

## People &amp; Places

## People

## 'Live Your Life'

## Kloots hopes people do not forget 'COVID loss'

NEW YORK, June 21, (AP): As COVID-19 restrictions lift in the US, many are reacquainting with friends and loved ones, attending parties, booking vacations and celebrating a return to normal.

But for **Amanda Kloots**, 39, a fitness instructor and TV personality, it's not a return to the life she had before the pandemic, and it never will be. Her husband, Nick Cordero, died from complications of the virus after more than 90 days in the hospital. He was 41 and had no prior health problems.

Cordero was an actor and singer, best-known for his work on Broadway in musicals "A Bronx Tale," "Waitress" and "Bullets Over Broadway," where he met Kloots. They married in 2017.

"I hope people don't forget what our world was a year ago, said Kloots in an interview over Zoom from Los Angeles. "Because of what I went through and how traumatic it was... I will never forget what that was. And because of that, I'm taking a slow roll back into society. It's a little harder for me to be back in huge, big groups. I'm not there yet."



Kloots

Kloots has become a face of COVID-19's devastation.

While Cordero was hospitalized, Kloots posted updates on her social media. It led to a daily virtual dance party to Cordero's song "Live Your Life" as a battle cry to wake him up. The well-wishes spread to celebrities including Sylvester Stallone and Priscilla Presley, plus people across the globe whom had never even met Cordero or Kloots, but felt emotionally invested.

Kloots says "it means the world" if her story has helped others who also went through their own loss from COVID-19, or just felt moved to appreciate life and loved ones.

In this rollercoaster year, Kloots says she's gotten used to experiencing highs as well as lows. A major win came in January when she was named one of the hosts of CBS' "The Talk."

Kloots has also released a new book called "Live Your Life: My Story of Loving and Losing Nick Cordero." She wrote the book with the help of her younger sister, Anna, who along with their older brother, Todd, dropped everything and moved in to help care for the couple's infant son, Elvis, while Cordero was hospitalized. Kloots writes that they helped create order and a sense of calm in her time of crisis.

**AP:** You really had to find your voice in becoming an advocate for Nick while he was being treated, at a really intimidating time. Would you advise people to do the same?

**Kloots:** Personally, for me, the minute I walk into a hospital, I'm just intimidated. So imagine. Yes, being in the ICU in the midst of a pandemic and you have four ICU doctors at the top of their game telling you, based on their experience, based on their education, which is a lot, what they think should happen, what they believe should be going on. It was very hard at times to hold my ground and to say "No," or, "I have a crazy idea." It was tough. But I encourage people to do it, I really do. And in the end, even the times I felt like so silly offering any suggestion that was coming my way via what I was Googling or what my Instagram army was telling me to ask. In the end, David Ng, Nick's doctor, said to me, "It was the Wild Wild West and because you were offering so many suggestions and you were being so strong, we did things that we maybe never would have done." And so I think it's a testament to being as strong as you possibly can. It is hard and it is intimidating. But you are the best advocate for your person. And when you know your person like a husband and a wife does, I wasn't going to give up on him until I knew that I had to.

**AP:** You speak of signs sometimes on social media. Have you had any signs you believe were from Nick recently?

**Kloots:** So many. The other day I was in the car after doing a couple of book interviews and after talking about Nick, you kind of instantly feel sad and lonely. So I got in the car and I said, "Nick, will you send me a sign, please? I really miss you, honey." And one of the songs that comes on the radio all the time since he's passed is "Every Breath You Take" by The Police. I turned on the radio and it came right on. It finished, I turned the station and it was on again. It was literally like Nick being like, "I'm watching you. I'm with you through this every step of this way."

**AP:** How's Elvis doing now that he just turned 2?

**Kloots:** "It's crazy. Just yesterday I was looking at him and I was like, "Look at Elvis right now. He literally looks like he's grown up five years in two days." He's wonderful. He's such a lover. He's an old soul. I've always said it from the day I locked eyes with him, he's just a beautiful little boy. He's my best friend.

## Also:

**NEW YORK:** Plans are afoot to put some old hit songs by **Britney Spears** into a stage musical about woke princesses, and the hope is that the result isn't "Toxic."

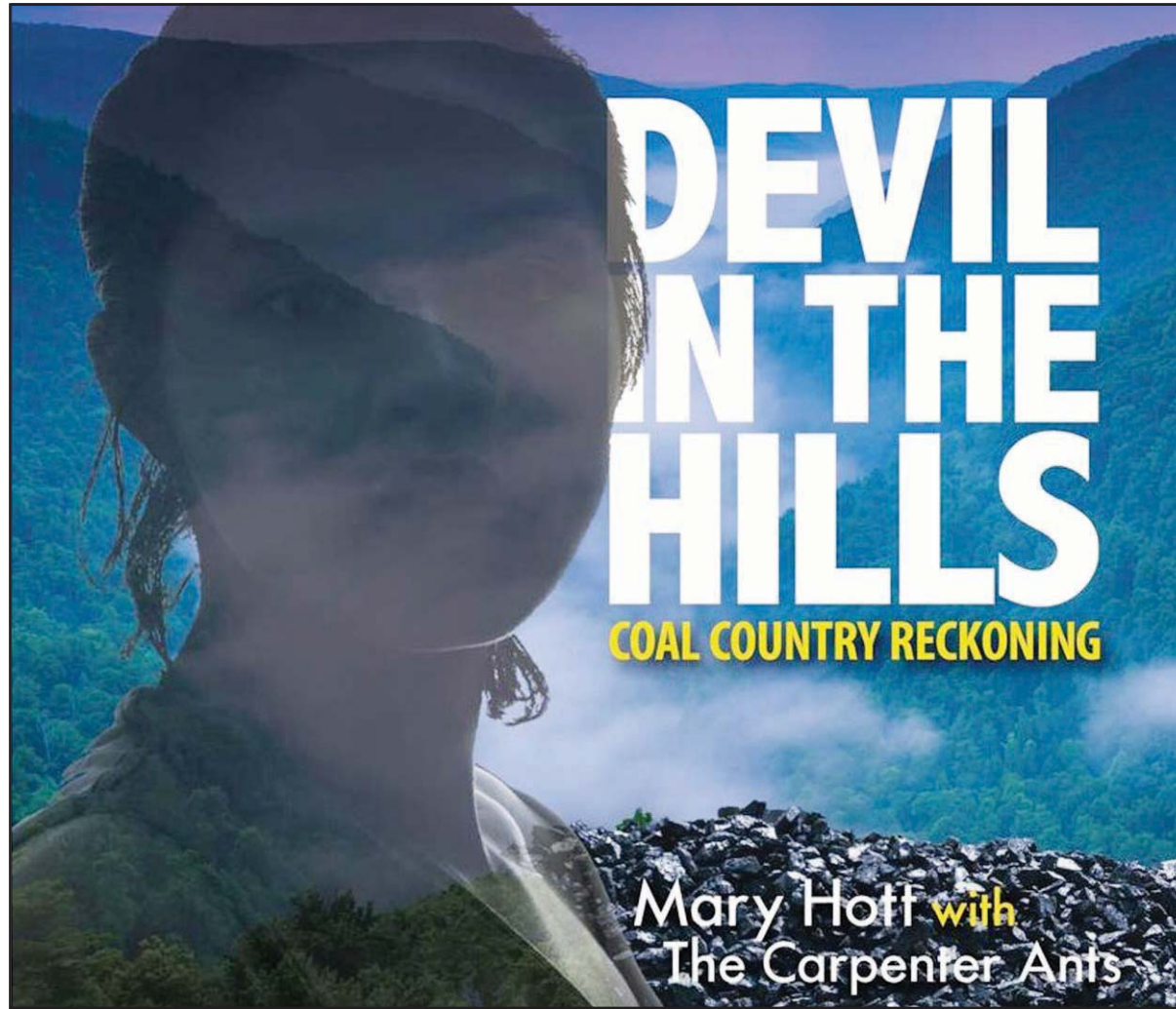
The Shakespeare Theatre Company in **Washington, D.C.** announced last month that it will stage "Once Upon a One More Time," featuring Spears' tunes, including "Oops!... I Did It Again," "Lucky," "Stronger" and "Toxic."

The musical will have an original story written by **Jon Hartmere** about classic fairy tale princesses — Cinderella, Snow White and Little Mermaid, among them — who are transformed after reading "The Feminine Mystique," a landmark feminist text.

"Once Upon a One More Time" begins performances at Sidney Harman Hall on Nov. 29. It represents a significant pivot for The Shakespeare Theatre Company, known for its more stately offerings.

The temptation to use already proven, popular songs to fuel a musical is an old one and on Broadway has lately led to shows with music from The Temptations, The Go Go's, **Tina Turner** and **Alanis Morissette**.

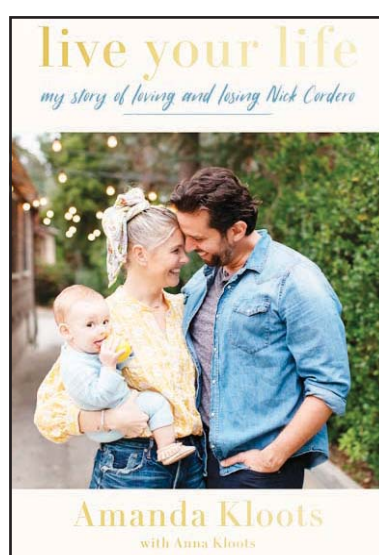
Spears has been under the spotlight lately after the recent FX and Hulu documentary "The New York Times Presents: Framing Britney" looked at the circumstances that led to the establishment of her conservatorship in 2008 and has spurred sympathy for the singer.



This cover image released by Harmonic Alliance shows 'Devil in the Hills: Coal Country Reckoning' by Mary Hott with the Carpenter Ants. (AP)



Cecilia Shaffette relaxes in the backyard with her father Rhett Shaffette, at their home in Carriere, Miss., June 16. The 12-year-old is thriving, eight months after getting a portion of her father's liver. She received the transplant after nearly losing her life to internal bleeding. (AP)



This cover image released by Harper shows 'Live Your Life: My Story of Loving and Losing Nick Cordero' by Amanda Kloots with Anna Kloots. (AP)

## Variety

**LONDON:** **Queen Elizabeth II** was smiling broadly as she attended the final day of the Ascot races on Saturday, where environmental protesters urged the monarch to press politicians to act faster against climate change.

The 95-year-old queen, a keen racing fan and racehorse owner, has attended Ascot almost every year of her seven-decade reign. She was absent last year, when the event was held without spectators because of the coronavirus pandemic. Her return came two months after the death of her husband, **Prince Philip**, at 99.

Dressed in a mint-green outfit and matching hat, the queen was applauded by the crowd as she arrived to cheer on four horses she owns that were racing on Saturday. She smiled broadly as she inspected one of her horses, Reach for the Moon, after it finished a close second.

The annual racing meeting west of London is a heady mix of horses, extravagant headwear, fancy dress and strawberries with cream.

Protesters from environmental group Extinction Rebellion unfurled a banner reading "Racing to Extinction" at the racecourse on Saturday. The group said four women glued themselves to their banner and chained themselves to the fence in a protest intended to be seen by the queen. She was not nearby at the time. (AP)

**ANNAPOLIS, Md:** The editor of the Capital Gazette, which won a special Pulitzer Prize citation for its coverage and courage in the face of a massacre in its newsroom, is leaving the **Maryland** newspaper.

**Rick Hutzell**, who worked at the Annapolis paper for more than three decades, au-

## Music

## Album of exploration from Lage

## Hott brings wrongs to light

By Steven Wine

**Mary Hott** with the Carpenter Ants, "Devil in the Hills: Coal Country Reckoning" (Harmonic Alliance)

This is grim history beautifully told.

Mary Hott has put to music the tragic tale of West Virginia's mine wars. They ended 100 years ago this summer, but her songs show the resulting emotional damage still lingers in the region.

No wonder: In Hott's telling, the wars were a violent clash of rich and poor involving terrorism, slave labor and sexual exploitation often kept secret. "Devil in the Hills: Coal Country Reckoning" brings the wrongs to light in a powerful way, and the album package includes extensive, informative liner notes.

"If you don't believe me," Hott sings, "then shame on you."

Hott is a seventh-generation West Virginian who had a career in software engineering before returning to her native Morgan County to run the local arts council. She released her first album of original material in 2014 and wrote seven of the songs on "Devil in the Hills." Among the three covers is a moving rendition of "Take Me Home, Country Roads," with Hott backed by gospel piano.

She has a first-rate supporting cast in the Carpenter Ants, with indie rock veteran Don Dixon and Mountain Stage house band guitarist Michael Lipton co-producing. The music is

rooty rock with echoes of Appalachia that perfectly suits Hott's appealing alto and honors a singular genre: history matters.

**Julian Lage**, "Squint" (Blue Note Records)

In the right hands, 12 notes multiplied by six strings can produce endless variety. Here's proof.

Jazz guitarist Julian Lage's Blue Note Records debut is an exuberant, engaging, endlessly inventive exploration of styles. Fronting his trio, which also includes bassist **Jorge Roeder** and drummer **Dave King**, Lage echoes and honors guitar slingers ranging beyond jazz, from **Tom Verlaine** to **Dick Dale** to **Chuck Berry**.

Imitation is not Lage's thing, though. On "Squint," his distinctive distillation of his instrument's possibilities produces notes that swirl and soar and curl and twist and shout and land with a grin. Mellifluous single-note lines are countered with stabs of dissonance and strummy squalls.

The set opens with a lovely, undulating, slightly discordant theme, "Etude," before the combo settles into a swaggering, funky groove on "Boo's Blues." On "Quiet Like a Fuse," Lage plays as if he's sharing a secret, and an ominous ostinato leads to resolution at the end. "Twilight Surfer" does indeed sound like a sports soundtrack, with an ending that crests. (AP)

thored a farewell column that was published on the paper's website Saturday morning.

Hutzell said he took a buyout that was



Queen Elizabeth



Hutzell

offered by the newspaper's parent company. The Capital Gazette was owned by Tribune Publishing until it was purchased last month by Hedge fund Alden Global Capital.

Hutzell was editor of the paper when five employees were shot to death in the newsroom in 2018.

"The murder of my five friends, **Rob Hiaasen**, **Gerald Fischman**, **Wendi Winters**, **John McNamara** and **Rebecca Smith**, changed me," he wrote on Saturday. "I always enjoyed the job. But I became consumed with the notion that it was my purpose to save the paper. A man with a shotgun tried to kill us — to kill me and the newspaper I've poured my life into for 33 years. I wasn't going to let it die." (AP)

## Lifestyle

## Father's Day gift

## Father gives girl a life-saving gift

CARRIERE, Miss., June 21, (AP): Sitting poolside with his wife and two daughters, Rhett Shaffette says he's already received the best gift this Father's Day.

His 12-year-old daughter is thriving, eight months after getting a portion of his liver. She received the transplant after nearly losing her life to internal bleeding.

"It was a very close call," Rhett said. His daughter **Cecilia**, 11 at the time, had spent years in frustration on the transplant list, and was twice called to be a back-up recipient, only to be sent home again in disappointment.

After Cecilia's near-fatal bleed last year, the family decided to look instead for a partial transplant from a living donor.

And they didn't have to look far: Tests and scans revealed that Rhett's liver was an ideal match. A few weeks later, both were prepped for surgery.

"It was a godsend," Rhett said. "That's the only way to explain it."

Cecilia had been suffering since birth with biliary atresia. That's when bile ducts in the liver don't form normally, preventing the organ from functioning properly. It's one of the most common reasons why children in the US require liver transplants, said John Seal, one of the surgeons on the family's transplant team at Ochsner Hospital for Children in New Orleans.

## Quality

Having a biological parent as a living donor helps with immunity and lowers the chance of organ rejection. But some kids awaiting transplants are in foster care or situations where a biological parent isn't available or willing to donate. So now there's a movement among pediatric surgeons and programs across the country to push for more anonymous living donors, Seal said.

Organs from living donors have been found to be superior in quality to those harvested from deceased donors, he said. And because the liver regenerates quickly, children and small adults typically only need a part of a healthy donor's liver. Both patients can typically expect their livers to return to normal size within a few months to a year, Seal said.

"No kid should die waiting for a liver," he said. "The biggest risk is that time waiting for an organ, and that wait time is getting longer and longer throughout the country."

Living donors made possible 491 of the 8,906 liver transplants performed in the United States last year, according to the United Network for Organ Sharing, the nonprofit that administers the nation's procurement and transplant process.

More than 500 of last year's liver transplants were performed on children, but only 66 were from living donors. And of those, only 22 donors were the child's biological parent, according to UNOS.

"We still don't have enough quality donors to take care of all the kids on the wait list," Seal said.

## Transplant

More than 300 children remain on the waiting list for a liver transplant in the US, along with more than 11,500 adults, according to UNOS.

Cecilia's mother, Angelle, described transplant day as long, exhausting, stressful, emotional, but in the end, worth it.

Eight months later, Rhett says he's feeling great, is back at work and enjoying his favorite pastimes, hunting and fishing. He said he's "anxious to see her be all that she can be, now that nothing's holding her back."

He and Angelle smiled and giggled while watching Cecilia, now 12, play a game of tag on hoverboards with her little sister, Lydia. The girls also practiced some dance moves, with Cecilia showing off her leaps and twirls.

Before the transplant, this much activity would have fatigued and stressed her body, at times causing pain, discomfort or illness.

"I have a lot more energy, and I don't feel bad a lot," Cecilia said. She said it's been five months since her last trip to the hospital.

"I just feel better overall," she said.

Her parents see her improving as well.

"She doesn't wake us up in the middle of the night and tell us she's nauseous or she doesn't feel good," Angelle said. "She's like a normal kid now."

Cecilia knows how fortunate she is, thanks to her father's love and generosity.

"I'm very lucky and grateful that he could do this for me," she said. "I have an awesome dad. He's always been my hero."



Cecilia