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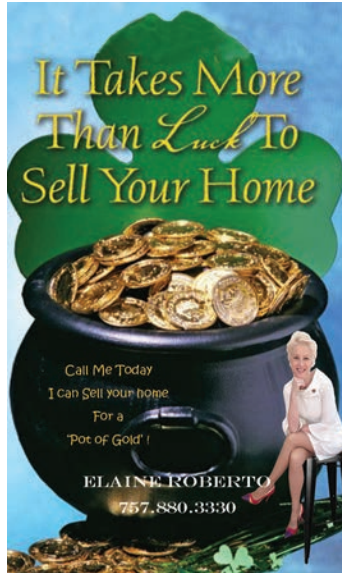
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Meredith Collins, Publisher

What can you say about volunteers and volunteering? Well, a lot, it seems. Reading these stories and realizing how volunteering is everywhere in many different forms, I thought there must be some really good observations about the giving process out there somewhere. I was right, and I think they say it better than I ever could.

So bear with me while I share what a few guests have to say about the theme of this issue:

- “Volunteers don’t get paid, not because they’re worthless, but because they’re priceless.” - *Sherry Anderson*
- “If you want to touch the past, touch a rock. If you want to touch the present, touch a flower. If you want to touch the future, touch a life.” - *Author Unknown*
- “The meaning of life is to find your gift. The purpose of life is to give it away.” - *William Shakespeare*
- “It’s easy to make a buck. It’s a lot tougher to make a difference - *Tom Brokaw*
- “I’ve learned that you shouldn’t go through life with a catcher’s mitt on both hands. You need to be able to throw something back.” - *Maya Angelou*

Meaningful quotes, all appropriate. But the people we feature in this issue actually don’t need anyone speaking for them. Their stories and their accomplishments and their contributions are simply remarkable. They give so much, and they make me wonder if their days are only 24 hours long like everyone else’s. Take note of how much they all love this community, enjoy sharing of themselves with others, and encourage others to join them. They epitomize what it means to be a good neighbor. Read on. [NDN](#)

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FOR THE LOVE OF

Williamsburg Botanical Garden

By Kristine Hojnicky

Each morning at dawn when the gates are unlocked to Freedom Park, the Williamsburg Botanical Garden opens to guests and residents. The two-acre property is home to eighteen distinct habitats which visitors can explore along paved and natural pathways.

Unlike other parks of its kind found throughout Virginia, the Williamsburg Botanical Garden is unique in that it educates and entertains visitors using responsible gardening, landscaping design and sustainable techniques that support environmental conversation.

“We are not like a Dupont Estate or other attractions with manicured gardens,” says Harry FahL, master gardener, volunteer and member of the Board of Directors. “This is a garden that

is maintained for the benefit of wildlife and it’s left in a more natural state. Our intent is for people to come out and see things that are safely taken care of and healthy but are in the most natural environment we can give them.”

Harry is one of the many volunteers who are responsible for ensuring guests’ safety and maintaining the health and wellbeing of the vegetation found in the garden using the rule of three D’s: dead, damaged or diseased.

If plants or trees are dead or diseased, they pose a significant risk to the healthy ones around them; and if they are found damaged from natural or man-made causes, the safety of guests and volunteers may be jeopardized.

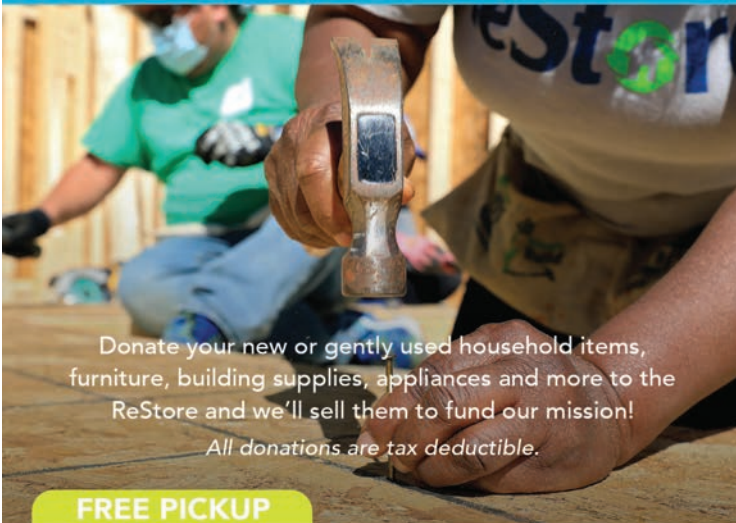
To care for the plants and wildlife, Harry

uses a variety of pruning techniques to cut back, remove or thin the vegetation. These are skills that have taken years for him to master. He was primarily self-taught for the purpose of maintaining the one-acre landscape surrounding his former home on the Chesapeake Bay in Baltimore County.

“When we bought that house thirty years ago, the trees, shrubs, bushes and so forth were kind of a jungle,” he explains. “I decided to tackle [it] but at that point, I knew nothing about pruning or landscaping. But I threw myself into the task.”

After a particularly terrible attempt at pruning a tree that Harry described as a slash and burn effort compared to leveling off the legs of

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a table and ending up with a piece of furniture several inches high off the ground, he dove into researching the proper techniques required to maintain the flora on his property.

“This was before the internet, so I started buying books. Over the next twenty-odd years I took formalized classes and practical training under the tutelage of several extremely knowledgeable and talented arborists and rounded out my education through the Virginia Tech Extension Master Gardeners’ class. Over that span of time, my wife, Jean, and I turned that acre of landscaping on the beautiful shores of the Chesapeake into an absolutely outstanding landscaped environment through proper care of our trees and shrubs.”

Harry, who was also a marketing executive at the time for a window and door manufacturer, decided to retire and sell the property to downsize and relocate his family to Williamsburg. He and Jean were fond of the area, and their daughter had been accepted to William & Mary to pursue her undergraduate studies.

“I like to stay active mentally and physically, and I live by several precepts,” he says. “The first is to wake up every day with a smile on my face and go to bed with a smile. The second is I firmly believe that for my own mental wellbeing, it’s important for me to continue to move and not let myself get stagnant. Finally, we all have to age, but excluding disease or other health conditions, getting ‘old’ is a choice.”

As he was settling into retirement in Williamsburg, Harry came upon the master gardeners’ booth at the Saturday morning farmers market and was immediately intrigued by their educational training program. He signed up for a series of classes and for three months, spent several hours a day roughly two days a week learning and acquiring new skills.

“Master gardeners are a valuable part of our community and communities throughout the country. The information I gleaned from this class was outstanding. A speaker came in to every one of the classes, including a PhD from Virginia Tech, someone with thirty years of experience running a tree crew, and a world-renowned bulb expert.”

The master gardeners, who fall under the auspices, rules and regulations of Virginia Tech University, hold a volunteer job fair for all of the new interns after graduating from the course. To become a master gardener, interns must complete fifty hours of volunteer work at any one of, or combination of, the nineteen available projects throughout James City County.

Harry chose six projects in his first year and by the end, whittled down the list to the two projects he liked the most. By his second year, he devoted all of his time to the Williamsburg Botanical Garden.

“It was the kind of place where I could walk in and become one with. I would look around and I didn’t see tasks to be done or jobs that required attention. I saw things that needed a personal touch, and the more I became involved, the more I loved the environment out there.”

On average, Harry volunteers approximately eight and a half hours per week in the gardens. Some weeks he may spend upwards of fifteen or more hours walking the pathways, pruning the vegetation and working on any number of projects to improve the experience for visitors and guests. He often works on special assignments to promote the master gardeners’ mission and improve the botanical garden. The flexibility and

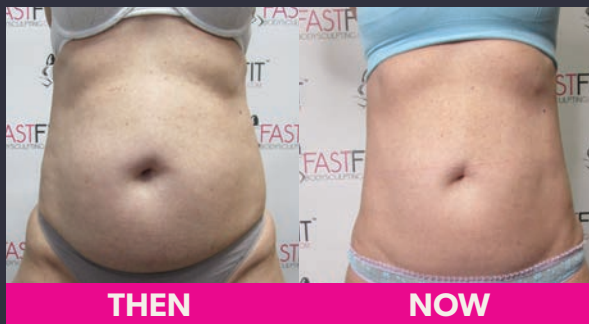


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seasonality of the work also affords him the opportunity to travel extensively across the country with Jean in their RV, visiting grandchildren on the West coast or spending extended time with their daughter when she visits from her home in Norway.

“I am much better with a hammer, saw or pruning shears in my hands than with a computer,” he admits. “I have the tools and the ability to build and create things that the garden needs, like making plant racks for when we have plant sales.”

Harry has also assisted with “in-person” pruning clinics during which he will teach other master gardeners, volunteers and members of the public the proper tools and techniques required for the craft.

“That’s what master gardeners are all about: providing a learning experience and stewardship of the population so homeowners can get started on the right foot towards knowing the proper techniques to take on these projects themselves.”

When the pandemic began, the in-person

pruning clinics were suspended. But with the help of several other volunteers and a student from the Rhode Island School of Design, Harry launched a series of videos on the James City County master gardener website so the public has access to information that was previously covered during the clinics. Topics include how to prune, why to prune, and the tools for maintenance. While it forced Harry to step out of his comfort zone, he sees it as an innovative way to support the community during a time of necessary precaution.

“I think they came out well considering none of us had ever done something like this before,” he says. “Master gardeners possess a wealth of information and this is a way we can communicate with the people in our community so they can continue to learn.”

As the weather shifts and spring approaches, Harry looks forward to ushering in the busy season at the Williamsburg Botanical Garden. He will spend the next several months completing thinning projects, pruning the trees and shrubbery, and cleaning up the habitats fol-

lowing the winter storms. With its numerous walking paths and outdoor spaces, Harry Fahl expects many numerous visitors and residents alike will take advantage of the opportunity to social distance in a safe environment full of local natural beauty.

“I get a very rapid, personal gratification from the work I do at the Williamsburg Botanical Garden. I can look at a shrub or a tree that requires pruning and within hours or less, look at the finished job and say by golly, that looks nice before moving on to the next project. Pruning is for the health of the tree, the safety of the people, and the beauty of the garden, which combines into making the experience so much nicer for everyone.” NDN

Williamsburg Botanical Garden depends entirely on contributions from members, visitors, and volunteers. To learn more, support or donate, visit www.williamsburgbotanicalgarden.org.

For information regarding the James City County Master Gardeners program, including resources like the pruning how-to video series mentioned in this article, visit www.jccwmg.org.


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HELEN HANSEN

Investing herself in the community she loves

By Lillian Stevens



Lisa Martin Lee Photography

Helen Hansen is the kind of neighbor everyone wants to have and the kind of volunteer organizations hope to attract.

She's a cheerful person by nature, a proud mother and grandmother. She's also an advocate for her community and its citizens.

With a passion for social justice issues, Helen, who retired from teaching and school counseling several years ago, spends an impressive part of her "free" days supporting several local organizations, including her beloved Williamsburg

Unitarian Universalist (WUU) church.

"I've practiced Unitarian Universalism my whole life," she says. "So, I joined WUU when we moved here in 2008."

Unitarian Universalists are unified by their shared search for spiritual growth and social justice. Theirs is a warm and nurturing congregation where people of all races, backgrounds, and walks of life are welcome. Given Helen's interest in social issues, it followed that she would join WUU's social justice committee and eventually

became one of the committee chairs.

"I was asked by a previous minister to be the WUU representative for the Greater Williamsburg Outreach Mission," she says. "That's how I got involved with that great organization. I started as the representative from WUU and am now Board Chair.

The Greater Williamsburg Outreach Mission (GWOM) is a coalition of faith groups committed to providing assistance to people who are experiencing homelessness in greater Wil-

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liamsburg. With a vast array of initiatives and partnerships, the organization works tirelessly to address the critical needs of the homeless in the community.

“I think we’re doing important work,” Helen says. “There are homeless people in our community, something that had not really been acknowledged in recent years.”

Through the Greater Williamsburg Outreach Mission, problems are identified and potential solutions are brainstormed. “We work collaboratively with faith group and community partners to create programs that we can pass along to others. We incubate ideas and move them to a place that they can be well organized and executed.”

One such partnership, and a heavier lift this winter because of the COVID pandemic, involves the Community of Faith Mission, an emergency winter shelter program serving the area’s homeless men, women and families. The organization represents a collaboration of more than 20 faith-based congregations, a dozen community partners and scores of volunteers offering help to the area’s most vulnerable neigh-

bors during the calendar’s coldest season.

“The Community of Faith Mission started in 2012 under the sponsorship of St. Bede’s Catholic Church as an emergency winter shelter for the homeless,” Helen says. The next year, it became a 501(c)3. “This year, we are housed at several area churches, with hosts taking turns providing hospitality.”

Not surprisingly, the threat of COVID-19 has had an impact on volunteers.

“Before the pandemic, we were always able to fill our volunteer slots. The reality is some of our older volunteers don’t feel comfortable at this time. People don’t want to put themselves at risk, and I wouldn’t want them to.”

At Williamsburg Community Chapel’s emergency winter shelter, volunteer duties run the gamut. Some volunteers will check in on folks, while others serve a meal. There are also volunteers who stay overnight to monitor things. Then, in the morning, breakfast is served before everything is packed away for the next evening. “We need about 15 volunteers each day,” Helen says. “Even with more than 20 churches partnering together, it is a challenge to line up the

help we need in the midst of a pandemic.”

While the number of volunteers has decreased, there has been an exponential increase in the number of citizens who need food, shelter and services. Helen marvels at the way the community has come together to help its own.

“One great thing happening in Williamsburg right now includes the COVID community conversations on Zoom organized by Williamsburg Health Foundation,” she says. “We have nonprofit service providers and representatives from the City, County and WJCC Schools getting on a regular meeting to assess services and then collaborate to provide assistance where needed. These efforts ensure a coordinated effort to help meet basic needs of everyone in the community.”

Helen supports Williamsburg House of Mercy, which is now providing food and referrals to services to anyone in need. The organization operates The Harbor, which began as a Greater Williamsburg Outreach Mission project. Although scaled back this winter, the Harbor Day Shelter at 10 Harrison Avenue provides warm meals to go and a place for our homeless neigh-

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bors to gather outdoors.

The importance of getting food to hungry citizens cannot be overstated.

“At the current time, the Greater Williamsburg Outreach Mission has two projects,” Helen says. “We have a crock pot meal project in partnership with FISH, providing meals to families in motels. Our member faith groups deliver a crock pot and shelf stable groceries and recipes, and the families can make meals once a week.”

Another project, drawing on help from Meals on Wheels, involves providing 20 meals to families living in area motels. Greater Williamsburg Outreach Mission faith groups pick up meals made by Meals on Wheels and deliver them to the families every Wednesday.

As much as Helen and her volunteers do for others, she says that they get back far more than they give.

“We meet so many others who have such spirit of cooperation and caring for others,” she says. “For me, that’s the takeaway. There are so many in this community who are working to ensure a welcoming community for all. To belong to such a community that cares about all of

its people is very special.”

Helen also lends her efforts to causes that go beyond basic food and shelter. Through her church community and the wider Williamsburg community, she is active in a variety of projects that promote advocacy for racial justice, criminal justice, economic justice, and taking care of our earth. Whether it’s a voter drive or a peaceful protest, she is there to offer her support.

A teacher and counselor by profession, Helen enjoyed working in six different states, including locally at Matoaka Elementary and Stonehouse Elementary Schools prior to retirement. Her professional skills translated naturally to those volunteer activities she has embraced.

After retiring, she and her late husband Doug, retired from a career with Mobile Oil, decided to live on a boat.

“We sailed for four years,” Helen says. “We sold our house, put our things in storage and sailed around on a catamaran. We sailed from the Bahamas to Maine. It was an exciting adventure, and we really enjoyed being self-sufficient, seeing new places, and meeting many interesting people.”

When her in-laws moved from California to Patriots Colony in Williamsburg, Helen and Doug sold their boat and bought a home in the Brandon Woods neighborhood.

“I love Brandon Woods and I love Williamsburg,” she says. “So much history here! I love walking my new puppy, a Cavapoo, down Duke of Gloucester Street.”

In terms of the future, Helen has high hopes for the special organizations she serves and for travel. With children and grandchildren in Colorado and California, she longs to visit them.

“I look forward to seeing my grandchildren! They are four amazing, spectacular kids. I love talking to them, [and] love spending time with them. I can’t wait to be able to travel again and see them.”

Helen anticipates the day when people can feel comfortable traveling and doing things that were long taken for granted. “I look forward to feeling comfortable with people indoors. I look forward to our local restaurants full and busy again. And mostly, I look forward to being in a room with 15 people meeting around a big table. That’s my dream!” NDN

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Lisa Martin Lee Photography

Building Boats to Showcase History

By Brandy Centolanza

A broken foot during college back in 1966 impacted Bruce Brown's decision to pursue a hobby building model boats. Today, the retired music teacher, voice coach and choir director dedicates his time to building model ships for the Watermen's Museum in Yorktown.

Bruce first became fascinated with model building while he was in high school in Michigan, thanks to his father. As a teen, Bruce worked with model cars, planes and trains. He

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liked to draw and design cars and Chris Craft boats and still has his original Erector Set from high school. His hobby waned in college until a foot injury while playing frisbee forced him to cancel a hiking trip. He turned to building model boats to pass the time while his foot healed.

Bruce started with a model of the USS Constitution, but never finished it. In 1974, Bruce, who earned degrees in music and education, joined the faculty of Houghton College in New

York, where he worked for the next 30 years. Eventually, he completed the USS Constitution before moving on to the clipper ship USS Flying Fish. Life intervened again and Bruce, who raised three kids with his wife, Cherie, didn't finish the USS Flying Fish until 2011.

Bruce and his wife relocated to Williamsburg in 2005 to be closer to their daughter and her family.

"I thoroughly enjoy the fact that here in Williamsburg we walk on the real dirt and visit

the real houses from history," Bruce says. "We are at the center of history, and I just love it."

Retirement has afforded Bruce more time to focus on model boat building. He has built three skipjack boats, the battleship USS Kearsarge, and a U.S. Coast Guard cutter. Bruce does additional model builds as well. He worked on clocks, trains, and model homes and churches. He also built a model of a Conestoga wagon and a Sopwith Camel fighter plane, complete with Snoopy.

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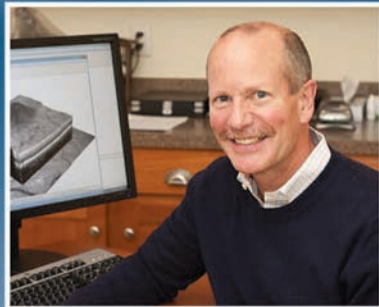


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In 2016, Bruce was able to intertwine his love of history with model building when he was approached by Phil Bowditch to finish a model of Yorktown's historic Moore House, which Phil's father started 40 years prior but was never able to complete. The model Moore House sat unattended for 25 years before Bruce began a three-month process of restoration and completion of the project. The model Moore House currently resides at the Hornsby House Inn, though the intent is to one day have it on display at the Visitors Center near Yorktown Battlefield.

"It was an incredible experience, and I am quite proud of it," Bruce says. "I never could have imagined doing something like it, to come down here and immerse myself in history to this extent with the Moore House."

Bruce is also proud of one of his 2019 projects, a model build of the HMS Endeavour, the vessel James Cook took around the world from 1768 to 1782.

Bruce has been volunteering at the Watermen's Museum since 2012, offering his services in model boat building and repair. The mission of the Watermen's Museum is to share the story of the sea men and women of the Chesapeake Bay experienced from pre-colonial times to the present and how they helped shape the country. Bruce started volunteering at the museum about a decade ago after visiting the Watermen's Museum to see examples of their model rigging. He discovered that some of the museum's model ship collection was in need of repair and was asked to assist with the cleanup. "They gave me a small workspace with a workbench," Bruce recalls. "I was first tasked with cleaning and fixing their models and making them presentable again. There were about ten of them that needed attention."

Using supplies and tools provided by the museum, Bruce first repaired a model of the gunboat Philadelphia from 1776, which has a connection to the full-sized Chesapeake gunboat Henry that the museum was in the process of building at the time. Other models Bruce worked on included the Armed Sloop warship Virginia from 1775; the Brigantine sailboat Eagle from 1814, the French Frigate ship L'Hermione from 1779 and the Canadian Schooner Bluenose from 1921.

"Most of the things I've done have been from kits because they have everything you need," Bruce says. The model boat building kits he uses supply material in scale, plans and manuals as well as fittings, which can't be easily fashioned.

In all, Bruce has built between 40 and 50 model ships for the Watermen's Museum, more than half of its collection. Through the years, he's made pre-colonial and colonial civilian and military crafts and warships as well as modern watercraft including ferry boats, skipjacks, sail boats, and more. In 2015, he worked on Civil War model ships including the USS Monitor, USS Merrimack, USS Albemarle, USS Picket, and USRC Harriette Lane. His home is adorned with additional model ships he has constructed with his most recent completion being a model yacht of America from America's Cup. He also builds boats to give as gifts. "I always try to have a faithful representation of the real ship," Bruce says.

"I love the history and style of the ship," Bruce says. "I think it has a fabulous story and feel privileged to have done the model."

Last year, Bruce completed four Mediterranean ships from the Greco-Roman Period, among other boats. In addition to the Watermen's Museum, he's also done projects for the Mariners' Museum in Newport News. Recently, Bruce also made two model Steam Pumper Firefighter carriages for the fire departments in Williamsburg and Yorktown.

It typically takes Bruce a few months to complete a model build, depending on the ship. He relies on the internet as well as the Hampton Roads Ship Model Society for support and inspiration. He's hands-on through the whole process, from construction to gluing, painting and applying the finishing touches. Though most of his projects have been from kits, a few have been made completely from scratch.

Bruce can be found at the Watermen's Museum multiple times a week, working on boats and interacting with the staff and visitors.

"Volunteering is wonderful," Bruce says. "I love giving my time. I love all the people at the museum. We all get along so well. I get to meet people from all over the world and feed

my interest in history with the history of all the ships."

Bruce usually takes a break from model ship building when the Watermen's Museum is closed for the season. During the winter respite, he enjoys painting and journaling about his life at the age of 80. Music is still very much a part of his life as well, and he continues to play piano. Bruce and Cherie also like to spend time with their three kids and six grandchildren, even if it is over Zoom these days. The couple, who met in college, will celebrate their 58th anniversary this year.

"I am very proud of my family," Bruce says. When the Watermen's Museum reopens this spring for the new season, Bruce will be ready to tackle any model boat building projects waiting for him.

"I treasure the opportunities to talk with people, especially youngsters, about the process of model making, the history of the subject underway, and where they are from," Bruce Brown says. "I consider my work at the Watermen's Museum as a ministry to the Lord." NDN

Next Door Neighbors

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STACEY PIETRUSZYNSKI



A Volunteer for Childhood Development

By Ashley Smith

Lisa Martin Lee Photography

Stacey Pietruszynski grew up in Redding, Pennsylvania, just outside of Philadelphia. While attending Bucknell University in Lewisburg, she took a summer job at a country club in her hometown. There, she met another college student who was working as a groundskeeper. Their summer romance blossomed, and they were married shortly thereafter. Steve attended Lehigh University, while Stacey continued her studies in psychology at Bucknell.

After graduation, she worked for Meridian Bank, headquartered in Redding. She was in their branch management training program as an assistant branch manager. Stacey decided she wanted to become a nurse and at the same time, Steve wanted to switch careers from electrical engineering to medicine. While Steve took prerequisite courses for the MCAT, Stacey was accepted into the accelerated nursing program at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore.

For a time, Stacey worked at John Hopkins, but the young couple soon moved to Hershey, Pennsylvania so Steve could attend medical school at Penn State University. Stacey began working as a nurse in the pediatric intensive care unit at Hershey Medical Center. Though the work was fulfilling and rewarding, it came with a high stress load. When she had the opportunity to switch gears completely, she took advantage of the offer and went into pharma-

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ceutical sales with Bristol Myers Squibb. Stacey's new job helped to support Steve through medical school and with only a month before yet another move, this time to Pittsburgh, the couple welcomed their son, Spencer. Though this series of changes presented challenges, a new baby, a new city, a new phase of learning, the small family soon fell in love with their home in Pittsburgh. As Steve's residency came to an end, the family made plans to settle there permanently.

Those plans changed yet again when a friend told them about a radiology practice in Virginia with an opening for a radiologist. When Steve accepted the offer to work at the radiology firm in Williamsburg, the timing felt right. Stacey's brother was a tennis player attending William & Mary and loved the area. They now had two sons, Spencer and Carson, who were still in early elementary school and the family settled into their new community quickly. Stacey enrolled the boys in second grade and kindergarten, respectively, at Matoaka Elementary. It was an adjustment for everyone since Pennsylvania's

kindergarteners only attended half-day sessions. She began to volunteer at the elementary school as often as possible.

During an exercise class, Stacey inquired about other volunteer opportunities. One of her neighbors introduced her to Child Development Resources, and Stacey found an organization with whom she felt an instant affinity. Many in the Historic Triangle are familiar with the nonprofit Child Development Resources (CDR) and the vast resources they utilize to support children with disabilities, ages infant to three, and their families. CDR provides early intervention services to families in Williamsburg, James City County, York County, and Poquoson. CDR began as the Williamsburg Preschool for Special Children in 1965 with a mission to serve children with disabilities and their families, years before published research documented the value of early childhood education and the importance of intervention for children with developmental delays. When federal legislation guaranteed every child a free and appropriate education regardless of the disabili-

ty, the founders shifted their focus to those children who would not receive services in school. Since then, they've grown from two classrooms at St. Bede's Church to two separate childcare development centers, a professional training center, and a headquarters. The organization provides an early childhood preschool, fatherhood initiatives, motherhood support, and access to early intervention therapies. Today, Child Development Resources manages and distributes grants totaling millions of dollars in support of programs that reach over 1,400 children and hundred of educators each year.

Stacey believes wholeheartedly in the mission of CDR and has a personal connection to the impact of early intervention. First, as a pediatric ICU nurse, Stacey knows firsthand how great the need is for support and training for families of children with disabilities. The organization's mission of early intervention is also close to her heart, since both of her sons received speech therapy services while they were quite young. Though they were in Pittsburgh at the time, Stacey is passionate about the im-

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pact that early intervention has on children and families.

Since 2008, she has worked behind the scenes on the Annual Bid 'n Buy Auction. The auction is a massive undertaking normally consisting of both a live and a silent auction.

Stacey loves her role with the silent auction, in part because of the incredible people with whom she has had the privilege to work. Under Special Events Coordinator Nancy Wigley, Stacey is part of a small team of volunteers, soliciting donations for the event and packaging each item.

"We have wonderful categories, such as home and garden, dining, entertainment, get-aways, sports, and more," she says. Past donations include tickets to the Chicago Cubs and the Boston Red Sox games, as well as a 2018 Gibson SG electric guitar. Stacey's favorite item that her family bid on was a week at a condo in the Outer Banks. "It was so wonderful to spend that week with family."

Though the pandemic has forced the organizers to pivot to an entirely online format and

eliminated some ancillary events, it wasn't a difficult transition since the database of auction items is already online. "The move to an online auction has certainly given the event more exposure across the country, which is great news for this fundraiser."

The 43rd Annual Bid 'n Buy Auction will be held online from April 17-24, 2021 instead of the usual March timeframe, to allow more time for donors to submit donations to the auction. Stacey feels fortunate to have the opportunity to support such a worthy cause. "I'm just grateful that CDR has allowed me to work with them on this project and support them in this small way. It doesn't feel like work because I love what I'm doing, I love the mission, and I enjoy the people with whom I've gotten to know and interact with," she says.

In addition to the Bid 'n Buy Auction, Stacey has served on the board of the Williamsburg Hospice House and Support Care and assisted with the Hike for Hospice. She also co-hosted the 30th annual Elegant Culinary Affaire, a benefit for the Hospice House, last January.

For several years, she sat on the board for the New2you Thrift store located on John Tyler Highway, which serves as a fundraiser for Williamsburg Christian Academy, her sons' alma mater.

Now that Spencer pursues studies at Randolph Macon College and Carson has begun his college career at Thomas Nelson Community College, Stacey is considering when and how to reenter the workforce. There may be a real estate license in her future, but as she says, "Who knows what will happen?"

She also enjoys spending time with her family and friends; cooking with her husband, Steve, and even playing pickleball. No matter what happens in the immediate future, Stacey Pietruszynski plans to remain connected and involved with the many organizations she has supported and volunteered with for the past 14 years. Though she contends that the honor remains entirely hers, Williamsburg is grateful for the impact Stacey's behind-the-scenes commitment and enthusiasm has had on the community. NDN

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Continuing to Serve

By Narielle Living

Lisa Martin Lee Photography

Col. Jim Pauls, the legislative affairs chair for the Virginia Peninsula Chapter Military Officers Association of America (VIPMOAA), has spent much of his life involved in politics and the military. Born in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, he moved to Washington, DC when he was eight years old.

“My dad went to work for the Veterans Ad-

ministration there after the war,” he says. “I grew up in the DC area, went to high school for two years in Maryland and then two years up in Northern Virginia. We moved from the district to Northern Virginia after my sophomore year in high school, so I really grew up in Northern Virginia.”

After high school, Jim attended Virginia

Military Institute (VMI). He says that his choice to attend VMI was somewhat non-traditional. “My classmates at VMI just loved to hear this story,” he says with a laugh.

According to Jim, he did not always do well academically. “I wasn’t such a hot student my last two years of high school. And so, when I graduated, I didn’t get accepted into many



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colleges, and I'll be honest, I didn't deserve to be. So, I went to a prep school for six months and did well enough that I got accepted at a number of colleges." His father, however, suggested that perhaps he should apply to VMI. "He thought I might be interested in that since I was not interested in any of the academies. We were trying to figure out the best place for me to go to school."

Col. Pauls' father made an appointment with the headmaster of the prep school to discuss his son's options. "When we got there, the headmaster asked him, 'Do you want your son to graduate from college?' My father said, 'Well, of course.'" Col. Pauls says the headmaster told his father that there was only one place for him to go: VMI. "He said, 'He likes to mess around. He needs the discipline.' So that was what determined my choice."

It was a choice that served him well. Col. Pauls says he never regretted attending VMI, as it set him up to succeed for his entire career. "I always felt from the first day I was in the military that I had a leg up on a lot of my peers

because of what I experienced at the school." He was an English major, and that had a direct impact on his career. "There were only about 30 or 40 of us who were English majors." With such a small class size, he quickly learned he had to stand up and communicate and express himself well. "Good communication skills were absolutely emphasized. And that's one of the things during the early part of my career that really helped me stand out among my peers."

While attending VMI, Col. Pauls had three ROTC options: Air Force, Army or a special Marine Corps program. "We had to make a choice a few weeks after we first started there about which programs we wanted to participate with. I called my dad." His father had been an amazing source of inspiration and insight as Col. Pauls grew up. "He was in the Army in the Second World War," he says. "In fact, I have a twin brother, and we were two years old before my dad ever saw us, because we were born in 1943." When he discussed his options for ROTC, his father was clear and said to him, "Well, there's no choice, son. The

Air Force."

After graduating from VMI, Col. Pauls was commissioned as an officer in the Air Force and spent 27 years in the Air Force, with 14 of those years in Virginia, at the Pentagon and four years at Langley.

"I retired after 27 years in 1993 out of the Pentagon and went to work with the Military Officers Association." Founded in 1927, the organization used to be known as the retired Officers Association.

"They primarily deal with trying to secure an oversight of legislation of benefits and entitlements for military members and their families. They have a rather significant lobbying effort up on Capitol Hill. They do all kinds of things." Col. Pauls says that he became involved with the one in the Williamsburg area, the Virginia Peninsula chapter. "Its geographic coverage ranges from Hampton all the way up to the New Kent area, and all the way over to Gloucester and Matthews County. It's a sizable region."

This group consists of retired military offi-

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cers who serve in various leadership positions within each chapter. “One of the reasons that the chapters are so important to the National Association is because of their potential influence on legislators in the region to help, pursue and support legislation. The national organization is trying to make sure that the benefits and entitlements are protected or enhanced. So, they rely on the chapters to interface with the legislators in the community.”

It’s a tall order, and one that Col. Pauls and his associates work tirelessly at, in addition to other activities within the organization. “We’re very engaged with the ROTC and Junior ROTC High School Program. Every year, we give out over \$5,000 in scholarship money to support the ROTC students that are graduating, and then we give support the ROTC units in their commissioning programs and give recognition certificates to their outstanding ROTC graduates. We periodically interact with the ROTC programs and conduct what we call mentoring programs for the potential new lieutenants.”

Obviously, with most schools having distance learning during 2020, everything has slowed or halted. “We have 11 JROTC high schools that we support,” he says. “Everything has come almost to a screeching halt, unfortunately.” Like so many other programs, they looked to virtual commissioning programs with the ROTC units this year and provided the ROTC instructors the certificates and awards to hand out to those people.

As a legislative committee chairman volunteer, the political aspect of this position is perfect for Col. Pauls. “I was always involved with Congress and the machinations of the political environment up there.”

Jim and his wife have one daughter, who is now grown and has a career of her own. “My daughter went to Hollins University and graduated from there.” Following in her father’s political footsteps, she eventually went to work in DC, first for a nonprofit group in Washington and then on Capitol Hill for about 10 years. “She picked up the bug from her dad,” he says with a laugh.

In addition to his daughter, Col. Pauls has grandchildren. His daughter’s husband works for a major consulting firm and they are currently living overseas in Stuttgart, Germany. Col. Pauls acknowledges that it’s been difficult having her live so far from them during the pandemic. “We have a five-year-old grandson and a two-year-old granddaughter. We haven’t seen them since last March.”

When it comes to his volunteer group, VIPMOAA, Col. Pauls urges retired officers to consider becoming part of this unique organization. “We are always struggling to find people to volunteer for leadership positions,” he says. “The current president, Col. Corson, is in his fourth year. It’s only supposed to be a two-year term. I’ve been in between being the chapter president and chairman of government relations for about 10 years now.”

One thing is certain. Any retired officers who decide to step in and volunteer with Col. Jim Pauls will not only have fun but will contribute to important military work for future generations. NDN

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LISA RIPCHICK



Feeding Our Community

Lisa Martin Lee Photography

By Alison Johnson

Not once in her 57 years has Lisa Ripchick had to wonder where her next meal would come from, or if she would have a meal at all.

Dedicating a part of every Thursday to volunteer for Williamsburg Area Meals on Wheels, then, is a way of recognizing how blessed she is. A driver for the organization since late 2019, Lisa has also grown to care deeply for the people living in the 12 to 15 houses where she delivers hot meals on her shifts.

"I love my people," she says. "I consider them 'mine' and feel like they are my family. I worry

about them and want to know they are okay. It's not just about leaving food; it's an important wellness check. In some cases, we are their only contact for the day."

Meals on Wheels America is a nationwide social agency that dates back to 1954, while the local chapter was founded in 1974. The organization fights hunger and malnutrition and helps vulnerable adults stay healthy and safe in their homes.

Many of the approximately 500 local clients are senior citizens who are isolated or finan-

cially fragile. The agency provides a nourishing noontime meal on weekdays, including an entrée, vegetable, starch, dessert and milk or juice, as well as shelf-stable meal packages, breakfast foods and nutritional supplements as needed.

Lisa's route takes her about an hour to complete, an easy fit with her part-time position at Jolly Pond Veterinary Hospital. While some clients don't ever answer the door and simply leave coolers on their porches, others like to wave from their windows or chat at the front door about their families, the weather and more.

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To celebrate birthdays recorded in agency paperwork, Lisa has added cards, homemade chocolate chip cookies, flowers and grocery gift cards. For one client who craved seafood, she fetched crab cakes from The Fresh Market.

“I just hope I make them smile,” Lisa says. “Some people are lonely, but even if a person has regular company, everyone wants to know someone cares about them.”

Lisa credits her late mother with instilling the value of community service and acts of kindness. She also noticed how much small gestures meant to her mom, especially in her older years. “Even just getting a card from someone gave her such joy, because it was a sign that person had remembered her and thought about her.”

Born in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania Lisa had moved with her family to Connecticut by the time she was two. They relocated again when she was 15, to Newport News, when her father was transferred to Newport News Shipbuilding.

Skilled at math, Lisa graduated from Menchville High School and earned a Bachelor’s Degree in Accounting from Christopher Newport College. She briefly ran her own accounting firm before taking a position as an accounting supervisor at the paper mill in West Point, where she met Joe, her husband of 27 years.

Joe currently is an electronics technician at Philip Morris in Richmond, and the two are parents to Joey, 26, Noah, 23, and Alis, 20. The family settled in Williamsburg in 1996, where Lisa spent some time as a stay-at-home mother and also had a job in the finance department at Williamsburg Community Chapel.

Since 2009, Lisa has worked at Jolly Pond on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, as an office manager and bookkeeper. That’s where

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Hans von Baeyer and his learner, Alberto Lopez, began their tutoring together in 2019 and have persevered through the challenges of 2020. “Before COVID we met at Literacy for Life,” says Hans, “but now our lessons are conducted by telephone. In good weather we meet outdoors, masked. I can’t think of a more flexible arrangement.” As a result of Hans’s tutoring and his own dedication, Alberto has improved significantly in his English skills. He sees a brighter future for himself and his family. “Now, I just cook. Maybe later, I will be a manager. I want to buy a house for my family. This is my dream.” Alberto describes Hans as “a very, very good man, a very good teacher. I appreciate him.” Meanwhile, Hans reflects, “I consider myself fortunate that

Alberto is an exceptionally responsible, conscientious student, and that the experience and expertise of the staff of Literacy for Life, as well as its library resources, are at my disposal. For me, it has provided a meaningful occupation in retirement. I am not only addressing a critical societal need in a stressful time, but I am also building a strong personal relationship with a fine young man. We are friends who help each other!” Hans heartily recommends tutoring with Literacy for Life as a flexible and rewarding volunteer experience. “Give the gift of language! Speaking and listening are how we interact with the world, make our living, raise our children, become part of the community. Language, like music, nourishes our spirits.”

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she welcomed her fourth “child”: her 9-year-old mutt, Hank, an Australian Cattle Dog mix. She and her daughter, Alis, actually helped deliver Hank and his eight siblings.

“It was a foster dog and a C-section, and the vet needed a lot of hands at once. So, we’re in there taking the puppies, peeling off goo, suctioning out mucus... it was incredible,” she recalls. “Newborn puppies aren’t real attractive little beings, but once they came back for shots later, that’s when they were adorable. Of course, we were getting one.”

Lisa connected with Meals on Wheels after years of volunteering mainly in public schools when her children were young. As she considered options once they had graduated, she had a two-month stretch where she read a magazine article about the nonprofit, saw a local news report about the need for volunteers, and overheard a group of women talking about it at the YMCA.

“I told my husband I thought someone was trying to tell me something,” she says. “I was on the lookout for something, but at the same time it was like Meals on Wheels found me.”

Starting off as a substitute driver, Lisa soon

had a route of her own. She typically delivers meals between 11 a.m. and noon on her designated weekday, balancing greeting clients with making sure the food in her car reaches all of her houses while it’s still fresh and warm.

On Lisa’s regular Thursday shift, clients receive single meals. When she drives on Christmas Eve and New Year’s Eve, however, she drops off more food to cover the holidays, as other Meals and Wheels volunteers do before weekends.

If a resident who typically comes to the door doesn’t appear, or if food from a previous day is still sitting in a porch cooler, Lisa is quick to alert Meals on Wheels staff. “They need to know about anything out of the norm,” she says. “That’s my responsibility.”

The COVID-19 pandemic inevitably has changed interactions, although Lisa is grateful that she can still deliver at all. She wears a mask on her route and is careful not to stand too close if people want to talk. In one case, she did a little shopping for a client who was nervous about venturing to big box stores.

“Initially, I was so afraid the organization would not continue, but it definitely has, and

people might need it now more than ever,” she says. “Social distancing is very important, so with some it is just leaving their meal and knocking. I have a couple with mobility issues so I still go inside their homes. I do what they need me to do.”

In her spare time, Lisa likes to jog or walk Hank at the Williamsburg Indoor Sports Complex trail, read mystery novels and cook. Two of her specialties in the kitchen are homemade lasagna and a black walnut pound cake that she makes for Joe on his birthday and at Christmas. Lisa also gardens frequently, cultivating staples such as tomatoes, cucumbers, radishes and peppers.

With more than a year at Meals on Wheels under her belt, Lisa Ripchick is eager to let other people know how simple yet meaningful the volunteer work is. Both Joe and Alis have tagged along on her route and also enjoyed it, she adds.

“It doesn’t require a lot of time, but it’s so unbelievably important. We see the news and ads all the time regarding food insecurities, and I think we become numb. Especially now, though, we need to make sure no one in our community is left behind or forgotten.” NDN



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ROSEMARIE CROCCO



Lisa Martin Lee Photography

Blankets of Love

By Narielle Living

When Rosemarie Crocco thought about her life as a teacher and where she would end up, making blankets to provide comfort to people was not something she expected to be doing. She and her husband, Tony, were born and raised in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. “I went to

high school and college there,” she says. “When we were married, we moved to Woodbridge, Virginia in 1970.”

Both Rosemarie and Tony were teachers, and they finished their teaching careers in Stafford and Fredericksburg. “I did 37 years teaching

first grade before I retired,” she says. Tony retired in 2010, and after careful consideration they moved here.

“We always vacationed here every year and loved the area. So, it was a good fit for us. We found this wonderful community called Colo-

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nial Heritage and just loved the whole atmosphere of it.” At that time, their children had already graduated from college, and they were empty nesters. “We felt it was a good time for us to move here.”

Rosemarie has two sons, and both are professional musicians. “The oldest one is a jazz guitarist, and the youngest one is a drummer. He’s actually teaching in private schools in Paris. They both followed their dreams of going into music and have been very successful at it.” Because her sons don’t live nearby, Tony and Rosemarie have not seen as much of the grandchildren as they would like due to pandemic restrictions. “Our youngest grandson in New Jersey has taken up the drums at age four,” she says with a laugh.

Not long after moving to their new Williamsburg community, Rosemarie was socializing with the neighbors. It was 2011, and since most of the folks she met at that time were also new to the area, there was much discussion about former jobs and current activities. “We were talking about the craftwork and hobbies that we all have, and I happened to mention that I have made a lot of fleece blankets.” When another woman heard that, she told Rosemarie that she was a hospital volunteer and asked if she could look into bringing the blankets to the hospital. “That’s how it got started.”

At that time, a woman named Margaret Cullivan was the director of volunteer services at Sentara. “I called her and we connected immediately. She said yes, if you bring blankets, we will give them to patients.” Rosemarie was told that blankets could be used for people on dialysis, in chemotherapy, for new mothers, new babies, and just about anyone who needed a little extra warmth and comfort. That’s all she needed to hear before Rosemarie decided this was something she was going to work on.

“In 2011, I only had two women who volunteered with me to make blankets. We did 53 blankets that first year.” Since that first year, the number of blankets they have been able to send out has blossomed. “In 2018, we passed 1,000 blankets in one year.” In 2020, despite a pandemic that left many housebound, Rosemarie and her team produced 1,166 blankets.

Rosemarie admits that they have made many blankets in the past three to four years. “We made about 80 baby blankets and gave them to the hospital. Every baby that’s born in December gets a blanket.” She says that her ability to keep these numbers up is due to the volunteers who work with her. “We have over 130 people on the team now.”

Oftentimes, people send cards and emails to let Rosemarie know that they have received one of her blankets, words of thanks that touch her heart.

“My husband does all the bagging and the delivering of the blankets to the hospital. We have little tags that I put on every blanket that says made and donated by Colonial Heritage. It’s been a wonderful project for me to work on because it doesn’t require any meetings. There’s no officers. There’s no fundraising.” She says that previously she held three workshops a year at Colonial Heritage, teaching others how to make blankets. “With the pandemic, I haven’t been able to do them.”

Because Colonial Heritage is a community whose population has continued to grow and shift, Rosemarie finds that there are always new people who want to participate in this project. Some people want to make blankets and others simply want to contribute supplies or financial donations. “I’ve had over \$1,000 in donations, which allows me to buy

more fleece that I give to people on the team to make more blankets.”

Rosemarie says that her sister-in-law, who lives in Hampton, has donated many bolts of fleece. “She doesn’t make the blankets. A lot of women in their 70s and 80s can’t maneuver the scissors well. They don’t want to make them, but they donate the fabric. My sister-in-law doesn’t make them, so she donates the fleece and then I give it to people who want to make the blankets.”

Donations of blankets are not limited to hospitals. In fact, if there is a need, Rosemarie calls and makes arrangements to supply whoever is in need. “I called House of Mercy, and I’m going to take blankets down to them.”

Prior to COVID, Rosemarie had taught two workshops to the team at St Olaf. They delivered their blankets to a homeless shelter in town. “That was a couple of years ago,” she says. Her blankets have traveled far and wide. “We’ve had blankets that have reached Pittsburgh and Maryland.” In fact, a friend of hers who made blankets made a trip to Maryland. “She went to visit someone in a facility up in Maryland. She saw the person had a blanket and she said, ‘Oh, that’s a beautiful blanket, where did you get that?’ She had gotten it here, at our hospital, and wound up relocating up there.”

Clearly the blankets have traveled to various parts of the world, but the important part of that is how they made people feel. One little girl who received a blanket expressed her appreciation by delivering cookies to everyone who worked on this project. Rosemarie says the stories from others are numerous. “You wouldn’t think something as simple as a blanket is such a big deal, but it is when you’re sick or when you’re dying.”

Recently, Rosemarie got a phone call from a friend who asked if she had a blanket. The friend told her that someone she knew had cancer and was not expected to survive much longer. “She came and got the blanket, took it to them, and they died two days later.”

It is clear that in times of crisis everyone can take comfort from the warmth of a blanket. “It’s been a great joy of mine to be able to put it all together and keep it running,” she says.

Rosemarie is clear that this is a project that is sustained by many hands, and she is grateful to everyone who has supported and worked with her. In fact, she recently applied for a JoAnn Fabric Handmade Heroes award, not for herself but for the many people who work on this project.

Rosemarie is so proud of the effort everyone has put in. “We have somebody on our team who has made over 1,000 blankets herself. We have a mother and daughter team who did a blanket a week for a year. We have another group here in Colonial Heritage that has done 40 blankets for the 40 days of Lent for the last three years.”

Despite the gravity of the blankets, there are times of humor as well. “When my husband was in the hospital for a minor procedure a couple of years ago, they brought him a blanket. I laughed when I got there.” Rosemarie went to the nurse’s station to talk with them. “I said, you don’t know who we are. But I’m the blanket lady,” she says with a laugh. She had the nurse take the blanket back so it could be given to someone else on the floor.

When thinking about the accomplishments of her group, Rosemarie Crocco is awed. “It’s been an amazing adventure to be on. It’s one of those things where you try to give it forward to somebody who’s in need. That’s really what this has been all about.” NDN



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SARA RUCH



Lisa Martin Lee Photography

When Disaster Strikes

By Narielle Living

Anyone who has worked in emergency services knows that the job isn't just a job, it's a way of life. And for emergency services to function efficiently, very often volunteers are an essential part of the operation. Sara Ruch, Emergency Manager for James City County, has extensive experience in both volunteering and leading volunteers, and she knows that a volunteer role can sometimes lead to a life's work.

Sara is from northern Minnesota. In 1997, when the Red River flood occurred, it was a major catastrophe. "I was either in junior high or had just started high school, and we were out of school for a whole entire month," she says. "The

National Guard came and took over our school because the city next to us literally got flooded out. There were maybe five homes that were not touched." At the time, Sara's father was the Volunteer Fire Chief for this small town with a population of 500 people. "That made him a de facto emergency manager. So, we set up our version of a small Emergency Operations Center." This location served as the donation center and information center for the press.

The entire process fascinated Sara, who was an active volunteer helping her community. At that point she was not affiliated with the Red Cross or other organizations who were assisting

people. "It was everybody just pitching in and helping."

Sara knew about the Community Emergency Response Teams (CERT) that are formed by volunteers in the community, and she had wanted to start a group when she was younger. "I wanted to start a CERT group but there just wasn't the infrastructure there to start a community emergency response team." CERT educates volunteers about disaster preparedness so they are better equipped to handle the hazards that may impact their area. Volunteers train in basic disaster response skills, such as fire safety, light search and rescue, team organization, and disas-



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ter medical operations.

“I thought it was very interesting,” she says. There was no doubt in her mind that this was something she wanted to be a part of as a career. “It was before the time of actual emergency management degrees. There wasn’t a thing for that at that point, so I had no idea what to do to go into this.” Eventually, Sara went to college and got a double major in Political Science and International Relations. Her reasoning was that a political science major could lead to working with FEMA.

“By the time I was ready to graduate, a neighboring college, North Dakota State University had started an emergency management program. I was one of the first master students for that program.”

Today, Sara is a certified emergency manager. In this role, she handles things on a day-to-day basis. Like everyone else, this last year has been entirely different. “I’m not used to having a disaster for a whole year,” she says.

Normally, Sara is responsible for writing the emergency operations plan for the county.

“We did a continuity of operations plan for the county right before COVID hit. This is a lot of planning, a lot of training, a lot of exercise to make sure that the county is ready for whatever sort of disaster we get.”

After graduating from North Dakota State University, Sara got a job at the Hampton Roads planning district commission, and a couple years into that she needed someone to help her because she was growing her programs. “I applied and got the job, and I spent about two years down there. I wanted to get more into actually responding and helping coordinate disaster, so I got a job in Hampton as their Emergency Management planner and then I rose up through the ranks in Hampton, and eventually the job came open in James City County. I’ve always loved the area up here. It feels very homey to me. It reminds me of my hometown in North Dakota, where you can have a little talk with the cashier as they’re checking you out and not feel like you’re bothering them. Everybody’s just so nice here that I really wanted to live and work in this community.”

Now, as she has settled into life here in this area, she also gets to work with the program she wanted to work with as a younger person: CERT. “The folks that tend to volunteer with us the most are those who have a little extra time on their hands, so they’re often retired.” Sara says that anyone can be part of CERT, including folks who only want to do administrative tasks. “If people want to join CERT, we can definitely find a spot for you to fit your needs.”

CERT volunteers take a class, which covers the basics of how to respond to an emergency. “We also do quarterly meetings or refreshers. If we have a leadership team and the group says hey, my people have been saying we really need a refresher on our medical bandaging skills, then we’ll do that for the quarterly meeting.” Other training include radio skills, light terrorism response and readiness response. When possible, CERT groups are now meeting outside, although some of the colder weather can make that difficult. “We always try to accommodate people,” she says. “I try to be super flexible and if you can’t make one or two of the classes, we’ll

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try to work with your schedule and get a different day and time for you to learn whatever was done with that. I would like to say that even if you know you're just interested for your family to learn more about search or how to work a fire extinguisher or basic first aid, you can still join CERT or take the classes. You don't have to necessarily join a team and be super active. My perspective is, if I educate one more person on disaster preparedness and them and their family are a little more prepared for the next disaster that hits, I consider that a win."

No work day is typical for Sara. "That's one of the things that I love about my job is I can literally pick and choose what I want to do that day. I have days I update or work on our Surry Nuclear Power Plant plan. Every spring it's grant time. CERT is a fully funded project through the state Homeland Security preparedness grant. That's where I get money to run the CERT program and our community Animal Response Team program." The animal response team is a group of trained volunteers who work with animals in the shelters if one needs to open.

Should a natural disaster strike and shelters are opened, at least one shelter must be prepared to accommodate pets. This law was put into place after Hurricane Katrina. "We have trained people to watch the animals. That's another volunteer group that I run and organize that we always need help with."

In this situation, volunteers run the animal section of the shelter. They're in charge of registering the people and the animals, setting up crates, looking at the animals to ensure that they appear healthy. Owners are required to walk their dog at certain times and they're scheduled to feed their dog at certain times. The volunteer is the person who organizes the schedule to avoid issues with too many people simultaneously feeding and walking their pets. "They're organizing and managing the animal area within the shelter."

In addition to managing volunteers, Sara sits on multiple boards. "I'm a past president of the Virginia Emergency Managers Association, I've sat on multiple FEMA boards, I was on the FEMA Region Three input commit-

tee for several years. Emergency management is about building relationships and partnerships, so whether that's partnerships through the community and getting people involved in emergency preparedness like CERT, or whether that's working with our hospitals around here for COVID vaccine and COVID vaccination and plans and those sorts of things, it's building relationships." Sara says that she has the good fortune to have built some wonderful relationships here, including working with community leaders such as Pastor Whitehead of the New Zion Baptist Church. "He was fabulous to work with, and I hope to continue working with him on some other projects."

Sara Ruch has a passion for what she does, and it shows in her ability to work and educate people. "Emergency preparedness really starts with each individual to make sure that they are prepared, and that their families are prepared, and their neighbors are prepared. Make sure you're prepared first, then your family, then your neighbors. Then we can recover faster as a community and get back to normal." NDN

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SUZANNE BOUFFARD JARVIS



Lisa Martin Lee Photography

A Warm Heart for Others

By Caroline Johnson

For as long as Suzanne Jarvis can remember, she has had an innate desire to help those around her. “As far back as being a little girl, I used to think about how lucky I was to be born into comfortable circumstances living in the United States,” Suzanne says. “I’ve always had an awareness that there were people less fortunate than me.” This awareness of the needs of others has been carried through Suzanne’s life and is still prominent to this day.

With her first volunteering experience being in high school, Suzanne had the opportunity

to tutor special needs children during study hall. “I think that is when I first realized that volunteering has benefits for both the recipients and the person doing the volunteering,” Suzanne says. “That made me feel good to know I had done that.”

Born in New Jersey and raised in northwest Chicago, Suzanne transferred to Lynchburg College in her junior year, which is where she met her husband, Raymond. The two have been married forty years and together have three sons: Raymond III, Nicolas and Timo-

thy.

After moving to Williamsburg in 1989, Suzanne became a stay-at-home mom once her oldest was born. When he began grade school, Suzanne found roles as a parent volunteer in various capacities, active in classroom events, serving as a room mother and helping plan big events.

“I volunteered in the schools because it was important for me to be involved in my children’s learning,” Suzanne says. “I wanted to help the administration in any way that I

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could, even if I was just serving as an extra set of hands in the art room." This involvement then multiplied as she took on volunteer roles with the Kingsmill swim team and the Cotillion club.

As a swim team parent, Suzanne started running concessions and eventually became president. With the Cotillion club, Suzanne began as secretary and then served as president later on. Responsible for planning and assisting with events in various ways through her roles with the club, she found new skills and things she enjoyed, such as making invitations for events in a way that was both efficient and less expensive for the club.

At the same time, Suzanne was a member of the Junior Women's club, an organization that supports a variety of charitable organizations through monetary and volunteer assistance. One volunteer opportunity in particular that she fondly remembers assisting with is Friday Frolics, an event hosted at the airport with live music and food to raise money for local charities.

Not only were these early years of volunteer involvement enjoyable, but they brought about many transferable skills Suzanne has since used in her volunteer work and personal life. "My volunteer experiences led to intellectual growth as I was able to learn to maximize usage of the computer, whether it was scheduling events or creating the invitations," Suzanne says. "I also learned about the statistics of planning and coordinating large events, which comes in handy with my current role, and how to be tactful and non-confrontational in my communication."

Though each volunteer role has been meaningful, there are a few that are very close to her heart. Having two nephews who have cystic fibrosis, Suzanne became involved with the Cystic Fibrosis Foundation. A recessively transmitted disease that affects the lungs and digestive system, research on better medicines is necessary to enhance the lives of those affected. Sadly, Suzanne lost her oldest nephew eight years ago. "We have collected funds that go directly to research, as Cystic Fibrosis Foundation funds this research and medicine in hopes of a cure." The advancement in medications over the years is largely responsible for her youngest nephew's quality of life, who is thriving with an increased life expectancy.

For years, Suzanne and her family have been participating in the Great Strides walk each April. These walks raise money for the Foundation, and Suzanne looks forward to her role in preparing raffle items for the event each year. By collecting and assembling raffle items for the event, she can play a direct role in the fundraising for this meaningful cause.

Another cause close to her heart is Literacy for Life, where she served as a volunteer tutor. One of her tutoring jobs was working with a group of J1 students from South America to fine-tune their English and learn some American idioms. "The significant thing about this was that ironically, after my oldest son graduated from William & Mary, he accepted a job in Chile," Suzanne says. "He spent seven years there and met his Chilean wife soon after arriving, and thanks to my time tutoring, I had some familiarity with what life was like in South America."

Attending St. Olaf Catholic Church for close to 20 years, Suzanne has found joy in volunteering in various ways through the ministry there. Teaching religious education, serving as the children's liturgy minister and having involvement with the Community of Faith Mission have all

had an impact both on others and on her faith.

“My ministry work with the very young as liturgy minister brought me to understand the scripture from a child’s view and see how they apply it to life,” Suzanne says. “It frequently led me to have a different perspective and be more enlightened and connected to God as well.”

Her current role, Director of Special Events and Hospitality with Community of Faith Mission (COFM), was brought about through volunteering her time at St. Olaf’s as a shelter partner volunteer. COFM provides three meals a day and 126 nights of safe shelter for homeless individuals during the coldest months of the year. As the only local emergency shelter for men, women and families, the shelter rotates each week between different host locations where guests are cared for by volunteers. As a shelter partner, Suzanne was involved when St. Olaf was hosting by organizing meals for their shelter days.

“I initially became involved because I’ve known people who were one step away from being homeless, and I would have wanted

them to be taken care of like we take care of our guests.”

After seven years of volunteering with COFM through St. Olaf, she decided it was time for someone else to take over when she was approached by the founders of COFM, Kathy Banfield and Renee Collins. “They asked me to come onto the board in the capacity of Coordinator of Special Events and Hospitality, mainly as the lead on Warm Up Williamsburg,” Suzanne shares. “I agreed and have been doing that the past two years.”

Suzanne is in charge of Warm Up Williamsburg, which started as a soup tasting social event and has morphed into a soup sale due to COVID-19. Money raised from the event goes directly toward COFM’s efforts to house and feed the homeless and entitles donors to soup donated from local restaurants. “Even though restaurants were hit hard this year, they did not hesitate to donate,” Suzanne says. “We have such amazing donors and volunteers who continue to be generous with both their time and support.”

“My work with the homeless and less fortunate has made me more thankful, empathetic, and less judgmental,” Suzanne says. “Homelessness is something that impacts those living in Williamsburg, and COFM is a way for us to care for the homeless in a loving and safe environment and hopefully transition them into more permanent housing.”

Though her time spent volunteering varies depending on the season, she sometimes spends as much as 40 hours a month serving others. When it comes to advice for someone interested in starting to volunteer, Suzanne says to start small. “Pick something that has impacted your life or is important to you in some way,” she says. “Pick something you have a connection to and start small.”

When she’s not volunteering, Suzanne enjoys playing golf, refinishing furniture, crafting, walking and taking on the occasional private swim lesson student. “I think Williamsburg is one of the prettiest towns I’ve ever been to, and I find myself comparing the places I visit to here. It always comes out on top.” NDN




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Advocating for Others

By Narielle Living



Lisa Martin Lee Photography

After living in various locations around the world, Jessica Sapalio and her family have settled here in the Williamsburg area. Although she is not native to Williamsburg, this location always interested her. "I'm originally from Pennsylvania, but I lived in Northern Virginia for over 10 years." Prior to moving to Williamsburg, they lived in Australia where her husband worked at the University of Australia. Currently, Jessica's husband works as a professor at William & Mary.

Living in Williamsburg was a great choice for

Jessica and her family. "As a child, I loved history, and I loved coming to Colonial Williamsburg as a kid. It was so funny because I always loved it and thought it would be such a cool place to live, but the humidity is too much." But it turns out she could handle the humidity just fine, and they love being in this area.

In addition to being a mother of four, all of Jessica's work is volunteer. She divides her time between volunteer activities and homeschooling, which is quite the balancing act with the age range of her children. "My oldest is 16, he'll

be 17 in March, and then my youngest is two. Two [of the children] we fostered and adopted, and then two are biological so we have a whole mix."

Jessica says that she has spent most of her life dedicated to public causes. "I started work with the Red Cross when I was in high school. When I worked professionally, I worked on public interest causes, so I worked for the Red Cross for a while after being a volunteer." After that, she was employed with a communications and marketing firm that focused on public

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interest causes. “When we came to Williamsburg, I started volunteering as an archaeological volunteer at historic Jamestown.” She enjoyed that very much, but when she found the Williamsburg Unitarian Universalists, she felt she had come home. “So much of the faith there is focused on deeds not creeds.”

With the Williamsburg Unitarian Universalists (WUU) Jessica dove into their social justice volunteer groups. “My passion really became trying to uphold the worth and dignity of all people. My work now is focused on racial justice with a focus on the criminal legal system reform, and then also immigrant justice.”

Inspiration for this type of work came from a book Jessica had read, *Just Mercy*. “I was so inspired by Bryan Stevenson’s efforts in the criminal justice system. I said okay, I have to do something, but at the same time I am not a lawyer.” She struggled with the idea of whether she could affect any real change but decided, in the end, that she had to do what felt right.

“One of the things I initially was thinking about was setting up a bail fund, and I was trying to figure out what would be the right thing.

That’s when I came upon the concept of court watch.” The court watch program, run in Williamsburg and James City County, is a volunteer program run in the courts, pre-COVID, that allows trained volunteers to observe for any disparities that might occur. “We watch people’s first arraignments and bail hearings, and we’re trying to gather data to address racial and economic disparities that happen in the courtroom.” The group runs trainings for volunteers and hopes to be able to start again once the pandemic restrictions are lifted. “It’s a great volunteer opportunity because we ask people to volunteer two days a month, but for the time commitment, people are usually in and out in less than an hour.”

Why is it important to monitor for issues like this in the court system? Jessica states that they are looking to address issues with the criminalization of poverty. “Things like cash bail, for instance,” she says. “People end up sitting a long time before their trial because they can’t afford bail. And then they end up losing their jobs, and sometimes their children are taken from their custody because they’re in jail.” In

addition, they want to ensure there are no disparities with interpreters or language issues.

In addition to the court watch, Jessica is one of the founders of the WJCC Coalition for Community Justice, an organization that seeks to assist law enforcement. “Our primary focus right now is looking at setting up a civilian oversight board for our local police departments to help address and ensure accountability. During the special session, the legislature passed a law that enabled localities to put these boards into place, and they’d be run by civilians.” If there were ever to be a complaint against the police, this board would be part of the process of investigating the complaint and would then make recommendations to the police chief. “We know that our local police chiefs are dedicated to accountability,” she says. “It takes that burden off of them because they don’t have to investigate their own. Think about your taxes; the IRS doesn’t have you audit your own taxes. You need an independent group that is reviewing things.”

As if those activities were not enough, Jessica also works on helping asylum seekers in our



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area. These are people who are going through the legal process to stay in the United States.

“Our first family and the program have been with us since July,” she says. Part of what they do is accompany the family through the process of helping them establish their life here in the United States and learn about our culture and language. This includes things from how to find transportation to how to navigate the grocery store. Jessica notes that trying to get someone

oriented in a new community where they can interact with people has been even more challenging because of COVID. “The idea is to help them reach self-sustainability. It takes several months or sometimes up to a year for them to get a work permit. So until that time, they have no way to support themselves.” Jessica’s group provides all of the family’s economic support, in addition to helping them navigate the school systems and find tutors for learning English.

“There are so many challenges that we take for granted,” she says. “The idea is that eventually this family will be able to support themselves.”

It would be understandable if Jessica struggled with the emotion of her volunteer efforts, but that is not what she finds the most difficult part of what she does. “I think the hardest part for me is that there are so many issues that I would like to address. And there’s just not

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enough time in the day.”

Jessica has also been able to teach her children about what she does by having them help her. “I try to pull my kids into the volunteer work that I’m doing and expose them to the issues and do things as a family. Each of them has their own interests, of course, but they really get excited about the issues. I think they feed off of my passion, and that’s been really great to see.”

The groups Jessica Sapalio works with are always looking for volunteers, and she has advice for anyone thinking about stepping in and working with an organization or a cause. “Find the issue that you’re most passionate about, that you think about when you’re falling asleep at night,” she says. Find the one thing where you feel you need to make a difference. “Try to envision the world as you would like it to be. Then start to think about what you can do to

make that vision a reality. When I started [with the WUU], I didn’t know how I was going to make a difference. I just knew that I needed to address things. I have found [when I call] organizations that people are very happy to talk about whatever the issue is because they can tell you’re passionate about it, even if you’re not experienced. Believe in yourself and that you can make a difference, and you’ll find others will be in it with you.” **NDN**

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Small Changes. Big Impact.

By Susan Williamson



Lisa Martin Lee Photography

“It’s only one plastic straw, but if everyone in the world says that, there are eight billion of them.” This is one of the thoughts that Jana Flores wants to implant in consumer consciousness. Five years ago, when her oldest daughter, Brianna, was born, Jana searched for natural, sustainable, ethically sourced products. She found some on Amazon, but they arrived wrapped in plastic. “There has to be a better way,” she thought.

Brianna, now five years old, loves the ocean. And as she and her mother learned together about the ocean, Jana became more aware of all the microplastics in every ocean creature which consequently ends up in our food supply. In her quest to make the planet a better place, she came up with the idea of one-stop shopping for sustainable, zero waste, natural products, sustainably packaged, for both people and animals. “We have a dog, so I wanted

to include pet supplies,” she says. Her enthusiasm and desire to help both consumers and the planet is contagious, and it comes through in her lively conversation.

Jana had always dreamed of starting a business and now she knew what kind of business she wanted to start. The COVID-19 pandemic acted as a pushbutton to get her moving in that direction. “I know it will be a challenge,” she says, “but I love challenges. My grand-

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mother used to say that I would take the bumpy road over the smooth road. Maybe this challenge is why I am here today.” This year, despite the ongoing pandemic, she opened her online store, Fill Happy Zero Waste and Refill Store, featuring sustainable products which can be refilled.

The products include household supplies, toiletries, and pet items; both dry goods and liquids. The products are mostly vegan, sourced from small businesses, small batches and many women-owned businesses. One example is the True Earth Laundry Strips. Instead of a large plastic jug or box or individual plastic wrapped pods, the True Earth strips come in a recyclable cardboard envelope. A single strip can be torn up and placed in the soap dispenser of a washing machine. Reusable dryer balls take the place of fabric softener. No bulky items to transport, no waste.

Toiletries such as shampoo, conditioners, body wash, lotions and so forth are sold by the ounce in either glass or aluminum bottles or the customer can provide his or her own container. Deodorant creams, shaving items, baby products, hand-sanitizer, reusable make-up remover pads, lip balm and toothpaste tablets are just a few more of the products offered. They also stock tree-free toilet paper and unpaper towels. Bee and silicone wraps for sandwiches and food storage are reusable and biodegradable replacements for plastic bags and plastic wraps.

When Jana was deciding how to run her business, she knew convenience would be a factor for her customers. She decided to deliver products and refills within 15 miles of their location near Waller Mill Elementary School.

Jana says, “I thought a lot about the name because I wanted to make people feel good about buying sustainable supplies to help the earth.” Initially, she will operate mostly online with products stocked in their former tool shed which her husband, Alfredo, converted to their product warehouse. Alfredo, who is an active participant in the business, will also make the deliveries.

Of course, her driving motivation to do this was learning about consumer use of plastics. Jana says, “I was shocked to learn that 40 percent of plastics are single use. One billion toothbrushes end up in landfills each year.” To try to offset that number, she decided to stock bamboo toothbrushes as well as other kinds of biodegradable brushes. Through diligent searches, Jana has been able to locate over 100 curated products ethically sourced from the U.S. and Canada. Though it was time consuming, she has conducted extensive research on product ingredients and encourages consumers to do the same. She discovered that many common everyday products contain toxic ingredients.

At some point, possibly even this year, Jana would also like to have a brick-and-mortar store stocking sustainable products. “There are no boundaries when you are doing what you love,” she says.

Jana grew up in a rural area of the Czech Republic and developed a love of nature at an early age. She studied international trade at the University of Economics in Prague, earning a master’s degree with a



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minor in managerial sociology and psychology as well as a bachelor's degree, also in international trade. Her secondary school concentration was economy and business. Her training and her passion for the environment combine to make her uniquely suited for her new venture.

She and her husband currently work for Lasvit, Inc., a Czech company which makes custom crystal chandeliers. She is currently the North American operations manager for Lighting Collections.

Previously, Jana and Alfredo lived in Los Angeles, where both Brianna and their younger daughter, Kayla, were born and then in New Jersey before realizing their dream of moving to Williamsburg. They adopted their eight-year-old long-haired Chihuahua mix, Lassy, from a shelter in Los Angeles when she was two. "The whole time we lived in LA," she says, "I dreamed of the beautiful green nature around Williamsburg." The whole family enjoys going to the beach and even the

girls get involved in picking up trash to make the beach a better place. They treasure their nightly walks in the neighborhood and enjoy seeing deer, raccoons and opossums. Clearly, Jana and her family enjoy living in this area. "People talk about going on vacation, but I feel we live in the perfect vacation spot with all the nature and water close by."

Jana and her daughters love crafting and upcycling. They made pillows out of outgrown clothes. She and her husband also take on DIY projects.

In their neighborhood, Alfredo, a native of El Salvador, is well known for his gardening. "He is always waiting for the spring, to start the garden," she says. "And we compost our food scraps to make fertilizer for the garden." The neighbors comment on his beautiful flowers and vegetables.

Jana loved to travel prior to having a family. She speaks English, Spanish and Czech fluently as well as a little French. Before the pandemic, Jana and her husband and daugh-

ters made annual trips to the Czech Republic to visit her family, but unfortunately, that was not possible in 2020. She and Alfredo have also visited his mother in the mountains of El Salvador, an area she says is extremely beautiful. But they haven't visited with the children due to safety concerns.

Jana also appreciates the historical aspects of Williamsburg. She says, "Being from the Czech Republic, I don't know much about American history, and I look forward to learning about it along with our daughters."

For Jana Flores and her family, sustainable living is not only a goal and a business, but something they practice every day. They hope that through Fill Happy, a greater number of local residents will be able to practice more sustainable living and in turn reduce the waste generated in the Williamsburg area. She hopes that she will also create greater awareness of how to help the planet. "Even a small change, like using a refillable water bottle, can have a big impact." NDN

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Lisa Martin Lee Photography

A Master Craftsman

By Kristine Hojnicky

Near the Capitol Building on Duke of Gloucester Street, nestled between the milliner's shop and Raleigh Tavern Bakery, sits the Golden Ball storefront. The shop, along with the building behind it, is where visitors can discover the art of silversmithing from the historic area's own expert craftsmen.

Before his retirement in 2000, James "Jim" Curtis served as Colonial Williamsburg's mas-

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ter silversmith for twenty years. Under his visionary leadership, he managed a team of fifteen employees who were in the various stages of learning the art of 18th century silversmithing.

Jim was a boundary-breaker. In the 1960s, he was hired as an apprentice in the silversmith shop and the first African American to serve in a public-facing role, demonstrating his craft to visitors on a daily basis. Throughout his subsequent forty-year tenure with Colonial Williamsburg, he became one of the first persons of color to serve as a Lantern Tour Guide and as a member of the Fife and Drums Corps.

“A crack in the door was made when they let me in to be a silversmith,” he says. “I don’t think at the time that I or anyone else thought one day I would be in the position that I worked myself up to. I did it because I really put myself wholeheartedly into it.”

Jim was born in the small town of Warrenton, North Carolina. His parents relocated the

family to Newport News when he was about five years old when his father became a mechanic at Langley Air Force Base.

After high school, he met his wife, Katherine, a native of Williamsburg, and the couple married in August 1960. Jim began working at the Raleigh Tavern Bakery in December of that year.

“I am not a cook or a baker,” he says with a laugh. “The foundation came up with a program called ‘roving interpreters,’ where you would go into different shops in the craft department and explain to the guests what was going on. I asked the director if I could join that program and after I passed the qualifications, I started doing interpretations in cabinetry, the apothecary, the printing office and other trades shops.”

Soon thereafter, the master printer requested that Jim be placed in his shop full-time. The shop opened at 9 a.m. but Jim would arrive before then on weekdays because Katherine left

so early for her teaching job near Charles City.

“There was a gentleman who often parked in the lot at the same time I was. We would walk up together, chatting; then he would go his way and I would go mine. One morning he asked me if I would like to come work for him at the silversmith shop. I didn’t even know what a silversmith did,” Jim says.

William DeMatteo was the master silversmith and his offer changed the trajectory of Jim’s career and life.

“I talked to my wife and she said she would leave the decision up to me. I talked to my father, who I idolized, and he wasn’t too pleased. He was under the impression that I was going to take my talent playing the trombone and go into music to be the next Duke Ellington.”

Despite his father’s reservations and with his wife’s support, Jim accepted William DeMatteo’s offer and within several days found himself reporting to the silversmith shop.

At first, Jim mainly spent his time interpret-



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ing for guests who visited the storefront and work area. DeMatteo then announced that he planned to take Jim on as an apprentice.

“It was very intimidating,” he explains. “There were fellas working there part time who also were going to the College of William & Mary and then there was me. I was nervous, but I did my best under Mr. DeMatteo’s guidance.”

Jim began by learning how to make simple sea band bracelets. He then moved on to making brass ladles, which were sold in the blacksmith’s shop after the bowls were fitted with iron handles. DeMatteo then taught Jim how to craft silver hollowware like cups, tankards and bowls.

“I got pretty proficient and while I was working, I would talk with the public out in front,” he says. “One day a gentleman walks in as I’m working on a gravy boat and after talking with him for a bit, he says he wants to buy the piece once I’m done with it.”

That man was Harry Figgie, the founder and

**“What-
ever you do,
you have to love it.
Success for me is the
accomplishments of those
that I had the honor of
teaching the art of 18th
century silversmithing.”**

~ James Curtis

CEO of the multibillion-dollar company, Figgie International Inc.

“[Mr. Figgie] came back several months later to buy that gravy boat and he said to me, ‘Jim, I’m going to stay in contact with you. You stay at your craft and one day you’re going to be the master of this shop.’”

Jim was promoted to journeyman in 1974 and six years later became the master silversmith following DeMatteo’s retirement in 1980. Harry Figgie and Jim did in fact stay in touch over the years as Jim worked his way up and mastered his skills. As the 25th anniversary celebration of Figgie International approached,

Jim was commissioned to make an exclusive, hand-crafted silver bread basket as a gift to the man who supported him early on in his career.

“I preferred crafting the hollowware type items in the manner that things were done 200 years ago,” Jim says. “I got a lot of joy from manufacturing silver. To start with something that looks like a block of nothing and then finish knowing I had given my very best and the silver gave



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it back to me was a good feeling.”

This was not Jim’s only brush with celebrity as a silversmith in Colonial Williamsburg. He shared the knowledge of his craft with Margaret Thatcher, President Ronald Reagan and world leaders during the 1983 G7 Economic Summit in Williamsburg. He also contributed to making silver pieces for Presidents Kennedy, Carter and Ford. His work was purchased by numerous foreign dignitaries and high-profile public figures visiting Williamsburg, and he personally handcrafted a necklace for Queen Elizabeth which was presented to Her Majesty by the College of William & Mary during her visit for the Centennial celebration. He also crafted a brooch for Prince Charles to gift to Princess Diana, and in 1987, Jim was part of a special envoy that traveled to Japan representing the United States at his craft in the American Fair.

But Jim says that the most important piece of silver that he ever crafted was a communion chalice in memory of William Caro, a parishioner at St. Matthew’s on Main Street in Newport News.


“In 1988, [Mrs. Caro] came in to the shop and said she wanted to make a communion chalice for the church in the 18th century manner for her husband who had recently passed away. In the 18th century, when you made a silver piece, the customer usually supplied the silver and the silversmith would melt it down and make it into whatever the customer wanted.”

The congregation at St. Matthew’s organized their resources and brought Jim a collection of items including sterling silver pins, family heirlooms and even a Tiffany’s bowl. Jim cut it all down, melted it, cast it into a block, hammered it into a sheet and made it into a chalice.

“Once it was done, my wife and I went to the church where the pastor prayed over it and served communion to the congregation,” he says. “Can you imagine? A hundred years from now, when I’m gone, someone is going to be taking communion from that cup with my name stamped on the bottom of it.”

Though he’s been retired from the silversmith trade for many years, Jim still works at his craft making jewelry for Williamsburg Jewelers. It allows him the flexibility to enjoy the art he spent so many years mastering while spending time with his wife and two daughters, one of whom lives and works in Chicago and the other who lives in Williamsburg and works in admissions at William & Mary.

In 2004, Jim Curtis was bestowed the Hans Christensen Sterling Silversmith’s Award, one of the highest honors given to a silversmith by the Society of American Silversmiths.

“Whatever you do, you have to love it,” Jim says. “Success for me is the accomplishments of those that I had the honor of teaching the art of 18th century silversmithing. If they have excelled in the craft, this means I did my job. I will always be eternally grateful to God and the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation for helping me discover what I was truly meant to do.” 

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