

Meet the Staff: Phyllis McKinnon, BioDesign's Office Administrator

One of the first smiling faces patients see when they enter our [Tampa Functional Medicine practice](#) is that of Phyllis McKinnon, BioDesign's intake coordinator and office administrator. Phyllis is charged with ensuring that each of our patients and guests is welcomed and taken care of. In addition, this former holistic spa owner educates new patients through our protocol for treatment and wellness.



Before joining our team earlier this year, Phyllis was a fulltime hospice volunteer, working with the dying and their families. Bringing comfort to these patients made her more determined than ever to become a part of a team that focuses on preventative health. She says she found that focus in the staff here at BioDesign Wellness.

Beginning her career as an esthetician, where she specialized in oncology esthetics, Phyllis became an esthetic instructor for one of the largest esthetic corporations in New England, where she spearheaded and opened that company's satellite school in Connecticut. She then opened her own spa on Newbury Street in Boston, developing and training a staff with holistic modalities

in order to specifically address stress, skin care, sore muscles, and overall wellness.

We asked Phyllis to take a few minutes to answer some questions about her career, her thoughts about BioDesign Wellness' approach to healthcare, and her personal life. And we tossed in a few whimsical queries just to see where her head is at. Enjoy!

BioDesign Wellness Center: *Why did you choose to apply to, and then come to work for BioDesign?*

Phyllis: *Arriving in Tampa meant a new life and new beginning, and I was most excited to find an opportunity to work among the best of the best when it comes to health, wellness, and beauty. I count my blessings every day that I have the opportunity to be surrounded by educated, out-of-the-box thinkers, who are as compassionate as they are brilliant. To end each day as a member of this team is beyond satisfying.*

BioDesign: *If you could tell new patients one thing about BioDesign Wellness Center, what would you want them to know?*

Phyllis: *We are here to get to the root problem of their illness, without the use of drugs to treat just the symptoms. Our patients feel heard and safe here. This process is a journey, and we at BioDesign are here to not only show you the road to wellness, but to also hold your hand through the process – with integrity, grace, respect, and most of all, results!*

BioDesign: *What board certifications or professional designations do you hold?*

Phyllis: *I have advanced certifications in Medical Esthetics and Esthetic Instruction with a focus on Oncology Esthetics; Paramedical certification in Corrective Cosmetics for Burns and Scars; and, I hold a Hospice Volunteer Certification.*

BioDesign: *Where did you grow up and what did you want to be when you became an adult?*

Phyllis: *I grew up in Boston and was driven toward holistic therapies and medicine from a very young age. Being part of a large, first-generation Italian family gave me the opportunity to see the benefit of fresh foods and the health benefits of good old-fashioned home cooking and herbal remedies, created with ingredients from our own garden. It was watching my grandparents and parents being treated in the best Boston hospitals, yet not receiving the restorative care or nutrition needed for wellness, that drove my passion for holistic health and preventative care.*

BioDesign: *If you moved to Sesame Street, who would you want as your neighbor and why?*

Phyllis: *Big Bird, because his inquisitive nature and positive attitude is not only infectious, but inspirational! The older we get, the more important this is. To grow with each challenge, find the wisdom we can glean from difficult times, and face each with joy, faith, and kindness – that's the secret to our sometimes-harried lives. Choose happiness instead of searching for it. That's Big Bird's secret!*

BioDesign: *What's something most people would be surprised to learn about you?*

Phyllis: *To celebrate a decade birthday, I traveled to Italy solo for two weeks. After taking Italian lessons, I was able to converse and eat my way through Tuscany, the Amalfi Coast, Rome, and the villages where my ancestors were born. I believe everyone should travel alone at least once in their lives. To gift yourself the ability to see the world through your own eyes, and to experience it on your own, is invaluable and exciting. Going out of our comfort zone is how we keep elevating*

who we were meant to be. Being a traveler, and not a tourist is essential.

BioDesign: *If you could pick three famous people to be a part of your entourage, who would you pick and why?*

Phyllis: *The three people I would choose to be part of my entourage would be Emmy award-winning television host, best-selling cookbook author, and restaurateur Lidia Bastianich; English musician and actor Sting; and, comedian, writer, actor, and director Larry David. Lydia's preparation of food is reminiscent of my grandmother's home cooking – simple, fresh ingredients with fresh herbs as flavors. She fills her food with love and is passionate about her meals. You can almost taste her food before eating it! Sting would provide the poetry, art, and music that we need to fill our world with color and heart. He exemplifies my ideal of an artist who is able to start off simply, but then morph and adapt to different musical modalities as he walks through life. He is fearless and still relevant after all these years. A yogi, musician, chef, poet, English teacher, and in great shape at over 60. Inspirational. Larry David would provide the down to earth, acerbic humor I love.*

BioDesign: *Please tell us about your hobbies or interests outside of work?*

Phyllis: *Cooking; especially turning unhealthy recipes into healthy ones. Finding out-of-the-way places to explore, and anything that involves the ocean or boating. Yoga and chakra meditation. Listening to live music. Farmer's markets and festivals.*

BioDesign: *Are you married, and do you have children?*

Phyllis: *I am happily a woman on her own and have two beautiful daughters, 28 and 22. My oldest is an emergency room nurse at*

Tampa General Hospital, and my youngest a radiography student. They followed the sun in June of 2018 to Florida, and I followed them five months later. We live in South Tampa and have two dogs between the three of us – a Yorkie and a Cockerdoodle.

BioDesign: *If you could eliminate one food so that no one would eat it ever again, what would you pick to destroy and why?*

Phyllis: *I would eliminate fast food. There is no sense of community when eating it, no nutritional value at all, and it encourages lazy “eating in front of the TV” habits. It doesn’t take long to prepare fresh meals, and at BioDesign Wellness we believe the road to wellness and happiness begins with what we put into our bodies. Fast food needs to go!*