

A photograph of a winter forest scene. The ground is covered in a layer of snow, and the trees are bare and heavily laden with snow. A path or road winds through the forest, and a small figure of a person can be seen in the distance. The overall atmosphere is quiet and serene.

Ulster Publishing's

Hudson Valley Explore

Winter in the Valley 2021

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Let it snow, let it snow

Nordic skiing revival thrives in the Shawangunks



DION OGUST

by Erin Quinn

CENTRAL ULSTER COUNTY, with the miles of groomed carriage roads, linear rail-trail parks, and now the River-2-Ridge trail that leads outdoor enthusiasts from the Village of New Paltz to the heart of the Shawangunk Mountains. This is a pristine and magical place to wax up cross-country skis and glide across the wintry landscape.

Few sports are as physically vigorous and mentally robust as Nordic skiing, which has strong roots here in the Hudson Valley. According to the Shawangunk

Nordic Skiing Association (SNSA), the old Williams Lake Hotel in Rosendale, owned by Gust Williams of Finnish heritage, brought together a large group of Scandinavians, predominantly Norwegians, to form a local Telemark Ski Club in 1936.

"They began racing on trails at Williams Lake and ski jumping at the ski jump they constructed at Joppenbergh," wrote the SNSA in its history of cross-country skiing in the region. "In 1937, during the same period, the Smiley family promoted healthy outdoor exercises of skiing and skating for the boys at the Mohonk School, which operated at the Mohonk

Mountain House hotel and hosted ski outings of other groups on the property's extensive carriage trails."

During and directly after World War Two, Nordic skiing, like many sports, suffered decline. With the formation of the Rosendale Nordic Ski Club at Williams Lake in 1963, however, there was a revival. Competitions became a regular feature at Williams Lake and eventually Guyot Hill at the Mohonk Preserve. Ski buses of Nordic skiers would come up from New York City. They patronized both the carriage roads and sky lakes of the Shawangunks and the Williams Lake property wedged between Binnewater

Road and Joppenbergh Mountain a stone's throw outside Rosendale's Main Street.. During the 1960s and 1970s two small alpine ski areas — Ski Minnie and Ski Guyot — were created locally. With but a single hill and a tow rope, they were phased out by the late 1970s as larger resorts in the Catskills opened.

Nordic skiing, however, continued to gain popularity.

In 1965, Williams Lake hosted the first female Nordic ski competition in the U.S., a 5K race was won by Norwegian Olympic medalist Beben Enger. The carriage roads at Minnewaska and Mohonk were ideal for ski touring, and each began regular grooming for increasing numbers of day visitors.

Nordic skiing always popular

The River-2-Ridge trail, an approximately six-mile loop that stretches from the base of Main Street in New Paltz, traversing the cornfields and winding up towards the foothills of the Shawangunks, has been being groomed for Nordic skiing this year.

The 27,000-acre Monnewaka State Park, which recently opened its new interactive visitors' center, has been grooming trails for both traditional and skate skiing. According to veteran



DION OGUST

park manager Eric Humphries, the park grooms up to 20 miles of carriage roads when there is significant snowfall.

"Minnewaska has up-and-down terrain with some trails adjacent to cliffs, so beginners should use caution," Humphries cautioned. "Upper Awosting Carriage Road would be most suitable for beginners." For more experienced skiers, Humphries said, "The Castle Point to Upper Awosting or Hamilton Point to

Castle Point loops are perfect."

There is a special skiing fee that is outside the Empire Pass. Adults can pay a \$10-a-day fee, seniors \$9 and juniors \$7. Snowshoeing, hiking and dogs are not permitted on trails specifically groomed for Nordic skiing.

"We open at 9 a.m., so come in visit the new visitors' center and warm up by the fire," he said. "Nordic skiing is always popular at Minnewaska, and now we're

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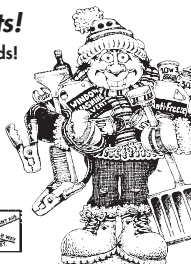
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just hoping for more snow so we can get the trails ready.”

The Mohonk Preserve, the 8000-

acre public/private land trust on the Shawngunk Ridge, typically grooms about ten miles of trails, some of which

connect with other groomed trails on Mohonk Mountain House lands. The amount of grooming depends on the snow conditions.

For beginners, the preserve suggested starting out with OverCliff Carriage Road. “It’s a great place for beginners — approximately four miles in-and-back, easily accessed from the Preserve’s West Trapps Trailhead,” said staff members.

Cross-country skiing is an included activity as part of the organization’s standard day-use fee and annual membership. “Skiing is always very popular when conditions are good,” said a staff member, “and was particularly robust during the major snowfall in mid-December.”

The trails at the preserve are predomi-

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Kathy Goodell, *Voyager*, 2020, courtesy the artist

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nantly groomed for classic skiing. Daily ski reports and information on skiing and snowshoeing can be found at Ski or Snowshoe at Mohonk Preserve. Skiers can also contact the visitors' center at 255-0919 for information on current conditions.

Happy trails to you

New Paltz Town Supervisor, Neil Bettez said that he's happy the trails are being

groomed. "I think it's important for folks to get outside and enjoy themselves," he said. "Unfortunately, I too gave away my skis a few years ago. but look at them every time I am in Rock and Snow,. so

it's probably only a matter of time."

Nordic skier Diego Schillaci, who has represented New Paltz High School at the State Nordic Ski Championships, said that the R2R has sections

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Daniel Lipson has observed the increase in the number of Nordic skiers. "When I skied on the River 2 Ridge trail twice after the December storm, I was delighted to see far more Nordic skiers using the trail than ever before," he said. "I ran into several friends who were Nordic skiing for the first or second

time in their life."

Numerous national news outlets have written stories highlighting the pandemic-inspired Nordic skiing renaissance. A simple visit to Rock and Snow provides vivid evidence. Virtually all their equipment rentals have been taken for the season. "It's quite similar to the rush to buy and ride bicycles this spring and summer," said Lipson.

Schillaci's favorite loops are from the

Testimonial Gatehouse all the way up to the Skytop Tower, the Castle Point loop at Minnewaska and the newly renovated Smiley Carriage Road. His advice is to bring enough food and water, know where you're going, have a trail map, and be prepared to have fun.

"Skiing is an easy way to cover lots of ground in the winter," said Schillaci. "A full body workout. Minnewaska especially, holds lots of snow, and the views are like no other ski area anywhere."

Lipson's favorite loop is the 8.5-mile Castle Point and/or overlapping Hamilton Point one. The scenery is spectacular. The trails are in great shape. The substantial elevation is kept gradual by the carriage-road trails.

When it snows, the Gunks and the skiers will be ready. A great group to get to know is the SNSA, which has a dynamic and informative website at <http://www.skithegunks.com>.



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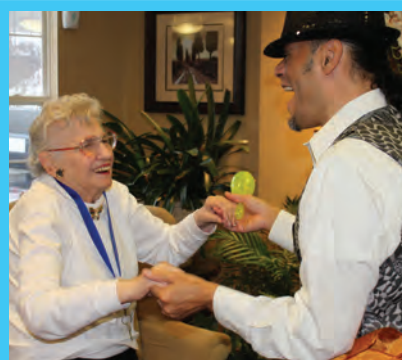
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Lauree Ostrofsky (second row, fifth from left) and company at the Hudson Valley Women in Business event.

These women business owners are paving the way

by Cloey Callahan

INAUGURATION DAY is here, and for the first time in American history the vice president is a woman – Kamala Harris. Women have been increasingly breaking the glass ceiling in a lot of places. Five Ulster County women businesspersons – Cheryl Bowers, Lagusta Yarwood, Joan Lonergan, Tamara Ehlin and Karianna Haasch – were asked how they got their businesses off the ground and running, who their supports were, and what challenges they faced along the way.

Role models are only part of the story. Ulster County boasts a number of resources helpful to women in business. We introduce three of them: Hudson Valley Women in Business, SUNY Ul-

ster's NewStart for Women program, and the Women's Enterprise Development Center. Each of these organizations has its own perspective, its own history, its own style, and its own goals. They have in common the focus of being of help to local businesswomen.

Cheryl Bowers
Rondout Savings Bank

Bowers is Rondout Savings Bank's first woman president and CEO. She is the fourteenth president of the 150-year-old local banking institution. Born and raised in Kingston, she worked part time at a bank during her high-school and SUNY Ulster years.

"I kept taking on different roles at this bank, and it was very exciting to me

then -- and still is, even with so many years that have gone by," said Bowers. "I wanted to throw my hat in the arena of doing business banking."

At the start of her career, she did feel as though certain jobs were only for men, including within business banking. However, the barriers faded. She said she "didn't use it as an obstacle."

She began to look at herself as a resource – someone that anyone could go to who needed banking help, with no gender-specific role or position per se. She felt there was no such thing as "gender-created wisdom."

In 2001, she joined Rondout Savings Bank and after seven years became the chief operating officer. When the president at the time retired in 2018, she



CARL COX

Cheryl Bowers from Rondout Savings Bank.

made history by becoming the president and CEO.

"It was an evolution of learning and doing different things," said Bowers. "I didn't stop doing what I loved. I got sucked into the helping of the customers, especially business customers."

She also "got this bug to volunteer and help the community." She wanted all



PROVIDED

Village Green Real Estate's Joan Lonergan at the beginning of her career.

sectors, all genders and all populations to have opportunity, said Bowers. "It's not just lip service, it's really who I am."

Rondout Savings Bank has a "Dividends

to the Community" program, where employees get a paid eight hours to do volunteer work, and the bank also donates ten percent of its annual earnings to the communities it serves.

"As much as I'm welcomed in every circle, when I look around on the boards I'm on, it is predominately male," said Bowers. She sees the need of everyone working together for advocacy.

"The roles have blended together, where 20 or 30 years ago wasn't the case," observed Bowers. "I feel there is still a barrier of salary today. It's not because the industry is unwilling to pay, it's because women tend to hunker down in a role because oftentimes they have family obligations as well – they can't just roll the dice continually," said Bowers. "When you stay in one role for a really long time, the escalation of salary is less of an opportunity."

She advocates being in a room where everyone is smarter than you. You make an acquaintance or friend, and learn what you can.

"Once you're friendly with folks, it doesn't really matter what your gender is, because there is a trust you build," said Bowers. "Going in without having



ERICKA WADLEIGH

Left to right: Erika Olver, C. Gaspar, Shelly Karan, and Kate Larson of Lagusta's Luscious

your own preconceived barriers is such an important lesson for young professional women."

"And don't say, 'I'm sorry,'" said Bowers. "We do it all the time."

Lagusta Yearwood

Lagusta's Luscious

Yearwood may have not planned to launch what is now a collection of three different establishments, but she spearheaded the path in that direction for herself. She is the owner of New Paltz's Lagusta's Luscious and Commissary and co-owner of New York City's Confectionary. "I didn't really set out to have three different businesses," said Yearwood. "It

grew organically over time."

Starting out, she knew she wanted to cook and work for herself. She graduated from culinary school in 2000 and began her career as a private chef in the

New York City area. "I moved upstate to New Paltz because there were good farms there," said Yearwood. "I continued cooking for clients, but started a little line of chocolate on the side. It was growing

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and growing.”

In 2010, she decided to turn her focus solely to chocolates, confections and vegan sweets. Lagusta's Luscious was built in 2011, which means its ten-year

anniversary is coming up this year. Commissary, the café, opened in 2016.

“I'm lucky to live in this very feminist world where I feel like a lot of people supported me as a woman business

owner,” said Yearwood. “There's always things like men talking down to you, but in general it's been okay.”

While she did face challenges being a young woman who moved to New Paltz and started a business, she feels as though she was able to become more established. Now she's well-known to other members of the community. “People are happy to see a woman-owned business making it,” said Yearwood.

Last year, she applied to become a New York State certified women business owner.

“I knew I wanted to never have kids,” said Yearwood about one challenge some women business owners face. “I couldn't imagine ten years ago when I was starting to grow the business from scratch also having babies or tiny kids. I don't think it would have been sustainable unless I had a stay-at-home partner.”

For young women considering starting a business of their own, Yearwood advised to “keep at it” despite the challenges they might meet along the way. “People want to keep quiet about how hard it is to own your own business,” said Yearwood. “I think the more open and honest you are about it, it shows people in your world the realities of it.”

Joan Lonergan

Coldwell Banker Village Green

Joan Lonergan grew up in Ulster County and went to college in New York City, where she earned a bachelor of fine arts degree in ceramics and painting. With a decade-long career in graphic design, she was ready to move back upstate – which for her, meant an opportunity to rethink her career choice.

In 1986, she and her family moved to Woodstock, where she decided to get a real-estate broker's license just two years later. “I fell in love with it,” said Lonergan. “I don't know what other way to put it.”

She worked with a broker for a year before she decided to pave her own way and open her own business. She stepped up to the challenge to help people find or sell their homes. She had never thought of herself as a salesperson, rather as someone who was helping another person.

“I started in Kingston, and people started following me – I can't exactly say how that happened,” said Lonergan. “I think people were drawn to my business principles that I quickly put together.”

Her four mantras that lead and guide

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In 2000, Coldwell Banker asked her to take on a franchise. While Lonergan was wary about a corporate model at first, she felt Coldwell Banker had the same philosophies as she did. The help that she could receive from its resources was considerable. She accepted the challenge.

"I went from a two-person office to 15 people in 2001, and I have grown the company to 130 agents from six different locations in three counties," said Lonergan.

She said she attributes her success to a couple of different things, including how "women do business differently on the management side." Lonergan described herself as "open and able to hear as a leader" rather than dogmatic.

"People worked with me, not for me," said Lonergan. "I always took the suggestions of the people who worked with me. More brains are better than one."

When she started her business, she set out to make sure that women were always comfortable and never felt discriminated against by anyone. "Being a woman [business owner] it is always more challenging because you're just not taken seriously," said Lonergan. "I just never gave it any credit. As soon as you give credit that you could be discriminated against or not taken seriously, you focus on that. For me, I blew past it and said I wasn't

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going to pay attention to it.”

She said people have asked her whether she thinks she would have gotten further if she was a man. To that, she says she doesn't know.

“Maybe I would've,” answered Loneragan. “Probably, but I am going to assume that I did as well as I did because of what I did, not who I was.”

Loneragan suggested young women considering being business owner find a mentor. “Find those people who can help you. and always remember to pay it forward to someone who is going to be coming behind you,” said Loneragan.

Tamara Ehlin

The Forsyth B&B

Ehlin's path may not have been linear, but she has been able to utilize her prior experience in the hospitality, nonprofit,



VERONICA FASSBENDER

Local Artisan Bakery's Karianna Haash.

culinary and marketing industries to find her way to owning The Forsyth B&B in

Kingston.

Ehlin moved from New York City to the area. “My youngest went to college, and it felt like I was liberated to not be there,” said Ehlin. “My sister moved to High Falls. and I discovered Kingston. I hadn't been familiar with it but I loved it.”

The idea of her own hospitality business began to crystalize with her move to Ulster County in 2015. A bed-and-breakfast was the operation that made the most sense for Ehlin. It brought together many of her talents. She started to look at different properties, when she found the former private residence at 85 Abeel Street that she turned into the bed-and-breakfast.

“I learned as I went along,” said Ehlin. “It has pulled all of my skills together in a way that has been extremely enjoyable for me.” Her “creative energy and passion” for food and entertaining served her well.

“As being a woman proprietor in the innkeeping industry, I didn't face challenges for being a woman,” said Ehlin. “It's harder for men in this industry, because many people expect women to be an innkeeper.”

At the same time, she had to put her foot down when it came to the construction management end of things. “I had to assert myself as the person in charge,” said Ehlin.

Ehlin is glad to see a lot of women entrepreneurs in the area. It's no longer a surprise when women decide to start something for themselves.

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higher than you think, be confident in doing things your own way, and don't compare yourself to others. These are Karianna Haasch's pieces of advice for young women business owners. She says she reminds herself to continue to apply these precepts to her own business.

Haasch earned her master's degree in international business management and headed into the corporate world. While she didn't consider being an entrepreneur right away, she decided to make it a side gig after friends and family encouraged her. What had started as a side gig led her to starting a pop-up bakery at 448 Broadway in Kingston in 2018, and turning it into its own retail

store a year later.

Haasch leaned on those around her, was accepted by a business accelerator program, and overcame financial challenges to keep the store running.

"I'll definitely get customers who come in occasionally that I feel like are a little disrespectful because I'm a woman, and specifically because I am a young woman," said Haasch. "Some of the comments people have made to me before are indicators of them not knowing I was the boss and not one of the counter people. That's always kind of amusing to be honest to be able to say, Actually, I'm the CEO."

While some people may have given her

a hard time, she continued to rise to the challenge, even during a crazy year with a pandemic. "If you're going into business for yourself, that means you're doing it because you have something to offer that no one else can offer," said Haasch. "It's important to lean into that."

Haasch is glad to keep providing treats made with locally sourced ingredients. "I started the business because I wanted to bring a greater awareness around sourcing locally," she explained. "As a food-service provider we source as many local ingredients as possible. All of the products we carry in our store are made locally. To be able to put that money back into the local economy is really important."

Resources for women in business

1. Women's Enterprise Development Center

"Men and women do business differently," said Cynthia Marsh-Croll from the mid Hudson sector of the Women's Enterprise Development Center.

The center is a nonprofit that was established in 1997, with its home base in White Plains. In 2013, it expanded with an office in Poughkeepsie. Its mission is to "help women business owners start, strengthen and succeed." It offers a number of no-cost or low-cost workshops and webinars.

"There's always been a discrepancy in terms of access to capital and opportunities for women and minorities," said Marsh-Croll. "Women and minorities historically don't have the same access that other people might have had in the past and still have today."

Some of the programming includes a 60-hour entrepreneurial training program, "Revise to Thrive" and "Building Marketing Resilience During the Extended Pandemic."

Programming in Spanish is available. "We help with the minority and women business certification for those who qualify," said Marsh-Croll. "We also help with loan packaging and access to funding."

New York State launched the Minority and Women-Owned Business Enterprise initiative, which aids minority and women business owners with funding, resources and allows for "equal opportunity in state contracting," ten years ago. During the Covid-19 pandemic, the Women's Enterprise Development Cen-

ter has stepped up to help women and minority owned businesses stay afloat and pivot to an online setting.

The center assists everyone from start-up businesses to those who have been in business longer but need help sustaining it or are making a change.

Marsh-Croll had her own consulting firm for a dozen years before joining the Women's Enterprise Development Center, which gave her a first-hand look at what it's like to be a woman in industry.

"Being a woman and anything associated

with acting like a woman was looked down upon and not looked at as a strength," said Marsh-Croll. "We're seeing a shift of what women can bring to the table. We look at things differently, we problem solve differently, we collaborate differently, we do business differently. We have a lot to add to the entrepreneurial community."

There's a lot that women-owned and minority business owners can add to the business world, but a gap still there, in Marsh-Croll's opinion. She sees the Women's Enterprise Development Center as an important tool in assisting women and minority communities. "We want to give them the opportunities and support

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they need to be successful,” she said.

2. Hudson Valley Women in Business

Hudson Valley author and life coach Laurie Ostrofsky is owner of Simply Leap. In 2014, she founded Hudson Valley Women in Business, a hub connecting more than 3000 women business owners in the area.

“I feel like Hudson Valley is a microcosm of what’s happening across the country as well,” said Ostrofsky. “We need to take more control of our lives, and business ownership and entrepreneurship is a way to do that.”

Ostrofsky founded Hudson Valley Women in Business in hopes of creating “a welcoming space for seasoned and aspiring business owners, all women, and people of gender minorities inclusive of rare, class and ability, and to lean on and learn from one another.” Relocating back to the Hudson Valley after a number of years and working by herself, Ostrofsky was looking to build a greater sense of camaraderie among business owners. She wanted to find professional connections.

She met four other women business owners at a co-working space in Beacon. Quickly, the five women understood how powerful the connection can be.

“Business owners have a certain way of thinking about things,” said Ostrofsky. “When women business owners get to be around one another, there is more honesty than you would have in a normal networking event.”

Hudson Valley Women in Business seeks to create a community of like-minded individuals able to ask each other for advice, swap contacts and more.

“It gets really lonely coming up with things in your own head,” explained Ostrofsky. “Even though we have friends and family members who believe in us, if you don’t own a business yourself and can’t understand the pressure that can be on you, then you can only be so supportive.”

Before the pandemic, the group met monthly for special networking events. Now, they have established an online platform with a different speaker each month. The sessions highlight a variety of different aspects of the business world, including social media, marketing, finances, legal questions and time management.

“A good number of women in our community are moms, too,” said Ostrofsky. “And with Covid, there are multiple roles



PROVIDED

Participants of Laurie Ostrofsky’s Hudson Valley Women in Business event.

happening in homes right now, including running my business and helping kids with online learning.”

Any woman business owner is welcome to join. There are two different membership levels. The first is free and includes a connection to the Hudson Valley Women in Business Facebook group and attendance at the monthly meetings. The second adds a member site that includes a presence on a public business directory, involvement with suggesting topics and speakers, and utilization of a media list, among other things. The membership fee for these services is \$25 a month.

If you’re interested in learning more about Hudson Valley Women in Business, visit hvwiib.com.

3. New Start for Women at SUNY Ulster

SUNY Ulster is a champion of supporting women and minority business owners in the Hudson Valley. The school has partnered with a number of community organizations and nonprofits to offer services at no cost to help support students in overcoming barriers to success through a special program called New Start for Women.

The program offers different resources for those accepted as candidates for a one-year SUNY Ulster business certificate. It was funded for three years by a \$1.5-million grant from the NoVo Foundation. Each annual cohort has had around 15 students, give or take.

Resources offered include a summer

orientation program, an introduction to the technology needed for success, childcare help, tutoring, personal skills to support self-awareness, assertiveness training and time management. There are a variety of networking events – mentoring, resume-building and interview workshops -- along with weekly support and study groups.

Mindy Kole, an associate professor in SUNY Ulster’s Business and Professional Studies Department who is the academic advisor for the students, said Darlene Pfeiffer, who sits on SUNY Ulster’s foundation board and is “a fan and benefactor of SUNY Ulster,” donated a substantial amount for the New Start for Women program. Pfeiffer was also the first woman to own a Kentucky Fried Chicken franchise.

“She said she wanted to do something to help underserved women in the community,” said Kole. “When Darlene speaks, we all listen.”

Key educators and others across the campus and community, brainstormed how SUNY Ulster could help. “There are a lot of people in Ulster County who live below the poverty line,” explained Kole. “Many of them are women and many are single moms. They’re in this incredibly difficult position trying to work, trying to take care of the kids, trying to do the best they can. It’s an ongoing difficult situation that is hard to get out of.”

SUNY Ulster identified barriers of success in getting a college degree: childcare, transportation, financial,

mental and physical health, support, for self-esteem, and Internet barriers, among other things.

Instead of creating a program for an associate's degree, the school figured the one-year business certificate would be more "readily achievable."

"It's all business classes, so it's building skills, and if they want, it fits into

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our associate of applied science degree, so it would be a seamless transfer into that associate program at the end of the certificate,” said Kole.

One of SUNY Ulster’s partners in the program is Family of Woodstock, which

provides a case manager and helps students navigate things like Social Security, housing, food insecurity and more. Additionally, New Start for Women works with local childcare facilities to assist those who are mothers.

The program also provides an opportunity for the participants to build relationships with each other. Recently, New Start for Women provided this year’s cohort the opportunity to stay connected over the winter break with a weekly Zoom book club.

Although the classes are online this year, it hasn’t been a difficult adjustment. These students were already using Zoom pre-pandemic, receiving training for the platform last year. When students had to stay at home to provide childcare, teachers were able to set up a Zoom call for those learning from home. New Start for Women extended its certificate to three terms for this cohort, hopefully to give them an opportunity for in-person collaboration and community-building next fall. This group will overlap with the beginning of the third cohort, starting at the same time.

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Women program include income below the federal poverty level (\$11,880 for a single adult and \$24,300 for a family of four) or the household survival budget of \$23,148 for a single adult and \$68,808 for a family of four). Applicants need a high-school diploma or equivalent and need to complete the standard SUNY Ulster application. There are also interviews to ensure that the student is "poised for success."

"The program has been, in my opinion, successful," said Kole.

During the first year, New Start for Women had 16 students, with 13 of them graduating with the certificate.

Once students graduate, SUNY Ulster makes sure to stay in touch. Last year, some graduating students went on to do their associate's degree. Others have gone on to a four-year school and received significant scholarships. Still others have started planning the business they want to create.

The school is looking for ways to be able to continue the New Start for Women past the three-year period.

"I believe in my heart of hearts that

this intensive advisement, support, community-building and safety nets, are the keys to success," said Kole. "We need to continue this."

SUNY Ulster holds an annual entrepreneurial women's conference called "Own It" every year. This year SUNY Ulster is planning the all-day conference for June 3, with guest speaker Carly-Ann Fergus, who will talk about her career journey in fashion and retail.



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Running in winter

Advice from experts who have found the activity has increased their “discomfort tolerance”

by Erin Quinn

CHEEKS ARE RED, toes are numb, and practically the only sound to be heard comes from the gentle thud of snow

falling from pine boughs. There are few cars in the trailhead parking lots: perhaps a few cross-country skiers and dog walkers.

No matter which trail or carriage road you choose to run on, you know it's going to be hard for you. It's going to be cold, especially at first, until your core temperature rises and your circulation gets flowing.

As the hum of cars and trucks dissipate and the chattering of people's problems and the noise of life recede, you are left listening to the sound of your own breath and the creaking bones of trees heavy with snow, broken only by the occasional screech of a falcon or hawk in flight. You become conscious of the crunch of that hard top layer of snow, of the way snow pools on top of boulders.

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The silence is enveloping, intoxicating, invigorating. This is running in winter; this is running into the woods when most are running towards shelter.

We asked three of the region's most rugged runners about their favorite winter loops. What apparel do they recommend? What gear or equipment can minimize the roadrunner's fear of falling, or at least of falling often? What winter running tips might they pass on to the layperson?

Here's what they said

Tom Eickelberg, a triathlete, is committed to running outdoors this entire winter as he trains to defend his title in the S.O.S. (Survival of the Shawangunks). What he recommends most is a headlamp. A good headlamp can get you outside and off the 'dreadmill,' he says. "Biolite is my favorite [brand], but stop by Rock and Snow and they'll help

you out," he says.

He calls wool socks crucial. For chapped skin and lips he swears by Bag Balm. "It's a lifesaver," he says. "It's made from

Lanolin, so I feel like Ron Burgundy when I use it."

Jason Friedman, an ER doctor and accomplished ultrarunner, hosts the

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popular ultrarunning podcast, *The Pain Cave*. For off-road running, he advocates for microspikes or nanospikes, or screw-shoes or studded shoes. They're a huge benefit, he says, if you don't want to take a spill on the ice. Microspikes and nanospikes are easy to slip on and off, and allow runners to head off into the trails even when there's snow and ice.

Like Eickelberg, Friedman thinks Merino wool socks are critical apparel for winter running. "I use Smartwool or FITS and my Patagonia Houdini — insanely lightweight, windproof, and packable."

Phil Vondra, well-known local ultrarunner who recently completed the infamous Vol-State ultramarathon, a grueling 314-mile race across Tennessee, said that his go-to for slippery runs are Icebug shoes that have built-in spikes. "They are great for ice but a bit heavy for longer runs," he says. "I also layer up. Overdressing is a good way to get out the door!"

Going fully outdoors

Why are they continuing to train outdoors? Vondra says that he "likes to see the winter landscapes." With most of the vegetation gone, he explained, he gets to see details of the landscape that are obscured in other seasons. He also "loves the frost."

Eickelberg, who in previous winters remained on an indoor trainer, is

"going fully outdoors" this year. "I'm only going to hit the bike trainer or treadmill if it's too snowy or icy on the trails," he avers. "I figure the cold will increase my overall discomfort tolerance."

What this triathlete says he enjoys most about winter running is "the quiet, especially when there's some snow on the ground. Summer is never as quiet as winter. and I think there's something to learn from that silence."

Friedman is going to attempt a second tour of the Leadville 100-mile run at high altitudes in Colorado, as well as the Lake Sonoma 100K this April (Cpvid permitting). Winter is not his favorite season to run, he confesses, but nonetheless he's put there six days a week. "I don't like the cold, or the shorter days or the narrower roads, but I do like the woods with most of the leaves off the trees — it makes it easier to pick out some of the birds of prey and other wildlife."

Eickelberg picked Godzilla Hill just off the Undercliff/Overcliff intersection at the West Trapps on the Mohonk Preserve



PROVIDED

Well-known local ultrarunner Phil Vondra.

as the most spectacular winter run in the area. "It has a great spot at the top with a big southern view," he says. This hill is also one of the last grueling, punishing climbs in the S.O.S., which includes 19 miles of carriage road running along with a three-lake swim and a 30-mile bike ride.

"Obviously, part of me hates Godzilla," he confesses, "but I've been trying to get myself to the top once a week to see the sunset." He finds Guyot's Hill, also in the Preserve, "really cool in the winter." From there, you can see some of the old downhill ski trails by the old Mohonk Preserve Visitor's Center off Mountain Rest Road from back in the day.

Do what you can

Vondra thinks few trails can top the Millbrook Ridge Trail if the snows not too deep. "If I can get to Skytop, it's hard to beat those views!"

Vondra has his eyes set on running a

hilly 74-mile race called The Georgia Death Race in March. Eickelberg is training for the local SOS and the smaller but challenging Cape Cod SOS this coming summer. Both Friedman and Vondra also have their sights set on the Yeti 100-mile race in Virginia this September.

For now, they're on the trails and the carriage roads. If those become too icy or snowy, they have Lenape Lane as a staple or some of the more bucolic roads to run. All three do a lot of winter cross-training like snowshoeing, ski mountaineering, trekking in the Catskills and Nordic skiing.

Parting advice: "Stay warm, have traction, check if it's windy, run with others if you can. Do what you can, depending on the conditions. It's all about having fun," says Vondra.

If you're not a person who likes crowds, it's hard to beat the sound of silence on the beautiful, blustery, winter runs.

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