



TRACIE VAN AUKEN / FOR THE BURLINGTON COUNTY TIMES

Patt Osborne starts off on a Boomer Chick Adventures kayak outing on the Mullica River. She designed the outdoors program with baby boomers in mind.

Booming business

Adventure group brings people and nature together.

By KRISTEN COPPOCK
STAFF WRITER

Life coach Patt Osborne has a challenge for her clients.

On a hike in the Pine Barrens, she'll instruct them to walk the first 20 minutes in solitary silence. There's no talking, and no use of electronic devices.

She'll instead encourage people to become immersed in nature and explore their senses. In many cases, clients will later discuss such observations as hearing birds sing, smelling aromatic plants, and feeling serenity while walking among the trees.

According to Osborne, 63, many people are able to disconnect from their stress and worries, and simply enjoy moments at peace.

"That's Mother Nature. That's not me," she said. "I'm not doing the transformation. I'm just setting it up for them."

The owner of Boomer Chick Adventures, Osborne is combining her skills and training as a life coach with her love of the outdoors and the potential benefits of communing with nature. Her business organizes half-day and daylong field trips to the Pine Barrens, Delaware River, Ocean City and other locations that offer active outdoor pursuits. Downtime with poignant group conversations also is part of the adventures.

The life coach plans about 12 to 20 trips each year, many of them in the Pine Barrens. In addition to hiking, activities include kayaking, surfing, parasailing, stand-up paddleboarding and tubing. She also organizes one overnight adventure per year that has taken clients to the Virgin Islands, Maryland's Eastern Shore and Cape May.

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Video online



Osborne (left) helps Nancy Cash, of Haddonfield, get set up in her kayak. The Haddon Heights woman combines her skills and training as a life coach with her love of the outdoors and the potential benefits of communing with nature.

She has no plans to fall in line with next season's fashion

Every summer, right around this time, I splurge: I buy a couple of fat, glossy fashion magazines that cost more than hardback books used to. I carry them home like pirate's booty, yearning to leaf through the first of the pile at traffic lights.

But I resist. Sure, there are right-thinking, disciplined people who are reading "War and Peace" this summer, while I am reaching for these frivolities.

But I buy fall fashion magazines as a reward for getting through heat waves and temperature-humidity indexes that no human body, let alone mine, should have to endure. And I buy them to remind me that there is life after summer.

I also buy them with the vague hope that I'll stand out as a fashion leader even when my three daughters, my severest critics, tell me that I'm just so ... yesterday.

This year, I absolutely want to be ... tomorrow.

Just leafing through the first pages of the first magazine alerted me that I was somehow not represented on those pages.

I am decidedly not younger than springtime. My hair never does what I want it to. I am neither willowy nor a fashion pacesetter,

but one of these magazines suggested that I could be with just a little help from its advertisers.

So desperately out of sorts was I that I finally rushed to the freezer for solace in the form of a generous portion of mocha fudge ice cream, my first choice of guilty pleasures. And I read my new magazines while I dipped into that sweet solace.

But I was in for an unpleasant surprise.

There, on the pages of my expensive magazines, the magazines that were to provide some fun, to say nothing of fashion inspiration, was the new crop of models.

In full color, on full pages, they stared out at me, these unspeakably thin, remarkably young things with absolutely no body fat. Not an ounce or a ripple.

Nobody I know looks like these girl-women. Nobody I've seen lately on the streets of my town does, either.

And I can't help wondering why these waifs must serve as the standard of female beauty.

The more pages I turned, the angrier I got. Not only could I never look like these babes; I wouldn't want to.

Call me crazy: I think women look wonderful when they're rounded, not angular.

Sally Friedman



I like the look of flesh, not bone. And I don't find emaciation beautiful.

I'm also getting weary of model poses. How many real, live women spend their lives staring off into space looking angry, or vacant, or absolutely

bored? How many contort their bodies into those unnatural postures models seem to assume?

I, for one, do not stand with one foot pointed out, one elbow on my hip, and my chin jutting forward. Do you?

Nor do I plan to buy anything that clings relentlessly to my hips.

Spare me talk of fashion revolutions that involve what one of my new magazines called "pure line." Who needs abstract metaphysics when all you're looking for is a fall skirt?

Concepts in fashion I do not love include "sleek," "clingy" and "body-hugging." I do love clothes that are forgiving, comfy, even slightly foolish. Fashion has gotten solemn. Downright bossy and stern.

By the second magazine, I was feeling vaguely headachy. I couldn't seem to find

the need for a knee-length vest in canary yellow layered over something that looked to me like a straitjacket with sleeves of unequal length.

I was told I would see the look everywhere this fall.

But definitely not on me.

By the third magazine, I wondered whether magazines are returnable for a full refund.

Here I'd blown good money for the dubious pleasure of feeling impossibly shabby and terminally out of step with haute couture.

I also surveyed the clothes that are jammed into my closet because I never get to organize it the way home design magazines say I should. But that's another story. Suddenly, they looked remarkably user-friendly.

Happily, the mocha fudge ice cream provided more comfort. It always does.

And with any luck, those bony models, and the fashion designers who starve them, will someday discover that, ounce for ounce, at least mocha fudge is always worth it.

Sally Friedman is a freelance writer. Contact her at pinegander@aol.com.



Naturalist John Volpe, of Pineands Adventures, helps carry paddles for a Boomer Chick Adventures kayaking outing on the Mullica River in Shamong.

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Patt Osborne (right), owner of Boomer Chick Adventures, waits for her group of adventurers to assemble at their meeting place in Shamong.

Group

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"I do something at least once a month. In the summer, it's busier," said Osborne, a former resident of Medford and Moorestown.

During the winter months, the experiences move indoors and have included art projects, theater outings, author visits, meditation sessions and culinary events. The business also operates group Boomer Chick Conversation Café sessions in Osborne's Haddon Heights home.

Each Boomer Chick event typically has no more than 10 participants. If more people are interested, the number of events is increased.

"I like to keep it intimate," the coach said. A retired teacher-turned-adventure coach, Osborne spent her early career working in Riverton before leading classrooms at Fleetwood Elementary School in Mount Laurel for 25 years.

"It was a great place to teach. My kids would always come back to visit," she said. "Now, I have (them as) Facebook friends."

Leading up to her 2001 retirement, she began to research alternative careers that would suit her lifestyle and personal goals. While combing through career books at a local bookstore, Osborne discovered life coaching, which was a relatively new field at the time.

By the time she was ready to retire from teaching, Osborne had completed training and earned her certification. Her small coaching business was launched in September 2001, and Osborne has formed a client base of fellow retirees, empty-nesters and other folks seeking direction.

"People come to a life coach because

they're trying to figure out what to do with their lives," she said. "They're in transition."

During her one-on-one coaching appointments, Osborne will typically orchestrate a "walk-talk" session with a client, using the lakeside path just steps from the front door of her home.

Her second business, as an outdoor retreat leader, was started as an extension of her life coach experience.

"I did a pilot program with some good friends. We took kayaks out, pulled up (to shore) at lunchtime, and had a conversation," Osborne said.

The feedback was extremely positive and resulted in the formation of Boomer Chick Adventures. The name is a nod to the women of Osborne's generation, which is her target demographic, but events are open to male and female clients of all ages.

Participants range in age from mid 20s to late 70s. Many enjoy the social dynamics, and repeat clients do get acquainted with one another, she said.

"They love the group experience. They love that I set it up. They just have to show up," Osborne said. "I have guys who are regulars, my Boomer Dudes."

A recent outing brought about 10 experienced kayakers to a Pinelands Adventures program in Shamong, operated on the Mullica River. Upcoming events include a Couples Reconnection Hike at Batsto Village in Washington, and a Relaxation Hike for "busy" women in Medford at YMCA Camp Ockanickon, a site that borders the yard of Osborne's former home.

For more information and to register for Boomer Chick events, visit boomerchickadventures.com.

Kristen Coppock: 609-871-8073; email: kcoppock@calkins.com; Twitter: @kcoppockbct



Osborne (center) talks with participants before setting out on the river.