

The 2013 BL Essentials

Now into our fifth annual installment, we've come to appreciate that this spread's a lot more nuanced than simply uncovering an out-of-the-way brunch hole—though it's not not about delivering just props to the old-school buttermilk pancakes served there—or an unconventional (and dirt-cheap) approach to home design. The “Essentials” has become, and maybe always was, a study of some of the most forward-thinking people of our area. With minimal direction, some opt to become a chamber of commerce of one. Others turn inward and reveal a few details of their self-nurturing personal practices. And then, of course, there are many degrees in between. The point is, no approach is wrong. Whether the counsel stirs the majority or just one of you, mission completed. Edited by Scott Edwards

Michele Armstrong | Point Pleasant
FOUNDER AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, LULU'S RESCUE

Rescuing abandoned, abused dogs, Armstrong says, is her calling. She's worked as an art director in New York, written a couple of books, designed jewelry and she teaches yoga. She's found purpose in all of it, but nothing of the level that's come with helping a dog. In them, Armstrong's learned to love unconditionally and to live in the moment, acts that are every bit as elusive as they are obviously-necessary. She launched Lulu's, a mostly-volunteer nonprofit, in 2010 shortly after moving to New Hope. But Armstrong's hardly new to the rescue scene. She started saving dogs almost 15 years ago while living in New York. They just found her, she says.

Book: It's usually the book I'm reading at the moment. Currently, there are two: *A Spiritual Renegade's Guide to the Good Life*, by the biting-funny and infinitely-wise Lama Marut. And I'm rereading *The Bell Jar*. Sylvia Plath had a stunning voice that asked the big questions.

Preferred way to escape daily stressors: Throwing on my hiking boots and hitting the trails with my dogs. Watching them live in the moment with big smiles and pure appreciation for something as simple as a walk brings everything into perspective.

Charity that's close to your heart: Having named Lulu's after my paternal grandmother, I would say Lulu's Rescue (www.lulusrescue.org).

Where you go to get lost: A special piece of Lake Nockamixon (www.dcnr.state.pa.us), early morning. There is a pine forest so dense you think you're in Bavaria. And when you stumble upon the clearing, with the view of the lake, with the sun not so high, it looks like millions of sparklers on the top of the water.

Where you exercise: Maximum Impact Karate (www.maximpactkarate.com), for kickboxing with Ken Andress. He is streetwise, very skilled, and anyone who can make me laugh after doing 45 minutes of straight cardio followed by 15 minutes of crazy abs is amazing.

On your iPod: Jim James, Ryan Bingham, The Black Keys, Black Rebel Motorcycle Club, Bobby Long, Emmylou Harris, Lucinda Williams, John Prine, Shaggy, Bob Marley, The Who, Led Zeppelin, Crosby, Stills & Nash.

Salon/spa: Michelle Campbell (www.silbermanmd.com) gives an incredible facial. A calming touch and an infectious laugh.

Luxurious indulgence: Taking yoga classes with Amy Cronise-Mead at The Solebury Club (www.thepathobliss.com). To not only experience a kickass Vinyasa for 90 minutes but to be skillfully taught how to bring your yoga off the mat and into the world is awesome-sauce.

Greatest unfulfilled ambition: To be a leader in ending the homeless companion animal crisis both nationally and globally. And, on a lighter note, to tap into my singer-songwriter desire.

Day-trip destination: Any place that involves a body of water, nature, my fur kids in tow and someone I can talk with about any- and everything, enjoy silence and, most importantly, share some belly laughs.

Local sight that never grows old: The Frenchtown, Stockton or Lambertville bridges. All make me realize how incredibly fortunate I am to live where I do.



PHOTO BY JOSH DEFOUNNEY