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954 MAG

Spring 2019

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Chandler Worley
Family Farms

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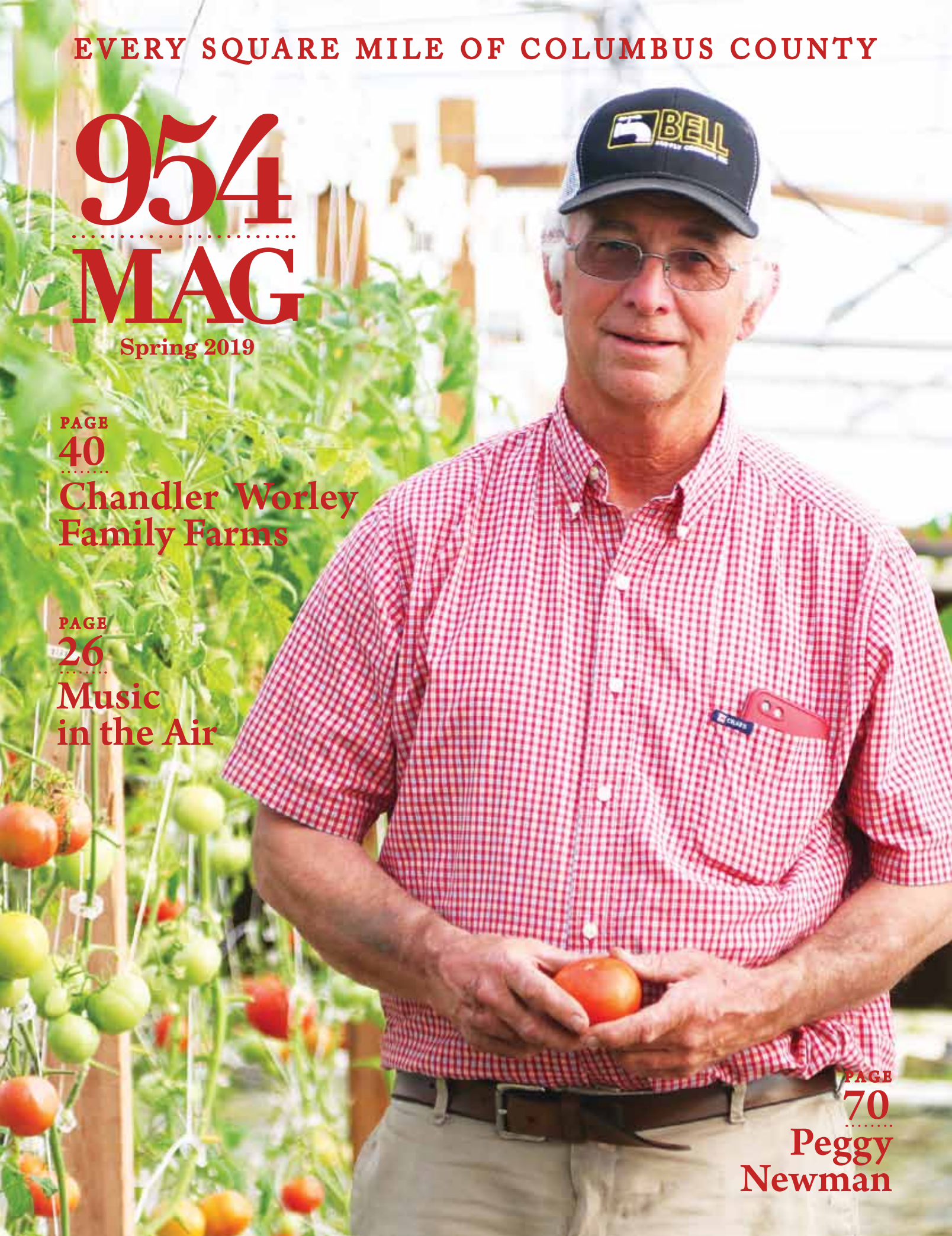
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Music
in the Air

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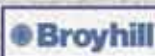
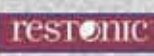
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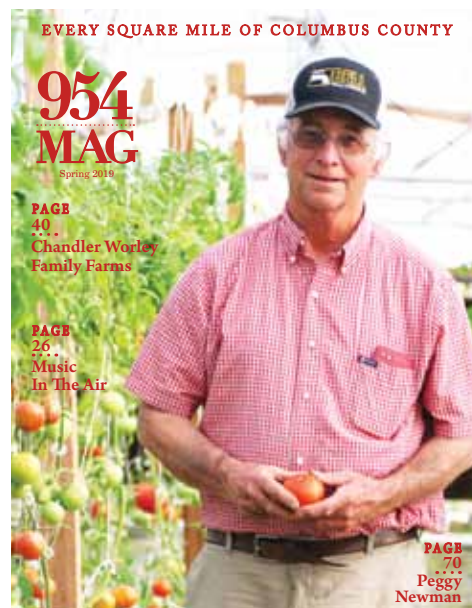
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CHANDLER WORLEY FAMILY FARMS
COVER PHOTO BY GRANT MERRITT

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954 EDITOR

STUART HIGH ROGERS

LAYOUT

JANIS CREECH

ADVERTISING

AMELIA SASSER • DEAN LEWIS

TJ ENZOR • HANNE RICHARDS

SARAH CRUTCHFIELD • JANNA SASSER

CONTRIBUTING EDITORIAL

CLARA CARTRETTE • SARAH CRUTCHFIELD

DIANA MATTHEWS • GRANT MERRITT

KATHRYN OGDEN • STUART ROGERS • JANNA SASSER

JULIE STOCKS • JEFFERSON WEAVER • BILL WOODSMAN

COPY EDITING

DIANA MATTHEWS

CLARA CARTRETTE

JANNA SASSER

954 PHOTOGRAPHERS

MARCUS ANTHONY • CLARA CARTRETTE • SARAH CRUTCHFIELD

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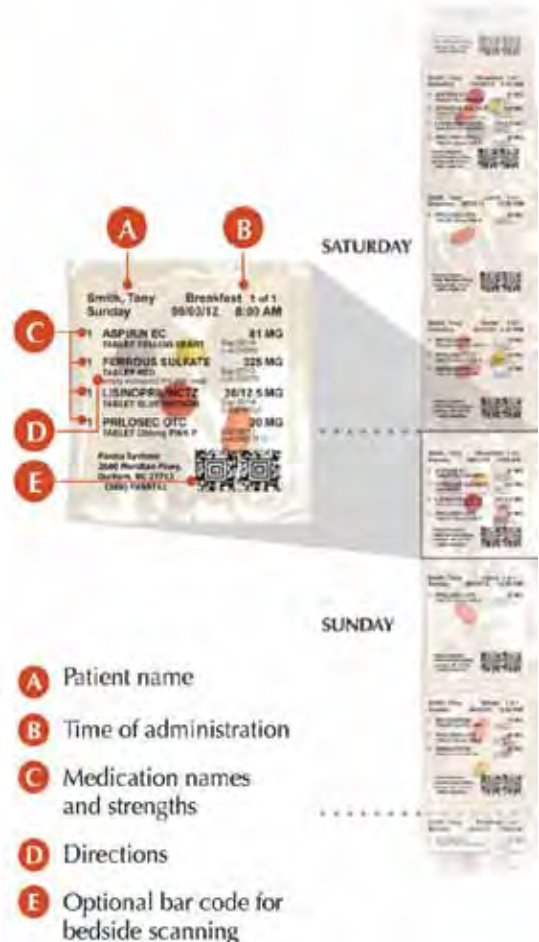
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LOCAL WEATHERMAN LOVES “A GOOD STORM”

STORY & PHOTOS GRANT MERRITT

Always ready to get his hands dirty in an explosion of meteorology, photography or science experiments, Chris Cawley is a self-professed science nerd. His love for science projected him through school to become a local radio meteorologist and medical transcriber, and he is now taking aim at becoming a school science teacher.

A native of Cooperstown, N.Y., Cawley lived with snow every winter for the first half of his life. Throughout elementary and middle school, however, Cawley spent every summer vacation on Canal Street in Whiteville with his great-grandmother, Ellen Hinson. In 2006 he and his wife Christine decided to move to Whiteville to escape cold weather and enjoy hot summers.

Cawley received his associate in science degree from Southeastern Community College in 2014, and he earned his bachelor's degree in operational meteorology in 2017 from Mississippi State University's online program. He did a two-month internship at WECT-TV in Wilmington as part of his online degree program in the summer of 2016.

“I learned everything from behind the scenes, to the green screen, to how the cameras worked and all aspects of the newsroom,” Cawley said. “People think it's an easy thing to do, but when you're standing in front of a green wall with a producer in your ear and having two and a half minutes to say your report, it will humble you really quick.”

Cawley's favorite aspect of his internship was the atmosphere of a newsroom. Meeting tight deadlines and having to go against what he

learned in the classroom, Cawley said that having 30 minutes to write a seven-day forecast was a challenging part of the experience. But being in front of the green screen, pointing at maps and saying a forecast from memory was the most challenging part for him.

“You just gotta pick your set of models that you like to choose from, use your own ingenuity and experience with the territory and just go,” Cawley explained. “That's why it's difficult for a forecaster here to forecast for somewhere like Wyoming because you don't know the lay of the land and how it affects the weather.”

Cawley's internship at a TV station helped him develop a personality for his radio weather reports on WTXY in Whiteville, Cool Winds Radio in Myrtle Beach, WHEZ in Hartsville, S.C., WDZD in Monroe and WEZU in Roanoke Rapids. He records three 30- to 60-second weather reports every day for each station except WTXY, where he records only one.

He records his weather reports at his home, developing them from online weather model services he subscribes to through Gibson Ridge. He uses a free audio software program called Audacity to edit and produce the reports, and he uses a Snowball Ice microphone to record the reports. Gibson Ridge allows him to look at all predictions and radars from the National Weather Service.

He also has his own backyard weather station. With access to additional recording weather data from his Davis Vantage Vue device, Cawley is able to more accurately predict local weather. Recording



With access to recording weather data at home with his Davis Vantage Vue device, Cawley is able to more accurately predict local weather.

Cawley uses Gibson Ridge to check the radar and weather models to write his weather forecast for his daily radio broadcasts.



Cawley records his daily radio broadcasts in the comfort of his living room in Whiteville.

the temperature, wind speed, rainfall, barometric pressure and humidity, Cawley said the device is a rugged piece of equipment, able to withstand Hurricane Matthew and Hurricane Florence with no damage.

"You have to use your own educational training, gut instinct and look out the window to see if what the weather model on the computer is telling you is junk," Cawley said.

On a global scale, Cawley looks at the "big picture" a couple of times per week. He looks at weather across the world to see how it will affect the United States and how it will affect everything locally. He looks at the telekinetics of the North Pacific Ocean during the winter and the west coast of Africa during the summer and pays attention to how it affects the tropical storm season.

"I am a storm addict," Cawley said. "I can do without hurricanes, and that last night of Florence with the tornadoes was a real sucker punch. But I like a good storm."



Cawley practices church music on his keyboard at home.

In addition to his radio reports, Cawley has been a reliable source of information for *The News Reporter's* senior reporter Jefferson Weaver and his stories on local weather impacts. He recorded a Facebook Live video with Weaver before Hurricane Florence made landfall to give his forecast on potential wind and rain amounts.

While Cawley is not reporting the weather, he enjoys spending time with his 12-year-old son, Nathan. They enjoy doing anything science-related, riding bikes through Whiteville, talking about cars and storm-chasing.

"We like hands-on activities that make things blow up or watching other people

blow stuff up," Cawley said. "We learned another thing about science when Nathan fell off his bike last week."

During his son's three years at Edgewood Elementary School, Cawley helped out with the North Carolina Science Olympiad at West Brunswick High School. He said the science competition hosts

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third, fourth and fifth grade students from all over North Carolina, and Nathan won gold and bronze medals.

While they are storm-chasing, Cawley likes to put his photography skill to the test and capture photos of lightning and cloud movement. He remembers the hairs on his arm tingling from the lightning being so close when he lived on Peacock Road north of Whiteville. He had wide-open fields in front of his house in which to take pictures of lightning while his son was screaming in the background.

He is also a musician. During church services at the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints in Tabor City, Cawley is a self-taught organist. He originally started playing the piano when he was six years old, and he said Billy Joel was his piano hero while growing up.

Taking lessons until he was 18 years old, Cawley said he fell out of the music arena until his wife mentioned at church that he could play the piano. With a need for a church organist, Cawley volunteered to play soon after joining the church.

Cawley lost Christine to a heart attack in August 2016 and said he has felt lost since then. Before the heart attack, she was working on her elementary education degree through UNC Wilmington. Cawley joked that he and his wife were competing for the highest grades since they were both doing their online degree programs at the same time.

"I lost the competition since she made all A's and one B," Cawley said. "And I'm sitting there in calculus class with a C, but 'C's get degrees, babe,'" he told her.

On a typical day, Cawley starts his day with taking his son to school and coming home to analyze all the weather models and radars to prepare for his radio reports. Cawley said it takes him about an hour to write each forecast before recording. After the radio reports are done and Nathan has gone to bed, he is a medical transcriber, typing out recorded doctor reports from orthopedic surgery. He said it takes him about four hours each night, and he does it five nights per week.

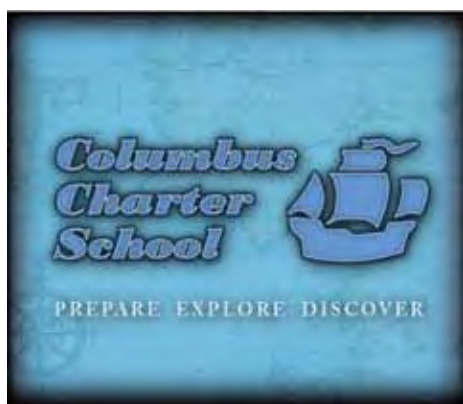
Having two sources of income from his radio weather forecast reports and medical transcribing, Cawley said he wants to further his career by becoming a science teacher at Columbus Charter School. He said that medical transcribing is not a fun job anymore. He wants to show and pass on his love for science to young people like his son.

"I'm a science nerd, and you're going to be a science nerd too when I'm done with you," Cawley said in relationship to being a

teacher.

You can find official weather reports from Cawley by searching Meteorologist Christopher Cawley to locate his Facebook page where he keeps people up-to-date on moderate or severe weather events.

*Cawley is a
musician
and self taught
organist.*



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PAM BYRD IS BUSY MANAGING B&B

A Tabor City Treasure

STORY CLARA CARTRETTE

PHOTOS COURTESY OF PAM BYRD

One of Tabor City's elite treasures is Dixie Belle Place, a three-story bed and breakfast that attracts customers from several states, especially during the summer months of beach season.

Pam Byrd, a schoolteacher who retired a few years ago, is the manager, thanks to wrongly installed pool motors and some that were not even hooked up in the Dixie Belle Place swimming pool. Byrd said she and her husband Tony were in the pool business but at that time they were concentrating more on cleaning pools.

However, a late night call from William and Irene Williford changed that. The Willifords were both in the Armed Forces but built the large brick home in Tabor City to introduce their children to small town living and give them an opportunity to go to smaller schools.

About three days before the Willifords were scheduled to host The Taste of Tabor, an outdoor dinner held annually during the N.C. Yam Festival, they discovered that their pool motors were not working. William called Pam and Tony and asked if they would come see if they could fix the motors.

Pam said she told William they were afraid they wouldn't know what to do and William said just come and look at it. "Tony and I re-plumbed all of the motors, which were installed backwards and some were not even hooked up," Pam said. "We probably woke up some neighbors when the spa came on and water shot up in the air. We were all cheering when the motors started working about 2 a.m. Now the Willifords don't want anyone else to mess with the pool."

The Willifords lived in Tabor City for several years while their children attended South Columbus High School, then went back into the Armed Forces and moved to Fairfax, Va.

Pam said the Willifords asked her about six years ago to manage the bed and breakfast. A year later she told them she would, "and it's been growing ever since. It's been amazing to see a sister from Cincinnati who takes care of her mother, another sister from Texas and a brother from Florida come together at Dixie Belle Place." She said families from many states meet at Dixie Belle Place to enjoy getting together and the small town atmosphere only 30 minutes from the beaches.

"Guests enjoy walking on the pier at Lake Tabor; they like the restaurants and shops in the downtown area, buying locally grown fresh vegetables off the back of a pickup



Pam Byrd manages Dixie Belle Place B&B for the Williford family.



The comfortable sitting room invites guests to take it easy.



One of the spacious bedrooms at Dixie Belle Place.



Hot days and warm summer evenings are the perfect time to enjoy the crystal clear pool.

truck and other things they don't have in the towns and cities they come from," Pam said. "They love the uniqueness of a small town — the shops, grills, restaurants and more. They love going in E.W. Fonvielle & Sons feed and seed store, and, even though they don't know what a feed and seed store is, they love seeing the baby chicks and meeting people from all walks of life."

Pam said Dixie Belle Place is pretty much booked from June through September and half of October, November and December.

The B&B is named for William Williford's mother, the late Dixie Belle Cox Williford, daughter of the late Mamie and Dewey Cox of Tabor City.

The brick three-story house has five bedrooms, five and a half baths, an indoor jacuzzi, an outdoor sports swimming pool (four feet deep on both ends and six feet in the middle), and an overflow spa. She plans special events for the guests by request, such as spa weekends, teacher weekends, gal pal weekends, ladies' night out weekends and more. "We can cater a steak dinner poolside and can arrange a five-course meal, if requested. I have three chefs I can call on if needed," she said.

One of her most recent events were etiquette classes for little girls and a mom and daughter tea party.

Pam makes a lot of cakes, pastries and desserts, "and I have baked as many as eight pound cakes in one week, one for every day," she said. "One of the grandmas wanted a cake to take with her on her plane trip home.

"But I don't do breakfast," Pam hastily added. "I give

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Pam is an extremely creative workaholic. She's happiest when she has a project... or projects... to work on. Last year she took on the job of planning and carrying out an all day Christmas on Main project that included visits with Santa, farmers selling produce and numerous other interesting events. When she was teaching, she took on the project of planning and carrying out the Miss Columbus County pageants and taking the winners to the Miss North Carolina pageant. She also received recognition as an outstanding teacher.

Instead of hiring someone to make a sign for Dixie Belle Place, Pam went to 2 Broke Sisters antique store in Tabor City and found an old headboard for a king-size bed. She took it to Randall and Lynda Harper, also exceptionally creative people, to help her design a sign for the bed and breakfast. They distressed the wood, painted it, put the B&B name on it and installed it in the yard.

Pam's latest project... a big one... was opening Bluebyrd Cafe recently on Main Street. She and her husband Tony refurbished the 1926 building "with new wiring, plumbing, floors, appliances, prayers, tears and laughter while putting life back on this corner of Main," she wrote on Facebook. The building was last occupied by the Corner Grill. They began this adventure on Jan. 10 and opened just a few weeks ago.



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THE WOODWORKER AND HIS ANIMALS

STORY JANNA SASSER
PHOTOS GRANT MERRITT

Is woodworking a dying art? Centuries ago, the woodworker was the indispensable artisan. With wood being a basic material for housing, furniture and tools, the multitude of products made from wood were part of human life from hello to goodbye.

Though the woodworker may not be the go-to guy for small town commerce today, as the industry changes, the creativity and skill that today's woodworkers are incorporating into their work is keeping the hobby very much alive.

"I saw this stick on the farm at Oakland plantation, so I picked it up and whittled this snake into it," says Kenneth Soles of Hallsboro, holding the first of his woodworking designs that he decided to paint.

The polished wooden stick, with a small rattlesnake coiled around its center, could pass as an elaborate walking stick that could sell for a pretty penny.

Soles is a retired employee of International Paper in Riegelwood and lifelong outdoorsmen. "I worked at International Paper my whole life so I could hunt — and I hunted five days a week, work or not."

A dedicated deer and bear hunter, he also “likes to take people hunting” and has led several eager hunters to bring home their first trophy bear or buck.

“I’ve spent a lot of time in the woods,” he says. “Growing up, while I was sitting in the stand I’d always carve little deer and animals from sticks I’d find.”

It wasn’t until he was home with a shoulder injury in 1991 that he created a piece he kept, inspiring him to keep up the hobby.

“I couldn’t sit still, so I started chipping away at a log from the Green Swamp,” he says. With only a small carpenter’s chisel and pocketknife, Soles carved a bear cub standing about two feet tall, peering from behind a tree trunk.

“When I start a project, I can’t stop until it’s complete,” he adds. “Some days I’ll go out to my building and start working, and when I can’t see anymore I realize the sun’s gone down.”

His backyard barn has co-served as his wood shop for the last 30 years, where he spends weeks at a time carving and whittling a block of wood — often a log of juniper or tupelo gum pulled from the Green swamp, and occasionally basswood from the North Carolina mountains.

Not only is that where Soles brings snakes, fish, bears and birds to life, but it’s also the hub for useful accents like lamp bases fashioned from deer antlers, or carved from juniper wood bearing familiar animal faces.

He’s also able to capture rare sightings in his memory like a snapshot.

“I like this one,” Soles says about his sharp-shinned hawk standing on a branch extending from a wall mount.

These small hawks have suffered a population decline since the mid-2000s, according to the Carolina Bird Club organization. Though they



A peregrine falcon, like the one Soles is holding, is believed to be the fastest bird in the world. In power-diving to strike prey, they can reach 200 miles per hour.

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*"When I start a project, I
can't stop until it's complete."*

Top: Red-tail hawks are commonly seen around the county soaring over fields or perched on roadside poles. Bottom: These three lamps are another early project of Soles' made from juniper from the Green Swamp in Columbus County.

primarily breed in Canada and northern states, the breeding range extends to the North Carolina mountains and Piedmont to a limited extent.

Still, most "Sharpies" are seen only in flight, as they stay close to cover and seldom perch in the open. "That's about as close to one as you're going to get," Soles says.

A rattlesnake is stretched across his coffee table on a wooden base, his head lifted and tongue extended. It has two light lines on its face and is covered in dark, namesake diamonds surrounded by lighter scales.

The Eastern diamondback rattlesnake is the largest species of rattlesnake in the state, where it is protected and likely to be extirpated. According to a recent study at the University of Georgia, none have been seen in North Carolina since the early 1900s.

Along with the unmistakable diamondback writhing in the center of the room, another slightly smaller one is curled in the corner. These and sev-





For Soles, the hardest part of carving is making birds' feet, which are designed by hand and topped with stainless steel toenails.



Soles' first carving shows its age with areas where the wood is naturally starting to split.

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Soles captured different stages of carving a rattlesnake and base into a one-piece design from his work shed.

eral others Soles created by memory.

"I appreciate painting," he adds. Though carving takes longer, usually several weeks, Soles' painting is equally detailed and meticulous.

"If feathers don't look soft, they don't look like feathers," he says, pointing to a faint silver dusting along each tip of an owl's plush, velvety-looking feathers.

The barred owl isn't his first, and shows subtle improvements in technique and painting that only the artist could point out.

"I like to finish things," he notes. "There are some pieces that I've considered going back and redoing but I don't; they're finished, they're complete."

Soles has never sold any of his work. Instead, he gives pieces to friends and family who he "knows appreciates them."

Soles also likes to have another project picked out before he finishes his last. Luckily, there's plenty of old wood to give new life.



Another distinguishing characteristic of Eastern diamondbacks is the presence of two 'pits' on each side of the face, which they use to sense heat from warm-blooded prey.



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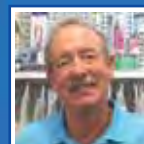


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Photo by Andy Anderson

Columbus County Area Singers in concert at St. Mark AME Zion Church.

Gospel Music

“Up above my head,
I hear music in the air.”

STORY KATHRYN OGDEN

PHOTOS ANDY ANDERSON & JERLENE BALDWIN

Gospel music is a true and unique art form that is indigenous to America. It was born out of the biggest blight on our American history: slavery. Yet out of this injustice and suffering came the most joyful, hopeful and uplifting form of music that has influenced the world. Some of America's greatest singers came straight out of the church, were the children of ministers, and learned to sing in a

choir. Sister Rosetta Tharpe, Mahalia Jackson, Whitney Houston, Sam Cooke, Marvin Gaye, Aretha Franklin, Mavis Staples, and North Carolina's own Shirley Caesar were part of the church tradition passed down through the generations rooted in the struggle of slavery and black oral history. Gospel singing is special. Gospel singing is different. It is about using the gift of song to God's glory. It is emotive, passionate, pained and glorious. The songs are filled with a longing for home and for redemption. There is harmony and call and answer. In the gospel singer's voice and in the words of the historic Negro spirituals, there is an acknowledgement of pain, and from that acknowledgment, there is joy, resilience, and hope. This message of hope is all-inclusive. Gospel music isn't just for Christians; it is for all races and religions. Gospel music is for everyone. I recently had a chance to witness and be a part of several gospel music celebrations and was lucky enough to interview several of Columbus County's finest. Gospel music is alive and well here in Columbus County. In the words of Sister Rosetta Tharpe: “Up above my head, I hear music in the air.”

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Photo by Andy Anderson

James Marley, Jr. directing the choir.

Q&A with local Gospel musicians

What is your background/training in music and singing?

LaDeen Powell: I began piano lessons at about the age of 6 and took organ lessons as a teenager.

I have not had any formal voice lessons.

James Marley, Jr.: I had an aunt and uncle who lived in Richmond, Va. They would come down to visit and would play the piano and sing. I would watch them and would then try to imitate what they had done. I later attended Pfeiffer University and studied Church Music. I've been hooked ever since.

Florence Raynette Gardner: I was a voice major at Morgan State University, where I graduated with a bachelor of science degree in music education and a master's degree in music education. I was also a Fulbright Scholar in Germany in 1964.

Sydney Munn: I received vocal training starting at the age of 13. I attended Pfeiffer University as an undergrad and I also received my MBA from there.

Carol Caldwell: I started singing in elementary school in the Glee Club, under the direction of my mother. I started taking piano lessons at the age of six and continued until my junior year at East Carolina University. I started at ECU as a piano major and voice minor; I changed majors during my junior year.



Photo by Andy Anderson

Male ensemble with Sydney Munn directing.

What is the background and history of the choir that you work with?

LaDeen Powell: I am musician/director for the Adult Choir at Friendship Missionary Baptist Church and have been for approximately 40 years. In addition, I direct and play for the Male Chorus at the same church. In earlier years, I played for the Junior Choir and The Comforters of Christ. The choir today consists of about 12 people.

Marley, Gardner, Munn and Caldwell: We have all played for and directed choirs in our churches. James and Florence continue to do so. Carol played for the Senior Choir as a youth and directed and played for the Junior Choir until four or five years ago. Sydney played for the choir at his church as a youth. All of us have sung in our church choirs.

How old were you when you realized you could sing?

LaDeen Powell: In primary school, we had an operetta, for which I auditioned and got the part of "Mollie." I never realized that I could really sing that well, but other people must have thought so, especially my parents. I sang at my grandfather's funeral when I was about 10 years old or so. I have sung for weddings, performing music of many genres.

James Marley: I was around the age of 13 when people started telling me that I was a singer. I was in the choir at Central High School here in Whiteville under the direction of Ms. JoAnne Badie and Ms. Dorothy Star Johnson.

Florence Raynette Gardner: I was about 15 years and I was drafted from the high school chorus to become a member of the

Peabody Chorus. I also sang at the World's Fair in 1964.

Sydney Munn: I was also around the age of 13. I started taking voice lessons from Ed Miller. He encouraged me to do a lot of solo work around town.

Carol Caldwell: I had always sung in the choir at church and school. While I was in high school, Frank McCullough, who was the choir director, gave me the opportunity to do some solos. I had never thought of myself as a soloist—mostly as a pianist. This was a surprise for me. Later, my mother and I did some duets, usually at Christmas. We were known for "O Holy Night."

What is your experience with Gospel Music?

LaDeen Powell: I have played and sung Gospel music since I began playing for the church. We had a community choir called The Third World Choir during the late 1970s in which I sang alto/soprano and as a soloist sometimes. I am now a member of the Columbus County Area Singers where I sing alto (second soprano, when needed) and as soloist.

One of the moments I am most proud of was when I got the opportunity to sing background at the debut of "Jesus (I Love Calling Your Name)," written by Harold Troy, which was made famous by Gospel singer Shirley Caesar. The song later was nominated for a Grammy. Mr. Troy was a member of the choir I played for at Friendship.

Florence Raynette Gardner: I was raised in the Missionary Baptist Church. I sang in the choir. At that time, I sang soprano. As a young person, I sang in a duo, with a guy named Sam Shufford. We were known as Shipman and Shufford.



Photo by Andy Anderson

Women's ensemble. Seated: Florence Raynette Gardner, LaDeen Powell standing beside the piano.

James Marley: I, too, was raised in the Missionary Baptist Church. I played and sang in the church choir. As a young musician, I played for several churches that sponsored choir anniversaries on Sunday afternoons. I remember sometimes playing for as many as five programs in one day. Currently, I direct a community choir known as the Columbus County Area Singers. This choir formed in the 1980s. At that time, we were all in our 20s and 30s. Now, the age range for the members ranges from 20s-80s. We have done a variety of music ranging from classical to spirituals to anthems to Gospel.

Sydney Munn: I was raised in the African Methodist Episcopal Church. I later joined the Columbus County Area Singers under the direction of James Marley Jr. in the mid-1990s, where I was given greater exposure to Gospel music.

Carol Caldwell: I was raised in the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church—St Mark AME Zion Church as a matter of fact. My recollection is that there were two distinct types of music in the church—the more traditional, with hymns and anthems and the more modern, with the swinging beat of the Gospel. As a young person, I preferred the livelier of the two, but today, I see the benefits of the balance and appreciate it.

Is there a difference for you when singing Gospel as opposed to secular music?

LaDeen Powell: Indeed! Gospel music pulls at the soul. Today it speaks more to my inner spirit than secular music, although I enjoy both.

Marley, Gardner and Munn: Gospel music is emotional

and tugs at the soul. When we think about some of the greats in Gospel music like Thomas A. Dorsey, Charles A. Tindley, Edwin Hawkins, Andre Crouch...to name a few....it's a giddy experience. These people have done so much for the world of music and it's exhilarating when you think that this music had its roots in the Mother Country—Africa.

Carol Caldwell: I don't know if I can say that I experience a difference when singing Gospel as opposed to secular music. I enjoy all types of music. I wake up in the morning with a song in my head...usually, it's a song of a spiritual nature and it could be classical or a church anthem. But I really enjoy listening to R&B. That's what my radio stays tuned to. This week, my head has been filled with the music from Jesus Christ Superstar! Go figure.

What are the benefits of singing in a choir?

Powell, Marley, Gardner, Munn and Caldwell: The benefit I get is the joy of blending voices with other people who have a common enjoyment. It is unexplainable when we "all get excited." A choir is a beautiful community where people work together and blend together for a common cause. It's the best sort of community.

In a word or phrase, what is Gospel music to you?

Powell, Marley, Gardner, Munn and Caldwell:

God's word in song

Emotional

Thought provoking





Jerlene Baldwin

Jerlene Baldwin

A chat with Jerlene Baldwin
about the joy of Gospel Music

Jerlene Baldwin has been performing Gospel music with her family since she was a child. She began singing alto and lead as part of her family group, The Baldwin Singers. Baldwin currently sings every second and fourth Sunday with The New Prong Chapel Gospel Choir at New Prong Chapel in Whiteville. She is also in charge of the non-profit Grandma's Hand Ministries that sponsors the annual Rainbow Gospel Gala, which will be held April 18th, 2020. The New Prong Chapel Gospel Choir has 11 members, including Mother Eloise Bright, who is currently 89 and still singing strong.

KO: How did you begin singing Gospel music?

JB: My father was in a Gospel group. He used to have all of us kids just singing and this led to our group called The Baldwin Singers. We would go with my father and his crew and then we started getting put on the programs at different churches. The group got better and kept developing, and then I became president and was president for about 20 years. I left the group because I began speaking at various conferences, but I still continued with the church.

KO: How many people were in The Baldwin Singers?

JB: There were six of us, brothers and sisters and my uncle and a niece.

KO: What part did you sing?

JB: I sang alto and lead.

KO: How did you figure out your harmony parts? Would you use sheet music or go by ear?

JB: We would listen to each other and we just knew our parts. My father taught us well and we knew all the keys. We didn't read music; we learned by just singing and listening.

KO: Who are some of your favorite Gospel singers?

JB: I love Tasha Cobbs, Shirley Caesar; I like a mixture of music because I feel



Photo courtesy of Jerlene Baldwin

The New Prong Chapel Gospel Choir in Whiteville. Left to right: Bobby Shipman, Peggy Jones, Mary Bradley, Liz Williams, Jerlene Baldwin, Deborah Williams and James Burt. Front row: Eldress Whila Haynes, Pastor Kelvin T. McGeachy and Mother Eloise Bright.

like everyone brings something different and special to the table. I really love Shawn Jones and the Believers. He passed a couple of months ago, and he was so anointed. He was just awesome!. I listened to Mahalia Jackson, The Angelic Gospel Singers. My brother wrote a song for The Angelic Gospel Singers and they recorded it. His name is Elder Jessie J. Troy.

KO: What is the name of the song?

JB: The name of the song is "I Just Want to Go Home," and it was recorded by Margaret Allison and The Angelic Gospel Singers.

KO: For those who may not know, what does it mean when you say someone is anointed?

JB: That God is anointing the spirit and the blessings of God have been given, God's hand is on you and that someone has been blessed.

KO: What do you think about the new Gospel sound as opposed to the traditional hymns?

JB: I like the new stuff, but you know, there is something special about the old hymns. My grandma always told me that the hymns would take you through your bad times, that those old hymns would get you through no matter what, and she really was right. You know, you can have all the praise and worship music, and all the contemporary stuff. But when you hit those old hymns and sing those words, there's just something about them.... they speak directly to you, to your soul and that is really the Heavenly Father speaking.

KO: If you can sum up in a few words, what is Gospel music to you?

JB: A safe haven and God's grace.



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CAITLYN & HUDSON

Shine Like Ya Dun It

STORY STUART ROGERS

PHOTOS MARCUS ANTHONY PHOTOGRAPHY & BASS FAMILY

A whole lot can change in a year. It was especially true for high school senior Caitlyn Bass of Whiteville when she was awarded her very own 4-month-old registered American Quarter Horse Association (AQHA) foal named Shine Like Ya Dun It. Bass won the foal as one of 60 participants in the yearlong 2018 Zoetis AQHA Ranching Heritage Young Horse Development Program (YHDP).

Each youth chosen for YHDP is given an AQHA weanling donated by a Zoetis AQHA Ranching Heritage Breeder to participate in hands-on training that is judged for the competition. "Shine Like Ya Dun It" is the fancy name for the AQHA weanling given to Bass for the competition by Jack and Tina Clark, the owners of Clark Farms Quarter Horses, located in the mountains of Fulton County, Pa.

The bay colored colt with a white blaze on his face is better known by his "barn name," Hudson. Bass says, "I chose the name Hudson since it is

similar to the Clarks' hometown of Hustontown, Pennsylvania, and it fits his easy-going personality."

The Clark family specializes in breeding AQHA foundation bred performance horses, and the Clarks' daughter who bred Hudson, Laramie Clark Booth, helped Bass transition the colt from his farm life in Pennsylvania to his new home at Boys & Girls Homes of North Carolina Exhibition Center in Lake Waccamaw.

Relatively new to horseback riding and horse management, Bass took riding lessons from Amanda Thompson, Boys & Girls Homes equestrian program director, prior to applying to the YHDP program.

After Bass rode schooling horses for Thompson for several years with marked progress, Thompson encouraged Bass to earn her very own horse and benefit from the training opportunity by applying for a spot in the YHDP class of 2018. Sharing the excitement when Bass was chosen for the

program, Thompson served as Bass's mentor by offering training advice and guidance.

Horses are big and powerful. However, their first year, when they are fragile, is important to their long-term health, training and success. Large animal veterinarians Dr. Christine Long and Dr. Leslie Jarrett of Pineview Veterinary Hospital in Bolton helped Bass track and ensure Hudson's growth and wellbeing. Bass says, "I had to schedule regular check-ups and submit his health records." Fulfilling these responsibilities was important in the YHDP judging process.

Bass's parents, Patti and Allen Bass, played a critical role in supporting their daughter's ambitious project. With their help, Bass balanced schoolwork while meeting the benchmarks of the YHDP competition schedule. Patti says, "Caitlyn was a very busy teenager. She was able to take some SCC classes online to give her more time at the farm with Hudson."

Bass maintains a 4.0 average at Columbus Career and College Academy (CCCA) and Southeastern Community College (SCC). She will graduate May 21 with a high school diploma from CCCA and on May 10 with an associate degree from SCC. She will start nursing school at UNC-Pembroke in the fall. Bass says, "Working with Hudson has taught me responsibility and goal-setting. I don't have time to procrastinate."

With a strong team backing her, Bass made the 11 hour trip with Amanda Thompson on October 30, 2017, to the Clarks' farm in Pennsylvania to bring Hudson to his new home in Lake Waccamaw. Bass and Hudson then had several months to settle in and get to know each other before the formal training and competition began January 1, 2018.

Hudson came to Bass straight out of the pasture without any training. Her first training lesson was to get him used to a halter and lead rope. From there, Bass worked with Hudson from the ground to teach him fundamental movements and cues that will help him transition into a skilled riding horse. Horses are usually two to three years old before they are saddled to ride. The AQHA Young Horse Development Program administrators closely monitored Bass and Hudson's progress during the year.

Bass worked with developing the young horse by teaching him to stand for the farrier while getting his hooves trimmed, stand for the veterinarian for check-ups, and load into and out of a horse trailer. These are skills that will make him a safe horse on the ground and in the saddle.

Other skills Bass taught Hudson will prepare him for when he is old enough to be ridden. He learned to move his hindquarters and forequarters as well as back up and lie down. She taught him to go through an obstacle course which included crossing a teeter totter bridge, going through water, and standing on tires filled with dirt.

In October 2018, each participant in the program turned in their completed record book along with a professional horseman evaluation and waited for their final standing decided upon by YHDP



Bass, Hudson and Amanda Thompson, Boys & Girls Homes equestrian program director



Standing on a dirt-filled tire is one test horses may encounter on an obstacle course.

judges. Bass is grateful that legendary local AQHA horseman Gene Parker visited her at the Boys & Girls Homes farm and completed her pro horseman evaluation. A month after his visit, Parker died. His passing is a great loss to our community and the AQHA family.

Bass's score was based on her detailed training records, monthly assignments, essays, photos, training videos and participation in a horse show, where Hudson earned a blue ribbon in a lunge line class for young horses.

As the only youth from North Carolina and South Carolina selected after a rigorous application process for the yearlong competition, Bass finished fifth out of 48 who successfully completed the program. The top ten finishers were recognized for their achievement.

YHDP participants from across the country got to know each other through a closed Facebook group where they could share training tips and successes. This year Bass and other YHDP alumni are working with the YHDP class of 2019 using Facebook to help them progress through the competition deadlines.

Bass says, "The YHDP challenge is a great experience. I recommend anyone interested in applying for the program should have experience with horses and understand the time and expense involved. A good trainer is important, too."

These days Hudson is enjoying his days with light training and playing with his juvenile "pasture pals." It's still a while before he is ready for the next big step to begin riding lessons. Bass says, "I will have Hudson forever. I'm not sure what area of competition we will pursue. I like the Ranch classes offered in the Waccamaw Equestrian Show Series."

A lot has changed for Bass and Hudson since their entry into the 2018 AQHA Ranching Heritage Young Horse Development Program last year... A lot of fun, a lot of hard work and a lot of accomplishments.



Photo by Marcus Anthony Photography

Bass and Hudson dressed in their best horse show attire.



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Innovation Is Their Tradition

STORY DIANA MATTHEWS

PHOTOS GRANT MERRITT

It's always August inside the greenhouse at Chandler Worley Family Farms, where 600 tomato plants bask in natural daylight supplemented with grow lamps.

The farm sits a mile from the South Carolina line, at 11005 Swamp Fox Hwy. West, Cerro Gordo. The longest-held family farm in Columbus County, it was deeded to Nicholas Worley in 1791.

Over the past 228 years the land has produced turpentine, sugarcane, rice, cotton, tobacco, corn, soybeans, strawberries, watermelons, sweet potatoes, wheat, hogs, cows and chickens. Soon it may be home to solar panels, blueberries and asparagus.

Chandler Worley, born in 1954, is the sixth generation of his family to work the property, and says, "I've seen a lot of changes. We plowed with mules before we got a tractor, and we broke corn by hand."

Today he grows products Nicholas Worley never heard of and

markets them on a website, chandlerworleyfamilyfarms.com.

Perhaps Worley's ancestors couldn't have imagined some of his 21st-Century methods, but they would surely approve of his ingenuity. After all, Worleys grew some of the county's first tobacco in the late 1800s. "We've always been innovators," he said.

His father, A.J. Worley, was a co-founder of N.C. Watermelon Festival in 1986. "Daddy had the first two-row planter around here," said Worley. "My daddy's first cousin, A. Buck Worley, got one like it, and they put them together to make a four-row planter. I rode on the back and set the row markers when I was in sixth and seventh grades."

The home in which Chandler and Jenny Lyon Worley live with their 34-year-old daughter Charity Worley is two centuries old. Daughter Emily lives in Columbia, S.C., and son Chan lives in Chadbourne. Katie Worley married Brad Cannon; they and their two children live in Galivants Ferry, S.C.

"My Daddy told me, if you ever find yourself backing up, stop and change what you're doing." — Chandler Worley



Jenny, Charity and Chandler Worley



Vegetables thrive under the controlled conditions.



These basil microgreens will be harvested before two weeks of age.



"The bigger the blossom, the bigger the berry."



"Restaurants want locally grown lettuce. It's better than California lettuce that's come across the country on a truck," Worley said.



Jenny Worley checks the growth of her arugula microgreens.

Charity Worley, the media coordinator at Williams Township School, wants to continue running the farm after her parents retire. She has happy memories of early experiences caring for the small garden her parents planted for her and her siblings. “I loved helping to pick strawberries,” she said.

She also remembers helping at the tobacco barns. “As a child,” she said, “my job was to be the rod puller. When I turned 14, I got a job helping at the cucumber market.”

She did not study agriculture in college as her father did but has pursued training in greenhouse management.

She began experimenting with blueberries 10 years ago; they are among her favorite crops, along with tomatoes, strawberries, sweet corn and watermelons. She loves them all, she said.

The question that concerns her father is how the farm can provide a livelihood for another generation.

To make it work, Worley has decided major change is necessary. “You’ve got to change with the



Chandler Worley lifts a floating flat of hydroponic celery from the water bed under the former tobacco greenhouse.

times,” he said. “My Daddy told me, if you ever find yourself backing up, stop and change what you’re doing.”

Jennifer Worley, a retired kindergarten teacher, says her husband “always thinks outside the box.” He is proving her right by developing a plan to make a larger income by farming on a smaller scale.

Controlled agriculture

Using a grant from Mt. Olive University, Worley turned one of his seven Chemico tobacco barns into a growing house, where lettuces grow in hydroponic channels under high-tech grow lights.

“There’s no spraying. We control the temperature and shut out the pests,” he said. “Restaurants want locally grown lettuce; it’s better than California lettuce that’s come across the country on a truck.”

Jennifer Worley grows microgreens, the nutrient- and flavor-packed product for which trendy eateries pay top dollar. “When you taste the celery (greens), she said, you’ll really know what celery tastes like.”

The Worleys began experimenting with “controlled ag,” including hydroponics, aquaponics and drip irrigation, more than 10 years ago.

“I wish we had a dozen Chandler Worleys,” said retired Agricultural Extension horticulture agent Milton Parker. If today’s young farmers are to succeed, Parker said, they will need to learn from the vision and courage of Worley and others like him.

In 2016 Worley realized he couldn’t control temperatures adequately in the 200-foot-long greenhouse. After consulting with

Parker, Worley divided the structure in two. The half with the heater and grow lights remained the tomato house while the other became the cucumber house.

Charity Worley started 600 Syngenta Trust variety tomato plants in August, and they were still producing in April. The plants grow in a soil-free medium, irrigated five times a day with 65-degree degree water containing a precise mix of nutrients. An evaporative cooling system protects against scorching heat. Chandler Worley is devising passive ventilation to reduce cooler usage on hot days. Fuel is costly, and the more of it he uses, the more dependent he is on outside sources.

Cords support the seven-month-old tomato plants so that the current batch of blossoms is at an optimum height, with side shoots and excess foliage pruned off. As each plant gains height, Charity Worley lowers it, and the slack of the lower vine droops to the floor. If the plants were to be extended straight up, they would be too tall to fit in the greenhouse, let alone for anyone to pick from.

The greenhouse doors shut out pests and weather but also shut out honeybees and other beneficial insects, so two colonies of bumblebees live in boxes, and, like the tomato vines, experience a life of endless summer. The overhead lights are timed to go off before natural daylight is completely spent, Jenny Worley said, because otherwise the house would immediately become completely dark and the bees wouldn’t be able to find their way home.

“Once the timer got off track, and the lights were on all night,”



Charity Worley carefully adjusts the height of a tomato vine.

she said. The bees didn't know any better than to work around the clock. "When we came out and saw the bees, we could tell they were exhausted."

The Worleys use other beneficial insects such as praying mantises, "good spider mites" and ladybugs to protect against pests.

Times have changed

Large-scale agriculture, said Chandler Worley, "depends on cheap fuel. It depends on the weather. You can only grow one crop of corn, wheat or soybeans a year, and if it's ruined you've got to wait a year for another chance," which is not guaranteed to be any better.

Worley says soybeans, corn and wheat are better suited to the Midwest's soil and climate than to ours. He stopped planting wheat in 2017. "At best it was a low-profit crop," he said.

Most years Worley has harvested about 125 bushels of corn per acre, but some years only 25. His soybean harvests have been as high as 70 bushels per acre and as low as 15. Federal crop insurance, at best, only covers 65-75 percent of a farmer's proven average income over the past 10 years, not enough to get out of debt after a bad crop.

"Last year, after insurance, I lost \$80,000," Worley said. "It was the weather." Worley also suffered a heart attack on Labor Day and was unable to work for three months. He was just getting back to 100 percent in April. "I haven't finished paying all the medical bills from then, either," he said.

Worley's hardships convinced him that, "I can't farm the way I used to."

For a reminder of what's at stake, he only has to look across the highway at the land that once belonged to his uncle Will Worley.

"The thing that put him out of farming," Worley said, "was he could never make the transition from mule to tractor." Worley isn't sure whether his uncle's problem was finances, stubbornness or lack of driving ability.

Worley has heard a lot of discouraged farmers say it's not possible to make a living in Columbus County due to its location. He'd rather say the county is "in a unique place," or even "the perfect place," due to its hour-or-so distance to Fayetteville, Jacksonville, Wilmington and the beaches.

"By 2030, there are going to be half a million people living in

Horry County, right out my backyard. People've got to eat."

It's not only a local problem. Farmers nationwide are in deeper debt than they can hope to get out of. With no idea how else to support their families, some give up hope. "Farmers are committing suicide at a high rate," Worley said.

Worley compares the farming life today to "The Poseidon Adventure." A tsunami capsized the fictional cruise ship in the 1972 movie; today powerful forces outside farmers' control have turned their world upside down.

"Some of the passengers sat where they were and waited for outside help to come save them," Worley said. But he identifies with the ones who climbed up the decks and ventilation shafts of the inverted ship to reach what used to be its bottom.

"I'm going to find a way out for my family," Worley said.



When this lettuce's roots emerge through the growing medium, it will graduate to the water trough.



"The key to lean farming is organization," Charity Worley said.



Radishes grow in the corner of the tomato greenhouse. The Worleys aim to use "every square inch."

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These delicate celery seedlings already pack a tasty punch.

Continuous learning

In January Worley read Indiana farmer Ben Hartman's *The Lean Farm*, which applies principles of Lean Systems Management to agriculture. Those principles were compatible with changes Worley had already put in place on his farm.

Lean Systems Management, developed in Japan, eliminates wasted effort, time and space to achieve high productivity.

"The key to lean farming is organization," Charity Worley said. "It's important to know what cost you put in the product and how to keep that cost low for the consumer."

Lean thinkers identify what customers value highly, then work to produce more of that commodity, and less of what customers don't value highly. Customers to Worley's produce stand wanted fresh produce they could take home and put on the table with minimal preparation. "I found most people weren't looking for Irish potatoes, but they'd buy tomatoes and cucumbers."

Lean managers constantly look for ways to do a good job even better. After dividing the long greenhouse, Worley didn't want to invest in costly heating equipment for the segment with the cucumbers but instead devised a homemade solar heating system. "If I can heat my greenhouse without buying propane, I'll be more independent and more sustainable," he said.

The Worleys farm small but think big. They envision Columbus farmers growing more of the "100,000 meals a week" eaten in local schools and prisons.

Chandler and Jenny Worley both volunteer for Columbus County Farm Bureau and actively promote the Watermelon Festival, now in its 34th year.

Charity Worley is proud of her heritage as "the seventh generational farmer-ette" on the family's land. She believes "It's important to promote and provide local healthy sustainable foods without having to depend on other sources to make ends meet."

When it comes to the family's homeplace, her father's goal is, "I want to find a way Charity can make it, and a way we can all sleep at night."

To make the transition, he has already taught himself far beyond his N.C. State University degree in agronomy and become a beginner all over again.

"I'm 65 years old, and I'm trying something new," Worley said. I have got a lot more to learn."



Worley harvests celery from the water bed.

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A photograph of a surgeon in an operating room. The surgeon is wearing blue scrubs, a blue surgical cap, and a white face mask. He is looking down, focused on his work. In the background, there are large, circular surgical lights. The overall color palette is dominated by blues and whites, with a strong blue tint across the entire image.

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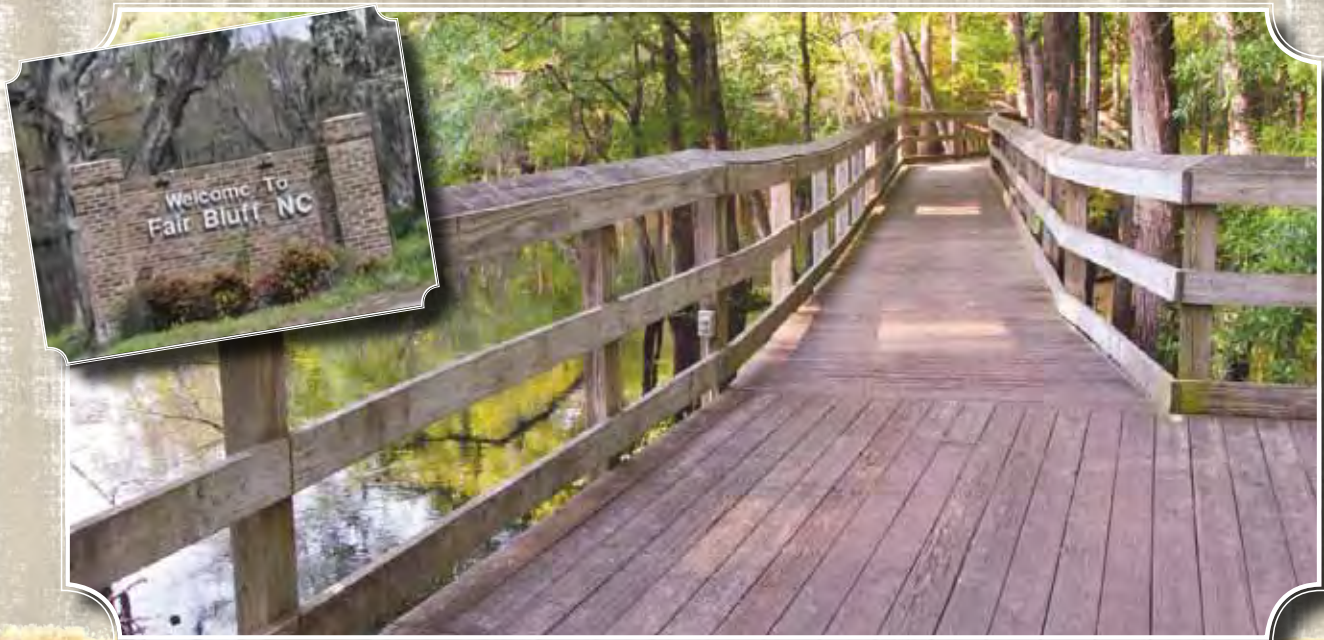
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Depot Museum Celebrates Fair Bluff History

STORY DIANA MATTHEWS

PHOTOS Grant Merritt

First in a series featuring historic train depots in Columbus County



The former railroad station remains a place for lovers of Fair Bluff to connect with one another and their history.

Freight trains again run through Fair Bluff. “There are usually trains on Tuesdays,” said Mary Alice Thompson, vice president of the Greater Fair Bluff Historical Society. “We’ve counted more than 80 cars on some of them.”

The society maintains a historical museum inside the vintage depot just south of the tracks; hours are 10:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. Tuesdays and 1-3 p.m. Sundays.

When Thompson was a girl, the tracks were a major connection from Fair Bluff to points east and west and carried freight and passengers every day. Thompson remembers traveling with a friend to the Azalea Festival as a girl.

“Our parents put us on the train, and her aunt

met us in Wilmington. At the end of the day she put us back on the train home. The train was full of people doing the same thing,” Thompson said.

Betty Willis served as vice president of the historical society and museum, then as president until 2018. As a child she used to travel west on the Atlantic Coast Line to see her aunt in Florence, S.C., spending the night and returning to Fair Bluff in the morning. The trains carried mail as well. Willis, now 94 years old, remembers that her aunt would send a letter in the morning and her mother would receive it the afternoon of that same day.

The last passenger train to stop in the riverside town was in 1960.

MEMORIES

When Fair Bluff first became the settlement of Wootensborough in the 1700s, the Lumber River was its main commercial connection to larger towns. The Wilmington and Manchester railroad arrived in 1854, but its depot burned down, and service was taken over by the Atlantic Coast Line in 1900.

Lighted display cases in the main room of Fair Bluff’s Depot Museum hold donated relics of area history, from farm equipment to clothing, photos, military history and antique glass bottles found in the Lumber River.

It would be difficult to take in all the exhibits in one trip. “Every time I come in, I see something I

didn't see the last time," Thompson said.

Fortunately, admission is free, so visitors can come repeatedly at no cost. One fan from Durham, Lindsay W., wrote an enthusiastic review on the travel website Yelp, saying,

"There are a number of objects you can touch and examine — personally the old dental chair and equipment creeps me out, and my favorite cases are the ones from the 1900s to 1950s because each item spurs a fascinating history lesson straight from the lives of the curators... e.g. 'Well, during the Depression... Back before we bought a tractor for the farm.... My daddy would use this strange contraption for this ... During rationing, we'd trade this for that...'

"Seriously, even if you are not much of one for history/museums, it's a treat. Ask to see the old fire truck."

A model train circles the room on a track near the ceiling, passing by models of downtown businesses as they looked in the heyday of the Atlantic Coast Line. Museum co-founder Bob Morgan built the models and maintained the train for years. The train ceased running after Morgan died, but retired radiologist Ed Eadie restored it to working condition.

The train's engine is an intentionally anach-

ronistic detail, Thompson said. "It was black, but (Eadie) painted it red with the R.J. Corman name on it" to celebrate the new ownership of the line. R.J. Corman repaired tracks in 2016, then had to repair three bridges again after Hurricane Matthew. The line resumed freight operations in early 2017.

ENTHUSIASTIC VOLUNTEERS

The historic depot's smaller rooms are full of original railroad equipment, plus files of well-organized genealogical records and shelves of books. Carl Meares Jr. bought the building from the Seaboard Coastline railroad and donated it to the historical society, which moved it a short distance in 1992.

Other than sitting in a different position, the depot itself has had almost no changes.

The largest item in the museum's collection is a 1942 International fire engine, which occupies the museum's reconstructed fire station. It was the first automotive fire engine owned by the town of Fair Bluff.

A handful of volunteers carry out all the routine cleaning and maintenance of the depot and grounds, with occasional help from a high school student needing to complete a service project.

For them, the 122-year-old station is more than an old building full of old things. After enduring destructive "hundred-year" floods in 2016 and 2018, it now has a dual mission to preserve Fair Bluff's past and to shine as a beacon for the town's recovery, said Ray Thigpen, who became the historical society's president in April 2018.

Thigpen grew up in Fair Bluff and remembers taking the train for the first time in 1955, when his third-grade class went to Lake Waccamaw for a picnic. He learned Morse code from the telegraph operator at the depot to fulfill his Boy Scout requirement in 1958.

CONNECTIONS

The historical society's quarterly newsletter is a line of communication between the present citizens of Fair Bluff and those who live in at least eight states, including Colorado and California.

Thigpen is forming alliances with other groups such as the Robeson County Historical Society; new director Mazie Smith at the Lake Waccamaw Depot Museum is interested in cooperative projects to promote local history.

Thigpen hopes to see signs about the museum erected on Hwy. 74-76. He also hopes to work with Tabor City and Whiteville gardening groups



Mary Alice Thompson, Ray Thigpen and Faye Ward display some of the museum's exhibits.

and Cooperative Extension Director Dalton Dockery to set up a pollinator garden on the grounds.

The depot continues to provide a place for people to connect, whether at a musical program, a presentation from Lower Cape Fear Hospice, the arrival of Santa Claus or the Watermelon Festival Queen's Breakfast. Genealogy and history groups as well as school groups tour the depot by appointment.

Fair Bluff Historical Society dues are \$10 per year and help to pay the costs of keeping the depot open and operating. The group also accepts tax-deductible donations at the museum during operating hours.

Thigpen plans to set up voice-mail soon, making appointment-planning easier for groups or individuals who want to visit outside the usual Tuesday and Sunday hours. The museum's number is (910) 649-7707.



An electric train travels past models of Fair Bluff businesses as they looked in the 1930s.



The museum preserves antique hairdressing, dentistry and farming implements.



The ticket agent sold the last passenger ticket at this window in 1960.



The Atlantic Coast Line connected Wilmington with Baltimore and Florida.

TRAIN DEPOTS IN COLUMBUS COUNTY: A SERIES



Learn To Swim

STORY JULIE STOCKS

PHOTOS SUBMITTED & NR ARCHIVE

Swimming Lake Waccamaw has a history dating back to the turn of the century. Many individuals have made swimming across the lake a personal challenge. It was Lee J. Greer who spearheaded the creation of an organized community swim program. He created The Big Swim of the 1960s, which evolved into the Labor Day Swim of the 70s, 80s and 90's, and most recently, Take the Lake of the early 21st century to the present. All of these swims and fitness challenges owe their existence to Greer, his passion for swimming and water safety, and his message: "Learn to Swim."

Big Swim Founder Lee J. Greer

In 1926, Greer was one of the first persons to swim across Lake Waccamaw. In 1934, he swam the Cape Fear River from Southport to Wilmington. Well versed in numerous sports - wrestling, boxing, football, and even the trapeze in the circus, Lee Greer was a consummate athlete. He focused his energies on swimming in the 1960s when Columbus County lost several people to drownings. His passion for swimming and water safety led him to create "The Big Swim." He initiated a campaign to teach people — especially youth — to swim. He organized a cadre of drivers to pick up youth from Whiteville, Hallsboro and the Lake and take them to Lake Waccamaw for swimming lessons. He taught hundreds of youth to swim - including my husband, Don, and some in turn became instructors who taught others to swim in later years. Mr. Greer's motto was, "Learn to Swim, Swim, and Encourage others to Swim."

Prior to formalizing the Big Swim, there are several reports of people who lived at or near the lake taking advantage of the cool waters and beauty of the Lake Waccamaw on hot summer days. One of these persons is Mike Gault Holt, who decided not to be left behind as a group of young men challenged her to make the swim, and she did. Thelma Crawford Greene, resident of Betsysburg at Lake Waccamaw, reported that she swam the lake after a hot day of farming in tobacco. Bessie Stephens also reported a similar situation when she said that she swam the lake. Family members state that Greer himself swam the lake over 50 times and supervised over 30 Lee J. Greer Labor Day Swims. Other than Greer, Walter Palmer of Whiteville holds the record for the most crossings - 36 (four of these crossings he completed during the X-treme portion of Take the Lake when he swam twice in one year.)

The Lee J. Greer Labor Day Swim

Greer, John McNeill, and other scout leaders wanted to encourage the young swimmers to develop their skills, while also



Lee J. Greer spearheaded the lake's first community swim program.



Other than Greer, Walter Palmer of Whiteville holds the record for most lake swim crossings.

LEARN TO SWIM

developing characteristics like discipline, goal setting, and following through on self-commitments. So, they initiated the Lee J. Greer Swim across Lake Waccamaw. After considering the July 4th holiday as a date, they decided on Labor Day for the event so that swimmers could devote the entire summer to training for the five mile swim across Lake Waccamaw. (Until the past few years when GPS tracked the route, we swim completers claimed that we had swum 5 miles. We now know that the distance is slightly over 4 miles.)

Greer and swim organizers required each swimmer to have a support boat to accompany him or her across the lake to ensure safety. The support boat people were often family members, so another goal was achieved - strengthen-



John A. McNeill congratulates a successful swimmer in 2004.

ing family bonds. Greer insisted that the Swim was not a race, but a chance for the individual swimmer to accomplish a goal. His main objective was for them to complete the swim, not speed. In his 1954 book, *The Way it Was*, Whiteville attorney Bob Burns wrote, (Mr. Greer was) "dedicated to the proposition that ALL CHILDREN should be taught to swim."

Since the Swim was begun, it is estimated that over 400 people have successfully finished the crossing. Records indicate the youngest swimmers were 9 (twins Walter and James Palmer and Jennie Stocks) and the oldest swimmer (Mr. Greer) 75.



Before joining the 1984 Labor Day swim, Greer gives instructions.

In one of his columns in *The News Reporter*, Greer reported that Joe Plasky of Kinston, then in his late 60s, had completed the swim over 10 times "with his difficult overhead backstroke with waves frequently hitting him in the face." Several people have swum over and back (double crossing) through the years, and Gary Shelby of Birmingham, Ala., completed a triple crossing in 1997.



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Julie Stocks with her late daughter Jennie Stocks. At age 9, Jennie was the youngest female swimmer at the time to swim across the lake. The Jennie Stocks Youngest Swimmer Award was established in 1993 by her family.

"The lake swim gives every child or adult a chance to compete in an individual sport, improve their swimming, and to help develop them physically."

- Lee J. Greer



The John A. McNeill Award (JAMA) is given to participants who complete Take the Lake challenges.



The Lee J. Greer medallion is given to swimmers who complete the lake crossing. The late Pebo Collier started the tradition, and Todd and Lori Collins of Collier's Jewelers continue it each year.

The Jennie Stocks Youngest Swimmer Award was established in 1993 by the family of the late Jennie Stocks to reward the efforts of the youngest swimmer under the age of 15 who successfully completes the swim. On Labor Day 1988, at age nine, Jennie made the swim under extreme weather conditions of frigid temperatures, stormy skies, and whitecapping waves to become the youngest female swimmer at that time to have made the crossing.

In a 1998 column for *The News Reporter*, Greer wrote:

"The lake swim gives every child or adult a chance to compete in an individual sport, improve their swimming, and to help develop them physically. It is also a confidence builder. It is an accomplishment, and every swimmer feels proud to have been able to make the swim."

To acknowledge this accomplishment, every swimmer who completed the crossing was awarded a Lee J. Greer medallion from Greer himself, or a member of his family. The medallions were donated by Pebo Collier of Collier's Jewelers in Whiteville. This tradition of the medallion and the Greer family awarding the medallion continues today.

Another provision that Greer made was that there be no entry fee for the Swim. He wanted to maximize access to the swim and minimize barriers so that anyone who wished would be able to participate. This emphasis on "Free" has continued to the present. During the past ten years, it has been due to the generous support of regional sponsors that the event has remained free to all participants. These loyal sponsors have included, but are not limited to, Columbus Regional Healthcare System, Liberty Homecare and Hospices Services, the John A. McNeill Family, Atlantic Membership Corporation, Carolina Sports, Baldwin Woods Gynecology, Council Tool Company, BB&T, Hill's Grocery, International Paper, Joe's Barbeque, Southeastern Community College, Baldwin Woods Pharmacy, Dale's Seafood Restaurant, Sam's Pit Stop, Gore's Manufacturing, Columbus

LEARN TO SWIM

County Health Department, Powell and Powell Law Firm, Interim Healthcare, Southern Veterinary Hospital, *The News Reporter*, Friends of Rube McCray Memorial Library, Laketime Vintiques, Body Shapers Fitness Center, and Collier's Jewelers.

Numerous combinations of family members completed the swim together: father/daughter, mother/daughter, mother/son, brother/sister, brother/brother, and cousin/cousin. Greer and 10 year old daughter, Laura, were perhaps the first family combination to swim across the lake together. Junius Lee Jr. and daughter Elizabeth swam over and back together in 1997. Of the many blessings I've experienced, I count the swim I made with my daughter Jennie in 1988 and the swim I made with my son Byrne in 1994 to be two of the most rewarding milestones in my life.

Swimmers from all over the world have completed the swim. One of the most exciting and fastest crossings was by Russian Olympic swimmer Andrei Belyi. In 2001 through 2004, members of the N.C. State Swim Team came to Lake Waccamaw for an experience in "open water" swimming. They also completed the swim quickly and were very appreciative of the hospitality of the Swim Committee and Lake Waccamaw residents, as well as of the beauty of Lake Waccamaw.

Take the Lake

The Lee J. Greer Labor Day Swim was expanded by Grant Egley in the early 2000s to include a 16 mile Run/Walk around the lake on Labor Day. In 2009,

Living

The News Reporter, Friday, August 24, 2018 1-C

Take the Lake times 10

2018 Schedule

Regular and Fun Family events are free of charge. There is a fee for TFL X-Treme. Walk, Run and Bike/Hike events begin and end at Elizabeth Brinkley Park.

Friday, Aug. 31

"Take the Lake" pasta dinner - eat in or take-out
Lake Waccamaw United Methodist Church, 506 Lakeshore Dr.
Donations support L&WMC's local outreach.

Saturday, Sept. 1

16 mile Run/Walk & 6.5 mile Fun Family Run/Walk at Elizabeth Brinkley Park
7:00 a.m. Registration opens
7:15 Participants who registered online may start early
7:30 Assemble for announcements at starting line
8:00 Official start of 16 mile Run/Walk
8:30 Start of Fun Family 6.5 mile Run/Walk

Sunday, Sept. 2

14 mile Paddle
Beside Dale's Seafood
7:15 Registration, unloading equipment
7:45 Assemble on beach
8:00 Start

Bike/Hike and Fun Family Bike/Hike beginning at Elizabeth Brinkley Park

14 mile Registration opens for 16 mile event
1:45 Assemble with bicycles and helmets at starting line
2:00 Start of 16 mile event; continued registration for 6.5 mile event
2:30 Start of 6.5 mile Fun Family Bike/Hike
All bike riders must wear helmets, and parents must supervise their children.

Monday, Sept. 3

X-Treme Challenge
6 a.m. Assemble at Dale's Seafood or Dale, TFLD according to wind direction
Swim is followed by Bike/Hike, Paddle, Run/Walk.

Traditional 4 mile Swim

Dale's Seafood or Dale, TFLD. Each swimmer must have a boat escort.
7:30 Registration opens
7:45 Assemble for announcements
8:00 Start Swim



We've come so far

Since 2011, Take the Lake's volunteer planning committee has chosen a theme for each year's Labor Day weekend activities. "The 2011 events honored veterans and active duty military, with an Uncle Sam design on the Walk/Run for participating servicemembers. Educators were the second group honored, as the class of 2012 proudly wear t-shirts proclaiming them graduates of the "University of Pain and Gain." Bright orange t-shirts suitable for a prison work gang made Take the Lake participants stand out in 2013, when the events honored law enforcement and correctional officers. Mark Glickstein's follow-up photo feature was titled, "I'm sorry officer, how fast was I going?" The 2014 promotional

poster featured an ear of corn and the words "Sowing the Seeds of Fitness," honoring the region's agricultural sector. That year's TFL T-shirt featured a placid alligator driving a tractor, a shade of green in his mouth. The art took center stage in 2015. TFL planners reached out to invite artists of all sorts to "Celebrate the Art of Fitness." Southeastern University's faculty provided entertainment at the kids' off spaghetti supper for the first time. T-shirts showed a beer wearing a pirate hat, and the water. Scoops of all sorts led the way in 2016 under the theme of "Be Prepared," a good motto for anyone who undertakes personal fitness challenges on a hot summer weekend. Teams of professionals

from the health department and hospital showed up in good numbers last year. The hospital and area medical practices have been strong supporters of TFL since its early days. This year's holistic health theme, "Body, Mind and Spirit," is one that brings together all categories, classes and cultures. For the first time since 2011, the land events will follow a circular route, crossing the lake on the new bridge above the dam.

Midnight deadline
Advance online registration closes tonight, said TFL webmaster Melissa Hopkins. Runners, walkers, bikers, paddlers and swimmers who sign up at www.lakehike.org before the clock strikes midnight may pick up their number bibs at Body Shapers Gym and Fitness Center, 618 S. Madison St., Whiteville, beginning Monday, Aug. 27, or may pick them up at the beginning of their first event. After midnight tonight, all participants must register in person onsite to get their bibs.

Online volunteer registration will remain open, said Hopkins. Mike Wall coordinates the many volunteers who work to make TFL to run smoothly. Volunteers help with onsite registration, traffic control, set up, clean up, timing or other valuable support roles. "Volunteers are extremely important," said committee director Julie Stocks, who is herself a volunteer and the head of the dedicated committee of volunteers who plan TFL each year. Register to volunteer at the website or by calling Stocks at 644-0071.

2011 X-Treme winners Tommy Mintz and Eric Brandt

Take the Lake comes full circle again this year.



2012: the year of the educator

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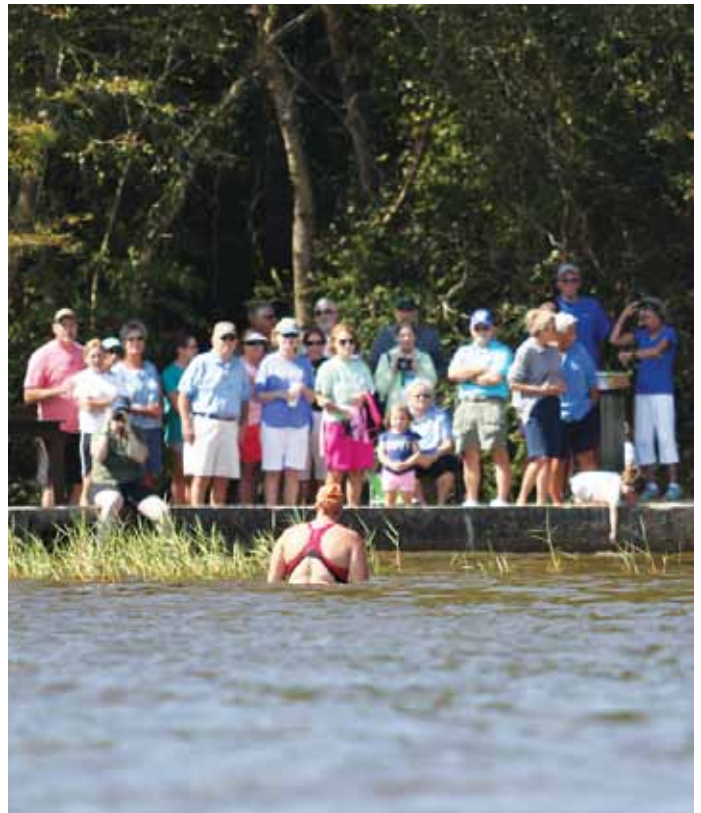
Mark Gilchrist with the assistance of *The News Reporter* added a 14 mile paddle and a 16 mile Bike/Hike around Lake Waccamaw. These events were added to the original Swim and were held on Labor Day weekend. They make up Take the Lake, which exists to the present.

In the spirit of Mr. Greer and the members of the founding Swim Committee, the emphasis on family has continued with the addition of family events to Take the Lake. A Family Walk was added in 2015 and a Family Bike was added in 2016. These family events have grown in popularity and people of all ages — children, adults, senior citizens — have enjoyed and been challenged by these events. A Take the Lake X-treme competitive event was added around 2012 whereby participants complete all four events (swim, bike, paddle, and walk/run) in one day. The Lake Waccamaw United Methodist Church has added a kick-off event — Take the Plate — on the Friday eve of Take the Lake weekend to support the participants and their families as well as to raise money for local benevolence(s).

The John A. McNeill Award (JAMA), sponsored by the John A. McNeill family, is given to each participant who successfully completes their respective event - the 16 mile Bike/Hike, 16 mile Walk/Run, the 6.2 mile Family walk, the 6.2 mile Family Ride, and the 14 mile Paddle. The Lee J. Greer Medallion is given to each swimmer who successfully completes the 4 mile swim.

Each year the all-volunteer Take The Lake Steering Committee has selected a theme to encourage broad participation in the events. Selected themes were the military, education, law enforcement, agriculture, the arts, scouting, health professions, and for 2018, the holistic “mind, body and spirit” theme. A corresponding logo and T-shirt enhanced each year’s theme.

The legacy of Lee J. Greer continues — “To learn to swim, to swim, and to encourage others to swim.” Thank you, Mr. Greer, and other committed community leaders, for inspiring so many people to build character, to develop self-confidence, to set and to achieve goals, and to maintain a healthy lifestyle!



Friends and family greet swimmers at the dam as they complete the lake crossing.



Left Julie Stocks, Swim finisher, Big Swim committee member and former Take the Lake Steering Committee Chair; Elizabeth Gibson and Lee J. Greer's daughter, Laura Greer Vick.

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Take The Lake

2019 offers new events and a three-year plan to refresh the fitness event

STORY & PHOTOS SARAH CRUTCHFIELD

Take the Lake (TTL) is a Labor Day tradition in Columbus County since 2008. After scoring near the bottom in the N.C. County Health Rankings, the event was created to encourage healthier lifestyles. Taking place at Lake Waccamaw, traditional Take the Lake events include a 16-mile walk, 16-mile bike, 14-mile paddle and The Lee J. Greer Labor Day Swim (4 miles). In recent years, the shorter distance family bike and family run/walk events have gained in popularity.

Although many athletes accept and rise to the long-distance challenges, those in the process of becoming more fitness-minded might see these distances as overwhelming. New this year, Take the Lake organizers announce a revised format of events as part of a three year plan that accommodates long distance athletes, families and those just starting their fitness journey.

Last year, like most parts of our county, Lake Waccamaw was hit hard by Hurricane Florence. Many homes were flooded and damaged, emergency services were pushed to their limits, and The Lake Waccamaw State Park trail sys-

tem suffered damage along the Lakeshore Trail. When coming back together to discuss Take The Lake 2019, the steering committee struggled with how to handle challenges and recovery efforts that the community, the city, and first responders still face. "It takes a lot of resident volunteers from the lake, some of whom are not even back in their homes. The time commitment required by first responders, city employees and state park rangers is extensive every year to host a safe and fun event. We didn't want to ask this of them after the year we just had," Stuart Rogers TTL steering committee chair said, "So we are going to scale back this year on the long distance events, incorporate several shorter distance events and a post-race celebration at Elizabeth Brinkley Park on Saturday for all. Over the next three years we will bring back the long distance run/walk and bike and keep the new shorter events, if they prove popular. Hopefully, offering a long and short distance for each event will allow everyone to participate and all to have fun." This year the run and bike events are Saturday, Aug. 31, and the paddle and swim events are Monday, Sept. 2. Sunday will be



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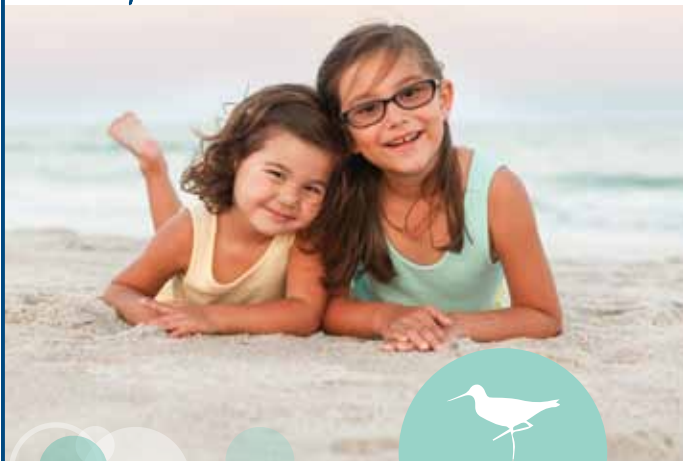
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The start of the 2018 Take the Lake bike event.



Marjorie Hilbourn and Summer Thorne Fowler having fun while conquering the Take the Lake walk event in 2018.

an “event free” day so volunteers and families can spend time together and enjoy the lake. Events kick off Friday night, Aug. 30, at Lake Waccamaw United Methodist Church with their annual Take the Plate spaghetti fundraising dinner.

Saturday morning will begin with a certified 5K run beginning at 8 a.m. at Elizabeth Brinkley Park. The entry fee for this event will be \$25 and includes a TTL t-shirt, division awards and an official race time. “We will replace the long distance run/walk this year with a certified 5K race and 1-mile family fun run. We are working with a race coordinator, Setup Events from Wilmington, to manage the 5K and certify the course through U.S.A. Track & Field,” Rogers



The author taking her job as race official very seriously in 2016.

said. “As part of the three year plan, the 16-mile run/walk will return next year, and we will keep the 5K, if participants enjoy the shorter event.”

New this year will be a TTL Celebration at Elizabeth Brinkley Park Saturday morning from 8 a.m. to 10:30 a.m. with breakfast food and drinks available, games for the kids, music and information on healthy living. At 9 a.m., there will be a 5K award ceremony and a free 1-mile fun run at 9:15 a.m. leaving from Elizabeth Brinkley Park. This event will not be timed, but registration and waiver are required.

A free 10K bike ride will follow the TTL Celebration at 10:30 a.m. Times will not be reported; however, all riders will be required to register and wear hel-



A Lee J. Greer swimmer finishing strong during the 2018 event.

ments. The 16-mile bike ride returns in 2021 in hopes the “around-the-lake-route” is open with improvements. Setup Events will manage online registration for all the events and a link to online registration is available at TakeTheLake.org.

Monday, September 2, the aquatic events begin with the traditional Labor Day swim. The Lee J. Greer Labor Day Swim, which started in the 1960s, will remain the same. It will start at 8 a.m. and, depending on the weather that morning, it will begin either at the dam or Dale’s Seafood.

New this year, however, will be a timed 1-mile swim. This short swim will begin at 8:30 a.m. at Dale’s and Setup Events will coordinate this event. “The one mile swim is being added for athletes that might need a qualifying swim for a triathlon or want to try a shorter swim challenge,” Rogers said. “We are giving the 1-mile swim a try after learning more about the popular Coastal Swim Series open water swim events around the state. The entry fee is \$25 and includes a TTL t-shirt, division winners and



Paddlers prepare to launch on a beautiful summer morning.

an official time.

The final event of the weekend will be the paddle, which is a free event and begins at noon. The 6-mile paddle will leave from the dam and follow the shoreline by the state park and finish at Dale's. Volunteers will be available to shuttle participants from the finish back to the dam.

Being a resident of Lake Waccamaw, a volunteer for what feels like forever, and an individual who has just recently decided to start exercising, I am looking forward to the new format this year! I have always found any excuse not to exercise, the events in Take the Lake were always very intimidating to me. You want me to walk how many miles? Through the State Park? No thank you, I will stand at a turn with my "Race Official" dinky on and feel like I am part of the weekend. However, I secretly always wanted to be one of the ones who had the courage to take on 15 miles.

With Take the Lake's new slate of events, I have the opportunity to get in on the action. I can start now and grow with Take the Lake over the next few years as they add back the long distance events and not feel like I am biting off more than I can chew.

There is a great app available called "Couch to 5K." It is an 8-week program that slowly builds up your running regimen to 3.1 miles. Simply download the app (\$2.99) and hit the road three days a week; the app will guide through walk/run intervals. This has been my method of training for Take the Lake's 5K and I am thoroughly enjoying it. You can do it, too!

Although there will be some big changes this year with Take The Lake, the steering committee believes it is for the best. "We are giving our hardworking volunteers more family time over the holiday weekend, a scaled back event to put less pressure on our first responders, and overall give us a chance to refresh the event

going forward; it is going to be really good for all parties involved," Rogers said. Also, a new logo and look are to be expected this year. "I am really excited about the new logo. The East Columbus High School art teacher Tim Dowless has designed it. It is colorful, fresh and just what we are looking for," Rogers said.

Although Take the Lake will be changing this year, the same great spirit of Columbus County will still be there. For more information and early registration go to takethelake.org.

Take the Lake 3-Year Plan

2019 Events

Friday, August 30

Take the Plate Spaghetti Dinner at Lake Waccamaw United Methodist Church

Saturday, August 31

- 8 a.m. 5K certified by USA Track & Field

Start and finish at Elizabeth Brinkley Park

- 8 a.m. Post-race celebration at Elizabeth Brinkley Park with race breakfast, children's games, music and 5K award ceremony. All are invited to enjoy the festivities and cheer on participants.

- 9 a.m. 5K award presentation

- 9:15 a.m. 1-mile fun run

Start and finish at Elizabeth Brinkley Park

- 10:30 a.m. 10K bike ride

Start and finish at Elizabeth Brinkley Park on the traditional 10K route down Lakeshore Dr. to the Bella Coola boat landing and back.

- 10:30 a.m. post-race celebration wraps up

Sunday, September 1

- Event free day

Labor Day Monday, September 2

- 8 a.m. Traditional Lee J. Greer Labor Day Swim

Leaves from Dale's or the dam depending on wind direction

- 8:30 a.m. 1-mile swim

Up and back loop leaving from Dale's

- Noon 6-mile paddle

Leave from the dam and follow the lake perimeter by the state park to Dale's.

2020 Events

Keep 2019 events and add back the 16-mile walk/run around the lake.

2021 Events

Keep 2020 events and add back the 16-mile bike around the lake.

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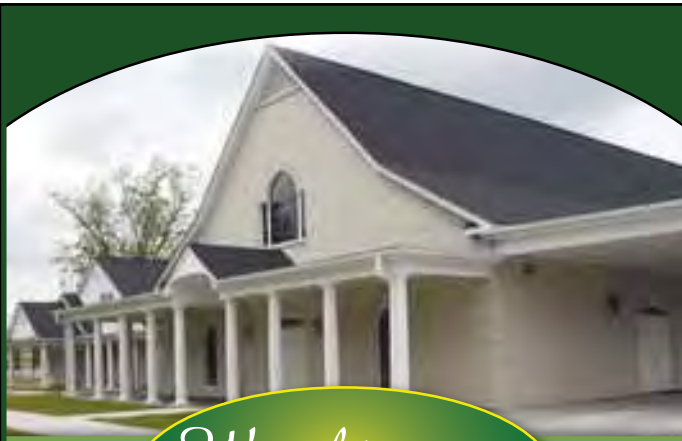
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Jennifer Grice, Cindy Lewis and Linda Watkins

A Happy Place

Delco landmark has been serving up friendship and food for 54 years

STORY JEFFERSON WEAVER

PHOTOS SARAH CRUTCHFIELD & SUBMITTED

From before the neon “Open” sign is lit around 5:30 a.m., the Burger Hut in Delco is in constant motion.

Cindy Lewis, Jennifer Grice and Linda Watkins move behind the counter, from drink machine and coffee pot to the flattop grill. Every sandwich, every plate, every meal is made to order. The telephone rings as regularly as the Farm Bureau clock on the wall ticks off the minutes between breakfast and lunch.

The matriarch and founder of the business, Doris Bullard, takes telephone orders, chats with customers, handles the cash register, and directs the entire operation like the conductor of a symphony. Instead of a lectern, however, she is usually seated in a comfortable chair surrounded by pictures of family.

Every person who comes through the door is greeted with the same enthusiasm, whether they were there the day before or have just found the classic diner beside U.S. 74-76.

“How’s your grandbabies?”

“You working today?”

“You heading to the city or home?”

“How’s your daddy? Is he better?”

“Do you know this fellow?”

Almost every day is nonstop at the Burger Hut, as it has been since “Miss Doris” opened a diner beside her husband Horace’s Texaco station around 1963, Cindy said.

“This is a happy place,” Cindy said. “Everybody is welcome. I feel like everybody needs a place they can go and not worry for a little while, and have something good to eat.”

Horace Bullard was known as “The Texaco Man” in Delco for years. The foundations for the gas pumps and sign are still in the parking lot.

“He had a little store, and gas pumps,” Cindy said of her stepfather. “Momma started the Burger Hut, and eventually, we just expanded to where the station used to be.”

When the highway was still a two-lane, Delco had its own schools, and



Doris Bullard, known as “Miss Doris,” opened the diner beside her husband Horace’s Texaco station around 1963.



As many as five generations of some families have been regulars at the Burger Hut.

there were more residents than big trucks in the community, the Burger Hut became a hangout as well as a destination for locals.

A large album Cindy had published for her mother’s 85th birthday has photos of teenagers in the parking lot with their hotrods, as well as children riding their bicycles or trying a scooter on the sidewalk. Other pictures show teens who are now grandparents lounging near a jukebox.

The full-color memory book also shows Miss Doris sharing ice cream with her children and grandchildren, laughing with customers, and visiting with the late country music singer Keith Whitley, who once stopped for a meal at the restaurant with his entire band.

For more than 54 years, the simple diner along the highway has served as an eatery as well as a social center for the community.

The Burger Hut has changed only a little since it grew to include the gas station — the building was painted and spiffed up and flowerbeds added out front in 2014. The interior’s dark pine paneling and white sheetrock flank a classic sit-down lunch counter with 10 rotating stools. Copies of newspapers are at one end for diners to read while awaiting their orders. Photos of John Wayne, Vivien Leigh and Clark Gable, and Shirley Temple

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are proudly displayed with other celebrity photos on one wall. Another wall is dedicated largely to family photos — children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren of Miss Doris, her family and close friends.

Elvis Presley is a constant presence in the diner — Miss Doris is a huge Elvis fan, and a small opening that once held an air conditioner was converted into a bit of a shrine for the King of Rock and Roll. Elvis figurines share space with souvenirs and mementoes shared by visitors or picked up on family vacations.

The near-perfectly preserved image of the old fashioned roadside diner has earned the Burger Hut a part in several movies as well as a commercial for BB&T.

“We even had King Kong come by,” Cindy laughs, pointing to a photo of the famous ape used in the Dino de Laurentis’ sequel, “King Kong Lives,” which was filmed in 1986. The tractor-trailer carrying the huge mechanical prop drew some stares as the crew caught a bite in the restaurant while passing through.

The brushes with stardom haven’t changed the Burger Hut, however. Cindy said her goal is to keep it that way.

“Momma is the reason all this is here,” she said. “It’s her dream, her legacy. She started it, and it’s her baby. I don’t want to change things — she doesn’t like change, and it’s always worked.

“I’ve updated a few things, just so we can keep people interested, and give people what they want. But this restaurant is Momma’s place. It’s a part of her,

and that’s a big part of us.”

Days usually begin around 5:30 to 6 a.m., and the doors close at 3 p.m. The diner is closed weekends.

During the week, however, customers begin coming through the door as soon as the lock is turned. In some families, as many as five generations have been regulars at the Burger Hut.

While most of the diners use the main seating area, some prefer the dining room. The larger room also serves as a gathering place for larger families, groups, birthday parties and other events.

“We have baby showers here,” Cindy said. “We have parties. This is a place to celebrate. We try to keep it happy.”

The diner is usually as happy as it is busy.

Hunters use the restaurant as a rendezvous in season. Parents call in breakfast orders to have a sit-down meal with their kids en route to school. Truckers, tourists and tradesmen share tables with millworkers, retirees and landscapers.

As the hubbub rises and falls, Cindy, Jennifer and Linda take down orders, serve hot and cold drinks, greet patrons by name — and cook.

Hot dog with sautéed onions? Check. Cheeseburger with bacon, lettuce and mustard? Check. Hot French fries? Check. Breakfast sandwich, with a chicken wrap to go? Check.

“We’re best known for our hamburgers,” Cindy said, “but we have regulars



The Burger Hut

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This book is dedicated to my mom, Doris Fowler Bullard, for all the love, hardwork, dedication and many many happy memories we all have shared here at the Burger Hut.

Bullard’s daughter, Cindy Lewis, created a memory book to celebrate her mother’s 85th birthday.

who have their own favorites.”

Cindy handles orders while simultaneously chatting with customers, catching up on family news and sharing the latest on Miss Doris. In recent months, the founder of the diner has had to miss work due to health issues, and her absence is often mentioned by customers.

“People look for Miss Doris,” Cindy said.

Cindy grew up in the restaurant. She laughed when she described how she never planned to follow in her mother’s footsteps.

“Then one day the lady that was working here had to take care of her husband,” Cindy said, laughing. “I told her I’d fill in till she got back. Well, I’m still here.”

While the menu has been updated in a few ways, the eatery lacks one thing that surprises some visitors – there’s no WiFi for Internet. As such, cell phones are more likely to be left sitting on tables or the counter while diners visit with each other.



From the time the neon “Open” sign is lit around 5:30 a.m., the Burger Hut is busy serving customers.

Sadly, the Burger Hut could someday see the neon “Open” light turned out for good. Miss Doris has been operating the diner under a grandfather clause for years. If she retires, Cindy said, the diner will have to be brought up to modern building standards, including handicapped accessibility, new restrooms and kitchen equipment, and other changes.

“I’m afraid it would be way too expensive,” Cindy said. “I’d hate to see the Burger Hut closed.”

For the time being, however, breakfast plates, hot coffee, sweet tea and burgers by the hundreds will continue moving across the counter.

“You don’t go into this business to get rich,” Cindy said. “You have to love it. It’s a lifestyle. You have to love people, and Momma loves seeing people happy. That’s why this is a place where we celebrate. That’s the way she wanted it, and we’re going to uphold her tradition as long as we can.”

“This is our happy place. She made it like that for everyone.”

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GIVING BACK

Family Nurse Practitioner Peggy Newman fulfills her calling

STORY & PHOTOS GRANT MERRITT

With a thirst for knowledge, Peggy Newman set out into the medical field 32 years ago to climb the proverbial ladder to the highest nursing degree. Celebrating her 20th year as a family nurse practitioner, Newman said there is no place on Earth she would rather be than Columbus County.

Newman practices with Liberty Advantage and works at both Liberty Commons and Shoreland Health Care and Retirement Center in Whiteville. Her specialty is working with internal medicine and cardiology patients whom she monitors, treats and evaluates at the two facilities.

Her favorite aspects of being a family nurse practitioner are the patients and providing a place for them to call home. While getting to know the residents of Liberty Commons and Shoreland on a personal level, she enjoys singing and dancing for them.

"It makes them laugh and giggle, and it costs me nothing to do that," Newman said. "For me, it's so much more than treating their diabetes, hypertension or heart failure."

Developing a bond with her patients, Newman is able to look after their physical, emotional and mental needs, whether that means treating them in a primary care setting or through a nursing home rehabilitation center.

Newman said Columbus County is very fortunate to have a healthcare community that works together.

"As nurse practitioner, I have witnessed in this medical field that there is such a collaborative effort between the private practices, nursing homes and the hospital," Newman explained. "I can really say that it's second to none. Columbus Regional Healthcare System really is more than a hospital."

Newman is a cancer survivor, and she praises the Donayre Cancer Care Center at CRHS for providing impeccable care. As a patient of CRHS and a professional who sends her own patients to CRHS from Liberty Commons and Shoreland, Newman said she is "just fortunate to be in the middle of all of this."

For Newman, being a family nurse practitioner was a calling. Being a Whiteville High School and Southeastern Community College graduate, she said those were stepping stones that eventually led her back home after graduating from Indiana University in 1999 with a master of science in nursing: family nurse practitioner. While there, she earned her board certification through the American Nurses Credentialing Center.

After graduating from SCC as a registered nurse, Newman went to

work at the ICU at Southeastern Regional Medical Center in Lumberton. After gaining work experience, Newman propelled her education through Sandhills Community College towards degree requirements for her bachelor of science in nursing with honors at UNC Chapel Hill in 1993.

“Because nurse practitioners and physician assistants don’t get the depth or amount of years in school as a physician, I decided to put myself through my own residency through work experience,” Newman said.

With her own personal goal of learning everything she can about the medical field, Newman said she did not want to limit herself because she is a nurse practitioner. She wants to be able to do something because she is a nurse practitioner.

After moving back to North Carolina from Indianapolis, Newman took jobs in primary care and urgent care and even opened her own clinic with her husband in Elizabethtown in 2010. With a rapid growth in patients, Newman’s clinic merged with Southeastern Regional Medical Center and was able to leave the business side of managing a clinic and return to focusing on just being family nurse practitioner when she joined Southeast Primary Care in 2014.

Having lived and worked outside of Columbus County for many years, Newman said it feels like life has come full circle with taking care of patients who are the parents of her former classmates in high school. It gives her joy to take care of them, and she said all the work experience has prepared her for what she is doing now.

“Being able to take care of these people is my way of giving back to where I came from,” Newman said.

A typical day for Newman at Liberty Commons and Shoreland starts

with communication with her and her staff through lab reports written at 4 a.m. With all of her residents enrolled through Liberty Advantage, she is able to make a health risk assessment to determine if she needs to meet with them once a week, once every two weeks or once a month. Between the two facilities, she has about 60 residents she checks and assesses during her rounds.

Newman said the health risk assessment does not limit her to seeing her patients because she wants to check on them five or six times per week just for their mental and emotional needs. Singing and dancing for patients and making them smile puts a smile on her face too.

Newman said she has a special interest in international medical missions. She was able to visit the Dominican Republic in February 2009 with the Grace Chapel Medical Missions Team and provide medical care for people in poverty-stricken villages. She said she holds Jesus Christ at the helm of everything she does.

In her spare time, Newman said the only time she watches the Hallmark Channel on TV is during the Christmas season. With a constant need to learn something, she watches the National Geographic, Smithsonian and History channels the most. She currently serves on the Southeastern Community College Foundation Board of Directors, and she was the college’s 2017 commencement keynote speaker.

Newman is married to Jim Newman, a retired Lt. Colonel of the United States Air Force and veteran of the Vietnam War and Desert Storm. They have two children and three grandchildren. The Newmans are members of Western Prong Baptist Church. She enjoys college basketball, fishing, gardening, canning, entertaining, reading and visiting historical sites.



Peggy Newman monitors Warren Cook’s vital signs as part of her well-check routine.

Columbus Regional Healthcare System Foundation Gala *Golden Nurse Award*



Golden Nurse honorees (left to right) Iris McEwen, Annette Eissens and Erlene Elkins. Eissens was awarded the Golden Nurse Award.

Columbus Regional Healthcare System *Hometown Healthy & Happy New Year's Eve*



Brad Lovin & Ashley Gore, Terri Gore, Sarah Gore, David Gore



Talaat Abdelnabi, Mahmoud Abdelnabi, Raad Gahram of Zeko's Italian Restaurant



Stacy Tice, Megan Cartrette, Jennifer Holcomb



Miranda & Veyda Edwards, Laney Bass



Collin & Leah Hooks, Brileigh Cartrette

Columbus County Farmers Market Farm-to-Table Dinner



Left back: Jerry Dunlap, Nikki Walker, Susie Rockel, Chance Holmes Snowden, Mariah Smith - Cottingham. Seated: Sheila Dunlap, Angela & Randolph Keaton



Teresa Hopkins, Dave Lewis & Bookie Burns Trogden



Kaye Pope, Geneva Ashley & Sara Brooks



Jeanie Evans, Anne Williamson, Wanda & Daryl Diefes

Tabor City Annual Banquet



Briana Nelson (center) is presented the Youth Volunteer of the Year Award.



Joseph Small presents Stewart Watts the Outstanding Citizen of the Year Award.



Suzette Leonard, Debbie James, Lora Harper



Richard Wright presents Mary Bow the Community Service Award.

82nd Columbus Chamber Annual Meeting & Expo



Suzanne King, W.H. Morris and Angela Norris



Autumn Callihan, Mary Jo Williamson, Debra McGougan, Hannah Hickman and Deborah McPherson



Terry Mann presents Rev. David Heller the Sol B. Mann Community Spirit Award.



Janice Young (center), pictured with her family, was presented the Honorary Lifetime Membership Award



2019 Columbus Chamber Board of Directors, standing: Terry Mann, Ethan Scott, Shawn Maynor, Nicky Nance, Greta Heye, Jeremy Coker, Dr. Dan Strickland, Dr. Anthony Clarke. Seated: Jamille Gore, Nancy Sigmon, Jennifer Holcomb and Brenda Troy.

Dancing With The Vineland Stars



Ellen Steinberg, Meredith Jackson & Suzanne Hall



Susan Deans, Courtney Worley, Melissa Williamson, Amber Dinkins, Jordan J. Carter, Susan Smith, Amy Ransom and Mary Wheatley



Brad McNeil and Summer Fowler



Boyd Worley and Staci Ezzell



David Smith and Mary Wheatley

Live Black History Expo



Left to right: F.O.F.T.Y. (From Our Family to Yours) Founders Tankeisha Graham, Rita Cutler Harrison, Danaysia Powell and Jason Graham holding son, Layden.



Camden Williamson as Franklin McCain, Jordan Newkirk as Henrietta Lacks and Frankye Boone-Newkirk



Inez Spicer and Tim Collier



Jalasia Graham as Josephine Baker, Rita Cutler Harrison

Wolfpack Optimist Sports Association 50th Anniversary



Matt McLean, Don & Judy Harritan and Liz McLean



Jeff & Pam Pridgen, Marty Cutchin and Briana Mannion



Amanda & Adam Williams



MacKenzie Gore and Matt McLean

Fair Bluff Chamber of Commerce



Julia Cooke, Kaitlyn Cooke, Chloe Pate, Leigh Ann Pate, Kaitlyn Cox



Gary Lanier, Kathy Ashley and Gene Martin



Gary Lanier, Stuart Hayes, Billy Barker



Charles Edwards provided musical entertainment during dinner.



Annie Kathryn Cole and Mary Alice Thompson

Columbus Cotillion Debutante Ball



The 2019 Columbus Cotillion Debutantes: Erica Jade Bass, Elizabeth Caroline Koonce, Meredith Maudrose McColskey and Meredith Brooke Moss. *All photos by Tim Hilbourn*



Meredith Moss smiles as she approaches the mothers of the debutantes.



Elizabeth Koonce is presented by her father, Sterling Koonce.



Meredith McColskey escorted by Ethan Stoll, left and presented by her father, Timothy McColskey, right.



Jade Bass dances with her father, Eric. Brother, Blake, looks to "cut in."



Brennan Bass, Whiteville High School
CCP Student, Welding program

Career & College Promise

Through a partnership of the Department of Public Instruction, the NC Community College System, the University of North Carolina System and many independent colleges and universities, North Carolina is helping eligible high school students to **begin earning college credit** at Southeastern Community College at no tuition cost to them or their families.

The purpose of **Career and College Promise** is to offer structured opportunities for qualified high school students to dually enroll in community college courses that provide pathways that lead to a certificate, diploma or degree, as well as provide entry-level job skills. Structured pathways are detailed programs of study that help students accelerate their progression towards a college degree and/or increasing their technical skills in preparation for a career in that field.

For more information on **Career & College Promise**, visit your guidance counselor or contact by phone/email at (910) 788-6279/ccp@sccnc.edu.



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Western Prong Baptist Church



**Sunday Worship Services 8:30 & 11am Sunday School 9:45am
Sunday Night 6:30 Wednesday Night 6:30**

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ages to attend*

Awana



Western Prong Baptist Church
112 Peacock Rd., Whiteville
(910) 648-2744
www.westernprong.org

We are inviting all Hispanics who want to hear the Word of God in Spanish to join us every Sunday at 11:00 am to our Hispanic Baptist Church, "The Way of Life" with Pastor Roberto Mancillas. For more information, call Pastor Roberto at (704) 941-9175. We await!!!

Invitamos a todos los hispanos que desean escuchar la Palabra de Dios en español para que nos acompañen todos los domingos a las 11:00am a nuestra iglesia Bautista, "El Camino de la Vida," con el pastor Roberto Mancillas. Más información al teléfono 704-941-9175 con el Pastor Roberto. Les esperamos!!!



Pastor: Ronnie Wilson

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October 5, 2019

Vineland Station

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954 Events



Whiteville Garden Club Tour of Gardens

Whiteville Garden Club will host a tour of nine gardens on June 1st from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. in the greater Whiteville area. The gardens on tour range from hobby farmers to formal English style gardens to historic Reuben Brown House. Musicians, artists, and writers will be featured at the gardens. Tickets are \$15 per person and can be purchased from Columbus County Chamber of Commerce and Tourism, Country Nursery or any club member.



Fireworks Celebration

The 31st Annual Columbus County July 4th Fireworks Celebration is Tuesday, July 2, at South Columbus High School. Gates open at 6 p.m. Entertainment begins at 6:45 p.m. and fireworks begin at 9:35 p.m. Evening events include musical entertainment, visiting queens, raffle drawings, special recognition of military veterans and much more.

The event is hosted by Tabor City and organized by Tabor City Chamber of Commerce. For more information, call 910-377-3012.



N. C. Watermelon Festival

Crafts, entertainment, parade, melon bites, and the "Best Tastin' Watermelon of the Carolinas" contest are just a few of the activities planned July 19 -21 at the N.C. Watermelon Festival in Fair Bluff. Forms, tickets, schedule of events and sponsorship information are available at www.ncwatermelonfestival.org.



Rodeo benefiting Boys & Girls Homes of N.C.

The rodeo returns to the Boys & Girls Homes Exhibition Center at Lake Waccamaw this summer August 15, 16 & 17. Top riders will compete in bull riding, calf roping, saddle bronc riding, team roping, barrel racing, steer wrestling, breakaway roping and bareback riding. Gates open at 6 p.m. and the competition begins at 8 p.m. All proceeds benefit Boys & Girls Homes of North Carolina.



N.C. Honey Festival

Celebrating the importance of bees to our farmers and environment, the N.C. Honey Festival is Saturday, September 7, from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. on Madison Street in downtown Whiteville.

Local beekeepers and craft vendors will have for sale raw/local honey, beeswax candles, skincare and natural hair products, bee pollen, honey sweetened sauces and desserts. Food and drinks will be available. Children will enjoy the Kids' Zone with fun and educational activities. Visit www.nchoneyfestival.com for the complete schedule of events.

Take the Lake

2019 Take the Lake (TTL) at Lake Waccamaw has a blend of new and traditional events this year as the steering committee implements a 3-year plan that is inclusive to families and beginner fitness participants as well as participants looking for endurance challenges and timed events. The run, walk and bike events will be based out of Elizabeth Brinkley Park Saturday, August 31. A post-race celebration with food, drinks, music, children's activities and awards will take place at Elizabeth Brinkley Park from 8 a.m. to 10:30 a.m. Everyone is invited to attend. The paddle and swim events will take place Monday, September 2. Take the Plate spaghetti dinner at Lake Waccamaw United Methodist Church is Friday, August 30, 5:30 p.m. to 7 p.m. See a related story in 954 for more information about Take the Lake and visit takethelake.org to register for all events.



Columbus County Agricultural Fair

The Columbus County Agricultural Fair is October 15 - 20, 2019. The fair parade is Tuesday, October 15 at 3:30 p.m. in downtown Whiteville. The fair opens at 5:00 p.m. after the parade and will continue through Sunday night the 20th. Visit www.columbuscountyfair.com for complete schedule and information.



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THE MEANEST CRITTER ANIMALS

STORY **Bill Woodsman**

After living in Whiteville for many years, I have decided to lay to rest that age old question of what is the meanest animal in the world. This question has been asked in every barroom and every outback campfire in the world and I think I have come across the answer right here in Columbus County.

Now mind you, there are a lot of stories going about and one of my favorites is about the crocogator. It is a story I heard a long time ago and it goes like this.

Three little boys were discussing the meanest animal in the world and after the first two had mentioned the tiger and the bulldog, the third little boy said the meanest animal in the world was a crocogator, an animal with a crocodile on one end and an alligator on the other. To the puzzlement of the other two, they thought for a few moments and then said, if he is a crocodile on one end and an alligator on the other, how does he ever go to the bathroom and the answer of course was, "He never goes. That's what makes him so mean."

Well, my selection for the most ferocious and the worst animal in the world is no less than our local deer fly. The deer fly is an interesting animal. He dares you to kill him; he will light and be very still on your arm or leg and cares little for your swatting or batting. Often five or 10 will get together and attack as one, totally immune and not caring for their lives. The interesting thing about deer flies is that they don't sting; they munch. While many of us are frightened by the great white shark because they are known to eat us alive, this is exactly what the deer fly does. If you are unfortunate enough to be walking in the shaded woods this time of year, you will find that they take great delight in lighting on any exposed portion of your body and quickly deciding that it is no less than an elegant buffet.

I have often wondered why some of the local football teams don't take on the name of the deer fly because there is certainly not a more ferocious, more aggressive, more fanatic animal in the world. Names like the Whiteville deer flies or the Hallsboro deer flies do not catch a lot of interest, so I guess we will have to be content with the Wolfpack and the Lions and the Tigers, as so many of our teams are called.

My wife has recently become a gardener and she tells me that she certainly agrees with my selection of the deer fly as the most aggressive and meanest animal in the world, but there is a close second that is just beginning to show, and that is the black gnat. Although many times smaller, it



bites just as hard and seems to enjoy the process just as much as a deer fly.

If I had my way, I would suggest that North Carolina make the deer fly its state insect (a.k.a. PEST) and point toward its very obvious credentials as being something that all good North Carolinians should strive for. Until I see a crocogator, my vote is for this aggressive nightmare of a fly. The meanest critter by far.

"Bill Woodsman" was born in 1954 when eighth grader Billy Ogden created his nom de plume "Willie the Woodsman." He wrote weekly hunting articles for his all boys junior high school in Macon, Georgia. When Dr. Ogden entered college and medical school, "Willie" matured into "Bill" as he has continued to write about the sports of hunting and fishing.

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WE REMEMBER
WWI VETERAN JAMES PALMER HAMMOND

..... PHOTOGRAPH FROM NR ARCHIVES



James Palmer Hammond of Cerro Gordo was 94 when this photo was taken in 1983.
Hammond served in France during WWI and was dressed in his uniform for the veterans program at the county fair.

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