

May 2014

WILLIAMSBURG'S

Next Door Neighbors®

VOL. 8, ISSUE 5

PRICELESS

Discovering the people who call Williamsburg home

The Great Outdoors Craig Strawser

BUSINESS
Buddy Parker

SPORTS
Brenda Mitchell

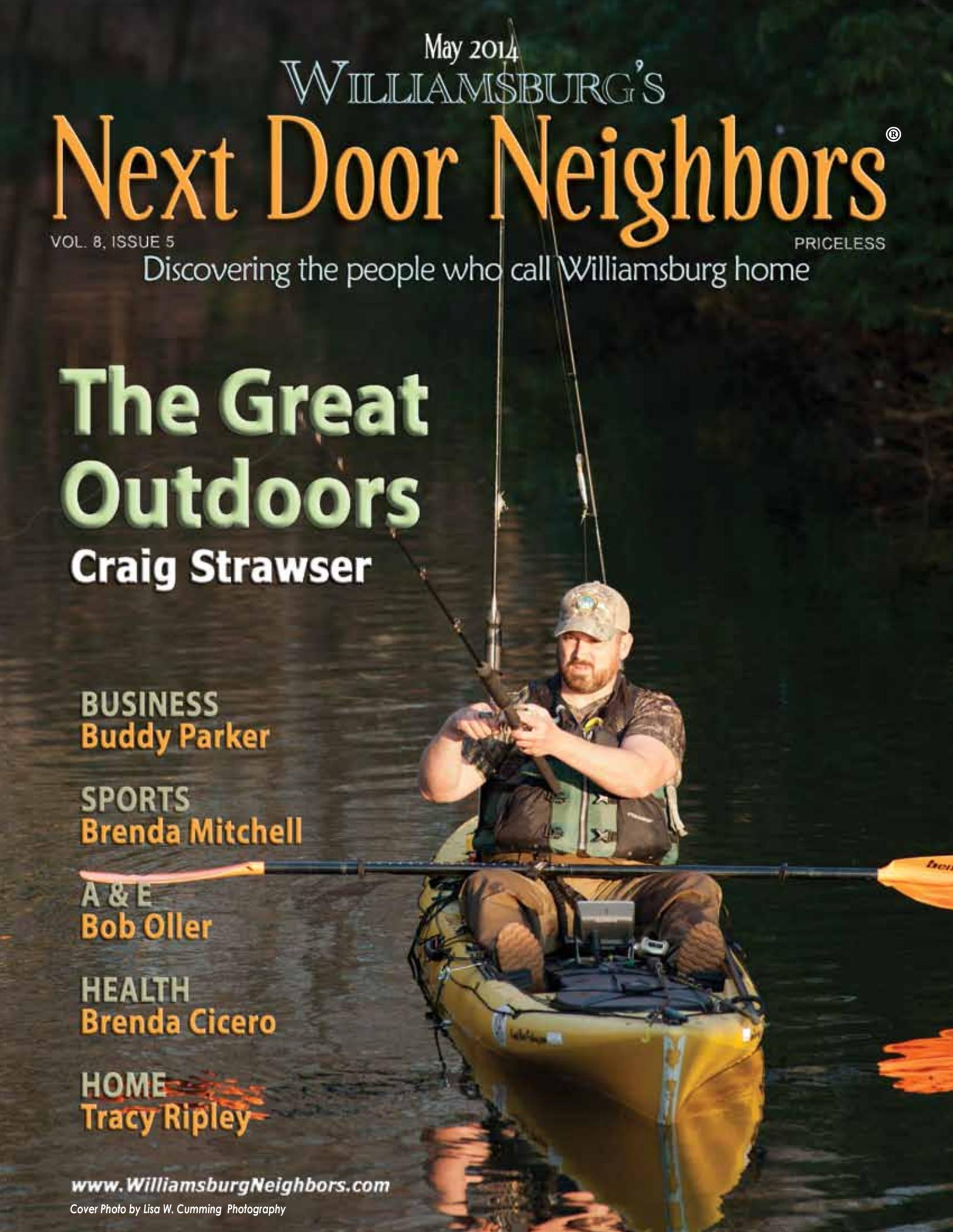
A & E
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It is Sunday afternoon as I write this intro. I'm sitting on my driveway enjoying a beverage. I'm happy. The sun is shining. It's warm. There is a gentle breeze keeping the heat down. Birds are singing. I'm almost finished with another issue of the magazine and the weather could not be better. After the long cold and grey winter we have had that included plenty of rain, a day like today is a blessing.



Meredith Collins, Publisher

We think the timing for an issue on the Great Outdoors couldn't be better.

We've interviewed locals who are active and who have become even more industrious as the weather breaks. We introduce you to some neighbors who love the outdoors: a mountain biker, kayak fisherman, herb gardener, bird watcher and more. I doubt you will find any of these folks sitting in one place for long as they seem to derive energy from the sun. As for me, I think I'll keep sitting in my chair in the driveway and reach for another cold beverage. **NDN**

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CORRECTIONS: In April's issue of Next Door Neighbors, the story on DeVonte Dedmon contained an error. He is the all-time leading scorer of his school, not of the Bay Rivers District.

On page 35 of the April issue, an ad appeared for 5 Brothers Lawn Care that was incorrect. The correct ad appears in this issue on page 25.

Next Door Neighbors regrets these errors and any inconvenience they may have caused.

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Cover Photo by Lisa Cumming

Veteran Fisherman

by Sandy Rotermund

Stability would hardly be the word of choice to describe kayaking, let alone kayak fishing. You have a small, narrow craft with little wiggle room that barely sits above the water, unpredictable weather conditions - even fish that can pull you on a “sleigh ride,” as the fishermen call it. What’s stable about that?

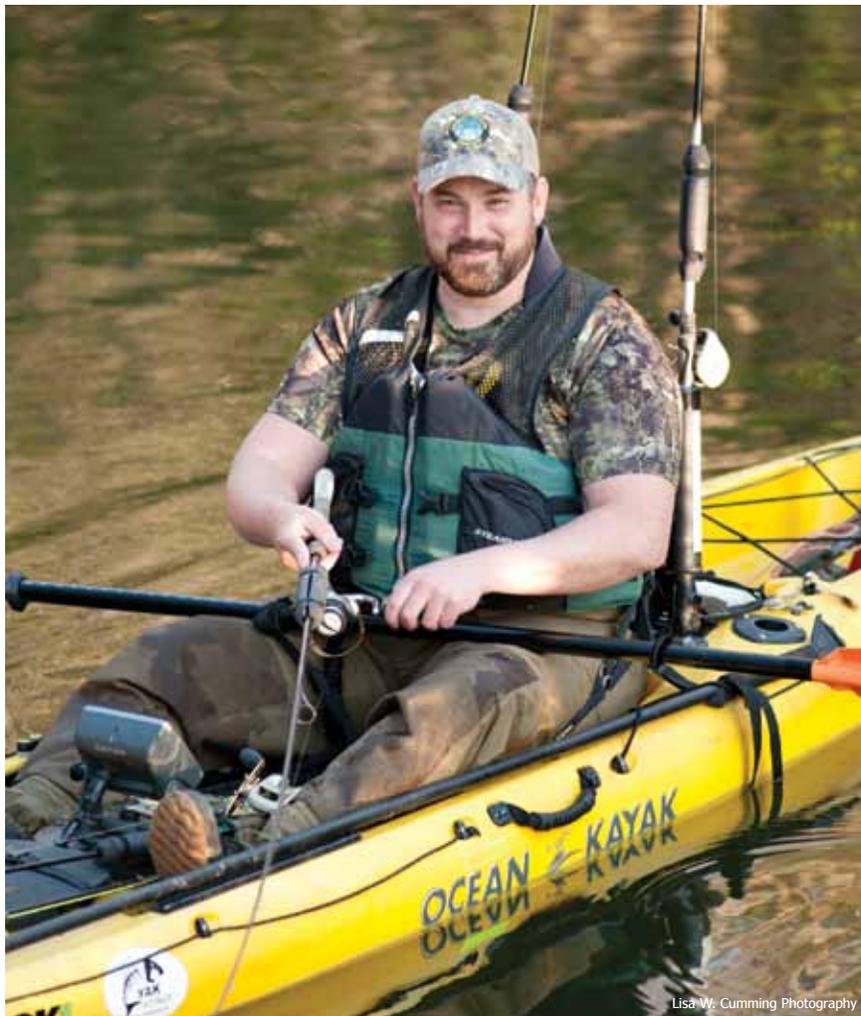
For 24-year United States Navy veteran, Craig Strawser, stability is defined another way. Calm. Focused. He describes being on the water as “almost spiritual.”

“When you’re a vet – and I was in Afghanistan for about a year – one of the things I longed for was to get back home to the U.S. where the fishing’s good and, you

know, you can relax. Because with fishing, you just let all your cares disappear. Nothing matters when you’re out there on the water except ‘Am I going to be able to get this fish to bite?’” Craig says.

Born in the Portsmouth Naval Hospital 42 years ago and a native of Newport News, Craig has few - yet fond - memories of his dad. Craig’s father passed away on active duty in the Army when Craig was just six years old.

“There was this little lake down by the house where we lived, and I remember going out and fishing for bluegill,” he says. Craig trolls his memory for details. “He’d [his dad] put a little worm on the hook – and it had just the hook and a little weight tied to the pole – and he would tell me to flip it in, count to three, and pull it out. Lo and behold, there’s this bluegill



Lisa W. Cumming Photography

on there!” Craig beams. “And now I realize that the place was just full of bluegill.”

When Craig enlisted in the service in 1989 just as he was graduating from high school, he had little idea that his job as a Mass Communications Specialist would take him around the world behind a camera lens. Four years after enlisting, he was accepted into Syracuse University’s prestigious Newhouse School of Public Communications. He completed a one-year, advanced military photojournalism program there.

“I was a combat photographer with a combat photography team out in San Diego, deployed all over doing photos with Marines, the SEAL team, things like that,” Craig says.

He also spent four years as the personal photographer to the Secretary of the Navy. Some

of his jobs were outdoors, which he loved. But Craig also held positions where he rarely saw the light of day. As the Public Affairs Officer on the USS Wasp, a U.S. Navy multipurpose amphibious assault ship, he navigated a desk deep in the ship’s belly. Some days, he had to schedule walks on the ship’s deck just to be sure he got some fresh air and daylight. No matter where he was on his tours, though, Craig was ready – his fishing pole in hand – to rejuvenate at the reel.

“I’d always have fishing poles on the ship. I’ve fished off the coast of Amman – we’d drop the stern gate off the back of the ship and we’d all go out there

and drop our fishing poles in,” Craig says, laughing.

The ship’s cooks conspired to provide pieces of shrimp to their fishermen mates, which helped lure the smaller fish used to bait the larger variety.

“I’ve fished all over the world. Bahrain, on the beaches of France, Turkey, Amman – basically anywhere there was water, I had a pole in my hand!” Craig’s Opie-like enthusiasm would make Andy Griffith proud.

Kayaks came later. When Craig lived in San Diego, the kayak fishing boon had just taken hold. He tried kayak fishing and was hooked. After transferring back to the east coast, he bought his first kayak and later joined the Williamsburg Kayak Fishing Association (WKFA).

More of a laid-back club than other tour-

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Owners Jeff & Karen Schell welcome the return of Jessica Mueller to the Cooke's family.

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nament-driven groups, WKFA welcomes new people to join the events and outings, so they can learn as well as have fun. The fishing fun takes Craig to all of the lakes, rivers and creeks nearby, as well as some in neighboring counties. His favorite local fishing spot is right here in Williamsburg at Waller Mill Park. Its varied habitat and fish species is not the only reason. It is also home to Craig's largest catch to date – a 39-inch, 18-pound striper. He and his sit-on-top kayak remained right side up throughout the wrestling match.

"The technology has evolved to where there's a lot of stability, especially on the sit-on-tops," Craig adds.

Craig earned his bragging rights with that citation-size striper. Fortunately, he didn't have to add a "Turtling" certificate to his credentials.

"You flip a turtle upside down, and he's helpless," Craig explains. "In our club, we have a sticker that we put on your kayak." Craig smiles.

Retired from the Navy just since September 2013, Craig is enjoying WKFA activities, a transitional job in customer service, and settling into life with his wife of eleven years, Alecia, and his stepson. Though Craig is the sole fisherman in the family, his passion is anything but solo. As a volunteer with the national program, "Heroes on the Water," he can share his enthusiasm for kayak fishing with others.

"Heroes on the Water" is a unique fishing program that helps our nation's wounded warriors and veterans from all branches of the United States military to unwind using the therapeutic qualities of fishing from kayaks.

"Being prior military," Craig says, "I have a place deep in my heart for folks who sacrificed for us."

Through the generosity of a Suffolk landowner, the Hampton Roads chapter can take wounded veterans out on two private, fully-stocked lakes. Craig recalls one especially meaningful event there.

"We had a guy who had just lost both of his legs over there in Afghanistan. Me and another guy were setting the kayaks up. We made sure he had on his life jacket and that he was really safe." Craig pauses. "He [the vet] goes, 'I don't know how I'm gonna make this happen.' Well, I go, 'do you mind if we pick you up?'"

Together, Craig and the other volunteer made it happen.

"We grabbed him and pulled him right out of his wheelchair and put him into the kayak. Then we just shoved him off!"

A volunteer accompanied him, but all he needed were his arms for paddling, Craig says candidly. Some of the vets have never fished before, so the volunteers will teach them how to bait the hook, cast and catch. Other warriors are veteran fishermen who are eager to resuscitate a skill they fear they've lost forever.

"Once you get fishing ingrained in your soul, it never goes away," Craig says. "From personal experience, the longer you go without, the more you have that desperate need to go back out on the water and get a line wet."

For Craig, retirement from the Navy is simply a pause before the next adventure. He doesn't know what will follow, but being outdoors is high on the list. It is what energizes him.

"I run on solar power, whether it's work or play. If I get out in the solar energy, it just pumps me up."

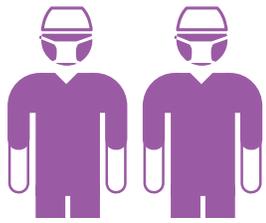
Giving back to others is also on the list.

"I think life is meant to share," Craig Strawser emphasizes. "There are a lot of awesome things out there. And if you enjoy it, chances are someone else will, too. Being able to share it with others makes it that much better."

This veteran has certainly done that. NDN

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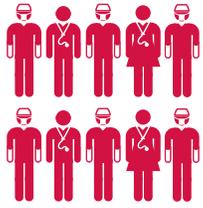
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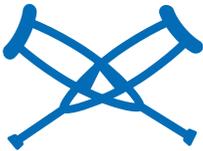
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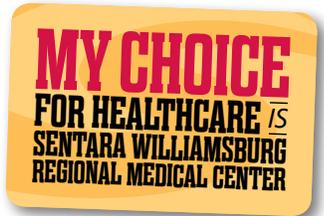


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Thyme Well Spent

by Linda Landreth Phelps

“About 25 years ago,” retired preschool teacher Jacqui Winther says, “I read something simple that made a lasting impression.” Martha Stewart wrote in an early cookbook: “If you want your food to taste better, you have to use fresh herbs.” Much more easily said than done back in that day, Jacqui recalls. “Fresh herbs weren’t common in the grocery store, but our century-old farmhouse in Westchester, New York had fabulous soil, so I decided to grow my own.” That was the beginning of Jacqui’s long love affair with herbs, a happy marriage of garden and kitchen.

March’s heirloom Lenten roses and abundant pink camellias are the lone winter stars in Jac-

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qui's Williamsburg back yard. They're soon followed by bright clumps of daffodils and tender green daylilies shouldering through damp earth after a long winter's hibernation. From May until frost, Jacqui's garden is a riot of color, texture and fragrance, her vivid flowers complemented by an eclectic mix of herbs. Some of these are chosen simply for their ornamental beauty, attractiveness to bees or birds, or historical significance. She grows others for their taste.

Jacqui's favorite recipes explode with the intense flavors of fresh thyme, tarragon, marjoram, basil, rosemary or mint, all safely planted within the protected perimeter of her fenced yard. "The deer can't get in, although we do have some very large rabbits," Jacqui laughs.

"This is my happy place," Jacqui says gesturing to a small bistro set tucked away behind the bird feeders and bubbling fountain. "I come out with my cup of coffee and just sit and soak it in. I bring my gloves and clippers and usually spend an hour trimming, deadheading and pulling a few weeds in the cool of the day. If you do this regularly, it's not hard to keep up with a garden."

Fourteen years ago, Jacqui and Bob, who have been married for 45 years, started with a completely blank slate when Bob retired from

his successful Information Technology career. They moved from Charleston, West Virginia to Williamsburg and built their new home in Villages of Westminster. Together they decided on a hardscape design and landscape ideas.

"I knew I didn't want any grass at all in my back yard," Jacqui remembers. "We first had a multilevel deck built and then laid out the beds and paths." Other than the deck and fence construction and the curvilinear flagstone paths, Jacqui and Bob (who is a Master Gardener) provided all the labor themselves. They began with the most basic need: rich soil with good drainage. "Virginia clay is nutritive, but it doesn't drain, so we created the beds with a layer of gypsum to break up the clay, then laid down a foot of blended compost and topsoil," she says.

In this soil they planted all of their favorite shrubs, flowers and herbs. "This is sweet woodruff," Jacqui says, cupping a lacy leaf. "It's a perfect ground cover for shady spots and has small, white, star-shaped flowers, but the best part is using the leaves to make May wine. Tie sprigs together in a bunch with dental floss, then steep them overnight in white wine. It adds a wonderful, grassy flavor to the least expensive wine," she adds.

Jacqui identifies another plant as fernleaf tansy, a "strewing herb" used during the Middle Ages. When crushed underfoot, tansy releases a pleasant fragrance which is said to repel insects. Tansy, a workhorse herb, was also used to line coffins, kill intestinal worms, and ease sunburn. Steeped in buttermilk for 9 days, tansy was applied cosmetically to whiten skin and diminish freckles.

"Tansy was then used as a spring tonic, but now we know it's a carcinogen," Jacqui says. Interestingly, another of Jacqui's favorite herbs, lamb's ear (sometimes known as woolly betony) was used to bind wounds and modern science shows the velvety leaves have antibiotic properties. For safety's sake, Jacqui limits her family's personal use to aromatic sachets and culinary enhancement.

Jacqui put a raised wooden bed in a sunny spot near her kitchen. "I plant favorite culinary herbs together, so when I'm cooking they're convenient to the pan, but I sprinkle them around elsewhere, too. This bed gets enough sun to grow my variegated oregano, marjoram and basil...everything but rosemary and lavender, which I have to put out front." Some herbs, such as basil, are true annuals which need replanting every year, but many are perennials.

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Jacqui says that tarragon doesn't overwinter for her no matter where she sites it. "I wind up replanting every spring," she says ruefully. "By the way, only French tarragon will do! The Russian variety is sturdy and robust, but has no taste."

Creeping thyme makes an excellent, fast-growing ground cover. It's shallow-rooted and easily maintained, but some herbs are so invasive that they'll quickly overwhelm other plants unless a gardener is careful. Jacqui has planted her favorite mint, Kentucky Colonel, in a metal pot to keep it reined in, but slightly less aggressive members of the family such as monarda and lemon balm (identifiable as mint by their square stems) are watchfully trusted in the midst of the flower beds. "I dry monarda, or bee balm leaves and use them to make a refreshing, minty tea," Jacqui says.

Jacqui dries many of her favorite herbs. "It's very hard!" She laughs. "Take a paper bag and throw the herbs in and seal it. Keep it in a dark place with low humidity. What works well for me is putting bags of herbs in the trunk of my car on a hot day."

They dehydrate quickly, and Jacqui shakes the bags until the leaves fall off, then transfers them to glass containers. "Oregano and mar-

joram have stronger flavor after they're dry," Jacqui says. Be positive there is no lingering moisture before sealing the containers or you'll be left with a mildewed mess instead of lovely, aromatic herbs.

Jacqui, a longtime member of the Colonial Triangle Unit of the Herb Society of America, is largely self-taught on the history and uses of herbs. "I have a number of books," she says, "and information is there for the reading on the Internet." Though she'd done extensive personal research, Jacqui found her knowledge expanding quickly during the eight years she volunteered at Colonial Williamsburg, especially while planning the herb garden behind Shield's Tavern on Duke of Gloucester Street. "I'm not volunteering anywhere at the moment," she says. "I thought I'd better use my energy in my own garden for now."

Jacqui's energy is also spent in other enjoyable pursuits, such as travel to exotic locales around the world. She and Bob made a decision to do the longest trips, such as to China, while they're relatively young and healthy, so last year was the trip to Indonesia and Malaysia. "After that 24-hour flight, I told Bob I didn't think we'd ever go back, but we just booked a cruise

from Singapore to Dubai."

"We used to vacation in Williamsburg when our daughter Kristen was growing up," Jacqui remembers. "The first time we visited, I asked Bob, 'Wouldn't this be a great place to live?'" Our area has changed enormously since then, but retains the small town vibe Jacqui loves while offering cultural abundance. The couple finds Williamsburg to have a sophisticated mentality which they both appreciate.

"Bob and I enjoy the Christopher Wren Society's class offerings all year, but in the spring we both look forward to the 'Great Decisions' subscription lecture series at the Williamsburg Regional Library. It's sponsored by the League of Women Voters and features speakers on wide-ranging world topics."

However, Jacqui Winther's greatest spring-time pleasure is always found in her garden, on her knees with her hands in the fertile soil.

"Even if you don't like to cook, growing herbs is a good thing to do. Buy a jarred spaghetti sauce and throw in some extra basil and oregano. Even soup from a box tastes better with your own homegrown parsley. Not everything has to be made from scratch, but with fresh herbs it can taste like it!" **NDN**

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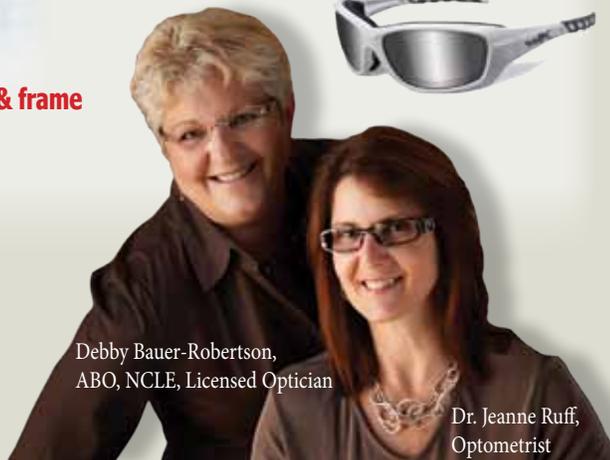
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Geoff Giles, President of the Williamsburg Bird Club and an active Virginia Master Naturalist, has lived, worked and bird-watched all over the world but Williamsburg and environs – in his view – has no parallel.

“This area boasts a beautiful natural setting and surroundings, with ample places readily available for public enjoyment,” he says. “Our location in the coastal plain, with access to the Chesapeake Bay – as well as the beautiful historic James and York Rivers – affords us a delightful four season climate.”

Geoff spends a good bit of time exploring and enjoying nature nearby with his friends from the bird club. He and his wife live near a tributary of the James River, but his fascination with bird life in this area began several years ago when his family was living in an old farmhouse they leased near the banks of the York River.

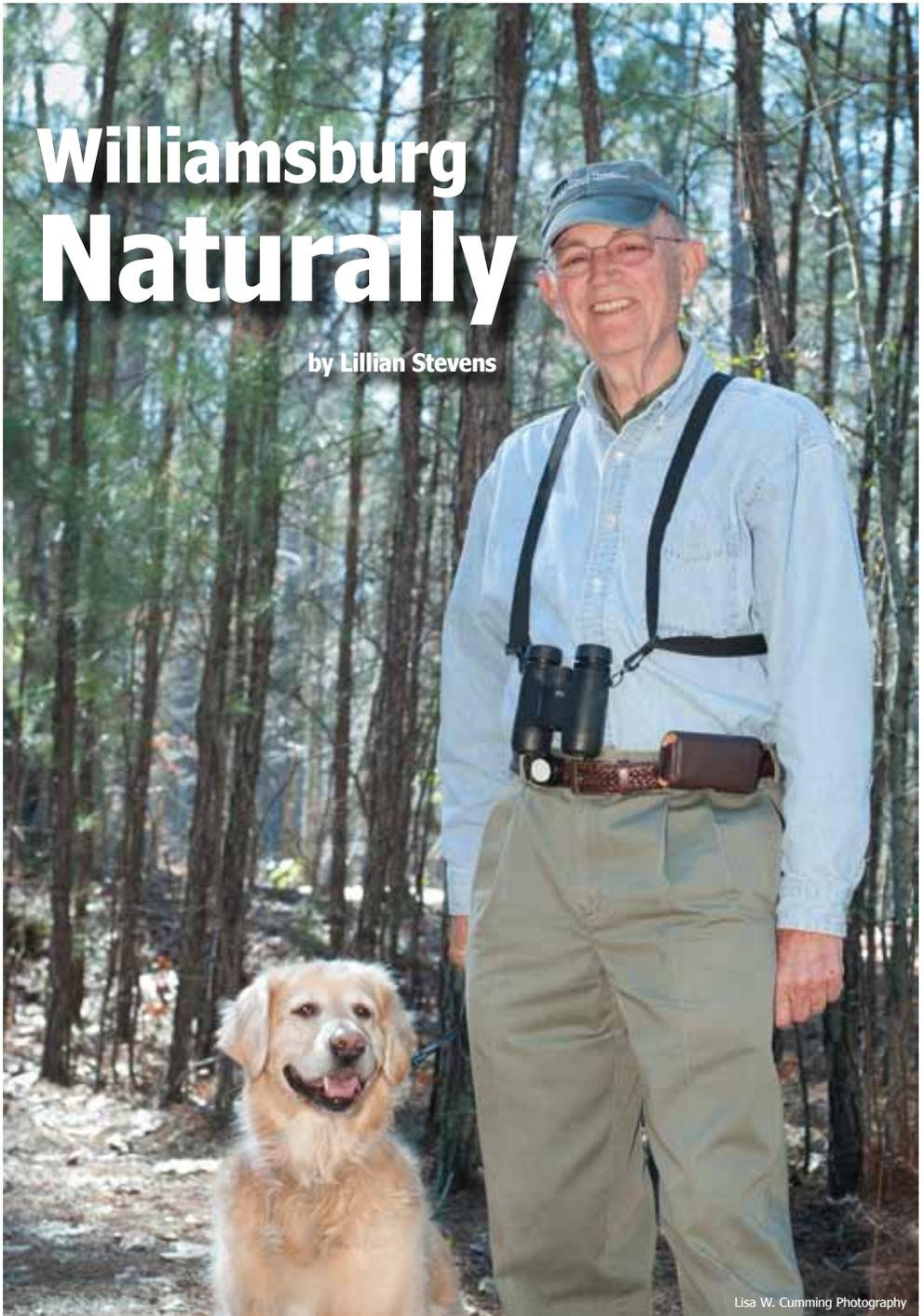
“Since I was a young boy, I’d seen birds at my mother’s feeder in our back yard in Maryland as well as ospreys and great blue herons fishing in the shallows along the rivers near our home.”

Geoff believes that most bird watchers get their start, in fact, at home in their own yards but years would pass before he called himself a bona fide bird watcher.

“During my working years, we lived in Europe for a time,” he reminisces. “I’d built a small feeder for my older son and hung it the back yard in the foothills of the Alps. I even let my casual interest go so far as to buy a field guide of the European birds, and learned some bird names in French and German.”

Geoff appreciated the birds and their beauty – but he wasn’t yet hooked.

“That happened in Williamsburg,” he says. “I was coming home to our farmhouse on the



Williamsburg Naturally

by Lillian Stevens

Lisa W. Cumming Photography

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York one day in May. As I turned into the driveway, I saw a very large and brightly colored bird – a king-sized woodpecker! This bird was perched on a very large red cypress tree, at about eye level. It looked like Woody Woodpecker right there in my backyard!”

Geoff had seen this bird, a pileated woodpecker, in books but had never observed one in nature, let alone this close up. The bird sat for a few moments, apparently as interested in Geoff as Geoff was in him. Although he didn't know it at the time, Geoff left this encounter a changed man.

“I began to read in an effort to try and unravel why this magnificent creature was in my yard. Soon, I noticed other frequent avian visitors to my property too, so I started conducting research about them.”

Geoff found his way to Wild Birds Unlimited in Williamsburg where he found binoculars, feeding stations (squirrel proof!) and eventually a bluebird house to bring the birds even closer. One day he picked up a Virginia Gazette and spotted the weekend calendar. That particular calendar included a listing of upcoming Williamsburg Bird Club bird walk/outings.

“Part of the enjoyment of that first walk was discovering the beautiful area of preserved nature in the park along unspoiled marsh and forest land bordering Queens Creek,” he says. “The other part was enjoying the company of enthusiastic and like-minded folks out for a pleasant stroll.”

On these outings, some of the bird watchers are quite new to avian life and nature, while the more experienced folks take pleasure in showing something new to a beginner and sharing what they know.

“We usually set out with around fifteen to twenty people,” says Geoff. “There will be people who are very experienced and others who have never looked through binoculars. Now that I've been at this for a while, I understand the vicarious enjoyment of helping someone discover a new and beautiful aspect of nature – and sharing their excitement in doing so.”

From the start, these bird walks were so enjoyable that they became a regular event for Geoff. At first, he was filled with a sense of wonder that there is always something new to discover in nature – something that may have been close at hand for a long time and yet gone unnoticed. The sense of wonder remained steadfast but after a time, Geoff found himself becoming more curious about the birds he so enjoyed watching.

“It was not long before it became apparent that some birds could be expected to frequent specific types of habitat and this led me to wonder why? Why were some birds with us year round while others undertook amazing migrations to get to their preferred breeding grounds?”

It turns out that it's all about the food and the bird species living in a unique ecological niche.

“The birds follow their instincts to be where they can find what they need to feed and breed,” Geoff explains. “Williamsburg is blessed with a large variety of year round resident species like cardinals, blue jays, chickadees and others but we are also on major flyways for some really cool migratory birds which pass through in spring and fall.”

There are also some species that are only here in winter, like a large population of beautiful waterfowl. Also, this past winter, the area was home to the snowy owl (of Harry Potter fame). Then as winter fades to spring, the other spectacular birds arrive – the scarlet and summer tanagers, blue grosbeaks, indigo buntings and many more which come to nest and then raise their young in summer. By late April and May, Geoff's beloved hummingbirds arrive. The tiniest bird, perhaps, but don't let the size of the bird fool you.

“A bird’s brain has amazing capabilities,” he says. “Birds have to learn quickly to feed themselves, find water and shelter, and avoid predators, generally within weeks from emerging from the egg and the nest, or else they perish.”

Imagine the tiny brain of a hummingbird, capable of flying within months after it has fledged. At the right time of the year they know to embark on a solo, non-stop night flight to an area of Mexico where they have never been – but can survive the winter. Then, they are able to return to our locality the following year.

“That brain clearly contains a miniaturized avionics package we could only dream of,” Geoff says.

Bird lovers couldn’t dream of a better backdrop for their outings, either.

“Some of the best places to go include the Colonial Parkway, the Jamestown Island Loop Road, York River State Park, Newport News Park, the plantations on the James River, historic Henricus, and Beaverdam Park in Gloucester,” Geoff says.

Other areas that are incomparable for shorebirds and migratory waterfowl in winter include the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel, Kiptopeke and small waterfront towns on Virginia’s Eastern Shore, Chincoteague/Assateague, and ocean coasts from Virginia Beach down to the North Carolina state line.

During these jaunts, has Geoff spotted an elusive bird – or has he seen birds that he’d never expect to find here?

“Well, the razorbill is a seabird that doesn’t belong here,” he says. “The razorbill is found up north or out in the Atlantic. But several weeks ago we had a winter birding by boat trip in the Chesapeake and we found ourselves in the midst of a bunch of razorbills so I got to see those after all.”

As rich as the bird life is in our area, Geoff has found the people who enjoy sharing his hobby to be just as rich a treasure trove.

“They are interesting folks from many areas and backgrounds who are happy to share great moments outdoors,” he says. “At an early point in appreciation of bird life it became apparent that the birds are just one part of a fabric of life on which they (and we) depend. This includes plants, insects, mammals, reptiles, amphibians and the air, earth and water they need to live.”

In an effort to understand more about the surprisingly complex interrelations in nature, Geoff became involved in the Virginia Master Naturalist program, which trains volunteers to gain a deeper understanding of nature and then to help others to do likewise.

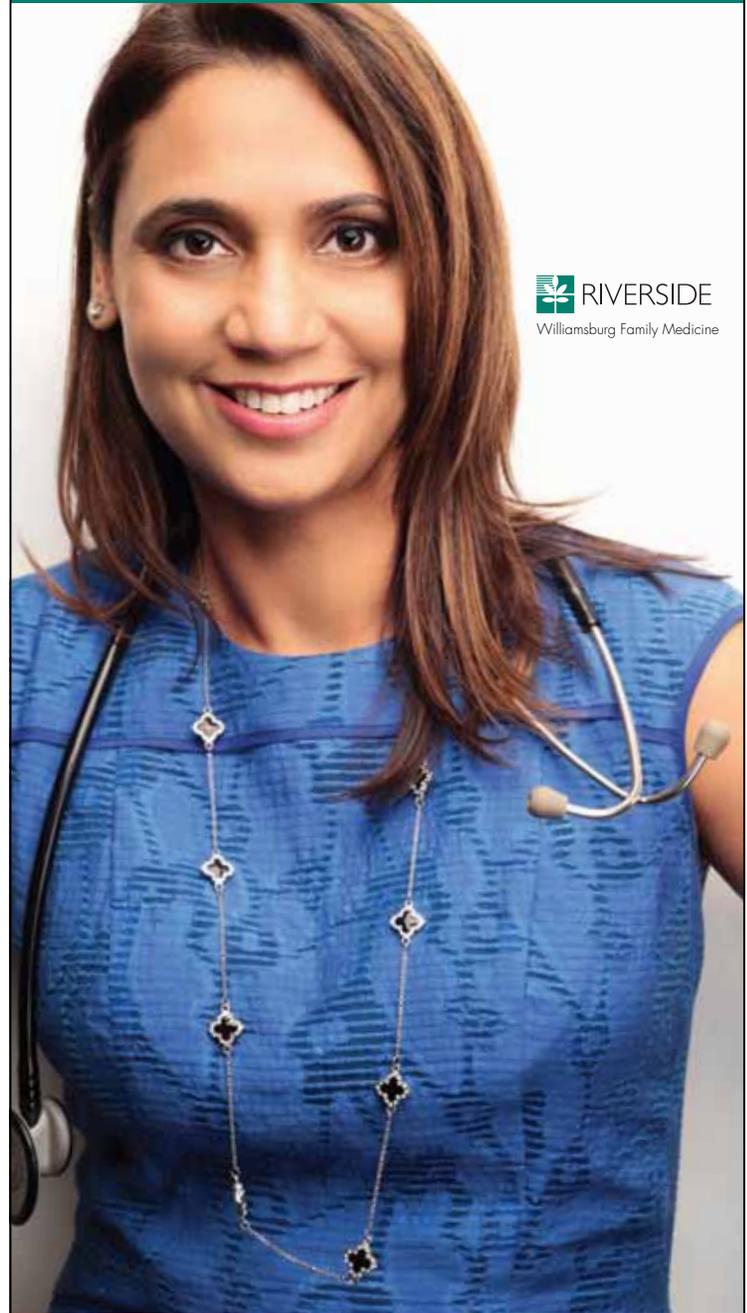
All of this brings Geoff right back to his happy home in Williamsburg. By far the one with whom he shares the most of nature is man’s best friend, his golden retriever, Buddy.

“Buddy does not take excuses or IOU’s when it’s time for his walks, and those walks are outdoors – whether in his neighborhood or in a park.”

Geoff’s patient wife and two fine sons are not bitten by the birding bug to the extent that he is, but they can’t avoid taking in some of the action of nature all around them. On Geoff’s half acre property, he has planted a number of small trees and shrubs (natives of course!) which give blossoms and berries for birds and critters.

Still, among Geoff Giles’ greatest enjoyments in Williamsburg are sharing the joys of our great natural setting with others, and he looks forward to sharing that enjoyment with anyone who is interested at the Williamsburg Bird Club whose activities are free to all and on line at www.williamsburgbirdclub.org. NDN

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MIKE BENTON



Lisa W. Cumming Photography

Mountain Biking What a BLAST!

by Brandy Centolanza

If there is anywhere that Mike Benton prefers to be, it is outside.

“Isn’t it natural to want to be outdoors?” asks Mike, president of the Eastern Virginia Mountain Bike Association (EVMA). “I can either be out biking or just sitting outside on the porch. Whether it is sunny or it is raining, it just feels natural to me to be outdoors.”

Even though Mike spent a great deal of time

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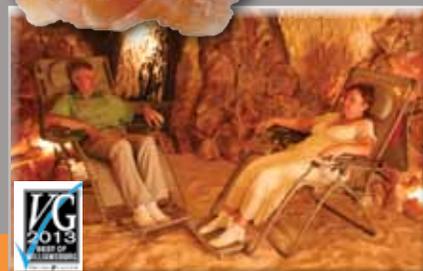
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outside growing up on a farm in North Carolina and later during a stint with the Navy, he didn't really appreciate it as much until later in life.

Mike first took up bicycling in the 1980s. One day when his road bike was stolen, he borrowed a friend's mountain bike for a ride and quickly became hooked.

"I had a blast with it," Mike recalls. "I just found it to be a fun way to exercise."

Soon, Mike became involved with cross country (XC) racing, in which he competed on flat terrain throughout Hampton Roads, Richmond, and other areas across the state every weekend.

"Back then, it used to be all about the racing and how fast I could get through a trail, but it took everything I got," Mike says. "Now, it's more of a social thing. If I am not out bike riding with my friends, it's just not as fun."

These days, in addition to mountain biking with pals, Mike has evolved in the sport, and recently started racing again, this time in downhill racing competitions. This year will be his third year of competition at Snowshoe Bike Park in West Virginia, the premiere downhill bike park on the East Coast. He's placed fourth in his previous two contests.

"My friends were actually the ones who encouraged me to give it a try," Mike says. "There is a different mentality to it than cross country racing. I compete in the senior class, and there are ten of us who race, so we know each other. You get such a real adrenaline rush when you are at the top of the hill at the start of the gate. I like it. I'm a real adrenaline junkie."

Mike tries to mountain bike four times a week. His favorite parks are Lake Maury Nature Area in Newport News, which has five miles of trails for beginners and intermediate riders, and historical Freedom Park along Centerville Road in James City County, which is popular among mountain bikers for its 21 miles of trails.

"Freedom Park just has a lot of fun stuff going on," Mike says. "There are a lot of jumps, and it's just a lot of fun. My favorite trail is Loop C."

Members of EVMA designed, built, and maintain the trails in Freedom Park. Mike first became involved with the organization more than ten years ago, around the time Freedom Park first opened.

"I became involved because I wanted to know more about the trails in the area," Mike says. "Now, I just like the social aspect of it."

More than 230 members belong to EVMA, which formed in 1988 to build environmentally appropriate, sustainable bike trails. Mike first took on the role of president last fall and was elected to a second term as president in February. EVMA recently filed for status as a non-profit organization, which has kept Mike busy. As president, Mike also works closely with land managers of several parks throughout the area in maintaining trails.

In addition to Freedom Park, EVMA helps with the trail upkeep at York River State Park, New Quarter Park, and Upper County Park in the Williamsburg area, Wahrani Nature Trail in West Point, Harwood Mills Park in Yorktown, and Indian River Park in Chesapeake.

"We design and build sustainable trails," Mike says. "If you design it correctly, it won't erode or wash away."

Mike works to accommodate the needs of as many EVMA members as possible. While some members would like to see more challenging trails, others would like to keep some trails simple enough to attract

more beginner mountain bike riders.

“Novice riders want something that is fun, and so do I,” Mike says. “I’d like to see some things changed up a bit. I want to make some trails a little easier and a lot more fun.”

EVMA is striving to bring in newer, younger participants as well, and has created a new program for children ages three through 18 called “Wednesdays on Your Wheels,” a mountain bike racing series that will be held at New Quarter Park near Queens Lake this spring.

“The trail at New Quarter Park is one of the nicest trails we have,”

“You get such a real adrenaline rush when you are at the top of the hill at the start of the gate. I like it. I’m a real adrenaline junkie.”

- Mike Benton

Mike says. “It is one of my favorite trails because there are not a lot of sharp corners or turns. It has a nice flow. It’s also not that long, relatively easy, and you can bail out pretty easily too if you need to.”

Mike suggests that beginner mountain bikers should start at New Quarter Park for those reasons. Though he has five different types of mountain bikes as well as specialized shoes for cycling, a beginning rider should start with a hardtail mountain bike, regular tennis shoes, as well as a helmet and a pair of gloves.

“When you are riding, always look ahead, and always look where you are going,” Mike adds. “If you look at the ground, then that is where you will go. Your bike will follow your eyes.”

The person that Mike most likes to go on mountain biking adventures with is his wife, Joan, whom he taught to ride.

“She just jumped in with it and took right off,” Mike says.

The pair have also backpacked along the Appalachian Trail in Northern Virginia and like to camp as well. Mike’s favorite mountain bike trips have been to Texas, and Devil’s Den State Park in Arkansas.

“Every trail has different terrain and features,” Mike says. “In Texas, there are no trees, and it was all out in the open. It was a whole different landscape. When we went to Arkansas, we rode on all solid rock. It was all rock, which was pretty incredible. It was really cool.”

One of his future goals through EVMA is to persuade the City of Williamsburg to put a bike trail back in Waller Mill Park. In 2003, Hurricane Isabel damaged or destroyed several of the trails there.

“I’ve been writing letters about it,” Mike says. “I really like that park and think they should put a bike trail back there.”

Mike also hopes that he and Joan will one day be able to visit Whistler Mountain Bike Park in British Columbia, Canada.

“It’s this world class bike park, and I’d like to go,” Mike Benton says. “I’m really obsessed with mountain biking. It is a lot of fun, and that is why I keep doing it.” NDN

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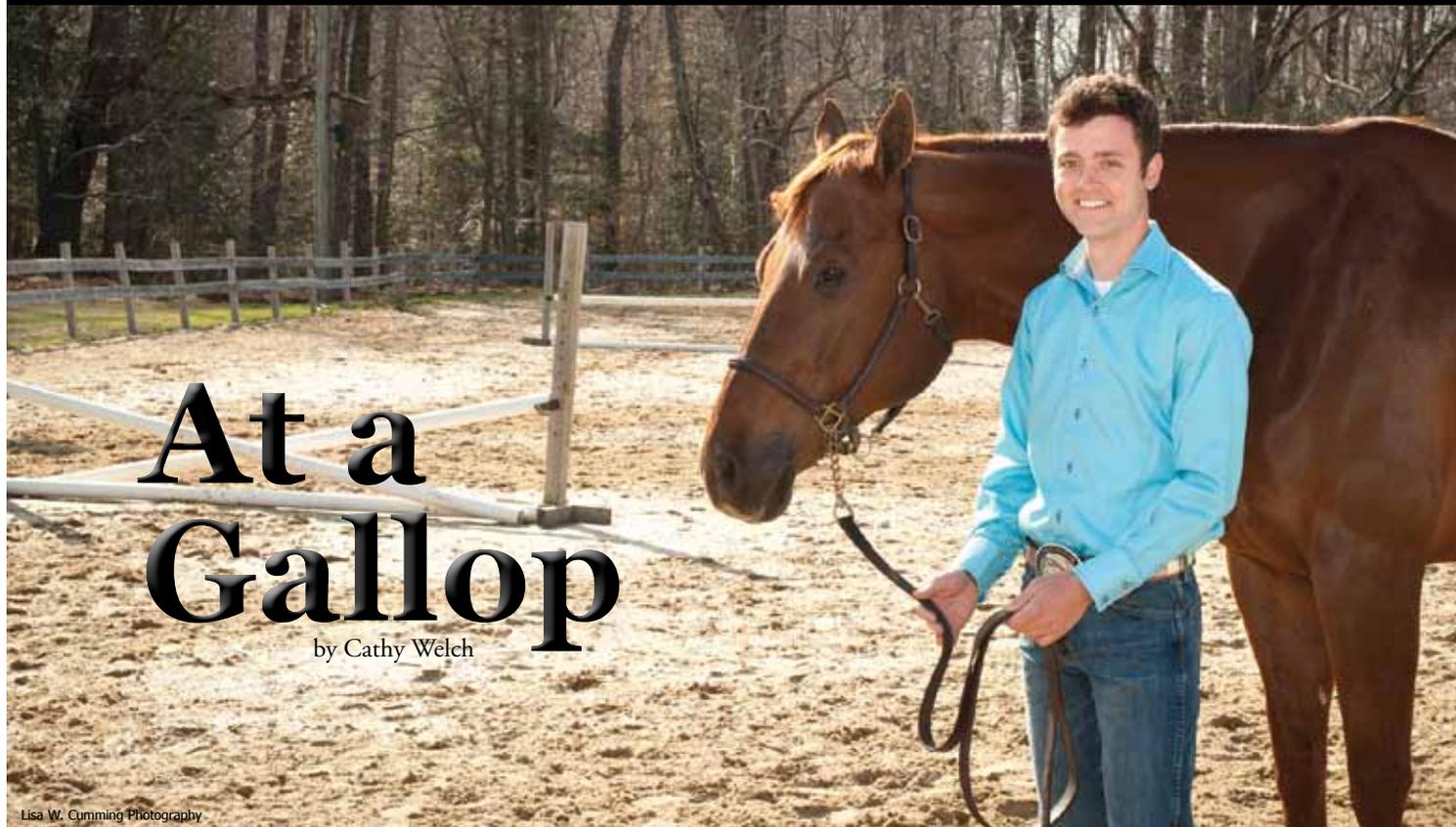
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JOSHUA CARR



At a Gallop

by Cathy Welch

Lisa W. Cumming Photography

“On a recent warm day, we had a lot of students come out to ride,” Joshua Carr of Joshua’s Heritage Farm on Forge Road in Toano says. “I just sat in a chair outside the ring and watched them all ride and have fun. At that point it really kind of clicked: It’s been a long road. It’s been a lot of work. But, just to watch the kids have a great time makes it all worth it to me.”

Joshua is the second of Jen Griffith Carr’s four boys. His brothers are Michael, Alexander and Jacob. They were born and raised in Williamsburg. Joshua graduated from Williamsburg Christian Academy before earning his Bachelor of Arts Degree in Psychology with a minor in Business Administration at Christopher Newport University (CNU).

Joshua started riding horses at his mother’s trainers’ farm in Smithfield when he was four-years old. He trained there until he was 16.

“We were boarding five horses,” Joshua explains. “My parents said we could build a farm and it would cost about the same as boarding five horses.” So they decided to build Joshua’s Heritage Farm (JHF).

As a child, he competed on the local circuit for a few years then progressed to the national level traveling up and down the East Coast. They boarded their horses at a farm in Williamsburg while JHF was under construction. There, they showed on the American Quarter Horse Circuit.

“That’s where I got turned on to Western

Riding,” Joshua explains. “We ended up buying a couple of Western Show Horses, and then commissioned trainers in North Carolina because Western Riding in this area is not very big.”

He started boarding a couple of his show horses at the North Carolina farm run by John and Laura Montross. “It got to where I was going down every week,” he says. After a year, he began living at the farm over weekends and summers.

“That’s where my passion to start my own equestrian training facility came about.” As time went on, the Montross’s gave him greater amounts of responsibilities in managing their farm to the point that he was managing their

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feed, their hay, cleaning their stalls and doing all of the background work of a training facility.

"I really enjoyed it and didn't mind working from sun up to sun down," he says. "My skill level for riding and training led them to allow me to train some of their clients' horses." Essentially, it turned into an internship.

His time at the Montross Farm started in his junior year of high school and carried through his senior year of college at CNU.

"Monday through Friday I would be in school and do all my assignments so I would have the weekends free to go down to my trainers." He did not take summer courses, so he could keep that time free for training and showing horses and to continue learning the trade.

"One of their main things was for their farm to be a peaceful, therapeutic, relaxing place for their clients." After training with the Montross's, Joshua felt confident in his ability to run a farm as their facility included 50 stalls with a large indoor arena.

Joshua is trying to translate that same feeling at JHF which was finished in 2006 and opened for business in 2011. He and his mom built the farm together.

"We started with lessons and as they progressed, we started to do boarding, then moved on to breeding."

He has one stud, Blazin' for Him, is his show name and Gabriel, is his barn name. Joshua also has one of the top ranked quarter horse stallions in the country.

JHF's mission statement comes to the forefront in the warmer months of spring, summer and fall. "We strongly believe in the importance of having fun with our horses, keeping a family-oriented atmosphere, and working hard to reach our goals; whatever they may be."

Joshua works to keep JHF as a small-knit, family-oriented farm. "In summers, we usually have a



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cookout on Fridays for the families to enjoy each other's company. We encourage all of our students to support each other."

With 25 horses on his property, JHF is not exclusively either a show or pleasure farm. "We leave that up to our clients," Joshua explains. "We go as high as the World Show and the World Cup as well as local competitions. And we have clients who have their horses as pets and simply enjoy their company."

Volunteering with Dream Catchers at the Cori Sikich Therapeutic Riding Center nearby since high school, Joshua was inspired to work in the field of psychology and still volunteers with Dream Catchers. "That was a really neat and humbling experience because they deal with a lot of developmental disorders," he says. He learned to appreciate the basic abilities he has that help him make an impact on people's lives.

Joshua finishes his Masters in Professional Counseling through Liberty University this month. He will start his PhD program in spring 2015. "This summer and fall, I'm going to get my feet wet with some actual practice," he explains. He is working to develop a program for some of the young adults and elderly patients at Eastern State Hospital. "They're going to come out and spend time with the horses." He would also like to work with them on actual equine therapy research.

Joshua has nine horses: Maggie, Taylor, Artie, Gabriel, Worthy, Callie, Charles, Angel and Elle. He has two miniature horses: Anna and Bella. Izzy and Oreo are his two miniature donkeys. Most of the horses are Appendix: a thoroughbred quarter horse mix. They also have a new rescue horse named Splash.

Even though Joshua spends time outdoors all year, like anybody else, he enjoys the warmer weather.

"Our clients still expect me to train their horses in cold weather," Joshua says. "I am outside during the winter. That's a given." The warmer temperatures bring more visitors to the farm to ride and enjoy their horses. "The show season (March to October) is starting up, which is one thing that really energizes me because I enjoy traveling for competitions."

This past year Joshua and his team went to the Built Ford Tough Youth World Show in Oklahoma. "We ended up being top 30 in the world for Hunter under Saddle." Hunter under Saddle is the competitive riding class that his 14-year-old student, Bailey Troutman, placed in as a semi-finalist. Bailey began riding at age 8 and now lives at JHF on the weekends to spend more time training with her horse.

"The horses seem to be a bit calmer during the warm weather which makes it easier to train them," Joshua explains. "The families spend more time at the farm, so it's definitely more fun out here during the warmer months because everyone's out riding." JHF hosts summer camps for students as well.

Joshua encourages his students to come out to the farm often and to ride together out in the ring. "They'll be riding bareback or just riding in the field," he says. "I really get a lot of joy out of watching the families come together and have fun."

He's had families tell him that some marital issues and other family difficulties have been resolved by spending time at the farm together. "That's a really powerful motivator" Joshua explains. "Simply opening the farm up to families to have a place to come and hang out and spend family time together has been so therapeutic." Joshua allows his students, who don't have horses, to ride his.

"I would like to think that having a horse when I was little kept me out of trouble," Joshua Carr adds. "I've seen it keep some kids out of a lot of trouble because of the time commitment. As someone who studies substance abuse, I value that. It's a way I feel I can help." NDN

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OUTDOOR ADVENTURER

by Ryan Jones

If a reprieve from a colder-than-usual winter wasn't enough motivation for Williamsburg residents to embark on a neighborhood stroll, most of us can confirm that time spent outdoors affects on our mental and physical well-being. It's no surprise then, that outdoor enthusiast Eric Hall, site manager for Williamsburg's outdoor-themed Go Ape Treetop Adventure Park, advocates time spent in nature as a fundamental part of healthy living.

"Personally I feel that time outdoors is an essential part of a well-balanced life," he says. "But I wouldn't say that being in prime physical condition from a fitness standpoint has anything to do with being outside. I think the connection with the outdoors is important, and it doesn't matter if you are fit or not to make that a part of your life."

Eric's assessment is encouraging for those who like to be outdoors, especially those who don't want to spend their leisure time training for half-marathons. Those of us who grew up during previous generations would probably agree that less-taxing children's activities like bike rides, hopscotch, makeshift baseball games and fort-building provided plenty of exercise, along with the additional benefits of increased social interaction and creativity.

While Williamsburg's up-and-coming generation has its share of time in the sun (just go to Mid-County Park on a nice day and you'll see for yourself), their epoch is irretrievably split between the digital realm and the natural world, with constant pressure to plunge further and further into a sea of electronic gadgets that tend to crowd out simpler activities.

Though Eric, a native of Brookville, Maryland (located about thirty minutes northwest of Washington D.C.) grew up during the initial flurry of the information age, he still managed to spend much of his life outdoors. Currently, he is somewhat of an adventurer, but doesn't subscribe to some of the activities you might expect from a guy who trains residents and visitors for a safe experience zip-lining through the trees at Freedom Park.

"I'm not really into obstacle races," he says, citing the trend of military-style racecourses that have been popular with many outdoor enthusiasts. "I never really enjoyed running. I did, however, play as many team based sports as I could through high school, mainly baseball."

Before he discovered his preference for baseball, Eric says his kinship with the outdoors was linked to a specific point in his adolescent timeline – a time many associate with camps, hikes,



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boating and other outdoor activities.

“My affinity for fitness-related work and leisure comes more from an experience I had at a summer camp when I was 13,” he says. “It was a camp called Wilderness Adventure at Eagle Landing. I spent two weeks at camp doing various outdoor activities from mountain biking to rock climbing to backpacking. That camp was a huge influence on me. When I was in high school I spent most of my weekends with my dad and brother backpacking or cycle camping. Then, once I got to college, I started rock climbing.”

During college, Eric began to affiliate himself with the local YMCA in Charlotte, North Carolina, and he found a niche promoting fitness and other outdoor-related activities. Among other things, he worked at a summer camp that was about an hour and a half from the city. Before he moved on to other venues, he served as a counselor, program director and environmental educator at the camp.

After he received his Bachelor of Science from Appalachian State University in Parks, Recreation and Leisure Facilities Management, Eric went to work for Hudson Trail Outfitters, an outdoor-enthusiast distributor whose mission was “to sell the highest quality, highest end, most specialized equipment, gear, and apparel in the entire outdoor industry.” There, he was promoted from a sales associate to assistant manager. He did not stay there, however.

“Go Ape found me for the most part,” he remembers. “I had a friend who knew the person who was starting the company here in the U.S. Go Ape wasn’t even open or under construction for that matter when I applied to work as instructor. I started working for Go Ape in 2010 as an instructor in Rockville and was promoted to site manager in 2012 to open the Williamsburg location.”

Go Ape is an adventure park located in several states that allows participants to explore from an otherwise unobtainable vantage point while navigating through the treetops using zip lines, obstacles and Tarzan swings. Of course, this diversion is accomplished using a bevy of harnesses, straps and other gadgets to maximize safety.

“As an instructor you spend the majority of your time outside in the woods,” explains Eric. “Very similar to a lifeguard, you make sure people are safe in the trees. From raking landing sites to doing trail maintenance, it is all pretty much done outside. I find the mornings at Go Ape most challenging, as I am not a morning person. Every morning the course has to be open and inspected to ensure it is safe for guests. My current duties revolve more around management than the instructor job. My favorite part of the job is interacting with guests on the course. It is always interesting to hear why they are visiting Williamsburg and to see them have a good time on the course.”

Though Eric enjoys helping individuals and families have a premier adventure experience at Go Ape, he laments the terrain-type here in Williamsburg.

“I am still an avid rock climber,” he says, “which has been a little hampered because Williamsburg doesn’t have a whole lot of mountains in close proximity. I do like Williamsburg, though. It’s quiet with very little traffic. The major downside is a lack of twenty- something people my age to be friends with. There are a few here and there, but I found all of them, and then I hired them to work for me at Go Ape,” he says with a laugh. “Recently, I found something that I liked a whole lot that wasn’t climbing: disc golf. I spent as many days as weather would allow playing the New Quarter Park disc golf course.”

Whether introducing Williamsburg residents and visitors to zip-lining atop the trees in Freedom Park or playing disc golf at New Quarter Park, Eric Hall embraces the outdoors and finding new adventures. “Come on out and Go Ape,” he adds. “In the treetops, it’s a great adventure.” NDN



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Lawn Bowling

Avoid the Rub

by Narielle Living



Lisa W. Cumming Photography

Queen: What sport shall we devise here in this garden, To drive away the heavy thought of care?

Lady: Madam, we'll play at bowls.

Queen: 'Twill make me think the world is full of rubs, And that my fortune runs against the bias.

-Shakespeare, Richard II, Act III Scene IV

The history of lawn bowling dates back to the Roman times, and as the example above illustrates, references to the sport can be found sprinkled throughout Shakespeare's plays. According to Richard Landauer, President of the Williamsburg Inn Lawn Bowling Club, "George Washington was a bowler. Unfortunately, after the Revolutionary War bowling

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was thought of more as a British sport, and anything British was not to be tolerated. At that time it fell by the wayside until about the 19th century, when it made a comeback here in the United States.”

Locally, lawn bowling can be played at the Williamsburg Inn Lawn Bowling Club. The bowling green, located behind the Williamsburg Inn, measures 120 feet by 120 feet. A small ditch, recently dug, runs along two sides of the green. The goal of the game is to roll the bowl—it is not a ball—as close as possible to a smaller ball, called a jack. Each player uses a bowl that is appropriate to their hand size, with the sizes and weights varying. The bowls are mostly round, but are flattened on two sides, creating what is called a bias, meaning the bowl will curve in direction when it is rolled.

“The bowls are off center so when you roll them they don’t go straight,” Richard says. “You can’t just roll the ball, you have to do what they call ‘play the grass,’ which means the condition of the grass will affect how it rolls. If the grass is dry or damp or not cut for a couple of days that affects your swing. So what you did the week before is not necessarily going to

be the same.”

The grass on the bowling green at the Williamsburg Inn has been recently aerated and sanded, creating what looks like a putting green on a golf course. The sand will wash away with the rains, and the grass, cut very short, is maintained by the head groundskeeper of the Golden Horseshoe golf course.

“While it’s supposed to be totally even, no grass is perfect so there are little nuances out there on the green,” Richard says. “Like a putting green where they keep moving the cup, we don’t have permanent stakes. We keep moving those too, so the grass doesn’t wear and you’re adding a little variation into it.” Variations or faults on the surface of the green are sometimes called rubs.

To start, players bowl off of a mat. The mat is placed on the green, and the player throws the jack, or the target, to determine the distance that will be played. The jack must go a minimum distance but it cannot roll into the ditch. If it goes in the ditch then the players bring it out two meters. If the jack is two meters from the ditch, that is considered a long distance.

Each bowling green is divided into rinks,

which are the lanes that each team plays. The jacks are rolled in the rink, and each team must stay within their defined area to bowl.

According to Richard, there can be quite a variation in the target distance for each game. “The distance is what determines how much ‘oomph’ you put on the bowl to get it down there,” he says. “So, there are two very big variables that do not make it easy. This game is never the same each time you play.”

With one foot on the mat, the player must bend their knees to throw the bowl toward the jack. Sometimes the bowl strikes the jack during play, moving the jack to a different location. “If the jack moves, as long as it doesn’t go out of your rink it’s still valid,” Richard says. “You can even move the jack into the ditch. That gets really hard because if the jack’s in the ditch you have to get as close as you can and keep the bowl out of the ditch.” The player with the bowl closest to the jack scores a point for their team.

Richard says that one of the best parts of lawn bowling is that anyone can play the game. “All you need to be able to do is get down to throw your bowl. Of course as people get

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older they have trouble doing that, and they come up with different variations. We have one member that plays with a device, which you're allowed to do, almost like one of those grab things you grab a can of corn from the kitchen cabinet with. He uses the device to grab his bowl." Richard chuckles. "He's hard to beat sometimes."

Richard encourages people to try the game. "We get people trying it all the time," he says. "Anyone can show up and play, we encourage that. The Williamsburg Inn has been wonderful to work with. During the season, which runs April 1 through Oct 31, a club member is on the green from 3 to 6 p.m. every day. The Inn lets guests know that the bowling green is open if people want to come out and try it." Richard also says that children are welcome to try the game, too. The ideal age to begin playing is around 10 years old, but they have a place for younger children to play, too. "For younger kids we have a practice green, with smaller bowls. They can go up there and do anything they want and they usually have lots of fun."

During the summer, the only time the green

is closed is during inclement weather or when it gets above 92 degrees. And although the season officially begins in April, Richard says that weather permitting they can play during the entire year. "When weather is good we all have keys to the equipment box so we go out there and use the green. Or sometimes I'll call a friend and say 'let's go bowling today.' We're very fortunate in this area that sometimes we can play during the winter."

Richard says that the Williamsburg Inn Lawn Bowling Club has been in existence for over thirty years. "I think when they originally started they had Colonial Williamsburg employees doing the demonstrations. The club kind of took over some of the aspects of keeping the green and evolved from that. We are really lucky to have the Williamsburg Inn support us like they do. We couldn't do it without them."

Originally from Oregon, Richard spent 25 years in the Navy. His last duty station was in Scotland and he lived in town. "Bowls are really big in Scotland, and as I got to know some of the local townspeople they invited me to try lawn bowling," he says. Eventually they invited

him to join the club, which he did. "That particular club just celebrated their 150th anniversary as a bowling club. It's incredibly popular in the commonwealth countries, and almost every little town over there has at least one green."

After his time in the Navy, Richard worked in northern Virginia as a contractor. Once he retired, he and his wife, who is from Scotland, decided to move to Williamsburg. "We're kind of in between Oregon and Scotland," he says, smiling. "One day we came down here for a visit and we loved it. This is the best move we ever made. The weather, the people, the cultural aspects, it's all great. Everything is here, and we're close to things."

He and his wife visit Scotland about every other year, and if their trip is during the summer he takes the time to bowl. "This is a really fun game, and I encourage anyone to come on out and give it a try," Richard Landauer says. "We're here every day, and we'll teach the game to anybody that's interested."

A gentle game, full of skill, finesse and fun, players can learn to play with the bias and hopefully avoid the rub. NDN

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Lisa W. Cumming Photography

63 YEARS OF Pedaling

by Alison Johnson

More than six decades later, Bob Austin can still feel the pure joy of the first day he rode a two-wheeler on his own. Then 6 years old and on vacation with his family in Nantucket, Bob clearly remembers coasting down a short hill on a fat-tired rental bike, past sand dunes that turned into brown blurs.

“I had this great sense of exhilaration and freedom,” he says. “For a kid, that’s pretty memorable.”

From that moment on, Bob has never stopped riding. Now 69 and in his second elected term as president of Williamsburg Area Bicyclists (WAB), he averages 3,000 to 4,000 total miles a year on his five bikes. Along with other club leaders, he’s also passionate about preserving local bike trails – and adding more – to give everyone from advanced riders to beginners more options.

May, designated as National Bike Month by the League of American Bicyclists, is a great chance to try some of the area’s routes, Bob says. Just this year, he notes, the league recognized Williamsburg as

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one of the country's bike-friendly communities. The WAB helps organize one of the most popular Bike Month events, the annual "Pedal the Parkway" ride – on the morning of May 3 this year – that allows riders to coast along the Colonial Parkway without worrying about car traffic.

Biking, Bob strongly believes, is very safe if people follow road rules and use well-maintained equipment. He's also convinced that the physical, mental and sometimes social benefits of the sport have kept him healthy as he pushes 70.

"Many friends my age have had knee replacements and hip replacements and shunts and bypass operations," he says. "I really have been lucky. My joints are fine. I have energy. I get a tremendous sense of well-being after a good sprint or a hard hill climb."

Bob was among the charter members of the WAB, a nonprofit founded in 1998, and has served as its treasurer, a board member and, since 2012, president. "We all wanted the opportunity to have organized rides, to explore and do our part to maintain the routes we have here," he says. "We don't race, but we can keep some pretty healthy paces."

With about 275 members, the club offers

a weekly schedule of rides along with special events. Together, members average 160,000 rider miles a year, according to self-reported odometer data. Most are what's known as "C" riders, with an average pace of 12- to 14-miles per hour (A, B, C and D and "casual" levels are based on average mph, from 20 to less than 10).

WAB leaders work with government planners to promote biking, educate the community on safety and plan regular clean-up efforts. Projects include donating helmets to local riders – young foreigners who often bike to seasonal jobs, for example – and, quarterly for the past 15 years, removing trash from an adopted two-mile stretch of roads near Bob's home in Croaker.

Safety-wise, bicyclists' most common mistake is riding against traffic rather than with it, Bob says. A few other basics: always wear helmets, use lights or reflective gear after dark, follow road signs and learn the hand signals to demonstrate intended stops and turns.

Drivers, meanwhile, should slow down to pass bicyclists, never drive, idle or park a car in bike lanes and double-check for riders before changing lanes and opening doors. "It's really not hard for all of us to get along," Bob says.

Cars and bikes do tend to get along well in the Williamsburg area, he adds. To his knowledge, no WAB member has suffered an injury caused by a motor vehicle. "We've had some falls, of course, and some accidents caused by dogs, but the idea that we're all terrible 'accidents waiting to happen' isn't true if you do it right and obey the rules," he says.

Bob's worst tumble in his many years of riding came in 2008, when a dog he hadn't seen suddenly knocked into his bike and sent him flying over the handlebars. He suffered a concussion, cracked ribs and some cuts and bruises. "Nothing too bad," he says. "Scars build character."

So does adventure, in his eyes. Bob, born in Washington, D.C. into a Navy family, lived all over the United States as a child. In the summer of 1961, at age 16, he somehow persuaded his parents to let him take a 14-day, 1,200-mile solo bike ride from north of Seattle, Washington, to Long Beach, California. He camped in state parks and accepted dinner invitations from strangers, who never questioned his situation.

"All I can say is those were more innocent times," he says. "I think I called home once and sent them one postcard. I learned that I could

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In 2011, Bob marked the 50th anniversary of that ride by repeating it, this time in 17 days and with hotel stays and support from a friend driving along. He published a book, *A Half-Century's Rides*, based on his diary and blog accounts from the two trips.

Bob also spent his college years in Long Beach, at what is now California State University, Long Beach, where he majored in French. Combining an interest in foreign languages and business, he went on to earn a Master's Degree in Business Administration at the American Graduate School of International Management in Arizona, now known as the Thunderbird School of Global Management.

Bob, who describes himself as a retired federal employee, is fluent in French and Spanish and traveled extensively for work. He lived in Central and South America for 11 years and in France for 3½ years. When he retired to James City County in 1998, one reason he bought his home was that a narrow, winding road nearby reminded him of a road he loved to bike along in northern France.

“I was definitely looking for a good biking community,” he says. “We have routes here that are rustic, rural and with little traffic, or where

if there are cars coming you can usually hear them in advance.”

To this day, one of Bob's favorite routes is an approximately 18-mile journey that takes him along roads surrounding his house on Ware Creek Road, with some ventures into York River State Park or Riverview Plantation. “I've been riding that route about two times a week for 15 years,” he says.

Bob, who averages about 15 mph, has two road bikes, one mountain, one cross and one single-speed commuter. He also spends his time designing and building sailboats – he crafted his own 16- and 22-foot boats in a backyard shop – repairing open-water kayaks and volunteering as a Spanish tutor for the public library system, as well as for young students in the General Assembly's Page Program.

The father of one grown daughter and grandfather of two, Bob hopes to bring more young members into the WAB. The club offers one- or two-year memberships for individuals, families and college students, ranging from \$15 to \$45 and including group rides, event calendars, the monthly “Flying Wheel” newsletter and discounts at local bike stores.

The WAB also sells a \$20 guide book featuring more than 25 area routes, from five to

62 miles long. One new option is completed portions of the Virginia Capital Trail, a paved pedestrian and bike path that will connect Jamestown and Richmond along the scenic Route 5 corridor. All 50-plus miles of the trail should be ready by summer 2015, when a major world road cycling competition is coming to Richmond.

“That's perfect for riders who don't like sharing the road with cars and trucks,” Bob says. The same is true for Pedal the Parkway, which has averaged 1,200 bicyclists a year and is back on an annual schedule after last year's federal budget sequestration derailed it.

With Bike Month in swing, Bob is happy to be past a cold, snowy winter and ready to add more miles to his odometer. Biking is a great way to exercise outdoors even in the heat of summer. “People see me in convenience stores on 100-degree days, taking a break to buy a drink, and they look at me like I'm crazy,” Bob says. “It only hurts when I stop, and I lose the wind.” NDN

To learn more about Williamsburg Area Bicyclists, visit www.wabonline.org. Information on local Bike Month events is available at www.williamsburgbikemonth.org.

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for Wildlife!

by Susan Guthrie

With the help of native plants, Phillip Merritt uses science to create art. "Garden design is creative but also has a scientific element; I like how science and art fit together in nature."

His mother's side of the family was in the floral business and as a child he loved to play in his grandparent's greenhouse. He was naturally artistic and received an undergraduate degree in fine arts. While attending UVA for his Master's Degree in Landscape Architecture, his favorite class was plant identification. The beauty of the surrounding Blue Ridge Mountains combined with his admiration for one of his professors, plant identification grew into more than a hobby. "I became interested in plants by seeing them in their native environment and learning how to identify them."



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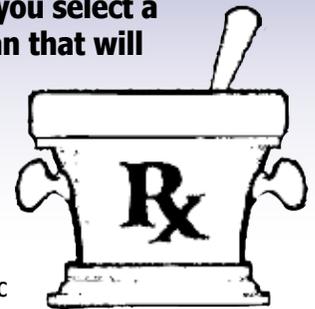


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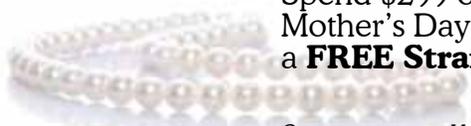
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Driving the scenic roads of the Blue Ridge Parkway, he found himself wanting to know what all of the plants were. "At first it all looks the same, you can't tell one plant from another, but with a little experience it's satisfying to see a blur of color and know exactly what it is. It's surprising how much you can learn with a little practice." His friends would mistake him for a crazy person wandering along the side of the road, but he was just identifying plants. "Wet ditches along country roads are some of the best places to spot unusual plants."

As a landscape architect and president of the John Clayton Chapter of the Virginia Native Plant Society, Phillip has been transforming Williamsburg landscapes into art for 21 years. He has led many field trips in Williamsburg for the native plants society. "It's like a puzzle; you go out with a group of people with field guides and see what you can identify." The society offers two field trips a month, with approximately 20 people per group.

Since his presidential duties at the native plant society keep him from leading many field trips, he is looking forward to the native plant sale at Jamestown Beach Park on April 26. "The plant sale is a great place to pick up plants that members of the society have grown in their own yards and to get native plants that you won't find in nurseries or garden centers." He also recommends looking at Colonial Williamsburg for an excellent example that native gardens do not have to look wild and can enhance the beauty of your residential landscape. "They were designed to reflect the 18th century; most of the plants are natives that the colonists would have had available."

If you love wildlife, use native plants in your landscape design. Native plants make up the base of the food web that supports wildlife and establishes the health of the ecosystem. Shelter and nesting sites provided by native plants are important to sustain native wildlife. The use of native plants in your yard and garden can be beautiful, good for the environment and will require less maintenance.

Phillip used mostly native plantings for his former house in Walnut Hills. The previous owners tried for a lawn, which did not do well in the shade, so he replaced the grass with between 10 and 12 species of ferns and a water garden. He now has three acres in Lanexa and is very excited to start with a fresh pallet. Native plants, especially those that support the most insects, will make up the majority of his new landscape. Phillip looks forward to the different habitat types on his new property where he'll experiment with unusual native trees like farkleberry, horse sugar and umbrella magnolia.

Mention insects in the garden and people reach for the pesticides. Wait, insects provide one of the main food sources for birds. "I want residents to understand and appreciate how important insects are to the larger ecosystem and how important native plants are to insects." Native plants are more resilient to occasional insect damage and recover easily.

"Most insects do minimal damage to native plants, so it's important to understand that not all insects are bad." The best thing you can do to support wildlife is to contribute to the food web by using native plants to increase native insect populations.

"If you want songbirds; goldenrod, aster - black-eyed susans are a great place to start," Phillip says. Everyone knows and requests roses and azaleas; however, they require chemicals and other artificial methods to thrive outside their natural limits. Phlox, roses, crabapples, euonymus, photinia and many other non-native ornamental plants are more commonly afflicted with disease and pests. The good insects cannot eat these and other non-native ornamental plants, which makes them more susceptible to infestations of destructive insects like gypsy moths and Japanese beetles.

Phillip recommends choosing plants that do not require many chemicals and putting them in the right place. For a distinctive low maintenance landscape, learn to appreciate native plants that are not as problematic.

He warns that invasive plants including English ivy, vinca, wisteria, privet, Japanese honeysuckle and bamboo can be very damaging to the ecosystem. "These have very little wildlife benefit and drive out the plants that do contribute to the food web." Using alternatives like native honeysuckle will make the landscape attractive to wildlife and support a healthy ecosystem. Phillip says he understands that everyone wants fast results; however, he cautions that you should be suspicious of plants described as "fast growing," especially Leyland cypress. "Leyland cypress can grow too big too fast for residential landscapes, and they can often blow over once they mature." He encourages planting milkweed, which is the sole source of food for monarch butterfly larvae. The loss of milkweed in the past several years has resulted in drastic reductions in the monarch butterfly population.

Are there existing wildlife areas adjacent to your property? "Don't think of nature as something 'out there,'" Phillip says. Planting native species next to existing natural areas can increase the size of wildlife corridors. "Often, trees and other more natural parts of the yard get pushed towards the back property line. If you look at it from above, you see how these unintentional natural areas join together to create networks running through neighborhoods, so put your new plantings next to these already existing natural areas."

Wildlife corridors not only provide food and shelter, they also reduce edge effects on native vegetation and provide a more natural range for larger species. "In the continental U.S. we've lost 95% of the wild areas, so homeowners should consider ways in which their yard can be added to what's left."

A frequent but often unexpected obstacle to using native plants in your yard can be your Home Owners Association (HOA) guidelines. Although the intent of HOA landscape standards is to promote beautiful lush yards, their standards often make achieving that goal difficult.

According to Phillip, height requirements for plant installation can result in plants that are too large for the available space. "Most homes need dwarf versions of shrubs but they tend to be too small when they come from the nursery to meet HOA requirements." Therefore, he recommends reviewing your HOA guidelines prior to designing your landscape.

Want more information on using native plants to attract wildlife to your yard? Phillip promotes the use of native plants by continually updating his very informative blog (www.HowItGrows.com) and native plant photographs. The blog includes a link to an interactive map of plants and places to see in Tidewater, as well as a diary of which plants are in bloom in Williamsburg for every week of the year. In addition, he contributed to approximately 100 photographs to the "Wildflowers and Grasses of Virginia's Coastal Plain" identification guide by Helen Hamilton, which he recommends for wildflower identification.

There are many sources for do-it-yourself landscaping advice, but Phillip Merritt says not to worry about a lot of garden lore and complicated planning. "Dig a hole, put a plant in it and keep it watered. If something dies don't give up or worry about it; just try something else."

He says the best thing is to experiment with different native plants in different areas and attend a native plant society field trip to see the possibilities right outside your door. "Start small, you'll have lower maintenance and see more results." Once you have success, you will feel inspired to expand and have fun with the diversity of nature. NDN



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ELIZABETH GREAF



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Taking Art Outdoors

by Susannah Livingston

Sitting down in her light-filled studio and talking with Elizabeth Greafe about her favorite subject—painting en plein air or in the open air—is like drawing a deep breath on a spring day. For Elizabeth, who moved to Williamsburg with her husband in 2012, painting is not only a passionate pursuit but a great way to

explore a new locale—one that is feeling more like home with every passing day.

Elizabeth's journey to Williamsburg has taken her across the country and back and as far afield as Europe. Her early childhood was more peripatetic than most: Her parents separated when she was very young and she

lived with her mother in Middleport, Ohio, a charming town on the Ohio River. But her father, who lived on a nearby farm, remained an important part of her life.

"I would visit my father and the fact that they were visits made them so special," she says. "He taught me to love nature. It was great

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Charles P. Martino, Gerontologist

to be out on that farm, out in the air... That was a really stimulating experience—it made me want to tell stories of things that I loved through art.” Though her family was not artistic, Elizabeth says, she “had always expressed herself visually,” and she began oil painting lessons at the age of seven.

By the time she was in high school, Elizabeth had moved to Salem, Virginia. After that, it was on to Boston, where she graduated from Northeastern University with a Degree in Hospital Administration and worked for the venerable Massachusetts General Hospital. In 1974, she finished a Master’s Degree in Hospital Administration at George Washington University in Washington, D.C., where she met her husband Bill.

“I’d finished my internship in functional programming,” which has to do with planning the size and functions of health-care spaces, Elizabeth explains. “The Veterans Administration (VA) was looking for someone in that area—I’d completed my master’s thesis on that—and I was hired almost immediately.” She would work for the VA for 13 years—in Washington and, later, in San Francisco. Though it was not exactly artistic, the work was heavily visual, for

Elizabeth was collaborating with architects and engineers to design hospitals and other health-care facilities. It was challenging but also gratifying, she says, to build a reputation in a field that was still dominated by men.

Even as she put in long days and weeks as a hospital planner, Elizabeth continued painting—and learning about painting. “As soon as I got my master’s degree I started taking art classes at night,” she says. “Wherever I’ve lived I’ve studied at a good art school along the way.”

She studied at the famed Corcoran School of Art in Washington, then at the de Young Museum Art School and the Academy of Art University in San Francisco. By the mid-1980s, she was taking part in juried shows and exhibiting in galleries across the Bay Area. In 1988, with enthusiastic support from her husband, Bill, Elizabeth made the courageous decision to leave health-care administration and become a full-time painter. “Since 1988, my art has been my job,” she says.

Despite having to part with the accustomed paycheck, Elizabeth never looked back. Instead, she plunged into her painting with gusto and soon found her niche in the San Francisco art community. “I was climbing,” she says

modestly. But in 1994, Bill was offered a job on New York’s Long Island, and the Greafs relocated to Stony Brook.

For Elizabeth, the artist, the move was not easy. “I was completely established by then in one of the best galleries in San Francisco and Napa Valley,” she says. “When I got to Long Island I had no reputation—I had to completely start over.” But by the mid-1990s Elizabeth was showing her work in respected shows and galleries on Long Island and in Connecticut. She exhibited her work regularly at Gallery North in Setauket, joined the board, and ended up chairing the gallery’s Artists Advisory Board. She also created Gallery North’s Wet Paint Festival, an annual three-day plein-air celebration now in its tenth year. Elizabeth lists the festival among her proudest accomplishments, along with her recent admission to New York’s exclusive Salmagundi Club.

Plein-air or outdoor painting gained a following in the mid-1800s, made possible by the invention of the humble paint tube. It remains a popular approach to this day. But what is it about plein-air that many artists find so compelling? Elizabeth says her own paintings are an attempt to “capture a moment spent in a



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place that I was reluctant to leave.” She adds that paintings created outside have a fresher feel than those painted in the studio.

One of a plein-air painter’s most important tasks is learning to study a scene with new vision. “I still remember once when I was sitting on a train in Prague waiting for it to leave the station... I started sketching some things in the station, then another train came in and blocked my view ... but to this day I remember what I was looking at because you engage with it so differently when you’re studying it to draw it.”

Elizabeth says it’s always a good idea to do some quick sketches. This helps “define the edges of the canvas and helps you not try to do too much. When you’re outdoors and you look around, it’s very hard to know how to limit yourself to a paintable subject because the whole world spreads out in front of you.”

Unlike some plein-air purists, Elizabeth finishes her works in the studio. “Once I get through the early stages of a painting, it starts talking to me—‘This needs to be lighter, this needs to be darker, whatever’... I’m a little more detailed, and your personal style has an impact on whether you can do a painting to-

tally onsite.” She works in watercolor and oil and favors evocative scenes from nature.

Despite her obvious love for talking about art, Elizabeth did not begin teaching until well into her full-time career as an artist. “People kept asking me if I taught, and I would say, ‘I don’t know anything about teaching!’ Then somebody signed me up to teach a class at a library and I fell in love with teaching adults.”

She says she found herself articulating things that she didn’t know she knew. “Concepts were coming together for me. I especially love teaching beginners, making sure people really know the details.”

Elizabeth particularly enjoys giving outdoor classes. In addition to regular weekly plein-air sessions, she’s held workshops across New England and the mid-Atlantic as well as in Paris and Chartres, France. This June she’ll be leading a workshop in scenic Rockport, Massachusetts.

Do painters sometimes experience the equivalent of writer’s block? Absolutely, Elizabeth says. “You hear about the problem of the white piece of paper or canvas. I tell my students, ‘Just make a mark on it—mess it up ... now you have something to work from.’”

Elizabeth and Bill still split their time between Williamsburg and Stony Brook, where they’re in the process of selling their house, but they look forward to settling down here for good. Meanwhile, the artist continues happily exploring her new surroundings. “This area is unfolding itself to me,” she says. “I love to explore, and you have to do that ... I love Jamestown Island, Colonial Williamsburg, Fort Monroe. I’m always looking.”

Elizabeth is already teaching classes in plein-air and other techniques at This Century Art Gallery in Williamsburg, and she plans to teach at other arts venues around Hampton Roads. She exhibited at An Occasion for the Arts last October; in April and May, she’ll be showing her work at Aromas Café on Prince George Street.

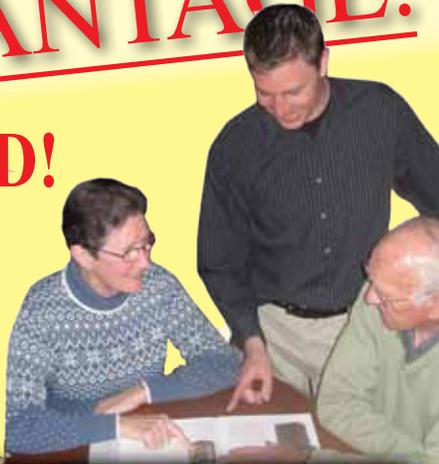
All of it is part of the plan Elizabeth Greaformed back in 1988 to share her love of art with those around her. After all, she says, “We paint for people to enjoy the painting. It’s not necessarily so that people can become painters; it’s to touch people’s lives.” **NDN**

For information on her plein-air classes at This Century Art Gallery, please call (757) 229-4949.

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Lisa W. Cumming Photography

Complementary Attraction

by Greg Lilly, Editor

With a cache of musical antiques and memorabilia that bloomed along with his main business, Buddy Parker has opened the Virginia Musical Museum that documents the history of music in the state. Buddy and his wife, Peggy, are the owners of Parker Piano Outlet.

“I purchased some of these when I was out buying used pianos,” Buddy says of the origin of the collection. “Back then, we had the business in our garage. I started selling used pianos

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there in Newmarket (a neighborhood of Newport News). We moved over to Ivy Farms in 1966 and continued restoring and selling used pianos from our garage there.”

As Buddy traveled around the area, tuning and fixing pianos, he bought a few to refurbish and sell. “A man gave me that organ out front,” he says. “I went to buy a piano from a lady, and she had this music box – I purchased that. I developed a passion for antique music instruments. That’s how we started collecting. Not many years after this, I told Peggy: ‘One day I want to open a museum so other people can enjoy these like I do.’”

Buddy grew up in Newport News and worked in the shipyard for a while. Peggy was pregnant with one of their daughters, and Buddy decided he needed to supplement their household income. “A friend of ours was working with Schaeffer Piano Company in Newport News,” Buddy explains, “and he said he needed some help moving pianos. He said he’d teach me to tune them. That’s how I got started in the piano business – a second income.”

He learned to tune, repair and rebuild pianos. His friend moved to Florida soon after and gave Buddy his piano tuning and repair clientele. “That’s when we started rebuilding old upright pianos in our garage – back in the 1960s. We sold those used pianos out of our garage for 15 years in New Market and Ivy Farms.”

When Buddy and Peggy outgrew their garage, they opened a store. “We only sold used pianos when first we opened then we became franchised with Yamaha.” They grew the business from the garage to eight retail stores. All the while, Buddy would find antique pianos and organs of all kinds. Some didn’t work, and he restored them. He kept them in his home, the garage, in some of the retail stores and in warehouses.

The idea of a museum stayed in Buddy’s head. “I’ve been collecting for over 40 years.” He saw a pattern of historical and Virginia-based items. He decided to bring all the items together for the Virginia Musical Museum. The museum opened last June in the Parker Piano Outlet retail store on Richmond Road. “I’m glad we didn’t do a Grand Opening because I wanted to work out a lot of the details along the way. We’ve refined a lot in the past year.” Today, the museum has headsets for self-guided tours and multimedia exhibits to see some of the instruments in action.

“We show the history of music in Virginia, not only through the people (in the upstairs exhibit), but through the instruments. This French desk,” Buddy explains, “we purchased through the estate of the founder of the first Smithfield Ham company, who acquired it from a distant nephew of President James Madison. It has a lot of Virginia history and is one of my favorite pieces. Besides the history, it is one of the rarest music boxes from the time.”

There is a nickelodeon Buddy and Peggy acquired about 30 years ago from a dealer in Suffolk. It had been rented it out as a jukebox. “It’s a forerunner to the jukebox. It has eleven instruments.”

Also on display is a Violano-Virtuoso made in 1925 that plays the violin and piano by a gear-driven device. “This instrument was designated by the U.S. Government as being one of the eight greatest inventions of 1925 because it played off of electric celluloids, instead of using vacuums.” The mechanical movements can be seen playing the piano and the violin.

Calliopes, hurdy-gurdy, monkey organ (also known as a street organ) and a glass organ show the variety of musical instruments. “We have an area devoted to organs of all types, keeping Virginia history in mind. One organ came from the funeral home in Norfolk that held the services

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for General MacArthur. That's one of the reasons we have it, the other is that it's a self-playing organ. You don't see many self-playing pipe organs."

From the music boxes and organs to the phonographs and cylinder phonographs the collection has a reproduction the first machine that Thomas Edison invented to record and playback sound.

The museum has a piano gallery that illustrates the development of the piano. "Hammer dulcimer to harpsichord to the piano. The first piano, as we know it today, was developed around the Civil War period." With the collection, Buddy and Peggy have furnished pianos for two movies: "Gods and Generals" and "Hannibal."

Along with the historical instruments, the display covers Virginia musicians. "Bruce Hornsby has been very helpful and sent us some memorabilia," Buddy says. On display is an outfit from Winchester native Patsy Cline, Ralph Stanley's banjo, mementos from Newport News' Ella Fitzgerald and Pearl Bailey. "The Statler Brothers from Staunton just sent us four of their outfits," Buddy adds. "They got their start by being the opening act for Johnny Cash. Speaking of Johnny Cash and June Carter Cash, the Carter Family made the first country music recordings in 1927 in Bristol. We try to emphasize how much Virginia has contributed to our musical culture."

As a business enterprise, the museum brings more people through the doors of the retail store. "Our original thought was to have a separate building for the museum," Buddy says. "The latest recession, we saw coming. Usually the piano business will see the economy slow before you start hearing the word 'recession' on television. We pulled out of the D.C. area. That was a good move for us." From eight stores to three stores, Buddy decided to build the museum as part of the Williamsburg store to get it started.

"It has already helped the store traffic. I think the summer will bring more traffic to the store. I still have dreams of having a big museum. It's something the state and city could benefit from. It could inspire young people to follow their dreams to go into music."

The museum visitors have raved about the exhibits. It is geared toward an older audience. "There's really not a lot things to entertain young kids, but people in their thirties and forties on up to seniors seem to really like it."

Scanning the exhibit of famous Virginia musicians, Buddy says he's very proud of having items from Bruce Hornsby, Ella Fitzgerald, Pearl Bailey, Patsy Cline and Wayne Newton. "We're pleased to have them, and proud to have the lesser known musicians too. Those help educate us on our famous musicians from decades past. We still want some items of the newest talent in Virginia like Pharrell Williams from Virginia Beach."

With the museum illustrating the past, the store shows the current and future of the piano. Buddy's right-hand man, Phil Crockett, demonstrates the newest piano from Yamaha that can play along with live performance or an Internet streaming video. "It's like having the concert in your home," Buddy explains. "For lessons, a university can hold workshops across the nation and the pianos link up – a student could see the instructor's playing technique."

Buddy started in the piano tuning and repair business as a second job to bring in more income for his growing family. Along the way, he collected pieces of Virginia's musical history. Sharing that collection with his neighbors and area visitors has turned his hobby into a local destination and a traffic generator for his store. "I want people to see how important music has been in Virginia's culture and highlight the fun and creativity of making all different types of music." NDN



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Lisa W. Cumming Photography

Moving & Improving

by Greg Lilly, Editor

“My interest is working with the older population because when you see these folks who have stayed fit and continued to exercise well into their 90s, they are still so healthy and active. They’re making all of their life the best it can be,” Brenda Mitchell says. Brenda is a personal trainer and fitness instructor, with a specialty in working with senior adults.

Brenda has had an active lifestyle since her early years. “I grew up in Ringgold, just outside Danville, Virginia,” she says. “My friends and

I were always outside riding our bikes, playing sandlot ball games, challenging each other to foot races and stunts on the jungle gyms in the neighborhood. In my high school, there were few sports opportunities for girls, so I never participated on an organized team until I joined the Colonial Road Runners here in Williamsburg at age 48.”

A week after she graduated from high school, Brenda headed to Farmville’s Longwood College. “I really liked going all year round,” she

says. “I took advantage of the many physical education classes that were offered: tennis, lacrosse, bowling, hockey, as well as general health and fitness. These activities energized me and gave me a general sense of well-being. I was a Home Economics major and briefly toyed with the idea of switching my major to Physical Education.”

She stayed with Home Economics and after she earned her degree in 1971, she married and moved to Richmond to teach in Chesterfield

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County. She continued to take tennis lessons and play tennis with her husband and one of her students who lived in their neighborhood. “That student also had a trampoline in her backyard and we would often do amazing gymnastic-like moves on it! Remember, at that time, I was only six or so years older than my students. In the early 1970s, our community didn’t have the gyms and fitness centers we enjoy today, so I joined the best thing we had—the Elaine Powers Figure Salon. We did do some strengthening and stretching floor exercise classes there, but the machine I most remember was the one that vibrated a belt around the buttocks.”

In 1979, Brenda, her husband and their toddler son moved to Roanoke. She became a Special Education teacher. In the summers, she took advantage of their neighborhood’s swimming pool and tennis courts where Brenda swam all season and took tennis lessons.

“We moved to Williamsburg in 1982,” she says. “I taught special education and alternative education students until I retired in 2004. In the evenings and on the weekends, I had started teaching fitness classes. The Williamsburg-James City County School System had a really great plan that offered aerobics classes to teachers after school. My friend and co-worker, Kelly Charles, taught a class at Matthew Whaley in the afternoon. I would come from Bruton Heights, where I taught, over to Matthew Whaley for the aerobics class.”

From those classes, Brenda became involved in aerobics conditioning. Another friend of hers was involved in the Rec Center and school system. “Lane Tolj became the wellness coordinator at Eastern State Hospital. She had been teaching aerobics classes at Rawls Byrd in the afternoon that I had taken. When she left to go to Eastern State, she encouraged me to join those classes, too. I credit Lane for my becoming an instructor. She needed another water aerobics instructor at Eastern State, so she convinced me to become certified to teach. Thanks to her coaching and mentoring, I became a certified group exercise instructor in 1998.”

Brenda then taught at the Tazewell Club at Colonial Williamsburg. The more she learned, the more in-demand she became. “I was teaching a couple of afternoons a week at the Rec Center, one day at Eastern State and on the weekend at the Tazewell Club. Then, when I retired from teaching school, I decided my part-time fitness teachings should become full-time.”

She became certified to be a personal trainer to work with older people and to work with over-weight people. She thought her fitness training business would be part-time, but it took off. “From 2004 through 2012, I was working 40-hour weeks in personal training. Then I scaled back and gave up some of the sites where I worked. Now, I’m mainly at the Williamsburg Landing and James City County Recreation Center doing personal training and water aerobics.”

Brenda says that no matter what the age, people need activity to stay alert and in shape. “Cardio, strength and balance are the three areas all of us should focus on.”

For cardiovascular conditioning, Brenda suggests walking – for seniors or anyone getting back into exercise. “Walking is always a good activity – anybody at any age can do that, usually without causing yourself injury. On a nice day, getting out and taking a walk is a good thing,” she says. “At a pool, water aerobics classes are an excellent form of exercise. You can really work on balance, strength and cardio with a water workout. In addition, the buoyancy of the water helps support your weight, so movements are more comfortable and easier on your joints.”

She adds that when starting a cardio routine, we need to listen to our bodies. “Your body will tell you when you overwork. Where you have

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the pain, you don't want to stress those areas. Scale things back a little. Younger people do more forceful moves. Those probably aren't in a senior's routine – the landing can be too hard on joints. We still need to do the cardio workout: walking on the treadmill, using the elliptical or riding the stationary bikes. These are ways to do the cardio work without further stressing the hips, the knees and all the other things. We still need to move them. Inactivity leads to more problems.”

Adjust the cardio workouts to your current fitness level, Brenda advises. “Slow down to a walk or a jog, if needed.”

For strength work, Brenda likes the weight machines. “Maybe not lift as many free weights, but the weight machines are designed so that the movement is fixed. This lessens the chances of hurting yourself. Always set the load at an appropriate weight. Don't try to be Charles Atlas.”

Strength training is important because we lose muscle mass as we age. “So we want to maintain as much as we can.”

With strength training, she warns not to forget your core: hips, pelvis, lower back and abdominals. “Core strength helps keep good posture and being able to do so many other things. If you can't get on the floor and do a Pilates class, you might be able to do a chair-yoga class or a tai chi class to work on balance and strength – most fitness centers and the recreation centers offer those. The opportunity to find a class is great. Not like it was in the past.”

Core strength helps with balance, and balance is a real concern for older people. “As things start hurting, sometimes your posture shifts,” Brenda says. “We work on balance and posture issues to help people get up and stay up. Balance helps a person be more aware and feel where they are in space. People, especially with diabetes, start to lose the feeling in their extremities. If you step down, but can't feel your foot stepping down, that's a challenge to stay upright. Exercises help with that.”

To get started with conditioning, Brenda suggests checking out the pool. “Water aerobics classes are a good overall starting point. They offer strength and resistance training along with balance in the water. For people who don't care for the water, he or she may want to get a personal trainer – someone who will look at their particular situation and come up with a personalized plan. For many people that's a good starting point.”

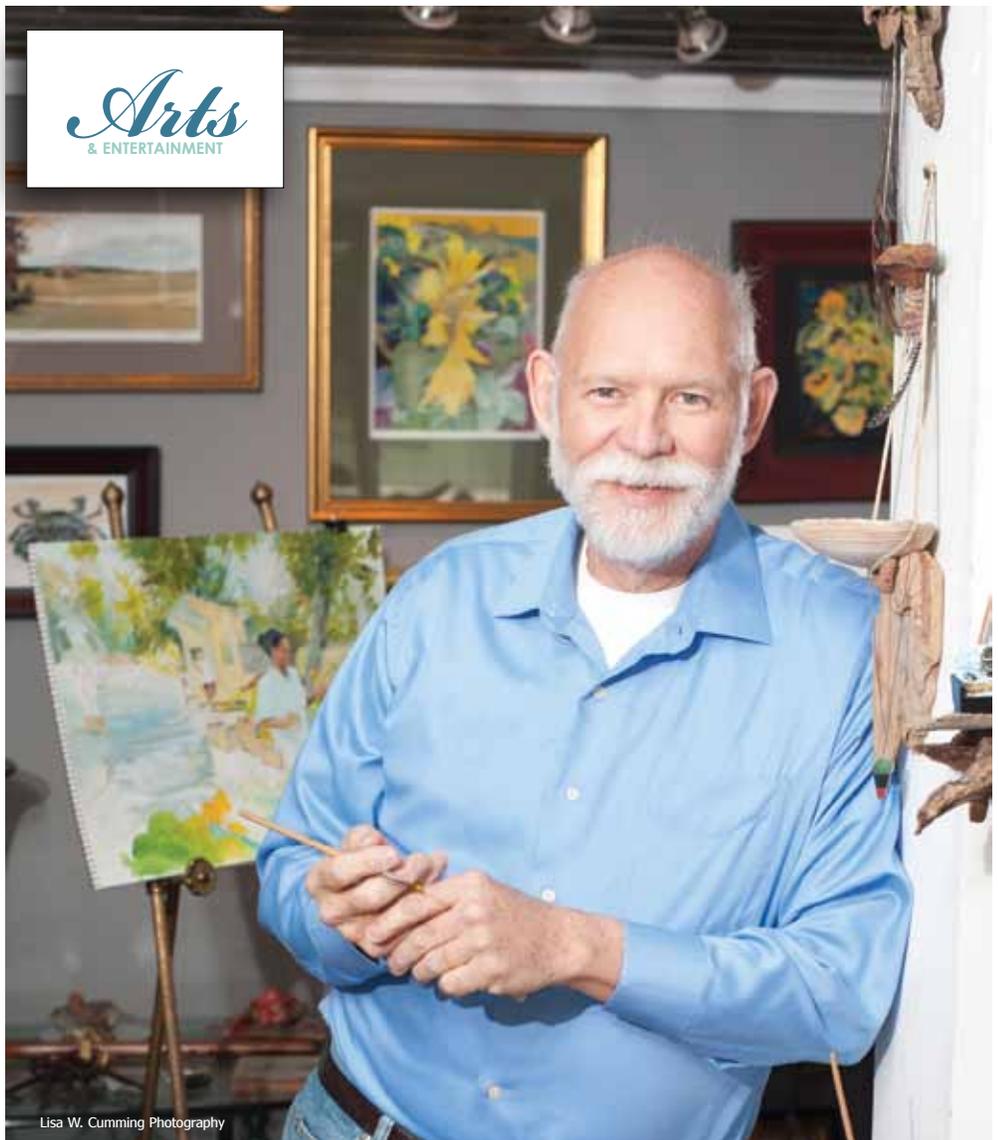
Physical conditioning leads to better performance and enjoyment of sports. For seniors, Brenda sees plenty of options. “Golf is a great sport for seniors. Swimming is a forever sport. I'm in the running community here, and there are many older people who still compete as runners or walkers. In March, I completed my 65th half marathon (13.1 miles) and have five more on my race schedule this year.” Tennis and biking are very popular, as well as lawn bowling and the fast-growing sport of pickleball. “If people stay fit as they age, they can continue with most of their favorite sports.”

Brenda loves teaching and staying active. “I've recently started taking spinning, tai chi and yoga classes, and I plan to return to the Zumba class. I intend to keep running for many more years. I want to keep working with other people, motivating them and helping them stay healthy. That's what I've enjoyed most about my work.”

Brenda Mitchell says she doesn't mind the aging process, and it helps her understand what her clients are experiencing with sports and exercise. “Keep exercising,” she advises. “Every pain and ache I've ever had got better faster because I was in good shape and because I kept exercising in the appropriate way. My motto is ‘moving is improving.’ A fit person is a powerful person.” **NDN**

Engaging the Imagination

by Greg Lilly, Editor



Lisa W. Cumming Photography

Bob Oller has many tools in his artist's toolbox. He paints in acrylics and watercolors. He creates vector paintings on his computer. He sketches. He gardens. He builds structures – including his own art studio. The common element in his work: it engages the imagination.

With a two-pronged career, Bob spends time in his commercial design firm and in his fine art studio. Bob was raised and graduated

from college in central Florida. “I had a wonderful teacher who had us do 250 drawings in class every week, plus 250 drawings outside of class every week. You start to develop effortless sketching.” Bob made a habit of carrying a sketchbook and drawing everywhere he went – continuing after graduation even when traveling for fun or for work as a graphic designer.

“I was doing a lot of leading edge work in

media technologies, early on,” he says of his design work life. “I was that creative guy that pushed the technology to figure out visual ways to stimulate people to respond and do.” His work brought him to Washington, D.C. for several projects. “I did a lot of work in D.C. and traveled all around the area.” His travels led him to Williamsburg and he decided this was his place. Bob has lived in Williamsburg

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for over 30 years.

His sketchbook came with him on his trips and he drew everywhere and everything. "That's what you're supposed to do. I teach a class called Coffeehouse Drawing. We go from coffeehouse to coffeehouse and people learn the fluent process of drawing. Just like in school when we had to do the 250 drawings in class and another 250 out of class each week, the process of doing makes it effortless."

Bob explains that anyone can draw. "Some people will become great, but anyone that makes the choice can get proficient at anything they want to do."

The creative process is stifled by self-judgment. "We should allow ourselves to please ourselves without being judged every minute." He says that when aspiring artists drop the self-judgment, they allow progress. "You work up to these places that are really exciting. You start realizing that you are an artist or are becoming one. There was a point in my career when I didn't feel my hand anymore. I didn't think about it. When I pick up a brush, or a mouse for a vector piece, or a pencil for a sketch, I don't think about it. It doesn't feel different to me. I've had enough time to know what the media will do. It becomes this mental process.

That's the place the magic of creative approach and position and impact really happens."

A walk through Bob's studio reveals his variety of media and subjects. He has clay sculptures of "Wisemen and Mother Earth" boxes. Paintings of landscapes, musicians, flowers and cityscapes in a variety of acrylics and watercolors and vector art decorate the studio walls.

"Vector paintings are really cool," he says. "It's a true artist touching an illustration process." The computer program doesn't interpret his drawing into millions of small dots. "Instead, it builds equations on exactly what you do. The color is exact, not a collection of dots. You get this vibrancy in artistic touch and feel to it."

One example is a vector art piece called "Watching Owl." He has a framed piece that's on a tabletop, but it has also been expanded to a 7 feet by 4.5 feet room-filling image that has not lost any color quality or image preciseness.

Bob doesn't like to put labels on his style. "The way I've been explained is a traditional, contemporary colorist. That is the way a couple of reps and buyers label it," he says with a laugh.

"You look at my acrylics and see who I am. You look at the vectors and watercolors and see

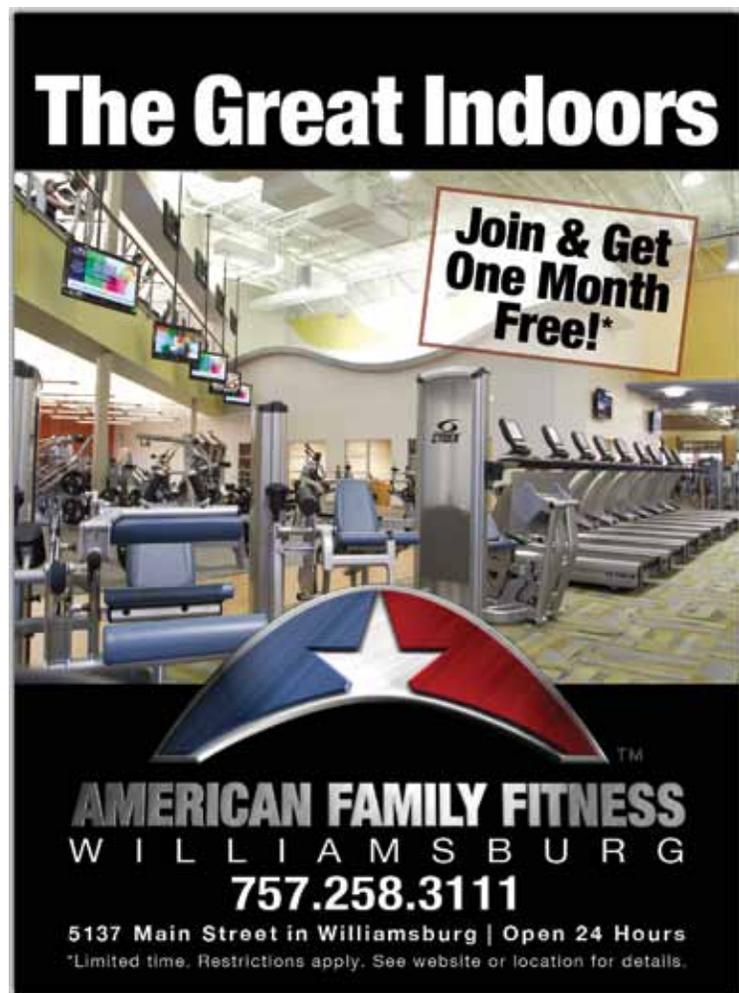
who I am. Each one of those mediums have different effects. What I hope to do is really reach in there and use it."

He explains that labels can be limiting. "We often pigeon-hole people, not just as artists, but across the board. Sometimes, we end up believing the label people have put on us. One of the greatest things you can do is not believe it."

When the artist is free of an expectation, the work is open for interpretation. "The viewer makes the story," Bob emphasizes. "The artist should look at the medium and think how far he can push it. You will see these movements and shifts that happen in the medium."

Several years ago, Bob prepared for a show and decided he wanted to display three strong media. "I wanted to show the reach of those media. There were several dealers that cautioned me on it. They said I was stepping out to the wrong place." To the dealers' surprise, but not to Bob's, the response to the show was positive. "People get it," he says. "They're capable of seeing those different sides of an artist. We have to trust that."

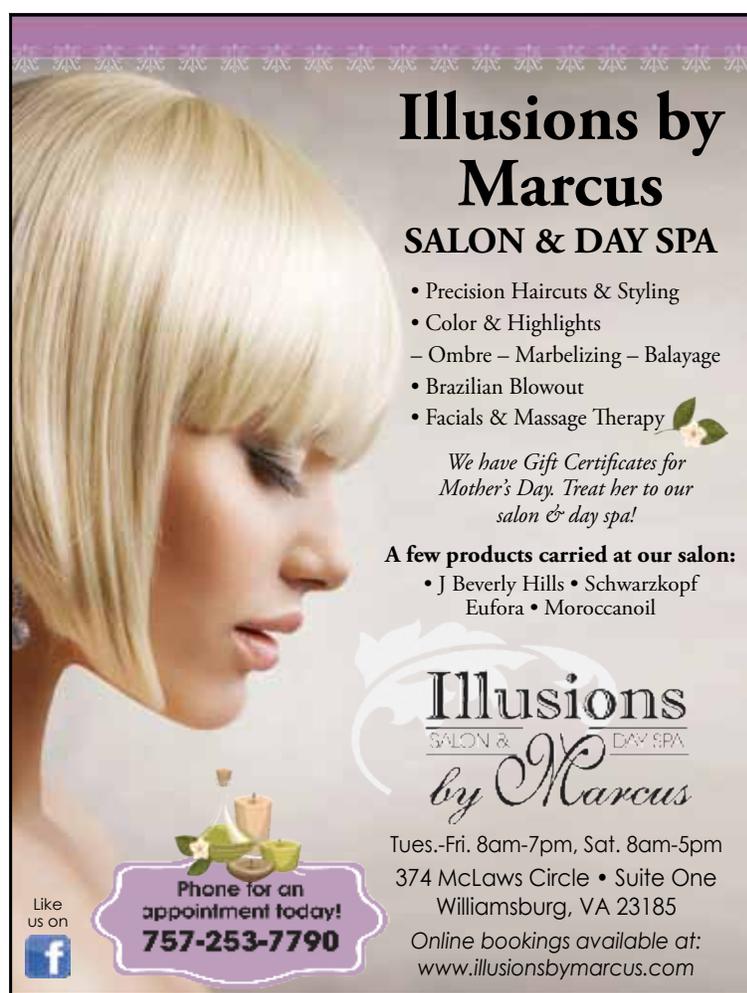
His love of color comes through his work. Anything is a canvas in Bob's view: his studio, his outdoor buildings and gardens. "I enjoy



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people coming to the studio. They can really see the reach of what I like to do.”

He carefully considers his art’s viewer. “I’m pushing it. If you look at my work, my hope is that the viewer’s imagination gets engaged enough to take it somewhere. The story that each one of us carry is what makes art so wonderful. It unlocks something. Traditional paintings or painting media gets the viewer to unlock something and tie it to one of their memories and expand that. That’s magical stuff.”

When art speaks to the viewer, Bob can see the person’s face show that connection. He explains that art is functional in our lives.

“Is seeing something important?” he asks. “Is going to the Colonial Parkway and seeing the river in beautiful morning sunlight important? It is. If we took that away, stayed inside our houses, we’ve stopped seeing beauty. We shouldn’t do that. It is really important. We wonder why we’re depressed. We’re not inspiring ourselves. That’s what art is supposed to do. It’s not me, the artist, inspiring you, it’s you finding something that inspires you.” That discovery of inspiration – in nature, in other people, in art – allows us to enjoy the beauty of

the world and our life. Inspiration is one of the key factors in art collecting. “I love the concept of giving ourselves permission to buy a piece of artwork that inspires us.”

In both his commercial and fine art work, Bob finds excitement in the creative process. “Taking a concept and making it appear is a common process in both fine art and commercial design. The commercial process is wonderful because it has a clear message and objective defined. Then you start looking at ways to do that visually in design, in text, in color, in all those things. That creative process is exciting.”

The inspiration leads to his message and objective. “It’s the same thing in the fine art paintings,” he says. “I look at the painting and media. Where am I going? For the young artist, that’s something that will help them. Stop trying to replicate a piece. Ask yourself what is inspiring you about this?”

For Bob’s future projects, he’s thinking about subjects and locations. “There are many Williamsburg pieces I want to do. There are many other places I want to go. I love traveling and I love painting. The list has become amazingly long. I’ve been turning out a lot of work. And there are so many more stories to tell.” NDN

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Stroke Recovery

by Greg Lilly, Editor

Brenda Cicero, a speech-language pathologist, runs the stroke recovery group at Sentara Williamsburg's Outpatient Rehabilitation Services. "Most people hear 'speech therapy' and say they can speak just fine, so why are they here? It's not just articulation and how you speak. If someone has suffered a stroke or had a brain injury, they might have Aphasia. It affects your ability to understand or use language – comprehension or expression. Speech can be totally clear, but the person may need extra time to process what's been said to them, understand directions or get the words out. They know it, but can't get the words out. That is Aphasia."

Aphasia is a language impairment, Brenda explains. "The person has trouble understanding or expressing himself, but the intellect is

not affected. Intellect remains intact, but the person might need different avenues to access or express the information."

She says that speech comes from the left side of the brain. "That's the area that, if damaged, may affect speech." Sometimes, with stroke, speech or language may not be affected, but the memory can be impaired. "Memory, prob-

lem-solving, reasoning, understanding time concepts, money-management – speech therapy covers all those domains. I may get a patient who is easily understandable, but are having trouble remembering things or can't pay their bills on time – it might affect them that way. Some people may have swallowing problems, which speech therapy also works on – the same



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muscles used for speech are the same used to swallow.”

Swallowing problems can be a huge safety issue for a person. Brenda utilizes a series of exercises to help patients improve their strength and mobility in swallowing. “That can also affect nutrition and hydration of the person.”

Brenda’s interest in speech and language therapy came to her in her mother’s beauty parlor in northern Wales. Although her early childhood was in Long Island, New York, at the age of 12, Brenda and her mother moved to North Wales, Great Britain. “My mother was an only child, and she went back to be near her aging parents. I went through high school in North Wales, which was a great experience. We lived in a resort town. My mom owned a beauty parlor. We had the customers with summer homes come in each year.”

A couple of those customers were a mother and daughter. “This young woman had Down syndrome and would come to the beauty parlor with her mom every year. One summer, she came in and her speech skills were so much more fluent and interactive. I asked her mom how she progressed so much. She had been working with a speech therapist. From that

moment, I knew that’s what I wanted to do. If I hadn’t met Christine, I wouldn’t have discovered speech therapy. I owe my career to her.”

Once Brenda graduated from high school, she returned to New York to visit family and friends. “My aunt asked me to stay for the year. I enrolled at Adelphi University in Garden City, New York. I received my undergraduate and graduate degrees there.”

Brenda met and married her husband, Anthony, who was raised in Williamsburg. “He didn’t want to live anywhere else,” she says. “We’ve been here for 25 years.”

With degrees and certification in speech-language pathology, Brenda initially worked with children with communication disorders, mostly with developmental, language-learning disabilities. “But I enjoyed the medical side and working with adults. After working with children for about six years, I decided to make the switch to working with adults.”

Unlike developmental issues that children deal with, adults in speech-language therapy have had intact communication abilities and have then lost those abilities in some way. “Typically, people are very motivated to return to their pre-injury functioning,” she says. “I

work mostly with adults with communication and cognitive disorders. That can result from people who have had strokes, brain injuries, neurological conditions, Parkinson’s disease... Sometimes viruses and infections affect people’s speech and communication.”

The therapy begins with an initial assessment to determine the patient’s cognitive strengths and weaknesses. “Attention, concentration, problem-solving, reasoning, overall general thinking,” Brenda lists. “Word retrieval – a lot of folks who have suffered a brain injury know what they want to say, but can’t pull that word up.”

From that initial assessment, a plan is formulated to bring the patient back as close as possible to their normal speech and language skills.

Stroke is a common cause of speech and language impairment. Brenda has found that support from other stroke survivors provides crucial encouragement for patients. She founded the stroke support group about eight years ago.

“The National Stroke Association’s FAST acronym helps us remember the signs of stroke: Face – ask the person to smile and look for facial droop; Arms – ask the person to raise both



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arms and watch for one drifting down; Speech – ask them to repeat their name or address and listen for slurred speech; Time – call 911 right away.”

But sometimes, someone might have a mini-stroke and it wasn't noticed. “That's where for a second, their speech is slurred, blurred vision or muscle weakness occur, but it clears up. If people start to notice that they're having trouble remembering after that, mention it to your physician.”

After a stroke, some people make remarkable gains, others may take longer. “For years, people continue to make tiny, steady, slow steps,” Brenda says. “When people keep working, they continue to make steady gains.” That's how a support group can help people on the way to recovery.

“The stroke support group meets the third Wednesday of every month at the hospital (Sentara). They're phenomenal, amazing people. I learn from them all the time.” The group will usually have a speaker to talk about medical or even social aspects of stroke recovery or other medical conditions.

“The people coming to the group may have recently had a stroke or it may have been

many years ago. They're constantly looking at ways to resume the activities they did before the stroke – to get back to living.” The group creates a community of support for them and their caregivers. “We share and celebrate in their successes.”

She explains that just meeting other people who have recovered from stroke is inspiring. “Someone who might have had a recent stroke can see another person who had a stroke years ago – see that he might still have trouble walking, but he's going on vacation cruises and dancing. That knowledge and interaction is invaluable.”

Brenda is excited about the possibilities that technology brings to her patients. “The doors technology is opening for people with communication or cognitive problems is amazing. Smart phones, tablets and iPad applications can do so much. For example, an iPad app may help people practice their speech. Other apps help with memory and attention. That could be something that most of us take for granted, something as simple as setting reminders to take medication, or electronic calendars to assist in planning and organization. There are speech generating devices for people to use for

communication. I think technology will keep introducing all kinds of great things.”

She explains that the important aspect of therapy is the neuroplasticity of the brain. “Participating in therapy rebuilds those new neural pathways. You have to keep working at it. The first few months are important so you can capitalize on as much gain as you can. Never give up. You can keep recovering. I think people continue to recover. It's a lifelong process.”

The people she works with are the motivation for Brenda Cicero to do all that she does with her patients and with her fellow medical workers. “The people are just wonderful. To be able to give someone hope and to see their progress as they put in the effort, that's a big personal reward – just to see the progress. If I can help someone make their communication abilities easier, that's well worth it for me.”

Brenda and the Outpatient Rehabilitation Services staff are sponsoring a stroke recovery conference on Friday, May 16 from 9 a.m. to noon at the James City County Recreation Center for caregivers and survivors. She invites everyone to come out and learn about stroke recovery. NDN



“As a mother of two boys, for whom my business is

named, I draw motivation from their energy and creativity. When I design your home or office, I take into consideration the functionality of the space and tailor it to your specific needs and inspiration. It's important to us that your personal tastes are reflected in the completed project.”

~ Christine Estep

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Lisa W. Cumming Photography

IRONWORK W O M A N

By Greg Lilly, Editor

Tracy Ripley believes in artful living. She explains the concept as adding functional and artistic elements to the home and garden. She has a Degree in Fine Arts from Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU) and is a partner in Custom Welding of Williamsburg.

“We created an avenue of arches for a client. She’d seen the concept in France. The series of arches have vines growing over them and create this tunnel effect in the garden. We do pieces like that from time to time. We’re lucky enough to help enhance people’s life.”

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Born and raised in Williamsburg, Tracy first fell in love with art and metalwork after taking a class her senior year of high school. "I took a little bit of art in high school and enjoyed it. My mom got me into a ceramic jewelry class that a student at William and Mary was holding. That was the first a-ha moment, in my senior year in high school, making clay jewelry earrings. I've always made things, but nothing excited me until I took that jewelry class. That's when I thought, 'I can do this. I like this.'"

After high school, Tracy attended Chowan University in Murfreesboro, North Carolina. "There was a ceramic art program that increased my confidence, and I kept moving along on that level until I ended up at VCU [Virginia Commonwealth University] with some fantastic teachers. I studied jewelry and metalsmithing. You gravitate to what you like."

From VCU, Tracy moved to Chicago. She worked at an art gallery and with the Art Institute of Chicago during a Claude Monet exhibition. "I also worked in some boutiques on Michigan Avenue," she adds. "I moved back to Richmond and worked in a boutique there."

Making a living as an artist wasn't practical for Tracy after graduation. "The only options at that time for a career in metalwork were caravanning from art show to art show, and if you were lucky, place your work in a gallery. This was pre-Internet. I was floundering in the boutiques."

Tracy's father knew of a young man who wanted to start his own welding shop. "My dad's a builder, so I wasn't afraid of any type of machinery or tools. In the boutiques, I had learned retail and operations. It was a really good combination of timing and skills in Scott's (Scott Hederer) life and in mine. My dad introduced us, and it was meant to be because we have been the yin to the yang for each other. I knew nothing about steel before this business. He's taught me everything I know about manipulating steel, and I've taught him about business and marketing, things I learned in retail."

Her father told her after she got into metalwork that there was a family history of master craftsmen. "First, my dad is a homebuilder and a passionate woodworker," Tracy says. "My mom has always sewn, and my sister is into design. I knew my grandfather had been a blacksmith at Colonial Williamsburg before my mother was born, but I did not know that my great-grandfather was a moldmaker for General Motors, which involved a massive amount of sculpturing and metalwork. This was in the 1920s and '30s."

She sees an undercurrent of design and creativity in her life. "That first class gave me a focus and a direction: How can I make functional things beautiful?"

The jump from jewelry design to ironwork was not a big leap for Tracy. "Every skill I learned in jewelry design transfers to ironwork. It's just large jewelry," she says with a laugh. "You make a basic structure stable and then embellish it. You can miniaturize anything I make into a tabletop sculpture or simplify it into a piece of jewelry. That design is transferable. I don't think any artist does one medium, the skills are so pliable."

She has designed and built residential railing, arbors and trellises. When the opportunity presents itself, she creates iron sculpture for clients' homes. "There are so many avenues I want to check into, like 2nd Sunday Arts & Music Festival. There are things I'd like to explore for showing and offering iron sculpture. With a five-year-old daughter, I don't have a lot of free time or energy."

A dual purpose piece is popular with area residents – artful and functional. Custom metal railings are the most requested item that Tracy

creates. "We did the patio for La Tienda," she says. "We've created ironwork for a home with a large expanse of bare outside wall – that custom iron ornamental piece really added to the style of the home." The National Center for State Courts came to her with a picnic area that needed shade. "The gentleman running the facility had a difficult time finding a canopy. We were able to make brackets with a vine and leaf design that supported a sail to make a sunscreen. That's the type of thing that can be created to enhance an area with both function and art."

A few years ago, Tracy created a line of garden art products. "My mom is a gardener, so that's been a primary focus of mine – thinking how a piece would look. I started out assisting her, and the products evolved from there." Hummingbird sculptures, tripods with hummingbird embellishments, cattail trellises and garden stakes, birdbaths and garden pediments combine function with art.

"Usually, you start with nature in designing garden art: hummingbirds, vines, dragonflies, things that are in the garden naturally," she describes. "You build on what you like to see." When she creates a piece, it becomes a process of trial and error, layering things on and off to help create a unique design. "It really becomes an a-ha moment when the piece comes together."

The Williamsburg area's marshlands and waterways, herons, egrets and other water fowl are popular designs. Tracy has added tree frog and turtle metal pieces from area blacksmiths to her designs as well. That's the great part of custom work: whatever inspires the homeowner can be incorporated into the design.

Tracy says that in the past 16 years of her work in custom welding, she's seen local artists beginning to find more venues to show their work. "I think Williamsburg is discovering this community of artists who have been working in backyard studios after their regular jobs." Finding the time and the outlet to show work have always been the challenges.

A mix of materials is a goal of Tracy's. "Since my dad is a woodworker, I like to incorporate wood with the metal. New Town Methodist does a fundraiser each year. I made an industrial bench out of iron and reclaimed wood. That was the donation, and several people have commented on how much they liked it. I wouldn't have thought the industrial look would be popular here, but the younger crowd were really drawn to it. It was a challenge to myself to try something different. It was a game of playing with what I know."

For outdoor ironwork, moisture is a big issue. Tracy says to check the finish. "Powder coating is a highly durable finish, basically a baked-on finish. The durability is amazing." Also, she says to look at the welding.

"A solid weld that goes all the way around a joint will keep out moisture better than just a dab. When water gets in, the weld will rust out." The less expensive pieces, usually made in other countries, have weak welds that rust and break after a season or two.

In the future, Tracy wants to incorporate more mixed media into her work. "I would love to do mixed media trellises – a lot of vine work, some glass globes, brass sculpture and ceramics. The more you can discover as you look at a piece, the better it was designed by the artist. I would love the opportunity to create trellises that had that element of discovery."

She enjoys creating a sculpture with something functional. "You are delighted every time you walk by it – it's more alive than just a functional piece."

Tracy says functional art in the home and garden makes life more enriched.

"You come home and go 'This is my space.' And it is." 

provided by the Williamsburg
Association of REALTORS®

what's up in real estate



Q: What is the difference between a Realtor® and a Sales Associate?

A: Realtors® are held to a much higher standard than a regular Sales Associate.

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They identify and take steps, through enforcement of this Code of Ethics and by assisting appropriate regulatory bodies, to eliminate practices which may damage the public or which might discredit or bring dishonor to the real estate profession.

Q: How is the market doing locally?

A: The bad weather affected the market in delaying

a lot of the spring activity. We are now seeing a significant improvement both in the number of listings and also the number of buyers.

Certain properties which are priced and staged right are only remaining on the market for a short period of time before a ratified contract is in force.

While there is improvement, we are still lagging behind the same period as last year, but the trend is upward.

Q: You mentioned in last month's edition about the establishment of a first-time homebuyer savings account. What is the status of this bill?

A: Governor McAuliffe signed this into law over the weekend of the first week in April and that together with other items of real estate legislation, will come into effect from the 1st July 2014.

This is a good time to remind those who have not been owners of property, the benefits of saving for their own home.



By
Andrew Nelson
President

Williamsburg
Area Association
of REALTORS®

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Hey Neighbor!

Please visit www.WilliamsburgNeighbors.com, go to the magazine site and click on **Hey Neighbor!** for a complete list of current community announcements.

To submit your non-profit event to Hey Neighbor! send a paragraph with your information to:
heyneighbor@cox.net



We are a support, education and advocacy organization for people with serious mental illness, their families and friends.

Weekly support group meetings are held every Tuesday at 7 p.m. at St. Stephen Lutheran Church, 612 Jamestown Rd. For more information call: 757-220-8535 or Email: info@nami-williamsburgarea.org. All are welcome. Membership is not necessary to attend our meetings.

www.namiwilliamsburgarea.org

Hey Neighbor! THE SCAMMON-MCCULLEY SCHOLARSHIP OFFERED

Ongoing
Each year The Williamsburg Players offers the Scammon-Mcculley Scholarship to assist graduating Hampton Roads Peninsula seniors with their college pursuit of theatrical arts, which include acting, dancing, musical theatre, music, or any other facet of the performing arts, including, but not limited to, set design, costume design and lighting design. To apply, go to <http://www.williamsburgplayers.org/policies/scholarship.pdf> and read the requirements and deadlines for filing. If awarded, the scholarship is issued at \$500.00 per year for a four year period, provided

the ongoing requirements are met. If you would like to donate to this all important fund, please go to <https://app.arts-people.com/index.php?donation=WP57>, select your donation type and complete the necessary information. (This uses the same process as purchasing a ticket). If you prefer to mail a check, please send it to PO Box 91, Williamsburg, Virginia 23187.

Hey Neighbor! BIBLE STUDY

Ongoing
A shepherd chapel type Bible study is held every Monday at the Williamsburg regional library Norge, starting at 6:30 pm. Contact: 757-253-0172 or 757-604-6649

Hey Neighbor! MOMS IN PRAYER INTERNATIONAL

Ongoing
Moms in Prayer International meets weekly thru June 2014. Join us and other Moms for a powerful time of prayer Every Wednesday at 1pm at Calvary Chapel Williamsburg, 5535 Olde Towne Road. Contact info: Jeanne Hallman, 757-220-8400/ Jeanne4j@cox.net. Visit www.MomsInPrayer.org; or www.calvarycw.org

Hey Neighbor! SOCIETY OF AMERICAN MAGICIANS

Ongoing
Come join us, the Baker-Temple Assembly 226, at our monthly

meeting for an evening of magic. Our members include professionals, amateurs and those just interested in magic. Meetings are generally held at 7 pm on the 3rd Wednesday of each month. Details regarding meetings can be found at <https://sites.google.com/site/samassembly226/>. If you have any questions or would like to attend one of our meetings, please contact us at assembly226@gmail.com.

Hey Neighbor! BRAIN INJURY SUPPORT GROUP

Ongoing
The Williamsburg/Newport News Brain Injury Support Group invites all area brain injury survivors and their families to join them each

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month at 6pm on third Thursday nights for discussion, socialization, support, information, friendship, and encouragement. Located at 12725 McManus Boulevard (across from Mary Immaculate Hospital) The group will participate in facilitated discussions to learn from each other on topics such as memory, communication, family dynamics, and other challenges familiar to persons living with brain injury. For more information, contact Sara E. Lewis, Support Group Coordinator/Facilitator, at 757-784-0344 or slewis@cox.net or Alex Watson, Denbigh House Program Coordinator, at 757-833-7845 or alex@communitybraininjury.org.

Hey Neighbor!

VA COOPERATIVE EXTENSION MASTER GARDENER HELPDESK

Ongoing

Virginia Cooperative Extension Master Gardeners staff the Helpdesk from 9 am – 1 pm, Monday-Friday from April-September. Call the James City County/Williamsburg Master Gardener Helpdesk at 757-564-2175. You may also email

your questions at jccwmg1@gmail.com. For more information on the Virginia Cooperative Extension Master Gardener Helpdesk visit <http://www.jccwmg.org/helpline.htm>

Hey Neighbor!

CALL FOR MUSICIANS!

Ongoing

The Williamsburg Players is looking for musicians for our upcoming musical productions of Into the Woods, Peter Pan and Cats. Especially needed are viola, violin, synthesizer and percussionists; however all interested musicians should call. Please call Mike at (757) 390-7050. Fun & friendship is guaranteed for all! Give Mike a call today.

Hey Neighbor!

GROVE COMMUNITY GARDEN

Ongoing

Learn how to grow your own food and enjoy the taste of the food you grow. Neighborhood community gardens are unique, and offer numerous benefits including physical and spiritual health, community building, neighborhood beautifica-

tion and neighborhood solidarity. If you're interested in participating, or have questions call the Abram Frink Jr. Community Center at 887-5810

Hey Neighbor!

CHURCH MUSIC DIRECTOR POSITION AVAILABLE

Ongoing

Stone House Presbyterian Church (9401 Fieldstone Pkwy, Toano) is seeking a part time music director. We are currently hiring and trying to get the word out to as many in the local area as possible. Contact Ann Grossman at music@shpchurch.org or at 757-565-1130.

Hey Neighbor!

NEW QUARTER PARK MONTHLY EVENTS

Ongoing

Bird Walks - See ducks, herons, hawks, bald eagles, songbirds, and more during bird walks lead by members of the Williamsburg Bird Club, twice each month, year-round. Bird guides and binoculars are available on loan from the park office for new birders and out-of-town guests. For more information, call 757-890-5840. Located at 1000

Lakeshead Dr, near Queens Lake neighborhood.

Hey Neighbor!

BYOK – BRING YOUR OWN KAYAK

Saturdays

From 9 am-12 noon every third Saturday from May to Out-and-back paddle on Queen's Creek led by park staff. Free with your own boat. No kayak? No problem. Rent one for \$30 from Chesapeake Experience; call 757- 259-6859 or e-mail jill@chesapeakeexperience.com to reserve a kayak, paddle, and life vest by noon on the Friday before the monthly paddle. For more information, call 757-890-5840. Located at 1000 Lakeshead Dr, near Queens Lake neighborhood.

Hey Neighbor!

MOONLIGHT AND MUSIC

Wednesdays

Moonlight and Music. Join other acoustic musicians and vocalists from 6:30 - 8:30 pm every fourth Wednesday night from May through September for this outdoor jam session led by musician Joe Duggan (Joe's Day Off). Everyone

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gets a turn to lead his or her choice of a tune. Listeners are welcome. Bring your own lawn chair; a limited number of folding chairs are available for musicians. For more information, call 757-890-5840. Located at 1000 Lakeshead Dr, near Queens Lake neighborhood.

Hey Neighbor!

DISC GOLF DOUBLES

Sundays

At New Quarter Park - Meet up with other disc golfers to create foursomes for informal disc golf tournaments every Sunday at 10 am at New Quarter Park, located at 1000 Lakeshead Dr. Check in at www.facebook.com/newquarter for news and updates.

Hey Neighbor!

**11TH ANNUAL COMMUNITY
OF STARS BANQUET**

April 25, 2014

Tickets are now available for Williamsburg-James City County Community Action Agency's 11th Annual Community of Stars fundraising at Colonial Heritage Clubhouse, 6500 Arthur Hills Drive, Williamsburg. The agency will honor several individuals, businesses and organizations that have strengthened and supported CAA by giving their time and resources. Tickets are \$50 per person, \$90 for two and \$450 for a table of ten. To purchase tickets, contact Yvonne Joseph at 229-9332.

Hey Neighbor!

**7th ANNUAL "BREAST BALL"
TOURNAMENT**

April 25, 2014

Join us and tee up for the best tournament of the year! This year's "Breast" Ball Tournament will take place at Ford's Colony Country Club. Check-in begins at 10:30 am and the Shotgun Start is at 12 noon, followed by dinner, awards, and an after party you won't want to miss. More than 100 Raffle and Auction items to win! For more information, visit www.breastballgolf.com or email Vicki@BeyondBoobs.org.

Hey Neighbor!

**SUMMER ART CAMPS FOR
KIDS (SACK)**

April 25, 2014

This Century Art Gallery is offering a variety of fun art camps at their Art Education Center in the Williamsburg Arts District, 110 Westover Ave. All supplies and a snack

included. Dress for a mess and to express! Separate camps for Pre-K 4 yr. through teens. For information, visit www.ThisCenturyArtGallery.org or call 757-229-5549 or 757-229-4949.

Hey Neighbor!

**WILLIAMSBURG FARMERS
MARKET**

April 26, 2014

From 8 am - 12 noon. Over 30 vendors will attend the Williamsburg Farmers Market with strawberries and asparagus in season. 402 W Duke of Gloucester St. in Merchants Square. The market includes live music, chef demonstrations and exhibits along with local shops and restaurants. The market now accepts SNAP/EBT, credit cards and W&M Express. For information, call 757-259-3768 or visit www.williamsburgfarmersmarket.com

Hey Neighbor!

**"PLANTS HUZZAH" PLANT
SALE**

April 26, 2014

The Virginia Cooperative Extension, James City County Master Gardener Association will be holding their annual "Plants Huzzah" plant from 9 am - 2 pm, rain or shine! The plant sale will be at the Jamestown Beach Park, across from the Jamestown Settlement. Part of the proceeds from the plant sale will be used to award a scholarship to a local High School senior studying in a Horticultural program, as well as support our 33+ projects and educational events throughout the community. For more information, call Ken Caro at 973-229-4024.

Hey Neighbor!

**NAACP LIFE MEMBERSHIP
BANQUET "NAACP: ADVANCING
ECONOMIC JUSTICE"**

April 26, 2014

Williamsburg Lodge Keynote Speaker: Dr. William Harvey, President, Hampton University. Presiding: Dr. W. Fanchon Glover, W&M Chief Diversity Officer, and Presidential Assistant. Entertainment: Liz Montgomery. Silent Auction and Reception - 5 pm. Dinner/Program - 6:30 pm. Proceeds support the Branch civil rights and youth programs and community outreach efforts. For tickets, call NAACP Branch Office at 229-3113.

Hey Neighbor!
**6TH ANNUAL WILLIAMS-
 BURG AQUATIC CLUB GOLF
 TOURNAMENT**

April 27, 2014

Shotgun start at 1 pm at Colonial Heritage Golf Club. Includes: 18 Holes of Golf, Cart, After-Round BBQ and Fried Chicken Dinner Buffet, Raffle Prizes, and Tournament Prizes. \$90 per player (\$360 per Team) Register Team Entries online at www.colonialheritageclub.com/wac. For questions, please contact Carey Sprigg at csprigg3@cox.net or 757-645-3260.

Hey Neighbor!
**KIWANIS CLUB OF TOANO 7TH
 ANNUAL GOLF TOURNAMENT**

May 2, 2014

To be held at Williamsburg National Golf Club. Players costs are \$100 for an individual and \$350 for a foursome. Green and cart fees, range balls, dinner and prizes are included. Registration is 12 noon and a shotgun start will be at 1pm. For further information, contact event co-chairpersons, Traci Carlson at 757-220-3293 or Courtney Buzzell at 757-741-8069, or visit the Facebook event page at <https://www.facebook.com/events/475263142575666/?context=create&source=49>

Hey Neighbor!
THEATRIC FANTASY

May 2 -3, 2014

The Williamsburg Choral Guild will present beloved choruses and solos from the lighter side of opera and musical theater. Ticket price (\$30) includes cabaret-style table seating with served dessert plate (Fri.) or hors d'oeuvres plate (Sat.); cash bar available. Fri., May 2 at 7:30 pm and Sat., May 3 at 5 pm; at the Williamsburg Hellenic Center, 4900 Mooretown Rd. Reserved tables are available for advance sale; contact the box office at 757-220-1808. For more information visit online at www.williamsburgchoralguild.org.

Hey Neighbor!
**ROBERT FULGHUM'S "ALL
 I REALLY NEED TO KNOW I
 LEARNED IN KINDERGARTEN"**

May 2-4, 2014

The King's Players spring 2014 performances will take place at 7 pm in the Fellowship Hall at King

of Glory Lutheran Church, 4897 Longhill Rd., Williamsburg. Ticket prices are \$10 adults; \$7 students/seniors; and \$35 for a Family Pack (2 adults and up to 4 children from the same household). Tickets are on sale at the church office. For questions or to reserve tickets, please call the office at 757-258-9701.

Hey Neighbor!
THRIFT STORE

Introducing new2you Thrift Store, a community thrift store supporting Williamsburg Christian Academy. Grand Opening: Saturday, May 3. 4500 John Tyler Highway. (At Five Forks Shopping Center on John Tyler Highway across from Farm Fresh) Hours of Operation: Tues.-Sat. 10 a.m.-6 p.m. Donations welcome! For more info email new2you@williamsburgchristian.org for more info.

Hey Neighbor!
**PROJECT LIFESAVER CAR
 SHOW**

May 3, 2014

The James City County Police Department along with the Classic Cruisers Car Club will be holding their 5th Project Lifesaver Car Show at Warhill High School, 4615 Opportunity Way. The show is open to all vehicles (cars, trucks and motorcycles) antique to brand new. \$10 plus a canned food item to register a vehicle. The car show is raises funds and awareness for the department's Project Lifesaver program. For more information or questions contact Officer Todd Dill, 757-603-6025.

Hey Neighbor!
**FASHION SHOW TO HIGH-
 LIGHT A WOMAN'S JOURNEY**

May 3, 2014

Join us and enjoy a fashion show portraying the milestones in a woman's life. Learn of the comprehensive medical services Sentara offers women of all ages. Show will be held at 1:30 pm in the lobby of Sentara Williamsburg Regional Medical Center, 100 Sentara Circle, Williamsburg. Information available and refreshments. Sponsored by the Auxiliary of SWRMC. \$5 pp. Reservations please: call 800-sentara.

Hey Neighbor!
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- Macular Degeneration
- Retinal Tears
- Retinal Vascular Disease
- Visual Field Loss



Dr. Nordlund is a board certified Ophthalmologist practicing full-time in Williamsburg.

- John R. Nordlund, MD, PhD

Fellow, American Society of Retina Specialists

- Retina fellowship at the Mayo Clinic
- Glaucoma fellowship at Johns Hopkins

Fellow, American Glaucoma Society

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for Public Education, Inc., from noon – 3 pm in Yorktown. Tickets are on sale at www.VillageEvents.org. For information contact Don Willis, at 757-877-2933 or www.VillageEvents.org.

Hey Neighbor! **SPECIAL MUSICAL EVENT** May 4, 2014

Williamsburg United Methodist Church will host an afternoon of special performances featuring graduates of the music school (elementary through college-age) joining Tom Marshall, the church's organist, who will perform on piano and harpsichord. Time: 3 pm. Childcare is provided for ages 3 and under. There is no cost, but donations to benefit the school's Project Outreach will be gratefully accepted. For information, contact Cindy Freeman: cfreeman@williamsburgumc.org

Hey Neighbor! **CINCO DE MAYO FUNDRAISER** May 5, 2014

James City Lions Club is holding its annual fundraiser to support vision, hearing, and diabetes programs in the greater Williamsburg community. This exciting event will be held at Ford's Colony Country Club from 5 - 7 pm. Tickets are \$35/person. Featured will be tapas, wine and beer. There will also be a raffle for various prizes. Help support these worthy causes. For further details, contact Phil Pryor at 757-564-1616.

Hey Neighbor! **THE GRAY HAVENS IN CONCERT** May 5, 2014

Husband and wife indie duo, Dave and Licia Radford, whose music has been described as "folksy, lyrical, redemptive and joyful" and "narrative-pop-folk", will be in concert one night only at Calvary Chapel Williamsburg, 5535 Olde Towne Rd. Doors open at 7 pm, music begins at 7:30. Free admission, suggested donation \$10. For more on the Gray Havens see www.thegrayhavensmusic.com. For questions about the concert call 757-608-8610.

Hey Neighbor! **WILLIAMSBURG SYMPHONIA MASTERWORKS #5** May 5 - 6, 2014

The Williamsburg Symphonia presents Respighi's Trittico Botticel-

liano, a sound portrait of three of Botticelli's most famous paintings now residing in the Uffizi Gallery. The music will be enhanced by projected images of the artworks, thanks to the Muscarelle Museum's collaboration. At the Kimball Theatre in Merchants Square, the programs begin at 8 pm. Tickets are \$44 and \$54; call 757-229-9857 or visit www.williamsburgsymphonia.org for details.

Hey Neighbor! **TIDEWATER INTERGENERATIONAL ORCHESTRA** May 10, 2014

The resident orchestra at Saint Bede will present a free concert featuring works by Vivaldi, Eccles, Beethoven, and Paul Parry. Time: 2 pm at Saint Bede Catholic Church, 3686 Ironbound Road. For more information, call 757- 229-3631 or visit www.bedeva.org/concerts.

Hey Neighbor! **JAMESTOWN DAY** May 10, 2014

A jointly sponsored event at Jamestown Settlement & Historic Jamestowne, 9 am – 5 pm. Mark the 407th anniversary of the founding of America's first permanent English settlement with family-friendly tours and activities, military and maritime demonstrations, and traditional music and entertainment. Separate site admission. Jamestown Settlement is located on Route 31 South of Williamsburg; Historic Jamestowne is located at the 1368 Colonial Parkway. For information about Historic Jamestowne, call 757-229-4997 or 757-898-2410 or visit www.historicjamestowne.org or www.nps.gov/colo. For information about Jamestown Settlement, call 888-593-4682 toll-free or visit www.historyisfun.org.

Hey Neighbor! **"CATCH THE VISION TOUR"** May 15, 2014

Williamsburg Christian Academy invites you to a one-hour captivating glimpse of the Academy. WCA is a pre-school through 12th grade Christ centered, interdenominational, college preparatory jewel in our community. Attend a tour to see if this is the educational option that's just right for your family! Tours are both 8 am and 2 pm. 101 Schoolhouse Lane, Williamsburg. Call 220-1978, ext. 113 for more

information. Online at Williamsburgchristian.org

Hey Neighbor! **RELAY FOR LIFE OF WILLIAMSBURG** May 16-17, 2014

At Jamestown High School, 7 pm – 7 am. Join the community, cancer patients, survivors, caregivers, friends, family and neighbors to benefit the American Cancer Society. The Survivor Dinner begins at 5 pm, contact ACS 757-591-8330 if you are interested in attending. Teams will set up campsites around the track and Relayers will take turns walking through the night. For more information or to sign up visit our website www.relayforlife.org/williamsburgva.

Hey Neighbor! **BLACK LIGHTS AND BUGS** MAY 17, 2014

Join us when Master Naturalists put on a show by attract the critters of the night to white sheets back lit with black lights. The program begins at 8 pm with a short presentation on moths you might see. Afterwards, visit several bug-attracting areas until 10 pm to see, identify, and photograph tiny and colorful creatures with help from members of the Historic Rivers Chapter, Virginia Master Naturalists. Rain date May 18. Call 757-890-5840 for weather-related updates and more information. New Quarter Park, 1000 Lakeshead Drive, Williamsburg.

Hey Neighbor! **FAMILY FUN FEST** May 17, 2014

James City County's annual Family Fun Fest is a family-focused outdoor event with entertainment for the entire family. Enjoy "Touch-a-Touch" a petting zoo, the Fun Bus, entertainment featuring a live band, live stage show, magic shows, pony and cart rides (\$) and much more! Also participate in the Family Fun Run! Chickahominy Riverfront Park, 11 am – 4 pm. Admission: \$5/ car (cash or check only). For more information, call 757-259-5353 or visit www.jamescitycountyva.gov/recreation.

Hey Neighbor! **"MEXICO MISSION TRIP YARD SALE"**

May 17, 2014

LifePointe Christian Church will host a large garage sale beginning at 7 am- 12:30 pm in front of C&F bank at 7534 Richmond Road in Norge. Team Mexico will be sponsoring this sale with all proceeds going towards a summer mission trip to Mexico. For any questions contact LifePointe Christian Church at 757-741-1022.

Hey Neighbor! **LATIN FESTIVAL** May 17, 2014

Join Literacy for Life from 10 am – 4 pm for a celebration of Latin culture! The community is invited to this family-friendly festival to enjoy authentic food, dance, arts and crafts from a variety of Latin countries. Saint Bede Catholic Church (3686 Ironbound Rd.). Tickets are \$5, and are available for purchase at Literacy for Life's front desk (in the William & Mary School of Education, 301 Monticello Ave.). All event proceeds benefit the adult learners at Literacy for Life. For more information, call 221-3325.

Hey Neighbor! **HISTORIC TRIANGLE SENIOR CENTER TRIP** May 20 2014

Join us for the Historic St. John's Church Tour and lunch at The Tobacco Company Restaurant in Richmond. We will eat lunch at 12 noon prior to the historic church tour at 2 pm. Lunch is included in the cost of the trip. For members – \$38 and for non-members – \$43. Sign up early for space is limited. The cut-off date for the trip is Monday, May 12, 2014. We will be leaving the Senior Center at 10:45 am and returning round 4:30 pm. Call the Historic Triangle Senior Center at 259-4187, for more information.

Hey Neighbor! **WILLIAMSBURG MUSIC CLUB 50TH ANNIVERSARY** May 21, 2014

Winners of this spring's Grants Auditions will perform a celebratory recital featuring their winning performances. The program begins at 11 am. in Lewis Hall of Bruton Parish preceded by "Coffee & Conversation" at 10 am. For more information contact Sylvia Lynn 757-741-0006 or visit online at www.williamsburgmusicclub.org.

Williamsburg's

IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD

photo challenge

ENJOYING AN AFTERNOON AT COLLEGE LANDING PARK

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

Enjoy!

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

APRIL 2014
In the Neighborhood
Photo Challenge



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