

# Learning how to bring joy into our lives

## 'Booked for Lunch' series explores the meeting of the Dalai Lama and Desmond Tutu

By JONATHAN PAPPALARDO  
CLIPPER REPORTER

What is joy?

Duxbury resident Rebecca Hammel posed that fundamental question when she spoke recently at the Senior Center. Her presentation, the latest in the ongoing "Booked for Lunch" series, came about after she finished reading "The Book of Joy," a spiritual guide chronicling a seven day meeting between the Dalai Lama and Archbishop Desmond Tutu, in which they define and explain their answer to that very question.

Hammel admitted to the crowd, who munched on cake from local chef Sarah Leahey-Benjamin, she exists on their level, and doesn't know any more about joy than they do. She read the book, found it impactful, and said she felt the message would resonate with this particular audience. She was right.

In the book, Hammel said, the Dalai Lama and Tutu define joy as "what makes the human experience satisfying," and approach it as a way of being, not as temporary elation based on day-to-day experiences. They point out, she said, the path to joy doesn't exclude suffering, which they feel is inevitable, with the Da-

lai Lama saying a person can find meaning in their suffering if they shift their perspective and realize their suffering is actually the suffering of all humanity. Tutu says to find meaning, look away from yourself and realize you are not alone.

Hammel went on to point out obstacles to joy we face in our daily lives, which include, despair, loneliness, and adversity as well as fear, stress, and anxiety. Stress, she says, is the brain's way of signaling something is important, which needs to be responded to "in a healthy way, by trying to observe it rather than letting it consume us." The Dalai Lama and Tutu, she pointed out, feel stress is "a loss of our communal connection."

She went on to say a recurring idea throughout the book is the South African concept of Ubuntu, which she says translates as "I am because we are." She explained it as: "This universal bond that connects all of humanity. We exist because we exist together. Think of others in a similar situation or a worse situation and see yourself as part of a greater whole."

For the majority of her presentation Hammel empathized what the Dalai Lama and Tutu

found to be eight qualities or ways of being that contribute to a joyful life. Hammel made it clear these pillars of joy have nothing to do with health, wealth or material possessions. "Four are qualities of the mind, and four are qualities of the heart," she said. "Perspective, humility, humor and acceptance are qualities of the mind and forgiveness, gratitude, compassion and generosity are qualities of the heart."

Perspective, she said, is the ability to reframe situations based on a broader, richer or more nuanced point-of-view. Humility, she pointed out, is the ability to let yourself shine, while also celebrating the gifts and talents of others around you. She made sure not to understate the importance of humor, saying whole-hearted laughter has benefits for both heart and general health and helps connect and bring people together. The idea of acceptance, she said, is the ability to accept reality, be present in each moment, and welcome discomfort, anxiety and hardship as part of life.

As for matters of the heart, she said the essence of gratitude is embracing reality and recognizing, perhaps through a gratitude journal, all we

have in this moment of our lives. She warned the crowd the inability to forgive has adverse effects on our immune systems, and when we choose to forgive, we're choosing not to develop anger or hatred towards another person, "while still responding to the wrong with clarity and firmness." Compassion, and collaboration with others, she added, is something for which we are all hardwired.

The final pillar, generosity, she said, improves health and life expectancy. She added the key is to be present to others. In illustrating her point, Hammel told a story about her dogs. "After you feed them, they come find you wherever you are in the house and they say thank you. They weave between your legs. It's sort of an extraordinary thing; I'm learning something from an animal. This dog is able to show gratitude. It's remarkable."

She left the crowd with some joy practices, which included meditation and prayer, and showed a video from MSNBC of residents from Mexico Beach, Florida helping each other recover from Hurricane Michael. In the video, which Hammel said illustrates all the pillars of joy, those affected by the hurricane

said that houses can be rebuilt but you cannot replace lives.

So, what is joy? Hammel summed up the secret as she learned it from the book: "It's a virtuous cycle," she said. "The more we help others, the more that it actually helps us be more joyful."

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## Waterfront Realty Group



**Waterfront Realty Group is pleased to announce that Donna MacLeod has joined the team!**

Donna is a South Shore native and longtime resident of Duxbury where she raised her three children, Nicole, Kim and Kyle.

She was an award winning agent at

William Raveis Real Estate in Duxbury from 2003-2013.

Following that, she became the Branch Manager of the

Coldwell Banker office in Dedham,

where she managed a team of forty agents.

She has listed and sold some of the most impressive properties in Duxbury, and is well respected by her peers and the community, having served as a religious class instructor at Holy Family Parish and was an active volunteer and substitute teacher in the Duxbury Public Schools.

Donna's achievements as a real estate professional are very impressive, and her commitment to her clients is exceptional.

You can contact Donna at [Donna@waterfrontrealtyma.com](mailto:Donna@waterfrontrealtyma.com) or 781-856-5790

833-WR-GROUP • [waterfrontrealtyma.com](http://waterfrontrealtyma.com)

272 Saint George Street, Duxbury, MA

439 Plain Street, Marshfield, MA • 1395 3rd Street S., Naples, FL