# The News Reporter's fifteen UNDER 40

CLASS OF 2020

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# fifteen UNDER 40

The News Reporter is recognizing fifteen young professionals who are not only making a difference in Columbus County but who are also ready and willing to take leadership roles. When The News Reporter asked for nominations for "fifteen Under 40," Columbus County answered the call. Then, five independent judges considered a nominee's impact on Columbus County, success in the nominee's career, plus his or her involvement, achievement and commitment to improving the quality of life in his or her community. Congratulations, Class of 2020, and thank you for making Columbus County a great place to live.

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## Join Us For
## A Special Live Recognition Event!

The News Reporter's Facebook page

**Wednesday, September 30th at 7:00 p.m.**

# Angela Y. Thompson, 36

*Advantage Behavioral Healthcare-Direct Care Staff 13 years and president of Thompson Landscaping and Construction, Inc.*
*Hometown: St. James community*
*Spouse: John L. Thompson*
*Children: Mason Thompson and stepchildren Laura and Garrett Thompson*
*Education: East Columbus High School and UNC Pembroke - Criminal Justice*
*Enjoys working out, going to the beach, crafting and spending time with family and friends.*

**Tell us about your professional and personal accomplishments:**
After graduating from UNC Pembroke, I started working in the mental health care field. I have been doing that for about 13 years. In 2012, I started my first Limited Liability Company in construction and in 2018 I became the president of Thompson Landscape & Construction, Inc.

**Provide examples of your community service:**
I help with special friends day at the Columbus County Fair. I am a member of the Waccamaw Siouan Tribe. I also enjoy donating to local charities, schools, Wounded Warrior, toy drives and food banks. One of my favorite things to is to sponsor children with reading books from Scholastic.

**What would you tell your 16-year-old self?**
Stop trying to grow up so fast. Your time is coming along with a ton of responsibilities. I would also tell myself that mom was always right!

**How have you coped with COVID-19 at work?**
I have continued working safely throughout COVID-19. In late March, life seemed a little more stressful than normal, but I have learned not to worry about things I can't control and I always try to make the best out of every situation.

**What do you do in your free time?**
I like doing crafts. Making custom tumblers is my favorite craft that I have been working on lately. To relax I like to read, take naps and watch HGTV.

**What is he best part about living in Columbus County?**
The people and that everybody knows everybody.

**Favorite band?**
Matchbox Twenty

**What was your favorite gift as a child?**
A play kitchen set; I used it to make the best mud pies.

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# Carlisa Brown, 37

*Chadbourn Elementary School - English language arts and social studies teacher and owner of B&J's Kreative Kreations*
*Hometown: Dothan community*
*Parents: Joelene Brown and the late Dr. Rev. Buck Brown Jr.*
*Child: Kyrie Smith age 10*
*Extended family: seven siblings, ten nephews, six nieces, a great-niece and a great nephew, and godmother to seven*
*Education: South Columbus High School, UNC Pembroke - BS, and currently in graduate school for a Master of Science in Elementary Education*
*Enjoys writing poetry, reading, planning and decorating events, being with family and friends, and helping others, and enjoys being with and helping the kids.*

**Tell us about your professional and personal accomplishments:**
While working a full-time job and participating in different community service activities, I have accomplished going back to college at UNC Pembroke. I have also completed the classes of to become a foster parent. I have opened my own business, B&J's Kreative Kreations, and do what I love most, which is event planning.

**Provide examples of your community service:**
I am a member of the local non-profit organization One Community-One Love. I am active in my church Deliverance Prayer Temple. Also, I've participated in the BB&T Light-House projects. With the help of Ms. Lillian Hickman and the community, I established Dothan Community Fun Day. I also donate book backpacks for the back-to-school drive.

**Tell us about a time that changed your life:**
The loss of my father changed my life. It seemed like I lost the world because he was my best friend. However, losing him helped me find myself and become a better person. It taught me to live life to the fullest and to appreciate the small things in life more.

**What is the best part of living in Columbus County?**
Being able to be surrounded by my family and friends. Being in a friendly and loving atmosphere. Everyone is helpful and willing to lend a helping hand. I also like that this is a small community that has and supports a lot of small businesses.

**Favorite movie?**
"Lean On Me"

**Favorite restaurant?**
My mom's kitchen

**Favorite musician?**
Lil'Wayne


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# Ashley Fowler, 37

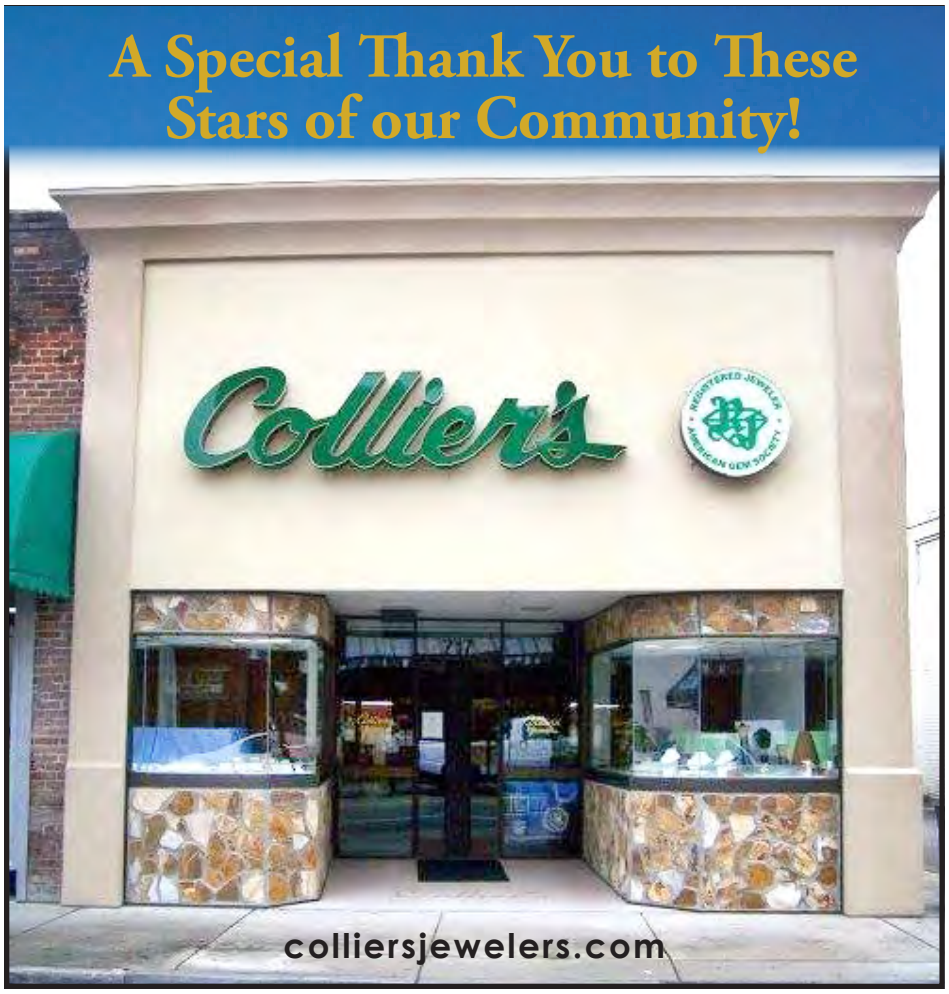
*Whiteville High School - Ag teacher*
*Hometown: Sherrills Ford*
*Husband: Bryan Fowler*
*Children: Bailey and Daniel Fowler*
*Parents: Patty and Gary Mauney*
*Education: Bandys High School; North Carolina State University - B.S. in Animal Science 2005; Master of Agriculture Education - 2008*
*Pets: Max, the Hallsboro Hound, and Black Kitty*
*Enjoys cooking, canning, reading, and singing in the shower.*

**Tell us about your professional and personal accomplishments:**
I tell my students I graduated from NCSU twice. I loved it so much that after finishing my B.S. in Animal Science, I wasn't ready to leave Raleigh. I stuck around longer and earned my master's in agriculture education. Being in the classroom gives me the opportunity to see my accomplishments come to fruition in the lives of students and FFA members. There have been many wonderful memories and milestones throughout my 13 years as an educator and my life has been blessed by current and former students.

**In what ways do you give back to the community?**
Being the WHS FFA advisor is my biggest contribution. We participate in FFA competitions, but it's the students that have an interest to give back to the community that are most notable. We have many service projects. The annual 12 Days of Service is most rewarding. For nine years, each FFA member completes one community service project each school day in December. We volunteer at CBA Toy Store, Dept. of Aging, nursing homes and Edgewood and Whiteville Primary schools.

**What do you like most about Columbus County?**
Hands down it is the people. I grew up in Catawba County and my entire family still lives there. I married into the Hallsboro community in 2009 and have met amazing folks through my husband and church family at Hallsboro Baptist. I love my WHS Wolfpack work family and without their support my job would be impossible. Despite living so far away from my hometown, I can say that I have found a loving and supportive community here.

**Tell us about your family:**
I am truly blessed with a great family. Bryan, my husband, is one of the hardest working people I've ever met. He breaks my tendency to be a marathon lounger. My daughter, Bailey, is such a beautiful light in my life. She's full of creation and wonder with a large helping of independence. She will conquer the world one day. My son, Daniel, has a heart bigger than the world is ready for. He loves fiercely with a dash of charm. Without a doubt, he will grow into a life of service.

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# Bryan Fowler, 36

*East Columbus High School - Ag Teacher*
*Hometown: Hallsboro*
*Wife: Ashley Fowler*
*Children: Bailey and Daniel Fowler*
*Parents: Pam and Chucky Fowler*
*Education: ECHS-2002 BS-AgEd-NCSU-06 MS-AgEd-NCAT-09*
*Enjoys farming, fishing, woodworking, hunting.*

**Tell us about your professional and personal accomplishments.**
Personally, accepting Christ, my wife and children are my greatest accomplishments. Professionally, as a teacher I judge myself by the success of my students. Not on some state mandated test or report card but in their successes. I have former students that are farmers, teachers, doctors, lawyers, factory workers, and many other things, but most importantly men and women that contribute to this place we all call home. I like to think that I share a small part of their success.

**In what ways do you give back to the community?**
Being a teacher and FFA advisor, I have the opportunity to influence many young people in a positive way and complete many service projects. The ECHS FFA participated in a hurricane relief project after Matthew where my students were able to build beds for around 60 families that lost their homes to flooding. I volunteer with the Hallsboro Baptist Men building wheel chair ramps whenever possible. I teach Sunday school and have been a substitute preacher and piano player at Mt. Olive FWB Church and Hallsboro Baptist Church.

**Tell us about your family.**
I am blessed with a great family. My wife is the most awesome person in my life; she is supportive and loves me despite my flaws. I think she's hot, too! My Momma and Grandma are great women who have always loved me unconditionally. I owe more than I could ever repay to my Daddy and two Grandpas (Burvin Hooks and FM Fowler); they have taught me what it means to be a man. I think that is an element often overlooked in today's world.

**What is the best part about living in Columbus County?**
It's home. I enjoy knowing people and people knowing me. Growing up in a place like Hallsboro, you sort of know everyone that lives around you and you look out for each other. When someone is sick we all pray, when someone dies we all mourn, when someone is successful we all feel a bit of pride.

**What do you do to relax?**
The most relaxing thing I can think of is driving a tractor. There's something about the smell of burning diesel and fresh turned soil that soothes the soul.


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# Debais Gore, 33

*Owner of Flaming Meals, LLC, self-employed caterer*
*Hometown: Whiteville*
*Parents: Patsy Gore and Richard Brown*
*Significant Other: Sheliea Daniels*
*Children: four step-children I love dearly*
*Education: Whiteville HIgh School*
*Enjoys watching sports and planning events for children.*

**Tell us about your professional and personal accomplishments.**
I have always enjoyed planning events and cooking. I started an LLC in 2017 in the food industry.

**In what ways do you give back to the community?**
Flaming Meals adopted four high school seniors with the goal of mentoring them and inspiring them to stay in school. I always focus on the youth. I love encouraging them to do better. I hope they can see from my life, that you can work hard and make something of yourself. I tell them there are no limits to what you can achieve. I also volunteer my time to cook at local events and I like to donate clothes and toys during the holidays.

**What would you tell your 16-year-old self?**
To stay focused. No matter what hurdles have come in my life, I always try to stay on the right path. When I was 16, I played Wolfpack basketball for WHS Coach Glenn McKoy. He has remained a mentor in my life. I really think I learned a lot of the things I need to own a business from playing for coach. As the point guard who controls the game, I learned leadership. Overall, playing sports helped me understand the importance of teamwork and that getting along and working together is needed to succeed.

**What do you like to do to relax?**
I like to relax at the beach, watch sports and spend time with family.

**What is something people are suprised to find out about you?**
Some people may not know that my nickname is 'Doctor Wings.' Wings are my specialty along with fried chicken. But, I am not limited to those. I've become good at Tofu dishes too. try to serve food for both young and old.

**Favorite book?**
"I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings" by Maya Angelou. It teaches me self-love and motivation.

**Favorite movie?**
Norbit is our family favorite on movie night. I also like to watch historical movies.

**Favorite band?**
Drake

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# Erin Mincey, 34

*IVY Ventures - Schedule Coordinator, formerly Doctors Care*
*Hometown: Philadelphia*
*Husband: Scott Mincey*
*Children: Peyton and Matthew Mincey*
*Education: West Brunswick High School, UNC Wilmington*
*Pets: Cats – Lulu, Lemon, and Jacks*
*Enjoys spending time with family and friends, reading, shopping and DIY projects.*

**In what ways do you give back to the community?**
I currently serve on the NC Yam Festival's Board of Directors and as the Chairperson for the festival's KidZone and Tabor's Got Talent. I served as the festival's secretary in 2019. I also love to volunteer and take part in other events around town, my children's sports and extra-curriculars and at their school.

**Tell us about your family.**
My husband, Scott, is my rock; after almost 16 years of marriage he is still my best friend and I look forward to what the future has in store for us. We are blessed to have our two amazing children, Peyton and Matthew.

**What would you tell your 16-year-old self?**
Don't be afraid to do something that is good for you, whether it's good for everyone else around you or not; this isn't their life, it's yours.

**What do you do to relax?**
After everyone goes to bed and the house is finally quiet for night, I enjoy this time to relax with a cup of hot tea and a good book.

**What is the best part about living in Columbus County?**
The best part is the people and being able to be a part of such an amazing community. I love living the small-town life in Tabor City.

**How have you coped with COVID-19 at work, at home, or in your community service?** Coping with COVID-19 has been a surreal experience for me… While life at home drastically changed for our family and our hectic crazy busy schedule, on the other hand for me I still went to work every day like normal.

**What are people surprised to learn about you?**
People are always surprised to find out that I grew up in a big city.

**What is your favorite movie?**
"Twister"

**What do you like to do on the weekend?**
I like to do anything out of the ordinary.

**What is your favorite dish?**
Anything Italian


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# Donnie Hamilton, 31

*Owner of AMA Fitness - Trainer*
*Hometown: Whiteville*
*Wife: Casey Hamilton*
*Children: Abigail and Benjamin Hamilton*
*Education: Whiteville High School; Southeastern Community College and Campbell University-Psychology;UNC Pembroke-MBA. National Academy of Sports Medicine-Fitness Nutrition Specialist & Certified Personal Trainer; CrossFit - level one trainer*
*Pets: Max and Loki*
*Enjoys rucking, CrossFit, the beach, time with family and friends, writing, journaling and reading and anything to do with learning.*

**Tell us about your professional and personal accomplishments.**
In the U.S. Marine Corps, I led operations in Afghanistan clearing terrain and locating, destroying and neutralizing explosives to clear paths to make them safe for infantry. In the Sangin River Valley, I made a judgment call to lead that was against the assessment of senior leadership. Going with my intuition resulted in over 36 explosive detonations that saved many lives. I received the Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medal for my actions. I proudly claim the Presidential Unit Citation, Navy Unit Commendation and Combat Action Ribbon among other awards. Through AMA Fitness, I invest in a long-term approach to health and wellness. I am proud of the community of athletes my team and I have built at the Drop Zone Group Training Center. My proudest accomplishment is my family. Casey, Abigail and Benjamin play a key role in my success.

**Provide examples of your Community Service:**
I founded a Veterans Response Group in California. I am an active member of Team Red, White, & Blue - Wilmington Chapter. I compete each year in the "Run as One" veteran suicide awareness event. I am involved in Team Rubicon, having deployed four times in two years to assist in relief efforts for underserved communities. My AMA Fitness team raises social awareness through exercise like 9/11, July 4th and Memorial Day workouts and a Juneteenth joint ruck to show solidarity. I believe in paying it forward. Community service is a way of life.

**Tell us about a moment that changed your life.**
After having been isolated with limited supplies in Taliban territory with my platoon for six days, I witnessed my squad leader and bomb tech lose their lives to an IED. Prior to this experience, I had a small sense that I was built to serve, but witnessing these two men give their lives selflessly to save others changed me forever. I will never forget their heroism and patriotism.

**What is the best part about living in Columbus County?**
It is the simplicity. I was hesitant to move back after service, but I believe we are placed where we belong in the universe. My heart is here. We have an astounding amount of work to do to see our county thrive once more. It begins with each individual and the one thing we can control...our health and wellness.

Congratulations Donnie!

We are so proud of you!
Thank you for always leading from the front, &
providing a space for education, encouragement, and fun.
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# fifteen UNDER 40

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# Justin O'Ferrell, 31

*Nutrien Ag Solutions - Precision agronomist*
*Wife: Kayla Cartrette O'Ferrell*
*Child: Deacon O'Ferrell*
*Hometown: Greensboro*
*Pets: Shi-Poo dog - Gracie*
*Education: NC State University - Agriculture Business Management*
*Enjoys spending time with family, playing and watching sports, hunting, fishing.*

**Tell us about your professional and personal accomplishments:**
As a precision agronomist, I have the ability to help the agricultural community in Columbus County and all of North and South Carolina grow food more efficiently. Personally, my greatest accomplishment is my family. In 2013, I married an awesome woman from Tabor City, Kayla, who is a second grade teacher at Old Dock Elementary school and we have a 3-year-old son, Deacon, who keeps us on our toes.

**Provide examples of your community service:**
I am an active member at Sandy Plain Baptist Church, currently as Chairman of Deacons, a Sunday school teacher and the head coach of our men's softball team. I previously served on the executive board committee of the Dock Baptist Association. I volunteered as a "Stride Coach" for Guideway Elementary School. I also currently serve on the advisory committee for NC State University's Agricultural Institute.

**What do you do in your free time?**
All free time is taken up by being a husband and father. I do enjoy playing church league softball, hunting, fishing, and watching college football (Go Wolfpack!)

**Tell us about a time that changed your life?**
In 2012, I decided to leave Raleigh and move to Columbus County for a job with Helena Chemical. It taught me that getting out of my comfort zone will make me rely on the Lord to take care of my uncertain future.

**What are people surprised to learn about you?**
I used to ride bulls in the rodeo while in college.

**What is the best part about living in Columbus County?**
It is the atmosphere You always have a neighbor you can depend on when you need help. Also, my parents have lived in Nakina since 2016.

**Favorite movie?**
"Mighty Ducks"

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# De’Maya Berry, 24

*Owner/Operator of Maya’s Crab Shack, 2018*
*Parents: Devoria and Donald Berry*
*Hometown: Riegelwood*
*Education: East Columbus High School, NC Agricultural & Technical State University - Sport Science - 2018*
*Enjoys fishing, crabbing, cooking, and traveling. “I want to travel around the world, trying different foods and experiencing new adventures.”*

**Tell us about your professional and personal accomplishments:**
One of my professional and personal accomplishments is starting my own business at the age of 22. Maya’s Crab Shack is a successful restaurant that is growing. I have just expanded by purchasing a food truck.

**Provide examples of your community service:**
Giving back to my community has always been something I have been passionate about. Examples are participating in back-to-school drives, and most recently, a laptop giveaway for a college freshman. I am a member of Black Business Community Empowerment Group. Being a part of this group allows the members to give grants to black business owners. I also volunteer with Men & Women United for Youth & Families.

**What is the best part about living in Columbus County?**
Being able to be around my family and having access to the river for fishing. My grandmother, Mildred Keaton, loved to fish, so I am carrying on her legacy.

**What do you do in your free time and how do you relax?:**
In my limited free time, I enjoy spending it with my family and friends. I have a very close-knit family. Even with COVID-19, we have managed to still come together. To relax, I like fishing and traveling. There is something about these activities that puts me in a relaxing mood.

**What would you tell your 16-year-old self?**
Take advantage of available opportunities. This is something I think about daily. There were so many things I did not take advantage of, but I count it as a lesson learned.

**Favorite drink?**
Water. I drink at least four bottles a day.

**Favorite gift as a child?**
An Easy Bake Oven. My cousins and I used to make cakes and cookies every day.

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# Eric Hill, 38

*Atlantic Blue Coast Realty-owner, agent*
*Wife: Heather Hill*
*Child: Westyn Hill*
*Hometown: Whiteville*
*Education: Whiteville High School, UNC Greensboro marketing/business management*
*Enjoys coaching youth soccer and baseball, movies, concerts and travel.*

**Tell us about your professional and personal accomplishments:**
I've been an active Realtor in Columbus County for 14 years, started my own Realty company in April 2019 and opened an office in Whiteville in April 2020. My family has been very supportive and patient through this and I love them for it. I am the creator and director for Whiteville Howl Athletics and Howl FC (youth soccer) established in 2017.

**Provide examples of your community service:**
I sponsor youth teams in a variety of sports and coach some of them. I serve on the Whiteville Parks & Rec advisory committee. My company participates in the Adopt-a-Park program by adopting the city rec center park. I have also served my church, Living Word, as a youth leader.

**What would you tell your 16-year-old self?**
I would have been at WHS then, and at that age a lot of kids compare our community to the brightness and busy activeness of nearby Wilmington or Myrtle Beach. They feel there is nothing here, no way to do well for yourself,and a lot of kids, including myself at the time, make the goal to "get out of this town" ASAP. I would tell my 16-year-old self to really give it a chance, get involved with the community outside of your limited bubble of friends. You will be surprised how much there is to do, how many great people there are and how much success you can achieve in our area if you take the time to really notice what we have in Columbus County.

**Please tell us a little-known fact about you:**
I'm a huge Tar Heel fan, wait, no, everyone knows that... how about, I am a lot more creative and artsy than most people realize. Those that haven't known me since high school may be surprised that I play the drums, I paint and draw, and can decorate cakes with Heather. I even wrote a Christmas play for my church a few years ago. Also, some would be surprised to find out how much of a prankster I can be, except those that have experienced it, and if any of those are reading this, they know who they are!

**Favorite dish?**
Strawberry shortcake


## A Better Community ... easy as A B C

Congratulations to Eric Hill
and the entire class of 2020
'fifteen under 40!'

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# Sarah Crutchfield, 37

The News Reporter - *Director of Circulation and Subscription Services*
*Parents: Lynne and Dickie Crutchfield*
*Siblings:Julie & Chad Nesbit, Carter, Emily Rich & Anne Crutchfield, Lucy, Wes Susan & Dennie McGarry, Anna, Lizzie, Maggie*
*Hometown: Whiteville*
*Education: Whiteville High School, University of South Carolina-Communications concentration Public Relations, Minor Psychology*
*Pet: Molly*
*Enjoys exercising, especially CrossFit and rucking, watching sunsets, laughing, reading and exploring with my dog.*

**Tell us about your professional and personal accomplishments:**
I have worn a lot of hats at *The News Reporter* - writing, marketing, and advertising - but I really enjoy being director of circulation because it is such an important part of our mission which is transforming our newsroom into a 24/7 operation and integrating that into our digital subscription model. As a people person, I particularly enjoy helping customers subscribe to the paper, walking them through the steps to get connected with us digitally, or resolving an issue with delivery.

**In what ways do you give back to the community?**
Being of service to your community was something my dad instilled in me at a young age; it was important to him and is important to me. I coached rec league soccer teams, served on committees like Take the Lake, Shuck 'N' Shag and Choose Whiteville. I am a mentor in Networkx (formerly Circles of Hope) and a lifelong member of Grace Episcopal Church.

**What is the best part about living in Columbus County?**
I have lived in Raleigh, Columbia, S.C. and Denver, Colo.,and there is no place like home. I moved back here for what I thought was a finite amount of time to help take care of my dad but have really fallen in love with the place all over again.

**What would you tell your 16-year-old self?**
Stop worrying about everything. Love yourself. Stay present. Enjoy the moment and the journey. Stop trying to grow up so fast. Love on your parents. Everyone is as uncomfortable in their own skin as you are, I promise.

**What do you do to relax?**
I like to meditate and swing in my hammock on the pier. Read a book. Nap with my pup, Molly.

**What was your favorite gift as a child?**
Any "prize" my dad brought me back from his business trips.

**Sarah, We are glad you have made Columbus County home again and thank you for what you do ALL YEAR!**

**Congratulations from The NR staff**

# Congratulations Sarah!

We are so proud of how far you have come and
for what you do for the community!
Thank you for representing our family
with grace and enthusiasm!

We love you!

The Crutchfield Crew

# Melissa Williamson, 35

*Owner of Posh Darlings Boutique, substitute teacher, volunteer, mother and student.*
*Husband: Kevin Williamson*
*Children: Gwyneth (6), Grant (4), Abygail (2)*
*Hometown: Whiteville has always been home*
*Education: Whiteville High School, Peace College - Bachelor's Degree in Child Development, Elementary Ed K-6 & Special Ed K-12*
*Pet: 12 year old dog, Maggie*
*Enjoys boating, time with friends, working out with FiA (Females in Action), reading a magazine and drinking coffee on the porch and family movie night.*

**Tell us about your professional and personal accomplishments:**
After college, I taught at Bladenboro Primary and Edgewood Elementary. After having my second child in 2016, I decide to come home to my growing family. I actively volunteer and started an on-line children's boutique, and I substitute teach. I am also currently pursuing a master's degree in Education for Curriculum and Instruction.

**In what ways do you give back to the community?**
Co-founder of Adopt-A-Storefront in downtown Whiteville; founder of Market on Madison, a vendor event at the Arts Council; Whiteville Junior Woman's Club; The Carolyn T. High Garden Club; Females In Action (FiA). I currently serve on the Columbus Cotillion Debutante committee, CRHS Hospital Gala and Pecan Harvest Festival. I teach Godly Play at First Baptist Church and was a part of the Choose Whiteville N.C. team for HGTV's Adopt-a-Hometown competition.

**Tell us about your family:**
My husband, Kevin Williamson, and I are high school sweethearts. We both graduated from Whiteville High School. He is an attorney in Whiteville and a city councilman. We have three wonderful children.

**What is the best part of living in Columbus County?**:
It is the people who are fiercely proud of our community—people who help their neighbors and strangers alike—people who have had roots here for generations—people who will give you the shirt off of their back, help you change a tire or loan you their last dollar. Maybe it's in the water or maybe it's in the way their mama raised them, but everyone I know from Columbus County has these traits. I am proud to be an 8th generation resident of Columbus County on my maternal grandfather's side. My grandfather still owns land that was deeded to his ancestors by the king of England in the late 1700s.

**Favorite dish?**
Anything Italian.


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Leadership Columbus is a program designed to develop a corps of informed, committed and qualified citizens capable of providing dynamic leadership for Columbus County, recognizing that volunteer leadership is one of the most valuable assets of a community.

The mission of Columbus Young Professionals is to connect individuals throughout our community while offering opportunities to develop their talents and skills – all in the name of curating them to become leaders of the future for Columbus County.

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*For more information on these programs, contact the Chamber at 910-642-3171, or at www.thecolumbuschamber.com.*

# Jimmy Price, 39

*South Columbus High Choral Director and Piano Instructor. Owner of JP Music Studio*
*Wife: Denise Price*
*Children: Lainey and Wesley Price*
*Hometown: Crusoe Island community*
*Education: South Columbus High School; AA-SCC; BS-UNC Pembroke; MAEd-ECU; School Admin Licensure - SLA / UNC Pembroke; Graduate work at Anderson University and Shenandoah Conservatory*
*Pet: Dachshund - Gretal*
*Enjoys family time, piano, music, reading, yard work, landscaping and traveling.*

**Tell us about your professional and personal accomplishments:**
My most treasured accomplishment is my personal relationship with Jesus Christ. I have been an educator for 18 years and it is truly my life's calling. I have taught 2nd to 12th grades in various subjects, including GED at SCC. I also worked administration, but my true passion lies in the classroom. Professionally, being named Columbus County Teacher of the Year in 2016 was a career highlight. I also maintain JP Music Studio, where I teach private piano, voice, and music theory lessons.

**Provide examples of your community service:**
I was raised in church, and it continues to be a stronghold for my family and is the most important aspect of our lives. I attend Magnolia Missionary Baptist Church, where I am a deacon, and adult Sunday school teacher, and I direct music, youth, and Vacation Bible School. At SCHS, I direct the Stallion Small Ensemble, a select vocal group who regularly performs at events in Columbus County. Many members of the Stallion Choral Program opted to join me in singing with the Southeastern Oratorio Society, which has been a wonderful means of connecting across generational lines.

**Tell us about your family:**
My lovely wife of 18 years, Denise, is the exceptional children's teacher at Old Dock Elementary School. Our 16-year-old daughter, Lainey, and our 13-year-old son, Wesley, are also musical and we enjoy singing as a family in church. My parents are Della and Rodney Price and my in-laws are Elaine and Russell Shepherd. My wife and I have five siblings between us. We love each other's company and we like to eat. We try to enjoy a meal with both families each week.

**What would you tell your 16-year-old self?**
I would remind myself of Proverbs 3:5-6. No degree, accomplishment, or amount of money will truly make you happy. Faith and trust in God are the ultimate means of joy, happiness and fulfillment.

Congratulations, Daddy, on being chosen one of this year's 'fifteen under 40!'
You deserve this for all you do for our family, church and community.
You are the best!! Love, Lainey and Wesley
(So proud of you. Love, Denise!)

# TJ James, 31

*BB&T now Truist - Branch Banker III*
*Parents: Pam & Teinne James*
*Child: Parker James*
*Hometown: Tabor City*
*Education: South Columbus High School, and Associate in General Education*
*Pet: Toy Schnoodle - Cooper*
*Enjoys crafting, taking pictures of loved ones and spending time with Parker and family.*

**Tell us about your professional and personal accomplishments:**
I started at BB&T in 2012 at the Fair Bluff branch straight out of college as a teller, knowing little about banking but eager to learn. Transferring to the Tabor City branch in 2013, I was encouraged by my leaders to keep striving to become more. I eventually became a Branch Banker and I am also a "teller mentor" for the bank who trains new tellers joining our team. In 2019 I had the opportunity to transition into a new position at the Courthouse Branch here in Whiteville, where I now call home. I love my job, my team and my clients. Helping people achieve their financial success is a good feeling. I plan to continue to grow in the bank and be the best that I can possibly be!

**Provide examples of your community service:**
I volunteer at Williams Township School. I served on the N.C. Watermelon Growers Association along with one of my lifelong mentors, Mrs. Judy Enzor. I directed the NC Watermelon Festival Little Pageant for five years. I am also co-director of the Merry Columbus Christmas Scholarship Pageant. I have donated a lot of my time singing at community events across the county and hold numerous pageant titles including Miss Tabor City and Miss South Columbus High School, where I volunteered for food drives, Relay for Life, and many other events.

**Tell us about your family:**
My family is my backbone. I have the best parents that support me and help me tremendously with my son while I work. I have four siblings, Jason James, Jessi James Hanks, Chris Phipps and Morgan Cribb. They are all hard working and supportive as well. Parker is my 4-year-old. He is a bubbly, talkative, very intelligent little boy. He was diagnosed with Autism when 3-years-old and has defied all odds placed against him. He has the best teachers and the absolute best speech therapist, Chassie Strickland ('fifteen under 40 Class of 2018.) Parker has a huge heart and he loves with all he has, especially dinosaurs.

**Favorite dish?**
Anything my momma cooks.

**Favortie drink?**
Sundrop

Grit & Grace Boutique

Congratulations TJ James for being chosen as one of this year's 'fifteen under 40!' I am so proud of you! You are a true representation of an awesome community leader and a great friend!
~ Mandy Barnhill, Grit & Grace Boutique owner
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# Dylan Newman, 32

*BB&T now Truist - client specialist*
*Parents: Ruthie and Tommy Newman*
*Child: Benjamin Newman*
*Siblings: Johanna and Caroline Newman*
*Nephew: John Newman*
*Hometown: Fair Bluff*
*Education: South Columbus High School and currently in the SCC nursing program.*
*Enjoys fitness, outdoorsmanship and spending time with Benjamin.*

**Tell us about your professional/personal accomplishments:**
I have been employed with BB&T in Columbus County for nine very fun years and made great contacts and personal friends along the way. Currently, I am studying in Southeastern Community College's Nursing Program and will complete that in the Spring of 2022. In my personal life, I recently have undertaken a physical fitness goal and become an advocate of the ketogenic diet. I have lost 81 lbs and am in the best shape of my life.

**Provide examples of your community service:**
I participate in BB&T's annual Lighthouse Project that includes volunteering with projects for Families First, packing food & water supplies for disaster relief and improvements to local public ball fields. In 2018, I won BB&T's highly esteemed Olympian Award for my local service with hurricane relief. I have also volunteered at the Fair Bluff Watermelon Festival and assist in the children's ministry at Living Word Church.

**Tell us a little known fact about you:**
I have attended eight different schools and had over 20 employers in my life. Hard work and education are the keys to success.

**What do you do to relax?**
Relaxing for me is simple. I fire up my trusty chainsaw and tend to my woods and hunting fields as needed. The work never ends but it is also my therapy! A cold shower and a hot coffee afterwards is the ticket to sleeping like a baby. In my free time, I head to my second home, BodyShapers gym, and continue the push into my fitness journey. Jeff and Cindy Faulk have brought a world-class gym experience right to our hometown in their updated location.

**Favorite gift as a child?**
My first BB gun

**Favorite movie?**
Citizen Kane

**Favorite drink?**
$H_2O$, baby!


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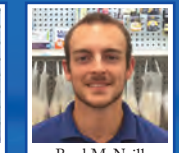
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fifteen UNDER 40

# Alumni Directory

## Class of 2016

Lucy Byrd
Cynthia Ellis
Erica Evans
Corey Faison
Jenny Fonvielle
David Holmes
Katherine Hyatt
Nicole Kelley
Santana Miller
Stephanie Miller
Sherica Powell
Anna Richardson
Mariel Sellers
Rachel Smith
Jared Worthington

## Class of 2017

Amber Bellamy
Rebekah Benton
CeCe Creech
Jessica Davis
Cassie Dawson
Christian Grate
Fielding Hammond
Chris Helak
Lacie Jacobs
Jonathon Medford
Leighann Merritt
Sid Miller
Justin Smith
Kevin Williamson
Boyd Worley

## Class of 2018

Derrick Boyd
Todd Burney
Jordan J. Carter
Dustin Chapman
W.T. Edwards II
Jason Elleby
Staci Ezzell
Justin Furlow
Sarah L. Gore
Jamika Lynch
Brandon Patrick
Danaysia Powell
Ethan Scott
Chassie Strickland
Mary Wheatley

## Class of 2019

Amanda Dale
Daniel Britt
Jordan B. Carter
Jenny Clore
Dustin Fowler
LaShoney Frink
C. Ashley Gore
Jason Graham
Kalee Hill
Greg Jacobs
Jennifer Cox Phipps
Jason Soles
Rachel Todd
Garrett Tolley
Nikki Walker

# Congratulations to the Class of 2020 "fifteen under 40"

**to all the nominees & winners.**

***You** are the future of Columbus County, and the future looks great!*

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# Kudos...from the Community

**Angela** *is an optimistic person who thinks the best possible things. She told me one day, "If you do good deeds for those who may be less fortunate or going through bad times, it will make an impact on their outlook of life." It lets them know someone believes in and cares for them.*

*She is a leader, a role model and an inspiration to be around.* **Carlisa** *is empathetic to other's needs, is well mannered and is always willing to lend a helping hand.*

**Eric** *is committed to our city and community - to its growth and welfare. He loves our citizens young and old and desires a safe, welcoming and nurturing environment for kids to grow up in and will hopefully want to stay in.*

*She is a genuine person with a big heart and is a hard worker.* **TJ** *is always positive and loves this county with all her heart. Anywhere you go, most people know her by her kind personality and the good spirit she gives off.*

*Unlike many of her peers,* **Sarah** *chose to come home to Columbus County to live because of her love for the place and its people. She is exactly the kind of person that will lead us into the future and will no doubt take a leadership role in solving problems and making Columbus County its best.*

**Dylan** *returned to Columbus County and to his home church, where he volunteers with children. In pursuing a career in nursing, he has decided to serve our community as a healthcare professional. Dylan is a terrific example of service and citizenship for Columbus County.*

*She has a variety of skills, talents and interests she has leveraged to improve our community.* **Melissa** *has worked tirelessly, while at the same time raising three children. These attributes reflect that of an ideal role model for other young parents.*

**Jimmy** *inspires his students to go beyond their limits and to show them ways to share their talents to benefit the world around them. He is not only their teacher, but their counselor, career coach, advisor and confidante.*

*She is the best person I know, and she has small town pride and a love of Tabor City.* **Erin** *spends hours volunteering at town events and at school. She never seeks recognition, but she deserves it.*

**Donnie** *embodies the spirit of Columbus County. He always has a smile on his face and inspires and motivates the people around him to be as fit, healthy and active as they can be. He applies his military experience and positive attitude to everything he does and he is dedicated to the people of this county.*

*She returned to her home after college. She understands what rural living is and the needs of her community.* **De'Maya** *wants to be a part of the solution.*

*He pushes me to do better for my students and to incorporate agriculture education in their lives. He is genuinely interested in every student.* **Bryan** *is inclusive and kind to all.*

*She is a delight to our community. She is dedicated to her students and the entire FFA program.* **Ashley** *does deeds without seeking recognition.*

*He has a good attitude, personality and work ethic. He is an asset to the Sandy Plain community and to our county. He stays busy helping people and has fun doing it.* **Dustin** *is active with his family, friends, church and community. Justin is a well-rounded person who has a lot of potential.*

**DeBais** *has worked hard to be a restaurant and catering owner. He loves cooking and shares his talent with his community. He understands the obstacles that can occur when being a small business owner and he faces the challenges while also making a difference in the lives of young people by giving them a purpose and support through his business.*

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