

DECEMBER 2022

Niskayuna NEIGHBORS



CATHY WEISS
— DIGGING FOR CRYSTALS —



Best Version Media

COVER PHOTO BY Mia Ertas Photography



RESIDENT FEATURE

CATHY WEISS

DIGGING FOR CRYSTALS

BY JENNA CAPUTO

PHOTOS BY MIA ERTAS PHOTOGRAPHY & CONTRIBUTED BY THE WEISS FAMILY



CATHY WEISS LOVES ROCKS.

Her passion was ignited after learning about them in elementary school, and she spent many hours digging for and collecting whatever she could find. Originally from Amsterdam, NY, Cathy also took ballet and loved to spend time with her family and enjoying the holidays.

The love of rocks never faded, and she went on to college, majoring in geology. Having to often go out in the field for her classes only increased her passion, along with learning more about Upstate NY. After graduation, she needed a job close to home to care for her ill mother, but no jobs in geology were available at the time. She took a job in retail at Glennpeter Jewelers instead. Soon after, she went to a friend's wedding and met Jeff, owner of Glennpeter Jewelers. Neither of them had come with a plus-one, so they hung together, dancing and laughing the night away. They've been together ever since, spending their honeymoon in Italy before settling back here in Niskayuna.

Cathy went on to get her masters in Earth Science, then a high school teaching job back in Amsterdam as the only female science teacher at the school. Jeff & Cathy traveled a lot during their early years together, but kept things close to home when their daughter, Dayva (24), was born in 1998. Dayva recently graduated NYU with a degree in film. Also a talented pianist, Dayva now lives in NYC where she is directing a film she wrote loosely based on Cathy's family. Centering on an Italian family living in NYC in the 1970s, *The Fortunato's Witch Mafia* has a vibe that combines *Goodfellas*, *Stranger Things*, and *Charmed*. She filmed locally in Troy and in the Secret Caverns at Howe Caverns as well as other locations in the Capital District. It will be available to stream soon. Jeff has been teaching Dayva how to invest in real estate to help support her projects as she works to make her mark in the film industry.

In 2000, Cathy and Jeff's son, Jonah (22), was born. Diagnosed with Cerebral Palsy, Jonah is mostly non-verbal and needs 24/7 care. He's very social and has a passion for music, easily remembering the beat and lyrics of a song after hearing it only once. He even dressed up as Elvis for Halloween this year! Jeff's son, Brian (42), is now a radiologist at St. Peter's Health Partners and lives nearby as well.

Cathy left the world of teaching to be home with her kids, but her love of rocks never went away. A day trip with Jeff out at the Herkimer Diamond Mines soon changed everything. They had such a great time they decided to invest in some land there themselves. Jeff found the perfect parcel of land nearby, and they invested in their own excavator and generator for their other heavy tools so they could sneak away whenever they felt like it for a day of digging fun. Naming their 24 acres Quartztopia, Cathy found her happy place digging for the exquisite crystals and using them to make jewelry and other items.

—continued



—continued

“The Herkimer Diamond is thought to be a highly powerful stone,” she says. “Because of its double terminated shape, it possesses high vibrational qualities. Many people feel this is good for overall wellbeing and especially to enhance a person’s intuition. SiO₂ is an excellent ‘transmitter’ of energy.” These “diamonds” are over 500 million years old and are naturally-faceted quartz crystals unique only to this area of New York State. In addition to their high frequency energy and balancing qualities, these crystals also have the ability to receive and amplify the characteristic of other power stones—like amethysts and emeralds—when worn together.

Most crystals form attached to a matrix rock, however, the Herkimer Diamonds formed within pockets in a sedimentary rock called dolostone. This rock formed by plants, sea life, and minerals layering on top of each other during the period when our region was still under sea, creating an immense pressure on top of the rocks. The organic matter eventually decomposed and released gases that formed the air pockets. As time continued, the pressure increased and the existing quartz and carbon elements, along with other compounds in the rock, transformed. The glaciers that then covered Herkimer County over the next 300 million years melted, washing away layers of the sedimentary rock and allowing the elements inside the pockets to cool and crystallize, forming what we now call the Herkimer Diamond.

Cathy opened her Heaven & Earth Gift Shoppe in Clifton Park in 2020. A unique crystal store, Heaven & Earth carries crystals both for the average collector as well as higher-end pieces, along with gift items, artisan crafts created by local artists, handmade jewelry, clothing, singing bowls, essential oils, kid-friendly gifts, Tarot card readings, psychic readings, and energy healing sessions. Their mission is to use earthly products to assist in the healing journey, and to find new ways to appreciate the Earth and support and guide one another on each of our unique spiritual paths. Cathy appreciates working with local artisans, not only because they are essential to our community but because their pieces are passionate and one of a kind. The artisan crafts in the store include items such as pottery, scarves, jewelry, and much more. Heaven & Earth’s selection of items is always changing based on the season and schedules of the artists. They host many in-person events as well, which are listed on their website and social media accounts.

All Pro Locksmith East

With 26+ years of experience we give you security, safety and peace of mind.

High Security key resistant locks.

Video door bells, smart locks & digital key pads
All locks, door closers, exit & decorative hardware
Home fire inspections and consultations

518-723-0482 • prolockandaccess@gmail.com

commercial & residential CLEANING SERVICES

Call Now!
518-982-7645
Chandra House



In the past couple of years, Cathy taught herself how to make jewelry from the smaller crystals she excavates. Besides being beautiful and unique pieces, crystals have been thought to possess various healing energies and have long been used in energy healing techniques. Cathy says that, in general, “Besides the aesthetic value, the good energy they possess can enhance an overall feeling of happiness.”

Every winter, Cathy and Jeff attend the Tuscan Gem and Mineral Show to purchase pieces for the store as well as their large personal collection. They are looking forward to returning this year to find some

unique pieces to bring back to the Capital Region. But excavating her own rocks at Quartztopia is Cathy’s joy. “I love the feeling of extracting one of nature’s gems that hasn’t had any human hands on it until I’ve uncovered it. I love to be outdoors in nature while excavating. Best of all is creating a piece of jewelry with the crystal that I’ve dug out of the ground.” She’s hoping to one day get to Brazil and other places in the world as well to excavate other gems not available here.

When she’s not out digging or creating her own jewelry, Cathy enjoys cooking for her family and extended family, including

her sister’s family that lives nearby. She’s especially fond of making Italian dishes, and her homemade pesto from her own garden’s basil is a family favorite. The Weiss family always appreciates a good dinner out, too, and taking in one of the plays or musicals produced in our area is one of their favorite activities here in the Capital District. Cathy also delights in getting out and meeting new neighbors. “I like when neighbors in my community are not afraid to be friendly. Say hi when you see me taking my son out for a walk!” she says.

Cathy is proud to be living and working in such a great community, enjoying watching her family grow and working in a field that fulfills her soul. Her mantra is to “Be grateful every day,” and she lives up to it with the rise of each new morning—one crystal at a time. ♦

For more information about Quartztopia jewelry or the Heaven & Earth Gift Shoppe, visit quartztopia.com & heavenandearthgiftshoppe.com. Follow Cathy on Instagram at @quartztopia.

I've worked many jobs.
All that experience has led me to a job that feels like home.

As a Home Instead® CAREGiver you can help care for older adults, from companionship to personal care. Choose a career that makes a difference.

Call (518) 346-6769 or visit
HomeInstead.com/JoinOurTeam

 **Home Instead®**
To us, it's personal

Each Home Instead® franchise is independently owned and operated. ©2021 Home Instead, Inc.