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workout at Rijk's Strength and Performance.
(Sean Meyers photo)*

*On this page: A patriotic pen made by
Neal Wilkinson sits in a small rifle case.
(Wayne Hinshaw photo)*

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It's all about the new beginnings

We all love new beginnings, don't we? A blank page, a sharp pencil — or a white screen — they all bear potential for a new beginning.

We mark dates to recognize new beginnings, as well. There's Easter with a new beginning that looked like an ending; there's the first day of school with new shoes and new school supplies. (Did anyone else actually smell your new pencils?) And perhaps the biggest new beginning of all, New Year's, with 365 pure and unsullied days ahead of us, to be spent with more intention and focus.

Whether you make resolutions, or like me, set goals for the new year, it seems anything is possible with this new beginning. One of my goals for 2022 was to learn about all our 52 U.S. Poets Laureate, and I still have a few left to catch up on! It's been a delightful journey.

This issue is all about new beginnings. Brenda Zimmerman tells us about Neal Wilkerson, who makes pens at his home workshop. Starting with wood or acrylic "blanks" — or even the shells from his dad's 21-gun salute — Neal is busy giving these ordinary items new beginnings as writing pens. On his first turn at the lathe, friend John Zerger told him it could be addictive. He's now 600 pens into the hobby and has to acknowledge John was right.

Heather Carlile took a pottery class three years ago and now sells her wares in shops and on Etsy. After learning how to turn clay on the wheel, she was so infatuated she took a part-time job to save up for her own equipment. Today she and hubby Chon create paintings, woodwork and pottery in their tiny outdoor shed. Sunflowers reign large as they symbolize



Heather as Chon's sunshine. Wet, malleable clay has a new beginning as a bright, impermeable surface under Heather's expert hand. Susan Shinn Turner takes us on Heather's journey from student to potter.

NASCAR is king in North Carolina and Ben White takes us on the action-packed account of Dave Moody, who has reigned as a compelling announcer for the sport for over 30 years. Hats off to Moody for being able to narrate a story that progresses at 200 miles per hour. At 17, Moody attempted racing and quickly learned it's not as easy as it looks. Ben weaves a story chock-full of adventure and racing bravado.

A couple of years ago, Rijk Zwaan came to North Carolina with \$60 in his pocket. Today he owns and operates Rijk's Strength and Performance near Catawba College. His daily mission is to help people find their new beginnings, whether that means recovering from injury or developing their body's strength. His tale is a true American success story of working

hard to pursue one's dreams.

Kyna Grubb, executive director at Rowan Helping Ministries, is our Rowan Original. The story of Kyna's prayer for service inspired me and I hope it inspires you as well. Her heart and soul go into the challenging job of meeting the needs of our unhoused population, and she shares some of the exciting new projects they have coming up, giving people new beginnings every day of the year.

Finally, I sat down with Deedee Wright to discuss her new book, "The (W)right Thing, My Life in the Civil Rights Movement and Beyond." Deedee waited for me at Bell Tower Green with her iconic Marlo Thomas hairdo and her broad smile. The book tells of her upbringing with a strict mom, her mentors at college and her involvement with the NAACP. She shares stories ranging from funny to inspiring to sad. She tells of writing a letter to the editor in her home town when she was just 14 years old, asking for the local library to be desegregated so students could access reference materials for school. Best of all, she shares her story of challenges in the 1960s South and her continued belief that things could be better. Deedee has served on many boards and commissions at the city and county levels and believes we are all obligated to make a difference. "Despite what I've seen," she says, "I still have hope."

Maggie

— Maggie Blackwell
Editor, Salisbury the Magazine

‘Wastelands’ tells the story of taking on big corporation

If you enjoy Southern mysteries, true crime, or procedural thrillers, Corban Addison’s “Wastelands: The True Story of Farm Country On Trial” (464 pages, Knopf) is the book for you. You will be particularly entranced if you’ve ever driven down Interstate 40 towards coastal North Carolina and wondered “What is that smell?”

I opened the covers of this book simply because I love a good true crime story, having no idea that I knew many of the characters described within these pages. I grew up in Duplin County, the primary setting of the story. As a young child I was very familiar with the stench my former neighbors continued to find themselves surrounded by, decades after my family was able to move away from it.

The nuisance lawsuit described in Wastelands is the culmination of decades of environmental racism perpetrated by Smithfield Foods and its subsidiaries on people (mainly African-American) who just wanted to enjoy clean, country air on the land their families had owned, often for generations. Rather than having the freedom to sit on their porch with clothes drying on a line, the plaintiffs in these suits were forced indoors as actual

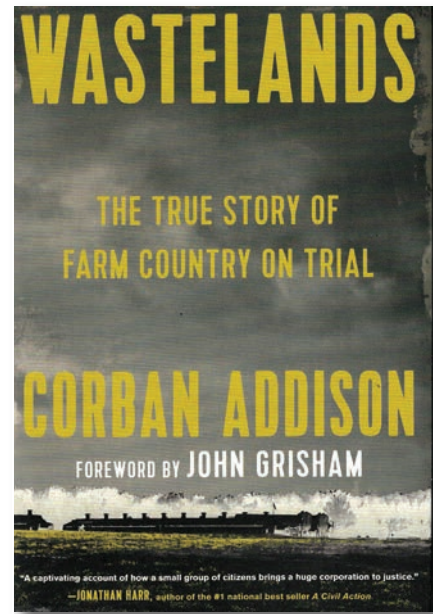
hog waste was sprayed into their air (and homes and occasionally well water) by commercial farmers attempting to eliminate a problem that could have been handled by a multitude of more neighborly methods. Nuisance lawsuits like these rarely see a court room, as the expense of taking on such a large multinational corporation is enormous, and the likelihood of remuneration is rare.



by
ALISSA
REDMOND

Through an incredibly lucky set of circumstances — described at length in the early chapters of this book — a legal dream team came together and realized the value of righting this injustice. The team of lawyers from across the country was spearheaded by Mona Lisa Wallace, of Salisbury’s Wallace & Graham Law Firm.

Reading this book as fellow North Carolinians, you will likely recognize many familiar locations, individuals and circumstances. I was riveted by each page as memories of my childhood in rural towns and my time working in China (Smithfield Foods is now owned by a Chinese conglomerate), along with a truly incredible legal thriller unfolded — all at once. This case, without getting into the details, had profound consequences



‘Wastelands: The True Story of Farm Country On Trial’
by Corban Addison

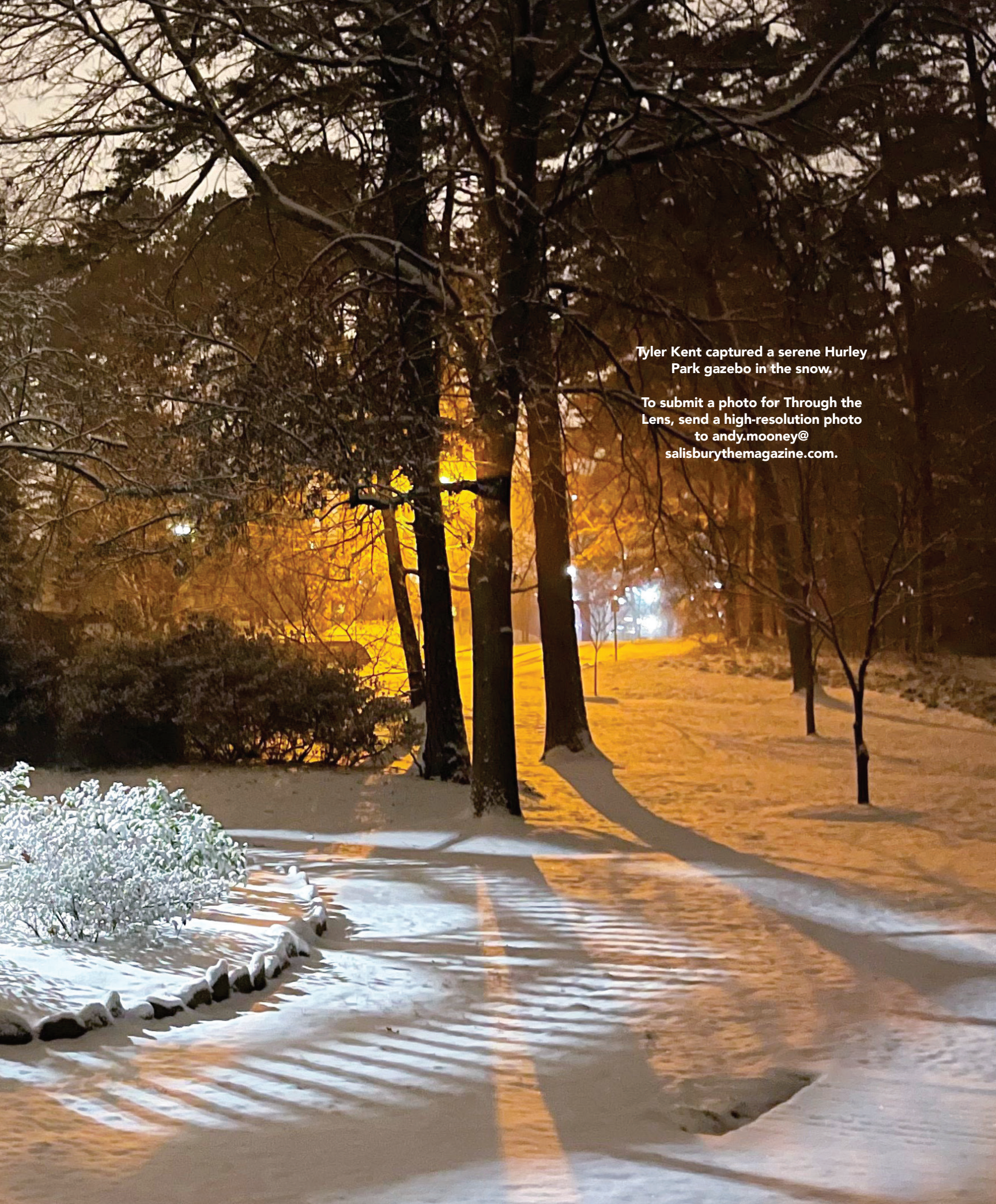
not just for the plaintiffs, but also for our state’s legal system in general, and I encourage anyone who practices law here to give this book a serious gander.

I am grateful to know that so many heroes in this story are my neighbors now. They did a tremendous service to others in our state and deserve all the high praise contained in Wastelands. If you have not already picked up your copy from the bookstore — we have sold quite a few of them already — I hope to get one in your hands very soon. **S**

► *The title mentioned above, along with others from fine North Carolinian authors, is available at Salisbury’s independent bookstore, South Main Book Company, located at 110 S. Main St. You can pre-order this novel on the store’s website (<https://bookshop.org/a/36/9780593320822>). Call 704-630-9788 or email southmainbookcompany@gmail.com to confirm store hours and events. Alissa Redmond is the owner of this store.*

THROUGH THE LENS by Tyler Kent





Tyler Kent captured a serene Hurley
Park gazebo in the snow.

To submit a photo for Through the
Lens, send a high-resolution photo
to [andy.mooney@
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| Q & A |

Changing lives

*Rowan Helping Ministries
Executive Director Kyna Grubb*

WRITTEN BY **MAGGIE BLACKWELL**

PHOTOGRAPHY BY **SEAN MEYERS**

“**T**here’s not a day goes by that you don’t see God’s hand at work at Rowan Helping Ministries.”

Kyna Grubb, executive director of Rowan Helping Ministries since 2010, is one of those people whose faith seems intertwined in everything she does.

Take her transition from the corporate world to the human services world. While working in accounting at Food Lion corporate offices, Kyna started praying the prayer of Jabez found in the Bible: “May I do good for You, expand my territory for Your good, and keep me safe from harm,” paraphrased. She shared this desire with her vice president, who offered her a job in community relations only three days later. On a daily basis, she managed Food Lion’s good-deed-doing, including food donations to Rowan Helping Ministries.



Rowan Helping
Ministries
Executive Director
Kyna Grubb

Years passed. Kyna was intrigued by Diane Scott’s retirement at Rowan Helping Ministries and the opening for executive director, but the salary was significantly lower than hers. A single mom at the time, Kyna had two kids in college and relied on her corporate stock options and grants to get them through.

Three days before the RHM application period ended, Food Lion did away with Kyna’s job, but extended her benefits for five years. This enabled her to apply to Rowan Helping Ministries. Kyna feels this is the miracle she had prayed for.

The mission of Rowan Helping Ministries is to serve, through cooperative community action, our neighbors in Rowan Coun-



ty who are in crisis, by providing essential life needs and educating and empowering them to break the cycle of crisis.

Kyna says when Diane left, she handed off a strong organization with a strong board and a well-developed strategic plan. “Everything we’ve done has come from that plan,” she says. “We ask, ‘What is the need of the community/ what do we build to meet those needs?’”

Kyna’s eyes light up as she talks about all the partners in the process: Meals on Wheels, local

churches, Cabarrus Rowan Health Centers, the VA, Food for Thought, the list goes on and on. Kyna says the partnership with the VA has actually helped her organization become smarter, due to their monthly and annual inspections. The total number of local churches who partner with RHM is 152.

She started in 2010, while the nation was still reeling from the 2008 recession. Unemployment was high and the homeless were often the last to be employed, due to many factors

including lapses in employment or lack of references. RHM began the Journey Forward program, allowing clients to volunteer at the center and receive a stipend. This provided them with a work history that enabled many to find paying jobs.

Before the Robertson-Stanback Center opened, the facility offered shelter overnight. Today they offer a 24-hour dayroom as well as life coaching, transitional apartments, Journey Forward and the Breaking Free program, teach-

ing clients about financial stability. Although the organization has long offered a pantry of free food to those in need, today they can shop in the pantry and get what they need, rather than receive a bag full of pre-packed groceries.

Kyna's proud that 90% of all donations go directly to programs. The organization serves only Rowan County residents, although transients can stay one time only for three days. Clients must provide identification, undergo a breathalyzer test and have a background test performed. When people come in from other counties, they are promptly sent back.

Currently the organization is building 12 new transitional apartments and 5 permanent supportive units. Administrative offices will soon move out of the original building, making room for mental and medical health services.

COVID caused challenges but Rowan Helping Ministries did not close its doors a day. They turned the waiting room into a makeshift isolation quarters for people were not yet tested. Kyna is proud that not until 18 months after the pandemic began, did they get a case of COVID at the shelter.

Q. *How involved is your board?*

All of our board members serve in some volunteer capacity, but they are good at leading at the strategic level. We have borrowed/stolen ideas from agencies that have perfected them. We've been given grace by the board to try new ideas knowing some may not work out. We adjust and pivot and change with the times.

Our board challenges me and I like it. Dave Jordan in particular would challenge me, and so would Chris Bradshaw. Dave is like a dad. I value his opinion because I know I have to be prepared. I like the pushback.

How many people does it take to run Rowan Helping Ministries?

Today we have 43 staff, a significant increase due to increased programs. Until COVID we had about 5,000 volunteers a year; many took a pause or stopped coming entirely. Today we are back up to 2,500 and critically need about 500 more. Another factor is that church congregations are getting smaller — and they were a big source of volunteers for us.

How much food do you go through?

This year we will use a total of 900,000 pounds in the pantry. Last year it was over a million. Jeannie's Kitchen is totally separate. Also, we have almost 1,000 children enrolled in Food for Thought, the program that sends backpacks filled with food home with students for the weekend.

Tell me about your family.

Husband John is a local Realtor. I have three adult kids, all local: Karla, married with one son; Kia, married and one son; Kenan lives just up the street.



What's your favorite pastime?

John and I have a 3.5-mile loop that we walk. I used to be a runner! But today I'm a walker. Also I have a new grandson across the street. Altogether I just like to be busy.

What's your guilty pleasure?

I enjoy a good massage.

Who are your mentors?

So many of them have passed away! I would have to list Tippi Miller, Dave Jordan, David Setzer, Paul Fisher. In my former job I gave money away. When I came here I did not know how to fundraise.

What's your comfort food?

Kilwin's toasted coconut ice cream, sadly not available around here.

How does it feel to know you are part of changing lives?

I feel like my parents would be proud of me. **S**

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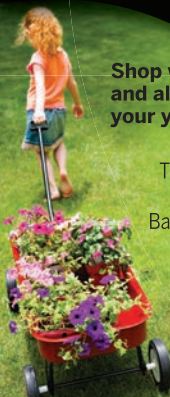
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*NASCAR announcer relishes the sport's people,
thrill of competition*

WRITTEN BY **BEN WHITE** | SUBMITTED PHOTOS



Dave Moody works as a NASCAR announcer for Motor Racing Network.

Dave Moody could honestly make watching paint dry sound exciting. For over 30 years, his world has been quite a bit faster than brush strokes on wood posts. How about 200 miles per hour faster? Moody works as an announcer for Motor Racing Network during 22 of 36 NASCAR weekends on the schedule that stretches from February through November. When he isn't perched high above Turns Three and Four at race tracks with cars whizzing under him at breathtaking speeds, he's in his studio hosting his show, "Sirius XM Speedway" from 3-7 p.m. each weekday.

Booth announcers Rusty Wallace, NASCAR's 1989 Cup Series champion, Jeff Strigle and Alex Hayden bring the broadcast to life with a quick description of the race that's upcoming. Mike Bagely is stationed in Turn One, Kim Coon and Steve Post cover the action on pit road, while Kyle Rickey, Kurt Becker and Jason Toy also worked various locations including the garage area and medical center when crashes occur on the track. They are a team that work hand-in-hand 36 race weekends per year and cover NASCAR's Cup Series, Xfinity Series, Craftsman Truck Series and ARCA Series.

Moody's blue eyes are trained on the field of racing machines 40 strong as they tighten in formation. His heart races as they come to his vantage point. He has offered a million descriptions via radio airwaves of drivers racing inches apart in a unique style of delivery no one can match. His voice alone allows those searching the radio dial for NASCAR events to know they are where they need to be.

"The guys in the booth come to me for what we call a scene set and that's where we describe the track, the banking, how wide the track is and the pertinent things about the day's race," Moody said. "I pretty much know when they're going to come to me. There's absolutely an excitement that goes through me. When those lights go out on top of the pace car to signal one lap until we go green and they'll be coming by me at 160 miles per hour, yeah, that gets my adrenaline pumping for sure."



Moody grew up in Montpelier, Vermont, and by the age of 7, was his uncle's sidekick going to one of the most popular short tracks in the Northeast. It was Thunder Road International Speedbowl in Barre, Vermont, a track that still operates on Thursday nights and has since it opened in 1960.

Ten years later, Moody worked as a crew member and aspired to become a driver himself. He drove in a mini-stock division that barely paid enough to put gas in the tank. He drove a battle-scarred Volkswagen Beetle with No. 77 on its sides that convinced him he should talk about races instead of driving in them.

"We were a really low-buck team," Moody said. "So much so that we didn't realize the shock absorber on the right rear of the car was junk. In the first practice session of my first race, I went into Turn One and that thing started wheel-hopping so badly I thought I had a jackhammer inside my trunk. I was 17 years old. I didn't know what wheel hop was. I figured all race cars did that. I just kept going. Finally, about the third corner that thing wheel hopped to the point where I couldn't bring it back. I spun it out in the middle of the corner and I neglected to lock up the brake and stayed where I spun. I coasted down the track and wiped out my teammate. At that point I said, 'You know, stock car racing might not be for me.'"

From there, Moody found himself writing columns for a local trade paper about racing, writing press releases about Thunder Road and helping with public address announcements at the track as well as other short tracks in the area. Thunder Road was built and operated by an icon of stock car racing and of NASCAR, the great Ken Squier, also the co-founder of Motor Racing Network and also the lead announcer for CBS Sports television broadcasts of NASCAR Grand National races, known today as the Cup Series.

Moody learned a great deal by working with Squier, es-

Moody hosts "Sirius XM Speedway" from 3-7 p.m. each weekday.



pecially the art of delivery and the importance of carefully describing the action on the track to fans in attendance.

For years, Moody listened to Motor Racing Network broadcasts of his heroes battling for wins on Sunday afternoons. There was Bobby Allison, Donnie Allison, Cale Yarborough, Richard Petty, David Pearson, Darrell Waltrip, Buddy Baker, Benny Parsons, all stars of the 1970s and 1980s. Then an opportunity came to audition for a part-time spot with the network that led to one of his most memorable days. He was also listening to MRN greats such as Barney Hall, Mike Joy and Squier for inspiration.

Moody's first Daytona 500 broadcast came in 1989 when Darrell Waltrip won the race by using a fuel strategy that kept everyone biting their nails during the final laps, including Waltrip's crew. "...I was pretty ramped up," Moody said. "There aren't many times that you can look at something and say, 'This is

"You're with the same people every week. You roll into town, you set up the tent, you put on the show, you tear it all down, you clean up after the elephant and you're on down the road."

SPORT



going to be history, this is going to be special.’ This day, one of two things was going to happen. Either he was going to make it and win the Daytona 500 or he was going to run out of gas with a lap and a half to go so it was going to be exciting either way.

“I remember getting off a line with two to go and they were talking about everything he could do to save fuel. I said, ‘If a seagull flies down the back straightaway, Darrell Waltrip is going to draft it.’

“We got to the final lap and as we go to Turn Three, I know this is my call. I have him from Turn Three to Turn Four. Darrell Waltrip is going to win the Daytona 500. About the time I’m ready to say it, the late great Dick Brooks keys his mic on pit road and says, “Guys, I don’t know if his crew knows if he can make it.” That took six or seven seconds. I stopped talking and Brooks stopped talking. I had a decision to make. It might have been my last Daytona 500 for jumping in, but I went for it and said, “Darrell Waltrip is coming out of Turn Four and I think he’s gonna make it.” That was my entire call, but that was good enough for me.”

The greatest move Moody has ever seen came just weeks ago on Oct. 30, 2022, at Martinsville (Virginia) Speedway. Ross Chastain, driver of the No. 1 Trackside Racing Chevrolet, needed to make up five positions to gain an invitation into NASCAR’s Championship Final Four on the final lap. He hugged the wall and passed Denny Hamlin to finish fourth. Chastain ultimately finished second to Joey Logano in the 2022 Cup Series Championship.

No one saw Chastain’s unorthodox Hail Mary move coming but it was considered a truly last-ditch heroic move.

“Honestly, it was half over before I realized it had started,” Moody said. “I’m calling Christopher Bell the leader of the race in Turn Four so I can hand it off to the booth for them to make the call that he’s coming to the checkered flag. As I finished with that call, I kind of got a little

peripheral vision thing going on and here’s Ross Chastain about halfway through turns one and two just screaming the wall and my first gut feeling was his throttle stuck open and he was crashing. Then I realized, he’s not crashing. That crazy nut is running the fence. I think I was like 99 percent of the people in the grandstand. When he went across the start-finish line, I had my left hand on the left side of my head and my right hand on the right side of my head saying, ‘Oh my GOD, what did he just do?’ It took a minute to mentally realize what had just happened. I take my hat off to him. What he did was beyond phenomenal.”

Moody has made many friends in NASCAR over three decades and enjoys traveling with them each week. At the end of the day, they are family everywhere they race.

“It’s the people,” Moody said. “I love the sport. I love the competition. I love the technical side of it, although I’m not the most technical guy in the world. But it’s the people. It really is. And after all these years, the best analogy I can come up with is this; I never traveled with the circus but I’m thinking it’s pretty much the same. You’re with the same people every week. You roll into town, you set up the tent, you put on the show, you tear it all down, you clean up after the elephant and you’re on down the road. You may not do the same job but you’re all a part of the same family. I love every second of it.”

Moody considers Rowan County home and enjoys the city of Salisbury and the people that live here.

“I love Rowan County and Salisbury in particular,” Moody said. “It’s big enough but not too big. Everything you need is here. We have some great restaurants to go to here. The community theatre is very strong. I like a strong sense of community, particularly in Salisbury. People wave to each other on the street, which is kind of nice.” **S**

Salisbury’s Ben White, an award-winning writer and author, has covered NASCAR for many publications for 40 years.

The Wright stuff

Civil rights champion recounts endeavors in book

WRITTEN BY **MAGGIE BLACKWELL**

PHOTOGRAPHY BY **SEAN MEYERS**

“**D**espite what I’ve seen, I still have hope.” Deedee Wright has finally written her book, “The (W)right Thing — My Life in the Civil Rights Movement and Beyond,” after years of urging from virtually everyone she knows.

“In seeing how she survived, I learned perseverance and to fight for what I wanted.”

Early in the book, Deedee shares that her mom was indeed her best role model, her “north star.” Deedee’s mom and dad separated when Deedee was only five years old, and she has no memories of her dad living at home. Her mom worked full-time as a domestic for the mayor of Greenville, South Carolina, and was the sole provider for the children. Deedee observed her working without complaint, raising the children, setting bound-

aries and requiring they were met.

They lived in a small home with no television, but plenty of reading material. She says her mom rarely used two words if one would do. Yet the youngsters knew the rules and they knew to follow them without question.

In her early years, Deedee spent mornings in the mayor’s kitchen as her mother fulfilled her job as his domestic worker. When it was time for school, her mother walked with her, holding her hand. “Each weekday morning,” she says, “I had something that I could take pride in... I had the security of my own mother’s hand to cling to as I traveled the distance to school.”

Deedee laughs as she recalls her mother’s ploy to get the kids to read. Oftentimes in the evening she would read the newspaper, chuckling to herself. When the kids asked what she was laughing about, she simply re-



Salisbury's
Deedee Wright
poses for a
portrait at her
home in the
West End.

HISTORY





Wright keeps photographs of her with various champions of the civil rights era on her mantel at home.



Right: Wright's letter to the editor responding to an editorial on library integration.



Inadequacies At Libraries Cited

Editor, The News:

Your editorial of Sept. 7 dealing with the library suit is undoubtedly based on a number of false assumptions. Maybe this is due to your misunderstanding the objectives of the plaintiffs in the case.

The "closed" signs on the doors of the Main Street and the McBee Avenue branches of the public library need not be there at all. Rather than admit a few Negroes who really want to use the facilities of the Main Street library, the Greenville City Council and the library board of trustees made their worst move by closing the libraries. The Council and the board put themselves in the so-called dilemma by creating one.

There is an easier course of action that the Council and the board could have taken. The libraries could now be operating smoothly on an integrated plan.

I question seriously the statement in your editorial that the above course of action would have led to "an influx of mixed races and the renewal of strife." Columbia and Spartanburg have integrated their libraries with no reaction.

Your editorial further states that we "went to the Main Street library for the sole purpose of creating an incident." The materials would have been made available to us at the McBee Avenue branch.

Some of the students in the group wanted to read the following leading newspapers of the nation: The New York Times, The St. Louis Post-Dispatch, The Atlanta Constitution, The New York Herald Tribune, and The Charlotte Observer. Out of all the papers named above, only the Sunday edition of The New York Times is received at the McBee Avenue branch of the public library. There are many inadequacies at the McBee Avenue branch that far surpass the ones at the Main Street library.

If the two libraries were truly set up on the principle of separate but equal, every book, pamphlet, magazine, newspaper, and other material that is at the Main Street library would also be at the McBee Avenue branch. The separate but equal principle is very expensive. It would be easier and less expensive to integrate the libraries. Just think of all the money that the library board could save. Furthermore there is a great need for more funds.

I hope that the Council and the library board will realize that in reality, there is no need for anyone to lose in the library suit. Integration of the libraries is not only morally right, but it is also less expensive as well.

DORRIS WRIGHT
President Youth Chapter
National Association for the
Advancement of Colored
People

plied, “Oh, just something I read.” Soon as she finished the paper, the kids grabbed it to see what was funny inside.

In high school, Deedee was thrilled to make the major-ette squad. Unfortunately, while the uniforms were provided, the signature white boots were not. Deedee approached her mom, who promptly put a pair of white boots on layaway for her at two dollars per installment. On the day of the last payment, she allowed her to wear the new boots home. Deedee never knew where she found the funds to pay for the boots but suspected later that her older sister had helped. She says her mom enjoyed telling the story in later years — how excited and happy Deedee was and how she wore the boots home from the store. “Somehow,” she says, “Mama knew those boots were extremely important to me, and because they were important to me, they were important to her.”

“I always say if she were educated,” Deedee says, “she could have been president of the U.S.”

Greenville in those days had two libraries, one for white patrons and one for Blacks. The Black library had no reference materials; those could only be accessed by requesting an intra-library transfer, which took three to five days. For students with an imminent research paper, that was too long.

Seventeen-year-old Deedee wrote a letter to the Greenville newspaper asking that the libraries be desegregated — and ultimately won. In the letter, she pointed out that Spartanburg had already desegregated their library by order of the mayor and politely — but clearly — asked for Greenville to follow suit. It took some work, but the library was ultimately desegregated.

NAACP AND SIT-INS

As a high school sophomore, Deedee was selected to serve

as president of the Greenville NAACP Youth Council. She and her colleagues participated in sit-ins at the S.H. Kress to protest separate eating areas — a case that went all the way to the Supreme Court. She was arrested for her participation. Later, she marched on the capitol in Columbia, fighting for the rights of Black Americans. This, too, later became a case at the Supreme Court — and for this, too, she was arrested.

The first in her family to earn a college degree, Deedee attended Clark College, now Clark Atlanta University, where she earned a bachelor’s degree in political science with a minor in physics. She worked hard to maintain grades that enabled her to continue with scholarships and grants.

She attended the University of Missouri and earned a master’s degree in counseling psychology. In true Deedee Wright fashion, she liberally credits her mentors and champions along the way.

Following a career in social work, Deedee retired in Salisbury. She’s served on multiple boards and commissions at the city and county levels. One board she’s quite enthusiastic about is the DSS, Department of Social Services, board. In every case, she has ensured that any board on which she serves is ultimately making life better for our citizens. “It’s been a life of service,” she says, “Each one touching one.”

She’s a frequent visitor to Salisbury City Council meetings, often asking for more resources for the police. While she can be critical, she’s always fair.

“I don’t call people racists,” she says. “It’s not my cultivation. I know a lot of people think I have a bravado, but they don’t know all the times I wanted to cry.” **S**

Deedee Wright’s book, “The (W)right Thing,” is available at South Main Books in Salisbury.

“I don’t call people racists. It’s not my cultivation. I know a lot of people think I have a bravado, but they don’t know all the times I wanted to cry.”



THE (W)RIGHT THING

MY LIFE IN THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT AND BEYOND

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Neal Wilkinson planes an acrylic blank on the lathe, from a square blank into a round smooth shape of a pen. As he planes the blank, the colorful inside of the blank changes colors as the chips are cut away.

as the PEN
TURNS

Neal Wilkinson takes pride in hand-crafted writing instruments

WRITTEN BY **BRENDA ZIMMERMAN** | PHOTOGRAPHY BY **WAYNE HINSHAW**

Wilkinson's order for 50
matching olive wood pens.
The order took many weeks
to finish.

(Neal Wilkinson photo)





Some of Wilkinson's pens styles. From left: Wilkinson made this pen using a brass shell casing from his father's 21-gun salute at his funeral; an acrylic pen design; a military design; a firefighter pen with a firetruck and a fire ax. This pen has a firehose nozzle where the nib comes out.

N

Neal Wilkinson has one of those voices you never forget.

If you have ever been to the First Baptist Church Living Christmas Tree in Salisbury, you may have heard his lovely tenor solos. Perhaps you've heard him sing, "The Star Spangled Banner" to open a Legion game.

Not only does he have a strong voice, but he has strong hands at the lathe in his shop. Generally, references to a lathe bring ornate stair railings and decorative table legs to mind. Neal uses the same format and process for a much smaller finished product.

When Neal's father died, he received seven of the shell casings from the 21-gun salute that ended the solemn military funeral. After a while, he reached out to friend and pen turner John Zerger, telling him, "It just felt like it could be a pen." While working on the seven pens, Neal tried turning a blank on the lathe. His friend warned him that it might be addictive.

More than 600 pens later, Neal acknowledges Zerger was right.

Neal has a 30-year career as a quality professional in manufacturing, which led to the last 15 years as a compliance auditor. His company audits producers of building supplies such as cultured stone, concrete reinforcement materials and structural insulated panels to ensure that high-quality assurance standards are followed. His work is one of detail and precision that can also be applied to the exacting artistry shown in his hand-crafted writing instruments.

The custom-made pens begin as acrylic, wood, or stone blanks. Neil's exact measuring and work on a small lathe



Wilkinson inherited his father's lathe. Until he began turning pens, he had never used it.



Wilkinson holds different types of 6-inch-by-3/4-inch wooden blanks that he uses to make pens. From left: olive wood from the Holy Land, Thuya Burl wood, Zebrawood, Coconut Palm, Purple Heart and Walton.

create beautiful works of art that fit in your hand.

Rows of acrylic blanks include solids as well as ones with streaks of marbled coloring and embedded materials such as mother of pearl. Watching them turn on the lathe, colors and patterns emerge from inside the acrylic. Other blanks are made of stone and wood. Patterns, as with the grain designs in the wooden blanks, are not evident until the turning peels back the surface to expose them.

One of Neal's favorite parts of the craft is visualizing what he wants the finished product to be.

Michelangelo said, "I saw the angel in the marble and carved until I set him free."

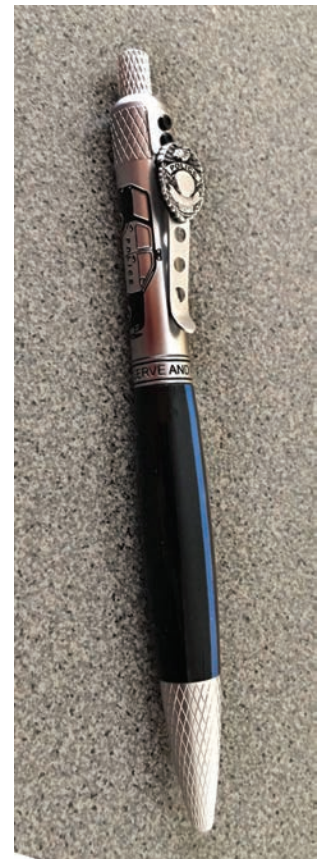
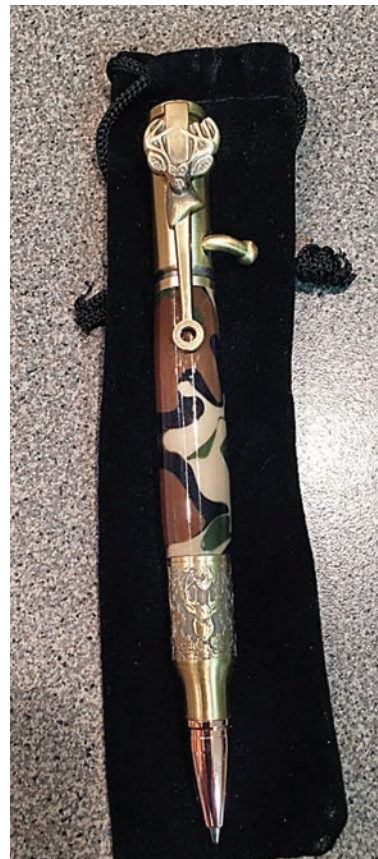
Neal knows that a pattern exists within the blank before he starts. He must work to pull it out and realize at what point the masterpiece within is perfectly exposed. It takes his skill, his feel for the process and patience to draw the work of art out so that others can see it.

Each medium has unique qualities and requires a different touch. As the barrel of the pen reveals itself, there are sometimes flaws. Although the acrylic blanks are usually consistent, natural elements such as stone and wood can present challenges.

A knot in a piece of cedar can add to the unique quality of a pen, or snag on the lathe and split it up.

"When that happens, you can't really do anything but start over," Neal notes.

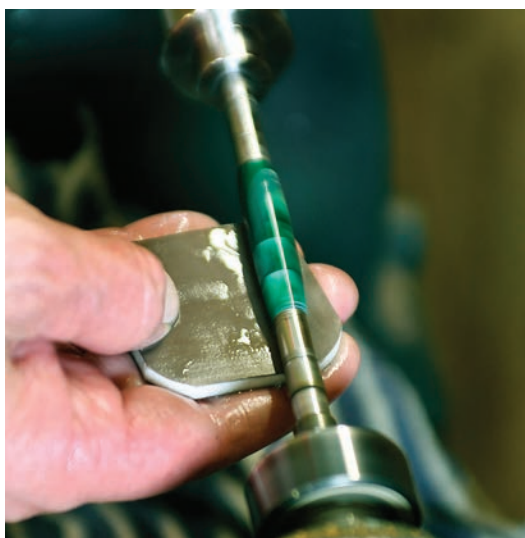
A 'deer hunter's pen,' right, and a 'policeman's pen,' far right. (Neal Wilkinson photos)





Neal Wilkinson's wife, Sandra, has pens made by Neal that match all of her outfits for work. Pictured are the some of the many colors and materials that Neal uses in the pens. Some are wood, acrylic and stone. Neal grew up in Enochville, Sandra is from China Grove. They graduated from South Rowan High School in 1975.

This acrylic blank is green and has marbled coloring inside. Wilkinson has cut the blank in half and added the medal insert where the ink cylinder will go.



Right: A Harley-Davidson motorcycle pen, left, complete with exhaust pipes and gas tank shape. The other two pens are patriotic pens with eagle and flag.

Left: Several grades of very fine sandpaper are used to smooth the pen body after it is turned on the lathe.





The parts that are installed into the finished blank of a pen.

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Wilkinson's tools hang over the lathe.

Knowing exactly when to stop turning the pen prevents the various materials from shattering as the contour thins out.

After the work of turning the pen is complete, there are processes for smoothing and finishing the surface to a fine patina. Details such as transmissions, clips and the thrusting mechanism are added. The thrusting device, more commonly known as the clicker, allows the nib to be protected when not in use, or exposed for writing. The pen is assembled with mechanical works that are state-of-the-art and easily refillable. Twist pens and fountain pens are also available. Neal makes pens in two main styles: a heftier pen for men and a lighter, slimline one for the ladies.

Brilliantly colored pens are displayed in his workshop. Many of the acrylic pens are solid colors and can be customized with school colors or laser-etched with logos.



The acrylic blanks used for the pen bodies comes in all sorts of colors like this red and white with marbled coloring inside.

Lynn Bernhardt's shop near the roundabout on Sherrill's Ford Road, HTC Designs and Apparel of Salisbury, collaborates with Neal to provide specialized laser etching for personalized gifts.

Several completed pens are a part of wife Sandra's personal collection. Retired from a career with Wells Fargo, she says with a laugh, "I had a matching pen for every outfit!"

One of the largest projects he has completed was a set of 80 pens for his boss to present to employees. They were made with olive wood from the Holy Land. On average, it takes an hour to two hours to complete one pen, so this was a time-consuming project.

Another project Neal took on was using oak from the renovated flooring at First Baptist Church to make pens for ministerial staff, renovation committee and some of the work crew. He has also done personalized projects with materials salvaged from events such as fallen tree that had significance to the recipient.

These pens make unique gifts to commemorate special life events such as a birthday, earning a degree or getting a promotion. A pen is also an affordable piece of original art you can buy for yourself. Pens retail for \$25-\$80 depending on the cost of the selected blank and the type of pen.

For more information, contact Neal at custompens2016@gmail.com. 

Wilkinson drills out the center of this acrylic blank where the ink cylinder will go.



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Rijk Zwaan works with his client, Jeremy Dennis during a recent workout at Rijk's Strength and Performance.



HEAVY LIFTING

Personal trainer Rijk Zwaan owns gym
that serves more than 200 clients

WRITTEN BY MAGGIE BLACKWELL | PHOTOGRAPHY BY SEAN MEYERS



Rijk and Jenni
Zwaan

Standing at 6'2" and weighing 250, Rijk Zwaan (pronounced, "Rike Swan,") might be a little intimidating, if not for that broad smile.

Rijk, 50, has graduated from culinary school, played semi-pro football and worked in construction, but after he earned his personal trainer license he really came into his own.

"If you'd told me 30 years ago, I would own a gym in North Carolina," he says, "I would have said, 'No way!'"

He's the owner and operator at Rijk's Strength and Performance, near Catawba College in Salisbury. He and four other certified trainers serve a base of about 200 members.

He's the first of his Dutch family to have been born in the U.S. but considers English his second language.

He says he moved here from New York in 2016 to be closer to his mom, who lives in nearby Cornelius. He had \$60 in his pocket when he arrived and initially worked at DuraFiber. During this time, he earned his personal trainer license. Rijk had competed in weightlifting competitions since age 25 and was interested in turning his personal hobby into a livelihood.

After DuraFiber closed, Rijk trained clients at The Forum Fitness on South Main Street before and after working shifts in construction. Day after day, he was either working, training clients, or sleeping.

Finally, the income from personal training began to exceed his wage in construction. He took the plunge and quit his day job, committing to training full-time. He began working full-time at The Forum, starting with just a handful of cli-



Banks Fisher works his abs during a recent workout.



Michael Mussler works the weight machine.



Rijk keeps an eye on his client during a recent workout.

ents. The longer he worked, and the more success his clients had, the more his client list grew.

Rijk is thankful for his time at The Forum. “The owners couldn’t be nicer guys,” he says.

Two years ago, one of his clients, 83-year-old Coach Ken Hayes, approached him. “Why aren’t you getting your own place?” he asked. “You have enough clients, and you’re already paying rent to The Forum.”

Shortly thereafter, the location on Corriher Avenue became available. Rijk went to see it with the owners, the Rusher family.

“I told them it was great, but just too big, more than I needed,” he says. “So they asked, ‘Well, how much do you want?’”

The gym today is clean, organized and well-equipped. And red. The entire gym is red. It feels a little intense at first. Rijk smiles and says, “The purpose of the red is to motivate — to create alertness. It helps us to work harder.”

There are several pieces of equipment not typically seen in other gyms. Rijk follows the conjugated method of training, popularized by Louis Simmons at Westside Barbell in Ohio. Simmons developed these pieces of equipment to facilitate training with minimal injury.



“It’s all made in the U.S. out of high-grade steel,” Rijk says. “It costs more but lasts forever — and I’m providing the best for my clients.”

Members at the gym range from 8 years old to over 80. He says they have quite a few law enforcement members as well as active-duty service people, veterans, nurses and doctors. Clients also include people with special needs, seniors and folks with recent joint replacements. Two young people on the autism spectrum work out there, as well. Several clients compete — and win — weightlifting competitions.

The gym is available for use 24 hours a day, although it’s staffed Monday through Friday from 4 a.m. to 8 p.m.; Saturdays 6 a.m. to 1 p.m.; and Sunday 6 a.m. to 2 p.m. In the unstaffed hours, clients use an app on their phones to open the doors. The gym has a security system as well as plenty of lighting outside and in.

After Burl Brady’s stroke, the right side of his body was paralyzed. When he first met Rijk, he was using a walker.

“This man would not take ‘no,’ for an answer!” Rijk laughs. “He was committed to playing golf again.”

Burl trained with Rijk for six months; during that time, he

dropped the walker, then the cane — then re-learned how to walk independently. They started with spatial awareness and progressed to strength training, with Rijk encouraging Burl along the way. They worked to develop strength and regain his balance. Today, Burl is back on the golf course and his wife Alice works out in the gym, as well.

“There are seven Grandfather Laws of Training,” Rijk says.

“Most important is the law of individuality. If you as a trainer, can remember that you’ll be successful.”

When Ken encouraged Rijk to open a gym 2 years ago, he likely never knew Rijk would help restore his mobility. A dedicated golfer, Hayes also enjoys dog sledding and snowmobiling.

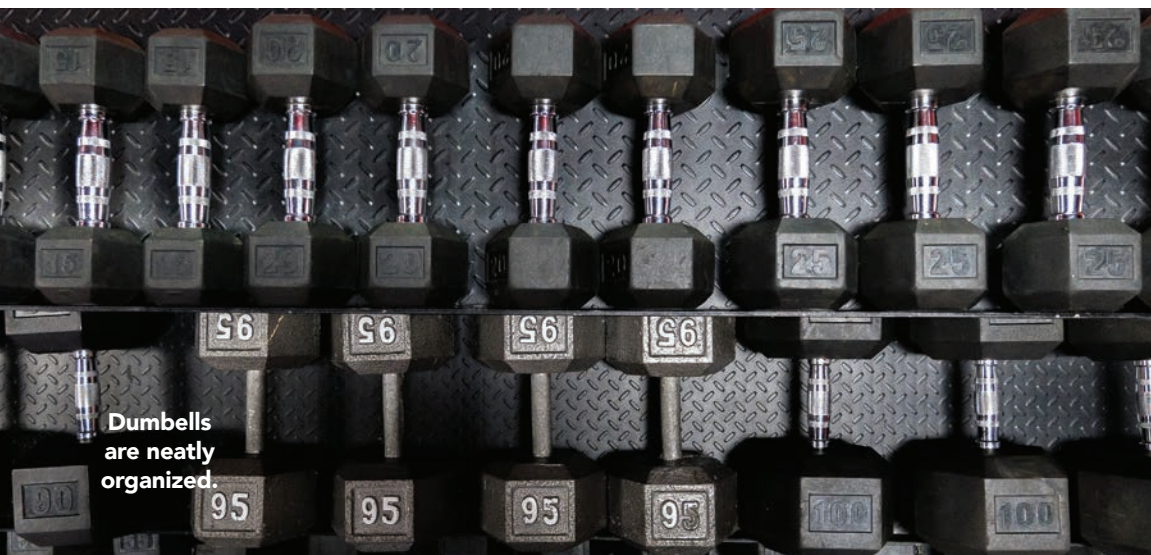
About a year ago, he fell in the woods and tore the interior of his shoulder. Hayes says he could not move his right arm more than a couple of inches from his side. His orthopedist told him it was just too deteriorated to surgically repair. Having trained with Rijk, he knew whom to call next.

Rijk and Ken faithfully worked on that shoulder, taking baby steps to strengthen the muscles surrounding the torn ones. It took 10 months of hard work, but Ken is back on the golf course and riding his motorcycle, although not at the same time. He’s talking

The entire gym is red. Rijk says, ‘The purpose of the red is to motivate — to create alertness. It helps us to work harder.’



Nick Hill lifts a 125-pound dumbbell.



Dumbbells are neatly organized.

“ Riker is gifted. He has the gift of encouragement. He has a great knowledge of the human body; its muscles and tissues. He has a dynamic personality and supreme patience.

— COACH KEN HAYES



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North Rowan High School students and track athletes Dashia Canada, standing, and Tai'lah Ward work out at Rijk's Strength and Performance.

about water skiing later this year.

He calls his buddy Rijk, "Riker."

"Riker is gifted," he says. "He has the gift of encouragement. He has a great knowledge of the human body, its muscles and tissues. He has a dynamic personality and supreme patience."

Todd Rosser is the owner of Codist Creative, a Salisbury digital design, development and marketing firm. He's also an avid cyclist and co-founder of Pedal Factory. At 48 years old, Todd says he's lifted weights for years, but never knew correct form. He had a cycle of joining a gym, working out, getting injured.


He says he looks for more than training at a gym; he looks for a culture where everyone is working for similar goals. He likes the mutual encouragement at Rijk's and says, "everyone is rowing in the same direction."

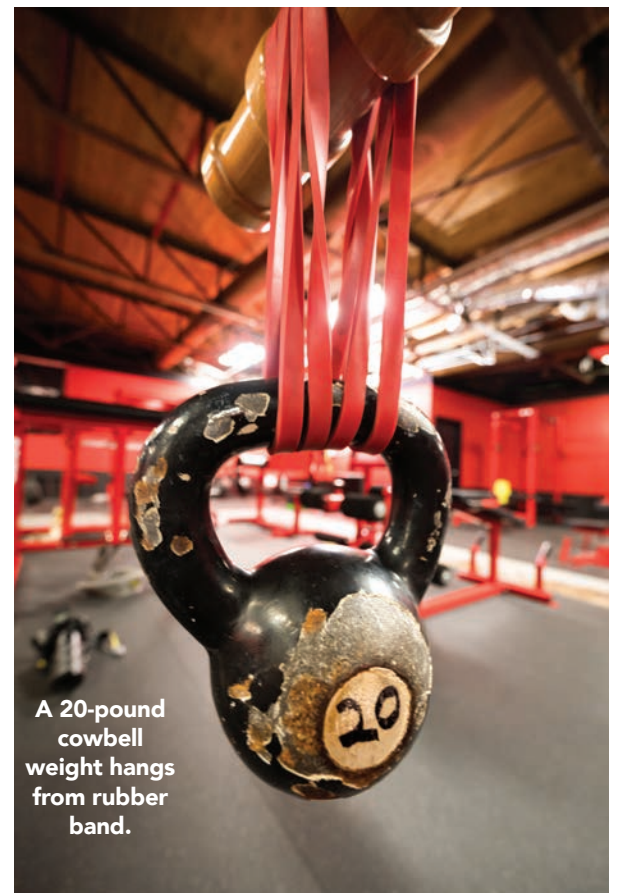
"Personally, I've spent about 6 months with Rijk, twice a week, perfecting my technique and learning the true mechanics of these movements. I've seen results I have never seen. I had a weak and injured lower back for years and years. Now I have zero back pain and four times the strength I have ever had."

Plans include adding a spin room and cardio room. Rijk is happy with the business to date and would like to open one or two more locations in the future.

Rijk recently married Jenni, manager of the gym. Together they sponsor an annual fundraiser. This year they raised \$6,000 for Special Olympics.

"They've helped us at Pedal Factory with kids' stuff for bike camps," Rosser says. "They are good community peeps."

Rijk's Strength and Performance is located at 123 West Corriher Avenue, near Catawba College. Phone is 704-794-2130. More info is available on Instagram, Facebook and www.rijksstrengthandperformance.com. 



A 20-pound cowbell weight hangs from rubber band.

Potter Heather Pressle
Carlile and her husband
Chon stand in the
door of her studio.
Chon is holding Little
Red. Heather loves
sunflowers and has
painted the flowers on
the side of the building.



A photograph of a man and a woman standing in a doorway. The woman on the left is wearing a pink and white plaid shirt and a dark, paint-splattered apron. She has her arms crossed and is smiling. The man on the right is wearing a white t-shirt, blue jeans, and a black baseball cap. He is holding a large, fluffy brown dog. Behind them is a wooden door with a circular "Welcome" sign featuring flowers. A white van is partially visible to the right.

INTO SHAPE

Heather and Chon Carlile mold their
creativity into pottery business

WRITTEN BY SUSAN SHINN TURNER | PHOTOGRAPHY BY WAYNE HINSHAW



Finished painted and fired bowls and cups.

Heather Carlile pulls her long, curly brunette hair out of the way and turns on her potter's wheel. Before long, she's created a bowl, and placed in the middle her trademark "swirl."

Then it's husband's Chon's turn. Chon (pronounced "Shaun") turns out another bowl in no time. He, too, puts a swirl in the middle.

The two do a complex dance of sorts to maneuver around their Lexington backyard pottery studio in a 12-foot by 12-foot outbuilding.

(With photographer Wayne Hinshaw and me there, and with all of Wayne's lighting equipment, it turns out to be more like a crowded cocktail party.)

But no drinks are being served — just the wonderfully creative artwork of Heather and Chon, and their business they call Shaped By Nature.

Their pottery is available at Missions Pottery, 3 N. Main St., Lexington, and Seagrove Pottery, 106 Broad St., Seagrove, as well as on Etsy. Their website, shaped-by-nature.com, went live in December.

"We lean more toward brick-and-mortar stores," Chon notes.

In December, however, they participated at Winterfest in Spencer. They were also part of last year's inaugural event.

"It was definitely fruitful meeting all those people," Heather says.

"Without knowing it, I have bought her pottery at Missions for years for the Seasons Gifts shop at St. John's Lutheran Church," says Sherry Mason Brown, one of the Winterfest



Heather proudly finishes a bowl.



organizers. “As I look at their designs, their name makes sense. I particularly like her sunflowers. They are just outstanding.”

Heather started creating pottery about three years ago to complement his woodwork and their paintings. Chon gave her a pottery class as a Christmas gift.

“We’ve always been hands-on,” he says. “We both like crafts. I sent her to class and she taught me.”

“When I made my pottery, the owner of the shop said he needed help,” Heather says. “I thought, ‘Score!’ I ended up teaching some classes. As I was working there, I was slowly saving money and buying equipment.”

“She hasn’t been doing it long, but her attitude is unbelievable,” says Tommy Davis, Missions owner. “I needed someone to work part-time. I ended up hiring her and she’s done great for us. She’s awesome. She’s a good potter for a beginner. She’s caught on fast.”

Chon does woodworking, and both of them paint. Heather’s trademark on her pottery and her paintings is a sunflower.

“I am his sunflower,” she says, looking at her husband and smiling





Clockwise from top left: A bowl, just off the potter's wheel in the studio; Chon with Heather's sons Austin, left, and Aaron; greenware pottery, which is pottery that has not yet been fired; Heather paints a sunflower on a cup. She loves sunflowers and even has them tattooed on her arms.





Above: Two pottery cups that Heather has painted with sunflowers.

Right: Greenware for a necklace.





Heather and Chon Carile wedding photo —
Aaron, Heather, Chon and Austin. (Brittany Steed
Photography photo)



that smile she only gives him. “Sunflowers transform with light.”

If Heather and Chon look adoringly at each other as if they were newlyweds, it’s because they are. They married Sept. 19, 2021.

Heather and Chon, both 32, attended West Davidson High School, class of 2008.

“He was too cool for me,” Heather says.

But not too cool to start messaging her on Facebook.

“I thought, ‘I’m talking to Chon Carlile! Oh yeah!’”

Their first date was to Linville Gorge.

Chon laughs at the memory.

“Here she comes in this prissy little dress and flip-flops,” he says. “But she survived, and I knew she was a keeper.”

The couple dated for five years before getting married. Heather says Chon treats her two boys, Aaron, 13, and Austin, 10, like his own.

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All of Chon's work is self-taught, he says. "I've got that Bob Ross vibe with those happy little trees. We like to be outdoors, and we want to bring nature inside."

Thus, the name of their business. Its tagline: "Handcrafted goods to showcase nature's beauty."

Chon works full-time for MedSource in Lexington, a company that builds ramps for disabled homeowners.

"It's a very rewarding job and I appreciate that," he says.

With the success of the business, Heather has been able to quit her waitressing job. She continues to work in the office for Lexington Home Brands, but gets home early enough in the afternoon to work on her pottery.

They don't waste clay. It's too valuable.

"We will find a way to make it into something," Heather says.

She teaches a painting class once a month at Bull City Ciderworks in Lexington — the price includes the cider. She teaches an ongoing hand building pottery class at Missions Pottery from 10 a.m. to noon on Saturdays.



A finished painted and fired bowl by Chon.

"I actually prefer hand building over throwing," Heather notes.

When they're not in the studio, they can be found in their garden just outside the door come spring.

Chon decided that a white toilet would make the perfect container for Heather's flowers.

"He thought it would make a good art piece," Heather says, rolling her eyes good-naturedly.

Beautiful wood disc necklaces by Chon, handpainted mugs by Heather, and clay necklaces round out their repertoire.

"We play, we don't work," Chon says. **S**





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Some 900 people attended the foundation's annual gala.

Heroes and History Makers gala

More than 900 military family caregivers, veterans, celebrities and supporters attended the Heroes and History Makers gala on Oct. 19 in Washington, D.C.

The evening celebrated the 10th anniversary of the Elizabeth Dole Foundation, and the fifth anniversary of the Hidden Heroes Campaign.

A donation of \$5 million from the Diana Davis Spencer Foundation was announced, the largest donation ever to the Dole Foundation. The Bob and Dolores Hope Foundation announced a \$1 million donation.

Tom Hanks, campaign chair, served as the evening's emcee. USAA served as presenting sponsor, and CEO Wayne Peacock and his wife Ginny attended.

Savannah Guthrie, co-anchor of NBC's Today, received the Tom Hanks Caregiver Champion Award for her work as a Hidden Heroes Ambassador.

Senator Dole launched the foundation in 2012 to assist military caregiver families after her husband, the late Sen. Bob Dole, spent nearly a year in Bethesda Naval Hospital.

Susan Shinn Turner, former editor of Salisbury the Magazine, interviewed Sen. Dole in August for the magazine's Holiday issue. Turner and her husband, Jim, were the senator's guests for the gala.

For more information about the foundation, visit elizabethdolefoundation.org

— Photos by Susan Shinn



Sen. Elizabeth Dole with honoree Savannah Guthrie and her family



From left: Tom Hanks; Savannah Guthrie; Sen. Elizabeth Dole; Steve Schwab, CEO of the Elizabeth Dole foundation; and Jocko Sims. (Katie Dance photo)



VIP reception overlooked wharf in Washington, D.C.



Left: Sen. Elizabeth Dole with chairman of the joint chiefs Mark Milley. Above: The marquee for the event. Right: The foundation honors the hidden heroes who are military caregivers.



Sherry Beck with her succulents.

Succulent pumpkins

Historic Salisbury Foundation offered supporters the opportunity to create autumn centerpieces from pumpkins, succulents and moss. The eager attendees met at the Hall House and learned how to use the pumpkin as a base without cutting into it at all. Although the pumpkin creations lasted only one season, the participants now have the knowledge to make more in the future. Proceeds from the class supported HSF's efforts to preserve and protect historic homes and properties.

— Submitted photos



Anne Cave shares her creation.



Above: Diana Keith, Genevieve Keith and Barb Sorell turn pumpkins into masterpieces. Right: Carol Harper and her pumpkin. Far right: Nova Hubbard displays her creation.





Timothy Michael Charles, Lane Wallace, Whitney Wallace, Lauren Whaley and Westin Ewart.



Laura Stephenson, Kay Peeler, and Kent Bernhardt performing at the annual Bury home Companion.



Whitney Wallace welcomes Jim and Betty Carli to the party.

Historic Salisbury Foundation

Historic Salisbury Foundation celebrated its 50th anniversary with a stunning Patrons' Party at the Wallace house on South Fulton Street the Thursday before OctoberTour. The Golden Soiree included entertainment from the Queen's Court party band, a catered dinner, beer and wine — even a bourbon bar. The event recognized HSF's 50 years of historic preservation success in Salisbury and its contribution to making historic homes, landmark sites, and history a hallmark for our small community.

— Photos by Studio 35



Above: Former Salisbury Mayor Susan Kluttz presents Ed Clement with the Order of the Long Leaf Pine proclamation for his decades of work preserving historic buildings.

Left: Barb and Cliff Sorel enjoy the Patrons' Party.



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Artwork for Local Colors may be submitted to
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