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SAMMAMISH

An exclusive magazine serving
the residents of northern Sammamish

Neighbors

NOVEMBER 2025



Maria Faires: *Family, Adventure, and the Science of Living Well*

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PHOTO BY MARIA FAIRES

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CONTENT SUBMISSION DEADLINES

Content Due:	Edition:
January 10.....	February
February 10.....	March
March 10.....	April
April 10	May
May 10	June
June 10	July
July 10.....	August
August 10	September
September 10.	October
October 10.	November
November 10	December
December 10.....	January

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*Dear Residents*

"I cannot endure to waste anything so precious as autumnal sunshine by staying in the house." — Nathaniel Hawthorne

I'm enjoying every single crisp, sunny fall day. It's perfect dog-walking weather. I love the crunch of the leaves beneath my feet and the smell of the air. Fall has always been my favorite and I hope to not waste a single day of its goodness.

This month I'm thrilled to feature Maira Faires, RD. Telling her story has inspired me in so many ways - from a health standpoint, when it comes to parenting, and when it comes to approaching living life to the fullest.

I'd love to hear how the kids in our community are making a difference. From cleaning up to mentoring younger kids to helping animals in need, I know there are countless kids helping in our community every day. It would be my honor to recognize them in our magazine. Feel free to send me an email at sschofhauser@bestversionmedia.com to share.

Wishing you a very Happy Thanksgiving!

Warmly,

Stephanie Schofhauser

Stephanie Schofhauser
Content Coordinator

Do you know an individual or family in your neighborhood who would make a great cover story? Want to nominate them to be featured in an upcoming edition? Contact me at sschofhauser@bestversionmedia.com.

IMPORTANT PHONE NUMBERS**EMERGENCY**

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King County Sheriff Department....	206-263-9133
Eastside Fire & Rescue Station 82	425-313-3200
National Poison Control Center.....	800-222-1222

UTILITIES

Republic Garbage Services	206-777-6441
Comcast Cable/Internet.....	877-824-2288
Northeast Sammamish Sewer and Water District	425-868-1144
Puget Sound Energy.....	888-225-5773

CITY

Sammamish City Hall 425-295-0500
Sammamish Parks and Recreation.... 425-295-0585

COUNTY

King County Sammamish Library..... 425-392-3130
King County Animal Control 206-296-PETS
King County Pets Lost and Found 206-296-7387
WSDOT Road Conditions 360-705-7000

SCHOOLS

Lake Washington School District 425-936-1200
Elizabeth Blackwell Elementary 425-936-2520
Margaret Mead Elementary 425-936-2630
Inglewood Middle School 425-936-2360
Eastlake High School 425-936-1500
Eastside Catholic School 425-295-3000



MARIA FAIRES:

*Family, Adventure,
and the Science of Living Well*

By Stephanie Schohauser



Photos by Stephanie West

When you meet Maria Faires, RD, you quickly get the sense that her story is not just about professional titles or business accomplishments—it's about a life deeply rooted in family, adventure, and a passion for living fully. Yes, she's a Registered Dietitian, Master Personal Trainer, and Medical Exercise Specialist with decades of experience. But what shines through most is how her childhood, her family, and her personal journey have shaped not just who she is, but the philosophy she brings into every part of her life.

"I grew up in Spokane and my childhood was a unique blend of city life and country living," Maria recalls. "As a teenager, our family moved to a small farm nearby, which deeply shaped who I am today. I was an animal lover from the start, and the farm gave me the chance to be around all kinds of creatures and have my own horse."

That farm life, combined with a family who loved to travel and camp, created the foundation of her active, hands-on approach to living. "We were a family of adventurers, constantly traveling and camping in our RV," she says. Even as a teen, Maria juggled modeling and volunteering at a veterinary clinic—a balance of beauty, grit, and science that would later define her career.

Growing up, Maria didn't have to look far for inspiration. "My father, a doctor, and my neighbor, a veterinarian, certainly played a role, sparking my initial curiosity about the human body," she explains. That curiosity only grew as she watched how food, health, and lifestyle shaped people's lives.

"As a teenager, I was also a model, which gave me a unique perspective on body image and the pressures to look a certain way. This experience taught me firsthand how critical a healthy and balanced approach to food and exercise is," Maria says. Later, she dated a bodybuilder, and that relationship sparked a fascination with how nutrition can directly change the body.

But it was one college professor who truly lit the fire. "My very first class was anatomy and physiology, and the professor was an absolutely incredible teacher. He had a deep, infectious passion for the subject and made the human body and all its systems come alive for us," she remembers. "What made his story so powerful was that he was battling cancer, and he openly shared with us that he believed his healthy diet had significantly prolonged his life."

That blend of science and personal resilience inspired Maria to pursue two bachelor's degrees in nutrition—and set the stage for a career that would eventually go far beyond textbooks and lecture halls.

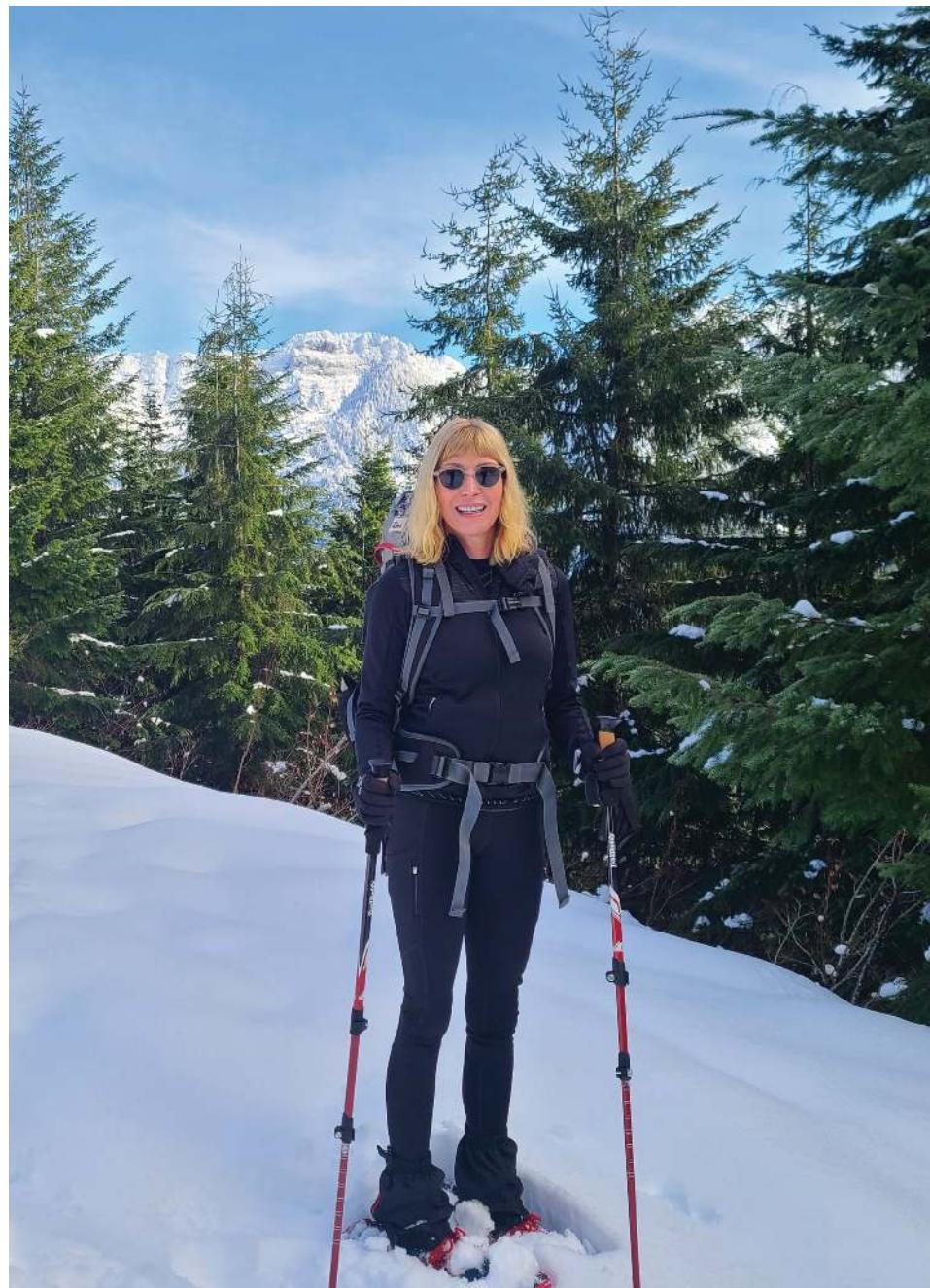
Maria's passion for food didn't start in a lab; it started in the kitchen. "I learned to cook from my mom and grandmother, and by the fourth grade, I was already cooking entire meals for the family," she says. Dinner wasn't just a meal—it was a ritual. "The dinner table was a special place for us; it was a non-negotiable family routine to eat dinner together every single night."

That love of cooking carried over to outdoor adventures. Summers were often spent camping and boating at Lake Roosevelt, where her mom made memorable meals over a campfire. "It taught me that delicious food doesn't have to be complicated or confined to a kitchen," Maria says.

The family's move to a small farm also redefined what activity meant. "We were incredibly active every day, not just for fun, but because it was part of our routine of taking care of the horses, cows, chickens, pigs, cats, and dogs. For fun, we rode horses and went cross-country skiing."

Those lessons—about simplicity, sustainability, and joy in everyday activity—are the same ones she now passes on to clients.

Maria carried those values into raising her own family. "My family has played a huge role in my journey, and they are both my greatest inspiration and my most important 'why,'" she says.



She wasn't just encouraging her kids to get outside—she was right there with them. "I did quite a bit of mountaineering when I was raising my sons. I have summited Mt. Rainier twice, Mt. Adams, Mt. Baker, Mt. St. Helens, and Mt. Angeles," she says. Training for those climbs often included her boys, even at a young age. "We routinely hiked, and hiking up to Camp Muir, the Mt. Rainier base camp, was a regular outing, even when my boys were only six and nine."

She also poured herself into their scouting adventures. "When my boys were in Boy Scouts, I became an assistant leader and led our high-adventure outings, including mountaineering education and summit trips." Those years of family adventures became a living reflection of the philosophy she now teaches: health is not about perfection, but about making movement and good food a joyful part of everyday life.

Her husband, George, is her partner in that lifestyle. "We've been married for five years, and our partnership is built on a shared commitment to an active, healthy life," Maria says. "We're avid boaters and we also love to hike and snowshoe for adventure, walk and run for endurance, and lift weights to build strength."

Maria's professional story began in traditional healthcare settings—

hospitals and nursing homes—where she quickly realized her passion was prevention, not treatment. “While I gained invaluable clinical experience, I quickly realized my true passion was in the prevention and lifestyle aspect of health—helping people before they needed to be in a hospital,” she says.

That realization led her into fitness clubs, where she combined nutrition and exercise and discovered the need for a more integrated approach. Eventually, she started her own practice, Active Nutrition Fitness & Nutrition Consulting.

The early days were a mix of nerves and excitement. “I remember one of my very first clients vividly—let’s call her Sarah. She was so frustrated and burned out from years of trying every diet and workout trend,” Maria says. Instead of rigid plans, Maria helped her find joy again—simple meals she liked and daily walks with her dog. “The ‘aha’ moment happened a few weeks in. Sarah came to our session with a huge smile and said that while she hadn’t lost a dramatic amount of weight yet, for the first time in years, she felt good.”

That client’s transformation reminded Maria why she took the leap—her work wasn’t just about calories or reps, but about helping people feel at home in their own bodies.

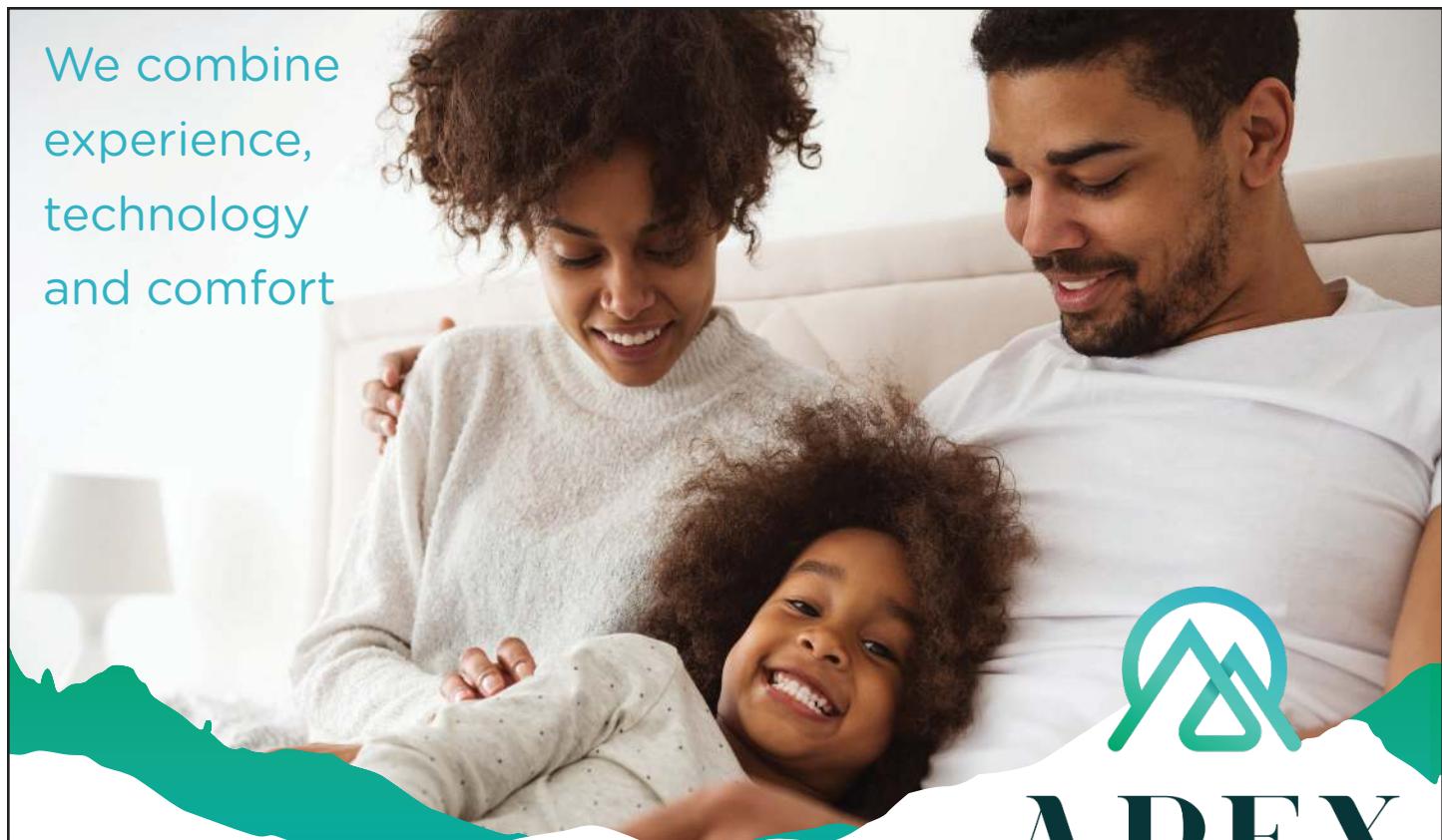
Running a business while raising kids and climbing mountains wasn’t always easy. “The most significant ‘challenge’ was a very practical one: simply finding the time to pursue the additional certifications after my college degrees,” Maria says. Balancing education with raising her family required careful time management, but she doesn’t regret it. “My education wasn’t just in textbooks and classrooms; it was in the messy, wonderful reality of family life.”

Rather than keeping family and career separate, Maria blended them. “My passions—hiking and mountaineering—were always shared with my family. Taking my kids on the trails from a young age and later leading their Boy Scout high-adventure outings wasn’t just a hobby; it was a way of building our family culture around movement and the outdoors.”

Even today, Maria’s personal passions reflect her family-centered, adventurous spirit. One of her greatest loves is boating with her husband. “We’ve spent a lot of time exploring the incredible waters of the San Juan and Gulf Islands, Desolation Sound, and the coast of Northern Canada, often dropping anchor to hike and explore the islands on foot,” she says.

Her love of boating even inspired her to obtain a Captain’s

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License and start a social media account, Healthy Boat Living, where she shares recipes and healthy-living tips from life on the water.

At home—or aboard their boat—food remains central. “My favorite meal to cook and enjoy with my loved ones is a beautiful piece of fish with fresh vegetables, a rice pilaf, and a nice bottle of wine,” Maria says. “It represents the very philosophy I share with my clients: that healthy eating should be a source of pleasure and connection, not a chore.”

Now in her 60s, Maria continues to evolve—most recently adding menopause-focused programs to her practice after going through the transition herself. “I realized there was a crucial need for specialized lifestyle support as a valuable part of menopause management,” she explains. It’s yet another way she brings both science and lived experience together to help others.

If there’s one message she hopes people take from her journey, it’s that health is worth the effort. “Strength training and consistent cardio, when combined with a Mediterranean-style diet pattern, form a powerful strategy for longevity,” Maria says. “People often view a healthy diet and exercise as a chore, a punishment, but science is clear—it’s the greatest investment you can make in yourself.”

Maria’s story is a reminder that health isn’t found in perfection, or in chasing quick fixes. It’s found in the everyday choices we make with our families, in the adventures we share, and in the belief that life should be lived fully—from the dinner table to the mountain peak, and sometimes, from the deck of a boat named Little Bear.

Connect with Maria at Active Nutrition Maria Faires, RD on Instagram and Facebook or visit www.myactivenutrition.com





be
THANKFUL ❤

UTILIZING Thanksgiving Leftovers

By Roberta C. Nelson

Thanksgiving is soon, so you're probably planning your menu already. Turkey: fresh or frozen? Cranberry sauce: jellied or whole berry? Mashed potatoes: homemade or packaged? Pie: pumpkin or apple?

But have you planned for the leftovers? Nearly every November issue of a housekeeping magazine includes a recipe for *turkey tetrazzini*, a pasta casserole with leftover turkey, cheddar cheese, and a gloppy sauce made from canned soup, sour cream or cream cheese. I made it once, and I never made it again.

Most Thanksgiving leftovers are scraped into separate covered dishes and stored in the refrigerator. The turkey is placed on a platter and covered with aluminum foil. For the first day or so, people reach in to tear off a wing or cut a slice for a sandwich. This loosens the foil and allows the turkey to dry out.

My plan for the leftovers is to deal with them as I clear the table. I layer them in a lasagna pan to reheat the following day, and also to make soup. No crowding little covered dishes and a big leftover turkey carcass in the fridge (where there isn't much room anyway). Here's how:

DAY-AFTER THANKSGIVING BANQUET

- One leftover roasted turkey, meat removed and sliced
- Leftover mashed potatoes
- Leftover dressing
- Leftover gravy

Vegetables for soup:

- 2 stalks celery with leaves (roughly chopped)
- 1 cooking onion (roughly chopped)
- 2 unpeeled carrots (roughly chopped)
- Several smashed garlic cloves (roughly chopped)
- Cooked rice or egg noodles

Layer turkey slices in the lasagna pan, placing dark meat at one end and white meat at the other. Crumble leftover dressing evenly over the meat. Pour gravy over everything. Top with leftover mashed potatoes, cover with foil and pop in the fridge. The next day, bake at 325°F for 30-45 minutes (or until heated through).

FOR THE SOUP: remove all small pieces of meat from the turkey and set aside. Place the turkey carcass and skin plus the vegetables in a large soup pot and cover with water plus about four inches. Add salt and pepper. Bring to a boil, then simmer for at least two hours until you have a rich broth. Taste and correct the seasoning if necessary.

When cool, skim the fat. Drain the soup with a strainer. Discard the bones and vegetables. Add the reserved meat to the liquid. Add the cooked rice or egg noodles. You can freeze this (preferably without the rice or noodles) for a cold winter's night. Keep a can of refrigerated biscuits or brown 'n serve rolls to serve with the soup.

Shopping tips: If you think you'll need them, make a little extra dressing, mashed potatoes and gravy for the casserole. Buy an extra can of cranberry sauce.



Calendar of Events

NOVEMBER 2025

*At the time this magazine went to print,
all event times and locations were accurate,
but please check event websites for the most
current information.*

Some events may have been postponed or canceled.

Every single event in your life, especially the difficult lessons, have made you smarter, stronger, and wiser than you were yesterday.

Gratitude allows you to see the redemptive benefits in even the hardest trials.



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- Body image, self-esteem and perfectionism
- Parenting teens and emerging adults

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MOST TUESDAYS

STORYTIME

11:00 - 11:30

KidsQuest Children's Museum

Circle up with the KidsQuest staff as we learn through songs, books, rhymes and giggles! We'll read, sing, and wiggle as we indulge in new adventures each week. This informal time is great for families and children of all ages.

www.kidsquestmuseum.org/calendar

MONDAY NOVEMBER 17

SAMMAMISH CHAMBER OF

COMMERCE MEMBERSHIP 101

MEETUP

4:00 pm

Virtual Meeting

Come discover the benefits of Chamber membership, learn how to utilize them to grow your business, and engage in a Q&A session. Led by Executive Director Julie Honn. This is a virtual meeting hosted on MS Teams. For more information contact office@sammamishchamber.org

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 29

30TH ANNUAL MAGIC IN THE

MARKET

Pike Place Market, Seattle

11:00 am – 6:00 pm

Holiday celebration at Pike Place Market with festive lights, music, and seasonal shopping for all ages.

www.pikeplacemarket.org/events-calendar/30th-annual-magic-in-the-market/

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 20

(OPENING)

SEATTLE CHRISTMAS MARKET

(VARIOUS DATES THROUGH DEC)

Seattle Center (South Fountain Lawn & Fisher Pavilion)

4:00 pm – 9:00 pm (Nov 20 & 21); 10:00

am – 9:00 pm on many other days

A holiday market with artisan stalls, live entertainment, carousel, festive lights, and seasonal treats. <https://seattlechristmasmarket.com/>

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 30

SNOWFLAKE LANE NIGHTLY

PARADE BEGINS

Bellevue, WA (between Bellevue Square & Lincoln Square)

7:00 pm nightly

A festive street parade of lights, music, dancers, holiday characters, and "snow" effects for families.

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 30 –

DECEMBER 31

GARDEN D'LIGHTS

Bellevue Botanical Garden

4:30 pm – 9:30 pm nightly

Half-million sparkling lights, illuminated garden displays, perfect for strolling with kids. <https://www.visitbellevuewa.com/blog/post/top-7-family-friendly-holiday-activities-in-bellevue/>

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ANNIE WRIGHT SCHOOLS

Seeds of Hope: Growing Community Through the Master Gardener Program

By Marie Kurka-Brown



Fall is a time of reflection. As we clear the remnants of summer's bounty and tuck compost into the soil, we also prepare ourselves—for rest, renewal, and the next season of growth. In the garden, as in life, this rhythm is sacred. It reminds us that every ending is also a beginning.

I first stepped into this rhythm more formally in 2020, during the height of the pandemic, as part of the WSU Master Gardener Program—the “Pandemic Class.” For many, it was a season of uncertainty and isolation. But for me, it was also a time of deep connection. Volunteering at Soos Creek Botanical Garden in the Propagation Department helped me complete my certification requirements despite the challenges. Becoming a Certified Master Gardener is something I treasure deeply. It's not just a title—it's a commitment to lifelong learning, stewardship, and service.

After a 30-year career in marketing and communications, I found myself drawn to a different kind of outreach—one rooted in soil, science, and soul. Encouraged by peers, I ran for a board position with the King County Master Gardener Foundation and was honored to be elected. This role allows me to blend my professional strengths—relationship-building, storytelling, and problem-solving—with my passion for gardening and community impact.

Our Master Gardener program, like many volunteer organizations, is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit. We serve King County as educators, environmental stewards, and advocates for healing gardens. We work shoulder-to-shoulder with local businesses, clinics, and community groups to bring horticultural knowledge and hope to the people we serve.

One of my favorite roles is helping solve garden problems at Renton's McLendon Hardware, where I am one of 22 volunteers every Tuesday and Saturday from April through September. Customers bring their questions, their frustrations, and their dreams—and together, we dig into solutions. These interactions have taught me as much as any textbook ever could.

Earlier this year, I was encouraged to run for a board position—and I won. With that comes great responsibility and even greater opportunity. As I look ahead to 2026, I'm focused on cultivating impact across four key areas:

CLINIC SUPPORT

We're building funding to strengthen our Plant Clinics—ensuring each location has the tools, signage, and infrastructure to serve with confidence. These clinics are often the first point of contact for curious gardeners and concerned community members. By investing in their visibility and functionality, we're investing in education, access, and trust.

GARDEN ENHANCEMENTS

Our gardens are living classrooms and healing spaces. To help them thrive, we're securing resources like soil amendments, seeds, garden tools, and irrigation supplies. These essentials allow our volunteers to grow more food,

teach more techniques, and create more beauty. Every trowel and drip line is a step toward deeper impact.

FOOD BANK PARTNERSHIPS

Thanks to generous donors and seed companies, we've begun supplying fresh, organic produce to local food banks. It's a powerful reminder that gardens don't just feed—they empower.



CULTIVATING COMMUNITY TOGETHER

We're committed to building upon existing relationships while developing new ones. Our donors are the lifeblood of our mission, and their contributions provide soil, seeds, and inspiration for our 2026 gardens—gardens that will grow into healthy meals, vibrant learning spaces, and moments of healing across King County. These gifts nourish our bodies, sustain our gardens, and yes, they nourish our spirits too.

The Extension Master Gardener Program doesn't just teach gardening—it can help you define your future and discover which path you want to grow in. For me, the opportunity to keep learning while growing organic produce for my community fuels my soul. It's a way to give back in ways I never imagined—through education, service, and connection. If you're seeking a new challenge, a deeper purpose, or simply a place to grow, come walk this journey with us.

There's something magical about watching a garden bloom. The colors, the textures, the scents—they awaken something in us. They remind us of beauty, resilience, and possibility. In a world that often feels chaotic, gardens offer a quiet kind of healing. They invite us to slow down, to notice, to connect.

If you've ever felt that pull—toward the soil, toward service, toward something greater—I invite you to join us. Whether you're a seasoned gardener or just starting out, there's a place for you in our community. Whether you're ready to volunteer, curious about our impact, or looking for ways to help us grow, we invite you to learn more at MGFKC.org. Together, we're cultivating a stronger, greener King County.

Marie Kurka-Brown is a WSU Extension Master Gardener and Board Member of the Master Gardener Foundation of King County. To learn more about our mission, programs, or ways to get involved, visit www.MGFKC.org.

Fall Twists on Oatmeal Cookies

By Beth Grusenski

Pumpkin Oatmeal Cookies

- 1 cup flour
- 1½ tsp. pumpkin pie spice
- 1/2 tsp. baking soda
- 1/4 tsp. salt
- 1/2 cup softened butter (sub: apple sauce or coconut oil)
- 1/2 cup brown sugar
- 1/4 cup honey or maple syrup
- 1 egg
- 1 t pure vanilla
- 1/3 cup pumpkin puree
- 1½ cups rolled oats



Mix all dry ingredients and set aside. Cream together all wet ingredients until well blended. With the mixer on low speed, gradually combine the dry ingredients with the wet ingredients. Refrigerate dough for 20-60 minutes to chill. After chilling, remove the dough, and roll it into 1-tablespoon balls. Bake at 350° for 9 minutes (or until the edges begin to brown). Let them cool for 5 minutes, then remove them from the baking sheet.

Apple Oatmeal Cookies

- 2 cups of rolled oats
- 1 cup flour

- 1/2 tsp baking soda
- 1/2 tsp salt
- 2 tsp cinnamon
- 1/4 cup of softened coconut oil
- 1/2 cup of natural apple sauce (unsweetened)
- 1/2 cup brown sugar
- 1/2 cup sugar (or other sweetener)
- 1 egg
- 1 tsp vanilla
- 1/2 large apple, diced



ICING

- 1½ c powdered sugar
- 2 Tbsp maple sugar or honey
- 2 Tbsp milk

Mix all dry ingredients and set aside. Cream together all wet ingredients (except apples) until well blended. With the mixer on low speed, gradually combine the dry ingredients with the wet ingredients. Refrigerate dough for 20 minutes (and up to 2 hours) to chill. After chilling, remove the dough and roll dough it into heaping 1-tablespoon balls. Bake at 350° for 12-14 minutes (or until the edges set and begin to brown). Transfer them off the baking sheet after cooling for 10 minutes.

While the cookies cool, whisk together icing ingredients. Evenly drizzle icing over the top of cookies.

The Power of

gratitude

By Stephanie Schofhauser

As the Thanksgiving holiday approaches, many of us naturally shift our focus to gratitude. We sit around tables full of food, friends, and family, pausing to give thanks for what we have. It's a wonderful tradition, but what if we made gratitude more than just an annual practice? What if we made it part of our daily lives, cultivating it like a habit, as crucial to our well-being as exercise or a good night's sleep?

Science suggests that we should. Research shows that practicing gratitude can improve mental health, increase feelings of well-being, and even make us more resilient to life's challenges. In fact, a study conducted by Dr. Robert A. Emmons, one of the world's leading experts on gratitude, found that people who wrote down things they were thankful for each day reported fewer physical complaints, felt more optimistic, and experienced lower levels of stress and depression.

The concept is simple: the more we focus on what we're thankful for, the less room there is for negativity. As Robert Braathe once said, "Gratitude and attitude are not challenges; they are choices." By choosing gratitude, we are, in effect, choosing a more positive mindset. And who doesn't want that?

GRATITUDE AND MENTAL HEALTH

Gratitude goes beyond polite thank-yous or counting our blessings on a holiday. It's an active recognition of the good things in life, big or small, and it shifts our perspective. One of the best parts about gratitude is that it can make us feel more joyful. As David Steindl-Rast wisely put it, "It is not joy that makes us grateful; it is gratitude that makes us joyful."

Numerous studies back this up. When you're grateful, your brain releases feel-good chemicals like dopamine and serotonin. This creates a positive feedback loop where the more you practice gratitude, the better you feel, and the better you feel, the easier it becomes to be grateful.

EXTENDING THANKSGIVING GRATITUDE

ALL YEAR LONG

It's easy to get caught up in the busy rush of life and reserve gratitude for special occasions like Thanksgiving. However, the true magic happens when we extend this practice beyond the holiday season. So, how do we

incorporate gratitude into everyday life?

One simple yet powerful way is through gratitude journaling. It doesn't have to be complicated. Grab a notebook or use a notes app on your phone and start small. Each day, jot down three things you're grateful for. These don't have to be profound—sometimes the best gratitude comes from the smallest moments. Maybe it's your morning cup of coffee, a text from a friend, or the fact that it didn't rain during your commute.

PRACTICAL STEPS FOR GRATITUDE JOURNALING

1. Find a consistent time: Whether it's in the morning to set the tone for your day, or in the evening to reflect, consistency is key.
2. Start with three things: Each day, write down three things you're thankful for. Over time, you can increase the number if you'd like, but three is a great starting point.
3. Be specific: Instead of writing, "I'm thankful for my job," try "I'm thankful for the great conversation I had with my coworker today." The more detailed, the more impactful.
4. Reflect on challenges: Sometimes, what feels like a challenge can turn into something to be grateful for. Was there a tough situation that taught you a lesson or a setback that made you stronger?
5. Revisit your entries: On tough days, it can be helpful to go back and read what you've written. It's a great reminder of the good things in your life, even when things feel hard.

By making gratitude a daily habit, we train our minds to focus on the positive, building resilience and improving our overall well-being. While Thanksgiving is a beautiful time to reflect on what we're thankful for, imagine the benefits of carrying that spirit with us all year long. Gratitude doesn't just enrich a holiday—it can enrich your life.

Sources: Dr. Robert A. Emmons' study on gratitude: <https://psycnet.apa.org/doi/10.1037/0022-3514.84.2.377>

Gratitude and well-being neuroscience:

<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0272735810000620>

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