

January 2017

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Finding teachers and mentors to interview for this issue was a piece of cake. In every business and organization in our community, you can find people who are teaching and/or mentoring to benefit the lives of others. In some cases, like our education and counseling programs within our schools, the teaching is structured, well planned and purposeful.

Mentoring takes place more informally in lots of places, sometimes just when the opportunity presents itself. Some of the most effective mentoring often occurs when someone is pulled aside and given guidance at the precise moment it is needed most; the most teachable moments are often those immediately after a misstep has been made.

The majority of the neighbors we introduce to you in this issue are school teachers who are mentoring in schools and are specifically working with youth. That makes perfect sense. Any good farmer knows it is best to plant where the soil is most fertile. There is no more impressionable and malleable material to develop than in the fertile hearts, souls, and minds of our children. The passion and commitment to teaching and mentoring amongst those we interviewed is inspiring and I think our community is blessed to have so many excellent leaders for our children who have answered their call to service in teaching and mentoring. NDN



Meredith Collins, Publisher

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Cover Photo by Lisa Cumming

Igniting Potential

By Alison Johnson

In the movies, the stereotypical school principal is distant, cold and mostly interested in discipline and isn't anyone that a teenager would want to be around.

Scott Meadows never wants to be that principal.

The leader of Queens Lake Middle School since 2013, Scott keeps his door open for any student who feels like talking. He is frequently out in the hallways to chat

with kids about their lives and tell a few jokes, aided by lingo he has picked up as a devoted dad to three teens and a tween.

Students who get in trouble don't get off the hook. Scott does his best to help them understand exactly what they did wrong, why a punishment is fair and how they could change their behavior. If they're not ready to talk one day, he tries again another time.

"At the end of the day, I want students to understand that hard work and good character win the day," he says. "Anyone who has worked in a middle school or has a middle school student at home understands that there is a tremendous amount of social and emotional development in those years. Sometimes we have to deal with that component first before any learning takes place."

Creating a positive school environment can shape all students, while truly changing the lives of those who are struggling at what is a pivotal age, he says. "There's something about middle school kids that I love," he relates.



Lisa W. Cumming Photography

"They're a little more impressionable. You can have a pretty good impact on them. They often still like to please. They're also a lot of fun to be around."

Mentoring teenagers is never a solo job, and many problems aren't a quick fix. "Our staff members are really good examples and take a lot of time to help students work through issues. You have to be patient and take the long view. Sometimes, seeing a change might take all year, but if a turnaround does happen, it is very rewarding," Scott says.

Scott, a 45-year-old Richmond native, remembers that the teachers and administrators he most admired as a student were those who took a genuine interest in him, outside of classroom requirements. One English teacher, for example, discovered what type of books he liked to read in his spare time and passed along copies to him.

"It's going a little bit above and beyond," he says. "Over the years, I have seen that children and families keep in touch with those who take

extra time with them."

Sometimes, that includes discipline. Like all principals, Scott has to deal with inappropriate comments between students, misbehavior in class, academic problems and occasional fights.

"They're not always going to make the right decisions," he says. "I tell them, 'Parents don't send their kids to school to be insulted or talked down to.' The message is to always be respect-

ful to others."

The more students can see him as a "real person," the more they tend to listen, Scott has found. While he can't guarantee he knows every one of Queens Lake's 465 students by name, he recognizes all of their faces. While they might not know he plays guitar, often runs five miles before sunrise, once hiked to the bottom of the Grand Canyon with his younger brother and loves Mexican food, Premier League soccer and the television show "The Office", he hopes they know that he cares about them.

"If you just interact with them as much as possible, have some small talk, even just say good morning, they will start to feel a connection," he says.

Having four kids at home helps Scott relate to the tricky world of social media and technology. He and his wife, Heidi, an elementary school teacher, are parents to Genevieve, 16, Colin, 15, Rory, 14, and Jude, 12. "Sometimes I'll ask my kids what something I hear means," he shares. "Or sometimes I'll just ask the stu-

dent. I find they appreciate me asking – taking an interest in their ‘culture’.”

Scott began to discover his professional path as a student at Hampden-Sydney College, where he originally intended to study pre-law. “I found that I really liked English and history, and I liked to learn,” he recalls. He majored in those two favorite subjects, earned a teaching certificate and got his first job at a small high school in rural Louisa County, Virginia.

“Once I started teaching, I realized that teaching was so much more than the subjects,” he says. “It was clear that teachers could be a substantial part of the students’ lives and the community.”

Scott’s next stop was in Roanoke, Virginia. He moved from teaching English into administration there, becoming an assistant principal after completing a Master’s Degree in Educational Leadership and Policy Studies at Virginia Tech. He later worked as a principal in Nantucket, Massachusetts, before accepting the Queens Lake job in upper York County to live closer to family again.

Administrators can have an impact on many aspects of school life, Scott notes. On any given day, he might be involved in safety, building concerns, classroom observations and meetings with staff, parents or students. He is often at work from 7:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. or later, espe-

cially if he wants to attend an athletic event or other after-school program.

“You have to change gears a lot,” he says. “I like the problem-solving aspect of being in a school and looking at ways to compromise or grow so that our students have a positive school experience and an environment where students are safe and teachers can teach. It’s busy, but I like being busy.”

The biggest challenges of the job are outside factors that students bring into the building, such as tough family situations. For example, communicating clearly with both students and staff and sustaining a high level of focus and energy throughout the school year.

Scott aims not to be a micromanager. “I try to use my experiences and background to play a supportive role. Students and staff all arrive with different ability levels, and it is important to meet people where they are and to help them grow as professionals or as learners.” He also encourages fun and openness to creative approaches to learning. “You can be productive but still enjoy one another,” he notes.

To make students feel more comfortable at school, Queens Lake has promoted inclusivity in daily life and during special assemblies. This year, administrators are using the “GreenZone” program from the National Center for the Prevention of Community Violence, which out-

lines categories or “zones” of behavior, green, yellow and red, that range from acceptable to unacceptable. “It’s a good visual element for kids and encourages kindness and civility,” Scott explains.

Work ethic is another constant theme. Scott wants kids to discover that extra effort pays off in everything in life, from academics and extracurricular activities to sports and friendships. When students come back to visit Queens Lake after moving on to high school, he loves to celebrate their successes. “I enjoy working with our families,” he says. “This is a great community.”

Outside of work, Scott spends most of his time with his wife and kids, who don’t attend his school. “They are busy with activities, but that’s what you want for them,” he says. “My oldest daughter just got her driver’s license, so that helps a lot.”

As Scott has seen at home and work, the middle school years tend to coincide with significant physical, mental and emotional changes for kids. Eighth graders leaving Queens Lake often bear little resemblance to the sixth graders who started. He considers it a privilege to be part of their journey.

“I really enjoy being in the school setting,” Scott Meadows says. “The short answer to what motivates me is always: the students. Each one of them has so much potential.” NDN

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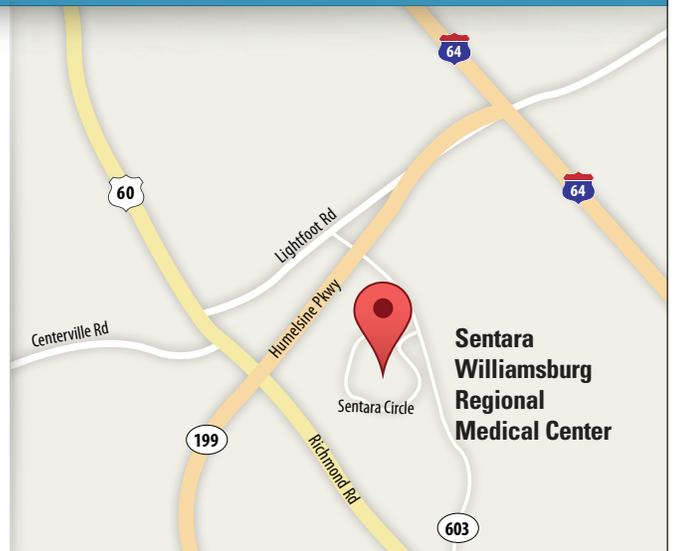
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REBECCA JOHNS WOODEN

Rebecca Johns Wooden proved herself smart, ambitious and thrifty growing up during the Great Depression. Little Becky, born in 1924 to a farming family in Surry, Virginia, had a deal with her father, Landon Johns (called "Daddy T"), who planted his acreage in peanuts. In late summer, their yellowing leaves signaled readiness for harvest.

"After the peanut plants had been pulled by the combine and were hoisted up by pitchfork into shocks for drying, I'd pick up the ones left on the ground and put them in my apron," Becky remembers. "Daddy T would sell them for me at the market and let me keep the money, which was about 25 cents a day."

Farms were usually a good place to bring up children, but they weren't without danger. Becky and her six siblings would hitch rides on the horse-drawn wagon for fun, but one day her brother Johnny fell off and the wagon wheel crushed his chest. He was 8 years old when he died.

Despite being considered in her family to be delicate in frame and constitution, Becky remembers picking cotton, but says it was too hard for her because they were paid by weight. "Cotton is so light it takes a lot to make any money. But my father paid me adult wages be-



Lisa W. Cumming Photography

provide. Gaye and her sister, Faye, grew up hearing family stories about their mother's hard work, both on the farm and in school.

Becky desired education above all else. She graduated from high school during World War II and decided to pursue a college degree on the other side of the James River.

"I worked in the library at Hampton Institute and only came home for holidays and in the summer," she says. "Mama T would come see me and stay overnight with one of her other daughters in Newport News."

On every visit home to Surry, a young farmer named Lacey Wooden would come courting. "Lacey begged me to marry him, but I was set on that degree," Becky remembers. "I finally agreed to get married if he would help pay for my education, which he did." They were united in marriage in 1946 at the family's home church, Lebanon Baptist.

When Becky graduated in 1948 with a degree in

Business Administration she was six months pregnant with her first child. "Two years, two months and two days after Gaye was born, I had Faye," Becky says. By then she had earned her teaching certification, too.

Becky's first professional job was at a one-room Surry schoolhouse. "I had about thirty students, at all different levels up through 6th

LOVE THEM

By Linda Landreth Phelps

cause he said I was such a good worker. That's the truth, because I don't believe in telling stories."

For a former teacher and Sunday School leader like Becky Wooden, telling the absolute truth and setting a good example is important. At 92, her memory sometimes needs a little assistance, which her daughter, Gaye Clark, is happy to

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grade. I wanted to make sure I placed them correctly according to ability, so I had each of them read for me and spell words," Becky says. "I had some success there, but not every child stayed in school."

Becky went on to a long, happy career teaching second grade at L.P. Jackson Elementary School, eventually moving on to David A. Harrison Elementary in Disputanta. She retired there after 40 years of teaching.

Lacey Wooden's over 300 prime acres in Prince George County were planted with corn, peanuts and soybeans, and he also had beef cattle and hogs. They kept chickens for their eggs and the occasional chicken dinner. Becky was a good cook, but had been squeamish about the necessary slaughtering since she was a child.

"Mama T would always tuck a bird under her arm and wring its neck, then toss it on the ground to flop," Becky recalls. "The children were expected to help pluck it, then singe the pinfeathers off over a twist of burning newspaper. It sure was a lot of work for fried chicken!"

Lacey bought new cars often and loved to travel. In her lifetime Becky has covered most of the United States and also visited Puerto Rico, but Canada was a favorite destination.

Gaye remembers, "One summer after we made the round trip, relatives drove down from Washington and wanted to go to Canada, too. We were only home long enough to do laundry

and repack our suitcases before getting back in the car and driving north again."

Becky learned to fish at her mother's knee and continued that love throughout her life. "Mama T would take me out in her boat to a wrecked barge in the James River where she knew the fishing was good," she says. "She'd bait my hook for me and then throw her line in, too. Mama T always caught the big catfish. They have to be skinned with pliers, which I never enjoyed, but they're good eating."

Becky's daughter is carrying on the tradition for the third generation. Gaye says, "I bought myself a pink rod and reel and plan to try my luck in Florida this winter."

More important things were passed along to her family, too: ambition and respect for education. Both Gaye and her sister Faye have earned their own college degrees. "When I graduated from Hampton University," Gaye says, "the family joke was that I walked for the second time. The first time, my mother was carrying me." Gaye went on to a career at the shipyard in Newport News, switching to Dominion Power in Surry and Glen Allen before taking early retirement. Faye has earned a Master of Education Degree and followed her mother into that field. One of Becky's four grandchildren, Keisha, will also be completing her master's degree in 2017. She also has three great-grands coming up who will benefit from Becky's wisdom and

experience.

Becky's health has been poor since losing Lacey nine years ago. Always a strong-minded woman, she declined to live with either daughter and decided that it was time to enter assisted living. She has been at Consulate Health Care Nursing Home on Jamestown Road for six years now. Though on the other side of the James River from her home place, it's a location central to her relatives who stop in to see her regularly. Becky thoroughly enjoys the many activities and the company of others that communal living affords her. "I'm the Bingo banker!" she says with a gleam in her eye.

Always thrifty, Becky had never before had her hair professionally styled until her interview for this article. "It took some convincing," Gaye says, "but Mama looks beautiful, doesn't she?" The compliments for this popular lady came from all sides as she was wheeled down her hallway.

When asked if she had any words of wisdom to share for teachers today, Becky Wooden responded quickly. Like the recipe for her famous corn pudding, she considers this advice a fine heritage to pass down to future generations. "I always tried to live my life based on Hebrews 13:16: 'Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God,'" she says. "As teachers, always be prepared, and just love them!" NDN

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A LIFE FOR THE CHILDREN

By Cathy Welch

From the time Roanoke native Christopher Leftwich was a boy, he knew he wanted to spend his life impacting kids. He was born to Edward and Rita Leftwich and is the youngest of three boys. As a child he helped his neighbors by cutting grass and doing other small jobs. As he grew he worked retail for Toys “R” Us and Saks Fifth Avenue and then did lawn work for the water department.

“When I first went to college, my mind was set on engineering. I was striving hard toward that path,” Christopher explains. “In my sophomore year my Spanish professor asked me what I really wanted to do as a kid. The only thing I could remember was to somehow impact kids within the educational field.”

From that moment on, Christopher turned his mindset to psychology. He earned his BS in Psychology at Davidson College in North Carolina in 2005.

After graduation, he taught special education in high school and middle school in Charlotte, North Carolina. “I liked it but I didn’t feel like teaching was the end goal for me,” he says. “I did like working with kids that have challenges and needed a little more support.”

There was another personal reason Christopher had compassion for these students. “For me it was because I’m hearing impaired,” Christopher, who has 80 percent hearing loss,



Lisa W. Cumming Photography

explains. “I’ve always had the mindset that my disability is a gift. It’s not something that was supposed to hurt me. It made me better in a lot of ways.”

Christopher grew up in the school system with an Individualized Education Program (IEP).

“I always had interactions with kids who were either handicapped, deaf or had IEPs for other reasons,” he says. “I’d always seen the other side of it growing up and it started me on my journey into the educational field.”

While working in Charlotte, Christopher

took special education courses in graduate school. But he did not want to be a teacher. He also had the inspiration of a brother who worked with adults with intellectual disabilities.

Today, Christopher is a mental health counselor. He lives in Norge with his wife, Ronica. The couple had visited family in Virginia Beach in 2013 and subsequently stayed with a friend in Williamsburg. “We really liked the slower feel of the city,” he explains. “We were moving from Charlotte and wanted some place that wasn’t as fast-paced but still had a lot to offer.”

Today, Ronica is a speech language patholo-

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gist for the Williamsburg-James City County School System, and Christopher is a mental health counselor at Rivermont School in Hampton where he has been since 2013.

"I work in the classroom alongside a teacher and another counselor," he says of his work there. "I help set up and help implement behavioral plans for kids in our class."

Christopher, part of a staff that has a five-to-one student-to-teacher ratio, helps students stay on task and ensures that each kid knows their current behavioral objectives and what steps they need to take to accomplish them.

The most prevalent behaviors students work on are attention issues of staying in their area, getting up and walking around, yelling out and the more severe behaviors they work on are verbal and physical aggression.

"When some kids hear the word 'No' they have a hard time responding in a positive way," Christopher explains. "We reinforce that saying 'No' isn't necessarily a bad thing. There has to be instruction, so everybody can't just do everything they want."

During the last two school years, Christopher has been mentoring youth. "It is one-on-one. I usually have two days during the week where I meet them for two hours," he explains. "We talk and play basketball. I'm a sports guy and have always felt sports was a good avenue to relax and talk."

Christopher feels he is an extra ear for things his students might not feel comfortable sharing with family members or other adults.

"I'm there to be able to sound off their ideas and give them encouragement that they are doing the right things. I help them with their homework, as well."

He also coaches football at Jamestown High School.

During the summer months, Christopher has worked with Williamsburg's Summer Youth Achievement Program, for the past two years. "It's six counselors, three males and three females, and about 30 to 35 boys and girls from the city of Williamsburg who are about 12 to 16 years old," he says. "We spend Monday through Friday with them."

They pick the students up at 8:30 a.m. and drop them off about 4:00 p.m. It's just for the kids in the city of Williamsburg. The counselors work on life skill lessons and try to incorporate them throughout the week.

"We mix it up with life skills and fun games, because it is summer," Christopher says. "On Fridays we do a trip which might be something as simple as go-karting. We may travel as far as Washington, D.C."

The program, funded by the City of Williamsburg, is not necessarily for kids who are getting into trouble. The young people often come from different economic backgrounds.

One benefit of mentoring is that students can be a little more open and express things that maybe they don't feel comfortable enough to say directly to a parent. "I can work with the parent by helping them bring up issues that might be on their child's mind that they need help with," he says. "Normally it's school-related and they need tutoring."

"When I was in Charlotte, I had two students in middle school who called me 'Uncle' instead of 'Teacher.' In eighth grade, they told me they wanted to be part of my wedding. Fast forward, they were graduating high school and were part of my wedding. One is starting to take classes in college."

Christopher believes the community benefits when people know each other. "Unless I worked in the school system, I wouldn't meet those kids," Christopher explains. "To be another adult in Williamsburg's tight-knit community who the kids know and see at football games and other places helps our community connect."

While Christopher Leftwich has seen the impact of mentoring youth, it has not been immediate gratification. "I have quite a few students who over the next year I can see grow," he explains. "It motivates you when you see the kid really did eventually listen and take the steps needed to turn it around and make that transition back." NDN

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COOL WITH COUNSELING

By Erin Fryer

Every student has a story both in and out of the classroom and it's those stories that form Amber Spicer's passion for mentoring her middle school students.

Amber got her start as an educator 14 years ago. What began as a dream to be a teacher has evolved into her true calling as a school counselor. Though she wasn't in a rush to get out of the classroom, she knew her heart wasn't in teaching and testing anymore.

A 2003 graduate of William & Mary, Amber majored in elementary education and has taught almost every grade in several school districts from Richmond to Chesapeake and several stops in between. She taught for six years before making the change to counseling and is currently a counselor at Hornsby Middle School.

After feeling inspired to make the shift from teacher to counselor, Amber earned a master's degree from Virginia Commonwealth University in 2007 and became a certified K-12 counselor.

"I always knew I wanted to get a master's degree outside of teaching just in case," Amber says. "I miss the classroom for different reasons, but there was such a focus on testing,



Lisa W. Cumming Photography

which was too much for some of the little ones to handle. That really inspired me to get my master's and move forward with becoming a counselor."

Amber takes a holistic approach when counseling her students, and focuses on the

students in a very unique way, in an effort to help them be as successful as possible.

"The school counselor has the unique position where we get to focus on the whole student," Amber says. "In the counseling world I get to not only focus on students but also spend time with families, and I really like understanding that whole picture because that's what is going to make them be a better student."

With 470 students on her caseload, Amber works her hardest to make each student feel valued. At the middle school level, the students come and go very quickly, so Amber does her best to see them in small groups and individually.

Being a counselor at the middle school level involves mentoring students through 6th, 7th and 8th grades, and while every grade level is very different, so is every student.

Amber mentors students through the challenges they face at each individual grade level. For sixth graders, it's transitioning into middle school. When they enter middle school they are going from having one or two teachers to six or eight, and learning to use new technology. In 7th grade, the curriculum becomes harder, so Amber works with her students on balancing schoolwork

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and what's expected of them. They learn that they need to study more, which can often be a challenge for some students. In eighth grade she starts working with the students on scheduling for high school, requesting and selecting courses. She meets with them one-on-one with their families and talks about the importance of a good grade.

Amber is especially talented at preparing her students for high school since she also spent three years as a counselor at Jamestown High School. She describes her years as a high school counselor as tough because the emphasis is more on planning for college, and while that is exciting, a lot of it is out of the counselor's hands. She says while high school counseling may have been the most rewarding role she has filled, it was also the most challenging.

A normal day for Amber starts the day before. When school lets out she looks at her notes from students and checks her voicemails and writes passes for students who have requested to see her. If parents request for her to meet with their student or if she has heard something through the grapevine, she will also write passes to meet with those students. Each day, Amber meets with anywhere from 15 to 30 students.

The teachers at Hornsby are very supportive of the students meeting with their counselors, and for that, Amber is thankful. While the

meetings take away from class time, the teachers realize those meetings benefit the student's overall academic success.

Aside from meeting with several students per day, Amber's days are also filled with meetings, writing and returning emails, and consulting with her colleagues. She also keeps a pulse on what's happening with her students, so if she knows there has been a major breakup or maybe someone failed a test and there are tears, she will see those students and work through the tough times and reassure them that it will be okay.

On a day-to-day basis, Amber says her mentoring philosophy is to make a difference by focusing on the little things. "I try to constantly remind the students that everything will be okay and that one little thing will not be the end of the world. I always want them to know that they are amazing and special every day."

Amber's main goal is for her students to look back and recall that she really cared about them, even if she only saw them in little spurts throughout the year. She also loves the times when she gets a thank you note from a student or family member, or if they do something sweet like doodle a picture for her. "School counselors are not always someone students remember, not because they didn't care but those students may have not had the same needs as others."

With a caseload of so many students, it's hard to spend an adequate amount of time with each individual. "I want to get to know each one of my students and support them, create academic plans and help with study habits. It's a hard job to quantify. There are no test results and you don't see them every day. But if I know one or two of them is better off from meeting with me, that's what really motivates me."

She is always happy to be the person her students can turn to when they need someone to talk to. She has dealt with difficult situations in the past, like students who have expressed interest in harming themselves, but she is happy to be there to connect them with the people and resources they need during dark times. While trained to help her students with mental health counseling, she knows who to refer them to if their needs exceed her training.

"Crisis moments like students contemplating suicide happen 3-4 times per year, and helping those students and their families is very rewarding," Amber says. "I feel like that's when my work is most meaningful."

"I'm really lucky to have all of the connections I have and the community we have behind us," Amber Spicer says. "I loved growing up in Williamsburg and I am so glad I get to raise my kids here. It's a very busy but very fun life." NDN



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Whether she is cheering them on in the classroom or on the field, Rebecca Clingerman is devoted to her middle school students at Walsingham Academy. Rebecca is a sixth and seventh grade science teacher at Walsingham Academy's Lower School. She's been with the school for the past ten years.

"I really enjoy working with the middle school kids," she says. "I feel I connect with this age group. I try to make my classroom as fun as I can, and it's rewarding to see their excitement when they learn something new or tell me they feel like a real scientist. That makes me feel good."

Education, however, wasn't Rebecca's first career choice. She worked as a medical lab technician before taking time off when her daughter, Leah, was born in 1995. Rebecca, her husband, Stephen, and their daughter traveled the world while Stephen was in the Air Force. Rebecca developed an interest in being a teacher while stationed in Colorado during her daughter's preschool years.

"What influenced my decision to go into teaching was spending time with my daughter and her friends," she says. "While we were at home, we did many activities and art projects, and had a great time. I saw my daughter learning and saw how rewarding it could be to be a teacher. It made me think that I could do it as a job. I knew it would be a job I would enjoy and one that wouldn't feel like a job."

Rebecca earned a Bachelor's Degree in Biology from the University of Colorado and then went on to earn her Master's Degree in Education while her family was stationed in Germany. Rebecca and her family relocated to Williamsburg in March 2007, and she started at Walsingham Academy that fall.

"When I first started teaching, I taught the



Lisa W. Cumming Photography

Passionate about Science

By Brandy Centolanza

way I was taught, which was by having the students take notes, but that didn't work out," she says. "I don't want my students to just take notes the whole time. I want to find ways to teach the class in an interesting way. I never want the students to be bored. I want the students to be excited to come to class."

One way to engage students has been incorporating a robotics program into the curriculum. The weekly program, which Rebecca helped implement, teaches students how to problem-solve, work together as a team and use their creativity.

"The kids just love it, and the parents are excited about it, too," she says. "Teaching has exceeded my expectations. I love working with the students. I love being there for

them academically as well as letting them know I am someone they can count on while they are at school. I always make them feel welcome and encourage them to take chances."

In addition to instructing six science classes a day, Rebecca is also the middle school specialist for Walsingham Academy. For the past two years, she has assisted Mary Johnston, the Lower School's director, with scheduling, programming and other tasks related to the school's 80 middle school students.

Rebecca is responsible for planning all the students' schedules, including core subjects and electives, as well as coordinating middle school orientation, dances and graduation. This year, she created the Drop Everything And Read (DEAR) program, in which students read for the first 20 minutes of the day in homeroom on Wednesday mornings.

"The idea is to encourage more reading in students," Rebecca says. "The kids really love it. We also read during that time to show the importance of reading. It's been a nice addition to the schedule."

She coordinates guest speakers and field trips for the middle school student body. Previous speakers have included geology students, dieticians, and those who study fossils. "I have had people from NASA come talk about space, and a weather person from Channel 13 come in and speak about weather," she says.

Her field trip itinerary always includes, of course, a visit to the Science Museum of Virginia in Richmond, and she is also in charge of Walsingham Academy's science fair, which is held every other year.

"I organize set up with maintenance, contact individuals in the community to judge, order and prepare awards, create an invitation to invite parents to the science fair as well as work with the middle school students to get

them started on their projects," she says.

Community service is an important part of the middle school curriculum, and Rebecca supports students with service projects such as collecting food, books, socks, mittens and other items for those in need; making cards for the elderly; participating in The Living Nativity each December; and Arc Night. During that event, students visit with the special needs adult clients from The Arc of Greater Williamsburg, and play games or do an art project with them.

"These monthly service projects help students learn compassion and how to better understand and accept others," Rebecca explains. "They also feel a stronger sense to their community."

This school year, Rebecca began volunteering with Walsingham Academy's after school clubs. She's involved with the cooking club for third through seventh graders and assists the middle school students with the yearbook club.

"I like spending time with the students, and I wanted to give them another reason to love Walsingham," Rebecca explains. "One of the clubs I am in is the No Cook cooking club. We make foods with the students that they make and eat right then. They learn the appropriate

way to act in a kitchen, practice proper procedures, practice measuring, and they get to hang out with their friends."

Rebecca enjoys attending her students' sporting events whenever she can, whether it's a field hockey game, a volleyball game or a soccer match.

"It's so endearing attending the games because the students always show their excitement and gratitude toward the teachers when we show up," Rebecca says.

Not only is Rebecca a positive influence on her students, but also her colleagues. Rebecca mentors all new teachers, addressing any of their questions or concerns and inviting them to lunch as a way to make them feel welcome.

"I just want to try to make them as comfortable as possible," Rebecca says. "I try to be supportive. I love coming here, not just for the students but for all the people I work with as well."

Colleagues have been there for Rebecca during two of her husband's deployments before he retired from the Air Force in 2011. She would seek solace in the school's chapel.

"I love that there is a chapel here, and that we can go there whenever we just need a little break," Rebecca says. "I love being here at Walsingham Academy. I always feel supported

by the administration and my fellow team members. It feels like a family here. We are so close and can count on each other. Some of my best friends are here, and the kids notice that." Being available to the students is what truly matters to Rebecca, and they notice that too.

"I have kids in the tenth grade at the Upper School who are still coming to visit me," Rebecca says. "I had a student who moved to the DC area who stopped to see me when he came back to Williamsburg. I feel so honored when past students visit me. I have had a few students tell me that they want to pursue science as a career, need my recommendation for a medical summer camp, or that one of my guest speakers changed their mind of what they wanted to do when they grow up. I am extremely proud of the idea that I may have influenced their decision in any way. I want to make science enjoyable and for students to look forward to coming to class."

Rebecca can't envision herself doing anything else besides teaching or imagine being anywhere else doing it other than at Walsingham Academy.

"I love it here, and each year I want to be as helpful as I can, and do more and more," Rebecca Clingerman says. "I am just trying to make this the best place it can be." NDN

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Confidence in Communicating

By Alison Johnson

As a child, Gary Plaag wasn't comfortable talking in front of a class. When he first began performing in barbershop harmony and dance groups as a young adult, he still had to force himself to speak to audiences onstage.

By the time Gary was speaking at Information Technology conferences during his first professional career, he was confident enough that fellow attendees would ask for advice with their presentations. That's when a light bulb went off. He liked helping other people communicate more than he liked being the center of attention.

"I can do a gig myself really well," he says. "What drives me, though, is guiding others to discover how to tell their stories and be successful. Seeing people overcome their anxieties, get out of their own way and find their voice is much more joyful for me."

Now 59, Gary is President of Couragio Consulting, a global firm he founded in 1998. Through Couragio, he offers communication, presentation and public speaking coaching for individuals, trade groups and businesses of all sizes across the country and world. Services in-



Lisa W. Cumming Photography

clude businesses presentation and interpersonal communication skills, interview preparation and life coaching.

Gary's methods often surprise and challenge his clients. He sometimes asks corporate employees to read Dr. Seuss books aloud, for example, to fight their fear of looking silly in public. He regularly makes video recordings

of his clients speaking, watches the tapes with them and prods them to notice and talk about their good qualities.

"People tend to focus only on what they don't like about themselves," he notes. "Many people think they have nothing of value to offer. Their filter is often skewed. They need to see themselves the way others see them. I want them to celebrate what they are good at, and then we can work on things that could be better."

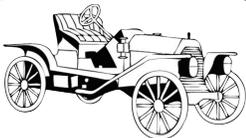
With greater confidence and a message and/or presentation aids designed to "hook" an audience, clients can turn their nerves into excitement about sharing their thoughts and ideas, Gary says. When he hears a client has nailed a presentation, run a successful seminar or captivated an audience onstage, he feels

deep personal pride. Sometimes, he gets to be there in person. "I've been thanked in front of literally thousands of people," he notes. "That is pretty amazing and humbling."

One of Gary's inspirations is also surprising at first glance: Alcoholics Anonymous (AA). Both of his parents attended meetings when he was a boy growing up in Northern Virginia, he

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shares. From their journey to sobriety, he discovered that people won't change their behavior until it hurts them badly enough, but that everyone is always responsible for his or her own actions. Speaking honestly, owning mistakes and listening to others were other keys to recovery.

"AA is a very supportive environment, but it also just doesn't do excuses," he relates. "I hear excuses all the time in my work, why people can't do something." He doesn't take every client, in fact. "There's a difference in wanting to get better and being willing to get better. When you are willing, you are willing to be uncomfortable, maybe very uncomfortable, to get where you need to be."

Gary credits his mother, now deceased, for passing on both the drive to help others and the courage to tackle new skills. She taught him ballroom dancing when he was 6 and later signed him up for tap and music lessons. His dad, still alive and now sober for 48 years, drilled him on the need to consider and accept the consequences of every decision. The director of his high school band, where Gary played clarinet and alto saxophone, modeled the value of discipline in achieving goals.

At William & Mary, Gary kept pushing his boundaries as he earned a degree in govern-

ment. "I joined the whitewater rafting canoeing team," he recalls. "How crazy is that?" As a junior and senior, he auditioned for shows as a musician and chorus member. After college, he joined Barbershop Harmony, Scottish Country Dancing and Bavarian Folk Dance groups, some of which performed internationally in front of thousands.

Yet Gary's career as an Information Technology (IT) Analyst and Manager wasn't as fulfilling. By 1997, he was suffering in an IT support job in Northern Virginia. "The normal burn-out timeframe was six to 10 months, and I had been there for 11 years," he says. By then, he had been on the IT speaking circuit for about seven years.

"The combination of my unpleasant job situation meeting with an exciting teaching opportunity pushed me to leave the IT career and start Couragio Consulting," says Gary, who also holds a Master's [Degree] in Communication from George Mason University. In 2014, he moved to Williamsburg to escape the bustle and traffic of Northern Virginia.

Gary works with all types of employees and businesses, in person and via video conferencing. Last spring, he traveled to Sweden for a workshop with a road construction company, where one challenge was to guide a few em-

ployees to be more comfortable communicating in English.

"After reading a children's story aloud in Swedish, they realized they could make some mistakes and that was OK," he says. "What I do is make it safe for people to be vulnerable."

Some clients, including top executives, balk at that approach. "It took one guy a half hour to agree to read a Dr. Seuss story aloud," Gary says. "He was scared, even though it was just me and him in the room. It wasn't part of his paradigm on what 'professional' people should do, but once you are able to lean into the discomfort and get past those arbitrary 'rules', you realize it's actually kind of fun. You can be playful, and then getting up in front of people probably isn't as scary."

One of Gary's clients gained the bravery and talents to go after, and land, a coveted job as a school administrator. That same client even took advantage of Gary's tips on music performance and went on to win an international barbershop quartet singing competition.

"It's not so much telling people what to do, but leading them in guided self-discovery," Gary explains, again drawing from Alcoholics Anonymous. "You lead them to discover things for themselves, so they will take real ownership."



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Couragio is a one-man operation, although Gary may look to hire a few trusted employees one day. He relies heavily on referrals to land new clients. “I don’t advertise because what I do is hard for people to understand without experiencing it, first hand,” he says. “I also tend to work myself out of jobs. When people are making progress and growing their confidence and skills, they will eventually no longer need regular coaching.”

Along with his business work, Gary continues to give live speeches and music performances to hone his skills and remember the jitters many of his clients feel. “Even now, I sometimes still have a little bit of that wonder, ‘Will they like me?’” he admits. “I can talk myself off the ledge, though, because what is labeled ‘anxiety’ can instead be seen as a chance to have an impact on people’s lives.”

Gary also keeps putting himself in unfamiliar territory. Currently, he is learning to speak Swedish. “I’m constantly doing things I don’t know how to do,” he says. “It’s not easy to be new at something, but it’s so worthwhile in the end.”

Helping others discover that fulfillment, he believes, is his calling.

“Teaching someone the skills necessary to be able to communicate effectively is what drives me, 24/7,” Gary Plaag says. “Helping them reach their goals is what pushes me to live. It doesn’t feel like work.” NDN



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TAMMY UNDERWOOD

Tammy Underwood knocks on the door of a Norge Elementary School classroom. When she enters, a fun activity begins to supplement the “place value” lessons the children have been learning. Tammy tosses paper plates on the floor with numbers written on them. The children are handed worksheets and told to skip to the front of the room and pick up a plate. Once they have a plate they return to their seats and write the number on the worksheet, then draw squares for 100’s place, lines for the 10’s place and dots for the 1’s place. The children also do a physical activity for instance jumping jacks for the 100’s place of the number. As a wellness integration specialist, Tammy Underwood implements physical activities which assist students with learning.

Tammy works as the wellness integration specialist at three elementary school locations: Rawls Byrd, Norge and Stonehouse. She moved to the Williamsburg area in 1998, and her first job was in Health and Physical Education at Toano Middle School “That job was a great background and rolled into what I do now,” Tammy says. She attended Virginia Tech and majored in P.E. and Health Endorsement and has a Master’s Degree in Education from Old Dominion University. Because Tammy works at three different school locations, she utilizes “scoot



Lisa W. Cumming Photography

them to solve in each corner. If they answer it correctly they exercise. The “scoot cards” promote movement and allow the students to benefit from Tammy’s wellness integration exercises even when she’s not at that school.

The Wellness Integration Program is part of the School Health Initiative Program which was established in 2006. “Figuring out how to get more physical activity in schools when the schools are not able to extend recess time or hire new P.E. teachers.”

As a wellness integration specialist, one objective for Tammy is to find ways to increase activity within the classroom environment. She does this by conducting research and picking up learning techniques from conferences and other sources. She plans and implements activities like the math exercises found on the “Teachers Pay Teachers” site. She uses physical activities to help make the information being taught more interesting and engaging for children.

Healthy for Life

By Lauren Plunkett

cards” for teachers to use when she is not at a particular school. The teachers can have these cards as a reference with instructions about a subject and an activity to accompany it. For example, having the students in four corners of a classroom and have a math problem for

“My mother was a Health and P.E. teacher. It was inspiring to see the impact she had on kids and adults. She inspired me to want to move toward the P.E. side of things,” Tammy says. Helping students lead healthy and active lifestyles is something Tammy finds rewarding

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about her job. She explains how the school division partnered with KelRae Farm in Toano to provide local produce in schools. The healthy food options became popular choices for students. Tammy says the children would be excited for free samples of food options such as kale chips and the prospect of receiving a sticker would encourage them to try items such as summer squash. Tammy teaches kindergarten, first and second grade children about nutrition. She talks to them once a week about topics ranging from serving sizes to learning the sugar and fiber content of foods. She provides younger children vital nutritional information so they will integrate healthy choices early on and will sustain them.

Collaboration is a key component of the Wellness Integration Program. Tammy explains that teachers have to be willing to incorporate the physical aspects of the program in their classrooms for it to be successful. As for the wellness integration specialist, they need to be extremely flexible and they need to have an educational background in order to best support the teachers and compliment their classroom plans and objectives.

"You need to know K-12 inside and out. Teachers will tell you different lessons, and you need to know background information. The learning and activities occur during classes. Ninety percent of the time you will be inside

the classroom, so you have to create a safe environment for kids moving around safely," Tammy explains.

As a wellness integration specialist, the ability to relate to the students and teachers is an important aspect. "You need to be kind and supportive and work well with others."

Tammy finds her career rewarding. The students are excited when they see Tammy because she is associated with an active time during classes. The positive influence of her work is represented by feedback from the students. She hears students say things such as "I ate dairy!" The excitement of learning about healthy eating and receiving a sticker as an incentive can encourage the students to eat well. "I cut out paper foot prints and stick them on the wall outside a classroom. I write on the footprints and say things like, 'caught you being active.'" The positive choices the students make to stay healthy are celebrated by this footprint and make the student feel special. Tammy airs segments during the school morning news. It gives students a physical activity to start their day. During the segments, she discusses how physicality can have a positive improvement overall because the students are able to focus and not "stare out the window or zone out" during class time.

When Tammy is not working she lives an active lifestyle. She enjoys playing Pokemon

Go with her children, Jackson and Kaylee. Tammy says Pokemon Go is an entertaining way to be active and go to places like Colonial Williamsburg with her children. Also, Tammy walks, plays golf and does Hot Yoga. She likes to go shopping and spends time with friends. As an avid Virginia Tech sports fan, she travels to Blacksburg for games. Tammy eats healthy for the most part, but laughs and says, "With two kids, I like to have some snack foods they like and better choices as well."

The Williamsburg Health Foundation funds the Wellness Integration Program, and Tammy is appreciative of their support. "I love what I do. I hope it continues to be funded so I can stay and grow the program," Tammy says.

With the goal of helping students in long lasting ways, she's proud that the impact of the Wellness Integration Program has developed into programs at other schools.

Tammy Underwood believes more elementary schools having the Wellness Integration Program would be beneficial.

"I hope this position grows across school divisions in the elementary schools as a part of the regular school program, and for someone to guide it at each school," Tammy says. The programs and activities Tammy creates with the students at Norge, Stonehouse and Rawls Byrd are educational and promote daily health and wellness. NDN

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SUZANNE HUDDLESTON

Learning for Fun

By Narielle Living

Lisa W. Cumming Photography

Some people enter the field of education at the onset of their career, and some, like Suzanne Huddleston, find themselves driven to share what they have discovered with the world at a different point in their life. Suzanne is the director of Williamsburg Learning Tree (formerly Williamsburg Area Learning Tree) and is preparing to teach her first class.

Suzanne and her husband, Tom, moved to Williamsburg in 1979. At that point she attended William & Mary and finished her education. "Our little girl was two years old at the time. I finished up a Master's Degree in Business at William & Mary and went to work for a research firm here in town, doing market research," she says. After fifteen years with that company, Suzanne and her husband both retired. "By then our daughter was grown and gone. We took a few years off and traveled all over the United States. We rode our motorcycles and visited every state."

After years of doing this, they decided to come back to Williamsburg and settle down

again. "We really enjoy working," she says. "After seeing the 48 states, we sold the motorcycles."

One day Suzanne saw that a job was available at the Williamsburg Unitarian Universalist Church. "The job that opened up here was for the financial assistant," she says. "I thought that keeping the books for the church would be perfect for me." After accepting the job, she discovered that the Williamsburg Learning Tree program, which is supported by the church, had an old database that needed refreshing. One of Suzanne's skills was working with a software program called Access database, so she took over that responsibility.

"I upgraded the database, including all the reports it generated, and that helped me learn so much about the program." Not long after that, Suzanne learned that the director of the program was getting ready to retire. Since she was already working at the church and familiar with the program, it seemed like a good fit for her to do both jobs.

The Williamsburg Learning Tree is a not-for-profit educational program sponsored by the Williamsburg Unitarian Universalists. "It's one of the ways they give back to the community," Suzanne says. "It's not a religious program whatsoever but they wanted to help the community and give opportunities for something the people would enjoy."

Classes are typically just one or two sessions and include an array of subjects such as health, arts, crafts, cooking, music, finances, real estate and languages. "People really like this program because it's done after one or two sessions, so they don't have to make a commitment to show up for eight classes."

For the first time, Suzanne is going to teach a class on a subject that was life-changing for her. "A little over a year ago, my doctor handed me a piece of paper and said if you want to try a good diet try the paleo diet."

When she told her husband she was trying a new diet, he decided to do it with her for support. He has been a diabetic for more than

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twenty years and has had to manage high blood pressure and high cholesterol.

"He's very disciplined," Suzanne says. "He was never overweight or anything. It got worse over time and he ended up on insulin and medications." She says that within two days of starting the diet he had to stop taking his diabetes medicine because his sugar went too low. "Two days after that he had to stop taking his high blood pressure medication because his blood pressure went too low. It's been over a year and he's never once touched another pill or a needle or anything. I lost over 40 pounds without even making an effort."

She is looking forward to sharing her life change with other people, and will teach this diet plan with her husband.

In her role as director of the program, Suzanne sets up a booth at the Williamsburg Farmers Market to reach out to the community. "I find both customers and instructors that way," she says. She feels fortunate that she is tasked with directing the program in any manner she feels is appropriate. "For example, this program previously was called Williamsburg Area Learning Tree," she says. "I dropped the word 'area', because I wanted to get rid of the acronym. I didn't think that was helping us, since it doesn't really say education."

Suzanne says that the program is always in need of instructors. "I took this program over in July and I would like to both extend the

semester's time period and grow the opportunities of the classes that we offer. We're going to start our spring semester on March 1 and go through mid-June, which is a lot later than usual. This fall semester we started September 1 and went through mid-December which is about an extra month. I've actually had requests from students for some of the classes over the winter break so I'm seeing if some of the instructors would consider doing that as well."

Suzanne would like to have the program expand with more course offerings and at the same time attract a younger demographic. "Retirees love to continue their education, and they have more time to do that," she says. "Working people, younger people, they're very busy. Kids are coming home from school or they have little ones in daycare. We need to work out ways that we can help people with families come take classes too. I think they'd like to but they have to prioritize what they do with the kids. Maybe we could provide some child care in the future or do mommy and me classes, things where we incorporate the kids with the program and help bring in a younger group. I'd like to grow the program. I think it's got a lot of potential."

Of course, some classes are more popular than others. At this point, Suzanne is not certain if the enrollment she has seen is normal for all the classes offered. "All I can talk about is this particular semester because I haven't

gone back and looked at the results of previous semesters. Our cooking classes are pretty popular, and we had a healthy holiday desserts class that was well attended. The class to learn how to make your own mozzarella is usually popular, because people love to do that. We have a couple of instructors who provide classes on how to navigate through Medicare and those fill quickly. I guess there's an option to change your plan, so if we offer those classes in September by the time that window opens up people feel a little more comfortable with making their health care decisions."

Suzanne Huddleston is excited to get the word out to Williamsburg about the learning program. She has designed advertising and has worked to get the catalogs into the community. "I've probably personally handed out a thousand catalogs in various locations since we started this semester. I think awareness of what we do is not what it could be, and it's not for lack of trying. My predecessor worked so hard to get the word out, but since we're a nonprofit program, we don't have an affiliation with any of the schools or a lot of marketing dollars." Suzanne is certain, though, that once people know what Williamsburg Learning Tree has to offer they will love taking classes. "We have something you're interested in, and if not please tell me what it is and we'll find it for you. That's our commitment to you, to help you enjoy your leisure time with us." NDN

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Crisis in a Cornfield

By Lillian Stevens



Lisa W. Cumming Photography

As much as he derives great satisfaction from teaching in the Raymond A. Mason School of Business at William & Mary, Bob Stowers wants his students to know that he is more than a teacher.

“I’m a human being who has been through painful moments,” Bob says. “We will all go through painful moments. To me, good teaching is an understanding that you can reach students, and sometimes you do that by unveiling something about yourself.”

For the past 25 years, Bob has served W&M as Clinical Professor of Management and Leadership Communications. He was initially recruited to the business school

to put together a communications program for the university’s full-time MBA Program. With extensive experience teaching at both the undergraduate and graduate levels, Bob’s research interests are diverse, but include applications of communication in professional settings.

A couple of years ago, he turned a nearly-devastating situation from his own life into a book entitled *Lost in a Cornfield: Never Losing Faith*.

Aside from a crisis communication class Bob teaches, the book is generally not required reading for his students. Still, he unveils a bit of himself and his experience by making his students cognizant of the story.

As its title suggests, the book is about a beloved family pet who finds himself lost in a cornfield very far from home. But it also carries lessons that can be applied in just about any crisis.

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predicament, they sometimes don't know what to do," Bob explains. "It could be financial issues, or addiction, or family members in distress. The cornfield is a metaphor for life's difficulties."

The story begins six years ago, on a farm in rural south central Pennsylvania.

At the time, Bob was in New Jersey participating in professional meetings, while his wife Charlotte set out for Chambersburg, Pennsylvania, to visit a hospitalized sister. Charlotte was accompanied by a family relative who was caring for Cole, ("Buddy" in the book). The relative took Cole to visit friends on a local farm. During the visit, something spooked the tiny poodle, prompting him to wiggle out of his caregiver's arms and take off, quickly disappearing in the cornfields.

The family spent the better part of a week searching for their beloved dog. They visited area veterinarians, the local dog catcher, and PetSmart. They knocked on doors, talked to farmers and posted flyers everywhere.

"It was a very difficult moment for my family," Bob says. "Our dogs are a part of our family. Cole was out there in the wilderness, and we felt emotionally distraught."

He remembers walking at least ten miles

of railroad track, repeatedly calling out Cole's name.

"I figured that if we didn't find him by the end of a week, we'd never find him. It was August, so it was hot. Beyond malnutrition and dehydration, there are coyotes, hawks and eagles out there. We did everything we could do. We even visited farms on Sundays, something that can get you shot in some places."

Eight days after Cole's disappearance, the couple agreed that there was no more hope. As they reluctantly set out for home, the phone call came. "Cole had wandered onto the front porch of a farm, over five miles from where he was last seen, and two pounds lighter," Bob says.

The Stowers had been to that particular farm and provided the farmer there one of the flyers, which they had placed on the refrigerator. The family believes that one thing central to Cole's rescue is that he followed his nose to a mulch factory adjacent to the farm where he was located.

"My thought was that he found his way there because of the mulch," Bob says. "Cole loved working in the yard with me. To him, the smell of mulch was like catnip."

In time, Bob knew there was a wonder-

ful story to be told. Would it be a children's book, about an adored pet who finds his way home? To whom would the book appeal, and how broadly? Ultimately, he determined that Cole's journey was very symbolic, one that offered teachable moments.

"They talk about voice in writing. So I wanted to make sure Cole's voice was in the book. I am sure that Cole always knew he would find his way out, so I wanted to be positive. If someone is in a really bad situation, isn't it best to be positive?"

Bob's journey to tell the story took him back to the cornfields of Pennsylvania. There, he set out to retrace Cole's path. Putting himself in his dog's place, Bob tried to imagine how it had been for the lost pup. Surely, there was fear and confusion, not to mention hunger and thirst. Ultimately, Bob arrived at five principles based on sheer survival instinct. He calls them the F-A-I-T-H principles:

When something is going wrong, what should you do first? "Once you decide what your first step should be, you're basically stepping towards your solution," Bob says.

What actions can you take? "Based on your experience and abilities, what are you able to do? Can you walk? From (Cole's) perspective,



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it got down to survival and how was he going to sustain himself.”

Then comes instinct, a blend of what we know, how we feel, and our experiences. “There are a lot of things going on that combine to offer us guidance at critical times. It’s important, then, to trust that the steps, actions, and instincts you have to draw upon are correct.”

Finally, home. “Cole’s objective was to get home, but in the book ‘home’ is a metaphor for reaching an objective,” Bob says. “If you are sick, home could be being cured. Someone suffers a horrific auto accident and they have to relearn how to walk. Or a person who is financially devastated returns to financial solvency.”

The F-A-I-T-H principles might not solve every problem, but Bob hopes his book provides inspiration, showing that there is light at the end of the tunnel.

“Positive action may not always end in positive results,” he said, “but I believe if you take steps to make the best you can of bad things, it’s always going to be better than where you were before.”

Today, the professor continues to spend his days teaching core classes like Management Communications, as well as elective classes like Crisis Communication. He particularly enjoys teaching evening MBA courses where students can immediately relate to what is being discussed in class.

“A business school is about finance, economics, marketing, management, and all sorts of other subjects,” Bob says. “But the glue that holds it all together is communication. Numbers are important. Numbers are wonderful! But numbers don’t speak and you have to have the ability to articulate what the numbers mean.”

In the spring, Bob will teach a corporate communication class which he says will be more about advertising, PR issues relating to corporations, identity, image and corporate reputation. “It’s fun,” he says. “The students are incredible. In fact, I learn so much from them. I think that’s an integral part of being a teacher.”

Bob grew up in Springfield, Massachusetts, earning his bachelor and master’s degrees from American International College. He went on to earn his Ph.D. from Rutgers University. He credits his parents, neither of whom attended college, for being teachers and mentors.

“I come from a blue collar family,” he says. “Neither of my parents graduated high school. They were, however, inspiring, loving wonderful people who believed in me. Maybe they were teachers because you don’t have to be in a classroom to teach. We teach as parents, as bosses, as humans.”

Bob and Charlotte have three grown children. Their eldest daughter is working as a teacher in China; another daughter teaches middle school in James City County. Their son is an actor in Richmond.

Sometimes, Bob hears from former students along the way.

“I’ll receive a note from students I thought had long ago forgotten about me. They will thank me for something we talked about long ago that is relevant to them today. That’s so gratifying. I think you could say that the best part of teaching is knowing that I’ve somehow made an impact on a student’s life.”

Of course, some things can be learned in the classroom, while others cannot. In the end, *Lost in a Cornfield: Never Losing Faith* is more than a story about a lost dog.

“There are decisions you will have to make in life,” Professor Bob Stowers says. “Just like the decisions Cole had to make in order to get out of his cornfield. It’s a story for anyone going through a personal tragedy, who seeks to find a way out.” 



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PLANTING THE SEEDS OF LEARNING

By Wynne Bowman

Dr. Paula Ginsburgh has been a pioneer for educational growth in Hampton Roads for more than four decades. Passionate about the esteem of our youth, Paula uses her time as an educator to prove the individual potential of each student. "This has never been a job for me. It has always been a passion." This passion led Paula to her current work, where she serves as a 10th-11th grade teacher and dean of the rhetoric school at Providence Classical School.

Paula, who was born and raised in Hampton Roads, graduated from Newport News Public Schools in 1972 and travelled to Florida, receiving a bachelor's degree from Southeastern University four years later.

After returning to her home state, Paula started her career in education in the late 1970s, working as a teacher for Hampton Roads Christian Schools. She worked for Hampton Roads Christian Schools until 1985, when she became the Education Director of Midatlantic Teen Challenge. "That was some of the most rewarding work I've ever done," she recalls. "It was amazing to work with these kids, to watch them get clean and to see them catch a glimmer in their eye. It's like a light went on and they were off to the races."

Paula settled into Williamsburg in the nineties with husband, Charles Lee Ginsburgh, a family physician with his own practice in

Newport News (C. Lee Ginsburgh, M.D.). Together, the couple have two sons, Grant, 24, and Trevor, 21. She raised these boys as a stay-at-home mom after the move to Williamsburg, while taking a hiatus from teaching.

However, in 1999, an opportunity appeared. This was the second opportunity of its kind, giving Paula another chance to broaden education in the area. As the new millennium rolled in, Paula was a member of the founding board and assisted in the development of founding documents for the Providence Classical School. She has been a founding board member for two schools in the region, Providence Classical School (PCS) in Williamsburg being the

most recent, and Summit Christian Academy in Newport News being the first.

"Education is building your whole person," she says. "It is being fully human, and being all that God created you to be." She has worked towards our city's educational wellness both inside and outside of the classroom. "I love to learn," she says, "and I love kids. I love when others love to learn. When I can make a bridge that connects everything, getting kids to love learning, that is really the icing on the cake for me."

PCS started as a school that taught K-5th grade students, but has grown over time. After getting a core group of students in the elementary school to move forward, PCS grew to teach



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K-12th grade students.

"We wanted to make a safe environment where people are truly cared for," Paula explains. "We wanted to be able to treat the kids individually. Everyone is capable and is capable at a level that they are personally able to reach," she says. "I'm willing to know the kids individually, know their strengths and weaknesses, and challenge them when they are ready."

Living in Williamsburg has perhaps been a reason for her resilient focus on education. After receiving her master's degree from Regent University, Paula attended William & Mary to obtain her Ph. D. in Cognitive and Gifted Education. "It's a college town, so there is a strong aspect of intellectual stimulation which I like. I love Williamsburg because there is a lot to do, but the area has kept a small town feel."

Paula loves the physical beauty of Williamsburg, too. "It's a beautiful city. I think it harks as a city with pure green. It seems to have more preserved nature than some other places." She will go on nature walks when she can, but has an energy that prefers to be more engaged. When she's not making moves in the world of education, Paula can be found playing racketball at the James City County Recreation Center or playing golf around town during the summer. She loves watching sports, especially tennis, and goes to the Williamsburg Community Chapel on the weekends. "I think of it as a lateral service," she says. After a week of serving

in the classroom, Paula is able to sit back and absorb the sermon each Sunday.

In her free time, and particularly in the summer time, Paula reads through works similar to those she uses in lesson planning. "I enjoy reading deeply on anything I can learn, particularly history," she says. "Classical Literature is interesting to me." In her classroom, students read through philosophy and literature of the Middle and Early Modern Ages and bring themes, patterns, conflicts and more to the discussion table.

"There is a sense of accomplishment when you can connect with a student on a topic. You can see the lightbulb go off in their mind," Paula explains. Watching their discussion come together brings her efforts of classical education to fruition. "It helps me realize I've pushed them to become fully-formed thinking individuals."

One of Paula's favorite parts about working at Providence Classical School is the academic freedom given to the educators. Without standardized testing requirements, the teachers are able to hone in on the lessons they believe matter most. Because she is not limited to strict testing dates and right or wrong answers, she can educate with a dynamic approach. The education does not stop at academia. "Character is big to me, and how we interact with others is important. I try to hold the kids up to a standard and challenge them on the value of the Golden Rule."

With a focus on character and each student's individual potential, Paula tries to teach all of her students, "Everyone can learn. Everyone is capable." In teaching this to her students, Paula has been reassured of it herself. "As I teach kids they can do hard things, I learn that I can do hard things. With time, energy and prayer, there is always a way to get past something."

She draws inspiration from everything the world around her has to offer and finds more motivation when putting her position into a new light. "My colleagues are like a family to me. We're constantly sharing knowledge with each other, but also planting seeds in the minds of the children." With intimate classroom sizes and a schedule that allows Paula to meet with some students three times a day, she is able to observe each student's development first hand.

"Teaching is like gardening to me. I put in effort for the harvest, and when I see the result in these children, I feel the same pride I would feel from a work that I made with my own hands. I think if we started using metaphors like this for our jobs, we could find them a lot more engaging."

About her career in education, Paula reiterates, "This has never been a job for me, and I've never met a student I didn't like." Dr. Paula Ginsburgh leads her students to individual success, guides her community to educational well-being and stands with her colleagues in their dedication to students. NDN



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WHAT MAKES GREAT HOSPITALITY

By Greg Lilly, Editor

David Smith, general manager of the Comfort Inn on Bypass Road, says he learned customer service from his father, Howard W. Smith, Sr. Howard is the president and owner of Oleta Coach Lines.

“My father has a commitment to making sure the guests have the best,” David says. “When I was about ten, he started buying the

buses. He would park them in the yard, and all my brothers and I had something to do. One brother would wash the outside, another would sweep the seats, and another would sweep the aisles. He gave me the responsibility of cleaning the buses’ bathrooms.”

David asked what the guidelines were for such a task. His father made it simple. “He said

he wanted them so clean that my mother could use them. That didn’t leave me much room for mistakes. He wanted the customer to have the best of the best when it came to cleanliness and every other aspect of the experience. He wanted them to experience what we would want to experience. That’s what carried on into hotel management with me.”



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From cleaning the buses, David moved to helping in the office of Oleta as a teenager, answering the phone calls. "One day, I had to call one of my dad's customers. I called her and said hello and proceeded to remind her that her deposit was due. She said, 'Hold on. Anytime your dad calls me, before he does any business, he asks how I'm doing. He doesn't talk any business until we talk about the state of everybody.' From that time on, I always start a conversation with 'How are you doing today?' You have to start with the person."

He thinks about the experience as someone walks into the hotel. Usually, he explains, when a person walks up to the front desk, they aren't greeted. "They hear, 'Checking in?' It's not, 'Hello. How are you?' or 'Welcome to Williamsburg.' Then in the morning, the guest would hear 'Checking out?' when they approached the front desk. That comment back when I was a teen from one of my dad's customers has carried on in my philosophy, for the past 25 or 30 years. I make sure I greet and ask about the person first before anything else."

David's first job in the hotel industry was when he was 15 and worked at the Best Western Patrick Henry Inn in the kitchen and in room service. At the Williamsburg Center Hotel, he was able to work the front desk. "I enjoyed talking with the guests. Even when there

was an issue with their room, I enjoyed fixing it for them. While fixing the issue, I talked to them and found out where they were from and what they enjoyed about the area. A lot of times while talking, they would forget about the problems until it was fixed."

A front office manager was hired, and since David knew it so well, he trained the new manager. "I was 16 years old. I thought if I could train a manager, I could really do this. I started taking management classes in high school." He worked with various hotels in the Williamsburg area through the years. He began working with the Hampton Inn Suites on Richmond Road while it was under construction and helped to open it. "I got the opportunity to work for the company I do now, HMP Properties. The owner, Hitesh Patel, and his sister gave me the opportunity to work at the Home-wood Suites down the street as the front office manager." Over the next few years, David worked at hotels and helped with the family coach lines business.

Hitesh Patel purchased the Comfort Inn property on Bypass Road and made David an offer to get back fully into the business. "I came here when the hotel was being reconstructed. We kept one employee from before the renovation. That one employee, Ron, had a lot of guests returning to the hotel. I would talk to

those guests, I had been there in the renovation and had seen how the property was before. Why did they continue to come? One answer: They loved Ron. He took care of them and addressed any problems to their satisfaction. That means a lot. Ron is now our assistant general manager and responsible for training the staff."

David saw what an effect a customer service oriented employee can have on the reputation of a business, and he strives to replicate that with all his employees.

"One of the key components is empowering the employees," David explains. "When a guest has an issue, we don't want them contacting the front desk and not getting resolution because a manager isn't available. That can be too late for the guest to wait, especially if that takes until the next morning. Empowering the employees is important." That means everyone from housekeeping to the front desk to maintenance to the breakfast room staff.

"We remind the breakfast attendant that they are probably the first employee that the guests see in the morning. They will hear about problems that may have occurred the previous night. We teach them to own the problem. That doesn't mean that they have to solve it, but report it, ask the maintenance person to report back to them, and then the breakfast attendant alerts the guest that the issue has been



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resolved.”

Guests become annoyed when they think an issue isn't being addressed fast enough. “Fix it quickly, that eliminates the chance that the guest becomes frustrated. The guest experience is not just an experience, but a memory.”

For customer service in the age of the Internet, review websites are influential for returning customers and for potential new customers. TripAdvisor.com is the king of the hospitality and tourism review sites. “They cover attractions, lodging and restaurants. So many people look at those reviews and as a result of those reviews, make their reservations. It's very powerful,” David says. “We look at the other hotels' reviews to see what we can learn from them. We make sure that everyone on staff checks Trip Advisor on a daily basis to see what we can learn.”

As with most review opportunities, customers post good reviews and not-so-good reviews. “I always address posted reviews that may have had an unreported issue. I can't change that past experience, but if given another opportunity I can prove that it was abnormal and that the customer will be well taken care of at our hotel.” He says the message he wants to convey is to please give them another opportunity. “I'd love to rewind things and fix any issue to the guest's satisfaction, but I realize I can't do that.”

He says the best thing a business can do is acknowledge there was a problem, and now that they know about it, they will fix it.

“There was a guest who sent an e-mail from her room. I received it at the front desk. She said the Days Inn duvet was very thin on her bed. She was cold at night.” He received the e-mail about 9:30 in the morning, and the guest had left for her day's activities. David went out and bought a fluffy duvet and put it on her bed. “I left a note that said I was sorry her sleep was uncomfortable and to please enjoy the duvet. If it was something she liked, by all means, take it home. She e-mailed me back that night about how appreciative she was. When she returned home, she wrote us a five-star review. That was a situation that could have been bad, but she was a happy customer.”

David says to not be afraid to embrace a complaint as an opportunity, an opportunity to create a “wow factor” for the customer.

“We had a guest stay a little while ago with a child who had food allergies. She wrote a review that the breakfast room didn't have anything her child could eat.” David reached out to her. She said she needed to check the ingredients of the items on the breakfast counter before her child tasted anything. “We ended up having things her child could have had, but she didn't know the ingredients. I thought the listing was a great idea. We contacted the food vendors and compiled a binder for the breakfast room and for the front desk for anyone needing to check the ingredients of what we serve. I contacted her and told her we now had that binder. And I asked if there were any other suggestions from her situation.”

She helped David and his staff offer additional services to their guests. “That was an opportunity. I appreciated that idea. She made our hotel a better hotel.”

David explains that there are 78 hotels in Williamsburg. “Obviously, there's a lot of competition. We want to stand apart. My wife, Talande, and I love to travel, and we stay at many different hotels. I look at those experiences and think how I want to be treated, whether in the process of booking the reservation or in the process of checking in or sitting down at breakfast, I treat people the same way I want to be treated.”

David Smith says great customer service is about creating memories. “It's the Maya Angelou quote: ‘I've learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel.’ That's what the hospitality industry is all about.” **NDN**



Lisa W. Cumming Photography

3 POINTER Past, Present & Future

By Greg Lilly, Editor

“I actually played basketball in the Williamsburg Parks & Recreation league growing up. Sports were always a big part of my life and an influence while growing up here,” explains Tyler Cobb, recreation supervisor for the city’s Parks & Recreation Department. Today, Tyler

oversees the Youth Basketball and Buddy Basketball leagues for the city.

Tyler grew up in Williamsburg, played basketball and baseball in the local leagues and graduated from Lafayette High School. During his high school days, Tyler was a basketball

official at the Quarterpath Rec Center. After high school, he enrolled at Christopher Newport University (CNU) and played baseball there. “I always knew I wanted to do something involving sports. I didn’t know exactly what it would be. Even in college, I didn’t know

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I would be in parks & recreation. During my college summers, I worked field maintenance for Williamsburg's Parks & Recreation."

After graduating from CNU, Tyler went to Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU) in Richmond for his graduate degree from the Center for Sports Leadership. The VCU graduate program prepares its participants for all areas of sports. "Collegiate athletics, professional athletics, parks & recreation, anything like that," Tyler explains. "I thought I wanted to get into collegiate athletics. At VCU, I interned at Randolph Macon College in Ashland and had a really great experience. Then as a matter of timing when I graduated from VCU, the Recreation Supervisor job came open here at Williamsburg. I was very familiar with the department, working with Robbi Hutton, Director of Parks & Recreation, and most of the people in the department for a number of years. It was a good fit from growing up in the program. My dad played softball in the program. I knew this was the route I wanted to go. I was getting married at the time. It was all a perfect fit."

Tyler's wife, Allie, grew up in Williamsburg and attended William & Mary. "She competed on the William & Mary gymnastics team," Tyler says. "Sports have always been intertwined

in our lives and our families' lives."

The Youth Basketball league encompasses boys and girls from ages 5 through 17. "Each age group is broken down by two age groups: 5 and 6 play together, and 7 and 8, 9 and 10, up to age 17, which play in their own group. This year we're expecting about 95 total teams. Last year we had 90. Typically, there are ten kids on a team. So, that's about 900 to 950 kids. They come from James City County, Williamsburg, the Bruton area of York County and some from Newport News. We have a wide array of kids from different backgrounds and locations."

This is Tyler's fourth basketball season as the recreation supervisor. The basketball programs have grown steadily over those four seasons. "Three years ago, I started the 5 & 6 year old age group. It's awesome to watch that age group, a teaching and learning experience. The kids have a blast."

The Buddy Basketball program runs eight Sundays between December and February. "It is designed for special needs children and young adults, and they get paired with a buddy. We partner with Jamestown High School and Warhill High School basketball teams. For an hour each Sunday, the kids and their buddies go through different skills and drills and

have fun. They scrimmage against each other." The program usually hosts 20 to 25 players each Sunday. The participants learn the fundamentals of the game, good sportsmanship and camaraderie.

"The Jamestown and Warhill kids are awesome," Tyler says. "They volunteer to come and play with the kids and chitchat. All of them know each other on a first name basis. I went to a high school game last year between Bruton and Jamestown. A Buddy Basketball participant was there to watch. One of the Jamestown players, before the game, stopped to shake his hand and talk with him in the stands. It's a cool program that creates friendships and fun for everyone involved."

A main focus of the Parks & Recreation leagues is creating an atmosphere of teamwork. "We don't keep league standings or give out awards or have a tournament," Tyler says. "We emphasize the team aspect, the sportsmanship aspect. Because in the end, some of the kids may play in high school or college, but a lot will not be playing past the recreation league. We want to focus on sportsmanship and teamwork as opposed to winning a league trophy at the end of the season."

Over the past four years, Tyler has witnessed the basketball players develop into young men

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If you or someone you know starts to experience memory problems, schedule a hearing evaluation with an audiologist to find out if there is another issue at hand that could be treated. Monitoring of hearing loss is crucial when memory issues are present.



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and women with important life skills from the program. "They work together to accomplish one goal. They develop good sportsmanship traits, treating each other with respect. Basketball shows them how exercise, regular practice and a healthy lifestyle can improve their athletic skills and can be fun. I emphasize that with the coaches each year. We're out here to have fun."

The basketball season can be hectic for Tyler, but the smiles on the kids' faces make it fun for him as well. "Seeing a kid grow is rewarding. Seeing the coaches grow year after year makes me happy. The relationships I have with my coworkers help make this position rewarding for me. We have a great team here. We have a lot of fun coming to work every day. We're doing things we like to do. I'm staying involved in sports. The team work we have and the relationships we have with the coaches, parents and the kids are a joy."

The coaches for the leagues are all volunteers, mostly parents of the participants. "Generally, there are two coaches on each youth basketball team. So, with 95 teams, that's 190 volunteers just for coaching. We have some volunteers from W&M. Some are grad students staying involved in the sports they grew up playing. This year we have four coaches from W&M helping out. And we have some seasoned

coaches. One coach, Ms. Virginia Palmer, has coached youth basketball here since 1976. She is awesome. She coaches basketball and softball. It is volunteers like that who make coming to work fun."

The goal for the future of the basketball programs is continued growth. Tyler plans to build on the relationships already formed with players, parents and volunteers, and he plans to create new relationships. "We'd like to get more local businesses involved in sponsorships to keep our program cost low."

At home, Tyler and Allie are preparing for their first child. "The end of February," Tyler says with pride. "We're very excited about that. Allie is a first grade teacher at Clara Byrd Baker. Her mom is a teacher and her dad was a teacher and football coach. Her brother is a football coach at Warhill High School. We have a lot of family and community ties in Williamsburg, so we anticipate staying here and raising our family. I grew up in here and love the area. There's a lot the area has to offer young families."

Tyler Cobb grew up in the Williamsburg Parks & Recreation leagues, now manages them, and in the future, will probably introduce his young son or daughter to basketball at Quarterpath Recreation Center. "It feels like my home." NDN

Next Door Neighbors

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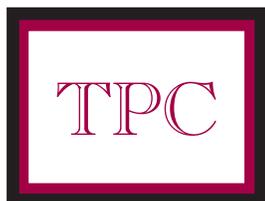
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Corey Miller Photography

A Gift of Dance

By Greg Lilly, Editor

“You see a kid walk in, maybe a little unsure, but then one day she walks through the door and you can see that something has clicked for her. Her energy and enthusiasm are contagious,” describes Wendy Buchan. Wendy owns and operates a dance studio in Toano called Power House Dance.

Her dance studio hosts classes for all levels

of dancers and all ages, children and adults. “We have kids with hearing difficulties, with ADHD, with Down syndrome, this is all inclusive. That’s the environment we want. Open and fun.”

Wendy says she wasn’t a dancer in her childhood. Her best moves were as a signalman on a Navy ship, flashing out visual Morse code.

Growing up in Buffalo, New York, Wendy was the youngest in a family of eight. After high school, she joined the Navy to help pay for her higher education. “I met my husband, Craig, while I was in the military. He was in the Army.”

In the military, Wendy was able to see the world. “I was in Guam, Hong Kong, Japan. I

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was young and I enjoyed the travel and adventure." She and Craig married, and she made some decisions. "It was time to be a wife and not be out to sea six months out of the year. Craig continued active duty. I got out of the military. His duty station brought us here. One of his first assignments was at Fort Lee, Virginia." Then they were sent to Germany for ten years. "When it was time to come back, we knew we wanted to be in Virginia and Williamsburg was our target. He went to Fort Eustis, and when Craig retired, we decided to make this home."

This past November, Wendy's studio celebrated its two year anniversary. "It's so much work," she says. "I had no clue what I was getting myself into. But the biggest surprise is how much I love it." Her intention was to be in the background, doing the business end of the studio, but she has found that she flourishes in the operations of the classes and the interaction with the students, parents and instructors. "I love the team we have assembled. I create an environment that I would want as a parent. My daughters are here. I have teachers that have education in dance and know what they are doing. We consist of three layers: a recreation program, a performance program and a competition team."

"A lot of the students have never danced before," Wendy says. "They may start because their friends are taking dance classes or their

parents want them to be more physically active. The key to them enjoying the experience is finding the right fit for each child."

The youth classes for ages 2 through 18 consist of Tap, Jazz, Ballet/Lyrical, Hip-Hop, Musical Theatre and Contemporary. For the youngest dancers, Wendy has a Knights & Princesses class. "We read them stories and the little ones interact with it." Plus, there is a tumbling class for the kids and local vocalist, Tempy Barbru, teaches a Vocals course to complement the musical theatre classes.

On the adult side, the instructors hold classes in Tap, Jazz and Zumba. "My goal for doing fitness classes like Zumba and yoga is for the parents to not sit out in the lobby waiting for their child, but to join in the fun." Salsa and Swing dancing are also options for adults to participate in. "I'll try different types of movement classes to see what the interest is," she adds.

Dance is fun. Anyone who has ever swayed on the middle school gym floor to the sounds of the Righteous Brothers, Lionel Richie, Whitney Houston, the Cranberries or Adele admits that it's a skill they'd like to have. But, dance is more than learning steps and moving to music. "Dance teaches kids responsibility and teamwork, builds confidence and forms friendships," Wendy says.

The discipline of dance, either recreational, performance or competition, enhances life skills. "The students learn so much without re-

alizing it. For a kid to be on the performance team, they're here easily four nights a week. That keeps them organized. They develop attention to detail because they all need to look uniform when they are out there performing. It instills so many amazing qualities in the kids. Parents don't really realize it until it's there and then they're astonished to see the changes in their kids." The students have fun and pick up great traits along the way. "Plus, dance keeps them active and fit."

Wendy says she has worked a lot of different jobs, but running the dance studio takes the prize for being more than a job. It is a community. "The kids, the families, they are awesome. We want to reach everyone in the community to let them know that they're welcome to join the dance." Power House Dance has been seen doing Flash Mob dances around town to delight the public and showcase the skills of the dancers.

"I want to create an environment where the students can tap into anything they want to do. I want them to be well-rounded with a technical foundation that they can go on and do anything."

As her daughters grow up and move on to college, Wendy Buchan will continue to help children dance and learn. "I now have 160 kids. That's why I love this. When my kids go on out into the world, I'll have all these other kids here to lift up." NDN

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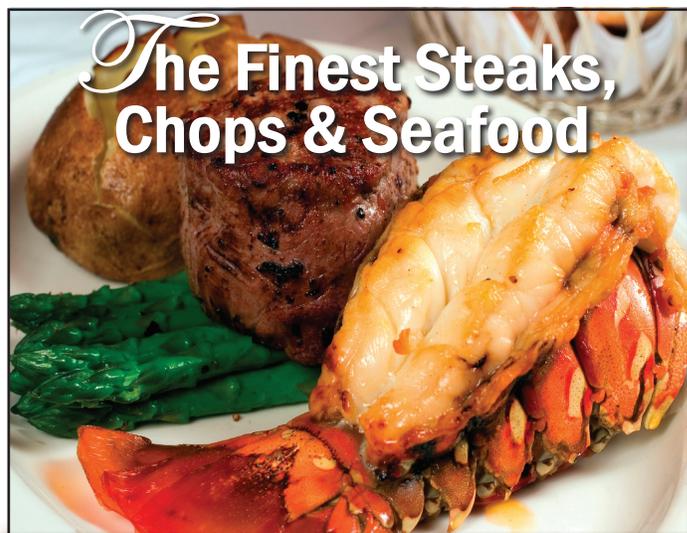
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Escorting Veterans to the Memorials

By Greg Lilly, Editor

Matt Hartman, Mission Director for Honor Flight Historic Triangle Virginia, says the organization's mission is to escort America's veterans to Washington D.C. to visit the memorials dedicated to honor their sacrifice and service.

"Early on, we recognized how important this is to our veterans," Matt says. "We regularly hear: 'Other than the day I married or the day my children were born, this was the most important day of my life.' Especially true of the World War II veterans. Everyone seems to think that when they returned, each one got a parade. The reality is that a large majority of our World War II veterans came back to the States to a processing center, handed discharge papers and a train ticket home then sent on their way. Part of what we do with the Honor Flight trips is to welcome them home. Some of them have never had that before."

Closure is part of the trip to the D. C. memorial is about. For the World War II veterans, the images and thoughts from the war have remained for over 70 years. That's one of the reasons that they say the day is so important to them. Some of these veterans are the last surviving crew member from a B-17 or from a platoon. A lot of these guys left buddies overseas in national cemeteries some place. They represent those veterans as well.

Matt describes the emotions he has observed

at the World War II Memorial that manifest the importance of the veterans' visits. "The first trip we made, a particular veteran was an Army medic. When we were leaving the memorial and checking for all our passengers, one of the bus captains, Dave, found the veteran still at the memorial, sobbing. He asked the veteran if there was anything he could help him with. The words that came from that veteran were: 'I failed them.' Dave pushed it a little further with 'You failed who?' Come to find out, the very first casualty the veteran had come across was a man who had stepped on a landmine and

lost both his legs. He couldn't save him. This veteran had been carrying this notion that he had failed that soldier for 70 years. Then Dave asked him how many he soldiers he had saved. That discussion happened, and just being at the memorial and the professionalism of Dave and other guardians, helped him. You could see the burden being lifted from his shoulders. I suspect he lived with a more clear conscience since that trip. It was a cleansing event to help him reconcile some of the things he'd seen and done during World War II."

For the guardians, those who help during the



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trips, they recognize how lucky they are to share the experience with the veterans. “When we have guardian training, we remind the volunteers that the veterans, especially combat veterans, very rarely talk to their families about their wartime experiences. So if they start to hear those stories, first recognize you are listening to our living history. Talk with the veteran to see if they have shared these stories with their families. Many haven’t, but may now.” Matt says the memorial visits and the emotions that rise to the surface are important to him since these veterans are the generations that made the country free for all people. “It’s my history as a veteran and as a citizen. I’m honored to hearing the stories from the men and women who lived it.”

Matt was born in Spokane, Washington and lived in Washington until he joined the Air Force after high school. “I served in the Air Force for 20 years. After retiring from the Air Force, I became a DOD (Department of Defense) contractor, teaching at the Air Force Battlestaff Training School in Hurlbert Field in Florida.”

The Honor Flight Historic Triangle Virginia hub received its charter in December 2008. “Bob Doherty, the co-founder of this hub, started making visits to the local veterans’ organizations. I’m a member of American Legion, Colonial Post 1776. In February, 2009, Bob gave a presentation at our post. I called him the next

day to volunteer with Honor Flight.”

At the time the Honor Flight was focused on the World War II veterans. “The World War II Memorial opened to the public in April, 2004. So, that’s about 59 years after the end of the war before there was a national memorial in the capital to honor those 16 million men and women who served. What drew me to that was that about 75 percent of the WWII veterans had already passed away. Only about 4 million surviving, it was a race against time to get those veterans to D.C. to see the WWII Memorial that honors their service. That’s what got me involved.”

Matt joined the hub in February, 2009, and they made the first trip to the WWII Memorial in D.C. in May 2009. The organization plans two missions a year to the memorial, a spring trip and a fall trip. “Our October trip was mission 16.” As of that trip, Honor Flight Historic Triangle Virginia had escorted over 1,300 local WWII veterans to D.C. Now they have included Korean and Vietnam War veterans on the trips to see those memorials built to honor their sacrifice and service.

“The history of Honor Flight was one of the founders worked at a Veterans Administration Hospital in Springfield, Ohio,” Matt explains. “As the World War II Memorial was being built, he would ask his patients if they were going to D.C. to see it.” Surprised at the num-

ber of veterans who said they didn’t have plans to see the memorial, the doctor decided to try to get as many of these veterans as he could to D.C. “The first Honor Flight was May, 2005 from Springfield, Ohio. It consisted of six pilots with six small airplanes with twelve WWII veterans flying to Manassas where they were met by the American Legion Post and driven to the Mall and the WWII Memorial. Those were the humble beginnings of the Honor Flights.” Today, planes and buses are chartered from all over the country, bringing veterans to experience the memorial.

The Honor Flight missions are open to veterans of World War II, Korean War and the Vietnam War. Volunteers to help are always needed. Matt explains that the guardian positions require training, vigor and energy. “This is a very long day for the trip up and back. A guardian needs the strength and stamina to help somebody throughout the day. Our biggest concerns are falls. Guardians must be fit enough to keep someone from falling.” All staff members are volunteers and rely on individual and corporate donations.

“Mission 17 is April 22, 2017,” Matt Hartman says. “The applications for veterans and for volunteer guardians are on the website. We’re not called Honor Flight by accident. It is our honor to do this for our veterans.” NDN
<http://www.honorflightva.org/>

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SERVING HUMANITY

By Greg Lilly, Editor

“My goal is to light a few candles, have the opportunity to touch someone else’s life and share what I have. I love working with kids. When I was going to school, I had a garage and would teach kids how to do things. Some are mechanics now.” says Ronald Wallace, scout master, Big Brother, deacon at his church and community leader.

“I came up in a scouting environment in a Christian family. My mother was a Cub Scout Den Leader. I loved that. I was in the Boy Scout Troop 195 that I lead today. When deciding what I would do in life, I knew it would be teaching and helping kids.”

Ronald has spent his life and career guid-

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ing the young men of Williamsburg. He has recently retired from 39 years at Crossroads Community Youth Home.

He grew up in Williamsburg and has lived here all his life. "I'm home-grown," he says. "My father was born in what is now Camp Peary; it was Magruder Village. Back in the 1940s, by right of eminent domain, Congress took that area. My mother was born in what is now the Yorktown Naval Weapons Station. Same thing happened to that neighborhood." Both his parents' families settled in the Penniman area. They met and married, raising four children in the neighborhood. Ronald is the oldest son, with an older sister and younger sister and brother.

Ronald and his wife, Charmaine, have two sons. "Ronald Charlie and Renard," he says. "Renard was born when I was 46, and Charlie was born when I was 42. So people call me and Charmaine, Abraham and Sarah, from Sunday school class. It's been 26 years of marital bliss."

Growing up on Penniman Road, Ronald says it was a time when the kids could ride their bicycles on the streets and not worry about traffic. "We rode facing traffic," he stresses, "because tractor-trailers used the route running down to the cold storage facili-

ty in Cheatham Annex, back when Penniman Road extended all the way out to Cheatham. Other than that, it was fairly low-key place. We played on the redoubts of Fort Magruder. This was pre-integration, during the segregation period, so I grew up experiencing some of that. We didn't know the difference. We had friends in York Terrace and James Terrace. We'd run through the woods together, having a lot of fun."

Ronald began York County Public Schools during segregation and graduated in 1970 after integration. He enrolled at Norfolk State University to earn his bachelor's degree in Industrial Vocational Education.

He wanted a job close to home. "Most of our family settled here in Williamsburg. Some went north, but most stayed in the Grove and Penniman areas, and some lived in Highland Park. Most folks clustered around here." The new Gloucester County High School had opened in 1975, and Ronald interviewed with the superintendent. He was hired on the spot. He received a tour of the new high school and its automotive shop where he would teach. He asked the salary. It was okay, but he told the superintendent that he wanted to think about it. When he talked it over with his mother, she told him he could get a higher

salary. "She had heard a job listed on Jobs Unlimited that was on WMBG Radio," Ronald says. He applied for the position his mother had heard on the radio and got that job, for a higher salary. "The place was called Green Acres, a residential facility. I started there on May 11, 1975 and stayed there for 39 years. I retired in 2014 as the manager of that facility."

Green Acres was an old motel on Richmond Road converted into a group home for boys. Youth were referred there by the court as an alternative to placement in a secure facility. "They boys were status offenders, there because of their status as juveniles, doing things beyond parental control, like truancy." In the early 1980s, the name of the facility was changed to Crossroads. Ronald laughs and says the boys were teased about Green Acres. Over the years, the group home changed locations and today is in a new facility on Mooretown Road.

As a vocational education instructor, Ronald knew that struggling kids gained self-value and confidence when they built or fixed something. "That's what is really missing," he explains. "Focus on what's right, don't dismiss what is wrong, but minimize that and maximize what's good." He would reinforce

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the good aspects of behavior with the youth. “Things like juvenile farms and hard labor didn’t work. First, these are human beings. Two, they’re children. Three, they are children who need services. I was amazed seeing the progress in people’s lives from keeping the focus on the positive.”

When the new Crossroads facility was built, Ronald saw several of his former students show up on the jobsite as electricians, flooring installers and landscapers. “When I see that, it lets me know I had an impact. I always think: How many lives did you change? How many candles did you light? How many hearts did you change?”

Away from work, Ronald continued guiding youth with his scouting leadership. “I was in Pack 95 when I was a boy and my mother was a Den Leader. Cub Scouts is parent-driven, mainly ladies. We did a lot of neat stuff. I always remember making Christmas ornaments for the elderly from pine cones and acorns. We got to go camping, fishing and hiking. I loved that. At the time, the troops were segregated. We had our own packs and our own troops, and there was even a Boy Scout Camp down near Grove, near the James River. That’s where I went to my first Boy Scout Camp.”

In the 1980s, Ronald served as a committee chair for the troop. “My sister was a Cub Master for the pack. When her boys moved up, she did too. She asked me to take over, and I started along with my boys. My eldest son was six years old. I stayed involved until he became an Eagle Scout in 2008. My younger son is still at home with us. He’s sitting for his Eagle Board tonight. I told Charmaine I was sticking with them all the way.” Troop 195 is the only remaining predominately African-American troop in the Colonial Virginia Council. “It just happens that way. We have a church sponsor us, Saint John’s Baptist on Penniman Road, and we draw from the neighborhood and congregation. I was in Troop 195.”

The two groups, Boy Scouts and juveniles in a group home, had some things in common, but also a few differences. “First, they are all kids. They all have the same basic needs, like food and shelter, and they need to be loved.” He says that means the same to both groups. “They want someone to listen to them. They want somebody to try to understand them and respect them for who they are and accept them.”

Providing the kids with time, patience, understanding and respect, which all add up to

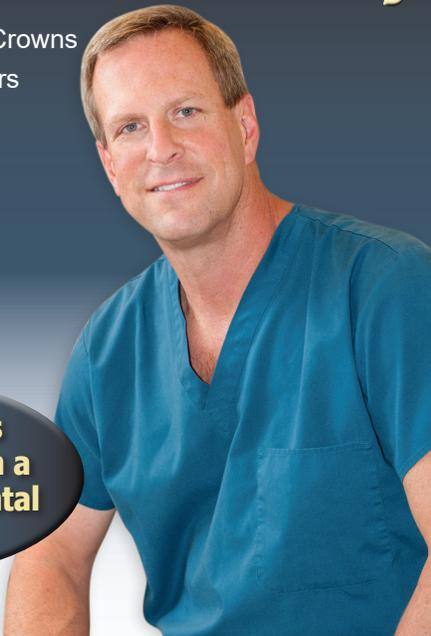
love, Ronald explains, they will respond. “It doesn’t matter who they are, Boy Scouts or boys in a group home, they respond. He’s not a bad kid; he’s a child in need of your love. That’s who he is.”

What they have different: opportunity. “These are great kids born into situations, families and communities where they don’t have the same resources, human or physical resources,” Ronald explains. “But when you introduce them to resources that bring them up to where they want to be, they change. Nobody wants to be a problem. They just don’t know how to not be a problem. It takes time, patience and love to do that. These are not little adults, but children developing into productive adulthood. We have a responsible to train them, to find what’s in them, to magnify and highlight ‘this is who you are.’ If we can do that for them, they take off!”

Now that Ronald Wallace is retired and his sons are finishing up their scouting lives, he’s in a period of transition and introspection to decide where he wants to go. “One thing I do know is that it’s about serving humanity. The mantra of our church, New Zion Baptist, is ‘Love God. Love Others. Serve Humanity.’ I want to do that, continue to do that, that’s what my mission in life is.” NDN

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GRANT OPPORTUNITIES DEADLINE January 19, 2017

The Foundation is interested in receiving proposals for funding requests of up to \$5,000 for its Community Endowment Grants benefitting residents of Greater Williamsburg. Deadline is noon. Grant guidelines and application materials may be found at www.WilliamsburgCommunityFoundation.org.

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Hey Neighbor!

FIRST NIGHT WILLIAMSBURG

December 31, 2016

A family-oriented, New Year's Eve celebration of the performing arts presented throughout the City and on the campus of the College of William & Mary. See as many acts during the day as you like! Food will be available for purchase. See you New Year's Eve! <http://www.firstnightwilliamsburg.org/>

Hey Neighbor!

MASTERWORKS SERIES

January 4, 2017

This free concert will feature a performance of the "Four Serious Songs" by Brahms and "Is Not His Word Like a Fire?" from Mendelssohn's Elijah sung by bass-baritone Darren K. Stokes accompanied by Michael Steven Lianos. There also will be organ selections by both Brahms and Mendelssohn as well as stories about these composers. Time: 1 pm at Saint Bede Catholic Church, 3686 Ironbound Road. For more information, call 757-229-3631 or visit www.bedeva.org/concerts.

Hey Neighbor!

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proposals for funding requests of up to \$5,000 for its Community Endowment Grants benefitting residents of Greater Williamsburg. Deadline is noon. Grant guidelines and application materials may be found at www.WilliamsburgCommunityFoundation.org. Questions? Call 757-259-1660.

Hey Neighbor!

GRANTS-IN-AID AUDITIONS DEADLINE

January 20, 2017

This is the deadline for the Williamsburg Music Club's annual Grants-in-Aid Auditions for junior and senior high school students in the greater Williamsburg area. \$7,000 is awarded to outstanding music students. For more information, www.williamsburgmusicclub.org or 757-646-0877.

Hey Neighbor!

PRUNING-WINTER TREE CARE

January 21, 2017

At Freedom Park Interpretive Center, 10 am, open to the public. This workshop will provide instruction on early winter tree care. James City County/Williamsburg Master Gardeners will discuss the basics of pruning trees and shrubs and will demonstrate the proper use of pruning tools. The program is free, although a \$5.00 donation to

help the Garden grow is appreciated. For more information, contact Barb Landa at 757-259-2079 or by email at barb@landa.org.

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 wmsbgvocal-community@gmail.com for more information and a registration link.

Hey Neighbor!

CABARET & COCKTAILS CONCERT

January 28, 2017

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,

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Hey Neighbor! **CENTURIES OF ART LECTURE** January 30, 2017

2017 lecture series at Williamsburg Regional Library Theatre, 501 Scotland. Doors open 7 pm, Lecture begins 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 following courses are offered this spring: Chinese Level III, Preparing to Travel in China, and A Sample of China for Session I; Chinese Level IV, Appreciation of Chinese Poetry, and Erhu Workshop for Session II. A Taiji course will be held over both sessions beginning on January 31st and ending April 11th (no class on March 7th). Chinese Cooking will also be offered, dates TBA. 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>

Hey Neighbor! **FREE INCOME TAX ASSISTANCE** February 1 - April 18, 2017

Williamsburg Tax-Aide is a program of the AARP Foundation in conjunction with the IRS and the Williamsburg Regional Library. Electronic tax preparation and filing are provided free of charge on a walk-in basis. Special attention is given to low- and moderate-income taxpayers, especially those age 60 and older. When you come for tax assistance, be sure to bring a picture ID, social security cards, health insurance documentation, tax information and receipts, bank account numbers, and a copy

of last year's tax return. Additional information can be found at www.aarp.org/money/taxes/aarp_taxaide.

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." Through a series of programs and lectures, attendees will delve into a dynamic aspect of American material culture focusing on the heavy influence of home cultures on immigrant artisans and consumers over generations. For further information and to register, visit colonialwilliamsburg.org/conted or call 1-800-603-0948.

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. 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. To purchase tickets, visit www.beyoutifulconference.com or call the office of CrossWalk Church at 757-258-2825.

Hey Neighbor! **HEAD START OPEN** **ENROLLMENT** Ongoing

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Apply by phone 757-229-6417 or in person at 312 Waller Mill Road, Williamsburg.

Hey Neighbor! **HOPE PREGNANCY CARE** **CENTER** Ongoing

New evening hours: Wednesday 6:30 pm - 8:30 pm by appointment. Also open: Monday- Thursday 10:30 am - 3:00 pm. All services are free and confidential- no insurance needed. We serve all women with unplanned and unexpected pregnancies. We also accept donations of new or gently used baby clothes up to 2T, as well as maternity clothes. 1315 Jamestown Road, Suite 202. 757-229-6472. www.hopewilliamsburg.org.

Hey Neighbor! **WOMAN'S CLUB WELCOMES** **PROSPECTIVE MEMBERS** Ongoing

All Williamsburg, VA-area women interested in learning more about The Woman's Club of Williamsburg-GFWC are invited to attend one of our meetings! We meet monthly on the fourth Wednesday, January through May. To verify meeting details and to RSVP to attend a meeting, please send an email to info@womansclubofwilliamsburg.org. The non-profit Woman's Club of Williamsburg-GFWC is a group of women with a common interest in community welfare and philanthropic projects. The Club provides financial support for a variety of local, national and international humanitarian organizations. Visit www.womansclubofwilliamsburg.org for more information about our club's activities and to see the list of speakers!

Hey Neighbor! **JAMES RIVER BAPTIST CHURCH** **SATURDAY EVENING SERVICE** Ongoing

From Homily, discussion groups and light refreshments create a warm environment for Christian spiritual growth. Join us at 4931 Centerville Rd, Williamsburg. For more information, visit our Facebook page at www.facebook.com/JamesRiverBaptistChurch. You can also visit the website at www.JamesRiverBaptist.org.

Hey Neighbor! **CALLING LOCAL WRITERS!**

2nd Monday each month. Word Weavers International, Inc., established in 1997. Word Weavers has a tried-and-true formula for sharpening the skills of its members, turning out published authors who go on to win acclaim and awards. If you are a writer who is not afraid to critique and be critiqued, join us and see what all the WW talk is about. We meet on

the 2nd Monday of each month from 5:30 - 7:30 pm in the Cosby Room at James City County Library - 7770 Croaker Road. For more information, go to: www.Word-Weavers.com or contact Sheryl: 757-342-1460. All writers are welcomed.

Hey Neighbor! **SEEKING VOLUNTEER TAX** **PREPARERS**

Ongoing
Williamsburg AARP Foundation Tax-Aide is looking for volunteers to assist seniors and low/moderate-income taxpayers in completing their 2016 Federal and Virginia tax returns. IRS certification training is provided during classes in early January. Basic knowledge of tax return preparation, as well as the ability to do returns on a computer, are needed. The service will be offered at the Williamsburg and James City County Libraries in 2017 from February 1 to April 15. Please email District Coordinator George Richmond at grichmond4@live.com if you are interested in becoming a Tax-Aide volunteer.

Hey Neighbor! **CHRISTOPHER WREN** **LECTURE, AND ACTIVITY REQUESTS** Online and Ongoing

The Christopher Wren Association is a self-funded, volunteer-led organization dedicated to adults of all ages who seek opportunities for learning and enrichment of their lives. This fall, CWA has over 150 offerings, including a wide variety of courses, activities (including the Town & Gown Lecture series), one-time lectures, and special events. The semester is already underway, but students are able to submit new or additional requests for courses and activities throughout the fall. For information about becoming a member, contact us at www.wm.edu/cwa, or 757-221-1506

Hey Neighbor! **HISTORIC JAMESTOWNE** **SEEKING VOLUNTEERS** Ongoing

Historic Jamestowne seeks volunteers to greet and engage guests as well provide accurate information about this premier historic site. A variety of volunteer opportunities are available, including Visitor Center greeters, Fort Site interpreters, and Docents in our archaeological museum, the Archaearium. Volunteer shifts are available Monday through Sunday, 9:30 am - 1 pm and 1 - 4:30 pm. Training sessions will be held in the Spring and Fall. If you are interested in volunteering at Historic Jamestowne, please contact Kelly Williams at kwilliams@preservationvirginia.org.

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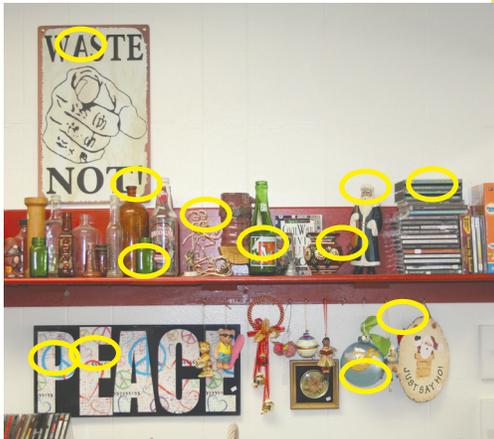
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4056 MILL DAM COURT

Brazilian cherry floors, cherry cabinets, granite, ceramic tile, stainless Appliances!
Corner lot on 2 cul-de-sacs!
3 BR, 2.5 BA with Bonus room.
Offered at \$285,000
Great Neighborhood!

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KINGSMILL • 112 THE GREEN

Gorgeous fairway views of the Plantation course!!
This 4 BR, 3.5 BA transitional style town home with 2,600 sqft boasts both first floor and second floor master bedroom suites. Simply exquisite. \$445,000.

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Ford's Colony

4 BR | 3.5 BA | 3410 SQ FT
BRAND NEW HOME by Hallmark Builders in the Killarney section of Ford's Colony
Overlooks Blackheath golf course
Lower Level Media Room
Tons of storage space
Two 1st floor bedrooms
\$649,500

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108 Mahogany Run | Fords Colony \$895,000

6 bd, 5 ba, 5,786 sq.ft. Sure to be a favorite, the warm and welcoming main living area features a relaxing family room, custom built-in cabinets, a large breakfast nook, and a designer kitchen. Elegant Georgian home with large main-floor master suite. Absolutely stunning. For more details and information, please go to the website. www.108mahoganyrun.info

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FORDS COLONY

172 S. Turnberry
3 BR, 2.5 BA, 2,957 sqft. First floor master, open floor plan, private back yard. Gourmet kitchen with granite and SS appliances. Whole house back up generator.

Tim Parker
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Cyril Petrop
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108 ALWOODLEY Fords Colony • \$440,000

3 BR, 3 BA, 2,880 sqft
Adorable Cape in St. Andrews Village. First floor master, golf view, beautiful garden, detached 2 car garage. Check it out for yourself!
http://108alwoodley.info

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QUEENS LAKE • \$399,500

Renovated Cape Cod w/Large 1st Floor Master plus 4 additional BRs.
Upgrades include HW Flooring, Kitchen w/ granite. Appliance upgrades: gas furnace, stove, hot water heater. Exterior & interior recently painted. Brick paved drive. All Windows updated to Anderson w/lifetime warranty. Ceiling Fans in Most rooms. 2 wood burning FP's
http://www.lizmoore.com/121LittleJohn

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45 YEARDLEYS GRANT Kingsmill • \$333,000

3 BR, 2.5 BA, 2,738 sqft
Patio home, updated kitchen
Thermador cooktop, double ovens
Private setting, wood burning
Double-sided fireplace

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