



A Conversation with Ashley Albert

BY RUTH YASKO

You've probably heard **Ashley Albert** on commercials for Lucky Charms, Coca-Cola, and McDonalds. As a voiceover artist, she's also brought characters to life on animated television series like *Daria* (MTV), *Courage the Cowardly Dog* (Cartoon Network), and *Bubble Guppies* (Nick Jr.). She's also front-woman for the award-winning children's rock 'n' roll band The Jimmies and the founder of a line of custom Twitter ID jewelry. And did we mention she recently became the co-owner of what may be New York City's first shuffleboard club—a business she started after falling in love with the sport while on her way to judging a barbecue contest in Florida?

Artist, entrepreneur, and Northwestern Mutual client Ashley Albert has several professions, multiple interests, and more ideas than she can use. She talked to us about what inspires her, how she inspires others, and the big idea that connects it all.

CL: You're involved in so many things. How do you summarize what you do?

AA: My business card says that I'm an "idea-man." It refers to the fact that my superpower is coming up with ideas and seeing how they could work.

CL: How do you decide which ideas to pursue?

AA: For a long time, I didn't. There were so many ideas that it was hard to decide



Ashley Albert and members of The Jimmies—(from left) Dan Weiner, Kiki Barrera, and Darren Graff—AKA the “guys in ties.”

“There’s no higher goal for me with The Jimmies than to let little girls know that they can be funny, smart, and interesting.” —Ashley Albert

smart, capable people. I advise them from behind the scenes and help them use my connections with the understanding that they need to drive the project and make it their own.

CL: Tell us about your band, The Jimmies. Now there’s an idea that has connected you to thousands of people.

AA: I’ve gotten a lot of fan mail from parents who say that their daughters walk around the house singing Jimmie songs. It makes them so happy that their kids are singing the message to themselves even if they’re too young to fully understand it. It makes me really happy, too, because there’s no higher goal for me with The Jimmies than to let little girls know that they can be funny, smart, and interesting.

CL: Do you have a favorite Jimmies song?

AA: I know that I’m fully and authentically expressed in all of The Jimmies’ songs, because I laugh out loud when I write the lyrics! However, there’s one song called “Bonfire” that feels like a personal anthem to me. It’s about strife, struggle, and being strong. I choked up during recording

because it felt like a victory just being there in the studio singing the song.

CL: How do you balance everything?

AA: I get great joy from almost everything I’m doing; so little of it feels like “work.” So much of what I do is intertwined: My work life, my social life, my creative life all come together like the swirls on a giant sticky bun!

CL: What have you learned along the way?

AA: I am a recovering perfectionist ... an aspiring “good enough-er!” Finding a way to accept that things can be done “not my way” and still be done well was a hard lesson for me to learn. If you want your idea to grow, you need to learn how to trust the people around you and encourage them to find their own version of excellence.

CL: Bringing an idea to life seems like it contains an element of risk. Are you a risk-taker?

AA: I wouldn’t call myself a risk-taker—I recognize that there’s a difference between emotional risk and financial risk. Something I’ve realized about myself is that I can’t do anything halfway.

So by the time I’ve decided to pursue an idea, I’m confident that it’s a *really good idea* so the emotional risk in my mind isn’t really there.

CL: What are you working on now?

AA: I took a break from performing with The Jimmies while I opened the shuffleboard club, and I’m looking forward to getting back on stage when the band performs at Lollapalooza this summer. I’ve also been asked to write a children’s book based on The Jimmies.

CL: Any advice for others who are on their own road less traveled?

AA: I often tell people that the only difference between them and me is that I had ideas and I followed through on them. A large part of inspiring others is helping them understand that the only thing they really have to be afraid of isn’t failure as much as it is not following through on the ideas that are important to them. Look at it this way: If you’re not pursuing something that’s going to enrich your life and bring you ultimate joy ... then isn’t staying where you are a failure?

which ones to follow through on. Over time, I’ve realized that what really interests me is making meaningful connections with people. Knowing what truly makes me happy enables me to instantly filter out ideas that don’t align with my purpose. For example, any idea that would require me to sit alone in my apartment isn’t going to be right for me, because it won’t lead to more connections with smart, funny, interesting people.

CL: What do you do with the ideas you don’t use?

AA: I’ve started what I call a “follow-through farm.” I give the ideas to really

Ruth Yasko is an award-winning writer and Northwestern Mutual client who has professionally mentored artists and entrepreneurs. Her 4-year-old daughter loves The Jimmies’ song “The Peanut Butter Polka.”



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ABOUT THIS MAGAZINE

Creative Living's editorial mission is to bring you thought-provoking articles and inspiring ideas to enrich your daily life. In each issue, we also provide helpful tips and tools to help you achieve financial security.

This exclusive quarterly magazine is a reflection of the Northwestern Mutual community, with advice and vision from the people we serve. We encourage you to join the conversation and share your story with us.



Game Changers

Much of my life is spent with screens and keyboards. But this spring, I sat in on a botanical drawing class. My assignment was to draw a single narcissus bulb. Easy, right? Not so much. After 20 minutes struggling to capture the bulb's curving surfaces in pencil, I felt as if I had never looked closely at anything before. The work required only the most basic of tools—my eyes, a piece of paper, a sharp pencil—but it turned out to be a game changer for me. I had new eyes.

In this issue, you will meet individuals who have changed their games in a variety of ways. These members of the Northwestern Mutual community have unleashed the creativity to hand-craft beautiful products in a manufactured world. They've summoned the bravery to shift careers, and the vision to pass a family business on to the next generation. They've reached within for the compassion and conviction to help underserved children. And, as in the case of our Outlook columnist Anthony Norelli, M.D., they've found the will to embark on lifestyle change.

We hope you find these stories inspiring. And if you have a story from your own life that you'd like to share, please contact the Northwestern Mutual representative whose name appears on this page. We want to hear about your game-changing moments.

Catherine Dawn Grace

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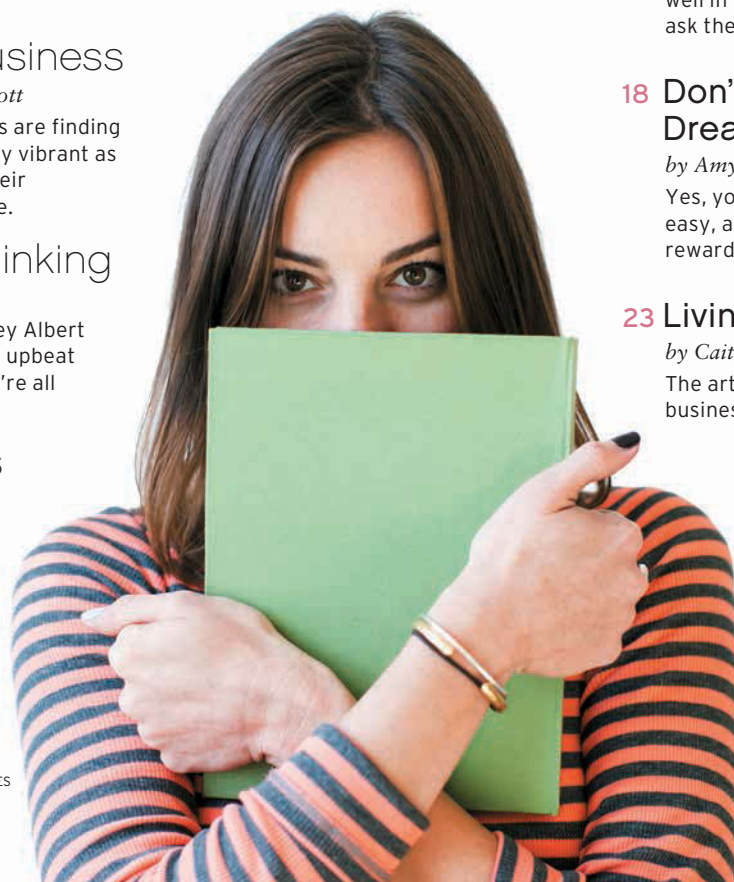
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Yes, you can change your life. It's not easy, and it takes planning. But the rewards are incalculable.

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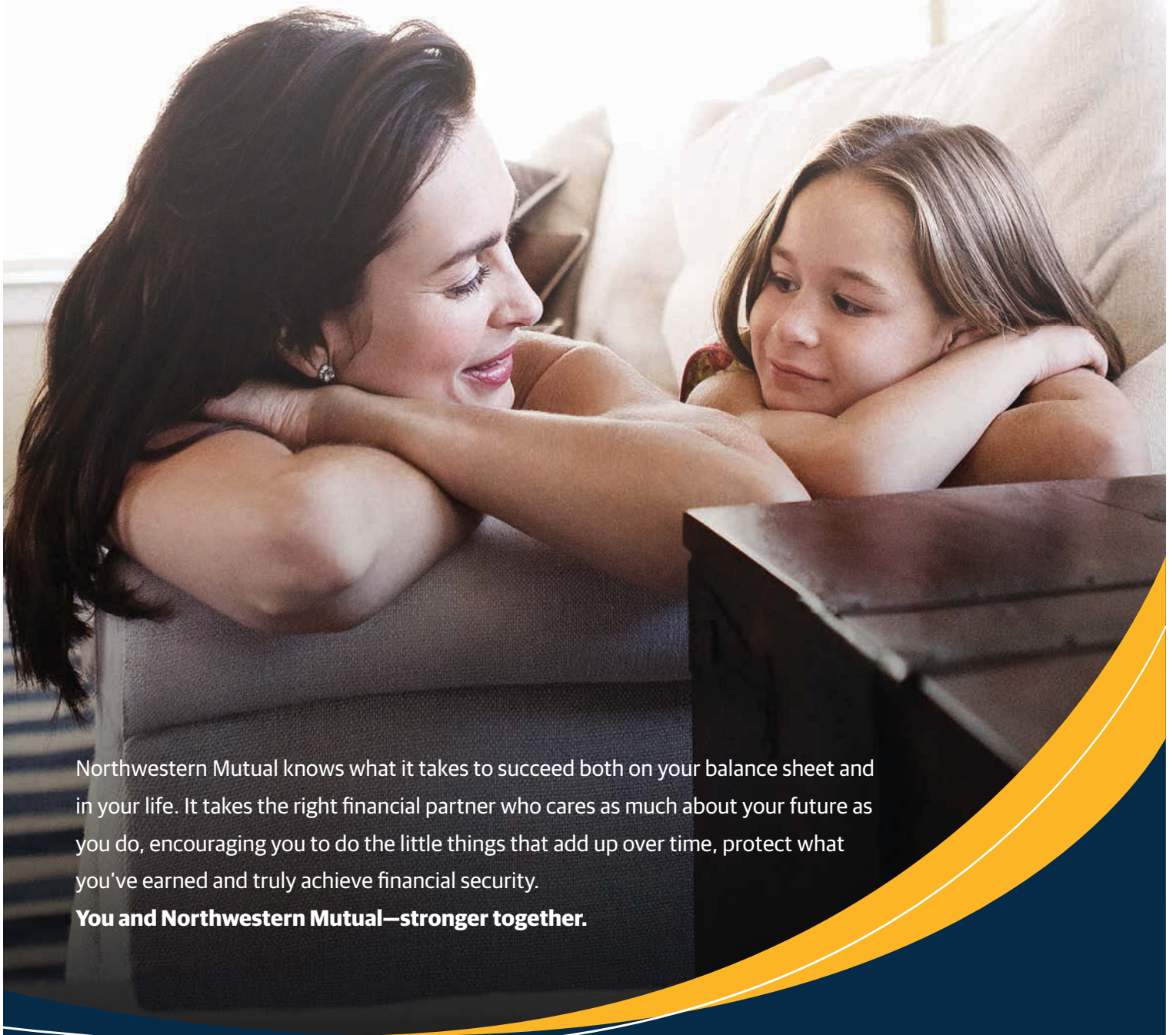


LEFT: ERIC SCHMIDT/WISE RIVER PRODUCTIONS; RIGHT: KATE MELTON; BOTTOM: JESSICA PETERSON/GLOW IMAGES

Cover: Dion Julian Lattimore, master tailor and image consultant, at a studio in downtown L.A.'s Fashion District

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