

December 2011

WILLIAMSBURG'S

# Next Door Neighbors®

VOL.5, ISSUE 12

PRICELESS

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## Williamsburg Holidays

**Pat McCormick**  
Grove Christian Outreach Center

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 1-2 Years Old  
 3-6  
 7-10  
 11-14  
**GIRL**

No Presents Here & Shout Christmas!  
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Joe and I have lived in Williamsburg for almost five years now. It is hard to believe. Even with half a decade here and five holiday seasons, we have only scratched the surface at attending the many events and celebrations offered in our community during the holidays.

Last year, we attended the Christmas Tree Lighting in Colonial Williamsburg for the first time and my parents joined us. The night was cold and clear. People of all ages slowly came together, gathering on Duke of Gloucester Street, candles in hand, singing, listening and enjoying the calmness of a beautiful winter night. Despite my deadlines, appointments and the rush of my daily life, I found I was able to slow down and become totally present in those moments. The spirit of Christmas filled my mind and heart as I enjoyed the evening with my family, feeling fortunate to be surrounded by people I love and grateful to be living in a place where inspiration comes so easily.

This issue, Williamsburg Holidays, is meant to provide you with ways of finding fun and invigorating things to do here during the holidays. We hope you enjoy these holiday stories about some of your neighbors and that you will visit the website [www.ChristmasInWilliamsburg.com](http://www.ChristmasInWilliamsburg.com) to find ways to open doors to your holiday spirit. NDN



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Presented by Ed Golden, President

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Lisa W. Cumming Photography

PAT McCORMICK

# Looking Outward

By Erin Zagursky

Many people spend a good portion of the holiday season rushing around to buy presents for friends and family members. Pat McCormick spends time helping people she may not even know by bringing gifts to those who may not otherwise have anything on Christmas morning.

Pat, Executive Director of Grove Christian Outreach Center, helps organize the center's annual gift drive for children, teens and adults in the Grove section of James City County. Last year the center provided shoeboxes filled with Christmas goodies to more than 400 children, and Pat expects even more this year.

"It's more of a calling of what the Lord wants me to do," she says. "I really can't imagine doing anything else. I love what I do and feel very blessed and privileged to be serving the people of Grove."

It's also something she didn't expect she'd be doing.

"The plan was - I was going to get married, have about four kids and that was going to be my life," she says. "It didn't quite work out that way."

Born in Richmond, Pat worked for the Virginia Department of Highways and later worked in banking until meeting and marrying her husband, Thomas, 30 years ago.

Thomas, who worked as a mail carrier in Grove, became the pastor of the couple's church in Charles City in 1996. Soon after, Thomas felt that God called him to help the poor in Grove. He invited the leaders of the church in Charles City to visit there, and they agreed to begin a ministry in the area.

"We opened February 1st of 2000, thinking we could just serve a few families a month with food and clothing - ten families maybe," Pat says. "It's not anything like what happened."

Although Pat was familiar with Grove before the church moved there (she had even once delivered phone books to the area), she says she didn't realize the level of poverty that existed.

"I guess I was somewhat like everybody else: oblivious to what was really going on out there, not engaged. It just didn't register with me," she says.

When her husband told her about the calling to go there, she says she was reluctant because

she was raising two great-nieces at the time and it was way out of her comfort zone.

"I just didn't know what I had to offer to people," Pat says. "We had just been involved in areas in church like Sunday school and children's church and things like that, but never any kind of outreach, so it was totally new ground for us."

In the end, Pat says, "I went and did it anyway."

She proved to be a fast learner. Pat went from not knowing what a food bank was to joining it in October and starting the outreach center's weekly bread day in November.

As the center and its outreach grew, Pat says that God quickly changed her heart.

"Not because I gained confidence in myself," she says. "I still don't have a lot or any confidence in myself and what I can do, but seeing His hand move and work and open up doors and bring in support and resources - it has just been an amazing journey over the last 11 years. It's just blown me away."

The center's all-volunteer staff now serves more than 2,200 individuals per year and dis-



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tributes about 488,000 pounds of food. In addition to the weekly bread line, they also distribute clothing, bus tickets, bikes, gas vouchers, backpacks, school supplies and Thanksgiving and Christmas food baskets. They also offer a limited amount of financial assistance to people in danger of being evicted or having their utilities shut off.

In 2009, Pat was presented with the Governor's Volunteerism & Community Service Award for an Outstanding Faith Based Organization.

Of everything that happens at the center each year, the Christmas shoebox project is Pat's favorite event.

"Christmas is big! We love Christmas," says Pat. "One of the things my husband wanted to make sure of when we went out to Grove was that everybody had something to eat, everybody had access to clothing, and every child in Grove that needed a Christmas gift would get one."

Pat took her inspiration for the shoeboxes from a project started by Samaritan's Purse called "Operation Christmas Child," which she had participated in with her nieces.

"I thought, well, why can't we do that here? We don't have a lot of money, but we can do a few shoeboxes," she says.

The first year, she created 25 boxes. Last year, the center distributed 422 shoe boxes to younger children and gifts packaged in popcorn tubs for teens.

Pat says they try to make sure that each child gets a pair of gloves, a hat, a toothbrush and toothpaste as well as other items – including toys, games and stuffed animals – based on the child's age and gender.

The teens receive candy and other goodies.

"Teens love to eat," Pat says.

They also receive Christian literature or music and gift certificates for movies or food, if they are available.

About four years ago, people began donating larger toys, so the center began what they call "the blessing room," where parents can "shop" for presents for their children and other family members.

"Assistant Director Deena (Walls) does a great job at organizing that and getting it all set up," says Pat. "We have little elves that escort the families and parents through. It's really become a big day."

The blessing room is open the same day that the center distributes the shoeboxes. This year, the event will be held on December 10th.

"I love doing shoeboxes," she says. "It's a lot of work and a lot of coordination. You're packing 422 and making sure you have enough of each thing, but I love doing that. And if I could, I would pack each one of them myself."

Pat's efforts to help others have impacted her life as well. Before becoming involved with the Grove community, Pat described herself as very inward.

"Working at Grove forces you to look outward and to give," she says. "It's very fulfilling, very rewarding, not just for the sake of giving, but, for me, I see this as a ministry and something that God wants me to do. In that way, it's very fulfilling to me because I feel like I'm pleasing Him. I'm doing what He wants me to do, and He's blessing other people through me being there and being available."

Though she feels that fulfillment throughout the year, Pat says that Christmas continues to be the highlight for her.

"I love Christmas anyway, so this is just icing on the cake to be able to see the joy in people's eyes and their smiles and their faces," she says.

While Pat's personal Christmas wish is for the center's new building to be fully funded, she has another set of wishes for the Grove community.

"We want every child in Grove to have a Christmas gift, families to enjoy a delicious Christmas dinner and for everyone to truly know and experience the great love that was born on that very first Christmas night," she says. NDN

To find out more about Grove Christian Outreach Center and how you can help visit: [www.groveoutreach.com](http://www.groveoutreach.com)

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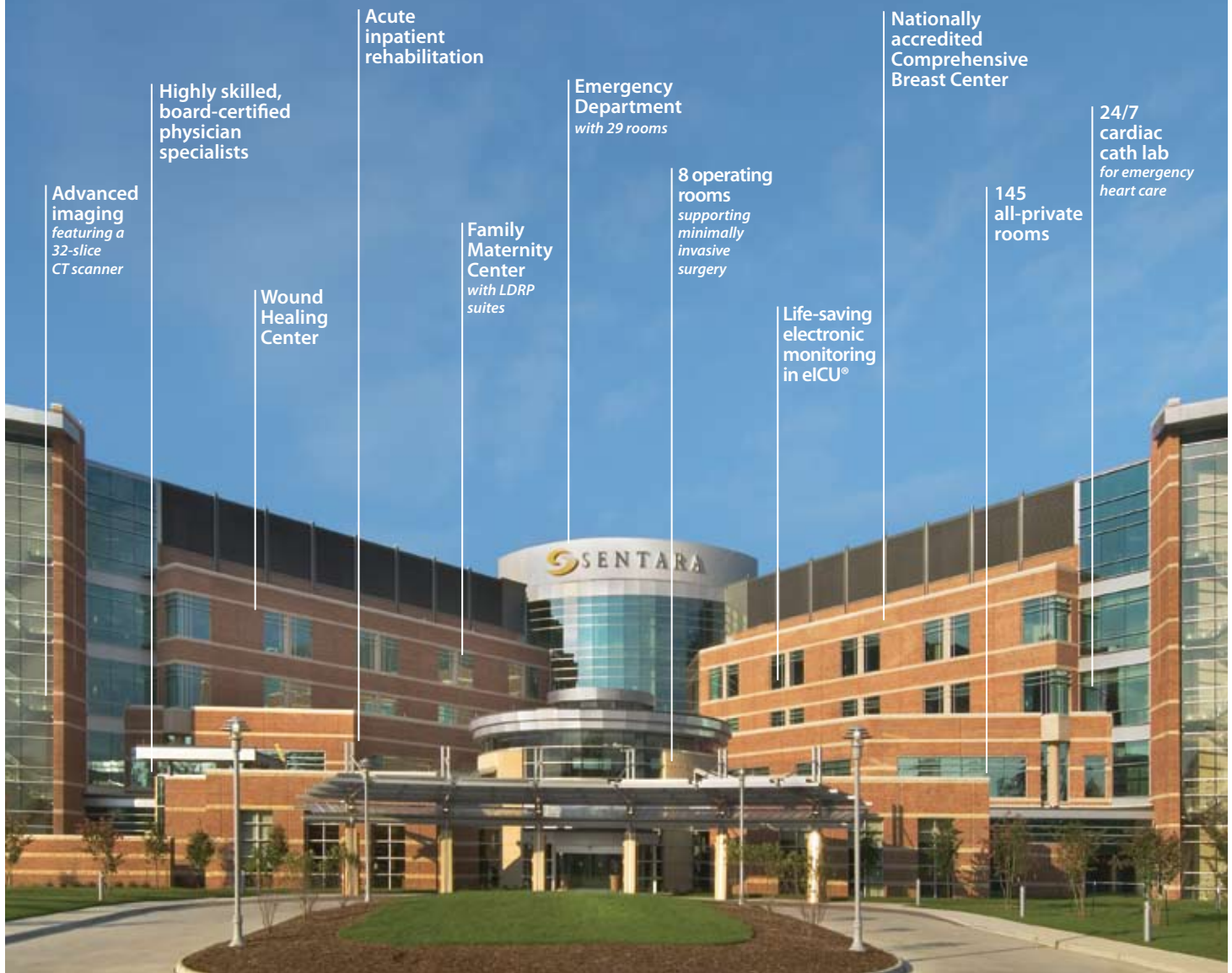
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FRED SCHOLPP

# Holiday Traditions

at Jamestown Settlement

By Sharon Dillon



Lisa W. Cumming Photography

During the month of December, Jamestown Settlement and Yorktown Victory Center offer insight into the 17th and 18th-century holiday season through period entertainment called *A Colonial Christmas*. One of the traditions interpreted at Jamestown Settlement is Lord of Misrule.

Fred Scholpp, who has spent almost 30 years at Jamestown Settlement, is an integral part of this glimpse of history. At one time, Fred portrayed Lord of Misrule at Jamestown Settlement; now, as assistant supervisor, he is relegated to roles such as fool (jester) or knight.

The Englishmen who came to Jamestown in 1607 considered Christmas to be a special time of the year. Festivities were common and little work was accomplished.

Fred describes several English customs of the time, such as the Twelve Days of Christmas, beginning on December 25 and ending

on Epiphany, January 6. This custom began as a mixture of German Yule and Roman Saturnalia combined with the Feast of the Nativity. The revelry included drinking and gambling, decorating homes with greenery, exchanging presents, and dressing up in costumes. Even small children were given coins to gamble.

“The early 17th century in Western Europe was a fascinating time. They had one foot in the Middle Ages and one foot in the Age of Reason,” Fred says. “This was shown in their laws, medicine and their holiday traditions. The first English settlers brought these to Jamestown. We interpret that time as accurately as possible every day and with our special programs such as *Foods and Feasts, Military through the Ages* and *A Colonial Christmas*.”

Nancy Egloff, a Jamestown Settlement Historian, writes: “In preparation for the season, many towns designated a Lord of Misrule, the

‘grand captain of all mischief,’ who with 20 or more chosen ‘lusty guts’ decked themselves in yellow and green scarves, ribbons, laces, rings and jewels, and proceeded through the town on Christmas Day... this ‘heathen company’ marched ‘towards the church and churchyard, their pipers piping, their drummers thundering, their stumps dancing, their bells jingling, their handkerchiefs swinging about their heads like madmen, their hobby-horses and other monsters skirmishing amongst the rout.’

Years later, Puritans and Presbyterians tried to ban such nonsense but were unsuccessful in their attempts to make Christmas a solemn holy day.

“Early 17th century England was an earthy place with a low form of humor,” Fred says. Often this included bawdy jokes and implied activity. “Here at Jamestown Settlement we assure that our reveling is suitable for even the





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youngest children.”

Part of this tradition includes the Wassail Bowl. “Wassailers also paraded to the houses in the towns on Christmas Eve, New Year’s Eve and Twelfth Night, traditionally carrying a wassail bowl full of spiced ale, sugar and apples, and singing a wassailing song while passing the bowl:

Wassail! Wassail! All over the town  
Our toast it is white, our ale it is brown,  
Our bowl it is made of a maplin tree;  
We be good fellows all, I drink to thee.’

Englishmen also followed the custom of wassailing apple trees on Christmas Eve and Twelfth Night by toasting the orchard, “placing pieces of toast on the branches and pouring cider on the roots of the trees ... entice the trees to yield an abundant crop of fruit.”

“We portray what the settlers remembered about their holidays in England,” Fred explains. “They would not have wanted to build big bonfires. They had little food and certainly not wassail. The settlers were a mixture of gentlemen, trades people and soldiers. During the Starving Time from 1610 to 1614 the fort could not have survived a lack of discipline for 12 days. This is simply not good military readiness.”

He also refers to General Washington’s Christmas attack and defeat of the celebrating German soldiers at Trenton, New Jersey as a clear example of why the settlers probably

## “We portray what the settlers remembered about their holidays in England.”

~ Fred Scholpp

would not have celebrated the Yule season in the traditional way.

Fred’s love of history has deep roots. “My mother was a historian and my father worked for the state department,” Fred says. “I’ve always been nuts about military history, the earlier the better. I’ve learned how to make armor and am avid about medieval reenactment. I was fortunate to be hired here in 1983 and have spent nearly the whole time in the fort. It’s so exciting to work outside in historic costumes.”

Fred says this passion has its drawbacks too, chuckling as he recalls a time during third grade when the teaching Sister asked the children to draw pictures of historic Christmas; meaning, of course, the Christ Child, Magi and Angels. She was dismayed to see many drawings of San-

ta, reindeer and candy canes, but not shocked until she came upon little Fred’s drawing of Washington crossing the Delaware River to attack Trenton.

The holiday season is a special time for Fred. He has another favorite Christmas memory from the ice storm in the late 1990s. He, his wife, Kim, and Martin, their son, were visiting her relatives in Norge. On Christmas Eve they enjoyed their traditional dinner of salmon. The next day the weight of the ice had broken the wires, leaving them without electricity, and with an uncooked beef roast and a large family to feed.

Kim, an interpreter on the farm at Yorktown Victory Center, came to the rescue. She guided the family in preparing a sumptuous feast. An old wood stove in the basement became the base of operations. Working together they set up a grill and drip pan in front of the oven and cooked the roast to perfection. In a pot on top of the stove they cooked a delicious Yorkshire pudding.

“This year we are celebrating with other relatives in upstate New York and are counting on having all the modern comforts,” Fred adds with a smile. NDN

To find out more please visit:  
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KYRA COOK

# Art

• IN LIFE • AT HOME • ALL AROUND!

By Ryan Jones

Quick...think fast! Name three things you really like.

With the magic of the Christmas spirit already wafting through the late-autumn breeze, a host of interesting thoughts and ideas might surface in response to such an inquiry. For those with quick wits and a decisive temperament like Williamsburg artist Kyra Cook, the mental images of what make this season the “most wonderful time of the year” begin to shape faster than wet clay on a potter’s wheel.

“I’d pick my husband, my kids, and good music,” Kyra answers without missing a beat. “My son, Drew, was born in early December nine years ago. On the night he was born, it

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snowed. It wasn't yet Christmas, but it was magical. It was great to sing Christmas carols to him and welcome him into our family. Seven years ago we celebrated our daughter Meggie's first Christmas. My grandmother was able to travel and join the extended family celebration. It was a treat to watch baby Meggie sit in her great grandmother's lap on Christmas Day."

With such a well-sorted list of holiday priorities and a seemingly endless pool of creativity, Kyra makes answering questions on the spot seem as easy as 1-2-3. Having established what will likely front her 2011 Christmas wish-list, Kyra moves on to another passion that has shaped a few of her holiday seasons over the years: the potter's wheel.

"I love working with clay," she says, reminiscing over her career as a professional potter. "I love its smell. I love its texture. I love seeing its transition into various stages. Pottery has been around since 2500 B.C. It's humbling to be a part of such a long tradition."

As anyone who has worked with ceramics can attest, a good artist can make this art form look much easier than it really is. Though Kyra has mastered the art of spinning pottery during the past two decades, she remembers a time when a moist lump of clay seemed more like a nemesis than a friend.

"I took a pottery class in college at William and Mary," she explains. "I was actually pretty bad at it. I was majoring in history and Russian studies at the time, and thought that a pottery class would be an easy A. Instead, it turned into a C. I worked hard to improve, and eventually got a little better. One day, my art teacher left the class to use the restroom. While she was gone, the phone rang. I answered it, and found myself talking to a person from Busch Gardens who was looking for a student to work in New France for the summer. I offered to fill the position, and all of a sudden, I was a full-time potter. It was serendipity!"

Though she was excited to make the unexpected course correction in accommodating her new hobby, Kyra admits that she still had much to learn before considering artwork as a primary career choice.

"I made pots every day in front of people," she remembers. "Being embarrassed daily is good motivation for doing better. By the time I was done that summer, I was a fairly competent potter, and of course, I was hooked. After graduation the economy was tough, and it was hard to get a job. A lot of my friends were moving back home and getting the only jobs they could – as waiters or bank tellers. Neither suited me. I had the opportunity to return to Busch Gardens. I worked at Busch Gardens ten months a year for four more years. Then I decided to start my own business in 1994."

With the start of a new business in an uncertain market, Kyra remembers being stretched financially during the first few Christmas seasons. Since her savings account wouldn't accommodate expensive gifts, Kyra decided that the old cliché about necessity being the mother of invention would make an excellent theme for her holiday preparations, and she turned to her potter's wheel for solutions.

"I was too poor to buy presents, so I gave pottery as gifts," she says, laughing at the memory. "After a while, I can remember family members suspiciously eying their boxes and saying, 'Uh oh, it's from Kyra...I wonder what it is'. Eventually, I got the vibe that some of my artwork recipients might not need any more pottery, so I stopped sending it out. It was funny, because when I changed things up, everyone asked me where their usual handcrafted ceramics were. It turned out that they actually missed them!"

While Kyra has moved on to other business ventures these days, she still has a soft spot for budding artists. On that note, she offers a few practical gift ideas for those in the community with friends or family members who have taken a fancy to the arts.

"JCC Parks and Recreation has great entry level art classes," she says. "This Century Art Gallery does too, as well as The School of Art. And if you want to buy brushes or other art mediums, the William and Mary

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Having networked extensively as an artist in the Williamsburg area, Kyra also knows a few local hubs where holiday shoppers can find gift items that are professionally crafted by regional artists. A Touch of Earth ranks high on her list, which is located in the Gallery Shops in Lightfoot. This small American craft gallery offers everything from pottery, jewelry, and prints to small furniture items and metal works. She also recommends Prince George Art and Frame, which pulls double duty as an art gallery and a framing shop. To round things off, Kyra says a trip to one of Colonial Williamsburg's gift shops is worth a try if you are looking for items with a distinctly Williamsburg flavor. In particular, she recommends the DeWitt Wallace Museum Gift Shop, which is accessible through the Public Hospital on the corner of Nassau and Francis Streets.

**“I love working with clay. I love its smell. I love seeing its transition into various stages. Pottery has been around since 2500 B.C. It's humbling to be a part of such a long tradition.”**

~ Kyra Cook

While the potter's wheel in Kyra's workshop has cooled off a bit this year when compared with previous Christmas seasons, Kyra says she is glad she was able to enjoy time with her kids in the studio this past summer, and hopes to get back to work on some new ideas soon. In the meantime, her mind centers on how she will prepare to ring in the holidays as this year's winter solstice approaches.

“We'll celebrate with family,” she says. “Likely at my mom's farm in Mathews County or at my aunt's home in Annapolis, Maryland. We typically have too much food. Too many gifts. Lots of laughter. And we usually stand around the piano and sing Christmas carols. We sometimes call older relatives who can no longer travel to wish them a merry Christmas and sing to them as well.”

It sounds like Kyra has the best part of her holiday planning all wrapped up. With an avalanche of wish-lists seeking prominence on Santa's desk this month, it's likely the jolly old elf will pause for a moment and smile if he finds that Kyra's impromptu top-three list made it into her Christmas letter.

“I'd pick my husband, my kids, and good music,” she reminds him.

Such a reminder will prove to be worth its weight in gold for all of us this year if holiday preparations become chaotic. Though Santa's attention will probably be riveted on the scores of iPads, Kindles, and new X Box games being loaded out on Christmas Eve, he will be the first to remind us that the best of what we have to be grateful for on December 25th won't be found underneath well-trimmed Fraser Firs. If we take a few moments to ponder the meaning and significance of the first Christmas, we will remember that the holiday season, by design, was made to be simple. So simple, in fact, that we won't have cause to hesitate if we find ourselves perched on Santa's knee responding to on-the-spot inquiries.

Quick...think fast! Name three things you really like.

It's a simple question that says a lot about which direction our hearts are headed this Christmas. If we happen to be reading from the right list, we can be sure that, like Kyra's, our 2011 holiday season will turn out exactly as it should: easy as 1-2-3. [NDN](#)

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MARIELLYNN MAURER

# Williamsburg's Christmas Parade

- A Holiday Tradition Since 1965 -

By Brandy Centolanza

For the second straight year, Mariellynn Maurer will chair the Christmas parade in Williamsburg, a holiday tradition since 1965. This year the parade kicks off a weekend of Christmas celebrations on December 3rd. Mariellynn has been a part of the parade in some form since 1998. That year, she answered an ad in the *Virginia Gazette* seeking volunteers for the parade and for First Night Williamsburg, the city's New Year's Eve festivities.

"I read it and it just sounded interesting," she recalls. "I just showed up and did what they needed me to do."

Mariellynn had some previous experience, having assisted with the homecoming parade for the College of William and Mary, her alma mater. As a student, she participated with homecoming events and helped create parade floats with the campus's service fraternity, Alpha Phi Om-

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As has been widely reported in the general press, we are in the midst of the largest generational transfer of wealth in United States history. Careful planning will be required both to minimize the impact of taxes and other expenses and to maximize the likelihood that this new wealth will prove a blessing rather than a curse to the recipients.

Perhaps the planner's single most effective tool is the trust. However, to speak of a "trust" is akin to your caddie telling you to use "a golf club" to hit your next shot. Trusts are designed to accomplish a variety of objectives, from minimization of estate taxes to protecting the resources of a disabled child. Like a trusted caddie, a qualified estate planning attorney will determine the best strategy for reaching your goals, and make certain you are using the best equipment to achieve your objectives.

Before describing a few trusts commonly used in estate planning, we address a common misperception - that trusts, and estate planning generally, benefit only the very wealthy. In fact, nothing could be farther from the truth. For most, a well-designed estate plan, even if it does not save a penny in estate tax, may make it possible for one's children or grandchildren to attend college or otherwise be able to get a decent start in life.

#### A. The Ta8 x-Exemption Trust

Often referred to as the "family trust" or "credit shelter trust," this trust can be thought of as the driver in the estate planner's bag. It is used to guarantee that each spouse's estate tax exemption amount is fully utilized. This one device can save a married couple millions of dollars in estate taxes. Indeed, under the current law, it makes any other estate tax planning unnecessary for the large majority of our clients.

#### B. QTIP Trust

The wealthy typically make use of the unlimited marital deduction to ensure that no estate tax is paid on the death of the first spouse. While effective as an estate-tax re-

duction strategy, this may imperil the preservation of assets for children or other intended beneficiaries if the assets become under the control of the surviving spouse, particularly in a second marriage situation. Like a trusted sand wedge, the QTIP trust provides a way out of this hazard, allowing the assets to benefit from the unlimited marital deduction, while maintaining the first spouse's control over the ultimate distribution of the assets.

#### C. The Irrevocable (Life Insurance) Trust

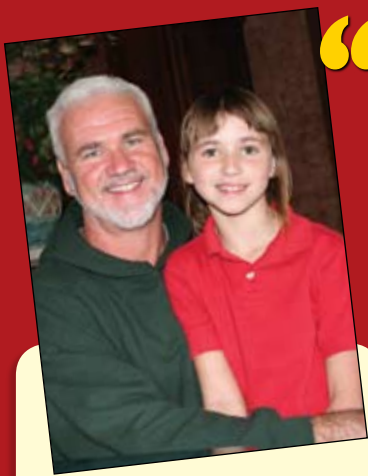
The revocable trust has replaced the Will as the centerpiece document in most families' estate plans. Less common, but often useful, is the irrevocable trust, which might be thought of as a utility wood - not always necessary, but invaluable under the right conditions.

As the name implies, an irrevocable trust cannot, under normal circumstance, be undone. A contribution into such a trust is considered a completed gift. The advantage of such this trust has never been greater, due to recent changes in the estate tax laws. Currently, the estate tax exemption is \$5 million; however, this is scheduled to return to \$1 million at the end of 2012. This provides a unique window of opportunity to place millions of dollars beyond the reach of the transfer tax system, by making completed gifts.

In addition, these trusts are frequently used to hold life insurance. Relatively small, nontaxable gifts may be used by the trust to pay for insurance on the life of a parent. Upon death, the children then receive a large lump sum, free of income tax, free of estate tax and, depending on the trust terms, protected from creditors.

We hope this brief introduction provides a helpful glimpse into the tremendous variety of entities that are classified as "trusts." Fortunately, we are not limited to a selection of fourteen solutions, but are allowed to keep as many clubs in the bag as our imagination provides.





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ga.

“That was my first experience with a parade other than watching one as a kid, and I really enjoyed it,” she says. “I enjoyed being a part of a group all working toward a common goal and then seeing everyone enjoying what we had done.”

Mariellynn spent her first few years involved with the Christmas parade by helping participants find their spots and lining up for the event, but she eventually decided she wanted to be more involved. In 2006, she responded to a flyer put out by the Greater Williamsburg Chamber & Tourism Alliance asking for volunteers to serve on the Chamber’s various committees. She applied to be on the committee for the Christmas parade, where she’s played a role ever since. Last year, she was named co-chair of the parade. Mariellynn uses her background from her day job as Director of Conference Services at the College of William and Mary as a guide to preparing for the parade.

**“I just love seeing the community come together to start the kick off of this well-known celebration of Christmas in Williamsburg.”**

*~ Mariellynn Maurer*

“It helps a lot,” she says.

The parade committee meets monthly year-round. In January, committee members evaluate what went well with the parade, assess feedback from the community, and discuss ways to improve the event. They also begin a search for a sponsor for the next parade, as well as finalize a parade theme.

“This year’s goal is to see more decorations from our participants and more of a reflection of our theme,” Mariellynn says. “This year’s theme is ‘Christmas In Williamsburg,’ which we thought goes hand in hand with the chamber’s new website focusing on Christmas in Williamsburg. We just thought it would be a great tie in.”

Parade themes vary from year to year and usually coincide with a significant community event during a particular year. The “Christmas In Williamsburg” theme was used only once before, during the parade’s inaugural year. In 2006, the parade theme was “I Saw Three Ships Come Sailing In,” named after a popular English Christmas tune, to kick off the 400th Anniversary of Jamestown, and in 2008, The Fife & Drum Corps was honored on its 50th anniversary with a theme of “The Little Drummer Boy.”

“Changing the theme gives a little variant to the parade,” Mariellynn explains. “Each year there are new floats and new companies who want to be involved.”

In 2009, the parade theme was set to be “Christmas Town,” in celebration of the newest attraction at Busch Gardens, but the parade was cancelled that year due to inclement weather, so last year the theme remained the same. Busch Gardens, this year’s sponsor for the event, went all out for the theme, adding a lot of extras such as costumed characters, including elves, and white horse-drawn carriages.

“It really added a little bit of magic to the parade,” Mariellynn recalls.

As this year’s parade draws near, the committee is busy once again. Mariellynn is helping her new co-chairman, Jim Kelley, a call center agent with Colonial Williamsburg, learn the ropes. Duties for both of them include reviewing applications from participants, seeking out community volunteers, advertising for the event, naming a grand marshal, and gathering permits for street closures as well as coordinating security

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for the parade. The parade starts in Merchants Square and works its way down Richmond Road past Zable Stadium before turning down Brooks Street and ending in the parking lot of William and Mary Hall.

Thousands of people line the streets each year to view the parade, which consists of civic organizations such as boy and girl scout troops, local businesses, marching bands, and special interest groups, including local cancer awareness groups and animal rescue groups.

"There is always such a big array of groups who participate," Mariellynn shares. "There is something in it for everyone." In all, up to 100 units march in the parade, and it's not just people whom spectators will see along the route. Animals also tag along, especially dogs, and in the past there have also been sightings of horses and llamas. And, of course, Santa brings up the rear.

On the day of the event, Mariellynn is ready at the scene by 5:30 a.m., coordinating with the volunteers on what needs to be accomplished before the parade commences. This means ensuring that each group knows where and when to go and also assuring that the parade route is clear of the crowd. Then, the fun begins.

"I just love seeing the community come to-

gether to start the kick off of this well-known celebration of Christmas in Williamsburg," Mariellynn says. "To me, it is very exciting. I love seeing the excitement and how proud everyone is of their float and all the excitement

## "I just love Christmas and everything that it stands for. I love the family and community emphasis on Christmas."

~ Mariellynn Maurer

on the children's faces and all the chatter and knowing that something special is about to happen. The reward is seeing the crowd gathered on that Saturday with their hot chocolates and coffees, clapping and cheering on their families and friends and just really enjoying the morning."

Mariellynn herself had the same reaction watching Christmas parades in the various towns she lived in while growing up in a Navy family. Her fondest holiday memories stem from time spent in a small town in New York watching the parades with her father's family, as well as overseas in Scotland during her elementary school years.

"I can remember going to see Santa in Scotland and realizing that wow, he really does go everywhere," Mariellynn recalls. "It was just so neat as a child to think that Santa really does travel all over the world. I loved all the small-knit communities we lived in. I just love Christmas and everything that it stands for. I love the family and community emphasis on Christmas."

Mariellynn attended high school in Virginia Beach, and after graduation she decided to stay in the area. She's watched the Christmas parade in Williamsburg each year since 1990. "To me, it has the same small town feel from my childhood, and it brings back a lot of happy memories, and it's very comforting," she says. "And now I love being a part of helping to provide those kinds of memories for someone else down the road. I think that's a super feeling." NDN

*The 2011 Christmas in Williamsburg Parade will be held Saturday, December 3rd at 9 a.m.*

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# Holiday Celebrations

in our Jewish community

By Linda Landreth Phelps



Lisa W. Cumming Photography

“Happy holidays!” means something different to you if you’re a member of Rabbi David Katz’ congregation at Temple Beth El. Gift giving is a part of the tradition. When Rabbi David was a child growing up in Brooklyn, he remembers getting a new sweater every night for the gifts that are traditionally given on each of the eight nights of Hanukkah. Every family has its own way of doing things to celebrate the holiday also known as the Festival of Lights.

“Others get a few big things early on, then end up with a pair of socks or something at the end. There’s no right way or wrong way to do it,” says Rabbi David.

Hanukkah is the holiday on the Jewish calendar that falls near the Christmas season. While

Christmas and Easter are the greatest spiritual events of the year for Christians, the High Holy Days are the most solemn and significant ones for Jews. The High Holy Days begin with Rosh Hashanah (Jewish New Year) and end with Yom Kippur, or the Day of Atonement.

“The juxtaposition of Christmas and what was once a relatively minor Jewish religious celebration has gradually given Hanukkah more attention,” he says. “but it’s not really meant to be the Jewish version of Christmas.”

Rabbi David is making efforts to educate others about the holiday that remembers and honors ancient Israel’s struggle for freedom.

“I come to my son Noah’s school to talk about our traditions and faith, and one of the

things that I’ll talk about is the history behind the Hanukkah holiday.”

By the end of December, a special nine-branched candle holder, a Hanukkah menorah, will shine with many points of light in the windows of Williamsburg’s observant Jews. Hanukkah begins this year at sunset on December 20th and ends the evening of December 28th.

“We’ll have a party here at the Temple at some point. We’ll eat latkes - potato pancakes - and doughnuts, play some games and sing songs. Some are fun and silly, some more traditional.”

The Hanukkah tradition is to eat foods that are fried in oil to commemorate the fuel that was used for the lamp signifying God’s presence

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in Jerusalem's Holy Temple. When the Maccabees recaptured Israel from the Persians in 165 BCE there was only one small vial of uncontaminated olive oil left with which to relight the Temple's menorah, but that amount miraculously lasted eight nights, long enough that new oil could be ritually made and sanctified for use.

"There are toys and games that are specifically associated with Hanukkah," Rabbi David says. "A dreidel is a spinning top which is inscribed with the Hebrew letters nun, gimmel, hei and shin, an acronym for Nes Gadol Hayah Sham, or 'a great miracle happened there'. People really like to buy modern dreidels in Israel because those say 'a great miracle happened here,'" he says. "There's also a holiday tradition of giving children small amounts of money, which evolved into the present day Hanukkah gelt, chocolates wrapped in gold paper that look like coins."

Much of the Hanukkah festivity revolves around the home and the ever-increasing numbers of candles lit at sundown each day.

"Special Hebrew blessings are said as the central candle, the shamash, or worker, is used to light one more candle on eight successive nights of the festival, until all nine bring light to the darkness," he says.

Rabbi David has both a heart and talent for religious education. As the father of two little boys, Noah, 7, and Elijah, 2 1/2, he is very aware of the challenges of instilling faith and a sense of identity in the next generation of Jews. He is drawing in growing families who connect with his innovative, family-friendly approach.

"Once a month we'll have a service geared more towards children," Rabbi David says. "I'll use a translation of Torah, or scripture, that is more modern and simple to understand, and I make use of puppets to teach the lesson."

Since June, David has served as the rabbi for William and Mary's Balfour Hillel, the college's organization for Jewish students. He's also active in Campus Ministry United, where he serves with clergy of all faiths in their efforts to foster ecumenical cooperation.

Rabbi David and his wife, psychologist Dr. Amy Lazev, spent several years in Philadelphia before coming to Williamsburg and Temple Beth El. They came from a large, thriving community rich in Jewish tradition to a place with relatively few people who share their faith. But, for a small town, there are a good number of members of the Jewish faith in Williamsburg.

Besides the synagogue's members, there are many unaffiliated Jews here, plus over 300 undergraduates at William and Mary and a Jewish law student organization. However, Rabbi David decided he will soon have Temple Beth El's small sign made into a larger one when he discovered that residents and even fellow clergy in town were unaware that there was a synagogue on Jamestown Road.

"But what's great is that many people in Williamsburg are very open to hearing about Jewish issues and interested in equality in general. I heard that the scheduled Homecoming for Warhill High School was switched to another night when someone realized that it fell on Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, the most sacred service of all in our faith. For us, it would be the same thing as scheduling something big on Christmas Eve, so it speaks well for them that they changed it."

Through his civic activities, Rabbi David is hoping to make the Jewish presence in Williamsburg more visible and better known to his neighbors because he feels that the more Christians, Jews and Muslims know about each other's different faiths, the more likely it will be that we will live in harmony.

As Rabbi David Katz joins other Jews worldwide in lighting the first candle of Hanukkah on December 20th, they will all recite the same Hebrew blessing that accompanies each new celebration of an ancient miracle: "Baruch ata Ado-nai, Elo-heinu Melech ha'olam, She'hecheyanu, ve-kiyemanu vehigi'anu laz'man hazeh" "Blessed are You, Hashem our God, King of the universe, Who has kept us alive, sustained us, and brought us to this season."

And a wonderful season it is. Happy holidays, neighbors! NDN

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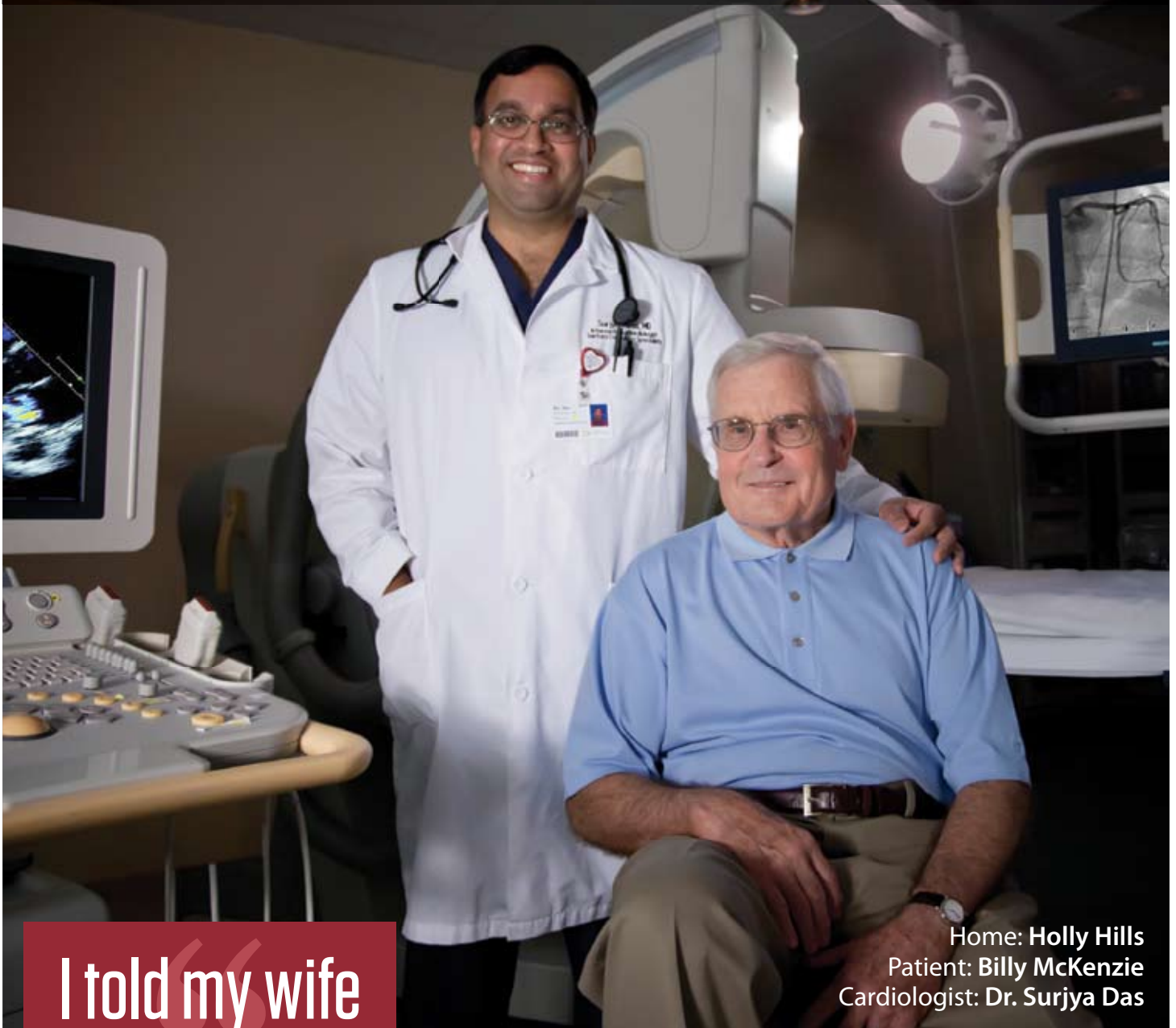
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RICHARD TATE

# The *Magic* of a Colonial Williamsburg Christmas

*By Linda Landreth Phelps*

A flawless, perfectly planned and executed occasion does not exist, according to Richard Tate, the Director of Special Events at Colonial Williamsburg. Something - small or large - will always go awry somewhere. But no matter what the unforeseen circumstance, Richard's goal as he describes it, is to have any event appear to flow flawlessly, its progress as serene as a swan swimming in a placid pond. To the casual observer it seems to be gliding effortlessly across the water, but beneath the surface the swan's powerful feet are churning away.

Richard's 39-year career in hospitality with the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation has ultimately led to dual titles and diverse responsibilities. In addition to his job as director, where he helps plan such complex events as the hugely popular Grand Illumination weekend or the most recent visit of Queen Elizabeth II, he is also Executive Assistant Manager of the Williamsburg Inn.

The Inn is the impeccably posh hotel conceived, designed, and built in the Regency style by the Rockefeller family in 1937. The grand, white brick hotel has hosted royalty and rock stars as well as a diverse cross section of international travelers for almost 75 years. Everything that happens at the Inn, from wedding receptions to Christmas carolers in the hotel's public lobby, falls under Richard Tate's scrutiny. He is in charge of meetings and events for major donors, illustrious guests and heads of state and sees being picky as a major part of his job.

"I focus on the details," Richard says. "If the small things are well cared for, the large things



usually take care of themselves. Of course, the ultimate goal is that everyone is happy.”

Christmas is arguably the happiest time of the year in Colonial Williamsburg. Visitors gather from every corner of the world to absorb the distinctive holiday atmosphere nurtured by a large contingent of planners from the day after Thanksgiving through New Year’s Day.

Every hotel and tavern bursts at the seams with merrymaking and seasonal feasting, all meticulously planned right down to the last plum in the pudding. To keep things fresh and encourage repeat visits, programs must constantly be updated and new attractions added to the familiar favorites from time to time.

“For this year’s guests,” Richard, who oversees special dining and hospitality events for all the hotels, says, “an afternoon tea and evening banquet will be hosted by an actor portraying Mr. Samuel Adams, a Regency-era butler who will explain historic holiday customs - Boxing Day for example - that would have been enjoyed in an elegant European manor house such as the Inn.”

The Regency period (1811-1837) is that short stretch of opulence following Georgian powdered wigs and gaudy satins and before the widowed Queen Victoria’s straitlaced ways settled over England like a dowdy shroud. The Rockefellers chose that period for the Inn’s decor in order to set it apart from the restored area.

Local residents are not forgotten or excluded in the planning of Colonial Williamsburg’s seasonal celebration. Though some are private affairs reserved for guests only, many events are public and have become an integral part of our community’s holiday tradition. Entertainers perform on Duke of Gloucester Street by the light of flaming cressets, single candles glow from every window, and hot cider and bonfires warm the throngs who gather for the Grand Illumination. Locals and visitors alike can enjoy a Groaning Board banquet or an afternoon tea at the Williamsburg Inn, with Mr. Gerald Charles Dickens performing scenes from his great-great-grandfather’s *A Christmas Carol*. It’s all part of the magic that happens only in Williamsburg.

The magic doesn’t take place without effort, however, or without the magician’s careful crafting. Planning for a successful season continues year round, beginning with Richard’s many meetings with committee heads, during which venues will be considered for the different events and the talent pool, whether singers, actors, or musicians, contracted for.

“It’s an ongoing process,” Richard says. “We aim to have our holiday calendar published and tickets for the events offered for sale by September. We always give our own guests opportunity to sign up first, but then tickets are offered to the public and most events do sell out.”

The Williamsburg Inn calls itself “America’s

Guesthouse”, according to Richard, and takes pride in its role as host to the world. As a tribute to the Inn’s welcoming ambience and family atmosphere, some guests return for the holidays year after year. The white-gloved doormen recognize them and cheerfully call out, “Welcome home!” as they enter a cozy yet elegant lobby lavish with fragrant greenery.

Guests request the same dates and rooms and some have become close friends with other regulars,” Richard says. “They may even exchange gifts!”

Richard’s abiding love for all things Williamsburg has its roots in his childhood. Even his memories of that time reflect his professional interest in accommodations.

“My family always visited twice a year. We lived in Arlington, Virginia, and my parents would bring their three children for one trip and stay at the old Motor House and eat in the cafeteria. Then they’d sneak away by themselves for the second stay and upgrade to the Williamsburg Lodge,” Richard remembers with a nostalgic smile.

As a young Virginia Tech graduate in 1970, Richard began his career with Hilton Hotels in Washington, D.C., but after almost two years there he heard of a job opening in Williamsburg.

“I was familiar with the area and also aware of its reputation in the industry,” Richard remem-

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bers. "I thought it would be a wonderful learning experience and look good on my resume when I moved on, which is the usual course of events for hoteliers."

The typical hospitality executive constantly trades up as he or she moves around to different places, with the goal of eventually earning a position as General Manager of a top hotel or resort.

"Once I got here in 1972," Richard says, "I found no reason to move on. Everything I would have looked for elsewhere was coming my way. If I'd had a normal hotel career, I certainly might have become a General Manager and perhaps had the opportunity to host a head of state once in my career. But by staying here in Colonial Williamsburg, I've had the chance to sit still as the world has come to me. Colonial Williamsburg has been very good to me, both personally and professionally."

Richard started his career with Colonial Williamsburg as Manager of Reservations in the era when all reservations funneled through 15 telephone lines into a boiler room headquarters. Everything was still done the old-fashioned way, hand written reservations with pencil and paper. He was with them long enough to oversee the installation of new, efficient computerized systems, then moved on to handling conferences and catering. Richard took a short respite from that position to develop an innovative Destina-

tion Management division.

"We needed to sell colonial-style entertainment and features to our conferences in order to distinguish ourselves from other hotels. This gave me an opportunity to learn about and understand the historic side of Williamsburg in great depth," he says. Eventually Richard achieved his twin titles as Colonial Williamsburg's Director of Special Events and Executive Assistant Manager of the Williamsburg Inn.

Interestingly, Richard's wife, Margie, is General Manager of the Williamsburg Lodge, which leads to some good-natured rivalry concerning everything from revenues to guest comments.

"But it reaches a point," Richard says, "where we agree not to talk shop too much when we're home together. We do manage to have a very normal life."

Part of that normal life includes visits from Margie's children, who jointly own a popular Brooklyn restaurant, and Richard's two grown daughters, Robin and Becca, currently living in Richmond and California, who return to visit the small town where they were raised.

"Any excuse to come home is a good excuse!" Richard says with a laugh. "They love it here. Both of them marched in every Christmas parade from the time they were Brownies until they graduated from Lafayette."

Richard is a man who seems happy and content with his life and work.

"I've carved out a very nice place for myself here. Every hour of the day I am doing something different. I'm rarely behind a desk. It's constantly stimulating, never boring, and a great privilege to serve the public in such an interesting way," Richard says. "What makes it all the more enjoyable is the fact that I have a wonderful team of people who help me weather any circumstance."

Members of Richard's hard-working team all seem to hold their boss in high regard and great affection. He is known throughout Colonial Williamsburg as a modest man who prefers to avoid the limelight, so when Richard is prodded forward for some well-earned recognition (as when he received two of the highest service honors a Colonial Williamsburg employee can achieve, the Order of the Pineapple and the One Foundation Award) everyone is delighted.

During the last weeks of November, Richard and his staff are busy getting ready to welcome Christmas guests who will soon arrive in Williamsburg, checking and rechecking all the myriad details that will ensure another season of enjoyable activity. His expertise will continue to keep the Christmas spirit flowing with apparent ease, to the shared benefit of all who celebrate the holidays here in Colonial Williamsburg.

"I'm always proud of how the employees and the staff make it all come magically together... it's wonderful!" Richard says. NDN



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~ *Patti Godman, Governor's Land resident*



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DEBBIE FINGER

# THE ANNUAL Christmas Homes Tour

By Natalie Miller Moore



Lisa W. Cumming Photography

Retirement in other towns may involve leisurely golf outings and lingering over brunch, but in Williamsburg, it seems the retirees are busier than anyone else. Debbie Finger, a high school chemistry tutor and trunk show hostess, is also the chair of the Annual Christmas Homes Tour. Proceeds from the popular event will go toward college scholarships for students

majoring in horticulture and environmental science, as well as community nature projects.

The Annual Christmas Homes Tour was started by the Green Spring Garden Club in 1956, and has grown to be a popular one for local residents as well as returning visitors, drawing several hundred people to each home in a single day. It's always held on the weekend

of Grand Illumination, after the Holiday Parade on Duke of Gloucester Street but before the fireworks and official Grand Illumination celebration on Sunday night. This weekend is one of the favorites in Williamsburg.

"We feel like it adds to the festivities – and people call us from all over when they buy their tickets for the tour and tell us how much

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they are looking forward to it," Debbie says. "Someone from California might call and say it's their 40th year visiting for the Tour. And that's my favorite part, how excited everyone is about the event."

Debbie read about the tour years ago and thought it sounded like fun, so even before she was a member of the garden club, she called to volunteer to sell tickets at the Visitor Center. The event involves the use of Colonial Williamsburg properties but it's entirely run by the Green Spring Garden Club and volunteers recruited by that organization.

"There are around 300 volunteers, and it feels like the whole town helps us with it," Debbie says.

Each home on the tour (there are five this year) needs between 30 and 50 volunteers because there are so many different tasks. There are hosts and hostesses, ticket sellers, decorators, flower arrangers, signs and brochures to create and logistics to attend to the day of the event.

Debbie isn't just involved for the month of December. The tour planning actually stretches throughout the entire year. The process of lining up which homes will

be on the next tour starts in January. Debbie, who moved here 12 years ago with her husband, says she's busier than ever.

"I got caught up in the excitement and wanted to do it. There's a learning process to it, and a lot of detail work," she says.

Before retirement, Debbie's husband worked for General Electric, and so the Finger family moved a dozen times. Her career as a chemistry teacher was fairly portable, and she continues to tutor students around Williamsburg. Her science skills expand into biology and horticulture as she oversees the decoration of the Christmas Home tour floral arrangements.

At a preview of each of the homes in the fall, floral designers pick places to decorate with arrangements. They measure, assess the lighting and the décor, and then design a piece customized for just that spot in the home. Other local garden clubs, florists and designers participate in this process in addition to the Green Spring Garden Club.

One of the unique facets of the tour is that, just like the Colonial Williamsburg decorations, only materials appropriate to the time period are used. That means the homes in the Historic Area have limits on the types of plants that can be displayed, generally native plants that were available to people living here in the 1770s. Past materials have included cotton plants, shells, sunflowers, apples, citrus fruit, cloves, holly, and all kinds of evergreens.

Marion Baker, owner of the Duchess of Gloucester flower farm, says that it hasn't been too difficult for her to abide by the material restrictions since she is a local grower. She enjoys the challenge. "It's a stretch. Something I've learned to do for the tour, say, a boxwood evergreen topiary, goes on to be something I continue to offer through my business," she says. "When I tour CW every year, I get more ideas of what to grow. I planted yellow yarrow after seeing it in some wreaths in the

**"There are around 300 volunteers, and it feels like the whole town helps us with it."**

~ Debbie Finger



Historic Area one year.”

This is Marion’s fifth year with the Homes Tour. No matter what area of a home she’s assigned, she enjoys getting into “colonial shoes” and imagining what it would be like to live there. She likes it that the tour is well-organized. “There’s a good system for the tour. Everyone is easy to work with and there’s always people there to help,” Baker says.

This year, one of the homes on the tour has a bit of wiggle room on the material restrictions. The Palmer House, at the end of Duke of Gloucester Street near the Capitol, is actually a Civil War Era house used as a military headquarters by both sides. Debbie says that this is a unique opportunity, and fitting for the 150th anniversary of the Battle of Williamsburg.

“We’re always grateful to the homeowners who participate. It gives us variety, and of course, without homes, there would be no tour,” Debbie says.

Besides the Civil War photographs and period maps that will be on display, there were more materials available due to changes in agriculture and trade. The additional options available for floral arrangements from this era include: lilies, ferns, poinsettias, bamboo and some oriental collections. Debbie says that this is a chance to “broaden horizons” and that designers can “be innovative while they tackle this creative challenge.”

This year’s tour is a unique opportunity to connect with the 150th anniversary of the Battle of Williamsburg, and to design something a little more “modern” - which is all relative, of course.

All of the homes on the tour are privately occupied, even the ones owned by the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation. Debbie is very excited about Colonial Williamsburg shoemaker, Brett Walker, and his family who are participating in this year’s tour. The Walkers and their five children live in the George Davenport house.

Owners of homes on the tour have the option of being as involved or not as they like. In the Walker family’s case, their enthusiasm for history will play a part in the tour of their home. Daughters Zipporah and Annaiah will be playing the harp at intervals, as well as showing off their colonial hobbies. Zipporah has a tape loom for making colonial period men’s stockings, and Annaiah has learned how to make hand-made brooms.

“Our family certainly has an interest in early American history and the kids have grown up in it since infancy,” Walker says.

These are the details that make people excited to go on the tour, and that make Debbie happy to be a part of it all.

“Even if it rains, people don’t care – they are just delighted to be able to be part of it, and personally, I’m thrilled to be with people with that kind of enthusiasm!” she says.

This year, the Christmas Homes Tour committee leadership team is comprised of Debbie and co-chair, Bobbie Streeter, women who’ve been involved with the tour for years. The tour has a chair and co-chair each year so the co-chair can take over for the next year. This helps prevent burnout. Debbie says that even when her time as chair is over she’ll still be one of the many people pitching in to help.

“When we moved here, I didn’t for a minute imagine there would be so much to do in Williamsburg,” Debbie says. NDN

*This year’s tour features five private residences that will be decorated with holiday floral arrangements. Four of the homes are in Colonial Williamsburg: the Elkanah Deane House, the Timson House, the Davenport House, and the Palmer House. In addition, the Wolf House, close to the Historic area, will be open for the first time. To find out more about the 52nd Annual Christmas Homes Tour and how to purchase tickets visit:*

<http://green-spring-garden-club.org/2.html>



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# Star of Wonder

By Alison Johnson

From the time she was a young child, Kathy Howell has loved animals. She still treasures two stuffed teddy bears she got as a baby: “Smokey Bear,” a present from her grandparents for her first Christmas, and “Baby Bear,” which her parents bought for her as a newborn.

“Baby Bear especially is kind of ratty looking now,” says Kathy, now 57. “He’s tiny and has almost no hair left. But he’s still very special.”

Simple holiday traditions are special to Kathy, too. While she’s among the early birds who put up a Christmas tree the Sunday after Thanksgiving, she does so to give herself extra time to relax by its twinkling lights and the glass ornaments that she and her husband collect. She enjoys the natural wreaths displayed at Colonial Williamsburg and the flower arrangements at the Williamsburg Inn, doesn’t believe in buying tons of gifts and tries not to overbook her schedule. One year she was so behind on mailing Christmas cards that she sent out Valentine’s Day cards instead.

All of those loves – animals, tradition and a desire for calm – drew her to the Virginia Living Museum (VLM) in Newport News. Kathy is in her fourth year on the museum’s governing board and heads a committee that handles



Lisa W. Cumming Photography

external relations and marketing. Her James City County-based business, Howell Creative Group, also redesigned the VLM’s logo and created new rack brochures.

The VLM is a perfect place for families looking for a unique holiday experience, Kathy says. A centerpiece of the museum’s offerings is its remarkably long-running show, “Star of Wonder: Mystery of the Christmas Star.” Versions of the program began in 1965, and it underwent a major revision in 2008 to incorporate new information and technology. Shown in a digital planetarium, the immersive program uses clues from archaeology, astronomy and history to explore who the magi, or wise men, might have been and journey in their footsteps as they followed the Star of Bethlehem.

Many questions swirl around the Biblical story: Were the magi, the bearers of gold, frankincense and myrrh, ancient priests? What was the mysterious star that foretold the birth of Jesus – or was it actually two planets that appeared closely together? What time of year did the magi begin their four- to five-month journey? The approximately 35-minute program, recommended for ages 8 and up, runs from Nov. 23 to Dec. 31 at various times.

“It is a very classic piece and a real tradition in the community,” Kathy says. “It’s a very interesting combination of the Christmas story and science, of faith and history.”

The combination of art and science has long appealed to Kathy, who grew up in Atlanta. Her father was an architectural and structural

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engineer and her mother, a watercolor artist, regularly took Kathy to museums to nurture her creative side. She clearly remembers feeling sad during her third grade school year because it didn't include an art class.

At Georgia Southern University, Kathy majored in art – specializing in graphic design and ceramics. She minored in geology. College was where she discovered the career of “designer” – the challenge of organizing information and artistic details such as color and shape to clarify, explain or sell. She founded her own advertising and marketing firm after moving to the Williamsburg area in 1982, originally working alone out of her home. Howell Creative Group, now based in New Town and with nine full- and part-time employees, helps businesses and non-profits with everything from Web site design to brand makeovers to public relations. Kathy, its president and creative director, recently was named Small Business Person of the Year by the Greater Williamsburg Chamber and Tourism Alliance.

Kathy is passionate about her work, although it isn't always easy. “You have to be thick-skinned because sometimes people don't like your idea, your baby,” she says. “Say if somebody hates a color – it's like they're saying they hate your baby's hair. On the other hand, you get to hear, ‘I love it!’ You don't get to hear ‘I love your work’ if you're an accountant. Those comments just make our day.”

Kathy and her team enjoy helping non-profits with free or reduced-cost work, as well as working with the Salvation Army to provide Christmas gifts for local children each year. She first visited the VLM soon after arriving in town, when its exhibits were squeezed into one small building. The expanded site now is forever tied to her family thanks to two plaques along the outdoor trail that honor her four nieces and nephews. That includes her late nephew Hunter, who died in a car crash at age 16.

“It means a lot to my sister and my whole family to see that plaque,” Kathy says. “It's like a piece of our heart that will always be at the VLM.” Both she and her husband, Mark, have included the museum in their wills.

Kathy joined the board of trustees after her company created a new logo for the museum, featuring a playful otter (one of Kathy's favorite creatures there) and a more vibrant font for the word “Living” to emphasize that families could see live animals and plants there – more than 250 different species, in fact.

“It's amazing to have this beautiful enclave of nature in the middle of a bunch of development,” she says. “Everyone is detached from computers, TVs, video games and cell phones. When parents and kids are interacting and learning and having fun together, something special happens.”

At her home in upper York County, Kathy enjoys spending time with her husband (who, as a side note, had the same last name as Kathy's maiden name, making for a very convenient wedding) and three cats, Bridget, Mia and Willow. Hobbies include taking daily morning walks, going to art shows and planning vacations centered on nature, including favorite coastal spots in Maine and California. She also has served on the board of the Williamsburg Land Conservancy.

Nature wasn't too kind to the Howells during Hurricane Isabel in 2003, when a huge oak tree crashed through their attic and caused enough damage to keep them out of their home for more than a year. Miraculously, though, the tree spared their entire collection of glass Christmas ornaments, landing within inches of them. So now when Kathy hangs the balls on her tree – in late November as usual – they're even more special.

“The holidays should be a time of joy, not stress,” she says. “Everyone should do the things that help them feel joyful.” NDN

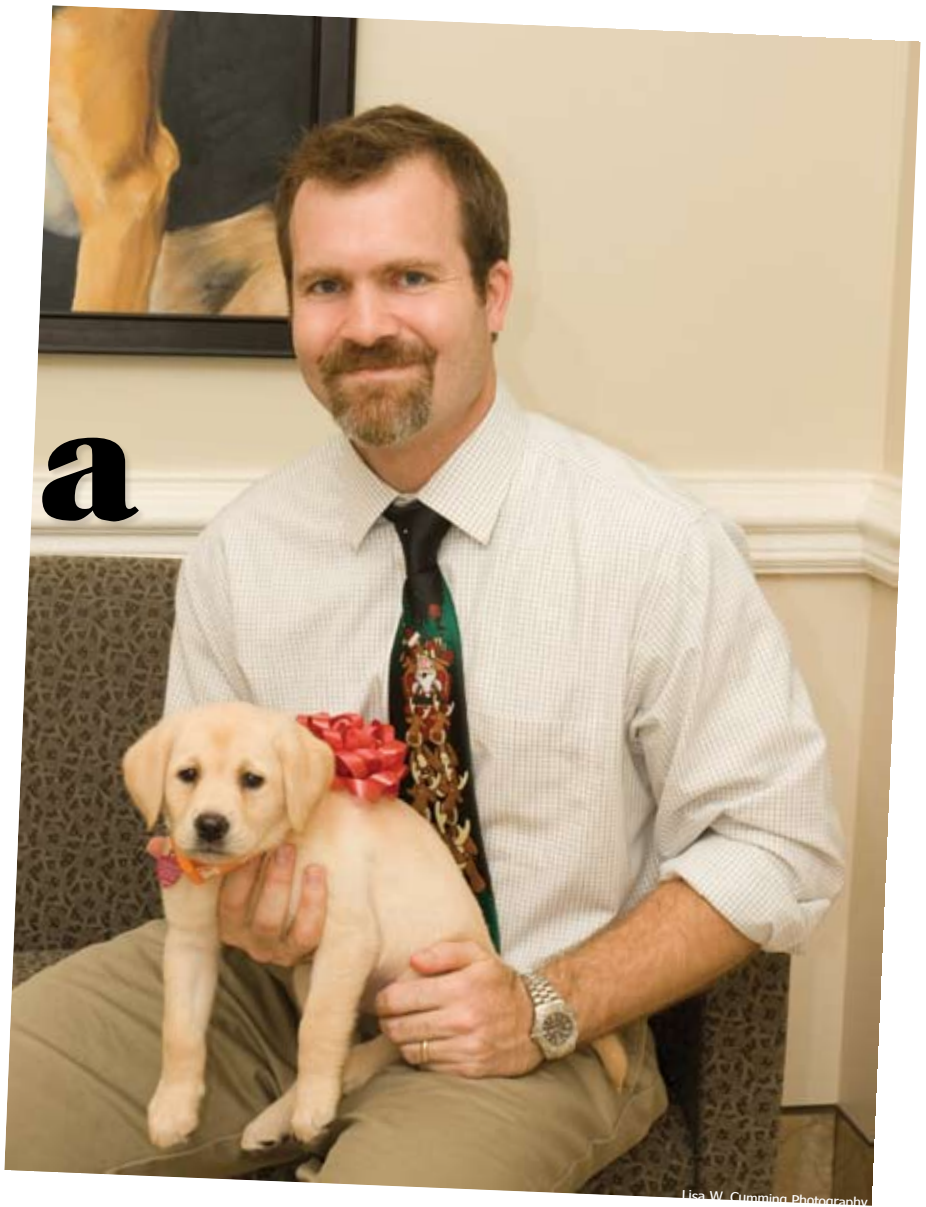
For more information about “Star of Wonder: Mystery of the Christmas Star” at the Virginia Living Museum, please visit:

[www.thevlm.org/starofwonder.aspx](http://www.thevlm.org/starofwonder.aspx)

DR. ROBB MURPHIE

# So you want to give a pet as a gift?

By Alison Johnson



Lisa W. Cumming Photography

Dr. Robb Murphie is a lifelong fan of pets, from the Boxers his family had when he was a child to the beloved Beagle that was in his wedding to his current dog and cat, both objects of fascination for his two young daughters. He even has a soft spot for more unusual animal companions, including perhaps his most difficult patient ever, a small, extremely wiggly gliding possum called a sugar glider that had

a broken leg yet wanted nothing more than to glide under the exam room door.

Dr. Murphie, the 36-year-old owner and director of Anderson's Corner Animal Hospital in Toano, gets concerned over one classic gift-giving scenario during the holidays: a spur-of-the-moment decision to get a pet, sometimes for a child, and spring it on the recipient amidst other gift-wrapped presents. In some

cases, families haven't thought enough about how much attention, patience and financial commitment an animal needs over a lifetime.

"If a pet is the right gift, it's the best gift possible," Dr. Murphie says. "If it's wrong, though, it's not fair to the pet or the person getting it. This animal really needs to become part of the family. It's not like buying a toy and playing with it for a month before moving on to some-

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thing else, or buying a tie or shirt and wearing it for a year or two and tossing it in the back of a closet. There are a lot of things to consider.”

Considerations are: What is an animal’s life expectancy; How big will it get? and how much will food, supplies and veterinary care cost? The first year often is one of the priciest. Owners might need to spend \$1,000 for a cat and between \$1,300 and \$1,900 for a dog depending on size, according to the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. Some breeds are predisposed to certain medical conditions, which can add expense especially as they get older.

An animal’s personality also needs to mesh well with a particular family. Beagles, Pugs and Labradors, for example, tend to be good with small children, while little Chihuahuas may be too nervous and big Chow Chows too temperamental. Some animals need lots of exercise; others are content as lap dogs. Vets, breeders and the American Kennel Club Web site ([www.akc.org](http://www.akc.org)) are good sources about different breeds, and all members of a family ideally should meet a potential pet before it comes home.

Rather than have the actual pet as a gift, Dr. Murphie floats an alternative: wrap up a bone or toy with a note about looking for the right animal at a less busy time. Holiday schedules

tend to be hectic, which can make new pets jittery and steal time needed to help them settle down. Holiday decorations and food also pose risks. Animals might chew on cords and lights or ingest tree bits or tinsel; the latter is a partic-

**“If a pet is the right gift, it’s the best gift possible. If it’s wrong, it’s not fair to the pet or the person getting it.”**

~ Dr. Robb Murphie

ular choking hazard for cats. Eating chocolate, poinsettia leaves, mistletoe and holly can cause stomach upset (large amounts of mistletoe may lead to breathing issues, too). Pets that drink Christmas tree water – which can contain pesticides or fire retardants – may also suffer digestive problems.

A child may be more likely to see an ani-

mal presented with a ball around its neck as a plaything, although all kids need lessons on treating pets gently.

“Pets can hurt kids, but kids can hurt pets, too,” says Dr. Murphie, who once treated a cat with significant nerve damage from being swung around by the tail. Parents should be prepared to supervise the animal and also be its primary caregiver, no matter how much a child has sworn that he or she will handle all pet chores and training.

All that said, Dr. Murphie stresses that the right fit between pet and human is priceless. Dr. Murphie calls his Beagle, Jack, who died last year at age 15, a “best friend,” with him through college and veterinary school, at his wedding and on hand when his newborn daughters – Danielle, now 3½, and Amanda, 1 – arrived at his Toano home from the hospital.

“Losing him was like losing a family member,” he says. “He was my first child.”

He still has one Beagle, 7-year-old Ginny, and along with a cat named Nip that he rescued after the animal apparently was hit by a car.

Dr. Murphie grew up an animal lover thanks in large part to admiration for his father, fellow veterinarian R. Andrew Murphie, Sr., who owned Boulevard Veterinary Hospital in Newport News for more than 30 years. Still,

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the younger Murphie was unsure of his future career when he graduated from Menchville High School, and initially he earned a business degree from East Carolina University (ECU). Switching to medicine at that point, he knew, would require two more years at ECU for pre-med courses and four years of veterinary school. Luckily Murphie had something – or actually, someone – to make all that extra studying more appealing: an ECU sophomore named Kirsten, who would become his wife.

“Let’s just say she helped me make the decision to stay an undergrad,” he says.

After graduating from Virginia-Maryland Regional College of Veterinary Medicine in Blacksburg, Virginia, Dr. Murphie worked at his dad’s practice for three years, followed by two years at the Tidewater Emergency and Critical Care Center in Virginia Beach. The emergency center, a mad mix of domestic, exotic and wild animals, highlighted the best and worst parts of being a vet: saving lives, sometimes in seemingly hopeless situations, but learning to move forward when he couldn’t.

“I would have evenings where it seemed that every patient that walked in the door was passing away,” he says. “You never become immune to euthanizing or not being able to save a patient. However, you cannot dwell on it, but walk into the next room with the mindset that you will do the best you can to send this pet

home to their family.”

In 2008, Dr. Murphie and his father – who had sold his Newport News practice a few years earlier – decided to open their own practice in James City County. Anderson’s Corner now has six vets, including one who specializes in more exotic pets such as birds, ferrets and rabbits. The practice also occasionally sees squirrels, owls, deer and other wild animals that they try to save and, if possible, send to a rehabilitation center.

Bites and scratches are part of the job, but Dr. Murphie hasn’t had a serious injury.

“In general, you’ll get a little warning like a growl or a funny look,” he says. “You try to calm them down and take it very slow.”

Dr. Murphie, who enjoys running and water sports in his spare time, is excited about the many advancements in veterinary medicine, from chemotherapy for cancer treatment to minimally invasive surgery that involves less pain and recovery time. While his job can be stressful, he has no regrets about following in his father’s footsteps, especially since they now are able to work together.

“To witness the joy that family members experience when their pet goes home makes it all worthwhile,” he says. “We have really enjoyed getting to know and be a part of the community through taking care of animals.” NDN

## Next Door Neighbors

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## HOLIDAY CALENDAR



You and your family can enjoy the magic of the holidays by experiencing many of the wonderful things there are to do right here at home. Enjoy this convenient partial listing of holiday happenings, but please visit the website above to discover all of the things there are to enjoy during the holidays!

### Verena At The Reserve's Holiday Extravaganza

November 17th

4:30 PM - 7:30 PM. Free. Verena At The Reserve is having a Holiday Extravaganza which is free and open to the public. The event takes place on November 17th from 4:30 to 7:30 at Verena At The Reserve, 121 Reserve Way, (4300 Mooretown Rd). Don't wait til the last minute to wrap up your holiday shopping. Local Artists and Crafters offering jewelry, handbags, specialty foods, soaps, stained glass, flower arrangements and much more. A Wine Tasting will be offered by Saude Creek Winery along with mouthwatering Hors D'oeuvres and fabulous desserts. You won't want to miss this event. Contact us at 757-345-2995 for additional information.

### Williamsburg Civil War Tour

November 18th

7:00 PM - 10:00 PM; Separate tickets available without admission pass. Tickets \$12 for adults and youth (ages 6-17), \$6 for children under 6. The old colonial capital of Williamsburg played an important part in the American Civil War. In addition to serving both the

Northern and Southern armies, it experienced a tragic battle on its doorstep. Join in a tour of the major Civil War sites of the town, meet people who were here, and learn more about Williamsburg's role in this heartrending period of America's history. One-hour evening tour departs every 20 minutes—7:00, 7:20, 7:40, 8:20, 8:40, 9:00. No tour departs at 8 p.m.

### Ne'Qwa Artist Demonstration

November 19th

12:00 PM - 4:00 PM; Yankee Candle Flagship is getting ready for the holidays with Ne'Qwa artist Trieste. Trieste will be here to demonstrate the art of her hand crafted Holiday Ornaments. In the Mandarin language, Ne'Qwa is the term for the centuries-old artistic tradition of reverse painting on the inside of glass. Through a small opening in each ornament, the artist uses delicate brush strokes to hand-paint on the inside of mouth-blown glass. This reverse-painting art form flourished during the 17th century, however today there are only a few artist groups, living in remote villages throughout China, who possess the

skill to create these Ne'Qwa Art ornaments.

### Holiday Wine Tasting

November 19th

12:00 PM - 2:00 PM; Head to La Tienda for a special Holiday Wine tasting with Ben of Elite Wines: Spanish Cava Seminar. Call 757-253-1925 for more information.

### Williamsburg Craft House Hosts Tavern Event

November 19th

8:30 AM - 3:00 PM; Join us Saturday, November 19 at the Williamsburg Craft House in Merchants Square for our special tavern event featuring artist Karen Cruden and Chef Blizzard from the Colonial Williamsburg taverns. From 8:30 am-noon, meet artist Karen Cruden and Chef Blizzard from the historic dining taverns. Enjoy complimentary samples of our popular Brunswick Stew and Sweet Potato Muffins. See the newest Williamsburg exclusive collection by Karen Cruden. From 1-3 pm, Karen Cruden returns in the afternoon to the Williamsburg Craft House tavern room. Guests will have the opportunity to meet Karen and have

her sign their exclusive Williamsburg collection.

### Tree Lighting in Yankee Candle Flagship Courtyard

November 20th

As dusk falls, see the beauty of the Yankee Candle Flagship's Holiday lights. Carolers will stroll the grounds leading Santa and Mrs. Claus in carols and light the Holiday tree.

### Star of Wonder: Mystery of the Christmas Star

November 23rd - December 31st

\$4, plus museum admission; Presented since 1965, the show was revisited in 2008 to offer a truly immersive look at the journey of the magi while examining the latest clues and seeking once more to understand the appearance of the Star of Bethlehem. Cost is \$4, plus museum admission. At the Virginia Living Museum.

### Laser Holidays

November 23rd - December 31st

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of timeless songs, this is an animated Christmas light display like no other you've seen before! See website for a complete schedule. At the Virginia Living Museum.

**2nd Annual Turkey Pardoning & Food Drive**

November 23rd  
11:00 AM; For the second year, the Virginia Living Museum will celebrate the long and healthy life of its wild turkey during the annual Turkey Pardoning, Wednesday, Nov. 23 at 11am. In the tradition of the annual Presidential Turkey Pardoning, Newport News Vice Mayor Madeline McMillan will lead the ceremony held on the Virginia Living Museum's outdoor trail beside the Turkey/Deer Habitat. Also, now through Nov. 23 the Wild Side Café at the museum will give every visitor who donates a non-perishable food item a free bottomless fountain drink with any café purchase. Items will be collected in bins in the museum lobby and vouchers for drinks will be distributed at the admissions desk. The Foodbank of the Virginia Peninsula will benefit from all donations.

**Foods & Feasts of Colonial Virginia**

November 24th - November 26th  
Colonial Virginia foodways are

featured during this three-day event beginning on Thanksgiving Day. At Jamestown Settlement, learn how food was gathered, preserved and prepared on land and at sea by Virginia's English colonists and Powhatan Indians. At the Yorktown Victory Center, learn about typical soldiers' fare during the American Revolution and trace the bounty of a 1780s farm from field to kitchen.

**A Tavern Thanksgiving**

November 24th  
11:00 AM - 8:00 PM; First celebrated in Virginia in 1619 at Berkeley Plantation, the Thanksgiving tradition continues at our historic dining taverns with a bountiful feast. November 24 seatings begin at 11 am. At Christiana Campbell's Tavern, Shields Tavern, King's Arms Tavern and Chowning's Tavern. Call 800-HISTORY for more information.

**Home for the Holidays Thanksgiving Dinner**

November 24th  
4:30 PM - 9:00 PM ; Enjoy delicious à la carte entrées and a bountiful dessert buffet in a charming candlelit dining room. Children can enjoy selections from their own menu. At the Williamsburg Lodge Restaurant; reservations recommended. Call 800-HISTORY for more information.

**Thanksgiving at Artcafe26**

November 24th  
12:00 PM - 7:00 PM; \$42/person; This Thanksgiving, Artcafe26 will be open offering a delicious four-course dinner. Cost is \$42/person (plus tax and gratuity). Reservations are recommended. Menu will be online.

**Blue Talon Bistro Turkey Trot 5K**

November 24th  
8:30 AM; This race celebrates a traditional holiday -- highlighting the importance of involvement in our communities. A beautiful 5k in historic Downtown Williamsburg and through the campus of The College of William & Mary is the perfect venue for a great outing for the whole family. Events will be held for children and a raffle of outstanding food & wine items will help raise money to combat hunger in this country. Visit the website for complete race information.

**Thanksgiving at the Trellis**

November 24th  
11:00 AM - 8:00 PM; \$28.75; The Trellis Restaurant will be open all day on November 24th. At both lunch and dinner (11 AM - 8 PM), Chef Everett will be offering a traditional Roasted Turkey Dinner featuring roasted and carved turkey breast, creamy mashed potatoes, savory dark

meat stuffing, vegetables and turkey gravy for \$28.75. In addition to the dinner we will be offering our lunch and dinner menus.

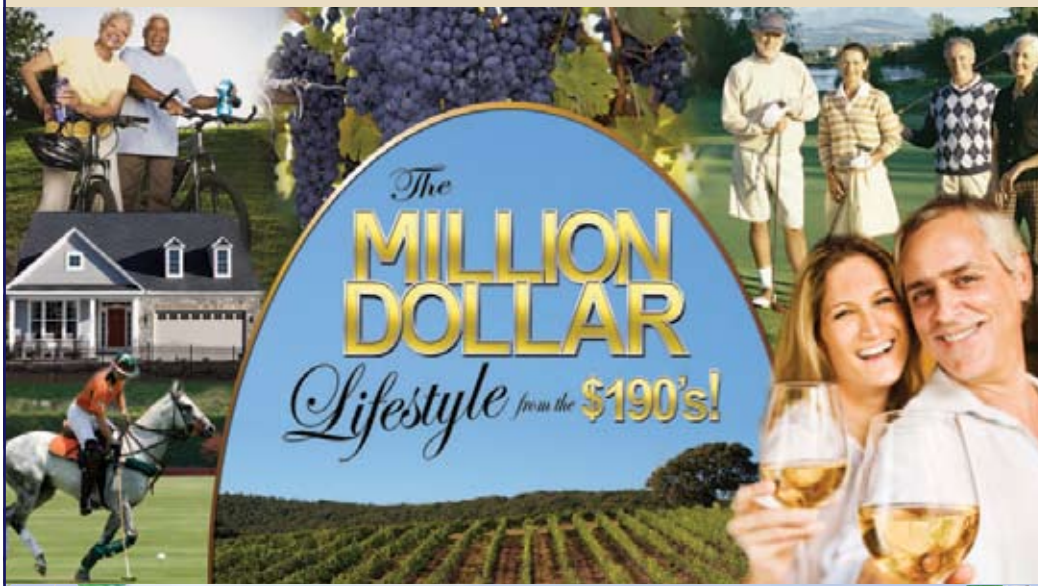
**Thanksgiving Day Service**

November 24th  
4:00PM; Williamsburg area religious leaders conduct a service of Thanksgiving for the community and for our guests. Interfaith prayers, seasonal hymns, and Thanksgiving proclamations from the past and the present will be featured. Will be held in the Play Booth Theatre in Colonial Williamsburg. In the event of rain, the service will be held in Bruton Parish Church. 800-HISTORY

**Thanksgiving at the Great Wolf Lodge**

November 24th  
12:00 PM - 6:00 PM; \$38.99/ adults; \$31.99/seniors 55+; \$14.99/ kids 4 - 10; 3 and under free; Join us at the Great Wolf Lodge for a spectacular Thanksgiving buffet! Menu items include award-winning soups, carving stations, chilled seafood, delicious desserts, and many Thanksgiving classics such as cornbread stuffing and whipped mashed potatoes. Cost is \$38.99/ adults; \$31.99/seniors 55+; \$14.99/ kids 4 - 10; 3 and under free. Reservations are required at 757-

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### Christmas Town at Busch Gardens

November 25<sup>th</sup> - December 31<sup>st</sup>

For its third year, Busch Gardens once again transforms into a winter wonderland filled with holiday traditions and park favorites that make everyone say, "Now this is Christmas." Select dates and times.

### Midnight Madness at

Williamsburg Premium Outlets

November 25<sup>th</sup> - November 27<sup>th</sup>

Don't miss the annual After Thanksgiving Weekend Sales, featuring the ever popular Midnight Madness event! Enjoy extra savings on top of our everyday savings of 25% to 65%! Hours: Friday, 12 am - 10 pm; Saturday, 10 am - 9 pm; and Sunday, 10 am - 7 pm.

### Black Friday at the Nautical Dog

November 25<sup>th</sup> - November 26<sup>th</sup>

On November 25<sup>th</sup> & 26<sup>th</sup>, the Nautical Dog is having its annual "Black Friday Event"! For every \$50 spent at The Nautical Dog you get a \$10 gift card that can be redeemed the week prior to Christmas. The Nautical Dog is located at 5104 Main Street (New Town), Williamsburg, VA. For more information, call 757-220-2001 or visit the website.

### La Tienda Celebrates Ceramic Artists Show & Holiday Sale

November 25<sup>th</sup>

11:00 PM - 6:00 PM; Our favorite local ceramic artists, Lynn Trotter, John Watters and Bob Leek are all coming to La Tienda for "Black Friday" to showcase their art and demonstrate their skills on the wheel. Come celebrate with us! Take a break from the shopping mayhem with wine and tapas, as we honor the Whitehall Building's historic legacy as Palin Thorley's home and ceramic studio. Call 757-253-1925 for more information.

### A Celtic Solstice Celebration

November 25<sup>th</sup>

7:30 PM - 9:00 PM; Tickets \$20 adults, \$17 seniors/students, \$14 children under 12. The winter solstice takes many shapes and has been celebrated in many forms throughout the generations. Join internationally renowned band Coyote Run as they revisit Yuletide legends and traditions from prehistoric Celtic lands to Christmas not so long ago. This rollicking concert is a family favorite, blending mystery and

myth, sacred and irreverent, all in an unforgettable journey through the unique Celtic rock stylings of one of the hottest bands on the circuit today.

### Timothy Seaman at A Touch of Earth

November 26<sup>th</sup>

11:00 AM - 2:00 PM; On November 26, Timothy Seaman will be at A Touch of Earth to play the hammer dulcimer. At Touch of Earth is located at 6580 Richmond Road, Williamsburg. Call 757-565-0425.

### A Kid's Holiday Memories Tour

November 26<sup>th</sup>

9:15 AM; Separate tickets required with any Historic Area admission pass. Cost: adults and youth, \$15; children under 6, \$7.50. This exclusive daytime tour includes a visit with a colonial character, making holiday decorations, and various colonial games with a trained costumed guide. Each child receives a bag to hold their itinerary and decoration as well as any other treasures they acquire. Children must be accompanied by a ticketed adult. This 90-minute tour leaves every 20 minutes from 9:20 through 11 a.m. Recommended for children ages 6 through 12. Reservations or additional tickets required. Call 1-800-HISTORY for prices and reservations.

### Santa Photos & Visits

November 26<sup>th</sup> - December 24<sup>th</sup>

12:00 PM - 5:00 PM; Every Saturday and Sunday beginning November 26<sup>th</sup>. The Williamsburg Outlet Mall offers professional photos Kevin Francis Photography. Santa will be located next to Always a Holiday in the DX-Wing of the mall. For more information please feel free to contact the management office at 757-565-3378.

### Lights Galore Bus Tour

November 26<sup>th</sup> - December 31<sup>st</sup>

\$35/person. Tuesdays, Saturdays & Sundays. Join Oleta Tours for a trip to see Hampton Roads at its best as we see over a million lights displayed! We visit Celebration in Lights at Newport News Parks, Norfolk Botanical Gardens, Dunkin Donuts for refreshments, at Virginia Beach Boardwalk. Watch holiday movies on the way to the sights and challenge yourself on the boardwalk to singing the 12 days of Christmas! Call 757-253-1008 for more information.



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**For the complete website listing of events and information about what you can do during the holidays, please visit:**

[www.ChristmasInWilliamsburg.com](http://www.ChristmasInWilliamsburg.com)

# Generations

by Sharon Dillon



Lisa W. Cumming Photography

## Ashley Odden

Age 13

Ashley Odden is only 13 but in her short life she has formulated some broad-based plans for where her life might one day take her. Ashley is currently taking courses in school that will prepare her for college - perhaps James Madison University - and beyond.

"I would like to become a neurosurgeon focusing on people with traumatic spinal cord and brain injuries, whether from sports or other accidents," she says. "Possibly I might practice medi-

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cine in Ireland.”

She says her interest in medicine is in her genes.

“My grandmother is a nurse and my mother works with older residents,” she explains. “They are both role models.”

A textbook education is not all she aspires to. Ashley is also musically inclined and she has played the piano and violin since third

**“Christmas in Williamsburg is a truly magical experience.”**

*~ Ashley Odden*

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and fourth grade respectively.

Last spring she attended Spring String Thing, a three-day camp for talented young musicians. At Toano Middle School, Ashley participates in Red Ribbon - a program similar to Drug Abuse Resistance Education (DARE) - the art club, and the running club,.

“We’re training to run a five kilometer race in December,” she adds.

Ashley volunteers at Spring Arbor of Williamsburg where her mother, Cynthia Odden, has been executive director since May 2006. She visits with residents and calls Bingo numbers for them as they enjoy recreation. She looks forward to playing her instruments at their social occasions. This not only gives the residents pleasure but also develops her confidence in playing before an audience.

Ashley’s love of art has led her to reflect on traditional Greek sculpture and classic architecture and their contributions to our current society. A trip to France that included visits to the Arc de Triumph, the Eiffel Tower, the Louvre, the Grand Palace at Versailles solidified her interest in different cultures. She has also traveled to Ireland.

Born into a career Air Force family, Ashley came into this life at Fort McClellan near Anniston, Alabama and has lived in many places including Germany, and more recently in Hampton, before moving to Williamsburg. She considers each of these life experiences to

be a part of her education.

Ashley enjoys exploring this region and learning about its role in our nation's history.


"This area reflects classic architecture and decorations, especially around the holidays. Colonial Williamsburg is so cool. I especially like the Grand Illumination, the fife and drums and the way each building is decorated," she says. "Christmas in Williamsburg is a truly magical experience. It takes you back in time to the 18th century when you walk downtown in Colonial Williamsburg. All the decorations are made of materials that were available back in the 18th century when Williamsburg was the capitol of Virginia, like the cedar wreaths and running cedar you see hanging above doors and on fences. It's really neat to see all the fresh fruit they use, like lemons apples and pineapple. I know the pineapple means hospitality and that is fitting around the holidays when we are meeting friends and family and sharing the holiday spirit."

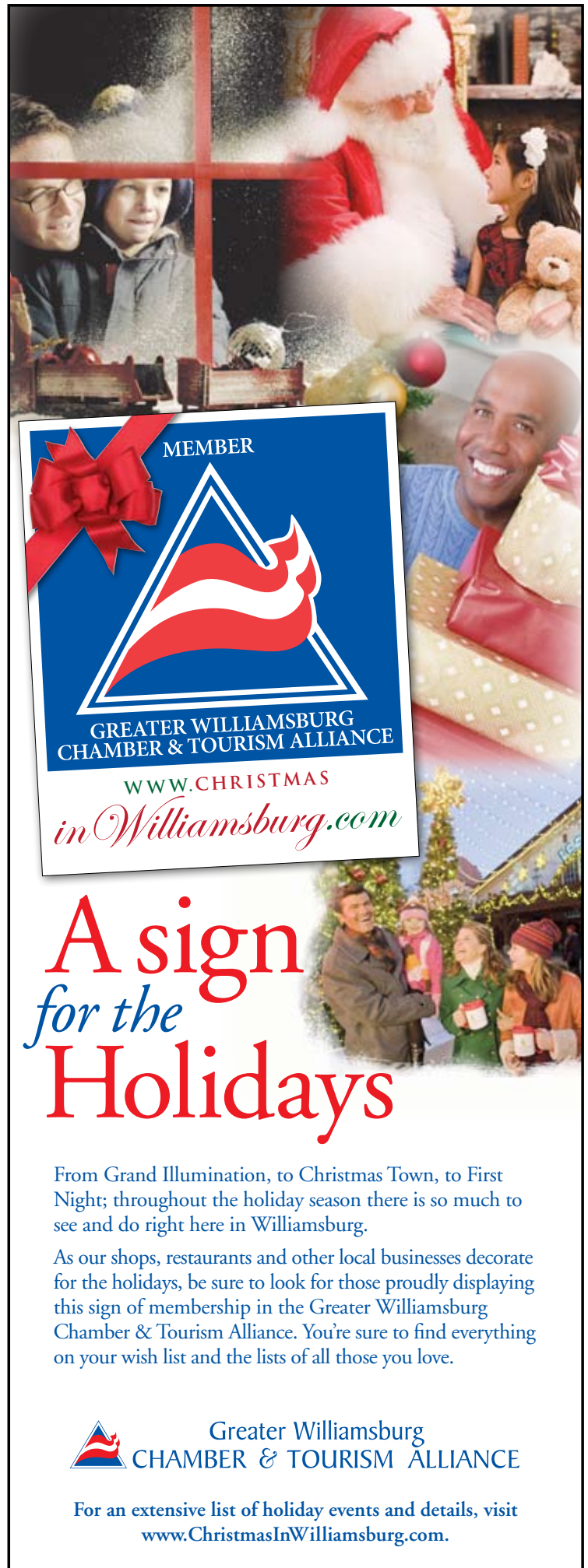
Family is also important to Ashley. Each year she visits her grandparents in Kansas for either Thanksgiving or Christmas. Her grandmother and aunts are teaching her how to prepare traditional family dishes to share with friend and neighbors.

"Our family has been making the same pumpkin nut bread for five generations and Christmas cookies for four generations," she says.


She also visits her father and brother, Tanner (17), in Texas and brother, Dustin (26), in northern Minnesota. Each visit means a great deal to Ashley who is proud of her family's closeness.

"On Christmas Eve we have watched the fireworks in Colonial Williamsburg. My mom likes to put green wreaths on all our windows and have a candle in each window, a tradition of the past. Christmas is not about receiving presents. It's about remembering the birth of Jesus and giving to others," she explains. "We like to share with our neighbors at White Hall. It's about spending time with family, grandparents that you don't always get to see all the time. I spent last Christmas in Germany with my father. It reminds me a lot of Colonial Williamsburg. They decorate their trees with fruit, cookies and candles."

Ashley seems to have her feet planted in Williamsburg close to family and tradition, yet she is developing her independence and exploring the world to form her own opinions and dreams. Even at age 13, she has made a good start to discovering what is important to her in life. With all of her goals and aspirations, she may find out that there just isn't time for everything. Then again...she might just figure out how to get it all done. 



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For an extensive list of holiday events and details, visit  
[www.ChristmasInWilliamsburg.com](http://www.ChristmasInWilliamsburg.com).





Lisa W. Cumming Photography

ROB MARSHALL

# Focus on Your Niche

*By Greg Lilly, Editor*

Niche business owners must know who they are and focus on being the best in the category, according to Rob Marshall of Williamsburg's Christmas Mouse store. "Focus," Rob says. "We want to be the best Christmas store that we can be."

The Christmas Mouse is a family business. "My dad (Bob Marshall) moved us to Williamsburg in 1969. I was about two months old then," Rob says. "He was running some retail shops called Cape Craftsman. They occupied two buildings in Norge; one of those buildings is now a Christmas Mouse. Cape Craftsman was a home furnishings factory-second store – an outlet store before outlet stores were popular."

One night in 1985, a drive along Richmond Road

sparked inspiration for Bob Marshall.

“He happened to be driving down near the old Pittman’s Chrysler dealership and a Roses Department Store (where High Street is now),” Rob describes. “He’s driving down the road, late at night, sees the big windows of the Roses store and thinks that would be a good spot for a Christmas store. He was in retail. He saw this trend. My father saw those windows fronting Richmond Road and thought lighting them up with Christmas displays would be great. He called Bruce Robertson, and they went in together to open a Christmas store.”

The initial store was a success, so they opened another one the next year in Nags Head, North Carolina. In the following six years after the first store on Richmond Road, seven more stores opened in tourist towns from here to Pawley’s Island, South Carolina.

The late 1980s and early ’90s brought about the age of big box stores that carried a bit of everything and those stores pulled out the Christmas decorations earlier each year. Bob and Rob Marshall knew they needed to separate themselves from that competition.

“We’ve created this niche,” Rob says. “Our advantage is that we’ve been able to stock

32,000 items in our system plus 6,700 new items each year.” The depth of selection differentiated the store from the big box stores.

After Rob finished college and graduate

**“As a niche business, we need to focus on who we are and try to become the expert in the field.”**

~ Rob Marshall

school, he came to work in the family business. Full of business school ideas, he brought the company into the computer age. Although he knew the science of retail, he still needed to learn the art of retail from his father.

“The first day I came to work, my dad was ordering some items,” Rob says. “Looking

through a catalog, he says ‘I should get some of those.’ And I asked ‘How do you know?’ He says, ‘I just know.’ That wasn’t going to help me.”

The computer system helped Rob analyze the sales data. “That was very important to me because I didn’t have that feel of years of retail experience. Having the numbers to prove the inventory was what I needed, but now I rely on that less and more on the feel of the item and how I think it will sell.”

Like a lot of retailers, and especially holiday-oriented businesses, the store rings up its majority of sales during the last quarter of the year. Although open all year, the stores benefit from their locations: tourist towns.

“Most tourists coming to Williamsburg don’t have a year-round Christmas shop near their home,” he explains. “Especially to the extent of items we have. It becomes a place for souvenirs, gifts for the people back home.”

With the deep selection, the store offers tourists inexpensive gifts for anyone they might want to remember during the holidays.

“I like to think we have two separate seasons,” Rob says. “I spend my time in the early

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part of the year taking care of the beach traffic and vacation souvenir ornaments, and then in the fourth quarter of the year we focus on all the traditional Christmas items.” The store in Williamsburg is frequented by tourists all year, but the locals shop during November and December.

Knowing the customer in a niche market is important in providing the right product for the right person, and the depth of products helps cover the bases.

“I know our customers range from age three to 95, a big, broad spectrum with everyone having a different interest,” Rob describes. “I try to buy for everybody. There are some core themes: gold, silver, traditional Christmas. Then there are the people who like to skydive. We have skydiving ornaments, shuffleboard ornaments...all these interests. When I see these specialized items, I know it will relate to somebody. The customer will come in and see things here that they will not see any other place.”

Themed trees help the customer visualize the ornaments in their own homes. Additional holiday decorations are arranged by the staff to help a customer see the full potential.

“We’ll have a Baby’s First Christmas themed tree and next to it will be huge selection of baby dolls,” Rob describes. “It’s a complementary

category.” The customer shopping for a baby’s first Christmas might like to accessorize with a doll. In the Outer Banks stores, they have nautical-themed trees with nautical-related signs and “sit-arounds” (as Rob calls them) that coordinate with the ornaments.

“We build around the tree,” he adds. “Most of the people coming in to shop see the items on the trees first.”

Rob’s wife and three children know the holiday season is busy for him. “That six week stretch of November and December is busy,” Rob states. “Plus, little things always come up. One thing about being in a niche business, you have to be well-informed about everything in the store, from maintaining light strings, to finding specialty ornaments, to shipping and receiving.”

His children love visiting the store.

“Everyone gets excited about Christmas. Even when I go in, I see things I’ve never seen before,” Rob says. “My wife and kids were in the store last week and when I came home, they had each picked out an ornament to take home. Like anyone else’s house, we all get excited about Christmas, even after working in it all year.”

Rob has two points of advice for other small businesses in a specialized market. He stresses

that running a niche store means staying focused on the core business.

“Trying to stay true to that is one of the most important things. Today we have grocery stores with banks and dry cleaners in them – it’s hard to be all things to all people. As a niche business, we need to focus on who we are and try to become the expert in the field.”

With the knowledge and focus of being the best, his next piece of advice is to identify how to separate from the competitors.

“For years I thought if I sold my Christmas trees at the same price as the big box stores then I’d be competing solely on price,” he says. “My consumer perceives the tree at a big box is cheaper regardless. I need to educate my customer on the quality of the lights, the quality of the trees, how it’s constructed. When I say become an expert, that’s what I mean. You have to get further into it than just buying and pricing. Retail is a difficult business.”

Focusing on expertise and offering deep selection in a specific field has helped Rob Marshall, and his father before him, create a holiday niche that sells year-round and attracts local and tourist customers – a niche Rob adores.

“I really love what I do. I love coming to work,” he says. “I love Christmas and buying for Christmas.” NDN

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QUINN McDOWELL

# The Spirit of Community

*By Greg Lilly, Editor*

William and Mary's basketball senior and team captain, Quinn McDowell, plans to make this season memorable for the team, school and fans. He is an athlete who embodies the spirit of community on and off the court.

"I'm very excited for the year," Quinn says. "We have the chance to win, to have one of the best seasons in William and Mary history."

Last season, Quinn was awarded the Colonial Athletic Association's (CAA) Don Ehler Leadership award for the student-athlete who, according to the CAA, "embodies the highest standards of leadership, integrity and sportsmanship in conjunction with his academic and athletic achievement."

At the end of his junior year, Quinn ranked fifth in 3-point field goal percentage for the CAA and fifth in the history of William and Mary with 154 career 3-pointers.

"It started early on," Quinn says of that sta-



Lisa W. Cumming Photography



tistic. “My dad wouldn’t let me shoot 3-pointers until I was strong enough to do so. Until about eighth or ninth grade, I didn’t shoot many threes. His philosophy was I wasn’t strong enough to shoot them with good form and the right fundamentals. So until I could, he wanted me shooting closer to the goal. That was a little hard when other guys were shooting them.” His patience to achieve good form reaped its rewards.

“I’ve always played sports growing up in Ohio, probably a product of my dad’s involvement,” Quinn states. “He played football here at William and Mary.”

Quinn was always around sports growing up, and his two sports in school were soccer and basketball. “I was always a two sport athlete until I came to college.”

Quinn’s father, Dave, grew up in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania and came to William and Mary on a football scholarship. “He came from a place in Pittsburgh, where a lot of people don’t get to William and Mary from there. The first semester I was here, I got a couple of A’s. He [Quinn’s dad] jokes that in my first semester here, I made as many A’s as he did in four years.”

Quinn had that family connection to William and Mary, but he hadn’t planned to attend

his father’s alma mater. “It really wasn’t on my radar,” he adds. “I wanted to play basketball in college. I decided in eighth or ninth grade that I wanted basketball to be my focus. My dad

**“The more I learn what it means to be a Christian, the more I realize I am foremost a Christian, then a basketball player.”**

~ Quinn McDowell

never pushed William and Mary until the coaches started recruiting me independent of any connection he had here. That was in my junior year of high school. I was offered a scholarship – [and] that made it a pretty easy choice to come here.”

When Quinn arrived at college, he didn’t have many preconceived notions of what his experience would be. “I think William and Mary was the best choice for me in a holistic experience – mind, body, soul – that I wanted out of a college. It has remained true to that for me in my time here.”

Quinn is majoring in religious studies with an economics minor. “That’s been a huge blessing for me.” He says he’s found a home in the Religious Studies department and with some of the professors with whom he’s connected. “They’ve mentored me through my academic career, especially in the last year or two.”

One of the reasons Quinn says that his college experience has been so memorable has been the community he’s found. “Specifically in relation to my faith as a professing Christian,” he says. “I attend the Williamsburg Community Chapel and that’s been a huge part of my Williamsburg experience.”

Quinn leads a small group of high school students at the church while involved in the student ministries. “When I talk about education being a holistic experience, that’s been a big part of my education,” he says of his church community. “My education, my growth in my

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spiritual life does have an effect on my athletics. It always has. The more I learn what it means to be a Christian, the more I realize I am foremost a Christian, then a basketball player. It's been a great experience."

Working with teens and younger children, Quinn knows they have a lot of questions for him. His advice for the younger athlete is two-fold.

"My first piece of advice would be: you are only going to be in high school once, so do what is best for you at the time," he says. "I know a lot of high school coaches put pressure on players to concentrate on one sport. For me, the best high school experience came from playing two sports."

He liked the break he had from basketball when soccer season started. The use of different muscle groups in different sports was also a benefit for him. "I think in a lot of ways it has prevented me from any type of burnout in college when I focused only on basketball."

His second piece of advice is one of sacrifice. "If you want to be a great athlete, you have to make sacrifices," he states. "Are you willing to do what it takes? Not everybody has the natural inclination and talent to become a Division I athlete, but are you willing to train your body and perfect your skill to the point where you

give yourself a shot to be as good as you can be?"

His advice to parents is to be supportive in what the child wants to do. "If they want to focus on one sport, by all means help them achieve their goals. Ask the kid what he wants to achieve in high school. Some kids don't want to play at the next level; they want to play sports to have some discipline, be around their teammates and work as hard as they can, but they know that after high school that's all they want."

He stresses that parents should support the child's dreams and goals, not the ones the parent may have set. "I see that. That's where a lot of burnout comes from. Maybe the kid likes the sport, but his parent has this grander vision of him becoming this world-class athlete. Maybe that's not the kid's goal. There's a balance between hard work and support."

As far as Quinn's own goals for his senior season of William and Mary basketball, he says: "They're the same goals I have at every season: win the league – I haven't done that. I want us to go to the NCAA [National Collegiate Athletic Association] tournament. And thirdly, beat ODU (Old Dominion University) this year."

For fans going to this season's games, Quinn trusts they will see a team going all out, no-

holds-barred. "I hope that every time people come to our game, they see a team playing like it's the last game we will ever play," he says. "This has a specific personal meaning for me this year because every game I play will be the last time I play that team at that place. That's the unique thing about a senior year."

His outlook for the season is positive and aggressive. "Every time we step on the floor we are going to compete. We're going to outwork the other team. In any way possible, we're going to give ourselves a chance to win," he states. "Last year, it felt like we had to learn how to compete – a problem that comes with youth. We had to learn how to bring it every day. The team is more mature this year, and we're better at that this year."

Mentoring youth at his church, focusing on his academics and motivating his teammates, Quinn McDowell has an exciting senior year on and off the court. This well-rounded young man strives to make this basketball season one of the best in William and Mary history for his teammates, fans and community. NDN

*To see Quinn and the rest of the men's basketball team play this holiday season, visit: [www.tribeathletics.com](http://www.tribeathletics.com) to see their game schedule.*



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TED CORNELL

# Music to Warm the Heart

By Greg Lilly, Editor

Arts & ENTERTAINMENT



Lisa W. Cumming Photography

Ted Cornell, Williamsburg Community Chapel's Minister of Worship, creates a yearly production of Christmas music that draws people from all over the region.

"There's no charge for the concerts," Ted explains, "but a ticket is needed so we can make sure there is room for everyone."

The popular concerts are an outreach program for the Chapel. The concerts run from Thursday, December 8th through Sunday, December 11.

"We'll seat about 8,000 people coming through the doors," Ted adds. "The choir is 150 people with full orchestra. We sing of Christmas and the joy of Christmas. It's a great time."

Ted grew up in the New York City area. His father detected a musical gift in Ted and had

him audition for the Juilliard School when he was seven.

"I started there when I was eight in the preparatory division," Ted says. "I studied at Juilliard for 17 years. I like to say it's because I'm a very slow learner," he adds with a laugh. "After the preparatory division, I went to the college division. All that time I was raised in a very strong Christian home. The music of the church was very important to me. I was a church organist and choir director as I was growing up in New Jersey and New York."

In the mid-1960s, Ted met Grady Wilson, an associate evangelist for the Reverend Billy Graham. "Grady invited me to what they called the 'Crusade' being held in Harlan, Kentucky one summer," Ted says. "For a city boy that was an

experience – coal miners, moonshiners, [and] all that good stuff. That was my first experience with the Billy Graham Association, there in a country town with Grady Wilson. I continued with schooling a little while longer, and in 1968 I started full time with Mr. Graham. That's when they were generous enough to invite me to be a part of their team."

For 42 years, Ted Cornell worked with the Billy Graham Association and travelled all over the world with the ministry. "That was just a great time."

The pastor at Williamsburg Community Chapel, Bill Warrick, visited one of the Reverend Graham's Crusades in Hartford, Connecticut where Ted played the music for the event.

"We fell into conversation in the lobby of the

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hotel. Of course he had heard me play, and he said 'Would you be willing to come down to Williamsburg? We're meeting in a small academy – Walsingham Academy – just until we have our own building finished.' His joke was: 'The piano you are going to play...most of the keys work.' I said, 'Well, as long as most of them work, okay.' The services were held in Walsingham's cafeteria. I was still busy with the Crusade work, but I would come down on occasion and help with Christmas and Easter."

In 1998, Bill Warrick asked Ted to help shape the music program since the Chapel had moved into their new building. "My wife and I prayed about it," Ted explains. "The way was open for us. Mr. Graham was slowing down, so I was able to invest more time in Williamsburg. I'm in my 14th year here. It's a great privilege to be part of this family of faith."

The choir that Ted helped build is made up of volunteers from the community. "We have fun learning together," he says. He scans the music publishers' catalogs as soon as the Christmas season is over to start selections for the next year. The concerts highlight the main choir, a children's choir, small ensembles and the orchestra.

"We plan to start our concert this year with a fife and drum corps – that has such a great flavor for Williamsburg," he describes. "The children's choir steals the show every year. The music will

be some contemporary Christmas carols, but I also like the great classics so we totally mix it up."

Many of the compositions will have familiar Christmas carol tunes in them, but the arrangements may be more contemporary or rhythmic than listeners may be accustomed to. "It's going to be a real variety," he adds.

The Chapel's sanctuary is also a magnificent theater. "It has 1,500 seats," Ted describes as he sits down at the Chapel's organ. "We have an orchestra pit, so the whole thing can be turned into a performance venue."

The reverberation of the magnificent organ fills the space as Ted plays a short piece of music.

"People who come back to hear the Christmas concert each year will find elements of the familiar, but the music is always different and the set up of the concerts will be different," he says. "The children's choir always has new faces. Our a cappella ensemble will sing. There is variety, but the basic ingredient of gathering with a lot of people, celebrating Christmas, is a joyful time."

The concerts cover the great classics in Christmas carols, a few contemporary carols, an a cappella ensemble – a full gamut of holiday music. "At the end of the concert," Ted says, "Bill Warrick, our pastor, will give a brief meditation on what we heard and what it's really all about. My

prayer is that no one would leave thinking it was great entertainment, but not get the message. If the audience doesn't get the message then I'm not doing what I'm supposed to do. That's the whole part of the planning. Every piece should touch people."

Ted sees music in the ministry as a vital element, something he learned from his association with the Reverend Billy Graham. "He knew people coming in for his Crusades would probably be there for one time only," Ted explains about Reverend Graham's philosophy of music and ministry. "What they needed to hear was something that would revolutionize their lives. He considered music to be the handmaiden of the Word. He actually said that he needed music to prepare the hearts of people for his preaching. George Beverly Shea has been Reverend Graham's soloist right from the start. He is now 103 years old. Billy says 'I can't preach until Bev has sung before me.' That's how strongly he feels about the power of music, how it can set a tone and warm the hearts of people." NDN

*Ted Cornell and the Williamsburg Community Chapel unify people during the Christmas concerts with music by warming hearts and sharing their community. Tickets for the annual concerts go fast. Call 757-941-1244 to inquire about ticket availability.*

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JANE HALEY

# Good Nutrition Over the Holidays

By Greg Lilly, Editor



Lisa W. Cumming Photography

Williamsburg-James City County (WJCC) Public Schools curriculum not only includes reading, writing and arithmetic; they also educate students, teachers and parents on good nutrition. Jane Haley, supervisor of Child Nutrition Services for the school system, shares some tips on helping maintain those healthy eating habits during the holidays.

Jane has worked for the school system for

21 years. She began her career with a degree in business administration and management.

“I worked at King’s Dominion for thirteen years, and one of the things I did there was food services as the operations manager and purchasing,” she says. “That was a great job, but exhausting.”

The variety and daily challenges of her work at the school system keep her engaged. “There’s

constant change – a wide variety of parents I work with, certainly the students. I like working with the kids. It’s a continuous educational experience.”

Child Nutrition Services, Jane’s department, handles anything related to food service. They solicit the bids for food products, manage the schedules for all the child nutrition employees, take in all the free and reduced lunch applica-

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tions and approve them. “And we do a little bit of catering for internal functions,” Jane adds. “Basically, we handle anything food related and the kitchens.”

The department does a great deal of nutrition education. They have a registered dietician, Pam Frazier, who is funded through the SHIP program. SHIP is the School Health Initiative Program funded by the Williamsburg Community Health Foundation. This is the fifth year of funding in the schools.

“It has enabled numerous opportunities for Child Nutrition Services,” Jane says. “The program permits us to do nutritional analysis on all our menus, provide service and assistance to parents about food allergies, and outreach to the pre-K children on nutrition.”

Jane explains that the schools use the National School Breakfast and Lunch Program and that sets federal guidelines on what the students are offered for their school meals.

“That is probably the most confusing thing for the parents and for the kids to understand as to what makes up a meal,” she says. “It has five components: one meat, one bread, two vegetables or fruits or combination, and a milk. They only have to pick three of those items to qualify for a nutritious meal. It can get confusing especially for the little kids.” The

kitchens operate under an “offer versus serve” policy, which allows the students to get what they like and to help prevent waste.

Through the 21 years that Jane has worked in the department, she has seen healthier guidelines developed and implemented. “For example,” she says, “juices have changed over the years. Today we offer only 100% juice. A few years ago we offered 5% or 25% juice. There have been a lot of changes and it’s ongoing.”

Even with changing guidelines, sometimes it’s difficult to convince children to try new healthier food. “We do a lot of taste testing,” Jane says. “The elementary schools are doing a lot with school gardens and local produce. PTA volunteers help with these new vegetables, like the PTA at Matoaka Elementary cooked and served butternut squash to the students. Hopefully, introducing the kids to things they might not have tried.” She’s found that once the students try new tasty vegetables, they begin to eat more and different vegetables and fruits in the cafeteria.

“For example, legumes,” Jane says. “We tried putting kidney beans in all the chili, but some of the kids wouldn’t eat it. We’ve done a black bean brownie, and the kids are eating it. Of course we tell them there are black beans in it

because some kids may have allergies. It’s actually pretty good. The challenge is getting them to taste it the first time.”

Other healthy changes have been more whole grain, even in the pizza crusts. Salad bars are new and popular additions in the high schools. “That salad bar gives them a wide variety to choose from,” Jane adds.

The healthy habits learned in school can translate to school breaks at home or while visiting relatives over the holidays. Jane and nutritionist Pam Frazier list six healthy messages for children (and parents) to think about to maintain the healthy eating habits away from school:

1. **Think Your Drink** – Drink more water and less sugary or caffeinated drinks. Try drinking a glass of water before a meal to reduce over eating.
2. **Snack Attack** – For a snack, choose two food groups because you will get more of a balance in nutrients and you are less likely to overeat like you would with only one thing.
3. **Breakfast Go Power** – Time off from school means a break in schedule. Don’t oversleep and skip breakfast. That just means you will eat more later in the day. Stay on a regular



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meal pattern. Use three food groups at breakfast for balanced nutrients. Eat protein and not too much fat or sugar.

4. **Smart Servings** – Big holidays do not mean big portions. Pay attention to portion size during the holidays because tempting food is everywhere. Try the trick of eating off a smaller plate. You will feel satisfied with smaller portions.

5. **Active Play Every Day** – Get active. In our mild climate, December allows plenty of opportunities to get outside and have fun. Go for a walk down Duke of Gloucester Street. Bike around your neighborhood. Rake leaves for an elderly neighbor. Play flag football.

6. **Fruit and Vegetables, More Matters** – The new USDA (United States Department of Agriculture) Choose my Plate guidelines are illustrated by a new graphic that divides a meal into certain percentages of your plate. Make half your plate fruits and vegetables. “If you start there, a lot of other nutrition goals will fall into place: vi-

tamins and mineral that you need, less fat and a more balanced meal,” Jane says.

A tip that Jane likes to give to the students during large meals like Thanksgiving and

too,” she says. “Go for the fruits and vegetables first.”

A concern in every school district is the possibility that a child, away from school, may not get the nutritious meals he or she needs.

“The Backpack program is available,” Jane states. “For some of our kids, the school meal is the only one they get, which is unfortunate.” The Backpack program was started by WJCC Public Schools’ Title I Office and the Foodbank of the Virginia Peninsula. The program has expanded, thanks to Sentara Williamsburg Regional Medical Center. The Backpack program provides a backpack of nutritious food for the student to take home while away from school. (For more information about this program contact Title I Parent Outreach Facilitator Pam Frazier at 903-1394.)

The holidays can be a challenge for many people to maintain good eating habits, including children. By following Jane Haley’s advice, kids can continue the school’s nutrition lessons during the holiday break and be ready to tackle the new semester with a healthy start. NDN



Christmas is to load their plate with the side dishes first, add the meat last. This helps them make sure to get the right servings of fruits and vegetables – while there is room on the plate.

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BOB DOARES

*Williamsburg's*  
**First Christmas Tree**

*By Greg Lilly, Editor*

Williamsburg style flourishes during the holiday season. Christmas trees decorate many homes bearing silver or gold ornaments, white lights, red and green ribbons and bows, and some add the local flavor of fresh fruit and evergreens' berries. This wasn't always the scene in the Williamsburg homes of the past. Bob Doares introduces residents and visitors to the man who created the first Christmas tree in Williamsburg as part of the Colonial Williamsburg holiday production "Christmastide at Home."

Bob Doares, a Colonial Williamsburg Training Specialist, is one of the interpreters who play Professor Minnigerode in the production.



Lisa W. Cumming Photography



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“Professor Charles Minnigerode was a young German political refugee,” Bob explains, “who came to America about 1840 and, in 1842, was the professor of Classics and Language at the College of William and Mary.” Professor Minnigerode introduced the people of Williamsburg to the Christmas tree tradition.

When Bob grew up in southeastern North Carolina, he didn’t realize how his life would intertwine with the historical figure and the Christmas tradition. “I guess I got really interested in history when I spent my junior year away from Davidson College (Davidson, North Carolina) to study abroad in Germany,” Bob says. “I fell in love with European history and had the opportunity to work for Davidson College as the director of their International Studies program for a few years in the 1970s and ’80s. I lived, for about six and a half years, in Germany, Austria and France.”

In North Carolina, Bob became involved with historical conservation work while he taught high school French, German and English Language and Literature courses. While conducting research on eastern North Carolina furniture, Bob made a trip to Colonial Williamsburg. “That was in 1997,” he says, “and I thought this was a place right up my alley. I have been in the training department since then, teaching the costumed folks – the interpreters – colonial history before we put them on the streets to interact with the visitors.”

Bob has numerous connections with Minnigerode and his history. “I feel an affinity for Professor Minnigerode on several levels,” Bob says. “I was a German teacher. When I was working and studying in Germany, I was in the university town of Marburg, which was only about six miles from the town of Giessen. Giessen was where Professor Minnigerode went to university.” The German parallels stop there since young Professor Minnigerode was arrested and imprisoned for four years for distributing political literature.

“As soon as Minnigerode got free, he got on a ship and headed for America,” Bob adds.

“To have gone to school and know the environment where he went to school in Germany and to have followed his footsteps into this production at Christmas time, it’s a lot of fun for me,” Bob says. “I feel a real historical connection to Minnigerode because I know the environment he lived in before he came here.”

Colonial Williamsburg’s holiday production of “Christmastide at Home” consists of four scenes of Williamsburg’s Christmas past. “It’s presented between Thanksgiving and New Years,” Bob describes. “The production takes place in the Governor’s Palace complex in four different areas. As you walk from space to space to see the 15 minute plays, you move through Williamsburg’s Christmas past over time.” In previous years’ productions, there have been scenes before the American Revolution, during the Revolution, Christmas of 1842 (the Christmas tree’s arrival in Williamsburg), and the last scene has been Christmas during World War II.

“In the 1842 scene, we portray Professor Charles Minnigerode,” Bob says of himself and other interpreters who play the part. “Professor Minnigerode boarded at the Tucker House on Market Square. That was a house of many children. He set up a Christmas tree decorated with brightly colored paper and popcorn and lit it with candles in the German fashion. This amazed the Tucker children and their friends who were present that night when the first Christmas tree was decorated in Williamsburg. By the next year, everyone in Williamsburg wanted to have a fresh tree with candles on it in their home on Christmas. Ever

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since the Christmas tree has been a big tradition in this town, and we owe that to Professor Minnigerode.”

A common story of the Christmas tree’s introduction to England and the United States tells of a magazine publishing an illustration of England’s Queen Victoria, her German husband Prince Albert and their children around a Christmas tree in 1848. Prince Albert had brought the tradition to Windsor Castle. The royal family set the style for the day, and by the next year, all British subjects and fashion-forward Americans had Christmas trees of their own.

“Same idea, a German brought it to England and it caught on like wildfire,” Bob states. “But six years before that print was published in England, the Christmas tree was popularized here in Virginia by Professor Minnigerode.” Williamsburg residents widely adopted the tradition well before the rest of the country.

“We wouldn’t have known about that episode at the Tucker house,” Bob says, “except that a Richmond newspaper reporter interviewed Mrs. Martha Vandergrift in 1928, who at that time was well into her 90s. She recalled being one of those little children at the Tucker house in 1842 that experienced the first Christmas tree in Williamsburg. That’s what we portray in our scene of ‘Christmastide at Home.’”

Most of our modern Christmas customs were developments of the 19th century in England and America, well after the colonial period. The Victorians were the first era to celebrate the holiday as we think of it today. Colonial America celebrated quite differently. “Eighteenth century Christmas is a holy day, a sacred holiday,” Bob says. “It’s a day when colonial Virginians of the Church of England would be expected to attend church for communion. After church, people went home for a feast. The beginning of Christmastide, which is what we know as the Twelve Days of Christmas, runs from Christmas day until Epiphany on January 6th (also known as Twelfth Night). Those twelve days of Christmas were celebrated with feasting, visiting family, fox hunts, balls – because Virginians loved to dance.”

Home Christmas decorations were minimal in colonial days. Sprigs of evergreen or candles may have been set in windows. “We have no visual images of American Christmas decorations in the 18th century,” Bob says. “We have a very limited number of English prints from that time that show what people did in Britain in private homes or taverns. Mistletoe is in most of the images, sprigs of ivy, boxwood, holly, laurel or some other evergreen were stuck with a bit of wax to the window panes. That’s about it.”

A generation after the American Revolution, a German immigrant professor teaching at the College of William and Mary brought Williamsburg a tradition that continues today. Now about 170 years later, that first Christmas tree comes to life again during the holiday season.

“There’s always something new, something interesting, something wonderful going on at Colonial Williamsburg,” Bob says. “We are forever learning ourselves. That’s one of the great things about the place.” Today’s holiday home is a nod to all Christmases that came before, celebrating the new, the old, the interesting and the wonderful of historic Williamsburg. [NDN](#)

To find out more about “Christmastide at Home”, please visit Colonial Williamsburg’s holiday calendar:

[www.colonialwilliamsburg.com/visit/holidays/calendar](http://www.colonialwilliamsburg.com/visit/holidays/calendar)



# Q & A

An Interview with Cathy Richardson, Ed. D.

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## Credit Scores and Buying Patterns: How do they work?

### RICHARDSON:

Credit scores and buying patterns are inseparable. Borrowers should remember when buying a house that a credit bureau score is a number based upon your credit history that represents the likelihood that you will be able to repay a mortgage loan. Lenders use that same score to determine your ability to qualify for a mortgage loan. The better the score, the better your chances are of getting a loan.

It’s important to realize that your credit score is derived from your financial activity over a period of time. It should never be a secret, because “FREE” reports are offered at least once a year by TransUnion, Equifax, and Experian. (*Go to [FreeScore.com](http://FreeScore.com) for your free credit reports.*)

This reporting data is used to produce your credit score and your buying patterns determine your actual credit score. When you borrow and repay money (via auto loans, credit cards, mortgages, etc.), it is reported to the three credit-reporting bureaus. In order to maintain an excellent credit score, money borrowed should always be paid on time and according to the payment schedule. My research shows that your payment record makes up approximately 35 percent of your credit score.

Remember, your credit score is the same as your FICO (Fair Isaac Corporation) score. In the first quarter of 2011, almost half of all mortgage loans went to people with a FICO scores in the 750-and-up range. In contrast, in 2008 only 29 percent of mortgages went to this group. This demonstrates how lending has tightened over the past four years. (*Data source: Mortgage Bankers Association.*)

What’s so important about buying patterns? Your buying/borrowing patterns should reflect your ability to repay loans that you may incur. Some people have habits of applying for department store credit to save a certain percentage off the purchases.

Inquiries can affect credit scores by approximately 10 percent; you should focus on building a better credit profile by applying for credit only when necessary; a strong credit profile usually results from a mixture of credit accounts: perhaps a couple credit

cards, an installment loan and a home loan, because the type of credit you hold could influence your credit by 15 percent.

Also, since debt balances make up about 30 percent of credit profiles, you should keep your debt balances at less than 30 percent of your given credit limit and payoff credit cards instead of using your buying power, which increases your debt balances.

There are many factors that come into play when making a home purchase. One of the largest factors in purchasing a home besides income is a consumer’s credit history. The minimum credit score needed to purchase a home will vary from one type of loan to another; it is very important to know what underwriting guidelines are in reference to a minimum credit score that is acceptable in order to obtain a mortgage loan.

In addition, if you are inspired to buy a house, check your credit scores before you move into action; and/or request a pre-approval letter from a lender to determine your qualification amount (a second opinion is always available if needed), and obtain a qualified Realtor®.

In a sense, you create your own credit score based on your buying patterns. You should never lose sight of the perks in having an excellent credit score. For instance, a high FICO score offers better mortgage loan options, lower interest rates which mean lower monthly payments, better mortgage terms and stronger buying power.

At the same time, if you have had poor credit in the past, you can change that. Over time, credit problems will begin to correct themselves with better financial performance and recent buying and payment patterns will start to restructure your credit reports. Improving your credit will benefit you, because buying a home is probably the single largest investment most people make in a lifetime. By preparing yourself, your credit profile and obtaining a Realtor® before a home purchase, you can ensure a smooth finance process and can potentially save yourself thousands on your loan.

For more information concerning credit scores, buying patterns and other real estate related questions, consult a qualified Realtor® and/or Lender for answers and/or recommendations.

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Please visit [www.WilliamsburgNeighbors.com](http://www.WilliamsburgNeighbors.com) and click on **Hey Neighbor!** for a complete list of current community announcements. To submit your non-profit event to Hey Neighbor! send a paragraph with your information to: [heyneighbor@cox.net](mailto:heyneighbor@cox.net)

## Hey Neighbor! WILLIAMSBURG CLASSIC SWING ORCHESTRA

November 18, 2011

The James City County Rotary Club continues its Williamsburg Charity Concert Series with the presentation of the Williamsburg Classic Swing Orchestra, 7:30 pm at the Kimball Theatre in Williamsburg. Tickets at \$15 available at the Kimball Theatre or from any James City County Rotary Club member. For more information, go the [www.jccrotary.org](http://www.jccrotary.org). for further information, contact: Dave Rothberg, Public Relations Chairman, James City County Rotary Club, 757-206-1750

## Hey Neighbor! WILLIAMSBURG FARMERS MARKET

Nov. 19 and 26, Dec. 10, 2011

402 W Duke of Gloucester St. in Merchants Square. 8:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.; Holiday Markets are filled with baked goods including Greek and French; cut berries and greens, and decorations handmade by farmers; items for gift giving and entertaining; and lots of winter produce, cheese, seafood and pasture-raised meats. Seasonal songs and music add to the festive spirit of the markets. 757-259-3768, [www.williamsburgfarmersmarket.com](http://www.williamsburgfarmersmarket.com)

## Hey Neighbor! ZOO IN A LUGGAGE

November 19, 2011

10-11:30 am. A children's educational program on bugs and snakes found in Virginia, both poisonous and non-poisonous. Class will be held in the new Interpretive Center at Freedom Park. Guest speaker, Clyde Marsteller. Free. For information, contact Barb Dunbar, 880-8875, [twotac@cox.net](mailto:twotac@cox.net).

## Hey Neighbor! CHRISTMAS BAZAAR

November 19, 2011

10 am – 2 pm. York River Baptist

Church Women's Ministry will be holding the bazaar at 8201 Croaker Rd, Williamsburg. Items for sale include wreaths, Christmas items, hand made goods, jewelry, baked goods, and a White Elephant table. Proceeds to benefit on-going ministry projects.

## Hey Neighbor! FOODS & FEASTS OF COLO- NIAL VIRGINIA - JAMESTOWN November 24-26, 2011

At Jamestown Settlement, 9 am – 5 pm. Explore Virginia foodways of the 17th century during this three-day event beginning on Thanksgiving Day. Learn how food was gathered, preserved and prepared on land and at sea by Virginia's English colonists and Powhatan Indians. with the Yorktown Victory Center, a museum of the American Revolution. (757) 253-4838 or [www.historyisfun.org](http://www.historyisfun.org)

## Hey Neighbor! FOODS & FEASTS OF COLO- NIAL VIRGINIA - YORKTOWN November 24-26, 2011

At Yorktown Victory Center, 9 am – 5 pm. Explore Virginia foodways of the 18th century during this three-day event beginning on Thanksgiving Day. At the Yorktown Victory Center, examine typical soldiers' fare during the American Revolution and trace the bounty of a 1780s farm from field to kitchen. A combination ticket is available with Jamestown Settlement, a museum of 17th-century Virginia. (757) 253-4838 or [www.historyisfun.org](http://www.historyisfun.org)

## Hey Neighbor! TRAINING FOR AARP TAXAIDE November 30, 2011

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ies donates space at both libraries for our use. Call 757-220-5464 or groennet@verizon.net for more information.

**Hey Neighbor!**  
**A COLONIAL CHRISTMAS**  
**- JAMESTOWN**

December 1-31, 2011  
 At Jamestown Settlement, 9 am – 5 pm. A holiday film and special guided tours compare English Christmas customs of the period with how the season may have been observed in the difficult early years of America's first permanent English colony. Holiday-themed tours, beginning daily at 11 am., 1 and 3 pm, guide visitors through outdoor interpretive areas. A combination ticket is available with the Yorktown Victory Center, a museum of the American Revolution. (757) 253-4838 or www.historyisfun.org.

**Hey Neighbor!**  
**A COLONIAL CHRISTMAS - YORKTOWN**

December 1-31, 2011  
 At Yorktown Victory Center, 9 am – 5 pm. Historical interpreters share accounts of Christmas and winter in military encampments during the American Revolution and show holiday preparations on a re-created 1780s farm. Continental Army encampment visitors can learn about winter camp life and hear stories of Christmas during the war. A combination ticket is available with Jamestown Settlement, a museum of 17th-century Virginia. (757) 253-4838 or www.historyisfun.org.

**Hey Neighbor!**  
**KING'S PLAYERS DECEMBER PRODUCTION**

December 2 – December 4, 2011  
 The King's Players cordially invite you to attend a presentation of Pat Cook's comedy Dad's Christmas Miracle at King of Glory Lutheran Church, on Friday, December 2nd, at 7:00 p.m., Saturday, December 3rd, at 7:00 p.m. and Sunday, December 4th, at 2:30 p.m. Ticket prices are: \$10 for adults and \$8 for seniors, students, and children. Tickets are available at the church office – you can stop by or call the office at 258-9701. The church address is 4897 Longhill Road, Williamsburg. The King's Players are King of Glory's theater ministry team.

**Hey Neighbor!**  
**WILLIAMSBURG MONTES-SORI SCHOOL'S 4TH ANNUAL OYSTER ROAST**

December 3, 2011  
 2:00-5:00 pm. Join us for roast oysters, hot dogs, chips, clam chowder, vegetarian chili, baked beans, cookies, beer, wine, and much more! Tickets are \$25.00 or \$30.00 at the door. Children under 12 \$10.00. At The Watermen's Museum, 309 Water Street, Yorktown. Proceeds benefit the Williamsburg Montessori School and The Watermen's Museum. For ticket information, go to www.williamsburgmontessori.org or www.watermens.org, 757-565-0977.

**Hey Neighbor!**  
**WOMEN'S OPPORTUNITY AWARD SEEKING APPLICATIONS**  
Through December 5, 2011

Soroptimist of International of Williamsburg, an organization for business and professional women, seeks applicants for the Women's Opportunity Award. Women receive cash grants for educational expenses. This award is for women who are the primary wage earners for their families and are seeking to attain higher education and or advance skills training. To obtain an application contact, Mary Minor at 757-254-1422 or mpmwilliamsburg@cox.net. The deadline for the application is December 5, 2011.

**Hey Neighbor!**  
**BREAKFAST WITH SANTA**  
December 10, 2011

3rd annual Junior Women's Club of Williamsburg Breakfast with Santa at The Williamsburg Hospitality House. Your ticket includes a full breakfast buffet, complimentary family photo, crafts, dancing, carolers, and new this year- festival of wreath sale! We will have two seatings at 8:00 am & 11:00 am. Ticket prices are adults \$20.00, children (3-10) \$16.00, children (2 & under) \$8.00. Visit www.williamsburgjuniors.org to purchase tickets. All proceeds to benefit local charities.

**Hey Neighbor!**  
**"AM AHL AND THE NIGHT VISITORS" – FREE CONCERT**  
December 11, 2011

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raculous healing of his crippled leg when he offers his crutch as a gift for the newborn babe in Bethlehem. At King of Glory Lutheran Church, 4897 Longhill Rd., Williamsburg. In lieu of admission, attendees are asked to bring a canned good or nonperishable food item for the benefit of FISH and Grove Christian Outreach Center. For concert information, call (757) 220-1808 or visit [www.williamsburgchoralguild.org](http://www.williamsburgchoralguild.org).

**Hey Neighbor!**

**"AT CHRISTMAS BE MERRY"-SPECIAL HOLIDAY EVENING AT HISTORIC JAMESTOWNE**  
December 21, 2011

6:30 pm, 7:30 pm, 8:30 pm. Join friends in the Memorial Church on Jamestown Island for an evening of caroling and an audience with Governor Yearley and the Reverend Buck. Enjoy refreshments as you witness the firing of the Christmas guns. Advanced ticket reservations are required. Call 1-800-HISTORY for tickets and information.

**Hey Neighbor!**

**HAMPTON ROADS MANDOLIN ENSEMBLE**  
December 21, 2011

Williamsburg Music Club presents the Hampton Roads Mandolin Ensemble performing musical selections in the style of mandolin orchestras of the 1900-1920s. December 21, at the Bruton Parish House, Lewis Hall, on Duke of Gloucester Street, Williamsburg. Refreshments and coffee at 10:00 a.m., a brief business meeting at 10:30 and the program at 11:00. All Music Club programs are free and open to the public.

**Hey Neighbor!**

**FIRST NIGHT WILLIAMSBURG**  
December 31, 2011

This New Year's Eve celebration presents live entertainment for all ages on over 40 stages throughout downtown Williamsburg and on the campus of the College of William & Mary. In its 19th year, First Night admission is by a \$15.00 button, available for sale starting Thanksgiving weekend at select merchants and online. Kids 5 & under are free. The kids show will be held from 3 - 7 pm at the Matthew Whaley School. Midnight fireworks conclude the evening. Food and beverages are for sale. First Night is a non-alcoholic event. 757-258-5153, [\[nightwilliamsburg.org\]\(http://nightwilliamsburg.org\)](http://www.first-</a></p></div>
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The Williamsburg Area Learning Tree (WALT) will have more than 55 different, fun, and informative topics. This is the most unique selection of WALT classes ever offered and many of them are brand new this session. Thirty-five instructors are offering to share their enthusiasm and talents in subjects as varied as Abacadabra - Magic for Beginners, Spanish for Travelers, Household Document Organization, & Auto Upkeep - Learn How to Look Under your Hood. There is something for everyone - Bring a Neighbor and share a great time trying something new. Complete list of courses, schedules of all the classes and how to register will be available online at [www.wuu.org/walt](http://www.wuu.org/walt) in the Virginia Gazette, at the Williamsburg/James City County Public Libraries, & around town for pick-up. WALT is a community service project of the Williamsburg Unitarian Universalist. For more information please call Jill Whitten - 757-220-9975 or email: [walt@wuu.org](mailto:walt@wuu.org).

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**MASTER GARDENER TRAINING**  
January 9 - April 5, 2012

James City County/Williamsburg and New Kent Application are now being accepted for the 2012 Master Gardener Training Program. Classes will be held Monday and Wednesday mornings, January 9 - April 5th, 2012, followed by 70 hours of internship. Topics covered include botany, weeds, insects and pest control, gardening practices, lawn care, flower, fruits and vegetables, pruning, landscape design and water conservation. Students will assist Virginia Cooperative Extension as volunteer community educators when their training is completed. The program fee is \$150. Applications and information are available at the Toano Extension Office (564-2170) or visit our website - [www.jccwmg.org](http://www.jccwmg.org). Application deadline is Oct. 30, 2011.

*Hey Neighbor! is free to non-profit organizations, civic groups and churches. Please email your submissions to [HeyNeighbor@cox.net](mailto:HeyNeighbor@cox.net). This inbox is only checked once a month during production. If you have a question or communication that you need a response to, please email: [meredith.collinsgroup@cox.net](mailto:meredith.collinsgroup@cox.net)*

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

YANKEE CANDLE  
HOLIDAYS!

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

Enjoy!

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



November 2011  
In the Neighborhood  
Photo Challenge







Real Estate. Reinvented.®

# WISHING YOU THE WARMTH OF HEARTH AND HOME



**144 ROGER SMITH**  
Kingsmill

Very rare patio home on the 3rd green of the Plantation course in Kingsmill. One level living, large eat in kitchen, very open floor plan for entertaining, cathedral ceilings & skylights. Relaxing back deck overlooking the green. Located at the end of a cul de sac. Move in ready.

**Tim Parker**  
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**Cyril Petrop**  
(757) 879-8811



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**KINGSMILL**  
48 Yeardeley's Grant

2 BR, 3 BA, 2,574 sqft. ONE LEVEL! Meticulously maintained inside and out - patio home. Formal LR & DR, FR, Breakfast Nook, Office, Laundry Room AND a Sunroom. Hardwoods, granite counter tops in kitchen & baths, S/S appliances and freshly painted interior. A must see!! One Year Home Warranty.



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**108 PORT ROYAL**  
Ford's Colony

Rear oversized covered porch w/FP with Fairway View of #10 Blue Heron. Large, gourmet kitchen w/granite, SS, gas & custom cabinetry opens to great room w/coffered ceiling. Open floor plan. All new carpet. Extensive hardwood. Dual Master Suites, crawl space storage. \$750,000.

**Andrea Pokorny**  
757.291.9119  
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**503 SPRING TRACE**  
Season's Trace  
Only \$225,000



4BR/3.5 Baths. 2 en suites!

**Lorraine Funk**

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**GOVERNOR'S LAND**

Custom craftsmanship, well-appointed interiors and superbly executed floor plan define this beautiful home. Great room w/cherry built-ins and arched doorways that lead to the sunroom with Palladium windows. Spacious kitchen w/cherry cabinetry, granite, pantry. 1st flr MBR & 3 add'l BRs. Study w/built-ins. 2 covered porches, deck & patio. \$679,000.



**757-503-1999**

deelynneilson@lizmoore.com

www.PremierWilliamsburgRealEstate.com



**WELLINGTON**  
8401 Attleborough

Transitional home, open floor plan, 2 story foyer & family room. Generous sized kitchen with walk-in pantry and task area with desk. 5 BR (one on first floor) & 2.5 BAs. Fenced, level rear yard with deck and shed. \$315,000.



**(757) 869-5533**

amerika@lizmoore.com



**1913 MILN HOUSE ROAD**  
Governor's Land

Brick Georgian, 5 BR, 3.5 BA, 5,405 sf. home. Dramatic foyer opens into the formal living & dining room which overlook beautiful gardens & patio. 2 covered porches.



1st floor master suite w/FP. FP welcomes you in the morning room, breakfast nook & culinary kitchen. Formal bonus/media room. A must see!



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**QUEENS LAKE • LAKEFRONT**

Amazing 4B/3B, 2,942 sqft. home on one acre lakefront parcel with breathtaking water views. Formal & casual spaces throughout one level plan. Extensive hardwood. Spectacular brick floored sunroom faces lake. Stunning master suite with sitting area, FP, large tiled bath & wall of glass windows to private deck and lake views. This is a rare find! \$495,000. MLS#30029946.



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