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Finding Her Niche



"I think people tend to think, 'Oh, it's all politics,' but that same drive behind politics in the city is also there in everyone else, just directed in different ways."

Though born in Washington, D.C., Eliza Yoder, who calls herself the quintessential "single girl in the city," lived in London, Cambridge, England, and Rhode Island before settling back in our nation's capital. "My family always kept their house here while we lived in London, so I always felt close to this area," says Yoder. "After college I knew I'd come back here — it still always felt like home."

Yoder graduated from Brown University with a concentration in history and went on to get her master's in modern British history from the University of Cambridge. "I have always felt passionately about education and continuing my own as well as advancing others'," says Yoder. But after working as a high school teacher for two years, she found herself wanting something new.

With a brief background in fundraising, she went on to land a job at the Kennedy Center. Today, she helps to nourish terminally ill patients and their families through an organization called Food & Friends, which provides nutritionally specific meals and groceries throughout D.C., Maryland and Virginia for individuals who are battling life-challenging illnesses such as HIV/AIDS and cancer.

"It's a nonprofit that is really focused on neighbor helping neighbor. I love that aspect of my job," says Yoder. "I have gotten to know so many different neighborhoods in the city delivering meals, and so many different kinds of people walk through our organization's doors to help volunteer."

It's no surprise Yoder ended up where she did: In a job that allows her to explore D.C.'s eclectic mix of neighborhoods. Yoder loves how easy it is to get around the city. "It's really alive, but it's manageable, and like a European city in a lot of ways," she explains.

"D.C. is also as much city as you want it to be, in that with such a variety of different neighborhood pockets, you can be in a very urban environment or more of an international feel or more suburban and you can choose to structure your life and your pursuits in the city to suit your comfort level."

For Yoder, that often means working with local chefs and the restaurant community. "There is a strong support from local restaurants in giving back to the community, not only by donating time or services, but also by building a sustainable business infrastructure to the city," she says. "I love seeing areas of D.C. transform because a few chefs have gone in and opened new restaurants that have spurred a commercial and residential resurgence and regrowth."

Whether it's organizing fundraisers or making food deliveries, Yoder's hands-on work keeps her



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rooted within the local community. "Food & Friends has really flourished here because there's such a sense of diversity and an urgent need for D.C. to be a community, for people to reach out and help," she says. "I think people tend to think, 'Oh, it's all politics,' but that same drive behind politics in the city is also there in everyone else, just directed in different ways. Like toward creative, artistic pursuits, charities and nonprofits, or business ventures. It's endlessly exciting and interesting to meet people who are driven to pursue different paths and appreciative of others' passions to do the same."

Washington, D.C., appeals to Yoder's sense of curiosity, she says, because whether "you're 25 or 85, there's always something new to discover." She loves to indulge her foodie habits and immerse herself in history and culture. Her favorite neighborhood may be H Street, because "it perfectly epitomizes an area of resurgence."

Yoder loves exploring the independent establishments: "They really take a lot of pride in what they're providing you with." Whether she's eating mussels and fries at [Granville Moore's](#), listening to a local bluegrass band at [SOVA Espresso & Wine](#) or playing board games at [H Street Country Club](#), Yoder is never at a loss for something captivating to do in Washington, D.C.

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