

July 2019

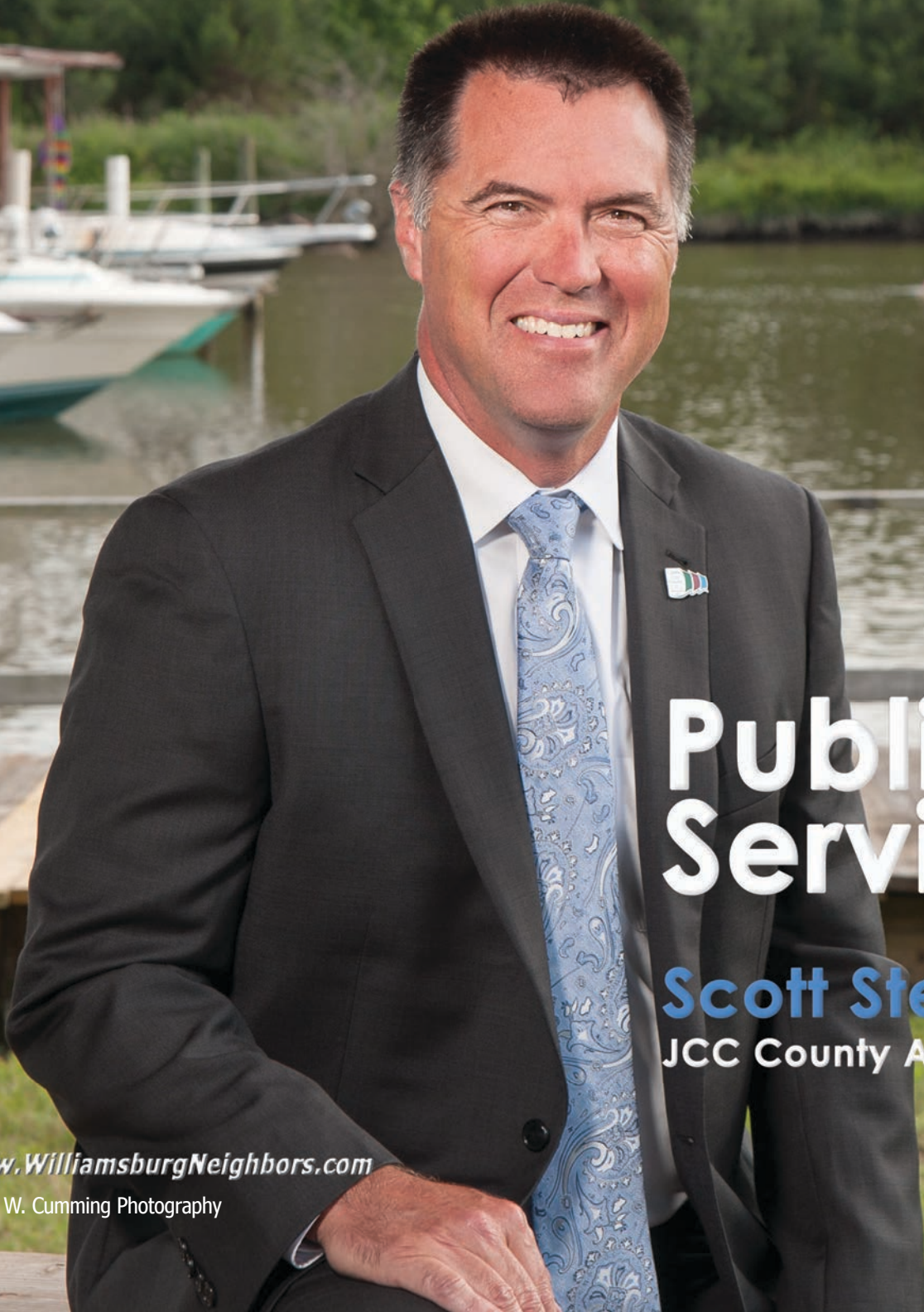
WILLIAMSBURG'S

Next Door Neighbors[®]

VOL. 13, ISSUE 7

PRICELESS

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Meredith Collins, Publisher

We've interviewed people in this issue who have dedicated their lives to public service. That's pretty amazing, to wake up in the morning and head out for the day with the primary goal of making someone else's life better.

Without exception these are upbeat, positive people with a knack for listening, a commitment to caring, and an ability to put others first. They are people

you are typically happy to meet.

And, if things aren't going well, they are people you are really happy to meet because they are also the folks who have the tools to help you with your concerns. They are part of the glue that holds a community together.

Interestingly, most of the people you will meet are from families with a long line of public service. Some are at the start of their careers. Some are nearing the end of their careers. In all cases, we applaud them for their role in working to make our community better. We are glad to call them our neighbors. NDN

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Local Accountability

By Harmony Hunter

Lisa W. Cumming Photography

Scott Stevens has never had a bad day. As new County Administrator for James City County, the issues he wrangles with range from road maintenance to the water supply, and he embraces them all. “Every day is a fun day. There are some moments you shake your head about, but every day is a great day,” he says.

Scott’s qualifications, a Bachelor’s of Science in Civil Engineering from North Carolina State University in 1990 and a Master’s of Public Administration from East Carolina University in 2006, coupled with a respectable career résumé would recommend him well to jobs in private industry. But local government suits him to his core.

Scott relocated from Goldsboro, North Carolina to Williamsburg to serve at the invitation of the James City County Board of Supervisors in 2018. His roots run deep in the Tidewater, however. As a boy, he recalls visiting his grandmother every summer on her idyllic, rural York County property.

“My grandmother lived on the water in York

County, so I’ve always had an affinity for the water and crabbing and fishing and sitting in little jon boats. That’s really the connection to this space. It wasn’t home. But it was a really strong second home for me.”

Summers in the country weren’t all crabbing and fishing. A good deal of hard work came along with the fun. “There was always work to be done, but it was good work. They had a 28-acre place with a small garden. So, we were always helping in the garden or helping in the woods. My grandfather didn’t believe in debt, so everything he had, he fixed and fixed and fixed. So, I think I developed an affinity for fixing things,” he says.

That knack for getting his hands on a problem and finding a solution remained a constant throughout Scott’s adult life. As County Administrator, he draws on that same set of skills to work his way through the issues that come with his position. “I really enjoy it. I like seeing results. I like that we can talk about a problem, we can figure out how to solve it, and in a month or

six months or five years, we can solve it.”

Scott didn’t always plan on a career in local administration. “You fall into a path maybe a little by accident,” he says with a laugh. As his first job led to his second, and the second led to the third, his career began to plot a course. When he landed in local government, everything clicked. “What I found in local government’s city structure was that we really could make the rules. Within our framework, we could make laws that fit our community. And I like that. If our elected officials in local government made a bad rule, they heard about it just as much as I did, because they’re in the same restaurants and grocery stores.”

Working at the local level offered a very satisfying immediate impact. “I liked that accountability. We saw something, we tried to address it, and if it works, great. If it doesn’t, we readjust it, because we’re all here experiencing it. You’re trying to figure out a problem and how to fix it. So, the local government piece fit my personality really well,” he says.

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Even now, Scott loves to engage with a problem and turn it over to find a fix just as much as he did as a kid working on his grandfather's old tractor. But the second ingredient to his success is just as important: communication. Even when conversations are tough, Scott welcomes the opportunity to engage.

"My mother would tell you I was this introverted kid, but I'm better with people than I thought I would be. I like people. Even when they're unhappy with us, I like the fact that people come to us with a problem. Sometimes it's ours to help solve, sometimes it's ours to just listen to. But I like that. I like that when folks have problems. We get to work with them to help solve them."

Face-to-face conversations are the bedrock of community connection, but Scott sees the advantages of using new media, as well. Video press releases suitable for sharing across multiple online platforms help Scott and his team respond to issues and contribute to the conversation in real time.

The recent recommendation to abandon the Jolly Pond Road Dam engendered a flood of concerns and suggestions from the public. Quickly producing a video that could be widely viewed and shared allowed Scott to communi-

cate why the recommendation was made while also filling in some gaps in the existing information around the issue. The Jolly Pond Dam video update and other news from Scott's division is shared at <https://jamescitycountyva.gov/953/Administration>.

Scott is a true believer in the good work that local government can do. "People get this idea that local government is out to get them or government is bad. And we're not. We're not perfect, but we're people in your community who want to make it better."

Scott wants people to know that he's listening. Even while navigating a regulatory environment and elements that aren't always under his control, he strives to serve as a good listener and a good partner in facilitating whatever connections he can. He says, "That's a goal: to make sure the community knows we're here to help."

"If you see something or hear something or read something that doesn't quite sound right, call me," he says. "You still may not like it, but at least I can tell you why we made that recommendation. I am one of those people who wants to share information." Scott Stevens can be reached at 757-253-6602.

Within James City County, Scott strives to understand the needs of the community through

its Board of Supervisors. As the public's elected representatives, Scott follows their lead in protecting the interests of the county. Issues before the county, in addition to the Strategic Plan, include parks and quality of life, preservation of open spaces, economic development and the long-term water supply. Current forecasts assure the water supply through 2027, and Scott and the board are working now to assure that a plan is in place for 2028. He says, "We try to solve today's problems but also look forward to the future of how our community looks. We try to set the framework for the community to grow and change in a way that's in James City County's best interest."

"I like it. I like working with people. I like solving problems. Part of what we do in public service that you miss out on in some other areas is that we provide the ability to fix a problem in the near term. When people are worried about what's going to happen in an emergency or a hurricane, we provide those services that make people feel better: simple things of collecting garbage, clearing trees, getting the power back on, being that person who responds when you call 911. These things are very fulfilling to those of us in these roles: to be part of that service back to the community." NDN

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KAREN STONE



Lisa W. Cumming Photography

A Modern Approach to Safety in Historic Times

By Susan Williamson

In the 18th Century, craftsmen and tradesmen didn't wear safety glasses. But in Colonial Williamsburg, employees are subject to Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) regulations. Colonial Williamsburg's Director of Environmental Health and Safety, Karen Stone, deals with this dichotomy on a



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daily basis.

“We have excellent vendors who help us to solve these problems,” Karen says. “One vendor makes prescription glasses which appear to be authentic to the time period, but are actually safety glasses. The costuming department came up with spats that interpreters can wear over steel-toed boots.” Flesh-colored ear protection is another innovative safety fix. In 2016 OSHA issued new regulations concerning silica in sand, so now the brick makers wear N95 respirators under kerchiefs since silica sand is used in the brick making process.

While Karen and her staff deal with keeping employees healthy and safe, they are also concerned with guest safety. Fire extinguishers and defibrillators are scattered throughout Colonial Williamsburg, but they are often out of sight in historical buildings. “We make sure that all staff members know where they are and how to use them. We offer CPR and AED [Automatic External Defibrillator] training,” she says. “There is no question that defibrillators save lives.” Safety of both guests and employees is also a concern in historical activities like Patriots at Play, the Musket Range and the Axe Range.

“All of our master sergeants and most of our sergeants are state certified first responders,”

Karen says. “And our department of public safety works very closely with the Williamsburg Police Department.”

Setting up and documenting appropriate training is a large part of Karen’s job. All employees receive training in basic safety as well as training in moving and lifting, bloodborne pathogens, active shooter awareness, emergency planning and other areas as needed. This training is not only required for the job site but it can be important in dealing with situations in employees’ homes or a public setting. Such training makes people better able to deal with events such as hurricane evacuations or other emergencies. Colonial Williamsburg posts safety training information on its internal website and access to different kinds of training is one of the benefits available to employees. Many types of training are required on an annual basis or when there is a change in equipment.

“We perform job safety analysis and work to develop new ways of performing a task. Personal Protection Equipment (PPE) is often a last resort,” she says.

The department conducts noise surveys every five years. As the Fife and Drum Corps grew, the noise level in their practice area and surrounding rooms became very loud. Acoustical

tiles were installed and the members now use hearing protection. Engineering and administrative control solved the problem.

In addition to responding to employee and guest accidents, the department serves as a lost and found, deals with escaped animals and even snake removal. During large events such as the Fourth of July and the Grand Illumination, the department works closely with Williamsburg Police and Fire Departments to ensure access for emergency vehicles. Employees are stationed in strategic locations to respond to emergencies or help Emergency Medical Service (EMS) responders.

A maintenance team inspects buildings and facilities every Wednesday to evaluate any repair or ongoing maintenance needs. The Health and Safety Department’s Occupational Health Specialist, a former fire marshal and EMT, is a member of the team. He reports any safety concerns to Karen. For the most part, the commercial businesses take care of their own maintenance but work with Karen’s department when they are planning a large event and need help with safety logistics.

The department oversees health and safety for both the non-profit historical aspects of Colonial Williamsburg and the for-profit enterprises

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such as hotels and restaurants. The total workforce is close to 2,000 employees. Karen says the diversity of the people she interacts with is one of her favorite parts of the job. "I can be in my office in the Franklin Annex working and look out the window at a team of oxen coming down the street. Where else could I do that?" She respects the knowledge and professionalism of the museum and collections curators, the interpreters, skilled craftsmen and supervisors and thrives on working among them.

Although much of the necessary training is web based, Karen is aware that some employees lack computer access. In that case, training is conducted by supervisors in a question and answer format.

For the most part, the commercial businesses take care of their own maintenance but work with Karen's department when they are planning a large event and need help with safety logistics.

Karen became the department director in 2015 and has a total of 14 years working in health and safety. She originally came to the department as the occupational health specialist. Prior to that Karen was an emergency room nurse with credentials from the Medical College of Virginia, now VCU. The emergency

room deals with both patient and staff safety, and Karen saw the transition to occupational health as a natural fit for her abilities. "As a nurse, you learn how to talk with people about health and safety." She enjoys the wellness based training aspect of her job and has maintained her nursing license. Karen also holds a business degree from Christopher Newport University which is important in her present position as department director.

Karen describes herself as an "Army brat" who grew up all over but spent 25 years in Williamsburg. She and her husband, David, recently moved from Williamsburg to Poquoson to be near her aging parents. In her free time, she is planning an upcoming 65th anniversary party for her parents. David is retired from the Navy and works for the Shops at Carolina Furniture. "We usually commute together," she says. Karen has a stepdaughter and grandchildren who live in South Carolina, which was originally David's home. "Although I didn't grow up in the Carolinas, we think of it as home because of the family members who live there."

Karen and her husband love to travel and have taken three grand adventures cross country on Amtrak with her parents, hoping to eventually see all 50 states. So far they have visited 43. At

first, she wasn't so sure what train travel would be like, but she found it a wonderful way to see the country. "Sleeping on a train is great," she says. "The rocking on the rails puts you right to sleep." They have made several side trips to visit different bases where her father was stationed over the years. Karen and David spend time with her brother's family, reuniting annually at the Outer Banks and being, "The best aunt and uncle ever to a niece and two nephews," she says with a laugh. 2019 marks year 35 of their Outer Banks reunions.

Karen loves books. "I love to read, especially historical fiction, and always have a book with me."

Working with the elderly is another of Karen's passions. "In retirement, I hope to work as an elder-care advocate, to help them navigate the medical system and remain independent as long as possible."

Karen Stone's interest in the health and well-being of her fellow employees comes through in her conversation. Her nursing and business backgrounds, as well as her respect for the talents and expertise of her co-workers, give her a pragmatic viewpoint and a positive approach to meeting modern concerns within the appearance of 18th century America. NDN

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Executive Director

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- 2 dogs reunited happily with their owners
- 7 dogs enjoyed play groups
- 1 dog training class was booked, and 2 Animal Camp registrations were processed
- 19 community animals went on the VA Beach Neuter Scooter's bus for spay neuter surgeries
- 12 public vaccines done for community pets on the Neuter Scooter
- 4 civil engineers on property taking soil samples for our upcoming improvements
- 100 plus students learned about what we do at Waller Mill Elementary School's Career Day
- 1 dog left the shelter with Officer Holiday from City of Williamsburg Police Department for the Ride Along Program
- 16 pets in our care received their daily medications and 1 insulin shot for a diabetic cat
- 17 pets made available for adoption after their spay/neuter surgeries during this week
- 120 pets fed, exercised, cleaned and loved
- 4 foster kittens visited for their check-up and vaccines
- \$5,000 of medical bills paid
- 4 owner surrenders were scheduled for this upcoming weekend
- 12 medical exams performed & 24 vaccinations for pets

in our care

- 10 rocks were delivered for our rock garden as part of the Williamsburg VA Rocks! Program
- 1 "pupdate" from Maddie, a long-time resident that had many special case medical needs that was adopted last month



- 4 volunteer orientations to join our team of more than 600 volunteers
- 34 dogs were walked
- 3 pets served through our community outreach "Kibble Kitchen"
- 2 cats cared for at the PetSmart adoption center by a volunteer

- 6 loads of laundry washed, dried, folded and put away
- 5 volunteers assisted with getting the shelter ready to open at noon
- 14 cats cuddled and socialized by volunteers
- 1 Animal Camp t-shirt design was completed and approved
- 1 kennel temporarily repaired as a make-shift solution until permanent repair can happen
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HEATHER HICKS

Providing the Best Care Possible

By Alison Johnson



Lisa W. Cumming Photography

Heather Hicks comes from a family of caregivers. Her mother is a fellow nurse, her father is a firefighter and paramedic, and her older brother is a flight medic. Not to mention Heather's nine-year-old daughter who wants to be a nurse too when she grows up.

Heather, a registered nurse in the post-anesthesia care unit (PACU) at Riverside Doctors' Hospital in Williamsburg for the past

four years, does everything she can to connect with her patients, comfort them and even make them laugh.

"Being sick is scary, and you really need someone there with you saying, 'I got your back, don't worry,'" she says. "They need an advocate, and I feel like I've got a real motherly instinct. It makes my heart happy when a family looks me in the eye and says, 'Thank you so

much.'"

Little gestures truly matter. Heather sits right beside patients to talk to them, rather than standing at a distance in the doorway. She loves to deliver warm blankets and drinks, especially when patients are thirsty just after surgery. She inserts intravenous lines as quickly and gently as possible, telling patients to let her know if she's ever hurting them.

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"I have to think about how my patients are feeling, not just the jobs that I need to get done," Heather says. "I always have to remember there's a person there. What I love most about nursing is meeting people that I truly connect with."

Having an outgoing, cheerful and caring personality, Heather, 30, grew up in Williamsburg. Her dad, Willard Hicks, was a captain with the James City County Fire Department; her mom, Deborah Richardson, has worked as a nurse in both hospital and home health settings.

Around her sophomore year at Lafayette High School, Heather began to picture herself as a doctor, specifically a pediatrician. "I was always a real kid person," she recalls. "I babysat, and on family vacations my brother and I would always gravitate to other kids at our hotel. So, I really liked the idea of helping young people feel better."

Heather began a pre-medical major in biology at James Madison University. Then her life took a very unexpected turn. As a 19-year-old sophomore, she discovered she was pregnant with her daughter, Emilee.

As a young, single mother, Heather realized that the road to becoming a doctor was too long. "I needed to do something now to pro-

vide for myself and support this little person growing inside of me," Heather says. "It was an adjustment, but Emilee was so worth it. It definitely made me grow up faster. In fact, Emilee and I really have grown up together."

Her mother suggested nursing, and not long after Emilee was born in 2009, Heather enrolled at Thomas Nelson Community College to study for an Associate's Degree in Nursing. Her mom often cared for Emilee as a baby and toddler. "I don't know how I could have done it without my family, especially my mom," Heather says. "I had such an amazing support system."

Getting homework done was challenging at times, especially when her daughter just wanted to play instead. Heather, though, was determined to defy the naysayers who doubted that she would finish a degree.

"I always knew I would do something to better myself and my life," she says. "I had to do it for me but also for Emilee. I wanted to show her you can accomplish good things even when life doesn't go exactly as planned. I've also been able to teach her a lot about health and nutrition and fitness."

Happily, Heather also discovered that she loved nursing. She saw that she had extra time

with her patients, as compared to doctors, and also more flexibility to pivot between specialties and care settings over the course of her career. Nurses, she notes, might choose anything from traditional hours at a doctor's office to 12-hour shifts a few days a week at a hospital.

After earning her degree, Heather spent three years on the cardiovascular telemetry unit at Riverside Regional Medical Center in Newport News, where physicians and nurses closely monitor patients' vital signs and heart rhythms. In the PACU, where patients are recovering from surgical procedures and anesthesia, medical teams also make sure vital signs are stable and pain is under control.

In the future, Heather would like to work in an intensive care unit, possibly at VCU Medical Center in Richmond. Her brother, Will Hicks IV, a flight paramedic for VCU, has encouraged her to take on the daunting challenge of caring for the most critically ill patients.

"Failure is not an option," she notes. "When you have the lives of people in your hands, it is a heavy burden at times." Depending on what happens with the ICU track, Heather also one day may consider studying to be a Nurse Anesthetist, an advanced practice provider who administers anesthesia for surgery or other medi-



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cal procedures.

One challenge for all types of nurses is the constant change in medicine, which they must embrace to deliver the best care. Luckily, Heather likes to acquire new skills by working with doctors or more experienced nurses. When she started in the PACU, for example, she didn't know how to place an IV in a patient's arm.

"It took time, but eventually I learned how to do it and now people come to me when they can't get them [in], which makes me feel amazing," she says. "Human nature is to resist change and want to stay the same, but in health care it's not an option."

Sometimes, nurses are simply too busy to spend all the time they'd like with each patient. She might have six patients at a time; if one stops breathing or has another major complication, she might have to spend an hour or longer in that one room.

"Even if not, that's six patients who need help to the restroom, need pain medications on time, need regular medications on time, want that ginger ale as soon as possible, want to walk the halls with the assistance of their nurse, or are just lonely and want to sit and talk," Heather says. "We genuinely want to be there for ev-

ery patient, but we are only one person."

Outside of work, Heather likes going to the beach, swimming, biking, working out at the gym and simply enjoying a good laugh. "People always tell me they can hear my laugh a mile away." At home, she and Emilee have two cats, Furb and Whiskers, and a spunky toy Chihuahua, Boss. "He thinks he is the boss," Heather says with a laugh.

Heather is immensely proud of Emilee, a rising fourth-grader, who she describes as "sweet but a firecracker." Her daughter is very social, talkative and sensitive to the feelings of others, all qualities of a potential future nurse.

"For me to follow in my mom's footsteps turned out to be a pretty special thing," Heather says. "Having a third-generation nurse in our family would be great, too, but whatever Emilee wants to do, I'm behind her."

Heather Hicks is behind all of her patients, always doing her best to help them feel better physically and mentally.

"I had an elderly lady the other day who told me I had the personality for what I did," she relates. "When people say this to me, I always respond with, 'It's because you are so sweet, you make it easy.' I love being a nurse, because I feel like we really can make a difference." NDN

Next Door Neighbors

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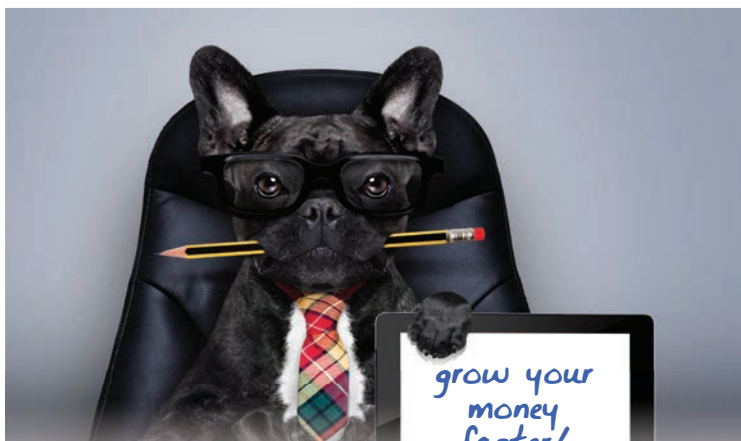
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SUSAN GALVIN



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A Life's Journey

By Dawn Brotherton

Deputy Chief of Police Susan Galvin is a Williamsburg native, through and through. She was born in Williamsburg Community Hospital that has since been replaced by Sentara Health. Graduating from Lafayette High School, she left town briefly to attend Old Dominion University.

Although a field hockey player in high school, Susan didn't hesitate to try something

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new when college friends approached her about trying rugby. Despite never having played before, she was chosen for the Virginia Women's Select Side team, made up of the best rugby players from the Virginia colleges.

Initially, Susan planned on going into social work, but an internship during college derailed those plans. "I was told you can go with the Secret Service, but you do a lot of filing. Or you can do an internship with the Chesapeake Police Department and ride around. So, I did that, and I was hooked the first night. I thought, this is awesome because no two days are ever going to be the same," Susan says.

After completing her criminal justice degree, Susan came back to Williamsburg and took a job with the sheriff's office. Six months later, she transferred to the police department and has been with them for the past 27 years. She started in patrol and has moved up the ranks through investigator, squad lieutenant and major. As a major, she rotated through as the leader of each of the different bureaus, giving her a well-rounded view of the department. In November 2018, she took the position of deputy chief.

In Williamsburg, Susan was the first female to make major and then first to deputy chief. In a department with only 38 sworn law enforcement officers, only eight are female. Pictures on the wall of her office show Susan as the only female on the Special Weapons and Tactics team before that specialty was absorbed into the department. But being the first woman in any of these positions is not what defines Susan. She appreciates the closeness of being part of the team, and even more so what the smaller squad gives her. "We're all a team. We're in this together."

In her latest position as deputy chief, Susan works on leadership development for the bureau commanders, which she enjoys. "It sounds cliché, but they are going to be the future of the department, and you have to have people ready to step in."

Susan believes that in order to be a good police officer, it's important to like serving the community. "You're in it for a reason; because you really, truly want to serve. And if you don't, I think you figure that out pretty quickly." There are moments that solidify why she chose this profession. "It's special when you have that one person who comes back to you, and you have no idea you've actually done something to touch their life, and they tell you how you affected them."

During one shift, Susan dropped off a book she found especially encouraging to a young man in need. Six months later, he looked her up again to express his appreciation. "You don't think about the little things you do that changes people's lives just because you care."

On the other hand, the hardest part about being a police officer is she tends to see people during their most difficult moments. "Sometimes they're not at their best. Any kind of tragedy? That's probably the worst." But under the new police chief, Sean Dunn, the department has started numerous campaigns for officers to engage with the public before there is hardship. "The officers have a neighborhood that they adopt, and they get to know the people in their assigned area. So, they're kind of the liaison for that neighborhood." Susan finds this program is solving issues at a much lower level before things get escalated to the sergeant or

lieutenant level.

“If something happens in the neighborhood, sometimes you hear people say, ‘Well, I didn’t want to call; I wasn’t sure it was something I should call the police about.’ But that’s why we’re here. It doesn’t matter how big or small, if it’s a concern to you, then it’s a concern to us. So instead, now they can reach out to the officer or someone they already feel comfortable with.”


The crime rate in Williamsburg is fairly low. “I think this community has expectations on the lifestyle they want. They work hard with the neighbors and other government organizations to be the best that they can be. You have to give a lot of that back to people who live here. They make the job a little easier.”

Susan and the other officers work hard to make themselves available to work with any groups that have concerns or questions. At any time, people can reach out for clarification. “I’ve found that usually, at the end of a meeting, everybody’s surprised by how well the conversation goes, and that maybe it was just a misunderstanding.”

Thankfully, Susan has a husband who can understand how important her work is to her. Todd Iverson is an investigator for the Gloucester Sheriff’s office, but they first met when he was working for the Williamsburg Police Department. When he transferred, they stayed friends, and a year later, they started dating. Married in December 2017, they are raising four-legged children of the canine variety.

Another very important man in Susan’s life is her father, James Galvin raised Susan and her sister on his own, and they remain very close. “He has really good values and taught us the right way to live our lives and our responsibilities. He’s one of my best friends.” Living in Williamsburg all of Susan’s life, James fixed up a house on the Eastern Shore and relocated after his retirement. But when a lot came open next to Susan’s house, James asked if she would mind if he moved next door. She was grateful for the additional time they had together, but he recently moved to the warmer weather of St Mary’s, Georgia, and Susan misses him already.

When Susan isn’t at work, she has plenty to keep her busy. She enjoys reading thrillers and will work on her own mystery novel after she retires. In the meantime, she loves to travel and explore various cultures. As a foodie, Susan can be found in the kitchen creating something new. She even makes her own blackened seasoning that she uses on everything.

When pushed to name her greatest achievement, Susan Galvin came up with an answer that everyone can strive for. “Getting to a place in your life, having lived a journey of life’s ups and downs, proud and not so proud moments and knowing you have overcome obstacles to become the person you are happy with... you are good with yourself. Life has unexpected events, but it’s how you approach and respond to your journey in life that shapes you into the person you are, a better you.” 

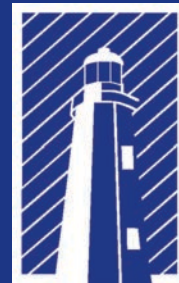
National Night Out is coming August 6 and will be held on the lawn near Revolution Golf off Richmond Road. This annual community-building campaign is to promote police-community partnerships and neighborhood camaraderie with an evening of food and fun. The police department will set up the child ID program and a cookout with a variety of local businesses supporting the event. It’s free to the public and a great way to meet your local law enforcement officers.

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JASON SLODISKO



Working to Keep Our Community Safe

By Narielle Living

Lisa W. Cumming Photography

As a young person, Jason Slodysko had a definite goal for his future: becoming a Navy fighter pilot. That goal had to change, however, because life had another plan for him. “When I was in high school, I had no intention of becoming a cop,” he says. “My whole life was geared toward becoming a Navy fighter pilot but my eyes were bad. They told me I couldn’t be a pilot, so I decided not to go into the military.”

Instead, Jason enrolled at Old Dominion University and began taking classes there. At

that time, he was living in his hometown of Virginia Beach. “To be honest, I had absolutely no idea what I wanted to do. I started working at a bowling alley and became the assistant manager there while I was in school.” Although he enjoyed his job and had fun at work, one thing bothered him. “I kept thinking, if this place disappeared tomorrow what would it matter.” At that point he knew he had to do something that would bring more meaning to his life.

One of the leagues who bowled at that location was a Virginia Beach police league. “I start-

ed talking to them and making friends with some of those guys,” he says. After a while, they began to encourage Jason to pursue a career in law enforcement, so he began researching the possibility. “Once I started looking into it, that’s all I wanted to do,” he says with a smile.

Jason took the police test for a couple of departments, but that initial attempt did not work out. “The vast majority of people don’t get hired right away unless they have certain backgrounds like criminal justice degrees or prior military, but I didn’t have any of that at the



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time,” he says. Soon, though, he began to work with the Norfolk Sheriff’s office as an auxiliary deputy. In this capacity he was assigned to work within the jails and the courthouses. “I got my certification through them and then I worked for juvenile justice for a little bit,” he says. “I was one of those boot camp drill instructors, and it was a good job. I liked working with the kids but I couldn’t support my family.”

He needed a job that paid better. Since he had his sheriff’s certification, he began applying for full-time law enforcement positions and was soon hired by the Richmond, Virginia sheriff’s department.

According to Jason, moving to Richmond was a giant leap of faith for him and his wife. “We had no family in Richmond, and I’d never been to Richmond,” he says. “I didn’t know anything about the area or where anything was. We just packed up, found an apartment and moved up there, and I started working. The job itself, I loved it. The guys I worked with, I loved.” Jason’s job was at the old city jail that has since been torn down. “I think there were something like 1,400 inmates and no air conditioning. So, you have tiers with 130 to 140 guys on it and no air conditioning. Tempers would flare, and it would be 100 degrees inside there.

But I loved it.”

Working full time in the old jail gave Jason a skill that has served him well during his career in law enforcement: effective communication. “Working there really taught me how to talk to people. When you’re a police officer, you have all your tools, but when you’re in a jail, you don’t have that. No weapons.” Because he only had himself to rely on, Jason quickly learned how to de-escalate a situation by talking to inmates, a skill that became useful in his next job with the Richmond Police Department.

“I thoroughly enjoyed working there, but I wanted to be out on the street, I wanted to become a cop. That was my ultimate goal. So I put in with the Richmond police department and got picked up there.” Upon joining the Richmond Police Department, Jason went through their police academy, which he refers to as one of the best. “Their police academy is top notch and very long. It was six months, not including the field training.”

After living in Henrico County and working on the southside of Richmond for a while, Jason and his wife decided to move their school-age children to a different area of Virginia. “We started looking at other places and actually came to Busch Gardens one time. I was talk-

ing to a lieutenant. He’s a major now, who was working extra duty at the front there and he said ‘hey, put in an application, we’re looking.’”

The people he spoke with gave him a great feeling about the area, so he applied and got the job. When Jason first began working here, he was assigned to patrol duty. As he explains, every officer eventually finds a specialty in law enforcement. “Some officers love traffic, some love community service, some love investigating cases, so it just depends on what you enjoy. I loved working criminal cases, I liked putting those puzzle pieces together.” This love of investigations eventually led to him studying for and taking the exam to become an investigator, an assignment he loves.

Jason has found a calling in life where he can help others and be in a community with citizens he loves to work with. “A lot of police work is based on the relationship with the community. James City County is famous for how wonderful the relationship is with the community, and that’s one of the reasons we can solve crimes so quickly because there are people willing to help us. Most of that is based on the fact that we do community based policing, where we’re not just out arresting bad guys. That’s not our goal. Our goal is to help people.” NDN

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WILLARD HICKS IV



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On the Front Lines and in The Air

By Elara Strand

Being a flight paramedic is not for the faint of heart.

“The job and the patients will surely humble you,” says Willard Hicks IV, flight paramedic at VCU Health Critical Care Transport Network. Willard, known as Will, has been a flight paramedic at the VCU Health Critical Care Transport Network for a year and a half.

Will is one of only a few flight paramedics in the area. He sees patients who range from babies to the elderly, who may be suffering from a serious illness or have just been in a traumatic accident. All of the patients have one thing in common. They desperately need the team’s help.

Each team is made up of a flight paramedic, a flight nurse, and a helicopter pilot. The helicopter itself is a flying ICU equipped with everything the team might need to do their job. Will and the team have to walk a fine line between

doing everything medically possible for their patient and getting them to the hospital as quickly as they can. Sometimes the hospital their patient is going to isn’t the VCU Medical Center. The flight team has taken critically ill patients to specialty centers as far away as Philadelphia, a very difficult task.

“We have to figure out which medical interventions to do now and which interventions can wait until the patient gets to the hospital,” Will says. “We need to decide how to transport these patients and treat them in a quick fashion, since we can’t stay on the scene for a long time, and then get them to the hospital. I’m just triaging what needs to be done.”

It’s a demanding job and one Will takes seriously. A typical shift might include two or three flights, so the first thing he always does is check the equipment thoroughly. After that,

the downtime while waiting for flights is never really downtime. Will reads medical books on topics ranging from ventilators to ultrasounds, listens to medical podcasts like EMCrit or does extra training. He feels he owes it to his patients to keep improving his skills and knowledge.

Part of Will’s job is sharing that knowledge. He teaches a variety of classes, from CPR to Airway Management and various trauma courses. One of the most important classes he teaches is to other medical professionals on how to create a proper landing zone for the flight team’s helicopter, a surprisingly complicated procedure.

“There’s a lot of training,” Will says. It’s training he’s tailored his life around since he was 16 years old.

Medicine is in Will’s blood. Will’s father, Willard Hicks III, has been a paramedic in his fire department for more than 30 years. Inspired

by his father's example, Will got his first certification, EMT-Basic, at the age of 16. By 19 he was volunteering with a local rescue squad. While volunteering with the rescue squad, Will and his father treated a patient who had to be medically evacuated. This experience of working with a flight team on a patient convinced Will he wanted to be on one of those teams someday.

The training isn't easy. Flight paramedics work for several years as a ground paramedic before transitioning to treating patients in the air. They also need a number of advanced certifications including the Flight Paramedic Certification itself, Advanced Cardiac Life Support, Pediatric Advanced Life Support, Neonatal Resuscitation and many others. Even when the initial training and certification is over, the learning never is. "Medicine is always evolving."

Will's first flight was a heady experience. "There was a lot of excitement, also nervousness," Will says. "You're nervous thinking 'Have I trained enough to have gotten here and handle these patients and such,' which I think is kind of good as well. You don't want to feel so cocky or arrogant. That can potentially cause detriment when it comes to patient care."

All of Will's training couldn't prepare him for just how intense conditions become inside the helicopter on a flight. "Probably the big-

gest eye-openers were how fast-paced it is and the amount of knowledge that you're required to know," Will says. "That's kind of the tough part. We're trying to be both quick and efficient at the scene or at the hospital and that can sometimes be pretty tough. So that, on top of the knowledge that's required because you're dealing with so many different types of patients, from babies to adults."

Five years in the air, Will is no longer a rookie flight paramedic, but there wasn't one specific moment when he stopped being a greenhorn. "It's definitely gradual. It's more how you feel when you've taken care of some complex patients, when things go awry and you're able to kind of turn it back around. It's once you've gotten a bunch of flights under your belt, once you've gotten a bunch of specific types of patients under your belt, that you're able to manage the scenes pretty well or manage the hospital well. That's when you think, 'Maybe this is for me.' Again, I'm still growing as a clinician. I'm still trying to get better. One day at a time, one shift at a time."

It takes a certain kind of person to be a flight paramedic, beyond any kind of knowledge. "You definitely need intelligence but you have to have passion. You have to have passion for what you do because passion is what keeps you driven."

At all times Will and the rest of the flight crew have the heavy burden of knowledge that they are not only transporting a patient but caring for them and intervening as medically necessary. "The bad flights linger with you at night."

Trying to stabilize severely ill patients while flying through the air is a high-stress job. Will and his coworkers all have their own ways of coping. "It's pretty tough," Will acknowledges. "Over the years you find your own ways of dealing with it. I'm fortunate to live in a rural part of James City County, so I have a bunch of property and I ride four wheelers out there, and that helps me to deal with stress."

Will and his coworkers know to lean on each other. During a flight, when working on a patient together with the flight nurse, "It becomes you two against the world." This closeness carries over into their personal lives. The co-workers become a kind of extended family, a web of support they can trust on and off the job. They celebrate birthdays and births together, letting happier moments bind the group tighter.

This team support, and the patients themselves, are what bring Will Hicks IV into work every day. "It's a blessing, it's a humbling opportunity, it really is. It's just such a unique job. That keeps me driving, keeps me going forward." NDN

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REPRESENTING WILLIAMSBURG

By Brandy Centolanza

Barbara “Barb” Ramsey first fell in love with the city of Williamsburg during her time as a student at William & Mary in the 1970s. Now, more than four decades later, Barb is working diligently to make Williamsburg just as enjoyable for students and residents alike as a member of Williamsburg’s City Council. She is serving her first term on the council after having been elected in 2016.

Barb wears many hats as a councilwoman. “I treat it as a job, and I take the responsibility seriously,” she says. “To do it right, I knew I would have to devote a lot of time to it. There is a sizable learning curve involved with being

an effective city council member, and I have discovered a lot about the numerous aspects of the city. I am enjoying representing the city in a variety of ways.”

Barb is the city representative for the Williamsburg-James City County School Division’s school liaison committee, which is comprised of school and government officials who are working collectively toward making the school division the best it can be. She is also the council representative for The Williamsburg Economic Development Authority (EDA) as well as the newly formed Eastern Virginia Regional Industrial Facility Authority. The latter consists of

seven jurisdictions on the Peninsula who work collaboratively on certain economic development projects.

Barb first became interested in public service six years ago after former Williamsburg mayor Clyde Haulman asked her to sit on the board of the Neighborhood Relations Committee (NRC) as its landlord representative. The NRC was established a decade ago to help foster better relationships between residents and college students. Barb, who has long had ties to W&M as an active alumnus, loves to interact with the students. At the beginning of each new academic year, she helps organize a picnic in her

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neighborhood on Griffin Avenue to welcome students.

Last fall, Barb went a step further, initiating “Break Bread with Barb,” a monthly event in which she invited various student groups along with local alumni to her home for dinner and discussion.

“It’s allowed everyone to talk about a multitude of topics in a relaxed atmosphere,” she says. “It’s been a great experience for both alumni and students and has helped broaden my awareness as a resident and a city council member.”

Barb is a devoted W&M alumnus. Through the years, she’s served on a number of the college’s boards and committees and has volunteered at the college in various capacities. She’s given time and energy to Campus Kitchens as well as the Sentara Colonial Half-Marathon and the Williamsburg Farmers Market. Barb is also a member of the Tribe Club board, supporting W&M athletics, and is involved with the local chapter of the alumni association.

Barb, who grew up in the small town of Dayton, Virginia, took a respite from Williamsburg for a while after graduating from W&M in 1975. She traveled extensively while employed at KDK & Associates and later lived in Germany for 15 years while working for Thomasville Furniture Industries.

Barb’s ventured to 82 countries and 46 states with the goal of crossing off two more states, North Dakota and South Dakota. Yearning to return to a familiar place, Barb relocated to Williamsburg a few years ago. After retiring from Thomasville Furniture Industries on her 60th birthday in 2013, she worked for a bit in the membership office of the Clubs of Colonial Williamsburg before leaving to focus on the election for a seat on the Williamsburg City Council. Barb decided to run for City Council in part after the retirement of councilwoman Judy Knudson.”

She was very excited upon hearing the news that she won a council seat. “I am still so grateful to everyone who helped me during my campaign. I had never run for anything before, so I didn’t know what was involved with it to be successful.”

Barb is especially proud of the opening and dedication of the new James Blair Middle School on Ironbound Road; the construction of new apartments in High Street as well as the construction of the Shenkman Jewish Center for students at W&M; the redevelopment and upcoming revitalization of the new Midtown Row in the heart of Williamsburg at the corner of Lafayette Street and Richmond Road; and the expansion of venues for entertainment, particularly the lawn at The Art Museums of Colonial Williamsburg for outdoor events such as the Summer Breeze concert series. A supporter of live music, Barb typically attends the weekly Summer Breeze concerts throughout the warmer months.

“I want to continue to broaden our tourism brand,” she says. “Williamsburg is a unique place. There are so many things to do and places to go. I especially want to work on increasing sports tourism. I am very keen on that and recognize that it is a win-win for everyone and has a significant economic impact on the entire area.”

Other aspects Barb would like to continue to improve upon are diversifying the city’s economy; addressing affordable housing needs and maintaining a healthy balance in neighborhoods; and strengthening the local school system. Barb is up for re-election to the Williamsburg City Council in 2020, and there is no doubt that she plans to seek a second term.

“My personal philosophy has been doing what is important as opposed to being important,” Barbara Ramsey says. “I want to continue to represent this city that I’ve become quite fond of and share all that we have to offer with everyone. I want to continue to see this city move forward in a positive way.” NDN



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CHIEF WILLIAM PATRICK DENT



Lisa W. Cumming Photography

Giving His Best to Williamsburg

By Narielle Living

Chief Patrick “Pat” Dent of the Williamsburg Fire Department has spent decades dedicated to serving his community in a job he loves. Poised to retire, Pat knows how much he will miss this job when he closes his office door for the final time. After all, he has spent 38 ½ years in the fire service. “Everybody always said you’d know when it was time, and it’s time.” Although he has had offers to do consulting work, he decided not to jump into another job

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yet. “I selected the summer to retire because I think it’s going to be a hard adjustment for me. It’s all I’ve ever known,” he says. “When I hear the sirens, I’m still concerned about the people here. It’s going to be a tough adjustment period not knowing if they’re coming back safe.”

Pat has spent time with one fire department or another from a very early age. “My dad was a volunteer firefighter in Hampton. That was back in the day when volunteers actually responded in their personal vehicles.” When his father responded to a call, often Pat would ride with him. “I have an older brother, and he became a volunteer.” Pat was soon hanging out at the fire station with them, and he credits his parents for his career choice. “My parents raised us to be caring people. I know that sounds cliché, but I just had that passion for community service. As soon as I was old enough, I started putting applications in with any fire department that would take them.” The first response he received was from the Newport News fire department, and he ended up working with them for 28 years. “I have a lot of respect for the department and a lot of friends there.”

When he was hired to work with Newport News, Pat had already obtained the certifications he needed to become a firefighter. Because of that, he did not have to attend the internal fire academy that Newport News hosted for new recruits. “It’s much different now,” he says. “We have a 16 week fire academy that everybody goes to and a Region One academy. We didn’t have that in 1981.”

Once he began work with Newport News, Pat rose through the ranks, eventually becoming assistant chief. “I was assistant chief in charge of training the last eight years I was there.” He worked with others on training, recruitment, hiring and retention. Then he was presented with an opportunity to come to Williamsburg. “They had an advertisement for a deputy fire chief, so I went through that process and fortunately was selected as deputy fire chief. A lot of times people leave departments because something happened, but there was no ill will whatsoever toward the Newport News fire department. It was difficult for me to leave there but it was an opportunity to come to a well-respected department.”

At that time, Pat’s intention was to be-

gin work as the Deputy Chief of Operations, which he began in 2009. Soon after that, the chief notified Pat of his plans to retire in June of that year. Pat says that he was very fortunate to be working with the city manager at that time, who told him they had several options. “He said we could go through a full nationwide recruitment process, but fortunately he was pleased with the work I’d done as the deputy chief, and he gave me the opportunity to be the interim chief. After a short interim period, he promoted me to fire chief.”

In fact, Pat considers himself to have been very fortunate throughout his entire career. “I was always an operations person so I never really saw myself as a fire chief, but of course your career advances.” Because of his passion for the fire service and the community that he is serving, Pat wants to continue to offer all he can. “Again, I am very fortunate to end up in Williamsburg and this community. Newport News was an awesome place to work but after 10 ½ years here this is like home for me.”

For Pat, being in this job has always been a passion, and the rewards of a good day’s work are being able to help people and being a



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When Darius Dixon and his wife were expecting their first child, they knew they needed someone to help them be the best parents they could be.

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“At first I was intimidated,” he said, “but I found support with my Fatherhood consultant. He listened to me, helped me through difficult challenges, and showed me he cared. Now I feel confident with my son and know I can be the father I want to be.”

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bridge to recovery. "A good day's work for me is that we see people and whatever they're dealing with, whether it's a medical incident or a fire incident, at their worst time. Although we can't fix it, we bring some comfort to them and provide some relief on their worst day. To me, that's what it's all about, service to the community."

Pat adds that the fire department provides so much more than responding to fire and EMS calls. "In Williamsburg, we support a huge number of special events throughout the year. Most often we provide medics for special events. Though we may never treat a patient, it gives us the opportunity to be ambassadors for the department. It gives us the opportunity to interact with visitors to Williamsburg and let them know what Williamsburg is all about."

Unfortunately for his department, the call volume is currently high. "Our guys stay extremely busy." In order to improve response times, city council recently approved the building of a second fire station for Williamsburg. "It's going to help several ways," he says. "The primary impact is that we're going to reduce

the response time to some of the areas that are the longer response times for us, but it's also going to help divide the work load. One of my biggest concerns is that my staff is rested and taking care of themselves. They push themselves. They're what makes the department what it is. It's not me sitting behind the desk, it's the work they do every day that makes the department well respected in the community. Some of the busy days they're running 23 calls in a 24-hour shift."

Pat encourages people to continue to take the precautions that they can when it comes to safety. Wear a seat belt and change the batteries in smoke detectors. When changing batteries, always check to see the manufacturer's date of the smoke detector. If the detector is over 10 years old, replace it with a new one. If anyone is unable to check or change their batteries, a call to the fire department non-emergency number will have someone come out to help. "In Williamsburg, there's a high population of elderly. If they can't check them, we would rather they call us than them be on the ladder. We'll come out and change them, check the battery, we'll

even get it replaced if it needs to be replaced. Another thing we offer is a home safety inspection." For the home safety inspection, someone is sent to the home to ensure there are no hazards. "This is not an enforcement thing, it's just to give you some ideas. If there's an elderly person living here is that really the rug you want, do you have extension cords everywhere. We have a checklist." But the one thing Pat stresses is simple: smoke alarms do their job, so make sure to have one that works properly.

After over a decade in Williamsburg, Chief Patrick Dent is grateful that his career path led him here. "I'm very fortunate to have been part of this department. It's really a team effort because it's the department and all the work the staff does every day but it's also the support we get from the city manager's office, city council and the community. It's really been a team effort to make this a safer community. That's why it's important for us to be the best we can be every day because they support us and that's what they deserve."

Thank you, Chief Dent, for everything you gave to Williamsburg. NDN



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Maintaining Beauty, Developing Growth

By Susan Williamson

Lisa W. Cumming Photography

City services cover many departments, including planning and zoning. Heather Markle holds the title of Zoning Administrator for the City of Williamsburg, which involves interpreting and enforcing the Williamsburg Zoning Ordinance. Her second-floor office in the Municipal Building features a half wall of operable windows overlooking trees. A giant zoning map covers one wall and the Williamsburg Zoning Ordinance book takes up a large space on her desk.

“My job is different every day,” Heather says, “and that’s one of the reasons I love it.” Her duties include reviewing all site plans and building permits and later making site visits to be sure that what is happening complies with the plans which were submitted. She may review four to five site plans a month and up to that many building permits per week. Site plans are required when the footprint or use of an existing building or parcel of land is changing.

She uses the ordinance to make recom-

mendations to the Board of Zoning Appeals, a group of five people appointed by the Williamsburg City Council. The board meets once a month to consider requests, appeals and applications.

“I try to help businesses and residents meet their goals within the confines of the ordinance. Often a business may want to erect an attention-getting sign or other feature which is not permitted here in Williamsburg. Instead of dwelling on what they can’t do, I try to find



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creative ways for them to accomplish their goals, such as referring them to economic development.”

Heather’s hope for her job is to continue to build relationships between the city and businesses, property owners, and students. As a part of relationship building, she provides information and advice to the public by explaining zoning and related ordinance requirements. Sometimes people are upset when they come to her, but by offering explanations in a non-confrontational manner, she can often help them to better understand the regulations and the reasons behind them.

One of her tasks is inspecting student housing and meeting with student tenants and property owners. “For many students, renting a home or apartment will be the first time they have lived away from home,” Heather says. She tries to counsel them on the importance of being a good neighbor. “The city even has an app telling them when to put out the trash and recycling.” According to the zoning ordinance, a maximum of four unrelated individuals can live in a single family dwelling, but only with an approved certificate of occupancy. She considers herself and her department a resource for students and property owners.

Allowing short-term rentals such as Airbnb’s

has been a recent zoning change. Homeowners may rent only one room of an owner occupied, detached single family dwelling. Another zoning change involved expanding the areas in which food trucks could operate.

“Williamsburg is a very green city,” Heather says. She administers tree preservation regulations, Chesapeake Bay Preservation/Wetlands ordinances and reviews plans for compliance. She is out in the city verifying the location of wetlands and resource protection areas where permits are required for tree removal. She also represents the City of Williamsburg on the Hampton Roads Planning District Commission Regional Environmental Committee. This regional committee covers Williamsburg to Virginia Beach and communities in between.

Citizen complaints will lead Heather to conduct inspections, but she also inspects ongoing projects and keeps her eyes open for new development which may change land use.

In looking towards the future, Heather sees one of Williamsburg’s challenges as meeting the needs of the residents and tourists within a limited geographical area. Affordable housing is one deficiency which is being met in part by the conversion of hotels into studio and one-bedroom apartments. Bike lanes help with transportation. Another challenge is to

maintain and encourage historical preservation while being creative toward meeting the needs of the next generation. The recently improved Kiwanis and Veterans Parks are examples.

Heather came to her job in zoning in 2018, moving from an administrative position in parks and recreation which she started in 2016. Her previous job involved league scheduling and facility management. She enjoyed her work there, but after ten years as a mostly stay-at-home mom, she was looking for a more career oriented position. When the zoning position became vacant, she applied and was hired with the understanding she would work for a year and then take the test for certification.

Instead, she worked hard to fast track her test preparation and passed the test after four months to become a Certified Zoning Administrator with the Virginia Association of Zoning Officials. She continues to attend meetings and join groups which will help her to learn more about the community and the region.

“I appreciate the opportunity to work in Williamsburg,” Heather says. “The city invests in people, making it a great place to be an employee.” Heather works under Erin Burke who is the Principal Planner. “She has a wealth of knowledge as does Planning Director Carolyn Murphy. They are great mentors.” NDN

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DESIGNS by REGGIE AKDOGAN

At Home in His Job

By Narielle Living



Lisa W. Cumming Photography

The City Assessor for Williamsburg may be new to this office, but Derek Green is not in any way new to the world of real estate assessment. Originally from Ohio, Derek and his family moved to this area in 2012 after a whirlwind job interview and house hunt. Enthusiastic and earnest, Derek sits surrounded by enormous computer screens on his desk as he describes his journey to working in city government.

Derek started his career in Ohio, where he was first exposed to the world of assessments and appraisals through an uncle. “In Ohio, assessments are overseen by an elected official called the county auditor. My uncle was the county auditor of the county I grew up in, and I was a fee appraiser, so I was doing it on the other side. My uncle came to me one day and said you know, I think you’d really like doing this for local government. I think this might better suit you.” Derek wasn’t convinced but little did he know that his uncle’s words would become a foretelling of his future.

Dayton, Ohio is home to Tyler Technolo-

gies, one of the largest mass appraisal firms in the country. Derek applied for a job with them, and after being hired he worked on Butler County, a suburb of Cincinnati. But he also worked on appraisals in other parts of the country. “I was a participant of the Nassau county, Long Island eval,” he says. “I got great experience.” Derek says that Tyler Technologies was a great company, and it was the best experience he ever had. “They were good to me, I never had to do a whole lot of traveling.”

Then came the opportunity that caused Derek to leave the company. They brought him into a conference room, slid over an envelope with a bonus in it for him, and told him his next assignment. “It was Lake County, Indiana. When they said Lake County, it didn’t really ring a bell, but when they told me Gary, Indiana...” He thought about it, considering that at that time Gary, Indiana was the murder capital. “So, I go home to my wife and I said yeah, they want us to go to Gary, and they want us to move.” As expected, that news was not well

received.

After that, Derek began to look for work elsewhere. He had contacts with a different firm, Appraisal Research. “I got to be good friends with some of those people, and the owner said I should come work for them. I did, and I spent four years there.” It was during his final reassessment with Appraisal Research that the county auditor of Preble County, Ohio contacted him about an opening within the government offices for the position of Real Estate Assessment Director. “So that’s how I got into local government. It just kind of worked itself out.”

Although he has lived in James City County since moving to Virginia, Derek began his career in Gloucester. “When I was offered the interview over in Gloucester, the county administrator and HR called me to set up an interview.” At that time, Derek and his family were in Florida visiting his mother. “My mother lives in Tampa. This was in the end of May, and school was out. I believe I got the call on a Monday or Tuesday, I was on a plane to Richmond

that Thursday, I interviewed, took my screens and tests while I was here, then I came back 2½ weeks later. So I had to fly back to Florida and drive my wife and kids to Virginia to find a place to live that weekend. We had very few options. We picked New Town. For six years I commuted to Gloucester from New Town. It was quite an adventure,” he says with a smile.

As the County Assessor in Gloucester, Derek walked into a job in 2006 that was full of turmoil. “It was coming into kind of a firestorm.” After their last assessment, Gloucester had had 4,000 board of equalization cases, in which homeowners protested their new assessments. “It’s really sad,” he says. It was a disaster. The board of supervisors decided to go in-house.”

Unfortunately, Derek says, they decided to appoint an assessor who had never done it before. “He had been working for the commission of revenue, and he was a long time fee appraiser, but he had never worked in that type of environment. It’s a whole different beast and was not fair to him. The expectations were insane.”

In 2010 the first assessment was not any better and administrative appeals were through the roof. “It was bad,” Derek says. After Gloucester hired someone else, this person stayed at that job for six weeks. Derek asked for permission

to call his predecessor to discuss the job. “He said there’s a lot of problems, but if you have a dedicated plan and stick to it, I think you’ll be okay.”

Derek made the decision to step into this position, and after working closely with other county employees produced his first assessment in 2015. “We had only 160 appeals. I’m told it was the best turnaround in the Commonwealth’s history, which was great because I had a good team. I was very fortunate, and I had an IT director who was very progressive. If not I would have been in trouble. So then in 2017 I did my next assessment. We reduced it again and only had 11 appeals.”

During his entire tenure in Gloucester, Derek lived in James City County. At the time, John Mattson, who was the former city assessor for Williamsburg, lived in Gloucester. “So bizarre, right? So, when John was ready to retire he’d given me a heads up a few years ago,” Derek says. He didn’t think anything would come of it, though. “What are the odds? So sure enough, he notified me early in the spring of last year that he was leaving. The job came open, and I couldn’t pass it up.”

As the city assessor, Derek sometimes has the opportunity to see people’s homes, especially in

the course of getting Williamsburg’s new system up and running. To his surprise and delight, people have opened their doors to him with a huge welcome.

“I’ve been in more homes here in the last three months than I have in 18 years. Here you knock, tell people ‘I’m out here on this permit,’ and they say well, come on in! It’s changed me in a positive way that the citizens here are so open.”

Derek has settled in at his job in Williamsburg and loves working here. “I told my wife, in hindsight, looking back and looking forward, this is the first time in my career as a local government employee that I’ve served the community I live in.” Over the course of 18 years, he commuted approximately 45 minutes each way. “This is the first time I can go home for lunch.”

Derek is quick to stress that while this job has been an exciting journey, he is grateful for the amazing support he receives from his co-workers.

“When this job came up I thought holy smokes, this is the city of Colonial Williamsburg. Does it get any cooler than that? Ironically, the path I took, I wouldn’t have done it any differently.” NDN



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Lisa W. Cumming Photography

ESTABLISHING ARTISAN CONNECTIONS TO TELL A STORY

By Caroline Johnson

Holly Webb never thought she'd call Williamsburg her home for as long as she has. In fact, living in this area is the longest time she has spent in one place. Coming up on 15 years here, Holly grew up moving both nationally and internationally. After moving here with her family, she was ready to graduate high school and move away.

"I had no interest in staying here," Holly says. "I've always had the heart to travel ever since I was a kid." Travel she did.

Holly remembers spending time in Korea as a child when her mom would take her to markets, seeking out local crafts, unintimidated by the language barrier. It was this passion for travel and an instilled sense of care for local artisans that would stick with Holly forever.

Holly, her husband and their golden retriever, Moses, have planted their roots in Williamsburg. They relish spending time outdoors, exploring local coffee shops and enjoying conversations with friends old and new. While the fact that she's calling Williamsburg home still is a surprise to her, she's learned how special it is to be a local. "I love that Williamsburg is a small town. I don't think you get to experience that unless you stick

around." Sticking around means witnessing the evolution of Williamsburg, of which she feels lucky to be a part. It's noticing when buildings change, when new places open and seeing the town grow. "I love that Williamsburg continues to evolve as I'm here longer," Holly says. "There's a sense of longevity about the people I've known in different seasons. There's a beauty to that."

By day, Holly and her husband serve as associate pastors at Life Church. Last fall, she transitioned to part-time to focus on a nonprofit she has long had a heart for, Wings of Refuge. It all started in 2010 when she visited Haiti after the life-altering earthquake that changed the course of the country. Wings of Refuge partnered with a local Haitian pastor to start a children's home after more than 330,000 children were orphaned. During that season, Holly found herself going back and forth to Haiti every few months. Now, with the headquarters moved to Williamsburg, Holly serves as the stateside Director.

After finding herself constantly bringing back items from her travels, and after meeting so many gifted artisan groups, Holly began to dream about possibilities for partnership. What

if she could find a way to connect these artisans to consumers in the States? What if she could find a way to ethically support local artisans from all over the world? While she looked for opportunities to do that, nothing existed like that in Williamsburg... yet. "I was talking about it non-stop, and finally my husband convinced me that I should just do it," Holly says. As scary as it was to dive into the unknown, Holly consulted with family members who had started a business and got to work. "I went online and got my LLC, a bank account and invested some money to stock up on inventory." And her business, Made, was born.

Made would sell ethically made goods crafted by artisans all over the world. Made would share their stories and connect consumers to what really matters. Made would solve a problem many consumers didn't even know they had. For Holly, it all started with learning what would sell. While she knew how beautiful and high-quality the products she would sell were, it was because she had seen them in person.

Through the mission of Made, it is Holly's hope to help transform the narrative of other countries that we see throughout the media.

Often, it can be easy to view work in Haiti or other countries as handouts. Having seen the negative effects of nonprofit work done poorly, Holly knew there was a better way. She saw the positive effects of business development and providing jobs for the local people. She realized that most of the orphans in Wings of Refuge's children's home were "poverty orphans," meaning they had parents alive who were financially unable to care for them. Partnering with local artisans could change this narrative for good, and made is doing everything in its power to make that happen.

"Everything we buy from artisans is paid fairly," Holly says. "This usually means four to six times more than the country's minimum wage." Rather than a handout, community development, when done right, gives ownership to local artisans. "The beautiful part of this is when people are willing to buy and pay a fair price. We don't sell items that are a 'charity buy.' We sell items that are bought because they are made well, high-quality and appealing." Each item is made with locally and/or ethically sourced material to ensure made's mission is intertwined from start to finish.

Along with the fair treatment of the artisans who make Made's products, Holly strongly be-

lieves in the impact that sharing the artisans' stories can have on consumers. While in the US we celebrate when things are cheap, it can mean that it's coming at the cost of someone else. "We don't see it, but it's often costing someone their children, dignity and ability to develop a life for themselves," Holly says. To combat this, sharing the stories of the artisans who make made's products is a way to establish a connection. Whether we know it or not, our shopping decisions can affect so many. Holly sees the importance of being connected and recognizing that connection. With Made, she's working to bridge that connection gap. "To shop in a way that you're aware and conscious about how the decisions you make impact the world is a really important and beautiful thing," Holly says.

Made sells a variety of items including home goods, children's toys, jewelry, accessories, bags and apparel. Holly wants to make sure that made isn't viewed as a "fair-trade gift shop," but rather as a way to help equip and educate people on the ethical way to buy from other brands as well. Made also attempts to connect customers with other brands that are providing ethical opportunities.

"The picture is about much more than just selling," Holly says. "It's about educating people

on how to do the shopping part of life a little better." By being a part of the fashion revolution, Made is committed to educating consumers on who makes the items they buy. They host events such as clothing swaps and pop-up shops and have future plans for educational events and film screenings in Williamsburg.

With hopes to one day open a storefront, Holly is excited to continue spreading made's mission in Williamsburg by sharing the impact of buying ethically. As she primarily sells items through pop-up sales, she has been immensely grateful for the support of local businesses around her. "I've been blown away by how kind and generous so many business owners have been in Williamsburg," Holly says. From her first pop-up shop at Culture Café in 2017 to many others at various locations, the support has been phenomenal in helping her share Made with people near and far.

"I don't want to pretend to be the expert," Holly says. "I am journeying and learning how to do this at the same time as everyone else." Holly Webb is hopeful about bridging the connection between people and the products they buy. "What our artisans make is about more than just a good product. It's about how the story matters." NDN




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Lisa W. Cumming Photography

Passionate About Lacrosse

By Dawn Brotherton

According to the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA), lacrosse is the fastest growing sport, with more than 36,000 athletes playing at the college level. Where do these athletes get their start? In recreational organizations like Williamsburg Warriors Lacrosse.

Anders Timberg is the president of the non-profit organization established in 2005. The Warriors are part of a recreational league; there are no tryouts, and they don't turn anyone away. Kids start as young as five years old, learning the basics and the rules of the game. The league is US Lacrosse sanctioned and includes players through eighth grade.

"We participate in a league, so we are just Williamsburg kids except for a few from New Kent because they don't have a program. But we do participate in a league that plays teams from Newport News, Yorktown, all the way down to Virginia Beach and the Outer Banks. And we've played teams all the way up to Richmond," An-

ders says.

The teams practice two days a week with multiple games on the weekends. "Lacrosse plays spring season. We will start practicing as early as February, and we finished our rec season in May." For kids who want to keep playing, travel lacrosse is available, but they may need to drive to Richmond to find a team.

While the area high schools do not have lacrosse as part of the Virginia High School League; Warhill, Jamestown and Lafayette have club teams. Anders is proud of the high school programs they feed. "The Jamestown girls won the state championship, and the Jamestown boys were the last boys' team to be eliminated in the semifinals." This year, two high school players who played for the Williamsburg Warriors were selected for the all-American team.

Sport & Fitness Industry Association reports participation in lacrosse growing nationwide 25 percent since 2012. Anders is hoping lacrosse

gets added to the VHSL in the near future. "I think at the rate we're growing, which is between 15 and 25 percent in the Hampton Roads area every year, it's inevitable. My hope is some of the kids who have come through our program will have the opportunity to play at a varsity level before they graduate high school," Anders says.

Although Anders never played lacrosse himself, he is very passionate about the program and helps coach. "I was an athlete growing up. I played all the sports, basketball, and football, even played hockey and baseball, so the concepts were all there, and I just applied those. But I think the most important thing is being around the kids and coaching them. That's what I love the most."

Originally from New Jersey, Anders received his English degree from William & Mary. "My English degree helps me quite a bit as far as my communication and presentation skills, but I never did truly get into the teaching, which is

what I originally thought I wanted to do.”

He returned to New Jersey and started consulting in the technology realm. Now he works business development for a software company out of Boston while living in Williamsburg. He and his wife, Rebecca, moved here eleven years ago to raise their three children, Emma, Mia and Logan. Anders knew he wanted to get the kids involved with sports but didn't know where to start. A good friend introduced them to lacrosse.

As an up-and-coming sport, lacrosse didn't have a large following in this area. His then-seven-year-old daughter Mia wanted to try it. “Like most parents, I volunteered just to make sure my kid didn't get run over. She didn't, and she really fell in love with it.” Now both of his daughters play, while his son is sticking to baseball.

The Williamsburg Warriors have approximately 180 players divided into nine youth teams broken into age groups eight and under, ten and under, twelve and under, and fourteen and under. They have separate teams for boys and girls. In some age groups, there are enough kids for Williamsburg to have multiple teams. When adding in the high school club players, there are another six lacrosse teams, bringing the number of participants closer to 250.

He is especially proud of the way the kids

have given back to the community and the culture surrounding the players through the years. They are inclusive and form strong bonds.

“It's very common for players who've come through our program who are in high school or have graduated to come back and volunteer as coaches. I've had two high school girls volunteer with me now for the last two years. Former warriors have come back to help and support these kids, to pay it forward. That culture is probably one of the most rewarding things: to see a kid get better, work at things and just find love for the game.”

In the youth leagues, the boys' team field ten players, and the girls' team has twelve. With the younger kids, fewer may play in order for them to get more time learning the basics of the game. Last year, as the numbers fell out, there were three girls in the eight-and-under age group without enough to make a team. Two of the girls each brought a friend. The Fab Five, as they became known, played with only five all season and didn't lose a game. “It's all about that friendship and camaraderie.”

Williamsburg has become home for Anders and his family. He loves the sense of community. “There are very few points of contact where you don't know somebody who knows somebody you know. Now that can also be daunting, right?

From a perspective of being involved in something like this organization, you get to know a lot of people who know other people.”

Coming from the northeast, Anders appreciates the weather and the location of Williamsburg. “You can be at the beach or the ocean within an hour. You can be at any one of the rivers within five to ten minutes from where we live. I think just the area itself is beautiful. It's one of the prettiest places on earth.”

With three children, Anders Timberg doesn't have much time for hobbies. He spends every spare minute he has with his kids, coaching whenever he has the chance. He's excited to continue growing the organization and teaching others about lacrosse. He encourages everyone to come out to the Warhill Complex for a game and cheer the kids on.

Registration for spring season opens around Thanksgiving of every year. The Williamsburg Warriors hold free clinics in the fall and winter for players to try it out before signing up. “We do have a great support system. But we can always use help with coaching and things like community outreach.” NDN

For more information, visit their website at www.wmbglax.org or follow their progress on Instagram [Williamsburgwarriorlax](https://www.instagram.com/Williamsburgwarriorlax).

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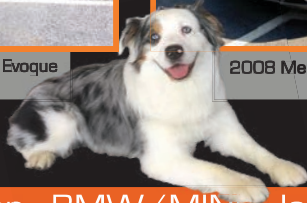
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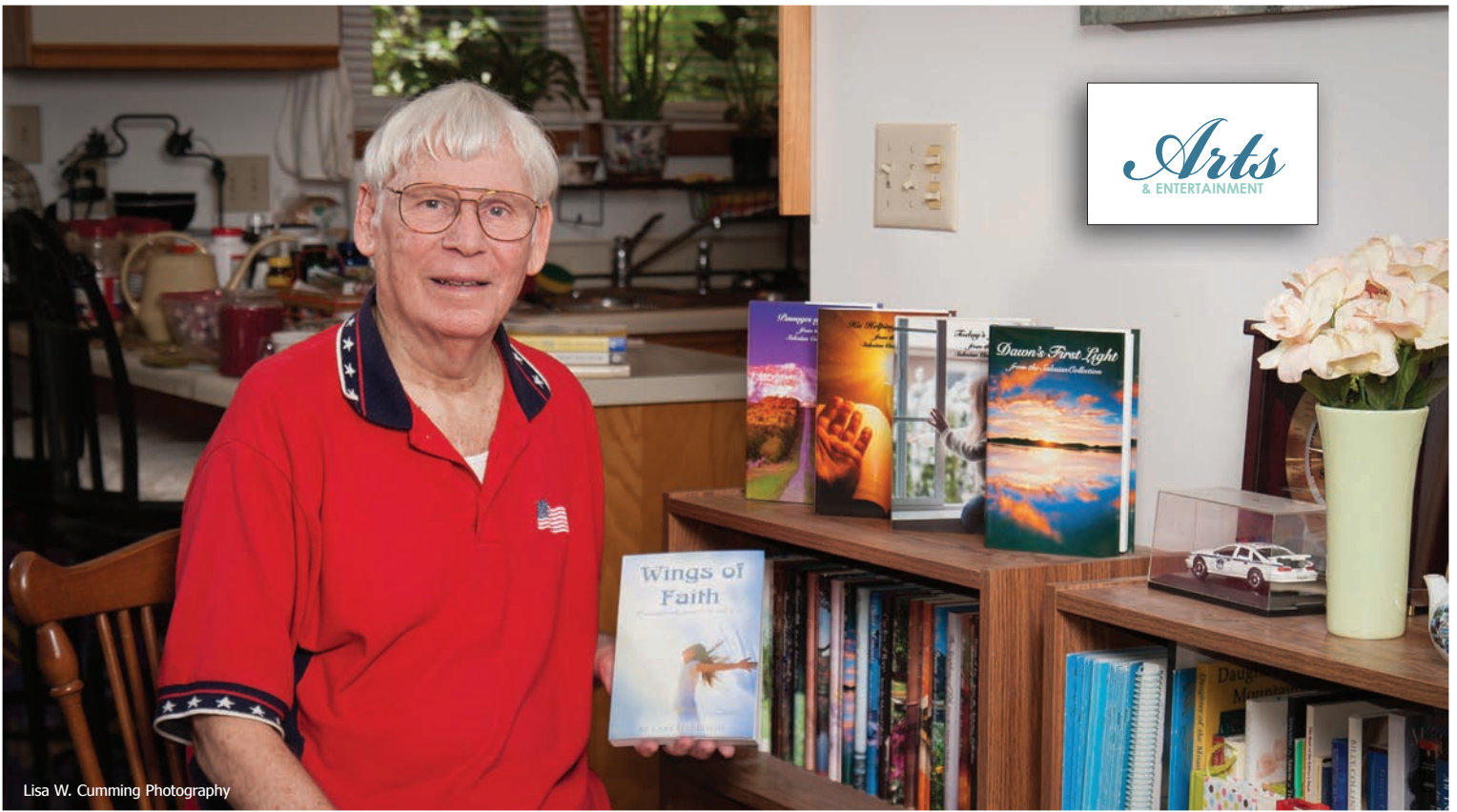
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Lisa W. Cumming Photography

Poetry is His Gift

By Lillian Stevens

Since the age of 16, Clay Harrison has composed poetry that is touching and moving, poetry that is sincerely written and felt. “Mostly, I just want to bring comfort to people,” Clay says.

He calls his poetry style basic rhyme and meter. “It’s just plain talk, down-to-earth writing that comes straight from the heart.”

For years, Clay’s poetry has appeared in various devotional guides, anthologies and spiritual collections. He also writes poems of tribute for neighbors or members of his beloved Olive Branch Christian Church when mourning their loved ones.

Last winter, his latest book was published.

“It’s my memoir,” he says. “The title is *Wings of Faith*, and the subtitle is ‘encountering angels in our lives.’”

The book is an extensive collection of poems through which he tells his life’s story, especially touching on certain teachers, coaches, pastors and friends who have both inspired and encouraged him. In addition to the poetry, the book offers a glimpse into another side of the retired law enforcement official. He is an avid collector of autographs and letters from celebrities and historic legends. With an estimated 40,000 au-

tographs in his collection, Clay chose carefully which ones to include in *Wings of Faith*. Spoiler alert: there are even notes from national figures, including former U.S. presidents. Indeed, his is a remarkable story.

“I was born in 1924 in a little wooden shanty in Murfreesboro, Tennessee. My father had a first grade education, and my mother made it through the sixth grade, so their options for work were limited. We were so poor that we had newspapers pasted to the walls for insulation.”

When his parents, both of whom grew up on farms, decided that the farming life was not for them, they harnessed their meager resources and boarded a Greyhound bus.

“They ran out of money in Tampa, Florida,” Clay says. “So that’s where they settled, and that’s where I grew up. Since my parents were not educated, they took menial jobs, and we lived over top of skid row for a while.”

Their apartment lacked the most basic creature comforts. “The tin roofs leaked, and there were roaches and scorpions on the floors,” he says. “Those years weren’t much fun.”

Fun did come into the youngster’s life, thanks to a generous uncle.

“In the 1930s my father’s older brother ran

away from the farm,” he says. “Uncle Lee had a lot of ambition and a lot of skills so he set off to California in search of work. He wound up in Los Angeles working as a studio driver.”

When Clay was in the sixth grade, his uncle invited the family to visit. They stayed five years. “My uncle knew so many movie stars because he drove them wherever they wanted to go. He was also a skilled blacksmith and quite the card shark so those talents landed him roles as an extra in the movies. In westerns, my uncle would be the blacksmith. Or in a gambling scene, he’d be dealing cards. He appeared in shows like *Hill Street Blues*, in parts that weren’t credited.”

The family lived in a little bungalow across the street from MGM Studios. “That was when I began collecting autographs,” Clay says. “Liz Taylor signed my first one.” Every day after school, he would walk over to see the movie stars and get autographs. His collection grew to include Bil Keene, creator of “The Family Circus” cartoon, and the Disney animators.

“We got to stay in California for five glorious years,” he says. “I loved it there, but we moved back to Tampa when I was in the tenth grade and it broke my heart because I wanted to get into the movies like my uncle.”

In hindsight, though, Clay knows that everything happens for a reason.

“Once we were back in Florida, I had a school teacher who was really tough,” he says. “She was like Bette Davis with shoulder pads, a harsh disciplinarian who never gave an ‘A’. Then, one day we were studying poetry, and she read the poem “Little Boy Blue” by Eugene Field and I noticed tears coming out of my teacher’s eyes. That’s when I started thinking about poetry seriously.” His teacher’s emotion led him to channel his own feelings through poems.

“There was a little girl who lived next door to us,” Clay says. “Her name was Lorraine, and my mother used to babysit for her. Well, I didn’t have any brothers or sisters so Lorraine was like my baby sister.” Tragically, the two-year-old had liver disease and passed away. To help the family through its grief, Clay wrote his first poem, which he called “Little Lorraine”. The family even had the poem printed on funeral cards in her memory.

Clearly, the stern teacher with a softness for poetry had influenced the emerging poet’s life, one of several defining moments. Another pivotal moment occurred at an Easter reenactment of the crucifixion, one that led Clay on his spiritual journey.

“The Black Hills Passion play came to an amphitheater in Lake Wales, Florida,” he says. “The pastor in my church knew I didn’t have money to attend, but he saw to it that I could go.”

Clay describes the part of the play that culminates in the crucifixion. “Storm clouds gathered and filled the sky. There was an intermission before they took Jesus off the cross. But then, as they lowered him from the cross, the weather cleared and the most gorgeous rainbow appeared across the amphitheater. At that moment I knew that God is real.”

From that point on, Clay began contributing writing for Christian magazines and journals. “It was like God drew me a path. He gave me the gift of poetry so that I could spread His word.”

In 1964, Clay enlisted in the U.S. Army and worked as a military police officer in the Panama Canal Zone. Three years later, he entered the first accredited police academy in Tampa and then embarked on his career in law enforcement. Having spent his professional career of 35 years in law enforcement, he has certainly seen a lot and has continued writing poetry about much of what he witnessed.

Through his career in law enforcement, he was sometimes exposed to world figures and often shared his poems with them. General Norman Schwarzkopf lived in Tampa, so Clay was part of his escort detail. “I gave him one of my little poetry books, and he wrote me a note that said he enjoyed reading poetry at the end of a stressful day.”

As a police officer, he also served on escort detail for national figures like Coretta Scott King, Alex Haley and Rosa Parks. And yes, he has their autographs. He even has a letter from Mother Teresa.

“I’ve met John Wayne, Doris Day. So many celebrities! Jane Russell, Barbara Mandrell and Rock Hudson. Barbi Benton called me a ‘poet disguised as a police officer’! I have notes from Jimmy Stewart and Rosa Parks, too.”

His poetry has won many awards ranging from the Daily Press Readers’ Choice (2013) to his selection to the International Authors and Writers Who’s Who, published by the International Biographical Centre in Cambridge England.

Clay and his wife, Shirley, recently celebrated 52 years of marriage.

“I had planned a trip to the mountains to see covered bridges,” he says. “Unfortunately, four days before our anniversary, I had a stroke.”

His recovery is going remarkably well, and once he finishes with his rehabilitation, Clay still plans to take his wife on that trip. NDN



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A Beacon for Change

By Wheston Chancellor Grove



Lisa W. Cumming Photography

Growing up as the daughter of a military father influenced Sharon Schlerf's professional trajectory. She and her husband, Michael Newcomb, an Army veteran, founded the *Beacon Institute: Veteran Pathways Home*, a nonprofit organization, in 2013. Formerly called Beacon Institute, established in 2001, Sharon has been serving those who serve us since 1993. Chaplain, Behavioral Health Professional and descendant of a multi-generational military family with five family members serving in our post 9/11 U.S. Armed Forces today, she provides Courage to Change holistic health programs for service members, veterans and their family members nationwide, with a focus on peer support and combat trauma care.

Before the age of 14, she'd moved 18 times.

She is one of five siblings. Her father retired as a Lt. Colonel having served in three wars: WWII, Korea and Vietnam. He lied about his age and entered the Navy at 14 before being honorably discharged at 18. He then enlisted in the Army at 19. At 39, having achieved so much in his early career, he experienced what is now recognized as combat fatigue. Still a young man, military demands had taken their toll. Sharon's entire family endured the repercussions of a father and husband who retired too soon. Military life was all he'd known. He just needed a break, not retirement.

As a result, Sharon now helps veterans navigate unemployment and loss of housing, preparing active service members for eventual major life transitions. In the early 90s, she returned to

college and earned degrees in counseling. She started Discipleship Concepts Inc. (DCI), delivering training to professionals to help them address community redevelopment and homelessness issues, especially where veterans and their families were concerned. DCI was located in Baltimore. Homeless rates were a staggering problem across the country 30 years ago and continue to be. Sharon taught classes on community rehab, stabilization and housing. "One day the Mayor's Office for housing and homeless affairs asked for assistance in creating a program to bring resources together." Sharon became the architect for Housing and Urban Development, better known as HUD, a continuum care plan for homelessness.

In 1995 Sharon published *Blow the Trumpets*,

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Loudly, which went on to sell 1.2 million copies. The plot for her first spiritual warfare novel is autobiographically based on “when the war started at home,” after her father retired from the military. She then published *When Hell Freezes Over... The Gift*.

Twenty years ago, Sharon was in a major accident when a car hit her as a pedestrian. She experienced a serious injury, permanent physical disabilities and a diagnosis of Post-Traumatic Stress (PTS). Compass, short for compassion, is the name of Sharon’s service dog, a well-behaved jet-black German shepherd.

Sharon has been in Virginia since 2008. She first served at Ft. Eustis, providing chaplain services to individuals returning from war and deployments. She also focused on helping active duty members learn transitioning strategies and coping skills in preparation for the day they would get out. In so doing, she started a pilot program and received referrals from Hampton’s Veteran Affairs services. She actively worked to stabilize homeless vets, assisting them in moving into long-term housing. “What we did was to look at what each organization does best, come to a consensus, then implement a plan.” With enough groups onboard, a program can be taken to the government for licensing and reviewed for certification.

Sharon met her second husband, Mike, in 2012. It was kismet. Mike is a peer-to-peer specialist. He became the first Peer Specialist hired by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs for Hunter Holmes McGuire Virginia Medical Center in Richmond in June 2013. At the time, Sharon was using traditional counseling approaches to address the needs of veterans and their family members. Michael introduced Sharon to peer-to-peer support training.

In the beginning, as the program was being assembled, they measured results over a 2.5-year period, tracking the stability of those who’d completed the intense training. “Of those who came to us and others who were referred by Veteran Affairs, we had a 93 percent success rate that has continued over the years because they know they can still contact us if they need assistance.”

Veterans Pathways Home not only services but also trains personnel at state and federal levels to be facilitators of the program. “It is a faith-based program that takes a holistic approach. We do not proselytize. We are here to help anyone who comes to us, regardless of beliefs.”

Sharon helps individuals reclaim, or acquire, a sense of empowerment and advocating for themselves. “We help service members and their families focus on long-term results. The program not only helps those in need of services, it also

informs and trains caregivers and counselors who are interested in seeking further knowledge about trauma and how to approach it in their practice.” Sharon and Michael also train law enforcement and first responders.

As an independent organization, Sharon can go “where angels fear to tread” because she isn’t owned. She has worked in a way that is grass roots, gradually sowing the seeds for change, while also building relationships with department heads of Veterans Affairs. She has a long-standing rapport, more than eleven years, with policymakers who are in the jockeying position to revamp the system and implement positive changes. This requires patience.

“We are committed to carrying the program through until we absolutely can’t perform anymore, or we feel there are enough trained peers out there to serve the needs of those in demand.”

Ideally, they are working to connect with a major, national veterans service organization so they can hand the program over, knowing its torch will continue to burn as a beacon of hope for future generations.

“It’s important to help someone based on empathy and connection. No amount of logical education ‘thinking and processing’ is ever going to take the place of human empathy, compassion and care.” NDN

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Lisa W. Cumming Photography

COLLECTING MOMENTS

By Erin Fryer

Beth Williamson's life motto is to collect moments, not things. This idea inspired her to take on an entirely new career path and launch her own home organizing business.

Originally from Delaware, Beth was a teacher for 12 years in her home state, California, and eventually here in Virginia. After having her son, the long hours that came with teaching didn't work well with Beth's new role as a mother, so she looked for a different opportunity with flexible hours. Before the Williamsburg location even opened, Beth walked into Trader Joe's and asked for a job.

Though she had hoped to snag a position as

an artist at Trader Joe's, that position was already taken so Beth was hired as a crewmember. Eventually, she took over the artist role and has been there ever since. "I absolutely love Trader Joe's," she says. "The staff there is just one big happy family. Everyone is awesome."

About three years ago, Beth met a new co-worker, Taylor. The pair had never met outside of work but they had a mutual passion for organizing and decorating. Fast-forward to today and the co-workers recently launched their own organizing and staging business called Creating Space.

"People always ask us how the business got

started, and we just kind of laugh because we aren't sure how to answer them," Beth says with a laugh. "We were just talking at work about how much we loved organizing and now here we are."

While Beth is still working part-time at Trader Joe's, she hopes to make Creating Space her full-time gig. "I have never loved a job so much," Beth says. "This is what I am meant to do."

Beth admits that it is not her style to sit still, so having a desk job has never been appealing to her. Working at Trader Joe's and Creating Space allows her to keep active at the same

time. "I am usually dirty, dusty and bleeding from crawling around in attics, but I love it."

Creating Space allows Beth to have the creative outlet she so desperately craves. "I come from a family of Realtors and artists, so I am kind of a blend of both," she says. "I have my real estate license and love working in people's homes, but I also love art and have been able to use this as my artistic outlet as well."

Not only do Beth and Taylor organize and de-clutter homes, but they also work with local real estate agents on home staging.

Beth says their main client base is people getting ready to move into assisted living or who have lost a spouse. "Our niche is working with people getting ready to sell a house," she says. "We will help anyone who needs us, but that's been the most popular request we have received. We help sort their belongings, help them purge unnecessary items and donate things to charity that can be reused by someone else."

If the homeowners Beth works with have specific charities that they would like her to give their belongings to she will, but she knows who needs what in town so she encourages them to trust her and Taylor to get the items to the people who need them most.

"We partner with Avalon, FISH and the Humane Society," Beth says. "Everything has a place, so we talk to the charities to find out what they need and bring them items we find."

The business partners admit that they ran before they walked, and even though they have only been in business for a few months, they are confident that they know what they are doing and have already made lots of connections.

"We just got to talking about it at work one day and the next thing we knew we were diving in headfirst and creating a website," says Beth. "It's like we are on a train and building the tracks as we go."

Beth says that prior to starting Creating Space, she started every new job she ever had with reorganizing. "First, I de-clutter, then I rearrange, and then I can work. I love doing it, it just took me a long time to learn that that's what I should be doing as my actual job."

Beth describes herself as a minimalist who doesn't have a lot of stuff. "I love not having extra stuff," she says. "It makes life so much simpler. I have experienced joy by minimizing my belongings, and I love getting to help others experience that same joy."

As for juggling a professional life with a personal life as mothers, being small business owners allows Beth and Taylor to make their own schedules to accommodate their children's school and extracurricular activity commitments.

While some people like the stability of the nine-to-five work week, Beth says she likes the excitement of being on call 24 hours a day. "Everyone says when you start a business that you will work day and night, but I love it. At night, I am not watching Netflix; I am researching. All of a sudden, I am a morning person, and I never have been before. I am just so excited and can't wait to get in the houses and get things done."

Outside of home organizing and staging, there is also a training aspect involved when Beth is working with a client. "If someone already had a habit of accumulating a lot of stuff, it can easily happen again," she says. "So we train them to set rules for themselves like if they buy something new, to donate something they no longer use."

The top-organizing tip Beth Williamson has for people is to live by her life motto of collecting moments, not things. But if you do find yourself needing to get rid of unwanted items, pick a place to donate them to rather than throwing them away and don't be afraid to ask for help. **NDN**

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Hey Neighbor!

Please visit

www.WilliamsburgNeighbors.com,

Click on **Hey Neighbor!** for a complete list of current community announcements.

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

Hey Neighbor!

JAMESTOWN JAMS CONCERT SERIES

June 28, 2019

Jamestown Beach Event Park, 2205 Jamestown Road from 5:30-8:30 p.m. Free. All ages. Live music during the Jamestown Jams free concert series, offered on select Fridays throughout the summer. Assorted beer, wine and food are available for purchase. Bring your own chair or blanket; snacks, picnics and non-alcoholic beverages are also permitted. For more event details, visit explorejccva.com. During the June 28 concert, also participate in friendly competition with family and friends in the Spikeball Tournament, 6-8 p.m. (ages 10+) offered by James City County and Williamsburg PickUp Games! Free! Pre-registration for the tournament is encouraged, but not required. For information on the tournament, visit jamescitycountyva.gov/recreation or call 757-259-5355.

Hey Neighbor!

WORLD CUP 3V3 SOCCER TOURNAMENT

June 28, 2019

Sanford B. Wanner Stadium, 4900 Stadium Road from 6 p.m. – midnight. Ages 6-18; \$5/player. Join James City County Parks & Recreation and local soccer organizations for a youth 3 v. 3 soccer tournament to celebrate the 2019 Women's World Cup! Individuals should pre-register by June 19 in order to reserve their team's spot to attempt to take gold! Enjoy soccer, music and a great tournament atmo-

sphere at the stadium. Pre-registration required. For registration information, visit jamescitycountyva.gov/recreation and for specific event information contact sarah.oreilly@jamescitycountyva.gov or phone 757-259-5355.

Hey Neighbor!

WILLIAMSBURG VFW POST 4639 ANNUAL 4TH OF JULY PICNIC

June 29, 2019

The Williamsburg VFW is having its annual free picnic this year from 12-4 pm. Open to the public, and of course all veterans and their families. We will have food, beverages, and activities for young and old. We are a 100% volunteer organization and our mission is to provide support to local veterans and their families in need. We are located at 109 Jesters Lane (behind Publix off of Old News Rd). Phone: (757) 258-9802 Website: vfwpost4639.com Email: vfwpost4639@gmail.com

Hey Neighbor!

2ND ANNUAL WILLIAMSBURG PRO-AM BBQ COOK OFF

June 30, 2019

The Rotary Club of the Historic Triangle is proud to present the 2nd Annual Williamsburg PRO-AM BBQ Cook Off from 11 am – 4 pm at Jamestown Beach Event Park. Ticketed guests will get unlimited samples of pulled pork, beef brisket and sides from some of the area's top BBQ purveyors and vote for their favorites. We have added a VIP ticket which gets you a "bottomless" souvenir glass mug for unlimited refills of beer and hard cider. Craft beer.

More information at our website www.WilliamsburgPROAMBBQ.com. All net proceeds go to benefit 3e Restoration, a local non-profit that seeks to walk with our area's homeless and socially displaced back to holistic sufficiency.

Hey Neighbor!

JULY 4TH CELEBRATION AT THE POOLS

July 4, 2019

Chickahominy Riverfront Park Pool (1350 John Tyler Highway, 757-603-1114) and Upper County Park Pool (180 Leisure Road in Toano, 757-566-1451), 11 a.m.-7 p.m. Beat the heat by visiting one of our outdoor Pools. FREE icepops to everyone entering the pool (while supplies last). Pool Fees Apply. Info: call the park or visit jamescitycountyva.gov/recreation. Weather permitting; call the activities hotline for any changes in schedule., 757-259-3232.

Hey Neighbor!

LOOKING FOR PINOCHLE PLAYERS

Every Tuesday

Small group of seniors looking for more pinochle double deck card players. We play at the Williamsburg Moose Lodge from 1 – 4:40 pm. Willing to help anyone that has not played for years. 5429 Richmond Road.

Hey Neighbor!

WILLIAMSBURG WOMEN'S CHORUS NEW MEMBERS

Thru August

The Williamsburg Women's Chorus is accepting new members for their fall season 2019. The first practice will be at 10 am in the Bruton Parish House lower level. Fall season runs from August thru early December. If you are interested in joining, please contact Beckie Davy, director, at bdavy@brutonparish.org.

Hey Neighbor!

FOOD TRUCK RALLY ON THE RIVER

July 13, 2019

Jamestown 4-H Educational Center Presents Food Truck Rally on the River! Join us for "Beats and Eats" from some of your local restaurants on wheels! Food, Beer and Music! The fun begins at 4:00 on Saturday July 13th at Jamestown 4-H Educational Center. This is a family friendly event and pets are welcome! \$5 per car. We hope you will join us for another fabulous event on the river! For more information, please check out <http://www.jamestown4hcenter.org/events> or call us at (757) 253-4931.

Hey Neighbor!

PARK TO PARK BICYCLE TOUR

July 13, 2019

James City County Marina, 2054 Jamestown Road. 8 a.m.-2 p.m., depending on ride option. Register by July 5 and save! Three rides offered: 15-Mile Ride (\$5/person by July 5; \$10/person after July 5/onsite); 30-Mile Ride (\$10/person by July 5; \$15/person after July 5/onsite); Half Century Ride (\$15/person by July 5; \$20/



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person after July 5/onsite) In this self-guided bicycle tour, all routes include visits to County parks where rest stops will allow you to cool down and power up. Fee includes refreshments, pool admittance to Chickahominy Riverfront Park Pool, maps, support vehicles to help out tired riders and, most importantly, lunch! All routes begin at the Virginia Capital Trail trailhead located near Jamestown Settlement. Info: 757-259-5355. Weather permitting; call the activity hotline for event updates at 757-259-3232.

Hey Neighbor!
FAMILY SPLASH AT THE POOLS
 July 20, 2019

Chickahominy Riverfront Park, 1350 John Tyler Highway, 6-9 p.m. We're hosting a FREE family fun night at the pool. Join us for games, prizes and fun. Children ages 12 and younger must be accompanied by an adult. Info: 757-603-1114 or jamescitycountyva.gov/recreation. Weather permitting; call the activities hotline for any changes in schedule., 757-259-3232.

Hey Neighbor!
ROTARY CONCERT SERIES
 July 20, 2019

Kimball Theatre. 7:30-9:30 pm. Featuring Elvis Genre Concert. Tickets available at jccrotary.org or through eventbrite.

Hey Neighbor!
FISHY INTERACTIONS: UNDERSTANDING THE FISH COMMUNITY IN CHESAPEAKE BAY
 July 25, 2019

Join us as Dr. Latour shows us how to tell the age of a fish, what you can learn from looking at stomach contents, and why the information his program collects is vital to ensure the fishes and ecosystems we care about and rely on continue to thrive. 7 pm in Watermen's Hall on the VIMS campus, 1375 Greate Road, Gloucester Point. Reservations to this free, public lecture are required due to limited space. Visit www.vims.edu/events or call (804) 684-7061 to register or to find out more information about this and future After Hours lectures. Register for the webinar at www.vims.edu/events.

Hey Neighbor!
FLUTE FRENZY SUMMER CAMP
 July 29 - August 2, 2019

Come join us for Flute Frenzy's Summer Camp: "A Week in the Big Apple" (for youth entering grades 6-12). Professional instruction and Technique classes; Learn to play Piccolo, Alto, and Bass Flutes; Games, Crafts, &

Snacks. Be a part of Flute Choir Performances! Location: Our Saviour's Lutheran Church, 7479 Richmond Road Williamsburg. For more information, visit www.flutefrenzy.org

Hey Neighbor!
ROTARY CHARITY CONCERT SERIES
 August 17, 2019

Kimball Theatre. 7:30-9:30 pm. Featuring Soul Intent. Tickets available at jccrotary.org or through eventbrite.

Hey Neighbor!
DISCOVERY LAB AT VIMS – ART IN SCIENCE
 August 20, 2019

We will be investigating the intersections between science and art. Megan Beck, a fashion designer, will explain how she relies on horticulture (raising plants) to practice her art of clothing design. Attendees will be able to complete a variety of science-related art activities: including fish printing and hand-dyeing their own t-shirt! From 6-8 pm (presentation from 6:30-7 pm) on the VIMS campus in Gloucester Point. Registration is required due to limited space. Visit www.vims.edu/events or call (804) 684-7061 to register for this free event and to find out more information on this and all upcoming Discovery Labs.

Hey Neighbor!
RESEARCH AROUND THE WORLD: ASIA'S LAST NATURAL AND UNSTUDIED MAJOR RIVER DELTA
 August 29, 2019

Dr. Steve Kuehl, faculty member at VIMS, has spent his career studying river deltas and the effects that nature and humans have on these environments. His current research focuses on the Ayeyarwady Delta in Myanmar, one of the least studied river deltas on earth. Join us as Dr. Kuehl tells the story of his research journey to Myanmar, the complexities of international research, and how his findings in Myanmar will help us understand and predict how future environmental and human-induced changes will impact deltas, and the people that inhabit them, around the world. 7 pm in Watermen's Hall on the VIMS campus, 1375 Greate Road, Gloucester Point. Visit www.vims.edu/events or call (804) 684-7061 to register or to find out more information about this and future After Hours lectures. Can't attend in person? The lecture is also offered as a live-streamed webinar. Register for the webinar at www.vims.edu/events.



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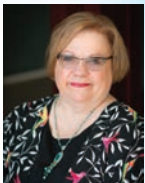
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Next Door Neighbors

Hey Neighbor!

FORECASTING TIDAL FLOODING: HELPING HAMPTON ROADS PREPARE FOR STORMS AND RISING SEAS

September 26, 2019

Join us as Dr. Loftis shares how the use of innovative technologies and citizen scientists is helping Hampton Roads communities predict and prepare for flood events and rising seas. All After Hours lectures take place at 7:00 pm in Watermen's Hall on the VIMS campus, 1375 Greate Road, Gloucester Point. Visit www.vims.edu/events or call 804-684-7061 to register or to find out more information about this and future After Hours lectures. Register for the webinar at www.vims.edu/events.

Hey Neighbor!

CYBOTOTS IN THE BAY: HOW TECHNOLOGY IS KEEPING VIRGINIANS SAFE

October 24, 2019

Dr. Juliette Smith, faculty member at VIMS, is using an autonomous, underwater instrument called an Imaging FlowCytobot in the York River to address those concerns. The cytotob can be "trained" to continuously monitor the water and identify harmful algae species in real-time, providing an early-warning system for detecting HABs. Join us as Dr. Smith describes the innovative technology she is using to protect public health as well as her vision for a network of cytotobs throughout the Bay. All After Hours lectures take place at 7:00 pm in Watermen's Hall on the VIMS campus, 1375 Greate Road, Gloucester Point. Visit www.vims.edu/events or call 804-684-7061 to register or to find out more information about this and future After Hours lectures. Register for the webinar at www.vims.edu/events.

Hey Neighbor!

BERKELEY PLANTATION CELEBRATES 400TH ANNIVERSARY 1619-2019

November 3, 2019

From 11 am – 4 pm, at Berkeley Plantation, 12602 Harrison Landing Rd. Charles City (directly off scenic Rt. 5 between Richmond and Williamsburg). House Tours 9:30 am– 4:30 pm. Berkeley Plantation hosts the Virginia Thanksgiving Festival. This annual tradition dates back to 1619 when Captain John Woodlief and his crew of thirty-five men landed on the shores of the James River. Join us for a day immersed in the history of early Colonial America as we celebrate the

First English Thanksgiving in the New World. Festival Admission and Parking (Cash only for parking): \$5.00 motorcycle/bike, \$10.00 car/van, \$20.00 bus. Tours of Berkeley's Manor House Available \$12.50 per person. Discounted rates for seniors, military and children ages 6-16. For more information call 804-829-6018 or 888-466-6018

Hey Neighbor!

VOLUNTEER WITH JCC PARKS & RECREATION

Ongoing

Volunteer with James City County Parks & Recreation! Lend a hand, Make a difference, Be a part of something great! Volunteering is your gift to our community. For a list of volunteer opportunities both in parks and recreation and County-wide, contact Angie Sims at angie.sims@jamescity-countyva.gov or call 75-259-5403.

Hey Neighbor!

LEARN MORE ABOUT HOSPICE HOUSE

Ongoing

We invite you to tour our home and gardens and learn about all we do for the community. On the first Thursday of the month, drop by between the hours of 12 – 2 p.m. to learn more about our organization. Questions or to RSVP (not required) Call: 757-345-5195. Email: Diane Schwarz, dschwartz@williamsburghospice.org, 4445 Powhatan Parkway. www.williamsburghospice.org. Caring for people at the end of life, comforting the bereaved and empowering others to do the same.

Hey Neighbor!

JAMES CITY COMMUNITY CHURCH

Ongoing

"A Door of Hope" No matter where you are on your spiritual journey, we're glad you're here. Located at 4550 Old News Rd., Williamsburg. Services: 9 am (nursery provided) and 11 am (birth - 5th grade programs provided). Come join us and feel free to participate as much or as little as you feel comfortable. We also offer Celebrate Recovery every Friday at 7 pm. Visit our website at www.jccchurch.com to learn more about JC3!

Hey Neighbor!

LOCAL FARM ANIMAL SANCTUARY

Ongoing

Life with Pigs Farm Animal Sanctuary in Williamsburg rescues farm animals that get to come and live out their hap-

pily ever-after here. We currently have a calf named Winnie who just arrived and has some mobility issues. She drags her back legs when walking and while she currently seems to be doing great, we are seeking a solution so that once she reaches full weight, she can continue to be mobile into old age. We also have another calf named Jenna who was born infertile, 4 turkeys, 7 chickens, and 3 pigs (who sleep on the couch inside often with a chicken in diapers on their backs). For more information, contact Ryan at Life with Pigs Farm Animal Sanctuary, (219) 331-6204.

Hey Neighbor! TURF LOVE PROGRAM

Year-Round

The Turf Love program is offered by the Colonial Soil and Water Conservation District to JCC residents who wish to grow and maintain a healthy lawn while protecting our surrounding environment. Homeowners can request a visit from a trained Virginia Cooperative Extension James City County/Williamsburg Master Gardener, known as a Lawn Ranger, who discuss the importance of environmentally-friendly lawn care, and the potential for environmental issues that stem from not maintaining a healthy lawn, with each homeowner. Each homeowner will also receive a certified nutrient management plan, which is specific to their lawn maintenance needs, goals, and surrounding environment. Please call (757) 645-4895.

Hey Neighbor! BIRD WALKS WITH THE WILLIAMSBURG BIRD CLUB

2nd and 4th Saturdays

8-10 am. On the second Saturday of every month, the Williamsburg Bird Club leads bird walks different parks in the Williamsburg/James City/York area. The second Saturday is at a different park each month. Please check the calendar at williamsburgbirdclub.org to find where these walks are held. On the fourth Saturdays, the walks are always held at New Quarter Park. Join them for upcoming walks to observe hawks, eagles and songbirds that live in the area year round and those that migrate in, out or through the area. New Quarter Park is located at 1000 Lakeshead Dr. in Williamsburg near the Queens Lake Neighborhood. Meet in the parking lot. Bring binoculars or borrow some from the office. Free and open to the public.

Hey Neighbor! VOLUNTEER WITH WILLIAMSBURG

BURG COMMUNITY GROWERS

Ongoing

Join us for a couple of hours of fun garden work planting, weeding, harvesting, learning about small scale farming and participating in our local food system! Our one-acre garden is located under the Dominion Energy power lines between Warhill High School and WISC, off Stadium Road. Tuesday evenings and second Saturdays mornings - choose as few or as many days as you wish, and children are welcome! Almost all of our harvest is donated to local charities. Community Garden plots available too! Email growwilliamsburg@gmail.com, or sign up at <http://signup.com/go/EFuuFjo>. Visit www.growwilliamsburg.org and follow us on Facebook and Twitter!

Hey Neighbor! GRIEFSHARE

Ongoing

Walnut Hills Baptist Church, 1014 Jamestown Road, will offer a Grief-Share program beginning on Sunday February 3, 2019, and running for 13 weeks. This ministry is a Biblical, Christ-centered support group for those who have lost a loved one. It includes a video seminar, small group discussion and a participant guide. There is a \$15 registration fee to cover the cost of the participant guide. The group will meet from 2-4 p.m. each week in the church Hospitality Center. Participants are welcome to join at any time. Contact: Elaine Schrader at 757-268-1761 or eschrader4@gmail.com. For more information, visit whbconline.org.

Hey Neighbor! CALL FOR THEATRICAL VOLUNTEERS

Ongoing

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

Hey Neighbor! F.R.E.E. OF WILLIAMSBURG

Ongoing

F.R.E.E. is a non-profit that gifts mobility related equipment to adults who are uninsured or under insured and have no other means of obtaining needed mobility equipment. If you or someone you know is in need of equipment or would like to make a donation, call 757-707-4741, visit our website www.free-foundation.org, or find us on Facebook.



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photograph (top) and
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INTERMEDIATE

**Look for the answers
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Next Door Neighbors**

JUNE 2019
In the Neighborhood
Photo Challenge



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One-owner custom-built Butch Palmer home | New master BA, new roof, new windows, new countertops and appliances
Kitchen offers island, double ovens, gas cooktop, walk-in pantry & tiled backsplash | Screened porch, covered back porch that spans the back of the house plus a beautiful flagstone patio | \$589,000




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Listed at \$260,000
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