

Your well-being is her top priority

Food allergies lead counselor into health field

By Carolyn Torella
For the Poughkeepsie Journal

When life gives you lemons, you make lemonade, or so the saying goes.

But if you're allergic to lemons, oranges and olive oil, and intolerant to wheat and a slew of other foods, you might wonder what to eat and where you might find the sweet in all the sour.

For 25-year-old certified health counselor Amanda Hudes, her lemonade came in the form of overcoming her own health challenges and eventually helping others to do the same.

Her Poughkeepsie and New York city-based A+ Plan health counseling business provides clients with a unique and completely individualized approach to health and nutrition.

"I became interested in nutrition at a young age when I found out I was allergic to many foods," Hudes said. "I started reading food labels for the ingredients and learned a lot on my own. My father is a chiropractor and my mother's a nurse, so it was always a very natural household."

Views it as a blessing

Regarding her food allergies, she said, "When you're younger, you think, this stinks. Now I think of it as a blessing. Would I have been interested in nutrition if not for that? Now I'm helping people and it's helped me stay healthy as well because I learned so much."

Hudes attended the Fashion Institute of Technology in Manhattan but her focus wasn't always on the runway.

"While I was in college, I did meal plans for people, to help people eat well, not as an actual business. Through word of mouth it grew, and I eventually made it into a business."

She realized the importance of industry certification and found the Institute for Integrative Nutrition. They offered Hudes the education and credentials she needed to further her career in holistic



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Certified health counselor Amanda Hudes checks out the healthful food selection at Mother Earth's Storehouse on Route 9 in Poughkeepsie. Hudes conducts shopping tours for her clients at health food stores.

**YOUNG
ENTREPRENEUR**

Profile

Amanda Hudes

Business: A+ Plan Health Counseling.

Age: 25.

Resides: Poughkeepsie.

Education: Bachelor of science from Fashion Institute of Technology, Institute for Integrative Nutrition.

Goals: To help people through nutrition and fashion and help teenagers battle depression and feel better about themselves.

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nutrition education.

While she specializes in weight loss, her training focused on a variety of traditional and scientific approaches to nutrition and wellness, including nutrition, modern health concepts, health counseling, anatomy, physiology, training and healthy living. Her job as health counselor is part nutrition adviser, part life coach, part cheerleader.

"Their training was so unique, it was the best fit for me," she said. "My whole business is about lifestyle change, not diets. Diets don't work.

Holiday tips

Here are five tips for a healthy holiday season, from Hudes:

1. Listen to your body. Are you still hungry after eating the turkey, stuffing and vegetables? Is your body craving dessert? If not, why eat it?
2. The holidays are a stressful time for many people, with so many parties and events. Don't let stress defeat you. Allow at least 15 minutes a day for yourself to just breathe.
3. Fill half of your plate with

vegetables (These do not include sugar-laden browned carrots or marshmallow sweet potato casserole).

lifestyle changes do. Even after the first few weeks, people notice their skin, hair and nails changing, looking healthier. My focus is really about helping people become healthier. Living healthier, more vibrant lives."

Before accepting new clients, she conducts a free initial 45-minute phone consultation and then, if she accepts them as a client, she offers recommendations for a six-month health plan.

"I assess their health background, as well as their parents' health. We go over their

vegetables (These do not include sugar-laden browned carrots or marshmallow sweet potato casserole).

4. Be as social as you want to be. This means saying no to holiday parties you don't want to attend and saying yes to at least one you think you would enjoy, especially where friends and family are in attendance; they miss you.
5. Exercise the extra stress of the holiday season away instead of using food as your crutch.

health and life goals, their difficulties, and how their personalities all work together. They have found comfort in speaking with me. Most importantly, they have to be committed or it's not going to work."

There is little they don't talk about. Clients share their eating habits, their feelings when they're eating and after they've eaten, details of their bodily functions, how much and what type of exercise they engage in and how their careers and relationships are going.

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