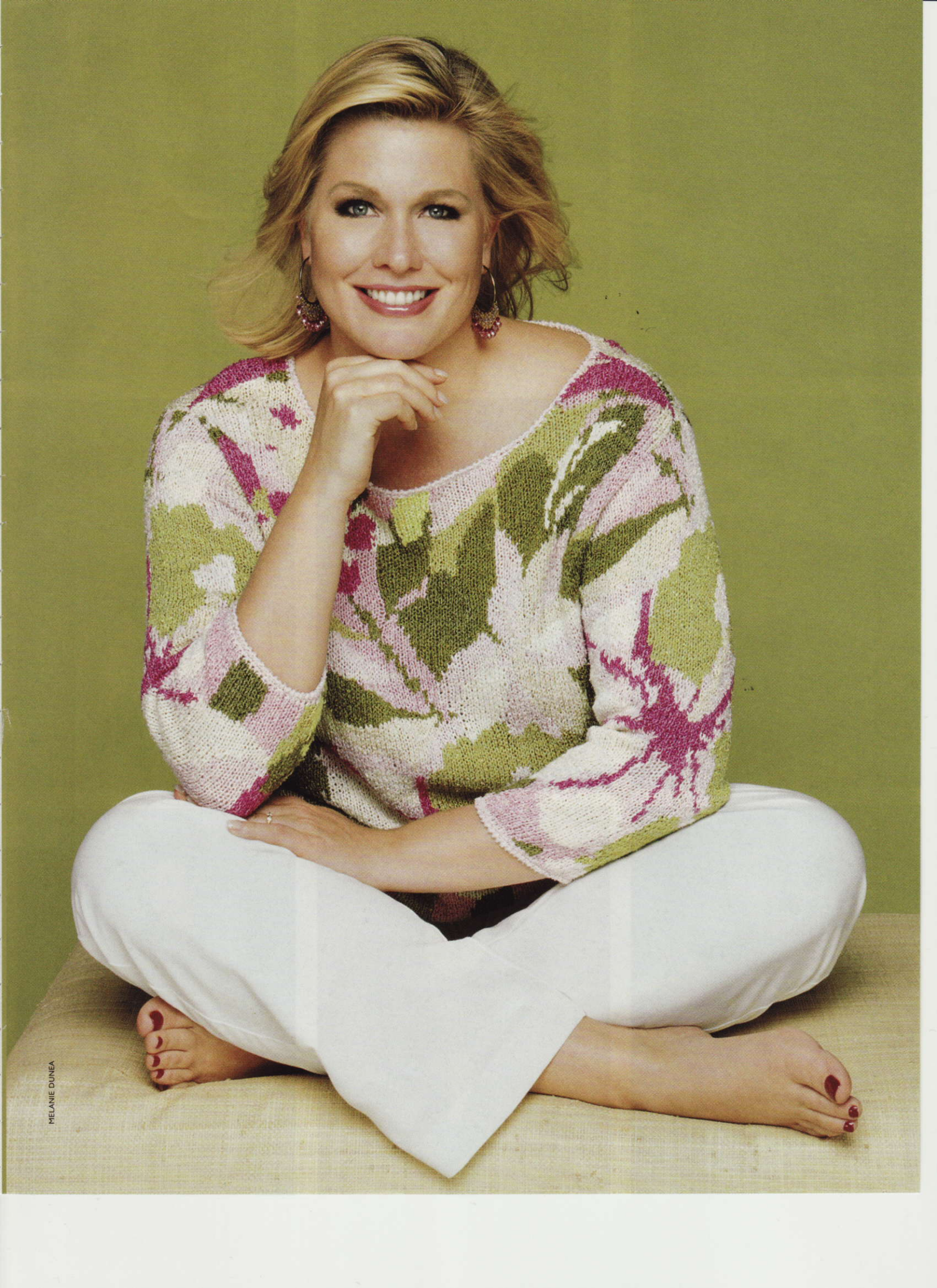


# Thin is in...

## or is it?

Full-Figured  
Model and  
Designer Emme  
Encourages  
Greenwich  
Country Day  
Teens to  
Broaden the  
Definition of a  
Beautiful Body

BY JILL JOHNSON



MELANIE DUNEVA

**A** twelve-year-old girl strips down to her underwear and stands before her stepfather, as he scrutinizes her tall, solid frame. He uncaps a black marker and draws circles on the young girl's thighs, hips, stomach and arms. He warns that these areas show potential for becoming fat. She knows, from the years of daily "weigh-ins" her stepfather has enforced on her and her mom, from his ban on sweets, and from her mother's constant dieting, that *fat* is a dirty word.

Several years later, the Saudi Arabia-based American family sends the young teen off to prep school in Kent, Connecticut. Freed from the scales, weight charts and calorie-counting, she nevertheless finds herself chained to her family's genes and behaviors; she inherits the curvy thighs her mother — a beautiful woman whom she adores — always complained about, she picks up her troubled stepfather's habit of bingeing. She periodically starves herself in an attempt to fit in with her slender peers and assuage the guilt of her compulsive overeating. A year later, her thirty-eight-year-old mother dies of lung cancer.

Fortunately, this tale has a happy ending. In high school, the girl encounters a crew coach who is impressed by her five-foot-eleven-inch physique and converts the power in her muscular thighs into a full scholarship to row at Syracuse University. And she has the good sense to do what any individual or family dealing with a potential or obvious eating disorder needs to do: get informed and get counseling.

This is the story of a woman whose birth certificate reads Melissa Miller, but anyone who has flipped through fashion spreads, checked out *People's* "50 Most Beautiful People" in 1994 and 1999, or *Biography's* "25 Most Influential Women" last year, tuned into E!'s *Fashion Emergency*, or shopped in JCPenney

recently probably knows her by another name: Emme. She is the size 14/16, buxom beauty who made history as the first full-figured model to land a cosmetics contract (with Revlon), grace a billboard in Times Square and gain first-name-basis recognition — like her slimmer sisters, Cindy, Claudia, Christy and Naomi — in households across America. Since Emme trailblazed into the almost nonexistent plus-size modeling market in 1988, she has been the focus of a visual feast of validating images for size 12-plus women — the majority of American females — who for years have been starved for fashion options.

Perhaps more important than Emme's role as the face of America's full-figured woman is her voice as a celebrity ambassador for the National Eating Disorder Association (NEDA). Emme gives lectures to young people, parents and educators at universities — she has spoken at Yale and Harvard — and at high schools, junior highs and elementary schools across the country. On May 6, Emme visited Greenwich Country Day's Middle School to share her message that a healthy lifestyle and body image should be what we strive for — not an unrealistic weight or size.

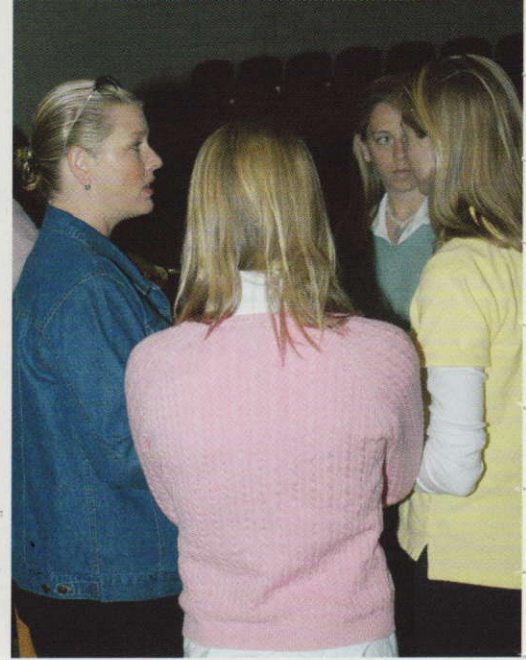
Emme's lecture was scheduled for 12:35 p.m. and administrators were pacing the grand porch at the school's entrance as 12:30 approached with yet no sign of the guest of honor. Typical supermodels don't have the best reputation for punctuality. Some have admitted a reluctance to get out of bed for an unacceptable number of zeros in their day rates. Emme, on the other hand, is appearing on a pro bono basis and her potential excuses have more validity. Perhaps her twenty-month-old daughter, Toby, is sick, an emergency came up at

her company (the thirty-nine-year-old is creative director of two fashion lines for full-figured women), a book signing ran late (she has written two books, the best-seller *True Beauty* and the recently released *Life's Little Emergencies*), or maybe her driver got lost on his way from her home in New Jersey. But at 12:30 she pulled up in her SUV (no driver), allowing herself just enough time to stride confidently across the parking lot, up the porch steps, into the auditorium and onto the stage, smiling radiantly and exuding the serenity of one who just exited a spa, not I-95.

Before launching into her "tell it like it is" talk about eating disorders and self-esteem, Emme gave the group of thirteen- to fifteen-year-olds some eye candy: a slide show featuring Emme's glamorous escapades as a model and TV host. Though she must have seen it hundreds of times, Emme looked as enthralled as the audience — she's clearly proud of how far she's come since her days as a "starving" reporter and morning anchor for an NBC affiliate in Flagstaff, Arizona — her first job out of college. She wasn't literally starving, but she did suffer from exercise bulimia, purging food binges with vigorous bouts of exercise.

When she decided to try modeling at someone's suggestion, seven of the top agencies rejected her then relatively svelte, size 12 body. "They told me to lose forty-five pounds," recounts Emme. "Now I weigh seventy-five pounds more than the typical model," she says, removing her jacket to make sure the group can see her womanly curves and pivoting with the self-assuredness of a contestant on *Are You Hot?* "I'm pretty normal looking, aren't I? I'm healthy, I go on fifteen-mile cross-country ski trips, I

**Opposite:** Shots of Emme talking with students at Greenwich Country Day School and modeling her fashion line for full-figured women





Before

Luxury Residential Architecture that blends the modern conveniences of today with the old world charm of yesterday.



After

## RICHARD KOTZ, ARCHITECT

New Construction, Renovations and Additions

Greenwich, CT  
(203) 698-2527

Armonk, NY  
(914) 273-1806

## Amazing Automatic Gates

Our GATE PAK™ includes gate, operator, everything needed...low as \$2,400

*Easy to install...do it yourself or use your favorite handyman!*

- Ornamental iron
- Operators
- Remote controls
- Complete systems
- Custom-designs



*Free video shows what you get and how it's installed.*

**800-234-3952 • [www.amazinggates.com](http://www.amazinggates.com)**

*Ask for our new catalog and installation video*

meditate. I do all these things to stay balanced in a world which tells us, 'Only thin is in.' All different body types are meant to be on this earth," she explains, "and a round, athletic endomorph may be healthier than a thin ectomorph who isn't exercising or eating right."

With the help of therapy, a loving husband (her business manager Phil Aronson) and the liberation that came with acceptance into Ford Models' 12-plus division when she was twenty-six, Emme learned to accept and celebrate her body. "One hundred and ninety is the healthy weight for me," she says, adding that she has twenty-five more pounds to lose of the fifty she gained during pregnancy. "I'm working out and taking it off slowly, because I know that if I yo-yo diet, I'll gain it back again."

At one time, Emme did try most of the fad diets, and she warns the Country Day students about this trap: "In 1997 Americans spent \$50 billion on diet products, and the failure rate was 98 percent! What really works is good nutrition and exercise, over the long haul." Scanning the attractive crowd in the room, one might wonder if it's youth, good nutrition, good genes, the school's acceptance criteria or risky practices that are keeping virtually all the bodies in the room on the skinny edge of the weight/height chart.

"Affluent communities like Greenwich are breeding havens for eating disorders and body image problems," Emme said several weeks earlier during a visit to her showroom in New York. "When there's a lot of success in the community, then there's pressure from parents and peers for kids to be just as successful or more so. Parents need to be educated, and they need to be careful about transferring their own negative attitudes down to their kids. Instead of enforcing the clean-plate club or telling them how fabulous they look after losing five pounds, encourage their creativity, their kindness and generous spirit, their charity, their uniqueness — all those wonderful attributes that are not physical. And encourage them to use their

“All different body types are meant to be on this earth.”

bodies: Go on hikes and bike rides together, take a family fitness vacation. Also, take time to be peaceful.”

The waiting area in the showroom reflects Emme’s attempt to infuse a little Zen into her frenetic existence. Purple pillows, candles and orchids — carefully selected to complement the heather and plum hues of the sophisticated Emme Collection samples in the adjacent room — invite buyers to do something Emme says many of us forget to do: “Take a deep breath!” With a sprinkle of freckles across her softly tanned cheeks, sparkling china-blue eyes and ever-regal posture that commands the attention of any room (especially when accompanied by knee-high suede boots, an above-the-knee skirt and a bold, black-and-white striped sweater), Emme seems fresh, composed, in control.

“I went through a lot as a child,” she says, sipping a cup of coffee and recapping some of the drastic measures her stepfather employed when he was controlling her. “When I got older and got therapy, I had to separate my parents’ issues from my own, take responsibility and stop pointing fingers.” Emme has even forgiven the photographer from early in her modeling days who looked her in the face and said, “I’m not going to shoot this fatty!” Emme repeated this anecdote to the Country Day kids, adding, with a giggle, “I wanted to cry, but I had just had an hour and half of makeup done and I looked too fabulous!” Once the photographer was coerced into taking what became a career-launching jeans campaign shot, he walked up to her, grabbed the boat-neck of her white sweater, stretched it as far off her shoulders as he could, and threatened, “If I’m



## We’re More Than Just Swimming Pools

Evan Wayne Associates will combine the design expertise of a Landscape Architect with the skill of a Master Carpenter, to create a unique swimming pool environment that is distinctive to your home and personal needs. We have designed and constructed projects in challenging environments where others wouldn’t even consider the job.

Evan Wayne will compliment your outdoor environment with distinctive garden architecture that may include architectural fencing, a pergola, or even a poolside bed such as those we designed and constructed above.

Call us today so that we may begin creating your swimming pool project that will blend beauty with functionality ensuring many years of pride and pleasure.

Gary Tyrrell  
President & Senior Designer

EVAN WAYNE  
ASSOCIATES, INC.

*“Swimming pools for more than just swimming.”*

30 Church Hill Road, Suite 5B, Newtown, CT 06470  
Phone: 203-426-6637 • Fax: 203-426-8972 • Email: info@EvanWayne.com

Visit our web site: [www.EvanWayne.com](http://www.EvanWayne.com)

**PATTI'S PORTICO**  
Outdoor Furniture  
Restoration

Wrought Iron  
& Patio Sets  
Sand Blasted and  
Powder Coated

Repairs • Glass Tops Replaced • Welding  
PICK-UP AND DELIVERY

213 West Putnam Ave. Greenwich, CT  
203-869-6227

**Tuscan Estates**  
Villa rentals in Italy, France and  
the Entire Mediterranean

[www.tuscanestates.com](http://www.tuscanestates.com)  
[www.espanaestates.com](http://www.espanaestates.com)  
978-453-7839



## Richard Hunt ~ Fine Woodworking

~ Design & Build ~

Custom Cabinetry • Entertainment Centers • Built-Ins  
Bookcases • Doors • Front Entrances • Libraries • Mantels  
Mouldings • Paneled Walls • Renovations • Room Additions



(800)  
394-6646

CT Licence  
#546408

Member of ~



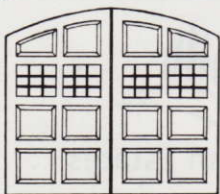
going to shoot you, then you better be sexy." Emme put on a brave face and got the job done.

She ran into the unnamed photographer at the Raleigh Hotel in Miami a few years later. "I walked up to him and thanked him," recalls Emme, without an ounce of sarcasm in her voice. "I said, 'It's because of you and me shooting together that I actually have a great career.' He looked at me and had no recollection; it didn't matter though."

Despite the rough start, Emme isn't complaining about her years in front of the camera. "Modeling was a great stepping stone for me. I have very little to say that's negative. I loved the money, the travel, the people I met. I loved being part of something new," she says, remembering the days when only ten models made a living donning garments in sizes 12 or 14, rather than 2 or 4. Now that Emme is a "brand," she can only model for her own lines: the Emme Collection and her new True Beauty casual clothing line, which debuted in JCPenney in March.

"I'm sitting here in a full-figured showroom because I believe in giving people the tools to live their lives really well," Emme remarks. Fashionable choices are just one step; the new curvaceous Emme doll, which will add some diversity to little girls' Barbie collections is another. Unfortunately, for some kids who have entered the vulnerable adolescent years without the benefit of well-rounded role models, more advanced tools may be necessary. And this is where Emme's lectures get serious.

"Right now, eight- to ten-million Americans are suffering from eating disorders (including one million men)," states Emme. "Each year 50,000 people die from these diseases." She encourages the teens to look for signs in their friends or family members: "Pushing around food, storing and bingeing on food, depression, huge swings in weight, moodiness, irritability, isolation." She advises opening the lines of communication without being confrontational, perhaps subtly placing eating disorders information from NEDA into



## Town & Country

Automated Garage Door Systems

Specializing in Carriage House Doors  
Overhead • Swinging • Sliding

Stock & Custom Designs  
Sales • Installation • Service

Serving Fairfield &  
Westchester Counties

**Ed Sementini**

phone 203.563.9300  
888.431.0004

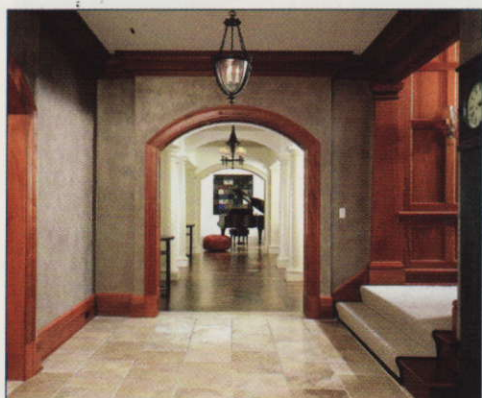
fax 203.563.9313

the person's underwear drawer. "The person has to want help, but often these behaviors — like a stash of wrappers left in an odd place — are cries for help," Emme explains.

Some of the best help in the country is right here in Greenwich at the Wilkins Center, where people struggling with anorexia, bulimia, compulsive overeating and obesity can find medical, nutritional and psychiatric services. Dr. Diane Mickley, the director of the clinic and also copresident of NEDA, founded the center in 1982. "I came to Greenwich in 1974," says Dr. Mickley. "I was working in primary care as an internist. There were almost no female doctors then, so I was seeing lots of young women. I saw a lot with eating disorders and therapists weren't getting them better." Dr. Mickley began focusing on this problem and developing plans for a center that would provide comprehensive, state-of-the-art care. "I gathered the leaders in the field from the United States and Canada and added to the staff as treatment evolved."

Dr. Mickley explains that some of the big changes in treatment have been a focus on targeting and fixing the symptoms first, *then* doing the psychological work of recovery — rather than vice versa — and incorporating new, effective medication to treat the chemical imbalance which often is present. "The majority of people can expect to be fully cured with early, sophisticated treatment," she says. "If you see signs — a growing preoccupation with weight loss as pounds come off, an absence of periods, relentless physical activity — see a professional and confirm whether or not there's a problem before the situation mushrooms."

Emme alerted the Greenwich teens that what they do to their bodies now can have long-term repercussions. Dr. Mickley, who has treated over 3,500 patients, elaborates: "Anorexia's irreversible tolls include a virulent form of osteoporosis, stunted growth and possibly higher miscarriage rates; the loss of brain mass and weakening of the heart are at



## KENNETH F. BACCO, INC.

GENERAL CONTRACTING & CONSTRUCTION MANAGEMENT

27 PINE STREET • NEW CANAAN, CT 06840  
 PHONE (203) 972-7641 • FAX (203) 972-7744  
 info@kennethfbaccoinc.com • www.kennethfbaccoinc.com

## Get Organized

with Scott M. Etter



For more information  
 Call:(443) 386-2220

Organizing, Pictorial Cataloging, Home Management and Creating Manuals for fine homes, grand estates, personal storage facilities, and home offices

**Estate Management as and when you need it - Nationwide**

Optimizing efficiency by creating solutions for your every need



# Clifford Michael DESIGN

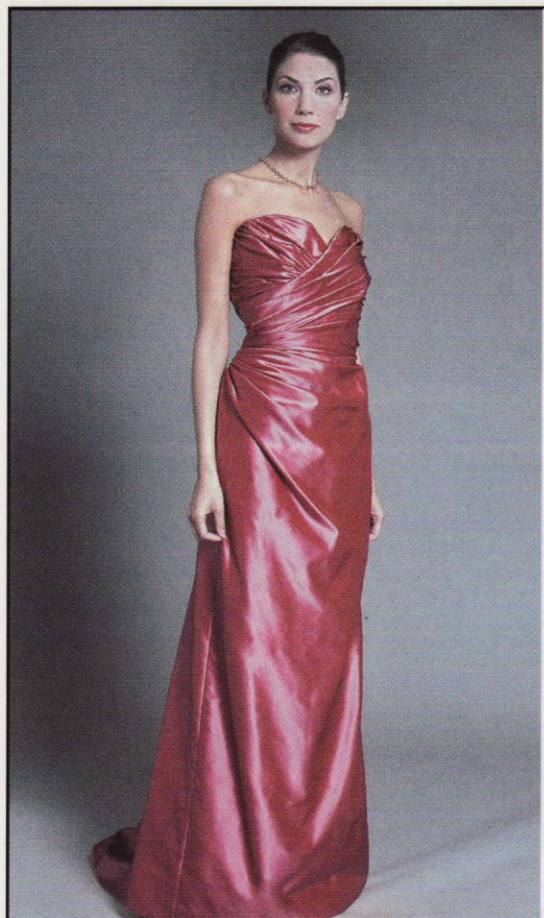
**SPECIAL OCCASION**  
BLACK TIE / EVENING / DAYTIME  
MOTHER OF THE BRIDE & GROOM

GOWNS, ENSEMBLES  
SUITS & SEPARATES

In Stock or Made to Order  
*Petite, Regular & Larger Sizes*

**GREENWICH**  
200 Greenwich Ave.  
(opposite Saks)  
(203) 861-0909

**NEW YORK**  
45 EAST 60TH  
(Madison & Park)  
(212) 888-7665



least partly reversible. Stomach acid causes dental problems in bulimics — I've seen patients in their thirties who have lost all their teeth. And both anorexics and bulimics have stomach problems, which, after recovery, diminish over time."

While the rate of recovery is much higher than in the day of Karen Carpenter's much-publicized death from anorexia, these diseases still can be lethal. The Alison Warren Memorial Fund was established at Greenwich High School the year after the alum died of bulimia in 1989. "I never expected she would die," says her mother, Carol Warren, who set up the fund to provide needy eating disorder victims with the financial means to seek treatment. "I wanted her to see Dr. Mickley, but she wanted to go back to college [in Arizona]," explains Carol, who received a touching letter from her twenty-six-year-old daughter the week before she died. Alison wrote that she "had been hoping to do something nice for you for Mother's Day," but was "not feeling well." She thanked her mother for some dresses and emphasized how much she loved her. Several days later Alison's heart stopped and she was found dead in her apartment. Carol Warren echoes Emme's advice: "Go and get counseling — the whole family — and work with your children! You have to get to them early on." Alison had two older sisters, both of whom have seen Dr. Mickley for their own eating disorders.

"There definitely is a genetic component," says Dr. Mickley, who works with the fund committee, providing treatment at a nominal cost. "Two identical twins are more likely to both suffer from an eating disorder than two fraternal twins. To have more than one kid in a family with this problem is not at all unusual." Dr. Mickley agrees that family stress can contribute to or perpetuate a problem but adds, "These disorders are not caused by bad parenting. Then again, in a house where food, weight and shape are part of the language and define people's worth, you are adding a risk factor." That's on



## HARBOR VIEW CENTER FOR ANTIQUES

OVER 70  
INTERNATIONAL  
DEALERS IN FINE  
ANTIQUES IN ONE  
ELEGANT SHOWROOM

*Featuring:*  
Home Furnishings  
Decorative Accessories  
Lighting • Artwork  
Jewelry



101 Jefferson Street Stamford, Connecticut 06902

T.203.325.8070 F.203.325.4704 sales@harborviewantiques.com www.harborviewantiques.com

*Open 7 days a week for your convenience*



# G3

## ARCHITECTURE INTERIORS PLANNING

ONE DOCK STREET  
STAMFORD, CT 06902

T: 203-327-3330  
F: 203-327-3335

41 WEST 25TH STREET  
NEW YORK, NY 10010

T: 212-627-9400  
F: 212-604-9300




Bringing expertise, experience and professionalism to placing and installing paintings, photographs, drawings, Asian screens, mirrors and posters.

  
**Ilevel, Inc.**  
*Art Installation  
& Design*  
 212.477.4319  
 www.ilevel.biz

top of the risk factors already inherent in a town like Greenwich. "Those in high socioeconomic areas and whites have the thinnest ideal of beauty and the poorest body image. Blacks and Hispanics have a much better body image. Also, as other cultures Westernize, their weights get higher and their ideal of what is a beautiful body gets thinner."

Dr. Mickley traces the escalation of eating disorder cases back to the early eighties. "We went from the buxom ideal of the fifties to Twiggy in the sixties. By the eighties, the weight of the population was going up, while the average weight of Miss America contestants was getting lower. We saw a huge wave of cases, hitting a more diverse group, and it's been unremitting ever since."

When Emme opened up the floor to questions, one boy asked, "Wouldn't Marilyn Monroe be considered full-figured today?" Emme confirmed, "Yes, she would have been a size 14!" 

#### Emme's latest book

*Life's Little Emergencies: Everyday Rescue for Beauty, Fashion, Relationships, and Life*  
(St. Martin's Press, hardcover: \$22.95)

#### The Emme Doll

is available on [www.tonnerdoll.com](http://www.tonnerdoll.com) and at FAO Schwartz, \$100

#### More about Emme

[www.emmestyle.com](http://www.emmestyle.com)  
[www.emmesupermodel.com](http://www.emmesupermodel.com)

#### EATING DISORDER RESOURCES

##### The Wilkins Center

[www.wilkinscenter.com](http://www.wilkinscenter.com)  
203-531-1909

##### National Eating Disorders Association (NEDA)

[www.nationaleatingdisorders.org](http://www.nationaleatingdisorders.org)

##### Overeaters Anonymous, Inc.

[www.overeatersanonymous.org](http://www.overeatersanonymous.org)

##### Largely Positive

[www.largelypositive.com](http://www.largelypositive.com)

##### When Dieting Becomes Dangerous

*A Guide to Understanding and Treating Anorexia and Bulimia* by Deborah M. Michel, et al.