

Speaker Spotlight



Ben Fanelli is a motivational speaker, who helps people overcome issues that stop them from reaching their full potential. In 2009, the former Kitchener Rangers Captain, sustained a brain injury that almost ended his life. Instead of throwing in the towel, Ben's motivational platform has been inspiring groups ranging from University students to NCAA sports teams to Fortune 500 companies.



Chef Darryl Fletcher (ChefD) is a graduate of the Chef program at Humber College in Toronto, Canada. Chef D's career, as a Chef, has grown from humble beginnings in Kitchener, to all over North America, eventually returning back home to Kitchener. He is going into his seventh season of his popular cooking show, "At Home with ChefD" on Rogers TV. He is the author of two cook bookettes, Maple Madness, and Garlic Madness and has a weekly radio show 'At the Kitchen Table'. ChefD has prepared meals for Blue Rodeo, Michael Bublé, Big Bad Voodoo Daddies, Diana Krall, Melissa Etheridge and the late BB King and Stuart McLean as well as many others.



Ashley Keefe is a student and a teacher at Modo Yoga Waterloo. As a student, she hopes to continually gain insight into our inner and outer worlds. As a teacher, Ashley hopes to encourage reflection, promote awareness and spread conscious, thoughtful living in her students who can, in turn, become teachers in their own rite. On a personal level, Ashley quickly realized the physical benefits of yoga and it was not long before the mental and emotional benefits became apparent to her. Yoga has helped Ashley overcome an eating disorder early in life, and yogic perspectives continue to help her manage and ease an anxious mind.



Tracy Valko has been in the finance and banking business for 25+ years. For the past ten years, she has been a mortgage broker specializing in the Kitchener-Waterloo area. Thanks to her passion for mortgage brokering, coupled with her dedicated team and loyal clients, Tracy is recognized by Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation as a leading mortgage expert in her market. As well, three top lending institutions have awarded Tracy Valko with "status levels", which means her clients receive preferred pricing. She consistently places in the Top 10 on the Dominion Lending Centres National Top Performers' Report.



Samantha DeJong, B.Sc, CTB.ccs, IPDTA-CDT is a Professional Certified Canine Trainer & Behaviour Therapist. She went to the University of Guelph to study Animal Biology and Psychology, and when she finished her degree in 2007, she began to foster dogs. That's how her current dog, Dexter (see photo), found her and in 2010, he led her to Greg Ceci and Norma Jeanne Laurette of ACTT (Applied Canine Therapy and Training) - They taught her everything she knows about fear rehabilitation using desensitization and counter-conditioning over the past 5 years. Norma Jeanne & Greg Ceci later on suggested that she could run Puppy Power.

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Heidi Pola is a Registered Dietitian who is passionate about all things food - perusing local farmers markets, growing her vegetable garden, and cooking for her loved ones. Heidi believes in the power of food for joy and well-being. She is eager to share her expertise and support her clients on their wellness journeys. Being diagnosed with diabetes, elevated blood pressure or high cholesterol can make shopping, cooking and dining out challenging. Heidi specializes in helping her clients discover foods and meal ideas that are health conscious and enjoyable



Kru Rick is an instructor at Darkside Muay Thai. Darkside Muay Thai was founded in 2012 by Kru Rick and Kru Darryl. They have a 5000 square foot facility that specializes in Muay Thai. Like most competitive full contact fighting sports, Muay Thai has a heavy focus on body conditioning. Muay Thai is specifically designed to promote the level of fitness and toughness required for ring competition. Although only a few practitioners will venture into ring competition, all members train and learn the same techniques.



Christian Beckner is a personal trainer at Genuine Fitness. Christian has been in the fitness industry professionally for nearly 3 years and has been a fitness enthusiast for nearly a decade. He has a passion for helping others reach their goals, nothing makes him happier than when somebody yells out "I DID IT!!!" when they were unable to before.



Paul Schultz is a country/folk music storyteller who hails from Kitchener, Ontario. He's known for his passionate sound and powerful vocals and lyrics.



Melanie Hunt is a RVT at KWHS. She spends her time working as a Medical, Surgical and Wellness RVT. As Wellness RVT, she is responsible for assessing every animal that comes into the centre - whether they are here as a stray, surrender, or through our emergency boarding program. Through these wellness exams, she helps determine whether the animals in our care are healthy when they arrive, or if they need medical help. The Wellness RVT works closely with the Medical RVT to ensure that the animals in need of care get medical help quickly. She helps find out which animals are healthy and can be vaccinated, spayed or neutered.