

Holiday 2017

SALISBURY

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Polar Express

Transportation Museum
brings holiday classic alive

Holiday homestead

Donaldsons enjoy grandeur
of their Roaring Twenties house

pedal pushers

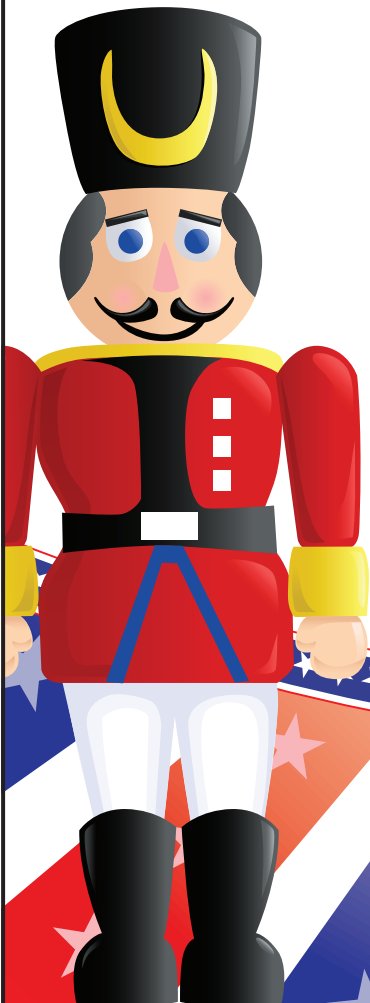
Unicyclists make parade
their holiday tradition

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brings holiday classic alive

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Merry band of unicyclists
make Holiday Caravan
a tradition

by MARK WINEKA

On this page: Santa Claus makes his way downstairs in one of the train cars during last year's Polar Express at the N.C. Transportation Museum.

On the cover: Rita Tannehill, Meredith Hooven and Ryan Jordan ride unicycles in last year's Holiday Caravan Parade.

— Photos by Jon C. Lakey



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If only we could offer you aroma therapy

I sometimes wish our magazine could include a scratch-and-sniff page. That way you could enjoy the luxurious smells filling the kitchens of people featured in some of our food stories.

This issue especially would be a good one for scratching. If only you could breathe in the aromas of pecan pies and sweet potato pies offered up by Cozy Davis, Janet Haynes and Jacqui Smith Watson who you'll read about later.

When I posted on Facebook that I was looking for folks willing to share their recipes for pecan and pumpkin pies for this holiday edition of *Salisbury the Magazine*, you wouldn't believe all the recommendations I received.

Among them were Jeannie Misenheimer, Delores Thomas, Diane Dillon Hooper, David Zalinsky, Danny Hunt, Karen Rogers, Yvonne Yost, Linda DeBlasio, Debbie Ippolito, Caroline Boone, L.A. Murph's, Donnie Moose, Lorna Medinger, Brandon Kepley and the Better Loafing Artisan Bread Co. I'm sure I'm leaving out others.

"Very clever way to scoff a pie, Mark!" Steve Olsen said.

Ben Cox and Leah Cox Thomas pleaded that I include their mother, Mary. Ben said she has "the best pumpkin pie in all the land." Leah said Mary "is always the best ... just saying!"

Other folks were recommended for specialties, such as Liz Hood's pumpkin soup, Barbara Moose for her pumpkin crisp and Courtney Smith Wood and Becky Lounsberry for their pumpkin cheesecakes.

"And what's wrong with sweet potato pie?" Chris Shoaf wanted to know. Someone immediately recommended Jody Blythe's version of this Southern delicacy.

In the end, we decided to go with pecan



pies and sweet potato pies, leaving pumpkin treats for another day, another issue. My thanks for all the suggestions, and we appreciate Cozy, Janet and Jackie for sharing their recipes and allowing us to pamper our noses.

"Need help tasting those?" Steve Monday asked. Nope, already taken care of.

Elsewhere in this 2017 holiday issue, you will read the inside story of how one man and his unicycle grew into a Holiday Caravan tradition for the Arey family and many of their friends. Look for these crazy clowns on unicycles again in this year's edition of the Spencer-Salisbury parade.

When people think of big events at the N.C. Transportation Museum in Spencer, they probably picture the crowds often associated with appearances of Thomas the Tank. In reality, the museum's biggest production has become the Polar Express.

Rebecca Rider fills us in on what is fast becoming a must-do holiday event for children.

Jessica Coates reports on the behind-the-scenes story of how The Arc of Rowan's Festival of Trees started, why it's important to the agency and the team involved in making it happen every year. Nothing will get you in the spirit of Christmas more than visiting the Festival of Trees at the F&M Trolley Barn on the first three days of December.

Elizabeth Cook, our resident expert in bringing you stories on interesting Rowan County homes, takes you to Seamus and Traci Donaldson's house, dressed out for Christmas. David Freeze writes about the wonderful gift Ageless Aviation offers to military veterans — flights they'll never forget.

Speaking of things never forgotten, many of us associate Christmas with certain gifts we might have received as a child. Folks share what some of their favorite gifts were as kids in the Reminisce section of the magazine.

Susan Shinn Turner catches up with Rowan Original Mike Connor, who spent three months in the Holy Land, and Deirdre Parker Smith has holiday reading recommendations in Bookish.

As always, photographer Jon Lakey provides great images, and Creative Director Andy Mooney packages it all together. They are true presents to this product.

Before I sign off, I must apologize for a careless oversight in a story I wrote for the September issue on same-day knee replacement procedures. I failed to mention that Dr. James L. Comadoll, connected with Novant Health Rowan Medical Center, also has performed that procedure and offers it regularly to qualifying patients.

I hope we can incorporate news of the innovative things Dr. Comadoll and the rest of the Novant Health Rowan team are doing in many future issues of *Salisbury the Magazine*. Happy holidays, all. **[S]**

Mark Wineka,
Editor, Salisbury the Magazine



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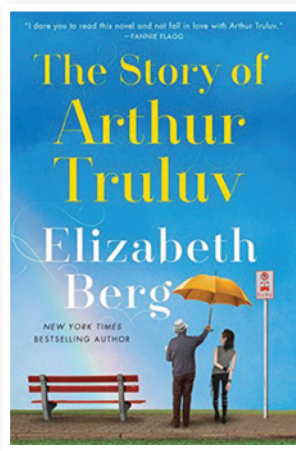
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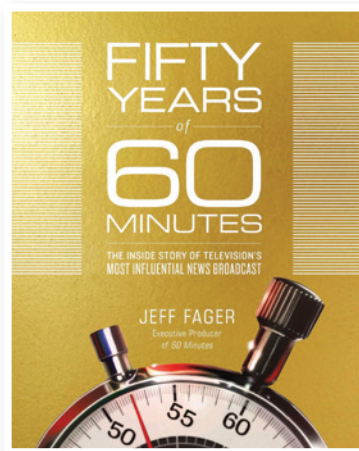
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For a happy holiday, look no further than these new releases

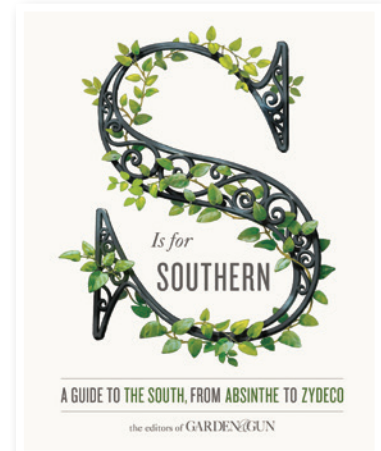
Longer nights and the gift-giving season offer an opportunity to pick a special book for someone or to treat yourself after a long day of shopping. Make it a literary holiday with these:



- **"The Story of Arthur Truluv,"** by Elizabeth Berg. An unlikely family forms among three people who each lose the one they love most, only to find second chances where they least expect them. The unlikely trio — 18-year-old Maddy, and senior citizens and neighbors Arthur and Lucille — come together just in time for the holidays with a big surprise on Christmas Day. To be published Nov. 21.



- **"Fifty Years of 60 Minutes: The Inside Story of Television's Most Influential News Broadcast,"** by Jeff Fager. The ultimate inside story of "60 Minutes," the program that has tracked and shaped the biggest moments in post-war American history. The show has profiled every major leader, artist and movement of the past five decades, perfecting the news-making interview and inventing the groundbreaking TV expose. "60 Minutes" is the longest running show on television.




- From the editors of Garden & Gun comes a lively encyclopedia of Southern living, culture, and history. Covering age-old traditions and current zeitgeists, **"S Is for Southern"** includes more than 500 entries spanning every letter of the alphabet, from absinthe to zydeco. The book also includes 100 signature essays from notable Southern writers.

Other worthy contenders for your fall reading:

- **"Ungrateful Mammals,"** by Dave Eggers. Eggers is one of the most notable writers of his generation, recognized for such acclaimed books as "A Hologram for the King," "What Is the What" and "The Circle." Eggers began as a classically trained draftsman and painter. He spent years as a professional illustrator and graphic designer before turning to writing full-time. To raise money for ScholarMatch, his college-access nonprofit, he returned to visual art. Usually involving the pairing of an animal with humorous or biblical text, the results are wry, oddly anthropomorphic tableaux that create a very entertaining and eccentric body of work from one of today's leading culture makers.
- Blue Rider Press will release an illustrated pop-up lullaby book, **"Sweet Baby James,"** with the lyrics from the James Taylor song.
- **"In the Midst of Winter,"** by Isabel Allende, available Oct. 31. The book begins with a minor traffic accident— which becomes the catalyst for

an unexpected and moving love story between two people who thought they were deep into the winter of their lives.

- **"Children of the Fleet,"** Orson Scott Card. Set at the same time as the events of the Ender's Shadow series and in the wake of the Formic War, the book returns to the Battle School where Ender made his bones.
- **"Merry Christmas from the Very Hungry Caterpillar,"** by Eric Carle. This beautiful book features Eric Carle's bright, colorful artwork of Christmas delights.
- **"The Pioneer Woman Cooks: Come and Get It! Simple, Scrumptious Recipes for Crazy Busy Lives,"** by Ree Drummond.
- **"Uncommon Type,"** Tom Hanks. A collection of 17 wonderful short stories showing that two-time Oscar winner Hanks is as talented a writer as he is an actor.
- **"In this Moment,"** Karen Kingsbury, a new Baxter Family novel about a beloved high school principal who starts a Bible study to improve the lives of his struggling students, only to become the national focus of a controversial lawsuit. Available Nov. 7. 

THROUGH THE LENS // by andy mooney





A light snow covers
the grounds at the Old
Stone House in Granite
Quarry.

Seeing God in the ‘rubble of life’

Mike Connor spends three months in Holy Land.

On Palm Sunday, after worship at St. John’s Lutheran Church, Mike Connor left for a three-month assignment in the Holy Land. He met his wife, B.J., in Washington on July 5.

Every three months, two Americans go to Israel and the West Bank as “ecumenical accompaniers” through World Council of Churches (WCC) — part of a delegation from 25 different countries. In 2002, Jerusalem church leaders made the request for such personnel to the WCC. Since then, more than 1,800 people have participated in this program. These volunteers assist residents of Israel and Palestine, navigating daily activities— often under challenging conditions.

Mike, 66, saw firsthand how challenging those conditions were. In emails home, he wrote of a three-hour interview by security agents upon his arrival in Tel Aviv, monitoring a Palestinian children’s soccer game near an Israeli outpost, meeting individuals passionate about a non-violent peace resolution, meeting children in a remote Bedouin village with a meager playground, and witnessing the demolition of a Palestinian home.

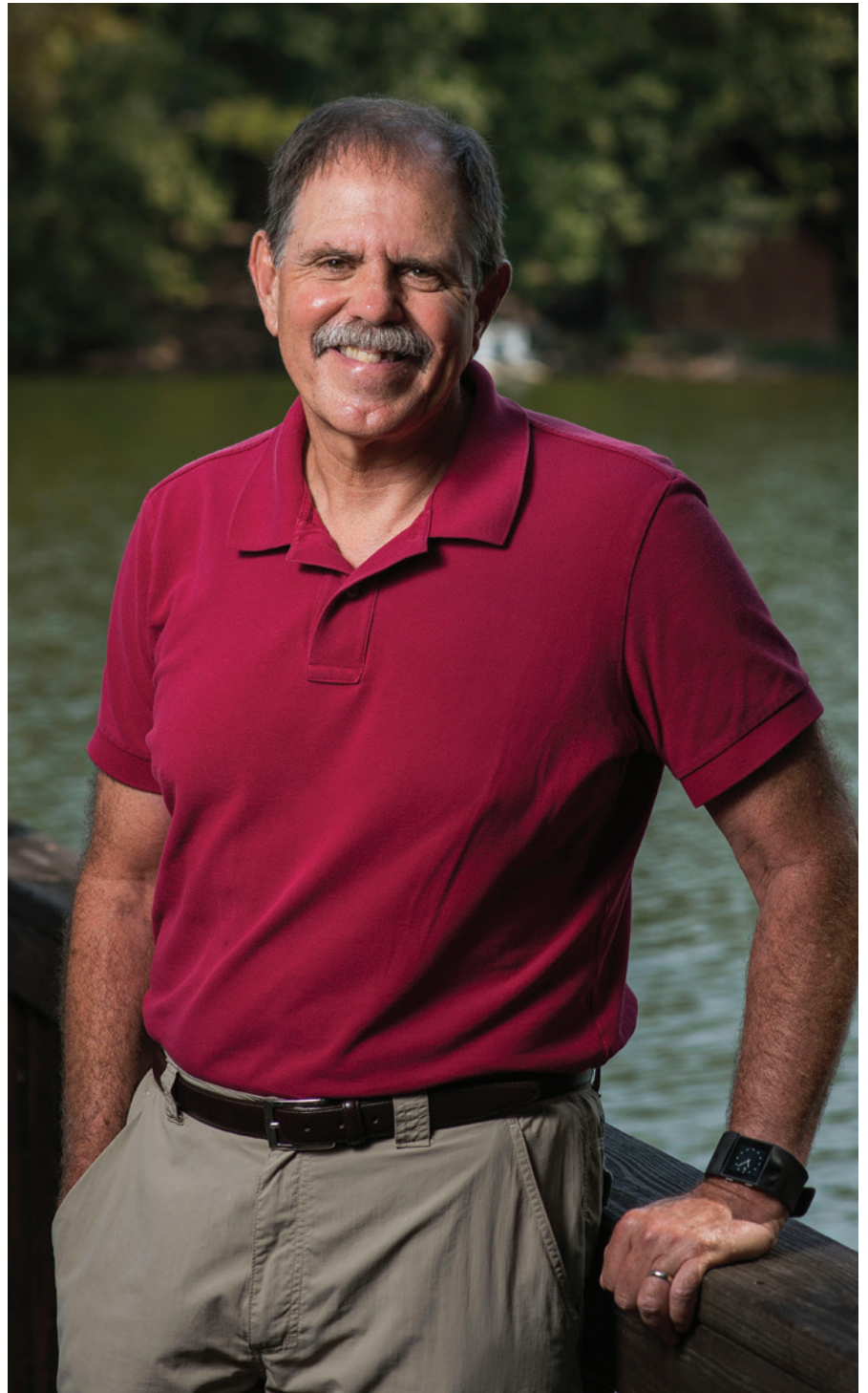
The most common question he was asked before he left, he said, was “Are you going to be safe?”

“I don’t see any evidence that God is safe,” he said earlier this year. “God is good and God is loving, but following a call isn’t necessarily safe. From a Christian disciple standpoint, safety is not on my radar. Not to be cavalier about it. I’ll use common sense, and be as safe as possible.”

And he was.

Part of the commitment of his assignment is being an advocate for human rights and justice issues as they relate to the Holy Land. Since his return, Mike has been contacting his vast network of friends and family to set up speaking engagements at their churches, or to other groups who are interested in learning more about the Holy Land. If you’d like for him to speak to your organization or learn more about the EAPPI program, contact him at mjconnor1982@gmail.com or go to eappi.org.

Salisbury the Magazine recently had a chat with this Rowan Original:



Mike Connor at his lakeside home. — Photo by Jon C. Lakey

Q Why did you decide to work in such a volatile region of the world?

I'd been to Israel and the West Bank two times already, so I was familiar with the region and had developed relationships with Palestinian colleagues whom I trust and respect. Their struggle has been going on for 50 years, yet they are experiencing meaningful lives through community service. When I became aware of the ecumenical accompaniment program, I was excited about living within a Palestinian community for three months. The program has a stellar record with volunteer safety and security.

Another motivating factor is the lack of awareness in the U.S. about what's happening in the West Bank. I wanted to go and see it first-hand in order to personally share my experiences.

Was there a time you ever felt unsafe?

No. There were times I was concerned that I would be cited by Israeli authorities, which could jeopardize my ability to return to Israel and the West Bank. Eventually, I decided to focus on encouraging and assisting the marginalized, and not let distractions limit my effectiveness.

What was the one big takeaway you got from your three-month assignment in the Holy Land?

The Israeli military is not only the West Bank Area C ruling authority, but also a colonizing force. Israeli citizens living in West Bank settlements experience thriving communities while nearby Palestinian villages struggle for adequate water supply and are under threat of home and school demolition orders. Many rural Palestinian families are denied permits to build on their private land and are being pressured to relocate.

How did the experience broaden or reshape your faith?

It strengthened my concept of hope. As an

American, I tended to see problems or concerns as interruptions to normal life. My initial reaction has been one of surprise; I wonder why this is happening to me or to a loved one. My immediate response is wanting God to "fix it."

A common Palestinian perspective is that suffering is a normal part of life. A Palestinian woman living in Ramallah shared with me that if there was hope in the brutal death of Jesus Christ and His resurrection, there is no situation we will ever experience that is devoid of hope. She refuses to reconcile herself to hopelessness. Palestinians have inspired me to see God in the "rubble of life."

How will your time in the Holy Land affect your Christmas celebration this year?

I'm discussing with our kids and their spouses about giving gifts solely to the grandchildren. Our extended family jointly supports certain ministries, and I would like to increase our contribution as part of our Christmas celebration.

My first trip in 2012 also affected Christmas celebration. I'm part of a ministry team at St. John's which participates in a global Advent simulcast service between Christmas Lutheran Church in Bethlehem and the Washington, D.C., National Cathedral. We've done it for the past few years. It's a community event, so everyone interested is welcome to participate in this global service at 10 a.m. on Dec. 16.

What is your favorite Christmas tradition?

Watching classic Christmas movies with family: "White Christmas," "It's a Wonderful Life," "A Christmas Story," and "National Lampoon's Christmas Vacation."

What are some things you enjoy doing?

We love spending time with our four grandchildren. I have enjoyed running for more than 40 years. Some of the best conversations I've had — and my fondest memories — have occurred during a run or related to a race event.

I especially treasure opportunities to run with our daughter and/or son. I enjoy walking, swimming and kayaking with my wife, B.J. I'm also on a quest to read all Pulitzer Prize-winning novels, and document our family genealogy.

Five words you would use to describe Salisbury:

Friendly, Historical, Theater, Haves, Have-Nots.

Two foods always in your fridge or pantry?

Olive oil and Parmesan cheese.

Who's been your mentor?

I've been blessed with a number of people at different life stages. While at UNC graduate school, my faculty advisor as well as the supervisor of my graduate traineeship launched my professional career. Early in my career, I learned core leadership and presentation skills from two bosses who were genuinely interested in my success.

Regarding my spiritual journey, a fraternity brother during my sophomore year was instrumental in forming my prayer life. As a young husband and father, a couple of members of Christian Business Men's Committee (CBMC) disciplined me and showed me how any profession is a calling from God.

What's your pet peeve?

Clutter.

What advice would you give to a young Mike Connor?

I like to encourage younger people by sharing that God loves them and has a wonderful plan for their lives. Basically, I'd encourage young Mike to live more in the present and don't be so concerned about the future. It's going to be better than you ever imagined, especially the marriage and family part. **S**



Cozy Davis' recipe makes three sweet potato pies.



Pied Pipers

Ladies spread their own kind of joy through pies.

Written by MARK WINEKA | *Photography by* JON C. LAKEY

When you start writing about ladies named “Cozy” and “Aunt Phibby” and a place in Spencer called “The Sugar Fairy Sweet Shop,” well, things can’t be too bad.

They become even better when you delve into their pies — for our purposes, their sweet potato pies, pecan pies and, as a little holiday bonus, pecan pie muffins.

Cozy Davis, 78, lives in the Jersey City neighborhood of Salisbury, and her sweet potato pies are family legend. “She’s been baking for 60 years,” son Skip Davis says, “and her pie will have you hearing the angels sing.”

Skip confesses he can eat half a pie at one sitting. That’s nothing, Michael Harrison says. He can eat a whole one.

“I guess it’s that Southern cooking,” says Harrison, who hails from New Jersey. “That smell is what they call ‘once in a lifetime.’”

Cozy shrugs at all the fuss. “Everybody calls me grandma,” she says, “and they’ll say, ‘Gran-ny, it sure smells good in here.’ I have to get on

them sometimes to let them know this is not a restaurant.”

Cozy thinks her sweet potato pies are like most others. If she can find it, she likes to use vanilla extract with butternut, which she thinks gives the pie an extra good taste.

She always depends on fresh sweet potatoes, not the canned kind, and she says cook them with the skin on, before they are peeled, mashed and placed into the pie mixture.

Cozy usually makes three sweet potato pies at a time. On this baking day, she has three in the oven, along with a pecan pie, which also makes angels sing. Some people like to add whipped cream or ice cream to their sweet potato pie.

“I just eat it plain,” Cozy says.

A retired medical secretary in the intensive care unit at Novant Health Rowan, Cozy always baked cakes and pies for employee functions at the hospital.

“I’ve been baking and cooking since I was about 15,” she says.

Her mother died when she was 7, and Cozy learned her way around the kitchen through an older sister. “I would sit down and watch her cook,” she says. By the time she was a teenager, Cozy would have dinner started for her sister and brother-in-law as they walked in the door from work.

But where did the name “Cozy” come from? “I wish you could tell me,” she says. “Cozy is my real first name.”

Because her parents were out of her life at such a young age, Cozy never heard why they chose the unusual, but brilliant name. Her middle name is “Willette,” which she often answered to growing up, but in the work world it became “Cozy” for good.

So there’s a new name for comfort food — Cozy food.

Jacqui Smith Watson, owner of The Sugar Fairy Sweet Shop, uses a recipe that was a winner at the Iowa State Fair. She found the recipe on Pinterest.

COZY’S SWEET POTATO PIE

(Makes three pies)

- Five sweet potatoes
- Stick of butter
- 3 cups sugar
- 1 Tbsp. cinnamon
- 1 Tbsp. nutmeg
- 1 Tbsp. vanilla
- $\frac{3}{4}$ can evaporated milk
- 4 eggs
- 3 pie crusts

Boil the whole potatoes in their skin until soft. Peel the skin, mash the potatoes and add in stick of butter in a large mixing bowl. Add the sugar, flavorings and eggs. Using a hand mixer, slowly pour in evaporated milk and whip the



mixture until it’s thin enough to spoon equally into the three pie crusts. Bake at 325 degrees F. for about an hour, then cool.



In the early 1980s, when Janet Haynes was still dating her future husband, John, they often would attend family functions together.

Janet first met John’s aunt, Phyllis Beck of Faith, at these gatherings. Everyone in the family knows her as Aunt Phibby. Janet immediately became impressed with Aunt Phibby’s pecan pie.

“It was my favorite because the nuts were crushed really fine,” Janet says.

John’s family must have thought Janet was a



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Above: Janet Haynes loves making pecan pies and giving them away as gifts. Right: Cozy Davis removes her pies from the oven at her home in Salisbury. They include three sweet potato pies and one pecan pie.

keeper, because Aunt Phibby shared her pecan pie recipe with her. “I love to cook and bake,” Janet says.

Speed forward to present day, and Aunt Phibby is still making her time-honored pecan pie — and so is Janet. All through the year, Janet constantly gives away pecan pies and pecan pie muffins to friends and family or bakes them for various community events.

Haynes beautifully wraps her gift pies and muffins in cellophane and ribbons. “It’s such a compliment to me when people say, “This is too pretty to eat,” Janet says.

She can think of no better gift to give someone than something she made in her kitchen that also happens to be tasty and pretty.

“The thing I like about my recipe — it makes one to keep and one to give away,” Haynes says of her two-pie approach.

Janet, an administrative officer and board assistant for F&M Bank, also is known for her homemade salsa and spaghetti sauce. She found the pecan pie muffin recipe about a year ago and describes it as “just a pecan pie in a single



servicing.”

AUNT PHIBBY'S PECAN PIE

(Makes two pies)

- 2 Pet Ritz frozen pie shells
- 1 stick butter (unsalted), melted
- 3 eggs
- 1 cup light brown sugar
- 1 cup white Karo syrup
- 1½ cups pecans, finely chopped
- 1 tsp. vanilla
- 16 pecan halves

Unwrap pie shells and let them thaw while

mixing the pie batter.

In a large mixing bowl, combine the butter, eggs, sugar, syrup and vanilla. Once mixed thoroughly, add the chopped pecans and mix well. Pour ½ of the batter into each pie shell. Top each pie with 8 pecan halves evenly on top of the batter to help with cutting the pie into 8 perfect pieces. Cook on 350 degrees F. until the top is golden brown (approximately 30 to 40 minutes).

PECAN PIE MUFFINS

- 1 stick butter (unsalted), melted
- ½ cup flour
- 1 cup light brown sugar

- 1 tsp. vanilla
- 2 eggs
- 1½ cups chopped pecans
- muffin cups (regular size)

Mix together butter, vanilla and eggs in large mixing bowl. Add the flour and brown sugar — mix well. Mix the pecans in with the batter. Place muffin cups in muffin tins and fill muffin cups approximately ½ to ¾ full with batter. Bake on 350 until golden brown on top (18 to 20 minutes). Makes approximately 8 muffins.



“So you want an award-winning pecan pie?” Jacqui Smith Watson asks as you walk in the front door of her Sugar Fairy Sweet Shop at 1108 S. Salisbury Ave., Spencer.

Watson patiently swipes through her cell-phone until she arrives at her go-to recipe — one that she has made dozens of times courtesy of Louise Piper, who won the Iowa State Fair blue ribbon in 2011.

“I just wanted a pie that wasn’t your normal Karo Syrup pie,” Watson says. “It’s a different constitution than a Karo pie. This pie has more character.”

Watson opened The Sugar Fairy Sweet Shop on Jan. 30 of this year. It had been seven years since she closed her popular Escape the Daily Grind coffee shop, which was a well-known Spencer business for 10 years.

At her Sugar Fairy Sweet Shop, Watson is a one-woman show, the “chief cook and bottle-washer,” she says. People are becoming more familiar with her new location, the former Jac-Lyn’s Florist near 11th Street, and they regularly call or stop in the small-batch bakery for cakes, cupcakes, pies, cookies, brownies, muffins, macaroons and more.

This particular pecan pie is probably her favorite pie overall. While many people enjoy this dessert at Thanksgiving and Christmas, Watson says it’s really an “anytime-of-the-year pie.”

What Watson likes about this recipe from the Iowa State Fair is the substitution of molasses and maple syrup for Karo syrup. And she also puts in about 50 percent more pecans than most recipes call for.

Watson uses Dutch Kettle sorghum cane molasses from Yadkin County.



A pecan pie and sweet potato pie bake in Cozy Davis’ oven.

“It’s quick, it’s easy, it’s delicious,” Watson says of her big pecan pie.

The baking takes about 45 to 50 minutes, and as she opens the oven and retrieves her masterpiece, Watson can’t help but say in a sing-song voice, “Pie, pie, we’ve got pie. Lordy, Lordy, we’ve got pie.”

The smell — you can definitely pick up the hint of molasses — fills Watson’s bakery.

“Walk in the door,” she says, “and the pie hits you in the face.”

But that’s a good pie in the face. Don’t forget

a scoop of vanilla ice cream.

THE SUGAR FAIRY SWEET SHOP PECAN PIE

(courtesy of the Iowa State Fair)

- 1 recipe unbaked pie crust (Watson usually makes her own crust, but the ready-made ones work fine.)
- 1 cup maple syrup
- 1 cup light brown sugar
- ½ cup heavy whipping cream
- 1 Tbsp. molasses
- 4 Tbsp. butter
- ½ Tbsp. salt
- 6 large egg yolks
- 2 cups pecan halves

Preheat oven to 425 degrees F. Combine maple syrup, brown sugar, heavy whipping cream and molasses in a 3 ½-quart saucepan. Cook over medium heat, stirring often, until sugar dissolves, about 3 minutes. Remove from heat; let cool 5 minutes. Whisk in butter and salt. Whisk in egg yolks. Spread pecans evenly in the prepared crust. Carefully pour syrup mixture over pecans. Place in preheated oven and reduce heat to 325 degrees F. Bake for 45 to 50 minutes, or just until the filling is set and center jiggles slightly when gently shaken.

Cool completely on wire rack. **S**



Janet Haynes’ pecan pie muffins.



Branching out

The Arc of Rowan's Festival of Trees keeps growing, keeps helping.

Written by JESSICA COATES | *Photography by* JON C. LAKEY

People have told Shela Sapp, executive director of The Arc of Rowan, that it doesn't feel like Christmas until the Festival of Trees begins.

"They come to the festival and then they move on and start their Christmas season with that," Sapp said.

The Festival of Trees, which is in its 14th year, is the Arc's only fundraiser of the year.

"The board had been seeking a way to be more public and to have a fundraiser that would bring attention to us," said Beth Foreman, who has worked with the festival since the beginning. "Because we'd been

talking about, you know, 'What can we do? What can we do that's not already being done in the community?'"

The idea was brought up by a former board member, Glenn Dixon, who was inspired to pursue the project after a holiday vacation in Wilmington.

"He came back and said, 'I have a signature event and I will chair it.' And that's all we had to hear," Sapp



From left: The Piedmont Players Theatre decorated this tree in the theme of 'Elf'; a zoom blur makes the lights come alive around a pine cone; the Harrison RV tree.

said.

Since that year, the event has grown from 23 trees to 50 trees and has moved from the Salisbury Civic Center to the F&M Trolley Barn.

"And we were told the very first year that we did it (at the Trolley Barn) ... we had everything decorated and were going to go through and turn the lights out. And Mr. Fisher said, 'Oh, no, those lights are staying on 24/7 until the event ends,'" Sapp said.

"He says, 'I want people to see this as they drive by at night.' So they have been very kind to us."

Last year, the Festival of Trees attracted 1,800 people to the Trolley Barn over three days.

"It's a really big event for Salisbury," Foreman said.

The Arc of Rowan is committed to improving the quality of life for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities, while promoting inclusiveness, equity, dignity, and respect for their diversity and cultural differences. It is a chapter of the national organization, The Arc of the United States.

The local Festival of Trees commit-

tee reports that attendance keeps growing every year.

"We have a number of schools that decorate a tree," Foreman said. "Sacred Heart, Salisbury Academy. North Hills Christian is in this year. So it brings in a lot of kids, and those kids bring in their families. The grandparents and the aunts and uncles. So, really, it has become a real community draw through the involvement of so many people."

Foreman and Sapp said many community

volunteers are involved behind the scenes.

"There's probably never more than eight to 10 people on the committee that actually do the gritty planning," Foreman said. "But there are many hundreds of people who help put this on. So it involves quite a large number of different groups and different people in the community. And that's really nice, too, because then it becomes a real community event."

When the festival first began, Sapp said, The Arc charged people money to see the decorated trees.

"But it was a PR opportunity," she said. "We wanted people to come in and learn about The Arc. So now, I know that I'm out in the community quite a bit and I'll say, 'The Arc,' and they'll say, 'Y'all do the trees.' And so, if that's their connection with us, I'm OK."

Even after the festival ends for the year, the decorated trees are displayed until the end of December, either in the businesses that sponsored them or in a place of the sponsor's choosing.

"We send one to the library, we send them to nursing homes, we



Steve Schoch, who is on the Festival of Trees Committee, looks over the trees during last year's patrons party.



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Above: The 2016 event filled the F&M Trolley Barn with vibrant color. Below left: Bethany Sinnott takes a look at one of the trees during last year's patrons party. Below right: Ed Childers and his wife, Joy (not pictured), decorated a tree for Summersett Funeral Home.



send them to other nonprofits,” Foreman said. “So it’s a really wide variety of sponsors and decorators — from businesses to nonprofits to private people who sponsor a tree. My husband and I sponsor a tree and decorate it, and it goes to a group home.”

In addition to having trees displayed at their places of business, sponsors also get the chance to have community members associate their name with the charitable event.

“(A tree) tag recognizes the sponsor, it recognizes the decorator, and it recognizes the theme,” Foreman said. “So as people are coming in, they can say, ‘That’s my pharmacy. I go there for my pills and they’ve got a tree here.’ So it’s good for everybody all the way around.”

Each tree costs \$325 to sponsor, and sponsors provide their own decorations.

“We don’t specify what that decoration has to be,” Foreman said. “Piedmont Players does a tree, for instance, and they always base it on their children’s play for that time of the year. So it might be a mermaid, and that’s fine. So the themes are very open and the trees are from a very traditional to, ‘Woo!’”

Foreman said the diversity of the tree decorations is one of the things that keeps her coming back to volunteer every year.

“You see things start to come together, those trees go up and the wiring gets laid, window decorations go up and then the decorators start going in,” Foreman said. “And then you really, you just stand there and go, ‘Wow. I would never have thought to do it that way.’ I say year after year that I’m not going to do this, and then year after year I do it because that final scene, what it looks like, it’s really beautiful.”

The 2017 Festival of Trees begins Friday, Dec. 1, and will run until Sunday, Dec. 3. **S**



Above: The 13th annual Festival of Trees was held in the F&M Trolley Barn last year. Admission is free to the festival. After the weekend, the trees are scattered around Rowan County during the remainder of the Christmas season. Left: The Moose Pharmacy tree was decorated in support of law enforcement by the Rowan County Senior Games and Silver Arts.



A Christmas tree glows beneath an intricate ceiling in the entry hall of the Walter McCaless House, now owned by Seamus and Traci Donaldson.



Decorations mingle with photos from the early years of the house, built in the Roaring Twenties-style in 1927-29.

Holiday palace

Donaldsons love unrivaled grandeur of their Roaring Twenties home.

Written by ELIZABETH COOK | *Photography by* JON C. LAKEY

Traci and Seamus Donaldson went all out with decorations for their first Christmas in the Walter McCanless House at 200 Confederate Ave. Greenery draped every archway.

They soon realized that elaborate decorations were unnecessary, though. Garlands and holiday frippery only detracted from the rich detailing throughout the 1920s house — intricate plaster trim, fine walnut woodwork, soaring marble mantels and much, much more.

Davyd Foard Hood’s “Architecture of Rowan County” describes the 8,000-square-foot McCanless

House as a “Renaissance Revival brick mansion whose grandeur is unrivaled in Rowan County.”

To the Donaldson family, the McCanless House is simply home — the place where the children’s friends congregate, where the family members sit around the fire pit to watch dancing flames, where Traci chats with the children while she cooks dinner.

Granted, this is a house whose entry hall is so grand

A huge wreath decorates the front of the Donaldsons' house, captured here on a snowy day.



that Carrera marble encases the radiators and intricate della robbia designs cover the coffered ceiling.

But Colin and Kate Donaldson, ages 13 and 7, respectively, run and play throughout the house much as friends do at their homes.

"It's not a museum. That's not what we want at all," Seamus says. "You just can't really break it — though they've tried."

The house reflects the over-the-top personality of the man who had it built, entrepreneur Walter Franklin McCanless. At one time the owner of five local textile mills and also a success in the quarry business, McCanless was described in the Salisbury Post as "a dynamic and outspoken figure who built up and lost several

fortunes."

McCanless' ventures must have been on the upswing when he decided to build this palatial house on a rise near the Country Club of Salisbury. He employed the architectural firm of Benton and Benton of Wilson. Construction spanned 1927-29, and the result was a mansion that, to borrow a phrase from the property's National Register application, represented "the wealth and taste of North Carolina's aristocracy in the Roaring Twenties."

More than two decades after E.B.C. Hambley built what's now referred to as the Wallace mansion on South Fulton Street, Salisbury was growing outward, and the area around the new country club was being developed into a resi-

dential neighborhood.

The McCanless home was one of the first houses to go up. The buff brick house was situated well back from the street, with a circular drive in front.

Some 300 people filled the house when McCanless and his wife opened their home to friends for a reception in November 1929.

A report in the Post's society pages described the event in great detail, from the attire of hostess Mary Roueche McCanless ("regally lovely in an imported gown of heliotrope georgette"), to the color of the dining room candles (yellow).

The story is silent, however, on any impact the stock market crash of the previous month may have had on the evening's mood. Indeed,



Black Friday may have seemed far away.

McCanless had spared no expense on the house, from the Ludowici glazed-tile roof to the large ballroom in the basement. Trios of paired French doors with fanlight transoms flanked the double front door. A large pool was installed behind the house. Total construction cost was said to be \$250,000 — or about \$3.5 million in today's dollars.

But the good times couldn't last forever. Ten years later, McCanless sold the house to B.V. Hedrick, whose family owned it until 1969.

At that point the Johnson Foundation gave the house to Catawba College. The college used half of what was then known as the Hedrick House as a 12-student dorm and half to house

the dean of students and his family, according to one of those now-former students, Bob Setzer.

How Setzer, a senior from Winchester, Va., got to be one of the lucky 12 is fuzzy, he says. But he remembers being able to step out of his room to the veranda over the carport to drink in the sunshine, along with a few beers. Once he and his friends sprang a surprise from that vantage point on some girls coming to visit. "We let the water balloons just go," he says.

More than anything, he remembers the strong bonds he and the other 11 students formed living in the house as they approached their spring 1973 graduation. "It was very special for us."

The house changed little in the transition.

"The good news is Catawba didn't do much to it," Seamus says. A couple of showers were installed, and an outdoor patio was closed in. Otherwise the layout and details of the house went untouched. "What was here stayed here."

THE DONALDSON ERA

Then came the Donaldsons. Art Donaldson was working for the FBI in San Diego when he was assigned to North Carolina to bust the Klan, and landed in Salisbury. In 1973, he and wife Linda bought the McCanless-Hedrick house, turned it back into a private home and settled in with their four children. Seamus was the youngest.



A red wreath decorates one of the double front doors.

Seamus, now a banker, says he didn't realize as a young child that his house was anything special. "It's just what you're used to."

As the years went by, he became aware that his house was different from his friends' — a realization his son has already reached. "Colin gets it."

Seamus and Traci took ownership of the house in 2004.

It was a big step. Traci says her greatest concern was how to make such a large house into a family home.

In addition to decorating the house elaborately for their first Christmas as owners, Seamus and Traci turned up the heat and ran the radiators.

"It was wonderful, having the whole house warm," Seamus says. Reality set in, though, when the \$800 energy bill arrived.

New heating and air conditioning headed the list of improvements they tackled, a task complicated by the house's four-inch concrete walls. "That was the biggest mess you ever saw," Seamus says.

The house is so sturdy, every floor is built on a concrete slab, even the attic.

Though the house was remarkably intact from its early days — original light fixtures, walnut flooring, mantels, doors — some areas had fallen into disrepair through the years. One by one, Seamus and Traci have



Seamus and Traci Donaldson and their children, Colin and Kate, along with the newest member of the family, Tic Tac the cat.



Near the stairway, a bucket invites visitors to an indoor snowball fight.

Story continues on page 34.

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Top: The fire pit at the back of the house is a favorite family gathering spot.

Above: The library ceiling has an intricate design.

Left: Stockings hang from the living room's marble mantel.



Clockwise from above: Traci adjusts a wall plaque in the fire pit area; Decorations include a snow globe and a crystal tree ornament; The dining room table is set for a holiday feast; The Donaldsons have six Christmas trees, including these in the living room and entry hall.





brought many of them up to date.

The basement, which always seemed to have an inch or two of standing water during Seamus' childhood, required major work to keep it dry. Chad

A snow village fills the shelves of a bookcase in the library.

Vriesema and Central Piedmont Construction tackled that and several other projects.

Despite decades of dampness, the basement's green and white floor tiles remained intact, right down to the Greek key border design.

The basement has a small ballroom that now serves as a game room and bar, and a large ballroom down the hall. Off the big room sits a small kitchen.

The basement may also have been something of a bar in McCanless' day — or a speakeasy. Prohibition spanned 1920 to 1933 and was still in force in the house's early days. McCanless was known for having friends in for drinks and cards.

The old laundry room down the hall has a chute going to both of the upper floors. Servant stairs at the back of the house lead all the way to the attic.

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FULL HOUSE

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When guests come through the front door, they enter a large entrance hall dominated by a soaring white Carrera marble mantel and surround that reaches up to the ceiling.

Off to the left is the living room, originally used by the McCanlesses as a music room, with a sparkling chandelier and another of the house's four carved marble mantels.

A sunny solarium and richly paneled library open off the living room. A bedroom tucked behind the library was McCanless' office at one time, Seamus says.

On the other side of the entry hall, a doorway leads to the elegantly appointed dining room, where a button in the floor was used by the home's early owners to buzz the kitchen staff. Several such buttons throughout the house were connected to a board in the kitchen — a la "Downton Abbey" — to beckon the staff.

In the entrance hall, it's easy to identify which stockings belong to Colin and Kate.



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Off the dining room, a wide pantry area leads to the kitchen, which the Donaldsons opened up by removing a breakfast room wall.

“This is probably the biggest remodel,” Traci says. They wanted, she says, to make it “modern enough where I could cook and the children could sit here and do their homework and talk to me — keep it homey.”

A framed, faded photo of the McCanlesses’ chauffeur and maids sits in the breakfast room. Jane McCanless Fowler, who grew up in the house, gave the Donaldsons several old photos of the house that they display on tabletops.

In a hallway outside the breakfast area, a green ceramic water fountain is embedded in the wall. There’s one on every floor, Seamus says. “They say Mr. McCanless liked Scotch and water.”

A wide staircase leads upstairs, where the family spends most of their time. The second

floor has six bedrooms, five baths, a sleeping porch and a stair hall. The sleeping porch has been converted into a den, a good place to relax on a sectional couch, watching TV.

Colin and Kate’s bedrooms have their own Christmas trees. (All told, the Donaldsons put up six trees for the holidays.) The master suite includes a spare bedroom that now serves as a closet and dressing room.

Each room and closet has a walnut door, one feature of the house that required little restoration beyond a wipe-down with Liquid Gold.

A favorite spot sits behind the house, tucked between the kitchen and library wings. The fire pit in the middle of a covered area glows golden and warm as the family sits around it at night, even in the dead of winter.

“You would not believe how much time we spend out here,” Traci says. “We sit out here and watch it snow.”

Colin and his neighborhood friends hang out here, as well, parking their scooters nearby. “This place seems to be the congregation house,” Seamus says.

A fountain that once stood in this spot reportedly shot a plume of water out to the swimming pool behind the house. The pool has since been filled in and replaced with lawn.

The European artisans McCanless brought in to work on the house set tiles around the fountain bearing signs of the zodiac — symbols also found on the front terrace.

The signs now encircle the fire pit, and Seamus asks visitors if they can find the flaw. The Cancer tile depicts a scorpion, and the Scorpio tile shows a crab.


A sign of the Depression troubles to come, perhaps? More likely the faulty tiles are just a small flaw in a beautifully constructed home — a home whose grandeur remains unrivaled. **S**


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Put on your pj's, grab a hot cocoa
and hop on the Polar Express.

Written by REBECCA RIDER

Photography by JON C. LAKEY





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The Polar Express
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It's not just sleigh bells true believers hear each Christmas season — it's train whistles, too.

They wait by the thousands, standing in the chilly December dusk in brightly colored pajamas and fluffy slippers, clutching paper cups of hot cocoa against the cold. And soon, they hear it: the whistle and chug of the Polar Express, coming down the track.

The N.C. Transportation Museum in Spencer began offering a Polar Express holiday ride four years ago, and the event has been met with wild success.

In 2014, the museum decided to offer the Polar Express for some variety in its Christmas programming. That first year, the museum sold 14,000 tickets, then 25,000, then 32,000. Mark Brown, museum information and communication specialist said this year the event's goal is 50,000.

"We had to add a whole other train to do that," Brown said with a chuckle.

Brown said he believes the success is, in part, due to the fact that it's a timeless, beloved story. Those who flock to Spencer each Christmas treasure the original story — or its 2004 film adaptation.

"People have enjoyed that, they have connected with it very, very closely," he said.

Much like the train, the evening rolls out along a familiar track, following the story of a young boy struggling to believe in the spirit of Christmas as he's whisked away to the North Pole on a mysterious train. Visitors, too, are whisked away into the frigid North, where magic makes its home.

The performance comes from a partnership with Rail Events, which "guarantees a certain degree of quality" across 37 national sites, Brown said. The Rail Events script follows events from the movie, complete with chefs who serve up hot chocolate with a song and dance.

And people ate it up, traveling from states across the Southeast to see the Spencer performance. When the



Above: Visitors board the Polar Express at the N.C. Transportation Museum. Below: No two snowflakes are alike, and each Polar Express ride is special, with sleigh bells at the end.





Remnants of fall will still remain for some Polar Express rides.

museum first advertised the event in 2014, the response was “larger and more viral” than anticipated.

“So we knew we had something special right off the bat,” Brown said.

Since then, the museum has been running to keep up with demand, and continuously working to streamline Rowan County’s own journey to the North Pole.

“We’ve just expanded the event every year after that,” Brown said.

The N.C. Transportation Museum has even teamed up with the Rowan County Visitor’s Bureau to offer hotel packages with Polar Express ticket sales; a deal that’s proven to be very successful, drawing people in from as far away as northern Virginia — and even a few from Canada.

Once the conductor has punched their golden tickets, visitors file on board, settling down in

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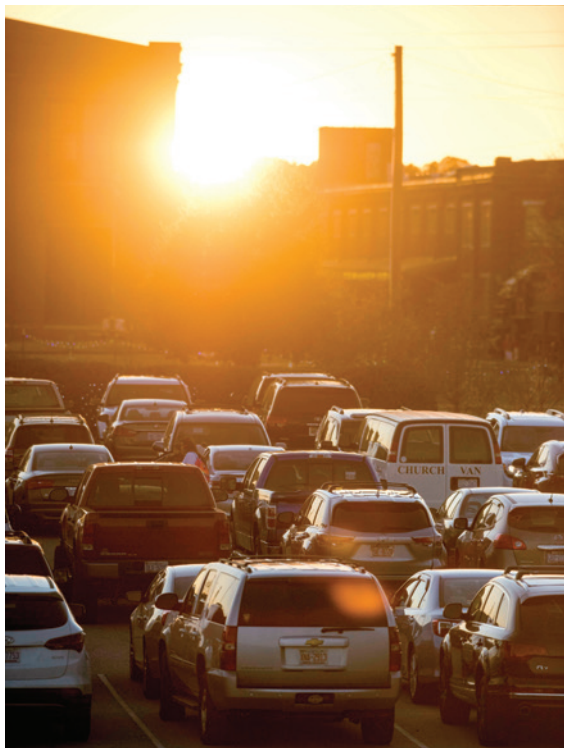
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Above: The Barber Junction Depot on the museum site is the starting point. Below left: The museum parking lot is full when the Polar Express is running. Below right: The Polar Express conductor calls 'All aboard!'





Cousins Allie Jones, 15, and Melena Ketner, 6, make s'mores in the fire pit near the Master Mechanic's Office.

seats or at private tables with a mug of thick hot chocolate while performers sing and dance up the aisles of the train cars, and the beloved book is read aloud. When the train stops next, it's in the wintry wonderland of the North Pole, set up in the museum's roundhouse.

This feature is the shining star of Spencer's performance.

"The location for the North Pole is always a key piece for this event," Brown said of performances nationwide.

And, in his mind, Spencer comes out on top. The transportation museum is home to one of the largest remaining roundhouses in the country. And each holiday season, the 37-bay house is transformed with lights and cheer so that when they step off the train, children believe they've found the home of Christmas.

Standing in the roundhouse, Brown said, "That story comes to life."

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Chef Cheyenne Reeder takes a picture of Aaron and Cydney Bennett and their children, Anders and Isaac, while on the trip to the North Pole.



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The wintry wonderland of the North Pole takes place at the roundhouse.

It's one of the things that makes Spencer's Polar Express so special. In its first year, the show won best performance out of all the Rail Events Polar Express performances. In its second year, it won best marketing. Brown said the awards event judging third-year performances has not yet been held, but he and others involved in the event have high hopes.

"One way or the other, we feel that we stack up against those other sites nationwide very,

very well," Brown said.

Cast and crew work hard, pushing for each year to be better than the last.

"We just have a great dedication to making sure that every person that walks on site feels like they belong here," he said of event staff.

Not only has the production expanded each year, adding trains, tiers and days, but the museum has also partnered with Lee Street theatre to bring in and train performers.

"They've taken that to an absolutely whole other level," Brown said.

That, along with working with Virtual Sounds, has helped the N.C. Transportation Museum polish its Polar Express show until it gleams like Santa's cherry-red sleigh.

"And the whole thing kind of comes to life," Brown said.

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The museum shop is filled with gifts for Christmas.

at the Polar Express. It's a place where stories — and dreams — come to life. At the North Pole, Santa's sleigh sits in the center of the roundhouse, shining like a beacon, and the lights twinkle like the clear stars of the pole.

"All of those things are coming together in real life," Brown said.

For some, riding the Polar Express has become a yearly tradition, and Brown's found


that the story has become part of his own family.

This year the museum has added an extra performance date, extra train cars and, for the first time, is opening day performances to school groups in order to keep up with demand.

"It's an absolute classic," Brown said.

As each child exits the train, the conductor

punches their tickets again, using the spaces to encourage them to lead, dream or believe. And each receives a small, silver sleigh bell, whose music is audible for all who truly believe.

The N.C. Transportation Museum will offer Polar Express between Nov. 17-Dec. 22. For tickets, dates and times available, go to www.nctrans.org/Events/Polar.aspx or call 704-636-2889. 

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BIG WHEELS

From left: Blake Jordan, Dillon Arey, Logan Arey, Ryan Jordan, Jamey Blalock, Rita Tannehill and Rodney Arey ride unicycles in last year's Holiday Caravan Parade.



Arey family, friends make unicycling
in Holiday Caravan a tradition.

Written by MARK WINEKA | *Photography by* JON C. LAKEY

H

Here's something you don't hear often, and it comes from Meredith Hooven: "All right, clowns, pile in."

The clowns to whom she refers — and count Meredith among them — are members of the Arey family and the friends they have recruited over the past 40 years to ride unicycles in the Holiday Caravan parade.

Consider it one of their cherished Thanksgiving traditions.

On this parade day, there are 17 clown unicyclists, some who traveled from as far away as Florida, Georgia, South Carolina, Rhode Island and California.

They all meet at the home of Clyde and Mary Catherine Arey off St. Matthews Church Road. They find places to change into their festive clown wear, battle for spots in the bathroom to put on funny faces and practice riding back and forth in the Arey's driveway.

It seems once you get the hang of riding a unicycle, the skill comes back fairly quickly, even if you haven't practiced in a year. There are always repairs to be done and tires to inflate at the last minute. As everyone practices in the driveway or plays basketball from their unicycles, an air-traffic controller would have a difficult time keeping things in order.

"It's kind of random chaos," Rodney Arey says of the scene.

When the time for departure comes, the clowns pile into the more accommodating vehicles parked in the yard, as Meredith suggests, and speed off for the parade lineup in Spencer.

Clyde Arey, Rodney's dad, started this mess some 40 years ago. "Afraid I did, yes," he confirms, "but it was fruitful."

Rodney, his sister Rita and their cousin Steve started riding unicycles in the Holiday Caravan in 1977 with Clyde, who worked for Alltel. Clyde



Story continues on page 54.



Rodney Arey waves as he cycles down North Main Street during last year's Holiday Caravan.



Clockwise from above: Meredith Hooven applies makeup to her mother, Rita Tannehill; A younger Clyde Arey in a photograph at his home; Blake Jordan and the Arey family practice in the driveway before heading to Spencer for the parade; Whitney Arey, Meredith Hooven and Rodney Arey cycle in last year's parade.





Above: Clyde Arey jumps on his trusty unicycle. The Arey family has been riding unicycles in the Holiday Caravan Parade for decades. Below right: Spencer Police Chief Mike James laughs with Taylor Arey, Cydney Arey and Logan Arey as the clan shows up for the parade. Below left: Logan Arey, left, and Jamey Blalock.





wore a bear's costume for the company during Christmas parades in Salisbury, Mooresville, Albemarle and Denton.

He eventually graduated to a corduroy clown suit made by Mary Catherine. He tops it off with an old hat that once belonged to his mother-in-law. He also wears white saddle shoes, parts of which are painted purple and blue.

Rita Tannehill and Taylor Arey.

Clyde, now in his 80s, finally stopped riding in the parade about five years ago, though the “kids” — they’re adults now — try to persuade him each year to give his unicycle one more try. These days he prefers manning their support team.

In the parade, the group stays together as much as possible, doing a lot of spinning, interlocking of arms and holding of hands.

“They actually like it when we fall,” Rodney Arey says of the crowd along the Spencer and Salisbury parade routes. This year’s Holiday Caravan will take place Nov. 22, starting at 2 p.m. in Spencer; 3 p.m., Salisbury.

Rodney says one of the better pieces of advice he has ever received about riding a unicycle in the Holiday Caravan was this: “Stay away from little cars, definitely.”



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The riders have different levels of proficiency. Dillon Arey (Rodney's son) can ride a unicycle up steps, if pressed. But Kristin Tannehill, one of Rita's children, remembers going into one Holiday Caravan as a novice, when she could only stay upright by holding onto someone else.

For that parade, Kristin wore a T-shirt that said "Clown in Training," and Rodney carried a black pen and wrote marks on the back of her shirt for each time she fell.

The unicyclists learn how to adapt to the pace of the Holiday Caravan. "I feel like it's slow and fast, kind of like traffic," Dillon Arey says.

In the past dozen years, the number of unicyclists has ballooned. When Rodney's own kids started riding, it wasn't long before their friends joined in.

Jamey Blalock, a school friend of Dillon Arey's, says it's not easy at first. Getting up and getting started on a unicycle prove to be the

hardest things. Then comes the balance. But "if you can go two pedals," Blalock explains, "you can go 2,000."

Clyde Arey ordered his first unicycle out of a catalog. It had a 20-inch wheel, which Clyde did not like, and a bearing was too loose, so he opted instead for a \$60 Schwinn model that his granddaughter Whitney (Rodney's daughter) rides today. He painted it purple.

Whitney learned to ride in the fifth grade. Clyde said he would give her money to attend Space Camp if she mastered the unicycle, which had a 24-inch wheel. Whitney had to ride to various lines in the driveway to prove her ability.

"It's difficult," Rodney says. "It's something not everybody does, but once you get it, you've got it."

A lot of beginners start on 20-inch wheels, which translate to more pedaling to cover the

same distance. By now, most of the people riding in the Holiday Caravan bring their own, but the Areys have unicycles to share.

"I think I've got four," Clyde says, bringing some more out of his barn in back.

"Unicycles — we never run out of them," Kristin Tannehill adds.

Rita Arey Tannehill rode regularly in the parades until she married and moved away. But if they make it back to Clyde and Mary Catherine's for Thanksgiving, Rita and her children — Meredith, Kristin and Jake — know they have unicycles and the Holiday Caravan waiting for them.

"It has grown, it's great," Rita says. "... For it to have lasted this long is pretty amazing."

Ed Jordan, who serves full-time in the Air Force Reserve, travels back to Rowan County every Thanksgiving from his current home in Charleston, S.C.



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Jordan met Rodney Arey in the seventh grade, and they have been best friends ever since. Over time, Ed's sons, Ryan and Blake, started riding unicycles in the Holiday Caravan, and Ed didn't want to be left out.

About five years ago, he became part of the clowning team of unicyclists.

"I'm a late bloomer," Ed Jordan says. "There were a lot of falls when people weren't looking. Once I got to where I could ride 100 yards, I felt I could get somewhere."

Ed says he practices back home in Charleston in preparation for riding in the parade. "I wouldn't have any chops otherwise," he says.

Ryan Jordan, who is in the Air Force, drives back to Rowan County from Seymour Johnson Air Force Base near Goldsboro. Blake Jordan works for the city of Salisbury.

Rodney Arey's children, Dillon and Whitney, travel the greatest distances to ride unicycles in the parade. Dillon, a biomedical engineering graduate of Duke University, works in San Francisco. Whitney also is a Duke graduate who attends Brown Univer-


sity in hopes of earning her Ph.D. in medical anthropology.

Others often riding unicycles include Cydney Arey, Nanci Lefko, Taylor Arey, Logan Arey and Gavin McDaniel, a family friend and youngest of the group.

After the parade, the participants always reserve a room and dine at Wink's Restaurant in Salisbury. Clyde says he also picks up barbecue for Thanksgiving Day, when a huge crowd gathers at the homestead.

There's a lot to do at the Arey's place — skeet shooting in the pasture, a rifle range out back and a Clyde-fashioned glass pitch under a big tent. With last year's glass pitch, the proceeds from all the coins swept up or those that went into dishes were donated to Nazareth's Children's Home.

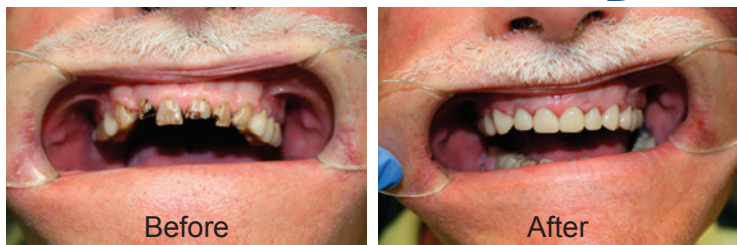
But for most in the crowd, Thanksgiving really starts with unicycles and the Holiday Caravan.

"It's a thing for this close-knit group of people," Ed Jordan says. "It's a coming-home thing for me." 



Mary Catherine Arey and her husband, Clyde, get ready for the parade.

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Top: Ageless Aviation Dreams Foundation Pilot Darryl Fisher helps Bob Horand into the Boeing Stearman biplane. — Photo by Wayne Hinshaw. Above: Fisher and 88-year-old Navy veteran Earl Graves from Oak Park Retirement take off. — Photo by Wayne Hinshaw. Right: Veteran Bill Howard reacts to the start of the radial engine on the 1942 Boeing Stearman. — Photo by Jon C. Lakey.



Ageless Aviation founder Darryl Fisher, left, shakes the hand of Oak Park resident Hall Steele. Steele, a former Rowan County commissioner, died since this photograph was taken at the Mid-Carolina Regional Airport in Salisbury. — Photo by David Freeze

Dream flights

Ageless Aviation gives back to those who have given so much.

Written by DAVID FREEZE

It all came about more or less by accident. Darryl Fisher had just suffered financial ruin that few could imagine. A man who once had a net worth of \$150 million, Fisher saw his investment in a mega business of assisted-living properties go sour through no fault of his own.

At a time when Darryl had virtually nothing left, his dad, Bill, asked him to help ferry a historic Stearman biplane from Mississippi back to Nevada. Darryl said, “I would be glad to go along but can’t help with any of the expenses.” Go he did — with an idea in mind.

The Fisher family had long been pilots with a special interest in those Stearman biplanes, best known as the

primary trainer for virtually every aspect of military flight during World War II. More than 10,600 Stearman planes were produced for use by both the Army Air Corps and the Navy.

Bill Fisher owned a Stearman, and an extensive renovation of his plane had just been completed in Cleveland, Mississippi. Bill planned to fly it home

REMINISCE

with Darryl's help. Darryl's idea was to stop along the way and give a few veterans a free ride to thank them for their service. Bill loved the idea, and the first veteran took a ride in Oxford, Mississippi, on March 29, 2011.

From that stop and 24 others on the way home, Darryl decided he wanted to do more of the same. As things turned around for him financially, he founded Ageless Aviation Dreams Foundation. For three years, he used much of his available time crossing the country in one of three Stearman planes owned by his family. Darryl soon coined the term, "Giving Back to Those Who Have Given."

Fisher began to assemble a small group of dedicated pilots and ground crew who gave "Dream Flights" an experience much more than just flying in one of the historic planes. Flight recipients get a signed commemorative hat, photo, certificate and often a big smile.

Today, those three planes spend March through early November giving pre-arranged flights, many of them to veterans who are now residents of assisted-living homes. Preference is given to older veterans, but other veterans and military widows also are eligible as time allows. Two more Stearman planes are in the works, aiming to be in the air by 2018.

AADF and Darryl Fisher first visited Salisbury in late spring 2013. Karen Leonard, activities head at Oak Park Retirement, had heard about the organization and wanted to get her older veterans in the air, particularly those who had served during World War II. When Leonard booked the visit, she didn't know what to expect, but she and the eligible veterans became excited about the opportunity.

Fisher and one of biplanes made their fourth annual visit to Salisbury on May 30, 2016. Oak Park veteran flights were chronicled in the

book, "Young Again," a recap of the year 2016 for AADF. Veteran "flyers" (the preferred spelling for ageless veterans and historic biplanes) on that day included nine residents of Oak Park.

An Army sergeant during the Korean War, Ron Hands was the first flyer. Air Force veteran Ned Thomas, also a Korean War veteran, was next, followed by the husband and wife duo of Margaret and Herman Snelling, both Army veterans.

Margaret, who was 86 then, was a member of the Women's Army Corps. She said, "I was a corpsman, relieving men so they could go to the battlefield." When strapped in, Margaret added, "Do I have a stewardess? I love you, Herman!"

After the flight, Margaret stepped out of the plane and Herman got in. Salisbury Mayor Karen Alexander was on hand and told all the veterans, "Thank you for your service! I know

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how excited you must be to fly because I was a pilot myself. I can't think of another more special day than to be here with these veterans. Their flights are bringing back their beautiful smiles."

Herman Snelling served from 1953 to 1984 in the Army and eventually ranked as a platoon sergeant. Army veteran Bob Horand had also served during Korea. After the 80 mph flight, he said, "I thoroughly enjoyed this. We saw the Food Lion warehouse, the VA and downtown Salisbury. It was very smooth. This was an outstanding experience."

Marine Corps and Vietnam veteran Tom Nolan was followed by World War II Navy veterans Walter Leather and Earl Graves. Former Rowan County Commissioner and Army veteran Hall Steele, who has since passed away, was the last scheduled flyer.

Fisher said, "I reflected back on those 25

flights and the people that we honored with dream flights on the way home from Mississippi and all we've done since. The central theme which stood out to me was the veterans' sacrifice, what they had given and done for our country and for our freedoms — all so selflessly. They didn't do it for recognition, they just did it as a course of what they had to do. We are giving back to them the dream flight experience. That's how 'Giving back to those who have given' became the mission of AADF."

All the dream flights are free. "We do it because we want to," Fisher said, "and we love the people that we honor and are appreciative of what they've done for us. It's the truest form of giving, and their satisfaction is the truest form of payment we can receive."

"I believe strongly if money is part of the equation, it cheapens the experience for everyone involved. We are saying thank you in a very

special way to people who are at a point in their lives when they need this gift more than ever."

On Nov. 10, Ageless Aviation Dreams Foundation gave its 2,827th dream flight. Darryl, whose home and headquarters is in Carson City, Nevada, and one of his planes plan to spend Memorial Day 2018 in Salisbury.

"I'll be there next year if Karen sends in her request," Fisher said. "I love coming to Salisbury and running my third Bare Bones 5K. Can't wait!"

Interested veterans should visit www.agelessaviationdreamsfoundation.org and apply for their own dream flight. **S**

David Freeze is an author, farmer, runner, cyclist and frequent contributor to the Salisbury Post. He is the author of "Young Again," a look back at 2016 for Ageless Aviation Dreams Foundation.

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Terry Holt and his metal Texaco tanker truck he received as a child. He is posing with it like the child in the advertisement, opposite.



Toy story

From horseshoes to dolls, some Christmas gifts you never forget.

Written by MARK WINEKA | *Photography by* JON C. LAKEY

Terry Holt brings out his Texaco tanker truck every Christmas.

In 1959, when Holt was a youngster, the toy tanker cost \$7.95 at the Texaco service station. But with a coupon, his parents were able to buy it for \$3.50. How Holt cherished that truck.

Some time back, Holt checked eBay to see what value might be placed on his truck today. It looked to be going for as much as \$125, and the red Texaco tanker

is more valuable if you have the box it came in.

“I have the box!” Holt said, but it’s doubtful he would ever consider selling this toy. It represents Christmas to him.

Holt’s love for his truck no doubt strikes a chord with many of us. Think of all the favorite Christmas toys stowed away in attics, closets, garages and out-buildings because the owners cannot not let go of the hours of joy they represented.

Holt shared his truck story at a Rowan County History Club Show and Share, which focused on toys or other Christmas gifts that brought back childhood memories.

REMINISCE



One of Linda Behrendt's favorite Christmas gifts was a tall, beautifully made and dressed Revlon doll called "Big Revy." She still has the Revlon doll and its original slip, stockings and shoes. Big Revy was one of many dolls fueling a lifelong passion for Behrendt, who now has close to 200 dolls at her home, including Revy which is on display at all times.

Doug McKenzie, now in his 70s, grew up on Mill Hill during a time when the neighborhood was teeming with boys always looking for something to play and keep them out of trouble. His parents wanted him to stay away from a store close to their home that had a bad reputation, McKenzie said, so for Christmas (and his 10th birthday the day after Christmas), he received a pair of J.C. Higgins horseshoes.

J.C. Higgins was the sporting goods line



Top: Gayle Hansen holds one of the miniatures she made. Above: A collection of Barbie dolls at the North Carolina Museum of Dolls, Toys & Miniatures.

for Sears, Roebuck & Co. at the time. His parents encouraged him to play horseshoes in the backyard with friends and stay away from that store. McKenzie came to love those horseshoes and could never give them up.

Today, in retirement, McKenzie still throws horseshoes with friends a couple days a week in the park behind the Harrisburg Public Library.

“My first bike also was a J.C. Higgins,” McKenzie said.

Rick Yost remembered the December days when he was 12 and desperately wanted a shotgun for Christmas. For a couple of Christmases before this, he had pleaded with his parents for a shotgun to hunt squirrels and rabbits, but they told him he was too young.

It was just days before Christmas this particular year, and Yost was feeling downhearted again, convinced he was not going to see a shotgun under the tree. But while he was waiting for his mother in the grocery store, he rummaged through a few bags in the car and spied a box of 20-gauge shotgun shells from Bernhardt Hardware.

He was going to get a shotgun, Yost thought, and he could hardly contain his excitement. He told no one of his discovery.

When Christmas morning came, Yost looked at all the presents under the tree, and nothing even closely resembled a shotgun. His major disappointment transformed to elation when Yost unwrapped a rectangular box and discovered it was his new shotgun, broken down into several components so as not to give it away.

Parents like to tease children this way.

Yost still has that box and his first shotgun. How could he not?

But it seems impossible to talk about Christmas gifts and childhood memories without paying a visit to the N.C. Museum of Dolls, Toys & Miniatures in Spencer. No matter how

Rick Yost, from Salisbury, gave up on getting his requested shotgun for Christmas when he was 12. When he saw the box, he knew it wasn't the shotgun, but he did not realize the gun was broken down in three pieces.



old, one can become lost in the museum displays of antique toys, dolls and dollhouses, trains, models, classic board games and finely crafted miniatures.

Michael and Gayle Hansen of Concord are board members of the museum, and Gayle is curator of the display cabinets. The couple know where everything is, and Michael was

asked if someone fresh off the street walked in and told him to point out his five favorite toys in the museum, what would they be?

Michael took off like a rocket, excited by the request. He stopped first at a German Mountain Train made in 1946 by Technofix. It's an intricate, elaborate windup piece that would still fascinate any child.



“I love windups,” Michael said. “Windups are my favorite thing.” He next stopped beside a display case that holds a complete set of Union Building Blocks, which were made of sandstone and produced between 1888 and 1913. After Germany entered World War I, these building blocks were never made again.

A display of Tinkertoys at the museum.

“To me, they were the forerunner and prime idea for the Erector Set,” Michael said.

Finding a complete set such as this is almost impossible, and Hansen loves the illustration that’s part of the set showing the whole family — kids, parents, grandparents — playing with the blocks. The company made 36 different sets that built 36 different structures.

Hansen moved to another section of the museum and pointed to the large antiques from the Rich Toy Co. on top of a cabinet. They are on loan to the museum from collector Steve Mayo of Kentucky.

“The wagons on the top are, no question, my favorite,” Hansen said. “The airplanes are no slouch, either.”

Nearby, are finely furnished German room boxes, which were built from 1885 to 1910. The kitchens and parlors on display “are just stunning,” Hansen said. German room boxes resemble dollhouses to a point.



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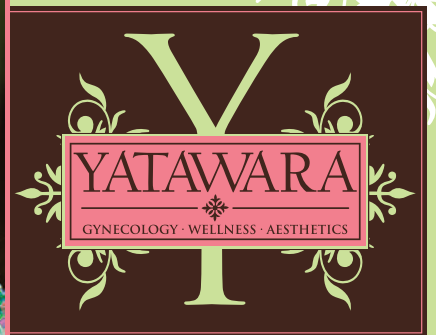


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They have three walls but no ceiling. Each of the furnishings in German room boxes are highly sought after and costly.

Hansen made his last stop in front of the museum's display of old board games.

"I love games, from any era," Hansen said. "They were the rainy-day toy. You never had a bad day if you had a game."

Many of the games were based on television game shows, such as "Dollar A Second" in 1953, or Disney movies such as the "Pied Piper of Hamelin" in the 1930s. "Derby Day" was a betting board game that adults could play at night after the children were in bed. It's also fun to see old Parcheesi games and a Chinese Checkers board.

Gayle Hansen said model trains were a big part of her childhood. Her parents laid tracks

A German room box from the 1880s.



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Left: Linda Behrendt and her Revlon doll she received as a child.



Right: Doug McKenzie holds horseshoes he received as a 10-year-old in 1954.

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and ran model trains up and down her hallway at home and even under their bed, adding or subtracting to the track layout every Christmas.


"That's a great memory," Gayle said. "The Lionel train around the tree."

Gayle Hansen listed many more of her favorite things in the museum — dolls, dollhouses, play sets, German room boxes, Tinkertoys, Fisher-Price toys, marbles, jacks, pick-up sticks, cap guns, Viewmasters and the miniatures, including several she and Michael built.

The non-profit museum was founded more than five years ago by Beth Morris Nance as a tribute to her late sister, Amy, and as a way to house Amy's impressive collection of dolls, including high-fashion Bob Mackie dolls and, of course, Barbies. "We actually have literally hundreds of Barbies in storage," Gayle says.

An extensive Barbie collection from Theresa Pitner is on display now at the museum, whose other display dolls reach back to examples of cloth, wood, papier-mache, china, bisque, metal, celluloid, wax, hard plastic and vinyl.

The museum has the largest Shirley Temple Doll collection on display, as well as the biggest Schoenhut Humpty-Dumpty Circus and Schoenhut Dolls exhibit.

"Coming to the museum awakens all the wonderful memories you had as a child," Michael Hansen said. "Coming here, you get to see 110 years of toys. Somewhere in here is something like you had or was what you had as a boy or girl." 



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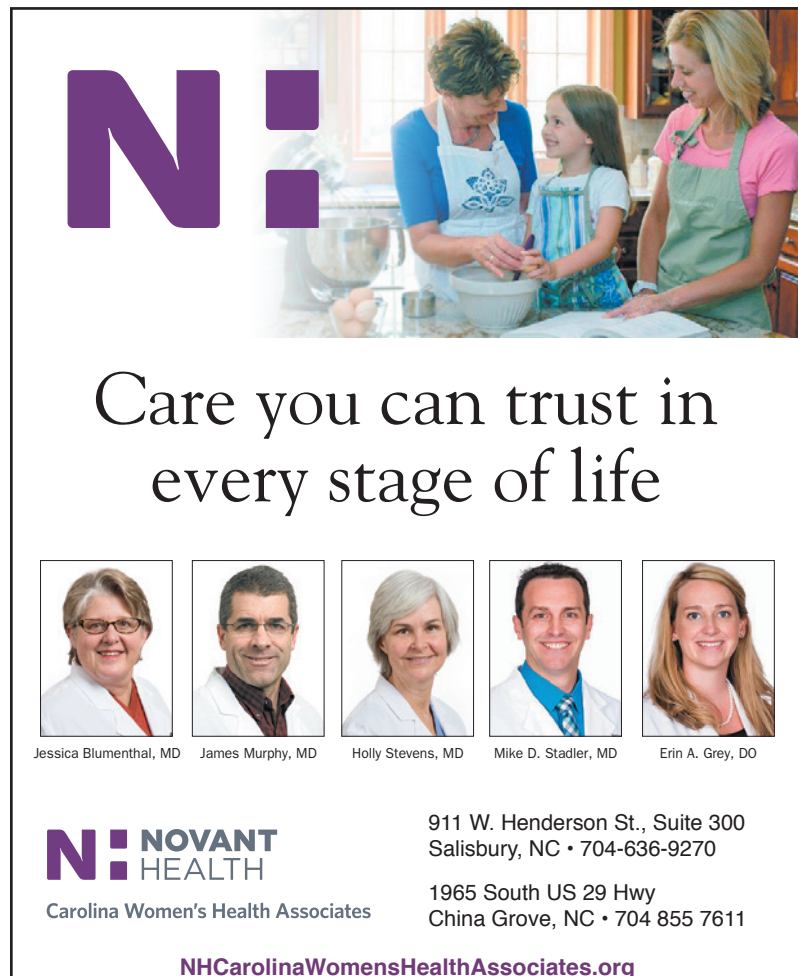
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The Salisbury Swing Band, directed by Dr. Stephen Etters, far left, and featuring vocalist Laura Millsbaugh, right, will give its Second Annual 'Swing into Christmas' concert for Rowan Helping Ministries at the Salisbury Civic Center Dec. 2. — Submitted photo

NOVEMBER

2 **'Next to Normal'**
Nov. 2-4, 9-11: Lee Street theatre — 7:30 p.m. For more information about tickets: 704-310-5507 or leestreet.org.

4 **Holiday Faire**
Nov. 4: First Ministry Center, 220 N. Fulton Street — 9 a.m.-3 p.m. Handmade crafts, vendors. Approximately 100 booths. Contact Joyce Curl at joycecurl2@yahoo.com or Rod Kerr at 704-633-0431, ext. 105.

10 **'Anne of Green Gables'**
Nov. 10-11, 17-18: Norvell Theater, 135 E. Fisher St. — 7:30 p.m. Presented by Piedmont Players Youth Theatre. Tickets on sale Nov. 6. Call 704-633-5471, or go to www.PiedmontPlayers.com.

Holiday 2017

Upcoming events in the Salisbury-Rowan area

10 **Salisbury Antiques Show**
Nov. 10-12: West End Plaza, 1935 Jake Alexander Blvd. West: — Friday, 10 a.m.-7 p.m.; Saturday, 10 a.m.-5 p.m.; Sunday, 11 a.m.-4 p.m. The 64th annual show is sponsored by Rowan Museum. It is considered the longest running annual antiques show in North Carolina and one of the finest. Tickets, \$5 in advance; \$6 at the door. For more information: 704-633-5946 or www.rowanmuseum.org.

11 **Share the Care 5k**
Nov. 11: Novant Health Rowan Medical Center, Mocksville Avenue — 9 a.m. Proceeds supporting Rowan Hospice. Go to salisburyrowanrunners.org for more information.

14 **'Dog Sees God'**
Nov. 14-18: Hedrick Little Theatre, Catawba College — 7:30 p.m. Catawba Theatre Arts presents "Dog Sees God: Confessions of a Teenage Blockhead" by Bert

V. Royal. For tickets and information: 704-637-4481 or catawba.edu/theatretix.

17 Polar Express
Nov. 17-Dec. 22: N.C. Transportation Museum, Spencer — “All Aboard” the Polar Express! Inspired by the hit movie, this holiday favorite comes to life as you and your family take a ride on the Polar Express. Passengers will enjoy singing and dancing upon arrival at the North Pole where Santa will present the first gift of Christmas. Tickets, dates and times available at www.nctrans.org/Events/Polar.aspx or by calling 704-636-2889.

18 Lighting of the Fall Fires
Nov. 18: Historic Gold Hill village, Saint Stephens Church Road. Check out www.goldhillnc.com for more information.

21 Southern Rowan Christmas Parade
Nov. 21: Landis 3 p.m.; China Grove — 4 p.m. Entry forms should be returned by Oct. 27. Go to chinagrovec.org for more information.

22 Holiday Caravan Parade
Nov. 22: Spencer, 2 p.m.; Salisbury — 3 p.m. 58th Annual Holiday Caravan Parade. 140 floats/units on Salisbury Avenue in Spencer and Main Street in Salisbury. For information, go to Holidaycaravanparade.com, or call 704-636-5335.

23 Butterball 5k
Nov. 23: Start at The Forum, 2318 S. Main St. — 8-10 a.m. Thanksgiving Day run. For more information, contact beth@preventionchildabuserowan.org, 704-639-1700, or go to preventionchildabuserowan.org or salisburyrowanrunners.org.

24 Scrooge's Christmas Trolley Tour
Nov. 24-Dec. 23: Lee Street theatre — Scrooge's Christmas Trolley Tour is a dramatic retelling of Charles Dickens' “A Christmas Carol,” featuring both laughter and serious moments. Passengers will travel back in time by trolley to Christmases past with Scrooge on his journey and see scenes from this wonderful holiday story acted out at historic sites in downtown Salisbury. Beginning Nov. 24, tours will run five times a night (6 p.m., 6:45 p.m., 7:30 p.m., 8:15 p.m., 9 p.m.) on Fridays and Saturdays with final performances on Dec. 23. For tickets and additional information, go to

Kerry Campion, from Salisbury, performs in ‘The Nutcracker’ during last year’s event at Keppel Auditorium at Catawba College. This year’s performance is Dec. 16-17. — Photo by Jon C. Lakey.

es-trolley-tour.html or call 704-310-5507.

25 Celebration of Lights and Winterland Express
Nov. 25-Dec. 30: Kannapolis Village Park — Celebrate the Christmas spirit all month long in Kannapolis with the Celebration of Lights. The Celebration of Lights boasts more than 250,000 lights and takes place at Village Park nightly at 6 p.m. Walk through the park and enjoy the many light displays or ride the Winterland Express and see if you can find all 12 Days of Christmas. After a train ride, kids of all ages can meet Santa in his studio each night. Closed Dec. 24 and 25.

30 The Living Christmas Tree
Nov. 30-Dec. 4; First Baptist Church, Salisbury — Involves more than 100 church and community choral members. Performances are 7 p.m. Thursday, Friday and Monday and 5 and 8 p.m. Saturday and Sunday. Tickets become available to the community at 8 a.m. Nov. 9. Tickets are free, but required. There is a suggested donation

of one canned food item per ticket to benefit Rowan Helping Ministries. Limit of 10 tickets per household.

DECEMBER

1 The Arc of Rowan Festival of Trees
Dec. 1-3: F&M Trolley Barn — The Festival of Trees is the signature fund-raising event of The Arc of Rowan County. It showcases a collection of beautifully decorated Christmas trees and is a wonderful kickoff to the holiday season. Trees in the festival are sponsored by anyone interested in helping this United Way organization. Times for viewing the trees are 7-9 p.m. Dec. 1; 10 a.m.-8 p.m. Dec. 2; and 1-5 p.m. Dec. 3.

2 Santa 5k
Dec. 2: Millbridge Ruritan Building on Sloan Road — 9 a.m. Run benefits Rowan Helping Ministries. Go to salisburyrowanrunners.org for information.

2 Brunch with Santa
Dec. 2: Salisbury Civic Center — 10 a.m.-noon, Families are invited to make a holiday memory, sharing brunch with Santa. \$6 per person or \$20 per family of four. Register in advance. Call 704-216-2708.

2 ROBOJO Holiday Show
Dec. 2: Stanback Room of Rowan Public Library, 201 W. Fisher St. — 2-3 p.m. 20th annual ROBOJO Children’s Christmas Show. Go to rowanpubliclibrary.org for information.

2 Cleveland Christmas Parade
Dec. 2: Main Street, Cleveland — 2 p.m. Marching band, candy, horses, fire trucks and Santa. To enter a group or float, contact 704-278-2252.

2 ‘Swing into Christmas’
Dec. 2: Salisbury Civic Center — 7-10 p.m. Salisbury Swing Band covers the classic holiday tunes from the 1920s to today in a concert that benefits Rowan Helping Ministries. Under the direction of Dr. Stephen Etters and featuring award-winning vocalist Laura Millsbaugh, the 18-piece ensemble will have your toes tapping to the sounds of Gershwin, Sinatra, Count Basie and more. Admission is \$15, and all proceeds directly benefit RHM. There will be a canned food raffle at the door with local prizes. Last year’s event raised

\$1,300 and more than 1,000 pounds of food. For ticket information, email tickets@salisbury-swingband.com.

2 Christmas at the Hall House

Dec. 2-24: Hall House, 226 S. Jackson St. — Step back in time to glimpse traditional holiday splendor as it would have appeared in the mid 1800's. Greenery, fruits and berries, antique toys, heirloom quilts and coverlets are all combined to transform Dr. Hall's house and transport each visitor back in time. On Dec. 2, 3, 9, 10, 16 & 17, tours will be given from 1-4 p.m. There will be a special evening tour on Christmas Eve from 6 to 8.

2 Town of China Grove Tree Lighting

Dec. 2: Hanna Park — 7 p.m. Don't miss the lighting of the town Christmas tree in China Grove followed by Christmas caroling and light refreshments.

3 Choral Society Holiday Concert

Dec. 3: 1500 Statesville Blvd. — 4:30 p.m. Annual holiday concert by the Salisbury-Rowan Choral Society. For information, contact lindavo@windstream.net, 704-796-9683, or check out [facebook.com/Salisbury.Rowan.Choral.Society](https://www.facebook.com/Salisbury.Rowan.Choral.Society).

3 Gingerbread House Workshop

Dec. 3: Rowan Museum, 202 N. Main St. — 1-4 p.m. Children have a chance to build and decorate their own gingerbread house. \$35 a house. For more information: 704-633-5946 or www.rowanmuseum.org.

5 Breakfast with Bing

Dec. 5: City Tavern Upper Room, 113 E. Fisher St. — 7:30 a.m.-9:00 a.m. Crosby Scholars' Breakfast with Bing. City Tavern Upper Room, 113 East Fisher Street. For more information: jcnipe@crosbyscholarsrowan.org, 704-762-3512 or crosbyscholarsrowan.org.

7 'A Charlie Brown Christmas'

Dec. 7-10, 14-16: The Norvell Theater, 135 E. Fisher St. — 7:30 p.m. Presented by Piedmont Players Youth Theatre. Tickets go on sale Nov. 27. For tickets or information: 704-633-5471 or www.PiedmontPlayers.com.



A large crowd turned out at the historic Salisbury Bell Tower park to ring in the new year during last year's festivities. — Photo by Jon C. Lakey.

8 Choral Society Holiday Concert

Dec. 8: 207 W. Horah St. — 7:30 p.m. Annual Holiday Concert of the Salisbury-Rowan Choral Society. For information: lindavo@windstream.net, (704) 796-9683, or [facebook.com/Salisbury.Rowan.Choral.Society/](https://www.facebook.com/Salisbury.Rowan.Choral.Society/).

8 Christmas in the Village

Dec. 8-10: Historic Gold Hill village, St. Stephens Church Road. Go to www.goldhill-nc.com for more details.

9 Kannapolis Christmas Parade

Dec. 9: Downtown Kannapolis — 6 p.m. For over 50 years, the Kannapolis Christmas Parade of Lights has been a must-see, nighttime event. For information: www.kannapolisnc.gov/christmasparade or 704-920-4349.

9 'The Nutcracker'

Dec. 9, 7 p.m.; Dec. 10, 2 p.m.: Kannapolis Performing Arts Center, 415 E. First

St., Kannapolis — a Piedmont Dance Theatre production. For more information: anneps-md@gmail.com, (704) 971-2011 or piedmont-dancetheatre.com/.

11 Christmas Traditions

Dec. 11-12: Meroney Theater — 7 p.m. each performance. "Christmas Traditions: The Stories and Music of Christmas" represents a collaboration among storyteller Dr. Karl Hales, vocalists Neal Wilkinson and Lauren Stephenson and pianist Susan Trivette. Admission is at least one canned item for Rowan Helping Ministries.

16 'The Nutcracker'

Dec. 16, 6:30 p.m.; Dec. 17, 2:30 p.m.: Keppel Auditorium on the Catawba College campus — a Piedmont Dance Theatre production with the Salisbury Symphony. Go to salburysymphony.org for more information.

16 Christmas in the Grove

Dec. 16: Downtown China Grove — 5-9 p.m. Join in the Christmas cheer with sledding, hot chocolate, s'mores and snacks on Swink Street in China Grove. Santa, horse-drawn carriage rides and other activities will take place on Main Street. Bring your own plastic sled, no metal sleds allowed. Sledding and wagon rides are free with a small charge for food and drinks.

30 Old Stone House Christmas

Dec. 30-31: Old Stone House, 770 Old Stone House Road, Granite Quarry — 10 a.m.-4 p.m., Dec. 30; noon-4 p.m. Dec. 31. Experience Christmas like many Rowan Countians would have known 200 years ago. Sponsored by Rowan Museum. Admission: \$5 adults, \$3 students.

31 New Year's Eve at the Bell Tower

Dec. 31: Bell Tower, West Innes Street — 8 p.m.-midnight. Free. Say goodbye to 2017 and ring in the new year. Festivities include live music, video feed from Times Square, hot chocolate, other goodies and the ringing of the bell.

Patrons' Ball

The Novant Health Rowan Medical Center Foundation hosted its 27th annual Patrons' Ball at the Peeler-Crystal Lounge on the Catawba College campus. The event raised more than \$200,000 toward support of a proposed cancer center, and some 200 people attended the masquerade-themed ball, which included dinner and dancing.

— Photos by Garrett Price of Carolina Portrait Designs



The Radiation Oncology Team at Novant Health Rowan Medical Center



Lester and Tiffany Brown



Rachel and Charles Bernheim



Lee and Mona Lisa Wallace



Carrie Poole, Rachel Ross, Mary McCubbin and Rick Parker



Wib and Julie Manuel



Mary Goodman



Above: Ray Paradowski and Dianne Scott were instrumental in launching the Rowan County Chamber of Commerce's Leadership Rowan program in 1992. Right: Elaine Spalding, Nancy Litton, Patricia J. Ricks and Amy Smith.



Left: Norma Honeycutt and Mark Honeycutt.

Right: Greg Edds, Kim Edds and Glen Albracht.



Kathy Leasure and Ann Eidson

Leadership Rowan's 25th Anniversary

More than 100 people gathered at the Firewater restaurant to celebrate the 25th anniversary of Rowan County Chamber of Commerce's Leadership Rowan program. Leadership Rowan began in 1992, and over 550 people have completed the nine-month community and leadership development program, which provides an overview of the county through explorations of different topics each month.

— Photos by Amanda Eller



Above: Carmen Wilder Harper, Vincia Benjamin and Wendy Gilmore Baskins. Left: Katie Scarvey, left, speaks with Donna Groce.



Left: Josh Bergeron and Amy Vestal

Right: Tim Norris and Ken Mowery



Ollie Mae Carroll and Elia Gegorek



Teresa Dakins and Keri Allman



Sharon and Dale Wooten



Cindy Tierney, Emily Tierney, Michelle Rowland, Anthony Philpott and Heather Scherer



Above: Beth Craft and Holly Doreen.
Below: Angela and Shane Moses.



Elizabeth Plumley, Hollis Theard, Lexa Turchin and Bryan Abramowski

Salisbury Sip

The Salisbury Sip festival, held behind the Gateway Building and next to New Sarum Brewery, featured live music and beers from more than 20 breweries. Downtown Salisbury Inc. organized the event, which attracted people from throughout the region.

— Photos by Mark Wineka



Above: Tad Helmstetler and Michael Owen. Right: David Veitch, Becky Bradham, Erle Craven, Theresa Pitner and Andrew Pitner.





Left: Caroline, Beverly and Ron Gobble

Right: John Davidson, Brenda Cuer and Paul Weisler



Sondra Yost, Julie Blalock, Bretta Matthews, Joe McGee, Barbara Schenk and Sheryle McGee



Above: Ray Platt, Jill Platt and Eric Mitchell

Below: Andrew, Marc and Lynn Murphy



Above: Jared and Brian Schmidt

Right: Derek Lipe, Kari Cutinella, Amanda Barry and Josh McHone





Nicole and Daniel Matangira



Elissa and Luke Brown with Samantha and Todd Dagenhart

Quetzal Gala

GRACES, the Salisbury-based nonprofit that supports the La Escuela Integrada school in Guatemala, was host for its inaugural Quetzal Gala at the Country Club of Salisbury. Many local donors stepped up with monetary, raffle and auction donations. The gala also attracted some 60 supporters from across the country. Those attending were treated to a Guatemalan menu.

— Photos by Nancy Shirley



Above: Hannah Nadeau, part of the staff at Escuela Integrada, Guatemala; Jessica Borg, a board member from Texas; and Jaime Olson, a board member from Wisconsin. Above right: Andrew Poe and Susan Shinn Turner. Right: Stan and Sandy Jordan. Left: Vincia Benjamin Miller and Barbara Keryluk. Barbara is from California.





Above: Tyler Hutchins and Daniel Waters.
Right: B.J. and Mike Connor.



Clockwise from above left: Lori and Steve Yang; Russell and Sarah Michalec; Henrietta Henderlite and Shari Graham; Just a few of the things that were raffle prizes at the gala; Robin Cohen models Oprah sunglasses that were actually won by Lilianna Spears; Paula Bohland stands in front of a list of Quetzal Gala sponsors.





Kaye Brown Hirst with her grandson, Liam Hirst.



The adults in back include Benjamin Brown, Candace Brown, Larry Brown and Sarah Brown. The children in front are Brooks, Berkley and Cole Brown.

Germanfest

The 500th anniversary of the Protestant Reformation was celebrated at this year's Germanfest, held at the Old Stone House in Granite Quarry. The day included a Volksmarch, Colonial beer-making, woodworking, candle-making, baking, traditional music and tours of the house. Local churches with German history were on site sharing their connection to the Reformation.

— Photos by Mark Wineka



Adam DeLand, Ashley DeLand and Zubecca Brown



Left: Jeremy and Madison Bloom.

Right: Mack and Meetta Lampert.





Dana and Paul Birkhead



Mary Marlin, Christal McRae and Christian McRae



Jack and Debbie Taylor



John Kesler,
Don Kesler
and David
Harrison



Joanna, Sheryl and Melinda Thompson



In front, Aaron Goss, Heidi Goss and Elizabeth Bauk. In back, Sarah and Steve Bauk.



Donna
Brown
Farmer
with Jerry,
Katie
and Riley
Adams.

'Christmas Traditions'

It all started with stories for children.

When I came to Catawba College to teach speech and theater courses, I wanted to continue a program from my last position in California. I wanted to read Christmas stories to children.

I was given courses in Oral Reading and Reader's Theatre which were taught on alternate years. I used those courses to begin a tradition of taking my students to local schools to read. It caught on and became popular enough that I did at least two programs at each of 17 elementary schools, reading to thousands of students each year. I began reading at other venues as well, and during my peak year, I gave 55 presentations between Thanksgiving and Christmas.

With numbers like these, it was hard to give up reading Christmas stories when I retired in 2005. My prayers were answered when longtime friend and singer Neal Wilkinson approached me with an idea. Neal and I had talked for years about doing a program together, and he let me know this was the right time to start.

We did our first program in December 2005 at Keppel Auditorium. We had fewer than 100 people in that 1,500-seat auditorium due to a snow storm. We decided to try again in 2006 at the Meroney

Theater with Piedmont Players being our principal sponsor, and ultimately expanded to two nights of performance with full houses in attendance.

Though we started with just Neal, a pianist and myself, we added a female voice in the person of Leslie Dunkin, who performed with us for 10 years before she left town with her husband, Dr. Jim Dunkin. We have been fortunate to have other ladies to replace Leslie, and this year (our 13th) will feature Lauren Stephenson as one of our performers. She and Neal will handle the beautiful music, accompanied by our wonderful pianist, Susan Trivette.

In between songs, I have the pleasure of reading related stories of Christmas. We use a very simple set and concentrate on music and stories to celebrate the season. The first part of the program is secular and then we segue into religious music and stories.

We think of each other as family as we

work together, laugh together and focus on the joy of celebrating the season as a team. There is no director of the group. We each accept certain responsibilities for bringing the program together, and we enjoy the opportunity to bring it to the public. This year's "Christmas Traditions" program at the Meroney will be Dec. 11 and 12 at 7 p.m. Don't forget to bring a canned good for Rowan Helping Ministries.

From the beginning our program has been free, advertising that this is a gift to the community. Shortly after we began, Neal suggested we partner with Rowan Helping Ministries and ask people to bring a canned good for their pantry. The public responded beautifully and we have raised thousands of pounds of food to stock the pantry. We are proud of this community for responding so well.

When programs like this one can involve so many people in celebrating this lovely holiday, it's easy to say, "Salisbury is the place to be." I've

been in Salisbury for 51 years, and it is certainly my place to be. **S**

Dr. Karl Hales, professor emeritus of Catawba College, taught communication courses at the school for 39 years.



by
KARL
HALES



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