A close-up portrait of a woman with short, curly grey hair and round glasses, smiling warmly. She is wearing a dark top. The background is a bright outdoor scene with a blue body of water, a bridge, and green trees under a clear sky. A semi-transparent dark blue box is overlaid on the right side of the image, containing white text.

# Thinking Outside the Office

USING YOUR MEDICAL  
KNOWLEDGE TO HELP YOUR  
COMMUNITY

ANN DORNEY, MD

# Creative Solutions to Thorny Problems

- History

- Single mother with recurrent c difficile colitis
- Financial instability
- Worked in food preparation

- Societal Issues

- Poverty; eviction from housing
- Poor microbiome
- History of domestic violence
- Difficulty accessing health care

- Intervention

- Self-administered fecal transplant
- Referred to free legal services
- Raised awareness through newspaper article



# Addressing Overlooked Traumas

- History
  - “Difficult patient” with overuse of ER and office
  - History of severe childhood abuse
- Societal Issues
  - Childhood trauma
  - ACEs unaddressed during childhood
  - Anxiety untreated into his 40s
- Intervention
  - ACE screens for OB patients and others
  - Social worker to aid with housing
  - Talks in the community about ACEs and resiliency
  - Increase awareness of ACEs with legislature



# Spreading Childhood Literacy

- History
  - Study showing the importance of having books in the home
- Societal Issues
  - Early literacy creates positive societal benefits
  - Lack of resources leading to unequal outcomes
- Intervention
  - Distribute as many books to preschoolers as possible
  - Encourage parents to read to their children

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## The ABCs of life with Dr. Ann Dorney

BY NANCY GALLAGHER  
Correspondent

**F**rom sickly childhood to dual outdoor-ecologist, from no school to medical school, from child of divorce to a cancer researcher, Dr. Ann Dorney, M.D., has used adversity as a springboard to a life filled with empathy, resilience and volunteerism. Her mother removed her from school at age 10 due to a lengthy, undiagnosed illness. "That was great," Dorney said. "I was one of those kids who would read the encyclopedia," she said, recalling that "I spent summers at the library. I've always loved to learn and I've always loved to do it, so it really wasn't an issue."

And she also got to spend a lot of time being the woods behind their home. When her parents separated, Ann, her four brothers and their mother in long-distance in her college years, continued their work — traveling from their Wisconsin to Vermont for a month of outdoor fun.

She attended Eastern College in Richfield, N.H., where she was a math major, intending to be a math teacher. The college's strong focus on the sciences also appealed to her. She was one of the first to hike the back country, study opportunity with a physician. "New York, convinced her shift to a career. 'I really got a sense of what it was like to work in a rural area with a doctor,'" she said.

If Ann (call-me broke-but-resilient) didn't, she purchased an Amherst, Mass., by bus to her medical school — changing clothes in bus stations. She graduated from George Washington University with a MD degree (doctor).

Her mother on family practice seemed sparse, Dorney worked at choosing where she'd like to live. She moved to Augusta, Maine, and was one of four practice residents recruited to join Hospital in Skowhegan (1982). Women physicians there mostly (one, to be exact) and a gender-based mutual assistance new and old staffers. It was Dorney's future (husband). They met while during their residency, and a practice together as part of a family practice.

Her mother on family practice seemed sparse, Dorney worked at choosing where she'd like to live. She moved to Augusta, Maine, and was one of four practice residents recruited to join Hospital in Skowhegan (1982). Women physicians there mostly (one, to be exact) and a gender-based mutual assistance new and old staffers. It was Dorney's future (husband). They met while during their residency, and a practice together as part of a family practice.

Dr. Ann Dorney loves bird watching.

Ann and Dorney to generally work opposite hours, sidestepping much of the need for outside child care. She said she "cherished the fact that we could spend a lot of time with our kids; that was very important to me."

As a result of her expanding awareness of her patients' needs and circumstances, Dorney gradually became an activist for a variety of health, environmental and societal causes.

Breast-feeding was out of fashion when she went into practice, so she led a breast-feeding support group for several years while she herself breast-fed her children. At times, she doubted her effectiveness in this effort, but she now sees a breast-feeding rate of 80 percent, and has won an award for her efforts in central Maine.

She trained in the treatment of op-

**"I was one of those kids who would read the encyclopedia,"**  
DR. ANN DORNEY, M.D.

and addiction when a hospital colleague approached her for help regarding a family member dealing with addiction. At that time, Maine had no coordinated training programs on the use of Suboxone, so Dorney trained and attended one in Boston.

Awareness of her patients' needs continues to identify her as a doctor with additional specialized training.

She believes many of her patients' anxieties, such as food and housing insecurity, are part of a larger societal breakdown. So when she learned about ACEs (Adverse Childhood Experiences), a connection flashed in her brain. This series of 10 childhood markers includes abuse, neglect, domestic violence, substance abuse, loss of a parent or caregiver, residential changes, and other factors that can become destructive, healthy adults, she said.

A lack of resilience often leads down a spiraling path of unhealthy behaviors, addiction, a range of disabilities, and early death.

Dorney has become a dedicated advocate for raising awareness among medical, education and law enforcement professionals on the pervasive impact of these ACEs on vulnerable children and adults, and how building resilience results in a healthier, more productive population.

Dorney grew up without much money and learned resilience from a mother who encouraged outdoor play and freedom to learn. She observes that technology has permeated today's lifestyles, and hours spent on computers, cell phones and social media have largely supplanted the childhood free play and time spent outdoors she personally experienced.

She said she made sure her children experienced an active outdoor childhood similar to her own — a childhood she considers formative to a healthy adulthood, and one she promotes in her care and professional engagement efforts to offset what she calls a "nature deficit disorder." "Free play is a gift," says Dorney.

A college course in environmental science inspired her love of birdwatching.

"Of all the courses that I ever took, this probably affected my life the most profoundly," Dorney said. Learning bird song and calls was the equivalent of learning new language, she said, a "life-changing experience."

Ever practical, Dorney points out that watching can be available everywhere, if done right. Whenever she is out of door is always aware of the birds around her.

As a member of the Somerset Wood Trust, Dorney advocates for land and conservation groups to change focus from "protecting the land and to connecting people and nature and to people," she suggests activities like teaching kids to fish, berry picking, or bird nests, or geocaching as well as connecting children to the outdoors, in partnership with schools to take wild walks.

Her dedication to social and environmental causes has apparently influenced children. One son works in the solar industry. Another does school prep on overcoming racial and religious racism.

After 20 years in private practice, Dorney began Family Practice, Dorney began hospital duties. Dorney is part of a local task force dealing with addiction issues. These volunteer efforts are unfunded. Ann Dorney, M.D.

More DORNEY, PAGE 2

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# Tackling the Opioid Crisis

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- History

- 20-something male with a history of untreated Opiate Use Disorder
- No Suboxone treatment available in Somerset County

- Societal Issues

- Worsening OUD over time with few treatment options
- Little knowledge for effective treatments at the time

- Intervention

- Took a Suboxone (buprenorphine) training in Boston and a waiver to prescribe
- Started accepting Suboxone patients at the practice
- Gave lectures in the community
- Opiate bill in the legislature
- Alternative sentencing program at local jail

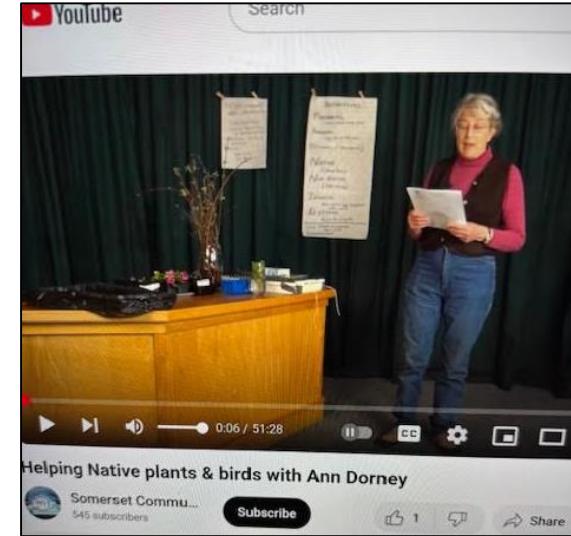
# Environmental Concerns

- Societal Issues

- Climate disruption
- Decreasing biodiversity
- Growing anxiety and suicidal thoughts

- Intervention

- Introduced two solar bills in the legislature
- Began rewilding project on a 27 acre field
- Horticultural program for high school students
- Local TV appearances on native perennials and rewilding
- Working with community to plant native species at new school building
- Board member of a local land trust



# Legislative Action

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- How do you turn your ideas into legislation?
  - Discuss ideas for possible bills with legislators
  - Reach out to advocacy groups; many have lobbyists
    - Maine Medical Association, Maine Hospital Association, environmental groups
  - Consider testifying or submitting written testimony
  - Offer productive proposals for changes if possible

# Thank You

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