

May 2009

WILLIAMSBURG'S

Next Door Neighbors[©]

VOL. 3, ISSUE 5

PRICELESS

Discovering the people who call Williamsburg home

Turning Lemons into Lemonade

SMALL BUSINESS ISSUE

**Renee Graves &
Patricia Myers**
From Real Estate to
Furniture Consignment

Robin Wilder
Creating an Artistic Future

**Gwen Henry &
Christine Farrior**
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Meredith Collins, Publisher

This Small Business issue focuses on the impact of the economy on our neighbors right here in Williamsburg. For many of us life has been going along smoothly even with the slowdown in the economy. We may have seen our 401K's dip or lost some money in the stock market, but our jobs are still secure and our paychecks keep coming regularly.

However, when we have a friend, neighbor or even a family member who loses their job or has their hours cut drastically, it suddenly hits home for us as well. We can't help but try to imagine ourselves in their shoes and think about what we might do if we were them. Would we be able to handle such an unexpected challenge?

What we found when we looked for people to interview for this issue is that when these individuals were confronted with "lemons" regarding their work situation, they figured out how to make "lemonade". An even greater by-product of their courageous efforts to handle their problem is that once they took a leap of faith and moved in a new direction, the changes brought them a sense of excitement and fulfillment in their new endeavor that they had never known before. Oddly enough, the adversity they faced - while unfortunate - also actually became a blessing for them. NDN

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early signs of recovery

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Look for these signs when shopping, dining or seeking personal services here at home.



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A New Beginning

TWO AREA REALTORS RESPOND TO A CHANGING MARKETPLACE

By Natalie Miller-Moore and Meredith Collins



Renee Graves and Patricia Myers

It wasn't until the middle of last year when the harsh reality of the real estate slowdown stared Patricia Myers in the face. Patricia had been working in real estate for about twenty years primarily doing site work – helping to sell newly constructed homes or condos and townhomes in specific developments. She had seen good times, not so good times and great times in her almost two decades of real estate sales. The ebb and flow of the real estate marketplace was nothing new to her and she took it in stride, always finding ways to make a good living.

This was something different, however. Patricia was selling townhomes in a new development in Williamsburg when she began to realize that the slowdown in traffic was unlike anything she had experienced before. There were more and more days with fewer and fewer solid prospects. Without impending

sales on the horizon, Patricia knew her savings were in jeopardy. In real estate, you have certain expenses no matter what your sales look like – MLS fees, insurance, tech fees and other expenses. Patricia was learning that she would soon be spending more than she was making.

“In June the traffic was dying as far as people coming in and the people that did come in had houses to sell that they knew were going to be difficult and they didn't want to make commitments to sell their houses for less,” Patricia says. “We (she and the other on-site agent) looked around and said there is something going on that maybe we have been avoiding and maybe we need to make some decisions. And I thought personally, ‘I'm watching my savings evaporate, I'm watching my 401K gradually decline and the plan that I wrote for my real estate life was

no longer going to work.’ I was not going to be able to retire in real estate. There's an old country western song that says, ‘There's a light at the end of the tunnel and I hope it's not a train’. Well, that's how I was feeling!”

This realization impacted Patricia in several ways. “I started having the sleepless nights, the weight gain and I looked in the mirror one day and saw my mother instead of me!” she exclaims. “There was a lot of angst with the decision to let go of my dream of retiring in real estate. That was painful. It hurt.”

Once Patricia accepted her plight she became very decisive about taking steps to improve her situation. At the time, she didn't know what she was going to do but she did know she needed to start investigating realistic options.

“I said to myself, ‘ok, I'm going to see what's going on in the world,’” Patricia ex-

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plains. "So I went to Virginia Workforce Center and they have all kinds of seminars there and programs and they have mentor-type people that will meet with you, review your resume and talk to you about how you re-enter the job market. For 20 years I have not had to do that. I might have interviewed with a builder so he could see who he was hiring but basically I got to where I was going on my merits and on my past successes. So here I'm going to change and I'm going to go out into the real world that doesn't know me at an age when most people don't want to do it."

Patricia received help with her resume from an employee of the Virginia Workforce Center. He cautioned her that the world was not the world she once knew. He helped her understand that the hiring process was much different now. Face-to-face interviews rarely occur in the early stages of the hiring process. Most companies rely on processes involving the Internet. The entire process would be a lot less personal than Patricia had experienced two decades ago.

Patricia didn't stop there. As a part of this discovery process, she also went to AARP to see what information they have for more mature people re-entering the job market. She took a look at fields that were hiring but also knew that there would be many people going after the same jobs, many of whom would have experience in that field. Patricia not only realized that it would be very difficult to live the same lifestyle she had become accustomed to if she went back into the job market, but that she may not even enjoy an office environment. After all, she had enjoyed a certain amount of autonomy as a Realtor.

"I realized I was going to make no money," she says. "At the level of my skills that were very good for real estate, to transfer those over into a corporate setting, I'd be starting out at the beginning or maybe in the middle. I certainly would not be making what I had made in my good years in real estate."

During this time, she shared her concerns with her friend, Renee Graves, who was also a Realtor at a different site. They had started to work in real estate at about the same time and had remained friends throughout the years.

"It's like dropping off a cliff," Patricia says. "What do we do at our age?"

That question was answered by a happenstance conversation and an eye for opportunity. Toward the end of last year, the owners of East Baker St. in the Village Shoppes at Kingsmill, Robert Smith and Leslie Papas, happened to be at the site where Renee worked. They knew her and told her about their consignment store and how they wanted to step back from that facet of their business so they could focus more on their design work. They were looking for someone to sublet a portion of their retail space.

Renee, who is an avid shopper of consignment stores and familiar with their potential, told Patricia about the opportunity. They were excited about the possibility of operating their own business because



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it would allow them to utilize their sales and business skills and also do something they knew they would enjoy. They seized the opportunity and moved into high gear to gain an understanding of everything they would need to do to become operational – initially figuring out the lease, insurance, and licensing requirements. They enlisted SCORE, a local retired business advisory group, for guidance. Their mentors first gave them a homework assignment: to visit at least six consignment shops outside the area. They visited several east coast consignment stores as benchmarks.

“Both of our (SCORE) mentors, Bruce Landefeld and Ken Carr have been invaluable,” Patricia says. “Their main goal was to make certain that we had a well thought out, written business and financial plan.”

Since Patricia and Renee were financing the new business themselves, they had a tight timeline for the store opening that they wanted to meet: 90 days. With that kind of timeline, it had to be all hands on deck. Patricia

and Renee enlisted their family members to help. Patricia’s brother set-up their computer system and Renee’s sister came in to assist with the opening. Their family, friends and business associates provided them with referrals to help them get off the ground.

The store, Classic Consignments, opened March 14th. Part of their initial success comes from their experience with the concept. Both Patricia and Renee had been working in new home sales and had spent time in furnished model homes, so they knew there was a market for gently used furnishings.

“We know everyone’s been looking for a bargain,” Renee says. “Frugality is in vogue, and it’s easy to part with pieces when you know you can get a little bit of money towards something new.”

Now, even as the real estate market improves, Patricia and Renee have said they won’t abandon their new love. “I feel like I have so much more energy. Starting up a business is hard work but it’s so exciting,” Patricia says. NDN

Next Door Neighbors

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A Part Time Passion Turns Into A Full-Time Plumbing Business

By Rachel Sapin

In 2001, Bill Wilbern fell off a roof and broke his back. He spent a couple of months recovering, thinking about his life and ordering his priorities. Perhaps that experience helped prepare him for his latest challenge.

This past October, Bill was laid off as an employee working in irrigation and plumbing maintenance for the Ford's Colony golf course. He found himself going through a similar thought process as he did when he



Bill Wilbern

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injured his back.

"I have a deep faith in God," he reflects. "Before I was laid off, I felt like I was going the wrong way. Then God sat me down and put my head on straight. Although I'm not making a million dollars, things are going a lot better now."

Bill has recently turned Professional Plumbing Services, a part-time business that he started in 2001, into a full-time job. "After I got laid off, I spent a lot of time praying and watching *Oprah*," he recalls. "We had Christmas coming for the children, and I knew I had to do something."

Confident that **"If I hadn't been laid off, I probably would have kept my plumbing business part-time. Looking back now though, I can't believe I didn't do this sooner."**

- Bill Wilbern

He could turn what had always been a side occupation into a full-fledged company, Bill placed an ad for his business in the *Virginia Gazette*. Coincidentally, the woman he spoke with about placing the ad was married to a remodeler who was looking for plumbing services. "I gave her my number, her husband called me, and I got the job," explains Bill.

In recent months, Bill has built much of his business's client base from a combination of faith, intuition, and determination. He started doing jobs for Case Handyman Services as a result of an impromptu visit. "I was driving by their office one day and something told me to pull in there and talk to them," he remembers. "I offered my services to them, and I've been doing work for them ever since."

For Bill, being his own advertiser has been a key factor in helping his business grow. "It was tough for me at first to feel comfortable approaching people and offering my services," he explains. "But when you're starting a business, you have to let other people know that you exist." Describing his business as a one-man crew - with the help of what he calls the best family crew imaginable - Bill has taken on many new roles in recent months, from marketing to scheduling to negotiating his next contract. "Doing the plumbing and construction work is the easiest part," he laughs. "Getting people to trust you is where it gets difficult."

For Bill, his newness to marketing can sometimes be challenging in terms of promoting his business. "It's hard to get people to trust that you can do the work when you haven't built up a reputation in the area," he remarks. "One thing I've found to be very helpful is to just be yourself: be honest. If I say I'm going to be at a job at ten, I'm going to be there at ten. I need to do what I say. I have noticed

...m, waved about helplessly as he looked. "What's happened to me?" he thought. It wasn't a
 ...om, a proper human room although a little too small, lay peacefully between its four famil
 ...lection of textile samples lay spread out on the table - Samsa was a travelling salesman - a
 ...ere hung a picture that he had recently cut out of an illustrated magazine and housed in a
 ...me. It showed a lady fitted out with a fur hat and fur boa who sat upright, raising a heavy lu
 ...vared the whole of her lower arm toward the viewer. Gregor then turned to look out the win
 ...ll weather. Drops of rain could be heard hitting the pane, which made him feel quite sad. "H
 ...leep a little bit longer and forget all this nonsense," he thought, but that was something he
 ...do because he was used to sleeping on his right, and in his present state could not get into th
 ...twever hard he threw himself on to his right, he always rolled back to where he was. He must
 ...a hundred times, shut his eyes as if that he wouldn't have to look at the floor-boarding legs, and o
 ...on he began to feel a mild, dull pain there that he had never felt before. "Oh, God," he thoug
 ...remains career it is that I've chosen! Travelling day in and day out, going business like this
 ...are effort than doing your own business at home, and on top of that there's the curse of
 ...aries about making train connections, bad and irregular food, contact with different people
 ...that you can never get to know anyone or become friendly with them. It can all go to Hell
 ...ght itch up on his belly; pushed himself slowly up on his back towards the head-board so th
 ...t his head better; found where the itch was, and saw that it was covered with lots of little
 ...sick he didn't know what to make of; and when he tried to feel the place with one of his legs
 ...ticky back because as soon as he touched it he was overcome by a cold shudder. He did
 ...rmer position. "Getting up early all the time," he thought, "it makes you stupid. You've got to
 ...top. Other travelling salesmen live a life of luxury. For instance, whenever I go back to the
 ...ring the morning to copy out the contract, these gentlemen are always still sitting there
 ...on-fists. I ought to just try that with my boss; I'd get kicked out on the spot. But who knows,
 ...ould be the best thing for me. If I didn't have my parents to think about I'd have given it my
 ...me ago, I'd have gone up to the boss and told him just what I think, told him everything I wo
 ...ow just what I feel. He'd fall right off his desk! And it's a funny sort of business to be sitting
 ...ur desk, talking down at your subordinates from up there, especially when you have to go rig
 ...cause the boss is hard of hearing. Well, there's still some hope; once I've got the money toge
 ...my parents' debt to him - another five or six years I suppose - that's definitely what I'll do."
 ...make the big change. First of all, though, he got to get up, my train leaves at five. And he
 ...the alarm clock, flicking at the sheet or drawers. "God in Heaven," he thought, it was half p
 ...he was quickly moving forward. It was even later than half past, more like quarter to
 ...a alarm clock not rung? He could see from the bed that it had been set for four o'clock as it
 ...ony it certainly must have rung. Yes, but was it possible to quietly step through that family
 ...ise? True, he had not slept peacefully, but probably all the more deeply because of that. What
 ...now? The next train went at seven; if he were to catch that he would have to rush like mad
 ...tion of animals was still not packed, and he did not at all feel particularly fresh and lively.
 ...did catch the train he would not avoid his boss's anger as the office assistant would have to
 ...the five o'clock train go, he would have put in his report about Gregor's not being there for
 ...the five o'clock train go, he would have put in his report about Gregor's not being there for

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that it's a big deal to a lot of people." As a result of his honesty and dedication to his customers, people who Bill initially had to seek out to offer his services to are now calling him.

While his full time business is new, since 2002 Bill has also been working as an instructor in Plumbing Theory and Plumbing Codes at New Horizons Adult Educational Center in Hampton and Newport News. "For most of my adult life I have been a plumber in one form or another," explains Bill. After beginning his career as a journeyman plumber in 1998, Bill went on to receive his Master Plumber License and has also served as a code compliance inspector for the City of Williamsburg. "When you're a plumber learning the trade and you get your Master License, the only reason why you get that card is to go into business," he says. "Before I was laid off in October, I was kind of just standing around working for someone else and not making my own business a priority. Finally, I got a good kick, and here I am."

Bill believes that one of the positive aspects of this recession is that it's motivating people to pursue goals they may have otherwise pushed aside. "If I hadn't been laid off, I probably would have kept my plumbing business part-time," he reflects. "Looking back now though, I can't believe I didn't do this sooner."

Although it's easy to fantasize about the creative and professional freedom that comes with starting your own business, Bill finds that there are also many challenges. "When you're only one guy, it's a lot to handle," he explains. "I'm still working on getting all of the equipment and technology I need for my business. It would be nice to say that I could purchase all of that stuff and not have to worry about going into debt. Business has really picked up, but I still feel like my motto is that I'm trying to survive."

Despite the challenges that go hand-in-hand with starting a business, Bill believes the effort that he has put into Professional Plumbing Services has been well worth it. In fact, he described much of the process that he went through to turn part-time work into a full-time job as if it was something that was as natural and necessary for him as breathing air.

"Working for myself fits my personality," he explains. "By getting away from the nine to five schedule, I have seen the world in a new light. It is very challenging, but it is also very rewarding to know that I have made my business what it is today. It's better than where I was -sitting on the couch watching *Oprah*."

Bill is thoughtful when it comes to describing what motivated him to start his own business. "My dad once told me, 'Life is so fast that you're going to wake up one day and wonder where it all went,'" he reflects. With determination, faith, and extensive knowledge of his trade, Bill has created a life and business for himself that he should be able to look back on years from now with no regret. **NDN**

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When she learned she was being laid off last November, Robin Wilder, 46, panicked. As a divorced mom with five children, her job provided for all of them. An artist by training, Robin didn't find her work in the mortgage industry fulfilling, but knew it allowed her to pay the bills, and 'then some'.

Robin understood instinctively that she couldn't let panic immobilize her: "I realized I couldn't just crawl under a rock. I had people relying on me."

The previous summer, because she believed her mortgage industry job provided security, she declined an offer to purchase Paint on Pottery, a Longhill Road studio where people decorated their unfinished clay pieces. But in a fortuitous turn of events, nearly



Robin Wilder

A Passion for Art Fulfilled

By Muna Killingback

the same week she was laid off, the offer presented itself again, and this time, with nothing to lose, she was ready to take on the risk and challenge that comes with small business ownership.

Her first move was to find investors, and she found two silent

partners willing to go into business with her. One of the partners had set up his small business 'from scratch' and knew what needed to be done. She hired a lawyer, got her business license and insurance, became incorporated, and she was off.

Her first challenge was to learn the business. "I had to learn how to glaze and fire, and had to find out where to buy the pottery or bisque, since the regular supplier had shut their doors," she says. "And I had to figure out advertising and marketing."

The start-up wasn't easy. "It's very scary to own your own business," Robin explains. "Who knows if it's going to work? In the beginning, there were days when no one walked through the door and I thought, 'What have



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- Nancy Olszyk



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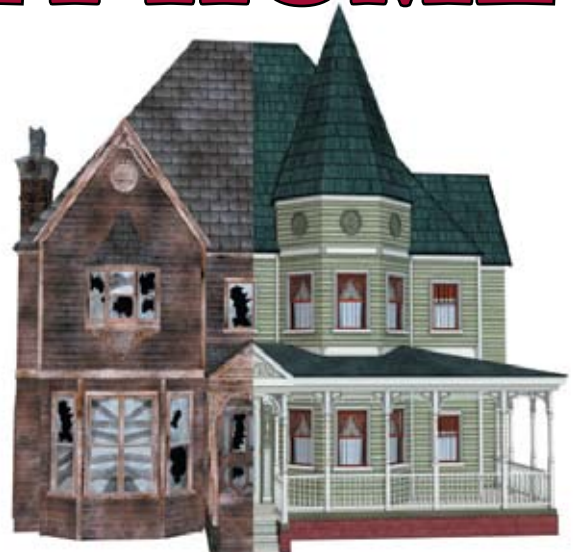
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I done?"

Also, knowing that the business was going to change hands, some of the regular clientele had slipped away, so she had to rebuild the customer base. Robin, with boundless creativity, had no shortage of ideas as well as a desire to serve the community through Paint on Pottery.

Robin began a relationship with the Heritage Humane Society, donating two dollars to the society every time someone paints a dog or cat bowl. The Humane Society in turn advertises this opportunity. She also decided to bring the pottery to where people are, supplying the pottery and paints to bridal showers and other parties.

"I see us as being very involved in the community and being a great place for children and people of all ages to be creative and to experience art, not just painting on pottery, but other mediums as well," she says. "It's a relaxing place to come - we serve coffee, and people can sit on the patio.

I have a family that comes in and they paint and then play cards and paint some more. They're not in front of the TV or the Game Boy™. It's a really wholesome place to be. I love that they feel that comfortable."

"It was always a dream of mine to work in the art field," Robin reflects. "But I never would have done it if I hadn't lost my job because it wasn't a safe thing to do. It was a blessing in disguise. I think that in these economic times, people are regrouping and finding out what they really want to do. Before they would not have had a need or opportunity to do that."

Her enthusiasm for the craft shines through as she speaks of a fifth grade girl who comes in regularly to work on a series of dog plates: "She is an amazing artist and out of her head come these wonderful dogs. I love watching a child create something - they are so creative - it's fascinating to watch the process." However, talent is not necessary to create pottery to be proud of. "We'll show you how to use stencils and come out with a beautiful piece of work," she explains.

Robin's friend, Kim Barbarji, is very supportive of Robin. "We all would love to do what we love to do instead of what we have to do for money," she says. She describes Robin as an "extremely creative person who was in a job that didn't allow her to express that." It was Kim who had encouraged Robin and the previous owner to meet because she thought "this would let Robin express her true self."

"It was always a dream of mine to work in the art field. But I never would have done it if I hadn't lost my job because it wasn't a safe thing to do. It was a blessing in disguise. I think that in these economic times, people are regrouping and finding out what they really want to do."

- Robin Wilder

Julie Phelps, another friend, credits Robin's success with her positive attitude and an abundance of inner strength. "She took what many would view as a potentially devastating situation and used it as a springboard for success," she says of her friend.

A big change in Robin's life has been the amount of time she's been able to spend with her children. "This is a wonderful way for me to be with my kids," she says. "I can take them to work with me on the weekends and they love creating and can spend hours on something. We'll also put puzzles together and we have time to sit down and talk. It's been great. At my previous job, I used to have pictures of my kids in my office, but now I have my kids. We can

even bring our puppy to work."

She speaks with pride about her oldest daughter Hannah, 19, who is a pottery and 3D design major. Hannah has helped decorate the studio, painting beautiful murals on the wall.

"Hannah is a wonderful artist and does beautiful pottery," she says with pride. "She is the artist on site and does commission work as well. I thought this was a wonderful thing for us to do together. She is addicted to the clay building process and we'll be getting a potter's wheel soon."

Besides her friends and children, Robin is grateful to her fiancé, Paul Hartman, for his unwavering support of her new endeavor. "He helps out with the kids and the business and works with me on the weekends too," she explains.

Plans for the future include incorporating other mediums of art including painting and jewelry making. Robin and Hannah are now working to become certified in glass making as well. Summer art camps are in the offing. In addition to her current range of customers - from groups of women friends who sit and paint while they sip wine and graze on snacks to homeschoolers and Girl Scout troops - Robin also wants to reach out to seniors and others.

Looking back on her journey Robin reflects, "I really have had to figure all this out for myself and my kids and I've only had myself to rely on. My kids have been my inspiration - they are all awesome. It's amazing what you can do when you have to." **NDN**

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In The Business of Helping Others

By Joe Collins

The world is often hard on the small businessperson. Even with the very best planning, the smartest and most careful investment, and the most acute business savvy, a sudden turn of events beyond the entrepreneur's control can quickly undermine the success of even a sturdy small business.

When the economy squeezes, businesses both large and small are impacted. Sometimes people find themselves needing help. That's when it's really good to know Gwen Henry and Christine Farrow of the United Way Information and Referral Service.

"We are seeing people who were making \$80,000 to \$100,000 and more and now have to live off of unemployment and it's hard," Christine says. "We are starting to see more and more people whose stories start with 'We never thought it would happen to us.'"

Gwen Henry and Christine Farrow



When the economy tightens it can affect anyone's ability to make ends meet no matter what income level they may have enjoyed.

Gwen is all too familiar with these stories of hardship: "One lady and her husband were working as contractors and he had a truck payment of over \$500 dollars and she had a big car payment and he had been traveling a lot and they had a lifestyle that could support it. They lost all of it."

Christine and Gwen have been Information and Referral Specialists for

the United Way long enough to witness people facing all kinds of hardships. Fortunately, their efforts often times help ease the burdens on these individuals and their families.

Christine and Gwen first worked together 35 years ago at Dow Chemical and took distinctly different paths to their current jobs. Christine, who is originally from North Carolina, first moved to the area in 1957 when her husband was stationed at Ft. Eustis. They made a good life here for many years and when her husband passed Christine made

a new friend who volunteered at the United Way. This friend was instrumental in encouraging her to volunteer at United Way also. Christine worked for five years as a volunteer before being hired as part of the full time staff. She has been with United Way for a total of 12 years.

Two years ago she suggested volunteering to

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her friend Gwen, a lifelong Newport News native, and the timing was just right. Gwen recalls, "I volunteered for a couple of weeks and then someone was leaving and they offered me a job."

Gwen and Christine work on the front lines, meeting and screening incoming clients and starting the qualification process. "When clients come in we get the information we need to find out if they qualify for help or not," Gwen explains. "There are certain criteria that they have to meet before we even look at their bills. When they do, we try to find the money for them and that entails going to the community."

Nearly all of the funding for their efforts is obtained locally. They have a large network of churches and other agencies they can ask for help with three agencies they usually turn to first: the Salvation Army, St. Bede's Church and the Community Action Agency. "Social services has also been helping out using money Dominion Power put in a special fund and that has been a tremendous help for us this year," Christine adds. "If it hadn't been for them we would have

really been up the creek."

Of course some of their clients are not in the workforce; they are older people or families who have little and are affected more indirectly by the economic downturn. "The one's that stand out the most in my mind are the ones that have children," Christine says.

"If they have children and power is being turned off or something like that we really work hard," Gwen adds. "A few weeks ago we helped get a \$3,000 electrical bill paid because there was a premature baby in the house."

The number of people seeking assistance from the United Way's Information and Referral Center is on the rise and Christine and Gwen attribute the increase to the economy. In the first two months of 2008, 801 individuals knocked on their door to find some assistance. In 2009 during the same two months - January and February - a total of 946 people have come to them for help - an 18% increase.

"We've had Realtors - husband and wives who worked together - and things went down the creek and they couldn't afford to pay the

fees for their real estate licenses and they lost their jobs," Gwen explains. "We helped them with funds for a storage place for their stuff and a truck to move it with because they lost their home."

"Being able to help someone that I know really, really needs the help is most rewarding," Christine admits. "But it is rewarding to come here every day and when I go home I feel like I have done something for someone else. And it's not for me, it's for them. And this is what I enjoy doing."

Gwen agrees. "You come in here and you see people that you know need help, they're not just somebody saying 'I am going to use the system'. You know they need help. And if you are able to help them not be put outside, when you are able to let them know, and help them, it's a great feeling when you can do something like that. When you know somebody needs help like the people with the little premature baby, it really feels good." NDN

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Facing Unemployment

A WILLIAMSBURG COUPLE SHARES THEIR STORY

By Linda Landreth Phelps

On Friday, February 6th, Tony Bascetta's job as a construction superintendent ended just as suddenly as last year's bull market. There was no notice, no bonus, just "Turn in the keys to your company truck." As shocking an event as that was, it turned out to be a blessing in disguise for Tony and his family.

As a young man in New York, Tony worked hard as a union carpenter, raised his family, and was always steadily employed, even taking on weekend side jobs building decks. Being at loose ends after he lost his job was unfamiliar territory for Tony and he had to learn how to navigate it in a hurry.

Loss of employment means that everyone in a family is affected. To weather such a storm, Tony and his wife, Grace, feel that working together with a positive attitude and being proactive about job search strategy is crucial.

First, they plugged in to the 21st century. "You really do need a computer these days, so we bought one that was reasonably priced at Wal-Mart and used it to update both of our resumes," Grace says. "If you're going to file for unemployment, it's so much easier to do it electronically than to go stand in line." If you can't afford your own, the public library has free computer access for the use of Greater Williamsburg residents.

Carpenter or corporate head, there is an emotional toll to be paid in the loss of a job that is every bit as real as the lost income. Sadly, for most people, unemployment attacks the very basis of their sense of self-worth. The temptation is to feel embarrassed and retreat to a safe place to lick psychic wounds. "This is the time to put yourself out there in the community and make your availability known," Grace says. She encouraged Tony to network.

"I told Tony to think of all the people he could use as contacts for a new job and he began calling," Grace says. "He has developed a good working relationship with many companies here in the Williamsburg area. My point is to let your friends, family, and work contacts know your situation. We went to a home show and I networked, too."

Grace found several means to help her cope when her stress levels rose, healthy ways that worked to alleviate worry and made her feel good again.

"When I get stressed I call my daughter, Maria, or a supportive friend. Going for a swim or a walk with my dogs is very relaxing. I also have a passion for gardening, so that first week I made a lot of mulch and cleared the paths in our woods. That was great therapy!"

Tony has always been a 'hands-on' type of guy, so he managed his stress by staying busy with projects he had been planning for their home in Wexford Hills, near York River State Park. He made steps for their little dachshunds, Enzo and Mocha, and started work on some walls that needed repairing. He also spent relaxing time in the hot tub to soak out his tension.

As it turned out, persistence and flexibility paid off and Tony was unemployed for only a short time. Thanks to their joint efforts, within the second week of his unemployment he had three possible job opportunities. His new position came to him by word of mouth, when Tony was approached by a company who had heard he was available. He's now working for a reduced salary but enjoying a job that is not as stressful. With Grace's new position as an operating room nurse at a Richmond hospital that came with lower cost health benefits, their combined income is now just about equal to what it was before Tony was laid off. As a bonus, Grace's schedule of three 12-hour workdays on and four off has freed her to follow up on a desire to get involved in local volunteer work. "I just started working at the Lackey Free Clinic," she says, "and I just love it!"

According to the old adage, the only guarantees in life are death and taxes, but the ebb and flow of any economy could be added to that list. You or I might one day be among those temporarily caught in the tide, but as frightening as unemployment can be for a family, there are positive actions to be taken to ride out the storm. "You need to be disciplined; have a plan and stick to it," Grace advises. "Crawling into bed and pulling the covers over your head is not going to help."

In this economic climate, it's wise to hope for the best and prepare for the worst, just like stocking up on hurricane supplies. The odds are good that they'll never be needed, but there is a peace that comes with an emergency plan and extra batteries in the drawer. And remember - just as they've always done, this storm too will pass. **NDN**

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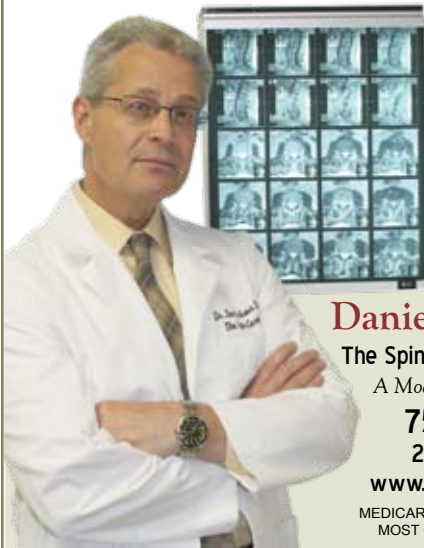
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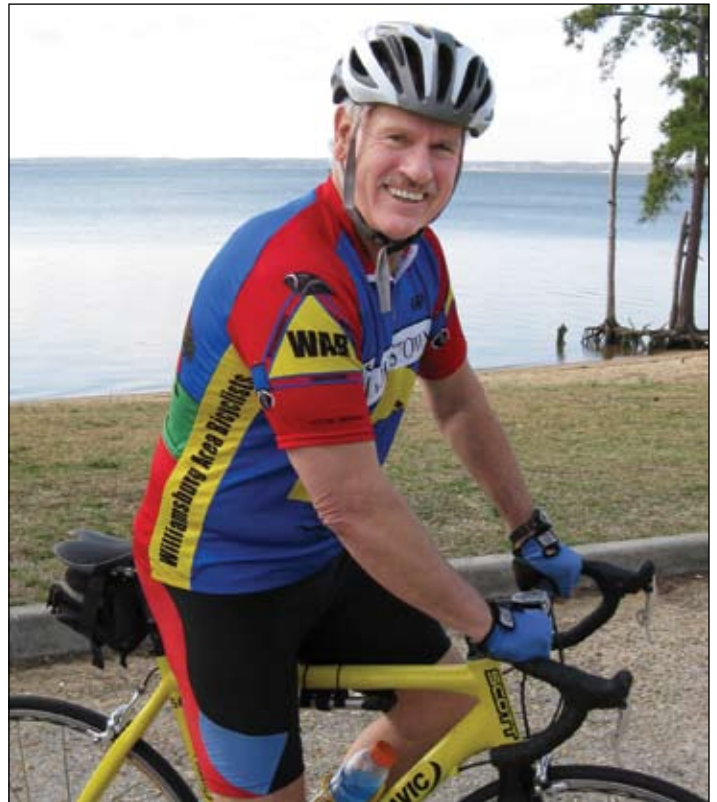
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The Benefits of Biking



DR. RON GROSSMAN GEARS UP FOR FUN & HEALTH

by Greg Lilly, Lifestyle Editor

May is Bike Month and a wonderful time for everyone to get some enjoyable exercise. "Anybody can bike, that's the nice thing about it," says Dr. Ron Grossman. "If your knees are bad, you can bike. If your back is bad, you can bike. Plus there are no age barriers to biking."

Dr. Ron Grossman and his wife, Anne, moved to Williamsburg from the Princeton, New Jersey area about two years ago in search of milder weather. As an active couple, they decided to join the Williamsburg Area Bicycling Club because of their love of bicycling. "We thought a bicycling club was a great way to integrate into the community," he says.

Biking provides many health benefits according to Ron. "As a physician, if I had one prescription I could write to people it would be the exercise prescription," he says. Biking provides exercise for

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all levels of riders, from people who want a leisurely ride to those who want to set personal best distance or time records. It's usually one of the first exercise activities we learned as children and one of the most fun, an activity that can be done alone or in groups.

"You get the benefits of lower blood pressure and lower cholesterol; you raise your HDLs which are the cardio-protective part of cholesterol," Ron explains. "You make your heart stronger. You get good aerobic function; the heart's a muscle and like any other muscle – if you don't use it, you lose it." Bicycling also helps with a more restful night. "It helps me sleep better," he adds. "It matches up my physical fatigue with my mental fatigue."

It is also a mood enhancer. "If you're fatigued at the end of the day or you need a mood change, biking brings about a good mood," Ron says. "That's one of the nice things about it. From a medical standpoint, we know it releases endorphins, natural hormone products that make us feel good and helps us relax. So, it can change your mood."

There is also a social aspect to biking. As Ron and Anne found, group rides are a great way to meet people and network. "One trip we enjoy doing is a ride around Jamestown Island with friends and we end up at the Williamsburg Winery for dinner."

Ron plans to participate in the many activities in May's Bike Month. The premier event is the 13th annual Pedal the Parkway held on Saturday, May 2nd. "The Colonial Parkway is closed to automobile traffic from Jamestown to Williamsburg," he says. "The Williamsburg Area Bicycling Club provides food and drinks in the middle of the route, has a rodeo for children to teach them how to ride properly and provides helmets to children who don't have them. Plus we make sure everyone's helmets fit them and we demonstrate how to wear them properly." Daily rides are scheduled throughout the month including historical rides through Williamsburg. "We have rides for all fitness levels," he adds.

For those who haven't been on a bike since elementary school, Ron offers some advice: "Visit one of the local bike shops to discuss goals, the range of money you want to spend on a bike and the type of biking you want to do (road, trail, or hybrid)," Ron says. "Then be properly fitted for your new bike. The only other things you need are some good bike pants, bike gloves, and a well-fitted helmet."

Are your goals to lose weight, lower your blood pressure, and strengthen your heart muscle? Are your goals to experience something new? Try bicycling in bike-friendly Williamsburg. Route guidebooks are available at the library and the local bike shops. But before hitting the streets and trails take some safety advice from Ron: "You must wear a helmet. You want to be alert," he emphasizes. "Don't wear headphones because you need to be aware of what's happening around you. Bikers must ride single file to allow cars to safely pass them. Bikes are considered a vehicle and must follow the traffic rules. Stop for pedestrians."

Cycling is good for your heart; you can shed pounds and increase your strength and coordination. The month of May provides the perfect weather for leaving the car parked and pedaling your way to a healthier place. NDN

To learn more about local biking opportunities visit www.WABonline.org

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Doug Lockwood
Creates Outdoor Rooms

by Greg Lilly, Lifestyle Editor

Williamsburg's mild climate invites homeowners to expand their living space into the outdoors. Doug Lockwood of Southern Blue Lawn and Landscaping has helped people create 'outdoor rooms' for over 25 years.

"As a pre-med student at the University of Richmond," Doug explains, "I took several botanical courses and that led to my interest in plants." He began a landscaping service while in school and his design skills developed. Pre-med blossomed into an MBA and Doug ended up in Williamsburg in 1983. Two Best-of-Show awards at the Maymont Flower & Garden Show plus several more national

honors established Doug as one of the country's top landscape designers.

A recent project brought together his skills and creativity to turn a backyard ravine into a terraced living area. "The homeowner said, 'We have an unusual backyard and want to do something with it,'" Doug explains. "We discussed the goals for the space and found that they wanted an area to unwind, a sanctuary." The challenging 40% slope and the 50 ft. elevation change prompted Doug to explore multi-level

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spaces, a terraced strategy to turn the unused hill into a place for relaxing and entertaining.

His approach was to view the outdoor room like any other part of the home. "What kind of floor do you want?" he asks. "What kind of walls? What type of ceiling (trees, pergola, open sky)? What kind of things do you want to see in your outdoor room?" These types of questions helped grow the design into a plan.

The homeowners wanted a large entertaining space plus an area for more intimate gatherings. Doug created a spacious deck and a smaller one below with an outdoor fireplace surrounded by comfortable seating. "They wanted a place to cook outside that was adjacent to the house's kitchen for convenience," he says. The plan included an outdoor kitchen with granite countertops, a grill, side burners, and a warming tray. Doug collaborated with contractor Bernie Mills to assist with the architectural elements.

A pool for exercise and entertainment for the family's children anchored the plan and added the sound and reflection of water to



the space. "We had discussed a natural shaped pool that would appear more like a pond," Doug adds, "but one of the homeowner's requirements was to swim laps and nothing is better for that than a rectangular pool."

In addition to the structures, the homeowners requested floral plants for year-round color. "I like 'bullet-proof perennials' that are hearty in this area," Doug says. "This garden is designed around non-stop flowering during the growing season and just enough evergreen structure to keep the area interesting in the winter."

An outdoor room should shine day and night, so Doug installed low-voltage landscape lights to create ambient and task lighting. The result is an outdoor space that calms the viewer at the end of the day with subtle highlights of the pool, plants, and architecture.

Doug sees definite trends in the amenities that clients request. The number one goal? "Having a space to cocoon, your private space," he says. "It's a place to get away from the world and be with your family." Patios can become outdoor rooms with just a few

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In Home Date
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May 5th

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Fire and water are popular elements to bring into the design. “Fire pits and fire places create a cozy space,”

Doug adds. “Ponds, pools, water falls, things that bring in the ambient sound of water help you unwind.”

Clipping magazine images of outdoor spaces that appeal to you, he suggests, helps to reveal your preferences for style and materials.



“When you’re building an outdoor room,” Doug says, “it’s the same as building an indoor room, you’re just using different materials.” Consider your goals and lifestyle when planning the space and cultivate all aspects of the outdoor room: plants, structures, flooring, ‘walls and ceiling’ and you may discover your favorite room is outdoors. NDN

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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! LE COQ NOIR CABARET April 23, 2009

At The Blue Talon Bistro; featuring: Nancy Schoenberger-Poetry, William & Mary Performance Art Ensemble, Sophia Serghi? GOogle (Stare, Glance, Wink), Vilhelm Sadoma's Cooking Class Premier. 8:30pm to 9pm Seating, Tickets \$30 to benefit Williamsburg AIDS Network. Tickets available at www.williamsburgaidsnetwork.org or call (757) 220-4606. **Adult Material and Situations**

Hey Neighbor! FOOD DRIVE FOR FISH & THE SALVATION ARMY April 25, 2009

12 noon until 4 pm. in the New Town Gazebo area. LifePointe Christian Church of Toano and Williamsburg Christian Church are co-sponsors. A carnival style event for the whole family - includes concerts at the gazebo, popcorn, hot dogs, face painting, games and more. For more info call Cay Davis at 757-221-1679.

Hey Neighbor! PLANTS GALORE ANNUAL PLANT SALE April 25, 2009

Get your gardens ready for spring! You'll find the best selection of native and ornamental plants including flowers, shrubs, small trees, vegetables, herbs and houseplants; seeds, garden supplies and more. Experts will be on hand to answer your gardening questions and to help you make your selections. Williamsburg Community Building, 401 N. Boundary St. Proceeds benefit the educational and community outreach programs of the John Clayton Chapter of the Virginia Native Plant Society and the James

City County/Williamsburg Master Gardener Association. For more info, visit www.Clayton-VNPS.org or www.jccwmg.org

Hey Neighbor! HERITAGE HUMANE SOCIETY'S 8th ANNUAL "BARK IN THE PARK" APRIL 25, 2009

9am to 1pm. at New Quarter Park. Proceeds will help support the Heritage Humane Society's mission to provide food and medicines for sheltered animals, maintain and improve the facilities, and promote adoptions and education. Bring your pet(s) and enjoy a "group walk", canine contests, face painting, bake sale, and police rescue demonstrations! For more information please visit our website at www.heritagehumanesociety.org/barkinthepark.html or call Breann at 221-0571.

Hey Neighbor! 46th ANNUAL ART ON THE SQUARE April 26, 2009

Hosted by the Junior Woman's Club of Williamsburg; from 10am-5pm, Duke of Gloucester & Boundary Streets - Merchants Square. Over 160 artists on exhibit. All monies we raise from poster sales and raffle tickets benefit the JWCW Art Scholarship fund which is awarded to local high school seniors looking to continue their education in the arts. For more info contact Michelle Parr at mparr@insiderspassport.com.

Hey Neighbor! EVERY 30 MINUTES - PROGRAM ON ALCOHOL AWARENESS

April 30 and May 1; May 7th and 8th
Warhill High - April 30th and May 1st; Lafayette High on May 7 and 8. A two-day alcohol awareness event held annually aimed towards Juniors and Seniors. The Grim Reaper calls

on students every 30 minutes to represent the national statistic of someone dying in an alcohol-related crash every 30 minutes. A mock car crash is also staged where police and fire respond as though it were a real alcohol-related crash with injuries, a fatality, and a DUI arrest. The program culminates on day 2 with a school assembly where students and parents share their experiences during the program. The program is a joint effort between the JCC Police and Fire Departments, the Williamsburg/James City County Commonwealth Attorney's Office, and the Williamsburg/James City County Schools. For more information contact Stephanie Williams-Ortery at stephanien@james-city.va.us

Hey Neighbor! 'SOS' HELP FOR PARENTS WORKSHOP AND DISCUSSION April 30 - June 4, 2009


This workshop and discussion group will meet for 6 weeks from 6 - 8 pm at the James City County Community Center, 5301 Longhill Road. For parents of children 2-12 years old whose children's arguments and fights are getting them down, who have that strong-willed child, who are feeling exhausted, frustrated, or angry with behavior problems. This class is \$20. Call Family Focus at 566-9777 for registration. This class is provided by Family Focus, a program of the Colonial Services Board and grant supported by The Williamsburg Community Health Foundation.

**ATTENTION
NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATIONS!**
Please email heyneighbor@cox.net
on or before Tuesday, May 5th to be considered for inclusion in the May 21st issue of
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**Kiwanis Club
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