

# Hartford Courant

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## Stories of strength and inspiration: 2021 calendar celebrates the splendid 60s with photos of Connecticut sexagenarians

Wise is the new pretty. A 2021 calendar going on sale in October celebrates Connecticut people in their 60s, people who have overcome adversity, who approach each day with a positive outlook.

The “60 Strong” calendar, whose proceeds will benefit Foodshare, was created by a team working at Starling Physicians, the Rocky Hill-based network of 32 medical offices.

Dr. Sarit Patel, a New Britain ophthalmologist who is chairman of the executive board at Starling, said the calendar was created as a response to many of their patients approaching Medicare age. Patel said board members felt that as part of Medicare awareness initiatives, there was a need for role models.

“We wanted to identify folks ages 60 to 69 who really are strong people who are incredibly resilient, who had faced some type of adversity,” Patel said. “This was a way to celebrate those people, who show that getting toward Medicare age doesn’t mean debilitated or incapacitated, but who are vibrant individuals.”

The “ambassadors” were photographed at historic or other noteworthy places in central Connecticut. Here are some of their stories.



Delores Slaughter-Hinton is one of the “ambassadors” pictured in the “60 Strong” calendar, to celebrate people in their 60s with positive, affirming lives. (Elliott Cramer / Courtesy 60 Strong)

### Delores Slaughter Hinton

Dolores Slaughter Hinton, 66, was diagnosed with breast cancer in 2010. Two weeks later, her husband, Lawrence, was diagnosed with prostate cancer. They pulled through it, together. “Between the two of us, we gave true meaning to ‘in sickness and in health,’” Slaughter Hinton said. In 2020, her cancer came back, but this time it’s metastatic. The retiree is back on chemotherapy.

“I have wonderful friends and my medical team is just awesome. Every day that I am given I am going to live, and do whatever I have to do to be here,” Slaughter Hinton, of Hartford, said. “Attitude is the key. Strong faith is the key.”

She said the COVID pandemic was an emotional and physical strain, but again, she credited her Hartford Hospital medical team to get her through it. “There is always someone there for me to talk to,” she said.



Michael Tutler is one of the “ambassadors” pictured in the “60 Strong” calendar, to celebrate people in their 60s with positive, affirming lives. (Elliott Cramer / Courtesy 60 Strong)

### Michael Tutler

The list of Michael Tutler’s medical issues is long. He was hit by a car and fractured his skull in 1972. In 1991, he had viral meningitis. In 1998, he was diagnosed with congestive heart failure. In 2005, he got a pacemaker. In 2007, he got a heart transplant. From 2011 to 2017, he battled cancer. In 2014, he had a bout with shingles.

Still, he keeps a positive outlook and keeps busy. For years, Tutler, 60, of Hartford, was a volunteer at Hartford Hospital, talking to transplant patients. “I would mentor people, tell them there was nothing to be afraid of, look at me, I’m living proof that it works,” he said. “I boosted their spirits.”

He competed twice in the National Kidney Foundation’s Transplant Games, an athletic event for people with any kind of transplant. He bowled in the 2008 and 2010 games in Pittsburgh and Madison, Wisconsin.

He doesn’t get out as much today, due to COVID – “I can’t afford to be sick anymore” – but he goes to see his mother about every other day.

Tutler’s advice to people in their 60s: See a doctor regularly. “I tell that to a lot of men. As they get older, they don’t like to go to the doctor. I tell them, stay on top of your medical appointments. If you see something wrong, go get it checked out. Don’t wait until last minute.”



Debroah Meincke is one of the "ambassadors" pictured in the "60 Strong" calendar, to celebrate people in their 60s with positive, affirming lives. (Elliott Cramer / Courtesy 60 Strong)

## Deb Meincke

Deb Meincke, 64, of Hebron, was nominated for the calendar by a friend who got her into running. She started in 2012. Meincke was overweight and out of shape and had never done any exercising.

"I joined the Glastonbury River Runners, who modeled their program on the "Couch to 5K" plan, where they increase the distance every day," Meincke said. "I got so into it and they were so wonderful and supportive, I ended up volunteering with them."

She has been a mentor, but one type of runner touches her heart the most. "I really enjoy working with people my age who are thinking that they couldn't do it, that they want to give it a try but they're not really sure," she said. "I find myself running with those ladies at the back of the pack."

Now Meincke runs or walks every day. She has competed in two marathons. She did a virtual race, to run the entire width of the state of Tennessee – more than 621 miles – which took her from early May to mid-August.

"It has changed my perception of myself, what I am capable of doing," she said. This helps when she is helping with her husband, who is living with Alzheimer's.

"We have a saying in running, run the mile you're in. You can use that for life as well. You can only control what is in front of you right now. You can handle this right now. You got it. Don't look at mile 10 when you're in mile five," she said.



Cynthia Bastiany is one of the "ambassadors" pictured in the "60 Strong" calendar, to celebrate people in their 60s with positive, affirming lives. (Elliott Cramer / Courtesy 60 Strong)

## Cynthia Bastiany

Cynthia Bastiany of Windsor, 63, had surgery several years ago, but there were complications. "That caused me to be hospitalized for almost a month. Then it took me almost six months could begin walking normally again," Bastiany said.

She didn't let that keep her down. Since then, she has retired and is dedicating her time to volunteering.

"Pre-COVID, I was volunteering at The Street Church, which meets every Saturday at noon in front of City Hall in Hartford, and 99.9 percent of the people are in the marginalized population," she said. "I am a case manager there. I work with people in domestic violence situations. I try to help people find places to live. People in need of food, I steer them toward kitchens. People need help with substance abuse."

She can't go there in person anymore, because she sees her elderly mother almost daily, but she helps with case managing on the phone. She also gives sermons and takes theology classes at Middlesex Institute of Theology and Technology in Middletown.

"When someone comes to me for help, I have to always remember that there is no difference between me and this person. They are my brother or my sister or my child," she said. "For me, the ministry is to care for everyone."

Other "60 Strong" participants are John Bennett and Jim Wrobel of Kensington, Glenn Cassis of Bloomfield, Eileen Cyr of Southington, Gail Gillman Elansky of Avon, David Norton and Ron and Aurora Jakubowski of New Britain and Lori Kelly of Bristol.

The calendars can be purchased starting in October at [centralct60strong.com](http://centralct60strong.com).

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