NFM NASHVILLE FIT MAGAZINE

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THE
GIVE BACK
ISSUE

WELLPOINT
Monica Oliver on lifting up Nashville's neighbors

GOOD MOVES
How Nashville Fit's community fund gives back

HOLIDAY RECIPE
A healthier plate for the season

ALLIE BURKE
Fitness that keeps you strong all season



446.5 POUNDS
His world record bench press

CATCH A LIFT
The flyer that changed everything

PURPLE HEART • WORLD RECORD HOLDER • COACH

JASON SMITH

"Stop trying to become who you were."

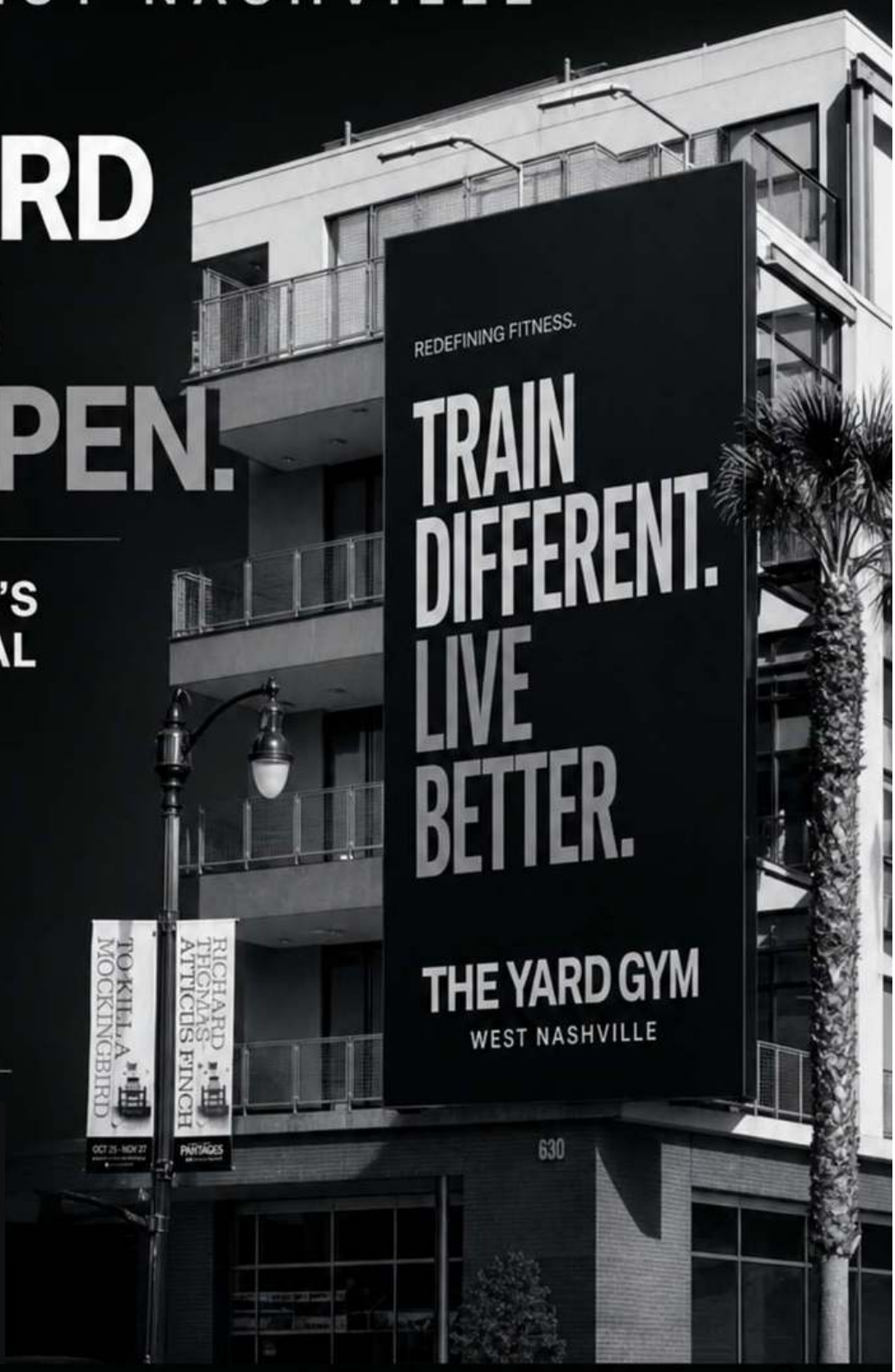
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LETTER FROM THE PUBLISHER

Every year, the Give Back Issue is the one that means the most to us.

Over the last few years, we've kept pressing deeper into work with our community, and much of it is at the ground level. Along the way, we've gotten to know a lot of nonprofits and a lot of angels working behind the scenes. They show up every day for the people in our city who need it most, and most of them never ask for credit.

That's why this issue matters. In these pages, you'll meet some of those people: Deja Jackson and From Your Father, Monica Oliver and the team at Wellpoint, the Hispanic Family Foundation, Free to Move, Echelon and more. We're proud to give them and their organizations the notoriety and awareness they deserve.

But as excited as we are to spotlight their work, we're even more grateful for the relationships we've built with these people and the communities they serve. They've become part of our story, and we hope they become part of yours. We invite you to read their stories, find a way to get involved, and support these communities alongside us.

We're also still finding new ways to give back ourselves. This year, we created the Good Moves Community Fund, a donor-advised fund at the heart of our new give-back model. A portion of Nashville Fit's proceeds now goes into the fund, so we can help nonprofits get the support they need. Sometimes that means telling their story. Sometimes it means Nashville Fit writes the check.

Healthier people. Stronger businesses. Better cities. That's what we're building, and we're glad you're building it with us.

Keep moving forward.

Terry Barga

OWNER/ PUBLISHER

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breaking the cycle

Deja Jackson and the Mission Behind From Your Father

how a single mother's story of survival became a decade of service for nashville's families

For Deja Jackson, the mission behind From Your Father isn't theoretical — it's personal. Jackson is the founder and executive director of From Your Father, a Nashville nonprofit that has spent the last decade working to break the cycle of poverty for single mothers and the children growing up without a father's steady, consistent presence. The organization has held 501(c)(3) status since 2017, but its roots go back further, to Jackson's own childhood.

"I was one of those kids that statistically shouldn't have overcome the odds," Jackson says. "And I did. And I felt like the Lord empowered me to give back and to support them."

Growing up, Jackson watched her own single mother work two, sometimes three, jobs rather than accept food stamps or move the family into public housing. The stress caught up with her: she was later diagnosed with stage three breast cancer.



"When you only have a mom, that's all you've got," Jackson says. "It really rocks your world." Looking back, Jackson traces a line from her mother's schedule — fast food, no time to work out, constant survival mode — straight to that diagnosis. "That all goes to play in poverty," she says. "Your financial decisions, but also how are you physically, and then what we pass down to our kids."

That connection between financial strain, physical health, and the cycle families pass down is the engine behind From Your Father's two core programs.

The first, the Love Box program, delivers a free monthly box to single mothers and their children containing household essentials like laundry detergent and toilet paper, hygiene items, and fresh produce sourced in partnership with the Nashville Food Project. For families without a car, From Your Father delivers the box straight to their door.

"The goal is for them to complete so many milestones that eventually they break the cycle of poverty,"

We package that up ... every single month they have access to that box free of charge, and it's consistent," Jackson says.
The second program, Out-of-the-Box Experiences, turns each delivery into what Jackson calls "cycle-breaking milestones" — hands-on experiences like art therapy, mommy-and-me cooking classes, and juicing classes designed to give families one practical, lasting takeaway. During the pandemic, a partnership with Wellpoint even put NutriBullets in families' hands so kids could learn to make their own green juice over Zoom.
"The goal is for them to complete so many milestones that eventually they break the cycle of poverty," Jackson says.

From Your Father's families come largely from East Nashville's 37206 zip code and North Nashville, where the organization is based out of a local church. It's a community Jackson describes as deeply engaged — quick to show up, whether for a financial workshop, a Love Box pickup, or, more recently, conversations with Nashville Fit and Wellpoint about a family field day built around movement, mentorship, and fun.
That partnership grew out of a shared belief that health and wellness can't be separated from the rest of a family's story. As Nashville Fit and Wellpoint have teamed up with From Your Father on Self-Care Saturdays and community events, the through-line has stayed the same: meet families where they are, hand them one practical tool, and let that be the start of something bigger.

Ten years in, Jackson's mission remains as simple — and as personal — as it was the day she started: give one more child, one more mom, a different story than the one poverty tries to write for them.





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Learn More:
To learn more about From Your Father, or to get involved, visit fromyourfather.org.

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Nashville Fit Magazine – Q&A

Allie Burke

Certified Personal Trainer & Nutrition Coach | Menopause Certified Specialist
Owner, APB Collective — Mt. Juliet, TN
Faith · Fitness · Community

1. What got you into fitness, and how did you find your way to personal training?

Honestly, fitness has just always been there. I've been strength training since high school — more than two decades now. I taught fitness classes in college. I went through the cardio phase, the bootcamp phase, all of it, and I always came back to the barbell. But it was mine. It wasn't a career, it was just the thing I did for me. What changed that was a parking lot.

After I had my first daughter, my old job had dissolved and I spent a year at home trying to figure out what came next. In October of 2019 I got re-baptized — I felt called to reestablish myself in my faith, to actually live like a disciple and not just be someone who believed.

And then everything fell apart. All at once. It felt like I was being tested from every direction.

There were days my husband would come home and find me face-down on the kitchen island while our toddler ran circles around the living room.



"It wasn't a career, it was just the thing I did for me."



One night I told him I just had to get out of the house. I found a yoga class at the Y, drove over — and never made it inside. I sat in the parking lot and bawled. And right in the middle of it I felt this impression on my heart: Teach. Train. This is where your passion is. This is how you help other women who are sitting exactly where you're sitting right now. I bought my first personal training certification from that parking lot before I ever put the car in drive.

And then I let it slide. The holidays hit, my husband's work season got crazy, life happened. Then March 2020 came and I thought, well — I'm home. I'm out of excuses. Got certified in July, started training clients in August.

So everything I've built started in that parking lot. That's exactly why APB Collective stands on Faith, Fitness, and Community, in that order. It's not a marketing line. The faith came first and the business came out of it.

2. What's your training philosophy?

Help women find consistency in the chaos of life. That's it.

Because there is never going to be that perfect moment where everything calms down and now you get to take care of yourself. It's not coming. So we build habits that hold up inside a real, full, messy life, and we let those turn into a lifestyle instead of a phase.

And strength first, always. It builds muscle, it protects your bone density going into perimenopause and menopause, it helps your hormones, it does more for how you age than anything else you can do in a gym. It's the goat, and I'll die on that hill.

I'll also be honest about the part nobody puts on a flyer. Training has been one of my saving graces mentally. I live with chronic anxiety and depression and I've been medicated for years. The gym doesn't replace that — it works alongside it. My husband can read me well enough now that on the days I haven't moved he'll say, hey, can you go for a walk? I need you to move your body. And he's right every time. I say that out loud because I know how many women are carrying the same thing quietly and assume the put-together woman in the gym doesn't have it too. She does. Move anyway.



3. Who's your ideal client, and what do you love about working with them?

Women. Moms, wives, women working full-time, women rebuilding after a baby or walking into perimenopause going, why doesn't anything work like it used to?

I train women because I am one. I've been pregnant. I've been the stay-at-home mom. I've been the working wife trying to squeeze a session in somewhere. I could read every book and collect every certification out there and still not be able to tell a man what his body is going to feel like. I can tell a woman. I've lived it.

My favorite texts are the ones that say why is this working? I'm eating more than I ever have. That's the click. It's not punishment, it's fuel. And watching a woman go from apologizing for what she can't do to blowing up the group chat about what she just lifted — that's the whole job right there.

That's the Community part of what we do. Women get results when they're not doing it alone. It's not just accountability — sisterhood is its own kind of medicine. The free community workouts, Girls Who Lift, our women's community online. I'm not building a client list. I'm building something that goes from one woman to the next to the next, and reaches a whole lot further than I ever could on my own.

4. What role does nutrition play in the results you help your clients get?

It's half the work. Not a bonus, not an add-on — half.

Adding nutrition coaching was the single biggest jump my clients ever made, because you cannot build strength on a body that isn't being fed. And most women I meet aren't overeating. They're under-eating, short on protein, restricting everything, and then wondering why they're exhausted and nothing's moving.

It also has to be livable or it's not coaching, it's a diet. Want the glass of wine at the end of the night?

Have the wine. Build it into your day. Family's going out to dinner? Go. Food is cultural, it's social, it's sitting at a table with people you love. We make choices that make your body feel good, and that includes the mental and social side of it. Whole-body health.

5. What's one piece of advice you'd give someone just starting their fitness journey?

Start small. Smaller than you think you need to.

When you're brand new you're fired up, you want to train five days a week and eat perfectly starting Monday — and you're setting yourself up to fail. So pick one thing. Drink your water. Look at the steps you're already getting and add a thousand. Do it until it stops being a decision and becomes just what you do. Then stack the next one on top of it.

That's how you end up with a lifestyle instead of another restart come January. And find your people. Be gracious with yourself on the hard days. Stay intentional, stay consistent, and keep moving.



Bio

Allie Burke is a certified personal trainer, nutrition coach, and menopause-certified specialist, and the owner of APB Collective in Mt. Juliet, specializing in strength training and pre- and postnatal coaching for women. Built on Faith, Fitness, and Community, APB Collective hosts free community workouts and Girls Who Lift events across Middle Tennessee.



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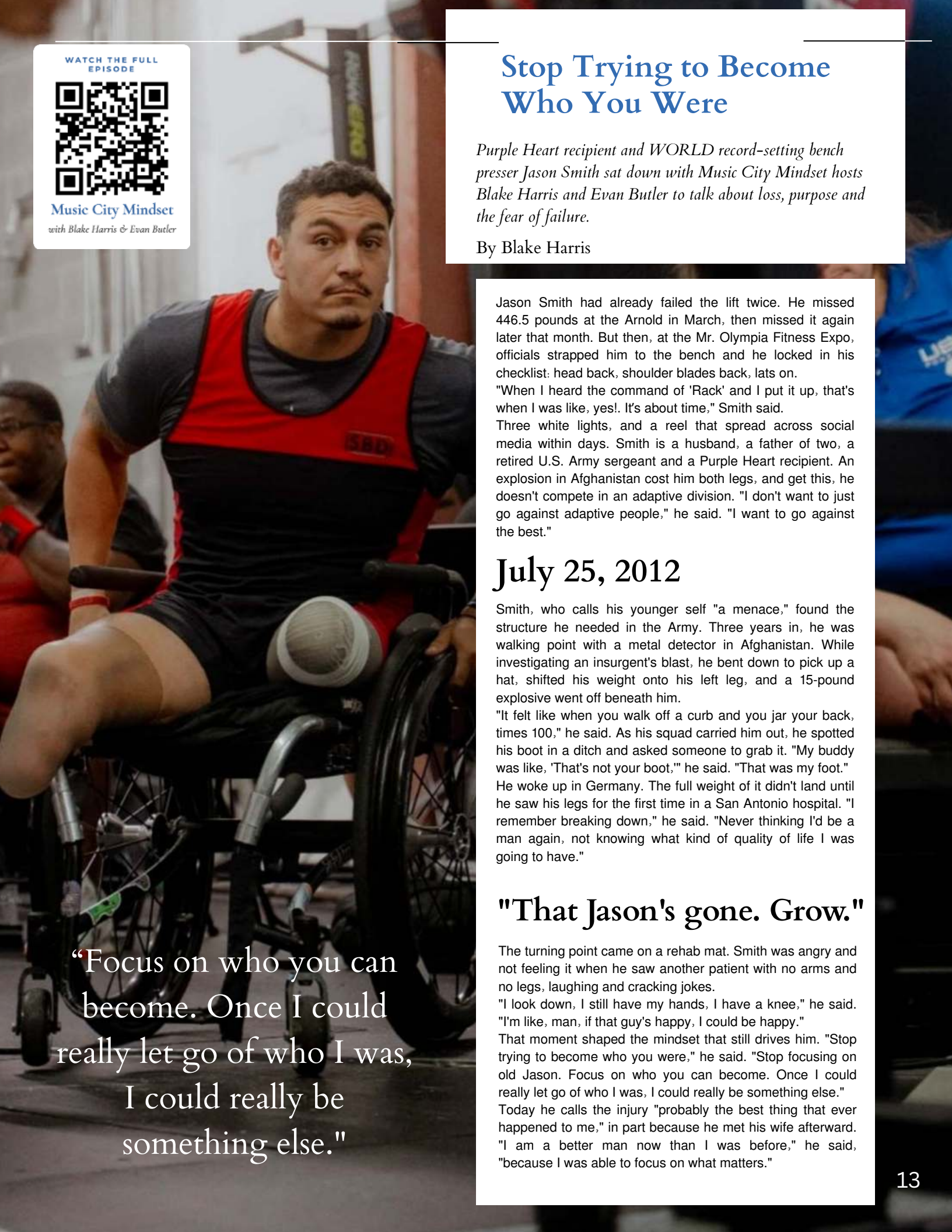


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Music City Mindset

with Blake Harris & Evan Butler

Stop Trying to Become Who You Were

Purple Heart recipient and WORLD record-setting bench presser Jason Smith sat down with Music City Mindset hosts Blake Harris and Evan Butler to talk about loss, purpose and the fear of failure.

By Blake Harris

Jason Smith had already failed the lift twice. He missed 446.5 pounds at the Arnold in March, then missed it again later that month. But then, at the Mr. Olympia Fitness Expo, officials strapped him to the bench and he locked in his checklist: head back, shoulder blades back, lats on.

"When I heard the command of 'Rack' and I put it up, that's when I was like, yes!. It's about time," Smith said.

Three white lights, and a reel that spread across social media within days. Smith is a husband, a father of two, a retired U.S. Army sergeant and a Purple Heart recipient. An explosion in Afghanistan cost him both legs, and get this, he doesn't compete in an adaptive division. "I don't want to just go against adaptive people," he said. "I want to go against the best."

July 25, 2012

Smith, who calls his younger self "a menace," found the structure he needed in the Army. Three years in, he was walking point with a metal detector in Afghanistan. While investigating an insurgent's blast, he bent down to pick up a hat, shifted his weight onto his left leg, and a 15-pound explosive went off beneath him.

"It felt like when you walk off a curb and you jar your back, times 100," he said. As his squad carried him out, he spotted his boot in a ditch and asked someone to grab it. "My buddy was like, 'That's not your boot,'" he said. "That was my foot."

He woke up in Germany. The full weight of it didn't land until he saw his legs for the first time in a San Antonio hospital. "I remember breaking down," he said. "Never thinking I'd be a man again, not knowing what kind of quality of life I was going to have."

"That Jason's gone. Grow."

The turning point came on a rehab mat. Smith was angry and not feeling it when he saw another patient with no arms and no legs, laughing and cracking jokes.

"I look down, I still have my hands, I have a knee," he said. "I'm like, man, if that guy's happy, I could be happy."

That moment shaped the mindset that still drives him. "Stop trying to become who you were," he said. "Stop focusing on old Jason. Focus on who you can become. Once I could really let go of who I was, I could really be something else."

Today he calls the injury "probably the best thing that ever happened to me," in part because he met his wife afterward. "I am a better man now than I was before," he said, "because I was able to focus on what matters."

"Focus on who you can become. Once I could really let go of who I was, I could really be something else."

A flyer instead of a prescription

After retiring to Chattanooga in 2014, Smith struggled with anxiety and PTSD, especially in the gym. So he went to the VA for medication. While he waited, he noticed a small flyer with a lifting glove and a barbell. It was for Catch-A-Lift Fund, a nonprofit that helps post-9/11 combat-wounded veterans rebuild through fitness.

"That same nonprofit completely changed the trajectory of my life," he said. "I didn't leave with any medication. I left with that flyer."

Catch a Lift put a rower in his home, and in 2018 asked him to become a coach.

The accidental athlete

Smith didn't compete until he was 37. He went on to win at the Invictus Games, including gold in rowing, and medaled as the Team Captain at the Warrior Games. When his military eligibility ran out, he moved to open powerlifting meets to test himself against the best. In about 12 months, he won Southeast Regionals, Bench Press Nationals, the Arnold and most recently the Olympia.

"If you'd have told me that a year ago, I would have laughed at you," he said.

Next up are Worlds in Las Vegas and UltraNats in Orlando next June. But life on his 60-acre farm with his wife and kids comes first. "I love being a father and a husband," he said.

Comfortable being uncomfortable

Coaching other wounded veterans is the purpose Smith found on the other side of his injury. "For them to know that someone's there for them, that changes everything," he said.

His advice for anyone afraid to try something new is simple. "Kids try new things all the time without asking what happens if they're not good enough," he said. Fear is learned.

"Be comfortable being uncomfortable," he said. "Ten years ago, I could only bench like 135. So don't look at where people are. Just remember where they started. My biggest fear is not knowing. I'd rather try something and fail."

"So don't look at where people are. Just remember where they started. My biggest fear is not knowing. I'd rather try something and fail."

About Catch A Lift Fund

Catch A Lift Fund began in 2010 by Lynn Coffland, a Gold Star sister, determined to honor her brother, Army Cpl. Christopher Coffland, who was killed in action in Afghanistan. Guided by Chris's belief that fitness unlocks human potential mentally, physically and emotionally, the nonprofit works to restore purpose to combat-injured veterans, one life at a time.

What started one veteran at a time is now a national program built on one-on-one coaching, personalized fitness plans, nutritional guidance and mental wellness support. More than 15,000 veterans and caregivers are now part of the Catch A Lift community.

Who qualifies: Post-9/11 combat-injured veterans with a VA disability rating of 50% or higher can apply for free gym memberships, home equipment and coaching. Applications typically open in January.

Learn more, apply or support the mission: catchaliftfund.org 855-496-4838

Watch the full conversation with Jason Smith on Music City Mindset, part of the Nashville Fit podcast network.




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Dignity in Action: How Monica Oliver Leads With Her Grandmother's Open Door

For Wellpoint's Monica Oliver, whole health starts with a simple truth: You can't focus on your health when you're hungry.

By Terry Barga

In college, Monica Oliver had a very different plan. She wanted to be a writer and a VJ. She loved music, and her inspiration was MTV's Downtown Julie Brown.

"I knew at some point I would help people," Monica says. "I didn't know that I would be doing that for a living."

Today she does exactly that, at a scale she never pictured, through her community work at Wellpoint. She doesn't take it lightly. "I am grateful that this is where I'm at," she says. "And I know that this specific position was put in my lap from God."

Miss Ruby's house

To understand Monica's work, you have to start with her family. Her mom, her dad and her grandmother were, in her words, "church people," and Monica grew up living those values inside the church and out of it.

Her grandmother made sure every grandchild knew what it meant to serve. "If you have food and your neighbor doesn't, then you need to share your food," Monica says. "If you have something that somebody else could use and you have an abundance of it, then you need to share that."

Anyone in the neighborhood who was hungry knew where to go: Miss Ruby's house. When her grandmother passed away, more than 400 people came to the funeral. Speaker after speaker said the same thing. Miss Ruby always opened her home for people to rest and to be fed.

"I think it's just a natural thing for me to want others to have food, have someplace to live, have some dignity," Monica says.

That last word matters to her. Her parents and grandparents taught her that it doesn't matter how someone shows up: long hair or short, a beard, dirty clothes, dirty shoes. "I've always been taught to treat everyone with dignity and respect," she says. "At no point do we judge any of the people that we serve."

Whole health, not just health care

At Wellpoint, the goal is to improve the health of humanity, and Monica's team takes that well beyond the doctor's office.

She's proud of bringing vegan food options to communities in West Tennessee, so people living with conditions like diabetes and hypertension can learn healthier ways to eat. She's proud of teaching people that a healthier life doesn't have to mean running a mile every day. That's where Nashville Fit came in, joining Wellpoint in the community to show people that something as simple as stretching can help.

And she's proud of her team's work on the needs that come before health care: feeding people in the community, making hygiene possible through laundry access, installing hygiene machines in schools, and helping people find stable housing.

"I can't really pinpoint one thing I'm most proud of, because we have our hands in so many different things," she says. "But collectively, I'm most proud that the team has been able to show that Wellpoint is here to help with your whole health needs."

The reason is simple. "We know that people cannot focus on their health when they are hungry," Monica says. "They can't focus on their family. They can't focus on much of anything if they don't have the nutrition they need. A lot of the people that we serve don't have any food. If you are hungry, there's nothing else you can focus on."



Box lunches and a rolled-down window

I've seen that truth up close. At our most recent Rise Up event with Wellpoint, turnout was slow. So Vanessa and I loaded box lunches into the car, drove about a mile and a half down the road, rolled down the windows and asked, "Are you hungry?"

Within minutes, 15 to 20 people were at the car. One woman took four lunches home for her grandkids. That's the kind of moment Monica's work makes possible. It's dignity in action. It's love in action.

Monica is quick to share the credit. She didn't hand-pick her team, she says, but once she shared her vision for the community, she found they already shared it. "I'm a reflection of them and they're a reflection of me," she says. And she believes that's what keeps people coming back: "Longer-term membership will last when you show people that you appreciate them."

Personally, this issue wouldn't look the way it does without Monica. Her example showed me that you don't have to choose between running a business, delivering for clients and serving your community. You can do all three at once.



Wellpoint's, Monica Oliver

Find your passion, and give your time

So where do you start if you want to give back but don't know how? Monica says you don't need a big checkbook.

"Some people cannot afford to give monetarily, but sometimes people can give their time," she says. "Sometimes that's the biggest thing, giving time to organizations."

Her advice is to start with what you already care about, whether that's food insecurity, housing or something else. "Tap into what that passion is, and it will become natural for you to want to give back," she says. "A lot of times people's passion is their purpose. Once you find that, it really is no additional effort. It just happens that way."

Miss Ruby would be proud.

> "A lot of times people's passion is their purpose. Once you find that, it really is no additional effort. It just happens that way."



> "If you have something that somebody else could use and you have an abundance of it, then you need to share that." -Monica Oliver

Free To Move

Turning Grief Into a Movement So Every Woman Can Run Without Fear

By. Terry Barga

For most of us, a run or walk on a Nashville greenway is the easy part of the day. It's where we clear our heads, train for the next race, or catch up with a friend. For the team behind Free to Move, that simple freedom is now the heart of a mission.

Free to Move was founded in honor of Alyssa Lokits, who was killed nearly two years ago while exercising on a greenway in Nashville. Her sister-in-law, Abby Lokits, is one of the nonprofit's founders.

"As you can imagine, her murder just absolutely devastated our family," Abby says. "But in the wake of her passing, we really felt called to honor her by doing something and making an impact."

The organization started with the people who knew and loved Alyssa: childhood friends, college friends, adult friends and family who wanted to turn their grief into something good for the world. Today the team also includes people who never met Alyssa but were moved by her story and share the same goal.

That's really what we care about," Abby says. "Making the world a better place in her honor."

Not an isolated incident

The family is open about what happened, and they want people to understand one thing clearly: Alyssa did everything she was told to do. She was trained in self-defense. She was exercising during the day, on a well-populated trail.

"This is an issue that is much larger than an isolated incident," Abby says. "This is a systemic, multifaceted issue that needs to be addressed across the board."

That's why Free to Move's mission is simple and direct: to empower women to be active without fear. The work happens on several fronts at once. They work with state government and local municipalities, push for safer infrastructure, and create free education anyone can use.

A mission that keeps them moving

Abby is honest that the road hasn't been easy.

"It's been a roller coaster," she says. "There have definitely been seasons where it has felt like we can't keep going, and then it's usually some incredible human or groups of humans in the community that keep pushing us forward."

Those people are a big part of why the work matters.



Free to Move hears from women who are afraid to exercise during the day or at night, from parents who worry about their daughters, and from families who have lived through the same kind of heartbreak. Many tell the team that the awareness and resources make them feel empowered instead of afraid.

"People hear Alyssa's story and they don't give up hope," Abby says. "It's so easy with this tragedy to give up hope, and we refuse to do that."

It has also been, in her words, "the most rewarding thing that I've ever done in my life." Alyssa's story has now reached thousands of people around the world.

"I have absolutely no doubt that she would be right there with us if this had happened to someone that she loved," Abby says.

Founded in honor of Alyssa Lokits, Free to Move is working to make sure no one has to think twice before lacing up and heading outside.

Started in Nashville, built for everywhere

Nashville is where Alyssa's roots were, and it's where Free to Move's work began. Abby says the city has shown the organization "an enormous amount of support." But the team itself is spread out, with board members in Kansas City, Florida and Colorado, where Abby is based, and staff in Philadelphia and Georgia. The goal is to bring these resources and advocacy efforts nationwide.

"It's not a Nashville-only problem," Abby says. "It's an everywhere problem."


Alyssa Lokits

The partners making it possible

Free to Move works alongside some familiar names in the Nashville fitness and outdoors community:

- Greenways for Nashville, along with Metro Council and Metro Parks, on advocacy for safer greenway infrastructure, including the Greenway Walk Audit program and the Alyssa Lokits Safety Act.
- Fleet Feet Nashville, a partner on empowerment and education efforts, including Free to Move's 5K and jogathon.
- Brooks Running, which has supported those same initiatives.
- Bridgestone, whose grant helped fund a large part of Free to Move's newest educational resource.
- "A lot of good people doing good work and supporting us along the way," Abby says.

How you can get involved

Walk a greenway with a purpose. Through the Greenway Walk Audit program, volunteers audit sections of Nashville greenways. Their findings build a data set Free to Move uses to push for infrastructure changes.

Learn, and share what you learn. Free to Move's newest resource covers self-defense and reactive safety strategies. It's free on their website for individuals and small groups, "and there never will be" a barrier to that education, Abby says.

Bring a workshop to your community. Free to Move is looking for corporate sponsors to host free workshops for their employees and communities. Invite them to speak. Walking groups, running clubs, book clubs and churches can invite the team to share Alyssa's story and their work. Share your experience. Free to Move runs ongoing surveys about how people feel in outdoor spaces. The answers shape what they build next.

Mark your calendar for March. Free to Move is planning a 5K for Alyssa's birthday, with International Women's Day events the week before. "We can only do this when we're united together," Abby says.

Learn more, donate or get involved: www.wearefreetomove.org/donate
Instagram: @wearefreetomove | Also on LinkedIn and Facebook.

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Lighten Up the Holiday Table: Two Recipes Worth Sharing

Festive, flavorful and a little lighter than the usual spread, these two crowd-pleasers prove healthy holiday eating doesn't mean giving anything up.
The holidays are about the people around the table, not guilt about what's on it. But a few smart swaps can keep you feeling good from Thanksgiving through New Year's. These two recipes bring all the cozy flavors of the season, with more fiber, more protein and a lot less added sugar.

Maple-Roasted Brussels Sprouts with Cranberries and Pecans



Serves 6 | Prep 10 minutes | Cook 25 minutes
Roasting turns Brussels sprouts sweet and crispy, and a light maple glaze with tart cranberries makes them holiday-worthy.

Ingredients

- 2 pounds Brussels sprouts, trimmed and halved
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1/2 teaspoon kosher salt
- 1/4 teaspoon black pepper
- 1 tablespoon pure maple syrup
- 1 tablespoon balsamic vinegar
- 1/3 cup pecans, roughly chopped
- 1/3 cup dried cranberries (unsweetened or reduced sugar if you can find them)
- Optional: zest of 1 orange

Directions

1. Heat the oven to 425°F and line a large baking sheet with parchment.
2. Toss the Brussels sprouts with olive oil, salt and pepper. Spread them cut side down in a single layer.
3. Roast 20 to 25 minutes, until the cut sides are deep golden and crispy. Add the pecans to the pan for the last 5 minutes to toast.
4. Whisk the maple syrup and balsamic together. Toss with the hot sprouts, pecans and cranberries. Finish with orange zest and serve.

Why it works: Brussels sprouts are packed with fiber and vitamin C, and pecans add heart-healthy fats. One tablespoon of maple syrup goes a long way for the whole pan.



Pumpkin Pie Yogurt Parfaits



Serves 6 | Prep 15 minutes | No baking
All the flavor of pumpkin pie, layered in a glass with protein-rich Greek yogurt. Make them a few hours ahead and let the fridge do the work.

Ingredients

- 1 can (15 ounces) pure pumpkin puree (not pumpkin pie filling)
- 2 cups plain Greek yogurt
- 3 tablespoons pure maple syrup or honey
- 1 1/2 teaspoons pumpkin pie spice
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1 cup granola (look for one low in added sugar)
- Optional toppings: a dollop of whipped cream, a sprinkle of cinnamon, chopped pecans

Directions

1. In a bowl, whisk together the pumpkin, 1 cup of the Greek yogurt, maple syrup, pumpkin pie spice and vanilla until smooth.
2. In six small glasses or jars, layer a spoonful of granola, then the pumpkin mixture, then plain Greek yogurt. Repeat.
3. Top with a little more granola and your favorite toppings. Serve right away, or chill up to 4 hours. Add the granola topping just before serving so it stays crunchy.

Why it works: Greek yogurt adds a serious protein boost, and pumpkin brings fiber and vitamin A. It's a dessert you can feel good about going back for.

A Few Holiday Wellness Wins

- Fill half your plate with vegetables first. Then enjoy the rest of the spread without stress.
- Move after the meal. A family walk after dinner helps digestion and makes a great new tradition.
- Drink water between festive drinks. Staying hydrated helps you feel better the next day.
- Skip the "all or nothing" mindset. One indulgent meal won't undo your progress. Enjoy it and get back to your routine.





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Hughston Clinic Orthopaedics provides world-class musculoskeletal care across eight locations in Middle Tennessee, including Hendersonville, Hermitage, Lebanon, Nashville (Centennial, Harding Place, and Skyline), Smyrna, and Springfield. Its team of 16 physicians treats a wide range of orthopedic conditions and injuries affecting the foot, ankle, knee, hip, hand, wrist, elbow, shoulder, and spine. With an in-house MRI facility and highly skilled rehabilitation team, Hughston Clinic Orthopedics delivers comprehensive, patient-focused care.

For more information or to schedule an appointment, please visit tn.hughston.com.

TERRY BARGA

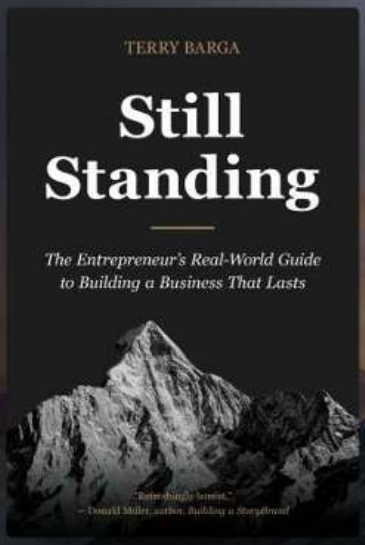
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LIVE TO SERVE: HOW THE HISPANIC FAMILY FOUNDATION SHOWS UP FOR NASHVILLE



For more than a decade, Executive Director Diane Janbakhsh and her team have met Nashville's most vulnerable families with practical help, one person at a time.

Before there were programs, outreach events or any of the work the public sees today, the Hispanic Family Foundation served Nashville one person at a time.

"Our slogan, live to serve, is foundational for us," said Executive Director Diane Janbakhsh.

From radio outreach to a citywide lifeline

The foundation's work began long before it was a nonprofit. In 2008, when Janbakhsh's family acquired it's radio stations, the family and radio staff began hosting community events: Easter egg hunts, food distributions, Christmas gifts for children and other ways to meet basic needs in Nashville's underserved Hispanic community.

"As we saw need in the community, we would work towards meeting those needs in a practical type of way," Janbakhsh said.

"Join us in this journey of loving people, serving people, and making Nashville a better place,"
-Executive Director Diane Janbakhsh

Those early events became the heart of the Hispanic Family Foundation, now a 501(c)(3) nonprofit for 13 years. Today it runs more than 20 programs and more than 22 community outreach events, partners with over 60 organizations, businesses and churches, and serves more than 100,000 people each year.

Its mission is to serve the most vulnerable, underserved, Hispanic and immigrant communities of the Nashville area.

Health care with dignity

Health is a big part of that work. HFF partners with local health care providers to bring screenings, education and services to people who are underinsured or underserved, through health fairs, regular outreach events and providers who set up weekly or monthly.

One story shows why it matters. Last year, at the foundation's Dia de la Mujer health fair, a young woman came in for a free mammogram. She had asked several doctors for one, but was told she was too young to qualify. The screening found something, and follow-up care confirmed early-stage breast cancer.

Because it was caught early, she got the treatment she needed. Today she is cancer free.

"This is why we continue to advocate for people who have medical concerns and needs but are not able to get the care that they need," Janbakhsh said. "We were a part of saving someone's life."



Rising need

Inflation, food insecurity and a lack of insurance are hitting the families HFF serves hard, and more people are walking through its doors asking for basic necessities. With federal funding drying up for the foundation and many of its partners, monetary donations are its biggest need.

HFF serves families of children with special needs, single moms with newborns, people facing food insecurity and community members in crisis. When disaster strikes, the city calls on HFF to help.

How to help

The foundation's Casino Night fundraiser on November 20 at Plaza Mariachi invites sponsors, partners and neighbors to enjoy a fun night while supporting its work.

Readers can also volunteer, become monthly partners or sign up for the newsletter at hffus.org.



Showing Up for Our Neighbors

From a monthly resource fair for neighbors facing homelessness to live broadcasts that bring Special Olympics athletes to fans across the state, here's how we show up.

RISE UP NASHVILLE

Rise Up is a free monthly resource fair for neighbors experiencing homelessness and hardship. Together with Wellpoint and partners across the city, we bring housing, health, employment and recovery services into one room, along with clothing, food and practical resources. Someone can walk in with a need and walk out with a next step.

Rise Up moves across the four corners of the city and reaches roughly 100 to 150 people each month. Guests find coats, hats, gloves and socks, free haircuts, health and wellness resources, housing, recovery and job programs, and a place to charge a phone. Most of all, they find friendly faces.

Behind the scenes, Rise Up connects nonprofits, businesses, churches and Metro Nashville services that might not otherwise cross paths. Every vendor table is one more door that opens for someone who needs it.





Clothing, food and services, all in one room at a recent Rise Up.



The State Fall Games live broadcast, Oct. 17 in Murfreesboro.

SPECIAL OLYMPICS TENNESSEE

Nashville Fit is a proud media partner of Special Olympics Tennessee and a Train for Life partner. We broadcast their events live, so families, friends and fans anywhere can cheer on the athletes.

On October 17, our team went live from the State Fall Games at Richard Siegel Park in Murfreesboro with flag football, cornhole, fitness, athlete interviews and the awards. The stream ran on YouTube, in the Nashville Fit app and on our Chattanooga and Knoxville sites, so fans across the state could join in.

NEXT RISE UP

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Learn more:
nashvillefitmagazine.com/give-back

OUR GIVE-BACK MODEL

Good Moves Community Fund

Good things happen when a community shows up for its neighbors. Here's how our fund works, and why it matters.

The Good Moves Community Fund is a donor-advised fund created by Nashville Fit and hosted on Charityvest. It brings individuals and businesses together to support efforts like Rise Up and the local nonprofits serving people facing housing insecurity and other barriers.

It's also at the heart of our new give-back model. A portion of Nashville Fit's proceeds now goes into the fund, so we can do more than tell a nonprofit's story. Sometimes, we can write the check.

HOW IT WORKS

1
GIFTS COME IN

A portion of Nashville Fit's proceeds goes into the fund, along with gifts from readers, partners and local businesses.

2
THE FUND GROWS

Gifts are held in the donor-advised fund on Charityvest, so every dollar is set aside for charitable work.

3
GRANTS GO OUT

Each quarter, grants go to nonprofits doing the work. Our Fit Media brands take no fee from the fund.

WHY IT MATTERS

Through Rise Up, our Give Back Issue and our partners across the city, we meet nonprofits and everyday heroes who are stretched thin. Awareness helps. Funding helps even more.

As the Fit City model grows into Chattanooga, Knoxville, Columbus and beyond, Good Moves goes with it, so every new city we serve can give back too.

GIVE TO GOOD MOVES

Scan to give online.
Businesses can also give by check, stock or corporate match.

Healthier people. Stronger businesses. Better cities.

The Gift of Having Your People

What a cycling community gave me during a hard season, and what we can all give each other this holiday season.

BY JEN SPICE

I love a good gift. But when I think about what has meant the most to me, especially during the harder seasons of my life, it has never been something someone bought me. It has been the people who made me feel like I had somewhere to belong.

For me, that was my CycleBar community.

During my teaching days, I was going through a difficult transition in my personal life. I won't get into every detail, because that's not the story I want to tell here. The story is what those people gave me while I was going through it.

Honestly? They saved me in ways they probably never realized.

I was teaching rooms of 50-plus riders, multiple times a day. That's a lot of people, a lot of personalities, and a lot of lives happening outside that studio. Connecting with them mattered to me. When someone gives you their time and energy, I think you owe them more than a good class. You owe them your attention. You should care that they're there.

And somewhere along the way, those riders became family.



Jen leading a ride during her CycleBar teaching days.

"I thought I was giving those riders a class. They gave me a family."



Jen in the CycleBar studio, where the riders became family.

I was there to lead them through a ride. But during that season, they were helping carry me through my life. The giving went both ways, and I don't think I fully understood how much I was receiving until I looked back.

I don't teach there anymore. That doesn't make what we had any less important. Some communities meet you in one particular season, and what they give you stays long after your routine changes.

> ***"Find your people, not just your workout."***

As we head into the holidays, that's the kind of giving I keep thinking about. The donations, toy drives, and fundraisers matter. Please support them when you can. But don't underestimate your ability to give someone a place to belong, too.

Invite the person who keeps saying they'll come "sometime." Offer to walk in with them. Learn the name of someone you see every week. If you're already comfortable in a room, help someone else get there.

And if you're the one having a hard season, you're allowed to be on the receiving end. You don't have to earn your place by being the strongest, the most outgoing, or the person who always has it together.

Fitness can feel intimidating when you're looking at it from the outside. I get that. My hope is that you find a space where you can move, connect, and feel like yourself. It may take trying a few places. That's okay. Find your people, not just your workout.

This season, give what you can. Your time counts. Your attention counts. Making room for someone counts.

I thought I was giving those riders a class. They gave me a family. I'm still grateful. ■

JEN SPICE *is Nashville Fit's Director of Operations and a former CycleBar instructor.*

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Keep Music City Playing

Giving back to the Nashville Symphony means investing in the people, possibilities and shared experiences behind the music.

BY JEN SPICE

The room settles. A bow lifts. Then comes that first rush of sound, the kind that pulls your attention away from your phone and into the moment.

In a city with music on nearly every corner, it's easy to take those moments for granted. This fall, Nashville received a reminder that keeping them alive takes more than applause.

A remarkable show of support.

After announcing a suspension of its 2026–27 season, the Nashville Symphony received a $10 million gift from Oracle, allowing the season to resume and preventing previously announced furloughs of full-time staff and musicians.

It was a remarkable show of support. It was also the beginning of the next chapter, not the end of the work.

Not the end of the work.

"Nashville deserves a flourishing orchestra, and sustaining it requires an ongoing commitment from our community," the Symphony wrote in its October 4 public update.

That commitment helps open doors well beyond an evening at the Schermerhorn. Through Young People's Concerts, K–12 students can experience live orchestral music with free student admission.



The Schermerhorn Symphony Center, home of the Nashville Symphony. Photos courtesy of the Nashville Symphony.

> ***"Nashville deserves a flourishing orchestra."***
>
> — THE NASHVILLE SYMPHONY, OCT. 4



“A first concert. A new curiosity. A room full of strangers sharing the same extraordinary sound.”

Classroom resources help teachers carry that discovery back to school, while eligible Title I schools can apply for ticket funding and bus reimbursement.

The work behind the music.

Curb Open Dress Rehearsals offer another perspective: a chance for students to see the listening, concentration and collaboration behind a performance. Before an audience hears the finished piece, musicians do the work together.

For a city that celebrates movement, connection and showing up for one another, there’s something worth protecting here. A first concert. A new curiosity. A room full of strangers sharing the same extraordinary sound.



Inside the Schermerhorn’s Laura Turner Concert Hall.

Give what you can this season.

This giving season, supporting the Nashville Symphony is one way to invest in that possibility. One-time and monthly gifts help sustain its future, so the next generation has a chance to hear what Music City can be. ▪

Support the Nashville Symphony

Scan to learn more or make a one-time or monthly gift at nashvillesymphony.org. Every gift helps keep Music City playing.

JEN SPICE *is Nashville Fit’s Director of Operations.*



Vendor Beverly P. Photo: Caroline Lindner

THE GIVE BACK ISSUE · COMMUNITY

Seen, Known and Celebrated

For 19 years, The Contributor has turned a $2 street newspaper into income, housing and community for Nashville's unhoused neighbors.

BY TERRY BARGA

If you've ever handed a vendor $2 for a copy of *The Contributor*, you've already been part of one of Nashville's most hands-on answers to homelessness.

The Contributor is a street newspaper created and sold in collaboration with people who are experiencing or have experienced homelessness. The paper gives them a way to earn income and start down the path to long-term stability. Over 19 years, the mission has grown to include pathways to housing, healthcare, community and creative expression.

"We are ever-evolving, yet our goal remains the same," says Lindsey Longoria, The Contributor's Community Engagement & Gratitude Officer, "allowing our unhoused neighbors to be seen, known, and celebrated through the hard work they do every day."

HOW THE PAPER WORKS

A copy costs $2, paid in cash or online through the QR code on the cover. Vendors buy each copy for 50 cents, so they keep $1.50 on every paper they sell. The Contributor pays vendors outright for online sales, in cash or as credit toward their next order.

Vendors are independent contractors who choose where and when they sell, within guidelines from their training. "I always say you get out what you put in," Longoria says. The more a vendor keeps coming back, the more access they have to everything from swag to case management.

That's why she asks readers not only to pay for the paper, but to take it and read it. Every sale brings a vendor back to the office for support, and every issue includes work written by vendors, who are paid for it.



Vendor leader Shawn L. leading The Unseen Walking Tour. Photo: Will Connelly



Lindsey Longoria cooks the bi-weekly paper release breakfast, serving about 100 plates of hot breakfast, fresh fruit and coffee. Photo: Lindsey Longoria

HOW YOU CAN HELP THIS SEASON

- **Buy the paper, and read it.** Can't find a vendor, or know a good spot? Email caroline@thecontributor.org.
- **Give** at thecontributor.org/donate or mail a check to P.O. Box 332023, Nashville, TN 37203.
- **Volunteer** in the vendor office: caroline@thecontributor.org.
- **Partner** on event space, catering or community connections: lindsey@thecontributor.org.
- **Write** articles, poetry or art for the paper: linda@thecontributor.org.
- **Take The Unseen Walking Tour:** thecontributor.org/unseen-nashville-tours

MEET SHAWN

Ask Longoria for a success story and one name comes to mind fast: Shawn L. A vendor for more than a decade, Shawn has become something of a local celebrity in Music Circle, where he greets people with a big smile, the occasional inflatable prop and a cheerful, booming "Hello, king!" or "Hello, queen!"

Shawn came to The Contributor after being incarcerated. A Nashville native, he came home to a community that offered few opportunities to people with records. Selling the paper gave him an income that wasn't limited by his past, and by sticking with it, he opened doors to his future.

Since then, Shawn has been permanently housed, joined the vendor leadership team, written articles for the paper and started leading The Unseen Walking Tour, where vendor guides show how downtown's changing landscape affects unhoused neighbors. He even makes his own king-and-queen merchandise, so you can rock your royal status all day long.

"We are so grateful for Shawn and vendors like him, and we are always rooting for them!"

MORE THAN THEIR WORST DAY

Longoria wishes more people shared the mindset The Contributor champions: "Every person is so much more than the worst thing that has ever happened to them."

She also wants people to see vendors for what they are: small business owners. "For so many of them, it is more than a job," she says. "It is a lifeline."

MORE THAN A PAYCHECK

The Contributor's team also offers housing navigation case management; SOAR services, which walk people through the disability and social services benefits process from the emergency room to long-term support; and creative workshops where vendors make poetry, zines and artwork they can showcase and sell.

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THE CONTRIBUTOR

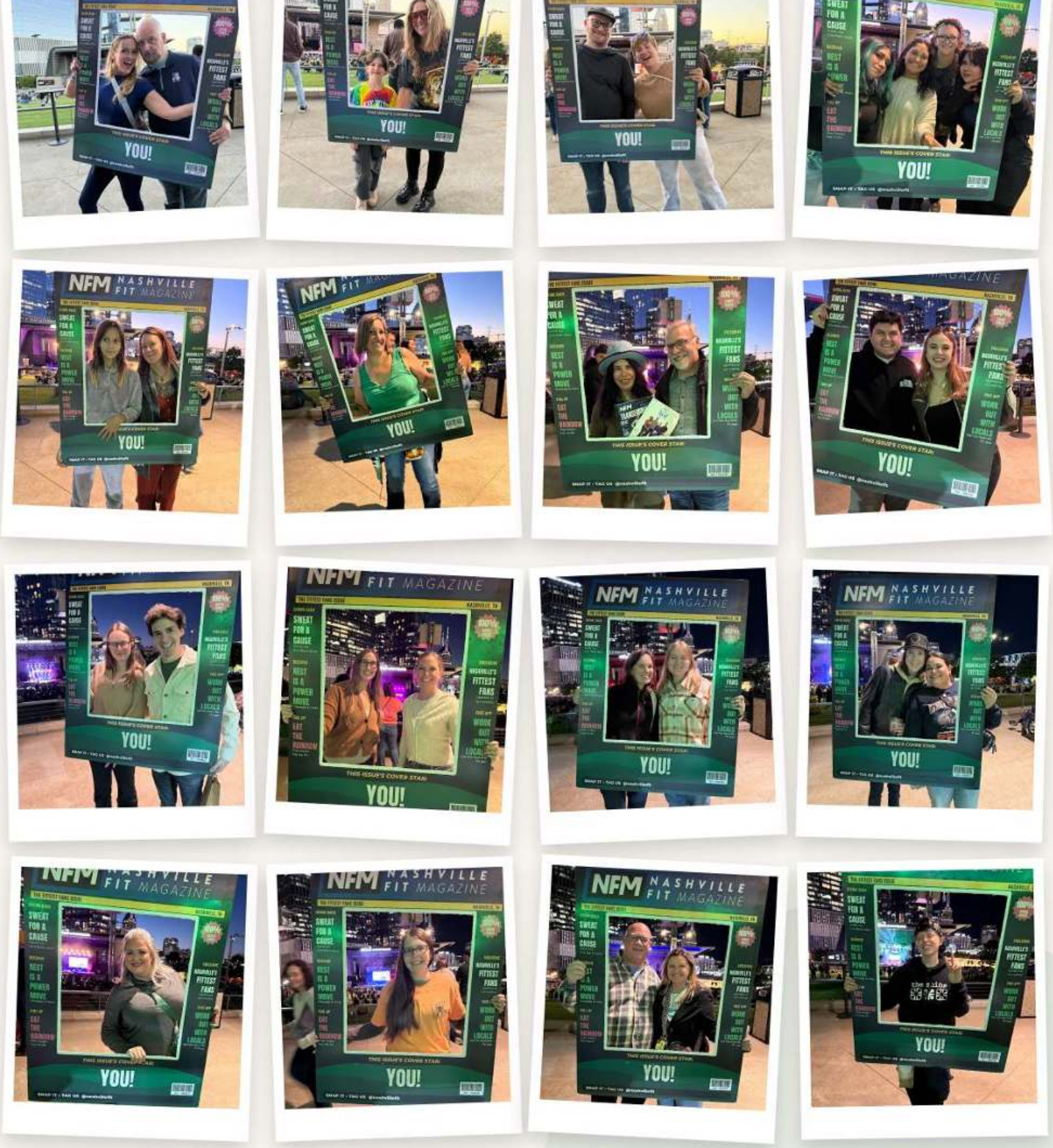
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ECHELON: BUILT FOR THOSE WHO SERVE, FUELED BY GIVING BACK

Nashville's veteran-founded energy drink measures success by who it shows up for, not just what it sells.

Plenty of brands say they support the people who serve. Echelon was built for them.

The Nashville-based performance energy company officially started in 2021 as a side project inside a company focused on military innovation. The mission was simple and specific: create a product that actually met the needs of service members working long days on little sleep under serious physical stress.



"We spent about 18 months iterating on an energy product that was powerful enough to meet their needs: no sleep, long work days, physical duress," says founder and CEO Erik Bartell, a U.S. Army combat veteran. "But it also had to be a cleaner product, without a bunch of preservatives and artificial ingredients that were going to give them health problems after copious amounts of use."

That last part mattered. According to Bartell, the military consumes five times more energy drinks than civilian consumers. Today, Echelon serves a broader market of people looking for a functional energy drink with cleaner, simpler ingredients, but its roots are still in uniform.





A product that does what it promises

Ask Bartell what has driven Echelon's fast growth and he doesn't point to margins or ad spend. He points to purpose.

"A lot of companies operate based off revenue, margins and the bottom line. They say yes or no to things because they want to make as much money as possible," he says. "We've been lucky enough to be that small brand that really just wants to show up and have an impact beyond our profit margin."

He's candid that Echelon's original military product isn't a big moneymaker. What it did build was a fiercely loyal following, because it works.

"People tell us all the time, 'I drink Echelon because I'm about to do something. I have an overnight shift,'" Bartell says. "Not because they just want something tasty. The product delivers exactly what the brand promises."

That loyalty reaches well beyond U.S. borders. Echelon is on most Army bases around the world, and when service members head to more austere locations, they reach out directly. "They'll say, 'We're about to deploy. Can you send some cases? We'll be here for eight or nine months. Even if it takes a month to get to us, it's worth it,'" Bartell says.

Where to find Echelon

The Vitamin Shoppe is Echelon's main retail partner, and every purchase there helps a small, veteran-founded brand compete with the biggest names in the industry. If there isn't a Vitamin Shoppe near you, Bartell's advice is to buy direct at drinkechelon.com.

For a brand built to keep people going when it matters most, Echelon's biggest strength may be that it keeps showing up, for service members, first responders, veterans and now, more than ever, for Nashville.

> "We've been lucky enough to be that small brand that really just wants to show up and have an impact beyond our profit margin."

Giving back is the marketing plan

Bartell's community-first mindset didn't start with Echelon. Before launching the brand, he ran a nonprofit, FitOps, and that's how many people in Nashville's fitness community, including our team, first got to know him.

"A lot of how we operate comes out of that," he says. "It's community-based, purpose-based and impact-based. That's how we run the for-profit too: How can we really help people?"

This year, that meant turning its attention to the people who wear a uniform at home. Echelon committed $100,000 worth of free product to first responders through The Vitamin Shoppe.

"We're not Monster or Red Bull, where $100,000 doesn't even touch the marketing budget," Bartell says. "It's basically our entire marketing budget. But it's a way we can authentically say we really are supporting the people we say we care about."

This November, Echelon is putting that same energy behind veterans. A percentage of profits from its November seasonal limited drop will go to the Hunter Seven Foundation, a nonprofit that supports veterans facing cancer linked to their service. The foundation helps cover medical costs, provides preemptive cancer screenings so veterans can catch problems early, and advocated in Washington for legislation so veterans with cancer tied to burn pit exposure can get their care covered by the VA.

"Before, these guys were doing GoFundMes trying to cover their cancer bills," Bartell says. "That's a really important cause to us, and it gets no press. We're doing a whole campaign around it to raise awareness and actually put money in their pocket."

Closer to home, Echelon has shown up again and again for Nashville, from partnering on Nashville Fit's Fit Crawl to supporting Rise Up, our resource fair for Nashville's unhoused neighbors.



Planting a flag in Nashville

Echelon's next chapter is local. Bartell's goal for the coming year is to make Echelon the energy drink of Nashville.

"We're local. We want to support more," he says. "I want to really plant a flag in Nashville and show up for the city as a whole."

Part of that vision is a future headquarters and training facility, inspired by Performix House, the gym Bartell ran in New York City. "If anyone came to New York City, they wanted to train in my gym," he says. "Part of what I want to build in Nashville is really putting Nashville on the fitness scene, with an HQ where no matter where you're coming from, you're going to want to pop in."

Echelon is also expanding into gyms, including Crunch and local facilities, and is launching a cooler program that places co-branded Echelon fridges in partner locations. Gym owners who share the brand's values are encouraged to reach out.

Learn more: drinkechelon.com

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Giving People Their Strength Back



By Collin Schoen

Before the gym, I was a small kid. I got bullied a little here and there, and I figured that was just who I was. Then I found the weight room.

That's where I discovered I could become strong, and over the years I've fallen in love with the process. Seeing my body learn to do anything I ask of it, as long as I'm willing to work for it, changed how I see myself. That confidence carried into everything else: being a good husband, a good father, a good business leader, and pushing past limits most people never break through.

That's what I want to give back. I want my clients to realize they are capable of more than they think. For one, it's a mom picking up the cat litter and realizing it's no big deal. For another, it's a dad getting to be the strong person for his kid. For someone else, it's walking in, afraid of movement, and rebuilding their mindset until they can say: I am strong, and I'm lifting hundreds of pounds.

> I want my clients to realize they are capable of more than they think.

The greatest gift you can give someone is the realization that they are not fragile. Society sends the opposite message: you're soft, you need to recover more, lifting is bad for your body. Strength is the most valuable thing a person can take from the gym, and helping people in my community find it in themselves is how I give back.

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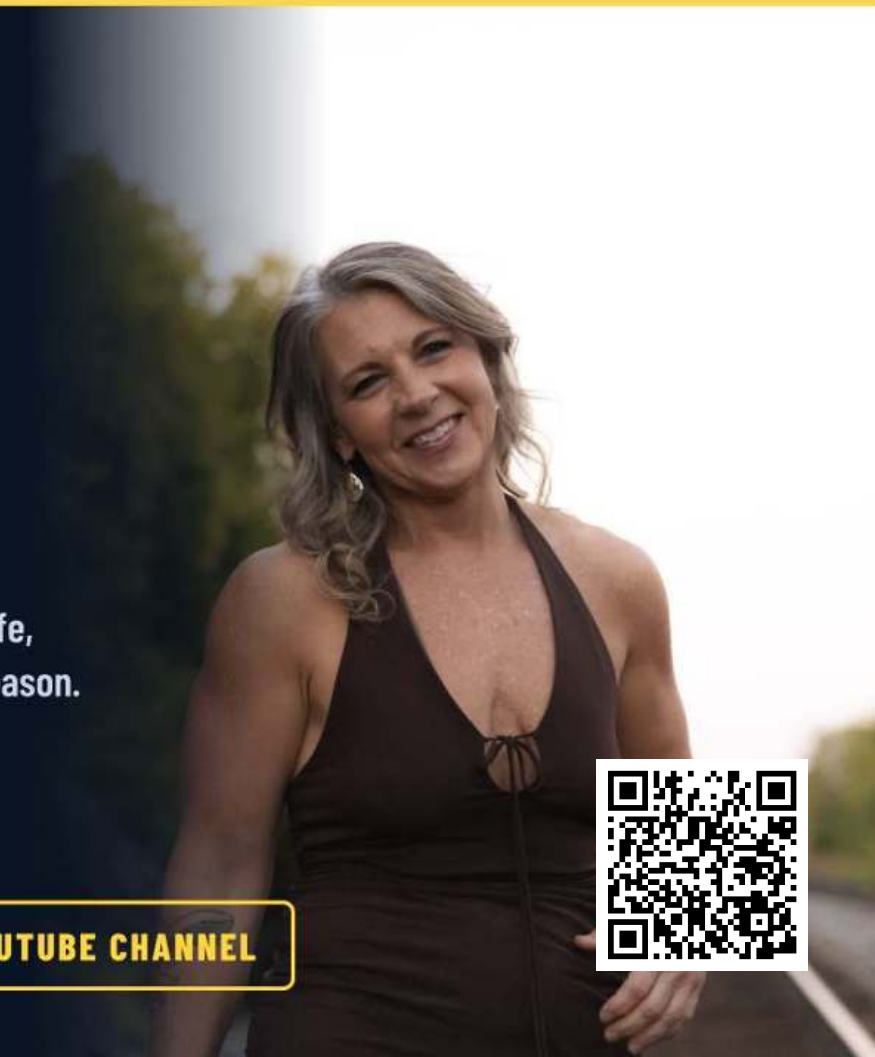
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