

Faces Of New Bedford #93: Sarah Medeiros

Meet Sarah Medeiros, 28-year-old Special Education teacher. Growing up Sarah was always around kids, as her mother owned an in-home daycare. This pushed her to take a class in high school, which focused on working with younger children with disabilities, as she had the childcare experience.



She graduated from high school and went to BCC, unsure what she wanted to do with her future, but knowing that she wanted to work with kids. Soon after she found out that she was pregnant with her daughter and quickly became a single mother working through school. She wasn't sure that she wanted to continue her education as she was trying to raise her daughter, but with the encouragement of her parents she continued onto finish her Bachelor's Degree in Psych at Umass Dartmouth.

Sarah then applied for a position as an ABA therapist at Carney Academy and began working soon after. At first she was worried that the position was going to be too much for her but realized that the students needed someone on their team to overcome the learning difficulties they faced. She began to love her job so much that she went back to finish her Master's degree in Special Education and test for her teaching license, so she could work with these children.

Due to the nature of her field, she mostly teaches children

with autism, but they all have some sort of learning disability. Sarah enjoys seeing the huge progress these children make in her classroom, as she doesn't limit the capability of her students but constantly finding ways for them to reach their full potential. She credits most of her success to the hard working staff at Carney, which play a major role in the education of her students.

"If a child can't learn the way we teach, maybe we should teach the way they learn." -- Ignacio Estrada

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Faces Of New Bedford #92: Heather Brito

Meet Heather Brito, 38-year-old Licensed Mental Health Counselor, Sand Play Practitioner and owner of HSW Counseling.



Growing up, people always thought she was happy go luck and on the outside she had it all, doing great in school and sports through college. But a series of bad decisions that had lasting effects on a lot of people, made her come to the realization that she wasn't who she wanted to be and started a journey of that discovery.

Hearing that Sandplay therapy, a form of therapy that, like other expressive forms of therapy, allow the individual to tap into their unconscious in order to work our your light and dark, bringing them into balance. She traveled to Vermont, because there weren't any local therapists, one weekend a month for two years.

Because of her success with this therapy, she wanted to bring it to others in the area, due to the large amounts of brokenness in the SouthCoast. She finished her Master's degree and got her license to become a Mental Health Counselor in 2012, to help her open HSW Counseling. Almost a year after opening, she has been able to help those in the area through sandplay therapy, EMDR, Cognitive Behavior Therapy, Art, and Massage Therapy. She is even holding her first retreat, Awaken 2017, where she is hoping, along with the other presenters, to bring healing and more healthy lives to the attendees.

“Because true belonging only happens when we present our authentic imperfect selves to the world, our sense of belonging can never be greater than our level of self acceptance.” Renee Brown

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Faces Of New Bedford #91: Brian Dube

Meet Brian Dube, 43-year-old Pastor and Chaplain in charge of Spiritual Life at Teen Challenge Brockton.



Brian grew up in a healthy environment, with a family that loved and supported him. He, however, felt like he never quite fit in or connected with other kids. After transferring from a private catholic school to New Bedford High, that sense of

disconnectedness became even broader. His desire to fit in and have friends led him to the party scene, filled with drinking and drugs, which led him on a slow downward spiral. This would affect the next 15 years of his life.

During that time, he had started a family and become successful in the Information Technology field that was booming during the nineties. Brian had splintered his life in half; the hardworking family man during the week and the party-filled bar hopper on the weekend. Being prescribed pain killers for the migraines he suffered from, his addiction then worsened from alcohol to prescription pills. He found himself at in all time low in 2007, when he suffered a drug induced seizure. He was at a crossroads, get help or lose everything he had worked so hard for.

It was then when his family brought him into Brockton's Teen Challenge, a faith-based drug treatment program. He went in broken, lost and without any real hope of getting clean, he just knew he wasn't ready to die. During his time there, his life changed dramatically. He had his family restored to him and accepted a position to work with the organization upon completing the program. That was ten years ago!

Since then he has taken over the lead Pastor position at South Coast Community Church in Fairhaven, MA. During his time with South Coast they have been active in ministry to the lost, addicted and broken throughout the city and at one time opened their own transitional home. He has also recently become a ride along chaplain with the NBPD, helping provide hope to those in New Bedford battling addiction, in those same places and with the same despair that he had once found himself in. A life once lost and now found.

"Once in a while you get shown the light, in the strangest of places if you look at it right."

– Scarlet Begonias, The Grateful Dead

“The Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.”

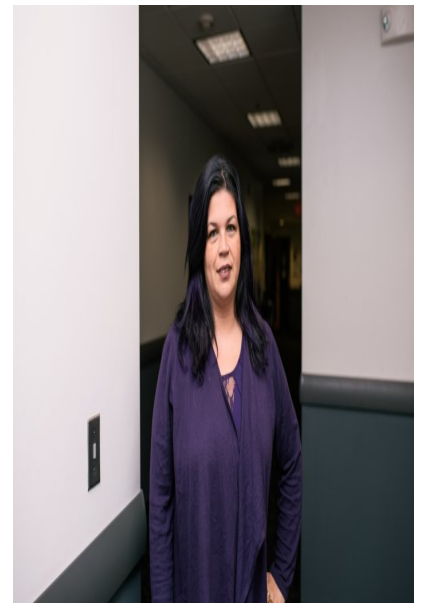
– John 1:5

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Faces Of New Bedford #90: Susana Viera

Meet Susana Viera, 42-year-old Nurse Practitioner and Co-Founder of Susana Viera Multiple Sclerosis Foundation.



Susana and her family migrated to New Bedford from São Miguel, Açores, Portugal when she was 18 months old. After graduating New Bedford High School, she decided to go to UMass Dartmouth, in hopes of attending medical school afterwards.

After the counsel of friends and teachers, who told her that she would be better as a nurse and that she shouldn't uproot her family to move to Worcester, she decided to pursue a career in nursing. She graduated UMass Dartmouth with her degree in Bio and then went to BCC, where she received her associates in Nursing.

She worked in several departments throughout hospitals and long-term care departments, in love with her new career. She got to the highest position she could with her education at the time and went on to complete her Masters degree. Shortly after her graduation, she self-diagnosed herself with multiple sclerosis, referencing the material a friend gathered during her Master's thesis. After a visit to a neurologist and some tests, her diagnosis was proven true.

Multiple Sclerosis effects those diagnosed in two ways, physically and sensory. Some become immobile and others lose the feeling in their extremities, and in Susana's case, she lost feeling to parts of her hands and arms. With her newly diagnosed illness, she didn't want to succumb but raise awareness of it, starting the Susana Viera Multiple Sclerosis Foundation. With this non-profit, the team holds an annual fundraiser, this year's being held on March 31st, and with funds raised at the event we provide adaptive equipment, 6 scholarships every year to graduating high school seniors, money for research, and support the Helping hands transportation program designed to offer wheelchair van transportation for people with neurological diseases like MS.

"Do as much as you can for others while you can because tomorrow isn't guaranteed."

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Faces Of New Bedford #89 – Cristina Pereira

Meet Cristina Pereira, 51-year-old REALTOR®. Cristina was born in South Africa, to two migrants of Portugal.



They then moved to Mozambique where the family started to build their lives. It was during that time that there was a revolution with the government, becoming refugees back to Portugal, with just the clothes on their backs at the age of 9. Hoping to start a new life for their family, they moved to the United States to try their luck here.

She graduated high school and went to the University of Massachusetts Dartmouth to study Computer Science. When she realized that wasn't what she wanted to do for the rest of her life, she left school and started working as a secretary at a realty agency. A few years later she started working as an assistant under one of the most successful female realtors in the area.

Cristina worked with her up until 2013, when her mentor retired, learning everything she could from her. She began working with Pelletier Realty, the number one Real Estate Agency in the area since 2007. Since being there she has had major success, even winning the award for being one of the top producers for the past two years.

“You have to go above and beyond your duties to be successful. If that means skipping going out to eat on a Friday night, then that is what it takes.”

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Faces Of New Bedford #88 – Connie Mimoso

Meet Connie Rocha-Mimoso, 50-year-old Director of Community Health Services at Seven Hills.



Connie moved to New Bedford from Portugal in 1981, at the age of 14, with her parents and 4 siblings. Her family always instilled the value of helping others, from her grandfather taking in homeless people in Portugal to her mother who helped house a boy for a year while his family moved to Germany.

This led to her seeking a position at the Center of Health and Human Services, where she became an outreach worker. The job became fulfilling for her and something that she wanted to continue to pursue. After receiving her license to become a Drug and Alcohol Counselor and a few years of experience she became director of the entire program.

Connie loves that she can help fight the opioid epidemic that has been ravaging our city for some time now. She also, through her work with Seven Hills, can provide resources for low income families, assist those living with life threatening diseases, and much more. She also spends time volunteering for several non-profits and organizations, including Team NOAH Foundation, Suicide Prevention Coalition, Opioid Task Force and the Day of Portugal Road Race. On top of her work on opioid prevention with Seven Hills, she also works with the New Bedford Police department on their regular ride-along drives, visiting struggling addicts who have had recent overdoses, in hopes to offer help.

"We need to treat every individual with respect and dignity."

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Faces Of New Bedford #87 – Meet Brandon Oliver

Meet Brandon Oliver, 29-year-old delivery driver and founder of 508 Sneakerheads.



Brandon grew up in the 90s, watching Michael Jordan play in his prime. During this time, the Jordan sneakers were growing in immense popularity and if Michael wore it, you wanted to have them. It was then, where Brandon's love for sneakers was born.

Once at the age where he could work and afford to buy the

sneakers he had always wanted, he started hunting down the rare and limited sneaker releases he always wanted. This became difficult without a network of people to connect with and that led to his starting of the 508 Sneakerheads on Facebook. It started as a small group of local collectors, where they could buy/trade/sell or just connect with others who had a passion for sneakers and the culture behind them.

It wasn't long before this group started to take off, connecting people from Connecticut to Maine, over their love for sneakers, and has over 15,000 active members. Brandon, who is passionate about the sneaker industry doesn't want to just stop there, but make a career working to design sneakers or in management and marketing at the major sneaker companies.

"No matter what you go thru in life never give up on your dreams"

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Faces Of New Bedford #86 – Meet Brandon Roderick

Meet Brandon Roderick, 27-year-old Chef and owner of the The Baker.



Most of Brandon's life, he knew he wanted to grow up and become a doctor. In high school, he worked in restaurants, with his first job being at Divino's in downtown New Bedford. His dream of becoming a doctor though soon became a reality for him, as he received a full ride to Tufts University.

While at Tufts, he continued to work in restaurants, all while pursuing his undergraduate degree full time. It was during a moment in his second year that everything changed and he knew that his passion wasn't in medicine. He was sitting in the library studying for a chemistry test, when he got the urge to call Le Cordon Bleu and apply for enrollment in their culinary arts program.

He finished the semester at Tufts and began his journey the following September at Le Cordon Bleu. During his time there, he greatly pressed into the teachings of his mentor Ying Wei Luo, who saw his skill in baking and poured into him. Brandon would be early for class and leave late, trying to perfect everything Ying had to teach him. Upon graduating, he worked long days serving tables and long nights in a bakery, getting 3 hours of sleep in his car.

He found out that his great-grandmother's health was declining and moved back to New Bedford, where he continued to commute

back to Boston. This became too much for him and he then took a job as the General Manager of Ella's in Wareham. This opened his eyes to the business side of the restaurant business, which helped him tremendously in the planning and opening of his own bakery, The Baker.

Brandon opened The Baker in downtown New Bedford in late 2016 and couldn't be happier. He was told by many while living in Boston that he would be a fool to come to New Bedford and open a bake shop focused on artisan, hand-made, pastries and baked goods. Being the city that he loved and in the middle of a revitalization of the downtown area, he knew that a bakery would be a great addition to our already great city.

"Follow your passion, do what you love."

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Faces Of New Bedford #85 – Gloria Williams

Meet Gloria Williams, 71-year-old Director of PACE YouthBuild. Gloria was born and raised in Springfield, Massachusetts. After time in college and some years working as a Math teacher, Gloria relocated to New Bedford to take a position working in the field of Human development.



After some time working in that field, she took the position at PACE YouthBuild, where she runs the program. PACE YouthBuild is a program for underserved at risk youth, 16-24, that have dropped out or been forced out of the traditional school system. They offer their members a host of wrap around services to lead them towards a brighter future. Through HiSET preparation, National construction certification, life and career development skills, YouthBuild prepares these young people for the rest of their lives.

Gloria has taken a huge amount of pride in what the YouthBuild team does at the program. She loves being at 593 Kempton Street, as it helps her keep going, knowing that they are impacting their students' lives. They are also involved in helping the community as well. PACE YouthBuild buys old and foreclosed homes, rehabs them, and then makes them affordable for first time home buyers, who wouldn't otherwise have been able purchase a home.

Gloria often says, "Once YouthBuild, always YouthBuild! Membership doesn't end when a student graduates, we are always here to support and enrich the lives of past, present and future members!"

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Faces Of New Bedford #84 – Jose Rego

Meet Jose Rego, 45-year-old Chef and Restaurant Owner. Jose grew up in a Portuguese family where cooking was central to their lifestyle. Their Sundays consisted of large feasts, where Joe learned so much about cooking.



As Joe got older and eventually graduated from high school, he became a pipefitter in Newport. Due to the nature of the job, he would get laid off every summer, which led him and a friend to move to North Carolina to help build a golf course. During that time as roommates his friend would clean and Joe would cook. Blown away by his talent, he encouraged him to go to school for culinary, and went as far as getting him an application to Johnson and Wales.

This was only the start to Jose's cooking career, as he finished school and went on to work in various restaurants

across the country. During sometime in Atlanta, he heard about an open casting for the Food Network television-show Chopped, which he entered and was selected. He performed so well on the show that he finished in first. He also went on to compete in another of the network's show Cutthroat, which he also won and even competed in a Battle of the Champions special.

With all this experience, he returned home to create his own culinary dream. Alongside Mario Ribeiro, of The Pasta House, they have teamed up to open the Cask & Pig. Their hope is to bring a gastro pub to North Dartmouth, which is teeming with corporate-owned restaurants, and give their patrons a place where there is quality service, food, and drinks.

Jose's biggest philosophy isn't about receiving though, as he tries to spend as much time helping others as possible. He has, throughout the years, offered his chef services up for non-profit organizations to raffle off at banquet silent auctions, which has helped him raise over \$65,000 for causes such as NOAH's Foundation, Prince Henry Society, St. Francis School, St. Anthony Church Choir, and so many more.

"It's not all about receiving, it's about giving back."

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