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Notes from editor (not for publication):

Hi, Annie — please see email asking about book you quote. Thanks! J



HEADLINE ELEMENTS:

####BEGIN HED####

1 Bringing treasure out of the underworld

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2 Allison Stieger, a new Newfane resident, to speak on

3 'The Power of Mythology in Creative Life'

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4 TEXT BODY:

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5 The Rock River Players present "The Power of Mythology
6 in Creative Life," a talk by Allison Stieger Thursday, March 26, at
7 7 p.m. Williamsville Hall. The evening will include a talk with
8 visuals followed by a Q&A session. Artists and creative thinkers
9 of all types are encouraged to participate.

10 Stieger founded Mythic Stories in 2004 to support
11 creative individuals and organizations in unlocking the sacred

12 stories that illuminate their untold potential. With a master's
13 degree in mythological studies with an emphasis in depth
14 psychology, she offers expertise on how the world's most ancient
15 narratives can enrich and inform creative life.

16 Stieger will speak to the heart of her work which led her
17 to these sorts of speaking engagements as well as to writing a
18 book, creating classes, and coaching individuals.

19 As creative people, she says, "we go through and dig into
20 our own stuff and come out with something that's beneficial and
21 positive."

22 Through it all, we are buoyed by stories and inspired by
23 others' creative expressions.

24 "It could be a myth, it could be a painting, it could be a
25 building — anything. We all have things we turn to that are
26 important to us, that help us get through the suck of human life,
27 right? The ancestors left their stories for us to learn from. They left
28 their art for us. Everybody turns to something that makes you feel
29 just a little bit better that day."

30 In her work, Stieger explores how one can turn what
31 might be a devastating experience with health, mental health,
32 relationships, or the like into productive expression.

33 "One can hit rock bottom, end up in the underworld,
34 and work through it, however painful that process might be," she
35 says.

36 "There's going to be something in every life, something
37 that just drops you into the underworld," Stieger continues.
38 "Sometimes it's sudden; sometimes it's not."

39 In the process, "you're going to go down, and it's going
40 to be terrible, but you're going to take solace and succor from
41 your favorite painting, your favorite film, your favorite novel or
42 poem or myth," she says. "That thing is going to be an ally — it's
43 going to make it possible for you to go through what you have
44 to."

45 That process, Stieger explains, can yield something worth
46 sharing for the benefit of others, especially from an artist's hand
47 and mind.

48 The quandary, she adds, is, "How do you know when it's
49 time to leave the underworld? How do you know when your
50 work is ready?"

51 Processing trauma on the page or on the easel can be
52 "the kind of thing you would do with a therapist," she says.

53 But it can also take the form of "something that's useful
54 to other people," which Stieger says is "the differentiating factor."

55 "You can write about how terrible your mother was, but
56 if there's not something in there that's actually going to interest,
57 and benefit, somebody else, then your work isn't ready," she says.

58 The intention as an artist, she explains, "is getting to the
59 point where we actually have something valuable to share," and
60 in so doing, private pain is transformed into "something that's
61 actually going to make somebody else's path a little bit easier."

62 Of the stories, Stieger says she tends to call most on
63 Roman and Greek mythology. "And I use one particular myth
64 from Mesopotamian mythology, the 'Descent of Inanna,' quite a
65 lot. I use Celtic. I use Norse."

66 But she adds that with her coaching clients, she will
67 often ask, "Where are your people from?" or "Is there a particular
68 mythic system that you really feel drawn to?"

69 "The client I just finished with is of Iranian and Cherokee
70 descent," Stieger says. "So we worked in that space. Our myths
71 show us that we can, in fact, learn from them enough that we
72 have something to share on with other people afterward — that
73 you can, in fact, bring treasure out of the underworld,"
74 transmuting pain "into art, into beauty, into power."

75 That concept, she said, is a core part of what she will talk
76 about: Instead of simply surviving a traumatic experience, myths
77 present the option of transformation.

78 "So it's survival versus transformation. You're going to try
79 to pull some kind of wisdom out of this experience — or some

80 kind of art that you've made — and you're going to learn from
81 your ancestors. We take whatever it is that they have to offer, we
82 go through it, and now we're ready to help somebody else. And
83 this is the beauty of human life, right? That we want to share what
84 we've learned."

85 ((Subhed))

86 Relatively new to southern Vermont, Stieger explains
87 how she, her husband, and two teenage sons landed here.

88 Having spent most of her life in the West — central
89 California and Alaska — she and her family felt compelled
90 several years ago to search for an escape from air quality issues
91 rendered by wildfires in the Seattle home her family had had for
92 27 years.

93 We "honed in on Vermont, mostly for cultural reasons
94 and that Bernie Sanders vibe, I guess," she says.

95 In some ways, too, "it reminded me a lot of Alaska
96 growing up, just that sort of 'chop wood, carry water' ethos,"
97 Stieger says. "And the climate's more like Alaska, so I had a kind
98 of feeling of home already.

99 "Sometimes you go to a place and it just feels right," she
100 says. "It feels like home, even though you've never been there.
101 And that was how it was for us."

102 ((subhed))

103 Beyond a childhood love of mythology and her
104 advanced studies, discovering the work of Joseph Campbell, an
105 author and scholar of mythology and comparative religion, when
106 she was about 30 years old "that really locked me in."

107 "I was feeling kind of lost in my late 20s, not really sure
108 where I wanted my life to go," she says.

109 Stieger then dug into *The Masks of God*, Campbell's four-
110 volume overview of world mythology.

111 That, in turn, opened “a whole new world” of Jung,
112 Nietzsche, “and all the other writers that he talked about,” she
113 says. “It was wonderful.”

114 Having been raised an evangelical, she’d left the church,
115 but not without elements of religion that wove into deeper
116 understandings of philosophy, sociology, anthropology,
117 archeology, and literature.

118 Along the way, Stieger became a master pastry chef and
119 worked in technology for Adobe and Microsoft as she went
120 through her own underworld experience with intense health
121 issues.

122 *Live Mythic*, Stieger’s book, begins as she is wrestling
123 with those issues on a quest in India that, she says, “restarted my
124 life.”

125 The book explores archetypes with which Stieger
126 engages deeply, exploring their potency and nuances. For
127 instance, Campbell, she explains, focuses on the “hero’s journey.”

128 Stieger takes a different spin to de-emphasize the
129 masculine in that concept and to recognize that not everyone
130 feels comfortable under a hero’s mantle. Instead, we may each be
131 called to do something heroic — or to make a heroic choice: a
132 one-off we can handle.

133 Stieger’s book deals, in part, with the heroic journey at
134 the end of which one “would come out ready now to share what
135 you’ve learned with the community.”

136 “You’re going to create your art, you’re going to give
137 advice, whatever it is you’re going to do,” she says. “So it’s kind
138 of like pulling a cloak around yourself.”

139 Stieger hopes her Williamsville lecture will inspire
140 people to look at their work and their approach to the creative
141 life in a new way. If interest warrants, she’ll offer a follow-up
142 workshop in which participants can apply what they’ve learned
143 through the talk.

144 "I have a lot of creativity exercises that I guide people
145 through that can be really helpful to kind of lodge" these
146 discoveries into one's mind.

147 **((subhed))**

148 Stieger's Newfane home is full of mythological visuals:
149 the dining room wallpaper, for instance, tells the story of
150 Telemachus from *The Odyssey*, Homer's epic poem from ancient
151 Greece. "It fits the era of the house, and also my own personal
152 interests."

153 The ceiling of her office is etched with "gods and
154 dragons. And this is Circe from *The Odyssey*," she says pointing
155 to a sculpture with a pink balloon emerging from its mouth. (She
156 also has a cat named Circe.)

157 Acknowledging the journey full of good fortune and
158 coincidence that landed her family here, she says, "I could have
159 moved anywhere in the world, but we chose here, and we have
160 this beautiful home in this beautiful community."

161 Now in Vermont, she adds, "everything about my work
162 just got lit with rocket fuel. I don't even know why. I don't know if
163 it was the room of one's own instead of sitting on the couch in
164 our living room in Seattle or what it was, but it's just really caught
165 fire. I've been doing more public speaking, more coaching. I
166 create classes."

167 Candidly, Stieger adds that one reason she wanted to
168 offer Thursday's free lecture "in the first place was just to
169 introduce myself to my new community."

170 "I know there are a lot of creatives in the area, which is
171 one of the reasons we chose to move here," she says. "And I just
172 want to say, 'Hey, you know I have this weird niche thing and I
173 think it's interesting,' and if you're the kind of person that also
174 finds it interesting, come check it out."

175 In the process, she knows she'll be making new friends.

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BIO/COATTAIL:

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176 The Rock River Players present “The Power of Mythology
177 in Creative Life,” Thursday, March 26, 7 p.m. at the Williamsville
178 Hall, 35 Dover Rd., Williamsville. Admission is free; donations
179 to sustain Rock River Players’ programming will be welcomed.
180 For more information, visit mythicstories.com and
181 rockriverplayers.org.

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