



Melissa Caporale shares a laugh with colleagues in downtown Cumberland. Recent medical research has indicated that laughter does a body good.

Maybe you've noticed. I have recently been contributing some features to our sister publication The Cumberland Times-News.

As I write this opening to you, I just finished a piece that appeared in May about how laughter is indeed still the best medicine.

For the story, I spoke with Janice Lindner, assistant director of community health and wellness with the Western Maryland Health Systems and a registered nurse for more than 30 years.

"The benefits of laughter are physical, mental and social," she said. "It relieves stress and helps with resilience. Laughter helps strengthens relationships. It's considered a good component of team work."

Lindner told me a recent study by the University of Maryland concluded that those who laugh on a regular basis were less prone to heart disease.

"That study found that people who laugh more tend to have less cardiac disease. There is so much research that's been done and is being done and even recently that I could go on and on about it," said Lindner. "Laughter is a vital component to our lives."

No laughing matter...or is it?

FINDING THE 2010 FACE OF SUMMER

In fact, in some cases, a complete guffaw could be as beneficial as a work out routine.

"We are talking about a full on belly laugh, a hahaha or a hohoho, the kind of laugh that can bring tears to your eyes," said Lindner. "It increases oxygen levels and gets blood flowing. Laughter releases endorphins which makes the body feel good. Laughter can temporarily relieve pain and helps ward off disease and infection."

As I sat for this month wondering what to write about to open this issue, I thought of the smiles of the many children who light up the pages in our "Face of Summer" feature. Every year, we are inundated with entries and this year, we had more than we have ever had in the last five years. I was accepting emails up until the very last second of the deadline. Every day I had to clear out my online mailbox or it became too full or congested to navigate.

I thought of all those faces – the ones selected for publication and even a few that were not – as I planned what to write in this column and then I recalled Lindner telling me that children laugh 300 times a day but adults only chuckle 12 to 15 times. What a shame that is.

Maybe this issue of Allegany Magazine can change that. For one day at least.

The Face of Summer feature is always one of my favorites. It takes hours of organizing and sifting and collecting but in the end, I think we have found 25 faces that will make your own face shine a bit. Our cover model herself makes me grin ear to ear. It's the darn near perfect picture of what summer represents.

And now, as I put the concluding touches on this letter from the editor, veteran newspaper man and columnist Jim Goldsworthy has stopped by my office.

"In the column writing business, there is no such thing as writer's block. You put your hands on the keys and you write something until you bleed," he said. Goldie is always good for sage advice like that. And a laugh. The next day, showing me a photograph of himself and his team mates in high school dressed as primadonnas in a ballet recital, he exhibited that he still remembered some of his moves and arabesqued right in front of me. It's an image that still haunts me. And still makes me laugh.

In writing this column this month – thinking of Lindner's words, Goldsworthy's dance and the 25 faces you are about to meet in this issue, I couldn't help but laugh...and yes, it did make me feel good and for a moment, stress and worry disappeared. I actually put myself in a good mood. Just thinking about laughing made me laugh and brought some needed positivity into an otherwise rainy and grey late spring morning.

I hope that over the last five years, Allegany Magazine has cheered up a few of your rainy days and Mondays.

And I hope this issue is no exception.



Shane Riggs
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MANAGING EDITOR