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WILLIAMSBURG'S

Next Door Neighbors[®]

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PRICELESS

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BUSINESS FORECAST 2008

COVER PHOTO BY MONICA SIGMON

WILLIAMSBURG'S BUSINESS LEADERS GIVE US THEIR INSIGHT INTO WHAT WE CAN EXPECT IN 2008 IN THESE LOCAL INDUSTRIES: BANKING, HOSPITALITY, REAL ESTATE, AUTOMOTIVE, HEALTH CARE AND CONSTRUCTION.

Pictured from left to right: Kimber Smith, Prudential McCardle Realty; Bill Strack, Henderson, Inc.; Robert Graves, Sentara Williamsburg Regional Medical Center; Anne Conner, TowneBank; Art Hudgins, Hudgins Holiday Chevrolet Cadillac; Doug Pons, Williamsburg Hotel & Motel Association

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Meredith Collins, Publisher

As we head into 2008, it is only natural to wonder what the upcoming year will bring for our local economy. The health of our local market is always a topic of interest even for those who are not in the workforce because it impacts virtually everyone who lives in the Williamsburg area. While regional and national economic changes and trends certainly impact our lives here, there is nothing more important to us than the well-being of our own community.

Many business forecast articles provide statistical summaries of the year ending and an overview for the year to be forecasted, complete with tables, graphs and scores of statistics and other displays of quantifiable data to reflect exactly what the experts are predicting for the upcoming year.

Next Door Neighbors has taken a slightly different approach. We've met with respected and knowledgeable local industry leaders in a number of "big business" categories that have ongoing influence in the Williamsburg market. We've asked them to tell us what they see as the primary challenges and opportunities for their industry in the upcoming year. We've asked for their professional insight relative to their experience and what they do as business leaders in Williamsburg.

In addition, we've asked these individuals to tell us a little bit about themselves. We've written about their backgrounds and given you insight into the forecasters themselves since these industry leaders are not just forces within our community, they are also our neighbors and friends. NDN

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Banking

By Meredith Collins

It has been said that banks are the economic engine of any community. This makes sense since it is the banking industry that provides many of the loans that enable new businesses to start and existing ones to expand. In Williamsburg, there is no shortage of these financial institutions. In fact, today there are twelve commercial banks and five credit unions serving the area, all of which have a stake in what happens with the economy in 2008.

One of the oldest banks in the area is Chesapeake Bank, which was founded in 1900 in Kilmarnock, VA. Marshall Warner is Executive Vice President of Chesapeake Bank. “People don’t realize how old we are,” Warner said. “We’re 107 years old – probably one of the oldest independent banks left in Virginia.”

Warner’s roots in the banking business go back many years. He graduated from Rider University in Lawrenceville, NJ in 1970 with a Bachelor of Finance degree and a minor in accounting. After he spent four years in the army, he started a full-time banking career at First National Bank of Toms River. Banking was in his blood.

“My dad was a banker for 40 years,” Warner reflected. “He was with the same bank for forty years, which of course is unusual today.” In addition, Warner’s oldest brother was also a banker.

Warner was employed by three different banks during his career in New

Jersey. In the 1980’s, he worked for what was then Horizon Bank Corporation, a \$5 billion holding company that had 125 branches throughout the state. At that time, it was the second largest bank in New Jersey.

“I was senior vice president and had one third of the state – twenty five branches that reported to me,” Warner explained. “I then left

there and became President and CEO of what was then Monarch Savings Bank for three years. They were an S&L that was losing money and I went there and took it over and made it profitable. And then from there I moved down to Virginia. I’ve been with Chesapeake Bank now for fifteen years.”

Today, Warner is responsible for the day-to-day operations in the Williamsburg and Gloucester branches of Chesapeake Bank.

“This market has been great,” Warner commented. “We all know about the growth in this area. Folks continue to come here, mainly out of the northeast, what we call our ‘feeder market’ – and they continue to move here for quality of life, the same reason I moved here.”

Warner points out that with all of this growth there has been an increasing number of financial institutions that have opened for business in Williamsburg to provide their services. “It has been great for financial institutions,” Warner said. “When we first came to Williamsburg with Chesapeake Bank we didn’t have as much competition.” At that time, SunTrust, Old Point National Bank and several other banks (now Wachovia, BB&T and Bank of America), were here. “Now we have Bay Community Bank that moved here, TowneBank has been here for a few years, Virginia Company Bank, and in addition to that we now have five credit unions,” Warner summarized.



**MARSHALL WARNER,
CHESAPEAKE BANK**

At a time when national economic reports provide daily doses of information about the housing market, the sub-prime lending fallout, higher gasoline prices and even the mention of a possible recession, the increased banking competition locally is significant. "With now twelve commercial banks and five credit unions, it is going to be very challenging to see who gets the bigger slice of the pie," Warner commented. "The hope is that there is enough business here for everyone – that we can all be successful."

Warner cites the slower housing sales and the national reports that impact consumer psyche as factors in how well Williamsburg will fare in 2008. Families from the northeast who want to sell their homes to move here may find that it takes longer to make that sale. In the meantime, competition will continue to be strong for the deals that are on the table.

Anne Conner, President of TowneBank in Williamsburg agrees.

"Williamsburg continues to be highly,

highly competitive from a banking perspective," Conner said. "Williamsburg is overly saturated with banks. There's no doubt about it. It's a good sign because there is a great deal of prosperity and wealth in Williamsburg, so consequently banks want to be a part of this community. When you have too much money chasing too few deals it becomes anti-productive in a way because you begin to – I don't want to say 'compete based on price' – because we're always competing based on price, interest rates, fees and that sort of thing. But sometimes you'll find organizations perhaps not being as prudent in their lending as they might otherwise would be because they feel pressure to meet goals and objectives. You have to do deals so you end up maybe taking a little more risk than you otherwise would and also taking a little less return for it. And we all know the risk/return balance has to be maintained or you have something like the sub-prime meltdown where the return was great, but the risk was greater, and the risk ended up winning the

day."

Conner's viewpoints are based on years of hands on experience and aggressive leadership that she has brought to TowneBank in New Town. Conner started her banking career when she was just 19 years old. She had completed two years of college at Virginia Commonwealth University in Richmond when she was hired by what is now Bank of America on Jamestown Road as a new accounts representative.

"I fell in love with it," Conner said with fervor. "I absolutely fell in love with banking and everything about it, and I didn't want to go back to school. I didn't go back to school for two and a half years."

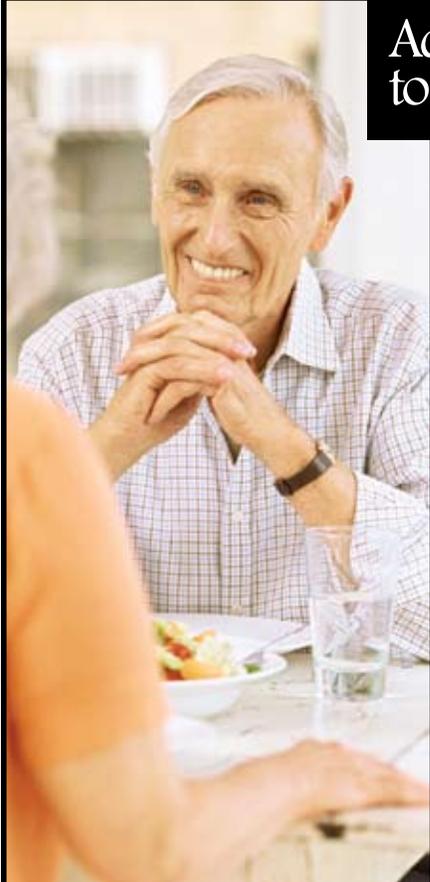
As a young person just beginning her banking career, Conner was heavily influenced by a man she describes as her first real mentor. Mel Causey was managing the Williamsburg region for Sovran Bank at the time (which subsequently became C&S Sovran, then Nations Bank and then Bank of America). He encouraged Conner to finish school and she

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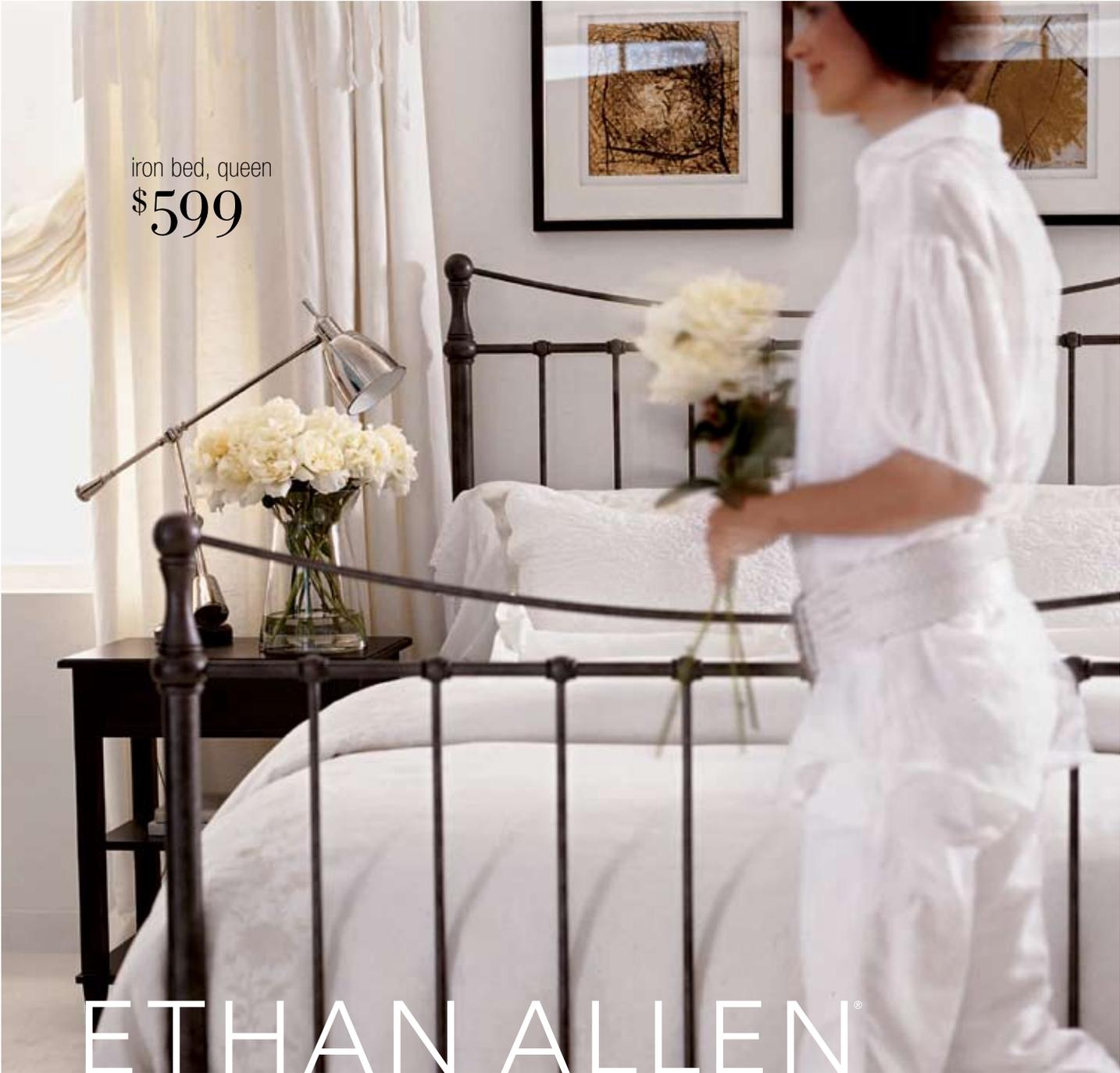


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did. She continued to work at the bank during the summer and over holidays for the next two years and finished her degree at Christopher Newport University. Upon graduation, Conner went back to banking full-time and has been doing what she loves for 23 years.

“I started in retail – consumer banking,” Conner recounted. “I worked

in branches from one end of the peninsula to the other, from Williamsburg all the way down to Hampton and Newport News. From there I moved into a division that was then called professional and executive (P&E) banking. P&E was focused primarily on physicians, attorneys, accountants, business owners, executives of companies and

other professionals. It’s a higher level of service with more customized product offerings and that sort of thing.”

Conner spent two years in P&E banking and then was accepted into Bank of America’s credit training program. She attended an intense 18 month school to learn how to underwrite credit and upon completion of this training she moved into commercial banking. This was in the early 90’s. TowneBank was started in 1999, and in February of 2005 Conner was hired to lead their operation in the Williamsburg region.

“2008 is going to come with some headwinds, I believe.”

- Anne Conner



ANNE CONNER, TOWNEBANK

In addition to the abundance of financial institutions in Williamsburg, Conner sees the changes in the housing market as another

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challenge for the Williamsburg market in 2008.

"The greatest challenge I've seen in the Williamsburg community has been what I'll call the 'Dead Zone' in the housing market," Conner said. "Anything from, let's say, \$500,000 to \$900,000 is deadier than a door nail. Trying to sell homes in that range is extremely difficult. That's what really has dropped off. Let's say \$400,000 even. If you're under \$400,000 there's still a market. And interestingly if you are over \$1 million there is still a market. Super wealthy people are largely recession-proof. If you can afford a million dollar home then likely a slowing economy is not going to affect you. You can afford that million dollar home no matter what is going on."

Conner talks about the housing market as one of the biggest challenges in 2008 because she realizes how home sales have a ripple affect on many businesses – small and large. It's not just the real estate agent who feels the pinch with reduced commissions when homes don't sell. It's also the carpet store that isn't installing new carpet. It's the painter who isn't putting a fresh coat of paint in every room. The furniture store isn't selling furniture to go in the new home, and on it goes.

"2008 is going to come with some headwinds, I believe," Conner stated. "It is going to be a challenging year but I'm very optimis-

tic about it. I think that we will continue to be able to grow, and I'm optimistic because of my microcosm in the world and because I'm in a community where the prosperity is almost tangible. It's a great place to be a banker. I think there will be opportunities for those organizations that have the right

reason why that will change next year."

Like Warner, Conner sees increased competition as something that will be very real in 2008, and something she believes will change the competitive landscape for many industries.

"You'll see in 2008 a separation of the wheat from the chaff," she added. Conner believes businesses have a choice in the way they approach the upcoming year and cites those that are aggressive and innovative as the ones that will be most successful. "It's innovative thinking that will help you survive and thrive in a difficult economic environment," she continued. "If you do things the same way that you've always done them, then you're going to struggle in a tough economic environment because if it gets you mediocre results in a strong economy then you can bet it's going to get you less than mediocre results in a tough economy."

Michael Maddocks, Regional Executive Officer of Old Point National Bank, agrees that 2008

will be a more challenging time, but it will also come with opportunity.

"I think the opportunity is that some people leave the marketplace," Maddocks said. "That's definitely an opportunity for the survivors."

Maddock's insight comes from many years in banking, and from his many years as a Williamsburg local. His family moved to the area



**MICHAEL MADDOCKS,
OLD POINT NATIONAL BANK**

people and continue to be aggressive. In a tough economy, I believe the worst mistake you can make is to re-trench, is to pull back, and say, 'Oh, we're not going to do anything because it's a bad economy.' If you pull back, then you'll miss the great opportunities that will present themselves next year. We've had nothing but the most dramatic growth since we've opened our doors and I don't see any

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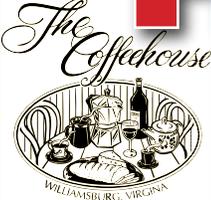
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in 1968 when his father was a naval officer and had command of the Naval Weapons Station in Yorktown. When his father retired three years later, he was invited to teach at the MBA School at William & Mary and the family moved to Queens Lake. Maddocks was 11 years old at the time and a 6th grader at Walsingham Academy.

A few years later, Maddocks attended Washington & Lee University and upon graduation spent five years on a destroyer out of Norfolk. "For me it was like a graduate school on life," Maddocks said. "I learned a lot. I learned skills I still use today."

In 1984, when Maddocks finished active duty in the military, he entered a banking training program in Washington D.C. with Virginia National Bank. Like Conner, Maddocks also had a mentor that influenced his decision to pursue a career in banking. "I was very influenced by a fellow in town, kind of a second dad – Bob Walker," Maddocks said. "He had gone to W&L and had served in WWII. Like me, he spent time on ships dur-

ing the war and then got out and got into banking. He came down here and worked for Peninsula Bank & Trust, which was the oldest bank in town at the time. That bank was started in 1898."

Maddocks spent six years in the banking industry in Washington and then six more years in South Hampton Roads, first at Signet Bank and then at Jefferson National. He returned to the Washington area to join Crestar Bank (now SunTrust) and ultimately it was Crestar that brought him back to the Williamsburg area.

"That was about ten years ago," Maddocks said. "I was with them almost ten years and then I got this opportunity to work for Old Point National Bank." The bank has three offices in Williamsburg and twenty one in Hampton Roads.

"I think credit is tightening on loans based on real estate," Maddocks commented. "Happily at Old Point we were never in the sub-prime business, so we don't have to labor under that dilemma. I just think

that across the board no matter what bank you're in or working with there's going to be a heightened level of scrutiny. Real estate is just moving slowly now, both residential and commercial. So that's probably the immediate challenge."

But like Warner and Conner, Maddocks doesn't see this as all bad. "Everything goes in cycles," he explained. "After a robust period of time in any industry there's typically a correction. Things slow down and then build up again. And those people in organizations who can survive the slowdown will then prosper when it picks up again."

Perhaps it comes down to whether business owners view 2008 as the glass half empty or the glass half full. All bets are on that those businesspeople who are sharpening their skills, capitalizing on their competitive advantages, aggressively going after market share and, yes, seeing the challenge as a natural evolution of the business cycle – will be poised to reap the benefits whenever a market upturn comes. NDN

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Hospitality

By Brandy Centolanza

2007 was a banner year for local hotels and restaurants, thanks to the Jamestown 400th anniversary celebration and the opening of the Griffon roller coaster at Busch Gardens, but can those working in the hospitality industry reap the same rewards in 2008?

“The Jamestown anniversary provided the Williamsburg destination the opportunity to showcase all that we have to offer,” says Doug Pons, President of the Williamsburg Hotel & Motel Association, and general manager of the Quarterpath Inn near Colonial Williamsburg, which his family owns. “The planning and coordination of this event showed the tourism industry what it’s capable of when it works together with common goals.”

Pons, who also serves on the board of the Williamsburg Area Chamber and Tourism Alliance, believes those in the business will need to build upon such collaboration next year.

“It will be very difficult to replicate the successes of 2007 in 2008,” he opines. “Traditionally, we experience

a slowdown in years with presidential elections and obviously we won’t have the benefits of the



events surrounding 2007 or the addition of a major roller coaster. However, I see a unified commitment to succeed in 2008 in the segments of the hospitality industry. Collectively, we are working to strengthen our brand and our message to continue building on the successes of 2007.”

Pons is very much an expert on the subject. “Having grown up in Williamsburg, I, of course, spent my summers working in the industry,” Pons states. “My first job started in 1982 at Mama Steve’s Pancake House working for the late John Baganakis. That same summer, I also started working for my father in the family business cutting grass at the Quarterpath Inn. I have always enjoyed working in the industry because it allows me the opportunity to meet a lot of people of diverse backgrounds. Whether

**DOUG PONS, PRESIDENT
WILLIAMSBURG HOTEL &
MOTEL ASSOCIATION**

facilitating travel and vacation needs or by providing a safe and stable work environment, it's working with people I find most rewarding."

Pons shares two key strategies to ensuring that tourism continues to flourish in Williamsburg.

"The first is to make sure our products are meeting the consumer's quality and value test," Pons notes. "Whether

it is at an attraction, a lodging facility or a restaurant, we need to ensure our departing guest will return. If we succeed at this, word of mouth promoting will bring new visitors. In addition, we must continue to invest dollars to market and promote the brand of Williamsburg. Williamsburg has so much to offer to a family planning a vacation or

a weekend away. We must dispel the 'been there, done that' mindset. I hear everyday from my customers that they had no idea

there was so much to do while here. Through the efforts of Williamsburg Area Destination Marketing Committees (WAD-MC), we need to continue to educate potential visitors that Williamsburg has something to offer everyone."

Events similar to the

Jamestown commemoration don't hurt either. "We must build on the success of special events," Pons says with enthusiasm. "We must expand our offerings by creating new and exciting venues that engage and entertain visitors. We must always challenge ourselves to not become complacent." NDN

"I see a unified commitment to succeed in 2008 in the segments of the hospitality industry."

- Doug Pons

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Real Estate

By Linda Landreth Phelps

As 2007 winds down, the big question is ‘What will 2008 bring for the real estate industry in Williamsburg?’ News media – both electronic and print – has provided consistent reporting of housing market activity throughout this past year. The affect of sub-prime lending on a national level and the subsequent effects on the home buying industry has made headlines for some time now. In Williamsburg, financial institutions stayed clear of these risky lending practices for the most part, but the market has still slowed as compared to the frenzy of buying activity in recent years. While national trends saw prices of homes drop dramatically in 2007, homes in Williamsburg have held their value rather well up to this point. Even so, homes are on the market longer than a year ago and sales have slowed. As we head into the New Year, it’s difficult to determine exactly what the challenges and opportunities will be in the local housing market.

Kimber Smith, President of Prudential McCardle Real Estate, thinks the time to buy is right now. Smith has a long history with Williamsburg real estate. “I grew up in the fourth house ever built in First Colony,”



**KIMBER SMITH,
PRUDENTIAL MCCARDLE REALTY**

Smith recalled. “I’ve seen a lot of cycles in the real estate business come and go. Steady demand and strong supply coming online could bode very well for this area in 2008.”

Smith has seen first-hand the transition of Williamsburg from a sleepy little town to a fast-growing, thriving community. “My friends’ moms wouldn’t let them come to my house in First Colony - it was just too far out in the boonies,” he laughed. Smith graduated from Lafayette High School and attended Virginia Tech. After college, he began his career with Dun & Bradstreet, which took him to both the Washington D.C. and New York

City areas. Smith always missed Williamsburg, however, and returned to put his efforts into real estate. Smith partnered with his mother, Randy, to purchase McCardle Realty when the owner retired in 1988.

“The facts are that you can’t ask for better conditions in which to buy,” Smith said. “I predict that brave, optimistic, realistic people will get the best deals, and that activity will encourage other buyers to jump on board. I am already seeing positive emphasis in the press again, and once that happens, the cycle shifts. When demand starts equaling supply,

the bargains will evaporate until it reaches equilibrium again.”

Angela Dougherty, Managing Broker of the Williamsburg office of William E. Wood and Associates, runs a real estate office which is ranked number one of the twenty William E. Wood offices in Hampton Roads. She acknowledges that mortgage money is available at a low rate now, but says that first time buyers may find it a little harder to qualify in 2008 since their credit will be scrutinized more closely than it was in recent years, fallout from the sub-prime lending problems.

“This year would be a smart time for folks



**ANGELA DOUGHERTY,
WILLIAM E. WOOD AND ASSOCIATES**

who are moving up from a smaller home to sell,” Dougherty explained. “The kids are teenagers and need more space; they’re ready to trade in the starter home in the \$300,000 range for a larger place for \$500,000 or more. Even if they have to cut the price for the \$300,000 home by 5% to close the deal, the fact is that houses in the lower bracket are selling better than the higher priced homes. More inventory in that range translates to better opportunities for the buyer - say perhaps a 15% reduction. If you do the math, you’ll see it’s a great buy.”

Dougherty has been in the Tidewater area for 32 years. She has 18 years experience in commercial real estate and ten years in residential real estate in Williamsburg.

She has been heavily involved with the Association of Realtors at both the state and national level and has experience in forecasting market trends. Dougherty sees the real challenge in 2008, and in the years ahead, is making good homes affordable and available to those who are the backbone of the community - teachers, nurses, police officers, mail carriers, clerks. Rising gas prices is also a

factor that makes this an ongoing challenge in 2008.

“It’s shortsighted in the extreme not to address this problem,” Dougherty stated. “As we grow, the need for Workforce Housing, as it is known, will just get greater. With the price of gas rising fast, nobody will want to commute to Williamsburg from Newport News or Richmond.”

Ron Miscavige of Long & Foster Realty, sees 2008 as a time to

return to stability. “What we really like to see in the industry is a slow, steady appreciation of about 5-6% a year, which can sustain itself over time,” he said. “In 2005, 15-20% of properties in this area were bought by investors who held them for a year or so while renting or fixing them up, and then resold. Volume of sales declined last year because investors are holding their properties or selling and deciding to delay reinvesting until they see that the market is stable again. I think that will happen this year.”

Miscavige has recently been elected vice-president of the Williamsburg Area Association of Realtors, and has served on the Board of Di-

rectors for the past three years. He believes Williamsburg will continue to be a strong destination for retirees and their influx into the area will continue to be positive for the real estate industry and other business sectors as well.

“We’re one of the most popular destinations for retirees,” Miscavige said. “Just like my family and I did, they’ve visited here on vacation, fallen in love with Williamsburg, moved here and plan to stay the rest of their lives. When retired people come, they’re usually not in the job market themselves but they create jobs for others, thereby stimulating the economy and insulating us from stagnation.”

While there is no crystal ball that will tell us what 2008 will bring, the consensus among these real estate professionals seems to be that the consumer should look ahead with confidence. Interest rates are good, home values are strong and those who are in the market for a home have a good selection of inventory to select from – at least for now. Only time will tell how the upcoming year will unfold. [NDN](#)



**RON MISCAVIGE,
LONG & FOSTER REALTY**

Automotive

By Brandy Centolanza

What does the future hold for the automotive industry? Despite a fluctuating market in 2007, local automotive dealers foresee more stability in the coming year, thanks to new and varying options available to drivers.

The rising price of gasoline and the real estate slump have put a damper on the auto business this year. However, Art Hudgins, President of Hudgins Holiday Chevrolet Cadillac on Second Street isn't too concerned. "This year was so up and down, but hopefully next year will be a little more stabilized," Hudgins says. "Real estate has been struggling, so it's definitely had an effect on us. Business has been tough, but I think we are starting to make the turn."

Hudgins would know. He has been in the dealership business for more than three decades, thanks to his late father, John. In 1982, the pair started their own dealership, which Hudgins operates today with his brother, Michael.

"I love this business," Hudgins says. "I love the challenges, and I love being around people. I just love the car business. It's in my blood."

David Julien, Vice President and General Manager of Williamsburg Chrysler Jeep Kia on Richmond Road, feels the same way. "I have been in the car business all my life," Julien says. "It's a part of my family." Julien worked at dealerships elsewhere on the Pen-



ART HUDGINS, HUDGINS HOLIDAY CHEVROLET CADILLAC

insula before settling in Williamsburg a few years ago.

Next year, Hudgins predicts a "very competitive market, like it always has been."

"I think the domestics will be more competitive with the imports," Hudgins states. "We have a lot of good product that is already here. It's gotten better and stronger. The people's perceptions just have to change, and in order to do that, we just have to put the product in front of them so that they can feel it, see it, touch it."

Rick Jones, General Manager of Williamsburg Ford Lincoln Mercury on Rochambeau Drive, agrees.

"The unknown, of course, is the general economy," says Jones. "But, I think the positive side for the coming year will be that we will be able to hold our own share with the domestics."

Jones, who has been in the industry for more than 30 years, fell into it by accident. In 1975 he decided to take a break from his education before attending law school.



**DAVID JULIEN,
WILLIAMSBURG CHRYSLER-JEEP-KIA**

“I saw an ad for a car salesman, and, like all boys, had a real interest in cars,” recalls Jones. “I absolutely fell in love with it, and never looked back.”

Today, technology plays a huge part in what drivers want in a vehicle, and manufacturers are happy to oblige. “It’s amazing the kind of technology that is in cars now,” says Julien. “Many navigation

systems are voice activated now,” he says. “All I have to do is tell it where to go, and it goes there.” Some vehicles also have the ability to synchronize the navigation systems with personal gadgets such as cell phones, Blackberrys, and iPods.

“Not only does it offer convenience to the customer, but it is also much safer,” notes Jones. “You can just say ‘call home,’ rather than taking your attention away from what you should be paying attention to.”

Hybrids are also gaining in popularity because of higher gas prices. “There is talk about going to \$4 a gallon, and that is going to affect everybody, every demographic,” says Julien. “I think it will actually force people back into the market, looking for the hybrids

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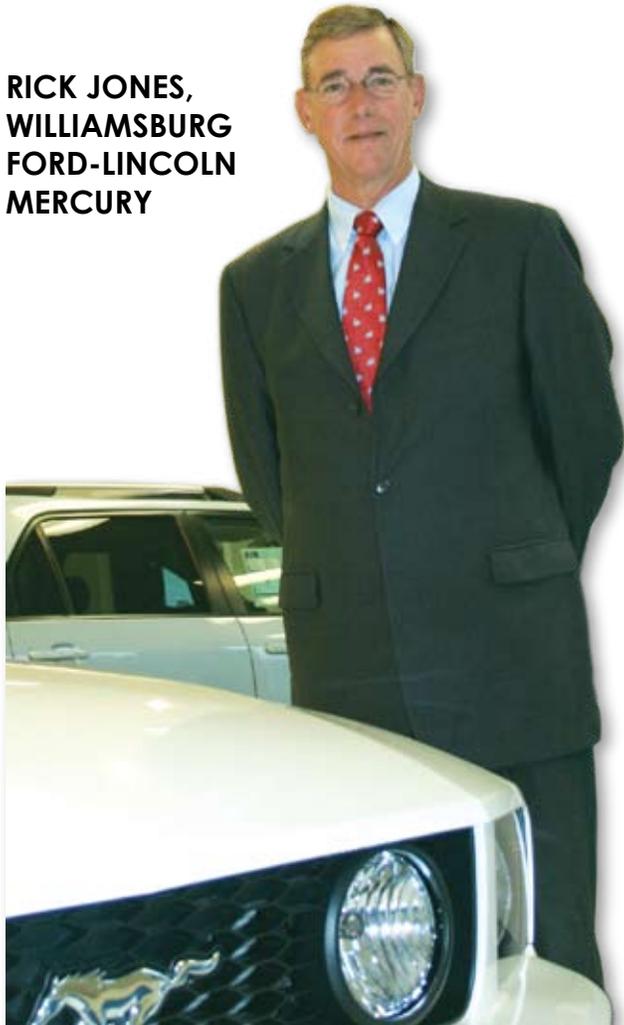
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or the mini vans or smaller vehicles that get more mileage. The gas prices are going to make a big, big difference on the bottom line.”

Another trend is the “Crossover” vehicle, which has the body of a sports utility vehicle, but drives more like a car. “It has the flexibility of an SUV, it can carry more people, carry the sports equipment and the camping equipment, but it has a more car-like ride,” explains Jones. “It’s more comfortable.”

To continue to attract customers in a shaky economy, the key is to cater to anybody and everybody. “We need to diversify, and offer a little bit of everything to everybody to cover the whole market,” Hudgins says. Some drivers prefer hybrid models and vehicles that provide good gas mileage, while others look for size, comfort, safety, and room. “A lot of moms out there still want the full size vehicles to carry their families around,” Hudgins said. “They feel safer in those vehicles.”

“Overall, there is a lot of money in Williamsburg, and I think they want to spend it,” Hudgins concludes. “They just need a reason to do it, and that’s good products, and good rates.” NDN



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Health Care

By Linda Landreth Phelps

As the population of the Williamsburg area increases and ages, health care and reform will likely be part of many conversations from Toano to New Town. Everyone will eventually experience the need, either first-hand or as a parent or caregiver, for medical care. When that day comes, our hope is that we will have access to high quality, cost-effective health care. The health care industry in our area is committed to help make this attainable, not only in 2008, but in the future as well.

Robert Graves, Vice President and Administrator of Sentara Williamsburg Regional Medical Center (SWRMC), moved from Virginia Beach to Kingsmill four years ago. He was actually born in Brazil, into a family of missionaries. The Portuguese he learned there - "A little rusty by now!" Graves laughs - still comes in handy when somebody arrives at his hospital's Emergency Room needing a translator.

After serving as administrator

of Virginia Beach General Hospital for fourteen years, he and his wife, Kathy, crossed the water to Williamsburg in time to head up the planning and building of Sentara's new medical center off Mooretown Road. Graves sees that there are different dynamics and

needs in this community's hospital.

"Williamsburg is a fairly small town compared to Virginia Beach and our population is not necessarily able to support the specialists that our patients sometimes need," he explained. "Robotics has given us a solution by allowing expert care from a distance."

Sentara's Intensive Care Unit, for instance, is equipped with electronics that monitor every patient and sends the data to their parent hospital.

"Remotely controlled, highly sensitive cameras scan for such things as skin color and respiration, and can even zoom in for a look at pupil size," Graves continued. "So with the interactive help of the on-site staff, doctors who are miles away



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can be treating a patient at our hospital almost as if they were standing at his bedside. We're also looking at getting a surgical robotic for urology in 2008, but have not yet finalized a decision on that."

Sentara is also looking to replicate the technology of their electronic ICU with its virtual sharing of information. "In order to enhance care this year," Graves said, "we may create a pilot program on a nursing unit where patients are monitored remotely to pick up trends that a bedside nurse might miss. In 2008, we will be exploring this technology further relative to the home health environment, as well. By doing this, a patient's blood pressure, blood sugar, and other vital statistics will be sent to a central location where they can be monitored in a real time basis."

Innovations in technology will continue to greatly facilitate patient care, but Graves still foresees that the aging population here in the Greater Williamsburg area will make health care more challenging in 2008 and beyond.

"The younger population is the largest in terms of total numbers, but recently there has been a 23% increase in people over the age of sixty," he stated. "The whole baby boomer situation has the health care system in high alert as we see a big bubble of potential need ahead. Older patients utilize health care at a much higher rate. You might even say it increases exponentially after age 65, so you can see it is really going to be a big challenge to keep ahead of the need."

Boomers do tend to be healthier than their parents, but some who are not yet eligible for Medicare are not able to afford health insurance, and others are finding it very difficult to get into the system at all.

"Everyone fears the term 'socialized medicine,'" Graves continued. "I think we're going to have to move toward something like that eventually. You may not have the same kind of freedom and flexibility we have today, but you'd have an overall healthier population. The problem is that there is a huge amount of waste in our health care system. Our doctors are forced into practicing defensive medicine, afraid not to order tests which may be unnecessary just to keep from being sued. When you're talking about an MRI or CT scan, that's at least \$1,000 per test, and it may not always be necessary. If you focus those wasted dollars on primary care, weight control, mammograms, prostate screenings, and smoking cessation, we'd be saving lives and money, too."

Another area expert who seems in accord with Graves is William B. Downey, the Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer of Riverside Health System, another large medical presence serving the Williamsburg area.

Downey also has a long heritage in Williamsburg. Family legend has it that an ancestor was a cabin boy on one of the earliest ships to arrive at Jamestown, and another long-ago uncle was George Wythe, a professor of law at the College of William & Mary in the late 1700's, and a signer of the Declaration of Independence.

Downey's father served in the Air Force which required the family to be mobile. After his father's retirement, Downey's family returned to the Williamsburg area to settle. Downey grew up in Queen's Lake and earned degrees from both James Madison University and the Medical College of Virginia at Virginia Commonwealth University.

"2008 will be a challenging time to be in the health industry," Downey agreed. "Medicare doesn't typically cover the cost of what it takes us to provide services; they pay us about 78 cents on the dollar. As it stands now, that gap may get even wider if the government im-

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plements the 10% reduction in reimbursement scheduled to start in January. Unfortunately, some of the “best and brightest” have lately chosen to go into other careers because of the financial challenges of the medical profession. That’s a shame, because while there may be issues, it’s still one of the most rewarding things you can do to impact peoples’ lives.”

Downey foresees the necessity of expanding such cost-effective methods as what is known as Evidence-Based Medicine, which is now practiced by Riverside Health System. “We have established protocols for such conditions and illnesses as ulcers, congestive heart failure, or diabetes, based on what a group of physicians has found to be the most efficient treatment for a good outcome—which tests to order and what medicines have proven to be most effective,” Downey said.

In response to the growth of the over-60 population, additional physicians will be added in 2008 to those currently practicing in Williamsburg. In addition, Williamsburg Radiation Therapy Center, Riverside’s oncology facility located on Treyburn Drive, looks forward to utilizing their new Image Guided Radiation Therapy, or IGRT, which adjusts radiation beams to the dimensions of a shrinking tumor, resulting in more precise treatment and doing less damage to surrounding healthy tissue.

On the large tract of land that Riverside has purchased in the Quarterpath Road area near Kingsmill, construction is expected to begin sometime in 2008 on a nursing home with 120 beds. Realistically, given the scenario that statistics predict for an increasingly aging population of Baby Boomers concentrating in the Williamsburg area in the years to come, it seems likely that Riverside will



**WILLIAM DOWNEY,
RIVERSIDE HEALTH SYSTEMS**

have no shortage of prospective patients who will one day fill those beds. **NDN**

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Construction

By Suzanne S. Lanier

How does a 36-year-old high school graduate get to be part owner and vice president of one of the most respected and well-known general contracting firms in the region?

He did it by hard work, a little luck and a lot of natural ability. Bill Strack entered the construction business straight out of high school. He got his start in underground utility work.

“I had a knack for production, and moved up the ladder at a fairly young age,” Strack explained. “I started working for Henderson, Inc. as a field supervisor in 1994, and now I’m managing day-to-day operations for the company.”

He is both proud of his achievements and delightfully humble for a man who worked his way up from the ground floor to co-owner and vice president in a little over 16 years.

Henderson, Inc. is a Williamsburg based, mid-sized commercial contracting business that has been involved in many local

projects, including the Griffon and Apollo’s Chariot, two popular roller coaster rides at

Busch Gardens. Strack leads operations and runs the general business of the company,

which sometimes proves to be quite challenging “We finished the Griffon on time,” he said, thinking back to the recent completion of the very much in-demand attraction. “We were dusting it off as the guests walked in, but it was on time,” Strack added with a smile.

In 2008, some of the challenges will be ones that are not new to Strack and others in similar positions in the building industry. Besides finishing projects on time, keeping employee turnover rate to a minimum is probably their next priority. With such a proliferation of



**BILL STRACK,
HENDERSON, INC.**

projects in the Williamsburg area, employers sometimes find themselves answering the questions of potential workers instead of the other way around. They want to know about competitive wages and what kind of work environment they can expect.

"We try to provide an atmosphere in which our employees can be in control of their jobs," Strack said, providing insight into Henderson's approach to the challenge. "We delegate authority so that decisions can be made on site; we don't micromanage. If you have the right people in the right places, you don't have to."

Another challenge for the local construction industry is keeping up with demand. "This is a very competitive market for commercial contractors," Strack said. "We see a lot of interest from businesses that want to locate here. With the ports, military bases and tourism in the area, I don't expect it to change for a while."

Commercial contractors compete for

business in different ways. Some submit bids in response to open advertisements. Others are hired through a select bid process, in which only a handful of contractors are invited to submit a bid. Another method that is becoming more popular in the industry is negotiated work. Contractors and potential clients get to know each other through various events and associations and by referral. Henderson, Inc. prefers this approach.

"We build relationships with people, then, when their company needs a contractor, they come to us because of the trust that has been established," Strack explained. "We become partners, in a sense, with our clients; our work is governed by their needs."

Contractors are also governed by local, state and federal agencies. They must keep up with the barrage of regulations that commercial builders are required to adhere to. This will be no different in 2008. "Things can change rapidly out here," Strack said. "Most of the changes are good and promote

better developments as a whole, but the industry has to be flexible and prepared for constant change."

That's good advice for local residents, as well. Strack predicts that the upcoming year will be another busy year for commercial contractors in this area. Construction at New Town continues, work on the High Street development has begun and the addition to Prime Outlets is well underway; the completion of the Marquis, a mixed-use retail center off 199, is several years down the road, although some of the anchor stores are already open for business. In addition, there are smaller projects in progress all around town.

The heavy rumbling of dump trucks, the sounds of hammers and power tools, the sight of framing reaching toward the sky and the employment opportunities for construction workers will be a part of this historic area for a long time to come - the past is meeting the future head on. NDN

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Hey Neighbor!

FASHION SHOW & LUNCHEON FEBRUARY 9, 2008

The Woman's Club of Williamsburg GFWC is hosting a "Rhapsody in Red" Valentine Extravaganza Fashion Show and Luncheon at Ford's Colony Country Club on Saturday, February 9, 2008 at 11:00 a.m. Fashions by Jim Fields of Lili's of Ghent. Romantic songs by Anthony Lee Wood. Door prizes, raffle prizes, and boutiques for shopping. Cash bar will be available. Proceeds will benefit the club's scholarship fund. For reservations send checks in the amount of \$45.00 per person to The Woman's Club of Williamsburg GFWC, 105 Sunningdale, Williamsburg, VA 23188-7487. For additional information call Reservations Chairman Nelia Heide at 345-2979.

Hey Neighbor!

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Hey Neighbor!

WJCC COMMUNITY SCHOLARSHIP FUND

The WJCC Community Scholarship Fund awards scholarships to the senior classes of Lafayette, Jamestown, and Warhill high schools. Their "Tour of Excellent Restaurants" booklets, featuring 32 local restaurants offering buy-one-get-one free or other meal discounts, are currently on sale at local SunTrust Banks, Bank of America, Old Point National Bank, the Virginia Gazette, and WJCC schools. In June 2007 JLEF awarded \$51,900 in college scholarships to 60 graduating seniors. For more information call Dana Johnson, President, WJCC Community Scholarship Fund (757) 221-2017.

Hey Neighbor!

CHILD DEVELOPMENT RESOURCES

(CDR) is a local organization that provides services to children birth through age three who have, or are at-risk for, developmental delays. CDR had a flood in its main building on October 16, 2007, when a power-failure and other factors led to sewage backing up and into the building. Because the flood was sewage-related, CDR now faces over \$250,000 in expenses over and above its "flood" and property insurance. Many toys and items used in special play therapy were lost. Its playgroup facilities were damaged, and the playgroup along with its offices, were temporarily closed and then relocated. Local schools, congregations, and individuals have stepped forward with cash contributions for CDR, but the organization needs even more support. To find out more and to make a contribution, visit www.cdr.org or call 566-3300 and ask for Allison Brody or Janet Reid. While we are temporarily displaced from our offices, please call our cell phone at 757-508-5007.

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