

# PRODUCT OF HEROES

**web:** [colleenkellyalexander.com](http://colleenkellyalexander.com) | **twitter:** @colleenkellyal | **facebook:** [colleenkellyalexander](https://www.facebook.com/colleenkellyalexander)

## Five Ways to Celebrate National Bike Month Year-Round

By cycling we are not only helping ourselves to be healthier, we are allowing our planet to breathe better. Right now the CO2 levels in the Earth's atmosphere are treacherous. Check out [350.org](http://350.org) for more information, especially the video "The 350 Movement: 90 Seconds, No Words".

- 1) Commit to riding your bike once a week instead of driving somewhere
- 2) As a cyclist, commit to ride safely: ride together, there is strength in numbers, WEAR YOUR HELMET. SPEAK UP about safety; it concerns everyone who shares the road.
- 3) Watch the clip Dear Motorist at [www.dearmotorist.com](http://www.dearmotorist.com) and commit to being a safe driver
- 4) Ask some of your local councilmen to ride to work one day.



## Motivational & Authentic Public Speaking

As spring slowly becomes summer, life continues to renew both itself and us, presenting new challenges, blessings, and opportunities for both growth and gratitude. Over the last year, I've come to the end of my surgeries and embarked on exciting work for the Red Cross and Bike Walk CT. We have also secured a publisher for our book, so be sure to keep an eye out on new offerings from Hachette Publishing in 2017 – and of course be sure to stay in touch on social media where we will be sharing more information as we have it.

Since the last newsletter, my surgery count has been brought up to thirty – and I'm calling it quits. Expanders were placed in and removed from my body in three locations in my leg and hip. The surgeons made a large incision under the tissue to place the three expander bags. My skin was then closed over the bags, along with drain tubes that had to stay in place for a few weeks until my skin accepted the implants and healed. Then we started the over two-month-long expansion process, where I went to Yale twice a week for saline injections in all three ports. This process stretched and

5) Talk to your local municipalities about making your community roadways safer. When roads are being constructed have bike lanes put in, sharrows painted, etc.

### Five Steps to Build Better Mental Health Awareness

- 1) Sleep. Our bodies require downtime to refuel, recharge, and be active for the next day. Keep your electronics away from your bed, and try to create a peaceful, safe space, that is clutter- and distraction-free so that you can focus on rest and relaxation. The main focus in my bedroom is simply a clean bed.
- 2) Use oils. Many of the "tree" oils like sandalwood, balsam, arborvitae, etc. are wonderful for promoting tranquility and wellness. Lavender is also a good option. I diffuse oils every night at my bedside because, even when we sleep, we fuel our bodies. If the air we breathe contains healing oils that can permeate our beings, our minds and bodies can recover that much more. Doterra got me back on my feet: <https://www.mydoterra.com/colleenkellyalexander/#/>
- 3) Eat well. I admit I love a good cookie, or a tasty

expanded my skin to three times the size it was. Once this goal was met, I went back in for surgery where they opened all of the incision sites again, cut out several feet of scarred and badly damaged skin and then pulled my newly stretched skin over the areas that were removed so I would have a healthier leg. I was then off my leg again for a few months. I feel rather relieved and very thankful to be done with the surgeries, though at some point I may get the bone mass in my hip removed and take out the screws in my pelvis.. I also feel a little disappointed as I hoped to have less pain and more range of motion than I have at this point. I can always finish having surgeries if I want to, my body just feels tired from what it has been through over the last four and a half years.



### *Moving Forward: Gratitude Through Giving*

Ending the rounds of surgery means being able to start discovering a new normal, both pushing and accepting my limitations, while finding new avenues through which to reach out to more people about the things I am most passionate about. May is both National Bike Month and National Mental Health

beer but these things need to be the exception and not the norm. When we fuel our bodies with plant-based foods, organic and lean proteins, and minimize our sugar intakes, we can keep our blood pressure and anxiety levels a little lower (not to mention our weight). Food is fuel and medicine. Think about how you take care of your car when you give it an oil change or refuel it. The same is true for the complex living machinery that is our bodies and minds.

4) Exercise. I know it is hard sometimes. I get tired, sore, depressed, frustrated, etc. too, and sometimes getting myself to exercise and be active is a huge challenge. But every time I do I release many endorphins that help to boost my mood, increase circulation, and heal!

5) Communicate. Talk, write, share, sing, cry and be one with where you are. I write a lot and talk to random "new friends" all of the time. None of us are strangers, we are just friends who haven't met yet.



Awareness Month, two things very close to my heart, as is the Red Cross. I have worked for and with the Red Cross for many years in different capacities, but after my trauma I mostly travel to speak pro bono at events, schools, and businesses about the importance of blood donations. Sean and I have both worked to help get donations and funding for the Red Cross to help with education and statewide support, and organized several public relations events and blood drives for the Red Cross. We also have been trained in disaster relief and shelter support, and worked with Services to the Armed Forces Program. I am very honored and grateful to share that this June I will be awarded the American Red Cross Community Impact Award at the 11th annual Red, White & YOU Ball on Saturday, June 11, 2016, at the Connecticut Convention Center. This award brings full circle the idea that not only do we all bleed red as one human family, but that I am truly a product of heroes, and proud to continue working to advocate for and educate people about the life saving efforts of this organization.

Want to get involved with the Red Cross but don't know where to start? First, call 1-800-RED-CROSS or go to the website at [www.redcross.org](http://www.redcross.org). There is a simple screening process to find out if you are eligible to donate blood, and if you are, please do so. If you cannot, there are so many ways to volunteer! You can help at blood drives, become trained in CPR and First Aid (and I can attest CPR WORKS!), or undertake other trainings such as disaster relief, fire safety prevention/fire relief, service to the armed forces, shelter support, or a myriad of other things. There is something for everyone who wants to help and give back.

In addition to our work with the Red Cross, Sean and I are on the board of Bike Walk CT. Through this, we have organized public educational events such as Bike to Work days and National Ride of Silence, educated the public about safe cycling and helmet safety. We have also helped to lobby for various bills and organized meet-ups in communities around the state to bring cyclists together and learn how we can work within communities to make our streets safer.

### *Finding the New Normal: Lessons in Galveston*

This year so far also brought me to a new milestone, one which I am not sure if I was fully prepared for: on April 10, 2016, in

## What's on our plates?

### **Tomatoes and Cilantro, with a Massaged Kale Salad**

- 1) Take a large head of fresh kale, wash it well, and place it in a bowl.
- 2) Remove the seed and skin of two large avocados and place them in the same bowl.
- 3) Rip apart the kale while simultaneously mashing the avocados with your hands, until the kale is in bite sized pieces and the avocado completely coats the kale.
- 4) Sprinkle with lemon juice, sea salt, black pepper, and a little nutritional yeast
- 5) In another bowl, dice several large fresh tomatoes and a large handful of cilantro
- 6) Grill or oven-roast corn, and remove the kernels from the cob. Add these to the tomatoes and cilantro
- 7) Add black beans, a drizzle of olive oil, juice from one lime, salt, pepper, and a few cloves of minced garlic, to taste.
- 8) Enjoy a healthy meal with all the best flavors of the spring and summer (these are also delicious with some salmon).

Galveston, TX, I had my first DNF (did not finish) during the Memorial Hermann Ironman 70.3 Texas. As an endurance competitor, I know that so much of this sort of competition is mental. Can we master our minds and our bodies and push all sorts of human limits. We take precautions and make preparations – for me in this race, I thought that if I only biked and ran I would be able to handle the competition and push myself while not taking a greater risk with the swim also. But the bike ride was tough with intense winds; I started retaining too much fluid and developed a bad headache at mile 7.5 of the run. Dizzy and disoriented, and with no need to pee (so very much dehydrated), I thought it better to just honor where I was and pull myself from the race. It felt both freeing and grown-up; I say that taking care of yourself is not backing down, and in this moment I respected myself and my journey enough to live that truth. But at the same time, I've never backed down before, so that was a little bit difficult to come to terms with, and not be a little disappointed and sad about. But at the end of the day, I feel so good about that decision. Instead of 70.3 I did 63.5 and feel so thankful and grateful for the experience.

And that is really the lesson of the year: as I move forward in my new normal I am going to find new limits, and accepting them is going to be just as important to growing and living authentically as pushing the limits is. Honoring ourselves, whether in terms of our hearts and souls, our bodies, or our mental health allows us to not only grow as people, but be grateful for who we are and what we can bring to others. When we recognize our capacity to give with gratitude, we become closer as a human family. Learning about my new limits will let me train in ways to become stronger and eventually surpass them, which adds a level of excitement to the upcoming season. Some of the events I am working towards include the Atlantic City Half Iron Man as a Delmo Sports Ambassador, Rev 3 Quassy Olympic Aqua Bike, Escape Lewes Open Water Swim, Tri the Wildwoods, AC Triathlon, and the Cedar Lake Triathlon series. This product of heroes can't wait to keep moving forward.