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Meredith Collins, Publisher

I appreciate good cooks. Perhaps that is because I am not one. I've never had an interest in cooking and I have never been able to fully relate to the satisfaction that comes from preparing and serving a great meal. All that planning, preparation and hard work...and in no time the food has been eaten! Quite frankly, I always try to find myself on the back end of things - immensely enjoying the food that has been prepared by someone who loves to cook and clearing away the dirty dishes. I'd much rather clean the kitchen when the meal is over and leave all that preparation to those who seem to relish it (no pun intended).

This is why I have been fortunate enough to have surrounded myself with great cooks who love cooking for me: namely my husband, and occasionally my mother and the many professional chefs in Williamsburg. In fact, we are all fortunate to live in a place where we can enjoy such exceptional cooking talent and where such a wide variety of cuisines are available.

Since the holidays are such a food-filled time of year, I thought it would be a good idea for my writers to interview some of the area's local chefs to learn a little more about them. We've also enticed each of them to share a favorite recipe. I hope these stories and recipes will interest and inspire those of you who are chefs at heart. And for those of you who are like me, you can always share them with your favorite cook. I did! NDN

Inside

PAGE 3
Sibilla Dengs

PAGE 14
Jim Kennedy

PAGE 8
Frank Alosa

PAGE 16
Henry Wang

PAGE 12
Marcel Desaulnier

PAGE 20
Adonis Conner

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Sibilla Dengs

ARTCAFÉ26

By Rachel Sapin

“Art will always be my first love,” says Sibilla Dengs, art historian and owner of artcafé26 in New Town. It was Sibilla’s love of art that helped make her dreams of having a café-gallery space in Williamsburg a reality.

“While doing a charity art auction at one of the top restaurants in Aachen, Germany, I did a lot of work with the television show ‘Top Chef,’” Sibilla says. “I explained to them what I wanted to do, and they said to me, ‘Why don’t you bring our junior chefs over from Europe so that they can experience the United States?’”

Not only did ‘Top Chef’ help Sibilla bring European chefs to artcafé26, the television show also introduced her to award winning German chef, author, and artist Franz Lauter. After training with Lauter for a few months, Sibilla learned the necessary culinary skills to create the unmatched assortment of European delicacies offered at artcafé26.

It’s difficult for Sibilla and her family, living in Williamsburg, to recreate the Christmases she remembers growing up in the Romanesque city of Aachen, Germany, but they come pretty close. In the European tradition, Sibilla and her family wait until Christmas Eve to do just about everything.

“We wait until Christmas Eve to decorate the tree, and then the whole

family decorates it,” she says. “You get out your collection of ornaments, and you talk about the memories that come with them. Then you go to church, you have dinner, and after dinner you open the Christmas presents.”

For Christmas Eve dinner, Sibilla relaxes while her husband cooks the holiday meal. “We have a recipe that is a stuffed turkey with a secret family ingredient that has been in our family for over 40 years,” she reveals.

While she doesn’t share that special family recipe for you to try at home, she does share another recipe that is among her favorites that you can serve to

friends and family during the holidays. NDN



Apple Chestnut Soup

Sibilla recommends an Apple Chestnut Soup for a delicious and simple holiday meal. “It’s a classical holiday soup,” she notes. “Chestnuts mean winter time, apples are in season, and it’s wonderful winter comfort food.” For Sibilla, the holidays are all about enjoying life’s little comforts and taking the time to reconnect with friends and family. “Sitting back and enjoying friends and family on a free afternoon, having dessert, homemade pralines, counting your blessings that you are healthy, that you have people you love around you, that accept you as you are: that is for me, Christmas,” she says with a smile.

INGREDIENTS

8 oz. of Chestnuts

8 oz. of Apple

2 Shallots

400 Milliliters (13.5 oz.) of Vegetable Broth

3 Tablespoons of Olive Oil

250 Milliliters (8.5 oz.) of Heavy Whipping Cream

1 Teaspoon of Lemongrass

RECIPE

Boil 8 ounces of peeled chestnuts. Chop 8 ounces of a type of apple that is not too sweet. Chop 2 shallots. Briefly fry boiled chestnuts, chopped apple, and chopped shallots in 3 tablespoons of olive oil. After frying them, add the chestnuts, apple, and shallots to 400 milliliters of vegetable broth. Let the broth boil (with above ingredients) for 2 to 3 minutes. Add 250 milliliters of heavy whipping cream to broth, again bringing contents to a boil. Once contents reach a boil, take pan off the stove. Let the contents cool down, and pour them into blender and blend. Pour contents into a bowl and reheat if necessary before serving. Finely chop 1 teaspoon of lemongrass. Sprinkle finely chopped lemongrass on soup and serve seasoned with salt and pepper. ■

Ashok Arora

NAWAB INDIAN CUISINE

By Linda Landreth Phelps



Ashok Arora, chef and owner of several Hampton Roads restaurants, features his native Indian cuisine at Nawab (a Punjabi word for a wealthy man who owns a lot of land), a pleasant spot tucked away in an older strip mall on Monticello Avenue. It's hard

to find a place that combines cloth napkins and a reasonably priced lunch buffet, but this one fits the bill. Ashok's story is a perfect example of the old Horatio Alger dime novels theme - of achieving the American dream of success through hard work, courage, and determination.

"When I arrived in this country in 1988, I had \$8.00 in my pocket and no place to sleep!" Ashok remembers. Within five years he had worked his way up from dishwasher to chef and bought the first of his restaurants. Thanks to diligence and drive, by 1989 he was successful enough to acquire a bride from India in a traditional arranged marriage. It seems to have worked out quite happily for them. "We have celebrated 20 years together and Neeru and I and the children plan to spend this Christmas season on a cruise to the Caribbean," Ashok says.

The major religions in Ashok's native country are Hindu, Sikh, Muslim and Christianity. "We honor many of their festivals," Ashok explains. "Christmas is a national holiday, but for Hindus such as myself, Diwali is the largest and most important time. It is also known as the Festival of Lights, and the many lights or lamps signify the victory of good over the evil within every human being and the uplifting of spiritual darkness. Even for those who are not religious, it has a lot of cultural significance. There are fireworks and gift giving, too, like Christmas and the 4th of July combined!"

This year Diwali fell on October 28, a Tuesday, and Ashok arrived home late in the evening from a business trip. Fortunately, he was still able to celebrate with his extended family, including his father, Pritam Chand, and his mother, Krishna Devi, who live in the Highland Park area of Williamsburg. His brother-in-law, Sandeep Baweja (or Sunny, as he is known), and wife, Ragni, are usually
- continued on page 6

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- continued from page 4

part of the family gathering, too.

Sunny is the manager of Williamsburg's Nawab. He was hand picked by Ashok for the management job. When Ashok got to know and appreciate Sunny's fine qualities, he chose him as a husband for his sister as well. With his help, Ashok has everything he needs to serve his customers during the holidays and all year long. NDN

Badami Besan Ke Laddoo

"Just as Americans serve cake for birthdays, people from India serve sweets at celebrations. This is a recipe that we often have for a festival treat. I hope you will enjoy it, too." - Ashok

INGREDIENTS

- 15 - 20 Almonds
- 4 Cups Lentil Flour (besan)
- 2 Cups Butter
- 1/2 Teaspoon Green Cardamom Powder
- 2 Cups Sugar

RECIPE

Heat butter in a pan and add green cardamom powder. Add lentil flour (besan) and roast on

low heat until a nice aroma is given out - approximately 10 minutes. Crush almonds. Transfer roasted lentil flour (besan) to a

bowl and add crushed almonds and mix. Allow the mixture to cool slightly before adding sugar. Add sugar and mix. (You can even use your hand to mix.)

Roll into even sized Laddoos (round in shape). Cooking Time: 30 minutes.

Cool and store. ■



Jason Wade

THE CORNER POCKET

By Rachel Sapin

Although Jason Wade, Head Chef of The Corner Pocket in New Town, has been a chef for 13 years he had an interest in cooking long before that. "I've always been interested in working with my hands," Jason says. "My family even tells a funny story about it. When I was in Boy Scouts, we were going for our first camp out, and all I wanted to take part in was the cooking around the fire and the organization of the

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chuck box.”

Jason learned many of his culinary skills from on-the-job training; he served as a Sous Chef at The Trellis for six years.

“One thing about The Trellis is that everything they make there is fresh,” Jason says. “They’re purists there: nothing comes out of a can, nothing comes out of the freezer, and everything is homemade.”

Jason applies this principle of using only fresh ingredients with the food he prepares at The Corner Pocket. “One ingredient in particular that we like to use that is a little bit different for the holidays is pumpkin,” he says. “At The Corner Pocket, we make sure to use fresh pumpkin, not canned pumpkin.”

Like many chefs during the holiday season, Jason finds it difficult to get out of town to spend time with friends and family. “That’s one of the tough things about being a chef,” he says. “The holidays and the weekends are when the restaurant business does the most business; as a chef, you better be there.”

Although Jason may be working over-

time to accommodate the holiday restaurant rush, he receives a lot of help from his family when it comes to making holiday meals at home. “For my family, a lot of the fun is the cooking of the meal, and a lot of the family time is spent in the kitchen during the holidays,” he explains. NDN

Roasted Pumpkin Soup

For a delightful and unusual holiday meal, Jason recommends his Roasted Pumpkin Soup. It’s a great recipe because it’s versatile,” he says. “It can be paired with a lunchtime sandwich, or served as a great first-course to a really nice dinner.”

Worried about cooking with pumpkin? According to Jason, many people initially feel the same way. “It’s a completely underutilized food, but it’s wonderful,” he explains. “People who take the time to try it and go out of their comfort zone reap the benefits: the hardest part is just cutting up pumpkin. You can use so many varieties of pumpkin, but even plain old jack-o-lantern pumpkin works for this recipe. It makes for great

winter food.”

INGREDIENTS

1 Medium Yellow Onion
2 Tablespoons Light Brown Sugar
3 Stalks of Celery
6 Cups Chicken Stock
1 Medium Carrot
1 Cup Heavy Whipping Cream
1 Small Pumpkin
2 Tablespoons Vegetable Oil
3 Cloves Garlic
1 Tablespoon Butter
Salt and Pepper to Taste

RECIPE

Pre-heat oven to 425 degrees. Peel, seed, and coarsely dice the pumpkin. In a stainless steel mixing bowl, toss pumpkin with 1 tablespoon of the vegetable oil and lightly season with salt and pepper. Transfer pumpkin to a cookie sheet, spread evenly and roast in the oven until pumpkin is tender and lightly browned. Clean and coarsely dice the onion, celery and carrot.



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Heat a large saucepot over high heat, once hot, add 1 tablespoon vegetable oil, 1 tablespoon butter, 3 cloves garlic and the diced vegetables (excluding the pumpkin). Cook this mixture until tender. Add 2 tablespoons brown sugar, 6 cups chicken stock and the roasted pumpkin. Bring soup to a boil then reduce heat to medium and simmer for 30 minutes. Remove soup from heat. Add 1 cup cream and puree mixture with a hand blender until very smooth. Strain the pureed soup through a fine mesh strainer to remove unwanted particles. Adjust seasoning with salt and pepper and serve hot. ■



Frank Alosa

DORALDO RISTORANTE ITALIANO

By Natalie Miller-Moore

Chef Frank Alosa grew up in the kitchens of his family's restaurants, so it's no surprise that he became a chef and later opened his own restaurant. "I'd go in after school and clean tables. When I was ready for the kitchen, they started me out small, with chicken parmesan, which is easy to make," Frank said.

Nine years ago, he opened Doraldo's in Newport News and two years later, moved it to Williamsburg



near Kingsmill. During that time, he hasn't stopped cooking.

Even when the restaurant is closed briefly for the holidays, Frank is home cooking for his family, using family recipes that have been passed on to him. "I love to cook – it's in my blood. Because I'm Italian, I love seafood, and that's a holiday tradition for us," he said.

Frank's family is from the seaside region of Calabria, where boats full of lobsters and shrimp would come in and be transformed

into dinner. Living on the sea also means easy access to mussels, on the rocks near the beach.

"One of the tricks to opening mussels is to drop them in boiling water for about 20 seconds. Then you

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can sauté them,” Frank said. In his opinion, the ultimate sin in all of cooking is not adding cheese to a seafood dish...in most cases, Pecorino Romano is his choice.

Besides the wonderful food, one of Frank’s favorite pleasures being a chef is the reaction he gets from his customers. “I like it when I go up to a table and get the satisfaction of people telling me how good the food is and how much they enjoy it. I guess it’s just a little instant gratification,” he said.

The creativity he adds to cooking is directly from his philosophy: *Rules are meant to be broken*. He’s not one to cook by the book because he feels cooking is a creative pursuit. Frank loves to think up new recipes for his regular customers. “It’s great to surprise them. This is definitely a small place where we get a lot of regulars and my goal is to make it the best meal for them,” he said.

Frank also has a favorite Italian sweet that he’s been making for years, called Crustuli. It’s a flour dough made with liquor, fried, formed and dipped in honey. It’s another

family recipe that he enjoys making.

Frank has a goal for those who dine in his restaurant - to make people think of their last trip to Italy, and exceed the quality of the food they had there. It’s a lofty goal, but he’s working on perfecting his craft so he can hear that from his customers. His 16 years of experience in the restaurant business and his innate creativity help propel him toward this ultimate goal. With his culinary talent and energy, it’s likely that there are customers who may say he has already accomplished that feat. NDN

Pan Stew of Mussels

INGREDIENTS

- 2 Tablespoons Extra Virgin Olive Oil
- 1 ½ Tablespoons Finely Chopped Garlic
- ½ Cup Sliced Onions
- 1 Pound of Mussels – Scrubbed and Debearded
- ½ Cup White Wine
- 1 Cup Heavy Cream
- 4 Roughly Chopped Basil Leaves

Salt and Fresh Ground Pepper
Butter

RECIPE

Heat the olive oil in a sauté pan. Heat until hot. Add garlic and onions, sauté briefly. Add the mussels and white wine and steam them open. Once the mussels are all open, add heavy cream, salt, and pepper. Allow the heavy cream to reduce while the mussels are cooking in the sauce. Add butter, basil and that most important ingredient... a dusting of Pecorino Romano. ■



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Lisa Lawrence

SPECTATOR'S FAMILY SPORTS PUB

By Greg Lilly

“My father was a chef and I loved to be in the kitchen cooking with him,” Lisa says. That love of cooking and spending time with her father sparked the flame for her to become a chef. “I like to try new recipes and variations, and when I make a meal that people truly enjoy – that’s the reward.”

The holidays create excitement in her life both at work and at home. “A wide variety of people come in the restaurant while taking a break from their holiday shopping,” Lisa says. “I meet new people and discover new ideas that I sometimes incorpo-



rate into my own meal planning.”

She says the customer interaction makes the season exciting and filled with kernels of special ideas. A tip from one customer mixes with a suggestion from another. Then those blend with a simmering concept Lisa has been thinking about and a new dish is created. “Trying new things keeps cooking interesting,” she says.

On the other hand, Lisa’s family has certain staples that make their holiday special. One is Sweet Potato Pudding. “My brothers and sisters and I get together on Christmas Eve,” Lisa says, “usually at my house, and I do all the cooking. It gets busy, but it’s also fun to be able to sit down together and enjoy a meal.” This recipe she shares is a variation of her father’s pie recipe. “One year we were making sweet potato pies and I realized that it could be made into a pudding as well.” She perfected the blend and it became a family favorite. Like all great cooks, Lisa discovered a twist. “We had made the holiday ham and had some extra pineapples, so I chopped them up into chunks and added them to the pudding mixture, and oh gosh, it was so good.” NDN

Lisa’s Sweet Potato Pudding

INGREDIENTS

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| 3 Pounds Medium-Large Sweet Potatoes | 1 Tablespoon Vanilla Extract |
| 1 Stick of Butter (1/2 cup) softened | 1/2 Tablespoon Lemon Extract |
| 2 Large Eggs | 1 Tablespoon Cinnamon |
| 1/4 Cup of Evaporated Milk | 1/2 Teaspoon Nutmeg |
| | 1 Cup Brown Sugar |

RECIPE

In a large pot, boil sweet potatoes with the skin on until tender (test with a fork). Drain water and peel the sweet potatoes then place into a large mixing bowl. Add butter to the warm sweet potatoes. Add the eggs and evaporated milk. Blend well. Mix in the remaining ingredients (vanilla and lemon extracts, cinnamon, nutmeg, and brown sugar). Pour into a serving dish. The pudding can be served warm or chilled. Optional: mix in pineapple chunks or pineapple juice for a more exotic flavor. ■

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Ronnie Oldham

OPUS 9 STEAKHOUSE

By Greg Lilly

Ronnie Oldham hails from a New Orleans family of seven sisters and a mother who didn't like to cook. At the age of twelve, he decided that if he wanted to eat something more than macaroni and cheese he had better learn to cook. Today, Ronnie is the Executive Chef at New Town's Opus 9 Steakhouse, and he shares a family recipe that combines the flavor of his past with his present.

The Mirliton Casserole is a family tradition for Thanksgiving and Christmas. "Someone always makes this," he says of his mother and four of his sisters and their families who now live in the area. "What I like about the casserole is that while most of the dishes in New Orleans are super rich with lots of butter and lots of heavy cream, this one is a little lighter because it has the squash, but still has the elements of the shrimp and ham that makes it nice and savory." Not only is it a family favorite, but it has become a holiday dish at Opus 9 Steakhouse. They serve it on their Thanksgiving buffet.

"This recipe is not your typical New Orleans dish," Ronnie explains. "New Orleans is so many different areas: Italians, Cubans, French and Creole. This is from the outskirts of New Orleans. The dish has some Latin influence too since Chayote squash is really a Latin food." The New Orleans flavor comes from the combination of the shrimp, ham, parmesan cheese and Cajun seasoning. Ronnie adds a local touch by using Smithfield ham in his casserole.



Ronnie bakes, roasts, steams and grills throughout the season and works all day Thanksgiving. Christmas, he says, is different. "Christmas Eve, I'm at the restaurant, then after work I stop at the grocery store, get home and try to take a nap, and then begin cooking for the family." But his smile and enthusiasm state that he wouldn't have it any other way. NDN

Mirliton Casserole

INGREDIENTS

10 Chayote Squash (Mirliton)	1 cup Parmesan Cheese, grated
1 Lb. Shrimp, peeled and de-veined	2 Tablespoon Cajun Seasoning
1 Lb. Smithfield Ham	3 Cloves Garlic, Chopped
1 Cup Panko Bread Crumbs	1 Large Yellow Onion, chopped
	1 Stick Unsalted Butter, cubed

RECIPE

Peel squash and blanch in boiling water; Remove seed and rough chop; Chop shrimp and ham; Combine all ingredients in a 9 x 13 baking dish; Bake at 375 degrees for 20 – 25 minutes. ■

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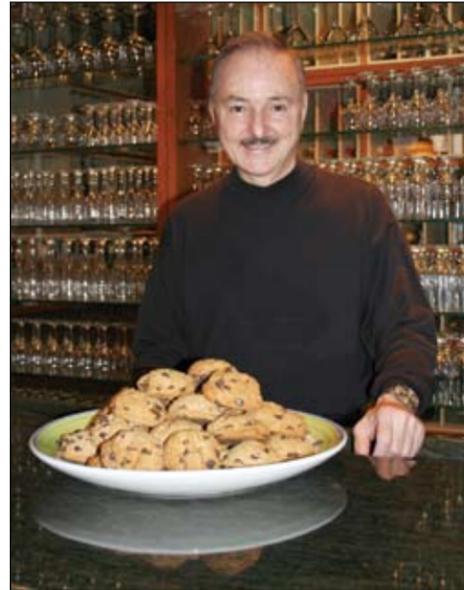
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Marcel Desaulnier

THE TRELIS

By Linda Landreth Phelps

Christmas Day at Marcel and Connie Desaulniers' house is celebrated with an ever-changing guest list of about thirty friends. Marcel is a world-class chef and has co-owned The Trellis on Merchant's Square since 1980. He says, "It's become a tradition with us to get together with people who are single or happen to be separated from their families somehow for the holidays. We call ourselves the 'Widows and Orphans' and we gather in the early afternoon for a buffet meal."



As you can imagine, Christmas dinner with Marcel and Connie is bound to be a treat for all the senses. Always among the offerings on the buffet spread for their guests is a special, time-honored treat from Marcel's early days, chocolate chip cookies.

These are not just any ordinary cookies, however. When they're baking in his oven, the blissful fragrance of chocolate-laden cookies with a whiff of buttery, dark rum can take Marcel back to his mother's kitchen and memory of a New England holiday in his childhood which was interrupted by the sudden

death of his father. At just 10 years old, Marcel was suddenly the man of the house. His mother never remarried and devoted herself to raising her children in the home Marcel's grandfather built.

Marcel's father was of French-Canadian heritage and one of 14 siblings, so there has always been a happy tradition of large family gatherings. In Canada as well as Rhode Island where Marcel was born, cold December weather emphasizes merriment, staying in, eating big and partying long.

"French Canadians celebrate Réveillon on Christmas Eve," Marcel recalls with nostalgia. "Families return home to a big meal after Midnight Mass, complete with tourtière, or meat pies, and eggnog. Later, gifts are exchanged, and the party usually goes on until 4 or 5 o'clock in the morning! That traditional gathering carries on at home to this day, but my mother's cookies are always a favorite at any family event."

Mrs. D, as she is known, celebrated her 90th birthday in November with most of her large extended clan present, including her six grandchildren and four great-grandchildren. Here is her own personal recipe that Marcel still uses today. NDN

Mrs. D's Chocolate Chip Cookies

INGREDIENTS

4 Cups All-Purpose Flour
1 1/2 Teaspoons Baking Soda
1/2 Teaspoon Salt
1/2 Pound Unsalted Butter, cut into 1-oz. pieces
2 Cups Tightly Packed Dark Brown Sugar
2 Large Eggs
2 Tablespoons Dark Rum
1 Teaspoon Pure Vanilla Extract
24 oz. Chocolate Chips

RECIPE

Preheat the oven to 300 degrees Fahrenheit. In a sifter combine the flour, baking soda, and salt. Sift onto a large piece of wax paper and set aside until needed. Place the butter and dark brown sugar in the bowl of an electric mixer fitted with a paddle. Beat on medium for 4 minutes until soft. Use a rubber spatula to scrape down the sides of the bowl, then add the eggs, dark rum, and vanilla extract and beat on medium for 1 minute until combined. Scrape down the bowl. Operate the mixer on low while gradually adding the sifted dry ingredients until incorporated, about 1 minute. Add the chocolate chips and mix on low for 30 seconds. Remove the bowl from the mixer and use a rubber spatula to finish mixing the dough until thoroughly combined. Using 2 large heaping tablespoons of dough for each cookie (just shy of 3 ounces), portion 6 cookies, evenly spaced, onto each of 4 nonstick baking sheets. Place the baking sheets on the top and center racks of the preheated oven and bake for 28 to 30 minutes until dry to the touch. Rotate the cookies from top to center about halfway through the baking time (at this time also turn each sheet 180 degrees). Remove the cookies from the oven and allow to cool at room temperature on the baking sheets for 30 minutes. Store the cookies in a tightly sealed plastic container until ready to serve. ■

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Jim Kennedy

DUDLEY'S FARMHOUSE GRILLE

By Alison Johnson

Jim Kennedy can remember the first thing he ever cooked: a vanilla cake with chocolate icing, thrown together from scratch when he was just five years old.

"It was pretty awful, actually," he says. "A 5 year-old reading a cookbook is going to have some interesting interpretations. But for a first attempt, it wasn't too bad, and as I recall I couldn't wait to try something else."

As his story shows, Jim – now owner and chef at Dudley's Farmhouse Grille in Toano – has always been interested in cooking. By the time he was 8 years old, Jim, now 48, was preparing full dinners for his parents and two siblings, building up a diverse menu that included seafood, chicken and beef. During high school in Connecticut, his childhood home, he took culinary program courses. From there he went on to become a chef's apprentice for six years, working in Connecticut restaurants with cooks of different nationalities. A German chef taught him the importance of timing and color presentation, for example, while an Italian passed on a love of good sauces and wines.

He left the restaurant business for a time to work as an optician, but his love for cooking influenced his return. Jim has held every job in a kitchen over the years and has gone from washing dishes and working as a line chef to running his own kitchen at Dudley's, which opened in May 2007.

The workdays are long and tiring, but Jim thrives on the bustling atmosphere. "I just enjoy the creativity of cooking and being in the kitchen," he says. "I also like the looks on people's faces when they're enjoying something that I've made. It's a wonderful feeling."

Jim takes Christmas off from work. His family's Christmas Eve tradition is to go into Colonial Williamsburg, where they walk their dogs, browse in shops and maybe go out for lunch. For the Christmas feast at his home, he prepares lobster bisque and three main courses: prime rib, turkey and



ham. Needless to say, Jim has come a long way from his first cooking experiences making vanilla cake. NDN

Sweet Potatoes in Caramel Sauce

"If you slow-cook them, the sauce really gets all the way through the potato and they get very sweet. They're different because they're like candied potatoes, and they've been a hit with people who say they've never liked sweet potatoes before." - Jim

INGREDIENTS

- 5 Lbs. Sweet Potatoes
- 1 Lb. Butter
- 1 Lb. Brown Sugar, dark or light
- ½ Cup Honey
- ½ Teaspoon Cinnamon
- 1/8 Teaspoon Fresh Nutmeg
- Pinch of Salt and Pepper

RECIPE

Peel potatoes and cut them into quarters. Put them in a bowl of water to soak, set aside. In a deep, heavy pan, melt butter and stir in brown sugar, honey, cinnamon, nutmeg, salt and pepper. Bring sauce to a bubble. It will get very thick and sticky (caution: it also gets very hot). Once sauce is done, drain potatoes and place them in a Dutch oven (a large, heavy metal cooking pot with a tight-fitting lid). Pour sauce over the potatoes. The sauce will harden. If slow cooking the potatoes – which I recommend – place them in the oven overnight at 200 degrees. If they start cooking at 11 p.m., they'll be done by the next morning. Place them in a warm area on the oven until you're ready to eat. To prepare more quickly, cook potatoes for about two hours at 350 degrees. ■

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John Fidler

BACKFIN RESTAURANT

By Natalie Miller-Moore

John Fidler, chef at the Backfin Restaurant, started out his career waiting tables but his calling was to be a chef. He loves cooking and enjoys having his regulars ask for him.

After seven years preparing food, he never runs out of ideas for new menu items for one of Williamsburg's landmark seafood restaurants. "We come up with specials every day and it's fun to experiment," John said. Seafood specials include spinach tomato Florentine mahi mahi and pecan-encrusted catfish. John describes himself as a "meat and pota-

toes kind of guy," which is ironic, given his current place of employment.

John doesn't spend a lot of time cooking at home and on the holidays; he leaves the cooking to others. "My dad and his wife cook on the holidays.

I'll just relax and hang out with the family," he said. He is appreciative of all the hard work that goes into making any meal and especially appreciates the ones prepared



by others.

The Backfin is known for its crab dishes, namely crabcakes and hot crab dip. John suggests cutting the breadsticks before you bake them, so that it doesn't mash the volume out

of them.

No matter what changes on the menu, John will be working in the kitchen to craft a dish for his regular customers to enjoy. He has no plans to get out of the kitchen - no matter how many tips he may be missing out on from his days waiting tables. NDN

Crab Dip

INGREDIENTS

- 24 oz. Cream Cheese
- 1/2 Quart Heavy Cream
- 8 oz. Lump Crab Meat
- 1 Cup Shredded Parmesan Cheese
- 1/2 Teaspoon Olde Bay Seasoning
- 1/2 Teaspoon Garlic Salt
- Pinch of Salt
- Pinch of Pepper

RECIPE

Over low heat add cream cheese and heavy cream. Bring to simmer and turn to break down cream cheese. Add parmesan, seasoning and crab meat until completely blended. Serve with French bread chips. ■

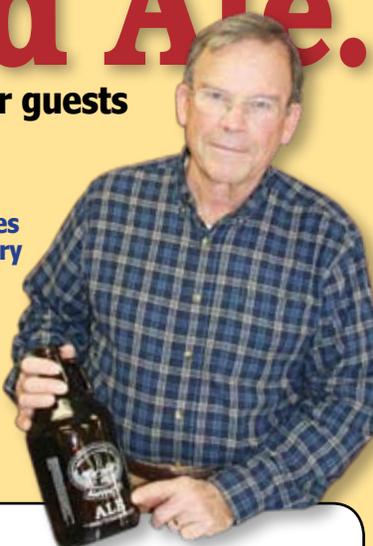
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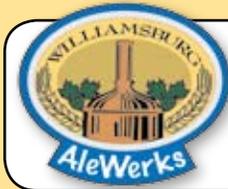
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Henry Wang

KYOTOS JAPANESE STEAK AND SEAFOOD HOUSE

By Linda Landreth Phelps

Henry Wang's world is about to change. His first big adjustment was when he came here from China in 1988 after learning to cook so well that he had been working in five star hotels. "Soon after I arrived," Henry says, "I learned Japanese style cooking from



a famous master chef, Sato-san."

Henry's busiest seasons are summer and the Christmas holidays, so he's not used to much of a celebration on Christmas Day, the one day they're closed. "We usually just have a small gathering at someone's home," Henry says.

That relaxed tradition is about to be revolutionized, however, with another life-changing moment. This Christmas, he and his wife, Baylee Wang, a Williamsburg Realtor, will be the parents of a brand new baby, due the first week of December.

In Chinese culture, the big party isn't at Christmas. Chinese New Year, changing dates according to the cycles of the moon, will be celebrated on January 26, 2009, and will usher in the Year of the Ox. Like Christmas, there's a lot of ritual attached to the preparation and celebration of the festival, including a thorough house cleaning to sweep away any lingering bad luck.

"We will go to a relative's house and have a banquet with many courses of small dishes," Henry shares. "Steamed fish is a traditional food to eat and a symbol of good luck. In Chinese language, the pronunciation of the character 'fish' is the same as the one with the meaning 'plentiful'. So in our culture we always have fish at a holiday dinner to be sure to have a surplus in the coming year!" NDN

Steamed Fish

INGREDIENTS

- 8 oz. White Fish (filet - Flounder, Grouper, Sea Bass)
- 2 Tablespoons - Soy Sauce (Kikkoman)
- 1 ½ Tablespoons - Vegetable Oil
- 1 Piece - Scallion
- ½ oz. - Ginger

RECIPE

Have a fish in a steamer and put it over boiling water for 10 minutes with high level heat on. The fish should not be over steamed in order to keep its tender and juicy taste. Then, put the steamed fish on a service plate. Add soy sauce over the fish first. Add sliced scallion (hair thin) and sliced Ginger (hair thin) on the top of the fish. Heat up vegetable oil above 450 degrees. Pour heated oil over the scallion and ginger covered fish. Now, enjoy this delicious steamed fish! ■

Tim Westby-Gibson

CENTER STREET GRILL

By Brandy Centolanza

Tim Westby-Gibson, Executive Chef at Center Street Grill in New Town, has been around food for as long as he can remember.

"My first job was in a restaurant," he recalls. "I loved the atmosphere it provided. High pressure and an ever-changing job description made it very interesting to me. I had [also] watched both my parents cook while growing up, and it had always fascinated me."

Before coming to Center Street Grill almost three years ago, Tim was the Executive Chef at A. Carroll's for seven years.

"I did not attend culinary school, but was fortunate enough to train under some very talented chefs, here in Williamsburg as well as in Key West, Florida," he notes. "I love the fact that working in a restaurant is a very different experience every day. There is always a new challenge to overcome and a new set of goals to strive for. Instant gratification also plays a major role. As far as cooking, it is something



I have enjoyed my entire life."

So what is Tim's favorite ingredient?

"Pork," he announces. "Everything pork. Never live without it. Bacon, sausage, ham, pork loin, pork chops, roast pork shoulder, smoked pork tenderloin, braised cheeks and shanks, the list goes on and on and on. It is by far the most diverse single ingredient in any kitchen. Whether using a little pancetta or bacon to flavor everything from soups to sauces, stews, and pastas, or as a main dish ingredient, everything pork is my favorite ingredient."

This season Tim will be busy with both his family and his work. "The holidays are a very busy time of year for a chef," he says. "The restaurant is always busy and usually open, so I don't get a lot of free time. I'm fortunate that all my family loves to cook as well, so for major holidays we can all chip in to make great meals without leaving the burden on one person alone." NDN

Guinness Braised Beef Short Ribs

While Tim likes to cook with pork, he's a beef man also. "I've found that around the holidays I need recipes that make outstanding food with minimal preparation. This recipe falls into that category. It's fairly simple to make, not a lot of ingredients are required, and it makes for a pretty impressive dish for family and guests alike. The best thing is that it can be made well ahead of time and gently reheated on the stovetop, allowing

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for plenty of time to mingle with guests or simply relax." - Tim

INGREDIENTS

8 Single Bone short Ribs, at least 1-inch thick
2 Cans of Guinness Draught (15 oz. cans)
2 Tablespoons Olive Oil
1 Large Onion, sliced
4 Cloves Garlic, smashed and skin removed
4 Strips Bacon, sliced into 1/4 inch
1 Sprig Fresh Rosemary
1 Sprig Fresh Thyme
Salt and Pepper

RECIPE

Allow the short ribs to come to room temperature, then coat liberally with salt and pepper. Heat a large dutch oven or braising pan (large enough to hold all the ribs and the liquid) over medium high heat, add bacon and cook until crispy, remove with slotted spoon and drain on paper towel. Leave the fat in the pan. Brown the short ribs all over and set aside. Remove all but two tablespoons of the remaining fat from the pan, then add onions, garlic, rosemary and thyme, season with salt and pepper to taste and saute until onions become translucent. Add Guinness and bring to a boil. Return ribs to pan and cover tightly. Place in preheated 350 degree oven and braise until tender, about 1 and a 1/2 hours. Remove from oven and let sit for twenty minutes, uncovered. Gently remove ribs from pan and set aside. Strain liquid into clean saucepot, discarding onions, garlic, rosemary and thyme. Place saucepot over medium heat and reduce liquid until thick in consistency (saucy). Add ribs to sauce to heat back up and serve, preferably over mashed potatoes, and sprinkled with the bacon. ■

John Hausman

SHACKLEFORD'S II RESTAURANT & BAR

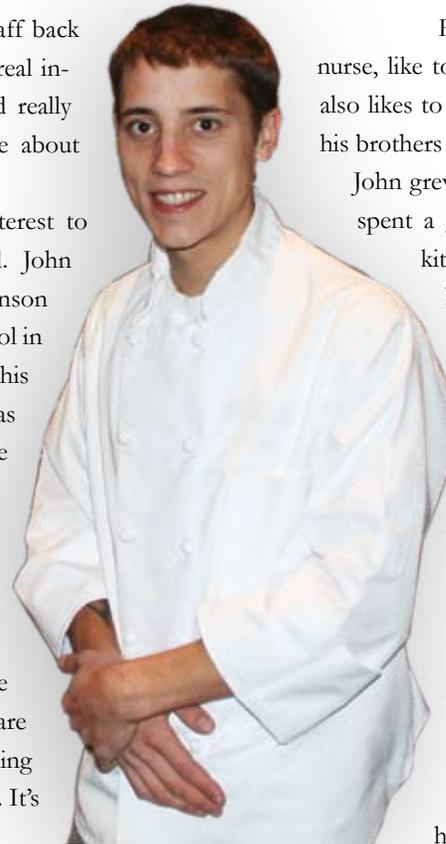
By Brandy Centolanza

In 1999, John Hausman started out as a food runner - setting up the food and getting it ready to take to the customers - at Shackelford's II Restaurant & Raw Bar in Monticello Marketplace. It was a job that kept him busy and he was good at it. Within three months, he was offered a chance to work in the kitchen permanently.

"I really liked the staff back there, and just had a real interest in cooking, and really wanted to learn more about food," John explains.

He took his interest to another level as well. John graduated from Johnson & Wales culinary school in Norfolk in 2004, and his extensive training has helped earn him the position of Executive Chef at Shackelford's Restaurant & Bar.

"I really enjoy it here," John says. "I really enjoy the people I work with here. We are a team and always willing to help each other out. It's a good environment."



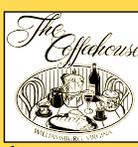
John was a key player in the creation of some of the recipes on the restaurant's new menu, which was unveiled earlier this fall. It's always a challenge to make changes to the menu, but it's one that he's good at. His current favorite dishes are Seafood Au Gratin and Brushcetta Pasta.

"I love to cook because there is always good stuff to eat," he laughs. "I like making food for people because they have to eat, and they appreciate good food. I like making things out of the ordinary." John's favorite ingredient is garlic "because it adds great flavor to almost any hot dish."

He and his wife Rajeeana, a nurse, like to grill on his days off. He also likes to golf and spend time with his brothers when he gets the chance.

John grew up in Williamsburg, and spent a great deal of time in the kitchen with his mother,

Patricia. He learned a lot fresh herbs from watching his mother working in the backyard garden. The holidays are a special time of year for John because it means helping his mother prepare the holiday meals. It has been a tradition for the two of them to work side-by-side in the kitchen to prepare the food for the holidays. For as long as he

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can remember, the two have made prime rib roast with Yorkshire pudding for the family on Christmas Day.

"I always stay home for the holidays," he says. "It's all about family time. It's definitely good to see them because I don't see them often since I am always working." NDN

Prime Rib Roast with Yorkshire Pudding

"Prime rib is my favorite cut of beef. It's real tender and has a lot of flavor. It's also neat to use the drippings from the prime rib as an ingredient in the pudding because that's what gives it the flavor." - John

INGREDIENTS

- 5 Pound Rib Roast, bone in
- 8 Cloves Garlic
- 1 Tablespoon Salt
- 1 Tablespoon Fresh Cracked Pepper

A few sprigs each of fresh oregano, rosemary, thyme, and tarragon, chopped

RECIPE

Cook roast at 450 degrees for 30 minutes, then at 350 for one hour, or until medium rare. Save drippings of roast for pudding.

PUDDING INGREDIENTS

- 2 Eggs
- 2 Cups of Milk
- 2 Cups of Flour
- ½ Cup of the Roast Pan Drippings
- Pinch of Salt

RECIPE

Preheat a muffin pan. Ladle pan drippings into each muffin slot. Mix remaining ingredients, then fill muffin pan until each slot is ¾ full. Bake at 425 degrees for 20 minutes. ■



Next Door Neighbors

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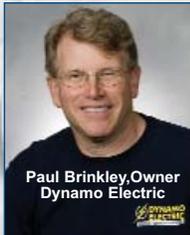
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Adonis Conner

THE GREEN LEAF

By Alison Johnson

One part of a chef's job that has never surprised Adonis Conner is how much work it takes. He has been well aware of that since his childhood on a peanut farm in Sussex County, where he helped prepare family meals every day.

"We had a huge garden and we picked tomatoes, shelled beans, did a lot of heavy lifting – it was really intense work," says Adonis, now 35. "We grew a lot of our own food, like my mom made preserves and relishes. There was not a lot of shopping. I was made to cook. I never thought I'd do it for a living."

As Executive Chef for Green Leaf, Inc. – which includes two



Williamsburg-area restaurants and a busy catering business – Adonis has learned to love working with food. That's despite the long days, which can be even tougher now that a pinched economy has stiffened competition between area restaurants.

"I like the results, especially when people give me compliments and respect," he says. "You also get to meet so many nice people. It's never boring. People customize their own menus when we cater. We change our menu twice a year at the restaurant and we'll serve more elegant foods when we do our beer and wine tastings. It keeps me on my toes."

Adonis first got into the restaurant business out of necessity. At 17, he was a father-to-be who had just been laid off from a job in Richmond. A friend who worked at Shields Tavern in Colonial Williamsburg told him the restaurant was hiring staffers. Once there, Adonis proved himself a hard worker and got into a chef's apprenticeship program. He has since earned a degree in culinary science from Johnson & Wales University and worked at several local restaurants. He started at Green Leaf in 2004.

For Adonis, the holidays are a time to slow down and enjoy family time. On Thanksgiving Day, it's all about cheering on his favorite football team, the Dallas Cowboys, and tackling a Southern-style spread with his family in Sussex. "We eat everything that's not good for you," he laughs.

Christmas is more of the same fare, including oven-roasted turkey and country ham. Adonis spends that day at his mother's house with his two sons, 18 and 13 (he also has a baby girl on the way).

Besides those days of rest, Adonis has no plans to step out of

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the heat in the kitchen. "I know how much effort goes into getting a good meal on the table," he says. "Every day, I know I have to step it up and give 100 percent." NDN

Shrimp Newburg

"This is a dish with a lot of different flavors going on, and you can customize the ingredients to what people really like. For example, I like to add fresh green onions or chives." - Adonis

INGREDIENTS

Sauce Ingredients:

½ Cup Butter

2 ½ to 3 Teaspoons All-Purpose Flour

2 Eggs, yolk only

2 Cups Half and Half Cream

3 Tablespoons Sherry

¾ Teaspoon Salt

Pinch/dash of Cayenne Pepper, Nutmeg and Hot Sauce

RECIPE

Heat butter in a medium saucepan and add flour, then stir in salt, cayenne pepper and nut-

meg. Set aside. Lightly beat the egg yolks and add a dash of hot sauce. Pour yolks into the flour mixture and reheat until the egg is cooked. The mixture should be smooth. Add in the half and half and sherry. In a separate pan, sauté shrimp. If desired, braise shrimp with white wine and fresh garlic. Pour sauce over shrimp, served over rice or pasta. ■



Bill Lee Watkins

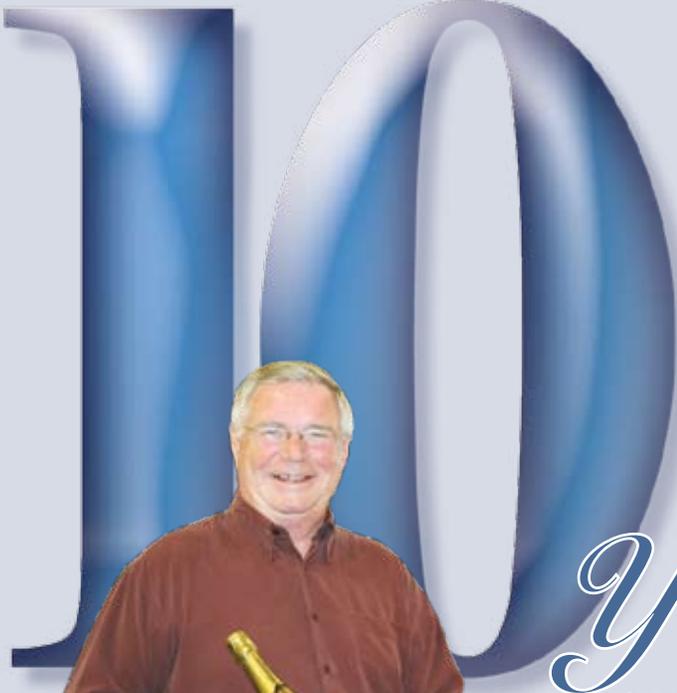
HOG WILD SMOKEHOUSE

By Linda Landreth Phelps

Hog Wild Smokehouse's menu advises 'Never Trust a Skinny Chef'. "I am what you see," he chuckles. "I'm fat and happy!" And why wouldn't he be? Bill Lee (pronounced "Billy") is a big, easy-going guy who likes food and is really good at preparing it. "I'm lucky - I get to do what I love for a living!" he says with enthusiasm.

"I've been involved with the food industry since I was just a kid. I grew up on the docks in New Orleans, icing down the fish and shucking oysters in the 5th grade, and by the time I was 12 I was cooking crabs and crawfish right off the boats."

He eventually came to Virginia and gained



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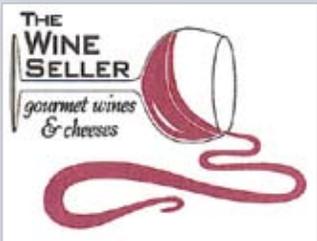
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experience cooking for upscale restaurants in the Tidewater area such as Williamsburg's Cities Grille and Chef Bobby Huber's Bobbywood, in Norfolk; he was also the Executive Chef at the historic Chamberlin Hotel on Hampton's waterfront. He can prepare high-end cuisine with the best of them, but deep in his heart, BillLee has always been just a down-home Creole-style barbecuing genius.

In the spring of 2005 he bought a run-down biker bar on Route 60 in Toano and turned it into a dream he and Blanche (his wife of 23 years) shared - a place of their own. "This building has been here since 1943 and originally was called The Oak Grove Tearoom. This was where you'd come to get your bootleg! It got to be a rough place, lots of fights and drugs, a real problem child for the community," BillLee says. "The locals seemed pleased and relieved when we bought it and renovated it, but we got a lot of calls after we opened asking, 'Are you a bar or a restaurant?' before they would come

here." The bikes still line up out front on sunny weekends, but now the chrome-laden Harleys are more likely to belong to Richmond lawyers looking for ribs than tough guys cruising for a fight.

Featured on the dessert menu at Hog Wild Smokehouse is a recipe that has special meaning for BillLee. "My dad didn't really like most desserts and I grew up in an era where the family dinner was designed around the tastes of the breadwinner. If Dad didn't like it, we didn't eat it. The only desserts Dad wanted were vanilla ice cream and my mother's sweet potato pie, so we had it at every special occasion - birthdays, Thanksgiving, and Christmas."

BillLee's father, Mr. Bill, lived with them until he passed away last April, so this will be their first Christmas without him. It was Mr. Bill who always had to have fried chicken livers and ham biscuits on Christmas morning, so that tradition might be set aside for food selections the entire family will enjoy. Yet, the sweet potato pie is likely to live on.

BillLee's father will be there in their hearts this Christmas season, and if you go to Hog Wild Smokehouse you can still order a slice of Mr. Bill's favorite pie. NDN

Sweet Potato Pie

INGREDIENTS

- 2 Cups Mashed Sweet Potatoes (canned is fine)
- 1 Cup Brown Sugar
- 2 Tablespoons White Sugar
- 3 Large Whole Eggs
- 1-½ Cup Whole Milk
- ½ Teaspoon Nutmeg
- ½ Teaspoon Ground Ginger
- 1 Teaspoon Cinnamon
- 1 Teaspoon Salt
- 1 Tablespoon Melted Butter

RECIPE

Put all ingredients in large mixing bowl. Blend until smooth. Pour into a nine-inch, unbaked piecrust. Bake in preheated 350 degree oven for 50-60 minutes, until inserted knife comes out clean. Cool at room temperature to avoid cracking. Serve with a generous portion of real whipped cream. ■

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Hey Neighbor!

There are more community announcements for this issue that did not fit on this page.

Please visit www.wburgndn.com and click on **Hey Neighbor!** for a complete list of current community announcements.

Hey Neighbor! **STORYTIME WITH THE ARTS** **November 22, 2008**

The Institute for Dance supporting the Williamsburg Regional Library will present a narrated version of The Nutcracker Ballet danced by the Williamsburg Ballet Theatre. Admission is FREE however a donation of a non-perishable food item in honor of National Family Week is appreciated. Event will be held at Williamsburg Regional Library Theatre at 10:30a.m.

Hey Neighbor! **NATIONAL FAMILY WEEK EVENT** **November 23, 2008**

Child and Family Connection and their community partners will be hosting a National Family Week event at the Historic Triangle Community Center from 2-5pm. Come Join the many activities, storytimes, games and Jumping Joey's...Something for every family member! National Family Week celebrates the strengths in families. Join the Institute for Dance, Boy Scouts of America, Girl Scouts of America, HEADSTART, WJCC Parks & Recreation, CASA and many more providing resources and sponsoring activities for this GREAT EVENT!!! Admission: One Non-Perishable Item per person.

Hey Neighbor! **STORYTIME WITH THE ARTS** **December 6, 2008**

The Institute for Dance will be hosting 'Gingerbread Friends' at the Barnes&Nobles W&M Bookstore on Merchant Square. Costume characters will be on hand as we share this wonderful Jan Brett story. The event is at 11am. A Snack and Craft will be provided.

Hey Neighbor! **EXHIBIT OF NATIVITY SCENES** **December 6, 2008**

At the Williamsburg Regional Library from 11am to 4pm the PEO Chapter AP will host this and have on display over 15 unique Nativity Scenes. Tickets may be obtained at the door (day of), purchased from a member or by calling Ruth Simpson, 757-229-2070. Admission is \$5.00, children under 10, \$2.00. Proceeds go to PEO, A Philanthropic Educational Organization that grants Scholarships for women.

Hey Neighbor! **THE ANNUAL HERITAGE HUMANE** **AUXILIARY CHRISTMAS BAZAAR** **December 13, 2008**

Held at the Parish House on Duke of Gloucester Street from 9am to 4pm. Support our shelter by shopping for hand made gift items – holiday and pet themed, scented handmade soaps, unique jewelry, gift baskets, designer scarves, yummy baked goods. Come early for purchases at our Soup Kitchen featuring quarts of soup from Top Chefs of area restaurants. For more info please contact: Debbie Dalla Villa at deborah.dallavilla@gmail.com Phone 757-647-5342 or Barbara Ball @ 229-5450.

Hey Neighbor! **2009 MISS WILLIAMSBURG SCHOLARSHIP PAGEANT** **December 13, 2008**

The Miss Williamsburg's Outstanding Teen and Pre-Teen Pageant will take place at the Bruton High School Auditorium at 2 pm followed by the Miss Williamsburg Scholarship Pageant at 7:30 pm. Tickets available at the door and help support the Miss Williamsburg Scholarship Organization. For more information, please visit our website at: www.misswilliamsburgva.com.

Hey Neighbor! **A CHRISTMAS IN WILLIAMSBURG:** **A MAGICAL NIGHT ON DUKE OF** **GLOUCESTER STREET** **December 13 & 14, 2008**

A Holiday production by the Institute for Dance, Inc. and the Williamsburg Ballet Theatre. Join us in celebrating Williamsburg's Newest Holiday Tradition. This original production melds classical ballet with toe tapping, high stepping kickline, and of course Santa and Mrs. Claus. A musical journey down Duke of Gloucester Street and rediscover the magic of Christmas. See us at Kimball Theatre Dec 13 Matinee 2pm/Evening 5:30pm; Dec 14 Matinee Only 2pm. Tickets on Sale Now at 1-800-History.

Hey Neighbor! **FIRST NIGHT WILLIAMSBURG 2009** **December 31, 2008**

The best value New Year's Eve celebration for families of all ages. Downtown Williamsburg, the College of William & Mary plus churches and City buildings provide stages for 60 performing arts groups. Food available for sale, and buses give free rides to all sites. Kids' Show starts at 5 pm at Matthew Whaley School, Main Stage Entertainment begins at 5 pm. Grand Finale Fireworks included in admission price. Buttons are on sale at 20 retailers. \$12 Dec 1 - 30; \$15 Dec 31st; kids under 5 free. www.firstnightwilliamsburg.org 757-258-5153.

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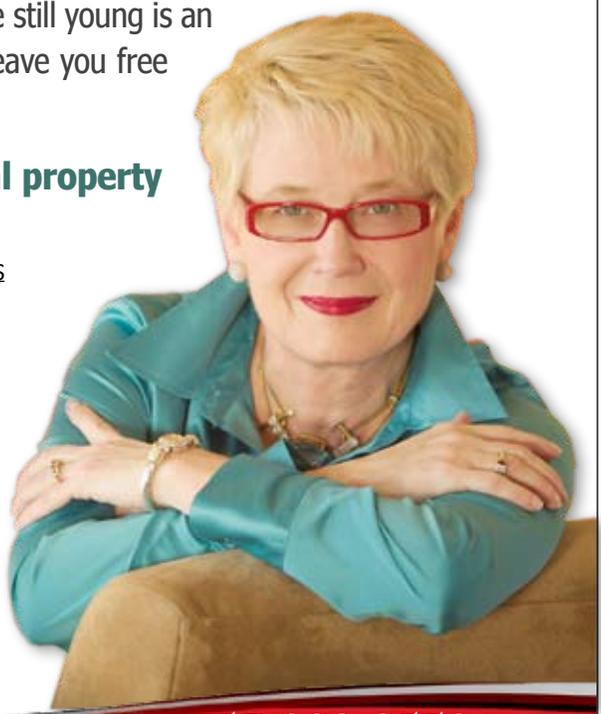
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