

January 2016

WILLIAMSBURG'S

Next Door Neighbors[®]

VOL. 10, ISSUE 1

PRICELESS

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Historically, Williamsburg residents have recognized a societal responsibility to give freely, join in and come to the aid of others even though the recipients of that time and effort may never be known to the giver. Volunteers provide essential services in our community. What's more, our area provides services through many, many non-profit organizations that depend on volunteers to help them provide service to others. Without volunteerism, some of our neighbors would never receive the help they need.



Meredith Collins, Publisher

In this issue, we have interviewed a few of your neighbors who are involved in volunteer efforts in our community. Some teach or coach, some serve on a board or committee, some provide care and the list goes on. There are literally thousands of people who give their time and talent to helping to improve the lives of others.

It would make an interesting issue to interview everyone who is a volunteer in the Williamsburg area, but there would be so many pages in such an issue that it would take a fork lift for postal carriers to deliver each one! For now, I hope you will enjoy the handful of stories we have brought you in "Lend A Hand". NDN

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CELEBRATING DIVERSITY

By Narielle Living

Jessica O'Brien is passionate, motivated and driven. Her career is helping people with their health and life insurance needs, but her real passion lies in exploring ways to challenge social justice issues and promote diversity within our community, as can be witnessed by her array of volunteer activities: President of *All Together*, secretary of the local NAACP chapter, and social justice chair for the Unitarian Universalist church.

Born and raised in Long Island, New York, Jessica moved to Canada at the age of eighteen and lived there for almost thirty years.

"At that time Canada was very liberal and concerned with people's

standard of living being decent and liberal causes in general. That was also when national health care came in," she says. Married with two young children, an opportunity arose for her and her family to move back to the United States. A business in Canada wanted to open a branch in the U.S. and asked if she would be interested in the position. "They decided they couldn't do it, but we decided to come back anyway. I really wanted my kids to grow up here, but I'd left in the sixties, so my impression of America was very different from the reality of what it was in the late nineties."

The difference in lifestyles between the two countries was glaring. For Jessica, coming to the South was eye-opening. "I remember one of the first things that happened," she says. "I went into a convenience store and an African American man was standing next to me. He



Lisa W. Cumming Photography

had paint all over him, and I said, 'I can see what you do for a living.' I was just making conversation, and he said 'Oh ma'am, I'm sorry ma'am.' He was so obsequious that I thought oh, my God, what is this?"

Jessica has always been drawn to issues of social justice. At that time, in the late nineties, she was searching for some type of community involvement in Williamsburg. *All Together*, a non-profit group dedicated to raising awareness of racial disparities, was holding public forums, so she went. The forums were on topics such as police issues, education and religion. "I went to them all," Jessica says. "They had sign-up sheets to get involved, and I wanted to get involved but I didn't know how, so I signed up."

As she began to attend *All Together* functions, Jessica got to know one of the founding members, Dick Orr. "He was a really wonder-

ful person who died about two years ago," she says. Dick wanted Jessica to be on the board of directors for *All Together* and took her to her first board meeting.

"We went around and introduced one another. There was Geoff Feiss who was the vice provost of the college, and Jeff Smith who was an assistant superintendent getting his PhD, and Roy Pearson who was professor emeritus at the business school, and a few other people. They got to me and I said I don't have any credentials. I didn't even have my bachelor's degree, because I hadn't finished college."

Jessica was taken aback at how she felt at that point. With a daughter poised to enter college, and college tours on her schedule, the

idea of returning to school started to creep in.

"We went to all these places and it was so fantastic that I wanted to go too," Jessica says. Her daughter wanted to go to William and Mary, and Jessica remembers the day she brought her to campus to begin school. "She moved in, and we went to this big meeting and they told the parents to say goodbye to our kids. I was like, oh my God, she's going..."

After that experience, Jessica decided to go back to school for herself. She attended Thomas Nelson Community College first, then applied to William and Mary. After being accepted to the college she received a Bachelor's Degree in Women's Studies with a 4.0 GPA average and graduated the same weekend her youngest daughter graduated from VCU. Of course, they had a party.

"The worst part was January of that last se-

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mester,” she says. “I was working outside, making some shelves. I turned my table saw off, turned around and hit it with my hand. I cut part of my fingers off. So I spent the last semester with that, but I had to finish because if I didn’t I would have to give my loan money back. I was exhausted.”

One of her projects at William and Mary was inspired by a man named Dr. James Baker. “He was a psychiatrist in his late eighties when I met him, and he died around the same time as Dick Orr. He was the grandfather everyone wanted, the most wonderful man, and he was brought here to be the head of Eastern State. He grew up in Mississippi and would tell the most incredible stories about his first awareness of race.”

Conversations with Dr. Baker led Jessica to the idea of having an alternative tour of the history of Williamsburg, a tour that included more information about African Americans. “I created a tour of sites all around different places, like the Naval Weapons Station, the Grove, with little snippets of history.”

This tour has since evolved and become a part of what *All Together* offers to the public. The last tour, on November 7, drew a crowd of around 100 people despite the pouring rain. Jessica has also received a request from the head of honors program at one of the schools to do a tour for the students.

All Together is an advocacy group with a mission to bring people together across racial and ethnic lines. “We have a Friday brown bag lunch, and that’s what people know about us,” Jessica says. “A lot of people come, and we try to have topics on the first Friday of the month that address what’s happening. Travis Harris of Black Lives Matter spoke, and he was really great. We had the commonwealth attorney speak about the process of arrests, which many of us didn’t know, but it can be hard to get speakers. This is a very divided community, so most of the people who come that are African American are ‘come backs’, or are people who are upper middle class. Mostly the black population in this community, the locals, the natives, don’t have a lot to do with us. That’s always a struggle, trying to do something that would interest both groups.”

Jessica has been a board member for *All Together* since 2002 and for the last two years has served as president. According to her, the membership of *All Together* has always been small, but people continue to attend functions. “People show up for things but they don’t join,” she says. “We do give out scholarships, so we need the money for that, and we used to have some bigger donors that Dick Orr brought in. We’ve also done other things, such as a celebration of cultures. Two years ago we brought in groups from all over the community, and we had a large tent out at the park at Jamestown. It was a big success.”

Jessica believes that people do not change easily, but she believes the number of people having the conversation about racial issues can expand. “To start with, it’s very hard to get people to do a lot of changing. You’re preaching to the choir, but the idea is that you get the choir to become a little bit bigger. There’s really no other way to do social justice work. You’re not going to change people’s minds that feel the opposite, but you try to keep expanding the choir, and I think that’s happening.”

Jessica O’Brien would like to invite readers to get involved as an opportunity to see that there are people who are interested in bringing people of all backgrounds together. She acknowledges the difficulty in getting to know others who may come from a different background. “It’s really hard to have people across racial lines in your daily life, over for dinner, doing things together. It’s hard work to incorporate people different from you in your daily life, but it’s really important because it makes you a better person.” NDN

The Journeys of CDR

Each family that walks through the doors of Child Development Resources is on a journey—to find the skills, strength and services to help their child learn and grow. Some are referred by their doctor in response to a vision or hearing loss, low birth weight and prematurity, or a diagnosed genetic disorder. Others seek services because factors in their homes and family lives have made healthy child development difficult.

This year, CDR celebrates its 50th year of service to the Williamsburg community. That's 50 years of miracles and milestones, 50 years of early childhood education and 50 years of life-changing therapies.

During this anniversary year, we will feature the stories of children and families whose lives have been touched by Child Development Resources. We share these remarkable journeys—with thanks to our community supporters, donors, volunteers, staff, and visionary founders who answered the call for change.

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GARY MASSIE



Helping Families Succeed

By Alison Johnson

Lisa W. Cumming Photography

Some have Down syndrome, or autism, or complications linked to a premature birth. Some need speech, occupational or physical therapy to learn how to talk, eat, walk and play. Some need help with early social skills.

Those are the babies and toddlers who need Child Development Resources' (CDR) early intervention programs. Then there are the parents.

Raising a child with a disability or developmental delay can feel like an overwhelming responsibility, but CDR's support and educational services can forever change their families. Gary Massie, a longtime volunteer for the Historic Triangle nonprofit, has seen that firsthand.

"Not all children are born to loving and understanding parents. Not all children come ready to participate in the mainstream," Gary says. "Not all parents know how to grow and

nourish their children. CDR is a resource for both parents and children in our community who need additional development to help them succeed."

Based in Norge, CDR got its start in 1965 as the Williamsburg Preschool for Special Children. The organization has grown to serve about 1,000 children and their families every year, covering James City and York counties, Williamsburg and Poquoson. Programs include free developmental screenings from birth to age 3, childcare, home visits, playgroups, referrals to other local resources and parenting classes, some specifically for new fathers.

Gary, president of a family civil construction business by profession, has volunteered for CDR since 1991. He served on its Board of Directors for 22 years, until 2013, and this year will mark his third go-around as an auctioneer at its annual Bid 'n Buy fundraiser. The

38th annual event, scheduled for March 20 at Jamestown High School, comes as CDR celebrates its 50th year of operation with a \$1 million comprehensive campaign (50th.cdr.org).

While not a professional auctioneer, Gary brings a bit of training and practice and lots of energy to get people excited during the approximately 45-minute live auction portion of Bid n' Buy. As a longtime community resident, public servant, father of three and grandfather of four, he is always happy to promote CDR's mission of reaching "exceptional" kids as early in their development as possible.

"If they grow up feeling marginalized because, say, other kids think they talk 'funny', they may go down a very different path in life," he says. "CDR helps both the child and parents cope with their challenges, so that children can grow in positive ways and reach their fullest development potential."

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Family has always been a source of strength for Gary. Born in Newport News, he moved to James City County at age 7 when his parents, Jack and Virginia, bought a 500-acre dairy farm. About 100 head of Holstein cattle gave middle child Gary and his two siblings plenty of fresh whole milk, although their chore list thankfully left the 4 a.m. wakeup calls for milking cows to paid staff members.

After about five years, Jack Massie converted the farm to a beef cattle operation with the Polled Hereford breed. As a teenager, Gary helped deliver newborn calves and give cows medicine. "It taught me a lot about life," he recalls. "It was a great time for me, a great place to grow up."

During the summers, Gary and his brother worked for their father's construction company, which was the family's primary income source. They pitched in on shopping center site work and several major road projects, including the widening of Route 60 from Lightfoot to Toano.

"I always liked moving dirt," Gary says. "I liked the process of seeing a piece of raw land, drawing up a specific set of plans and then changing the shape of the earth to meet the intent of the drawing. That's a rewarding experience."

Jack Massie, his father who died in 2005, was a great mentor. In fact, Gary's current company, J.S.G. Corporation, is an acronym for "Jack's son Gary."

"His company was very well-respected, and I am proud to have that legacy," Gary says. J.S.G.'s work includes building streets, storm drains and solid waste disposal facilities and handling environmental projects such as guarding against water pollution.

A graduate of James Blair High School, Gary earned a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration from East Carolina University in 1973. A year after college, he married his wife, Linda Gardner, a South Boston, Virginia native.

Gary and Linda live in James City County, although the family's farmland was sold in 2000 and is now part of the Colonial Heritage development.

Over the years, Gary has served on a number of community boards, including the R.F. Wilkinson Family YMCA, the Greater Williamsburg Chamber & Tourism Alliance, the Virginia Transportation Construction Alliance and the American Road & Transportation Builders Association. He is currently a board member for TowneBank Williamsburg.

The volunteer experience was immediately

rewarding. "Attendance on the board left you feeling like you were part of an organization that helped people in our community as well as developed programs for early childhood intervention that could serve other communities."

"There are thousands of stories that could be told about the impact that CDR has had on a child and family's life," Gary says, "and these are people from all walks of life and socio-economic and educational backgrounds."

In addition to his individual volunteer efforts, Gary has frequently donated professional construction and landscaping materials through his company and even kept CDR's sidewalks and driveway clear of snow in the winters.

"You don't get experience with raising a child in school," Gary says. "It's a tough job. New parents tend to think their child will be perfect, or that their child will be like them. In life, it doesn't happen that way. People don't have to face that alone." NDN

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Empowering Girls

By Nicole Puskar



Lisa W. Cumming Photography

Williamsburg Girl Scout Troop 1356 Leader Trish Armstrong, and her husband, Jon Armstrong, just celebrated their 20 year Williamsburg residential anniversary this past December. The Armstrong's two children, Alex, 15, and Veronica "Roni", 11, have grown up in Williamsburg and, along with their parents, have been very active members of their local community.

Alex, who is a freshman at Jamestown High School, runs cross country, plays soccer and is an active Boy Scout. Roni, who is a 6th grader at Hornsby Middle School, is a competitive cheerleader and Girl Scout Cadet.

Trish is an electrical engineer by degree. Both she and her husband are employed by Anheuser-

Busch and moved here with the company from St. Louis, Missouri. When Alex was born in 2001, Trish resigned her full-time position and opted for a part-time schedule.

"I still, to this day, am working for them part time in two different capacities, and I ramped up my volunteer stuff after Alex was born," Trish says with a laugh. "I've been fortunate that I've been able to stay in a working capacity with my background, and I've been fortunate that I've been able to stay home full time, as well. It's been a good balance."

In the early years of volunteering, Trish actively participated on the Parent-Teacher-Association (PTA) for Clara Byrd Baker Elementary School. Additionally, both she and

her husband have volunteered for a number of their children's extracurricular activities over the years.

"When Roni was in kindergarten, she was placed on a waiting list for Girl Scouts here," Trish says. After watching and hearing about her brother's adventures with Boy Scouts, Roni wanted in on the scouting action, but most importantly, she wanted to sell cookies. Due to her already busy schedule and PTA commitments, Trish initially wanted to ease into Girl Scouts and learn the landscape before fully extending her time and energy in a new organization. But life, as it often does, had other plans. "After she was on a waiting list for a year, I went ahead and jumped all in and became a leader."

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Trish stepped up to the plate for all the wait listed girls from Clara Byrd Baker from her daughter's grade and the grade below and started her own troop with the service unit of Williamsburg. Today, Trish leads her troop of four Cadets who have been with her since they were Daisies.

In addition to her daughter's desire to be a Girl Scout, Trish's own journey with the Girl Scouts served as a contributing factor to her motivation to volunteer. Trish, whose own mother served as her troop leader, went as far as Cadets, but wishes she had gone farther. "That's just a small piece, but the other is that I was very supportive and motivated by getting women empowered and being leaders."

Due to her professional background in a male dominated profession, Trish is largely compelled by a desire to instill in her girls the knowledge of all they are capable of and to strengthen their resolve to be leaders in whatever capacity they choose.

"It's also very gratifying to watch what they were like when they were six years old and in first grade, to now I'm more of a bystander...and they're taking over doing stuff. It's just really great to see them move forward and have empowerment."

On a more tactical level, one of Trish's favorite aspects and top priorities within Girl Scouts is organizing and participating in outdoor activities, from camping and rock climbing to race running.

"I'm blessed with this group that I've got. We've dwindled a little bit here because of entering middle school. My troop is comprised of a state swimmer, dancers, horseback riders. They're a very athletic group."

Trish serves as the Race Organizer/Director for the Governor's Land 5k, which benefits the Girl Scouts of Colonial Coast Annual Giving Campaign (formerly Family Partnership Fund). Historically proceeds from the campaign have



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– Halyna Drutsul, learner

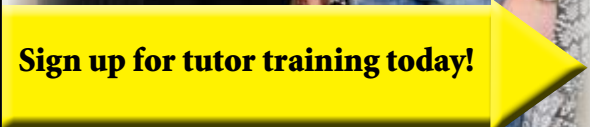
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helped send girls to summer camp, who otherwise would not be able to attend.

Trish's biggest challenge is dealing with attrition right around the beginning of middle school and high school. "That's been a challenge for me this year and I think it's going to be an ongoing challenge, and that's why I'm willing to say, 'Girls, what do you want to do,?' which is how it should be anyway. They should be driving this now, not me." According to Trish, attrition rates are a challenge for the entire Colonial Coast Service Unit and are also correlated with the low numbers of locally achieved Girl Scout Gold Awards.

"Long term, I would love to see them go all the way to Gold," Trish says. Her strategy is twofold. Primarily, Trish wants to let the girls continue to expand their leadership skills and take the reins, while she steps back and provides the support and flexibility to accommodate their goals. Secondly, Trish is relying on the girls to begin seeing the inherent value of their participation by looking ahead to older troops as role models, and reaching back to younger troops and seeing what an impact they have on the girls who are looking up to them. To earn the prestigious Gold Award, Girl Scouts need to organize and lead a seven-step project to solve an issue within their community. According to Trish, the girls are responsible for getting the project approved by the Girl Scout council and executing it from concept to completion. "It's a big deal. It's a great thing for any of them that can do that. So that would be my goal, and I'd feel like I did something good, too, if they followed through on that."

Getting the girls to see how much they have already accomplished and realize their full leadership potential is one of the most gratifying aspects of Trish's role. "I think they realize that's just going to continue to build and that's not just going to help them with Girl Scouts, that's going to help them with all areas of their lives. Empowering them and showing them that they can be leaders is great. It's gratifying for me as a leader, but I also see it in them, that they believe it now."

Trish's humility shines through as she shares the story of how her girls recently learned of her professional background as an electrical engineer. The troop was putting together autobiographical storyboards depicting their definition of beauty and uniqueness. Upon the girls' insistence, Trish participated in the project and was very surprised by girls' reactions to learning about her background. "That made an impact. They talked about that for a while. I was like, 'How did we not...?', but it's not about me. We never talked about what I did." This opened the door to a fruitful dialogue on women being able to enter traditionally male-dominated professions today. Ironically, for all Trish's talk about empowerment and leadership, she had no idea just how impactful her own life's testimony was until this experience.

Today, Trish's commitment to the Girl Scouts' extends beyond her daughter's involvement. The Girl Scout mission and vision has taken on its own uniquely intrinsic value for Trish. "I just love seeing the adults whose kids have long gone, but they know how the program should work and they are still committed to it because of what their purpose was to begin with. I know that Roni joined this and that's why I'm in it, but I also feel it's such a great program that it would be a great way for me to continue being a volunteer and encouraging other girls to get involved... If they would have me, I would continue to try to be involved."

Volunteering aside, Trish reveals the greatest Girl Scout debate taking place in her home – cookies. "My favorite is Samoa and it has always been Samoa. Even though I live in a house where Tagalongs are a huge, huge favorite, my personal favorite is Samoa." Thankfully for everyone, cookies season is upon us, which generally means everyone wins. NDN

Happy New Year!



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VINCE ABBOTT



Lisa W. Cumming Photography

10 Years OF MEALS ON WHEELS

By Lillian Stevens

Every Wednesday around 11 a.m., Vince Abbott arrives at Williamsburg Baptist Church where he greets nine or so other fellow Williamsburg Area Meals on Wheels volunteers. After exchanging pleasantries and good-natured jokes, the drivers load up their vehicles with the day's allotment of hot meals, a route itinerary and directions to each home they will visit.

"When we arrive, the meals are nice and hot," Vince says. "I always try to ask ahead of time what they consist of so that I can tell folks when I arrive."

Participants in the Meals on Wheels program generally fit into one of the following categories: persons (or their caretakers) 60 years of age or older who might be homebound or have difficulty leaving their home unassisted; disabled individuals who live in a non-institutional setting with an eligible participant; a registered congregate meal participant who needs a home-delivered meal(s) due to an illness or health condition. Some individuals receive special meals due to an illness like diabetes, heart disease, a kidney disorder or trouble chewing or swallowing.

Vince has chosen Wednesdays as his day to volunteer as a driver, but

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DESIGNS by REGGIE AKDOGAN

meals are delivered to over 100 participants in the program every week-day, even on holidays. The number might vary from day to day but not by much.

"I've been involved with Meals on Wheels for at least ten years now. I might be one of the oldest volunteers. It's a time investment of only one day each week but they know they can count on me for other days if the need arises."

Vince says that beyond the nutritional component of a hearty hot meal, the value of the social interaction cannot be understated. For many, the noon-time delivery is the highlight of their day.

"It is so rewarding," Vince says. "For some of these folks, I might be the only person they see all day."

Locally, Meals on Wheels partners with Custom Culinary Connections of Toano to prepare quality nutritious meals. A registered dietician plans the menus which consist of an entrée (meat, fish or pasta), a vegetable, a starch, fruit, milk, bread and dessert. Each meal costs around \$5.50 and about 60% of the meals are subsidized.

"The amount participants pay for meals is based on a sliding scale," Vince explains. "Some pay full price, others pay partial or nothing at all. There are elderly people who have the ability to pay and for those individuals, this is a financially feasible way to have a hot meal. There are also participants who are quite young, in their twenties even, who are recovering from surgery and just not able to prepare a meal during their recovery."

Sometimes, breakfast foods and/or nutritional supplements are provided to those in particular need.

"Also, on days when we know there won't be a meal the next day, perhaps inclement weather is expected or whatever else it might be, we'll give them a cold meal along with a hot one so that they have something for the following day."

It's challenging sometimes, because the volunteers tend to become attached to the participants.

"One of my guys was a widower who lived over in Kingsmill," Vince says. "He passed away and I sure do miss him. I remember one day while we were talking, I asked him when he lost his wife and he said something like 2 years, 3 months, 14 days, right down to the minute. He was really a neat man."

When a new participant is signed on, Meals on Wheels staff will conduct a home visit to establish a baseline of function and environment. Home visits are conducted on an annual basis thereafter. Though it is not frequent, drivers must be prepared in case the day's delivery doesn't go as planned. For instance, what if someone doesn't answer the door or a driver observes a health or environmental change? In the case of the former, a phone call is made to the residence and if there is no answer, the meal is not left there. In terms of perceived health or home issues, concerns are immediately addressed by the staff per instructions previously outlined by participants or their caregivers.

When the holidays roll around, there are volunteers in the community who donate cookies or other goodies and put together festive gift-wrapped packages so that the drivers can surprise the program participants on a specified date. "No one could have ridden along with me that day because my car was stacked with gifts for everyone. I even had a sack that made me look like Santa! When I was making my deliveries, I played a trick on one of the ladies. I hid my sack of goodies and delivered her meal. After she thanked me and said 'goodbye', I said 'wait a minute' and I pulled out the sack of presents. You'd think I had given her the world! It was so rewarding that it's hard to even put into words." NDN



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Making Homes Safe, Warm and Dry

By Cathy Welch

As much as he thought he would love free time in retirement, Connecticut native Bob Burke only lasted six consecutive days playing golf. He had to keep busy and chose to be a neighbor helping neighbors.

Bob earned his Bachelor of Science Degree in Mechanical Engineering from Catholic University in Washington, D.C. and spent a couple of summers working for the Pratt & Whitney Division of United Technologies Corporation where his dad worked for 40 years. He went on to earn his Master's Degree in Personnel Management from Troy State.

"I wanted to fly forever," he says. "so I went into Air Force pilot training."

Bob and his wife, Rosemary, did a tour of duty with the Air Force in North Dakota before he went to Vietnam to do search and rescue.

During his Air Force career, Bob was assigned a couple of staff tours at Langley Air Force Base. He alternated between the cockpit and a desk job. During this time his family, now including daughters, Missy and Megan,

and son, Tim, lived in Yorktown's Marlbank Cove.

Bob retired from the Air Force in 1993. The following year he was employed by Housing Partnerships, Inc. as a project coordinator for about six months.

"After six months I decided I needed to get serious about making a little more money to pay off the kids' college loans and a few other things," he says. He had several different jobs but ended up in defense contracting. Much of this work was done on the Southside in Suffolk and Norfolk.

"Eventually, I hit a point back in 2008 and I figured out that about 2 1/2 hours of my life each day was spent looking at somebody's tail-lights going through the tunnel." That's when he and Rosemary, a family counselor, retired.

"I'm always doing something," Bob says. "When I got to the point where I finally quit work that lasted about three days." He knew he needed to figure something out to keep himself busy and to contribute. That's when he walked back in to the offices of Housing Partnerships. "I found out these guys were work-



Lisa W. Cumming Photography

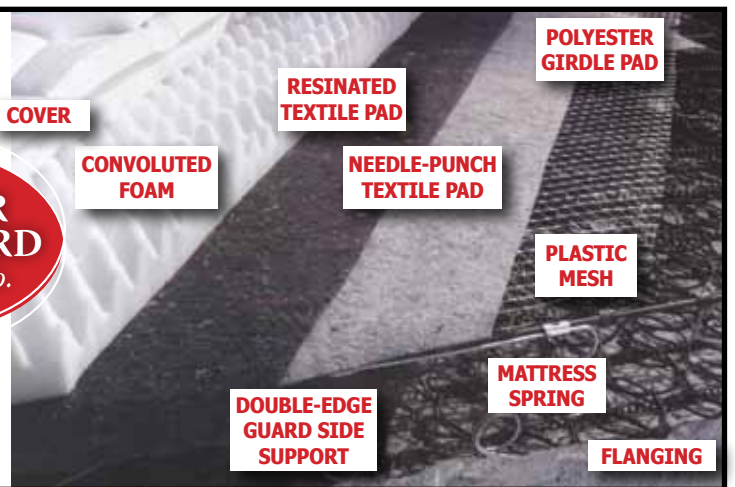
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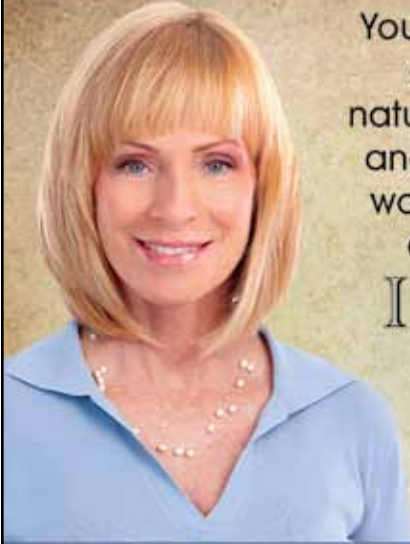
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Like us on

ing Tuesdays and Thursdays and that fit the rest of my week,” he says.

This time Bob was a volunteer whose work was a good match for his mechanical engineering skills learned working on his own homes. “You figure out that houses are not rocket science,” he says. “There are sticks, there are wires, there are tubes.”

Formed in 1985, Housing Partnerships, Inc. is a nonprofit working in the City of Williamsburg, James City County, York County and a few properties in New Kent County. They consider themselves to be neighbors helping neighbors, who may not otherwise be able to afford basic, but critical home repairs.

Housing Partnerships’ clients come from either a social services referral or they see the organization’s trucks out on a job.

“The organization’s motto is ‘Warm, Safe and Dry,’” he explains. “Pretty we don’t get into, but we try to make it look presentable. In some cases it’s the best room in the house.”

Those who receive help from Housing Partnerships must own their home and have at or below 50 percent of average median income based on household size.

“Most of what we’re doing is trailers and most of what we repair is water damage in one way or another,” Bob says. “Either the roof or the plumbing is leaking. Obviously, we always try to make sure they don’t fall through, and we keep the critters out.”

Housing Partnerships works on a project-by-project basis with a county or the city funding a portion of the work. Fundraising, grants and individual/business donations contribute to their bottom line. They are a United Way partner agency. The client doesn’t pay anything.

“Probably the big difference between us and Habitat for Humanity is that there is no sweat equity,” Bob says of Housing Partnership’s work. “If folks are fairly handy and willing to do it, great. But other times it’s easier if we just get in there and be done with it.”

There are two regular crews who work in addition to periodic groups of college students, church members and other volunteers.

Most of Housing Partnership’s volunteers are retired. Each volunteer has their own skillset: some in the electrical world, some in carpentry and plumbing where Bob’s strengths are. Some do very nice woodworking, but they are used to building jewelry boxes and have to change gears a little.

“Our group of guys could sit there and look at a job and say, we can do it that way and that way,” Bob says. “About 15 seconds later, you’ve got agreement which is nice. So we all get along and everybody’s quirky.”

“There’s a ton of stuff to do around here,” he says. “You don’t realize that because you’re beaming up and down the street all the time and don’t see trailer parks off to the side. Go off the main road and these homes are there. We could really use more volunteers.”

Recently, Bob’s crew pulled a wheelchair lift out of a lady’s house that they put in two years ago for her husband. He passed away recently and she did not need it anymore. The crew put the lift on a truck and installed it for another family in need.

“This went from an elderly gentleman who passed away and it goes to a 10-year-old with cerebral palsy,” he says. “She (the widow) wrote us a very nice note, donated some of her husband’s tools and made a monetary donation. We have been back to do a little fix up with wood rot in the doors and things like that.”

“I think it gives folks who don’t have a lot of other options a way of staying in their homes and remaining independent,” Bob Burke explains. “We do our best to make that goal a reality.”

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Flower Power

By Wynne Bowman



Lisa W. Cumming Photography

With a sight, a smell and a texture comes a memory. For the volunteers at Blooms That Brighten, an organization that has been delivering flowers to Williamsburg’s community care centers since 2008, connecting care residents to colorful memories of their past is the reward of their efforts.

Bonnie Klem, Volunteer Coordinator of Blooms That Brighten, explains the process as one that yields a room full of smiles. “We, the volunteers, visit a different place each week. All

of us meet at the home and act as visitors for its residents, interacting with them and chatting with them. Together, we fill the vases and create bouquets while spending time at the home.”

The members of Blooms That Brighten dedicate their Wednesdays to these assisted living facilities, providing a hands-on visit for each resident who wants to participate. “There are all levels of participation,” Bonnie says. “One week, people will actively assist in creating the bouquets while the next week they choose to

simply sit and watch.”

Routinely, before visiting the locations, a delivery volunteer of Blooms That Brighten will collect donations from local companies including Morrison’s Flowers and Gifts, Williamsburg Floral, Schmidt’s Flowers and Accessories, Trader Joe’s, Martin’s, Fresh Market and Farm Fresh. This allows the program to run smoothly, offering any extra flowers and bouquets they can at no cost to this 100% volunteer organization. Often, the vases are provided by the volunteers

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themselves. After conducting a workshop and leaving the flowers with continuing care residents, the members of Blooms That Brighten will return to the care homes a week later, collect the emptied vases and continue the process.

Bonnie, who moved to Williamsburg from Northern Virginia about five years ago, came across information about this non-profit here in Next Door Neighbors magazine and has been blown away by the positivity and fulfillment the program has brought to her. After previously working for a florist in her hometown of Vienna, Virginia, she was immediately drawn to the opportunities that Blooms That Brighten had to offer. With time spent away from the florist shop, Bonnie was eager to work with flowers again. Happily, she claims, “I knew I wanted to be a part of the program, but I had no idea it would be as wonderful as it is. The combination of working with flowers and the elderly is just perfect.”

“I think all of the volunteers feel the same way,” she continues. “It is incredible to go into a facility and watch what happens to the residents. The interaction is wonderful. They are always so appreciative, and you can tell the flowers awaken things that have been lost in their past. The smell, the look – it all brings back memories. This especially goes for one in-care resident whose father used to be a florist in New York. We can tell we make a difference when we come in, and I have been able to witness so many life-changing moments because of it.”

Through her experiences, Bonnie has given a new light to the notion that an assisted living facility is just a place for elders to spend their days waiting. “There was a lady who once told me that she thought her children put her in the home to die. The day I met her, we were bringing in flowers for everyone to arrange, and there was an ice cream social scheduled that same day.” After the woman realized that fun events are always planned throughout the week, Bonnie explains, “I could see her outlook change. Before the ice cream social, she came out of her room smiling.”

Bonnie, as someone who lost her parents at a young age, is now able to witness and be a part of the challenges that come with an extended life experience. “I’ve learned that you never know what to expect,” she says. “I get to see a different angle of what happens at the end of life. I can see children doing what they know is best for their parents when they know the parents cannot be at home alone anymore. Truly, these facilities are godsend. It is wonderful to know that there are people who will happily care for your family members at the end of their life.”

The stories that Bonnie has collected from her time in these facilities are the reason why she is happy to put forth the effort. “Just the other week, we were able to help celebrate a woman’s 103rd birthday. In another facility,” she continues, “there is a gentleman who only leaves his room when we come to visit. When he knows we are on the calendar, he always comes down to see us. He gets around in his wheelchair, but there was one night recently in which he stood up out of his wheelchair to participate. No one had ever seen him get out of his wheelchair before, so this was just wonderful. Visiting these homes can be such a joy.”

This joy does not only exist in these homes, but in the energy which Bonnie and the other volunteers of Blooms That Brighten provide with each visit. Since the organization was founded in 2008, more than 30,000 bouquets have been distributed to the care centers in the Williamsburg area. Annually, these volunteers spend more than 6,000 hours working to put smiles on the resident’s faces. The program works with eleven continuing care facilities from West Point to Newport News, nine of which are in Williamsburg.

“Surprisingly, only three percent of residents in assisted living facilities receive a visitor each month,” she says. This means that the volunteers of Blooms That Brighten provide well over half of the residents with an interactive and fulfilling visit to look forward to on a regular basis. Most of the volunteers are retired, yet the volunteer ages range from the mid-

twenties to the mid-nineties.

Bonnie and her husband, Jon, have been married 35 years. They are retired now, which is what brought them to Williamsburg. "Jon really wanted to live in a golf community, and the more we visited Williamsburg, the more I grew to like it. I really love the community. It's low-key and enjoyable. I am also a gardener, and I love the fact that just two hours south of Washington D.C., there is a totally different growing environment. We have been living in Ford's Colony and it is fabulous."

As part of the landscape design committee for Ford's Colony, Bonnie keeps herself busy. "I also go to the gym when I can, and Jon and I bowl on Mondays. I work in my church office on Thursdays and I also like to play Mahjong with my neighbors in my free time."

The Ford's Colony Country Club recently hosted the annual Blooms That Brighten fundraiser, named "Art of Tea." As this is the organization's only fundraiser of the year, most of the money that keeps the program circulating comes from donations, both monetary and material. None of the members are paid nor are on a salary, so 100% of the donations go immediately back into the community, keeping the program alive and keeping Williamsburg's continuing care residents happy.

For now, Blooms That Brighten holds a special place in the hearts of more than 20 volunteers and 1,300 continuing care residents.

As the Volunteer Coordinator of this blooming nonprofit, Bonnie wants to keep the volunteer list growing. There is a job for everyone and a place for each volunteer's skill set to shine. From public relations, floral experience and an interest in giving colors and life back to the community, Blooms That Brighten provides its volunteers and clients with a chance to thrive and Bonnie Klem helps to make it all happen. NDN

To learn more about the program and how to volunteer or donate, visit BloomsThatBrighten.org or call (757) 570-1909.

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HELPING TO PROTECT LOCAL LAND



By Susannah Livingston

They say people who volunteer their time and talents often receive more than they give. Travis Crayosky couldn't agree more.

Principal of Environmental Services for the environmental consulting firm Stantec, Inc., Travis arrived in Williamsburg 20 years ago with a passion for the natural world and a determination to help safeguard its future. Since 2010, he's also served on the board of directors of the Historic Virginia Land Conservancy, formerly the Williamsburg Land Conservancy,

a volunteer position that seems to fit him like a glove.

Travis grew up in the small town of Huntingdon in central Pennsylvania, about an hour south of State College. The youngest of three brothers, he spent every minute he could exploring the outdoors with his family and friends. "Nature was my playground," he explains. "I always thought science and nature were fascinating. You watch the sun rise every day and you have to wonder 'Why?' or

'How?'" As a kid, Travis says, he would think about a tree growing or a farmer plowing a field, and he decided he wanted to find out how those things worked.

By the time he enrolled as an undergraduate at Penn State, Travis knew that he wanted to study natural processes and use his understanding of them to improve and protect the environment.

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says, “anything and everything that I would have wanted to do environmentally. I understood things in two dimensions, but I wanted to understand that third dimension.” He majored in earth sciences, specializing in geology, and was a catcher on the school’s Big Ten baseball team. When he finished his undergrad degree, he went on for a Master’s Degree in Forest Hydrology.

Penn State was eye-opening in more ways than one. As a small-town boy, Travis says he’d had very little exposure to cultural diversity. “I had 800 students in my biology 101 class. Thirty thousand people were changing classes at 9 a.m., people from all over the world, all walks of life.” For the self-professed “people watcher” with a powerful curiosity, it was an exhilarating time.

In 1996, with a freshly minted master’s degree, Travis moved to Williamsburg to begin working as an ecologist for the Williamsburg Environmental Group (WEG). He primarily worked in engineering and water resources work. Then, he explains, “Some regulations changed which really propelled the line of work I’m in now, larger-scale ecosystem restoration projects throughout the Commonwealth.”

Today Travis works for Stantec, which acquired WEG in 2014. Locally, the firm currently works with James City County on stormwater issues such as restoring streams to reduce erosion and ultimately to improve drainage and water quality for county residents. “You can restore, preserve, enhance and protect natural resources and make that a business. That’s what I do.” Travis adds that it was his understanding of the interaction of economics and the environment that made him a good fit with the Historic Virginia Land Conservancy’s (HVLC) work.

HVLC, which was established in 1990 as the nonprofit Historic Rivers Land Conservancy and soon became known as the Williamsburg Land Conservancy, was incorporated specifically to use the provisions of the Virginia Conservation Easement Act. Working with private landowners, including farmers and developers, the organization protects and permanently preserves significant natural, scenic, agricultural and historic land in the lower James, York and Rappahannock rivers watersheds. Property owners who donate land enjoy significant tax benefits and, in many cases, the option of continuing to use the land.

The essential goal of a conservancy is to set land aside in perpetuity for the enjoyment of all. But, like other conservation organizations, Travis says, the HVLC is not a no-growth organization. “Not all lands should be conserved, but there are times and places and lands that should absolutely be conserved, and that’s what we support.”

Travis joined the Conservancy’s board five years ago when friend and former board member, Mark Rinaldi, put his name forward. “Mark asked me to give it some thought because what I do professionally touches on issues that affect conservation,” Travis explains. He became board chair in 2015 and is now starting his second term.

Travis says the most common misconception about land conservation is that it creates a no-touch zone. “People think the owners can’t do anything with it, and nobody can touch it. That’s really not the case. You can still have limited development and use. Questions we get a lot are: ‘Can I still farm, can I still manage timber, can I still hunt and fish?’ The answer very often is ‘yes.’” And the public benefits greatly, Travis says, because permanently preserving a beautiful and perhaps historic piece of land helps maintain the character and ambience of a very special region.

One of the main challenges to land conservation in this area is that development pressure is high. But Travis is glad to point out that developers themselves often become advocates for the preservation of greenspace.

“There was one developer who had a big footprint and had planned to build a lot of homes. Instead, that developer reduced the footprint and conserved about 200 acres enjoying the benefits that go with such a decision. That company just went with a different model, and it turned out to be a great example of what can work.”

Travis also mentions Poplar Springs Farm, a beautiful 103-acre tract in historic New Kent that has been farmed by the Talley family for six generations. “It’s easy to get emotional when Jim Talley tells his story, just knowing the legacy he’s going to leave,” Travis says. “There are multiple conservation models that work, farmer, developer, and everything in between. There are many paths to conservation and in my view none of them are incorrect.”

HVLC just celebrated its 25th anniversary and is now the steward of 41 easements comprising more than 6,350 acres. Most of the land is in James City, King William, and New Kent counties, but there are also properties in the city of Williamsburg and Charles City, Gloucester, Surry, Suffolk and York counties. Preliminary plans are under way to assume the stewardship of easements in the Middle Peninsula. Travis explains that, as a fully accredited land conservancy with a strong operational structure, HVLC is in a good position to work with landowners who want to leave a legacy of land for the enjoyment of all. The Conservancy’s work is supported by annual membership dues, individual and corporate contributions and grants.

If a property owner decides to explore the option of conserving a piece of land, Travis says, all he or she has to do is contact HVLC at (757) 565-0343 or visit historicvirginialandconservancy.org. From there, the organization’s multidisciplinary professional team will assess the property’s eligibility for conservation and, if appropriate, guide the owner through the process of protecting the land.

Though his great admiration for the Conservancy is evident, Travis is quick to say that the decision to put land under conservation is a big one. “It’s not something to take lightly. As we sometimes say, perpetuity is a long time,” he adds, smiling.

When not going about his work with Stantec or giving his time to the Conservancy, Travis likes to hunt, fish, and spend time with his wife, Karen, who is an artist, and their daughter, Caitlyn, and son Cade, ages nine and six. By his own account, he’s an old-school dad, exploring and playing outdoors with his kids or huddling around a game of Parcheesi or Uno. He laughs when asked how he feels about kids and screen time. “Let’s just say I strongly encourage that they be outside. I tell them, ‘At 5:15 when it’s dark, you can play on the computer.’”

Travis Crayosky says he is humbled by his experience with the HVLC and grateful for the opportunities to do good that the organization has given him. “We all enjoy greenspace. We like living in beautiful areas with land conservation. We all get to enjoy them even though we don’t personally own a big piece of land.” He mentions Mainland Farm, the oldest working farm in America, a lovely, peaceful tract that is now under the Conservancy’s protection. “There’s probably not a person who drives down Greensprings Road who wouldn’t think, ‘I’m really glad we did that.’” NDN

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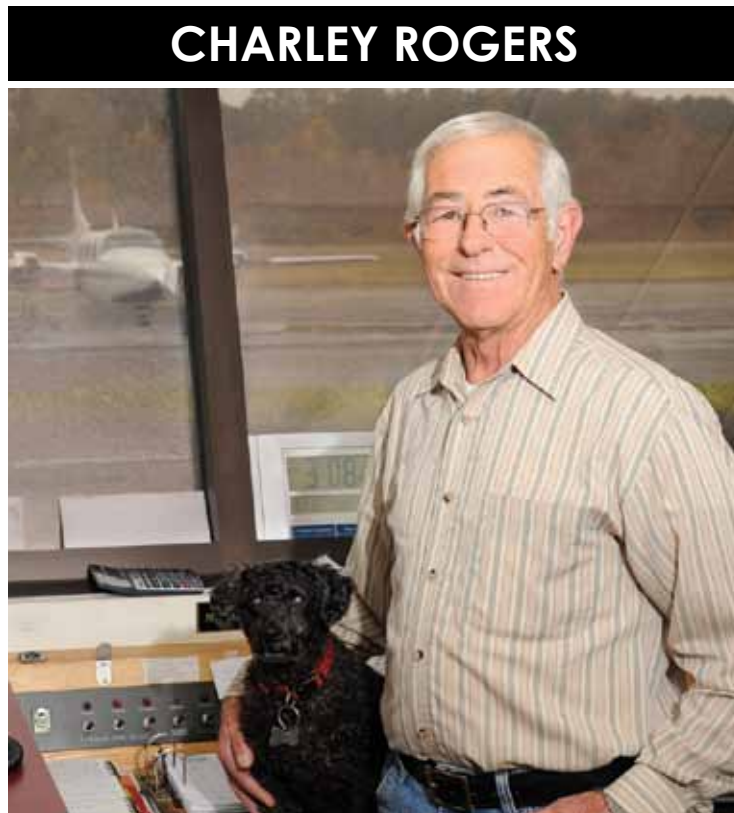
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CHARLEY ROGERS

Lisa W. Cumming Photography

Wind Beneath Their Wings

By Linda Landreth Phelps

"I am an aviator," Charley Rogers says. "You don't have to be a pilot to be an aviator, you know. I started in the aviation industry when I was in the Navy during Vietnam." Back then he served aboard aircraft carriers in a support capacity. Charley's job was office work, though he always wanted to give flying a go if the chance ever came his way. That chance didn't come for Charley, but thanks to him and his efforts, many others will earn their wings.

After serving in Vietnam, Charley left the Navy and went into the insurance business, where he stayed for thirty years. When retirement came, he had time again for plenty of fishing and hunting, just as he'd done in his boyhood home town of Big Stone Gap, Virginia.

"I was president of the Virginia Peninsula Sportsman's Association at one time, and created the Big Game Citation Program for bear, deer and turkey," Charley recalls with pride. He also kept busy with his Five Forks Ruritan Club volunteer work and looked forward to his habitual season as a Salvation Army bell ringer. A bachelor without kids or local family ties, Charley had no real obligations and time on his hands.

Ten years ago, a lunch at the Williamsburg/Jamestown Airport changed all that. "I was eating here at Charly's Restaurant because I like the food and enjoyed watching the planes take off and land. I was just finishing up and saw owner, Larry Waltrip, at a table right over there," he gestures. "I thought I'd go over and say howdy." Larry and Charley struck up an agreeable conversation and when Larry's wife came in and saw them together, she thought her husband was trying to hire him. "Don't work for Larry at the mulch business, work for me here at the airport," Jean said to

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Charley. "I can use the help!"

"I told her I didn't want to get tied down to a full time job, so we agreed I'd come two or three days a week and see how it went." Two days quickly became three, then four and five. Sadly, Jean has now passed away, but Charley can be found making himself useful at the airport almost every day, whether he's on the clock or not. He didn't just accept a job, he found a family.

"I'm in the operations department," he says. "I pump gas, talk to the pilots on the radio, take care of the planes and the customers, things of that nature." Though he's been known to get a fishing line wet occasionally, he doesn't hunt much anymore. The woods around the airfield are full of deer, and they're a danger when they wander onto the runway. In season or out, it's legal to shoot them if they can't be chased off. Charley says it kind of took the sport out of it for him. "I still like to walk in the woods, but now I take a friend or my camera instead of a gun."

At 68, Charley enjoys the bustle of business, but likes that the airport's active times come in short, intense bursts. Events such as the Warbirds and Seaplane Association gatherings that he planned keep things interesting. Last October, the airport celebrated its 45th anniversary with a hugely successful open house.

Charley and his best buddy and constant shadow, a small, well-mannered black poodle named Pablo, keep a close eye on their territory. Pablo is impelled to "snoopervise" the comings and goings of customers, bestowing his final seal of approval with a sniff and a wag of his stubby tail.

Happy to be part of the aviation industry again, Charley began to think the time had finally come for his long-deferred dream, to become a private pilot. "I scheduled my first lesson with an instructor, and the day before it was to happen, I had a heart attack," Charley says. "I hadn't been feeling well and I woke up with chest pains, so I drove myself to Sentara."

He had two stents put in, and after a 5-day stay, was discharged. "The hospital wanted to know how I was getting home. I pointed to my car in the parking lot and told them, "The same way I got here!" he says with a soft chuckle.

Charley lived, but his dream of earning wings died. There was no chance the FAA would give Charley his pilot's license, so he put his hopes away. He's content with the occasional joyride he snags with the airport regulars. "I've been up about 150 times or more," Charley says. Flying is still fun, even if it's done in the copilot's seat.

A couple of years ago Charley looked around the airport and noticed something...or rather, the lack of something important. Almost all of

the pilots he saw were middle-aged, Caucasian men. Where were the young people, the women, the minorities? From where would the next generation of private pilots come, and what would they look like? In a sometimes uncertain economy, the cost of flying lessons is beyond the reach of many. Something should be done to change this state of affairs, Charley figured. He chewed on the problem for a while and then decided to act.

"I talked to Shaun Stewart, who owns the flight school next door," he remembers. "He said he'd been thinking the same thing, and so we got together out there on the patio one day to discuss it." With them was friend and pilot, Thomas "Tuck" McAtee, and soon they asked another concerned friend, Mark Badanowski, to join them. Others quickly followed, and the newly formed group hammered out a plan.

"We officially organized in May, 2013. A lawyer, Tim McSwain, helped us to incorporate as the Williamsburg Aviation Scholarship Program, or WASP, a 501(c)(3) foundation. Instead of the nine months we expected it to take for approval, it came in just five weeks. Everybody who's on the board of directors is a pilot except me," Charley says. Their foundation's mission is to identify and select qualified, highly motivated high school students and offer them a full scholarship to the Williamsburg Flight Center.

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In particular, the members hope to recruit deserving minority and female applicants who want to earn their Private Pilot License (PPL).

They kicked off the program with a fundraiser. Thanks to Charley's extensive airport email list he'd compiled over the years, the response was good. Money began to flow. "We've had donations ranging from spare change in the jar up there next to the cash register to larger ones like the one that came in this week for \$10,000," Charley recalls. Eventually there was enough to begin awarding scholarships.

The foundation's process is to solicit applications from every high school in James City County and Williamsburg, both public and private. After receiving approval from the school board, they asked guidance counselors to encourage deserving students at least 16 years old to apply for their school's recommendation. "A maximum of two entries from each school come to us for review," Charley says, "but some don't send any." A committee of pilots interviews the final applicants and their parents and selects the students who will receive training.

"We pick them strictly by whoever is the most qualified and motivated," he says. The committee isn't looking for someone who thinks they might like to try flying; they are searching out the ones who've spent hopeful hours watching airplanes high above them, dreaming of future

flight. They prefer to help kids who long to fly.

"We raised enough money for five scholarships last year," Charley says. "The class of 2015 started flight school here at the airport last June. At \$200 an hour, it costs about \$13,000 per student, so you can see that in a small community like ours, it's a challenge to raise enough for the ten scholarships that we'd like to award in 2016."

One of those initial students stands out for Charley. "This young man did a great job," he says. "He studied hard, soloed early and was here when he was supposed to be. If the weather was bad, he'd check in to see if he was going to fly. His goal is to become an airline pilot, which means 1,500 flight hours before they'll even consider you."

Another scholarship recipient who was diligent did well after an initial struggle. Hard work is paying off for him and he's come a long way. He's a soft-spoken man who seems an unlikely hero, but some heroic acts can be accomplished quietly; all it takes is a selfless idea and the grit to see it through. As an earthbound aviator, Charley Rogers wants to see others soar. NDN

To find out more about the Williamsburg Aviation Scholarship Program, or to make a donation, call Williamsburg/Jamestown Airport at 757-229-9256. Chances are good that it will be Charley who picks up the phone.

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PAT MISAGE

If you know Pat Misage, two words probably come to mind when asked to describe her: reading and volunteering.

Pat has spent the past 13 years volunteering her time at the James City County Library in Norge. Each week, Pat can be found processing books, which she describes as covering the books with plastic, stamping and dating them, and getting the books ready for the public.

"I do the grunge work." She laughs. "The simple, ordinary, fun stuff. The cataloger used to do it all, but with my help we are able to get more books out there for the public at a faster rate."

Pat's motivation for getting up every day and doing the "grunge work" for more than a decade is one simple reason. "I love books," she says. "I have always loved books and have been very fortunate to have the opportunity to volunteer in libraries and schools for the past 40 years."

With a degree in teaching, Pat went to work shortly after marrying her husband 52 years ago. When her first child came along, Pat left her position as a teacher to raise her family. However, Pat couldn't stay away from books and teaching for long, so she started volunteering in her kids' schools.

Pat says she has always felt that it is so important for her to know what her children



Lisa W. Cumming Photography

til Pat's youngest child graduated from high school that she started to volunteer at the library in Fairfax where her family was living at the time.

In the digital age we live in today, books have changed a lot throughout Pat's 40 years as a volunteer. When it comes to the fact that books have become more and more digital, Pat says while she realizes progress is important, nothing can beat holding a book in your hands.

Her love for books started at a very young age. A native of Northern Virginia, she grew up in a household where everyone read and there

wasn't a television to be found; a tradition she maintained while raising her own children.

With her children now grown with families of their own, Pat is still proud to admit she does not own a television, and when her grandchildren come to visit they enjoy reading the same books their parents read growing up.

Pat's "no TV" rule probably seems impossible in such a technology-dependent world, but she says it's never caused a problem with her kids or grandkids. "When they come to my house, they play outside and dig in the dirt," she says. "We read books, ride bikes and talk to each other. They accepted the rule

BOOK THEM

By Erin Fryer

are learning, so volunteering in their schools helped her keep up. "I think it's just as much the parent's responsibility to teach the children as it is the teacher's," she says. It wasn't un-

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without question.”

Pat says she also taught her children and grandchildren how great it is to volunteer. “I wanted them to know volunteering is not just something you do as a requirement to graduate from high school,” she says with a laugh. “If you have the time to do it, it can be very rewarding. You also learn more than you could ever imagine.”

She is proud that her kids have followed in her footsteps, and all of them love books and do volunteer work in their spare time.

She explains what inspires her to volunteer is her desire to be around books and to interact with intelligent people who know a lot about books and can share what they know with her. She also likes that they encourage her to be more open to the idea of digital books on computers and mobile devices. “I can’t get stuck in the stone age,” she says. “That’s an important reason I come here every day, to learn.”

Volunteering at the library keeps her mind alert. “I learn a tremendous amount from reading, and sometimes I read books I never would have read but they have been recommended from people at the library. It gives me something I can share with my kids and

grandkids but also keeps me on the ball at the same time.”

Pat suspects she reads about 20 books per month. She prefers English and Irish authors, particularly those written by strong women. Her favorite author is Barbara Radford Taylor. She says she reads mostly fiction, but sometimes she will mix it up.

When you read as many books as Pat does, they are sure to not all boast the most engaging storylines, but Pat says it’s very rare for her to not finish a book. “I always feel like the author is trying to take you somewhere, so I always give them the chance to finish.”

With such a love for books, one might be surprised to find out that Pat has no interest in ever writing her own book. “I encourage kids to get their thoughts down and I think creative writing is wonderful, but I talk so much I don’t need to write.” She laughs.

Pat is thankful for her husband of more than five decades for encouraging her to keep her volunteer work going all of these years. She admits a big part of her happy marriage is the fact that she has been out of the home so much with her volunteer work. “When people retire you have to let them do their own thing,” she

says. “You can’t be in each other’s pockets all of the time.”

In addition to her volunteer work at the library, Pat used to volunteer at Avalon Women’s Shelter in Williamsburg where she would host play groups for the children of the women who were seeking counseling. Unfortunately, Pat’s two knee replacements made it hard for her to lift the little ones, so she went back to only volunteering at the library.

Her most rewarding part about volunteering at the library has been meeting intelligent people who can teach her something. “I am not up on all this digital jazz. I use a computer, but I am not up-to-date on all of the different avenues out there and I need to be open to them. I have learned so much by just listening to others, and they encourage me to broaden my horizons.”

Having recently celebrated her 75th birthday, Pat’s energy for volunteering and passion for reading is infectious. While she says she doesn’t have any concrete plans for the future, it’s safe to say Pat Misage will continue to be a valuable asset for James City County Library and her fellow book-lovers of Williamsburg for many years to come. NDN



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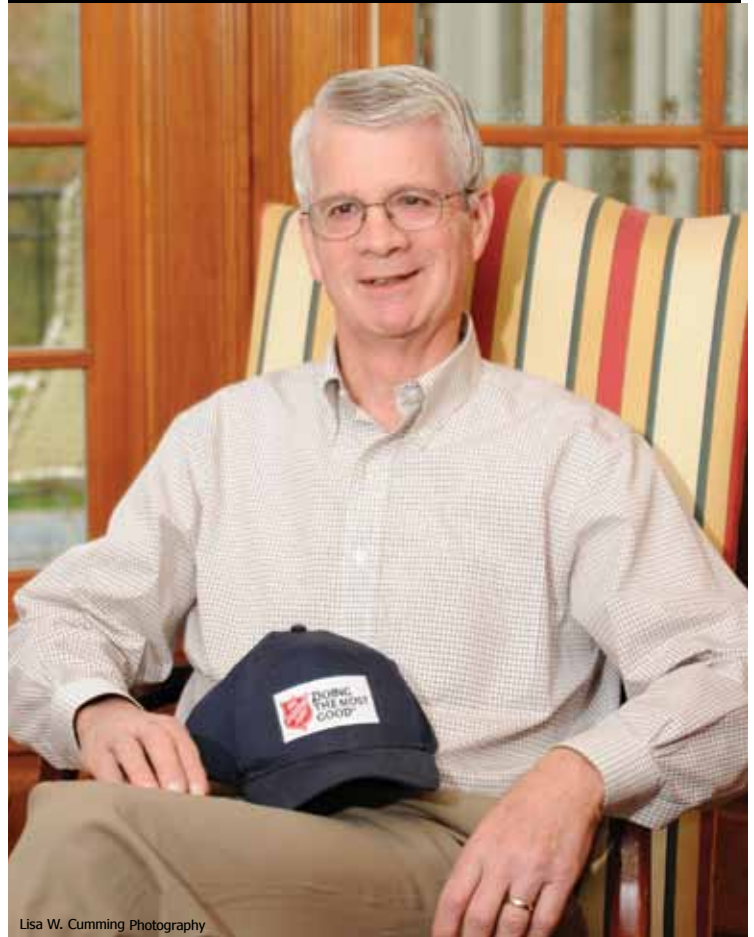


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JOE AVELLAR



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Guiding LIGHT

By Brandy Centolanza

The mission of The Salvation Army is "Doing the Most Good," and for the past decade, Joe Avellar has been a dedicated volunteer helping to fulfill that mission.

Joe first interacted with The Salvation Army about 15 years ago in Wichita, Kansas when he was assigned to manage the costs and care of a project involving The Salvation Army and another organization involved with youth and foster care. Joe was so inspired by The Salvation Army workers on that particular project that he decided he would one day be just like them.

"I loved what they were doing, what they stood for," recalls Joe. "I admired their dedication and their spirit, and I decided that I wanted to be more involved with The Salvation Army once I retired. I wanted to use my skills to help them."

True to his word, Joe, a former manager for behavioral health care who moved to Williamsburg in 2001, sought out The Salvation Army

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here in town upon his retirement in 2005. He's been an active volunteer with The Salvation Army and other organizations ever since.

"I like the fact that I can help The Salvation Army fulfill its mission of helping the poor and needy," Joe says.

Joe first connected with the local The Salvation Army through the outreach program at his church, Williamsburg Presbyterian Church. Through The Salvation Army as well as another program at the church called From His Hand, Joe coordinates volunteers from his church as well as 14 other congregations to cook and deliver hot, nutritious meals on a weekly basis to needy people in Grove as well as four local hotels and motels that temporarily house those without a place to stay.

Joe, who sits on the local Salvation Army board, also organizes the volunteers for The Salvation Army's Angel Tree distribution. The Salvation Army's Angel Tree program provides clothing and toys for needy families during the holidays.

In addition, Joe devotes time to The Salvation Army's food drive for area schools and assists with the organization's Transitional Housing Program, which provides individuals and families with important life skills in order to be more successful.

"I help people learn how to budget and manage their expenses, clean up their credit," Joe says. "I help them learn how to get out of that cycle that they are in, and try to teach them that there is another way."

He's also hands on with the Transitional Housing Program in other ways. "I have done inside repairs in the apartments, repaired furniture, as well as help move residents into their transitional apartments," he says. "I am pleased that I have the time and talents that can be used to help the Transitional Housing Program."

Joe can't praise The Salvation Army enough for all it does for the community. "I do pretty much whatever they ask me to do," he says. "The reason I got involved is because the people are models for me to be a disciple of Jesus Christ. They inspire me with all the sacrifices they make and all that they do. I am quite proud to be a part of it."

During the holidays, you probably saw Joe outside ringing one of the bells for The Salvation Army's Kettle Bell Drive. Eighty percent of The Salvation Army's funding comes from this popular drive, which runs Thanksgiving through Christmas. Funds from the kettle drive go toward several services including: providing toys for children, providing groceries for needy families, sheltering the homeless, and other general relief and assistance during the holiday season.

"When people hear the bell and see The Salvation Army shield, they will come talk to me and share these amazing stories about how The Salvation Army touched their lives," Joe shares. "Sometimes you think you have your life figured out and then something happens and turns it upside down. The Salvation Army is there to help you get through those difficulties."

He recalls being a part of one such scenario a few years ago, when a woman came to The Salvation Army looking for assistance after her retired husband fell ill and required treatment not covered by his health insurance. "They spent all they had to pay for the treatment and were nearly destitute except for their monthly pensions," Joe says. "I was struck by how someone who had planned, saved and prepared for their retirement could get into such a position through no fault of their own.

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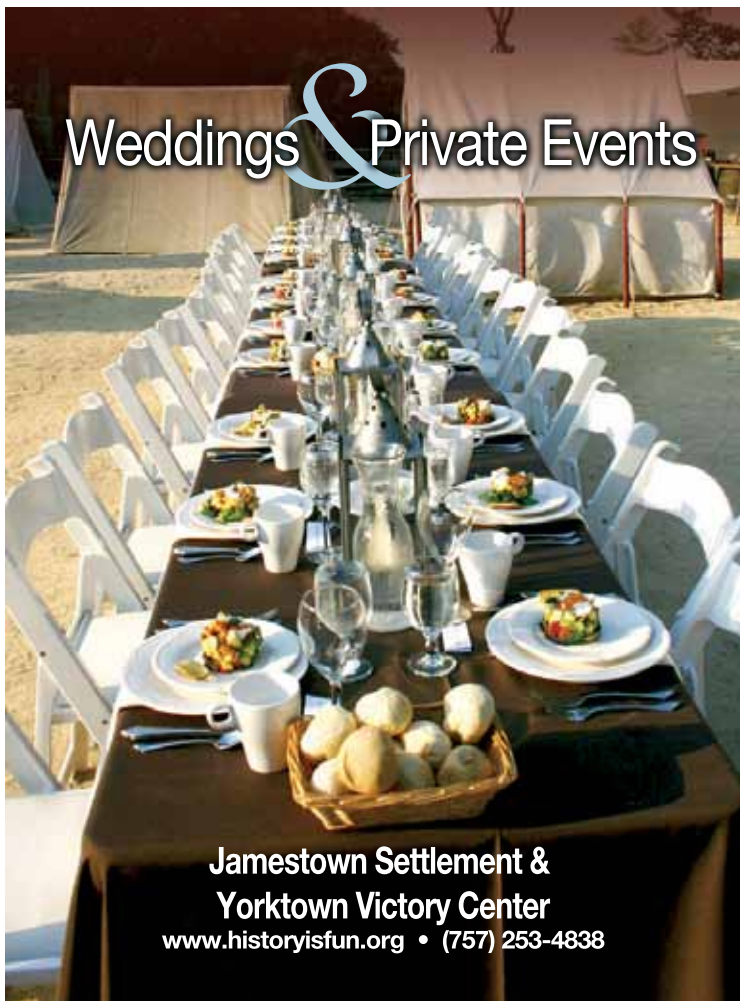


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I was glad The Salvation Army was there to help them and that I was part of their mission.”

Five years ago, Joe began volunteering through another organization, Kairos Prison Ministry of Virginia, a Christian faith-based ministry that provides spiritual guidance and support to incarcerated individuals. Parishioners from various churches in the Richmond and Tidewater areas spend four days at The Sussex II state prison in Waverly, Virginia sharing cookies and fellowship with the inmates. In October, 26,000 cookies were distributed to the prisoners during discussions about faith and forgiveness.

“It’s about showing them God’s love,” Joe says. “We want to show them that God hasn’t forgotten about them. It’s about forgiveness.”

Joe had some reservations about volunteering with the organization in the beginning, but that soon changed once he started talking with those involved with the program. “It was out of my comfort zone, but I thought I’d give it a try. People shared some of their experiences with me, and I felt that I had a purpose for being there. I want to show them that there is a better way to live your life.”

Every six months, there are group reunions at the prison called “Prayer and Share.”

“The wardens love the program,” Joe says. “The recidivism rate is 22 percent for those who’ve been in the program for 72 months.”

Joe considers being a part of Kairos Prison Ministry a calling. “I realize I was guilty of forgetting about prisoners. I feel I have a responsibility to help them and to try to give them hope. Every time I participate in the program I am always amazed how this program changes some of the prisoners’ lives. They struggle with some of the same issues I do with having faith and trusting God.”

Joe is also active with Community of Faith Mission (COFM), the winter homeless shelter program in Williamsburg in which various congregations take turns housing folks without a place to stay during the colder nights. Joe is the lead organizer for his church.

“I like doing this because I feel I can share the grace and blessings that have been given to me with others who are less fortunate,” he says. “I think COFM guests, as a result of their experiences at COFM, can see the blessings in their lives. In so doing, I hope this will help them to find ways to improve their situations so that they can have adequate food and secure shelter on their own.”

Joe’s wife, Sarah, is also an avid volunteer who is president of The Salvation Army’s Women’s Auxiliary. The pair also helps build homes on the Eastern Shore through Habitat for Humanity.

Beyond volunteering, Joe and Sarah enjoy spending time with their daughter whenever they can, gardening, and travelling. “We enjoy visiting museums and learning about new things,” Joe says. But they mostly focus on devoting their time to bettering the lives of others.

“I’ve always volunteered, ever since college,” Joe Avellar says. “I used to do it because it was the right thing to do, and it made me feel good. Now, I see myself as an instrument with skills to help others. It’s not about me, but rather it’s about what people see me doing and showing them that they can do it too. I’m doing what God wants me to do, to be a light for people.” NDN

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Lisa W. Cumming Photography

HE'S ALL ABOUT COMMUNICATING

By Greg Lilly, Editor

"The first time I really realized the value of public service was when I worked in Recreation while I was going to college," explains Marvin Collins III, Williamsburg's city manager. He worked with an after-school program in North Carolina while attending Appalachian State University, and he thought it would be a fun way to gain some experience and shoot basketball with the kids, maybe mentor a little.

"One day, one of the youth came to me and said, 'Mr. Collins, I need to talk to you.' He had been on his way home from school. 'I went behind a business downtown,' he said. 'A guy yelled something very negative to me.' It was a racial slur. He continued, 'I had two choices. My brother has a gun at home. I felt very angry. I wanted to go home and get my brother's gun. But, I made the other choice and came here to talk to you about it first.'

That changed my life," Marvin says. "I don't take for granted how im-

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portant it is touching people's lives in public service."

Most people presume someone will ensure the fire department shows up when a building catches fire or that the water flows when the faucet is turned or that recreational basketball is available for their child.

"All that happens because of the thoughtful hard work of public servants," Marvin says. "That's really what drives me. I have a strong value in helping others. I get excited about public service and what we do."

Marvin was born in Raleigh, but his family moved around the Sandhills area of North Carolina to towns like Goldsboro, Southern Pines and Pinehurst. "My father is a community planner. The state planning awards are named after him. Growing up, I would color in landscape plans, attend public meetings. He conveyed a passion for community to me. My mother worked with special needs children and then became a Girl Scout field director for the county. Now, she's a bankruptcy attorney. She took a different path to community service and helping the community. I was strongly impressed by my family about giving to the community and the value of public service."

He went to the mountains of North Caro-

lina for college, studying at Appalachian State in Boone. He entered college in applied mathematical sciences to become an engineer. "Engineering ended at about the Calculus III level when I realized I could almost put a man on the moon," he says with a smile. "I didn't think we would find an astronaut who wanted to almost get to where they were going. I had to back off the sciences a little bit. I had a parallel track in public administration with a minor in geography. I finished that and got a job in Parks as a park supervisor for Catawba County, North Carolina."

Catawba County had started a new parks system, and Marvin did open space planning, grant writing, new park design, and he worked regionally on open space and environmental issues. His work caught the attention of a neighboring county, Burke County, looking for a planner to do open space planning.

He earned his Master's Degree in Public Administration and soon became the assistant county manager. A position opened in Fort Myers, Florida to work with the city manager there, newly hired Billy Mitchell from Newport News.

As the assistant city manager for Fort Myers, Marvin was assigned many tasks. "I was respon-

sible for a lot of the community development, redevelopment, public works, the arts programs, parks & recreations, economic development and citizen requests." He learned how to help solve the citizens' problems and concerns on a daily basis. "It was a challenge in Florida," he says. "It spoke to why I value what I do. There was a very strong need in the community for local government and public service. That attracts me. I like a challenge. I'm analytical by nature."

When Williamsburg began the search for a city manager with the announcement of Jack Tuttle's retirement, Marvin was interested. "It's Williamsburg," he says. "I grew up as the son of a planner. My father's areas (around Chapel Hill and Orange County) had a lot of historic preservation, a sense of place, environmental sensitivity with urban growth boundaries and a proud sense of community. That's still important to me. When I look at Williamsburg, it's a model of that. There is an importance of place here that permeates generation after generation. There's a value system with Colonial Williamsburg and what it imparts to the country and the world. There's a history in William and Mary that is phenomenal. The idea that you can walk in the same places as a lot of our Founding Fathers, that's exciting. There is a strong sense of

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place that calls to me.”

At the same time, Marvin says, there is a challenge of relevance to the community. “How do we convey that message and sense of place into the next generation? That’s a challenge of our generation. The Baby Boomers are retiring. They have an individual mindset in a lot of ways. The Millennials are more group-thinking, community-minded, technology-minded. Then there’s the Generation X group in between that I’m part of. I’m a bridge manager. How we bridge the community from the past to be relevant in the next generation. That challenge is exciting.”

Also the quality of the city’s employees enticed him. “There’s a highly competent workforce here at the city – very experienced and talented. Most of my department heads are, have been, or will be, the presidents of their state organizations or national organizations. The employees work a long time for their community. They value the community and the sense of place. All of that told me this was an organization that I wanted to be a part of.”

He uses the illustration of a bow tie to explain the job of a city manager. “On one side of the bow tie, you have the city staff that does the work with their technical knowledge, and you have the community input involvement

through the elected leadership on the other side that sets policy. The manager is really the knot in the middle that holds the tie together,” he describes. “The manager facilitates the communication from policy to implementation and from technical knowledge to community understanding. I’m a facilitator of communication. That’s a primary role.”

A city manager also servers the role of communicator with City Council of the highly technical issues that they need to understand to set policy. “There’s too much going on for part-time leaders to understand all the technical details. They need to have someone who works directly with them, who they trust, to handle that communication and review. That’s the role of a city manager.”

He has a broad background in the workings of local government, but he relies on the staff to be his experts. “I can’t have a definite opinion about any issue,” he says. “Anyone needs to feel free to come into this office and give their point of view without feeling they were prejudged in some way. Whether or not I have an opinion doesn’t matter. No one votes for a city manager, so no one wants my opinion. The Council wants my professional recommendation, but not my opinion.”

Instead of opinions, Marvin works with his

staff to provide facts to the City Council. “I can frame a conversation by providing facts for the conversation, but I’m not steering that conversation toward a personal opinion.” He wants the community to have an informed discussion, without guiding the outcome of the discussion. Sometimes that’s hard, he admits.

“Knowing that ability to shape my community and have meaningful input is exciting. It gets me up early and keeps me here late. It’s a 24-7 job, a job where I put everything into it.” Marvin began his job with the city of Williamsburg in August, so this year holds a lot of new experiences for him. He wants to take some time to wander up to Merchants Square and try the ice skating rink this winter.

“One thing exciting for the entire community will be the ‘Let Freedom Ring’ event and the Freedom Bell. That’s an effort between Colonial Williamsburg and First Baptist Church during the month of February for Black History Month.”

Marvin and his commitment to public service have touched many lives, and now he’s helping Williamsburg preserve its sense of place and prepare for the future. “Everything is a first for me here in Williamsburg. Each day is exciting for me. There are still a lot of new people for me to meet. That’s exhilarating.” NDN

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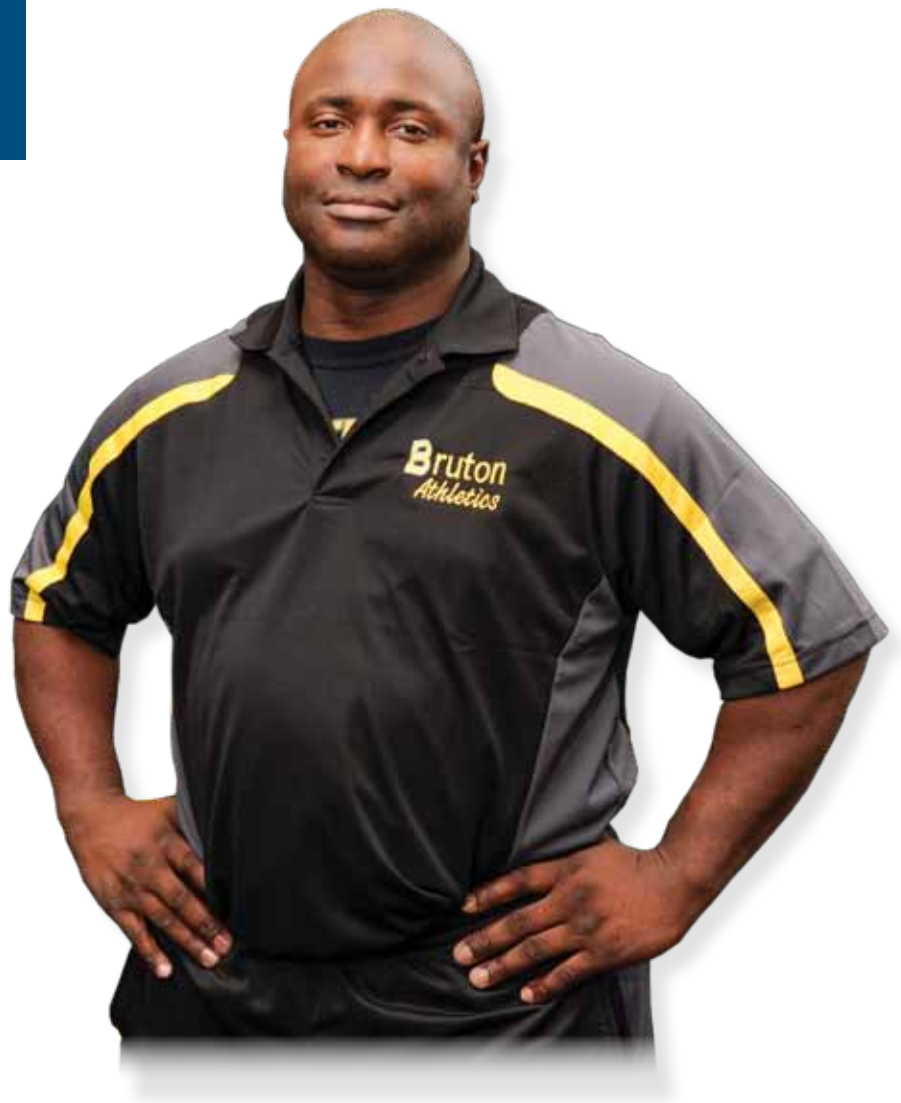


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90% Mental 10% Physical

By Greg Lilly, Editor



Lisa W. Cumming Photography

Coach Kyle Cowles explains that wrestling is the hardest sport in which to train. “No sport is like wrestling. It’s a sport in a class by itself. I did gymnastics, track, basketball, baseball, football, some soccer,” he explains. “Wrestling, by far, is the most overall demanding. You use every part of your body and you have to use your mind constantly. It’s 90 per-

cent mental and 10 percent physical.”

Kyle is the head coach for wrestling at Bruton High School. Wrestling is a grappling chess game of watching and anticipating an opponent’s next move in a split second and then reacting and setting up the next move. “There is really no one-on-one contact sports but wrestling,” he adds.

Kyle is in his 26th year of coaching wrestling. Born and raised in Williamsburg, Kyle lettered in three sports at Lafayette High School: football, wrestling and baseball. He first learned of wrestling as part of his James Blair Middle School gym class. “Coach Overton always had a class where we’d learn wrestling. During his class, I pinned everybody in

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less than 25 seconds. He coached me in football at James Blair, so he knew me. He said I should come to the high school and wrestle on the JV team.”

Kyle decided not to wrestle on the junior varsity team while in middle school. When he started at Lafayette, Kyle joined the football team his freshman year. “I needed something in the winter to keep me in shape for baseball. Baseball was my primary sport. So, I thought I’d wrestle to stay in shape.” He took to the sport. He was the most improved wrestler his freshman year, and by his junior and senior years, he was captain of the team.

“You have to have balance, be quick on your feet, have controlled aggression and be assertive. I was used to those because I had been a gymnast. I had the balance and the strength. From baseball, I had the assertiveness. Wrestling came naturally to me.”

By the end of Kyle’s senior year, he was burnt out physically by the constant rotation of competitive sports. He took two years off to let his body recover. Since he had been the captain of the wrestling team, he returned to help coach the Lafayette wrestlers after graduation.

“It’s a tough sport to teach and to coach. It’s one-on-one. Just you and him on the mat, and that comes down to who’s in the best shape and who wants it the most.”

To be a good wrestler, Kyle explains, the guys must know how to use their size as an asset, large or small, tall or short. “You don’t have to be brute-strong, but need to know how to use what you have to your advantage - know how to manipulate someone to get them into the position you need them in.”

Another part of recognizing a young wrestler is their state of mind. “With the younger kids, you can tell by their mentality. The successful ones don’t give up, don’t cry, don’t quit. They’re very assertive and headstrong. A successful wrestler will be mentally tough with balance and coordination.”

Also, wrestling isn’t just a boys’ sport like it was several years ago. “There are girl wrestlers,” Kyle says, “a lot of girls. There was a girl last year who almost won States. They practice with the boys.”

For those who haven’t attended a wrestling match, Kyle encourages readers to come out and cheer on Bruton’s team. When the match starts, each wrestler is on his/her feet. “Once the whistle blows, you want to take him down, either by a shot or a throw. Once you get him down, the objective is to get his shoulders to the mat to pin him or to get as many points as possible, turning him and exposing his back. Beat him by getting points or by a pin.”

The matches are timed so they move fast. Each match is three two-minute periods. The first period starts with both wrestlers in the neutral position (both standing). The second period allows one of the wrestlers to choose top, bottom or neutral, and the third period lets the other wrestler choose the starting position. “If they are even in points after that,” Kyle explains, “you have one minute where one of them will have to score.” This continues until one wrestler gains the most points (or pins his opponent). “Someone has to win. There is no tie in wrestling.”

During practice, Kyle takes his guys through the moves they need to

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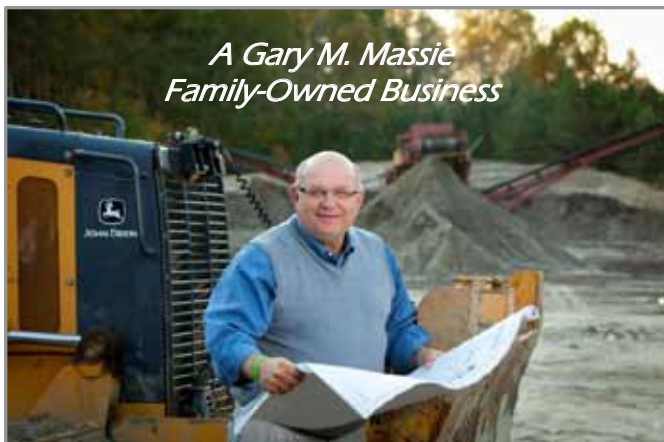
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takedown or escape their opponents. “You have to know how to take someone down. There are many moves to do that, single or double leg takedown, high crotch, fireman’s, duck under, or throw. The bottom man’s objective is to get a reversal to get on top or to get an escape. The top man’s objective is to break the guy down and turn him onto his back – to pin or get back points.” Wrestlers have to learn offensive and defensive moves and execute them instantly because the positions change quickly.

“You have to be well-rounded as a good wrestler. You have to know how to take someone down. It might come to a takedown to win a match or an escape to win or a reversal to win.”

Wrestling isn’t for everyone. It’s a tough sport that only a few are successful in. “We run more than the track team. We lift like the football team. We drill and condition all the time. You are always trying to be in the best shape possible. I played football,” Kyle says. “My best football shape was my worst wrestling shape. Wrestling practice is a constant workout.”

An aspect that Kyle likes about wrestling is that it’s great for the high school age group. “This sport is good for all that teenage extra energy. You burn it out. It’s used up. You will use it up in practice. By the time the wrestlers get home, they’re out of energy, not using any of that crazy energy after school. It’s all gone. Wrestling teaches them control, when and how to use aggression, channeling that into assertiveness.”

The wrestling season started just before Thanksgiving with practices and continues through February. “Regional tournaments are mid-February and state championships are at the end of February,” Kyle says. “My main goal is to win, but it’s not all about winning matches. I want to make the kids the best well-rounded kids possible, not just sports-wise, but teaching them life in the process. Wrestling is just like life. If you can get them to get wrestling down, they will be fine in the real world.”

Over his 27 years of coaching, Kyle has seen many of his athletes go on to college or the military, and then on to successful careers. “They were taught discipline in practice, in matches and even in maintaining their weight classes.”

Kyle wrestled for three years at Norfolk State. “I went there for baseball. They had one of the best programs in the CIAA (Central Intercollegiate Athletic Association), but the baseball season started so late. I decided to wrestle to stay in shape, just like I did in high school as a walk-on. I ended up getting a partial scholarship.” He won the state, the region and qualified for nationals his freshman year. “I was tenth in the nation my first year of college. Injuries the next couple of years plagued me from going back to nationals. I would still come back to coach in Williamsburg during my breaks.”

Kyle has coached many young men around the area. He coached at Lafayette High School for seven years then moved over to Jamestown. He spent 14 years at Smithfield as coach and now this is his fourth year at Bruton. “I’ve seen a lot of these kids change their lives through wrestling. It’s a tough sport that uses body and mind. It’s 90 percent mental and 10 percent physical. That’s why I love this sport.” NDN



Lisa W. Cumming Photography

Art Speaks a Truth

By Greg Lilly, Editor

“We don’t realize the wonderful talent that we have in our own backyard,” Lianne Pittman states. She and her husband, Paul, both potters and owners of A Touch of Earth Gallery, explain that their objective is to showcase local artisans and to keep art in peoples’ lives.

“We want to show people how you can live with this and enjoy this and enhance your life on a daily basis,” Lianne says of the pottery,

ceramics, glass and metal works surrounding her. “There are so many area artisans with wonderful work. We pick things that speak a truth, that may sound funky or weird or whatever, it’s just that simple.”

The artists they represent have become friends with Lianne and Paul over the many years they’ve had the shop. Their own experience as potters reflects in the quality of the art

in the gallery. For 34 years, Lianne and Paul have helped bring art to the daily lives of residents and visitors.

“Art helps enhance a memory,” Lianne says. “We have three friends from Georgia who have visited us every year. They just left town to return home. They shopped all over Williamsburg from the western side to New Town to the eastern side. That’s typical of returning visi-

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tors. We have several people who come back every year to shop with us.”

An important aspect of buying art, Paul explains, is understanding the process and gaining an appreciation for the skill and talent needed to create it. “People ask about the glazes,” he says of the ceramics. “Being potters ourselves, we know how they are done and can explain the processes of the work. That makes a difference to people. I enjoy that aspect of informing collectors on the methods. It’s been a fascinating journey.” He and Lianne have spent many years in Williamsburg, in the arts community.

“I taught Paul,” Lianne says. “I got him interested in pottery.” She had worked with Newport News Parks and Recreation after she graduated from the University of Alabama.

“I was the first Artist in the Park. I had a potter’s wheel. I would go out to the park and do demonstrations. I participated in the first Folk Art Festival that they had. I then started teaching pottery at Harwood’s Mill in Newport News on a fishing reservoir. Paul got interested in pottery there. We both attended

Hampton Institute and took classes from a wonderful teacher, Jerry Lange.”

Lianne was the first potter at Yorktown’s On the Hill Gallery. “This was 1976. I had the tiniest room upstairs in that house on Church Street. I must have been doing okay at the gallery because I was moved downstairs to the large room.” She says that there was no heat in the building back then. In the winter, things would freeze inside the building. The cold temperatures made it hard to work year round, so Lianne looked for another location.

“Wythe Green, most people don’t remember, Wythe Green Shoppes in Lightfoot,” she says. “They had a little gazebo available. No running water. I did mostly hand-building there.”

Paul worked as an apprentice carpenter then. “About that time, I went to work at Jamestown for a couple of years,” he says. After Jamestown, he joined Lianne in starting their shop.

“I would bring all my bags of clay and work,” Lianne says, “and I enjoyed every minute.” She remembers her first sale in the shop. “It was a

handful of stoneware beads sold to a lady from Pennsylvania. She gave me a five dollar bill and did not want any change. I think I still have it.”

Wythe Green Shoppes was an incubator for the early arts community in Williamsburg. “We were there for three years,” Lianne explains. “Wythe Green was gorgeous with its pastoral setting. Shirley Pewter, Trimble Collection’s Tom Trimble and Lightfoot Manor’s Mary Lou were all there. After being in the gazebo, when a larger shop opened that had running water, I moved to it.”

She and Paul remember the buses backed up going into the Williamsburg Pottery. The Pottery pulled visitors from all over the region and beyond, and these people were interested in stoneware, porcelain, glass, fiber and wood arts and crafts. “I existed on sales to people from Pennsylvania, Ohio and Michigan. Those were the three states that came this way more often and shopped here. There was one traffic light on Richmond Road between Anderson’s Corner and the Colonial area. No traffic except going to the pottery factory.”

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Paul and Lianne noticed that the traffic patterns were changing. "They started building this shopping center 27 years ago. It was called the Gallery Shops," she says. They knew the larger space would allow them to grow.

"Prior to that, it had only been our things with the exception of glasswork by a wonderful artist from Staunton, Virginia who used to live in Newport News. I met her through doing shows when I was just out of college."

To bring a quality offering to their shop, they began to attend wholesale shows around the mid-Atlantic and Southeastern regions.

"We started doing the Baltimore show, the Wendy Rosen show, the first wholesale show of American artisans. The artisans, who participated in that show, were the quality that we wanted to have," Lianne adds. "Beautiful things direct from the artists. We started with pottery, glasswork, metal and jewelry hand-made in this country."

The couple has maintained those relationships with the artists. "We have made friendships," Lianne says. "We represent artisans not found in any other area gallery. Richard Aerni

from upstate New York, he's one of the finest potters in the country. You open a ceramic book and you'll see his name and work. Another wonderful potter is Ron Larsen. These are people we met during the shows we attended. Royce Yoder is a Pennsylvania potter, very important to the ceramic art world. We always want to represent quality local artists as well, from Williamsburg and around Virginia." Lianne and Paul represent local artists like Russell Turnage from Lanexa, Elizabeth Krome from Toano and Martha Ungate Hayes from Gloucester.

The ceramic artists in Williamsburg are well-known with collectors. The College of William and Mary attracts students and talented artists to town. "We've known Marlene Jack forever. She was the ceramics professor at William and Mary for years, and she would bring in very famous ceramic artists. Her work is amazing. She was on the cover of Ceramics Monthly," Lianne says.

Neither Paul nor Lianne has much time these days to pursue their own pottery. "We're just the shopkeepers," she says, "showing peo-

ple how to enhance their lives by surrounding themselves with beautifully made objects by American artisans."

Lianne would love to teach pottery again. "That's so meaningful, to share that. I taught hand-building when we moved to the Gallery Shops. I would adore teaching again. If I had a place, I would put in an electric kiln and teach. There is nothing like having a bag of clay and reaching in and making a pinch pot."

After 34 years, their personal reward for working with artists and art remains constant.

"Exposing people to what artists have made and explaining the techniques – it's an educational process," Paul says. "To have a person come to more fully appreciate the work, that's fulfilling."

"You never get tired of doing that," Lianne adds. "Anytime someone is interested in the way something is made or glazed, we delight in explaining that. It keeps us motivated."

Lianne and Paul Pittman select objects that speak a truth of quality, beauty and utility from renowned artisans from around the country and many from our own backyard. NDN



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Brighter Days!

By Greg Lilly, Editor

As the holidays fade and the winter's gray light dampens the mood, some people develop a seasonal depression. "It's called Major Depressive Disorder, Seasonal Pattern. It's a specific type of depression largely tied to loss of daylight," Dr. Susanna Owens explains. "It's correlated with hunkering down, staying inside, eating more, withdrawing socially and feeling blah. It tends to happen between the time changes."

She explains this seasonal depression can be treated with bright light therapy. "Also, if you can, get outside and take a walk in the daylight." While any type of depression needs professional help to catch it early and to apply effective treatment, Dr. Owens says there are things that can be done as preventative measures, once the person is aware of the



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depression.

The term depression can include a multitude of concerns. "I would call it depressions, plural," she says. "There are a number of different kinds of depressions. It's easier to define by someone's symptoms: feeling low, sad, down, most of the day on a majority of days, on-going thoughts of death or hopelessness. In some cases, people have trouble with sleep and concentration, fatigue and irritability."

What our parents called the "blues" are common. "We're not static in our emotions. We all have good days and bad days, good hours and bad hours. That's normal. When it becomes a diagnosable illness is when it becomes unrelenting, when it significantly impacts the quality of your life, when you're unable to enjoy the pleasant things in life that you used to enjoy." The loss of quality of life is a key to seeking help.

"It's normal to be sad," she stresses. "We live in a culture that says we should be happy all the time, which isn't healthy. Depression is when it impacts your functioning. It can be mild, moderate or severe. It can be diagnosable like a major depressive disorder or bi-polar disorder or the seasonal pattern that tends to hit people in the winter after the holidays."

Dr. Owens explains that when a person doesn't feel like themselves or they hear from family, friends and neighbors that they're not behaving as usual, maybe sleeping more or demonstrating irritability, then it may be depression.

"I refer to anxiety and depression as the 'evil twin sisters' because they often go together," she says. "Sometimes people, especially after the holidays, are experiencing an anxiety disorder, but they aren't sure that's what it is. They're often on-edge, they can't hold their thoughts together, their muscles ache and they feel cranky or have headaches. Usually if a person is depressed and it goes untreated, anxiety tends to develop with it. They often occur together."

Dr. Owens uses the bio-psycho-social approach to identifying a cause of the depression. "There is usually a biological component to it, maybe genetic or chemical. There's a psychological component in the way someone is thinking or the expectations for themselves play a role in making them feel worse. Social or environmental aspects also impact a person."

The personal aspect of psychology attracted Dr. Owens to the field when she was in school. "Actually, this is my second career," she says. "My first was as a professional ballet dancer with the Richmond Ballet. When that career was coming to an end due to an injury, I thought about what I wanted to do. Some of my favorite times were talking to other people. Psychology allowed me to do that as a career."

She had grown up in Richmond and earned her undergraduate and graduate degrees in psychology at Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU). After her injury that ended her ballet career, she returned to VCU for her doctorate in Counseling Psychology.

"I really like people. I'm an introvert, so I'm better with one-on-one and small group interactions. I've always found people interesting. I like to get to know people. I'm curious about people. Psychology is this beautiful blend of the art and science of understanding people. There is an art to being with people and helping people, but it can be so much more powerfully informed by science. For me, psychology was a great fit."

She stresses that while some self-help practices can be used as preventative measures, a professional diagnosis and plan lead toward a cure. "We know that anxiety and depression are treatable. We know that peo-

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ple get better through talk therapy, medication or a combination of the two. We know that like any medical illness, the quicker you get treatment, the sooner you get better, the less suffering you have. The more chronic, the harder it is to treat.”

To mitigate the chances of depression, Dr. Owens offers tips for well-being throughout the year:

First, be realistic about New Year’s resolutions. “Readjust expectations. Having goals is great because they are very focusing for people. However, an unrealistic goal, for many self-reflective people, causes self condemnation. Readjust expectations.”

Secondly, get help when you need it. “Seek support from your loved ones and family. Talk to people. If you need more assistance or don’t have a family that can be there for you, get professional help.”

Third, build in positive experiences in your day, week and month. “There is a lot of research showing that Americans are incredibly stressed. To build in resiliency, we need to be intentional about putting enjoyable activities into our days.” The goal of these is not to make us happy, she explains, but to build in positive experiences to help us manage ourselves better. “There is no goal to get happy. Happy is a transient state. It’s a good result.”

Fourth, leverage your resources. “Eat healthy. Move your body. Get outdoors. Notice the seasons. Use your personal leave from work. Don’t put in a lot of overtime if you are not feeling well. Get some daylight. Use meditation and mindfulness, such as breathing, prayer, yoga, gratitude practices. These have been shown to help improve mood.”

These are actions with positive effects that improve mood as well as maintain a sense of well-being. “These behaviors help with prevention of depression and are used during recovery.”

Dr. Owens doesn’t make New Year’s resolutions because of the expectations they create. “I always have self-growth goals. Learning new things is always important to me.” Instead of making resolutions, she uses the New Year for reflection. “I contemplate what my values are, how I’m spending my time and energy and to work toward spending as much time as I can on things I feel are fulfilling.”

Turning 50 this year, she created a bucket list of things she would enjoy doing. “They are all things within a three-hour drive or easily done in the Williamsburg or Hampton Roads area. I’m working through my list. Every time I see something cool, it goes on my list. I enjoy travelling, but I also enjoy going in-depth locally.”

She and her husband, Lewis, moved to Williamsburg over 27 years ago. “Lewis works in Hampton at NASA Langley Research Center. When we married, we decided to live halfway between Hampton and Richmond. We moved here and loved it. We’ve stayed put.”

The outdoor environment is an important part of Dr. Owens’ own collection of healthy resources. “I love the number of parks, trails and waterways that can be enjoyed through hiking, kayaking and fishing. Being in nature is very important to me, and every day, I make space to spend time outdoors. It is one of several things I do to take care of myself.”

Recently transitioning to her own practice, Dr. Susanna Owens spent 13 years working at the College of William and Mary Counseling Center. “I enjoyed working with the students in that environment. Part of my career goal was to have a private practice. It was time to stretch my wings in that way.” The bright beginnings of a new year and new career have her excited for the possibilities. NDN

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A DOGGIE LIFESTYLE

By Greg Lilly, Editor

Growing up, Dr. Ruth Gussman says her parents limited her to one pet at a time. Today, she has four dogs and interacts with hundreds more animals throughout her week. She's one of the veterinarians at Jolly Pond Veterinary

Hospital. "I've had as many as 20 animals in my house. Through time, I'm down to four. I'm a foster failure. When I foster, I have a hard time giving up the animals."

Dr. Gussman had always wanted to be a

veterinarian. She grew up in Philadelphia and went to Columbia University to become a registered nurse. "I graduated and worked in New York and Philadelphia. At 22, I needed an adventure and moved to California for ten years.

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I lived in Oakland and Berkley while I worked as a nurse." After ten years as a nurse, she knew she wanted to go back to school to become a veterinarian.

Dr. Gussman attended vet school at Colorado State University. "I studied as hard as I could (graduated cum laude). I worked my tail off because I wanted to make sure I was worthy of taking care of animals."

The switch from human patients to animal patients wasn't a difficult swap. "You still have the people relationship. It's still medicine. You have to ask people a lot of questions to figure out what is wrong with an animal because there is no way to know from the animal. You can see weight loss. You can see some things, but other things you can't. You need people to help tell you what is wrong."

In 2007, Dr. Gussman relocated to Williamsburg. "I moved here because my dad was dying. I was here for nine months before he died. It was good." Her mother, brother and sister-in-law are in Williamsburg. "We all live on the same street. It works. That keeps our mother in her house. I'm really glad to be near family. I moved away from family for a lot of years. It's so important now."

She describes her own household as a four dog family. "One woman and four dogs," she says. "I have two older dogs and two youngsters."

To bring a pet into a home, she stresses to think carefully about the decision. "You have to pick the pet to fit your lifestyle. Don't just pick a dog. I chose carefully in what I wanted in a dog. If you pick a high-energy dog, you'd better be a high-energy person. It's not fair to pick a dog and never walk it. I have two that need to be walked often. Most days of the week, we're on long walks. You need to pick the pet that matches your lifestyle."

Matching dogs, a pair at the same age and activity level, is something that Dr. Gussman has done with her four dogs. "I have two older dogs that have the same energy and two younger dogs with the same energy. That's worked out well. Though, I'm crazy to have four dogs, and I don't recommend four dogs for most people," she adds with a laugh.

When a new pet comes to her office, Dr. Gussman walks the people through the needs of their new family member. "We talk about all the vaccines that the pet needs, the deworming, spay and neutering, the list goes on and on." The vaccines come at the ages of 8, 12 and 16 weeks, and may include prevention for distemper, parvovirus and rabies. "Then there are other diseases like lyme disease and leptospirosis that I'm vaccinating for – depending on lifestyle."

Another requirement for bringing a dog into the home is obedience classes. "I've had dogs my whole life and I still go to dog obedience classes with my new dogs," she says. "I need to be held accountable and to practice with the dog." The weekly classes forced her to work with the new dog so she wouldn't be embarrassed by the dog's performance in front of its classmates. "Just because I knew how to teach a dog to sit, doesn't mean that I'd do it. The class made me accountable to show progress each week. It takes a village to raise a dog. There's a commitment to raise a puppy."

Every dog should be spayed or neutered, she states. "There are so

many homeless animals. I'm a strong advocate of picking something that needs you."

The biggest surprise for people bringing a pet into their home is the money needed to care for the animal. Not just the regular costs of food, vaccines, deworming, microchips, obedience classes and spaying/neutering, but the unexpected costs can be significant. "You just never know what they may need. My golden retriever needed shoulder surgery. I didn't expect that."

To mitigate the regular and surprise costs for a new pet, Dr. Gussman suggests planning ahead financially. "There's a high cost to owning a pet. I would recommend taking \$50 a month and putting it in a bank account for that pet's care." Some of the expenses are predictable like food, vaccines, heartworm medicine, flea and tick medicine, a yearly physical and teeth cleaning, but there may be surprises. "You will need a fund. Instead of getting pet insurance, be your own pet insurance and put aside \$50 a month for regular and unexpected expenses. With that fund, you are ready and prepared for the cost."

Even with the costs, training, exercise requirements and additional house cleaning are needed with a pet. There's the benefit – unconditional love. "Look at this loving I'm getting from this golden retriever. Who loves you like that? Who's so happy to see you come home as your dogs? There are so many benefits that a pet can bring to a home that no price tag can measure."

Dr. Gussman enjoys creating a better quality of life for her animal patients and for their owners. "If there are problems, we try to work through them to make it a better animal. Sometimes the people need the work and sometimes the animal needs the work."

She has found she loves working with behavioral problems with dogs. "One of my all-time favorites was this really bad dog, just bad attitude and biting a lot. He was with an old dog that died and then he was solo." The dog was with an older couple with grown children. The couple's sons and daughters wanted to bring their own dogs when they visited their parents, but this dog didn't want visiting dogs in his house. "I had everyone crying because I did it. The dog was accepting the others. Not that he was going to love them, but he wasn't allowed to hurt them or bite them. I did it in an hour. It felt good."

Making dogs better behaved takes work. "Getting a dog well-behaved and adjusted to people coming in the house, this is what people don't understand, you have to do the work. Some dogs are innately good. I picked a golden retriever because I know a golden retriever is going to be good at that. You pick another breed of dog, you might not get that. You'll have to work harder to get the dog to accept other people and other animals. That's so important to socialize a dog and get it well behaved."

Dr. Ruth Gussman likes to take the four dogs and her camper and go on an adventure. "For the end of the season this fall, we went to Seashore State Park in Virginia Beach. We'd get up at six in the morning and I'd run four dogs down to the beach. We have fun, cook out, meet friends and go for long walks. It's a doggy lifestyle." NDN



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WILLIAMSBURG'S GOT TALENT FINAL AUDITIONS

January 7, 2016

Limber up your throat, toes, or whatever it is you use to showcase your skills and artistry! You've got one last chance to audition for the 5th Annual Williamsburg's Got Talent Show! The competition is set for Saturday, January 23, 2016, at the Kimball Theater in Merchants Square, and will benefit the Historic Virginia Land Conservancy (formally Williamsburg Land Conservancy). The final auditions will be held in the Alvin Anderson Auditorium at the Williamsburg Landing from 5-9 pm. Visit www.historicvirginalandconservancy.org to register. Special thanks to this year's sponsors: C&F Bank, Howell Creative Group, The Tide, WYDaily, and BACHfm.

Hey Neighbor!

MAKING THE RIGHT CUT

January 16, 2016

Freedom Park Interpretive Center, 10 am, open to the public. This workshop will provide instruction on early winter tree care. James City County/Williamsburg Master Gardeners will discuss the basics of pruning trees and shrubs and will demonstrate the proper use of pruning tools. This event is part of the Learn and Grow Educational Series sponsored by the Williamsburg Botanical Garden. The program is free, although a \$5.00 donation to help the Garden grow is appreciated. For more information, contact Annette Bell at (757) 229-5488 or by email at wbell11@cox.net or contact Barb Landa at (757) 259-2079 or by email at barb@landa.org

Hey Neighbor!

NAACP/ACT-SO BREAKFAST

January 18, 2016

The 27th Annual Martin Luther King Breakfast, sponsored by the

local NAACP Branch and hosted by the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, pays tribute to the late civil rights leader and recognizes high academic achievers in the WJCC and York County High Schools. Proceeds provide support for student participation in national ACT-SO Competition. Breakfast starts at 8:30 am held at Williamsburg Lodge-Virginia Room. \$40 adults; \$15 students. Contact YJCWNAACP.org or (757) 229-3113 for tickets.

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SISTER DUO: LUCY MANNING & CATHERINE CROTTY

January 20, 2016

The Williamsburg Music Club proudly presents its guest performers in a program of traditional and surprisingly refreshing new crowd pleasers. "Coffee & Conversation" at 10 am. Followed by the program at 11 am in Bruton Parish Church Hall, 222 Duke of Gloucester

Street. For more information, contact (757) 229-4429 or www.williamsburgmusicclub.org.

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WILLIAMSBURG'S GOT TALENT

January 23, 2016

Season five of the most exhilarating local talent showcase in our region will be held at 7 pm at the Kimball Theater in Merchants Square. Sponsored by C&F Bank, Howell Creative Group, The Tide, WYDaily, and BACHfm, you won't want to miss this Williamsburg spin on the television phenomenon! See the hottest local performers compete in front of you and celebrity judges, vying for their chance to win cash prizes and the coveted trophy. Proceeds will benefit the Historic Virginia Land Conservancy (formally the Williamsburg Land Conservancy). General admission is \$35, and 12 and under \$25. Tickets can be purchased online



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Hey Neighbor! CABARET & COCKTAILS POPS CONCERT

January 23, 2016

Concert begins at 8 pm - Cash Bar in lobby opens at 7 pm. The Williamsburg Symphonia, conducted by Music Director Janna Hymes, will present its second annual program of pops and jazz tunes. The orchestra will be joined by guest instrumentalists Mike Monaghan (saxophone), Rex Richardson (jazz trumpet) and Russell Wilson (piano). Vocalists Tish Oney, Tiffany Haas and Brett Cahoon will also be featured in renditions of great American standards by Mancini, Gershwin, Ellington, Armstrong, Cahn and others. At the Williamsburg Lodge, Virginia Room, 310 S. England St., Williamsburg. Ticket prices are \$45, \$60 and \$75, and all tickets are for table seating. To reserve a table, purchase tickets in groups of 10; individual seats at tables are also available. Purchase tickets at www.williamsburgsymphonia.tix.com. For more information: www.williamsburgsymphonia.org or (757) 229-9857.

Hey Neighbor! SOROPTIMIST PANCAKE

SUPPER SUPPORTS SCHOLARSHIPS

January 28, 2016

Soroptimist International of Williamsburg will host its annual pancake supper at the Astronomical Pancake and Waffle House, 5437 Richmond Rd. The event is from 5- 8 pm. Snow date is February 4, 2016. Proceeds support local scholarships and service projects. Soroptimist is an international volunteer service organization of women who work to improve the lives of women and girls through educational and economic empowerment. Tickets are \$8.00. Advanced tickets can be purchased by contacting Sherry Phipps at (757) 810-4658 or www.soroptimistwilliamsburg.org.

Hey Neighbor! EMERGENCY WINTER SHELTER WARM UP FUNDRAISER

January 29, 2016

Williamsburg chefs donate soup to raise funds for a soup-tasting event for Community of Faith Mission — the Williamsburg area emergency winter shelter program. From 5:30-8:00 pm at Williamsburg United Methodist Church, 500 Jamestown Rd. Tickets to “Warm Up Williamsburg” cost \$20. For reservations, go to www.cofm.info or call 220-0484. All proceeds from the event will support Community of Faith Mission, a faith-based non-profit program involving 32 faith groups which operates an emergen-

cy shelter on a weekly basis from November through March.

Hey Neighbor! FREE TAX PREPARATION

Ongoing

WJCC Community Action Agency will offer free tax preparation services to low-and moderate-income workers. You can save money this year by getting your tax return prepared at our VITA site and you could receive your refund in approximately 7 to 10 business days with direct deposit. Families and individuals with an income less than \$60,000 may be eligible to claim the earned income tax credit, which can reduce the amount of income taxes owed. If you need additional information, or would like to schedule an appointment, call John Smith at (757) 229-3316 or (757) 229-9332.

Hey Neighbor! YJCW-NAACP MEETING

Ongoing

The York-James City- Williamsburg NAACP meets the second Monday of each month (except July) at First Baptist Church, 727 Scotland Street, Williamsburg. Branch meetings begin at 6:30 pm. For more information, contact NAACP@yjcwnaacp.org

Hey Neighbor! WILLIAMSBURG MOOSE LODGE SEEKS NEW MEMBERS

Ongoing

We are a charitable group of men and women that “do good” for neighborhood causes (as well as for MooseHeart and MooseHaven). Just this past year, at the local level, we have donated to Beyond Boobs, A Gift from Ben, all three local Fire Departments, Hospice House, Historic Triangle, and others. We also host many events at our lodge that donate to other causes and charities. Contact us for more information: Joe Roney, administrator (757) 565-5149 or Williamsburg Moose Lodge #757 at (757) 565-9807 Moose757@cox.net

Hey Neighbor! SEEKING SUPPORT FROM THE WILLIAMSBURG COMMUNITY

Ongoing

The EEE Resource Center is a non-profit center dedicated to serving adults with special needs through Education, Empowerment, and Engagement. In our day program, Associates spend time working on continuing education skills, life skills, and vocational skills. We rely on gifts, grants, donations, and income from our Laundry Service. Our facility has commercial grade washers and dryers and we can meet most laundry needs. We specialize in large, bulky items such as comforters, quilts, and mattress pads. Please contact us by email at lsteale@e3serves.org, by phone at (757) 345-2299, on the web at www.e3serves.org, or on Facebook

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at EEE Resource Center, Inc. We appreciate the support of our Williamsburg neighbors!

Hey Neighbor!

CALL FOR THEATRICAL VOLUNTEERS

Ongoing

Williamsburg Players Theater is looking for volunteers to help in all areas of the theater. There are so many ways to get involved! No experience necessary. Please go to williamsburgplayers.org/volunteers/ for more details. Come have some fun!

Hey Neighbor!

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

Ongoing

Williamsburg AARP Tax-Aide is looking for volunteers to assist seniors and low/moderate-income taxpayers in completing their 2015 Federal and Virginia tax returns. IRS certification training is provided during classes in early January. Basic knowledge of tax return preparation, as well as the ability to do returns on a computer, are needed. We help over 2,500 local taxpayers each year take advantage of tax credits and tax law changes, resulting in refunds of over \$3 million. The service is offered at the Williamsburg and James City County Libraries in 2016 from February 1 to April 15. We also need facilitators for each session to register and do an initial screening of our clients. Please email District Coordinator George Richmond at grichmond4@live.com if you are

interested in becoming a Tax-Aide volunteer.

Hey Neighbor!

F.R.E.E. OF WILLIAMSBURG

Ongoing

F.R.E.E. is a non-profit that gifts mobility related equipment to adults who are uninsured or under insured and have no other means of obtaining needed mobility equipment such as canes, walkers, bed rails, hoist lifts, wheelchairs and power scooters. Equipment gifted also includes bathroom transfer aids such as shower chairs, tub transfer benches and bedside commodes. If you or someone you know is in need of equipment or would like to make a donation, call (757) 707-4741, visit our website www.free-foundation.org, or find us on Facebook.

Hey Neighbor!

ABUNDANT LIFE GROUPS MEETINGS

Ongoing

Are you a vegetarian, vegan, raw food or just curious? Join us to taste new recipes and foods, get educated and share ideas around plant based living for a healthier you! You don't have to be plant based to join the fun. 1st Sunday of each month at 7 pm. Email AbundantLifeGroups@gmail.com for more information.

Hey Neighbor!

JAMES CITY COMMUNITY CHURCH

Ongoing

"A Door of Hope" James City

Community Church is located at 4550 Old News Rd., Williamsburg. Services: 9 am (Nursery provided) and 10:30 am (Nursery and Children Classes). Visit our website at www.jccchurch.com. Come join us and make yourself at home, and feel free to participate as much or as little as you feel comfortable. No matter where you are on your spiritual journey, we're glad you're here.

Hey Neighbor!

VOICES OF CHANGE TOASTMASTERS CLUB

Ongoing

Develop your leadership and public speaking skills in a safe, friendly environment with the Voices of Change Toastmasters Club of Williamsburg. Visitors are welcome; this is an open club. We meet every Friday at 12:05-1:05 pm in the second floor conference room at EVB (formerly Virginia Company Bank), 1430 High Street, Williamsburg. For more information, visit www.voicesofchange.toastmastersclubs.org or www.facebook.com/VoicesofChangeWilliamsburg.

Hey Neighbor!

BIBLE STUDY AND WORSHIP

Ongoing

Informal, interactive Bible study and Holy Communion worship each Wednesday evening, 6:30 pm, at St. Stephen Lutheran Church, 612 Jamestown Road, right across from the campus of the College of William and Mary.

Hey Neighbor!

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED: WILLIAMSBURG AREA FAITH IN ACTION

Ongoing

Faith In Action relies on volunteers to transport care receivers to doctor's appointments, the grocery store, bank, pharmacy, etc. Right now, the demand for transportation is increasing. Faith in Action offers a flexible schedule for its volunteers. "Our organization was built on the idea of people helping people," Smith said. "If you have a few hours to dedicate to someone who may just need an arm to lean on to get to a doctor's appointment, then we have a spot for you. "If you are interested in volunteering, call the Williamsburg Faith In Action offices at (757) 258-5890.

Hey Neighbor!

VIRGINIA AERONAUTICAL HISTORICAL SOCIETY (VAHS)

Ongoing

Every third Wednesday of the month, the Williamsburg chapter of the parent VAHS headquartered at the Richmond Airport Aviation Museum meets with aviation related speakers, programs and field trips. Everyone with an interest in aviation is encouraged to attend meetings in the second floor conference room of the Williamsburg-Jamestown Airport terminal building. Come for the camaraderie and learning experience, which comes with expanding your interest in aviation – past, present and future. Point of contact: (757) 258-0376.

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**IN THE
NEIGHBORHOOD**
photo challenge

**LUNCH AT
THE TRELIS**

Find the 12 differences
between the original
photograph (top) and
the altered photograph
(bottom).

Enjoy!



INTERMEDIATE LEVEL

**Look for the answers
in the next issue of
Next Door Neighbors**

December 2015
In the Neighborhood
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