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# CNY

**INSIDE**

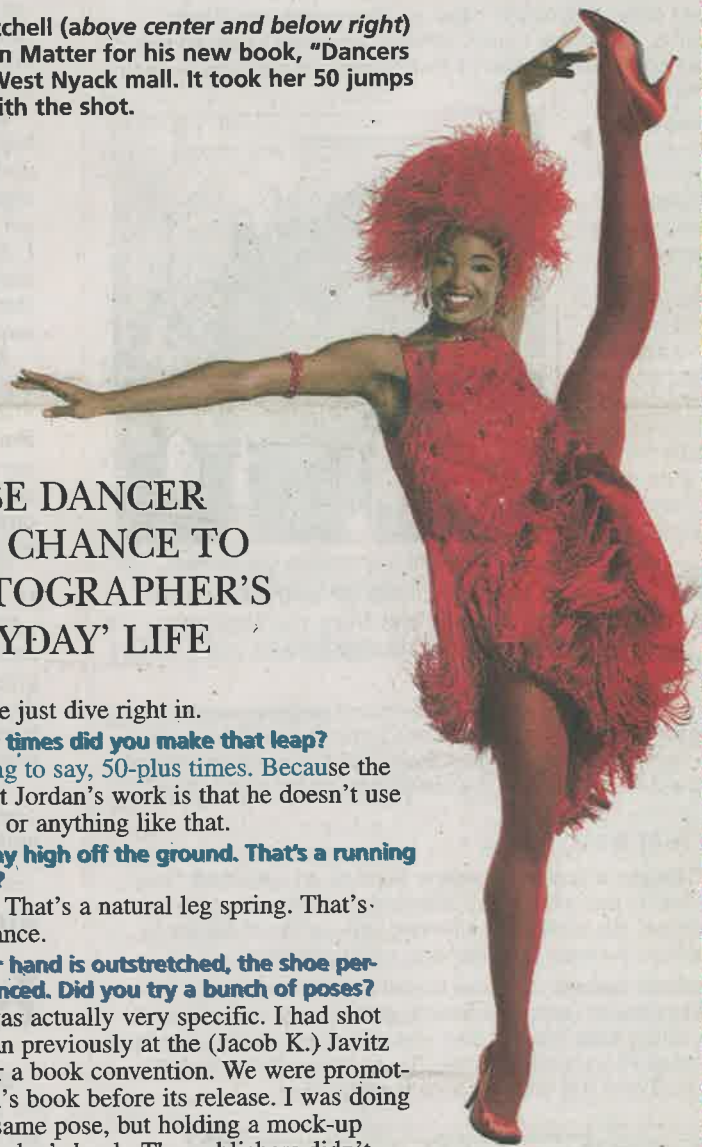
Elmcrest Children's Center seeks donations of gifts for children at the center. **I-3**



Alvin Ailey dancer Aisha Mitchell (above center and below right) was photographed by Jordan Matter for his new book, "Dancers Among Us," at a store in a West Nyack mall. It took her 50 jumps before Matter was happy with the shot.

# 50 LEAPS, 1 PHOTO

HOW A SYRACUSE DANCER JUMPED AT THE CHANCE TO APPEAR IN PHOTOGRAPHER'S STUDY OF 'EVERYDAY' LIFE



**By Hart Seely**  
Staff writer

Early on, Aisha Mitchell found that she loved to dance. And the 2003 Nottingham High School graduate has never stopped. In 2008, she joined the renowned Alvin Ailey Dance Theater in New York City. Mitchell is currently performing in the Ailey company's winter-holiday series, which runs through January.

But one of her coolest moments — at least lately — happened on a page rather than a stage. Mitchell posed — if that is right word — for a shot in photographer Jordan Matter's "Dancers Among Us: A Celebration of Joy in the Everyday" (Workman Publishing Co., 2012).

The book is a collection of photos that depict dancers intervening on otherwise mundane scenes of American life.

Look closely above at Mitchell's arching leap in "Head Over Heels," and you might wonder: How did they do it?

The dancer spoke via phone from New York City.

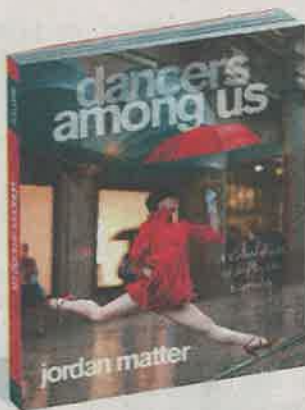
**First, is that a real shoe store?**

I'm going to refrain from saying the store's name, but, yeah, it took place in a mall in West Nyack. That day, I came unprepared for the shoot. I didn't have the clothes Jordan wanted me to wear. So I was, "OK, mind if I just go grab an outfit?" And he was, "Sure, just make sure it's bright, colorful clothes." So he's in this store, waiting with his son, who is about 6, while I try on clothes and grab a quick outfit. When I come out, he says, "Let's try to shoot right here, if we don't get caught."

So I turn around, and there's this big illuminated shoe rack, with all these flannel tennis shoes, stuff like that — and one pair of heels. I say, "OK, I see where you're going." And we went with it.

**You just started shooting?**

We just started shooting. At first, we tried to be a little reserved, not make a commotion, not



draw attention — which is hard, because we're in the middle of a clothing store in a big mall.

**So those people, they're not models? They look a bit dumbfounded.**

Yeah, they're like, "What is this girl doing?"

Jordan is taking about 10 shots at a time, and whenever an employee walks by, he tries to hide this massive camera, all while trying to get his son to play in the corner. We go like that for about 20 minutes, when we start to realize that none of the employees seem concerned. I mean, nobody's telling us to

stop. So we just dive right in.

**How many times did you make that leap?**

I'm going to say, 50-plus times. Because the thing about Jordan's work is that he doesn't use Photoshop or anything like that.

**You are way high off the ground. That's a running leap, right?**

No. No. That's a natural leg spring. That's how we dance.

**Wow. Your hand is outstretched, the shoe perfectly balanced. Did you try a bunch of poses?**

No, it was actually very specific. I had shot with Jordan previously at the (Jacob K.) Javitz Center, for a book convention. We were promoting Jordan's book before its release. I was doing the exact same pose, but holding a mock-up copy of Jordan's book. The publishers didn't want to include it in his actual book, so Jordan asked me to redo the shoot in a different location. So we started with that pose and worked to make it happen.

**What was the most physically difficult part of the leap?**

I think it was having my hand steady, as a platform, holding the shoe.

**Any slight jiggle, and it wouldn't work?**

Right. And if the angle was just a little askew, it wouldn't have the same effect.

**Did those people ever ask what you were doing?**

No. At the end, Jordan was like, "Maybe we can use the shot with them." Hé went over and asked for their permission.

**Were you self-conscious? Was there a crowd?**

No, there wasn't a crowd. Believe it or not,

CHARITY NOTEBOOK

# Elmcrest Center seeks gifts for resident children

JAMES T. MULDER  
STAFF WRITER



Elmcrest Children's Center in Syracuse is seeking donations of gifts for children at the center who will be spending the holidays away from their families.

Children go to Elmcrest for a variety of behavioral, emotional and mental health issues. Others have serious disabilities and complex medical problems. Many of them come from families with limited resources.

The center is seeking the following items: model cars and trucks with non-toxic glue; CD players with radios, wireless speakers, ear buds and headphones; sport balls; gym bags and backpacks; T-shirts and caps with team logos; crayons, coloring books, sketch pads and art supplies; craft items; board games and playing cards; hacky sacks; hot wheel miniature cards, Legos and Knexs; jigsaw puzzles; hats, scarves and gloves for boys and girls; robes, slippers and pajamas for teenage girls; nail polish and remover; make-up bags with make-up for teenage girls; girls body spray and lotions; journals, photo albums and scrapbooking materials; twin bed sheets, towels and comforters; kitchen items, baking pans, mixing and serving bowls; Tops, Wegmans and Target gift cards; umbrellas; movie passes and Centro bus passes.

Items can be dropped off 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday at the Elmcrest administration building, 960 Salt Springs Road, Syracuse.

**Syracuse Hurricane Sandy relief fundraiser**  
What: Syracuse Hurricane

Got an event?

Send us information about your charity event at least two weeks before it occurs. Submissions should be as brief as possible. Email them to James T. Mulder at [jmulder@syracuse.com](mailto:jmulder@syracuse.com) or mail them to him at The Post-Standard, P.O. Box 4915, Syracuse, NY 13221-4915.

Sandy relief fundraiser at the Syracuse Crunch vs. Adirondack Phantoms game, 7:30 p.m. Friday at the Onondaga County War Memorial in downtown Syracuse

**About the event:** Tickets are \$15; \$5 from each ticket will benefit Operation Christmas in the Rockaways organization. To order tickets, call Potrikus at 720-4251 or Stephen Fiorella at 473-4444, ext. 11.

Hospice seeking volunteers

Hospice of Central New York is seeking volunteers who are emotionally mature and compassionate to provide end-of-life support to patients and their families. Hospice will offer training for volunteers 9:30 a.m. to noon on Mondays, Jan. 14 through March 4. The deadline for registering is Jan. 7. For more information, contact Michelle Devlin at Hospice, 634-1111.

Baby Easton fundraiser

More than 300 people attended a recent fundraiser for Easton Friedel, a 3-month-old boy from Weedsport who is suffering from a rare skin disease. The event, held at the Palace Theater in Eastwood, raised more than \$10,000. The money will help pay his ongoing medical care and expenses.

# Nottingham graduate leaps into new book

NOTTINGHAM, FROM PAGE I-1

people were just doing their shopping. A typical day. Only the people who were actually looking for shoes were kind of caught off guard. Self-conscious? Definitely not.

**Your face has a straightforward look. Did you toy around with smiles and grimaces.**

We played a little bit. There was conversation about whether I should be excited about this shoe, or should I be joyous? He said, no, it should be as if I had found the perfect shoe — nobody else's.

**All about the shoe?**  
It was all about the shoe. And it was all mine.

**Fifty jumps?**  
Easily. Easily. He would say something wasn't right and reposition stuff on the back shelves, stuff like that.

**So what's in the future? The shows and the excitement, right?**

The shows and the excitement, yup. Then we have a couple weeks off, and then start our national tour again.

**Any time for Syracuse?**  
Most likely. I like to come back to Syracuse. But the funny thing is, I still don't have my license. I'm still working on the little things. I can get behind the wheel.

**Well, you'll always have this really neat picture.**

Yeah, and I think it's really cool how much momentum this project has gained. There were no guarantees that I'd be in the book. A lot of dance moves were left out. So I'm really excited about the process — for Jordan. It was a team effort. And my favorite part that it made Oprah's Favorite Things. You know how she has that list? I'm really excited about that. I mean: Oh, my gosh! At least indirectly, I'm one of Oprah's Favorite Things.



Jacquelyn Martin / AP

REGINA BENJAMIN, Surgeon General of the United States, is interviewed earlier this month after speaking about health disparities in Washington. Last year, Benjamin observed publicly that women must stop allowing concern about their hair to prevent them from exercising.

# Battling Obesity

## Black women take charge with dialogue, action

By Stacy A. Anderson  
The Associated Press

Nicole Ari Parker was motivated by frustration. For Star Jones, it was a matter of life or death. Toni Carey wanted a fresh start after a bad breakup.

All three have launched individual campaigns that reflect an emerging priority for African-American women: finding creative ways to combat the obesity epidemic that threatens their longevity.

African-American women have the highest obesity rate of any group of Americans. Four out of five black women have a body mass index above 25 percent, the threshold for being overweight or obese, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. By comparison, nearly two-thirds of Americans overall are in this category, the CDC said.

Many black women seem to not be bothered that they are generally heavier than other Americans.

Calorie-rich, traditional soul food is a staple in the diets of many African-Americans, and curvy black women are embraced positively through slang praising them as "thick" with a "little meat on their bones," or through songs like the Commodore's "Brick House" or "Bootylicious" by Destiny's Child. A study by the Kaiser Family Foundation and The Washington Post earlier this year found that 66 percent of overweight black women had high self-esteem, while 41 percent of average-sized or thin white women had high self-esteem.

Still, that doesn't mean black women reject the need to become healthier.

Historically black, all-female Spelman College in Atlanta is disbanding its NCAA teams and devoting those resources to a campus-wide wellness program. In an open letter announcing Spelman's "wellness revolution," president Beverly Daniel Tatum cited a campus analysis that found many of Spelman's 2,100 students already have high blood pressure, Type 2 diabetes or other chronic ailments.

"Spelman has an opportunity to change the health trajectory of our students and, through their influence, the communities from which they come," Tatum's letter said.

Jones, who underwent open heart surgery in 2010 at age 47 and now



TV PERSONALITY Star Jones is shown above left in 2005 and then above right in 2012. Jones underwent open heart surgery three years ago at age 47 and now urges awareness about heart disease among black women.

choices.

Nutritionist and author Rovenia M. Brock, known professionally as Dr. Ro, agrees with Jones. She said getting active is only about 20 percent of the fight against obesity. The rest revolves around how much people eat.

"Our plates are killing us," she said.

Brock said "food deserts," or urban areas that lack quality supermarkets, are a real obstacle. She suggested getting around that by carpooling with neighbors to stores in areas with higher-quality grocery options or buying food in bulk. She also suggested growing herbs and vegetables in window-box gardens.

"Stop focusing on what's not there, or what you think is not there," Brock said. "We have to get out of this wimpy, 'woe is me' mentality."

While first lady Michelle Obama has encouraged exercise through her "Let's Move" campaign targeting childhood obesity, the spark for this current interest among black women may have been comments last year by Surgeon General Regina Benjamin,

who observed publicly that women must stop allowing concern about their hair to prevent them from exercising.

Some black women visit salons as often as every two weeks, investing several hours and anywhere from \$50 to hundreds of dollars each visit — activity that, according to the Black Owned Beauty Supply Association, helps fuel a \$9 billion black hair care and cosmetics industry.

In an interview during a health conference in Washington last week, Benjamin said the damage sweat can inflict on costly hairstyles can affect women's willingness to work out, and she hopes to change that. She goes to beauty industry conferences to encourage stylists to create exercise-friendly hairdos.

"I wouldn't say we use it as an excuse, we use it as a barrier," Benjamin said. "And that's not one of the barriers anymore. We're always going to have problems with balancing our lives, but we could take that one out."

Parker, an actress who starred in "A Streetcar Named Desire" on Broadway earlier this year, understands this dilemma well. Out of personal frustration over maintaining both her work-out and her hair, she created "Save Your Do" Gymwrap — a headband that can be wrapped around the hair in a way that minimizes sweat and preserves hairstyles.

