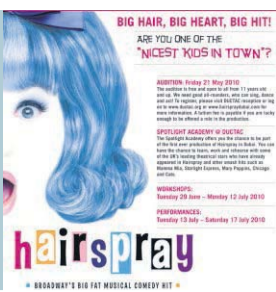


anticipate **we**

Hairspray, the camp musical that's coming to DUCTAC on June 29. We don't expect this one to reach the giddy heights of the John Waters version, but it'll be worth the price of admission to see how they try. www.ductac.org



'The results were so phenomenal that I just felt people needed this'

→ Summer projects, continued from 1

Writing a screenplay



The aspiring screenwriter Steve Watson. Rich-Joseph Facun / The National

Steve Watson used to work in the media but has, since arriving in Abu Dhabi last August, been a house husband. Over the summer he will be writing his first screenplay.

"A friend, who works at the Abu Dhabi Film Commission, said to me recently 'You've always got these great stories to tell about your life; you should focus that energy and see if you can turn it into something more concrete.' As a house husband in Abu Dhabi (I took a step back so that my wife could pursue her career), I

am a bit of an anomaly. I find myself doing Pilates with 15 ladies three times a week; I've just said goodbye to my bi-polar neighbour who's moved back home and I've recently turned my hand to gardening, as well as introducing newcomers to life in Abu Dhabi, so I've got plenty of material. People have often said I should write a blog about what I get up to as some of it's quite entertaining. Doing this is a way of seeing whether I can take my thoughts and life and dinner conversations, and turn them into a story. It gives me something to focus on rather than going mad in the heat."

Starting a business



The businesswoman Julie Meer. Paulo Vecina / The National

Julie Meer is in the process of starting up Body Balancers, a wellness, sports and physiotherapy centre in Jumeirah Lake Towers, Dubai, with her partner Caryl Machado.

"I've always had a strong entrepreneurial spirit and a million ideas. I've been in the UAE for 16 years and mainly in the corporate world. A few years ago I was introduced to this health-related treatment from Germany. It's a natural approach to curing neck and neck pain, as well as headaches. The results were so phenomenal that I just felt people needed this, so I

chucked in my job and decided to give it a go. The biggest hurdle has been trying to find the capital. People wanted big projects and big returns of investment. Being a woman, I ran into several people who, before they even knew what I was going to do, said I would fail. I eventually found financing through a friend. We're hoping to be up and running by the beginning of July. I know people go away over the summer, but people don't have the money to go on long holidays right now. We are not a fluff spa; we are a centre that is looking to fix health problems. Recession or not, back pain is always going to be there."

Getting Fit



The boot camper Jeanne LeSage. Galen Clarke / The National

Jeanne LeSage is the managing producer of the Abu Dhabi Film Festival. She will spend the summer doing the Original Fitness Company's beach boot camp.

"For me, it's really about being healthy. I'm from Canada and you take it for granted there how many times you walk to the corner, to the streetcar, to the shops. All the little stuff adds up. But here it's very easy for your exercise levels to drop. The irony is that while most people are quietening down

over the summer, we're ramping right up at work. So this is about stress reduction as well as fitness. Also, since we're a busy festival, I'm interested in finding ways of engaging with the community. I'm a complete sports dork, though. I was the kid who would rather read than do gym class. Gym class was traumatic. Boot camp starts at 6am three days a week so part of the goal is just to complete it. In my experience, exercise is the catalyst that gets all the other healthy habits in line. This should be a good way to get me on the right track."

Learning Arabic



The language learner Murtuza Kaizar. Jeff Topping / The National

Murtuza Kaizar is the general manager of Hafele, a German company that supplies the construction industry with door hardware. He is studying level three Arabic at the Berlitz language school in Abu Dhabi.

"Despite being born and brought up in Abu Dhabi, I only recently starting learning Arabic. I speak English, Hindi and Gujarati, but when you've lived here all your life and you can't communicate, you feel like you're missing a lot of the country. I started level one in March. I learnt Arabic in school but it was very basic, and wasn't compu-

sory in high school. It's difficult in a group class, so I have recently switched to individual tutoring. It costs me twice as much but I am progressing in leaps and bounds. I go four times a week for an hour and a half after work. It's intensive but I feel passionately about it. When I go back to India everyone asks if you speak the language or have a passport and the answer to both is no, even though it is my home. Arabic is not an easy language, so doing this means I will have achieved something special. It looks good on my CV and I can deal with people in a more friendly manner."