

# The *Good* Things in Life

Pat Fontaine honors **Really Are Free** friends, family and community

With its lush rows of vegetables and flowers, bird feeders brimming with seed, bees and butterflies flitting everywhere, it's no wonder Pat Fontaine describes her back yard as a "slice of heaven." Tending her plants is just one of the many simple joys she gets from life.

"You can see from being in my gardens that there is a precious thing that comes by every minute when we take the time to be aware and notice and not take ourselves so seriously," says Pat.

Learning to love life in this way didn't happen overnight for Pat. In 1995 she was diagnosed with breast cancer. Surgery, chemotherapy and radiation got her through it, but three years later doctors found another lump. After more surgery, chemo, and several months of follow-up, Pat has 'graduated' to once-a-year checks.

Pat owes her good health to many, but her friends, family and community are what pulled her through the most difficult times. Her circle of friends managed everything from food and cleaning to play and spiritual support. Her sisters even traveled from Boston and Seattle to accompany her for every chemotherapy treatment.

"I love you all and I am so incredibly grateful," says Pat about those who helped her during her bouts with cancer. "My gratitude knows no boundaries, and I respect and honor the privilege of what it was like to feel so nourished by you and so held in your generosity."

In addition to friends and family members, Pat found help and support from the lesbian community.

"One of the things that absolutely helped me get through was a sense of community, and I owe that sense of community to being a lesbian," says Pat. "I think if I was going to pass anything on to anyone, it's that key part of survival: finding and celebrating and nourishing a community - any community."

In addition to all the support she received, Pat's treatments have been effective



LORE LANDAU PHOTOGRAPHY

because her cancer was found early and treated right away. Not all women are as fortunate, however. In the lesbian community alone, 45 percent do not have regular OB/GYN care, according to

Dr. Suzanne Haynes of the National Cancer Institute. Lack of sensitivity to lesbian issues is the main reason most delay or avoid life-saving medical checks.

It's a situation that won't change overnight, but Pat Fontaine sees much hope on the horizon. "I encourage lesbians to make use of some of the fabulous resources that are here (in Vermont) such as Mountain Pride Media."

Pat also encourages lesbians to be kinder to their bodies. "If the culture is unkind to us, sometimes we can't be

kind to ourselves," she says. "One way to respect our bodies is to seek out and advocate for health care providers with "good, healthy, honest and non-heterosexist attitudes and policies."

To help lesbians get the regular health screenings and care they need, Ladies First is working to raise awareness. Together with Planned Parenthood of Northern New England, Ladies First offers in-office training to help medical professionals understand - and remove - those barriers to health care that exist for lesbians. To date, over 100 health care professionals have participated. Ladies First also

keeps a list of doctors and nurses who have identified themselves as welcoming to lesbians. To find out more, call Kate: 1-800-508-2222 or TDD 1-800-319-3141.

## Getting to Know You...

Meet Ladies First Outreach Specialist **Karen Crawford**

Springfield and White River Junction Areas



For Karen it's all about wellness. "Getting together with other women to talk about women's health issues is what women do naturally. Having the opportunity to share what works for each of us is so important. I think we can all learn from each other. I believe the Women's Wellness

Circles can be a natural support," says Karen.

Karen strives to enjoy the simplicities of life, and spends as much time as she can with her two children on the coast of Maine. "One of my passions is dancing (40's swing) 'til my feet hurt.

I love the exercise and challenge of learning the dance steps. My second passion is laughter!"

Karen's past work experience includes social work, case management, managing a child care subsidy program, and assisting families in a welfare to work program.

"Now I can honestly say, 'I am happy with my job!'" says Karen.



Vermont Department of Health  
P.O. Box 70, Burlington, Vermont 05402  
1-800-508-2222 TDD 1-800-319-3141

## Free Trip!

Ladies First offers free mammograms and Pap tests for Vermont women age 40 to 64 with limited income.

Get a friend to join Ladies First and both of you will go on a FREE bus trip to Montreal on Saturday, October 13.

Make the call that could make a difference, today! Call Kate at 1-800-508-2222 or TDD at 1-800-319-3141.

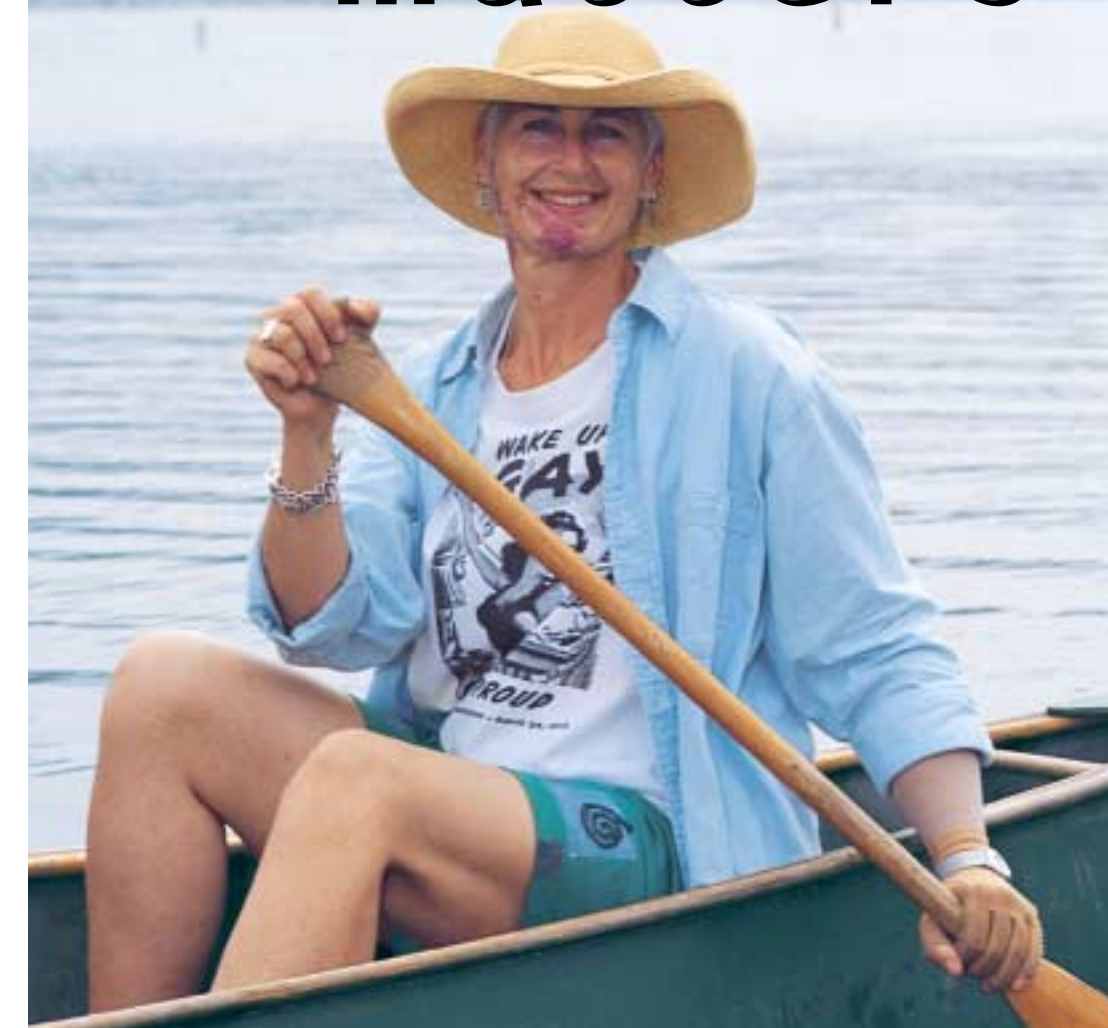
## On the Air

Meet Pat Fontaine as she shares her passion for friends, family, and the great outdoors. You may just find yourself dusting off the old canoe paddles or digging out those jogging shoes from the closet. Pat knows how to live the good life, and she'll make you want to, too!

See Pat Fontaine on Tuesday, September 25, 2001 on WCAX Channel 3, WPTZ Channel 5, WVNY Channel 22 and WNNE Channel 31 during the news.

# women's share with a friend matters

A Free Publication of Ladies First



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## My Gratitude Knows No Boundaries

BREAST CANCER SURVIVOR PAT FONTAINE IS LOVING LIFE

## Beyond Tolerance

In Vermont, we've come a long way toward making quality health care accessible to every woman. Yet we've still got a long way to go. Close to 50 percent of lesbians don't seek regular OB/GYN care, and that means missing out on tests like mammograms that save lives. Our own studies show that women still travel great distances within the state for lesbian-friendly health care. It's a situation that all medical providers must address, but it's also something every Vermonter should consider: What can each one of us do to welcome, accept and understand people who have a different sexual orientation, religion, race or gender? For inspiration, turn to our cover story and meet Pat Fontaine, an extraordinary woman whose wisdom and joy for life serve as lessons for every human being.

In Health,



Kerri Frenya



## The Doctor is In

A conversation with Kelly Lord, MD

*I am 52 years old, and for the last three years my Pap tests have been completely normal. Do I still need to get a Pap test every year?*

—Sara Dell, Burlington, VT

Guidelines for national medical organizations including the American Cancer Society and the American College of Obstetrics and Gynecology are now recommending Pap tests every three years if a woman has had three negative Pap tests in a row and does not have risk factors for cervical cancer. It is important to discuss your Pap test screening with your physician. If you have risk factors for cervical cancer, your doctor will recommend yearly screening. If your Pap test screening is not going to be done annually, it is still important to have a clinical breast exam, mammogram, and pelvic exam every year. Ladies First will cover Pap test screening as recommended by your doctor.

## Blaze a new Trail ... in your Brain and in your Life!

Most of the stereotypes about growing older aren't good ones. One of the worst is the belief that as we grow older, our mind starts to go.

Why is this myth so terrible? Because so many of us believe it. Because it keeps us from living life to its fullest. And most of all, because it's completely wrong!

When we learn new things, we grow new connections in our brains – no matter how old we are. It's these connections that let us think, remember, and create. As long as our minds stay active, they stay healthy and alert. And it's not just book-learning that counts.

Learning new skills and habits is a great way to strengthen your brain!

### BLAZE A NEW TRAIL.

Marilyn has been a couch potato for years. The connection between her brain cells that say "I'm home from work!" and "Legs, take me to the couch" is really strong. It's like a straight, well-paved freeway:

Marilyn's brain cruises down this road on auto-pilot. But as Marilyn tries to be more active, she makes her brain build new roads. At first, it takes hard work to come home and make her brain think, "Legs, take me to my walking shoes."

But every time she does it, the road gets easier to travel.

### VISUALIZE NEW ROADS.

When swimmers prepare for the Olympics, they don't just practice swimming in the pool – they practice in their minds, too. Athletes know that thinking about what they want to do

actually helps them do it. Why? Because just like Marilyn, they're building new roads in their minds. As you think about doing something, your brain is making and using new connections. And when you go to actually do it, your brain already knows the way. You don't have to be an athlete to use this trick. For example, Marilyn could spend a few minutes every day thinking about how she'll go home, put on her walking shoes, and go out for a nice walk.

Making healthy changes in your life is worth it at any age. By learning healthy new habits, you're building a healthy body and mind!



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## Memory Tips and Tools

Despite the stereotype, memory isn't a gift of youth. As Tony Buzan and Raymond Keene say in their book, *The Age Heresy*: If you think that young people have good memories, walk through a playground after school lets out. Notice all of the jackets, mittens, toys, and lunchboxes these fine young minds have left behind!

Memory is a skill. Like any skill, if we don't use it, we start to lose it. But there are tools and tips we can use to keep our memory skills sharp.

### MEMORY TOOLS

Our minds like strange, silly images much better than boring facts and numbers!

• **Make a link.** When you meet someone new, link the name with something about the person, like "Claire with the curly hair."

• **Make a rhyme.** This works well with numbers. Find a rhyme for each number from 1-10. To remember the number, make up a rhyme. For example, to remember "74," you could make the rhyme "heaven's door."

• **Take a photo.** Pretend that you're looking at the word, number, or fact through a camera. See it as you're focusing. Hear the click as you take the photo.

• **Draw a list.** Instead of writing your list, draw it in pictures. Our minds remem-

ber images better than words.

### MEMORY TIPS

Memory may fail us for many reasons. If yours is giving you trouble, ask yourself:

• **Am I getting enough sleep?** It's hard to remember when you're tired.

• **Am I taking medicine?** Many drugs can cause memory problems – even ones that don't make you sleepy.

• **Was I really paying attention?** Maybe your mind is someplace else. Maybe you can't hear yourself think. You need to be able to concentrate on what you're trying to remember.

**Celebrate Mayor's Breast Cancer Awareness Day on October 5, from 11:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. in front of City Hall in Burlington. Festivities include free cooking demonstrations and food sampling, autograph sessions with race car driver Jean-Paul Cyr, and plenty of information that will promote public awareness of breast cancer and early detection.**

• **How's my stress level?** It's hard to think when we're stressed or depressed.

If these don't explain your problem, talk to your doctor. Alzheimer's Disease is a serious health problem for older people, but there are lots of other health problems that affect memory.

## Apple Cobbler

- 8 cups sliced apples (about 3 lbs.)
- 6 ounces pineapple juice
- 1/2 cup uncooked oatmeal
- 1/2 cup raisins
- 1 teaspoon cinnamon
- 1/2 teaspoon nutmeg
- 2 tablespoons honey
- 1 cup Grape-nuts cereal

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Cover bottom of 8-inch non-stick pan with uncooked oatmeal; cover oatmeal with mixture as above. Cover tightly with foil and bake one hour. Remove foil; sprinkle cobbler with Grape-nuts. Bake for an additional 15 minutes.

Makes 8 servings.

Nutritional Analysis per serving:  
299 Calories, 7.4g Fiber, 0mg Cholesterol,  
100mg Sodium

% Calories from:  
Protein 5%, Carbohydrate 91%, Fat 4%

