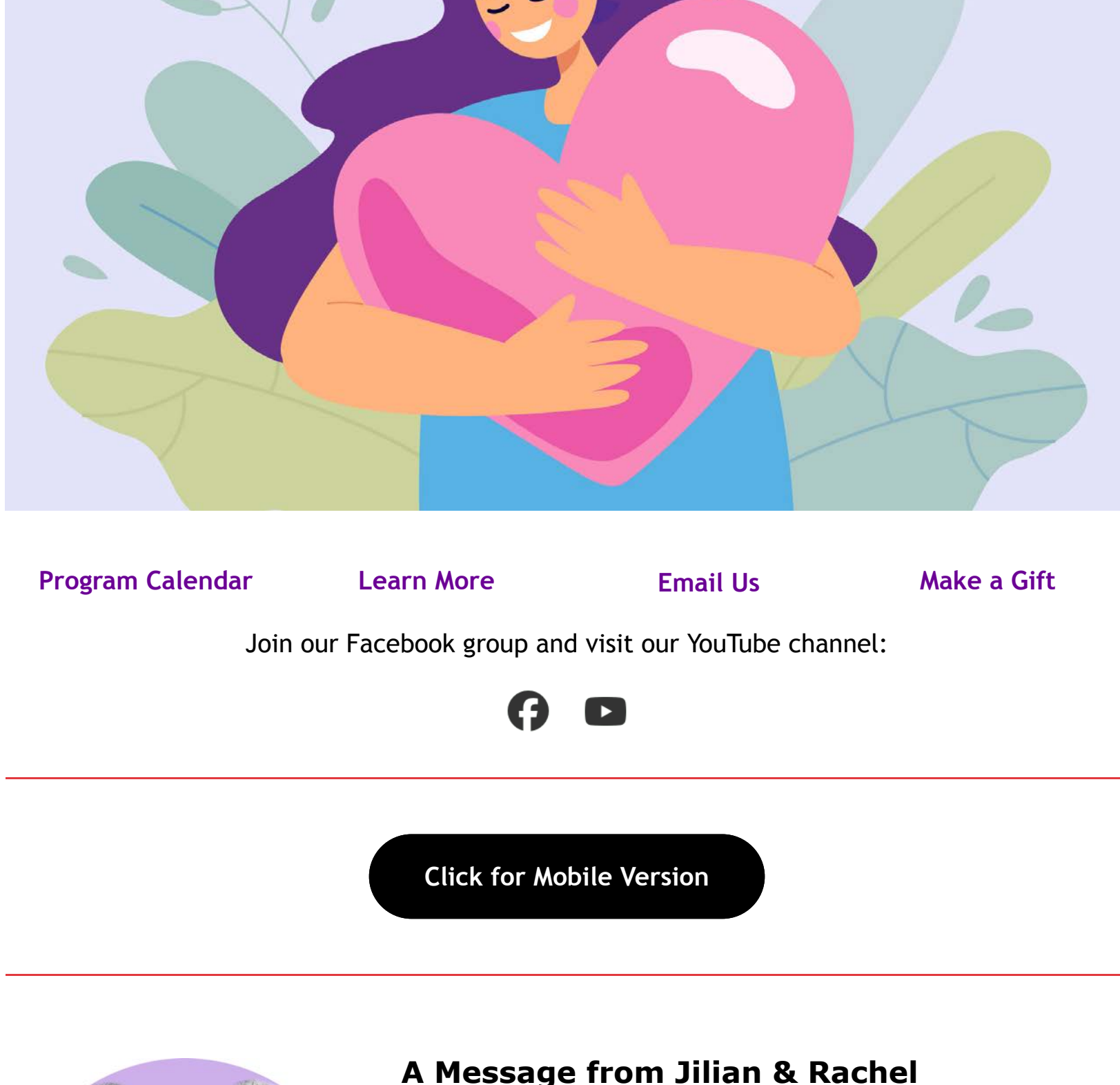




## Self-Love

September 2025



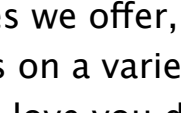
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Jilian Levinson & Rachel Justus,  
Woman to Woman  
Program Managers

### A Message from Jilian & Rachel

We hope everyone enjoyed a safe and relaxing summer. Taking time to recharge is a form of self-love—so vital in our fast-paced lives—and it helps us embrace the energy September brings. We warmly invite our community to take small breaks from daily busyness and explore the many resources we offer, including our [video archive](#) of expert speakers on a variety of healing topics, to give yourself the care and love you deserve.

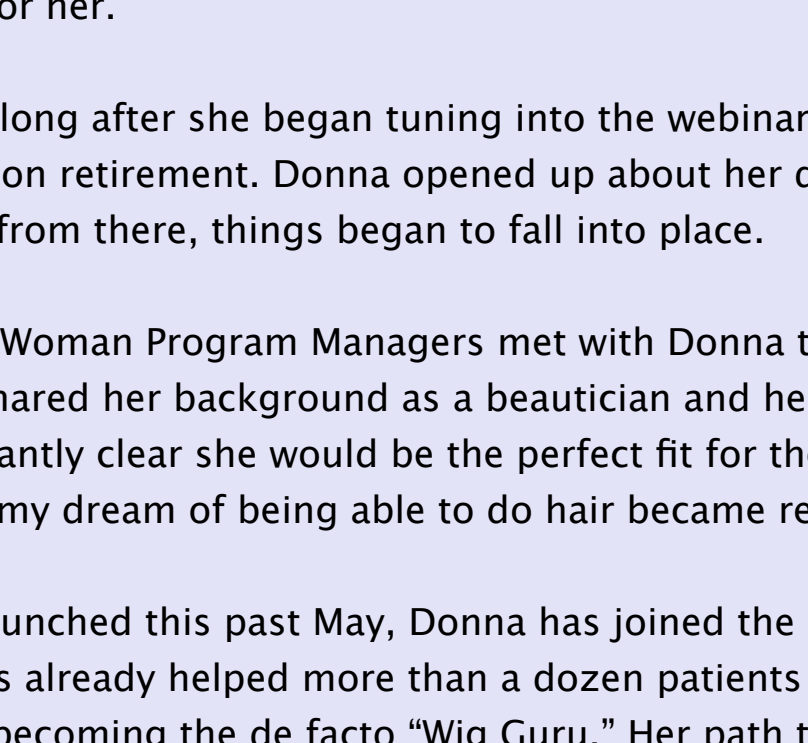


Carol Lee, Editor

### A Letter from the Editor

*Self-Love* marks the final installment of the love-themed newsletters of 2025 (*Physical Love* in January and *Relational Love* in May). From singing and sipping tea to listening to gospel music, pursuing our dreams, and mindful eating, the guests in this edition have beautifully illuminated diverse ways we can be kind to ourselves—and, in turn, show up for others. We hope the stories in this newsletter bring a smile and plant a seed of inspiration to try a new habit or step outside your comfort zone. Happy fall!

## Why I Give Back Donna Vocaturo on Her Journey to Becoming a "Wig Guru"



Donna in front of SOUL RYEDERS in Rye, NY

Donna Vocaturo credits Woman to Woman with keeping her going when things got tough. Fiercely independent—as a mother, a paralegal, and a boxer—she found it difficult to adjust to abrupt retirement at 61 after her cancer diagnosis in 2023. During this time, Woman to Woman's online support groups became a source of comfort and action for her.

Serendipitously, not long after she began tuning into the webinars, one of the discussions focused on retirement. Donna opened up about her desire to volunteer with the group, and from there, things began to fall into place.

When the Woman to Woman Program Managers met with Donna to discuss volunteer opportunities, she shared her background as a beautician and her hope of utilizing her skills. It was instantly clear she would be the perfect fit for the newly conceived Wig Program. "Thus my dream of being able to do hair became real!" Donna enthuses.

Since the program launched this past May, Donna has joined the exceptional team of Wig Advisors and has already helped more than a dozen patients with wig selection and styling, quickly becoming the de facto "Wig Guru." Her path to self-love, rediscovering her passion and reigniting her talent for hairstyling, has not only allowed her to flourish in retirement but also brought light and glimpses of happiness to women navigating difficult times.

"For me, it gave me a purpose," Donna says. "The women always say to me, 'Oh my God, you're an angel.' But I tell them, 'No, you have no idea what you have done for me.' It totally changed my life."

**ALL Gynecologic Cancer Patients Are Eligible for FREE Wig Assistance Program.**

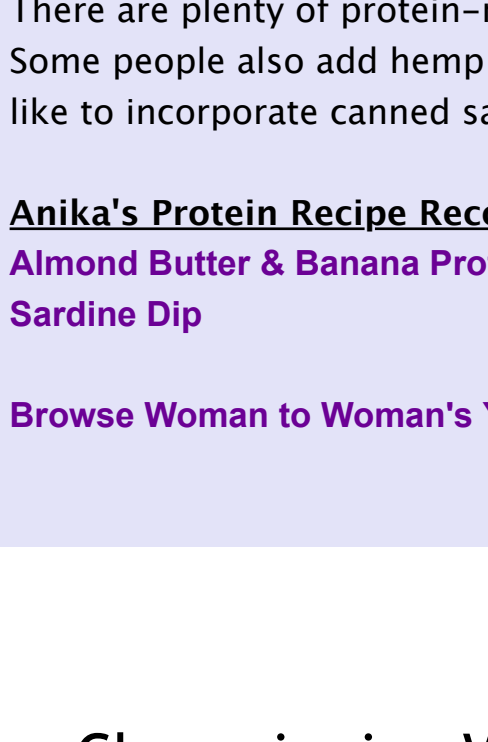
[Click here to find out more.](#)



Wig displays inside SOUL RYEDERS  
Photos by Donna Vocaturo

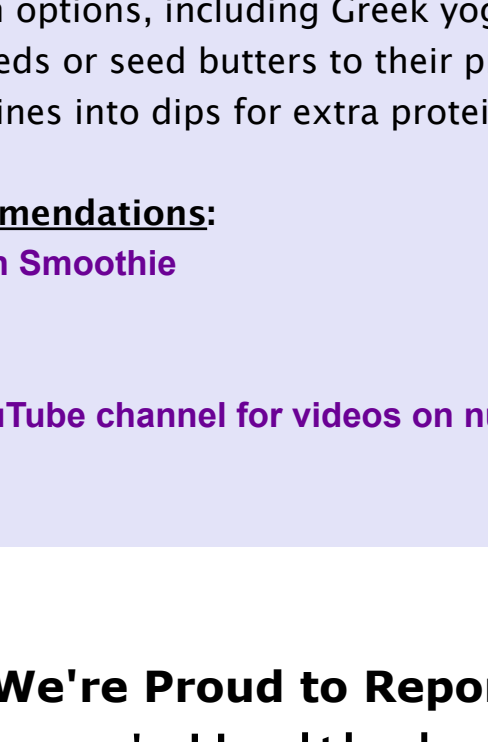
## Roundtable: We Asked, We Listened How do you show yourself self-love?

In our roundtable discussion, we showcase a range of perspectives by asking three community members the same questions. Today, we've asked a staff member, survivor volunteer and patient: *"What is something you do for yourself to show self-love?"*



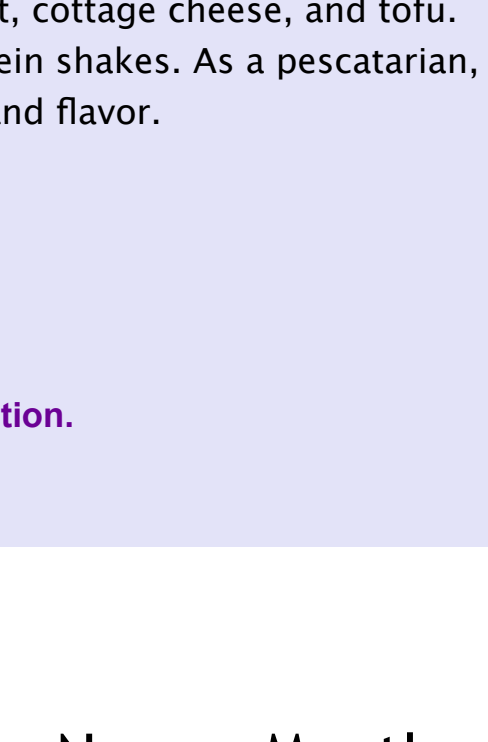
Emma Zhou  
Social Worker

**"Singing is my biggest hobby.** No matter how busy I am, I work with my vocal coach regularly and devote time to practicing each week. Singing provides both physical and mental health benefits, and it allows me to bring joy to others."



Palak Bhatt  
Woman to Woman Volunteer

**"I set aside time for reflection and grounding.** Whether through journaling, a walk in nature, or sipping tea while listening to calming music, I've learned to embrace these quiet moments."



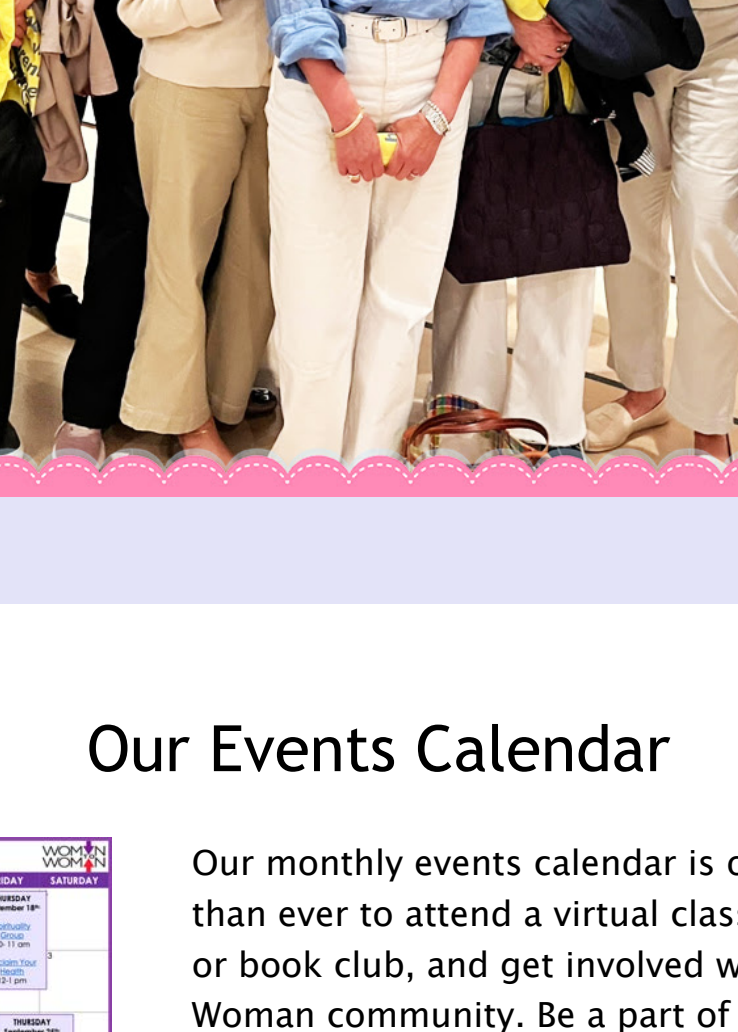
Alida Figueroa  
Gynecologic Cancer Survivor

**"I love listening to praise and worship music.** It provides both spiritual and emotional benefits, giving me a sense of peace, calm, and a closer relationship with God."

**September is Gynecologic Cancer Awareness Month—together, we honor the fighters, support survivors, and raise awareness for every woman's health.**



## Ask the Expert Anika Jagasia on Protein and Spices



**Anika Jagasia**, a graduate student in clinical nutrition at the New York Institute of Technology, is passionate about nutrition-focused wellness and sharing what she's learned with women affected by gynecologic cancer. She often uses everyday ingredients like spices to show how food can support both wellness and mood. As the cozy season returns, we asked Anika to share some of the ways we can practice self-love through spices and other foods that enhance mood and well-being:

### How can we incorporate spices more into our diet?

I like to share simple recipes that women can easily weave into their diets. For example, adding cinnamon to a smoothie or oatmeal is a quick way to enjoy a spice that may help lower blood sugar levels and support cognitive function.

### There's a lot of buzz about protein. What does protein do for our body?

Protein is important for muscle repair, immune function, and even hormone regulation. Oftentimes, we aren't fully aware of the many benefits of being properly fueled and having adequate protein intake. Without it, we can feel fatigued or experience emotional crashes.

### How can we consume protein more easily?

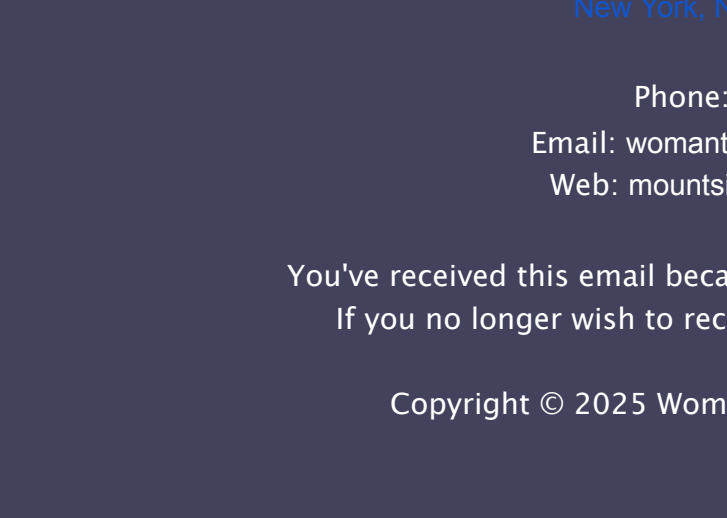
There are plenty of protein-rich options, including Greek yogurt, cottage cheese, and tofu. Some people also add hemp seeds or seed butters to their protein shakes. As a pescatarian, I like to incorporate canned sardines into dips for extra protein and flavor.

### Anika's Protein Recipe Recommendations:

[Almond Butter & Banana Protein Smoothie](#)  
[Sardine Dip](#)

[Browse Woman to Woman's YouTube channel for videos on nutrition.](#)

## We're Proud to Report Championing Women's Health during Nurses Month



Our fantastic survivor volunteers, **Vivian Port, Bonni Braverman, and Susan Engel**, staffed an information table at the **Women's Health** event in May, which drew hundreds of attendees in honor of Nurses Month. They spoke with visitors about survivorship, shared handouts on gynecologic cancer and women's health, and spread their positive energy to all who stopped by, including Godsfavour Gillet, Nurse Administrator (second from left)!

## Spotlight Live Summer Gathering at MoMA

The amazing volunteers of Woman to Woman made time in June for a very special outing—a **guided tour at the Museum of Modern Art!** The tour was followed by an afternoon tea with pastries and beverages. Everyone looked absolutely ravishing. A change of scenery and a dose of culture are always a self-love recipe we can all relish!



## Our Events Calendar



Our monthly events calendar is online, making it easier than ever to attend a virtual class, join a support group or book club, and get involved with our Woman to Woman community. Be a part of online and in-person opportunities for learning, healing, celebration, and connection.

[Bookmark our calendar and stay up-to-date on Woman to Woman events.](#)

Please email [womantowoman@mountsinai.org](mailto:womantowoman@mountsinai.org) if you would like more information.

**Woman to Woman's patient assistance fund is completely philanthropically funded. If you would like to continue our legacy of support, [please click here.](#)**

## Artful Pause

We celebrate self-love in many forms, especially those we can partake in with our pets. In this issue, we're sharing a darling comic by the wonderful **Maria Scrivan**. Go ahead and stretch out on the grass—paw-sitively better if it's next to your sweet pup!



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