

February 2020

WILLIAMSBURG'S

# Next Door Neighbors<sup>®</sup>

VOL. 14, ISSUE 1

PRICELESS

Discovering the people who call Williamsburg home



## Food & Love

Ainslie O'Rourke

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Meredith Collins, Publisher

If you started the New Year with a commitment to eat better, prepare to be tempted and inspired with this month's issue, *Food & Love*. You'll be tempted by the abundance of great looking and great sounding food, including snacks, pastries, and other treats described and pictured within these pages. This issue is inspired by the stories of people who are so dedicated to helping people eat well and find spiritual strength in preparing and enjoying mouthwatering food.

Weaved throughout the temptations and inspirations is the recurring theme of food as a cultural and family affair. Frequent references are made to recreating dishes enjoyed growing up, of carrying on family and homeland traditions, and celebrating friendship and love and family with the sharing of food.

Williamsburg is a great place for both the amateur and professional gastronomes. There are so many terrific restaurants to choose from and so many ways to enjoy them. And, of course, the added pleasure of enjoying the experience with good neighbors! NDN

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## AINSLIE O'ROURKE



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# A PASSION FOR PASTRIES

By Lillian Stevens

It's long been known that people express love with food. Whether it's a special occasion meal or a dessert delivered to a neighbor experiencing loss, sharing good food has been an important part of being good neighbors.

Through a passion for baking, Ainslie O'Rourke met the man who would become both her husband and business partner. In spring 2018, Ainslie and Colin O'Rourke launched their business, the Virginia Bread Company.

At first, the venture was a sidebar intended to supplement their full-time work with side jobs while working toward a shared dream of owning a company. Today, it's a full-time undertaking. The Virginia Bread Company enjoys a presence at the Williamsburg Farmers Market and supplies six restaurants with their

incredible baked goods. Ainslie says that the business is split about 50/50 between wholesale and farmers' markets.

The young pastry chefs, who were married this past October, met as students at the Culinary Institute of Virginia in Norfolk, hit it off immediately. "We went to the beach on our first date," Ainslie says. "And then we went out to eat. It was a basic date. We talked about cooking. We talked so much that we barely ate our food!"

After graduating from culinary school, Ainslie landed a job as a pastry chef at the Williamsburg Inn, which was a great opportunity. Soon after, Colin was offered a position at the Williamsburg Lodge. Over time, Ainslie and Colin also baked for several well-known restaurants and markets. It's the Williamsburg

Farmers Market, however, that is especially near and dear to Ainslie's heart.

"I love interacting with our customers, and I love watching their faces as they taste something they love," she says. "It's powerful watching someone enjoy your food."

The popular farmers market, located on Duke of Gloucester Street, runs weekly on Saturday mornings and has provided an amazing opportunity for the Virginia Bread Company. "It's been an honor to be a part of such a wonderfully curated market. They are pretty selective in terms of who they allow in, with a beautiful end result."

Ainslie gives credit to her mother for selecting the name "Virginia Bread Company."

"It's a play on the Virginia Company," she says. "So we like that because it ties the area's



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colonial heritage to the name of the state we live and work in."

Ainslie's mother is Maureen Anderson, owner of Tasha's Own, a long-time vendor at the Williamsburg Farmers Market.

"My mom has a goat's milk soap business. Growing up, we lived in Virginia Beach, but we'd travel here every weekend because the farmers market here has always been such a big deal. We'd drive up and stay in a hotel on Friday nights."

Over the years, Ainslie watched as her mother created and sustained a small company, soaking it all in. "I knew I wanted to start my own business one day," she says. "And now that I have, it's great knowing I can lean on my family and community for help."

Indeed, the community is a big part of the Virginia Bread Company's business model. "I take great pride in supporting our local businesses. If we see a product that's local, and we love it, we will absolutely support that business."

Virginia Bread Company has a relationship with Mill Farm, as well as Sweet Haven Lavender of Williamsburg and Kelrae Farm. "We use Mill Farm extensively for berries for our scones in summer," Ainslie says. "And I absolutely love Sweet Haven Lavender! Our lavender shortbread cookie is probably our number one seller. I'm so excited because these people are so beautiful, such sweet people. At Kelrae Farm, there is always great variety so we can do something new every week." Despite the name they chose for their business, Ainslie and Colin's baked goods stretch beyond bread and cookies. "In school, Colin's favorite class was 'Artisan Breads and Viennoiserie', enriched, buttery pastries. Just think of croissants and beautiful baguettes. I loved the pastries and all the different fancy cookies, so it was like the perfect mix!"

Halfway through culinary school, Ainslie actually learned that she has celiac disease, an immune system disorder in which people cannot eat gluten without damaging their small intestines. This is not ideal for a pastry chef, but she takes it in stride and credits her husband for his steadfast support, both when she was undergoing testing and especially today as the two entrepreneurs spend a lot of time in the kitchen.

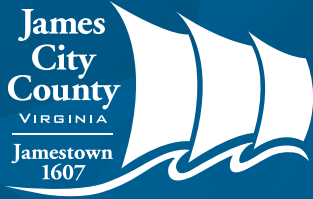
For inspiration, Ainslie likes to research recipes. "It's fun to see what others are doing, then create my own varieties," she says. "I look at recipes for inspiration, then incorporate my twist from my own recipes. If I find a good solid base pound cake recipe, for instance, I'm going to add cranberries! Or blueberries in season."

Currently, all the baking is done at home, but that is about to change. Soon the Virginia Bread Company will be based in historic Toano, which is on the cusp of revitalization efforts.

"Our tentative plan is to open a little storefront and put all of our ovens in there. Currently, the space is being renovated, so it's just a matter of how long that process will take. It will be nice to expand our wholesale."

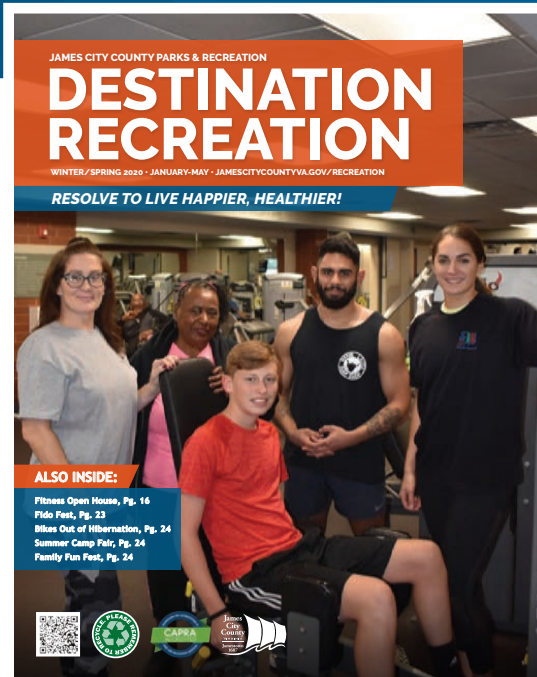
"Williamsburg has been a great place for us," Ainslie says. "The community is more like a family here, and word of mouth is big. The farmers market is such an amazing place for small businesses and farms too; it's just this wonderful community where they all come together on Saturdays with patrons supporting us and with us supporting each other. I love that my mom is there supporting us, and we are sending customers her way too."

It's easy to see that Ainslie O'Rourke's work is her passion, and she says she has loved to bake for as long as she can remember. As a young business owner and new wife, her life is still centered around baking and food. The same is true for her husband. How sweet is that? NDN



# JAMES CITY COUNTY PARKS & RECREATION WINTER/SPRING 2020 ACTIVITY BROCHURE

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### FAMILY FUN NIGHT

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March 21\* • 10 a.m.-2 p.m.  
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### BIKES OUT OF HIBERNATION - **FREE!**

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### SUMMER CAMP FAIR - **FREE!**

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\*In the event of inclement weather, please call the Activities Hotline at 757-259-3232 for any changes in schedule. For information and registration details, call 757-259-4200 or visit [jamescitycountyva.gov/recreation](http://jamescitycountyva.gov/recreation).

# LAURA REEVES

## ALL THE RIGHT INGREDIENTS FOR HOSPITALITY

By Brandy Centolanza



Lisa W. Cumming Photography

Who can say they've helped prepare a meal for the Queen of England, the Dalai Lama and the President of the United States of America? Laura Reeves can.

Laura co-owns a local catering company aptly named The Catering Company with her husband, Craig. The couple also own a bed and breakfast, the Williamsburg Manor, on Richmond Road, and help operate the Williamsburg

Sampler Bed & Breakfast Inn on Jamestown Road. Laura has been a part of the Williamsburg food and beverage scene for more than three decades.

"Hospitality is in my soul," Laura says. "It's just a part of who I am."

Laura started out in the hospitality industry by waiting tables as a teenager while living in the Poconos in Pennsylvania. She relocated to

Hampton Roads with her family during high school, settling in Newport News. After graduation, Laura moved to Richmond to study at Virginia Commonwealth University. Initially, she wanted to pursue a career in nursing, but while waiting tables at Colonial Williamsburg during college, she decided to switch gears and work in the hospitality field.

Laura was later accepted into Disney's Col-

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lege Program. The program offers unique paid internship and working experiences for those aiming for a career in hospitality. Laura worked for a year at the Disney World theme park, taking reservations and preparing vacation packages for guests.

“It was awesome exposure to the hospitality industry,” she says. Laura made her way back to Williamsburg, where she started working as the restaurant manager at the Ford’s Colony Country Club in 1986. During her time at Ford’s Colony, she helped start the catering operation for the country club. The Ford’s Colony Country Club is also where Laura met her husband, Craig, who had just left the U.S. Army and was working at the club as a bartender.

At the time, Laura’s parents ran the Williamsburg Sampler Bed & Breakfast Inn on Jamestown Road, so Laura also knew the ins and outs of operating a bed and breakfast. One day off from work, Laura and her mother went to check out a house for sale on Richmond Road.

Laura decided to place a bid on the house on a whim with encouragement from her mother. She and Craig ended up buying the house and converting it into their own bed and breakfast. The Williamsburg Manor opened in July 1992. Laura and Craig started The Catering Company a few months later.

“It just happened,” Laura says.

The Williamsburg Manor, located just down the road from William & Mary (W&M) and Colonial Williamsburg, has five guest bedrooms including the Benjamin Powell House Red Room, the Palace Chambers Yellow Room, the Russell House Green Room, the James Southall Blue Room and the James Geddy Family Suite. Some families rent out the whole house, while other guests are tourists, former W&M students in town for a reunion or members of a wedding party.

“All the guests we have had have been delightful individuals,” Laura says. “Everyone is so interesting and so happy to be here.”

At The Williamsburg Manor, guests are treat-

ed to a traditional buffet style breakfast of cereals, toasts, fresh baked goods, grits, porridge, French toast and scrambled eggs.

“Our breakfasts are awesome,” Laura says. “We have really good, hearty menu items to help get our guests started for their day.”

Visitors from all over the world have stayed at the Williamsburg Manor, though most are from the East coast. Laura’s favorite aspect of running a bed and breakfast is the interaction with guests first thing in the morning.

“There is something unique about meeting people and getting to know them in the morning,” she says. “You have to be a morning person to appreciate it. I like being a part of their lives for a day. I also like that we are part of someone’s special occasion. We’ve had people get engaged here. We’ve had people who learn they are from the same town. There were William & Mary students who used to live in this house, and they still come back and get together. It’s like being a part of a legacy.”

Laura and her husband also share in the joy of



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other people's celebrations while heading up The Catering Company. The Catering Company is one of the largest off-premise, all-inclusive catering companies in the area, well-known for its style and décor. The company employs close to 400 people, mostly college students and young adults just starting out.

"Hospitality is so important to us," Laura says. "I believe a smiling, happy waiter is more important than a waiter who can carry eighteen entrees."

The Catering Company has an event nearly every day, catering weddings and other special occasions, corporate events and events at W&M, particularly at the Raymond A. Mason School of Business. Laura is always on the go.

"I've given birth on days that we've had events," Laura says.

The Catering Company prepares meals for any dining experience, everything from backyard barbeque cookouts to lavish buffets and elegant dinners.

"I like to think of a good caterer as a good

actor," Laura says. "Our clients set the stage and then we do the role."

Thankfully, Craig and her staff are always there to assist.

"Not only do you have to have great food prepared with love, but you also have to have the staff who will execute the meal with that same care and love," Laura says. "It also helps to enjoy doing what you do. If you enjoy what you do, then your staff will enjoy it too."

Having such a great staff has reaped rewards for The Catering Company. Last year, the company completed a trifecta after catering for U.S. President Donald Trump during his visit to Jamestown in July 2019 to commemorate the 400th anniversary of the first meeting of a representative legislative assembly, the House of Burgesses, on July 30, 1619.

"It was all very exciting," Laura says.

Previously, The Catering Company also served The Queen of England breakfast during her visit to Jamestown in 2007 and waited on the Dalai Lama during a visit to W&M in 2012.

Laura was especially honored to prepare lunch for the Dalai Lama.

"It was pretty amazing," Laura says. "Any time you are in the presence of someone like that, it is breathtaking."

She may have provided a meal for the Dalai Lama, but Laura still prefers spending time with her family. She and Craig have two children, and Laura continues to see her father on a daily basis. Laura helps cook breakfast for her father's guests at Williamsburg Sampler Bed & Breakfast Inn each day.

"When I am there, I get to spend quality time with him," she says. "I feel lucky that I get to see him every day. That is important to me."

For years, Laura Reeves has helped guests feel welcome either through The Williamsburg Manor or The Catering Company, and she wouldn't have it any other way.

"I've been doing this basically my entire life," Laura says. "I love entertaining. I have a passion to please. It's exhilarating any time you can make someone smile and have a good time." NDN

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# The Sweet Life

By Linda Landreth Phelps



Lisa W. Cumming Photography

The symmetrical rows of bushy plants occupying part of Sweethaven Lavender's 134 acres are uniformly brown and dry underneath a wintry blue sky. It's impossible to tell if they are dead or merely sleeping, storing energy for the spring rebirth to come. Tidewater's early spring warmth will eventually coax into leaf

the fields surrounding the Messer family's newly built home on rural Jolly Pond Road, followed by an explosion of fragrant buds and blooms.

A healthy plant can survive 10-15 years under optimum conditions, but not all of the farm's plants will make it through the winter.

"Among the members of the Lavender Grower's Association, our microclimate is unique. The first year here we spent preparing and planting 20,000 plants by hand," business owner and president Kerry Messer says. "We're working with Virginia Tech and Clemson University, kind of feeling our way along as we be-

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gin to identify cultivars that can withstand our area's heat and high humidity. We've had to do some replanting and are also expanding our culinary lavender, which blooms purple, pink and white, with a mild-tasting bud."

The farm is a true family business, with everyone pitching in when not away at work or school. They all share the mission, but for Kerry and her daughter Hannah it's a full-time labor of love, as well as an homage to Kerry's idyllic childhood.

"I come from a big family," she says, "and loved growing up in a small country town in central New York. I'd ride my bike everywhere and play with the same friends all summer. Behind our house was the local school, and behind that was Science Hill, where science experiments were conducted." Town life revolved around that place, Kerry recalls, with sledding in the winter and picnics in spring and summer. Volunteer firefighters flooded the school's football field annually, and everybody skated all winter long. Norman Rockwell could have illustrated the book of her town's history.

After graduating from high school, Kerry won a scholarship to attend college in Tennessee. She then took a teaching job in Ches-

apeake, Virginia in 1995. At first enamored with the convenient unlimited shopping and entertainment she found there, the novelty soon wore off. Kerry craved that small town intimacy and walkability she had left. "I met Adam in 1996," she says, "and we immediately aligned on our love of wide open spaces. We always wanted to duplicate the comfort and security of my childhood for our children, but with his Navy career, that was a dream deferred." Antiques dealers had raised Kerry, and the stories behind the found pieces always immensely appealed to her. "They gave me an appreciation of history, and Colonial Williamsburg was one of our favorite places because of that. Adam and I always agreed it would be great to live here one day," she says.

The Messers have three children, all homeschooled by Kerry. There's Hannah, 21, currently vice-president of Sweethaven Lavender and the mastermind behind all of their proprietary formulas. "She was actually studying entrepreneurship in college," Kerry says with pride. "Then when we made the decision to go forward with the farm, Hannah decided to seize the day and switched her studies to organic skincare formulation."

Their second born is son Luke, who is 18 and currently away studying at Word of Life Bible College in upstate New York. Ten years after Luke's birth they welcomed their third child. "Adam always jokes that we were pacing ourselves," Kerry says, "but Luke prayed for years for a brother. Just when we were looking into adoption, I got pregnant again with Levi." Levi, now eight years old, is being homeschooled as he enjoys the privilege of being raised on a working farm.

"It's amazing how God has always worked things out for us in every area of our lives, from the purchase of this land to providing us shelter while we built our house," Kerry says. "Even when things looked bad, He opened doors and turned things around. For example, the same day we began planting, we heard about a rental house becoming available directly across from our farm. We were able to watch our house and barn be built and see the sunsets from our own land. Then on Volunteer Planting Day last year, it was so hot!" Twenty thousand plants had arrived and needed to get in the ground quickly. "We had 54 volunteers show up and plant 5,000 plants in one day. Every day God reassured us that He was beside

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us and was providing a way. He still is.”

The vision has always been to create a space where they could invite others to share in the simple pleasures of open fields and the blessings of manual labor, the satisfaction of a hard job well done. The family wasn't quite prepared for the magnitude of the enthusiastic response to that invitation. So many people participated that they held their Grand Opening in June 2019. It was a sold-out event with 3,500 guests and over 70 vendors experiencing a flawlessly executed event. “We weren't even supposed to open until 2020,” Kerry says. “The incredible welcome and response of our fellow Williamsburg neighbors and community members made it possible to open a full year earlier thanks to their volunteer labor. And best of all, those volunteers have also become our good friends!”

This year's Lavender Festival will be held a month earlier in the hope of avoiding the sometimes oppressive June heat and humidity and will be expanded to two weekends. “We'll do two in a row, with different themes. We want it to be a relaxing, intimate time, and you won't be overwhelmed by crowds,” Kerry says. “That's not what our farm is about.”

The first of the Sweethaven Lavender Festival Days, on Saturday, May 30, will feature foods that show how lavender can be incorporated into our menus in ingenious ways. “For Christmas gifts, our family makes lavender-infused peppermint nougat, or S'More kits with our own homemade marshmallows.” These pillowy clouds melt into pools of intense sweetness on the tongue, leaving just a hint of lavender on the back of the palate, like a small whiff of wood smoke on the breeze.

Various delicious and useful products will be available for purchase both days, thanks to vendors and Hannah's own formulas for skin care and a lavender-based insect repellent, which has proven wildly popular with commercial fishermen in New York's Finger Lakes district. “They order it by the case!” Kerry says with pride. “They say it works better than any chemical, and for the first time they haven't been bothered by biting flies.”

The second celebration, held June 6, is themed “Family Fun in the Fields” and will keep the vibe of the popular 2019 festival but with more animals, crafts, shaded seating, food and ice cream stands.

One of Kerry's favorite stories about their

farm involves a romantic surprise. “A police officer in Lynchburg contacted me by email,” she says. “He'd been faithfully tracking all his girlfriend's preferences and bucket list items for years. High on that list were amusement parks and visiting a lavender farm, so he arranged a road trip to Busch Gardens for them, with a stop here. Between us, we'd set the scene for a very special marriage proposal, finishing with all her family and close friends popping out of the barn to help celebrate!”

What could be more romantic than a wedding with lush fields of fragrant lavender as a background? Sweethaven has hosted its first of these over-the-top rustic events, and hopes to share in the joy of many more as the years pass by... even, perhaps, weddings for their own children. Kerry Messer and her family have a long term, generation-spanning vision for their newly established farm. “There's plenty of room here to build homes for Hannah, Luke, and Levi as needed,” Kerry says with a sweeping gesture encompassing their acreage.

“It's our hope that we will one day, God willing, see grandchildren busy feeding the sheep and chickens here, and helping to harvest the bounty of Sweethaven Lavender.” NDN

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# FRANK CLARK



# Culinary History

By Susan Williamson

Lisa W. Cumming Photography

A love of food and Colonial Williamsburg (CW) led Frank Clark to his position as Master of Historic Foodways. Frank's job entails recreating 18th century food and drink using original recipes, ingredients and cooking methods in the kitchen at the Governor's Palace. The kitchen operates five days a week which includes one day a week to make chocolate and another to brew beer. Whenever possible, vegetables and herbs from the colonial gardens as well as eggs and milk from the CW livestock are incorporated as ingredients.

The food is not sold to the public since co-

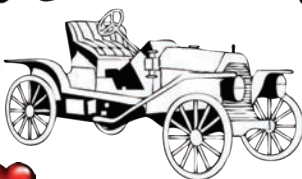
lonial kitchens don't meet current sanitation standards, but Frank says 18th century food was safer than people think. "They used fresh ingredients and consumed the meals in one day. Milk and cream fresh from the cow, eggs fresh from the hen." In addition to what was consumed fresh, early colonists also used pickling and fermentation as preservation methods. Pickled goods would be covered with sheep or beef bladders which would shrink and seal the products. Jams and jellies would be covered with a layer of brandy and then paper. Meats were salted and cured. Salt was obtained by

boiling ocean and bay water. Lard and clarified butter were used as fats.

Frank grew up in Williamsburg, spending a lot of time in Colonial Williamsburg, where his mother worked as a trainer in the Department of Interpretive Education. He left to attend college, earning a Degree in International Studies from Ferrum College in Ferrum, Virginia. He began working for CW in 1993, at first giving lantern tours. Not only did he find a career at CW, he found love. He met Gail Bittinger, who was also working the lantern tours, and they began to date. They married and she is now re-

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tired from CW. The couple live in Williamsburg with their cats.

From lantern tours, Frank went to working in school and group services where he sometimes helped out in the kitchen. He enjoyed cooking, and when a job vacancy arose, he was hired for kitchen duty. In 1994, the museum started brewing beer, creating “The Arts and Mysteries of Brewing” which was the first historic brewing operation in the United States. Researching and recreating historic brewing is Frank’s favorite part of the historic foodways. One difficulty in following the 18th century recipes is that today’s ingredients are very different than what was available in the 1700s. One of the first attempts to brew beer resulted in a product with a 14% alcohol content due to the increased protein in modern grains. Early colonists could not have worked all day drinking that potent a beverage, so the recipe had to be adjusted. Frank says, “Most of the varieties of grain now being grown are less than fifty years old.”

At one time, hops were grown at Carter’s Grove Plantation for the brewing operation, but since the sale of that property, other sources were found. So far, Colonial Williamsburg has not been successful in growing hops on the current CW property and must purchase them. In the past, brewers often purchased hops as a cash crop from growers who may have included enslaved people. Frank says there is only one variety of British hops similar to what was used in the 18th century.

Early colonists drank imported tea and coffee and made sipping chocolate from imported cocoa. They pressed fruit for cider as well as peach and apple brandy. They were unsuccessful in growing European grapes and were not fond of wine made from native grapes, so most wine was imported. After the American Revolution, corn whiskey became popular. Adapting and researching old recipes is challenging because in addition to the difficulty of finding comparable ingredients, measurements may be inexact or missing. Some measurements can be translated. For example, a gill is four ounces. Frank says, “We are lucky in that there is no shortage of source material. There were more than 250 cookbooks published in London, and we have a large collection. The other historical areas have fewer written manuals.” A blog on the CW website, “History is Served”, <https://recipes.history.org>, lists original recipes and their modern versions.

Research shows roasted beef was one of the most popular colonial dishes, but colonists also ate pork, lamb and mutton along with a wide variety of fish which were abundant in Chesapeake Bay. Some accounts spoke of oysters the size of dinner plates. Fish included some crab, sturgeon, drums, spade fish, sheepshead and shad. Wild game accounted for only about seven percent of the diet. Clearing the forests to farm the land and competition from native American hunters made game scarce. Early cooks used skerrits, which are a long, thin white carrot-like vegetable, along with various leafy greens. Cardoon stalks were boiled and served with cheese or wine. Jerusalem artichokes were another popular staple. Soft or farmer’s cheese was produced, the climate being too warm for harder cheeses. Seasonal salads were served when fresh vegetables and greens were available, but Frank says, “Even in salads the vegetables were mostly cooked. They believed that cooked foods were more nutritious.”

Frank enjoys interacting with visitors and explaining 18th century foodways. His enthusiasm is evident as he talks about the research into how and what our Williamsburg ancestors ate. He tells guests how learning about 18th century cooking has influenced meal preparation at his home. Frank Clark is indeed a master, one who continues to research and recreate our culinary history. NDN



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# KADI SPRUILL

## Baking Up The Sweetest Things

By Caroline Johnson

Lisa W. Cumming Photography

For Kadi Spruill, life is sweet. As the owner of Kadi Bakes, her love of baking has transformed into creating works of art for her customers as they celebrate the most special days of their lives. Kadi has been baking professionally for the past 12 years, though her love for being in the kitchen started much earlier.

“Lots of happy memories I have with my mom happened when we were baking,” Kadi says. “Many of my happiest childhood memo-

ries center around a kitchen.”

Born and raised in Alaska, she also spent time living in Texas and Washington. In 2008, she found herself working at a call center, doing home loans while the market was crashing. Knowing she couldn't stay with this job much longer, she applied to work as a hostess at a local restaurant. When they asked how she felt about working in the kitchen, she happily accepted. With her mom dabbling in the wed-

ding catering business, Kadi was familiar with what it took.

As she began working, her chance to finally get to bake professionally came about. One day, the head chef was complaining about the pastries he had to make. “I was confused,” Kadi says. “How could anyone hate baking?” She offered to help, he dubbed her “the pastry girl” and it took off from there. As the only girl on the team, she was delighted to start in her new

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position. From there, she continued working in the food industry, spending time working at a café in a Texas resort as well as opening the pastry half of an alehouse in Alaska.

With all of these unique experiences under her belt, she had the ability to get to know a number of people in a variety of markets. It helped her hone in on what it would take to bake different types of desserts for people and special events. After moving to Williamsburg in 2013, she began working as a head pastry chef with William and Mary. Amidst all of her moves, one thing was certain: people loved what she made. She found herself continuously being asked by others to make certain desserts for them.

“Even if I didn’t know how to make what someone asked for, I’d never decline,” Kadi says. “I always like to take on a challenge; if people ask me for things I don’t know how to do, I learn!”

While she kept herself busy with small orders here and there, things amped up in the kitchen during 2014 and 2015. As she married her

teenage sweetheart, whom she met when she was fourteen on vacation in the Outer Banks, she also found herself dealing with some health issues. “God was closing a door and opening a window,” Kadi says. “The best way I knew how to bless people was to bake for them and take them from invoice numbers to real people, and I did that through Kadi Bakes.” As Kadi turned her passion into her full-time business, she brought these people-focused values with her.

To Kadi, her clients are more than just a date on her calendar. “I know who they are, what they’re celebrating, their allergies and more,” Kadi says. “That’s what my heart beats for, getting to know my people and making sure they’re happy.” With family in Alaska, Washington, Texas and Florida, Kadi thinks of her clients as an extension of the people she’s not able to bake for on a regular basis. “I take care of them just the same.” From initial contact to delivering the cake for clients’ special days, Kadi integrates aspects of her love for people and what she does into every step.

Whether clients find her through referrals,

her website or her social media, it all starts with a scheduled call to get more details and get to know one another. From there, Kadi works closely with her couples and clients to get to know their unique ideas, working to design a cake or other desserts that exceed their expectations.

“Cake has turned into a mixed media art form for me,” Kadi shares, as it channels her creativity and energy into something she loves. It’s this view of baking as an art form that has allowed Kadi and her business to flourish. “As someone who lives with anxiety and depression, it’s important for me to have those artistic outlets,” Kadi says. “If my anxiety is going to be there, I have the ability to channel that into my cakes.” Because of the care that goes into creating her works of art, the cost and level of detail involved in her cakes reflect that. “It’s just like commissioning a piece of art for your wall. This just happens to be an edible focal point for your most important celebrations.”

Kadi also prides herself on being “that cake lady” who shows up prepared for a delivery



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with everything a client may need. "Whether it's arches, zip ties or even running to Trader Joe's to grab extra flowers, I like to take care of my clients and think of the little things." This extra care is what makes her passion shine through, never taking for granted that people are trusting her to create something for their special day. "It's not a machine, it's love and care going into your order," Kadi says. "My hands are the only thing that will be touching your order throughout the process up to the day of delivery. Not a lot of people can say that."

For Kadi, baking cakes and desserts are just the basics of her business. Her cakes and desserts mean much more to both her and the recipient. "I love that I get to be the first sweet thing about someone's most important night, the first sweet thing about the start of a couple's journey and the first sweet thing a baby eats the first time they get to make a huge mess," Kadi says. "Getting to be a sweet part of peoples' lives is what matters most."

Kadi and her husband, along with their dogs, chickens and bees, are thankful to call Chickahominy Haven home here in Williamsburg.

In addition to housing incredible people and neighbors, she has found that Williamsburg combines the landscape and community of two of her favorite places. "I love that Williamsburg is the green of Alaska that I love and the southern hospitality of Texas that I love merged together," Kadi says. "Everyone seems happy to be here. Williamsburg has a strong community, and you can tell people choose to live here." She has also found Williamsburg to be welcoming to artists of all kinds, encouraging her and other artists to flourish within the growing art scene.

Since most of her customers find her through word-of-mouth referrals, the close-knit community of Williamsburg is close to her heart and her business. It's within this community and neighboring localities that Kadi Spruill is able to brighten the days of others with her beautifully designed cakes and desserts. "I love that so many of the opportunities I'm given are centered around joy and celebration," she says. "I'm blessed to be in the field that I'm in where everyone who comes to me is excited about something." **NDN**

## Next Door Neighbors

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## STEPHANIE MAY

Back to the Basics with

# Food

By Narielle Living



Lisa W. Cumming Photography

Sometimes people know exactly what they want to do with their lives, and sometimes it takes a life experience to influence our future. For Stephanie May, her childhood greatly influenced her career direction and becoming a nutritionist was a direct result of her playing soccer as a kid.

“Growing up, I played competitive soccer,” she says. “I played across the country and actually got to play in a tournament in Europe, so that was really fun.” With soccer as her passion, Stephanie worked hard at athletics. “Growing up, I was an athlete who was always a little smaller, a little behind the growth

curve.” Because of her size, she and her parents agreed that she could meet with someone who might be able to help her work past that. “I met with a dietitian to try to help me kind of get back on track.”

Unfortunately, that was not the best experience for Stephanie. The dietitian did not help

## Next Door Neighbors

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her with her athletic goals but this did teach her something: food is important. Due to her interest and her determination, she began her own research and learned what kind of foods would help her as an athlete. “That’s why I fell in love with nutrition. I saw everything it did for me and my athletic performance.”

Originally from upstate New York, Stephanie grew up in the Hudson Valley area. “I did my undergraduate, my masters and my clinical internship all in New York.” After that she moved to South Carolina where she worked for a hospital before relocating to Williamsburg. “I’ve been here about a year and a half, two years now.”

Today, Stephanie has her own practice as a nutritionist and works hard to educate people about foods and food choices. She says that when learning about making positive food choices the important thing to remember is that change is gradual. “Anything that happens overnight is never a good choice. You never just want to throw someone into a new lifestyle; it takes time, so I try to meet my cli-

ents halfway and make those small changes over time. That’s why I work with most of my clients for months, just because it’s a lot easier and they find that they get the most benefit out of that.”

One thing to remember, Stephanie says, is that food and how we feel about ourselves is all tied together. “Food is fuel, yes, but it’s also emotional.” Food can have a direct impact on our emotions, as is seen sometimes in our food choices. “When we’re celebrating something or when we’re sad or have any sort of emotion, we typically turn to food,” she says. “It’s also how we meet family, friends and new people.” Stephanie comments that within a new environment, social interactions commonly occur around food.

Stephanie works with a spectrum of people who have a variety of relationships with food, including people who need help with menu planning and grocery shopping. “There’s really a big spectrum when it comes to different views on food,” she says. “There are people who love to cook and people who want to

cook but don’t know how to cook, and everybody in between. When I work with people, sometimes I actually help them put together a grocery list.”

One of the aspects of nutrition that Stephanie stresses to her clients is that making dietary changes does not happen overnight. It can take three or six months or longer, and because of that she works with people virtually, or online, to create change. In doing so, they can create lists and plans. “You can walk me through the grocery store on your phone and we can look at labels together or you can bring me to your kitchen and we can go through your cabinets.” Stephanie helps not only with grocery store shopping but also with learning to cook. “I have one client now who has never cooked before in her life.”

When considering nutrition and foods, balance is key, she says. “One salad doesn’t make you super healthy just like one cookie or burger isn’t the end.” It’s about enjoying life and understanding what type of fuel your body needs. “It’s emotional, it’s social and don’t

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feel guilty about eating something. You're not going to gain 10 pounds or lose all your performance goals by celebrating a birthday or Christmas or a holiday. It's about finding that balance and what really matters to you."

Stephanie notes that while she doesn't see people struggle with any particular food, per se, they struggle more with portions, especially for folks who dine out frequently. "You can eat too much of a good thing, too, like avocado or almonds. Yes, they're healthy, but there is such a thing as too much."

Often, when discussing food, people will debate the evils of sugar. While she is not a fan of sugar with empty calories, Stephanie is quick to remind people that sugars occur naturally in many foods. "One of my philosophies is to eat whole food first." She stresses that items like fruit and milk have sugar naturally so even if people say they are on a low sugar or a no sugar diet, they are still getting sugars. "It's about what that sugar is packaged in, so think about a cookie that has sugar and

empty calories. That can be a little inflammatory versus strawberries that have antioxidants and vitamins, minerals and fiber."

One of the approaches Stephanie recommends when working with life changes around food is having a team to work with, a combination of professionals including a doctor, therapist and dietician. "Build a team that you can work with and be honest with. There's nothing wrong with asking for help and having a team behind you to help you get to where you want to be faster is a good goal."

One thing in particular that she does not recommend is counting calories. Stephanie sees it as a time-sucking strategy that might not be effective in the end. "Everyone's different, but I typically don't recommend it," she says. Because people can spend a lot of time with apps and calorie counters, Stephanie notes that it is much healthier to use that time to enjoy life. "I typically don't recommend counting calories unless we have a specific goal together. Who needs more stress?"

Rather than calorie counting, she will advise someone to simply begin cutting back. "If someone is, say, eating a lot of cookies during the day, my first step will be to ask if we can tailor that back a little. I will never rip anything from anyone, like asking someone to give up coffee." So instead of eating four or five cookies each day she will suggest cutting it down to only four, then three, then two. "I found it to be really beneficial to just work with clients on the transition out of it versus ripping it away. I'm not that dietitian who is going to make you eat cucumbers and hummus all day, every day."

For Stephanie May, food and nutrition is about getting back to the basics. "I think when it comes to food we need to get back to cooking, back to choosing our foods, back to farmer's markets and learning that perfect doesn't have to be chef inspired. It could be something very, very simple. Your vegetables don't have to be beautiful, they can be just simple." NDN



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## BURKU MUKUS

# Serving Up Family-Style Mezes

By Kristine Hojnicky



Lisa W. Cumming Photography

It's impossible to talk about Kyra Su Snacks without first discussing its owner, Burku "Bee" Mukus. The charismatic and charming Bee sits at the heart of Kyra Su Snacks and its parent restaurant, Anatolia Bar & Grill located in New Town. Walking into the restaurant is like being enveloped into a warm and cozy family kitchen. It's a feeling Bee is certain her customers from the Williamsburg Farmers Market will replicate in their own homes as they share Kyra Su Snack's array of freshly prepared Mediterranean, Turkish and Middle Eastern mezes, or appetizers, with their families.

"Food is hospitality. Food is generosity. Food is a warm welcome. Food is literally everything to us," Bee says.

Bee and her fiancé, Sevan Yecilman, opened Anatolia Bar & Grill in New Town in July 2018. After the restaurant gained popularity and established a loyal following of repeat diners, Bee looked to expand the operation to expose more people to the traditional family recipes of her childhood.

She saw an opportunity to reach more of the community through the weekly Farmers Market located in Merchants Square. She submitted an application for Kyra Su Snacks, a new company named after her now-two-year-old daughter Kyra Su, and began serving up takeaway appetizers, salads, snacks and desserts to customers during the 2019 season.

"So far, people love it. Customers come to the

restaurant from the Farmers Market, and I have customers who go to the Farmers Market from the restaurant," Bee says.

To know Bee is to understand that her upbringing was a very traditional and culturally rich one. The daughter of a Kurdish father and a Turkish mother, Bee was raised in Turkey among a large, extended family until she was seventeen years old. Her father was a civil engineer working on roads for the government, and her mother assumed the traditional roles of a wife, raising children, tending to the home and cooking for her family.

At the age of fourteen, Bee prepared her first meal for the family. Her mother had been diagnosed with cancer, and her grandmother and

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aunts spent much of their time accompanying her to treatments. That left Bee, as the only girl still at home, with the responsibility of feeding the family's crowd of men, including male cousins, uncles, and her grandfather and father. The first meal she prepared them was a simple, traditional recipe of beans with lemon served with rice, and the meal's success sparked in her a desire to pursue a career in the culinary industry. Bee and her family immigrated to the United States when she was seventeen years old. They settled in Astoria, Queens, and in her free time, she helped friends who ran cafes and restaurants. She eventually became a busgirl for a restaurant in New York City, and after about a year of working in the industry, she secured a waitress position with a Turkish restaurant in New Jersey.

Eventually her family left the northeast and moved to Wilmington, North Carolina which Bee simply describes as "culture shock." But fate would lead the family to Williamsburg when Bee and her father, who now boasted his own set of culinary skills, learned of an opportunity to take over Jamestown Pie Company located on Old Jamestown Road.

Once familiar with the Williamsburg food

scene, Bee and her father began discussing the possibility of expanding into a new culinary venture. When a restaurant property near Jamestown Pie Company became available to lease, they saw it as an opportunity to open Istanbul, the area's only Turkish restaurant.

"We ran it as a family until 2018. Our lease was ending and we decided to not continue in that location," Bee explains. "Luckily on the day that I gave notice, [Anatolia's space in New Town] became available. Something in my heart wanted this place. I knew I would be successful."

Perhaps Bee's biggest supporter as she undertook the opening of a new restaurant was her fiancé, Sevan. The two met when Bee delivered food from Istanbul to the jewelry shop in Merchant's Square where Sevan was working as a diamond setter.

Once Bee signed the lease on the restaurant space in New Town, Sevan decided to leave his position and run the restaurant with Bee as a family. They decided to name the restaurant Anatolia, an homage to the Turkish, Kurdish, Armenian and Greek Orthodox heritage they share with their daughter.

Today, Bee handles most of the business oper-

ations and can often be found engaged with customers in the restaurant. Sevan has seamlessly transitioned from a diamond setter to head chef, managing most of the back-of-house execution of the menu, a blend of freshly-made Mediterranean, Turkish and Middle Eastern dishes.

Currently, Bee is working on new recipes to debut during the 2020 farmers market season. She's seen an increased demand by customers for freshly prepared salads so she plans to include her culturally diverse take on orzo salad and macaroni salad on the weekly menu of offerings.

"I try to use as much as possible the farmers market products; produce, especially the eggplant," she says. "Whenever I can, I try to use their products instead of buying from the wholesale providers. It just tastes better."

Bee is also looking forward to introducing customers to less widely known Turkish mezes like mozzarella or feta stuffed pastry.

They also see a wedding ahead. "We are thinking of surprising our customers here one of these days. Just walk in over here in our bridal clothes and do the wedding," she says. "Our life is built around them so why not have them a part of our special day?" NDN

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# JAMES KROLL

# Life With Coffee

By Erin Fryer



Lisa W. Cumming Photography

Coffee drinkers know that there's something comforting about wrapping their hands around a warm mug of their favorite brew. For James Kroll, coffee is so much more than a morning jolt of energy, and he has made it his life mission to master the perfect cup of coffee.

James is the owner of Column15, a new coffee business in Williamsburg that has introduced the Colonial Capital and beyond to craft coffee and beverages. Along with his business partner, Victoria Goldsby, James is

working to turn the peninsula into a source of quality coffee for Virginia.

James attended William & Mary and was famous for brewing coffee in his dorm room. Always on the hunt to make the perfect cup of coffee, James says he has only pulled it off twice. "To me, the perfect cup of coffee tastes exactly as it smells," he says.

As a student at W&M, James majored in International Relations with a minor in Russian & Post-Soviet Studies. After graduating, he landed a marketing job that allowed him to

travel the world. James's love for coffee never faded, and he ended up studying under one of the top coffee roasters and educators in the nation who just so happens to live in Williamsburg, Todd Arnette.

When James met Victoria, who is also a W&M alum, they hit it off immediately and could relate to each other because both were working grueling schedules at their jobs. They both found that they had a passion for entrepreneurship, as well as coffee. Since they were used to working all the time, they decided to

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dive in headfirst and try their hand at starting a business. “We figured we were like a four person team,” James says.

The tagline for Column15 is “The Science of Good Coffee,” because that is really what their business is all about. Their flagship product, nitro cold brew, is a high quality, nitrogen infused craft beverage that is a smooth and refreshing cold coffee with low acidity and natural sweetness. The beverage inspired the name of the business, since the nitrogen family is the 15th column of the Periodic Table of Elements. “We will go through kegs of the nitro cold brew at the Williamsburg Famers Market during warmer weather.”

In addition to the nitro cold brew, Column15 also sells a variety of other coffees that are all freshly roasted, single origin and fair trade, organically sourced. They celebrate the regional uniqueness of the beans they roast from Guatemala to Colombia.

When James and Victoria first got started a little over a year ago, the business was launched from the basement of James’ house. They have since moved to a physical location in James-York Plaza Shopping Center on Merrimac Trail and plan to expand into a

larger space later this year. “We want to create a place where people can come and see how the coffee is brewed, do tastings, bring their laptops and get some work done, socialize and hopefully have events,” James says.

The business launched in the early winter, so James and Victoria used those first months to prep their branding. That first spring and summer, Column15 was at as many markets as they could attend, handing out hundreds of samples each time. James knew if they wanted the business to grow fast, they were going to need help, so they hired two marketing staff members in the very beginning. They also enlist the help of W&M students, who always do a great job at fairs and markets. At the State Fair of Virginia this year, Column15 was named the Best New Food of 2019, and James says that is largely due to the help of the students who worked the event. “There were in-cognito judges seeking out the best food, and the students did a great job serving the coffee and interacting with the crowd,” he says.

While their coffee has started to pop up in local stores like Earth Fare and is now on tap at various breweries, the backbone of the business is wholesale distribution. James sells kegs

of nitro cold brew, Frac Pack cases, loose beans for places like coffee houses and cafes, growlers and more.

When looking for the perfect location for Column15, James says they needed something that wasn’t exorbitantly expensive because they needed a lot of square footage and that can get very pricey in Williamsburg. They also needed to be in a populated area, so it was important to find that balance. Their spot in James-York Plaza is perfect for them, because the area has started to see a revitalization with the addition of new businesses like Virginia Beer Company and Casa Pearl, and it’s an area where York County, James City County and the City of Williamsburg all converge.

Just a little over a year after starting the business, James and Victoria are opening a satellite location in a new roller-skating rink and entertainment center in Virginia Beach called Sk8 House. “We have found while working at the farmers markets that we work really well in a small 10’x10’ space, so we are opening our own small coffee bar there.” James says he hopes they can continue to open up simple, straightforward satellite locations, with Richmond being their logical next step. NDN

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Lisa W. Cumming Photography

# The Power of Food

By Dawn Brotherton

Many people may still be holding fast to their New Year's resolution to eat better. Keep it up! But eating right is about more than losing weight. Madeline Vann is a strong believer in the power of food to bring families together.

Originally, Madeline went to college to study psychology and communication with a minor in religion, but when she graduated, she wasn't sure what she wanted to do with her degree. She went to San Antonio, Texas, to try her hand at

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journalism. At that time, border health was becoming an issue with maquiladoras, largely unregulated factories with a lot of labor violations, that sprang up on the Mexican side of the border in part as a result of NAFTA and some other regulatory changes in the United States in the early and mid-1990s. As a writer in San Antonio, Madeline began researching the health needs of populations along the border, and that research pointed toward a compelling need for training in public health.

When it was time for her to pick her Masters' program, she decided on public health because she wanted to make a difference. Tying her Psychology Undergraduate degree into her interest in public health, Madeline became involved in Tulane's community health science projects, which prepares students to recognize, evaluate and control domestic and global health problems.

"I was working more in health communications and policy within the state of Louisiana, our focus being on the public health of the state and how to help people make healthier choices for themselves and their families," Madeline says. After graduation, she worked in public health policy for a while, then became a freelancer, writ-

ing about health, public health, wellness, mental and emotional health, addiction, and dementia. "Over time, it became clear to me that the heart of our wellness and our well-being is the family," she says.

Madeline completed a Masters of Education degree from William & Mary and is now a resident in counseling, working on her licensure under the supervision of Daniel Gutierrez, PhD, LPC, CSAC at White Cloud Therapeutic Services, LLC.

"I come from an existential narrative focus. My hope is to help people change the way that they tell their own stories. A lot of times, people get stuck in a negative story about themselves, their families, or their marriage. I see the challenge as breaking the cycle of the negative story and helping them tell a different story about themselves. That's the part I really enjoy," Madeline says.

Madeline admits she isn't an artist herself, but in their practice, the counselors use many techniques to help clients tell their story, especially when they work with kids. "Some art, some manipulatable things, maybe some music just to try to move further toward building connections," she says.

In her studies at W&M, she got involved with a program at Virginia Peninsula Regional Jail. "The program was for women with substance abuse histories who wanted to focus on overcoming addiction while they were in prison," Madeline says. "What's most rewarding is helping people reconnect with their loved ones, with their sense of purpose, and with the things that are really going to feed them in life."

Madeline also works at the Farley Center, primarily in family counseling. She finds her work with addiction treatment to be very gratifying. "I believe that The Farley Center is one of the best possible places to finally break free from the yoke of addiction to substances or alcohol, if that is what an individual wants to do. It's been phenomenal working there with the treatment team to help people achieve that."

Madeline is working toward becoming a licensed professional counselor and then certified substance abuse counselor. During her time as a journalist, she observed the huge trend toward an addiction epidemic and wanted to do something to help stop the problem. "Everybody has their wheelhouse, but I actually enjoy trying to help people who are working on harm reduction, which is the idea of using less. So, if you drink

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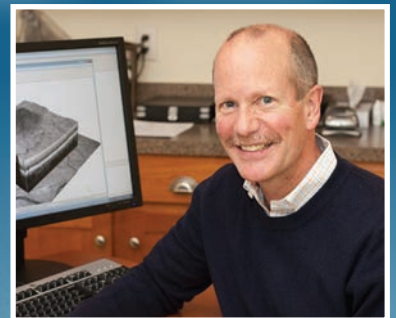
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a lot, maybe drinking less so that you're more in control."

Madeline's aim is to help people achieve their goals so they can reconnect with who they truly are. "Addiction is like having this thing that initially showed up as a friend and a good time and now it's moved into your life, your family and your household. And it's this big obnoxious gas that's ruining everything. You want to get rid of it."

When counseling, she places emphasis on family rituals. "We look at the couple as the foundation of the family, whether it's blended or not blended or whatever. What happens with the couple extends to the entire family. So, when it comes to food and connection, making the time just to eat together, ideally to prepare meals together, but even if you grab a hamburger, if we could get people to eat together as a family at least three times a week, that's really the foundation of connection."

People can usually name the rituals that come with celebrating holidays, but Madeline stresses the importance on everyday life. "One of the things that we know is helpful for families and couples is developing healthy bonding rituals. We tend to think of big rituals. We think of Val-

entine's Day as a ritual, we think of Christmas and Easter and all these things as times when there are big traditional events, but the rituals that really tie us together are the small things we do every day. So, trying to eat together would be phenomenal without our phones or our screens; actually have some face time asking open-ended questions to get to know each other over that meal as people. It just provides the opportunity for us to share at that time."

Madeline's father is from South Africa and her mother is from England. They left Africa when apartheid was in full swing and immigrated to Austin, Texas. Family dinners are a big part of what shaped Madeline's outlook on life. "Some of my best memories have to do with eating with my family. I think we all grow up with certain meals that our parents have cooked or our grandparents have prepared, that are nostalgic and are worth continuing as family traditions. That's valuable. Whatever your ethnic or racial background is, eating some foods from your cultural history is also very powerful for your children."

Madeline loves to spend time in the kitchen and has a large collection of cookbooks. Her favorite dishes are stir fry and ethnic Asian foods. "I make a mean bobotie," she says. Bobotie is the

national dish of South Africa, minced meat simmered with curry powder, herbs and dried fruit. It is then topped with egg, milk and sugar and served with chutney. Because Madeline prefers to eat plant-based food, she adds more vegetables and skips the meat. "This is one of the things we ate growing up. It is a South African comfort food." And although her children haven't learned the recipe yet, they know how the house smells when she makes it.

When her husband got a job at Fort Eustis, it was a good chance for the family to move to Williamsburg. "One of the things that I have always appreciated about Williamsburg is that it is a great place for people with children. There are a lot of activities. There's a lot of support for families and a lot of low-cost activities. Where we came from, which was just outside of New Orleans, the state doesn't really invest in things like public parks and that kind of infrastructure. So to come here with those beautiful parks, the weather's phenomenal eighty percent of the year, there's so much to do. It's safe and wholesome, and there are other kids."

So, Madeline Vann and her family are building their own traditions here in Williamsburg, beginning with eating meals together. NDN

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# CAITLIN BRANNON

## *Serving a Positive Attitude with Food*

By Ashley Smith



Lisa W. Cumming Photography

Whenever Caitlin Brannon enters a room, it instantly becomes brighter. Her warm, infectious smile and positive energy delight customers at Rick's Cheesesteak Shop every day. As the manager, she loves to serve comfort with every order, and she strives to make certain that customers love every bite.

Caitlin, or Catie, as she is known, was born outside of Philadelphia but her family moved to Virginia in 1999. Her dad, Rick, opened a cheesesteak shop in Poquoson and later, Straight Outta Philly in the Oyster Point area

of Newport News. After both closed, he opened Rick's Cheesesteak Shop on Jefferson Avenue in Newport News. Through hard work and family support, the restaurant became quite well known on the Peninsula.

Catie helped the family in both restaurants as a teenager, but she also worked at Movie Stop for a while. "I still miss that job," she says. "It was fun!" After graduating from Poquoson High School in 2006, she went to college and soon became a certified medical assistant at a chiropractic office for a couple of years.

While Catie always had a desire to help her family prosper in their restaurants, her first dream was to become an FBI profiler. Every Friday night, she would watch John Walsh's "America's Most Wanted" with her grandmother, and the tenacity of the agents inspired her. "I love mysteries, and I wanted to take on the most difficult challenges as a profiler." Though she didn't become an agent, she still enjoys taking on new challenges.

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opened in 2015, and at that time, Rick asked Catie to join the team full time and manage the store. Catie agreed and has been there ever since. Now, her sister runs the kitchen while she manages the front of the house. Her recommendations for new visitors? Cheesesteak, of course, and yes, they use white American cheese. She also suggests the Reuben. Catie takes delight in being part of her family's legacy on the Peninsula and adding to the unique food scene in Williamsburg. Her family has been in the business for 20 years, but the self-described foodie thinks Williamsburg is the best place for the shop.

"I love Williamsburg!" she says. "The culture is incredibly diverse, and the food scene here is like a miniature New York. I especially love the number of mom and pop restaurants here." Her favorite food is spicy American cuisine. "My husband will tell you I like chicken wings best, but I really enjoy sushi and anything with full flavor."

Caitlin works hard to make sure that everyone who walks into Rick's feels like family. "People come to us for the ultimate comfort food, but we are serving kindness, too. We are truly comfort food. There are no calories listed on our menu." Calories counts are available by request, however.

Caitlin runs the restaurant on simple but powerful principles. First, never judge a book by its cover. Second, they should always follow the golden rule. "You don't know what people are going through, and when they visit us, we want them to feel at home." She also believes that people only get what they give. For Catie, every day is an opportunity to put good vibes and positive energy into the world by treating every person with respect and kindness. "A smile and a kind word do so much to help

other people smile." Catie's positive energy has a definite impact at the shop. Customers drive from as far away as North Carolina and Ohio to enjoy the fantastic food and family atmosphere.

Besides her role in keeping the energy at Rick's Cheesesteak Shop warm and friendly, Catie is also responsible for bringing Rick's into the digital age. She runs the social media channels for the family business. "It's been a challenge, but I love contributing in this way." Catie is bringing Rick's Cheesesteak shop to new frontiers, such as Instagram and Facebook. She also utilizes Yelp! and TripAdvisor for their ability to help travelers find the best local eateries. "It helps them to find the mom and pop places that everyone really wants to visit." Though she hasn't had formal training, Catie's natural ability to connect with others and youthful vivacity helps the business make a mark online.

Outside of the shop, Catie's interests encompass the entertainment industry. She has done quite a bit of acting and singing in student films at local universities. She came close to achieving her childhood dream, however, when she was cast as an extra in the crime drama, Imperium, in which Daniel Radcliffe, an inexperienced FBI agent, must go undercover to prevent a terrorist plot. She also works with a local group that is trying to create interest in Virginia as a premier filming destination. "Virginia has a lot to offer, and we'd like to see the film industry take more notice." She is encouraged by the work happening in Virginia Beach to lower tax incentives for filmmakers across the state.

Catie desires to have a career in film one day and actively seeks opportunities to pursue her dream. She is open to a career as an actress and a role behind the camera as well. She loves media and is working hard to educate herself on

every aspect of the film industry. No matter if it's on screen or in the background, she thinks it would be amazing to have any type of career in film and media. Catie also actively records music to help establish herself as a more formidable actress. Her role model is Amy Lee of the band Evanescence. "I have a Smule account where people can follow my singing career with over 1,400 recordings. It really shows my growth as a singer. I also have a Facebook page for my acting pursuits."

Like most creative people, Catie's hobbies are varied. She loves fashion. She follows fashion and often sets trends herself. Bright colors and unique accessories are a staple of her wardrobe. "Everyone is beautiful. There's a way to show that." She believes that everyone has a feature worth celebrating and wants to help others feel comfortable showing off their strengths. Catie's pursuits may be bold but her best adventure has just begun. On January 2, 2020,

Caitlin Pistone became Mrs. George Brannon. She met George while waiting tables at the shop in true cinema style. "We locked eyes from across the room that day, but we were both in very different places in our lives." Yet, destiny would not be deterred. Just a little over two years ago, they met once more and became a couple on Catie's 30th birthday.

Caitlin Brannon has big dreams, and she hopes that in the future, whatever she is doing will be making others happy. "That's what I love to do, make other people happy." Whether that is by serving Italian hoagies and chicken cheesesteak or reliving the lives of brave women on the silver screen, Catie's positive attitude and commitment to serving others will help her succeed. She is truly a treasure of the Williamsburg community. NDN

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Williamsburg Area Faith in Action offers a wide variety of support services to help seniors in Williamsburg, James City County and the Bruton District of York County remain happy, healthy and independent. The faith referred to in their name does not refer to a particular religious organization. The whole premise of Faith in Action is for people of all different faiths, or without a religious belief, to come together in action to help others in their community.

The new development director, Caroline Johnson, is passionate about the work Williamsburg Area Faith in Action accomplishes. "It's not an exclusive organization, and the people we help and the people who serve are from all different backgrounds." Plus, their services are free of charge.

Volunteers can provide services as simple as visiting with a senior while their caregiver runs errands or needs to be away, which can make a huge difference in many lives. Volunteers may also provide transportation for ambulatory individuals to places such as doctor appointments, grocery shopping, the library, church, or the post office. Without transportation, older adults lose their independence, making it difficult to stay engaged with the community. For seniors who can't get out to the store even with a driver, volunteers can pick up the money and grocery list from them and shop for the senior.

Caroline studied sociology at Christopher Newport University (CNU), with a minor in



Lisa W. Cumming Photography

## Little Things Make a Difference

By Dawn Brotherton

civic engagement and social entrepreneurship. She fell in love with nonprofit work during a summer internship in Nicaragua with the Manna Project. During another summer, she interned near her hometown in northern Virginia at an adoption agency. "I definitely feel like I've had a lot of great opportunities that have shown me things at a young age that maybe I wouldn't have figured out if I didn't take that leap of faith and do those odd internships that weren't necessarily as desirable as high-paid internships."

During her first year out of college, she worked for a county-run nonprofit concerning homelessness where she learned the importance of grant writing to keep programs running. After a year, Caroline relocated to Williamsburg when she married Bryce Johnson in September 2017. They met on the first day of class during their freshmen year at CNU but didn't begin dating until their junior year. Bryce's job brought them to Williamsburg, and it was a rough transition for Caroline to leave her friends and family behind.

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“When I first moved here, I was looking for something to do, something that would make an impact. I had done volunteer work and worked in nonprofits as an intern. And I just felt so fulfilled when I was doing something for other people,” Caroline says. “I went on Google and looked for opportunities in Williamsburg and came across Faith in Action. And I’ve always kind of had a soft spot for children and elderly. When I saw what they did, I knew that was something that I wanted to be a part of. So, I started volunteering with them.”

First, she helped with household chores, then began caregiver support. “I have met people I would have never met before,” Caroline says. “I don’t feel like I’m volunteering. I feel like I’m meeting with a friend because we know each other so well now.”

Outside of her volunteer time, Caroline wasn’t sure what she wanted to do. She has always enjoyed blogging and writing, and she has an entrepreneurial spirit, so it was a natural progression for her to start her own copywriting business creating website content for other companies. She discovered joy in using storytelling to help others explain the why of their business with a personal touch.

While she loved what she was doing, there was a void. “I missed having an impact directly on someone,” she admits. “I missed working for a nonprofit because that really was my passion.”

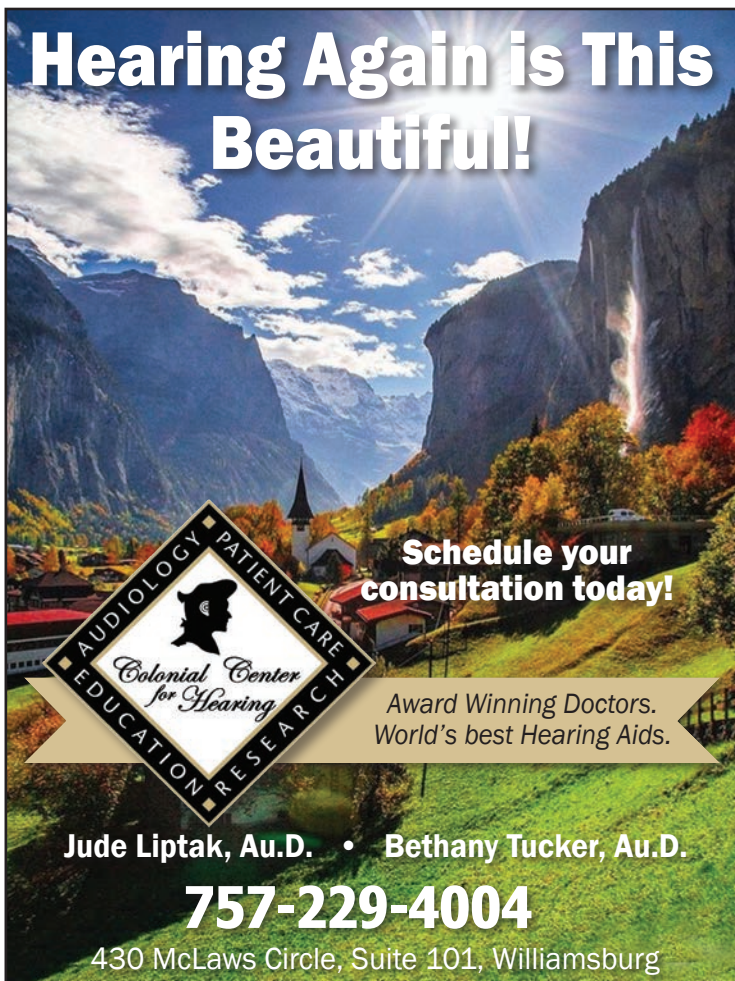
She wasn’t actively seeking another job but was open to the idea. She kept coming back to working with seniors. “I started to bring it up to my friends in my small group, and we talked about it. I asked them to pray that I would be open to options.”

A week later, Caroline felt called to reach out to the executive director of Williamsburg Area Faith in Action where she volunteered to get the director’s counsel about her career path. Through their discussion, they discovered they had a lot in common, including attending CNU with the same major, working for a nonprofit, then off to something else before feeling called back to the nonprofit world. Before the end of the conversation, the executive director was encouraging her to apply for an open position within their organization.

Caroline admits she used to have the mindset that donating only twenty dollars to a cause wasn’t going to do anything, so why bother. “But now, seeing the checks come in day after day, it adds up. It’s my goal to help people realize that no matter how young you are, how little you have, you have something to give.”

She continues to be encouraged by people who find a way to make a little go a long way. “As someone who is in the younger generation, it’s really easy for me to look at things and say, ‘Oh, I can’t afford to help much with that,’ or ‘Oh, I don’t have that much time to help with that,’ and put it off to people who are retired or people who have more income.” Now she has come to realize every little bit makes a difference. “Whether it’s donating a little money or donating two hours a week, it’s inspiring to watch other people do the same thing and see how big of an impact it makes.”

Caroline hit the ground running when she started in December 2019. “We’ve started a new campaign called twenty on twenty for 2020. The goal is to encourage new donors to give twenty dollars or more every month for the entirety of 2020.” Starting the habit of giving a small amount over the course of the year may show people that giving is manageable for a longer period of time. NDN



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Out on the softball field, John J. Ancellotti feels like a kid again, even if he and his teammates can't run the bases, chase after fly balls or bend down for grounders quite as well as they did in their younger days.

None of that matters in the Williamsburg Senior Softball League (WSSL).

"You see people sparkle, even when they make errors or strike out," John says. "We are who we are. Our hearts are large for the love of the game. We appreciate a chance to feel alive on a

baseball diamond, with absolutely no pressure to be an All-Star. Just being there is a treasure."

John, a military veteran with a long and prestigious career in law enforcement and counter-intelligence, knows that all too well.

A 100 percent service-connected disabled veteran, John has battled three types of cancer since 2013. At 66, he has stage 4 pancreatic cancer, possibly linked to a Middle East deployment and/or work as a Coast Guard liaison during the 2010 Deepwater Horizon oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico.

After beating thyroid cancer with two operations plus radiation, John also recently learned he has a slow-growing case of prostate cancer. And after 38 years in law enforcement and 30 years of active and reserve duty with the military, there's the inevitable joint damage. John



## Having a Ball!

By Alison Johnson

has had two operations on each knee, three on his left shoulder and one on his right shoulder. "My motto is, 'Never give up, never surrender,'" he explains. "WSSL is one more thing that gives me the drive to never give up."

Founded in late 2018 and launched in spring 2019, WSSL is a slow-pitch softball program for men and women 55 and older. The organization offers fall and spring seasons with some offseason practices and online training videos.

The growing WSSL fielded four teams this past fall, with about 55 players total. The program operates as a nonprofit in partnership with Williamsburg Parks & Recreation and plays games at Kiwanis Park.

At Kiwanis Park, John was thrilled to meet teammates still going strong in their 70s and early 80s. He also discovered plenty of ef-

fort, competitive spirit, sportsmanship and patience.

After games, WSSL players often gather at restaurants to chat. "It's great to meet people from all walks of life and careers," John says. "There's just a lot of camaraderie. It's good for your physical and mental health."

Growing up, John, a New Jersey native, played football and basketball in addition to Little League and high school baseball.

He was usually a pitcher or first-baseman back then, although he recently took up second base at the re-

quest of his WSSL coach.

In 1972, John enlisted in the U.S. Army Military Police Corps after receiving a Selective Service draft number of one. For more than six years, he worked primarily as a Military Police Investigator with several drug suppression teams in Europe and the U.S.

John completed his duty as a sergeant, E-5, to continue a career in civilian and federal law enforcement. He had been interested in the field since he was a boy watching the television series "Gunsmoke," featuring a U.S. marshal in a frontier town, with his father every Saturday. John's diverse career included time at the Army Criminal Investigations Division, Air Force Office of Special Investigations, North Carolina Criminal Justice Academy and as a sheriff and time with the police department in North

Carolina. He has conducted counterespionage, counterterrorism, counterintelligence, criminal, bribery, fraud and narcotics investigations.

As a Department of Defense Special Agent, John deployed to numerous Middle East countries and served six months in Baghdad working public corruption and bribery cases alongside the Iraqi Criminal Investigation Division.

Along the way, John took night and weekend classes to earn a Bachelor's Degree in Police Science and Political Science from Fayetteville State University. He also completed the Air War College Associate Seminar Program and the Postgraduate Intelligence Program at Joint Military Intelligence College in Washington, D.C., now known as National Intelligence University.

From 1989 to 2013, John served in the Coast Guard Reserves. Among his high-profile assignments: ensuring unit readiness throughout North Carolina and developing management plans for weapons of mass destruction with the Joint Chiefs of Staff at the Pentagon. He retired with the rank of Captain.

John has lived in Williamsburg since 1993, when he was transferred to Hampton Roads as a Department of Defense Federal Agent. "I love

the work I do," he says. "I encourage everyone to stay involved in something they love, whether it's a job, their community or a sport."

Still, aging has its undeniable challenges. John laughs that in his very first WSSL game, he pulled a hamstring as he ran from third base to home plate after a long hit. "They nicknamed me 'The One-Hit Wonder,'" he recalls. To make matters worse, he was thrown out at home.

Before the next season, John helped coordinate a meeting with a trainer from William & Mary, who taught WSSL players about strengthening exercises and stressed the importance of rest and recovery. In the fall, John avoided any major issues and helped his Silver Team win the league championship.

Really, though, John simply counts himself fortunate to be alive. His pancreatic cancer, the same dangerous type that killed Apple executive Steve Jobs, was caught by chance in its infancy when he participated in a clinical trial on a minimally invasive colonoscopy. He has undergone two major surgeries and sees specialists for regular monitoring.

"I'm a walking miracle," he says. "I have good days and bad days; however, I treasure

every day."

In addition to playing softball, John, who has two grown daughters and a 3-year-old grandson, travels to a different Major League Baseball stadium each June with several high school classmates.

The group has been to Baltimore, Colorado, New York, Pittsburgh, St. Louis and Washington, DC, with plans to hit Minneapolis in 2020.

Outside of sports, John is active in several local charitable organizations, including the Disabled American Veterans, the VFW and the Richmond USO, and is a member of the Virginia Symphony Society and the BMW Car Club of America. He also is one of several co-owners of the Illy Caffe Williamsburg, a European-style shop in Merchants Square.

Health permitting, though, John Ancellotti will never be too busy to pick up a bat and glove for the WSSL.

"Even if something happens and I can't be on the field, I would at least go out to games to watch, cheer or maybe umpire," he says. "Just being out there for as long as we can; that's what's important to all of us." **NDN**

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# Maestro of Missing Music

By Harmony Hunter

David Grandis is something of a polymath. So much so, that it's difficult to assign him a label. He's a man who loves his family and his home. He loves music. He loves history, and he loves literature and poetry. Tease apart any aspect of his life, and one of these threads will be running through the weave.

He serves as Director of Orchestras at William & Mary, Music Director of the Virginia Chamber Orchestra and Music Director of the Williamsburg Youth Orchestra. His distinction in the field sets him apart, and he's conducted world-famous orchestras. During a performance, he has a knack for serving up lesser-known composers to game new audiences, using his influence to restore the sonic presence of musicians at the edges of obscurity.

David is a native of France, where his life's core passions were seeded. During his youth in France, family lore would nurture a fascination with history. His connection to World War II is rich with admiration. "My grandfather was a general in the French Army, and I was raised with a sense of gratitude for the Americans in the second World War. My grandfather was in the second World War himself. I had a great big American flag in my bedroom growing up. I still have it, actually. It's a flag that my great grand-



Lisa W. Cumming Photography

mother had to welcome the American troops in Alsace. It has never left me."

In his youth, a twin passion for music grew alongside his respect for the Allies. This connection was a deeply personal one, formed instantaneously during a chance childhood encounter with an organ playing at a Catholic chapel called The Church of Joan of Arc. "The organ was a fantastic tool of propaganda, because I had faith instantly," he says with a laugh. "I had a kind of epiphany through the music, and I have linked music with spirituality ever since."

In his work as a teacher and a musician, David is purposeful in his choice to program scores that

exist on the fringes. "With the students, when you select a piece that they absolutely don't know, they might not be motivated at first. It's fantastic to play Beethoven's Symphony, and it's fantastic to play Mozart and Dvořák, but the repertoire is so huge. There are so many other things, maybe not at the same levels as these absolute masterpieces, but these things are enjoyable and people would love to hear," he says.

This habit of favoring lesser-known composers has its roots in David's youth, as well. Looking back, he says, "It was a personal trait. When I was a kid, and I started to discover classical music, I was using all my pocket money to buy CDs,

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recordings. And when I was looking on the shelf, and I saw an obscure French composer that nobody knew or everybody had forgotten, I had the curiosity to say, "Why is it not performed?"

Young David would snatch up these wallflowers from their racks before they disappeared altogether, reasoning, he says, "It had still been recorded, so there might be some value. So, I bought all these things before I had a full version of 'Carmen,' for example. Because I know I can listen to 'Carmen' whenever I want: it's always going to be available. But an obscure composer? I should get it now, because it might be difficult to get it later."

This early, earnest drive to rescue art from a purgatory of silence echoes even now throughout his professional endeavors. "There was always this intellectual curiosity regarding the quality of the piece: has history made a fair decision? You hear so many times that masterpieces from Beethoven, from Schumann, from Tchaikovsky, were not necessarily well-received at their premiere. And now we consider they were masterpieces."

A dread of discarding something of value in haste has haunted David's steps since those early days when he debated whose discs to redeem from the dusty shelves. "I'm always thinking about these things. We might have a change of mind for these other pieces. To be fair; it's quite rare to find something that is an absolute masterpiece that has been completely forgotten and never played again. But very good pieces? That's very frequent," David says.

In proof of this truth stands the work of Max d'Ollone, a composer of whom David has made a special study. A romantic musician and contemporary of Maurice Ravel, Max d'Ollone enjoyed some prominence in his lifetime but was largely forgotten after his death in 1959. Scant recordings of his works survive, and performances are rare. With the rediscovery of Max d'Ollone's body of work came a real opportunity to rescue an endangered legacy.

If there is an element of magic in conjuring combinations of sounds that have not disturbed the air for one hundred years or more, so too, there is a suggestion of the fantastic in the channeling of their deceased composer. To conduct a symphony conceived in the past is to will back into existence an era that has faded, with all the social, political and personal nuance of longing and struggle in whose influence it was born.

The conductor must set the rhythm of a piece, and from his central perch he or she can experience the totality of the performance, where a single musician might be mired in the sounds of their section. That is the more prosaic aspect of the conductor's job. The poetry comes in the interpretation. David says, "You have to set yourself in the composer's shoes and understand how life was at that time and why this melody meant something at that time, and why it is expressing this particular thing. Germany in the 1800s, France in the 1900s: you have all these different societies and cultures."

At the heart of the job is the duty to express the meaning of a piece as its composer understood it. "It's why, for a conductor, it's important to read a lot, and go see exhibitions and museums, and be very versatile and open your mind and be interested in everything," David says. It is only by understanding the full context of a piece that the conductor can truly deliver the soul of a composition to an audience.

David Grandis has found the perfect axis of all of his passions. A self-described history buff, he finds ample material to feed his fascination with the American Civil War and the broader field of Virginia's historic legacies. His wife and son share his love of the region's beauty and temperate climate, and with engagement in music ranging from the Williamsburg Youth Orchestra all the way up to professional musicians, he shepherds music at every stage, doing his best to make sure none of it is forgotten. NDN

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# A Community Supports Recovery

By Paige Brotherton

Three stories from the ground, a thin tarp covers a nearly twenty-foot drop from the roof. Donovan Devlin and his father are working on it. It's around six o'clock, and it's time to turn in for the night. But in the growing darkness, the objects strewn around the roof are harder to see, and one misstep leads to terrifying consequences. For some people, a simple accident can change their outlook on life. For Donovan, he saw how the most unexpected events can bring people together.

Since moving to Virginia at age two, he's lived in Hampton, Yorktown, and finally Williamsburg. "It was a military family," Donovan says. "My dad was in the Air Force." Traveling is no small feat for a family so large. But having so many people to lean on can make transitions easier. "I come from a blended family. I have eight siblings: seven sisters and one brother. We're bookends," he says with a laugh. "It's me at the top, little boy at the bottom, and all girls in between." Big families can be stressful, but Donovan has enjoyed the caring nature of the situation as a whole. "It's definitely an adventure, growing up in that sort of environment," he admits. "But it's a loving environment, and it's really awesome."

As part of such a large military family on the move, Donovan has been both homeschooled and enrolled in local schools. Although he attended Tabb Middle in sixth grade, the family traveled to Williamsburg to make the most of the numerous co-op opportunities available. In tenth grade, Donovan set out to finish his high school education at Warhill High School, where he was a member of the football team and founder of the Christian Club. Since he and many of his friends attended the nearby Cross-



Lisa W. Cumming Photography

walk Church, Donovan started Warhill's Christian Club as a solution to schedule conflicts preventing people from getting to youth group every week.

"I think a couple of us at lunch one day got together and were like, 'Hey, let's make this club where we can just meet for an hour after school.' We found a teacher who was willing to sponsor us, which was awesome, and so after fourth block, we booked it over to his classroom and hung out, played some music, and talked about life."

What began in 2016 as a subsidiary of his church's youth group grew into a club with more than forty members, fostering a safe place for teens to relax with good discussions and good company.

In his other after-school activities, Donovan learned to make hard choices regarding priorities. Although he attended all of the summer training sessions for football and competed with his team in the first few scrimmages, his busy curriculum forced him to put academics first

and drop football. "I had to talk with the coach," Donovan says. "I told him, 'I'm in these classes and they're proving to be quite a challenge.' I had to tell him, but that was a hard decision."

After high school, Donovan went on to study Christian Leadership and Management at Regent University in Virginia Beach. His favorite classes had to do with history and how ancient texts were written and theologies developed. "When people say, 'I wonder why they stopped using thee and thou' and things like that, I'm like, 'Oh, that actually happened when this king said this' and so on, so that was a lot of fun for me." As interesting as the book work was, Donovan's ultimate goal lies in mission work.

He's been on two overseas mission trips before, one to Haiti and one to the Dominican Republic. "It gave me a perspective of being able to share what we have and be grateful for what we have." Some of his experiences taught him to stay alert at all times, since the world is not always as friendly as we'd like. But for the most part, Donovan came back with a positive outlook on

the impact he could have on his communities. “I learned that love is a universal language,” he says. “When you don’t speak a language, when you don’t know those people and what they’re going through, love can speak for you.”

His travels added to his dream of working full time in an organization doing outreach programs. Currently, Donovan continues to work with the Jeremiah Project, which serves lower-income families and people who lack the resources to set up devices like handicap ramps. “We go to their house and we spend time getting to know the individuals who live there, and we look at the planning, and then we build a ramp for them, or something that will aid or help them in that way.”

When he’s not working to make a difference or studying at college, Donovan returns home to his family. It was on one such winter break that he found himself helping his father build the new addition to their house. Since the weather promised to turn bad soon, they decided to cover the hole in the roof with a tarp to protect the work-in-progress from the elements. “It was getting late. I was talking to my dad and kind of forgot where I was,” Donovan says. “We had materials laying all around this hole, and I tripped on a piece of wood tacked on to the floor and fell

on the tarp. It ripped open, and I fell, all the way through the first floor and into our basement.”

The concrete waiting at the bottom left him in need of a hospital, and fast. One frantic helicopter ride later, Donovan was seeing the head trauma specialist in the ICU unit at Virginia Commonwealth University. Although he had to get several stitches and even some staples in his head, he walked away less than a week later with no broken bones below the neck and only a minor concussion.

Nevertheless, when his neighbors heard about the accident, the community rallied around a common hope for his recovery. “Many, many, many people from the area actually visited me in the hospital,” Donovan says. “Many, many, many people sent meals. The outpouring was very needed and very heartfelt. And I’d say in a way, it helped me recover faster.”

After the accident, Donovan is still thriving as a citizen of Williamsburg. He decided to take a break from school and is working at the Norfolk International Airport as a ramp agent. Not only does he get to direct the airplanes from the ground, but he also enjoys the unique job perks of air travel. “I get to fly anywhere in the U.S. for free on standby,” Donovan says with a grin. So far, he’s taken advantage of this opportunity with

a trip to New York City. After a day of sightseeing and dining, he and his friends returned in time to go home for the night.

Even with the whole nation a free flight away, Donovan is staying in Williamsburg for now. It may be different than Oklahoma where he was born, but it has its unique attributes. “The weather has definitely been a big thing,” he says. “It’s like one day you can wear shorts, and the next day you have to bundle up. But it’s definitely given me a good home and foundation.”

Between the natural landscape and the supportive community, Donovan is happy to call Williamsburg his home. “There’s an appreciation for the more traditional and the slower pace of life. I really like the beautiful people and scenery, and the focus on family, growth, and challenging each other. To this day, I’m still meeting people that say, ‘We heard about your story at church and gatherings and were the ones praying for you and calling to check in on you.’”

Donovan will keep traveling, and spending time with his family. A year later, the accident stands only to prove that nothing will keep him from his dreams of making a difference. “No prolonged effects, nothing. I mean, I get a headache every now and again, but hey...” Donovan smiles and shrugs. “It’s all good.” NDN

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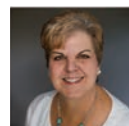
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# Sharing Spaces

By Narielle Living

In the shared retail space on Richmond Road in Norge, customers can find anything for their home from furniture to decorations to bath items. The beauty of this shared space is such that there is a constant turnover in inventory, keeping the store fresh and filled with interesting items. For Nancy Lee, the founder of Flipping Flea, her concept works to create a space not only for the customer but also for the small business owner.

Although she has an extraordinary entrepreneurial spirit, Nancy used to work in a labor-intensive field as a machinist. "I turned wrenches for 25 years as a grease monkey," she says with a smile. After leaving that job, which she loved, she began to set her sights on other careers. "I have actually been in direct sales pretty much my entire life. When I was a kid, I used to ride my bike up to a local grocery store and buy bubblegum. Then I would take it to

school and sell it."

Her initial business, called Always A Happy Hour, began in 2009. She carried items related to beer, wine and libations, including novelty items. She described it as, "household decor that was themed with wine or beer." At that time, however, she struggled with balancing a lease for her space and working at wine festivals. "I would do wine festivals on the weekends, and I was making great money at these festivals, and that would pay my rent here." She tried to talk with the owner where she rented space and discuss the concept of renting out the large space to a number of small, mom and pop business, but nothing ever came of those discussions.

The idea for Always A Happy Hour came about because of her proximity to the Outer Banks. Initially, Nancy and a friend thought it would be fun to set up a business that acted as

a sort of concierge service that delivered beer and wine to people who were staying at the beach. However, due to permits and legal concerns, they decided to put that idea on hold. The home decor for Always A Happy Hour, however, is available.

After a medical emergency, Nancy put most of her things into storage and closed her business. Although she was out of commission for a while, she ended up finding a new business space. After entering into a short-term lease at the Prime Outlets, she had a pleasant surprise: her grandson was born.

"He was my first, but I was in there long hours, morning till night. You really can't afford payroll when you're a mom and pop business; you're pretty much married to the business. But when my grandson was born, it was game over." She was fortunate to be able to spend a few years with her grandson, watch-



ing over him when he was young. But the idea of a business that could host other businesses would not let go. "I told my husband it would be so wonderful if you could have somebody who had a store where you could put everybody in. Keep your day jobs, do your own thing, and, if you were the only person there you would have other people to help."

Nancy had maintained her first business, Always A Happy Hour, and she eventually got back to traveling and doing wine festivals. But she kept saying that she needed to find a location and start this other business. "So I did. I got a location and started the business with the shared retail concept." Her first try was not in the best location, but she ended up on Richmond Road in Norge and that is where her business blossomed and quickly took off. "We quickly found that there's such a need for small businesses to have a place where they can set up their business without the burden of taking on a lease and all the overhead alone so this shared retail concept came from that. I struggled for years with paying a lease that I was stuck in and had to go out and start trying different ways to make my ends meet."

Because of the nature of her business, Nancy

attracts a varied number of vendors. "I have two girls, they are eight and 11. They just left a couple of weeks ago because they moved to Florida. They've been in my store almost a year. Another of my merchants, Nicholas, came in here when he was 14 and he just turned 15 about four months ago. He took a second booth in my second store. He is incredible. It's a whole eclectic group of people."

Nancy says that she is somewhat particular about the vendors at The Flipping Flea. "We are a flea market with a twist. We're not a yard sale." Her goal is to ensure that people understand the market and what they can do with their product while not getting weighed down by the overhead of rent and long-term leases that can strangle a young business. "I want vendors to start small, meet their goals, and then get in line to see if there's a space to grow into."

Nancy relates the story of one of her first merchants who came to see her at the Flipping Flea about renting space. "She brought her products in, and she brought them to the counter and said she had made it." When Nancy looked at the beautifully packaged items, she asked the woman where she currently sold her

wares. The woman did not sell her products, and instead she created, packaged and gave them away as gifts. Today, all that has changed. "She has a great business here. Her repeat customers are amazing. She makes aromatherapy products and bath products and they're just phenomenal."

The aspect that Nancy enjoys most about her establishment is the opportunity to help other businesspeople grow their business. Of course, she loves the products that are housed in the booths, but helping people is her first love. "We help you with your business. We help you get started and try to give you the ins and outs. I'm not a professional but we certainly will help you find ways to make your dreams happen."

Nancy and her family moved to this area when she was very young, but today she considers herself to be a local. She lives in York County and loves the surrounding Williamsburg area and all that it has to offer. For Nancy Lee, helping others is what she does best. Whether she is helping someone launch their business or helping a customer find the perfect accent piece for their home, she is living her life to the fullest and enjoying every moment of it. NDN



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# Hey Neighbor!

Please visit

[www.WilliamsburgNeighbors.com](http://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](mailto:heyneighbor@cox.net)

## Hey Neighbor!

### WARM UP WILLIAMSBURG

January 31, 2020

Warm Up Williamsburg will be held from 5:15 – 8 pm at the Williamsburg Community Chapel on John Tyler Highway. The local culinary community comes together to support the event by donating soups, breads, baked goods, and supplies. Over 20 establishments are expected to participate. Elderberry Jam will donate their talents to the evening as well. A limited number of tickets will be available, \$25 ea online at COFM.info. Tickets may be available at the door- Cash/check only for \$30 ea. For questions or to volunteer contact Suzanne Jarvis: [suzanne-jarvis@cofm.info](mailto:suzanne-jarvis@cofm.info).

## Hey Neighbor!

### THE NEIGHBORHOOD COUNCIL OF WILLIAMSBURG MEETING

February 1, 2020

The Neighborhood Council of Williamsburg will hold its monthly meeting at 8 am at the Stryker Center, 412 North Boundary Street, Williamsburg. In addition to our program, we conduct our “business session”, where we cover items important to our community. Residents are invited to speak about their neighborhoods. Typically, the meetings are attended by residents of the various neighborhoods in Williamsburg, as well as members of the City Council including Mayor Paul Freiling, and representatives of the Williamsburg Police Department. The meeting will start on time and will adjourn promptly at 9:30 am. For more information contact Jim Joseph at (757) 565-1549 or at [jim-joseph@cityofwilliamsburgva.gov](mailto:jim-joseph@cityofwilliamsburgva.gov)

[joseph120@gmail.com](mailto:joseph120@gmail.com).

## Hey Neighbor!

### GRIEF SHARE

February 2, 2020

Walnut Hills Baptist Church, 1014 Jamestown Road, will offer GriefShare, a grief recovery seminar and support group. GriefShare is a video seminar that features some of the nation's foremost Christian experts on grief and recovery topics as seen from a Biblical perspective. The video seminars are combined with support group discussions of the materials presented during the video. The support group meets in the church Hospitality Center for thirteen weeks from 2 – 4 pm beginning on February 2. The program fee is \$15.00 and registration is required. Please register with Carol Mitchell at [carol.mitchell@cox.net](mailto:carol.mitchell@cox.net) or (757) 345-6294. For more information, visit [whbconline.org](http://whbconline.org).

## Hey Neighbor!

### TRINITY ORGAN CONCERT SERIES

February 5, 2020

The free concert will feature music from the Baroque period through the present for organ and voice. The Alternatim practice from the French Catholic Church, the lyrical settings of the Psalms from England, and the colorful sounds of the late French Romantic combine with a modern setting of the Magnificat to provide a whirlwind tour through the history of Sacred Song. Refreshments will follow. Time: Noon at Saint Bede Catholic Church, 3686 Ironbound Road. For more information, call (757) 229-3631 or visit [www.bede.org/concerts](http://www.bede.org/concerts).

## Hey Neighbor!

### TICKLED PINK (CLEAN) COMEDY SHOW

February 8, 2020

Get tickled pink by joining us for a night of clean comedy. Headliner: Shannan Parker, featuring Donna Lewis, Rod Shannon and Kemi Layeni. Host: Howard El & Melody Harris. All proceeds from this event will provide scholarships for students in the York/Williamsburg areas. Sponsored by the Ladies of Alpha Kappa Alpha, Sorority, Inc., Lambda Lambda Omega Chapter Saturday 7–9 pm. (doors open at 6 pm.) Historic Triangle Community Services Center, 312 Waller Mill Road. Advance Ticket \$35.00. Please call or email for tickets or additional info: Adriane Stewart (757) 285-6270, [allopublicity@gmail.com](mailto:allopublicity@gmail.com).

## Hey Neighbor!

### NARFE LUNCHEON

February 11, 2020

Terry Banez executive director of the Greater Williamsburg Chamber and Tourism Alliance Business Council will speak at the luncheon of the Williamsburg Chapter of the National Active and Retired Federal Employees Association. The luncheon will be held at the Ford's Colony Restaurant, 240 Ford's Colony Drive, Williamsburg, with a social gathering at 11 and lunch at 11:30. Cost for the luncheon, payable to the restaurant, is \$20 (cash or check payable to Ford's Colony). Please RSVP no later than Tuesday, February 4, to Penny Kell at [PZKell@cox.net](mailto:PZKell@cox.net). For more information about NARFE Chapter 685, contact Tom Kell at [twkell@aol.com](mailto:twkell@aol.com) or (757) 220-2093.

## Hey Neighbor!

### DAILY WORK OF JUSTICE

February 13, 20, & 27, 2020

The Daily Work of Justice, a conversation series in 2020, is entitled, “Ability & Disability.” This series invites people with experiences connected to ability and disability to share their stories as a way of providing space for others to engage with empathy, understanding, and action. They will take place in the Sadler Center from 6:30 - 8 pm on three consecutive Thursday evenings. RSVP at [www.wm.edu/dwoj](http://www.wm.edu/dwoj) or contact The Arc at [pam.mcgregor@thearcgw.org](mailto:pam.mcgregor@thearcgw.org).

## Hey Neighbor!

### HS STUDENT AND AFRICAN AMERICAN EXHIBITS

Through February 14, 2020

The Williamsburg Contemporary Art Center's 17th Annual High School Student Show is underway. The show features 2-D and 3-D artwork by students from six area schools. Also featured in the Fire-side Gallery is new work by winners of the 2019 Members Show as well as 3-D works in our Artisan Corner. WCAC's next show, “Untold Stories – An African American Perspective,” begins Feb. 18 and runs through March 20. This first-time exhibit features multi-media artwork by African American Virginia artists and is to promote cultural understanding of their experiences in central and greater Hampton Roads. Artists have been asked to tell their own stories through their artwork—past, present, personal, or handed down through families. WCAC is located at 110 Westover Ave. Hours: 11-3 Tues.-Sat.; 12-4 Sun. (757) 229-4949. [www.VisitWCAC.org](http://www.VisitWCAC.org).

## Hey Neighbor!

### TIDEWATER INTERGENERATIONAL ORCHESTRA

February 16, 2020

The orchestra will perform works by Dvorak, Brahms, and others. Viola virtuoso, Adelya Lindsay, principal violist with the Philadelphia Chamber Orchestra, will be the featured artist. 1 pm at St. Bede's Kaplan Parish Hall, 3686 Ironbound Road. For more information about this free concert, call (757) 229-3631, or visit [www.bedeva.org/concerts](http://www.bedeva.org/concerts).

## Hey Neighbor!

### RELAY FOR LIFE OF WILLIAMSBURG

February 18, 2020

Team meeting at JCC Recreation Center, 5301 Longhill Road, begins at 6 pm, doors open at 5:30. The Relay for Life event will be held on Friday, June 5, 5 pm to Midnight, at Lafayette High School. Benefits the American Cancer Society. Other team meetings are March 17, April 21, and May 19.

## Hey Neighbor!

### THE AARP DRIVER SAFETY PROGRAM

February 19-20, 2020

AARP presents the driver safety program at Riverside Doctors' Hospital from 8:30 am - 1 pm each day. This program is designed particularly for drivers over 50 years of age but anyone may attend. Attendance for both days is required. RDH is located at 1500 Commonwealth Ave. Completion certificate allows for a lower auto insurance rate for three years. \$15 for AARP members with current AARP membership card; \$20 for non-members. Please call (757) 220-0463 to reserve a seat in the class.

## Hey Neighbor!

### 5TH ANNUAL "AN EVENING FOR BACON STREET" GALA

February 21, 2020

Kingsmill Resort. Once Upon A Time, the community gathered for an enchanting evening of live music, a three-course meal, and

live and silent auctions to celebrate those in our community who are making a difference in the fields of adolescent substance use prevention and treatment. Tickets on sale at [baconstreet.org/gala](http://baconstreet.org/gala).

## Hey Neighbor!

### FAMILY FUN NIGHT

February 22, 2020

Join James City County Parks & Recreation for a night of family FUN and entertainment – enjoy gym games, create various craft projects, splash in the pool, dance to tunes, play racquetball or old-fashioned board games! All ages welcome. New this year: an inflatable pool obstacle course, face painting, the FIFA 20 eSports Tournament and more. The FIFA 20 Xbox Tournament, for ages 8+, is included with your Family Fun Night entrance fee. All games will be played on an Xbox and a drawing will take place to determine pools and match ups. All players must arrive and enter by 7:15 p.m. James City County Recreation Center, 5301 Longhill Road, 7-9:30 p.m. Ages 13+, \$5; ages 12 & younger are free! Preregistration is encouraged but not required. Info: [jamescitycountyva.gov/recreation](http://jamescitycountyva.gov/recreation) or 757-259-4200.

## Hey Neighbor!

### CHARITY BASKETBALL TOURNAMENT

February 22, 2020

Get ready to "Swish" for Seniors! We invite you to play in or sponsor our second annual basketball tournament, Swishin' for Seniors. This 3-on-3 tournament benefits Williamsburg Faith in Action and takes place at Bruton High School in Williamsburg. We're excited to welcome players from middle-school-age to adult to come together for some competitive 3-on-3 basketball while supporting a wonderful cause. Visit us online (<http://wfia.org/swishin4seniors/>) for more information and to sign up today! This event is sure to be a slam dunk!

## Hey Neighbor!

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February 22, 2020

From 2-4 pm at Chippokes Plantation State Park, 695 Chippokes Park Rd., Surry. We invite you to come and learn how to build one of these boxes, and even have the chance to take one home. There is a registration for the program, and the cost for registration is \$20 per person. If you are interested in registering please contact the Farm and Forestry Office at (757) 294-3439. Workshop to be held in the Quayle Classroom located at the Farm and Forestry Museum, see you there!

### Hey Neighbor! THE CHAMBER MUSIC SOCIETY OF WILLIAMSBURG

February 25, 2020

Trio Con Brio of Copenhagen will perform at 8 pm in the Williamsburg Regional Library Theatre. Acknowledged as one of the world's finest piano trios, Con Brio has a worldwide reputation for their fresh and contemporary approach to the core repertoire. For further information and tickets visit our website --- chambermusicwilliamsburg.org

### Hey Neighbor! LECTURE AT VIMS - PLASTICS IN THE OCEAN

February 27, 2020

While the accumulation of plastic waste in our oceans and other bodies of water is a serious concern, it is not a simple problem to understand or study. Much of this debris exists in tiny pieces called microplastics, which are able to interact with even the smallest ocean animals but very difficult for scientists to trace. Join us as Meredith Seeley, a doctoral student at VIMS, walks us through the complex story of plastics in the ocean - where they come from, where they go, and how they impact ocean organisms. All After Hours lectures take place at 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.

### Hey Neighbor! WILLIAMSBURG CHORAL GUILD, SEVEN LAST WORDS

March 1, 2020

4 pm, at the Williamsburg United Methodist Church, 500 Jamestown Rd. Adult tickets: \$20 in advance / \$25 at the door; Student tickets \$10 with ID; no cost for children under 12. The Williamsburg Choral Guild presents our winter concert, Seven Last Words, featuring Richard Burchard's large work for choir, strings, and organ of the same name. Burchard's setting of Christ's last words on the cross evokes "love, fear, sorrow, hope, betrayal, agony, and ecstasy." For ticket information, contact tickets@williamsburgchoralguild.org. For more information, contact www.williamsburgchoralguild.org.

### Hey Neighbor! HAM RADIO CLASS

March 9, 2020

Amateur Radio, also known as Ham Radio, is a popular hobby and service that brings people and radio communications together. Hams use their radios to talk across town, around the world, and even into space. During natural disasters they're often the only means of contacting the outside world. The Williamsburg Area Amateur Radio Club will be offering classes for the entry level and secondary level radio operator's license. Classes will take place two days a week, from 9 am - 12:30 pm, March 9 - April 24. The classes are free. For additional information contact HamRadioClass@yahoo.com.

### Hey Neighbor! HANDS-ON HEARTH COOKING WORKSHOP

March 14, 2020

From 10 am-4 pm at Chippokes Plantation State Park. Sign up today for this Hands-On Workshop and learn how to cook like our ancestors did! Recreate recipes from 17th, 18th and 19th century sources and taste everything you make in class! Class Size is limited

so sign up early! Ages 16+ | Register online at <http://17thcvirginiacook.wixsite.com/workshops>

### Hey Neighbor! CASA PROGRAM PRESENTS "CASA COUTURE"

March 21, 2020

Colonial CASA invites you to attend its 4th annual Board-sponsored fund-raising event. Our BINGO NIGHT will feature designer handbags, retailing for more than \$500 each! Tickets are \$50 each before February 15; a table for 10 may be reserved. Each ticket includes one playing card for 12 games of Bingo, one beverage, and heavy hors d'oeuvres. Tickets can be purchased at [colonialcasa.org](http://colonialcasa.org) or by calling (757) 229-3306. CASA provides specially trained volunteer advocates to abused and neglected children in James City and York Counties, Williamsburg, and Poquoson.

### Hey Neighbor! THE CHAMBER MUSIC SOCIETY OF WILLIAMSBURG

March 24, 2020

The Parker Quartet will perform at 8 pm in the Williamsburg Regional Library Theatre. Hailed by The New York Times as "something extraordinary" the Grammy-winning Parker is known for its inspiring performances, luminous sound, and exceptional musicianship. Renowned for its dynamic interpretations and polished, expansive colors, the group has rapidly distinguished itself as one of the preeminent ensembles of its generation. For further information and tickets visit our website --- [chambermusicwilliamsburg.org](http://chambermusicwilliamsburg.org)

### Hey Neighbor! MASTERWORKS CONCERT #5 - ROMANTICS

March 26, 2020

At 7:30 pm at the Williamsburg Community Chapel. Music includes J. Strauss, Jr.: Overture to Die Fledermaus (The Bat); Rachmaninoff: Piano Concerto No. 2 in C minor, Op. 18; Brahms: Symphony No. 1 in C minor, Op. 68. Concert features music direc-

tor candidate Andrés Lopera and guest artist Eun Joo Chung, piano.

### Hey Neighbor! 21ST ANNUAL BRITISH & EUROPEAN CAR SHOW

April 18, 2020

Open the 2020 car show season by visiting beautiful Colonial Williamsburg for the 21th Annual British and European Car Show sponsored by the Williamsburg British Car Club at Revolution Golf & Grille in The Shops of High Street 9 am - 3 pm. Show will be held at. Registration form on our website - <http://www.wm-bgbrit.com/>. Featured marque is Mini to celebrate their 60th year of production. Spectators free, car entry \$25. Roy Gavilan-car show registration, [WBCCcarshow@gmail.com](mailto:WBCCcarshow@gmail.com).

### Hey Neighbor! GLOUCESTER/MATHEWS HOUSE AND GARDEN TOUR

April 18, 2020

Hosted by the Garden Club of Gloucester from 10 am - 5 pm. Reflecting the maritime heritage of Mathews, the homes and gardens showcased are all on the pristine waters of the East River. Tour four historic homes and three guest cottages located close to each other and to downtown on this driving and shuttle tour. Day of tour tickets are \$45 and available on tour day at headquarters, Christ Episcopal Church, and Samarkand, starting at 9:30 a.m. by credit card, cash or check. Not available at other houses. Advance tickets are \$35 pp. and available online at <https://www.vagardenweek.org/main/tickets>. For detailed property, headquarters, ticket, lunch, and special activity descriptions, please go to <https://www.vagardenweek.org/main/tourdetails?id=433>. For questions please contact Peggy Montgomery, Chair at (804) 516-5261 or Lynne Manning, Vice-Chair at (919) 880-2329 or [Gloucester@vagardenweek.org](mailto:Gloucester@vagardenweek.org).

### Hey Neighbor! THE CHAMBER MUSIC SOCIETY OF WILLIAMSBURG



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**APPETIZER OR DESSERT**  
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April 21, 2020

Pianist Lise de la Salle and Quatuor Danel perform at 8 pm in the Williamsburg Regional Library Theatre. Both de la Salle and Quatuor Danel strive to create excitement with the traditional and the new repertoire. Lise de la Salle has a reputation as one of today's most exciting artists and as a musician of uncommon sensibility and maturity. Quatuor Danel, is at the forefront of the international music scene, with important performances worldwide and a series of groundbreaking CDs in collaboration with major contemporary composers. For further information and tickets visit our website --- chambermusicwilliamsburg.org

## Hey Neighbor!

### 57TH ANNUAL ART ON THE SQUARE

April 26, 2020

The 57th Annual Art on the Square will be held from 10 am – 5 pm. Art on the Square is a juried show that is dedicated to providing original, high quality, handcrafted and diverse mediums of art. It is located on Duke of Gloucester and North Boundary Street in Merchants Square, Williamsburg, Virginia. The event features more than 150 artists and is free and open to the public. Proceeds from artist booth fees are donated to visual and performing arts organizations throughout the greater Williamsburg area including Williamsburg, James City and York counties.

## Hey Neighbor!

### WILLIAMSBURG CHORAL GUILD MAY CONCERT

May 3, 2020

4 pm, Williamsburg United Methodist Church, 500 Jamestown Rd. For tickets, visit tickets@williamsburgchoralguild.org. Adult tickets \$20 in advance /\$25 at the door; \$10 for students; no cost for children under 12. We hope you'll join the Williamsburg Choral Guild for our spring concert celebrating the art of storytelling with a program entitled Fable. You'll hear works by Eric Whitacre (Goodnight

Moon), Sam Pottle (The Jabberwocky), and Bob Chilcott (Aesop's Fables), to name a few. We will be joined by the Jamestown High School Chamber Choir, under the direction of Matthew Rapach. For more information, visit www.williamsburgchoralguild.org.

## Hey Neighbor!

### MEMORIAL MILE

May 23 – 25, 2020

Williamsburg Parks and Recreation would like to honor and remember the sacrifice of our fallen military, fire, EMS and law enforcement members by sharing their fallen hero stories at Waller Mill Park. Help us remember our fallen heroes by submitting a written remembrance story and photograph to parksandrec@williamsburgva.gov. Remembrance signs will be on display May 23 – 25 at Waller Mill Park (901 Airport Road) from 8 am – 4 pm in Williamsburg. All are welcome to visit the park and read the stories of those that were taken too soon. Event info. at www.williamsburgva.gov/rec.

## Hey Neighbor!

### RELAY FOR LIFE OF WILLIAMSBURG

June 5, 2020

Events include 5 pm Survivor Reception, 6:30 pm Opening Ceremonies, Midnight Closing Ceremonies. Lafayette High School, 4460 Longhill Road. During the family-friendly event, individuals and teams will walk the track and will participate in a variety of fun activities, including live music; special theme laps around the track; the Luminaria Ceremony; food trucks; children's activities; a Survivor Reception and a Reflection Tent for Survivors and Caregivers. Benefits the American Cancer Society.

FIND MORE LISTINGS AND LENGTHIER DESCRIPTIONS AT:

**WilliamsburgNeighbors.com**

*Williamsburg's*  
**IN THE  
NEIGHBORHOOD**  
photo challenge

**THE WINE SELLER**

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

**Enjoy!**

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



INTERMEDIATE



JANUARY 2020  
In the Neighborhood  
Photo Challenge





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