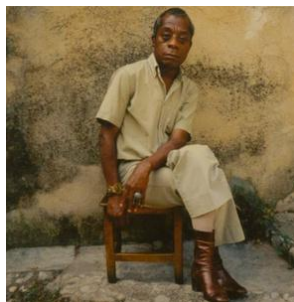
A lot of people signed up for my printmaking class and on the first day asked, "What is it? What did I sign up for?" Of course, I needed to answer that question. Remember, I'd been doing it for a long time, and I thought, oh, well, it's something where you make multiples of things. Not necessarily; you can make a monotype. And then, well, it's something where you use a press. Well, no, you can print by hand. Or it's something with ink. Well, no, you can print inkless. So, I remember saying to myself, I can't believe you've been doing this for so long and are just finally figuring out that the one unifying definition for printmaking is that you create a matrix that you transfer. That's the only bottom line, right? So, you're just not working directly onto paper or fabric. It's this... to that.

Why did you start printmaking?

One of the reasons I was drawn to printmaking is because it's so process-oriented that you often need to collaborate, to ask for help. Four hands are better than two. Can you hold the sponge for me while I roll the ink? So, there's this exchange. And as we've said about the printshop, it's more of a community. You're not just a lone person in the studio. Not that that's not nice sometimes, you know? The other thing I remember feeling that drew me to printmaking, and I could see how this wasn't the case for everyone, was the balance between physical labor or repetitive actions and conceptualizing; I really didn't want to do all of one or all of

one or all of the other. And that sometimes, when running 100 copies of something, is the meditative moment when you get an idea. And it's quite physical. Using a press, particularly the Vandercook that has a carriage that moves back and forth, I always felt like I had a dance partner, you know? Like sashaying.

Do you have any mentors that inspired you?



You see James Baldwin's picture right there? So, he's not a mentor. But a hero. And I don't know of any other hero I've ever had. And when I was in high school or junior high school, we read some of his work, and it moved me and taught me so much at an important point in my life. The very first thing I ever printed letterpress in my first class in grad school was an excerpt from one of James Baldwin's novels, *Just Above My Head*. And I did something I would never do now. It was prose, and I broke it up like poetry. It starts out like this, "When someone you love is happy, you have been given a great gift; you are the honored guest at a rare celebration. If you are burdened, the joy of your brother lightens your burden..." I had just printed that out, and a friend going to school in Massachusetts told me she was taking a class from him. So, I sent her a copy for him, a copy for her, and a copy for me, and I said

if it feels right, can you ask him to sign it, and please apologize for my line breaks. And she met with him, and he read it, and he said (about the line breaks), "Oh, that doesn't matter," then he said, "I'm so honored that your friend did this." And then he signed one, God Bless, James Baldwin, and I have it framed at my house. I should bring it here. So, James Baldwin, because of so many things, like who he was artistically, and for being such a brave person.

But the other person is my dear friend Kathy Kuehn, who was a mentor because she was ahead of me in grad school, and she helped me so much. I moved to Wisconsin to get a Master of Fine Arts in Printmaking and didn't know a soul, and when I met her, she said Joe Wilfer, the guy who told me about the program, told me to take care of you, and she did! She found me a studio and helped and taught me in any way that she could. I love her aesthetic, and I got to work with her and under her, and we've collaborated on many projects. But the thing that she taught me that has only made sense to me in the last ten or fifteen years is that part of being an artist is helping to facilitate other artists. When I was teaching, I was doing that; it was a job, but now when I think about going forward, obviously I want to make my own work and also have a space to bring in other artists. I love when you see someone pull a print for the first time; how special that is, or with type, seeing your words transfer from the metal or wood to the paper. It's a moving and delightful surprise. I still feel that way every time.

What inspires your art?



My prints, books and drawings are about the poetry of solitude and memory. They are about the comfort and poignancy of beauty, reminiscence and longing. Searching for and creating this comfort are essential human endeavors. What we make and what we find are necessarily juxtaposed to the pain and suffering of loss. The rich morsels that we collect help us to live an existence in which answers may not be forthcoming to our most fundamental questions, but making art offers us a way to keep seeking. Being able to discern what you can investigate and what conclusions you can draw...basically what wisdom you can acquire—I believe is predicated on understanding that seeking doesn't guarantee an answer.



Do artists copy, steal, borrow from each other?

I think some people have the wrong idea about being derivative. The idea of not sharing art seems very funny to me. To students, I would say, steal something from someone else so that they wouldn't be so protective of their work. Like share and steal and copy and borrow and all of that. When I would see a student's work and say, it looks like you've been spending time with Amy, I meant it in a good way. Because that's part of being in the class together.

People would always say, about one of my former students, Kathy O'Connell, "Oh, I can see that she studied with you by her artwork." She is such a wonderful artist.

When someone would say that, I would just bristle and say, "Thank you." But I remember thinking. Hmm. I think the reason she and I connected so much was because we had simpatico. I don't think she thought, "Let me make art like Diane does." I mean, because I obviously worked with plenty of people like that, their work didn't look anything like mine. But sometimes it happens that you're inspired and influenced. And no one owns anything. In fact, I'm very comfortable with the fact that Kathy and I influenced each other, and it definitely wasn't a one-way street. Years after Kathy graduated from SUNY Plattsburgh, she and I collaborated on several series of prints that we have exhibited locally.

How do you deal with something coming out a little off or imperfect?

Good question. I definitely would talk to my students about this. What's the expression? You have to know when to fish or cut bait. I've learned to wait and step away. Revisit.



"Make it like a Master -- Masterpiece" class at the Lake Placid Center for the Arts.

Eventually you know, and it is very freeing to let it go.

Any advice for people who want to try to experiment with printmaking?

Obviously, if they are new to the medium, they will need some instruction. Printmaking can be highly technical but also very straightforward and simple. You can use a press and a variety of tools and chemicals, but you can also print on your kitchen table by hand with, for example, a wooden spoon. Most medium- to large-sized cities have community print shops. You can take workshops or watch YouTube videos. ■

Now you try!

How to learn from other artists...

Find a work of art or an artist that you love. Check out a book at the library or locate an image from a museum online. Notice the lines, the colors, the style. Try to recreate the image as a sketch or painting.

Copy with curiosity.
Copy to learn the basics.
Copy to notice the marks.
Copy to understand, not to imitate.
Eventually, you will notice YOUR marks and your style will sprout, blossom, and bloom!

Did you know that many museums allow people to bring their sketchbooks and even their paints to copy the works of art in their collections? Please check the rules before you go and try!

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HALF PAGE

Finding History and Art in the ADIRONDACKS

photos and story by **Jennifer Giamb Bruno Gordon**

Some photos courtesy of the respective organizations.

When most people, myself included, hear the words "Upstate New York," they often think of the mountains, quiet farming communities, and fall foliage. As a native upstate New Yorker, I appreciate the natural beauty and the quiet. But this summer, I wanted some different experiences, so I decided to play tourist and explore what else the North Country has to offer. I was astounded by the history and creativity that I discovered, housed in inviting free museums and organizations.

Few art experiences in the North Country are easier to access than the murals in the city of Plattsburgh, for which we can thank Outside Art: Plattsburgh Public Art. Outside Art, started by Director Amy Guglielmo and former SUNY Plattsburgh professor Julia Devine, has been creating public art for over ten years. Devine, originally from Philadelphia, considered the mural city approached Guglielmo to spark Plattsburgh's public art movement. All that people need to do to enjoy the beauty of the murals is simply walk around. The "Discover Plattsburgh" website has an online guide to the murals: [Discover Plattsburgh Guide](#)



The Michael P. Anderson Mural by Brendon Palmer-Angell.

Amy and I agreed that there is so much to love about these murals. Amy enjoys seeing people take pictures of them as well as the "happy splash of color" the murals give, even in the cold days of winter. While professional artists have dedicated much work to the murals, the community has been an integral part of the creative process, as well. Amy notes that all community support is crucial, particularly donations, so even if people do not consider themselves artistic enough to help create the murals, they know they are part of the mural projects.

Professor Devine has since moved to Virginia, so Amy now has artist (and former student) Abbie Duquette working with her. Additional public art is coming, and that will uplift the city even more. Guglielmo cites many practical benefits to public art, such as increased community pride and lower incidents of vandalism. Moreover, with a public art project, people get to watch art created before their very eyes—so inspirational! Public art is a wonderful way to connect—ask any Plattsburgh native or visitor about their favorite mural and take a stroll to appreciate your favorites again and again.



The Nicandri Nature Center.

My next adventure was in Massena, NY, just minutes away from the Canadian border. Right on the St. Lawrence River is one of the only free state parks, Robert Moses State Park. But free entry to the park itself is only the beginning of what could be days of learning and appreciation. The Nicandri Nature Center, an interactive museum, offers engaging fun for all seasons. Admission to this beautiful building and trail system is free. Colorful panels display fascinating scientific information on the local environment. A variety of fish and turtles live at the Center, and there are regular informational sessions on these creatures. An

inviting little library with nature books, binoculars, and board games is available for the public to check out.

The Center offers a full calendar of daily activities, which, like admission, are free. According to the August calendar, craft projects include pressed flower bookmarks and rock painting. They also host plenty of outdoor activities like sidewalk chalk art and a fern walk. In the winter, visitors can borrow from the Center's cross-country skis or snowshoes and explore the trails. The skis and snowshoes are available in all sizes for adults and children, and they even have small sleds for babies.

A little over a mile down the road is the Seaway Visitor Center, which is right on the Eisenhower Lock. The lock is one of fifteen on the St. Lawrence Seaway, where ships traverse through Canada and the United States-all the way from the Great Lakes to the Atlantic Ocean. The economic and engineering impacts of these locks are staggering. The locks connect the rivers and lakes and allow the ships smooth passage despite changes in the water's movement and elevation.



The Seaway Visitor Center is a fascinating place to witness the ships move through the lock and explore the historical displays inside the Center's main building. The Center has a small theater to view a film about the story of the Seaway and multiple interactive panels and signs. There are observation decks to watch these mighty ships thread themselves through the upper gate of the lock. Once the ship is fully inside the lock, it descends with the water level, then moves through the lower gate. It is an impressive sight, almost moving in its

magnitude. The cost of this majestic experience? **Free!**

The Seaway Visitor Center represents a recent slice of American history. However, our North Country history goes back further—centuries, in fact. Several local museums house these collective memories. The Hancock House in Ticonderoga has a large collection of historical and cultural documents and objects. Run by the Lower Adirondack Regional Center for History, the Hancock House opened in 1926. Built by local paper magnate and philanthropist Horace Moses, a huge supporter of the town of Ticonderoga, the house is a representation of famous Patriot John Hancock's house in Massachusetts, which was torn down in 1863. In addition to the regular exhibits, Hancock House hosts community events such as lectures and musical performances.



The Hancock House.

Dianne O'Connor has been the director for eleven years. She loves "the opportunity to work with a diverse group of individuals and undertake a variety of tasks [such as] exhibit preparations, programs, and docent activities." She describes the purpose of the museum as a place to "preserve the legacy" of Ticonderoga and to "educate and inform," all for free. One of her favorite pieces in the museum is an ancient gold coin, embossed with an elephant, found by a young boy in the Pharaoh Mountain Wilderness. Another favorite piece is the Hancock House Table, which was in the original Hancock House, where "luminaries" like George Washington and Lafayette sat when they visited John Hancock. Finally, she stresses the importance of the Clegg Mural, an

"exquisite piece of art which was commissioned for the opening of the museum in 1926." I could feel both the beauty and the historical significance of the museum's artifacts as I moved through the space.

"the link with the past that the building and its contents provide. The craftsmanship is pretty spectacular and appreciated by all who visit."

The Hancock House also has a notable research library. Visitors come to the research library for genealogy and property research. Additionally, authors writing both historical fiction and nonfiction books have used the library. Librarian Colleen Bessett has been involved with the Hancock House for about 30 years, carrying on a family tradition—her great-grandfather, grandmother, and mother were connected with the Hancock House. Colleen explains that what has been most impactful for her is, "the link with the past that the building and its contents provide. The craftsmanship is pretty spectacular and appreciated by all who visit." She hopes that "the mission of LARCH and the Hancock House will continue to be enjoyed for a long time to come."

This interplay of past and present became a recurring theme during my visits to our area's multiple museums—particularly at the Alice T. Miner Museum in Chazy, NY. Both Director Ellen Adams and Program Coordinator Leni Vradelis discussed how the museum is part of the community, and they are still learning about the impact Alice and William Miner had as they hear stories from locals who interacted with the Miners decades ago. The Miners had a huge impact on the area, establishing and/or supporting institutions like Heart's Delight Farm, the Chazy Central Rural School, and our local hospital.

The Alice T. Miner Museum began with a 50-cent admission price, which eventually progressed to three dollars. Free admission began after the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown. Free admission is not only appealing on a financial level, but, in my observations, seems in direct alignment with the mission of the museum, part of which is, as Vradelis says, "to create as few barriers" as possible for visitors.

Inherent in any social institution dedicated to preservation and "socially bounded" to a specific family and town, as Adams says, is a huge responsibility and a certain level of expertise. Fortunately, both Adams and Vradelis are more than capable and have an enormous wealth of knowledge. Even better is their passion for their work, which shines through the museum's pieces and special exhibitions. For example, Adams explains that the ceramics collection has special significance because it was the first collection that Alice started, following the fashion for turn-of-the- 20th-century women of means to collect and display fine china. Adams characterizes this collection as a "gateway" for Alice's interest in both acquisition for her family and as a "public resource."



Tea set given to Marion O'Brien as a Christmas gift by Alice and William Miner, early 1920s.

Just as impressive as their knowledge is the enthusiasm with which Adams and Vradelis infuse their research and discussion. We had a lively discussion about a current exhibit of a quilt made by Anna Moore Hubbell circa 1812. The cotton fabric's pattern, called "The Apotheosis of Washington and Franklin," was especially popular at the time because it is replete with patriotic symbols. The quilt's display has a clever interactive component: museum visitors are invited to find certain objects on the quilt and learn about the deeper meaning of the symbols on the fabric—so fun!

Need more historical—and free—fun? Cruise further south into Clinton County and visit the Clinton County Historical Association and Museum. This organization's mission is to show and share the history of Clinton County, New York. The museum stewards a huge variety of objects and knowledge—from the replica of a cannon used during the Battle of Valcour in 1776 to wedding attire from nearly two hundred years ago, all of which have been donated.

They also host exhibits on businesses like the Lozier Boat and Auto Plant and Redford Glass. Director Helen Nerska credits the Historical Association's membership fees, along with some funding from the County, for keeping the museum admission free.

Like the Alice T. Miner Museum, the knowledge in the CCHA Museum evolves, particularly in commemoration of this year's 250th birthday of America. The recent "Echoes" exhibit illuminates perspectives that historically haven't been at the forefront: the personal experiences of Native Americans, women, and African-Americans during the American Revolution. With vivid paintings by former Plattsburgh mayor Clyde Rabideau, this exhibit provides fresh insight into what life was like for all Americans in this time of such huge historical and cultural significance.



3D replica of an exploded cannon during the Battle of Valcour.

In addition to the "Echoes" exhibit, the Clinton County Historical Association will be hosting a special Battle of Valcour Celebration on Sunday, October 11th. Director Geri Favreau is particularly proud of a publication made for local 4th and 5th graders, *The American Revolutionary in the Champlain Valley from A to Z*. When Favreau showed me the book, I immediately shared her enthusiasm. Created with a panel of local experts, every local 4th and 5th grader received a free copy of the book.

Just around the corner from the Clinton County Historical Association and Museum is the War of 1812 Museum and the Plattsburgh Air Force Museum. Both museums are operated by the Battle of Plattsburgh Association, which, like the Clinton County Historical Association and Museum, has a

charter from the New York State Department of Education as a non-profit organization. Yet more similarities to the Clinton County Historical Association and Museum are that all of the artifacts found in the War of 1812 Museum were donated, and that admission is free. Keith Herkalo, author of the *Battle of Plattsburgh* book, *The Battles at Plattsburgh, September 11th, 1814*, notes that donations exceed what visitors would pay in admission.

As visitors come in, Herkalo greets them cordially and piques interest with some introductory facts about the Battle of Plattsburgh. After watching a short film in the small theater, visitors are encouraged to walk around the museum. I was especially impressed by the replica of a cabin from the 1812 winter encampment for three regiments of troops, as well as the interactive battlefield diorama. Visitors come from literally all over the country and the world. According to Herkalo, there have been people from 47 states, 7 Canadian provinces, and 17 different countries. Like us locals, these visitors now understand the significance of the Battle of Plattsburgh, which solidified the independence and the identity of the United States of America—all because of this museum and the work of the Battle of Plattsburgh Association.

For more about African-American history, the best place to go is the North Star Underground Railroad Museum in Keeseville—another amazing organization with free admission. The Underground Railroad, a route and support system for African-Americans seeking liberation from slavery in Canada, came right through the North Country. At the Museum, visitors can learn about both the overall facts of the Underground Railroad and personal stories of people who gained their freedom and who were subject to enormous cruelty.

With the proximity to waterways for transportation and the Canadian border, our North Country has many stories about local people who provided safe houses and helped African-Americans get to Quebec and Ontario. One of the many poignant stories told at this museum is of escaped slave John Thomas, who escaped slavery in Maryland and had his own farm in the Adirondacks.

For more affecting historical stories, head to the Awkwesasne Cultural Center in Akwesasne, New

York, again, free admission. In the front of the building is the library, and in the back is the museum. As I strolled through the museum, I was enraptured by the gorgeous displays of baskets, woven from black ash splint and sweetgrass. Every Thursday in the month of May, the Cultural Center has log pounding demonstrations. Log pounding is the process by which the splints for basket-weaving are produced, and the demonstration is just one way that the Cultural Center brings people together. With a newly completed pavilion, the Cultural Center now has an inviting space for people to gather.

There was also a sad and sobering display on Indian Residential schools, where indigenous children were taken from their families to be indoctrinated, usually through abusive practices. Director Justin Cree, a member of the Akwesasne Community, explains how knowing this history is essential, especially for Native Americans, who for generations have been told that their culture is wrong. The Cultural Center is a place for unlearning, Mr. Cree emphasized, and there are many plans for the future. He would like to add more rotating exhibits, as well as a Veterans' Exhibit and a Fire Department Exhibit, as the Akwesasne have a proud legacy serving in the military and as first responders.

The Akwesasne Cultural Center is a beautiful blend of history and art. On my way back to Plattsburgh, I wanted more art, so I visited the Downtown Artist Cellar, "DAC," in Malone, NY, and marveled at the geese mural on the building by Michael Hart and Brendon Palmer-Angell, who also created murals in Plattsburgh. Behind the DAC building is another gorgeous mural by Portuguese artist Beatrice Leonardo, featuring the North Star, where I heard more echoes of history across multiple counties in the North Country. Entry into the space is free.

Jennifer Bilow, the owner and operator of DAC, feels strongly that everyone can create, and that the process of creating, which involves curiosity, learning, and tools, is essential for success in life. "We are all creative," she asserts, "it's how we apply it." A space like DAC is especially important in a rural place like Malone, particularly for young people. Bilow explains that when students witness art and successful artists, it inspires them and helps their overall well-being.

I finished my journey in the place that I started, my

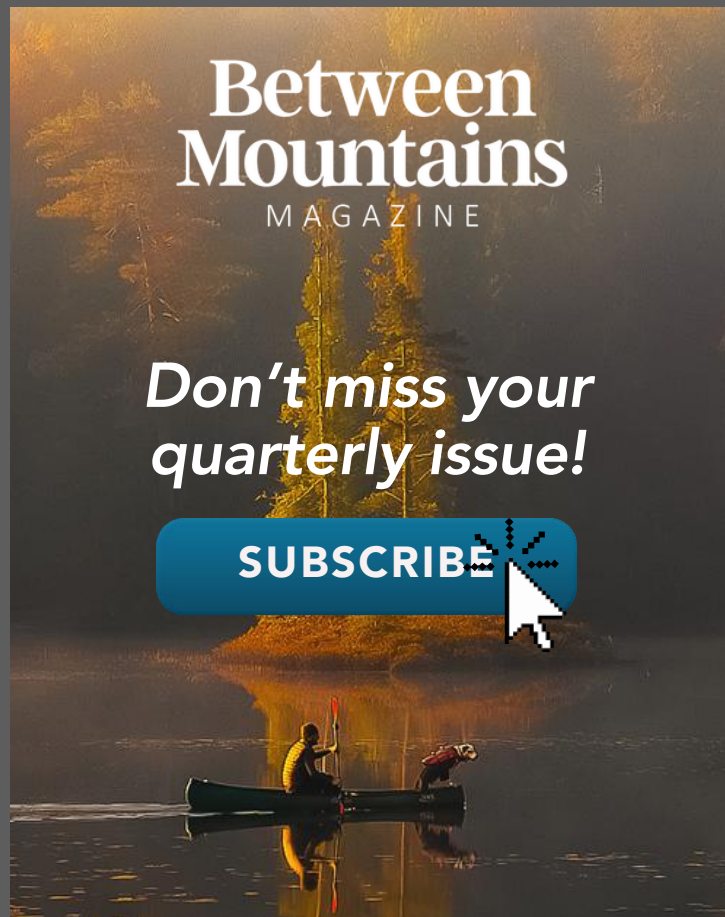
hometown of Plattsburgh, at the Strand Center for the Arts. Executive Director Megan Charland describes the robust free programming at the Strand that has really accelerated in the past few years. The Strand relies on their Art for All mid-annual appeal from the community to sustain the free exhibits and at least two to three free art events per month.

"Art is for everyone," Charland declares. When people participate in a free community art event, they interact and create with people they may have never talked with otherwise. "Nothing brings people together like art," says Charland, and hopes that through community support, the Strand can sustain their free programming and continue to offer these community-building events.

That is my wish as well, not just for the Strand but for all of the museums in the North Country. These institutions are so careful and caring of our history and creativity, uniting and uplifting all of us, and motivating us to be our most knowledgeable and inventive selves. ■



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is a publication by Your Space Between, Inc.
tax-exempt 501(C)(3) nonprofit organization
Tax ID Number: 99-4362867



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