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Physical therapist to Broadway stars lands permanent role in Lancaster

BY CLAUDIA W. ESBENSHADE
 Intelligencer Journal Staff

Dawn Cox was once a physical therapist under the lights of Broadway and worked on many of the famed casts from 1992 to 2002. Her clientele included members from "A Chorus Line," "The Lion King," "Chicago" and "42nd Street," just to name a few.

Now the married mother of two owns physical therapy rehabilitation center Prana, 617 N. Prince St. Cox—a bubbly, petite redhead—recently reflected on the journey that took her from Times Square, to Broadway to New Jersey to Lancaster.

She not only worked with the dancers of Broadway, but for years worked for a public relations firm that served some of the celebrities in New York City.

Cox, 41, spent her first years out of college as a public relations assistant and was determined to work her way up the ladder. Traveling to New York City at 21 from St. Louis, Ill., Cox followed a dream with determination.

"My college roommate was there and would write letters to me—this was before e-mail—raving about the city," Cox said. She relocated with not much more than a suitcase in hand and began to work for the same firm as her roommate with clients such as Paul Simon, Donald Trump and Gloria Estefan.

Working the typical New York City long days, Cox said she always included fitness in her schedule and would leave at night to go to the gym, only to return to the office to work into the night. In 1993, she enrolled at Long Island University for physical therapy.

Juggling school, married life—she married Jim Cox in a "destination wedding before there was such a thing"—volunteering, work and extra classes, Cox called herself the typical New Yorker, but "loved it."

"I was running here and there, but was doing what I loved," she said. "I would run between jobs all day and night."

After graduating with distinction from Long Island University, she worked backstage Broadway, making sure dancers and actors were prepared to perform.

"It was hard, because I had to be the one to call the shots if someone could perform or not," Cox said. "As much as I loved it, though, I knew there was something more that I needed," she said.

The road to Lancaster was one that Cox describes as "meant to be."

Having visited friends in the area on vacations, Cox and her family began to focus on relocating to the area. She viewed it as a positive move for everyone involved, including her two children.

"I prayed on it," Cox said, "and while looking at want ads online, the ad for my first job here just spoke to me and I knew I had to go for it."

Cox applied for the position at Renew physical therapy and relocated to Lancaster three years ago. After working with Renew for three years, Cox yearned to open her own place.

At Prana, Cox is applying the lessons learned in the public relations field and from her mentors in the physical therapy field.

"Although it may not seem obvious, I can apply those people-pleasing skills from public relations to my clients," Cox said. "I want to dig and find out what the problem is, not just take the pain away. And I had to dig like that in my other field, just in other ways."

Cox is one of two Pennsylvania therapists to be certified by the Institute of Physical Art in Steamboat Springs, Colo. The institute certifies therapists in Functional Manual Therapy, which educates therapists to treat and diagnose the core of the problem, not just the pain, according to the institute's Web site, www.institu

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Deb Grove/Intelligencer Journal photos

Dawn Cox of Prana Physical Therapy, 617 N. Prince St., works on the ankle of client Jen Spackman. Cox is one of two certified functional manual therapists in the state. CFMT concentrates on the body parts functioning together, rather than focusing on one area, to find the cause of pain.



Dawn Cox works on Mannheim Central football player Dakota Royer's knee.

Divorce could be amicable once both adults act friendly

Dear Carolyn: A few years ago I initiated a separation/divorce. Just a couple of months after I moved out, my husband started calling me and I spent the next year trying to recover from what I saw as his betrayal of our hopefully "friendly" divorce.



Tell me about it
 Carolyn Hax

Now our divorce is final and I do not want his now-fiancee attending our children's events. I want him to attend with me and show our kids we can still be friends, as the divorce has been very difficult for them. It makes me uncomfortable to have this woman there. The kids asked their father not to bring her because it upsets me, but he won't comply.

I refuse to attend if she is there and I am tired of missing out on my own kids' (three teenagers) activities!

Shouldn't she find something else to do? Just because they live together doesn't mean she needs to be involved with family things. How can I get them to see this? —Three's a Crowd

Why is the burden on you to "show our kids we can still be friends"? Why can't you model maturity, by accepting his new relationship?

You know—the relationship he started after you left him?

Even when you're the one who chose to leave, it can be shocking to feel erased and replaced. I get that. I realize, too, that you could have had an excellent reason to leave, such as neglect or other mistreatment. Initiating divorce doesn't inoculate you against raw feelings.

Nevertheless, the day you left was the last day you had any say in his love life. And while reasonable people can debate the timing and aggressiveness of introducing new mates to exes and children, she is, essentially, under contract to become your kids' stepmother. She is

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Business meeting morphs into personal chat fest

DEAR ABBY: How do you convince co-workers to stay on topic and on track in business meetings? Each week I am required to attend a mandatory meeting, and each week the people in that meeting drag in personal issues or start talking about the news.



Dear Abby
 Jeanne Phillips

I have tried suggesting that we stay on track and keep the meetings brief, but it's not working, especially since management is one of the worst offenders. Please respond! —ON TRACK IN LAWTON, OKLA.

DEAR ON TRACK: Some companies have eliminated meetings for exactly the reason you have described and found that productivity increased. Those who schedule regular meetings keep them on track by listing the subjects to be discussed on an agenda and sticking to it. However, someone must control the meeting and ensure that the agenda is adhered to.

Because your boss is causing the problem, there is nothing you or I can do about it. If it was another employee, "someone" could suggest that the topic of conversation wasn't on the agenda and a better time for discussing it would be during a break or at lunch.

DEAR ABBY: A dear cousin let me know that she'll be coming to visit for two weeks. My problem is, she's allergic to everything and has asked me to purchase special foods for her and to board my cats for the duration of her stay.

The food and boarding fees are

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Physical therapist Dawn Cox explains an exercise to client Dakota Royer. Cox says she uses her skills in public relations and physical therapy to communicate with her clients and help them open up about the pain they are experiencing.



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Therapy: Journey

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teophysical.com.
 "For me, physical therapy is not about some amazing recovery," Cox said. "It's helping people do what they love to do, getting to the root of the problem so that they can live the way they always have."

John Herrera, a New York City performer who also does guest appearances at the Fulton Opera House, worked with Cox in New York City and now Lancaster—when he is in town.

"Her approach is so well-rounded," Herrera said. "You just know that she has worked with people all of her life and cares."

Cox is the physical therapist for the Fulton Opera House and treats its actors. Her love for the arts draws her to treat those within the art community, although those are not her only patients.

Kathy Hazam, a patient of Cox and a former ballroom dance instructor, was in con-

stant pain in her ankle after an injury, which sidelined her from the profession she loved. Having sought physical therapy in the past, Hazam said that it was frustrating in that many would relieve the pain, but it would return in a matter of weeks. As a patient of Cox, she has found that working with her surgeon and Cox, they were able to relieve the pain and strengthen her ankle.

"Dawn was able to work with me over many sessions to get to the bottom of the problem," Hazam said. "Now I am working my way up to teaching again, but also know that I will never be able to do it on the same level as I once did."

"But I really never thought I would teach again at all," she added.

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Hax: Divorce maturity

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family.
 You make the point that your kids have asked their father not to bring his fiancée. I imagine you were trying to demonstrate his insensitivity or stubbornness (and I'll get to him in a moment).

However, your point has the unintended consequence of revealing that your kids aren't themselves objecting to the fiancée; they're upset because you're upset. The divorce has been—again, your words—"very difficult for them," and yet you are putting a great deal of pressure on them by boycotting their events and forcing them to stick up for you. You're inducing them to take sides, perhaps the most stressful thing to ask of kids of divorce.

You're probably thinking

your ex is the one forcing the issue. But you and he have your own households now. If he were to agree to leave his fiancée home, then he would be granting you control of his household. Something I would advise him against.

If you want to show your kids something valuable, show them a mother who makes a mature decision to take responsibility for her own life and choices. If you want an amicable divorce, be amicable. If you want to see your kids' events, go to the events. If you want your kids to heal, make an effort to heal yourself. It's time to stop doling out blame.

Carolyn Hax's syndicated column appears Tuesdays. E-mail Carolyn at tellme@washpost.com.

Abby: Business meetings

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very expensive, and I don't earn that much. Also, my cats are my children. They won't be happy to be away from me, nor will I be happy to have them away. My cousin asked me to do these things after she informed me that she had already purchased her airline tickets. What should I do? —BETWEEN A ROCK AND A HARD PLACE

DEAR BETWEEN: If your presumptuous "dear" cousin is "allergic to everything," then surely she must be aware that her allergies will be triggered if she is exposed not only to your cats, but also the dander that they have shed on the furniture, carpets and possibly the window treatments in your home. In other words, boarding your "children" may not be enough to prevent an allergic reaction.

For her sake and yours, before she arrives give her a list of reasonably priced, pet-free hotels and motels close by. Her health could depend on it.

P.S. Room service should be able to cater to her dietary needs.

DEAR ABBY: I am a 35-year-old recovering addict currently 23 months clean and sober. I have worked hard to get to where I am today.

My problem concerns my sister. She constantly brings my addiction up to other people around me. I almost feel like she's trying to make

a spectacle of me. I know I'm an addict, and I am dealing with it. I work my steps, my program and my recovery every day. I have learned much about this terrible disease, and I am tired of feeling like a sideshow freak when my sister brings it up. Any suggestions on how to handle this? —RECOVERING BIG SIS

DEAR BIG SIS: First, ask your sister why she feels compelled to bring up such a private matter with others. Then explain that when she talks about it, it makes you uncomfortable, and ask her to please stop. If she doesn't comply, limit your time with her.

Write Dear Abby at www.DearAbby.com.

BY RICHARD SOLASH
 Columbia News Service

NEW YORK—First there was the pomegranate, but that is so yesterday. Then came the goji berry, now utterly passé. They were merely the precursors, it seems, to the latest and perhaps most far-reaching fruit fad to hit the American market. As one blogger proclaims, "It's a bird! It's a plane! No, it's acai!"

Trend

A diminutive purplish berry, acai (pronounced "ah-sah-EE") is native to Brazil and tastes like an earlier version of a blackberry (or, as some enthusiasts claim, like a chocolate-covered blueberry). It is most commonly consumed as juice or in a smoothie, but that's only the beginning. Acai-based products are now found at corner stores as well as high-end grocers, on the shelves of both GNC and Sephora, and in concentrated, blended, encapsulated and powdered form. But why limit yourself to eating the berry when you can buy acai shampoo, too? And for true devotees, there are even acai-see necklaces. Today's acai market is worth \$15 million, up from under \$500,000 in 2004, according to the Better Business Bureau.

The hype stems from aggressive marketing and the berry's high claim to fame: It has a high concentration of antioxidants, substances found in food that help prevent damage to a body's cells. That fact has generated not only a host of new products, but also nearly as many claims as to the berry's supposed health benefits. It has been hailed as both a weight-loss wonder and anti-aging breakthrough, cancer cure, colon unclogger, skin firmer, and even libido lifter. In January, the Better Business Bureau stepped in and issued a warning to consumers about online scams involving acai. It is the latest chapter in a drama set off by one unassuming little berry.

Long hidden in the South American rainforest, acai was brought to the United States in 2000 by brothers Ryan and Jeremy Black. They first encountered the berry in the form of an "acai bowl"—a mix of fruit pulp and granola that is a favored pick-me-up for Brazilian surfers. Soon, the brothers formed Sambazon, now the country's largest retailer of acai. Their 10.5-ounce bottles of juice sell for under \$5, even as competitors fetch as much as \$20 for the

same amount.

The berry got a major boost in early 2008 when cosmetics magnate Dr. Nicholas Perricone named acai as his No. 1 superfood on Oprah Winfrey's Web site. Since then, a veritable rainforest of sites has cropped up, some of which "make wallets thin and consumers angry," according to the Better Business Bureau.

Its recent warning came in the wake of thousands of complaints from consumers across the country who had been hooked by weight-loss plans featuring acai. Many of the plans offered supposedly no-risk trials, but proved difficult or impossible to cancel, with some consumers going as far as suspending their credit cards to avoid being billed.

The scams have left legitimate acai companies with the task of defending their berry. Kaia Lai, communications manager for Sambazon, said that her company does not attribute any fat-burning ability to acai, and that the true value of the fruit should not be diminished by online hucksters.

"We stand behind its nutrients," Lai added. "It is high in anthocyanins," a class of antioxidants, "and it also has fiber, protein and omega fatty acids. What we do suggest is that if you want a nutrient-rich food as part of your diet, acai is a good choice."

Sambazon's Web site features a bar graph that shows the acai berry outpacing the strawberry, the blueberry and even its superfruit forebear, the pomegranate, in antioxidant content. But that, too, is a claim that should be



Lancaster Newspapers

Newly harvested acai berries await mass consumption.

taken in the proper context, according to Jonny Bowden, a nutrition expert and author of "The 150 Healthiest Foods on Earth."

"Yes, it's very high in antioxidants, but that doesn't necessarily make it more important than other fruits," he said.

One recent study of acai's properties offered an eye-catching result, but also confirmed Bowden's assessment. In 2006, the Journal of Agricultural and Food Chemistry reported that acai extracts set off a self-destruct response in up to 86 percent of leukemia cells in a test tube. Researchers noted, however, that similar results have been recorded for grapes, guavas and mangoes, and that test-tube findings do not necessarily apply to the human body.

According to Bowden, methods used to measure a food's antioxidant capacity can also produce misleading results. "Did they test 50 grams of the substance, 10 grams of the substance, or 5 grams of the substance?" he asked. "Maybe blueberries were measured with a 10-gram portion and they measured their stuff with 100 grams. It's like comparing apples and oranges." Or acai berries and oranges.

Lai, Sambazon's representative, agreed that antioxidant measurements are sometimes skewed but expressed confidence in the work of Brunswick Laboratories, which specializes in antioxidant science and is the source of Sambazon's data.

Even if acai is at least a certain type of antioxidant, that is a fact that Bowden said can get overlooked as well. "I don't know if the incremental difference of more anthocyanins in one berry, and more vitamin A in another and more folic acid in a third—I don't really know if it is ultimately going to make that much of a difference," he explained.

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