

BEAUTY

HEALTH

HAIR

FASHION

STYLE!

STYLISH

MAGAZINE

Your quarterly guide to gorgeous

Dr. Laura Ellis

*Surgeon, author
and innovator*

Beyond Botox
*What's available for
aging impeccably*

Home for
the Holidays
with Angie Plackis

Cosmetic
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Mitzi Martin

Visionary Image Maker: Troy Jensen

For over three decades, Troy Jensen has been one of the entertainment industry's best-kept creative forces—an artist whose work behind the scenes has defined the public image of some of the world's most famous women. From developing Kim Kardashian's image to capturing timeless portraits of Mariah Carey, Jennifer Lopez, and Elle Macpherson, Jensen's signature lies in the transformative power of image—equal parts fantasy, authenticity, and precision.

But today, Jensen's lens is focused on something even more personal: empowering professionals to see themselves as the face of their own brand. As co-founder of the creative studio Be A Muse with business partner Jarek Addison, he brings a cinematic approach to visual branding—merging editorial-level storytelling with marketing that drives real results.

"What makes someone iconic isn't perfection," Jensen has said. "It's the courage to be seen." With a career spanning fashion, beauty, celebrity, and brand development, Troy continues to redefine what it means to be truly seen—and unforgettable.

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MAGAZINE

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Camilla Calnan



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Radiant Boutique sets itself apart by offering a carefully curated selection of clothing, jewelry, and accessories that not only reflect the latest fashion trends but also helps women feel beautiful and confident. The focus is not just on selling products, but on **empowering women to embrace their unique beauty and radiance.**

Stories of Style



From left: Krista Gargano - Art Director, Camilla Calnan - Photography Editor, Tera Pruitt - Senior Fitness Editor, Carla Myron - Publisher & CEO Brittany Summey - Associate Publisher & Senior Style Editor in front of the newly re-opened Grand Bohemian in historic Biltmore Village.

Welcome to the inaugural issue of Stylish Magazine, a quarterly guide to gorgeous. You're reading the culmination of long-standing friendships and business associations rooted in empowering women to look and feel beautiful.

The team envisioned a source for aesthetic and cosmetic procedures, anti-aging ideas and products, hair services and fashion tips. The vision included providing fitness, overall wellness and weight loss information. Women are discerning consumers of health & beauty products and services. Stylish Magazine was created to become a trusted resource and a guide to gorgeous.

We'll introduce you to the most stylish and successful women in the Southeast through these pages. In this issue we have a surgeon, a salon owner, a personal trainer and an acupuncturist. The women we'll bring you will be as varied and different as they are delightful. We look forward to discovering how they view style and what they practice for health and beauty.

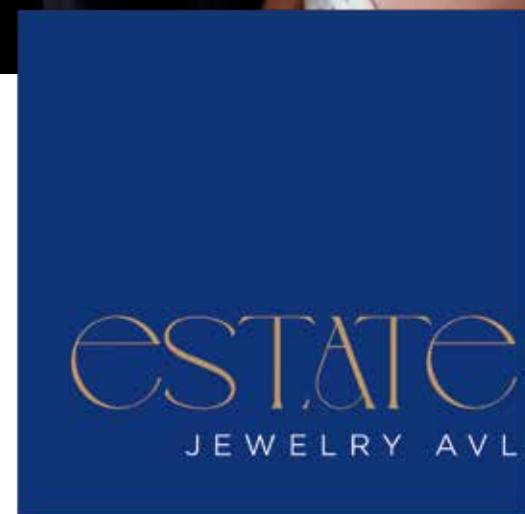
We'll make recommendations on products, services and places to go to once you're gorgeous, starting with Stone Ashe Vineyards in Hendersonville, NC. Much of our region was devastated by Hurricane Helene so in place of a brewery suggestion, in this issue, we highlight a "survivor celebration."

At the center of the gathering were Tara Normington and Jim Kempton who hiked out of Gerton NC because the rescue helicopter wouldn't let them bring their dog, Rocky. Dogs!! Yes, dogs will be making regular appearances throughout the magazine and in their own feature, "Canine Couture."

Again, welcome to the inaugural issue of Stylish Magazine. We are so grateful you found us and look forward to sharing this gorgeous journey. We would love to hear from you. We can't wait to learn what products and beauty providers you adore.

With Love & Gratitude,

Carla, Krista, Cami, Brittani & Tera



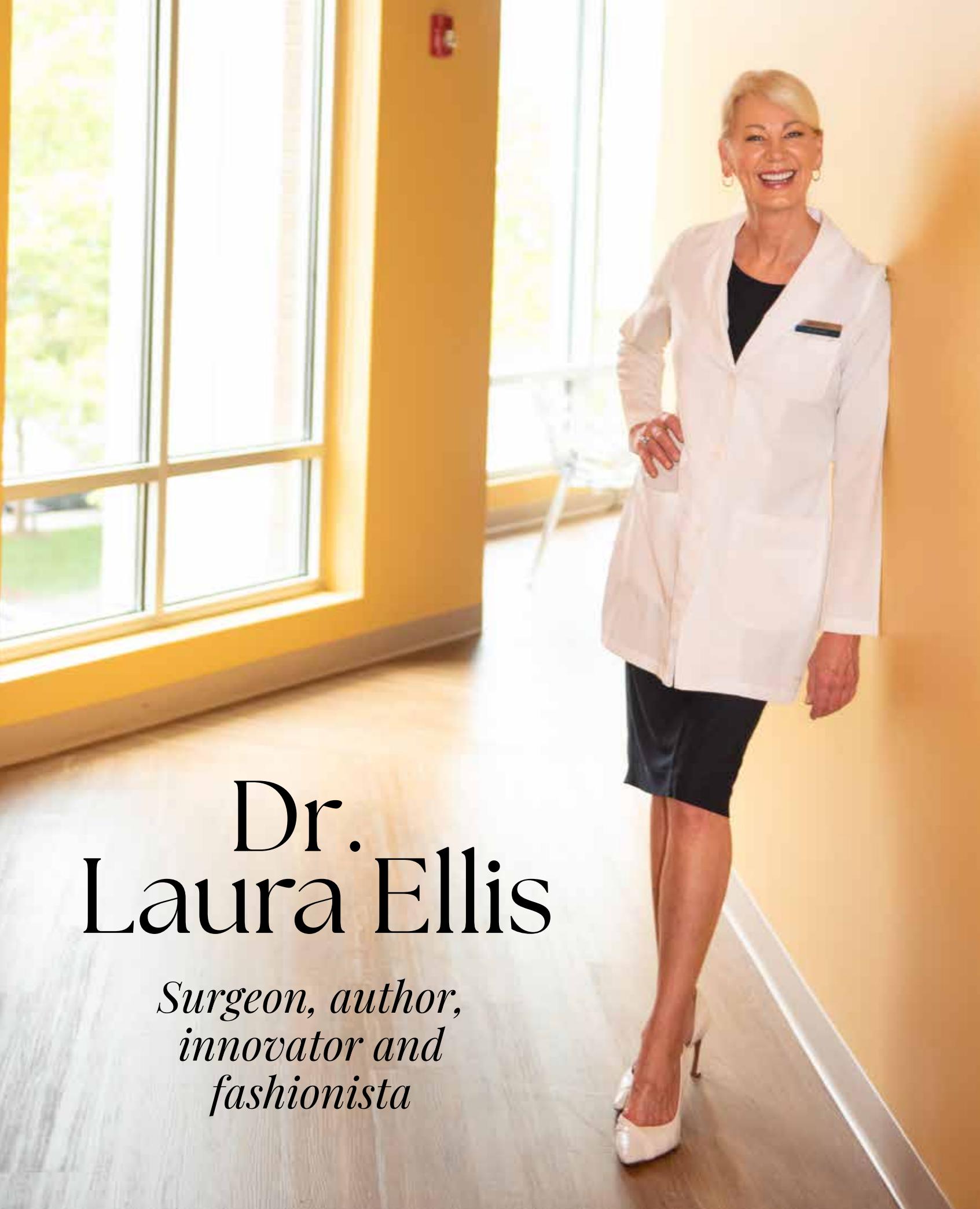
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Dr. Laura Ellis

*Surgeon, author,
innovator and
fashionista*



SMART, SUCCESSFUL, STYLISH



✉ Susan Reinhardt 📸 Camilla Calnan

Shortly before noon on a breezy day in Asheville, N.C., Dr. Laura Ellis, a tall and impossibly glamourous woman emerges from her Tesla looking like a celebrity. She's wearing all black and her sleek blonde hair brushes her shoulders as she enters Liberty House Café, one of her favorite local haunts.

I am admittedly intimidated as I stroll into the restaurant a few minutes later and find her already seated and sipping a latte.

She's early for our lunch meeting, gracious and bubbling with the kind of energy and a vitality found only in those who take their health as seriously as one might who's nearly met her Maker—or is doing all she can to avoid a premature arrival.

We've crossed paths before, at her vein surgery and aesthetics practice, which she established in 2003. I've also seen her at events and fundraisers, noticing she always appears effortlessly chic.

When I tell her this, she shakes her head and laughs, then admits that's a huge misconception others have about her persona.

"I'm actually a really nice, generous person," she says as the server brings her farmhouse skillet entrée, a blend

of grains, greens and eggs. She laments there's a bit of cheese in the dish as she's mostly vegan. "People think I'm untouchable and I'm not. I have no interest in being rich or famous, and more often than not, I like to be relaxed. I don't drive a fancy car; I don't live in a fancy house. I live in a humble bungalow and drive a model 3 Tesla."

Ellis, a former trauma surgeon, an author, innovator, sought-after speaker, and extreme-sports enthusiast, grew up in Greensboro, N.C., the middle child with an older brother and younger sister. She wasn't the girly-girl type asking for Barbies or baby dolls. Her playtime as a kid was similar to that of her adult years—loads of sports and dare-devil feats that scared most of the boys.

"I climbed trees and built forts and would ride my bike down 'suicide hill', a dirt hill near my home. I loved sports, and especially horses. I played tennis and was a sprinter in track."

This raw courage carried over into adulthood, and when people told her she wouldn't be able to attain her goals, she set out with moxie and determination to prove them wrong, graduating from North Carolina State University with a degree in biochemistry and earning her medical degree from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

"I've been told many, many times in my life that I might not be able to achieve the goals I set and that just propels me forward to do the best I can to succeed," she says. "I was the only woman in the surgery residency program and always feel I'm competing in a man's space."

Ellis also served as a guest scientist at the Centers for Disease Control, working as a biochemist and focusing on DNA analysis, before discovering her true calling in medicine: helping others to look and feel their best.

In 2003, she founded medAge, specializing in aesthetics and anti-aging medicine in her office in Asheville. Six years later, she worked as a consultant for three medical offices in Southern California, opening her own medAge clinic in Laguna Beach in 2015, and another medAge office five years later in Greenville, S.C. Ellis also is partial owner and medical director of three practices in South Florida and one in Raleigh, N.C.



During mid-life, when most settle down and accept their careers and status quo, Ellis's fearlessness zoomed unchecked. She's raced motorcycles across the country at speeds well over 100 miles per hour, once crashing on the track coming away with only a bruise. She's plunged into oceans and seas while scuba-diving at unfathomable depths, is a serious rock climber and mountain biker.

Her latest risk, however, has nothing to do with spiking adrenaline through ferocious sports.

Instead, she's invested her time, money, and talents into a revolutionary new skincare product that's poised to change everything we know about the limits of topical treatments.

"It's truly magical," she says. "It does everything. This is what regenerative aesthetics has been missing."



Chris Dailey of Ocean Isle Beach receiving rejuvenating treatments.

She excitedly discusses her new venture as the founder and CEO of PROVOQUE, a serum containing proteins secreted from human cells she says were ethically derived. She's spent years preparing for the product's March 2025 launch and works up to 18 hours a day, thrilled that PROVOQUE will soon command the market.

With such a fast-paced schedule, most would feel harried and burned-out, but not Ellis who thrives when challenged. Between meetings and late nights working, she manages to squeeze in time for Pilates with her home trainer, daily meditation and mindfulness routines.

The groundwork for PROVOQUE broke eight years ago when Ellis, working in her California practice, met one of the most renowned stem cell scientists in the world, Dr. Hans Keirstead who'd treated the late Christopher Reeve and spearheaded a bill that passed twenty years ago allowing stem cell use for scientific research.

A friend of hers introduced them, mentioning Keirstead had developed the research for a new skincare product promising to change everything about the anti-aging industry.

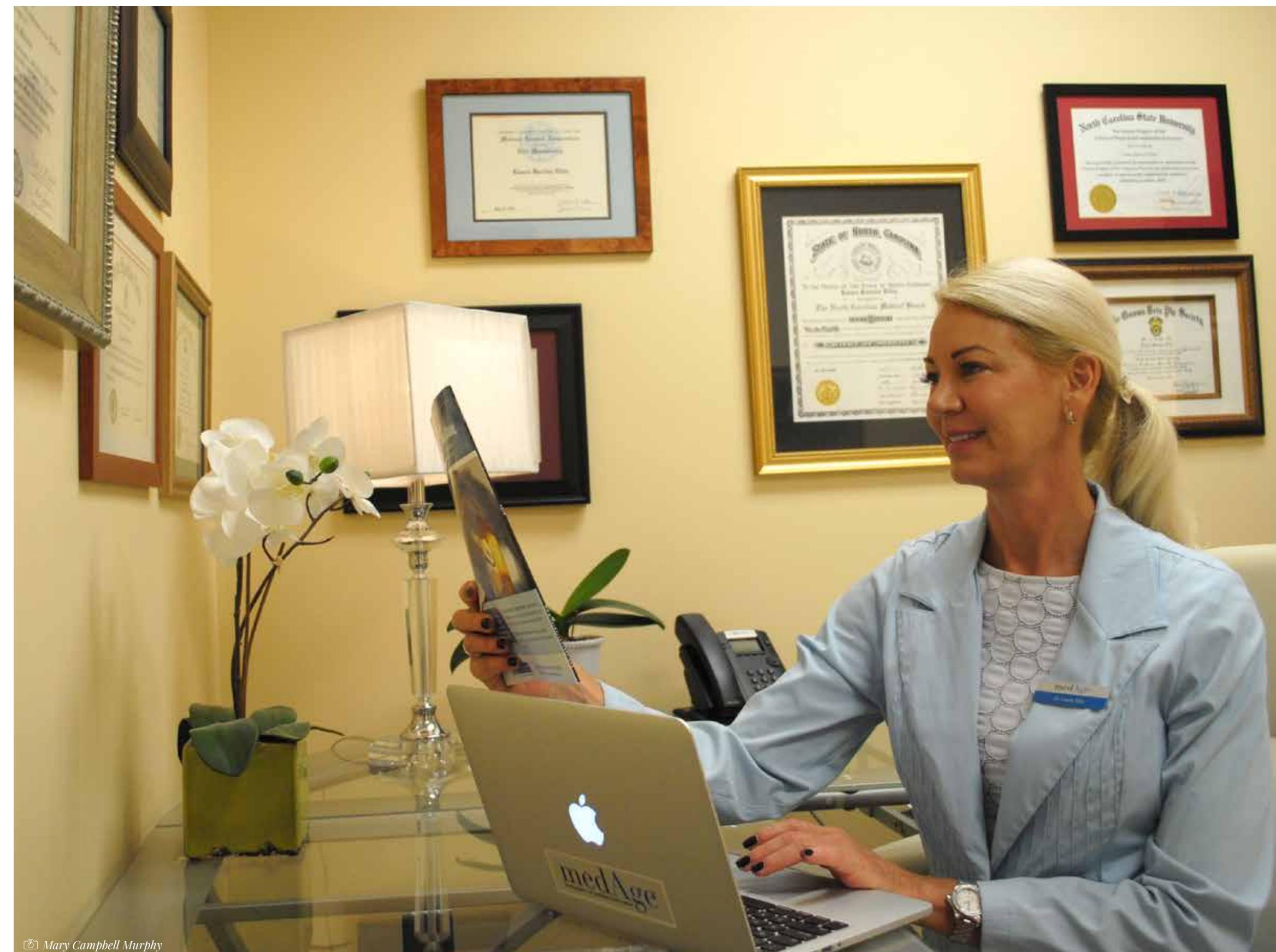
As someone who's spent years in aesthetic medicine, she'd heard this line before.

"I thought, here we go again, I don't want to hear about another skincare product," she says, waving a hand as if brushing off another possible scam. Like everything else in her life, Ellis did her research and learned about Keirstead's company and background.

In 2016, Keirstead founded AIVITA Biomedical, a private company, focused on treatments for cancer, including four clinical trials in various countries to test for a vaccine targeting glioblastoma, a deadly brain cancer, ovarian, and melanoma cancers. He won the Stem Cell Innovator of the Year Award in 2013 for his breakthrough contributions to stem cells therapy, and the Health Care Visionary Award two years later for similar advances in the field.

Using the same technology, he is credited as the first scientist to transform stem cells into a product that improves the appearance of facial skin. Having seen Ellis's anti-aging and wellness infomercials, she was on his radar.

"I agreed to meet Hans," she says. "I went to the biotech firm, and I go into this boardroom with my doctor friend. Two and a half hours into the presentation, I'm totally blown away. It's like nothing I've ever heard of before."



© Mary Campbell Murphy

5 Things You Didn't Know About Dr. Ellis

Dr. Laura Ellis has received loads of press and TV airtime. From her reality shows racing motorcycles to her videos and anti-aging infomercials, this Asheville go-getter and regenerative aesthetics surgeon, is no stranger to the camera.

And it loves her. She downplays this with her trademark self-deprecating wit by saying it's good lighting and photoshop.

When I met her for lunch recently, she looked nothing but camera-ready. No editing necessary.

During our entertaining and informative interview, I asked her to share interesting aspects of her life that may surprise others. She laughed and leaned in, admitting that while she adores extreme sports, she is terrified of small spaces and is claustrophobic. You won't find her cave diving, spelunking, or touring coal mines.

Here are more tidbits about Ellis, a former trauma surgeon and now an anti-aging and wellness practitioner, which might raise an un-Botched eyebrow.

She's nice, generous and unpretentious, having no interest in living a fancy life of upscale homes and luxury. Being famous or a celeb isn't her goal. Educating those about wellness and looking and feeling one's best from the inside out is her mission.

"I'm an extremely insecure person at times, and other times I'm extremely secure. I go from one to the other and think everybody does to some degree."

She broke up with social media two years ago and doesn't scroll through Facebook, Instagram or other channels. "It improved my health immediately," she says. "When I started the new company, I had to look at Instagram and TikTok, and I could feel myself sinking when I did that. The way I see myself started to change. I don't touch social media anymore."

While she hasn't tested it, Ellis believes she may have a mutation in her "risk taker" gene. Although safety comes first, she finds dangerous sports thrilling and has considered flying helicopters one day if she can find the time or extra funds.

"I'm happier and get to know myself better every year, and my sons are my greatest achievement."

Ellis's immediate thoughts were, "OK, I want it. But I also want to sell this in my practice because my patients need this. My patients are flipping out. Not even laser treatments can give them the results this stuff does. It's a topical at-home treatment, feels fresh, not tacky. It has all the growth factors to signal cells to become young again."

Keirstead is equally as excited to partner with Ellis. "I'm thrilled to see Dr. Ellis harness our active technology in PROVOQUE," he said, via email. "Her reputation for quality care and results makes her a natural choice to bring this innovation to the skincare world."

Ellis didn't hesitate to become part of this game-changing revolution, and her new company, LevEllis, (Wes Lev is her business partner's name), is producing this line of skin and hair products using stem cell technology to signal new growth in skin.

"It tells the skin and hair to act young again," she says of the serum which is a class of what she calls, "active biologic skin care."

What's on the market now, she says, are formulas claiming to incorporate stem cell factors from bone marrow, fat, hair follicles, plants and platelets, but they don't supply everything needed for skin renewal. "Plus, plant factors do not help have not been proven to improve human skin," she notes. "They are specific to plants."

So, what makes PROVOQUE different?

"The fact it does not contain any cells is important because our skin doesn't need cells," she says.

"PROVOQUE contains all the peptides and growth factors from human stem cells needed for treating aging and damaged skin. It signals our cells to act young again, to produce more collagen, become more radiant, retain more moisture, and look healthier."

Clinical trials are behind the serum, which was tested in 200 medical offices across the country. The result: a major increase in the production of elastin and collagen.

"And do you know what?" Ellis asks. "Our bodies are magical, and we need to harness our ability to heal ourselves."

The topical sells for \$279 a bottle, similar in price to department store high-end brands, and transforms the skin in less than three months. But what about

medAge
The Science of Peak Performance

Dr. Laura Ellis demonstrates how to use the Pilates Ladder Barrel (made by Balanced Body).



"Developed by Dr. Hans Keirstead through a patented process of ethically sourced skin-specific skin cells, PROVOQUE promises to improve fine lines and wrinkles, firmness, radiance, texture and softness in as little as 14 days."

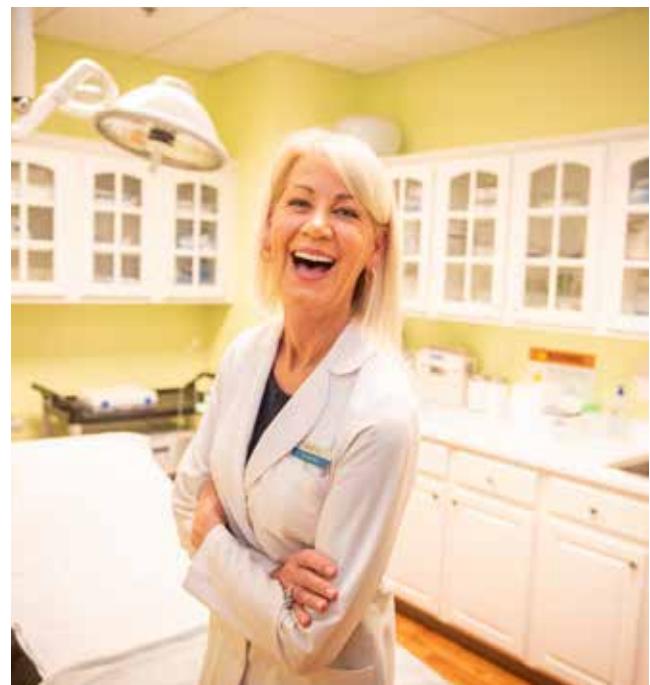
Botox, fillers, lasers, and more invasive procedures to lift and smooth the skin?

A one-time fan and deliverer of these popular anti-aging injectables, Ellis says she no longer relies on these to look and feel younger.

"Today's anti-aging markets are moving from surface-level beauty and wellness, to deeper, more regenerative methods of looking and feeling one's best," she says. "The market in longevity and wellness medicine is growing massively. Many people don't want facelifts or injections."

Ellis labels these as "temporary" fixes, creating injuries to the skin to which the body responds.

"I've been working on this a long time," she says. "Hans' biotech firm produces the active ingredient, and I package and distribute PROVOQUE." She owns the



(Continued on page 82)

Z
FOR ZHENYA



Zhenya and Khalisi in their West Asheville salon.

THE JOYFUL ALCHEMYST OF HAIR



ZHENYA'S PATH TO BEAUTY, BALANCE, AND ASHEVILLE BLISS

BY Ayana Dusenberry

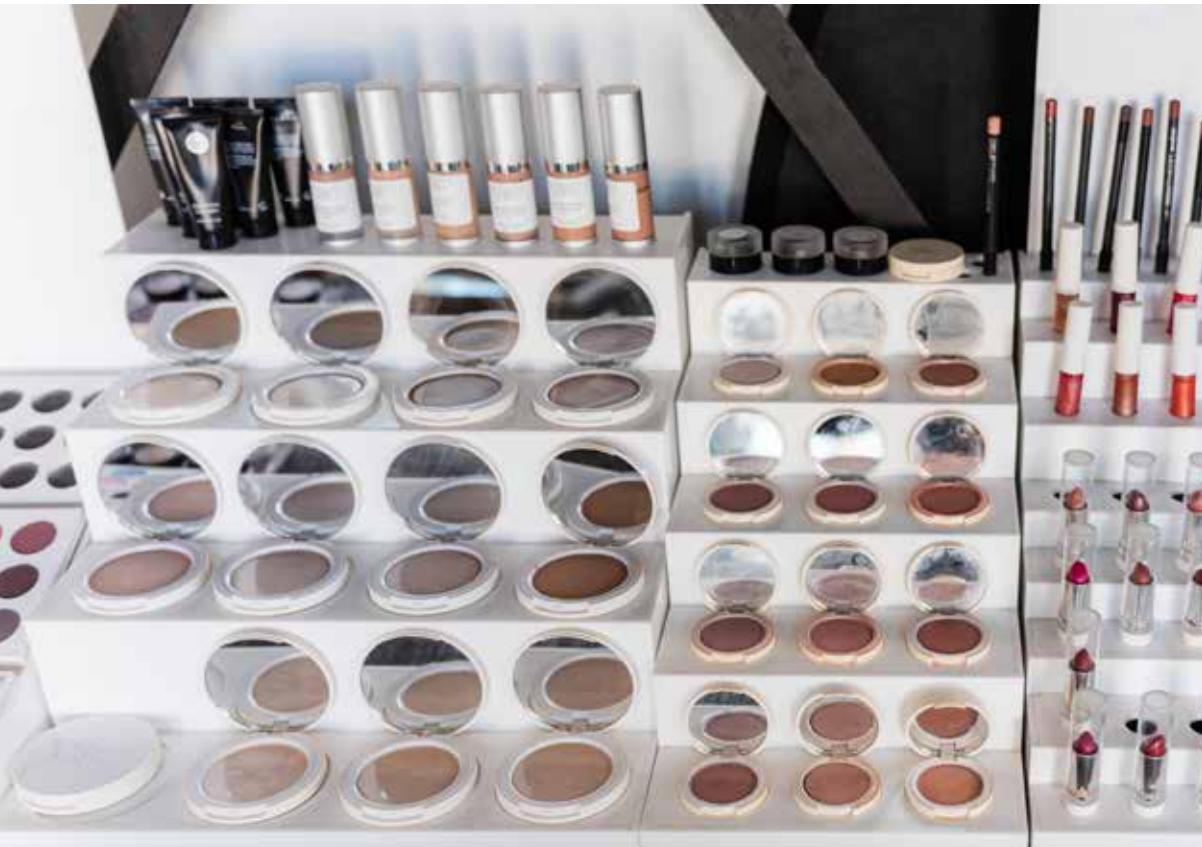
PHOTO Camilla Calnan

Walk into Salon Zhenya on any given day, and you'll likely be greeted by the comforting scent of styling products, the hum of music and hair dryers, lively chatter between stylists and clients, and the unmistakable warmth of its owner, Zhenya Lazarchuk. With her radiant energy, infectious laugh, and ability to make everyone who walks through her doors feel seen and special, it's no surprise that Zhenya has become one of Asheville's most beloved stylists. But her path to this beautiful corner of the world—both the physical salon and the emotional space it offers—was anything but ordinary.

Born in Estonia to Ukrainian parents, Zhenya arrived in the United States at just two years old, with her family settling first in Akron, Ohio. Life took a fateful turn during a family trip to Asheville for a wedding, where her father fell in love with the mountain town on sight. "He said it reminded him of home," Zhenya recalls. "You could live out in the country and still be close to a city. That summer, our house in Ohio went up for sale, and we moved. I was thirteen and devastated—but now, I can't imagine being anywhere else."

It was, in many ways, destiny. That wedding? It happened to be for the sister of Zhenya's now-partner. "We met much later, but looking back, it was serendipitous," she says with a smile. "Maybe the stars did align."

Her journey into hair began not with a salon apprenticeship or beauty school dream, but with tinkering on broken electronics, like the family VCR. "I enjoyed taking things apart to see how they worked to try and fix them," she explains. "And then, when my mom would do these beautiful braids on me and my sister—Dutch braids, rope braids, you name it—I'd try to copy them on my sister. She was my first model. I even started cutting my sister's friends' hair, just to see what would happen." Although it might have initially resulted in getting into a bit of trouble, that same friend of her sister's—one who even joked that she hoped Zhenya would never become a hairdresser—ended up being one of her first models at the first salon she ever worked in.



This instinctive curiosity and love for experimentation quickly turned into an impressive talent. Although she initially tried pursuing more “practical” careers, encouraged by her parents to consider medicine or real estate, none of it clicked. It was her ex-husband who finally nudged her toward making hair a career. “I was already doing it for free—for proms, for weddings—because I loved it,” she says. “That moment of realizing I could do what I love and get paid for it? That was the big lightbulb moment.”

Zhenya’s career began at Carmen Carmen, an Aveda-concept salon inside a mall—an unlikely choice, she admits, but one she made with purpose. “They offered so much support and education, both in-house and in Charlotte. I’d spend weekends driving to shadow master stylists, just to learn more.” That hunger to learn has never faded.

Trying to come up with solutions to challenges has led her to become one of Asheville’s few stylists to offer AirTouch, a sophisticated highlighting technique developed by a stylist she found while scrolling through socials in bed.

“I saw it and just knew it would solve a problem—not just for me, but for my clients,” she explains. “It creates

this incredibly soft, diffused blend that grows out so well. Some of my clients only need to see me once a year. It’s beautiful, low-maintenance, and great for gray blending.”

It’s become something of a signature—what some clients lovingly call “Zhenya Blonde.” “It’s almost like the color just melts,” she laughs. “That’s what one of my friends said, and it’s stuck.”

But Zhenya’s magic isn’t just technical. Her true gift may be in the environment she’s created. After working in various salons—both commission and booth rental—she realized none of them felt quite right. “I wanted to build something I couldn’t find,” she says. “A place with the independence of a booth rental, but the support and community of a traditional salon.”

Salon Zhenya is that vision come to life. Nestled in West Asheville, it’s more than a place for a great haircut. It’s a haven of positivity and connection—something she has cultivated intentionally, even through immense challenges. “COVID, the hurricane... those moments forced me to adapt,” she says. “But they also deepened my gratitude. I’m so thankful when I’m busy, and just as thankful when I’m not. Both bring tremendous value.”

Gratitude is a recurring theme in Zhenya’s life. At her salon station, a simple mirror decal asks: What are you grateful for? It’s a reminder to herself and her clients to stay rooted in joy, even amid chaos. “I’ve learned to focus on those little ‘kaif’ moments,” she shares, referencing a Ukrainian slang term for ecstatic joy. “It might come from a sunrise, a connection, or just a really good hair day. But those are the memories that stick.”

Those moments often include travel—or eggs. Yes, eggs. “I love eggs on everything,” she laughs. “Pizza, burgers, you name it. My friends call me Joanna from The Rescuers Down Under because she was obsessed with eggs too. I’ve even joked that I work for travel—and eggs!”

At home, Zhenya is surrounded by her three cats and two dogs—and she dreams of adding chickens to the mix. Her partner, Andre—a kind of Midas-touch renaissance man who helped build nearly every feature in the salon, from the front desk to the barn door to the break room—is gently resisting the chicken plan, for now. “He doesn’t know how we’d keep the cats from eating the chickens,” she admits. “But never say never.”

What truly grounds Zhenya is her life in Asheville. In warmer weather, she rollerblades to the salon, and

she often takes long walks through her West Asheville neighborhood with her sweet senior dog, Khalisi—well-known and well-loved by salon regulars. She supports local businesses, not because it’s trendy, but because it’s meaningful. “There’s something so special here,” she says. “During the hurricane, I cried almost every day—not out of despair, but because of how beautiful people were to each other. Everyone pulled together. I’ve never seen anything like it.”

Her hope for the future is refreshingly simple. “I’m content,” she says. “The salon is running beautifully. The energy is good. I just want to preserve that. It’s sacred.”

Contentment might not be the most glamorous of goals in an era obsessed with constant hustle and relentless expansion—but for Zhenya, it’s a radical and beautiful act. She’s not chasing a bigger business or a flashier title. She’s chasing peace. Purpose. Positivity. And, of course, a really good hair day—ideally followed by a burger with a fried egg on top.

As she puts it: “Life is hard. But when you sprinkle it with moments of kaif, it becomes something you want to keep living—something that’s truly worth it.”



April Riddick, Janet Perry, and Jaclyn Glendinning look for fashion finds on Hendersonville, NC's Main Street.

FALL IN LOVE WITH FASHION

DISCOVER THE MUST-HAVE TRENDS FOR AUTUMN 2025!

Jacqui Perry *Camilla Calnan*

As the leaves start to change and the air becomes crisp, autumn fashion arrives, bringing change and excitement to our wardrobes! Fashion is an ongoing opportunity to express and elevate your look. This season embraces bold colors and fun textures to capture the cozy vibe and it's a great time to build a capsule wardrobe.

Fall color trends include a rich palette which mirrors the warmth and vibrancy of the cooler months. Key colors to consider adding this year are burnt orange, deep plum, forest green, muted mustard, rusty red, navy blue, and teal. Include vibrant accents in cobalt blue, sunflower yellow, fiery red. Don't forget to add metallics as well as neutrals like soft beige, black, and charcoal.

Innovative designers are mixing classic styles with fresh materials and playful patterns. Adding eye-catching accessories like scarves or statement jewelry makes getting dressed fun. Be on the lookout for denim, comfy knits, animal print, embellished clothing, tailored cuts, and layering. Try out a monochromatic look. Creating an ensemble using varying shades, tones, and textures of a single color is sophisticated, dramatic and elegant.

Invest in the right pieces and choose colors that suit you to create a visually striking wardrobe that helps express your individuality and charisma.

Be sure to include timeless essentials and casual pieces that add versatility and embrace novelty pieces for your own personal touch.

ESSENTIALS & MUST-HAVES:

Having at least one neutral, tailored blazer (denim, navy, black, or charcoal) is imperative. They transition effortlessly from work to weekend and elevate any outfit.

A crisp white shirt is a blank canvas for endless styling opportunities. The crispier, the better. Wear tucked into high-rise jeans or layered under a cozy knit sweater. You'll wear this on repeat.

Autumn weather requires well-fitting, tailored trousers in black, grey, or tan. Perfect for any occasion and can be dressed down with a casual tee.

Don't forget your little black dress! An LBD is a timeless classic and perfect for dinner dates and nights out with friends.

Own at least one beautifully tailored trench coat. They add sophistication and are perfect for transitional weather. Layer over dressy or casual looks.

CASUAL NECESSITIES:

Invest in a pair of perfectly fitting jeans; classic straight leg, high-rise, wide-leg, or relaxed-fit. Dress them up or down effortlessly.

Add extra personality with a graphic tee.

Make sure you opt for high-quality sweaters, turtlenecks or cardigans. Choose timeless colors and layer over tees or dresses.

Head downtown or to the dock with classic white sneakers or canvas slip-ons. Perfect for a laid-back vibe and everyday casual wear.

Chinos and comfortable cotton trousers are an excellent alternative to jeans.

Lastly, stylish utility jackets add a relaxed yet edgy element. Perfect for layering over tees and light knits.



Plenty of places to relax in downtown Hendersonville.



ONE FINAL NOTE...

Get out and explore the variety of local boutiques to uncover hidden gems that make you say "I want that!" and transform your wardrobe into something truly extraordinary.

Remember, fashion is what you wear;
style is how you wear it!



creative cuts • custom color • your style
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PRAISEWORTHY PRODUCTS



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TERA PRUETT

**FIT.
FIERCE.
FABULOUS.**



Tera Pruett



Camilla Calnan

I fell in love with health, nutrition, and the desire to feel strong, capable, and UNSTOPPABLE at an unusually early age. But it didn't begin with a picture-perfect childhood filled with sports teams, trophies, or learning how to navigate wins and losses with a jersey on my back. Nope. That kind of structure, discipline, and accountability came much later—after life gave me a whole different kind of training ground.





Tera Pruett at 'home' in the gym.

Moving my body gave me a feeling I hadn't felt before: freedom.

Growing up in a chaotic home with more barriers than bridges, I chose to enroll in boarding school as a teenager. I grew up fast and left home even faster. The summer I turned 13, I arrived early to campus to work and get settled in. But what I didn't realize then was that I was sinking into a depression I couldn't name. That's when I started running—and something shifted. Moving my body gave me a feeling I hadn't felt before: freedom. I didn't have the language for it yet, but I knew it helped me feel stronger, more alive, and yes, unstoppable.

That same year, I made the alternate squad for our Acro Team—our school's fun mash-up of gymnastics and cheerleading. I had no clue what I was doing, but I knew one thing: moving my body made me feel powerful, and it was doing something real for my spirit.

Then, during one summer break, I had my radio moment—lucky caller number 9! (I know, I'm dating myself here—ha!) I won a free summer gym membership, and I showed up early for my very first step aerobics class—those wooden steps were no joke. I claimed a spot in the back, hoping to blend in. But 75 minutes later, I was drenched, my calves were screaming, and I was riding high on that endorphin magic. I was hooked. At just 18, I didn't know this was the beginning of a lifelong journey—one where movement would become my medicine, my passion, and my purpose. It wasn't the answer to everything, but it opened a door to healing, confidence, and connection.

After college, I met my husband, and we built our home and family in Asheville. I was determined to raise our son while still chasing my passion. I started working childcare at a local gym to get my

foot in the door. That led to teaching group fitness classes, and not long after, I became a certified personal trainer. A few years in gym management gave me clarity—I didn't just want to work in fitness. I wanted to create impact. I saw how trainers could be on the frontlines of someone's transformation. We could cheer people on and walk beside them. I dreamed of opening my own space. Slowly, I began collecting equipment, storing it in our garage, and training clients in parks, driveways, and even parking lots. Many of my long-time clients can tell stories of workouts in blazing heat and freezing cold. I had help—gym owners who lent me space, local businesses who opened their lots, and a community that believed in me before I had four walls to call my own.

In 2018, that dream became real. With the help of some incredible humans, I opened a studio—a space to train my clients and share with other passionate coaches. It started small, but it became a true hub. Then 2020 hit. We paused, pivoted, and found creative ways to support our people through the chaos.

By 2023, we were breathing again—hosting community events, adding a new trainer to the team, and feeling the momentum. But nothing could have prepared us for what came next.

September 26–27, 2025. Hurricane Helene.

She changed everything.

In preparation for being out of town, I had gone to the studio to restock supplies and tidy up. Something felt off, so I moved all the equipment to the front—just in case. I told myself to stop worrying



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we believe in the magic of black cats.

Binx's Home for Black Cats is an Asheville, NC, non-profit. We're a foster-based rescue on a mission to spread the magic of black cats and create a community that loves and protects them.

and not feel guilty for stepping away. But by Friday at lunchtime—no power, no service, no contact—silence. I knew something was very wrong.

Like so many in our community, our story became one of heartbreak and survival. The sound of chainsaws, helicopters, and darkness became our new normal. The layers of grief, gratitude, and survivor's guilt all hit at once—and then again, day after day. It was like living on a loop.

Deep down, I knew OUR gym was gone. Our studio sat along the Swannanoa River near Biltmore Village.

Once I could safely get in, I needed to see it for myself. Laurel, one of the original trainers who helped build that space with me, met me there. Together, we stood in the wreckage of years of hard work and beautiful memories.

With help, I salvaged what I could and started adjusting to a whole new reality. In the middle of volunteering, cleanup, and chaos, Coach Luis and the Caffeine N Fitness community opened their doors to us without hesitation—a true lifeline in a storm. Having a place to land was a gift, and having Coach Laurel (Feel Fit with Laurel) there made it even more powerful. Laurel is a force—strong, steady, no-nonsense, and the kind of badass teammate you want beside you when the going gets tough. Rebuilding alongside her has been a grounding presence and a daily source of inspiration.

Where are they now?

Coach Eric took the leap and opened his own space—Reconstruct Personal Fitness Training—carving out

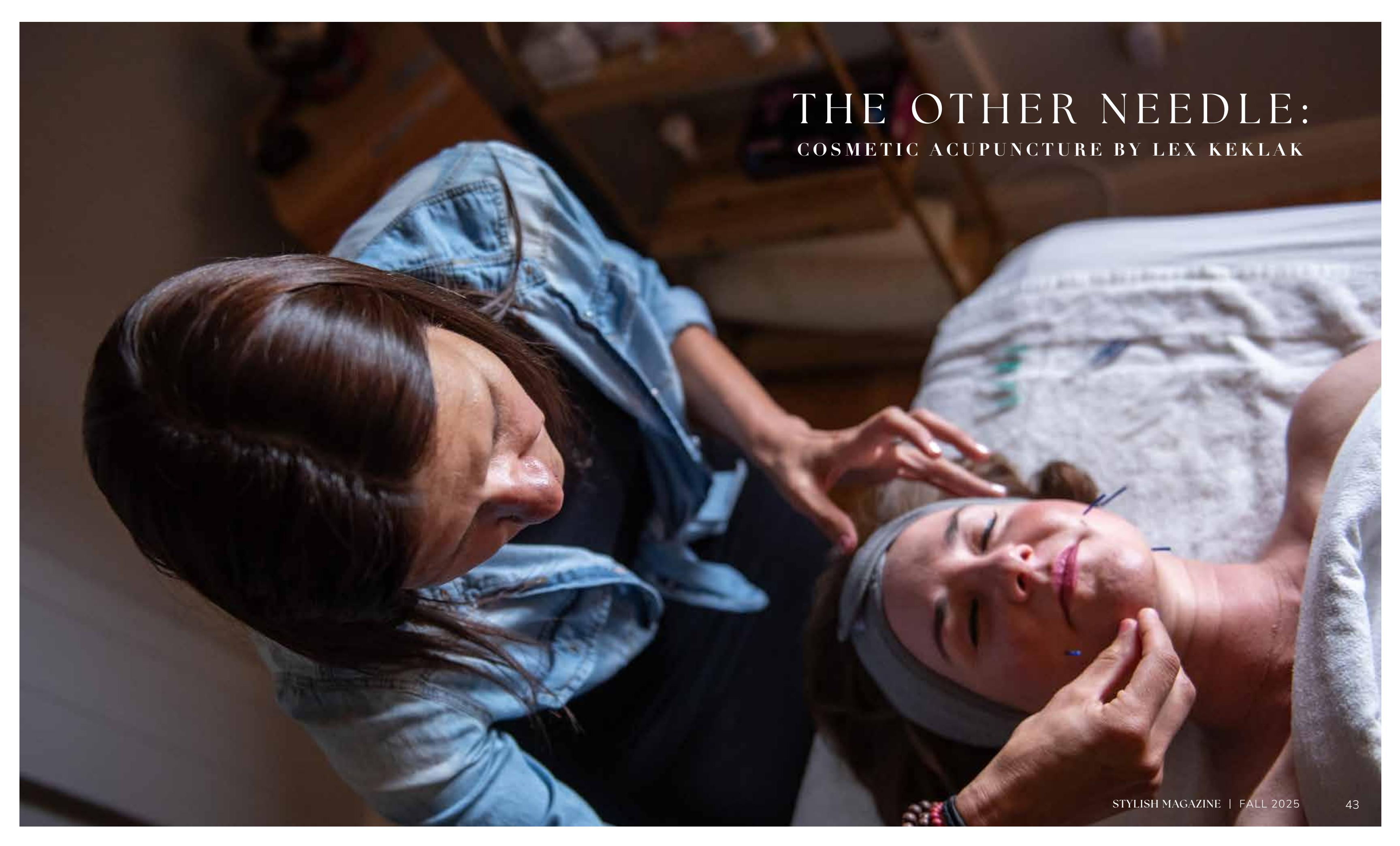


a new chapter with his signature drive. Coach Ben is meeting clients throughout town and chasing down his next big goal with heart and hustle. Everyone is rising in their own way, and it's been wild and beautiful to witness. A massive shoutout to those who helped me get back on my feet. To those who donated (near and far) funds to help with the jump start to replace equipment, to Lululemon for stepping in and supporting me as an ambassador, to Fuel Goods for their generous donation to charge the comeback by replacing what was lost, and to Realistic Runners-Mak for raising money to help me check a few items off my wish list for resupply. You all showed up when I needed it most, and that's the power of community. I'm beyond grateful for each and every one of you. This is what it means to rise together.

But let's be real—there's still a ton of work to do to get back to full function. I'm still on the hunt for a new HOME for the Training HUB, but nothing's going to stop this Rebel from rising again. Stay tuned—this ride ain't over.

Through every twist, turn, loss, and comeback—my people have held me down in the best way. My husband is the ultimate "DO IT" hype man. When I doubt, he's the voice that says, "Go for it." My sister is my soft place and my fire starter—she keeps me grounded and reminds me that I can do hard things. And my son? He's my WHY. My reason for showing up in the world bold, loud, proud, and UNSTOPPABLE. I want him to see that no matter what life throws your way—you get up, you keep going, and you don't let those inner demons win. He's the heartbeat behind my hustle, every single day.

Continued on page 86

A woman with long dark hair is lying on a massage table, looking up. A practitioner in a grey t-shirt is performing cosmetic acupuncture on her face, with several needles visible in her forehead and cheeks. The practitioner's hands are visible, one holding a needle and the other supporting the patient's head. The background is dark and out of focus.

THE OTHER NEEDLE:

COSMETIC ACUPUNCTURE BY LEX KEKLAK



Lex applies needles following the contours of Brittani's face. Points in facial treatments have names like Welcome Fragrance, Hundred Convergences and Bright Light which helps the eyes

 *Claudia Cascile*  *Camilla Calnan*

Botox and other injectables for anti-aging have become so mainstream, women no longer fib about availing themselves of the miracle, wrinkle-erasing magic. Instead, they point to their faces and tell friends how many units they've received.

But it's not for everyone. Many women prefer a more natural approach to aging well. They opt for yoga, juice cleanses and vegan diets. And some women are opting for acupuncture to reduce the signs of aging.

I wasn't aware the traditional Chinese medicine could help reduce those fine lines and wrinkles until I ran into Lex Kelak at Hot Yoga in Asheville. Lex has been one of my yoga instructors for more than 14 years. She's also an acupuncturist. I went

to her for help with a shoulder injury and remember feeling my hands uncurl as she placed the needles into my shoulder. I didn't realize my fists were clenched from pain until they opened.

Originally from Philadelphia, Lex now calls Asheville home. It's also where she opened her own acupuncture studio, Lex Acupuncture in Biltmore Village, NC. Being a yoga instructor first, she learned there are ways to feel at home in your own skin. She cites the understanding of the human body she gained through yoga with her interest in treating injuries and chronic pain with acupuncture and cupping. She went to The Won Institute of Graduate Studies, Daoist traditions and graduated from the Jung Tao School of Classical Chinese Medicine.

She explained facial rejuvenation acupuncture. "It has been used for centuries as a gentle, effective and safe technique to combat the signs of aging and erase years from the face without risk or downtime. I love watching the light return to my patients' faces and seeing their confidence grow." The technique places fine needles in specific points in the face, improving the flow of energy and stimulating the production of collagen and elastin to make skin look youthful and firm.

"Cosmetic acupuncture is a commitment. It takes 6 weeks to convince the body to increase collagen production, so I recommend a series of 10 to 12 weekly treatments. By seeing my patients every week, I really get to know their faces, fine lines and all. I also get to see the changes up close. I love that

and getting to know them over those 10 to 12 weeks and beyond. In a world of instant gratification, I teach patients that our bodies demand patience and these treatments require maintenance. The beautiful thing about these treatments is that they address the whole-body health, not just the face."

Lucy Paterson, one of Lex's long-term patients had this to say, "when people ask me if acupuncture works, I reply 'there's a reason it's been around for a few thousand years.' I first tried acupuncture to heal pain and it completely went away in a few weeks. Lex's treatments are so relaxing, I often fall asleep. I look forward to every session. I'm frequently told I don't look my age, which is awesome. Lex is wickedly smart and has a treasure chest of knowledge and experience. She has the



heart of a healer and is an amazing human. I just love her! She's the bomb!"

Lex has been a Bikram Yoga instructor for 20 years. "It's a style of hatha which is a very physical practice but there are wrenches thrown in to challenge the mind as well. I often offer my patients yoga postures to help whatever is going on in their bodies." Regarding her own practice Lex said "yoga works my body on a level that I can control, but there will always be deeper pieces of the puzzle that, even as a trained acupuncturist, I can't recognize in myself. This is why I get regular treatments from other practitioners. We are trained to see the underlying patterns that cause imbalance in the body. Acupuncture gives me a more direct way to help my students and patients."

Before speaking with Lex, I thought acupuncture was exclusively about pain relief, detox and balance. I asked her if patients were coming for those options or specifically for cosmetic acupuncture. "It's about fifty-fifty. I think most people think about acupuncture for pain relief. I certainly did but when I went for my first treatment, I learned it treats the body inside and out. It works wonders for stress, anxiety, depression, insomnia, hormonal imbalances, digestive issues...I could go on. When people see what a difference treatments work for their body and mind, they're more inclined to understand how it might work for cosmetic purposes."

"I've worked on patients that just want a little extra glow for wedding pictures, and I've worked on patients who are treating themselves to a little pampering post chemotherapy.

Everyone's journey is so different, and I love every connection formed along the way."

Book your treatment with Lex at lexacupuncture.com.



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SURVIVOR CELEBRATION

ONE YEAR POST-HURRICANE HELENE

✉ Michael E. Gouge

📸 Camilla Calnan

Nearly a year after Hurricane Helene devastated Western North Carolina, residents who lived through the natural disaster reflect on how the deadly storm brought them closer together with their friends and neighbors.

High winds and heavy rains especially battered the Hickory Nut Gorge, the scenic region home to Lake Lure, Chimney Rock and Bat Cave. The deluge washed out most of the buildings on the main throughfare in Chimney Rock. Debris filled Lake Lure. Bat Cave became cut off from the outside world when the Rocky Broad River rearranged the landscape. In total, at least 108 people lost their lives and countless others suffered property damage.

For Tara Normington and Jim Kempton of Bat Cave, the natural disaster gave them a greater appreciation for their community, their good fortune and their friends who rallied to their aid.

"It was awesome the way strangers came together to help one another. We met new friends through the whole thing, people from other areas coming to help, said Kempton, who retired to the scenic area after a career in the aerospace industry. "For me, one of the greatest things was, as strange as it sounds, we got to experience something that not everybody on this planet gets to experience. I feel blessed or just enlightened."

As the storm passed, the couple became thankful their home was intact. They weren't injured, but some of the neighbors were. They



Left: Tara and Angie, Cheers! Middle: Susan Reinhardt and Tara Normington discussing the hurricane.



Right: Jimmy Okpych, Tom Plackis, Jim Kempton and Gary Slattery discuss evacuating their friends.



provided first aid, food, and clothing, as well as shelter for 13 people overnight in their home and camper trailer. Power was out. The main highway, U.S. 74A, did not exist anymore, scoured away by the raging river.

Kempton's iPhone has a feature where users can send an SOS via satellite. He got a response and requested help. He couldn't text much more given the weak connection but told them a 10-year-old girl was trapped under a roof. Luckily, she was extricated and suffered no serious injuries.

A group of rescuers soon approached from over the wooded mountain responding to the SOS. It was a husband, wife and son from Bat Cave Volunteer Fire Department. "They had two-way communication. They hiked over the mountain, which was still unstable ground. I thought that was amazing," he said.

The rescuers managed to call for a military helicopter to evacuate survivors of the devastating flood. They arrived the next day. There was no place to land, so they lowered personnel and began hauling the injured and homeless up in a basket. A crewman on the ground tallied everyone's weight before loading them for evacuation. Kempton asked about their beloved Australian shepherd, Rocky. Sorry, no

dogs on the helicopter came the terse reply. "I said we're not going. A man can't leave his dog. I said we're hiking out. He kind of gave a look of approval. My concern was if he knew what the weather was going to be like for the next couple of days. The fire folks stayed around for a couple of hours, and then they hiked back over the mountain."

Benevolently, the weather the next few days was sunny and mild. The couple cleaned the toxic river mud from their household surfaces, cooked what perishable food they had on the grill for their neighbors and the volunteers, then packed up some essentials and cherished possessions into a few backpacks and headed out with their dog on a three-mile hike to the Gerton Fire Department's station on U.S. 74A. "Thank goodness we're both in shape to do that because it wasn't a cake walk. We were crawling down into the stream and wading. We were walking along and all of a sudden, the road is gone," Kempton said.

They made the arduous hike to the fire station, then caught a ride to another fire house closer to Asheville. They didn't want to go to the main shelter to spend the night since they were not sure they'd even take them with their dog. That's when Normington managed to get a cell phone call out to her friend Tom Plackis, who lives near

Rutherfordton, about 40 miles away. Plackis, a retired FDNY firefighter, snapped into action. Several roads were still flooded, washed out completely, or blocked by down trees, but the former 9/11 first responder was undeterred. "I can't make any promises on what time, but I'm going to be there, I don't know when, so don't leave," Plackis told his friends.

Not knowing how he was going to manage such a feat, Plackis called his friend and former FDNY colleague Gary Slattery, who managed to escape the region and was safe in Charlotte with a good internet connection. Slattery was able to coordinate directions and find a passable route for Plackis to navigate to evacuate their friends.

"When Tara called me, I packed my truck up with ropes, chainsaws, food, blankets and clothes. We didn't know what they had and didn't have or what we would need to get to them," Plackis said. "That's one thing about being a fireman, it's a team operation. You call on somebody for help and you get things done," Slattery said.

As rebuilding continues in the Hickory Nut Gorge and across WNC, the people who endure Helene's wrath take pride and comfort in how the community rallied together during the disaster. "I'm happy of neighbor

helping neighbor. It showed the community coming together during a very stressful time," Plackis said.

"You know, you wave to your neighbors, and they wave back as they're driving past, but a lot of time you don't really know their names," Slattery said. "The neighbors all came out, and I was proud of that. They had their chainsaws. As we drove through the neighborhood, they cut the trees wide enough for cars to get through. Every neighborhood was doing the same. It shows in times of distress, everybody did come together and do what neighbors should do."

Plackis, who met Slattery when they worked as firefighters in New York, nodded in agreement. He also complimented the local volunteer firefighters who trekked through the woods to offer aid. "Not just FDNY. It's brotherhood and it really is a thing. There are people in that job because they want to help people."

As for the area residents, they immediately responded to the community's needs, becoming the front-line people, Plackis said. "They weren't cops. They weren't firemen or utility workers. They were just people clearing in front of their house and neighbors. It was all these little links in the chain of teamwork."

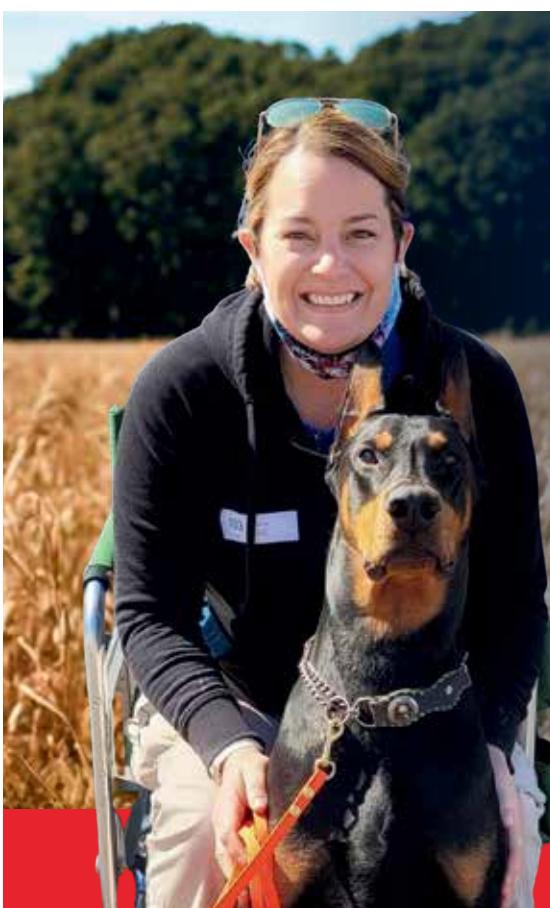
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From across the country, other ordinary people lent support in the form of donations. Rutherford County, normally a quiet and peaceful region, saw aircraft from around the country landing at the small airport. Fleets of trucks began bringing in supplies. "To me, it restored humanity. It restored the way people treat each other and acted toward each other without being asked," said Jimmy Okpych Director of Habitat for Humanity in Rutherford County. Okpych said more than 800 volunteers arrived at the small airport to help unload supplies. A generous property owner donated the use of a 20,000-square-foot warehouse to store the influx of relief supplies.

"Food, diapers, clothing, gas bottles. It got to the point where we could ask for something specifically, and they'd radio it in. It was amazing to be part of that," he said. "Helping your neighbor is just an easy thing to do, and I saw that happen time-and-time again."

For Bat Cave residents Normington and Kempton, life is returning to normal. Within weeks, a temporary gravel road allowed access to their home. Work continues in Chimney Rock and Lake Lure, and it will be years before the scars of Helene vanish.

"Obviously, I appreciate that our house is still there, based on the fact several people were not that lucky. I'm grateful we're alive and didn't suffer any debilitating circumstances. Our place is the most beautiful place on earth. It's been a long haul getting it back to being beautiful," Kempton said.

"We have bears that visit every day. I'm so glad to see bears. They could've got wiped out, too. We have a mom and three cubs that come every day."

"I don't know where else I'd want to go," Normington said. "It's beautiful. We have a new palette to play with. Even though the whole yard was flooded, our flowers and plants have just exploded, I guess from the minerals washing down the side of the mountain. It's beautiful, a different kind of beautiful. There's always hope."

THE GIFT OF HAIR

KAYLA THOMASSON TREATS THINNING HAIR

BY  **Carla Myron**  **Camilla Calnan**

Kayla Thomasson, a Sylva NC native, knew she would become a stylist when she was 12 years old. "I took a crimper to my barbie doll's hair. I fried it off." She laughed as she continued "I didn't learn the first time; I kept doing it." She also remembers coloring their hair with Kool Aide, already a budding colorist. She intended to go to hair school but explained "part of me wanted to become a teacher." During her first semester at Southwestern Community College, she studied education. "I quickly realized that it wasn't 'artsy' enough. It wasn't hands-on. I liked the idea of teaching people, but I was bored." Second semester she switched to the full-time pursuit of a cosmetology license.

After graduation, she worked as an assistant at Serendipity Salon in Franklin, NC for six months before becoming a full-time stylist. Her initial passions were blonding and vivids. "I loved the funky, vivid colors and giving people rainbows. It spoke to my youth and the younger demographic I attracted. I promptly realized that blonding was more my style, my focus shifted to perfecting blondes while maintaining the integrity of the hair."

Kayla Thomasson enjoys the crisp air and holiday vibes at the Jackson County Historic Courthouse.

Enjoy the annual Christmas tree lighting on Friday, December 5th at 6pm.

The courthouse is located at 310 Keener Street, Sylva, NC





Left: Kayla going over color options during a consultation. Middle: Kayla uses Oligo's Calura Permanent Shine Hair Color.



Right: She always starts by examining the integrity of the hair.



Fast forward sixteen years, Kayla is married and a mother of three. She's a stylist and co-owner at Les Gen Beaux in Sylva (where she's been doing hair since she left Serendipity Salon fifteen years ago). "Do you know what Les Gen Beaux means?" she asked. I did not. I also did not pronounce it correctly. "It's French for the Beautiful People." And returning to her desire to teach, she's also an educator for Zenagen; a safe, effective, plant-based treatment for thinning hair.

I should be able to pronounce Les Gen Beaux correctly by now. Full disclosure, I've known Kayla for seven years. I am a Distributor Sales Consultant for EISS (European Image Salon Suppliers) and Kayla has been one of my clients since 2018. I have very thick hair but noticed an alarming amount of (age-related) shedding. During a meeting at the EISS office near Charleston SC, I learned about Zenagen, decided to try it, and it worked. I had been using Zenagen for few weeks when Kayla mentioned her post-partum hair loss. "I'm using this." I told her and handed her a sample.

Kayla recalled the story. "My first Zenagen came from you. I had Corbin in 2015 and had been struggling with post-partum hair loss for three years. I noticed within a month of starting Zenagen that my hair was coming back."

She saw a post on social media where Zenagen was looking for educators. "It sparked my interest because I was amazed by my results. I wrote a bio and submitted

a video. They sensed my passion for this line and brought me on board."

Thanks to her husband Jay's support, she's able to travel and teach certification classes for stylists. "I've been throughout western North Carolina and all the surrounding states as well as Ohio, Florida and New Mexico."

She spoke about COVID's impact on education in the beauty industry and how she's motivated to get the information to other stylists so they can help their clients. "There is a lot of misinformation on social media about hair loss and scalp health. It's a big issue in our industry. Women don't feel as confident when they don't love their hair. The most beautiful color will not look good on hair that isn't healthy. This is a tool for stylists to give their clients gorgeous hair. I want them to understand Zenagen and what it can do, it's why I'm willing to take time away from my family. This company has me hook, line and sinker."

We talked about length of time to see results. "It depends on the cause of the inflammation that is resulting in hair loss, but most people see a reduction in shedding fairly quickly." She has approximately 70% of her salon clients using Zenagen. "They know I'm an educator, so they ask me about it. One client told me she was pregnant and asked when she should start using it to prevent post-partum hair loss. This line is even safe for pregnant and nursing women." Kayla introduced her

client Jane Coburn to Zenagen after she'd lost her hair from chemotherapy. "Not only do I have hair growing back in my bald spots, but all my hair is thicker and healthier. Kayla is a fun, knowledgeable and thoughtful stylist who listens to my needs and isn't afraid to think outside the box," Jane told us. Maria Lyons added "I love the Zenagen products Kayla introduced me to, especially the Repairacal leave-in conditioner. My hair is completely transformed, it's fuller, longer and much healthier."

Kayla and I were out bringing Zenagen samples to salons in Asheville NC while having this conversation; Shear Shack, Ravin Salon, Opal Crow and Wink. We stopped for lunch at Juicy Lucy's on Hendersonville Road and enjoyed big hearty burgers. Yes, most of Asheville is open! She confided in me that her favorite comfort food is pizza, and looked sheepish as she said, "I love Papa John's."

She enjoys cooking for her family, and lasagna is one of her favorite dishes to prepare. In fact, that's her Christmas menu. "We have the big traditional turkey and side dishes for Thanksgiving, so we like Christmas to be more laid-back. We make lasagna, a large salad and bread sticks. My family lives nearby so we don't have to travel to celebrate. We stay home on New Years Eve playing games until midnight. We love Uno and Jay invents games that include prizes for the kids. We all stay awake until 12:00 to ring in the new year." Kayla's New Year's resolution? That's simple "help more stylists give their clients the gift of healthy hair."



You can follow Kayla on Instagram at [kayla_lesgenbeaux](https://www.instagram.com/kayla_lesgenbeaux)

If you're a stylist or salon owner in Western North Carolina and would like information and/or samples, call Carla 828-989-4074.

In eastern North Carolina, call Kim 910-580-2730.

Anywhere else in North or South Carolina, call EISS 843-552-7600, they'll direct you to your rep.

For everyone else, Zenagen is available at the nicest salons in your area.

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 Dr. Laura Ellis

 Troy Jensen

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We're no longer just asking how to look younger. We're asking how to live younger. Let's explore the full spectrum of tools available to those who want to optimize their vitality, aesthetics, and health—inside and out.



SURGICAL & ENERGY-BASED AESTHETIC INNOVATIONS

While non-invasive procedures are incredibly popular, surgical interventions have also advanced significantly—and in many cases, still offer the most dramatic, long-lasting results. What's new, however, is the way these surgeries are being combined with non-surgical adjuncts to enhance outcomes and shorten downtime.

Modern Surgical Options

Facelifts, neck lifts, and blepharoplasty (eyelid surgery) remain gold-standard procedures for tightening sagging skin and rejuvenating facial contours. But today's techniques emphasize natural results. Surgeons now favor deep-plane lifts and fat grafting to restore volume and contour, rather than simply pulling the skin tight.

Mini-lifts, lower-face lifts, and localized procedures (like brow or eyelid lifts) are popular with patients in their 40s and 50s who want to maintain rather than drastically alter their appearance.

Energy-Based Devices

Technologies using radio frequency (RF), ultrasound, and lasers have revolutionized skin tightening and collagen stimulation. These treatments can offer impressive results without surgery. Some of my favorite examples include:

Ultherapy (Ultrasound): FDA-cleared for lifting and tightening skin on the neck, lower face, and brow.

Morpheus8 (RF Microneedling): Combines microneedling with radiofrequency for deep tissue remodeling and improved skin texture.

CO2 Lasers and Er:YAG Lasers: Fractional laser resurfacing improves tone, texture, and pigmentation with minimal downtime.

Thermage and RF devices: Stimulate collagen production, improving laxity and contour over time.

For patients not ready for surgery—or looking to enhance or maintain surgical results—these devices offer powerful, non-invasive options.

THE POWER OF REGENERATIVE AESTHETICS

One of the most exciting frontiers in aesthetic medicine is regenerative aesthetics—where your body's own cells and biological materials are used to repair, rejuvenate, and regenerate tissue.

PRP, Exosomes, and Secretome Therapies

Platelet-rich plasma (PRP), derived from your own blood, is rich in growth factors that stimulate tissue repair and collagen production. PRP has become popular with regenerative facial and scalp treatments.

Exosomes are tiny vesicles produced by plant and animal cells and contain “messages” that can signal your skin cells to heal more quickly after a laser treatment or to make more collagen. There is a wide range of options available, but most lack credible efficacy and safety data which in my opinion, makes many preparations not viable choices.

But we've gone beyond PRP and exosomes. Enter secretome therapy—the next evolution in regenerative aesthetics. A “secretome” is the powerful cocktail of proteins, peptides, growth factors, exosomes, and cytokines secreted by stem or progenitor cells. These elements form the command-and-control center of cellular regeneration.

Unlike whole stem cell therapies (which face regulatory hurdles), secretome products harness only the bioactive signals cells produce to heal and rejuvenate. They're safer, targeted, and remarkably effective.

PROVOQUE

PROVOQUE is a next-generation secretome-based skin and hair regeneration line that's rewriting the rules in aesthetics. Formulated from the secretome of carefully selected, NIH-registered, lab-grown stem cell lines, PROVOQUE delivers potent biological signals to stimulate collagen and elastin, enhance skin texture and tone, and support hair follicle activity. And it is backed by published and peer-reviewed clinical trials demonstrating its effectiveness and safety profile.



Dr. Laura Ellis applies IPL (Intense Pulsed Light) for collagen building and removal of age spots.

Used post-laser, microneedling, or as a standalone topical treatment, PROVOQUE helps calm inflammation, accelerate healing, and activate regenerative pathways. It represents a new category of non-invasive treatments that work to reverse the visible signs of aging.

Immunis Inc.

Another major player in this space is Immunis Inc., a biotechnology company pioneering secretome-based therapeutics aimed at restoring immune function and regenerative capacity, particularly in aging adults.

Immunis is developing highly refined secretome compositions with immunomodulatory and regenerative properties, targeting not just aesthetic improvements but systemic age-related degeneration.

•• Their work points to a future where aging can be modulated at the molecular signaling level, far beyond the reach of traditional therapies. Together, therapies like PROVOQUE and Immunis's innovations are charting a future where we don't just slow aging we reprogram the body's ability to heal itself, inside and out. ••

Biostimulatory Injectables

Products like Sculptra and Radiesse don't just fill—they stimulate your body to produce its own collagen over time. The result is a gradual, natural-looking improvement in volume and skin quality.

FUNCTIONAL NUTRITION & CELLULAR HEALTH

The old adage "you are what you eat" has never been more relevant. Today's anti-aging experts agree: what you put on your fork is just as important as what you put on your face.

Precision Nutrition

Longevity nutrition focuses on reducing inflammation, improving mitochondrial health, and supporting autophagy (your body's cellular cleanup process). Key elements include:

High-antioxidant, low-glycemic diets: Think deeply colored fruits and vegetables, omega-3-rich fats, and limited refined carbohydrates.

Intermittent Fasting: Cyclical fasting protocols have been shown to improve insulin sensitivity, support brain health, and stimulate autophagy.

Supplemental Support: Nutraceuticals like resveratrol, NMN (nicotinamide mononucleotide), and quercetin are under investigation for their anti-aging potential.

Functional medicine practitioners often test for micronutrient deficiencies, gut health imbalances, and food sensitivities to create personalized plans that support vibrant aging at the cellular level.

FITNESS & RECOVERY AS MEDICINE

Movement is medicine—but so is rest. Today's longevity-focused fitness protocols emphasize not just high-intensity training, but mobility, strength, and recovery for lifelong performance.

Smart Fitness Strategies

Resistance Training: Crucial for maintaining lean muscle mass, metabolic health, and bone density.

Zone 2 Cardio: This low-intensity aerobic training builds mitochondrial efficiency and improves cardiovascular health.

HIIT (High-Intensity Interval Training): Enhances insulin sensitivity and growth hormone release when used judiciously.

The emphasis is on balance: more is not always better. Overtraining can accelerate aging by increasing oxidative stress and depleting recovery resources.

Continued on page 84.

CLYDE FIRE DEPARTMENT ANNUAL 9/11 MEMORIAL SERVICE

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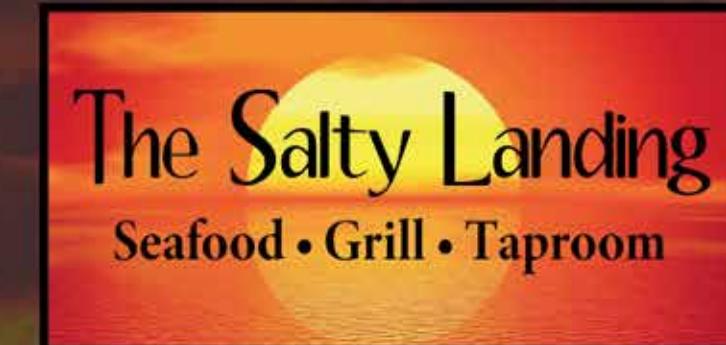
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Rocky Face Tavern

AT THE SPRINGDALE RESORT



Chris McHome behind the bar



Stylish Magazine contributors enjoying pre-dinner drinks

Carla Myron Cami Calnan

Rocky Face Tavern is a bit off the beaten path, but the drive is picturesque, and the meal is worth the trip. In fact, once you've enjoyed their award-winning Appalachian cuisine, you'll dine with them regularly. Located below Cold Mountain at the Springdale Resort in Canton NC, Rocky Face Tavern has the look and feel of an exclusive, members-only establishment – fortunately, it's open to the public.

Our group of magazine contributors and friends trickled in two at a time. We enjoyed watching the golfers play on the vibrant green course below, as

we sipped signature cocktails from the high vantage point of one of the outdoor stone patios. We found the Blackberry Bramble with gin, blackberries and lemon juice exquisitely refreshing, our compliments to the bartender, Chris McHone.

Tom and Angie Plackis were the first to join me and Jeff as we spoke with the husband-and-wife hospitality-dream-duo, Sid and Page Truesdale. We learned Sid's accolades include winning a restaurateur of the year award and Page is known for her dreamy homemade desserts. (A decision was made to try them all.) Krista Gargano, Stylish Magazine Art Director

and Beau, Tommy LaMorte arrived as they explained how their dishes are crafted with local ingredients to showcase the Appalachian heritage. They source from Christopher Farms in Waynesville, NC, and City Bakery Bread in Asheville, NC. Beer is available from local breweries Boojum in Waynesville and Catawba brewing in Asheville. Even the coffee is locally sourced from Smoky Mountain Coffee Roasters and Papertown Coffee (two of my favorites).

Our small group of ten enjoyed the private dining room with covered patio (which accommodates up to 40 guests). The crowd inside the beautiful bar and

dining area were so buoyant and cheerful, we were compelled toward the festivities. We relaxed by the bar, met new golfing-friends on the larger outdoor patio, enjoyed views of the Blue Ridge Mountains and, of course, signature cocktails prepared by our new pal, Chris. Don't miss the Summer Heat Smash, a divine concoction made with Weldon Mills Peach-Elderflower Whiskey, hot honey, peach purée, lemon juice, and elderflower tonic – oh so satisfying!

Maybe it was the fresh air, possibly, the mirth and merriment, most likely it was the divine aroma of what was to come. We were simultaneously ravenous.



Ayana Dusenberry and Krista Gargano



Angie and Tom Plackis



Our new golfing friends



Oh! This is the reason for going to Rocky Face Tavern. The options exceeded expectations with offerings to delight every palate. We devoured the delectable appetizers. The Dip Trio and the Shrimp Scampi with Toasted Garlic Knots disappeared before the serving plates had a chance to cool. Each was incredible, but I found the Spinach Artichoke Dip especially scrumptious. It's a well-loved and ubiquitous appetizer. Rocky Face Tavern's is just superior in taste and texture. Bring a dinner date that won't let you lick the plate.

Three of us opted for the Crab Stuffed Flounder with a creamy Bechamel Sauce and were rewarded with fresh delicious flounder stuffed with a copious serving of delectable crab, cooked and seasoned to perfection. Jeff Myron, our Senior Culinary Editor (and classically trained chef) and I swapped bites of each other's dishes. He concurred "the Bechamel Sauce had the perfect texture and flavor, the crabmeat accented the flounder perfectly." He also expressed adulation for his own order, "the Tuscan Chicken, split breast was outstanding, perfectly grilled and accented with goat cheese, basil, sundried tomatoes, and the Lemon Beurre Blanc which was perfect." Angie Plackis, a health coach from Rutherford County agreed. "It was extraordinary, it had the ideal complement of goat cheese and basil." Jeff also had high praise for the Pimento Mac & Cheese, calling it "a true southern charm" and said the "Zucchini with Tomato Cheese was the perfect al dente."

The raves were unanimous. Dr. Laura Ellis, CEO of MedAge, co-founder of LevEllis and Provoque (as well as Stylish Magazine contributor and cover feature in this issue) said "the Pecan Crusted Local Trout with Summer Squash was fabulous." Ayana Dusenberry, marketing professional and Stylish Magazine Senior Fashion Editor summed up the experience by saying "Rocky Face Tavern is a gorgeous setting with beautiful views, the staff is fabulous; attentive and friendly and the tasty dishes were all amazing." Our photographer, Cami Calnan seconded that opinion. "Everything was impeccable, the venue, views, vibe, food,



Continued on page 87

HOME for the HOLIDAYS

WITH NUTRITIONIST ANGIE PLACKIS

Charlotte Gage

Camilla Calnan

She moves with ease through her state-of-the-art kitchen, but Angie Plackis wasn't always this proficient. She confided that her passion for cooking and baking began only after she retired from a career in healthcare. "I married a retired New York City firefighter in 2016. He not only cooked for his firehouse but also won numerous cooking competitions held between FDNY firehouses. One contest was sponsored by Ronzoni and Tom won with 'Patriot Portobella Pasta.' It was served to the runners of the NYC marathon the night before the race," she shared.

Watching Angie whip up delectable meals so effortlessly, it's hard to imagine that she was once intimidated by her husband Tom's culinary skills. "I had been a vegetarian for 23 years," she explained. "Learning to cook well for my meat-eating, hunter husband was challenging."

Initially, Tom did the lion's share of the cooking. But once Angie ended her career in healthcare, the couple moved into a stunning, three-level, post & beam home on a private and picturesque 69 acres - complete with a large, well-appointed, dream kitchen. The main level is 2,000 square feet and the kitchen is approximately one third of it. "I had no excuse not to utilize it," she laughed. "Through trial and error, I became a confident cook. Now I enjoy creating healthy dishes using organic meats and vegetables from my own garden. I garden in straw bales and pots, and I also have a beehive. It's important to me to avoid processed foods and use ingredients that are as fresh and unadulterated as possible."



Angie working on a loaf of sourdough sandwich in her dream kitchen.

“
Angie offers this advice:
Moderation. It’s unrealistic to expect
that you won’t indulge but try to do so
mindfully. Limit sugar and alcohol, and
whenever possible, eat a high-protein
snack before attending a holiday party.”

That commitment to wholesome ingredients eventually led Angie to sourdough baking. “Learning to use sourdough has been a journey,” she admitted. “It’s more nuanced than just following a recipe. What made it even trickier was figuring out how to make bread without that tangy sour taste. Tom appreciates the health benefits of sourdough, but he’s not a fan of the sour flavor.”

Angie smiled as she described how she perfected a sandwich bread that meets Tom’s approval. “I avoid the overnight cold ferment and bake the bread the same day. It’s the fermentation process that creates the sour taste, but it also brings incredible health benefits — it increases prebiotic and postbiotic properties, aids in the digestion of gluten, and blunts the blood sugar spikes associated with most breads. Fermentation also makes minerals like calcium, sodium, magnesium, iron, and zinc more bioavailable to the body.”

Her background in healthcare fueled her passion for nutrition. “Over the years, it became clear to me that most people were becoming increasingly unhealthy and dependent on medications. It’s obvious that what we eat plays a huge role in this trend.”

In 2020, Angie became a Functional Diagnostic Nutrition Practitioner. “I am passionate about helping my clients discover the root cause of their health issues. In most cases, it’s a combination of mineral and nutrient deficiencies coupled with environmental and emotional stressors.” She encourages her clients to focus on whole foods: “Avoid processed foods, shop the outer perimeter of the grocery store, and read EVERY label. When people really start reading labels, they’re often shocked to see how little nutrition is in many foods. Some of it looks more like a lab experiment than something you should be eating.”

When asked about the causes of mineral and nutrient deficiencies, Angie shared a surprising fact: “The nutrient value of the average garden vegetable has dropped by up to 38% since the mid-twentieth century. This creates a real need for strategic supplementation.”

Her dedication to clean eating has also deepened her appreciation for the wild game meat Tom provides as a hunter. “Not only is it organic, but it’s also lean, high in protein, and very nutritious. Many people avoid wild game because they believe it has a gamey taste or is too tough or dry. But that usually comes down to poor handling or improper cooking. Venison doesn’t taste like beef — and it shouldn’t. It has its own unique flavor that deserves to be appreciated.”

Maggie Plackis, the couple’s exceptionally well-trained Springer Spaniel is also an accomplished hunter. She gets to enjoy raw game meat like venison and wild turkey. “She gets deer antler and bear bones — she absolutely loves them!”

As the holiday season approaches, Angie offers this advice: “Moderation. It’s unrealistic to expect that you won’t indulge but try to do so mindfully. Limit sugar and alcohol, and whenever possible, eat a high-protein snack before attending a holiday party. Once you’re there, choose the most nutritious options from the spread.”

She added with a laugh, “My decadent indulgence will be my amazing sourdough cinnamon rolls — warm from the oven and oozing with cinnamon. When I bake these, I must eat one or two and then freeze the rest, or I’ll keep going back to the pan until they’re all gone. That wouldn’t exactly be practicing my own advice about moderation!”



Tom and Angie Plackis
relaxing at home.

HENDERSONVILLE'S

Stone Ashe Vineyards

 Charlotte Gage  Camilla Calnan

The dirt and gravel driveway leading up to Stone Ashe Vineyards foretells the expanse of viticulture, but not the majestic, yet elegant venue surrounded by the ripening grapes. The vineyard is the passion project of Craig and Tina Little. After successful careers in dentistry, they turned to their second lifelong passion: grape growing and wine making. Their search for the best location spanned three years. They landed on a perfect site, an area rich in 'stony ashe' soil providing internal drainage, steep slopes for high-density planting and external irrigation. This ideal micro-climate is nestled in the pastoral hills of Hendersonville, NC.

It's well suited for efficient photosynthesis and elegantly balanced fruit – and it's a big win for wine lovers in and around Western North Carolina. Plan on relaxing and enjoying the wine, beautiful scenery and welcoming staff for an entire day. That's exactly what Tina and Craig Little envisioned when they dreamed about opening a vineyard. "It was really out of a love of food and wine and family and friends," Tina Little says of the 2010 decision to pursue their passion of growing grapes and making wine.





"Our vines all came from France," Tina says. (Specifically, the Bordeaux region.) Grapes went into the ground in 2016. The first harvest came three years later. The spacious tasting room filled with inviting, modern mountain decor opened in 2020, along with an outdoor seating area. The elevation of 2,700 feet gives a spectacular view of the Blue Ridge Mountains. The winery, or production facility, opened in 2024. Stone Ashe Vineyards, spanning about 19 acres under vine, is now fully estate grown, Tina says proudly. "It's a huge feather in our cap." Wine connoisseurs will enjoy their complimentary behind-the-scenes tour – which is available with a reservation.

Your visit will begin on the crush pad where they'll share their philosophy and the distinctive terroir that define their wines. Next, into the tank room to explore their lab and fermentation practices. Lastly, the tour will take you into the barrel room for an in depth look at their barrel-aging program. Not near Western North Carolina? Don't fret, Stone Ashe Vineyards offers a wine club and will ship their delectables (details on their website). And of course, this service is available to locals too. Check their website for fun events like wine and chocolate pairings or wine blending workshop. Check back frequently, the calendar is updated often.



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And more than the website gets updated. "Quite a bit has unfolded at Stone Ashe Winery over the past two years. We've cleared new land, planted additional vines and completed construction on a state-of-the art production facility – just steps from our tasting room. The new building not only enhances our winemaking, it marks a deeper investment in quality, control and our belief in North Carolina as a region. What was once an ambition is now our reality. We are showcasing that with the right elements; site, climate and facilities great wines can be produced from Hendersonville, NC" Tina Told us.

Choosing Stone Ashe Vineyards to recommend was unanimous:

"The wine is outstanding. Great body in the Cab."

-Jeff Myron, Editor-in-Chief & Senior Culinary Editor, Stylish Magazine.

"The setting is fantastic. Very relaxing and scenic. Of course, the wine is amazing. The Cab was a standout!"

-Scott Pruett, Mars Hill.

"Ambience. Location. Hospitality. I enjoyed all the wine, it was great!"

-Leah Howard, CEO/Co-founder Cultivated Cocktails, Asheville.

"Location is gorgeous! Staff super friendly. Wine is delicious! Love this place!"

-Laura Ellis, Physician and MedAge owner, Asheville.

"Ambience. Peaceful. Welcoming. A secret little spot."

-Tera Pruett, Senior Health Editor, Stylish Magazine and Personal Trainer, Mars Hills.

"The views and attention to detail are truly breathtaking."

-Brittani Summey, Senior Style Editor, Stylish Magazine and Southern Roots Salon Owner, Brevard.

"I love how it feels here. Beautiful views and feels so secluded being on a mountaintop."

-Krista Gargano, Art Director, Stylish Magazine, Asheville.

"This place is awesome!"

-Graham Dienert, Managing Editor, Stylish Magazine, Asheville.



4



5



6

stoneashevineyards.com
736 Green Mountain Road
Hendersonville, NC 28792

1: Tina Little and Jeff Myron discussing the wine.

2: Leah Howard enjoying the tasting room.

3: Brittani Summey and Laura Ellis laugh at Carla Myron.

4: The Stone Ashe lineup.

5: Krista Gargano, Tera Pruett, Leah Howard and Chris Dailey laughing on the patio.

6: Tina Little explains grape growing and wine making.

global rights, and the formula is the cornerstone of her new practice of regenerative medicine, using one's body to heal itself.

With all her achievements and such a healthy lifestyle, I ask Ellis the secrets of her personal youth and well-being.

"Cleanser, this product, antioxidants and your sun protection," she says, smiling. "That's it."

Over time, the company may add other products to the line, including eye creams and moisturizers and topicals for hair. Other than good skincare, Ellis supports her health through diet, exercise, and what she calls "heart math," wearing a smart ring to deliver information such as heart rate variability and sleep quality.

Staying calm in a crazy, fast-paced world is key to good health, she says. For Ellis, another part of her regime is spending winters in mild climates such as Cyprus, Portugal, and Southern California.

"I like warm sunny weather," she says. "I love Santa Barbara and Montecito for the climate and farmers markets."

Despite her mountain of accomplishments, what Ellis is most proud of are the men her two sons, Mark and David Gilbert, have become. She has a close relationship with them, one of whom lives in Colorado and the other Wyoming.

"They are great, wonderful young men," she says. "The best."

The feeling is mutual. Mark Gilbert, her 27-year-old son in Wyoming is super proud of his mom. "She is ambitious," the environmental engineer says. "She just takes it to the next level."

Her mission is to help others take their health and wellness to the next level. Her personal daily routine includes cocoa, clean organic eating, little to no alcohol and "a lot of supplements that are anti-aging and antioxidants."

"It starts from the inside always," she says. "I never approach anti-aging from the outside." Proper nutrition, meditation, stress management, supplementation, sleep quality, are more important than exercise, Ellis says.

"If you had to pick two things to improve your overall health, it would be proper nutrition and good sleep. Then stress management followed by exercise."

Ellis works out three times weekly and says one doesn't have to "crush" it to see benefits. "It's all starting to come together, and people are wanting the more natural approach to anti-aging and improving our health as we age.

"We don't want to just look young and healthy. We want to be young and healthy."



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Beyond Botox (Continued from page 62)

Recovery Tools

Recovery is now a science in itself. Top tools include:

Infrared Saunas: Promote detoxification, reduce inflammation, and improve skin health.

Cold Plunges & Cryotherapy: Trigger hormesis—mild stress that boosts cellular resilience.

Compression Therapy (Normatec, etc.): Enhances circulation and reduces recovery time post-exercise.

Red Light Therapy: Stimulates mitochondrial activity, improves skin tone, and reduces inflammation.

Prioritizing recovery isn't just for athletes—it's for anyone who wants to maintain high energy and strong physical performance as they age.

The Rise of Anti-Aging Medications

Longevity medicine is no longer science fiction. Physicians specializing in age management now use pharmaceuticals once reserved for treating disease to prevent decline and optimize healthspan.

Peptides

Peptides are short chains of amino acids that regulate everything from growth hormone release to skin healing. Popular examples include:

BPC-157: Supports tissue healing and gut health.

GHRH/GHRP blends (like CJC-1295/Ipamorelin): Stimulate natural growth hormone release to improve sleep, recovery, and muscle tone.

Thymosin Alpha-1: Enhances immune function and may have anti-inflammatory benefits.

These require medical oversight and individualized dosing but are showing great promise in optimizing body composition, recovery, and vitality.

Senolytics and NAD+ Support

Senolytics are compounds that help the body clear out senescent cells—old cells that no longer function but cause inflammation and damage. Fisetin and quercetin are natural senolytics being studied for their potential to delay aging.

NAD+ boosters like NMN and NR (Nicotinamide Riboside) support mitochondrial energy production, DNA repair, and cognitive health. Supplementing with NAD precursors may improve fatigue, mental clarity, and cellular repair.

Metformin and Rapamycin

These two prescription drugs are gaining attention for their potential longevity benefits:

Metformin: Traditionally a diabetes medication, it may reduce inflammation, support metabolic health, and mimic some of the benefits of caloric restriction.

Rapamycin: An immunosuppressant in higher doses, low-dose intermittent rapamycin is being studied for its ability to inhibit mTOR—a nutrient-sensing pathway involved in aging and cancer.

These medications are not appropriate for everyone, but under proper medical supervision, they represent the cutting edge of pharmaceutical longevity.

The Future Is Personalized

The most important takeaway in today's age-defying playbook? There's no one-size-fits-all formula. Aging impeccably means choosing a strategy that reflects your goals, genetics, lifestyle, and personal values.

A 45-year-old athlete looking to maintain peak performance will have a very different roadmap than a 60-year-old executive seeking to preserve cognitive vitality or a new mom wanting to rejuvenate postpartum skin and energy.

In my work as a physician and regenerative aesthetics expert, I believe in combining evidence-based medicine with individualized care. By integrating aesthetic treatments with lifestyle optimization and cutting-edge science, we're helping people not just look younger—but feel younger, longer.

So yes, Botox still has its place. But the future of aging beautifully lies well beyond the syringe.

Closing Thoughts

Aging is inevitable—but decline is not. The toolkit for living a long, vibrant, and beautiful life has never been more powerful. Whether you're just beginning to explore aesthetics or are ready to level up with regenerative and longevity medicine, the opportunities are limitless.

Your future self is waiting. And with the right blend of science, strategy, and self-care, you won't just age well—you'll age impeccably.



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Fit, Fierce & Fabulous (Continued from page 41)

And listen—I wouldn’t be here without the wild, generous, badass support of this community. Between business partnerships, community events, rental spaces, coaching opportunities, collaborations, festival events, networking, and good old-fashioned word of mouth from my amazing clients, friends, and neighbors... it’s been one giant web of support. It truly takes a village—and this one has shown up for me in every way. We rise together. That’s how we do it.

My Training Philosophy

Here’s the deal: I don’t train women to shrink—I train them to rise. To take up space. To show up in the world with confidence and create real damn impact. Strength isn’t just physical—it’s a whole damn lifestyle. Getting strong, lifting heavy, and aging like a badass is a choice we make by consistently showing up for ourselves. And when we do? That strength ripples outward—into our families, careers, communities, and everyday lives.

Training doesn’t have to suck. It’s not punishment—it’s a privilege. We GET to move, we GET to choose how our path unfolds, and we GET to build a life that feels powerful, purposeful, and unapologetically ours. Whether you’re learning to deadlift, prepping for your first trail race, or just want to feel strong in your skin again, I’m here for it. We train for real-life strength, not just gym PRs. We celebrate sweat, progress, and power in all its forms. And yes, we drop F-bombs—because strength should be loud, bold, and just rebellious enough to wake up the world. I don’t just train bodies—I help women reclaim their fire and build the strength to carry their boldest, wildest dreams.

Where I’m At Now

These days, I’m balancing the rebuilding of my business with some of my biggest personal goals yet. I’m deep in training for my next endurance challenge, continuing to coach the amazing women (and yes men) in my community, and in the messy (and fun) thick of building our new home—after four wild years of living in a camper! There’s a lot of chaos, a lot of coffee, and a whole lot of heart in this chapter. It’s not always pretty, but it’s real—and it’s mine. I’m here for every step of it!

And through it all, I’m not backing down. I’m not shrinking. I’m showing up—loudly, boldly, and on a mission to help others do the same. We weren’t made to play small. We were made to make waves.

Grateful to Be Featured

Being part of Stylish Magazine is an honor—and a full-circle moment. To be recognized not just for building a business, but for building a life of purpose, connection, and courage means everything. If you’re reading this, know that your journey matters. Your story matters. And maybe—just maybe—it’s your time to rise too.

This chapter? Just the beginning.

I’m here to RISE. We lift. We lead. We adventure. We don’t wait for permission, we take up space and we OWN it. This Rebel doesn’t back down. We get louder. We get stronger. We get wilder. And we’re just getting started.

Scrumptious: Stylish Restaurant Review—Rocky Face Tavern (Continued from page 71)

service, there’s so much love behind all that goodness. Such a special place.”

Our server, Heidi Kelley, completed the consummate dining experience. She was attentive, accommodating, friendly and most importantly very knowledgeable. Each of her recommendations was sublime. Jeff added “Heidi, was the epidemic of a perfect server, she truly covered all aspects of what was needed to create an impeccable meal and dining experience.”

As the expression goes “eat dessert first.” Page’s homemade desserts were phenomenal. It was a group indulgence; we ordered everything and shared. Jeff remarked “The entrees made me feel that Chef Sid and I apprenticed with the same 5 European Chefs. And then- the Sinful Conclusions! The Pecan Pie, accented with chocolate sauce, was outstanding. Perfectly baked with Chocolate accents. Flavors just explode in the palate.”

There was not a crumb or smudge remaining on our plates, we had savored every morsel. Our entire mouthwatering experience was thoughtfully curated and deeply appreciated. Bravo Rocky Face Tavern!

Visit Rocky Face Tavern for a meal, an event or just cocktails on the patio.

Find out more at therockyfacetavern.com, or go see them at the Springdale Resort, 180 Golfwatch Road, Canton NC 28716.

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CANINE COUTURE



Cheyenne Ellis

Cheyenne is a stunner and a stylish sidekick. This beautiful, 18-month-old toy Australian shepherd has a full time job at MedAge entertaining guests and staff with his adorable antics.

Cheyenne was a big hit at Stone Ashe Vineyard and became an instant Stylish Magazine Mascot. We caught him au natural as he frolicked on the lush vineyard lawn, but Cheyenne has an enormous collection of sweaters and jackets that match his beautiful blue eyes. He is his mother's most cherished accessory and he loves when they match. We're sure we'll see more of this furry fashionista in future issues.

Such a good boy!



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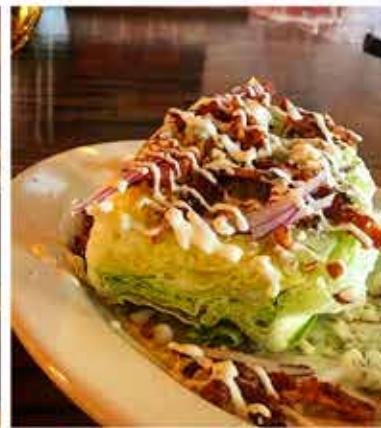
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