

BALANCE

Women embrace reinvention

Convention at Navy Pier helps refocus lives

By Terri Yablonsky Stat
SPECIAL TO THE TRIBUNE

There's another act in store for Marianne Dougherty.

After a lengthy publishing career in the beauty and spa industry, the 62-year-old divorced mother and grandmother recently moved to Chicago from New York to head up a beauty Web site. Dougherty has "reinvented" herself before, starting afresh in Pittsburgh, Los Angeles and New York before coming to Chicago.

She, like many other women, finds herself ready for change, whether careerwise, physically or spiritually. Regardless of what led them down this path — job loss, the end of a relationship, a longing to contribute in a meaningful way, simple restlessness — they all share a desire to self-improve, reposition and thrive.

On Monday, Dougherty and more than 500 others attended More Magazine's Reinvention Convention at Navy Pier. The all-day convention — held for the first time in Chicago — helped women get their groove back as they listened to speakers ranging from a money management expert to a career coach.

"For women, reinvention is part of the evolution toward becoming a productive, interesting, connected human being," said Lesley Jane Seymour, editor in chief of More. "And it can take many forms — from revising your shopping habits, to taking a healthier approach to eating, to figuring out how to add meaning to your life."

The conventions, which began in 2007, allow women to hear from experts and from women "who've been there and done that who can share their struggles and successes," said Seymour.

When life in New York took its toll on Dougherty, she happily accepted a job as editorial director of behindthechair.com in



Chris Coyne, left, of Hinsdale hugs best selling author and TV personality Dr. Pamela Peeke at a book signing during More Magazine's Reinvention Convention at Navy Pier on Monday. CHRIS SALATA/PHOTOS FOR THE TRIBUNE



Chicagoan Robert-Eric West of Giorgio Armani Cosmetics gives a free mini-makeover to LaDonna Jewell of Toledo, Ohio, at the convention.

West Chicago. She packed her bags and drove with her cat through snow and ice storms to the Windy City. Today, she lives in St. Charles and is seeking an agent for her first novel.

"My daily life is not as stressed and harried as it was," she said. "I've joined Weight Watchers and want to find the 'old me.' My theory is that you can reinvent yourself anytime you want."

Dougherty attended the social media session led by Julia Angwin, the Wall Street Journal's technology editor. "I learned how you can use Twitter and other

social networks to promote your small business," she said.

She also resonated with Olympic swimmer Dara Torres, who discussed being competitive and pushing oneself. "There are benefits to maturity and experience," Dougherty said. "There are things young kids don't have. We've figured it out."

Chris E. Coyne, 57, of Hinsdale took a vacation day from her job to attend the conference. She's a customer service representative at a connector company in Lisle. "I envisioned this as one big energy room, because when wom-

en get together it's exciting," said Coyne.

In her former life, Coyne was a corporate executive wife, stay-at-home mother who raised four children and was an active volunteer. Three years ago, she divorced after 28 years of marriage.

Coyne's in the process of reinventing. "I started to think about how I want to live the next 30 years of my life," she said. "I've set some goals — stay healthy, get sleep, connect with family, read more, do things that will re-energize me."

One highlight for Coyne was meeting Dr. Pamela Peeke, author of "Fight Fat After Forty."

"Her book changed my life," said Coyne. "My looks and attitude about living a healthy lifestyle have changed for the better." She now understands the dangers of emotional eating, why time of day is important for eating and foods to avoid.

Coyne also was inspired by actress Dana Delany who plays Katherine Mayfair on "Desperate Housewives." "She talked about embracing change," said Coyne. "We're all concerned about handling change but Dana Delany has embraced it. She also exercises every day and does yoga. Movement is life."

NOTES

FREE LEGAL CLINIC

Volunteer attorneys from the Cook County Bar Association Foundation will provide counseling in the areas of mortgage foreclosure defense and unemployment compensation benefits. 9:30 a.m. Saturday, Chicago Black United Communities, 330 E. 37th St. Call 773-548-2000.

JAPANESE EMBROIDERY

Karen L. Plater, a certified teacher in traditional Japanese embroidery, will share information on technique and design skills. 1 p.m. Friday, Chicago Public Library, Blackstone branch, 4904 S. Lake Park Ave. Free. Call 312-747-0511.

READING

Osie Gabriel Adelfang and Emma Rosenthal read and discuss the anthology "Shifting Sands: Jewish Women Confront the Israeli Occupation." 4:30 p.m. Sunday, Women and Children First, 5233 N. Clark St. Free. Call 773-769-9299.

GREEN FESTIVAL

Learn about greener living. 10 a.m. Saturday and 11 a.m. Sunday. Navy Pier, 600 E. Grand Ave. \$10 one-day pass, \$15 weekend pass. Visit greenfestivals.org/Chicago.

CAREER TRAINING

Chicago Financial Women will meet to talk about transitioning from corporate work to the nonprofit sector. 5:30 p.m. Wednesday, 1 S. Dearborn St., 20th floor. \$25. To register, visit chicagofw.org.

BUSINESS EXPO

Child-care entrepreneurs are invited to attend panel discussions and workshops and network with veteran providers. Presented in Spanish and English by the Women's Business Development Center. 8 a.m. Saturday, Chicago Hilton & Towers, 720 S. Michigan Ave. \$55, \$65 on-site. Call 312-853-3477, ext. 29 or visit wbdc.org.

Send information about women's events at least two weeks in advance to city@tribune.com.

Extended trip went well for mom — and daughter, 10

"I started to forget what your face looked like," my 10 year-old daughter said as we walked out of the airport. I'd just arrived home after being gone for nearly two weeks — the longest trip I'd taken since becoming a mother:

Had my travel left my children with jagged emotional scars? Damaged our relationship? Betrayed their trust?

Child development expert Karen Deerwester is the author of "The Entitlement-Free Child: Positive Parenting Solutions for Raising Confident and Respectful Kids," and I turned to her for perspective on moms and business travel. She quickly put my mind at ease when she said there



Jennifer Grant

my kids can be healthier and happier? Tell me more.)

Deerwester said a child has the opportunity to become more responsible and independent

can be significant benefits to children whose mothers travel.

(Wait? You mean I get to eat in nice restaurants, have a few precious moments alone and finally get to see the film that won the Academy Award... and

when her primary caretaker travels. Children's confidence actually grows as they come to understand that their mothers "make a difference to other people" outside of the family.

"It's a huge self-esteem builder for a daughter to see her mom successful in other roles," Deerwester said.

She said preparing children for extended absences is essential and offered these suggestions:

1. Create predictable routines for your children and keep their schedules as close to normal as possible while you are away.
2. Create a travel communication plan that takes into account school and work schedules.

3. Create games to maintain intimacy while you are away. Hide notes or treats at home for your child to discover and challenge each other to try new things (use foreign phrases, eat new foods).

4. Ask children to participate in your trip preparations.

5. Find concrete ways to explain travel to young children. Send a picture of yourself sitting on the airplane, mark the calendar with a countdown of days until your return, and show your destination to them on a map.

Deerwester said it's a mistake to think that older children handle a mother's absence better than younger ones. How a child

deals with separation is "temperament more than age," she said.

"Some children, regardless of age, will be less comfortable with change and more sensitive to absences," Deerwester said. "The 'tenderoni' child needs age-appropriate strategies for handling the absence... and more time and attention than the innately easy-going child."

By the time our car was in sight in the airport parking lot, my daughter was regaling me with stories about helping cook dinner and packing her sister's backpack. "You know, like what you usually do," she said. "I can do that stuff now."

We were both proud of her.

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