

February 2017

WILLIAMSBURG'S

Next Door Neighbors[®]

VOL. 11, ISSUE 2

PRICELESS

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Martha Berry

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Setting out to put together this issue on people who specialize in creating things hand-made, we had no doubt that there would be no end to the number of talented and creative people in our community we might interview. The stories we are pleased to present here certainly prove that out. But as we met with them and learned of their respective interests it quickly became clear that this issue was sort of misnamed. The tapestries and sculptures and paintings and produce that these neighbors of ours fashion most definitely result from deft and patient handiwork; but the way they lovingly describe their craft and share the backstories behind how they developed a passion for that craft reveal that their creations come from the heart as much or more than from their hands. The connection is evident in the beauty and quality of their results. It is flattering to also hear that, without exception, they say that they draw inspiration and motivation from living and working in the Williamsburg area. Neighbor to neighbor, heart to heart, it's a communal relationship we can be proud to claim. NDN



Meredith Collins, Publisher

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Every Quilt Tells a Story

By Lillian Stevens



Lisa W. Cumming Photography

Perhaps there's a quilt hanging on a wall in your home. Or maybe there's one tucked neatly under a bedspread, providing added warmth through winter's chilly nights.

If you are lucky enough to own a handmade quilt, you are lucky indeed.

From ancestral quilts to a small quilt created for a newborn baby to holiday or other types of themed quilts, most quilters are inspired by something inward, something personal.

According to Martha Berry, owner of Two Rivers Quilting, every quilt has a story.

"Quilters will come in to the studio and share the reasons they are crafting a quilt, or the stories behind the designs and fabrics they are using," she says. "Some of the stories are incredible and others are very simple. For me, the biggest reward comes in knowing that I can be a little part of their story."

Martha has operated Two Rivers Quilting for nearly six years. The fabric arts studio provides longarm quilting services to quilters as well as a longarm quilting class. Martha offers edge-to-edge, an all over quilting pattern, to custom quilting for a client's quilt. The studio has also hosted various quilting classes and workshops each taught by experts in their field.

"You don't have to know how to sew to learn to quilt," Martha says. "But if you learn to quilt you will learn to sew but it's a bit different than sewing garments."

The studio is delightfully appointed with many of her own creations on display in the

front rooms, including a quilt made by Martha's grandmother.

"She made it for me when I was a teenager. This quilt is somewhat tattered and torn now, but it is so loved. My grandmother did her patch work using all kinds of fabric, velvets, corduroy, wool, whatever she had. She cut the pieces manually and then stitched them together with low embroidery stitches before tie-quilting it all together."

Walking toward the back of Martha's studio, it's plain to see that there are many, many works in progress. Amidst a neatly organized backdrop of many colors, textures and implements, there sits a large Gammill Statler longarm machine that takes up nearly 14 feet of space. There's a second machine upstairs.

Longarm machines are used to sew together a quilt top, the batting (or stuffing) and the quilt's backing into a finished quilt. Longarm quilting takes significantly less time than hand quilting or more traditional machine quilting.

"Once the top of a quilt is pieced, these machines make everything else so much easier," Martha says. "We are able to load a quilt on a table and the machine actually moves across the quilt. This eliminates the cumbersome task of quilting by hand or trying to sew some-

thing so large on a regular sewing machine."

Lots of people think of a quilt as the pretty part you see first, the top, but that's actually the first step of several in crafting a quilt.

"After the top is pieced, the ac-

tual quilting begins. This involves putting in the backing, the batting, and layering the top. Then you sew one to the other so that you have a finished quilt."

The final step in the process involves labeling. Martha encourages quilters not to skip this step because it provides a provenance, or history, of the quilt. At a minimum, the label should include the quilter's name and the date it was completed. If the quilter wants to include the theme or story that inspired the piece, all the better.

At Two Rivers Quilting, some customers bring in their quilts with the pieced tops already in place, for Martha to finish quilting. It's very common for crafters to piece together beautiful tops and then leave them unfinished. Martha has done this many times herself. Others prefer to rent one of the longarm machines in order to finish their own quilts.

No matter how automated the process, most quilters share in common a love of fabric, the color, the design, textures. There's also a particular freedom of expression that lends itself to a quilt's story.

"I love to make my own quilts," Martha says. "The sky is the limit when it comes to patterns you can put on a quilt. There are so



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many designs from which to choose.”

Over the years, fabric lines have grown to include absolutely luxurious fabrics. “There are reproduction fabrics, including Civil War period reproduction fabrics. That time in our country’s history represents a big era for quilting. There are 1930s reproduction fabrics, modern fabrics, and everything in between. One of the things quilters tend to do is to collect fabric. We all tell ourselves that someday we will make something from it.”

In addition to vast fabric lines that are available, Martha says that modern methods and techniques have also emerged. “Years ago, quilters used cardboard templates and scissors to cut the fabric for the top of their quilt. Rotary cutters, acrylic templates and even precut fabric bundles changed everything, making quilting much easier and more precise. Machine quilting has been around for a long time but a lot of people still prefer to hand piece and hand quilt.”

Raised in nearby Richmond, Martha and her two sisters were exposed to arts and crafts as young girls. “My mother sewed all through my childhood, and she made most of our clothes on an old Singer treadle machine. She was also a great decorator. My father was pretty artistic, too. He enjoyed making pottery and jewelry.”

After graduating from high school, Martha attended Virginia Tech, majoring in Horticulture, with a focus on landscape design. In the late 1970s, armed with her college degree, she embarked on a career with a landscape architecture firm in Florida. It was a fun field, one that combined her love of design with landscape architecture.

She also made her first big purchase: a Sears Kenmore sewing machine which she still owns.

“From a young age, I always loved fabrics, the color, design and feel of working with them. Sewing and crafting were my hobbies.”

In the late 1980s, Martha returned to Virginia to be closer to family. She married her husband, Mark, and enjoyed sewing and creating home décor crafts. After her first son was born, she discovered quilting.

“The quilts I was seeing didn’t look like the country calico quilts of the 1960s and 1970s,” she says. “New tools and technologies were emerging on the market. Art quilting was becoming popular and really appealed to me.”

With art quilting, the artist can incorporate different surface design techniques, utilizing fabric in a variety of different ways. “Even though I love to do traditional piecing, there is even more freedom of expression in art quilting which I find wonderful.”

As her children got older, Martha took a job teaching art at a local private school. She worked there for seven years prior to opening Two Rivers Quilting.

“I loved teaching art, and I do miss the children and the fun work we did together. Teaching art was such a great outlet for me, because we created so many wonderful pieces using many different media.”

In 2010, Martha opened her studio. Over the course of the first year, she continued teaching part-time. Pretty soon, however, she realized that she couldn’t continue teaching, even part-time, and run a business.

“As much as I loved teaching, I decided to focus completely on the quilting business, particularly after the big investment we’d made in the longarm machine and software.”

When she’s not in her studio, Martha is a regular at the colonial guilds where she always finds new inspiration and learns new things. “There is so much expertise among so many of the people in this area, both men and women.

Yes, there are quilters out there!”

She is a member of the Colonial Piecemakers Quilt Guild, the Virginia Consortium of Quilters and a member of the Virginia Quilt Museum in Harrisonburg.

“What I love about living and working in this community is this amazing community of quilters that we have here,” Martha Berry says. “They are the most wonderful people.” NDN

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KAREN CLANCY



Lisa W. Cumming Photography

MASTER WEAVER

By Ryan Jones

A few blocks east of Merchants Square on Duke of Gloucester Street rests the Taliaferro-Cole Shop, a small, restored 18th century edifice well-known for its flamboyant springtime flower garden on the south patio. Inside the whitewashed walls, the shop bustles with activity much of the year functioning as both a production workshop and an educational forum for guests who are curious about the work of weaving, spinning and dyeing in Colonial America.

Master weaver Karen Clancy, a 24-year veteran of the trade, is one of the people you

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might see and interact with if you find yourself in the historic area and are curious about 18th century artisanship.

“We work in a production weaving shop,” Karen explains, “but it also functions as an interpretation site. Over half of my job is showing and conversing with our guests the ‘how’ and the ‘why’ of what we do. I wear an 18th century costume while I work. It is important to understand the context of these professions and the role they played here in the colonies and their development into the modern age. I also work with historical designs and colors for reproducing cloth used in the Foundation, and, sometimes, we are contracted by other museums for our work. Our staff has completed approximately 350 yards of fabric since March 2016. We talk to the public as interpreters of the past and how relevant weaving, spinning and dyeing is to our guests.”

Karen says the work of weaving and dyeing in America dates back to the early years of the Revolution when trades were restricted with England. Out of necessity, the colonists began producing their own textiles. Karen specializes in explaining to the public how the devices and techniques used during that era are both different and similar to those used in the pro-

duction of modern textiles.

“The biggest difference between 18th century weaving and modern textile production is the equipment,” she says. “18th century equipment is pretty big and rigged with string, twine and wood. Modern machines are made of wood for hobby looms with nylon and metal parts. The process of weaving over and under yarn with horizontal looms with peddles has been going on for a thousand years.”

For people interested in spinning, weaving and dyeing as a hobby, Karen’s artisanship is fascinating. Her roots in the trade date back 24 years to a trip she made to Columbia, Missouri. “I needed a vacation and decided to take a two-week immersive workshop on these topics,” she says. “I’ve been hooked ever since.”

Currently, in addition to heading up operations in the Taliaferro-Cole Shop, Karen also hosts mini-workshops throughout the historic area to teach hobbyists a bit more about her trade. The process of creation may sound complicated to those not well-versed in weaving techniques, but is better understood when viewing the equipment and interpretative dialogue in Karen’s shop.

“There are two sets of yarns; the warp and the weft,” she explains. “The warp yarns run

vertical to the weaver and are wound on a back beam to create the length of the fabric. The weft yarns move horizontally from ‘weft’ to right (Weaving humor!). Each warp yarn must be assigned to harnesses, two sticks with loops of thread called heddles. The yarn passes through an ‘eye’ tied in the middle of the heddle. That yarn is then pulled through a reed which acts to seat the weft yarn into place. For every 100 yarns it takes us about an hour to set or ‘program’ the harnesses and reed. Once all the yarn has been assigned, it is lashed to the cloth beam and placed under consistent tension. The harnesses are attached to peddles in a particular way to execute the pattern. Peddles are pushed to raise and lower the harnesses and the yarns assigned. A shuttle is then sent through the separation of yarns known as the shed. With a flick, the shuttle deposits a yarn from the bobbin and the reed that is resting in the beater bar and is pulled forward to place that yarn. A different peddle is pushed to raise another set of yarns for the shuttle’s return trip. Different peddle combinations can be applied to create different textures of the same ‘programming’ or threading. Different colors, yarn size and color choices can be placed in the weft quite easily for even more pattern op-

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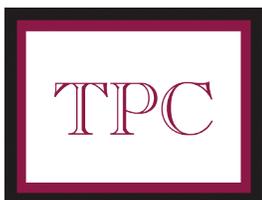
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tions. Once the fabric builds up, it is rotated on the cloth beam in order to pull more warp yarn down for weaving more yardage.”

Though Colonial Williamsburg hosts a large collection of original 18th century fabrics, Karen’s work enables the Foundation to set up realistic replicas in situations where delicate original fabrics would be damaged by the elements. For instance, the giant linen sails of the windmill were made by the weavers, as was the dimity bed furniture used on the bed in the Peyton Randolph House. Karen says one of her favorite projects involved the purchase of a weaver’s notebook that was discovered in the rafters of an English townhouse slated for demolition.

“There were four pieces of his work in the back of the notebook,” she recalls. “I recreated one of those pieces and built 42 yards of it! It was a challenge to reverse-engineer it and make it work, but it was pretty neat to feel that I might be the only other person to duplicate the piece. I shared something with a guy that has been dead for over 250 years...that’s pretty cool.”

Karen says her work with 18th century weaving and dyeing has led to a myriad of opportunities for travel, study, observation and

teaching.

“I have taken several workshops and classes from great instructors over the years to keep my skills up,” she says. “I was invited to London’s V&A (Victoria and Albert Museum) to be one of five practitioners amongst several academics to understand textile construction from a historical perspective. I was the only American there and was humbled by the amount of knowledge and history in that forum. I have always felt that we need to share our knowledge and experiences with as many folks as we are able. I have conducted classes on rug making, dyeing and spinning. I have given presentations through the Association for Living History and Agricultural Museums for several years now. I have three apprentices, three volunteers, and one intern that I am shepherding through skill sets to achieve their Journeyman papers.”

Karen recalls that her work with Colonial Williamsburg, which began in 1987, was both a planned event and a surprise.

“I graduated on a Sunday from a college in central New York, packed on Monday, drove on Tuesday with two other gals from college, and was working by Thursday. But it was only going to be a summer job.”

Fortunately, the surprise turned out to be a good one for Karen, who says she loves the area and has no immediate plans for relocation.

“I have never felt more at home than I do in Virginia,” she says. “My family drove from New York to Florida when I was in fifth grade, and I remember looking out the window while passing through Virginia and saying that I was going to live here. Marrying a sweet local guy kind of helped, too. In Williamsburg, you still get the feeling of seasonal changes, but you don’t have to deal with lake effect snow. When I first started here I had no idea what a heat index was. It didn’t take me long to figure out that it was the opposite of wind chill.”

As an interpreter in the world’s largest outdoor living museum, Karen has as much experience as any Williamsburg resident in braving the summer heat and winter chill. Her ability to share her knowledge with the public adds a rich flavor to the colonial history that fascinates a plethora of visitors to Williamsburg each year.

What is her favorite aspect of working as a master weaver? Karen Clancy is quick to respond. “Teaching,” she says. “Watching a light bulb go off in someone’s mind.” NDN



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Creative Crafting

By Brandy Centolanza



Lisa W. Cumming Photography

Kim Seibert has parlayed her love of art and working with her hands into a career as a multi-media crafter. She paints, quilts, designs buttons and jewelry, and she also does needle felting. It really seems like there isn't anything she can't do.

"There is nothing like molding something by hand," states Kim. "I'm very tactile, and I like to keep my hands busy. To create something by hand and see your amazing accomplishment afterward is incredible."

Her foray as an artist began as a child growing up in Lancaster, Pennsylvania. "My dad was

artistic, and he taught me some tricks," Kim recalls. "I loved drawing as a child. I especially loved to draw trees. I had a real fascination with it. I also had a great art teacher, Mr. Moon, in elementary school who really inspired me. He saw what I could do and made me go beyond it."

After graduating from the Pennsylvania School of Art and Design with a degree in fine art with an emphasis on painting from the Pennsylvania School of Art & Design, Kim opened her own business, the Bird-in-Hand Country Store, a quilt and craft store located in

Bird-in-Hand, a small community in the Pennsylvania Amish Country. Most of her clientele were Amish or Mennonite.

Among the items the shop carried were genuine silks, fabrics, wools, and other material from Japan and Africa.

"A lot of major quilters shopped at my store because of the items I carried," Kim says. "I carried almost anything and everything a quilter could own. I wanted to help quilters to become better designers and create quilts that were more visually spectacular."

Kim learned to make pillows, throws and

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quilts using patterns and applique designs as well as her own designs and imagination while working at her store. She also taught classes on quilting, including one on color theory.

"I taught people how to turn their fabrics into a palette," she says. "I showed them how to have fun with their fabrics, how to pick fabrics they wouldn't normally use that would give their quilt a pop. It was a lot of fun."

Kim later discovered the art of jewelry-making after being asked to design jewelry for a fundraiser at one of the local museums. "One year, we were asked to make birdhouses like in the movie *Witness*," she remembers. "Another year, we were asked to try jewelry. The artists were all challenged to do something out of their comfort zone. It was a blast, especially to see what all the artists could do with jewelry."

Kim enjoys making necklaces, earrings and bracelets using various beads and stones.

"I really like fire agate," she says. "It's just a beautiful stone. It's fun to mix and match. I love making necklaces, and I love exploring with the different styles of beads. There are so many different types you can use, and I love it all. You name it, I've used it."

Kim operated her country store for seven years and then sold the shop to focus more on family. She later met and married her second husband, Peter, and the pair relocated to New Mexico after Peter accepted a job at the Mil-

lilent Rogers Museum in Taos.

It was in New Mexico where Kim developed a fascination with the art of needle felting, a fiber art. In fiber art, an artist creates a design using the fibers of material such as fabric or yarn. "Needle felting became my focus," Kim says. "It's sculpting and shaping the wool with needles. I took a class with a friend, and she didn't like it, but I just loved it. I still do it. I find it very soothing to be able to sit and create. It's my outlet, my stress relief. It really is. Some people do yoga, I do art."

Kim's created several fiber art masterpieces throughout the years.

"It's been wonderful," she says. "I've done pumpkins, Santas, snowmen, Easter eggs, birds, chicks, fruit. Each one is different, one-of-a-kind. No two are the same. Each has its own personality. I especially like the Father Christmases."

Kim worked as a freelance artist for a time, and, in 2000, started her own online business, Two In the Bush Design Studio, which she still operates today. Through the business, Kim teaches as well as sells her numerous designs, projects and products, including her needle felt work and buttons. Her goal is to expand the business, particularly with her fiber art.

Kim spent three years in New Mexico before settling in Williamsburg in 2015 after her husband, Peter, was hired at Colonial Williamsburg

Foundation.

In November, she had a booth at the Colonial Williamsburg Employee Arts & Crafts Show for the first time. "The craft show was a fantastic experience," she says. "People who come to craft shows have great appreciation for hand-made work, which I love. I love the appreciation from the people when they see what I do, the people who love the color, the designs. I also enjoy explaining the craft of needle felting to them and how they are amazed by it. I believe that everyone is creative, even if it is in an artistic field or not."

Kim has also recently rediscovered quilting after all these years when her youngest daughter asked her to teach her how to sew. Kim and her family also like to spend time antiquing, and visiting art museums, botanical gardens and the beach.

"We love looking at and finding antiques," she says. "I also love collecting seashells from the beaches around Virginia Beach."

Still, Kim Seibert isn't done with her creative side yet. Eventually, she would like to delve into the various trades in Colonial Williamsburg, and perhaps learn to be a silversmith one day.

"I would love to work with metals," she says. "I think the best part about being in Williamsburg is meeting all the talented craftsmen at Colonial Williamsburg. The trades people are super amazing. It's been just the best thing." **NDN**

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A Potter's Life

By Gail Dillon



Lisa Trichel-Beavers may not have grown up wanting to make beautiful pottery but she has long suspected she had a strong creative streak. “I think it was always brewing inside of me,” she says. “I mean I’ve always loved art and I’ve always been interested in colors and design. I was just trying to figure out a way to employ it.”

This local artist has called Williamsburg home since 2010, after she and her husband, Kirk, moved to the area from North Carolina. It was there that she discovered her passion and talent for making pottery, but her route was a bit circuitous. After graduating from high school in Erie, Pennsylvania, and following a

year of college, she decided to join the military against her parents’ wishes.

Lisa admits she was a rebellious student and daughter during her teen years. “As the eldest of three children, I always had to be the responsible one,” she says. “I had to get away from home, and of course, when your parents tell you not to do something, that’s when you’re going to do it. I wanted to try a different path.”

Soon she found herself swearing into the United States Navy. “I chose the Navy because I’ve always had a love for water,” she explains, adding that she was also interested in oceanography as a young adult. As an Oceanographic Technician, she became proficient in the phys-

ics of underwater sound. During her seven-year stint, she was assigned to bases in Alaska, Wales, and Northern California, not exactly shabby locales for a young and adventurous woman. However, despite the fun of traveling and meeting people, she says the Navy ultimately didn’t suit her. “I wouldn’t trade the experience for anything but it’s not for everybody,” she says.

One of the most important people she met during this time was her husband, who also worked for the government. The two became friends in Wales but their relationship remained casual until later, when they both lived in California. “He pursued me for at least a



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year, almost two years,” Lisa says with a fond smile. “I said, ‘I’m not getting married until I’m out of the military,’ and he agreed to wait.” Last December marked their 28th wedding anniversary.

The couple has two grown daughters, Page, who is 26, and Wren, who is 21. “It’s interesting because they actually fit their names,” Lisa says. “Wren loves to sing and Page loves to serve.” Her older daughter works for a think-tank in Washington, D.C. while Wren is a burgeoning actress and performer in Los Angeles. Their mother is clearly proud of both of them, marveling at their many differences. She feels privileged that she was able to be a stay-at-home mother for them, acknowledging that many women don’t get this choice in life. The family lived in the Winston-Salem area when the girls were small where Lisa homeschooled them while simultaneously restoring the 1885 farmhouse she and Kirk bought.

It wasn’t until 2005 that Lisa decided she wanted to return to school. She was working as a librarian in the small town of Liberty, North Carolina located in Randolph County, which happens to have a rich history. “Randolph County is also the home of Seagrove,” she says. “Seagrove is a huge clay environment. In the 1700s when farmers inhabited the areas between Durham over to Seagrove, they encountered these clay pockets, which they kept running into when they plowed their fields. So they started making pottery from it.”

Making things out of clay had interested her for a while, but it wasn’t until she was on a weekend retreat with a women’s fellowship group that she became fascinated. She recalls the speaker at the retreat was using a pottery wheel while he spoke. After doing some research, she found a two-year, intense clay-sculpting program at Carolina Central Community College in Pittsboro. “It was a natural fit for me,” she says. “I could take classes during the day while the girls were at school.” The program offered everything she wanted and more, to include making the pottery, of course, but also lessons in running a small business, building a kiln, and learning to “throw” pottery on a wheel. She admits this hasn’t been her strongest skill. “My wheel is an expensive table,” she says, smiling. “It sits there and taunts me!”

The program culminated in the students putting together their own shows, which required far more than simply making pottery. “We had to approach galleries with our ideas, create marketing materials and generate our email list,” she says.

Lisa’s pottery business bears the whimsical name “Stone Lace” because she’ll often use a piece of handmade lace she inherited from her relatives as a way to stylize her pieces. Using the lace creates a unique look and a delicate design that is her hallmark. The lace was handed down from her great aunts, who were skilled at tatting and crocheting. She typically reuses the lace, soaking it in detergent to get any stains out. When she sees other potters using lace texture in their pieces, she admits it sometimes bothers her but reminds herself of something they were taught in class, nothing is ever really new. “I think that mine is unique in that I am using heirloom pieces,” she points out. “I will have some women look at something and say, ‘oh my gosh, I haven’t seen that lace pattern for years.’”

After moving to Williamsburg, Lisa took a break from making pottery to help support her daughters in their busy lives. For example, she is a skilled seamstress and sewed many costumes for her younger daughter’s high school theatrical productions. She also became serious about cycling, joining the Williamsburg Area Bicycling Club and eventually serving as the vice president for the organization. In 2014, she was approached to help pour wine for an event at Williamsburg Contemporary Art Center, and before long with the contacts she made, she was invited to show her pottery at the Newtown Art Gallery from June 2015 until

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they closed last March. Some of her pieces are currently on display at On The Hill Gallery in Yorktown, as well as at Prince George Art and Frame in Williamsburg. She also volunteers at On the Hill Gallery once or twice a month, where more than 80 artists have pieces on display and for sale. “The nice thing is that we (the artists) are local; being at the gallery with the public is all about education,” she explains.

She says there are many artists who would like to get another gallery started in the Williamsburg area, and she is hopeful that this will happen.

Lisa hand-rolls her pottery using slabs of clay, which can be time-consuming. In fact, it might surprise people to realize how long it takes to make a piece of pottery. “There are a number of steps in the process to get to the finished piece. Then if something isn’t quite right, meaning too thin, thick or warped, I have to start over,” she says, adding that it usually takes approximately two hours to make a mug. “If I were to receive a special order, I would tell the customer it takes one month from creation to the final product,” she says.

Pottery excites her because it involves a variety of different skills, such as the creative process but also more traditionally “left brain” abilities. “I think the preciseness attracts me,” she says. “You have the math that’s in there and especially the science. There’s chemistry involved with making my own glazes. You look at a bucket of glaze and say, ‘there’s no way that’s going [to] turn blue.’”

Calling her artistic style “simple and loose,” Lisa Trichel-Beavers says being outdoors provides her with the best ideas for her pottery. Instead of sketching her vision out, she will often take home something she finds while outside, a stone or twig, for example, and use that as a “muse” in her studio. “Seeing texture in the natural world and admiring stonework on historic buildings. This is what inspires me,” she says. NDN



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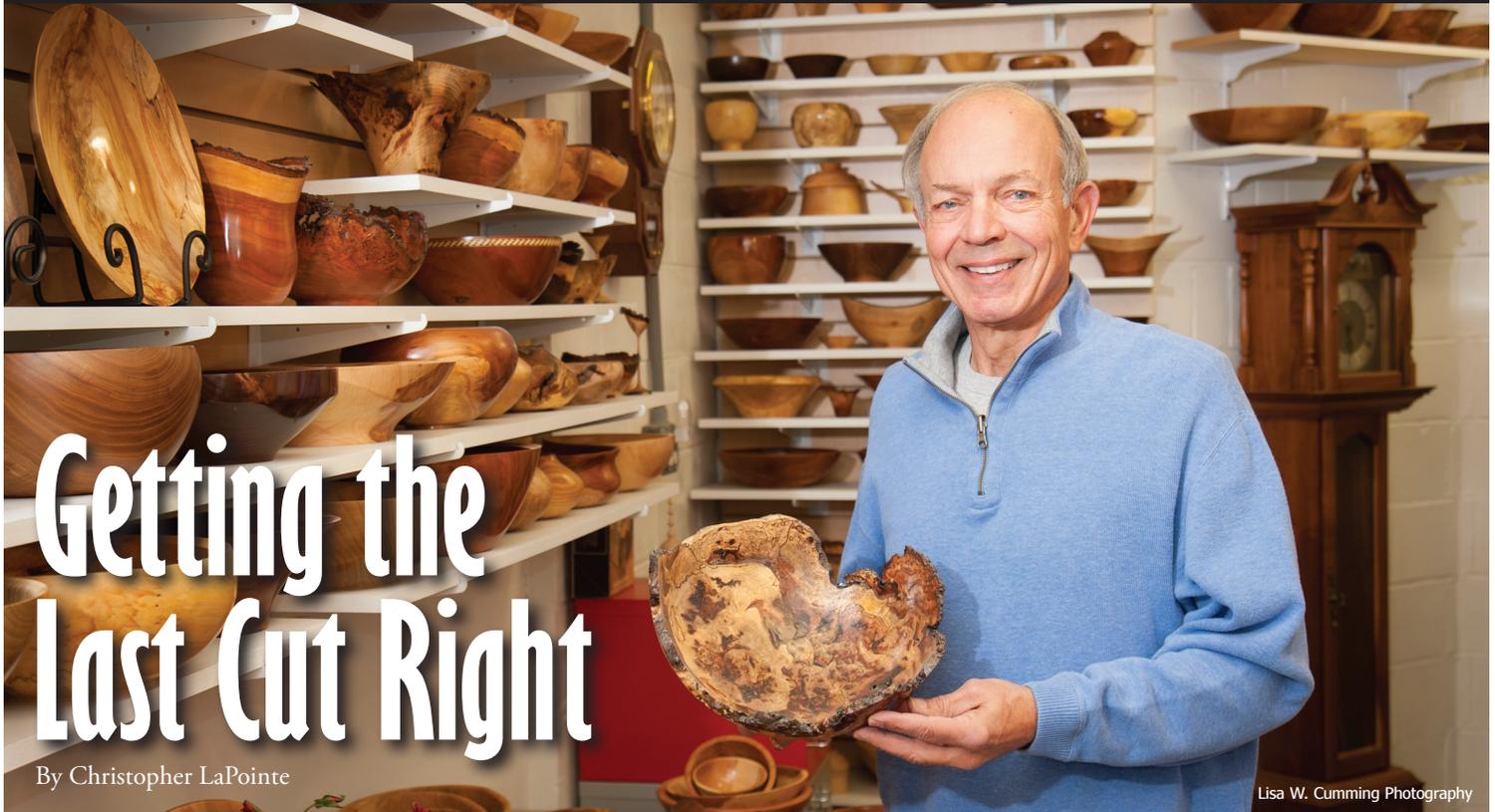
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MARK STRANG



Getting the Last Cut Right

By Christopher LaPointe

Lisa W. Cumming Photography

What started as a young couple looking through an Ethan Allen catalog turned into a lifelong hobby for Mark Strang. Though Mark's wife, Sue, was looking at bedroom furniture, she was captivated by a crib on one of the pages.

Neither she nor her husband could find the listing for the crib on that page. "It wasn't for sale. It was just a piece in the catalog," Mark says. The crib was merely a piece of set dressing for the photoshoot. Not to be dissuaded from having the crib they both wanted, Mark decided to take a closer look at the photograph. "We took the catalog photo and some dividers, and I'm an engineer, so I sat there and calculated out the sizes."

Mark was born in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan. Living in some of the more rural

and picturesque parts of the state allowed him to learn how to be self-sufficient and self-reliant. The conveniences of the city had not yet made it up to where the Strangs lived. He remembers being interested in what makes things work and enjoying shop class in high school. Given his interests, he went on to study Mechanical Engineering at Michigan Technological University in Houghton.

He worked for several companies, including General Electric, as an engineer and manager at various plants. In 1988, he and his wife bought a plant in Milwaukee. It was a repair plant for industrial motors. They ran it for several successful years before selling it to spend more time together as a family. Mark attributes his schooling and work experience as the foundation of his abilities with a lathe.

With little more than the picture in the catalog and basic drawing tools, Mark designed the crib on paper first. From those plans, he went on to build the crib with the wood-working tools he already had. To make the spindles for the crib, they had to purchase a lathe, which they did at a flea market, for five dollars. Both soon-to-be parents got involved with making the spindles, though Mark made the vast majority.

After several trips to the Williamsburg area for golfing excursions and to visit their daughter and her military husband at Langley Air Force Base, Mark and Sue decided this was the place for them to retire. Since his retirement, Mark has steadily been able to hone his craft. Though he does not think of himself as an artisan, he routinely turns chunks of cherry,

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walnut and maple with no discernible value into fascinating and beautiful bowls. He has taken numerous master classes with national and world renowned wood turners. He occasionally teaches these same types of classes at specialty stores, like Woodcraft in Richmond.

"I've never made the perfect piece. But, the nice thing about the bowls is that the wood is recycled, and you get a lot of satisfaction in a relatively short period of time," Mark says. "I can take a piece of wood, and in an evening, I'll have the most part of it done. And if you don't like it, the wood is free, and it turns into firewood."

It takes Mark an evening to turn a bowl, his most frequent output. He prefers to make these as they are handy to give as gifts to their many friends and family. When he goes to his shop, he has numerous roughed out pieces to choose from on any given night. Nearly all of the materials he uses were obtained the most natural of all ways, taken from a fallen tree.

Mark looks forward to hurricane season in a way that no one else does. It is the best time of year for fallen trees. The wind and the rain soaked earth result in trees toppling down. Friends and neighbors will call Mark and tell him of the cherry or walnut tree that fell during the storm. Mark gears up with his chainsaws and other tools to bring back a new load. The wood must be dried in order to prevent

cracking, so these materials can only produce bowls or vases after several months or even a year of curing.

When Ford's Colony was still developing, Mark would take a section from a felled tree on the plot of the new construction. He explains, "I'd rough it out. And then as a housewarming gift, we'd present them a bowl made from a tree from their property. The neighbors seem to like it, and it is fun for me as well."

Sometimes the chunk of wood will dictate what it can be made into. He roughs out a general piece before setting it aside with markings so he can keep the flow of dried pieces somewhat orderly. These pieces will sit for a few months to more than a year before they are dry enough to turn smoothly. However, turning a wet piece can result in gentle warping that gives the bowl a uniquely handcrafted allure.

While in Houghton for a class reunion, they drove by the church where they were married. People at the church had literally just cut down the tree outside. Mark asked the man there if he could have a couple pieces of wood. Mark turned one piece into a simple, but beautiful, candy dish sized bowl. This became his anniversary gift to his wife the next year.

The only time that Mark gets a bit nervous is during the last cut. "The last one you're

going to make, you hope you don't ruin the whole piece." Once he has the turning near completion, the whole piece can be ruined with a slip of the blade on the last cut. Even still, once the turning is complete, there are still hours of work to complete before the bowl or vase is ready. Mark spends twice as much time painstakingly sanding each square inch of the piece by hand to achieve the best finish possible.

Even though Mark uses magnifiers while sanding, Sue is his first, and most trusted, critic. Her touch is more delicate and discerning. She can feel the subtle variations in the texture. Only after her appraisal does Mark begin to apply the finish.

He gladly gives pieces away if the would-be owners will take part in the turning process. They must pick out a rough piece and discuss design. He wants them to see the process in order to appreciate the finished product. A few weeks later, after sanding and finishing, he presents the new piece as a gift.

One of his biggest surprises is that people want the bowls that he produces. Like all fine craftsmen, Mark sees the minor imperfections and blemishes that no one else sees. "The difference between a nice product and great product is probably eight to ten percent of effort. It's that last eight to ten percent to really makes the piece." NDN

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JAPANESE *Embroidery*

By Alison Johnson

By the time she was 5 years old, Carol Harrison had learned how to knit. In elementary school, she made clothes for her dolls. In the 8th grade, Carol began making her own clothes, starting with a yellow sleeveless blouse with a collar and a Colonial-style dress for a history class project.

So not surprisingly, Carol grew up to tackle a challenging art form: Japanese embroidery, a collection of techniques using a special form of silk that originated more than 1,600 years ago. She first fell in love with the delicate designs and intricate colors as a 10-year-old child living with her Air Force family in Japan, where she marveled at the elegant silk kimonos worn by local women.

“The idea that you could take a plain old needle and some silk thread and create such incredible beauty was always so intriguing to me,” Carol says. “I remember being very impressed.”

Carol’s artwork follows the Japanese culture’s strong connection to nature, especially plant life and exploration of seasonal colors. She has two favorite pieces: Cherry with Small Bird, an image of a bird flying among blooming cherry branches, and Winter Cypress, a gnarled old tree in the snow.

“It’s very detailed with getting the perfect shades,” she explains. “Say you have a pine tree:



Lisa W. Cumming Photography

it’s never just one shade of green, but several different ones. It’s really looking at what you are seeing. When I look at things in nature now, I see more than I ever saw before.”

A retired history teacher, Carol began studying her craft in 1991 and has taken classes at the Japanese Embroidery Centers in Japan and Atlanta, Georgia. She tries to visit the non-profit educational center in Atlanta twice a year, where she can order the special silk needed for her work. Once a month, Carol also opens her home to teach classes to four or five local embroidery students.

While Japanese embroidery originally developed to decorate the clothing of high-ranking women, most work today is done for interior

decoration. Carol’s framed pieces hang throughout her home, especially in the dining room, as well as in the homes of family and friends.

“Generally speaking, I stitch for a couple of hours each evening,” she says. “Sometimes you have to put the thread in and tear it out several times to get the results you want. It’s not easy, but it’s so very satisfying.”

Silk, a lustrous fiber produced by silkworms in making cocoons, has long been Carol’s favorite fabric. “I just love the feel and the texture, the way it shines,” she says. “A piece of silk could be a couple of hundred years old, and it never loses its luxuriousness.”

The silk used for stitching in Japanese embroidery is unique. Known as “flat silk,” it is

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not spun or twisted but in a form that comes directly off a cocoon. "It's like hair," Carol explains. After buying pre-cleaned tubes of dyed silk, artists can use flat silk as it is, combine it with other strands to make it heavier or twist it to be as thin or thick as they'd like.

That allows for very realistic, intricate craftwork. "When certain pieces are finished, people have thought they were a painting or drawing," Carol says. "They can't believe it's stitched. It's a fascinating challenge."

Japanese embroidery artists don't follow set patterns. "It's an extremely artistic approach, with all of the decisions made by the stitcher," she says. "It's not just about learning the techniques but knowing how to implement them."

Classes take a different approach than many American art classes, where people chatter as they work. In Japanese embroidery sessions, the teacher gives instructions and walks around to help people, but otherwise the room is quiet.

"You don't talk," Carol explains. "It's not a cold silence, but a communal silence. Everybody zones out and concentrates, and the rest of the world goes away. It's very therapeutic. You just concentrate on the beauty of the work. You get out of yourself."

Teaching is important to her. "I want to help preserve this beautiful art form and encourage others to embrace Nuido, The Way of Japanese Embroidery." Nuido emphasizes a connection

between embroidery techniques and each artist's heart and spirit.

Born in Pennsylvania, Carol spent time in Connecticut, New York, Maine, Alabama, Virginia, Greece and Japan as a child. In Japan, the family lived in the port city of Nagoya in 1951 and 1952, when the country was rebuilding after World War II. "It was really a foreign country, and we absolutely loved it," she says.

Carol's mother regularly took her children to art and history museums. "She was the perfect military wife. She saw everything as an adventure, so we did too," Carol says. "We wanted to absorb everything we possibly could."

Later, as a young woman in the 1980s, Carol saw a display of Japanese embroidery while visiting a textile museum in Washington, D.C. with a friend. "I told my friend, 'One of these days, I'm going to learn how to do that,'" she remembers. "My friend was like, 'Oh, right', because she could tell it wouldn't be easy."

Carol earned a history degree from Gettysburg College and worked as a teacher in Fairfax and York County schools. She also was a stewardess for United Airlines for about a year before she married her husband of 49 years, Ray. Ray's career with the Department of Defense brought them to Williamsburg in 1975.

The couple has two sons and a granddaughter. Carol made clothes for her boys when they were young and now knits gifts for her 10-year-

old granddaughter. She also enjoys rug-hooking and doing textile preservation work on privately-owned embroidered pieces, which includes carefully cleaning them and taking care of loose threads.

"Without those efforts, they would fall apart much sooner," she says. "It is gratifying to know that I've done what I can to make them last a while longer for a family."

Outside her home, Carol has volunteered for 32 years with the textile collection at Colonial Williamsburg, where she helps set up displays and care for pieces in storage. She also helps man the switchboard at Hospice House & Support Care of Williamsburg.

Carol's love for Japanese embroidery still runs deep. "My hands are not as nimble as they once were, but stitching with silk on silk with handmade needles keeps strain to a minimum," she notes. Her current project is a white peacock sitting on the branch of a camellia, his head turned toward her. Carol started the piece in an Advanced Stitchers class last spring and says it might not be done for another year, but she doesn't mind. While some artists have many unfinished pieces, Carol describes herself as a finisher.

"I don't like to leave anything before it has turned into exactly what I pictured," Carol Harrison says. "I find such fulfillment in that process. It's a joy." NDN

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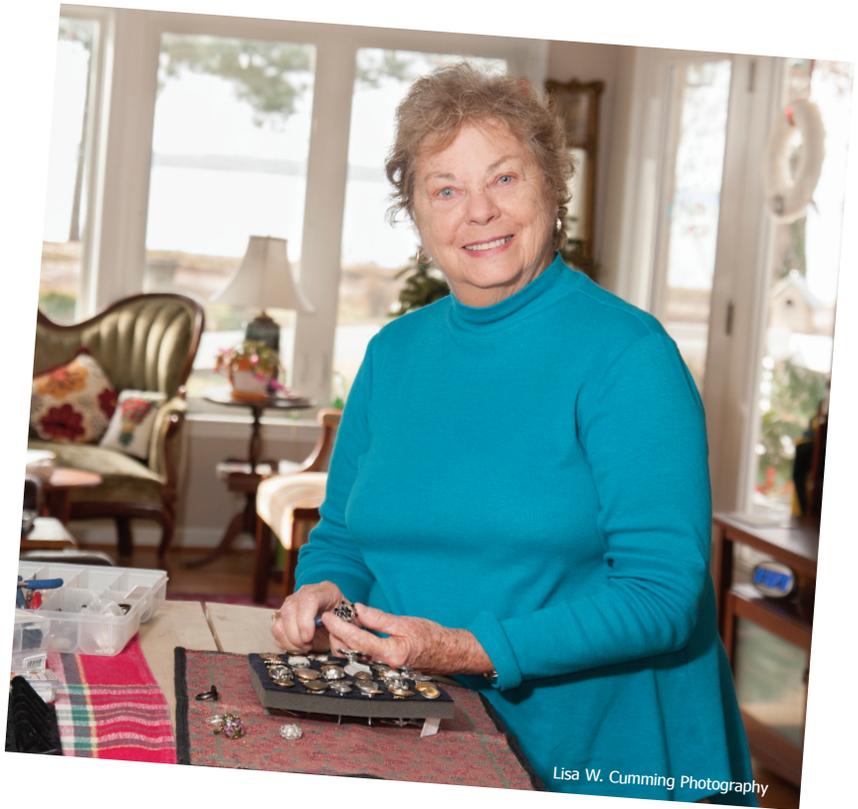
From *the* Heart *to the* Hands

By Cathy Welch

Sylvia Hunt was born and raised in Norfolk, Virginia. During the Great Depression her father, dangling from a rope swing, painted a high flagpole in downtown Norfolk. Later, he worked on a banana boat from Virginia to Cuba and back. "During those days, you'd do anything," Sylvia recounts him telling her. He eventually worked for the government in maintenance at Portsmouth Naval Hospital. She always remembered his busy hands helped get them through the hard times.

Sylvia married Bob Hunt 59 years ago and the couple moved to Williamsburg. Bob did his graduate work at W&M and coached football and basketball as a graduate assistant. He later went to work for the admissions office. Bob was Dean of Admissions at W&M from 1961 to 1980. He filled the role of Associate Director of Career Services for the last 15 years of his career.

The couple raised their family in the three-story house on the James River they moved into in 1968. They now have two grown children: daughter, Stacy Hill, lives in northwest Illinois with her husband, Guy, and has two grown children, Megan and Will; son, Roger, now lives in the main house with his wife, Eli, and their seven-year-old son, Coleman.



Lisa W. Cumming Photography

"We stayed here and never left," Sylvia explains. "It's been wonderful, and I enjoy being with Coleman."

Bob and Sylvia added a smaller apartment to their home for her parents to live in when her mother became ill. Four years ago, the Hunts began talking about their own retirement. "It got harder and harder for us to take care of the house," Sylvia says. "After looking around, we could not leave this river."

In 2000, Sylvia retired after years of accounting work for the government at Camp Peary, the Jamestown Corporation with "The Common Glory" show and as a freelancer.

She also worked retail for eight years managing the sport shop at the Golden Horseshoe.

Sylvia had painted for years but never thought anything of pottery until Bob brought her a pair of pottery earrings made by his assistant. She went to see what the woman was doing and discovered a new passion.

"Each art medium was an adventure in and out of places with people I might never have known," Sylvia explains. "The practice of each follows a similar pattern: I become intrigued with a craft; visit shows and fairs to see it; then, quite often, I take a class to learn the how-to; then I apply the process and create



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my own work.”

Bob’s assistant suggested that Sylvia take classes taught by ceramist, Melanie Mason, in Toano. Because of her years spent on the water, Sylvia was drawn to creating pottery fish. “I made thousands of fish for shows,” she says. “After a couple of years people became collectors of the fish. I did very well with those.” She studied books on local and tropical fish, especially Atlantic and Chesapeake Bay species. She sold them at shows in North Carolina, Virginia and Maryland. That kept her very busy. “I had a great time with the fish.”

When Sylvia stopped doing shows she offered her creations wholesale to galleries and consignment shops. She currently has a few pieces in The Gallery at York Hall. Sylvia crafted some small bowls, a lot of nautical platters, grape leaf bowls, earrings and bracelets.

Another of her creative outlets included working in stained glass for a short time, and then she moved to bottle art. “I crashed the bottles,” she says. “I would sit on the basement floor with bottles under canvas and whack at them with a hammer.”

She moved on to paint floor cloths for colonial houses and one special wall hanging for friends. “It featured a banjo with the southwestern Virginia Crooked Road of mountain and bluegrass music,” she explains.

“I’ve had a lot of different periods I’ve gone through, but the pottery was my passion.”

Sylvia continued doing art shows, festivals and her artwork for many years, until she was plagued with chronic headaches 20 years ago. “The headaches became worse over the years and were exacerbated by the work,” she explains.

Then, suddenly, all her pottery work halted about two years ago.

“My husband suffered an accident and our lives changed completely,” she says.

In 2014 on their anniversary, Bob, who was very fit and exercised daily, went for a bike ride. He told Sylvia he would return quickly and then they would go out to celebrate. “He suffered a bike accident from which he never recovered.” she says.

During the time she was caring for Bob, she needed to get involved in an art form she could do nearby rather than in the studio. After a friend’s mother passed away, she gave Sylvia her mother’s collection of buttons. Sylvia researched the growing popularity of button jewelry and discovered few artists were creating button rings. Now she could produce in a small space with only a few cutting tools, a drill and buttons. “The search for unique and interesting buttons is the most fun,” she says. “Flea markets, websites, friends, thrift shops are a great way to find that one treasure. They don’t come along very often, but when they do, it’s very exciting.” She currently sells her button rings at Auntie M’s American Cottage on the Yorktown waterfront.

Sylvia is a member of the ElderBerry Jam Band, a group of seven (mostly) seniors. She began playing the lap dulcimer then went to the autoharp. Now she is learning mandolin. “My music has pretty much overtaken me,” she says. “Our focus is playing for nursing homes, retirement communities, churches and private functions, everything from bluegrass and country to swing and Americana. This is the most fun I am having right now: playing with people I care about, doing something for others and still learning.”

In addition to her music, button jewelry takes priority over other art forms. “I feel I have everything I need living in Williamsburg, especially the many friends I have made over these last 59 years,” Sylvia says. “I am near the ocean, mountains and two large cities are close by. I am blessed.”

Sylvia hopes to one day rekindle her passion for pottery. “I haven’t had any interest in it,” she says. “It just sort of left me. Maybe it’s just a natural thing that happens. I am motivated to pursue the thing that excites me and plays to my passion. It must come from the heart and be made by hand.” NDN

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SUSAN DICKERSON



Lisa W. Cumming Photography

GET YOUR CRAFT ON

By Lillian Stevens

Susan Dickerson has spent the better part of her career in public relations and marketing. Last year, in a giant leap of faith, she walked away from her job as a communications professional at William & Mary, and launched her own business, The Flying Needles yarn shop.

“This is a dream come true!” Susan exclaims. “I always knew that I wanted to do my own thing, but I wasn’t entirely sure what the widget would be.”

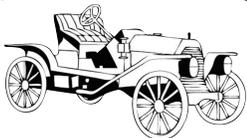
The widget would be a love of yarn.

Susan’s shop specializes in unique yarns, in-

cluding an extensive selection of yarns curated by Virginia-based knitters and crocheters. Sales are, however, only one part of the experience. The shop is a cozy haven where local knitters gather to learn, inspire and create. There are classes for newbie knitters, as well as sessions

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geared toward those with more experience.

"Bring your needles and choose from our wide selection of classes," Susan says. "Or visit one of our yarn tastings, trunk shows or movie nights."

There is group knitting and crocheting, and personalized service for crafters hoping to un-kink their latest project's knot. "I like to think of this as a place where you can come get your craft on!"

For many years, local yarn aficionados visited the Knitting Sisters boutique, another well-loved shop across town, which closed its doors last year when owner Cathy Gill announced her retirement.

"That lit the spark," Susan says. "I always knew I wanted to go out on my own someday. With encouragement from my family, I decided that the day had come. It was scary, though, because I know public relations and I know consulting, but I did not know how to start a business."

With the help of Cathy Gill and her colleague Rosemarie Kammer, as well as support from other friends, an idea took shape. Susan would open her own store, on a conservatively small scale.

First, the shop would need a name. "This is a great story," Susan says. "My family and I were sitting around one night brainstorming names for the shop. My husband's career has been in marketing also, so he was a huge help. First, we whittled my large list to five names and bounced those off of my friends. Then, my friends helped me narrow it down to two names."

It was either going to be The Flying Needles or Unraveled.

"I went to the web gods and found out which domain was available," she says. "Thus, The Flying Needles was born. Besides, if my business is going to be knitting, did I really want to be called Unraveled?" she asks with a laugh.

Once the financing came through, a good friend recommended that Susan enlist three key people to get her up and running. One, a great contractor to build out the business. Two, a knowledgeable real estate agent to help negotiate the space. And, three, a top attorney to look out for Susan's best interests.

After that was accomplished, it was time to have some fun.

"I knew that I wanted an imaginative, cre-

ative space, Not just a knitting shop that would sell yarns. I wanted to have a dedicated space for people to hang out and knit or work on whatever project they had going, whether for a few minutes in between medical appointments, or a few hours."

Susan's zest for knitting is palpable, but she wasn't always a knitter. Growing up, however, she was exposed to arts and crafts and learned many creative arts from her grandmother. "My grandmother was an accomplished crafter," she says. "She taught me cross stitching and needlepoint, among other things."

Some have called knitting "emotional yoga" as the rhythmic clicking of the needles soothes and calms even the most frazzled nerve. "It's hard to describe, but there has been research that indicates there is a wellness aspect to knitting," Susan says.

She discovered knitting as a young adult, in the early 2000s, when she and her family were living in Radford, Virginia. "I had a neighbor who taught me how to knit, and I fell in love with it immediately. Knitting centers me when I need to find my Zen."

Beyond the rhythm and the process, there's always the creative, artsy part too.

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“Unless you are knitting long rectangles, you start with a pattern,” Susan says. “For me, the fun part is finding the right colors and the right yarns for what you want to create.”

Susan has a favorite piece which is a sweater she made for her daughter that took nine months to knit.

“That sweater was just incredible. It’s actually more of a jacket called a knit swirl. You start with a giant circle and work your way from the outside in. It’s a fabulous sweater. It looks like the blues and greens of a peacock.”

There’s a certain energy that Susan exudes when talking about crafting and the business she is so delighted to be running. She describes a typical day as “wild” but in the best way.

“It can be pretty crazy. We might have 25 people sitting around stitching. Some knit, some crochet, some cross-stitch.”

There are yarn lovers who come by in search of the perfect skein for their project. There are panicked knitters seeking help with a flawed project. There are crafters arriving for scheduled classes. Susan even arranges “college knit nights” that attract nearby William & Mary student knitters.

There are also “knit with an instructor” ses-

sions on the horizon, where customers will receive individualized help. Indeed, teaching classes is one of Susan’s very favorite things to do, especially the beginning knitting class she offers.

“My most requested class has been a simple easy beginning sweater, top down,” she says. “There is no seaming, so you’ll knit the sleeves to the body. There’s no sewing with tapestry needles because it’s all one piece.”

As passionate as Susan is about her hobby, and teaching it to others, she says that the very best part of her new adventure has been the people in her life, those she has known for years as well as new friends who have come into her life.

“I’m surrounded by creative, amazing people,” she says. “It’s just a super awesome sense of community here.”

It might sound easy, but Susan admits that it can be daunting starting a small business. “Do not let fear overcome you. It’s scary stepping outside of your comfort zone, and there were times I was so afraid. Always remember that fear is just an obstacle between where you are and what you want.”

Susan also suggests tapping into a network

of friends, family, and peers who are happy to serve as a sounding board and offer the benefit of their wisdom.

“Also, don’t take no for an answer,” she says. “If someone says you can’t do something, approach someone else.”

At the end of the day, Susan’s strongest network is her immediate family. “My husband, Drew, has been my biggest champion and our daughters have been my biggest cheerleaders.”

Their eldest is a junior at William & Mary, and their youngest is still in high school. “I am so lucky to have such an incredibly supportive family, great friends and customers and this community.”

At last, Susan’s dream has come true. Even so, she never takes one day for granted, and encourages us to realize the importance of time. She could have bought her daughter a sweater, for instance, instead of taking nearly nine months to knit an original.

“In today’s disposable world, there is nothing more precious than time,” Susan Dickerson says. “When someone takes a moment from their lives and makes something for you from the tips of their needles, nothing is more valuable than that.” NDN

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MAKING THE MUNDANE *Magnificent*

By Linda Landreth Phelps

“Color is my music!” says Vivian Hall. “Just like a composer uses notes, I use paint colors.” In her home studio, she sketches out a pattern for one of her works of rosemaling, demonstrating her artistic technique like the teacher she is. She grips a brush lightly in her right hand, supporting and steadying it on her left arm as she performs the motions needed to make the graceful swirls, leaves and petals of this art form. “Rosemaling simply means ‘flower-painting,’” she says. It is a folk art which began in Norway’s rural valleys in the late 18th century.

“It has its origins in an art called ‘krilling,’” Vivian says. “Norway’s old homes were dark, built with a central open fire pit. For special occasions such as weddings and baptisms, artists would decorate their walls with colorful chalk designs.” The smoky fires would soon cover them with black soot, and fresh designs were chalked for the next celebration.

This art gradually migrated from walls to utilitarian items, from chalk to paint. Rosemaling uses stylized scrollwork which mimics acanthus carving, as well as lining and geometric elements, most often in flowing patterns. Decorative painting techniques such as glazing, spattering, and marbling are also used to complete the transformation of everyday objects into true works of art.

“Every valley had its local artists, and even-



Lisa W. Cumming Photography

tually, strong regional styles developed, each with its own techniques, themes, even color palettes,” Vivian says. “Today three of the main styles are Telemark, Hallingdal and Rogaland, named after the places where they originated. I dabble in all of them, but Hallingdal is my favorite.”

Rosemaling’s popularity declined in the 1860s, until interest in the art was revived by Norwegian-American immigrants in the early 20th century. It remains popular today, and

modern Norway has a state-supported rosemaling artist to ensure its preservation.

Scandinavian heritage runs strong in Vivian’s veins. She grew up as Vivian Anderson, a dairy farmer’s daughter in tiny Fosston, Minnesota. “We were barely a hundred miles south of Canada, and north of most everything else,” she describes her hometown with a small shiver. Winters were long, cold and dark, and families were often snowbound.

“I clearly remember opening the back door and seeing a solid white wall. We had to shovel it inside to tunnel our way out so we six children could ski to our one-room school. With a typical snow depth of four feet, that’s the only way we could get there. I heard about California and its climate when I was only 5, and my goal was always to go there when I grew up.”

Go there she did, arriving ten days after her 18th birthday to attend the Bible Institute of Los Angeles, a private Christian college where she met her husband, Jerry. “I believed I was being called to prepare for the mission field, and in a way I was, but by serving as a pastor’s wife.” Jerry and Vivian graduated, married and served in California together for twelve years. They then spent more than two decades in Annandale, Virginia, leading an Evangelical Free Church. It’s a denomination which has its origins in Norway and includes contemporary pastor and author Chuck Swindoll as its most



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Vivian served on a number of church boards and stayed busy as she raised their children. She was famous for her hospitality, often filling every bed in the house, with a turnover so brisk that she barely had time to change the sheets between guests.

They had two children, a boy and a girl, who gave them four grandsons, now grown. A woman who is an “acquired” daughter lived with Vivian and Jerry during seminary. “Kimberly claims us as parents since hers are deceased. Two years after she married at age 48, they adopted an infant, so now we have a two year old granddaughter,” Vivian says with a delighted chuckle.

After moving from Annandale and spending eight years working in Chicago, the couple returned to Virginia to retire, if that term can be defined to include leading numerous short term mission trips to Slovakia and the Czech Republic and teaching English. Years before retirement, they had purchased a lot in western James City County, an area that’s boasted a heavy Scandinavian presence since the establishment of Norge in 1904. The Halls designed and built a unique home near Toano, constructed with natural, untreated cypress logs.

In its appearance, their home looks as if it could have been whisked by an alpine tornado from an Oslo mountain slope, but unlike Dorothy’s hard landing in Oz, this European chalet

seems gently deposited on the bank of the York River. There is nothing like it, safe to say, anywhere else in this area.

Most of the construction was done by the Halls’ own hands over a four year period. Jerry, a skilled woodworker and carver but deeply modest man, was asked with awe by a new friend if they’d built the house themselves. His response was, “Well, only the wooden parts.”

Much of the home’s interior reflects Vivian’s astonishing artwork, a lifetime of painting on display on every surface. You’ll see her intricate and colorful rosemaling on bowls, doors, cabinets, chairs and plaques. She’s painstakingly decorated even the tiles on their bathroom wall.

An example of their shared artistic skill is the traditional round-topped chests that they made for their grandsons’ high school graduation gifts. Jerry crafted the wooden trunks, and then Vivian decorated them in the style of her ancestors. “This type trunk carried household goods and clothes from Norway when people immigrated to America,” she says. “The rounded top trunk at the foot of the bed in the basement is the one my great grandmother brought her belongings to America in. I never knew why it had a rounded top. The Halls have thoroughly enjoyed living on the Peninsula for the last two decades. It’s a place that suited them both in every way.

“This was a dream location to be as an artist. The Sons of Norway put on a Christmas bazaar

in Virginia Beach and Raleigh does a Scandinavian festival every year. When I’d go, I would typically sell most of what I took. Even painting 40 hours a week, I could only produce enough inventory for those two shows.”

Things do change as the years go by, and Vivian has decided that she’ll be retiring her brushes in June, when she is 85. “I don’t have the fine motor skills to do it to my standards anymore,” she shares. “I have four students at the moment, who come to me for lessons, and I will miss that, but there is a season for everything.”

This season for Vivian includes being a caregiver for Jerry, almost 88, who is measuring his remaining earthly life in weeks. “Our hope now is Heaven,” she says.

Until then, Vivian is planning her next season in the arts. Before she took up rosemaling, she taught a form of folk embroidery, examples of which can be seen in every corner of her home. In its spacious upstairs loft is a wooden loom, waiting for her hands to bring fabric to vibrant life. Her days will still be full of activity as she uses thread instead of paint to compose colorful, joyous hymns. Her art is a reflection of her faith, the bedrock of her personal peace. She is satisfied with her life.

“I agree with what King David said in Psalm 16, verse 6. Along with him, I can truly say that the boundary lines are fallen to me in pleasant places,” Vivian says. “I have a delightful heritage.” NDN



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Home Grown, Hand-made

By Erin Fryer



Lisa W. Cumming Photography

Many years ago, one of Maureen Anderson's eight children suffered from allergies. Maureen and her husband, Kevin, bought a goat so they could have fresh goat's milk for their daughter. One of their friends, who had been making goat's milk soap, stopped by to see the goat and shared her soap recipe with the Andersons.

"The first time we made goat's milk soap was chaos," Maureen says with a laugh. "We were all in a bedroom with the windows open, masks on and fans blowing. We were so nervous we would breathe in something bad."

Since that first attempt at making the soap, Maureen and Kevin have perfected their own recipe and method and have turned the hobby

into a popular artisan product.

For many years, the couple resided in Virginia Beach in the Pungo area where they owned a 30-acre farm. Their family grew over the years to include six girls, two boys and several animals.

When they started making the goat's milk soap, they couldn't believe how many people wanted it. "They just kept coming back for more," Maureen says. Once they nailed down their process, Kevin and Maureen started hitting the road and going to different stores to market their soap, Tasha's Own. While still living in Virginia Beach, Maureen helped start a farmer's market there and that's when she and

Kevin really saw success with the soap. One day a representative from Whole Foods Market came by looking for local vendors for their Virginia Beach store that was getting ready to open, and they found Tasha's Own.

After being accepted into Whole Foods in Virginia Beach, Maureen and her daughter hit the road and visited more than 13 other Whole Foods in the Northern Virginia, Charlottesville and Richmond areas where they once again found great success. Tasha's Own can be found on the shelves of many Whole Foods stores in Virginia. This past spring, Maureen and her family hit another major milestone when they were contacted by TJ Maxx. The discount store

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ordered 3,000 bars and distributed Tasha's Own soaps to stores in the United States, Canada and the United Kingdom.

Though they have had some big success stories throughout their journey to building the business, Tasha's Own, the soaps are still hand-made and wrapped by Maureen and Kevin at their Williamsburg home.

The business is named after the couple's first goat, Tasha. The label is designed and hand cut by Kevin, and the signature piece of fabric that rests under the label was Maureen's idea. "I did a lot of smocking and sewing for our girls when they were growing up so we always had a lot of fabric," she says. "We get so many compliments on the wrapping which is funny because wrapping the soap is the most tedious part."

When Maureen received the TJ Maxx order, she and Kevin hosted a wrapping party and invited friends and loyal customers to help them wrap the 3,000 bars. "If we ever got an order larger than that we will probably have to reconsider the wrapping," Maureen says.

The recipe for their soap is something the couple has tweaked many times. The market can be very volatile for a lot of the ingredients they use, like coconut oil and palm oil. The markets go up and down, so they often have to shop around. They also want to make sure they are using products that are obtained through moral practices. For example, when they found out the palm kernel flakes they were using were being found as a result of people clear-cutting forests and using bad practices to obtain them, they stopped using that product.

The pH in goat's milk is very similar to human skin, so if skin is particularly oily or dry the soap helps balance that out. Maureen says it's a great moisturizer and wonderful for your skin.

Maureen and her family fell into this business because of their love of the goats. "We had a ton of goat's milk, and I had a goat addiction," she says with a laugh. "We have 17 goats now. With all that goat's milk, we make a lot of soap, and we always have such great feedback. That's what motivates us, because there are so many people who love it."

While the couple was still living in Pungo, they began driving up to Williamsburg to sell their soap at the Williamsburg Farmers Market in Merchants Square. They were spending many nights in hotels and a lot of time driving back and forth. When their first grandchild was born in the Williamsburg area, the couple decided to make the move.

"The Farmers Market is a big deal for us. It's kind of our little social event each week," Maureen says. "We have a lot of regulars and they love our soap. It's great to see them come back time and time again. Many of them have become friends."

Thus far, their biggest success has been being welcomed into the Whole Foods chain. The stores do a display with the Tasha's Own story and a picture of the family, and they order in big bulk orders. They also buy it by the loaf and sell it by the slice, so the Anderson's don't have to wrap individual bars.

"What sets our soap apart from the rest is we are using our milk, our honey, and our herbs," Maureen says. "It's a unique farm product that people would enjoy even if buying artisan things wasn't trendy right now." The family is thankful for the Williamsburg community because they are so receptive to supporting hand-made, quality products.

Maureen developed her interest in living this lifestyle as a young girl growing up in the farming communities of Loudon County, Virginia. She also developed an interest in herbal remedies.

"The way I live is much cheaper than if I were to go to work every day and buy lunch and bring home a prepared dinner," Maureen says. "I could live in a one bedroom log house, but it's really our kids and my love of animals that inspires us to live this way of life."

Maureen's desire to live a sustainable, self-sufficient, all-natural lifestyle has led to a business that has supported her family of 10 and opened the doors for opportunities in Williamsburg and beyond. Maureen Anderson can be found most Saturdays throughout the year at the Williamsburg Farmers Market with her family's hand-made goat's milk soap from home-grown ingredients. 

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LIKE FAMILY

By Greg Lilly, Editor

For over 50 years, Dona Fletcher has styled hair, managed, and eventually owned, Jacqueline's Beauty Salon. She explains the longevity of her career because of the customer interaction at the salon. "We're like a family," she says.

A beauty salon creates a community. Many people have a set schedule of appointments and see the same salon employees and other customers each time they sit down in the chair. Also, Dona explains that there is an intimacy that develops between the stylist and the customer.

"People can use hairdressers as an outlet to talk about things that they can't talk to their friends about," Dona says. "Maybe it is something that is too personal to talk to their friends about. They know they can talk to their hairdresser because we've established that trust. Secondly, we're not in their circle of friends where we might run into people they know and say something we shouldn't. It makes them comfortable. That's important."

Born and raised in Williamsburg, Dona graduated from James Blair High School.



Corey Miller Photography

"That was the only Williamsburg high school then," she says. At the age of 15, while still at James Blair, she decided to find a part-time summer job.

"Jackie Clingenpeel, the woman who worked in the shop at the time, always cut my hair. I asked her if she knew of any jobs. She said the owner would let me help at the shop. I shampooed, cleaned up, all the things that needed to be done around the salon."

In 1966, Jackie Clingenpeel opened her own salon on Jamestown Road. "As soon as she opened it, I was here. I was out of beauty school and working part-time for one of the

other salons, waiting for the shop to be built. We were over on Jamestown Road where CVS Pharmacy is now. Berkeley Pharmacy was on one side of us and the Shell Gas Station facing Jamestown Road and the 7-11 were across from us. Just the four of us," Dona says.

After many years in that location, the property was sold, and the salon moved to the Five Forks area on John Tyler Highway. "This gave us more exposure because we are visible from the road. We hated to move. We'd been in the other location for 32 years. That was quite a transition."

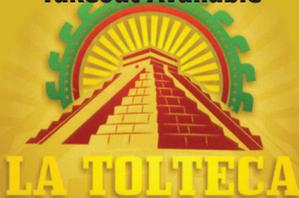
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mand” at the salon, and they’d laugh about that since there were only the two of them. “When Jackie’s first husband passed away, I took on more of the day to day responsibilities of the shop.” About ten years ago, Dona bought the business from Jackie. “I had been running it for a number of years before because she had moved out of town.”

Dona credits her staff as one of the primary reasons for the stability of the business. “I have one lady that’s been here for 24 years. One that’s been here for 25 years, and one I’ve worked with for 37 years.” She says that in the salon industry, stylists tend to move often, so to have the collective years in her shop is quite unusual.

“I’ve been here 50 years. That’s over 135 years total for us. We’ve worked together for so long. That’s important to the customers, that continuity. They know that if their stylist is out sick or on vacation that any of us can do their hair because we’ve seen it done a hundred times. With that many years together, we’ve seen quite a few generations of customers come through this door.”

The philosophy that guides Dona is that the customer comes first. “We do what’s best for the customer, not for ourselves. These are our neighbors and friends. We serve them. We don’t take credit cards because that requires us doing something other than hair. If someone

doesn’t have cash or check, we tell them to bring it by the next time they’re in the area.”

Because of the amount of time Dona has been in the business and the years that her customers have frequented Jacqueline’s, she says the salon has become a part of the fabric of their lives. “I can tell you when this or that happened with a customer, if they have kids and where their kids are and when those kids had kids of their own.”

As Williamsburg has grown over the past 50 years, the salon’s customers have changed as well. “Being an older, established salon, we find people who want to get their hair done every week. When blow drying came out and people washed their own hair, that idea of having someone else fix your hair every week, sort of went by the wayside. So, we see it now as some of the younger women get a little older and want to treat themselves. Getting their hair done is a nice treat. For a long time, the younger women couldn’t afford to get it done except for a special occasion. As they get a little older, they have some expendable income and have more time.”

Dona’s years of service and those of her stylists may appear to be heading toward retirement, but she says not so fast. “All three stylists want to continue as long as they can. They’re very special people who work for me. About four and a half years ago, I went through a

bout with cancer. I had to have a mastectomy and half a lung removed. I was out of the salon for seven months. For a hairdresser that’s too long. These three ladies took over and ran everything. All I did was come in once a week to do the payroll. To find people that special would be difficult to replace any one of them.”

“My oldest customer, is just six years older than I am. I did her hair before we even opened Jacqueline’s, while waiting for the shop to be built. I’ve done her hair for 51 years. It’s hard to give that up. It’s like a family. We’re all interconnected.”

Many customers come in each week at the same time, so they make friends with each other. “We had a fellow who would bring his wife in every Friday to get here hair done. Another fellow brought his wife in a half hour later. They would talk together each week while they waited. When the man’s wife passed away, the following Friday, he came in. He said it was Friday, where else would he go? He came in every Friday for another two years until he passed away. He knew we were concerned about him and happy to have him come in. It makes you feel good.”

For over 50 years, Dona has opened her doors to the people of Williamsburg, along with her heart and skill. The customers have responded with faithful support and friendship. “This is a feel-good business.” NDN

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Raising It to the Next Level

By Greg Lilly, Editor

"I see in the states with the most elite athletes, states like Florida, Pennsylvania, Texas. They have facilities offering Division I caliber athletic strength and conditioning training for young athletes," explains Andre (Dre) McLaughlin. "These athletes train in an intense and focused program with experienced trainers, and that's what takes them to that next level

and earns a place at universities like Alabama, Florida and Notre Dame."

Dre and business partner, Sean Walker, work with young athletes to help prepare them for sports performance in middle school, high school, college and beyond.

"It is an attention to detail," he explains. "I've been in the weight rooms in the schools and in

gyms and know how it's geared toward rotating students in a circuit, as fast as they can, to get as much as they can. There's not much detail on your form and improving performance."

Born and raised in Williamsburg, Dre attended Matthew Whaley Elementary School then James Blair Middle School. He describes himself as a "chubby kid" and started playing

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soccer and basketball. "I'm only five foot, seven inches tall, so basketball was more recreational. My older brother helped get me into athletics."

In middle school, he started playing football. "I knew I wasn't tall enough for basketball. I'd been a Pittsburgh Steelers fan all my life, and my friends were playing football. At the time, I was pretty chubby and trying to find a fit for me athletically. Football was the answer." Dre played on the offensive line at James Blair his seventh grade year.

"I worked out with my older brother over the summer, and by the next season, I was starting running back. I'd dropped about 40 pounds that summer working out and lifting weights." Seeing results from his work out jumpstarted the strength and conditioning routine for Dre. He also discovered with the loss of the weight, he could run – fast. "Everything kicked in over that summer. Seventh grade, I was a chubby offensive lineman, and then in eighth grade, I was a starting running back on the James Blair team."

At Jamestown High School, Dre started as a cornerback on the varsity team during his freshman year. "That was pretty good for a freshman. I wasn't that big and still trying to find my way to get more strength and get faster. I ran outdoor track. I played basketball my ninth and tenth grade years on junior varsity,

but I knew that wasn't my sport. I needed to get bigger and faster. I started attending morning workouts at Jamestown High School's 'Breakfast Club' before school. I lifted then and went to track practice in the evenings to get faster. I excelled my junior and senior years as a running back."

He was recruited by some Division III schools. "I wasn't a glamorous Division I athlete, but Randolph-Macon and Catholic University and American University showed interest. I ran a 4.3 40-yard, which is considered pretty fast. I was 5'7" and 170 pounds – for a running back, that's small. But I was quick and that got me in." Dre went to Randolph-Macon College in Ashland, Virginia.

At Randolph-Macon, Dre started as a science major. "My plan was to be a meteorologist," he says with a laugh. "I wanted to be a TV weatherman." But, his first science class had him rethinking that path. Throughout his teen and young adult life, Dre immersed himself in the church and playing music. "So after deciding against meteorology, I went to my passion, which is music. I became a Music Business major. I composed the fight song for Randolph-Macon that the pep band plays when the football team scores. I was highly involved in choral as a Chamber Singer, playing drums in the jazz band, playing piano for the gospel choir, and

later as the director of the gospel choir."

The summers during college, Dre played at Busch Gardens in the shows. "I thought at one point, I'd be a professional musician. I had no idea I would become a police officer, but I knew I would be involved in music somehow."

Playing football, Dre always had fitness as a focus. "Faster, bigger and stronger," he says. "I also wanted to get better." This desire to constantly improve provided insight to training and conditioning that he wanted to share with others. "All my life, I liked helping other people with their goals. It really hit home in college. I played football my freshman and sophomore years. Then I decided I wanted to help people in a different manner and became a residence assistant, an orientation leader for freshman, and the director of the gospel choir. I was also in a community service group called Brothers for Change. That was a minority group for males, like an African-American fraternity, where we would do community service projects like winterizing homes and helping kids in the community. That's when I knew I wanted to help people."

Dre worked as a behavioral specialist at James River Elementary School after graduating from Randolph-Macon. He noticed the football coach at Jamestown High School was Ryan Turnage, who had been Dre's defensive



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lineman coach at Randolph-Macon. Dre called Coach Turnage to see if he could help coach the Jamestown football team. He was back at his alma mater sharing the knowledge and skills he'd learned at college.

He also worked with his church as the music director. Then one day at the barber shop, Dre ran into Major Peterson with the James City County Police. "He asked if I had ever thought of being a police officer. I considered it and visited the Law Enforcement Center. I liked the people I met and applied. I got the position and went to the Police Academy. That was about six years ago." He started on the midnight shift and then became the School Resource Officer at Lafayette High School. "This is my third year there."

Being a police officer, church music director and maintaining his own fitness routine, kept Dre busy, but he still had other things he wanted to accomplish. "My best friend, Sean, and I had this idea to turn our passion for fitness into boot camp classes. That was two years ago. We started doing boot camp classes at Jamestown High School at five dollars each class." They began the classes outside on the school's fields then moved to the gym. About a year ago, Dre and Sean decided to open a facility to house their classes.

Frame Fitness opened this past fall with per-

sonal training, partner training, small group training and group classes. Dre's unrivaled initiative is Frame Fitness Prep with the mission of lifting the student athlete to the next level in their performance. With a staff of personal trainers, including Courtney Bridget, former Division I athlete and former member of the Washington Redskins, Dre and the team use the knowledge of achieving a higher level of athletic performance with their clients. "Maybe that one push from an elite trainer could help a young athlete get to the level of an Alabama or Notre Dame athlete," Dre says. "It's not what happens on the field, but in the weight room and with their conditioning routine."

As Dre McLaughlin divides his time with his law enforcement career, music direction at church, and now with his new athletic training facility, he looks to the future. "I love what I do as a police officer. I'm a man of faith and unless God tells me to move from that, I'll stay there. For the personal training business, I see another location, maybe have the youth athletic training in its own location and the adult personal training in another." Dre's trilateral reach into the community of law enforcement, music director and athletic training shows his commitment to the lifting up the people of his hometown. **NDN**

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Community Theatre It's the People

By Greg Lilly, Editor

Volunteering with the Williamsburg Players is an endeavor Michael Westenberger's family enjoys. Michael is the president of the board for the Williamsburg Players. "It's definitely a family affair. That's the same with most of the board members. I've been fortunate that all my family loves the theatre and likes being involved."

His wife, Christina, brought Michael into volunteering with community theatre. "Christina grew up singing and acting. We've been married for 20 years this coming May, and in those 20 years, she's the one that exposed me to Broadway and community theatre." The couple's daughter and son also

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help. "Both of the kids have been involved in a couple of the shows, either with the Players or with Panglossian (another local theatre group). Christina, in addition to singing and acting, also directs. A couple of years ago, she directed 'Into the Woods' and had both of our kids in the show. When I'm here set building, the kids are here as well, lending a hand."

Since Michael says he has no musical or acting talent, he contributes by designing and building sets for the productions. "My construction experience goes back to helping my father do things around the house: remodeling or building additions. So I was familiar with building things. For me, it was always a challenge to not overbuild. I want to build something to last 50 years, but it really only needs to last five weeks. That's a huge dichotomy from a permanent structure to something to look good from vantage point of the audience and is temporary. With 'Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat' coming in March, I'm helping with the set design and leading on the set build."

Michael grew up in Northern Virginia. His father was an air traffic controller out of Dulles Airport. "We lived in Northern Virginia for a number of years and then moved

to Oklahoma City for two years when my dad was an instructor at the academy there. That was about my first and second grade school years, so I experienced tarantulas and tumbleweeds as a kid. Then we move back to Northern Virginia." He graduated from high school and then went to George Mason University for his freshman year.

His parents retired and moved to the Hampton Roads area. "I was still 18, and Northern Virginia was too expensive to live there on my own, so I moved down here with them." He started taking classes at Christopher Newport University and ended up finishing at Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University.

Today, Michael works at Newport News Shipbuilding. "I manage a staff of about a dozen people," he says. "We manage the production schedule for Newport News and for some government contractors."

"For me, safety is always the main concern. Many of the sets I've built had elevated platforms, either a two-story set or a bridge. Then you have to think how many people will be on the constructed set. I've had a lot of performers thank me for building the set as sturdy as I do. I want their mind to be on the

performance, not worrying about how sturdy the props are."

Productions coming to the Williamsburg Players include musicals, children's theatre and dramas. First up in February is "Freedom Songs" for the children's series. "We usually have three or four productions a year where we contract with a traveling company that puts on children's performances around the country," Michael explains. "This is Bright Star Touring that will do the production on African-American music and how it has impacted the world."

Another production in February is James Cameron's "A Conversation with John Rolison." James portrays an 18th century African-American, who was a Virginia Founding Father. It's an interactive one-man show.

"Crazy Ever After" is a cabaret. "The lobby turns into the performance space," Michael says. "There will be nine phenomenal singers performing different Broadway songs, an emotional journey, just in time for Valentine's Day. It is limited seating because it is held in the lobby of the theater."

"Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat" is a favorite of theatre goers in Williamsburg and around the world. "We're

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excited to have that.”

The Williamsburg Players end the regular season this year with “On Golden Pond.” A summer show is planned, the musical “Next To Normal.”

“Usually for our season, we have a balance of musicals and plays,” Michael says. “We, as a board, have an idea of the things we’d like to see on our stage. We take into account if we have done any of those in the past few years so we don’t repeat ourselves. We also look at the community. Has a particular performance been produced in the last few years in Newport News, Virginia Beach, Richmond or Smithfield? There are a number of plays and musicals we’d like to see. And, we also have an open initiation for directors to submit their own ideas. It’s a balance between the board’s list and the directors’ lists.”

With the many entertainment options available to our neighbors, Michael knows that Hollywood brings a lot of special effects and car chases to the movie screens, things that can’t be done live on a stage. “Community theatre and theatre in general brings realism,” he says. Realism is something that doesn’t come from the big special effects movies. “You go to a movie and expect the big

effects, but it’s not very personal. From my experience, community theatre is where you can develop a relationship with the people on stage. It’s more emotional. I’ve been moved more often in the theatre than ever in a movie or by a TV show. This is live theatre. You’re right here. People are coming to the show because they love the experience. It affects you a certain way that filmed productions can’t.”

Michael stresses that the Williamsburg Players is a non-profit organization that is a community theatre. They have an emphasis on community. “We’re identifying areas where we can better serve the community. One of the areas is our Art in the Lobby initiative.” A wall in the lobby of the theater displays art by local artists. “The hardware and installation were funded by a grant through York County Arts Commission. As a theater, really an arts community center, I see this as a space where not just performance art is here, but visual art and other arts in the community can use this space. We have five main season shows, and each show will have a different artist’s work on the wall.”

Christina manages the Art in the Lobby program, working with artists in the area to have their work displayed. For each of the five

main season shows, the opening night has an artist Meet & Greet in the lobby before the show. “That puts two art forms together,” Michael says, “and brings in people who might not have been to the theatre before, and it exposes theatre goers to new art.”

With both of Michael and Christina’s children at Queens Lake Middle School, Michael realizes that they’re growing up fast. “I want to get more involved with their school activities. I plan to step off the board when my term is up to spend more time with them.”

Michael Westenberger sees the correlations between the theatre and his business life. “This is my fourteenth year at the shipyard. Whether at the shipyard or at the theatre, it boils down to people. The shipyard is the number one builder of aircraft carriers and submarines, the best in the business. While we have steel and piping and all the things that make up the ship, just like here at the theater with soundboards, lights, sets and curtains, none of it is possible without people. I’m fortunate to be surrounded by great board members and volunteers with the Williamsburg Players. Without them, none of this is possible. That’s a direct correlation to the shipyard. Our most valued resource is people.” NDN

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A Glitch in the Journey

By Greg Lilly, Editor

“The hair is the biggest thing for women,” Carolyn (CC) Collins says about women going through cancer treatments. “Yes, it comes back and you never know how it will look – straight, curly.” CC is the coordinator of Sentara Williamsburg Regional Medical Center Auxiliary/Volunteer Services’ Unique Boutique that provides wigs, hats, scarves to patients affected by chemotherapy.

CC explains that many patients look at her when she tells them that she’s a cancer survivor and comment that she seems remarkably healthy. “Yes, we (cancer survivors) look healthy. That’s why we go through this to cleanse our bodies of the cancer. I tell them, ‘It’s just a glitch in our journey.’ We can get through this.”

Bring a friend, CC advises the women when they call to meet her at the Unique Boutique. “A friend can tell them what looks good on them. Just because your hair is dark brown doesn’t mean you have to have that color wig. Try something different. This is the time to have fun. You can be any color you want to be. Be that redhead. Most women who come in don’t leave with the color they initially ask for.”

She sees a lot of apprehension when the women walk through the door. “That thought



Lisa W. Cumming Photography

of losing their hair, their crowning glory, means more to them than losing a breast or whatever,” CC says. “Because the hair is such a visible aspect of their appearance, it is what other people see.”

CC suggests that women wait to get their wigs once they have their hair cut short to get a better fit. Some women try to get everything before their first chemo treatment, to be prepared for what they have heard will come, hair loss. “I know what they are going through,” CC says. “They can wait until their second chemo or a week later. I can meet them at anytime. They should wait until they are willing to cut their hair. That’s the hardest thing for women. Your hair is like a cover on a book. We’re more than our hair, more inside of us that is so much more important than hair.”

As women leave their teens and 20s, many find attractive short hairstyles, and CC encour-

ages women to take the short cut. “Chemo makes the hair come out in clumps. It’s better to cut it short beforehand. Seeing big clumps of hair come out is shocking. Better to cut it short before the treatments.”

This experience is one that CC lived just a few years ago. “In 2010, I was diagnosed with ovarian cancer.”

Growing up in Baltimore, Maryland, CC went to work right after high school at the Savings Bank of Baltimore. “I was a secretary in public relations,” she says. “I married and moved to Tacoma, Washington. He was in the service at Fort Lewis. I had my first child there. After a year, we moved back to Baltimore. I worked a Johns Hopkins as an administrative assistant in the neurological surgery area. From there, I went back into banking and stayed until 1994.” During this time, CC became involved in fitness and personal training. “I’ve always

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been a very physical person, trying to take good care of myself. I started with Spa Lady, first as a customer then as an instructor before and after work while I worked at the bank.”

She and her husband, Gary, had visited Williamsburg and contemplated moving here for many years. “We visited for 29 years and moved on our 30th wedding anniversary.” Her 2010 diagnosis played a part in their move. “When I was diagnosed, the house in Maryland had been for sale for a year. Then on December 13 of that year, my world changed when I was diagnosed. We pulled the house off the market. I took my treatments and when things were going well, we put the house back on the market and it sold in two weeks! I needed to be there in Baltimore to be taken care of by my long-time doctors. In a way, it was divine intervention for the house not to sell until I was through my treatments,” she adds.

“I was very fortunate. My cancer was contained in my fallopian tube. It was a miracle. There are no symptoms for ovarian cancer, except for some bloating. What saved me was some bleeding that I saw my doctor about. I had my surgery on January 11, 2011.”

CC’s sister had passed away from breast cancer, so her doctor suggested CC be genetically tested. “My test came back that I had the gene. They could pull the exact gene. I could give that information to my daughters, Pam and Maria,

to all my siblings and their children and grandchildren. My youngest sister had the gene. Two other sisters had already passed. But our children and grandchildren are negative. That’s a relief.”

Finding the gene in a family member meant there were elevated chances that family member could get cancer. With the gene showing in her results, CC had some decisions to make. “Two years after, I had my breasts removed prophylactically without cancer. That was a precaution. We do what we need to do. From having my breasts removed, I decreased my chances of cancer from 90 percent (because of the gene) to 10 percent. Some things are just not as important as you think.”

When CC and Gary moved to Williamsburg, CC wanted to find a place where she could help other women going through cancer treatments. “I wanted them to know there was more to the story. The big C doesn’t mean the end of anything.”

She applied to volunteer at Sentara, told them her history and how she wanted to help. “Suzi Williamson had started, what became the Unique Boutique, as Hat Trader out of her home,” CC describes. “Suzi was moving to Colorado after 40 years. I wanted to continue her legacy. She had over 700 wigs and hats and scarves in her home. It started with one wig and people would bring her more and more as

they finished their treatments.”

CC became the coordinator of the Unique Boutique. “I love it and love the ladies. I hope my words help them through their situation. There is quite a bit of adjustment when you are told you have cancer of any type. A person who has been through cancer can give so much more information other than the medical side. We know those feelings and fears. It’s personal. I feel I helped a lot of people through that. I feel like that’s my reward, and I’m paying it forward. I was treated very well while I went through it.”

The Sentara’s Auxiliary consists of volunteers, like CC, creating a community of support. “The hardest thing for people is to accept the fact that they have cancer,” CC says. “I’m a survivor and I lost a sister to cancer. I talk with them. Go to lunch with them. I don’t give medical advice, but do give helpful hints like put sunscreen on your head so you don’t burn, how to wrap scarves, keeping warm with hair bands.”

The first year CC Collins volunteered with the Unique Boutique, she saw over one hundred women come through the door of the boutique. “It was all kinds of cancer. I didn’t know there were so many different types of cancer. So many women in a short amount of time,” she says. “Women feel like they are the only ones going through it. They aren’t. We’re here to help.” NDN

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Open Field of View

By Greg Lilly, Editor

“There is a culture amongst us of going back to holistic, organic, locally-grown foods and away from processed foodstuffs. There’s a movement of buying clothing made here instead of overseas. That’s the cultural shift,” John Ballentine explains. John owns Fox Wire Farm in Toano, focused on raising alpacas. Alpacas are in the family of camels and llamas. John and his wife, Laura, raise alpacas and integrate every aspect of the animals into useful products for the home.

Not only does John concentrate on alpacas, but he has created learning pastures and



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February 1 – April 18, 2017

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a self-sustaining farm. “You can feed yourself with a farm. How cool is that? I raise my own eggs, my own pork, harvest deer from my property and raise my own vegetables. I have fruit trees. We host bee hives. We’re trying our hand at goat milk cheese.”

Not growing up on a farm might have created some challenges for John, but it also created an open view of what is possible. The son of an Air Force fighter pilot, John grew up travelling all over the world. “I’m my father’s namesake, so I went into the Air Force and flew jets, as well. I ended up doing two tours at Langley Air Force Base. I fell in love with the area, the rich history, the culture, the education of the people and the strong military presence. It is my home. My wife, Laura, and I met at Langley on my second tour there. That’s been close to 20 years now.”

He and Laura came across Toano in 2005 when a real estate agent told them about a farm. “Beautiful waterfront property off of Yarmouth Creek and Little Creek,” John describes. “We started with 57 acres, and it has grown to approximately 200 acres as we bought up most of Turner’s Neck. Toano is a fantastic community. We get to know our neighbors and keep our dollars in the com-

munity. We really find everything we need here.”

John and Laura started a defense contracting firm in 1999. “That was our main income. We supported both wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. I’m still doing some part-time consulting.” With the gentleman’s farm he bought, John heard a warning from his accountant. “Taxes,” he stresses. “The IRS does not look kindly on hobby farms. We started with two horses and trying our hand at a few other things. Our accountants suggested alpacas. I asked, ‘What’s an alpaca?’ I started with four. The reason they suggested alpacas is because everything an alpaca touches is 100 percent tax deductible.” He explains that it’s an industry the government wants to promote.

The jump from former Air Force pilot to alpaca farmer was logical looking at John’s underlying interests. He majored in life science and agriculture at the University of New Hampshire. “I wanted to be a veterinarian. My father wanted me to follow in his footsteps into the Air Force. For 32 years, I followed his lead. But, I always had a desire to farm, to be with livestock, to look after them. So, after the military, I knew I wanted to get property and farm.”

Part of his enjoyment of the farm is opening it up and sharing what he’s doing with his neighbors. “Over 500 students, the majority being homeschooled, have come to the farm to see the alpacas and how we care for them and the products they produce.” He runs tours to demonstrate the processes and show the alpacas’ daily lives.

“I enjoy the alpacas. They are unique animals and very easy to maintain. The hardest factor is keeping them cool. They originate from the Andes mountain range in South America at about 8,000 to 10,000 feet where the heat of the summer is 45 degrees. The fiber of these animals is ten times warmer than wool and softer than cashmere. The heat will kill them unless you have an infrastructure to keep them cool. Once we figured out the way to mitigate that, they are awesome.”

The farm being between two creeks makes possible animal waste runoff a concern. “The alpacas are communal animals, which means they find one area in their yard and that becomes their bathroom,” John explains. “So, clean-up is a breeze.” Since the farm is surrounded by creeks, John takes the environmental impact of alpaca waste seriously. “We have an extensive RPA (Resource Protection

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Area) that surrounds the property. We have safeguards throughout the farm to protect and alleviate any type of runoff. Every field on the farm is cleaned every day and the waste is removed. Each barn is cleaned twice a day.” This mitigates the amount of nitrogen that goes into the environment. “That’s one of the hallmarks of our farm, the lack of environmental impact. We are one of the cleanest in the entire county.”

The alpacas grow thick coats of fiber like wool, but warmer and not as itchy as wool. The fiber is turned into yarns and threads. “We have ten area Williamsburg based knitters, both women and men, who take the alpaca yarn and make some beautiful products. We keep everything local. If we can take our raw materials, use local knitters to create products and then sell them in our farm shop, that’s the definition of locally grown and handcrafted.”

Baby alpacas are sheared to keep them cool and the fiber is made into the softest products. “We get one shearing a year from adult alpacas, usually the first weekend in April,” John says. “Our shearers come from New Zealand.”

The yarn made from the fiber comes in 22

natural colors. “We do not dye the yarn. It can be made into a sports-weight yarn, a fingering-weight made into socks or finer products, and all the different thicknesses needed for a wide variety of products. You take the yarn and make it into items like glittens (glove/mitten combo), scarves, hats, crocheted shawls, vests, sweaters, coats, and into custom-made, one-of-a-kind garments and high-end fashion.”

John’s vision is for a complete vertical integration of the products, from caring for the animals and shearing them to spinning yarn and incorporating local knitters to create products that are sold at the farm’s store in Toano. “All products made by our neighbors. We provide the yarn and the knitters provide their skill.”

“Nothing goes to waste,” he says. “We take scraps to make into felt as boot inserts. We take trimmings and package those into bird nest material.” A bundle of fiber trimmings hang in trees to provide birds with soft material for their nests in the spring.

Quite literally, nothing goes to waste. “We sell alpaca beans,” John says of the animals’ waste. “Alpaca beans are sundried and sold by the pound – pure nitrogen. Soak them in water, leave in the sun and then pour over

your plants. No odor, pure organic nitrogen, and no seeds in the fertilizer.” Through the alpacas’ three-stomach digestive system, food is processed thoroughly and it destroys seeds in their food. So, no weeds grow in the plant beds or containers, unlike cow, horse or chicken manure fertilizers.

Not growing up on a farm, John had no preconceived notion of limits of his reach. “I never had the farming concept of ‘Dad didn’t do it that way, so I won’t.’ My field of view is not just one area like one product, wrapping my arms around one tree (my farm). I was educated to create an open field of view. I look at the entire forest; I look at the opportunities of the entire forest. I stay within reach of my tree, my farm in the analogy, but I can see everything that it touches and other opportunities.”

John Ballentine says he’s a sponge of information. “Soak up all the information and then decide what works best for you and your farm,” he advises. “Like our store where we sell products and give information about alpacas, I want to educate my community on this industry and the great things alpacas produce. It’s a vision that looks globally, but is from start to finish, local.” NDN

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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

Hey Neighbor! COFM HOMELESS SHELTER PROGRAM SOUP FUNDRAISER

January 27, 2017

Warm Up Williamsburg, the annual soup-tasting event to raise money for Community of Faith Mission (COFM)--Greater Williamsburg's emergency winter shelter program--will be held at 5:15-8 pm at Williamsburg Community Chapel, 3899 John Tyler Highway. Chefs from local restaurants will donate their soups for the fundraiser. The evening will also include live music by Elderberry Jam, a bake shop and a special gift sale. All proceeds from the event will support COFM's emergency shelter program operating on a weekly basis from mid-November to mid-March. Tickets to Warm Up Williamsburg cost \$20 in advance and \$25 at the door. Reservations are required for dine-in or this year's new take-out option. Visit www.cofm.info or call 757-220-0484.

Hey Neighbor! THE POWER OF SONG IN COMMUNITY

January 27-28, 2017

This is a 2-day event at the William & Mary School of Education, starting 6-9 pm Friday and continuing 9 am-4 pm Saturday (lunch provided). Internationally renowned singer/conductor

Dr. Ysaye Barnwell will lead participants in experiencing African & African American musical traditions while exploring the power of music to bring communities together. No musical experience or talent needed! \$50 for general admission; \$15 for students. Search for the event on Facebook or Eventbrite.com or email wmsbgvocalcommunity@gmail.com for more information and a registration link.

Hey Neighbor! CABARET & COCKTAILS CONCERT

January 28, 2017

At the Williamsburg Lodge, 310 South England St., 8 pm, The Williamsburg Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Music Director Janna Hymes, will be joined by the nationally-acclaimed pop group Piano Men to perform the Music of Elton and Billy. The four-piece group features Joe Boucher on piano and vocals and concentrates on the recordings of Elton John and Billy Joel during their 70s heyday when their many hits featured lush orchestrations. Ticket prices are \$85, \$65 and \$45 for table seating. Order online at williamsburgsymphony.tix.com.

Hey Neighbor! FAMILY HEALTH FAIR

January 28, 2017

The Arc of Greater Williamsburg and JCC Parks & Recreation will host their annual Family Health Fair from 9 am - noon at the Recreation Center located at 5301 Longhill Road. For a vendor application or for more information please visit the Arc's website at thearcgw.org. Please join us!!!

Hey Neighbor! WILLIAMSBURG AREA HYMN FESTIVAL

January 29, 2017

Celebrating the "Week for Christian Unity" and commemorating the 500th anniversary of the Reformation, all are invited to the Williamsburg Area Hymn Festival led by Dr. David Cherwien, organist and cantor at Mount Olive Lutheran Church, Minneapolis. The large festival choir will include members from more than a dozen area churches. Free will offering will go to the Williamsburg House of Mercy. 2 pm at Saint Bede Catholic Church, 3686 Ironbound Road. For information about singing in the choir and the choral workshops, visit www.reformation500williamsburg.com.

Hey Neighbor! CENTURIES OF ART LECTURE

January 30, 2017

2017 lecture series at Williamsburg Regional Library Theatre, 501 Scotland. Doors open 7 pm, Lecture be-

gins 7:30 pm. Made possible by The Williamsburg Contemporary Art Center in partnership with the Library & Virginia Museum of Fine Arts. Free and Open to the public. This evening's topic is "Devi: The Goddess and Her Many Forms" (Southeast Asia).

Hey Neighbor! THE WILLIAM & MARY CONFUCIUS INSTITUTE COURSES

January 30-April 11, 2017

The W&M Confucius Institute offers a variety of language and culture courses from January 30th - February 23rd (Session I), and from March 13th - April 6th (Session II). The cost for each course is \$10/class, to be paid in full on the first day of class. W&M faculty, staff, and students always receive a 50% discount (e.g. \$40 for 8 classes). Please sign up today to secure your spot as the classes are filling up quickly! Learn more at <http://www.wm.edu/sites/confuciusinstitute/announcements/wmci-spring-2017-community-courses.php>

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Hey Neighbor! TRINITY ORGAN CONCERT SERIES

February 8, 2017

Celebrate Black History Month with organist Aaron Renninger performing music by black composers from the U.S. and abroad. The free one-hour concert also will feature both lively and soulful arrangements of well-known spirituals. Bring lunch to eat following the concert. Beverages provided. 12 pm at Saint Bede Catholic Church, 3686 Ironbound Road. For more information, please call 757-229-3631 or visit www.bedeva.org/concerts.

Hey Neighbor! THINK SPRING AND HAVE BLUEBIRDS IN YOUR YARD

February 18, 2017

At Freedom Park Interpretive Center, 10 am, open to the public. Join Nancy Barnhart and a team of certified Master Naturalists to learn all about bluebirds and how to attract them to your yard. This event is part of the Learn and Grow Educational Series sponsored by the Williamsburg Botanical Garden. The program is free, although a \$5 donation to help the Garden grow is appreciated. For more information, contact Nancy Barnhart at 540-454-3014 or email her at barnhartnt@gmail.com

Hey Neighbor! 69TH COLONIAL WILLIAMSBURG ANTIQUES FORUM

February 24-28, 2017

The Forum promises to uphold its tradition of sharing recent findings and insights in "Early American Craftsmanship: Influence and Innovation." Scheduled speakers include June Lucas, director of research at the Museum of Early Southern Decorative Arts, Kentucky Art Historian Estill Curtis Pennington and Lisa Minardi, noted scholar on Pennsylvania-German culture. Colonial Williamsburg curators will also speak on a broad range of topics ranging from "Two Nations Divided by a Common Craft: Silversmithing in Britain and America" to "The Swords of George Washington." For further information and to register, visit colonialwilliamsburg.org/conted or call 1-800-603-0948.

Hey Neighbor! DESTINATION RECREATION EXPO

February 25, 2017

Saturday, 9 a.m.-noon. All ages. Free. James City County Recreation Center, 5301 Longhill Road. Discover your parks and facilities, learn about various classes and programs offered throughout the year and be one of the first to register for the upcoming summer camps! Informational booths, interactive demonstrations and hands-on activities are just a few great features of this event. For more information, visit jamescitycountyva.gov/recreation or call 757-259-5353.

Hey Neighbor! FUNDRAISER FOR AVALON

February 25, 2017

William and Mary Law Revue is performing "A Memory, a Monologue, a Rant, and a Prayer" (MMRP) at 7:30 pm in the Commonwealth Auditorium. MMRP is a series of monologues meant to raise awareness about violence against women, and the performance is a fundraiser for Avalon, Williamsburg's domestic violence shelter. This year's theme centers on how we as a community can best respond to our friends and neighbors who have experienced violence. Tickets are \$5

pre-sale and \$7 at the door. Tickets can be purchased and donations to Avalon can be made online at <http://tinyurl.com/mmrppress>.

Hey Neighbor! BEYOUTIFUL WOMEN'S CONFERENCE

March 10-11, 2017

The third annual BeYOUtiful Women's Conference will take place at CrossWalk Church, 7575 Richmond Road, Norge. This spectacular weekend inspires and empowers women with creative production, captivating worship, dynamic teaching, delightful surprises, and a welcoming atmosphere. Join this gathering of hundreds of women and hear from guest speaker, Marilyn Skinner, founder of Watoto Ministries in Kampala, Uganda. Drawing from her deep and tested faith, Marilyn is passionate about encouraging women all around the world to stand up against inhumane practices such as human trafficking, child soldiers, HIV/AIDS stigmatization, and all forms of injustice. Every woman is invited! To purchase tickets, visit www.beyoutifulconference.com or call the office of CrossWalk Church at 757-258-2825.

Hey Neighbor! CHILDREN'S CONSIGNMENT SALE

March 17-18, 2017

The Spring King of Glory Consignment sale will be held at the church, 4987 Longhill Rd., Williamsburg. The sale is a volunteer-run, non-profit sale supporting community organizations and neighbors in need. We sell new and gently used seasonal clothing for expectant parents and growing children (newborn to teen), maternity clothing, costumes and dress up, nursery and children's furniture, room accessories, baby equipment, strollers, high chairs, pack N plays, toys, books, videos, puzzles, games and bikes. For more info: <http://childrensconsignmentsale.weebly.com/>. Sales hours are

Friday, March 17, 2017 – 11 am – 7 pm. Saturday, March 18, 2017 – 8 am – noon.

Hey Neighbor! ATTRACTING BIRDS WITH WATER

March 18, 2017

Freedom Park interpretive Center, 10 am, open to the public. Award-winning Nature Photographer Bob Schamerhorn will show us how to bring numerous species of birds to our yards by adding a water feature. It reveals the water features simple design and a parts list, plus demonstrates step-by-step how to install one yourself. Come see how a little water can greatly improve both your garden and your enjoyment of nature, right in your own backyard. The program is free, although a \$5.00 donation to help the Garden grow is appreciated. For more information, contact Bob by email at bob@iPhotoBirds.com After the program, Master Gardeners will be in the Garden to answer questions and talk about what is in bloom.

Hey Neighbor! BOWL FOR KIDS' SAKE 2017

March 25, 2017

This year Big Brothers Big Sisters of the Greater Virginia Peninsula will be hosting one bowl for all of Hampton Roads at AMF York Lanes, 4200 George Washington Memorial Hwy, Grafton, VA 23692. Bowling Times: 1 - 2:30 pm; 3 - 4:30 pm; 5 - 6:30 pm. This event will help raise money and awareness for the mentoring needs in our community. It's easy and fun! Step 1 - Register your team of 5 at www.bowlforkids.org (or sign up individually). Step 2 - Choose your time slot. Step 3 - Fundraise anyway you want! By meeting the \$50 individual fundraising goal, you are helping Big Brothers Big Sisters match more children with safe and effective mentors.

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