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*"The piece of art that I chose for the cover represents growth. I think that to flourish is to grow in harmony with nature and those around us."*

— Elizabeth Spaulding

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Ten years ago my father and then-publisher Jim High proposed the idea of producing feature magazines for The News Reporter. It was a challenge, but with a team effort we figured it out. Our skill set “flourished” from 0 to 100 very quickly.

I have learned so much from each person featured in our pages, including our featured artist in this edition, Elizabeth Spaulding. When asked to explain what the word “flourish” means to her, Spaulding says simply and profoundly, “I think about survival. It makes me think about my purpose on this earth. Am I doing things to make the world more beautiful for myself and others? The world belongs to us all.”

Spaulding’s words mirror my own journey with Flourish magazine and the reward of trying something new, overcoming the challenges and growing in the process. However small it may seem to try to make the world a better and more beautiful place, each effort brings “flourish” to life.

— Stuart High Rogers



Cover Art  
by Elizabeth Spaulding

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## Get to know our cover artist Elizabeth Spaulding

STORY & PHOTOS BY STUART ROGERS

Cover artist Elizabeth Spaulding favors mixed media for composing textured and beautiful works of art. Just as she incorporates many elements into each stunning and singular piece, many people have encouraged and supported Spaulding's journey from a student in the Whiteville City Schools to her current position teaching art at Central Middle School.

Her Flourish cover excites wonder and invites the viewer to spend time searching for hidden elements. Each discovery feels like a small gift from Spaulding. She describes the work by saying, "The piece of art that I chose for the cover represents growth. I think that to flourish is to grow in harmony with nature and those around us.

"When I think about the word flourish, I think about survival. I think about how we all need each other to flourish. It

makes me think about my purpose on this earth. Am I doing things to make the world more beautiful for myself and others? The world belongs to us all. It is a beautiful place. I tried to portray all of this in this piece of art."

Raised in the Farmers Union community, where she still resides, Spaulding is the daughter of Cetrena Spaulding and the late Willie Spaulding. Her father was one of her biggest fans, and they loved working on art projects together. Her parents displayed art in their home, and Spaulding was influenced by the work of Ernie Barnes.

"Sometimes I would just sit and stare at it. Some of the pieces made me happy," Spaulding said. She gives her mother credit for teaching her balance and giving her the strength to persevere.

Spaulding says, "I have been influenced by the many tal-



## MEET THE ARTIST



*Top left: Out of the blue, mixed media;  
Right: Willie, mixed media;  
Bottom right: Rhoda, mixed media*



ented art teachers that I have had growing up and in college. Most of my encouragement comes from family, friends, and my local community. I am very thankful for their support."

Beginning art lessons at a very young age, she progressed to experimenting and developing her talent in high school, where she won many Scholastic Art Awards. During her senior year in high school, Spaulding's father died, and that same year she won a national Scholastic Art Silver Award. Her family and community rallied to make it possible for her to travel to New York City to accept her award on stage at Carnegie Hall.

She gives back to her experience in the Scholastic Art Awards program by serving on the Scholastic Art Awards Regional Teacher Advisory Committee. Her middle school students have experienced success in the art competition, and last year she had a student who placed in the regionals for poetry in the writing competition.

Celebrate the Arts is held annually in Columbus County, and each school in the county has the opportunity to participate. Spaulding looks forward to Celebrate the Arts each year since it gives students a chance to display their artwork for others to enjoy. It also provides them the opportunity to look at other students' works and get feedback on their own artwork. Spaulding says, "Not only do they get to enjoy the visual arts at this time, but the other arts as well. The young people





## MEET THE ARTIST

in the county are filled with so much talent, and Celebrate the Arts is a perfect time for them to showcase it.”

After graduating from Whiteville High School in 2010, Spaulding attended UNC Greensboro and graduated with a BFA in painting and a BA in political science. She went on to earn a master’s degree in teaching from UNC Pembroke. While at UNC-G, Spaulding held a solo art exhibit and was awarded the prestigious UNC-G William Mangum Artistic Merit Award, which is presented each fall to an outstanding senior in painting to aid them in creating a final body of art.

She has been invited to show her art in many galleries, including Columbus County Arts Council, Carolina Civic Center in Lumberton, Cameron Art Museum in Wilmington and Gatewood Gallery at UNC-G. She has won awards at the Brady Kendall Art Show held annually at the Columbus County Arts Council, Columbus County Fair, Yam Festival and the Azalea Festival Spring Art Show. She was given a Regional Artist Project Grant by the N.C. Arts Council, a division of the Department of Natural and Cultural Resources.

Spaulding is very modest about her awards and recognition. Her accomplishments are more considerable than those stated in this article. She is quick to turn the conversation and attention back to her students. She says, “Teaching has given me an opportunity to work with future artists and to be a part of their journey. It has also given me a chance to instill a love for the arts in my students. It is wonderful to see how creative they are at such a young age.”

She added, “As a teacher, I am very proud of them.” Her goal and highest reward is to help her students find the lifelong gift of their love for creating art.



Top right, “Tranquility,” mixed media; above, “All Over the Place,” charcoal; right, “I’m Blue,” mixed media





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*Gail and Bob Crutchfield can hang their Star Lite speaker in the window and reminisce about good times at the drive-in theater, or they can buckle up and head for an auction in Dillon.*

# Crutchfields enjoy the thrill of the hunt

STORY & PHOTOS BY DIANA MATTHEWS

**“Y**ou won’t ever know what you’re going to find” at an auction or estate sale, Bob Crutchfield says. A few of the things he and his wife Gail Crutchfield have brought home are:

- A boat’s bell bought for \$20 that they resold on Ebay for \$700
- A set of china plates designed to serve whole steamed artichokes, each with a depression to hold sauce;
- A pair of armchairs with what Bob Crutchfield originally called “silly, awful” sparkly buttons in the tufted backs, which are now a favorite breakfast spot;
- A broken model sailboat that became a “perfect” hanging decoration;
- A grand piano for \$25 that now graces the 1898

house where Bob Crutchfield grew up in Chadbourn;

- “Absolutely gorgeous” towels and linens, barely used and at a fraction of the new price; and
- A vintage Camel Cigarettes lighter still in its original package.

## ‘Just fun’

The Crutchfields began attending auctions 13 years ago on weekend outings with college friends. At one time, for about a year and a half, they sold their finds at an antique mall between Dillon and Latta. “We never made a fortune, but we never lost any money,” Gail Crutchfield said.

After Hurricane Florence, auction shopping became a practical way to refurbish their Lake Waccamaw house. Along the way, it’s even become a bit



of a passion. However, "We're definitely not obsessed," Gail Crutchfield said. "It's just fun."

Part of the fun is sharing, she said. "We're not married to any of these things." She and her husband enjoy giving away items as much as buying and selling them.

"At this point, we don't need anything," he said.

They donate a lot of their finds to the thrift stores run by Boys and Girls Homes of North Carolina and Families First Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Services.

That way, they're supporting a worthwhile cause and providing "a heck of a bargain" for the buyer while "not filling the landfill with stuff that somebody might be able to use," Bob Crutchfield said.

Over the years, they've initiated friends, relatives and neighbors into the auction life. Now they de-emphasize the business aspect. Their weekend antiquing and auctioning trips are mostly a chance to spend time among "happy, upbeat, fun people," who "have the same kinds of interests we do," Bob Crutchfield said. "We're people people. And it's just fun."



Customers browse the furniture, antiques, jewelry, art and weapons in the B&W warehouse near Dillon, S.C., before the auction begins.



Gail Crutchfield found some Waterford cut-crystal glasses in the middle of an auction field and got them for a song. Hanging behind her is a sailboat her husband picked up free and repaired to decorate their lakeside home.



Bob Crutchfield admires a mantel clock.





*Gail Crutchfield discusses jewelry with Betty Williams, co-owner of B&W Auction.*

### **A day at the auction**

The Crutchfields have attended estate sales and other auctions in many locations, but they go regularly to B&W Auctions near Dillon, S.C. The company's Saturday auctions attract buyers and sellers from Florence, Myrtle Beach, Burgaw and Lumberton, including some who have large online businesses.

A Saturday at B&W offers two very different scenes: In the morning people sift through heaps of items in a good-sized grassy field, salvaging something they want from a boxful of seeming rubbish, or grabbing a piece of furniture that has potential even though it may have sat out in the rain the night before.

When asked whether they are worried about bringing home bedbugs or other pests, they say they aren't, but they do inspect upholstery well before buying it, and they wash any fabric items as soon as they bring them home.

Auctioneer Earl Bullard rides up and down the field in a golf cart. A microphone amplifies his pat-

ter to the crowd: "And a lamp! Seven-na-half, seven-na-half, seven-na-half, now ten, ten, ten...what about twelve-na-half? Now sold for \$10."

It takes him only a few seconds to sell each lot before he asks, "Now whatcha got?" and one of his helpers indicates the next lot to bid on.

As the golf cart rolls down the row, Bullard's amplified voice reminds the crowd to observe the rules. "If you didn't buy it, do not pick it up. It is not yours. If you buy it, take it home. Do not leave it here."

Inside an air-conditioned warehouse is what Bob Crutchfield called "the really high-end stuff," tables full of china and antiques, a case of jewelry and some better-cared-for furniture, both antique and not. An auction of these items will start at 3 p.m and continue into the evening.

### **Solving problems**

During his lunch break, Bullard took a few minutes to describe his work.





*Bob Crutchfield glances at some used furniture soon to be auctioned on the field at B&W Auction. The higher-end items are inside the air-conditioned warehouse.*

Auctioneers “are actually problem solvers,” he said. For example, an older person dies and leaves “a houseful of furniture. There’s nothing there that their children want. We turn an unwanted asset into real money, something they can use to buy what they want.”

Bullard says that, at an auction, “You’ll meet anything from a ditch digger to a judge. You’ll see them all.” And, when the bidding starts, “There are no friends at an auction.”

The auctioneer advises new auction-goers to “Come find something you’re interested in and make up your mind what you’re willing to pay for it.” Be sure to examine it well, he said. “Make sure it’s in the shape you want, and it’s what you want.”

Then stick to your plan, he said. “Don’t get caught up in the fever. Be willing to pay what you think it’s worth, but don’t pay any more than that.”

Some of the Crutchfields’ auction-going friends make their living buying and reselling specialized items such as medical equipment and electronics.

Gail Crutchfield prefers the term “repurposing” over “recycling” for the activity. Although she’s not in it to make a profit anymore, when she sees poten-



*Auctioneers are problem-solvers, says Earl Bullard, above. He’s sold cars, farm equipment, antiques, weapons, art, pottery and real estate.*



## AUCTION FINDS

tial in an item, she likes to err on the side of giving it a chance. Or, as she said, "If it's hard to say no, I usually don't. Because we're not talking about a lot of money."

### More than meets the eye

At an auction, "You discover all kinds of things" you weren't looking for, Bob Crutchfield said, especially by taking time to search items other people have overlooked. He and his wife have found that old things are often of better quality than new things.

Going to an auction is "an adventure" akin to "a treasure hunt," Gail Crutchfield said. But it's better than searching for pearls in oysters because, "We find a pearl every time we go."



*This window speaker from a former Whiteville landmark reminds the Crutchfields of where they met.*



*Crutchfield holds a vintage Camel cigarette lighter he found in the bottom of a box at an auction.*

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*Volunteers from the Columbus Council of the N.C. Reading Association help children and parents pick out free books at the Columbus County Community Farmers Market's Back-to-School Fun Day on Aug. 12.*

# Six fun ways to spark the love of reading and writing

Story By TONYE FLETCHER, PRESIDENT, COLUMBUS COUNCIL OF N.C. READING ASSOCIATION

Photos By Tonnye Fletcher & Diana Matthews

There was a definite excited buzz in the air as parents and students milled around the Columbus County Community Farmers Market. While families received lots of fun freebies and perused vendor offerings at the "Back to School" event, a question swirled. What fun, educational opportunities exist for students and families in Columbus County?

Volunteers for the Columbus Council of the N.C. Reading Association (CCNCRA) helped market-goers answer that question while handing out free books to young visitors. Here's how you can find your own fun answers:

Fuel a child's enthusiasm for reading by visiting a Little Free Library, where you can take out a book and leave one for someone else. You can set a good example to your child by swapping a book you've finished and taking home a different one yourself. CCNCRA donates

to the dozen Little Free Libraries in our area, filling them with fun and exciting books for children and adults. As Roald Dahl, author, said, "Books shouldn't be daunting. They should be funny, exciting and wonderful, and learning to be a reader gives a terrific advantage."

Another fun activity that helps children find the fun in books and reading is enjoying local StoryWalks. A StoryWalk is a book that is taken apart and installed on signs outside so that readers literally walk as they read.

You can find StoryWalks at various places around the county. Currently, the N.C. Museum of Natural Sciences at Whiteville has one, as does the Columbus County Parks and Rec Fitness Trail. According to Whiteville Primary School media specialist and naturalist Nikki Walker, "StoryWalks provide the reader with a unique type of reading experience. Walking from page to page creates an anticipation that is different from the traditional flip



## LOVE OF READING

of a page. The excitement of what is coming next often sends a young reader running to the next section of the book. StoryWalks provide a physical interaction with the book, and being out in nature reading is an added benefit, as well."

During the school year, bring your young children to Second Saturday Storytime at the N.C. Museum of Natural Sciences at Whiteville, where CCNCRA volunteers lead engaging read-alouds and related activities. Stories, songs, dances, crafts and nature walks are sure to ignite kids' curiosity and excitement about books, reading and science. According to Jessica Stitt, early childhood education specialist at the museum, "CCNCRA [adds] value to the science education we strive to teach by bringing literacy into the mix."

Families can enjoy another fun event bridging science and literacy each March by bringing their children to SPRING into Science at the museum. CCNCRA offers the free event each spring. Past events have included planting seeds, making oobleck and doing crafts. Plans are already underway for a live author and activities focused on gardening, space and yoga for SIS 2024.

Watch for fun author events, also sponsored by CCNCRA. According to Michael "Shane" Fletcher, a seventh grade teacher at Central Middle School, "In the absence of a traditional book store in Columbus County, CCN-



Mariana Ríos Ramírez reads her debut picture book *SANTIAGO'S DINOSAURIOS* on Dino-Day at the N.C. Museum of Natural Sciences at Whiteville.

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CCNCRA volunteers bridge science and literacy in the *SPRING* into Science event each spring and plan crafts related to the Second Saturday Storytime at the science museum.

CRA brings authors and books into the area to provide rich literate experiences to our citizens." On Oct. 27, North Carolina author/illustrator Ashley Belote is joining us at Country Corners Farm in Chadbourn for an evening of "witchy wombat-y" fun.

Encourage your child as a writer by participating in the N.C. Reading Association's Young Author Project. Writers this year will write about the theme "Reflections: Celebrating the Me I See." The contest is open to CCNCRA members and their young writers.

Shanda White, a homeschool mom and writer in the adult category says, "The young authors project has been a fun challenge, a wonderful learning experience, and a joy to participate in." Local entries are judged, with winning entries continuing on to the state round. State winners' writings are published in an anthology. Seventh grader Kyras White, who has been a state winner several times, said, "I've enjoyed being able to put my opinion out there, and to be published in the book."

CCNCRA is dedicated to creating readers and writers for life in fun and engaging ways through community partnerships and literacy-based activities. Pam Sutton, Edgewood Elementary School principal, sums up the group's role in the community this way:

"CCNCRA opens opportunities for the children and families of Columbus County that were not previously available to our citizens. Their presence in our community through the activities they sponsor and their involvement to support other community activities is invaluable by generating conversations about literacy, providing materials



This Little Free Library station is stocked with books so readers can take out a book and leave one for someone else.



CCNCRA partners with the museum in Whiteville to present the StoryWalk project.





Niyah Leggett and Malliciah Mims received recognition at the Benton Convention Center in Winston-Salem. They were state winners in the 2022 Young Authors contest.

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to support literacy and creating opportunities to engage families in literacy. CCNCRA truly supports my lifelong belief as an educator that reading is a gift that no one can take away and that has the potential to impact young readers' lives in ways we can only wait to witness as we watch them grow in our community."

**CCNCRA welcomes anyone who cares about literacy to help in the following ways:**

- Become a member for only \$26 a year. Your membership helps CCNCRA reach the quota allowing local students to enter the state organization's contests. Your donation also supports local literacy activities. There is no requirement to volunteer, but, "If you want to be involved, that's even better!" Fletcher said. "We'd love to have more boots on the ground promoting literacy!"
- Join now at [NCRReading.org/membership](http://NCRReading.org/membership)  
Click NCRA membership form  
Select Columbus  
Pay online \$25.00 + \$1.00 online fee  
You'll be an official member of NCRA & CCNCRA
- Sponsor a StoryWalk. (The cost is \$50 for printing, sign boards, stakes, paper, laminating film, adhesive, etc.) CCNCRA will be happy to add a sponsorship page for you or your business.
- Make a donation: Prizes for Young Author project, items CCNCRA can raffle off at events, food for a meeting or the Young Author celebration, funds or goods or services that help fulfill CCNCRA's mission
- Host a fund-raiser
- Let CCNCRA know if you have another way you'd like to help:  
- E-mail [CCNCRA@gmail.com](mailto:CCNCRA@gmail.com) or call 910-770-3670 and leave voicemail.
- Find CCNCRA on Facebook page @ CCNCRA(a.k.a. Columbus Council of NCRA) and #creatingreaders4life

*About the writer:*

Tonnye Williams Fletcher is president of the Columbus Council of the N.C. Reading Association, which was founded in 2016. Fletcher was born and raised in Columbus County. She is a music teacher at Whiteville Primary School, the wife of Shane Fletcher and a children's book author.



**Little Free Library Locations**

**Charter #121743**

**Whiteville Alumnae Chapter Delta Sigma Theta**  
106 Chadwick Place, Chadbourn  
(Chadwick Place Apartments)

**Charter #45550 established by Susan Deans**  
4564 Chadbourn Hwy., Whiteville  
(Southeastern Community College)

**Charter #62321 established by Nikki Walker**  
805 Barcrest Ave., Whiteville  
(Whiteville Primary School)

**Charter #49382 established by Susan Deans**  
304 Jefferson St., Whiteville  
(outside Columbus County Health Dept.)

**Charter #47800 established by Carla Brown**  
109 E. Wyche St., Whiteville  
(Speech-Language Pathology Services)

**Charter #121744**

**Whiteville Alumnae Chapter Delta Sigma Theta**  
504 W. Burkhead St., Whiteville  
(Whiteville Housing Authority)

**Charter #49381 established by Susan Deans**  
403 Martin Luther King Jr. Ave., Whiteville  
(DREAM Center)

**Charter #22304 established by Jan Weems**  
(N.C. Museum of Natural Sciences)  
415 S. Madison St., Whiteville

**Charter #162305 established by Raven Boone**  
7490 Andrew Jackson Hwy., SW, Cerro Gordo  
(outside G&G Healthcare)

**Additional Little Free Libraries**

**Vineland Station, Whiteville**  
**Arts Council, Whiteville**  
(inside Columbus County Health Dept.)

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2019 *Simply Dance* recital “United” finale with studio owner Staci Ezzell and her dance students.

# ‘THIS IS REAL LIFE’: EZZELL PROUDLY WATCHES DANCERS GROW AND EXCEL

By OLIVIA ROGERS | PHOTOGRAPHY SUBMITTED

For Staci Ezzell, owner of Simply Dance in Whiteville, “Running a business and teaching dance are two opposite things,” but she has found a way to succeed at both. Whether she’s shaping and guiding her young dancers until they graduate from high school or dealing with the ins and outs of business, she finds each aspect rewarding in its own way.

Ezzell has been dancing for 38 years. While growing up in Chadbourn, she started dancing at Wanda’s School of Dance at age 2. She later transitioned to Amy’s School of Dance, where she studied until she graduated from West Columbus High School.

“I was maybe 11 or 12 when I realized that this was something I loved and wanted to do” as a career, Ezzell said. After high school, she studied ballroom dance in Raleigh at Arthur Murray Dance Studio. She then returned to Columbus County to teach at Southside Dance Center in Tabor City. After teaching there for seven years, she

opened Simply Dance in 2015.

Ezzell told *Flourish* about the demands and rewards of her profession. This interview has been edited for clarity.

***How have dancing and teaching developed for you over the years?***

I love teaching. I love being around kids. I love being able to share things I learn and have a passion for.

When I opened my own business, I quickly realized that it’s not just about teaching dance. There are so many other things that you have to take into consideration. Running a business and teaching dance are two opposite things. Thankfully I get to do both. I just have to be very disciplined about my time.

***What led you to open your studio?***

It was something I always wanted to do, and I honestly never thought I was capable of doing something on my own like this. I just wanted to be on my own. I wanted to be something, and I wanted to do something to make



people proud of me. I wanted to make my family proud of me, and I wanted to be proud of myself. I think I've accomplished that.

***Do you still teach classes?***

I do still teach full time. I'm in the studio every day Monday through Thursday, and I'm not ready to step down any right now. I still love it the same.

***Which part of your life are you most proud of?***

I am most proud of becoming a mother at the same time I was opening a studio. I was a mom of a 2-year-old boy while I was working on opening Simply Dance.

I was scared to death to open up a dance studio and it not be successful. I just prayed for at least 50 students so I could keep the doors open and build off of that. In my first year, I registered 252 students.

***Tell us about your instructors and students.***

One instructor in particular — her name is Morgan Fowler — I started teaching her at my previous studio where I worked since she was 9 years old. I have watched her grow into this flower that has blossomed. Seeing what I've taught her and seeing her do everything that I've taught



Center: Staci Ezzell, owner/instructor; clockwise from front left: Kaydee Davis, instructor; Amy Simmons, office assistant; Brittani Smith, photographer; Amy Greene, instructor; Morgan Fowler, instructor

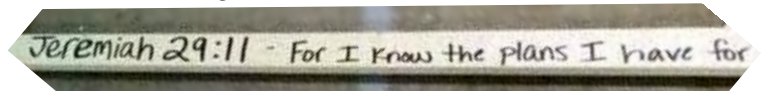


Photo of scripture written on the dance floor foundation during construction.



Simply Dance ribbon cutting ceremony in 2015 sponsored by Columbus Chamber of Commerce. Pictured are Ezzell, her husband, Issac Ezzell, and their son Abel along with family and friends who supported her effort to open her own dance studio.





Lifelong dancer Staci Ezzell opened her own dance studio, *Simply Dance*, in 2015. - Photo by Brittani Smith

her just amazes me. It's just amazing to see the seed I planted grow.

One of my other instructors, Amy Greene, has been one of my dear friends since we were young. She danced at Wanda's, and I danced at Amy's. We always used to pick and play with each other about having our own studio and teaching together. That was just us being young kids with big dreams, but in reality, we were speaking that into existence.

I have another teacher, Katie Davis. I have taught her since she was young in Tabor City. She's been teaching with me for three years.

As far as my dancers are concerned, I don't even have words sometimes. Watching girls and boys walk through the door and knowing this is real life. I still pinch myself sometimes.

I have one son, so all my dancers are like my kids. The only difference is I can love on them, but I get to send them home.

I have a very close relationship with a lot of my older dancers, especially. As my younger dancers grow and we establish that type of relationship, a bond grows that can never be broken. They will always be there, and it's really sad when they graduate.

***Does your studio participate in competitions?***

Yes, we do. Every year we try to do something different. I like to travel and get out of local competitions. There are so many dance studios in North Carolina. The further you go, the more competition you see. I enjoy

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that because it allows my dancers to see that there's more out there. There's so much talent to see. I love to go and watch with my dancers because they feel the same way.

***Do you prefer competitions or recitals?***

I like the recital more. I like competition because I get to see different talent, and I learn new things. But I love my recitals. I love that the kids and parents look forward to it every year.

For the kids especially, the recital is like Christmas in May. They get up there on the stage and do the thing that they've worked so hard on all year. I get to sit back and look at all the hard work my instructors and dancers have



*Simply Dance competitive dancers received the Most Entertaining Performance award in the 2017 Platinum National Dance Competition with their performance "Whoop, There It Is."*



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## DANCERS GROW AND EXCEL



*Staci Ezzell and Boyd Worley won the Judges' Choice Award in the 2019 Dancing with the Vineland Stars fundraiser at Vineland.*



*In 2021, Ezzell raised money as a "celebrity jumper" for the Whiteville Junior Woman's Club Arctic Alligator Plunge. Proceeds support high school scholarships and other local needs.*



*Ezzell, shown with some of her students, says, "I love teaching. I love being around kids. I love being able to share things I learn and have a passion for."*



## DANCERS GROW AND EXCEL

put in. It's just like a pat on the back. It means a lot because we do work hard for that.

At the end of every recital I always like to recognize my Lord and Savior for what he's done for me, and what he continues to do for me. I like to give it back to him. We always do a little dance at the end, and we do it for him.

*What are your challenges and how do you motivate yourself to overcome them?*

Balance. Trying to balance being present for my family and running a business is extremely hard and exhausting at times. There's always something that needs to be done on both sides.

I don't know that I have overcome it! I just do my best, and that's all I can do.

*What drives you in and out of the studio?*

I've always grown up saying I would have the best life for my son and my husband. I want to be the best version of myself for them and my studio.

I just turned 40, so I can't move like I did when I was 18, but I still try to get out there and do some of the same things. Some of my dancers say, 'Oh my gosh, you can still do that.' It makes me feel like I still got it.

I want to be the best version of myself every day, and I'm blessed. There's no other way to put it. Who gets to wake up every single day and do something they absolutely love? It's sometimes surreal. As I said earlier, I still pinch myself sometimes.



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# SIT A SPELL: PORCHES OF COLUMBUS COUNTY

STORY & PHOTOGRAPHY BY  
DIANA MATTHEWS & STUART ROGERS

What better way is there to pass a summer evening than sitting on your front porch, watching the lightning bugs or listening to birds or frogs? A porch can be a social site or a spot for solitude. Its decor can change for every season of the year or it can be bare except for a few welcoming chairs.

Six Columbus County neighbors told *Flourish* what makes their front porches special to them.

Grab a glass of tea and come along for a visit to just a few of the best-loved porches in the county.



**Whiteville** — Ann Ellis believes “being calm and enjoying life” are as important as “going and doing.” She’s turned the porch of her W. Lewis Street duplex into a setting for maximum calm and enjoyment.

In pleasant weather, Ellis spends six or seven hours a day on the porch supervising her grandchildren in the yard, watching birds at her feeder, visiting with friends and family and greeting passers-by.

## What’s on Ellis’ porch and why?

“I like to have a lot of plants,” Ellis said. “My mother loved her porch, and she had the most beautiful plants. We’d sit out there and eat and talk,” Ellis said. “I reckon [being on my porch] makes me feel closer to her.”

Ellis inherited her mother’s green thumb and welcoming vibe.



*Ann Ellis gives friendly waves to friends and strangers alike from her central Whiteville porch.*



*- Contributed photo by Deanna Worley*



*Ellis finds her front porch a peaceful place to slow down and think.*



## SIT A SPELL

Potted flowers stand near the steps, and a pair of sweet potato plants hang overhead. An electric fan is pointed at Ellis' favorite spot on the swing "because it's hot," she said. Summer flags, flowered wreaths and pink flamingos welcome visitors from June through August. Around mid-September they'll give way to leaf tones, then Halloween decorations.

### Sights and sounds

A fountain gurgles in Ellis' front yard. She's watched five or six birds perch on the rim at one time to drink water, not afraid of her sitting just a few feet away on the porch. "One day I saw a squirrel come and drink too," she said.

Ellis stays involved with neighbors and passing pedes-

trians. "The people that walk the sidewalk speak when they come by," she said. Some nights, after putting her youngest grandchild to bed, she comes back out and listens to the fountain as the city is settling in for the night.

Slowing down lets Ellis connect with nature. "The birds, the trees, how the magnolias bloom, the way the sun sets across the yard — it makes you feel humble and in awe of the world," she said. "How can you see that and not know there is a God? There is a God, and this is his awesome work."

Ellis thinks more people ought to slow down and give the porch life a try. "When you're out there partying," she said, "you can't really take in the peacefulness."



*Deanna Worley snuggles Jackson and Duncan. The front porch steps are a favorite spot for family photos and also her favorite spot for quiet times.*

**Beaverdam** — A granite plaque saying "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord" welcomes visitors to the home of Deanna and Jason Worley on Cribbtown Road. Along with the Joshua 24:15 quotation, the plaque bears the date of the couple's marriage and is "one of my favorite things," Deanna Worley said.

"The main part of the house is almost 200 years old," she said, but the couple added the porch about 17 years ago while doing a major renovation that she called "a labor of love."

### What's the porch like?

For Deanna Worley, the porch is "a gathering place." She and her husband have a large extended family, whose members take turns cooking for one another on Sundays after church.

"When it's our time, people usually end up on the porch, sitting in our rocking chairs or on the steps," she said. There

could be 25 or 30 people enjoying one another's company and "umpiring wiffleball games in the front yard."

### What does the porch mean to the Worleys?

The porch is their go-to setting for family pictures, Deanna Worley said. When 13-year-old Duncan and 8-year-old Jackson carve pumpkins or celebrate a birthday, or when it's time to hunt Easter eggs, "We all sit on the steps for family pictures."

While the porch "is a gathering place and a busy place," Worley said, "it's also my quiet place. It's where I go to think and have my devotions."

The house is set back from the road, making the front porch a good place for a busy mother to get alone for a little while. "My favorite place to sit is on the steps right in front of the front door, where I can look out," she said.



**Tabor City** — A surprising amount of wildlife visits the neighborhood of Pam and Tony Byrd. Pam Byrd said she thinks the deer, foxes and rabbits live in a wooded area that separates their end of Live Oak Street from U.S. 701.

Being “in town but not in town” is one of the things she likes best about her porch.

#### What makes this porch special?

When the Byrds married in 1977, they moved into the 1929 house and added a porch on the side facing the street.

When asked if the porch has any special meaning for her, Byrd immediately answered, “My mom.”

Irene Young, Byrd’s mother, worked for Columbus County Health Department for 36 years and retired as director. For about seven years after that, “I was still teaching school,” Byrd said, “and when I would come home, lo and behold, Mama would be sitting right here on the porch waiting on me.”

“Sometimes,” Byrd said, “I’ve been told, she would be sitting here at one o’clock. She would be wanting to talk,” but part of the reason she came early was that, “She liked the porch.”

Plenty of other times, “We just sat here and listened to the birds. It’ll always be special” because of those memories, Byrd said.

#### How does the family use it?

Now it’s a site for family reunions and a favorite hangout for the Byrds’ five grandchildren “under the age of 8,” who all live at Vinegar Hill. The children listen to books, play games with their grandparents and throw a ball from end to end of the porch — at night they play by flashlight.

When it rains, “They think that’s the coolest thing,” Byrd said. It’s a good place to listen to the rain and breathe the cool air, and, as always, “It’s a good place to talk.”



*The porch of Pam and Tony Byrd’s 1929 home in Tabor City has been a favorite place for members of four generations, from her mother to their five grandchildren.*



*Sammy Jacobs relaxes on the porch of his log house with friend Jackie Gore.*

- Contributed photo by Melissa Jacobs

**Nakina** — If you drive along N.C. 905 in the evenings, you’ve probably been waved at by Joseph “Sammy” Jacobs Jr. Maybe you’ve also been hollered at, in a friendly way, of course.

“I love to sit on the porch,” said Jacobs. He said he’s got his particular chair “turned like I want it” to see the highway, plus three more chairs for visitors.

Whether he knows passing drivers or not, “I throw up my hand and wave, and I holler,” he said. A lot of drivers wave, holler or blow their horns in return. A few stop their cars, turn around and come back to speak.

#### What’s Jacobs’ porch like?

Located close to Nakina Middle School, the “shotgun”-style log cabin occupies land Jacobs’ family has farmed since 1935.

Jacobs’ wife died almost 12 years ago, and he has since given their brick house to a grandson. He finished building the cabin and moved into it in January.



## SIT A SPELL

He and son Joe Jacobs designed the home to maximize his view of the world going by. The entire enclosed part of the house has 1,200 square feet — “plenty big for me,” he said — and the porch has about 300. “It ain’t crowded,” even when friends, neighbors and occasional strangers stop by.

### What makes it a special place?

A frequent visitor is his mother, Shirley Jacobs. Her neighboring house doesn’t have as wide a view as her son’s.

“My house is six or seven steps high,” Sammy Jacobs said. The height makes a difference in the view.

When asked how porch time benefits his quality of life, Jacobs quickly answered, “Peace of mind.” As a truck driver and owner of Joe’s Wrecker Service, Jacobs works long hours. When he gets home, he likes to unwind on the porch with a bowl of ice cream or a cup of coffee.

“I’ve got a porch on the back the same size,” he said. “If I get tired of looking at traffic, I can go there and look at the woods and the deer.”



**Fair Bluff** — Mary and Keith Fuller consider their front porch “a special room” of their 208-year-old house at 976 Main St. in Fair Bluff.

Keith Fuller said the 60-by-12-foot porch means “family” to him. It’s hosted wedding receptions and visits from Santa Claus, who used to stop to hear Christmas wishes from the Fullers’ five children, then 11 grandchildren, and their friends.

Now that the couple has four great-grandchildren, “It won’t be long before the tradition starts again,” Keith Fuller said.

The porch also provides a peaceful place for the retired couple to read, sip a cool drink and watch beach traffic — or the Watermelon Festival Parade — go by.

### How do the owners show their patriotic spirit?

“Come the Fourth of July or any holiday like that,” Mary Fuller said, her husband displays “umpteens flags” on the house.

“Probably about a hundred,” Keith Fuller said. Drivers “stop and blow the horn. Especially the veterans; they stop and salute. They thank us for putting the flags out and remembering them. I get a big kick out of that.”

### What’s the view like?

The Fullers moved into the house in 1984 and for a few years enjoyed prime seats to observe trucks unloading fragrant tobacco at the Powell Warehouse a block south. From the same point, they’ve surveyed the aftermath of hurricanes;



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#### SIT A SPELL

now they're watching the new "Uptown" business center rise.

Every summer the Fullers watch hummingbirds and families of bluebirds, which Keith Fuller said they feed "very well." A breeze usually finds its way to their spot on Fair Bluff's highest elevation, but, in case the breeze gives out, they have two fans.

Above all, "If you want a piece of heaven, just let there come a summer rain," Mary Fuller said. "You listen, and it's refreshing, and the aroma of a summer rain is just fabulous."

Slow, steady nighttime rains, her husband added, are a good time to be together on the porch and "think about good times, old times."



*Mary and Keith Fuller's front porch is like an outdoor living room equipped with comfortable seating, fans, a bug zapper and reading material.*



**Wananish** — A keystone marker within a circle of brick on Devoria and Dedrick Anders' front porch near Lake Waccamaw "symbolizes that our family bond will never be broken," Devoria Anders said. "The keystone engraved with our last name is the period to the sentence. This is it. This is where we will stay."

Dedrick Anders grew up next door, where every day he ran and waved to the conductors of freight trains traveling a set of tracks that crossed his yard. In 2010, after working hard and saving their money, he and his wife moved their family "across the ditch" into their new, stately and comfortable home.

Sundays are their favorite day to wind down on the front porch. They enjoy watching traffic pass and often see deer and wild turkeys in the yard.



*The keystone and brick marker welcomes guests to the home of Devoria and Dedrick Anders.*





*Dedrick Anders points out a fish chiseled brick that was their brickmason's signature. The Anderses liked it so much they carried the design throughout their brickwork.*

### What's on the Anderses' porch and why?

A large wreath graces the front door with bright yellow flowers and polka dot ribbons. White rocking chairs with black and white pillows and a pineapple design, the symbol of hospitality, line the porch along with lush potted ferns. A welcome sign and welcome mat announce that this porch is a place of warmth and friendship.

Devoria Anders changes the bright colors with the seasons for the enjoyment of folks traveling by.

There is a symbol of faith hidden in the brickwork for the curious to find, she explained, a fish shape added by brickmasons from Honduras at her request.

### Familiar sounds

From their porch, the couple can hear the East Columbus Jr.-Sr. High School band practicing. When the wind is right, they can hear the train that runs parallel to Hwy. 211 near Rosindale.

"Council Tool (in Lake Waccamaw) is our alarm clock," they said. In the morning they can hear the sound of workers drop forging hot metal into dies to make steel axe heads and other tools.

There is a sense of place earned with the gift of time that makes the Anderses' house and their lovely front porch a home.



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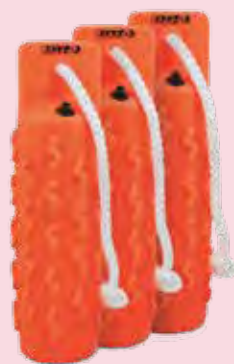
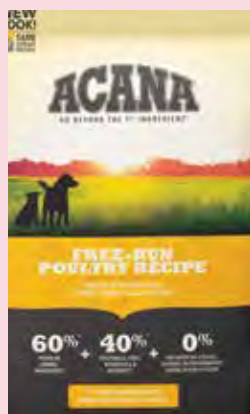




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# Pet-friendly outings are just a step away

STORY STUART ROGERS  
PHOTOS BY KEITH ROGERS & NR ARCHIVE



*Bo is ready to play and waits patiently for his owner to return so they can go explore pet-friendly places close to home.*

A quiet revolution has been underway for pets. Before COVID-19, most were relegated to kennels and perches with views of the driveway, where they waited for their busy people to return home. But the current post-COVID trend is that pets and their owners have more opportunities than ever to shop, dine and vacation together.

Quarantine policies during the pandemic allowed pet owners to spend time at home with their pets. Now that in-person interaction is back to being the norm, pups and their people want to continue hanging out together away from home, too.

Some local businesses have responded to the growing trend by creating pet-friendly policies to accommodate patrons out and about with their well-behaved pets. In this article, we have listed pet-friendly businesses and places we have discovered in Columbus County, and the list is growing every day. E-mail [ameliasasser@nrcolumbus.com](mailto:ameliasasser@nrcolumbus.com) if you are a pet-friendly business, and we'll add you to our list for future publication. Be sure to include your pet policy.

Both state and federal laws protect the rights of people with disabilities to have their service animals in public, and the recommendations in this article are directed to leisure activities enjoyed by family pets and their owners.

## Dining out with your pet

Restaurants that added outdoor seating during COVID-19 are right on trend to accommodate pet owners who want to enjoy patio dining with their furry friends. Listed are restaurants we know that welcome pets and their owners. All the businesses we spoke to for this article require pets to remain leashed and attended by a responsible caregiver in designated outdoor dining areas except where noted.

Dale's Seafood - 100 Lakeshore Dr.,  
Lake Waccamaw

- Pet owners can enjoy lakefront dining with seafood and daily specials for lunch and dinner on Dale's bug-free screened porch. The lake views and late afternoon breeze are delightful.

Daddy Joe's - 626 Richard Wright Rd.  
Tabor City

- Daddy Joe's RV sites, yurts and tents welcome leashed pets. The Creamery for ice cream, hot/iced coffee and pastries is pet-friendly. So is the Pic-A-Nic Basket for lunch and dinner.



*Etna Diner is one of the growing number of restaurants in the county that offer a pet-friendly policy for guests dining with their pets.*



To accommodate guests with pet allergies, pets are not allowed in the cabins. The Creamery and The Pic-A-Nic Basket are open 12 p.m. to 7 p.m. Monday, Tuesday, and Thursday through Saturday during the summer season.

Etna Diner - 703 N. Madison St.  
near Courthouse Square, uptown Whiteville

- Covered patio dining in uptown Whiteville for breakfast and lunch. Check out Etna's daily specials that draw locals and visitors alike. There is a convenient take-out window for ordering.

Farmacy on Main - 110 E. Main St.  
downtown Whiteville

- Shop and enjoy craft beer, kombucha and curated snacks with your leashed pet at Farmacy on Main. For the pups they carry Farm Hounds jerky dog treats and trainer bits and Tails A Waggin dog treats from Kure Beach. Check back often since they frequently stock the shelves with new items. Give Herban Essentials dog towelettes a try to safely clean human hands and pet paws. Stay a while and enjoy the sights and sounds of downtown Whiteville from their sidewalk seating area stocked with sidewalk chalk to entertain the kids. Open Tuesday through Friday 10 a.m. to 6:30 p.m. and Saturday 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Freeman's Grill - 961 Green Swamp Rd S.  
Bolton

- Freeman's is known near and far for hearty breakfasts, hand-pattied burgers and tasty hotdogs with their homemade chili. Freeman's is a popular stop for coastal travel-

ers with pets. They open at 6 a.m. for all the earlybirds and close at 4 p.m.

Penn's Grill - 128 E. Commerce St.  
downtown Whiteville

- Penn's has large outdoor picnic tables for breakfast and lunch plus ample, easy parking and a take-out window for ordering. Check out their daily specials, homebaked goodies and low-carb menu selections.

San José - 1616 S. Madison St.  
south Whiteville

- Since 2000, San José has offered fresh Mexican dishes and inventive cocktails. Enjoy covered outdoor seating with your pup on the patio for lunch and dinner.



*Merchants such as Farmacy on Main are increasing their inventory of pet pampering products to meet customer demand.*





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**Questions? Contact Us!**

Foundation Office: 910-788-6320  
Scan the QR code for more info or visit:  
[sccnc.edu/raise-the-bell](http://sccnc.edu/raise-the-bell)





*SubSational's pet-friendly policy allows customers to dine with their pets on their outdoor covered deck.*

San Juan - 1202 S. J.K. Powell Blvd. (U.S. 701 Bypass)  
south Whiteville

- Bring your pup and order your favorite Mexican dishes and hand-crafted margaritas at San Juan's in Whiteville. Leashed pets are allowed on their large outdoor deck with covered seating for lunch and dinner.

SubSational - 225 S. Madison St.  
Whiteville

- Celebrating 40 years serving delicious sub sandwiches and salads, Sub-Sational added a very nice covered and pet-friendly deck in 2015 for outdoor dining. They have a take-out window for ordering, or call ahead and have your order ready when you arrive.

#### Wherever you go, what to do

Here are a few tips to remember so that you, your pet and fellow diners have a good experience on "doggy day out."

- It's a good idea to call ahead or check online before you visit a business or restaurant to make sure that it is pet-friendly and confirm their pet policy.
- Always keep your dog leashed and carry "poop" bags for any accidents.
- Know your dog's personality and training and don't stress them out by putting them in a group situation if they are not prepared.
- Choose a corner table to give your pup plenty of room to lie down and watch all the action. It's best not to secure the leash to a table or chair. Doing so is definitely a disaster in the making.
- It can be hard, but don't feed your dog at the table. Restaurant-style food may not be a healthy choice for your pet, and your dining neighbor may not appreciate that you are feeding your dog from your plate.
- Feed your dog at home before dining to help curb their appetite. Bring along a few treats to keep your pet satisfied, and don't feed other dogs treats without their owners' permission.
- Bring your pet's own water and water bowl and make sure the pavement is not too hot for your dog's paws. The American Kennel Club (AKC) recommends the best way to tell if the pavement is too hot for your dog is to place the back of your hand on the pavement for 10 seconds. If it's too painful for your hand, then it's too painful for your dog's paws. \*Note —This information about testing for hot pavement was sourced from the AKC website, akc.org.

#### Shopping for and with your pet

There is a growing demand for pet goods and services, and merchants in the county are stocking their shelves with innovative and useful pet products. Some businesses welcome pets to shop with you. Call ahead to confirm. Add to your dog's comfort away from home with a properly fitting collar and leash, healthy treats and portable water options.

All Creatures Great and Small – 3632 James B. White Hwy. S.  
Whiteville

- All Creatures is a full service pet store that offers an extensive line of pet essentials including dog food, specialty shampoos and skin care products, a variety of treats including varieties to accommodate special diets, dog beds, leashes, collars and pet costumes along with boarding and grooming. Bring your pet with you to All Creatures and let the pampering begin. They are open Sunday 4 p.m. to 6 p.m., Monday through Friday 8 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. and Saturday from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m.



*Whiteville has several pet relief locations such as this one at the N.C. Museum of Natural Sciences.*



## PET FRIENDLY OUTINGS



*The Riverwalk in Fair Bluff is a beautiful location for a shady walk and picnic with your pet.*

Chadbourn Feed Service - 207 W. 1st Ave.  
Chadbourn

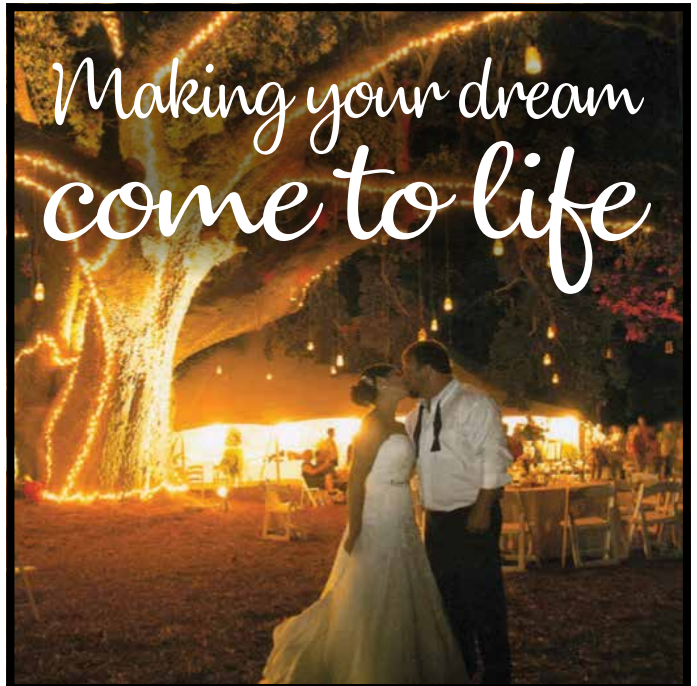
- Stop by Chadbourn Feed Service and bring your pet inside to shop for leashes, collars, toys, water buoys and Garmin trackers for adventuresome pups. You'll find treats and useful "pill pockets," an extensive line of dog food brands and Happy Jack shampoos and skin care products made in North Carolina since 1946. Insider tip - Make sure to grab yourself a frosty cold soft drink from the drink cooler by the front door. You won't be disappointed. Open Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Saturday from 8 a.m. to 12 p.m.

E.W. Fonvielle & Son Feed, Seed & Garden Center  
205 Hickman Rd., Tabor City

- E.W. Fonvielle & Son carries The Pride and PMI Nutrition brand dog foods, which are made in the United States. They also carry the Pro Series line brand that is made by a family-owned Canadian company that sources ingredients as locally as possible. Stop by Monday through Saturday 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m.



*Whiteville Parks and Recreation has an off-leash dog park at Nolan Park Fitness and Recreation Center.*



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## PET FRIENDLY OUTINGS



*Pets are allowed on the trails and at camp sites at Lake Waccamaw State Park.*



*The N.C. Museum of Natural Sciences in Whiteville has a pet-friendly area with a short nature trail on the south side.*



*The N.C. Department of Transportation recently announced a project to extend the sidewalk from downtown Tabor City to Lake Tabor.*

### Gurganus Feed and Grain - 6 Whiteville Plaza south Whiteville

Leashed pets are welcome to join their owners while shopping at Gurganus Feed and Grain. They have a variety of pet toys and beds plus collars, leashes, pet bowls, Garmin tracking devices and more. They carry a variety of treats and dog food brands including the popular oven-baked Old Mother Hubbard treats and Missouri-based Diamond Naturals dog food. Open Monday through Friday from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. and Saturday 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

### Lee Lee's on Madison & Main - 703 S. Madison St. Whiteville

- The pampered pet will feel right at home at Lee Lee's on Madison and Main. Pet pampering lines includes Capri Blue Volcano Shampoo & Deodorizing Fragrance for dogs, Lilly Pulitzer leashes, dog collars and bandanas, Frost Buddy insulated food and water bowls, and both Brown Dog and Local Boy lines with colorful and camo-styled water repellent collars and leashes. Open Monday through Friday from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. and Saturday 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

### Piggypies Bakeshop - 600 S. Madison St. downtown Whiteville

- Baked dog treats in cute ribbon-tied bags make the perfect pet treat and gift for your favorite pup. Open Thursday and Friday 9:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. and Saturday 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.

I recently spent an afternoon on a pet-friendly walk with our dogs, Bo and Angus, along the Madison Mile in Whiteville. We took advantage of only a few of the pet-friendly options, and here is a rundown of our fun outing.

We started out at Etna Diner and made a quick stop for "poop" bags provided by the City of Whiteville located across Madison Street from SubSational.

We then made our way to Farmacy on Main to check out their newest selection of pet treats, and Angus picked out the peanut butter-oat treats by Tails A Waggin.

We made a stop by the N.C. Museum of Natural Sciences in Whiteville for a bit of shade and to break open the bag of treats. This was the highlight of the walk for the pups.

We found some shade at the picnic tables in a wooded area near a short educational trail on the south side of the museum. Poop bags and a trashcan are conveniently located in the area.

We all had a good time and look forward to more pet-friendly adventures together, especially as the weather cools down in the fall.

### Get into nature

After giving shopping and dining a try, it's time to head to the wide-open outdoors, where Columbus County has always been pet-friendly and ready for adventure.

There is a varied selection of free outdoor recreational opportunities in the county to enjoy with your pet. There are too many options to list, but the following are locations with easy access and pet-friendly accommodations to make your outing fun and safe.

Pack a picnic and visit Lumber River State Park and the elevated River Walk in Fair Bluff to enjoy nature walks and hopefully get a glimpse of wildlife. Both locations have picnic tables, and Johnny's Drive-In and the Shop 'N' Save in Fair Bluff have take-out selections for a filling and delicious lunch.

Beautiful Lake Tabor in Tabor City is pet-friendly and has picnic tables at the park. The N.C. Department of Transportation recently announced a project to extend the sidewalk from downtown Tabor City east along U.S. 701



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## LIBERTY REHABILITATION



*Left to right - Amber Robinson COTA/Rehab Director, Tara Birchall PTA, Caitlin Sykes COTA, Evelina Trost OTR, Allison Morin COTA, Navin Kingston DPT*



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## PET FRIENDLY OUTINGS

Business from Jesse Street to Lynwood Norris Road, which leads to Lake Tabor Park. Visitors can pick up picnic items at several locations along the scenic route.

Whiteville Parks and Recreation has large and small fenced dog parks at Nolan Park. It is a secure area where you can let your pet off leash to run. Benches are in each run where you can rest and watch them play.

The Madison Mile from the courthouse to downtown Whiteville — or as much of that as you want to cover — is a winning walk, with stops along the way.

At the north end of Whiteville, Columbus County Parks and Recreation offers the 10-acre fitness park with an outdoor gym, walking trail, inclusive playground, covered picnic tables and restroom facilities. It is a great spot to spend a few hours with your pet, and it has all the amenities for a safe and comfortable outing.

Lake Waccamaw offers an extensive trail system and amenities at Lake Waccamaw State Park and Elizabeth Brinkley Park. Pick up Mrs. Bright's Sandwiches, chips and a drink at the local convenience stores or fried chicken and all the fixin's from Hill's and you are all set for a picnic and an adventure at the lake. Just don't feed the wildlife or leave any scraps behind that would attract alligators, and watch your pet closely near the water's edge, for safety's sake.

We hope you and your four-legged friends will support local businesses and natural resources by venturing out to discover the amenities and goods they offer to make our community pet-friendly.

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- 2** Offer support: Let them know they are not alone and that no one deserves to be hurt.
- 3** Provide resources: Encourage them to reach out to Families First, Inc.
- 4** Respect their choices: Do not pressure them into leaving. It is never that simple. You're there to support your loved one, not rescue or save them.

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# LIVING SUCCESSFULLY WITH FIBROMYALGIA

BY MAZIE SWINDELL SMITH | PHOTOGRAPHY BY STUART ROGERS & SUBMITTED

Debbie Bracey of Delco was nearly 30 years old when she first began experiencing a cluster of symptoms that were unusual for her. Extreme fatigue, body aches, sleeplessness and digestive issues were all taking a toll on her body. To make matters worse, they robbed Bracey of the energy to get exercise that might have helped her situation. Her regular doctor treated the individual symptoms, but offered no information as to whether they might be interconnected. Desperate to find answers, she visited a doctor of chiropractic, who diagnosed her as having fibromyalgia.

"It was a relief to realize that all of the symptoms were related to a syndrome called fibromyalgia," Bracey said. According to the National Fibromyalgia Association, "Fibromyalgia (pronounced fy-bro-my-AL-ja) is a complex chronic pain disorder that affects an estimated five to eight million Americans. While it occurs most often in women, it can occur in men and children, and all ethnic backgrounds. For those with severe symptoms, fibromyalgia (FM) can be extremely debilitating and interfere with basic daily activities."

The organization's website also says that, "Scientists do not fully understand what causes [fibromyalgia], but people with the disorder have a heightened sensitivity to pain." Recent research has suggested that genetics may play a small part in the development of fibromyalgia, with some people perhaps more likely than others to develop the condition due to their genetic makeup, the site says.

In the early days, doctors often resorted to treating the individual symptoms a person was having, rather than looking at them together. The National Fibromyalgia Association (NFA) has said that "Fibromyalgia varies from one patient to another, but the multiple symptoms it causes are often intertwined."

Bracey, who grew up in Delco with her large extended family, had always enjoyed an active lifestyle. She and her husband, Freddy Bracey, the parents of two children, were busy with family, community and church activities when she was diagnosed. "I would go to the doctor and get individual medicines for each symptom, and something would work for a few days, then stop working," she explained.



*Debbie Bracey is grateful for the support she has received during her rough patches with fibromyalgia.*

According to NFA, "Some people may have one to two symptoms while others may have many. Symptoms will often come and go, and many people with fibromyalgia report difficulties identifying a pattern to their symptoms."

Bracey says she was thankful that her concerns were finally acknowledged as real, and that fibromyalgia has been identified as a serious illness. "In the beginning, I started to feel that the doctors who were treating me thought everything was just in my head. Finally in the late 1980's, it began to be talked about as the disease that it is."

Once she was diagnosed, Bracey began a regimen that included not only prescription medications, but the alternative therapies of chiropractic care and therapeutic massage. She credits both with giving her great relief. She also discovered that she felt much better when she began getting Vitamin B-12 shots.

Fibromyalgia didn't keep Bracey from working as a banker for 34 years, with a 13-year interval out of the job market to raise her children. However, there were many days that going to work was no easy task, and



there were times she missed work. When she told coworkers that she didn't feel well, she perceived them as skeptical. "I always felt that I had to prove myself," she said.

Drew Smith, a doctor of chiropractic at Smith Chiropractic in Whiteville, cares for patients who suffer from fibromyalgia. Dr. Smith says that fibromyalgia can often be hard to diagnose because of the multitude of symptoms and how they present themselves in different people. "There really isn't a test to confirm fibromyalgia," he said, "but common complaints include moderate to severe fatigue, sleep disorders, muscle pain, digestive issues, cognitive issues, migraines, anxiety and depression usually point to it. We do what we can to help them manage their pain."

Smith said treatment methods include physical therapy, trigger point therapy, and a new sound wave procedure called SoftWave therapy that decreases inflammation at the cellular level. He said the sound wave treatment works quickly, is noninvasive and "resets the healing recognition in the body."

Smith also stresses the benefit of limiting the intake of foods that can cause inflammation, such as sugar, red meats and starchy foods. He recommends cooking with olive oil. "Diet can play a critical role in managing fibromyalgia symptoms," Dr. Smith further suggests that "adding a turmeric supplement to a person's diet plan has also shown great benefit in some patients."

Other alternative therapies used to treat fibromyalgia pain include acupuncture and yoga. The Mayo Clinic's website states that, "A key com-



*Chiropractor Drew Smith, owner of Smith Chiropractic and Wellness in Whiteville, uses complementary treatments such as SoftWave Therapy, which uses sound waves to treat chronic pain.*

ponent of traditional Chinese medicine, acupuncture is most commonly used to treat pain. In contrast, many Western practitioners view the acupuncture points as places to stimulate nerves, muscles and connective tissue. Some believe that this stimulation boosts your body's natural painkillers."

Likewise, an article on the NFA website says that patients using yoga techniques — including movement, breathing, visualization, and relaxation — can reduce their pain and fatigue, achieve deeper sleep and ease stress.

After living with fibromyalgia for several decades, Bracey says that, "I

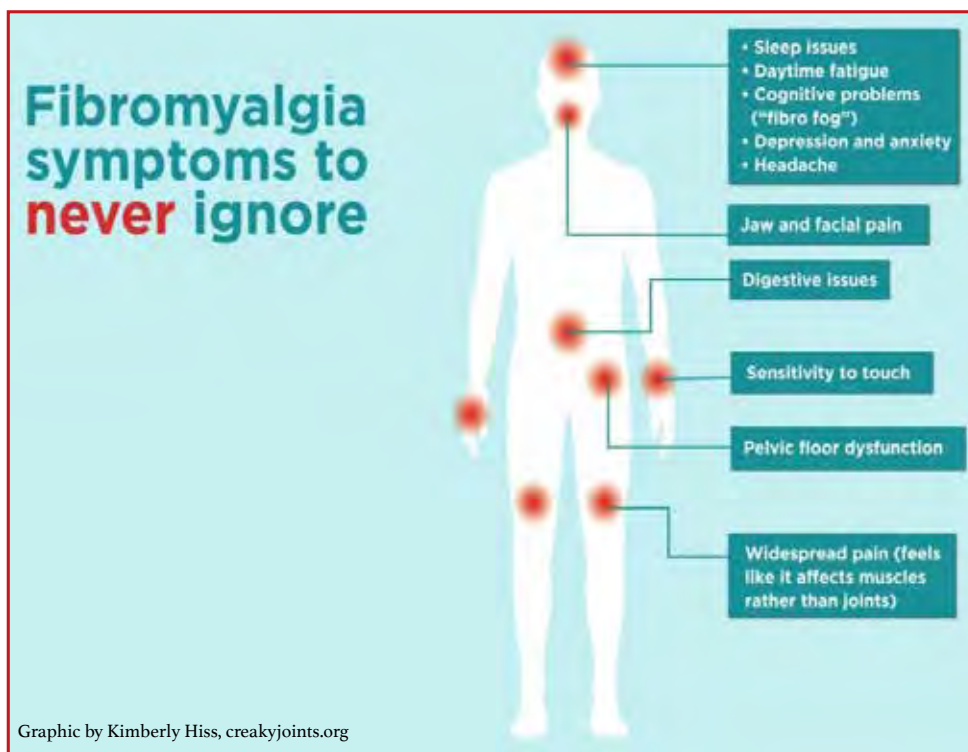


## LIVING SUCCESSFULLY WITH FIBROMYALGIA

tell other folks who are suffering to be strong and not to give up. There can be a lot of drama added to your life from people who don't understand what you're going through. You have to keep at it."

Bracey also says that she's just thankful that new information and treatments are becoming available and is grateful for the support of family and friends as she has learned to live successfully with the illness. "I am thankful to the Lord for his healing power," she said, "and for the support of my husband, children and church as I have dealt with this."

Mazie Smith grew up in eastern North Carolina and spent her career in public education and public service. She and her husband Dan live in Lake Waccamaw. She loves all things handmade and homegrown.



*Fibromyalgia causes muscle pain and tenderness and is often accompanied by fatigue and a change in sleep, memory and mood.*

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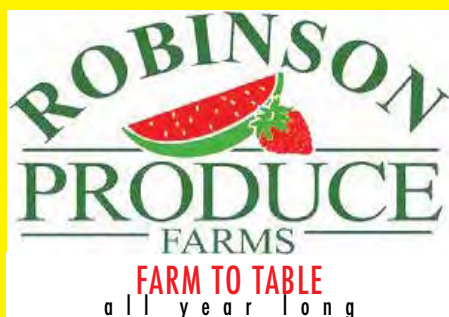


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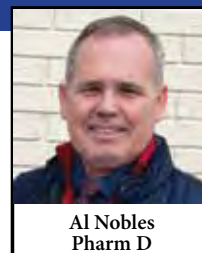
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# SOUTH IN MY MOUTH

BY TONNYE WILLIAMS FLETCHER | ILLUSTRATION BY ISABEL HUMPHREYS

When you hear THE SOUTH, what do you see?  
Old farms, Spanish moss, and driveways lined with live oak trees?

THE SOUTH is a place, that's for sure!

The southern USA, made up of these states: Alabama, Arkansas, Delaware, the District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, and West Virginia.

We're also called "The Bible Belt."

Sometimes people say it like an insult, but here in the South, most of us believe in God and the Bible.

That doesn't make us perfect – or even better than anyone else.

But it doesn't make us worse either.

More than a place, we're a people –

You can live anywhere and have a Southern state of mind. People who believe in kindness and helping a neighbor, who love our country, and each other.

The South is often characterized by what goes in – and comes out – of our mouths: the words, the phrases, the drinks, the foods, and the music.

These are a huge part of what makes the South.

When you come down here, we'll greet you friendly, with a handshake – or even a hug.

And when it's time for you to leave, we'll thank you for coming for a visit.

We do say "y'all" – it's not a myth.

It's a word straight from our heart that says we include you no matter what –

even if you don't look, act, or believe like us.

We might still say, "Bless Your Heart!"

if you're feeling sad or things are tough for you right now – or if your thinking just doesn't make sense to us.

But no matter what you do or say, we'll treat you with respect,

"Yes, sir," "No, ma'am" is just our way of using our manners.



We might even call you “sugar” or “honey.” It’s just our Southern way.

We like things sweet down here, including our talk.

Another thing we like sugary is our Southern sweet tea.

Brewed up right, syrupy sweet,

It’s delightful over ice.

Add a lemon slice or two and

a garnish of fresh-grown mint.

We’ll sit on the porch for a spell

and maybe put you to work shelling beans or peas,

but the conversation is richer than any bank

to go with that sweet tea.

Maybe you prefer lemonade.

We like it fresh-squeezed.

Just like our tea, we like it

served up sweet with loads of ice,

garnished with a lemon slice and

some lemon balm for a touch of green –

a tall glass of puckery-sweet goodness

that cools long, hot summer days.

We love soul food – cooked with love and grace.

Southern fried – like summer days!

Fried squash, fried chicken – we’ll fry most anything.

And green? It’s one of our favorite colors – as in . . .

green beans, collard greens, mustard greens, turnip

greens, and fried green tomatoes.

Smooth and creamy fits the bill

when you’re living in the South –

Shrimp and grits,

Mac and cheese,

Rice and gravy – comfort food at its best!

A little spice if you like it –

cayenne, hot sauce,

and pepper vinegar on our greens!

Or fresh-grown food, straight from the garden:

Yellow squash or green zucchini,

Cucumbers – short for pickling, or long and green.

Watermelon – cool, juicy sweetness that’s a necessity for hot summer days!

Beans and peas for shelling (and delicious with rice!)

Vegetable beef soup, (Yes, even in summer!) –with veggies fresh from the patch –

corn,

okra,

green beans,

potatoes and

tomatoes.

Simmering on the stove for hours,  
served up with sandwiches of peanut butter and sweet  
syrup

or a cast iron skillet of sweet cornbread

or hoe cakes fried up thin and crispy.

We like things slow (cooking ribs)

Full of comfort (chicken and dumplin’s)

And sweet (desserts and sweet tea).

In fact, we’ve got four food groups down South:

Fried

Fresh

Sweet

Comforting

We love nothing more than sharing a meal with friends,  
family, church folk, or neighbors.

We love our neighbor here,

Believe in the golden rule.

Many of us go to church on Sundays (but not all of us do),

And potluck dinners are a way of life down here.

And music. . . oh, we do love our music!

Country, gospel, bluegrass, blues, and rock ‘n’ roll –

all have a place in our culture!

We can’t forget beach music, either!

Shag dancing was born right here in Carolina!

Beale Street – home of the blues and BB King,

gospel groups reiterating our strong faith,

bluegrass snaking its way through the Appalachians,

but not stopping there!

Rock ‘n’ roll made itself at home here,

with the help of Elvis Presley, Southern to the core,

and country music is about as synonymous with the South  
as our morals, our manners, and our meals!

The music that strums from our instruments, our hearts,  
and our mouths helps identify the South.

If you’re not from around here,

You might think it’s strange

That we hold doors open, whether we know you or not,  
and wave at strangers on the road.

Our smiles are big and offered freely,  
along with our sweet tea,

friendly chat,

And Southern hospitality!

So, we hope you’ll come to visit,

Kick your shoes off,

Hang out on the porch, in the kitchen, at church, or

The next pickin’ and grinnin’!

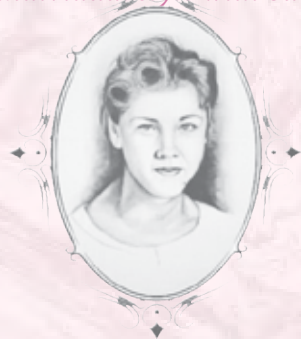
And put some South in YOUR mouth!

Stay long enough. . .

and you’ll start to hear some South comin’ out, too!

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# FARMERS MARKET BLUES

A children's short story to share

By TONNYE WILLIAMS FLETCHER | Illustrations By LAURIE ROY



Katherine and her mom had looked forward all summer to making blueberry muffins using Grandma's favorite recipe. Blueberry season was almost done, but they hadn't gotten to make them yet. The muffins are always better with sweet juicy berries straight off the bush.

Saturday. Farmers market day. Katherine got up early and tiptoed to her mom's room.

Wiggle, wiggle. Katherine shook the sheets.

Jiggle, jiggle. She shook her mom.

Giggle, giggle. Mom grabbed her and tickled until she was out of breath from laughing.

"Mama, it's Saturday. We're going to the farmers market for blueberries, right?"

"Yep, last one to get dressed and get their teeth brushed is a rotten egg."

"Eeww!" Katherine dashed out of the room, pulled on her clothes and brushed her teeth.

"Done! I beat you. You're the rotten egg."

"Good job," said Mama.

They buckled up and headed for the market.

They arrived in time to see Mr. Michael put up the flag, so they paused.

"We should do the pledge of allegiance," Katherine said.

"Let's see who's here today," Mom said after that, and then they went booth to booth, chatting with the farmers and vendors.

Mr. Michael and his wife were smiling behind a veggie table full of potatoes, tomatoes, okra and cucumbers.

"You got any blueberries?" Katherine asked.

"Nope," Mr. Michael said, "My bushes are all done."

Sigh.

Katherine and her mom got some okra to fry for supper.

They always liked looking at the Lewises' beautiful photography. Katherine's favorite today was a beautiful yellow butterfly.

Down the way, they saw Ms. Walker at Blue Buzz Botanicals. She wouldn't have blueberries, but sometimes she had honey or the softest lip balm ever (made from beeswax). Katherine especially liked her little macrame mushrooms. She was the librarian at Whiteville Primary, where Katherine attended school, and she was as pretty as a butterfly. They chatted and bought two lip balms before moving on.

At Nut House Farms, they bought a little bread basket cozy from Ms. Ruth. She sewed them by hand. It was so pretty – it had blueberries and butterflies all over it. It would be lovely full of their blueberry muffins and would help them stay warm. If they could find any blueberries.

They rounded the corner and saw Higher Grounds Gardens. Mr. John and Ms. Barbara always had beautiful zinnias. Katherine picked four of her favorite colors while mom asked about blueberries. "None today, sorry." Mr. John said, as he wrapped Katherine's zinnias in a damp paper towel.

Sigh.







When they got to Mr. Bobby at Country Corners Farm, Katherine squealed, "Blueberries!" Mr. Bobby and her mom laughed.

"We'll take three pints," Katherine's mom chuckled.

"You got plans for these berries?" Mr. Bobby asked Katherine.

"Yep, we're making blueberry muffins," Katherine said.

"Well, that sounds mighty good! I hope you enjoy them."

Katherine's grin grew. "Oh, we will. We're using Grandma's recipe. AND they'll be made with love.

Mama says that makes everything better!"

"Well, sure 'nough, I think she's right about that. Bye now."



"I'm thirsty," Katherine told her mom.

"Well, Greenhaus Farms sometimes has some juice pouches. And they're right next door," her mom replied.

They got two juice pouches and a dozen eggs. They were ready to leave when Katherine said, "Wait, Mama! Can we please get a picture with the butterfly wings?"

"Of course, did you know Ms. Bess painted those butterfly wings?"

"Yes, Mama. She painted butterflies all over town. They're so beautiful!"

"They are beautiful, just like you! Now, let's go home and make some beautiful and tasty blueberry muffins."

"Yes, ma'am, I can hardly wait!"



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*Photography by Eli High  
Lead cosmetology instructor*







*Edward Scissorhands - 1990 Drama/Fantasy*

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cosmetology students  
created memorable  
movie makeup and hairstyles.**

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*IT - 2017 American/Supernatural Horror*



*Beetlejuice - 1988 Comedy/Horror*

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**Fall 2023 hours**

**Tues. 9:30 a.m. - 2 p.m. and 5:30 p.m. - 9 p.m.**

**Wed. 9:30 a.m. - 3 p.m. and 5:30 p.m. - 9 p.m.**

**Thurs. 11:30 a.m. - 3 p.m. and 5:30 p.m. - 9 p.m.**

**Check out current promotions and loyalty card.**

**Call 910-642-7554 to make an appointment.**

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# September 30, 2023



## Madison Street Music Festival

Downtown Whiteville, NC  
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### Tickets \$20.00

KIDS 12 and under get in for FREE

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The Embers featuring Craig Woolard 1:00 p.m. - 2:15 p.m.

North Tower Band 2:45 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.

Black Water Band 4:30 p.m. - 6:30 p.m.



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Sept. 21 | Jason Smith

Oct. 5 | Luke Kiser

Oct. 19 | Paleo Sun

### Summer Concert Series

## Music on Madison

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**Free!** 6 pm - 9 pm

Gary Lowder & Smokin' Hot

Set. 28, 2023

Zack Brock & Good Intentions

Oct. 26, 2023



## UNC Health Southeastern:

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In addition to offering services you'd expect from a community health care system, UNC Health Southeastern provides a number of specialized services that are unique to our health care system and not available anywhere else in the region.

### Did you know —

UNC Health Southeastern provides:

- Obstetric services to many residents of Bladen County because they do not have a resource in their county for delivery services.
- Open heart surgery for patients in Bladen, Columbus and Scotland counties because this service is not available in these counties. UNC Health Southeastern also provides heart positron emission tomography, which is used to measure blood flow to the heart in order to diagnose heart disease, for patients in the region as an alternative to the Raleigh area.
- Inpatient behavioral services for the region, including Bladen, Columbus and Scotland counties, as this service is not available in these counties.
- High-level, advanced technology diagnostic and treatment services for cancer patients in the region.



Some additional specialty services that we offer that are unique to our local health system include:

- Interventional radiology, which uses minimally-invasive, image-guided procedures to diagnose and treat diseases.
- Thrombectomy, or the removal of a blood clot from a blood vessel.
- Weight-loss surgery, using minimally-invasive techniques for faster healing times.
- A growing vascular surgery program with the addition of a cardiothoracic surgeon, who performs vascular procedures.

It is our mission to provide exceptional care for our diverse region; offer the highest quality standards in a safe environment; and provide compassionate care provided by a committed team.

At UNC Health Southeastern, together, we will improve the health and well-being of the region we serve.

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