

APRIL 2020

SALISBURY

the magazine

SALUTE!

Five-star Partners in Learning gives kids, families a leg up

Amen corner

Pray Rowan tries to make a difference one gathering at a time

Powerful pair

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by MAGGIE
BLACKWELL

On the cover: Leland Efrid, Liam Ranes, Blake Adams, Mariah Croshaw and Caia Cuthbertson have fun on the playground at Partners in Learning Child Development and Family Resource Center.

On this page: A woman feels the spirit at a recent Pray Rowan meeting at Shive Elementary School.



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Can I get an 'amen' for prayer, partnerships?

I don't pray well. Never have. When it comes time for saying a blessing over food or for starting off a meeting, I'm not the guy you want. I gladly turn the duties over to someone else, so no one has to suffer through my yammering and stammering.

It's not that my own silent prayers are any better. If you transcribed them with your secret transcribing machine, you'd find only bits and pieces of prayer, I fear. Nothing coherent. I'd be asking God to give certain people strength or help them get better or keep them safe, but I'm afraid my prayers wouldn't come in complete sentences or be as thankful or praising as they should be.

Nope, I don't pray well. Still, I believe it helps.

So do the people who have been attending the monthly Pray Rowan gatherings for the last two-plus years. It's a Christian-based effort whose organizers think is making a difference in the community, and the month of April, which includes Easter, seems like a good time to drop in and report on what they're doing.

I attended one of Pray Rowan's meetings in February and, though my praying skills still leave a lot to be desired, it was especially inspirational to see a diverse group of Christians gathering to send up issue-oriented prayers. They asked God's help to address challenges in society such as human-trafficking and racial reconciliation, while also seeking protection for military veterans, first-responders and addicts.

Pray Rowan hopes its monthly, hourlong model — which includes music, a guest speaker and many prayers, of course — becomes something for each county in the state to follow.

Another model certainly worth emulating is the community-minded spirit of Shari Graham and Hen Henderlite, a dynamic duo for whom no job seems too big. In this issue, look for Maggie Blackwell's profile on these close friends who make things happen.

Lots of changes are in the works for Kannapolis, especially the city's downtown, but in The Big Five, contributing writer Susan

Shinn Turner details five longstanding sites Kannapolis is known for — places always worth visiting.

Elsewhere, Kris Mueller details the spectrum of services for children and families offered by Partners in Learning. You'll be impressed. And Carl Blankenship spends a day with students gaining some scientific literacy through hands-on learning with the Muddy Sneakers program.



Are you a fan of all those baking shows on television? Deirdre Parker Smith visits with Shameika Peebles, whose passion finds her making all kinds of creations out of cakes, usually chocolate cakes.

Bookish features a look at Donna Peeler Poteat's compilation of important stories on the Salisbury Confederate Prison. The Rowan Original Q&A catches up with Jason Walser, who shares insights on the Robertson Foundation and the Bell Tower Green park

now under construction.

James Donaldson provides the artwork for Salisbury's the Place; Jon Lakey, the photo for Through the Lens. You'll likely see people you know in Scene photos from the Waterworks' Oyster Roast, Catawba College Baseball's First Pitch or Downtown Salisbury's Wine About Winter.

Now for a prideful note. Issues of Salisbury the Magazine recently earned first- and second-place awards as the best magazine or niche publications in their category from the N.C. Press Association. I don't know if prayers made it happen, but we thank our readers and advertisers for showing faith in us.

Mark Wineka,
Editor, Salisbury the Magazine

| *through the lens* |

by jon c. lakey

*A tin-roofed building nestled
along the edge of a tree line on
Organ Church Road in rural
Rowan County catches the
final rays of the setting sun.*



Compilation details Salisbury's darkest period

Viewed in any era or by any standard, what happened at the Salisbury Confederate Prison during the Civil War is a tragedy of almost unfathomable proportion.

Consider this: In a four-month period between Oct. 1, 1864, and Feb. 17, 1865, records show that 3,419 prisoners died in Salisbury. The rates of deaths, mostly from disease, starvation and exposure, were 18 to 40 men a day. The numbers of dead were so overwhelming men had to be stacked and buried in long, deep trenches. The corpses often were stripped of all their clothing so the garments could be used by other prisoners.

To say the prison grounds — an old cotton factory — were not suited to this mass of humanity is an understatement. In October 1864, the mostly Union prisoners stood by one count at 10,321, and they were still coming in.

On Feb. 16, 1865, just days before the thousands of prisoners left Salisbury as part of a mass prisoner exchange and it essentially shut down, the prison listed 546 sick and hospitalized. The infirm left on trains; those able to walk or be helped by others marched to Greensboro.

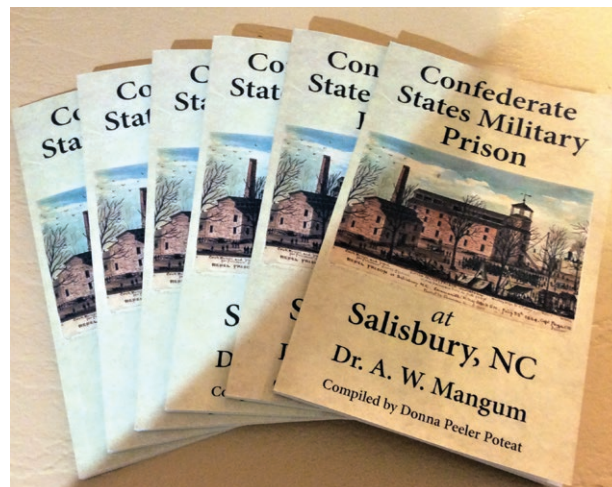
If the deaths by “horrific” conditions were not enough — and that’s a word, “horrific,” you read and hear a lot with the Salisbury prison — it also was scene of a mass shooting. In a failed uprising Oct. 20, 1864, that probably lasted all of 10 minutes, an estimated 16 prisoners were killed and 60 wounded.

It’s just hard to digest these situations and numbers, and it likely does not compute with how we tend to view, romanticize and sugarcoat Salisbury and its history.

“Confederate States Military Prison,” the name given to a compilation put together by Salisbury’s Donna Peeler Poteat, brings into focus this chapter that seems to remain the city’s darkest period.

Poteat, a matron of honor with the Sons of Confederate Veterans Rowan Rifles Camp 405, compiled an attractive, soft-cover, 50-page book of two Sunday installments she came across that were published by the Charlotte Observer in 1893.

They had been penned by Dr. Adolphus W. Mangum, a young Methodist minister in Salisbury prior to the Civil War. He enlisted in the 6th North Carolina Infantry and served as a regiment chaplain, but illness forced him to leave the Confederate Army in October 1861. He returned to Salisbury and began serving as chaplain at the prison.



The beauty of what Mangum delivered in these two articles, which possibly first appeared in *The Carolina Watchman*, is that they represent a firsthand account of someone who was actually on the prison grounds and also was living in Salisbury at the time the prison was here.

Poteat says Mangum kept copious notes and diaries, and that author Louis Brown relied on much of what Mangum had recorded for his 1992 book, “The Salisbury Prison.”

Poteat’s compilation also includes a letter about the “horrific” conditions — there’s that word again — of the Salisbury prison written Feb. 17, 1865, by T.W. Hall, assistant adjutant and inspector general for the Confederates

States.

“There’s just so much information in there that hasn’t been shared in so many years,” Poteat says of Mangum’s and Hall’s contributions to what we know about the prison.

When she came across the Mangum stories during an online search of 19th century newspapers, “I just couldn’t believe it,” Poteat says, adding she was surprised they had never been reprinted.

The Salisbury prison started out with just 120 prisoners on Dec. 9, 1861.


As you read what Mangum describes, you see how quickly things devolve over the coming

years as more and more prisoners — Union captives, Confederate convicts, deserters — are brought in. You learn of heroic doctors, murder among the prisoners, work details, “galvanized Yankees,” failed and successful escape attempts, the young and old guards, and the interaction between the prisoners and Salisbury residents.

But in the end, as the South’s resources dwindled, it all came down to survival. Prisoners turned to climbing trees for acorns or fishing through sewers for bones. When tents ran out, they burrowed into the ground for shelter.

Based on what escaped federal prisoners who also were newspaper correspondents had written, Mangum concluded years after the war that the death and suffering could have been avoided and was the fault of U.S. Secretary of War Edwin M. Stanton, who would not agree to prisoner exchanges when they needed to occur.

Poteat agrees with Mangum’s conclusion. It’s something, of course, for historians to keep debating. Meanwhile, Poteat’s compilation is worth picking up and reading.

“*Confederate States Military Prison*” costs \$8 and is available at South Main Book Co., Rowan Museum, Historic Salisbury Foundation and Clyde’s Off Main Gallery. 

Construction zone

*Walser stays committed to park,
renewal, West End*

BY MARK WINEKA

PHOTOGRAPHY BY JON C. LAKEY

Bell Tower Green Inc. stands as the nonprofit overseeing the fundraising and development of a new downtown park — Bell Tower Green — and Jason Walser serves as one of the board members and point people for that project

Walser also doubles as executive director for the Blanche & Julian Robertson Family Foundation, arguably the community's greatest benefactor since its establishment in 1997. Foundation members proved to be the catalyst for Bell Tower Green, now under construction within the block bounded by West Innes, South Church, South Jackson and West Fisher streets.

Walser guesses he has given 50 to 60 interviews and presentations so far on Bell Tower Green. The questions he always hears are things such as “When will it be open?” “How many parking spaces are you creating on the perimeter?” “How will you manage safety and security in the park?” “And what kind of restaurant is the Wrenn House going to become?”

More than \$9 million has been given for the park by individuals, foundations, businesses and civic clubs. Some 300 families have made donations so far.

“Most of the donors have really dug deep to make the largest investment in the park and this community that they could,” Walser says.

Before his role with the Robertson Foundation, Walser served as executive director for the LandTrust for Central North Carolina. A native of Statesville and an attorney by training, the 48-year-old Walser and his wife, Tracy, have a son, Ian, who is a freshman at East Carolina University, and a daughter, Autumn, a sophomore at Salisbury High.

Salisbury the Magazine recently caught up with Walser for a quick Q&A.



*Jason Walser is on the
board for the new Bell
Tower Green park and
is executive director of
the Blanche & Julian
Robertson Family
Foundation.*

Q *What are the major areas the Robertson Foundation board is focusing on these days?*

While we continue to support a broad array of nonprofits in the community, we have recently been focused on children's issues in the community — particularly the renewal opportunity for Rowan-Salisbury Schools. We also remain committed to helping the West End neighborhood continue its revitalization.

Is there any way to describe effectively what Julian Robertson's gift and the establishment of the foundation have meant to Salisbury, or can you attempt it?

I appreciate the way you asked the question. The answer I am about to give is about 1% of the answer I would like to give if you had space in your magazine.

The foundation has invested more than \$36 million in Rowan County thanks to Julian and his sisters, Wyndham and Blanche. Investments in Salisbury High, Catawba and Livingstone colleges, the Community Care Clinic, Rowan Helping Ministries, and more than 100 other grant recipients have made this community a better place to live.

One aspect of this giving that I would like to highlight is that under the leadership of Jimmy Hurley, who was chairman of the board of directors at the time, the foundation increased its giving substantially to human services organizations during the Great Recession.

Like everyone else invested in the stock market, our foundation investments were down substantially. But we increased the amount we were giving to organizations helping those living at the margins during a three- or four-year period when our economy was most challenging. Our endowment has never gotten back to where it was before the Great Recession, but stepping up at that difficult time for our economy was the right thing to do, and there is no telling how many thousands of families the

foundation helped directly or indirectly during this period.

You and the foundation have had a longtime interest in the West End community of Salisbury. Are there any big plans on the horizon for that area?

There are plenty of dreams, including the restoration of the Monroe Street School and additional recreational opportunities for residents that are in the early stages of planning now. However, "big plans" are probably not as important as sustained incremental victories, which we remain committed to. From the summer basketball league to the Teen Center to summer camps in the neighborhood to supporting the housing improvement program that the Community Development Corporation is spearheading, we have been making investments quietly in the West End for several years. And I believe that we will continue to do so.

Some wet weather this winter surely has slowed down construction, but tons of progress has been made on Bell Tower Green. What major aspects of the park will be coming into shape this spring, say in April and May?

You are correct. We had a fantastic autumn, weather-wise, and got weeks ahead of schedule. Then we had two solid months where we received at least one rain event per week. We are at the phase now where we really need dry weather to be able to pack dirt for some of the structures and hardened trails that are in the next phase of construction. If we get a few weeks of dry weather, trails will be built, and the bathroom facility on the back side of our water wall will be constructed. Also, the front of the water wall will begin to take shape as a more natural and attractive centerpiece, and some of the park will start to receive some trees. Our contractor still be-

lieves that completion of the park this fall is realistic, although it will likely require more work on weekends and after hours.

How much money is left to be raised for the park project, and what would those funds be used for?

As of the time of this interview, we remain approximately \$1.5 million short of where we want to be. We hope to completely rebuild the streets surrounding the park on three sides — Church, Fisher and Jackson. The new streets will have brick pavers on top. Taylor Clay has very generously donated all the bricks we need to build the streets to match the brick street on Fisher in front of City Tavern and the Norvell Theater. Eventually, we hope that they will be connected. These brick pavers slow traffic, become usable space for programming — such as for festivals or the farmers market, provide an attractive entrance to the park and, most importantly, allow us to construct some new parking, especially on Fisher Street where we will be providing new diagonal spaces in front of the library. As you might imagine, rebuilding three streets and moving curbs and utilities is not inexpensive.

What else?

We also are hoping to build the stage this summer. However, it, too, is a "big-ticket" item. Whether we build it now or wait until later, we will run all electricity to the site and prepare it for the stage. A temporary stage could be utilized in the interim until all funds are in hand to complete what will be a very attractive and large performance space.

Lastly, we are hoping to begin the creation of an endowment for the park, much like Hurley Park has. We know that the park will need to be maintained to the highest of standards, and we are hoping that we can provide a vehicle for the private sector to assist in the long term maintenance of what will be one of our county's most cherished landmarks.



Site manager David Vincent explains the details of the restroom facility behind the water wall to Jason Walser at the new Bell Tower Green park under construction.

What do your instincts tell you about how popular a place Bell Tower Green will be when it's finished and what impact it will have?

I have little doubt that within a short time frame, this park will become one of the most beloved and photographed locations in our county. I suspect that in five years, residents will wonder how we thrived for 250 years without this public green space in downtown Salisbury. It will be highly programmed and serve as a destination, especially on weekends and summer evenings.

Already, developers have been asking us for copies of images and the master plan for the park to use in their financing applications to build apartments in downtown Salisbury. I can make a straight-faced prediction that with the Empire coming online in the next few years, this park has the potential to help attract more than \$30 million in new investment in downtown residential living and new retail and restaurant development. Between new festivals,

concerts, weddings, reunions and community celebrations, it holds potential to bring many thousands of additional visitors and dozens of new residents to our community in just the first couple of years.

In your mind, what are the biggest challenges facing Salisbury and Rowan County in the years ahead?

Improving our school system, or at least the perception of our school system, is critical. It is the key to lifting our neighbors out of poverty, growing our tax base, and helping us learn to get along with each other better — which is a challenge for our entire country in the years ahead.

What's your pet peeve?

People who litter, bully, don't pick up their pets' "waste," throw chewing gum on the ground, and leave shopping carts strewn all over the parking lot. I guess I have more than my fair share of pet peeves.

What are your biggest interests or hobbies outside of work?

Walking my dog Tory twice per day, reading on issues of public policy, traveling and baking.

List your top three movies or television shows ...

"Crash," "Waiting for Guffman" and "Seinfeld."

What two foods might folks always find in your fridge or pantry?

Frozen blueberries and nuts.

If you could go back 25 years, what advice would you give a young Jason Walser?

Record your parents and grandparents as they answer questions about their parents and grandparents and other ancestors. Go to the gym every other day. Run your fingers through your hair every day and enjoy the feeling while you can. **[S]**

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Flour power

You can have your cake and sculpt it, too

BY DEIRDRE PARKER SMITH / PHOTOGRAPHY BY JON C. LAKEY



Above: Peebles sculpted a cake to look like a Japanese lantern. Below: That apple pie is a cake and the napkin is edible, too.



The tiny kitchen where Shameika Peebles sculpts cake can barely contain her imagination.

Inspirational advice lines the walls, such as “I never quit. I will progress every day” and “Passion is energy. Feel the power that comes from focusing on what excites you.”

Oprah Winfrey said that.

Loaded on the table are her supplies — fondant, carving tools, food coloring, cake waiting to be transformed, photographs and the computer that connects her to pastry classes.

Using a small stove, a tiny sink and short counter, and every bit of her positivity, she creates amazing 3D cakes — some so vivid, no one would dare cut and serve them.

Shameika has a dream — to teach others how to do this — and she’s working hard to learn herself, taking a one-year online course and practicing, perfecting every day and night.

She calls her business Chocolatey Art, because she usually uses chocolate cake.

She recently introduced her skills to Salisbury at a Waterworks Visual Arts Center show, an introduction to a class she’ll be teaching there on cake sculpting.

Set up right at the front door, Shameika’s creations earned oohs and aahs and lots of pointing fingers while people said, “Look at

that!”

She even made a cake pie, with a lattice top, a drip of pie filling down the side and a gingham cloth underneath the pie

Shameika Peebles stands at her display of sculpted cakes at Waterworks Visual Arts Center. The large cube is made up of several chocolate cakes.



After shaping the cube from chocolate cake, Shameika Peebles covers it with chocolate ganache so she can add other features. On the wall are inspirational quotes.

that was made of fondant.

Adding real apples just under the lattice really fooled the eye.

On the other side of the table was a roaring lion, with fur of many colors, but it's his snarling face, teeth bared, that brings him to life — that and his glossy eyes.

A dragon rested on another plate, while a large geode cube caught attention.

Most of her creations spring to mind, and then she finds photos to study the subject and replicate it.

Her favorite animal is the sea turtle, with its large flippers and expressive eyes. That's what she's teaching in her March class at Waterworks.

Her sculpted cakes take at least 12 hours or a day.

She'd love to have a large mixer, one that stands alone on the floor, so she can do a big batch of cake. A bigger oven would be nice, too.

Now she has a large sheet pan and will



Peebles made this cake sculpted and painted like a dragon head.



Above: A nest accompanies the lantern.

Below: A butterfly on a cake sculpted into a dog.



make several cakes to then cut up and use for a new piece.

She once worked at Sweet Cakes bakery in Cornelius, where she made cake pops, among many other things, as the main baker — but she did not decorate there. Every bit of what she does now is self taught, thanks to careful observation, experimentation and her pastry course.

The course is offered by the Auguste Escoffier School of Culinary Arts. There are two campuses, in Austin, Texas, and Boulder, Colorado, with numerous online courses. When Shameika completes her course she will receive certification from the school.

She uses boxed cake mixes because of their texture and shelf life. She also uses pound cake — “I need something dense to hold the shape” — so she can add sculptural pieces.

Shameika does everything by hand, only using



“*This is my peaceful, happy place.*”

molds to add different textures. She uses cake decorating tools, as well as tools for decorating clay — the fondant and molding chocolate have a density similar to some clays.

Spreading the cakes with ganache, which is a

blend of melted chocolate and cream, gives her a smooth, stable background to build from.

“I have to be an engineer and a physicist,” she laughs. She frequently gets help in those departments from her husband, DeVore, who has built structures for support as she sculpts large or abstract cakes.

“I have a vision and draw it out and my husband helps me build the structure or frame. ... I have to be able to explain it to him.” She says her husband helps her all the time, whatever she needs, he says, “I’ll get it for you.”



Miriam Blakeney, 4, checks the cake that looks like an apple pie.



Some of the detail tools she uses on her cakes.

Once her structure is stable, it's easier to decorate and design.

"I make the best use of my small space. My crafts took over the room."

Her daughter, Ava, loves to "help" and hang out with her Mom.

Someday, her dream is to own a little place, a cake studio. And she'd like to travel and teach.

Apologizing for her small space, she says, "Circumstances shouldn't define who I am. I'm proud of what I can accomplish."

"This is my reality," she says, referring to the small apartment. "I am embracing my struggles and successes. God is blessing me. He sees me, he knows his plan for my life. He has a bigger dream and plan than you can imagine.

"I really, really love what I do. It's the joy of it and wanting to share it with other people.

"This is my peaceful, happy place." **S**



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A group of Knollwood Elementary School fifth-graders navigate the boardwalk at Boone's Cave in Davidson County.



Core instructor Michelle Ward inspects a spider's web attached to a cave ceiling that glistens with moisture. Looking on are fifth-graders Eilyn De Paz and Allisson Cabrera.

Science jumps off the page

Muddy Sneakers shows kids the natural world happening all around them.

BY CARL BLANKENSHIP / PHOTOGRAPHY BY JON C. LAKEY

BOONE'S CAVE — The first thing Michelle Ward did with her group of students was make sure they were warm. While the fifth-graders were circled around, she asked them to show her how they “move their molecules,” a good request on a chilly morning. Some of the kids were not too enthused, but one girl did a backward cartwheel.

This was February 10 at Boone's Cave. A group of fifth-graders from Knollwood Elementary School were bused here to spend the day outside.

Their visit was coming off the heels of rain and a few tornado touchdowns around the Piedmont, but a ranger opened the gate for Muddy Sneakers, a nonprofit that takes kids outdoors, sometimes just behind their schools,



A student takes a closer look at the living things a cave sustains.

and shows them the concepts taught in their science classes playing out in front of them.

Boone's Cave owes its name to North Carolina icon Daniel Boone, who is rumored to have spent the winter of 1751 in the cave. The park is more than a rocky hole in the ground. The 110 acres have natural water features and trails snaking through the forested grounds. The students were out here to learn about matter.

They were split into small groups to tag along with the half-dozen Muddy Sneakers instructors

out for the day. The people who teach the classes are a mix of full- and part-time, fresh out of college and seasoned educators alike.

They all teach the kids the same things, but they may do it in a different order, have their own style and so on. Walking along a trail, Stephen Daniels was telling his group about physical and chemical changes in matter.

The logs lining where the group was walking were clearly put there by man, hewn to a good size and shape for the task. There were

other logs, trees that fell, and they had moss on them. Moss and other decomposers eat away at the dead wood, causing chemical changes to the material as they digest it.

The chilly weather at Boone's Cave did not keep the kids from being curious about what they were seeing. A little farther down the trail, a student pointed out a stream emerging from a mysterious source between some rocks. Some of the students thought the stream and its source were manmade. One student suggested it could



Above: Core instructor Michelle Ward points out details connected to the nearby Yadkin River. *Left and below:* Scenes from the Muddy Sneakers field trip to Boone's Cave.



be groundwater. Just a little farther, and there was a culvert under the trail so the natural drain line could pass underneath without washing the trail away.

“A lot of these kids have never spent time outside or never been on a hike before,” Piedmont Field Office Director Elise Tellez said.

The sentiment among some kids who have not been able to spend much time in nature that natural features like streams must have been built by people, that the wonders of the natu-

ral world could surely not just exist like that on their own, is not uncommon.

“We have kids that go into Pisgah (National Forest) for the first time and they ask, ‘Who paid for all this?’ as if it’s man-created,” Muddy Sneakers Executive Director Ryan Olson said. “It blows people’s minds, they think we’re exaggerating when we talk about this feedback. We’re not.”

Olson said when students see amazing things out in nature, their eyes are like saucers.

“It jumps off the page when you see one of these photos printed,” Olson said. “That’s the magic, that’s what keeps our instructors coming back year after year.”

What the kids are seeing and learning outside is directly tied to what they do in class. They learn about something in the classroom, and then they get to go and see the concepts working in the natural world. The effectiveness of the nonprofit’s programs is the subject of research out of North Carolina State University.



***Above:** Jonathan Guerra and Sebastian Hernandez (right) work together to build an example of the water cycle with things they found. **Right:** Knollwood fifth-grader Dayana Gonzalez holds up the word 'transpiration' during the explanation of the water cycle.*

Knollwood teacher Allyson Neves said what the kids learn on these excursions connects back perfectly to what they learn in the classroom, and it helps their scientific literacy.

“As teachers, we also kind of bring that experience back to life since they’ve had that hands on,” Neves said.

Students do more than just walk around. They perform experiments. What happens when you put some leaves in a bag and leave them for a while? Even questions like “where is that water coming from?” give students the chance to engage.


Muddy Sneakers came to Salisbury about three-and-a-half years ago and serves the Piedmont out of its downtown field office. The nonprofit started in Brevard 12 years ago and is expanding to the eastern part of the state out of New Bern, but those efforts have been stalled by the organization’s not receiving expansion funding from the state due to no budget passing in 2019.

Right now the nonprofit is partnered with 18 schools in the Piedmont. Eight of those schools are in Rowan County. **S**





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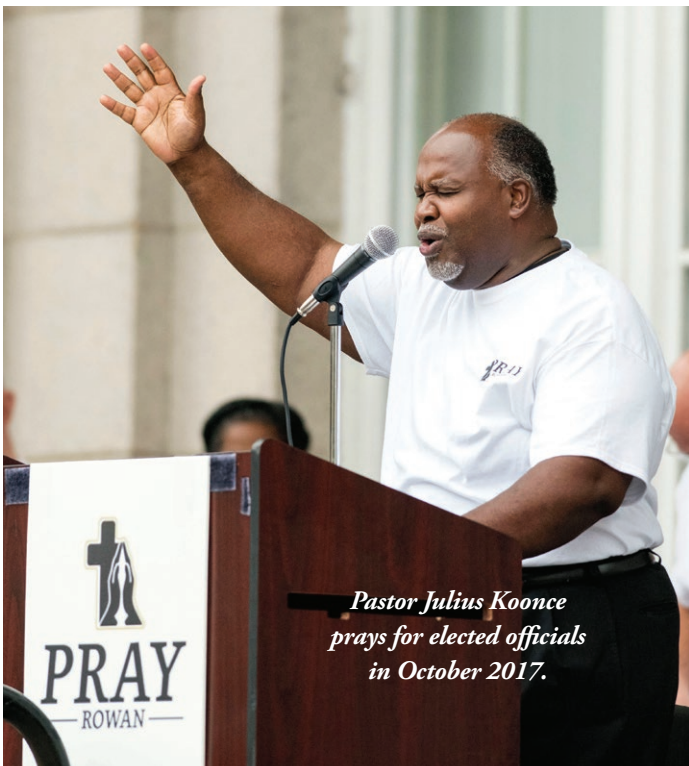
ISSUE-ORIENTED PRAY ROWAN GOES FOR
A GRASS-ROOTS REVIVAL

by MARK WINEKA

photography by JON C. LAKEY



Michael Brown exalts.



*Pastor Julius Koonce
prays for elected officials
in October 2017.*





Shive Elementary served as backdrop for the hourlong Pray Rowan gathering in February.



Guitarist Rebecca Kullhewick and singer Renetta Roberts are part of the praise band.

Christians attending a Pray Rowan meeting on the first Saturday of a month check their egos

at the door. For the next hour, there is no mention of church names or denominations.

The folks who read Scripture are introduced by their first names only. There's introductory music by a singer and three-piece praise band, but no hymnals. Participants represent all ages, races and backgrounds.

No one passes the hat.



Michael Hollingsworth, in back, stands for a prayer.

While some personal healing may go on, most of the prayers sent up during the one-hour session are issue-related. Later in the program, after a guest speaker, those attending break into designated prayer circles, each with a specific topic.

With circle leaders holding up topic signs, the groups might include people taking turns praying for racial reconciliation, first-responders, military veterans, students and teachers, elected officials, marriages, the unborn and salvation for loved ones.

Likewise, there might be prayer circles against racism, human trafficking, drugs and violence in the community. Each person in a circle has a turn. If someone prefers not to pray out loud, he or she squeezes the hand of the next person, and the prayers being sent upward continue.

“Sometimes, you just need to cry out to the Lord,” the Rev. Henry Diggs said during a February Pray Rowan meeting at Shive Elementary School.

Toward the end of the hour — the entire Pray Rowan gatherings are timed to last only 60 minutes — attendees break off from these smaller circles and join hands in one room-encompassing oval to hear individual prayer requests, which have been written out and submitted earlier.

Carolyn Barker reads the anonymous requests. On this particular day at Shive Elementary, one is for the children in a struggling family. Another is for a granddaughter battling drug addiction. A third asks that a college graduate in May



Carolyn Barker holds written requests for personal prayers.

will be able to find a job. And the group responds in whole.

“We pray this in your holy name, amen,” Barker says.

Then comes a benediction, maybe with a song, and the Pray Rowan gathering is over. Some folks linger behind, making new friends. Others just walk to their cars and go home, content there will be another Pray Rowan meeting in an entirely different location in a month’s time.



So how do you describe Pray Rowan to someone who hasn't heard of it before?

Is this a tent revival without the tent? Is this a nomadic tribe of prayer warriors going from place to place? Are they making a difference?

The people associated with Pray Rowan from the beginning might say they are all of these things. Barker, for one, points to crime statistics for the city of Salisbury which show homicides and overall crime down by large percentages since October 2017, when the first Pray Rowan event took place.

"It's just incredible what is happening in our county," says Tanya Skelly, whose idea it was back then to have the first citywide prayer gathering. She also speaks of miracles that have come to people on a more personal level through Pray Rowan.



Jessica Cloward leads a prayer against human trafficking.

In May 2017, Skelly says her heart was burdened by reports of violence, racism and drugs

in the community. God kept putting in front of her a particular Scripture — John 17: 21-23,

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when Jesus prayed to God that believers would be unified, for that is when the world will know he was sent.

“I kept thinking, we’re not unified,” Skelly recalls. “He’s telling us this, but we’re not obedient.”

Skelly shared her concerns with husband Greg, then sought out the counsel of Father Lucas Rossi at Sacred Heart Catholic Church. They discussed the idea of an old-fashioned, one-day tent revival, but they also wanted to ensure widespread community participation.

Tanya was able to speak with then Salisbury Mayor Karen Alexander, and it led to Tanya and Greg arranging for a June 13, 2017, prayer breakfast at the Country Club of Salisbury, which included mayors, community Christian leaders, pastors and a Billy Graham-connected speaker on the subject of revival.

That led to a second meeting of about 35 interested people at Life Church, and soon a committee of roughly 25 people had chosen the Pray Rowan name and its logo.

On Oct. 7, 2017, Pray Rowan held its first gathering on the steps of the Rowan County Courthouse, and Skelly estimates about 500 people attended.

To her, God already was showing the group it was not supposed to be a one-time event. She adds the courthouse was chosen because it’s a place where a lot of government decisions are made.

“It was very appropriate and well attended,” says committee member Pete Harvey.

Since then, Pray Rowan has met from 10 to 11 a.m. on the first Saturday of each month, and intentionally the gatherings are held in different parts of the county. In February, for example,

the meeting took place at Shive Elementary; in March, the Wallace Educational Forum in Salisbury; and come April 4, Pray Rowan will meet from 10-11 a.m. at Koontz Elementary School at 685 E. Ritchie Road.

Other meeting places have included Catawba and Livingstone colleges, the Salvation Army, YMCA, Power Cross and Salisbury Academy.

“We make it about God, about relationships,” Pray Rowan committee member Jessica Cloward says.

On every first Saturday in May, Pray Rowan goes home, so to speak, and gathers back at the Rowan County Courthouse. That’s usually close to the National Day of Prayer.

“It’s more than what I ever would have asked or imagined,” Skelly says of everything that has happened so far. “In the end, Jesus is the answer to everything.”



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Several hundred people attended the first Pray Rowan gathering outside the county courthouse on Oct. 7, 2017.



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Some of the Pray Rowan committee members include, front row: Jessica Cloward, Jackie Harris, Tanya Skelly; back row: Pete Harvey, Julius Koonce, Greg Skelly, Rebecca Kulhawick, James Byers. They are standing on the Rowan County Courthouse steps where Pray Rowan started. (Photo by Wayne Hinshaw)

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The idea is for Pray Rowan to be the start of something much bigger. Skelly and other committee members envision its being a model for a grassroots revival that happens in the state — and eventually, the country — one county at a time.

Pray Rowan has registered as a 501(c)(3) non-profit called Pray Ecclesia. “We are Christians coming together in the name of Jesus from all ages, denominations and cultural backgrounds to pray for our leaders, issues and concerns pertaining to counties in North Carolina,” the Pray Ecclesia website says.

Skelly says the Pray Ecclesia name was chosen purposely because people immediately ask about the word “Ecclesia,” an alternate spelling for the Greek word, “Ekklesia,” standing for a “called-out assembly or congregation.”

“The church needs to see itself as being ‘called out’ by God,” the Pray Ecclesia website says. “If the church wants to make a difference in the world, it must be different from the world.”

Skelly loves telling how the chaplain for Rick Hendrick Motorsports described the Pray Rowan meeting he attended when he was a guest speaker.

“This must have been what the first century church felt like,” he told her.

Pastor Julius Koonce says Pray Rowan brings strangers together and builds strong, positive relationships among them.

“I think it’s about the healing of the land, and Pray Rowan is an agent for that to happen,” Koonce says. “It has been a game-changer on a level we can’t understand.”

Committee member James Byers says prayer is a primal, intimate and individual expression, and “we’re not all going to pray the same way.” But Pray Rowan helps push people in new directions, witness other traditions and grow in diverse ways, he adds. “It’s amazing where God takes you, when you are obedient to what he calls you to do,” he says.

At the Pray Rowan meeting in February, Susan King served as guest speaker, and she gave personal, faith-driven testimony of how raising an autistic child deepened her trust in God.

Linda Merrell said afterward she was one of 18 people from Lyerly Evangelical Church who attended the Pray Rowan gathering that morning.

“I like it because you see new people each time,” Merrell said. “I look forward to it.”

Her group had actually met together for a breakfast of ham biscuits before traveling to the Pray Rowan meeting.

Sheila Weidner came with Barker, an old friend. She said she likes to meet with other believers and “pray for our county.”

“There’s a lot of hurt in this county,” added Weidner, who otherwise attends Calvary Baptist Church on Sundays.

Skelly says it has been incredible, the lives being connected through Pray



The crowd sings along with the morning’s praise band.

Rowan, and she would love to see more churches and people coming out.

“We totally should be unified,” Skelly says. “That is why Pray Rowan has come about.” **S**

To learn more about Pray Rowan, go to www.prayecclesia.com.

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Emalieh Fidler and Jinae Spruill are all smiles at Partners in Learning Child Development and Family Resource Center.

FIVE STARS

HIGHLY RATED PARTNERS IN LEARNING
GIVES KIDS, FAMILIES A LEG UP

by KRIS MUELLER

photography by JON C. LAKEY



Madelin Contreras uses play therapy to engage 22-month-old Oliver Ramirez. Contreras has been making home visits to Oliver's home to help improve his fine and gross motor skills and language development.

The staff at the Partners in Learning center at Catawba College and the Andruzzi family — Tony, Candy and young sons, Gabe and Lucas — have bonded in a relationship that is difficult to define.

“Their family shows the entire spectrum of our programs and all we do — low-income, special needs, inclusion, parent support ... they even get their social support here,” says Norma Honeycutt, executive director of the child development and family resource center.

“It’s like a family,” Candy Andruzzi says, trying to find the right word.

“It’s like a community,” says Honeycutt, with hesitation. Later, she lands on a better description and smiles.

“It’s magic,” she says.

This special relationship was born out of their common desire to help Gabe, now 6, experience a childhood different from his mother’s.

The moment Gabe was born, Candy knew the difficulties

that awaited him. The position of his legs and the purple shade of his feet combined to tell her he had inherited spinal muscular atrophy, the condition she has lived with all her life.

“I was worried because I knew what I had gone through as a child — kids would make fun of me,” she says, burying her face in her hands. “They can be just cruel. I was so worried that when Gabe started school kids would be terrible to him.”

But Candy also developed an unflinching determination to walk, attend community college, and work — all goals she has



Above: Tyana Cuthrell plays dress up. Below: Partners in Learning Child Development and Family Resource Center is more than just child care. As this storefront window display says, it supports the community from birth to old age.



accomplished — so she set out with Tony to help their son thrive despite his physical limitations.

Their physician helped connect them to Partners in Learning's Community Based Rehabilitative Services (CBRS). A child development therapist came to their home weekly to teach them how to help Gabe roll over, crawl and pull up — all important and necessary milestones for healthy development.

Candy's job as a medical technician paid more, so Tony stayed home to care for Gabe and take him to doctors' appointments and four kinds of therapies. Despite government assistance, the bills and financial concerns mounted.

As everyone focused on strengthening Gabe's muscles, he fell behind in other areas. They sought childcare to give him more socialization but needed one that was affordable, inclusive and could accommodate his physical limitations.

"When we came to visit Partners in Learning, there was a little girl here in a wheelchair," Tony remembers. "The other kids were falling all over each other to help her, to play with her. That's when we knew this was the place."



They found a loving, supportive environment that has served Gabe for half his life. He now attends public school and comes to Partners in Learning for after-school care. Younger brother Lucas, who did not inherit the muscular disorder, is a member of the Toddler classroom.

Tony and Candy have also found their places at Partners in Learning. Two years ago, Candy was hired as an assistant classroom teacher. While working, she is pursuing a degree in early childhood education with financial assistance from the agency. Tony began volunteering at the center and became so valuable that the agency hired him to handle technology projects, coordinate the parent support group and family activities, serve as a floater in classrooms, and provide one-on-one afternoon care for a child with extreme trauma issues.

“This story demonstrates the importance of early education, the importance of community, the importance of making sure children with special needs have good resources and other people to help them with that journey,” Honeycutt says. “Really, it is about giving people a leg up.



Top: Yazan Gordon and Gabe Andruzzi play together in afterschool care.

Above: Sophia Gordon and Candy Andruzzi.



Emalieb Fidler, Jinae Spruill and Jordyn Spruill play in the afternoon.



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Clockwise from above: Oliver Ramirez places the colored popsicle stick inside a empty drink bottle with a slit cut in the cap; Tony and Candy Andruzzi with their children Lucas and Gabe; Craig Bernhardt and Hank Swaney enjoy the playground.



“And they have passed it on — by far. Tony leads a lot of our support groups, they both do. Other families come to them and ask, ‘How did you get this done?’ It has just been wonderful for everyone.”

Partners in Learning’s two childcare centers — the other is at Novant Health Rowan Medical Center — are the front doors for the organization. Together, they serve 260 children, ages 6 weeks to 12 years, in their five-star rated, licensed childcare programs, the highest license awarded in the state.

The Community-Based Rehabilitative Services (CBRS) sends therapists into the homes or schools of 150 children each week. Using “play with a purpose” therapy, they teach parents how to improve their children’s cognitive, physical, behavioral, self-help, social-emotional and language skills.

The late Dr. Shirley Ritchie, a longtime educator and advocate for children, led the effort to build the Partners in Learning Child Development and Family Resource Center on the Catawba College property and



form the Rowan Partnership for Children, to implement the Smart Start program here when state money finally came through.

The center was dedicated in 1996.

Most people know that Partners in Learning serves children, but Honeycutt believes the organization's programs for parents and professional teachers are its best kept secrets. Staff members teach out in the communi-

ty what they model in their childcare centers.

The parent support groups and family activities that Tony Andruzzi coordinates are just some of the ways parents of special needs children are supported, Honeycutt says, "because no child comes with an instruction manual." Two free play groups for special needs children not served in childcare also are provided monthly at the Catawba College site.

The Triple P Program – Positive Parenting Program — gives all parents the skills needed to help children communicate, manage their feelings, become independent, and solve problems themselves. Program staff, who make 25 home visits weekly, help prevent and treat behavioral and emotional problems in children and teenagers and prevent problems in the family, school and community before they arise.

"It's like having Super Nanny in your home each week," Honeycutt says.

Staff in the Community Inclusion Program provide regular professional trainings and workshops for teachers on important topics to increase their confidence and effectiveness in the classroom. They provide teachers resources to give to parents, technical assistance in serving children with special needs or developmental concerns, and ideas for modifying class-



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rooms or curriculum to help students learn.

These services are important because one in six children have a developmental delay and one in 10 have experienced trauma or have a mental health issue, says Amy Vestal, community inclusion specialist. More than a third of children with trauma-related issues experience their trauma due to having unmet needs in the home.

While working recently with teachers in a local childcare center, Amy learned the children sometimes came to the center wearing no shoes or underwear. As it often does, Partners in Learning conducted a Facebook drive to get shoes and underwear to help these families.


While the muscle strength in Gabe's legs is equivalent to that of a 3-month-old baby, doctors expect him to continue progressing. He now can take a few unsupported steps but mostly uses crutches and foot and ankle braces to walk.

Recently, Partners in Learning's inclusion director sent a video to Ellen DeGeneres that showed Gabe working with a motivational fitness expert on drills designed to strengthen his body. One of Candy's co-teachers pays for the fitness sessions to help Gabe continue getting stronger. Ellen posted the video on her Twitter Page as a "Motivation Monday" video, and the celebrity attention kept Gabe and his friends and supporters excited for days. You can view Gabe's video at twitter.com/TheEllenShow.

"It's difficult to imagine where we would be without Partners in Learning — our son and our family in general," Tony Andruzzi says. "We are also able to afford to send our other child to this amazing place and get this great care because of how awesome everybody is here — we love it. No matter what, if anybody at the center asks us to help with an event or stay after late or come in

early or anything, we always say OK."

Candy Andruzzi has a hard time finding the words to express her thanks to the staff, but that gratitude is evident on her face.

"Gabe is becoming a leader and the kids really look after him," she says. "It has made my Mommy heart happy." 

Kris Mueller is a freelance writer living in Salisbury.

During the upcoming national Week of the Young Child (April 11-17), be sure to thank our community's early childhood teachers and specialists for the important roles they play in helping our youngest learners reach their full potential. The Week of the Young Child is sponsored by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) and promotes high-quality early learning for all children.



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Hen Henderlite, left, and Shari Graham take a break while decorating for the First Pitch dinner at Catawba College. Opposite page: The women lead the 'Tis the Season Spectacular parade for which they are chief organizers.



DYNAMIC DUO

COMMUNITY-MINDED TAG TEAM OF
SHARI GRAHAM, HEN HENDERLITE KNOW
HOW TO MAKE AN EVENT SUCCESSFUL

by **MAGGIE BLACKWELL**
photography by **JON C. LAKEY**



Graham, left, and Henderlite gather things together for the First Pitch event.

Self-described “Party Peeps” Shari Graham and Hen Henderlite had no idea when they met 20 years ago that one day they’d talk every day, often at 5:30 a.m. That their families would share Thanksgiving, Christmas and many vacations. That they’d manage 22 fundraisers, many of them annual events, 18 weddings and 12 birthday parties. Or that they’d be local heroes in saving the Christmas parade for the community.

They’re a tough but fun interview, interrupting each other, completing the other’s sentences and talking at the speed of light. They’re fun, spontaneous and competitive.

They play team tennis, participate in the Pride Bowling League and have run half-marathons. They play golf and try to walk at least five miles a day. When a fundraiser for Catawba College asked them to play 100 holes

of golf, they played 101. Of course.

“We’re not sitters,” Shari says with a smile.

“We call ourselves a lot of things,” Hen says. “Most of all, Lucy and Ethel.”

“I guess it’s a business,” Shari continues, “but we never charge. We do it because it’s fun.”

Their first event was the Heart Ball, an annual fundraiser for Novant Health Rowan and the Community



Above: The women go all out in decorating for the First Pitch dinner. Below left: One of their table decorations. Below right: The 'Party Peeps' have all kinds of decoration items at the ready in Shari Graham's attic.





Above: One of the First Pitch payoffs for Graham and Henderlite was to pose with the Catawba College baseball team. **Below:** Graham adds an extra touch.

Care Clinic. “Oh, gosh,” Shari says. “We were both on the committee and we somehow got on the decorating committee early on.” Shari is such a down-to-earth person, she literally starts most sentences with, “Oh, gosh,” or “Golly.”

“We enjoyed decorating that event together, and we clicked. We just started doing it,” Hen adds.

They’re both early risers. Hen might text Shari at 5:30 a.m. only to learn that Shari was just about to text her the exact same thing.

Weddings, they say, are special work; it’s an honor to be trusted with such an important milestone in the bride’s life. Because of that, they say, it must be flawless.

Sometimes they plan just the wedding; other times, the reception or rehearsal dinner as well. Last September they managed three big weddings in one month. They laugh as they



declare they’ll never do that again.

The first step is a two-hour meeting with the bride. Hen is the detail person, using a questionnaire. She also manages emails and numbers.

Shari, a theater major in college, is busy visualizing as the bride talks.

“If the bride wants blues and pinks and greens,” Shari says, “my head is in my attic, seeing the crystal, we have that linen.”

“We have great rapport with vendors,” Hen says, “not only in Salisbury but in the surrounding area. We’ll think, this florist is best for her budget.”

They never — ever — get their feelings hurt, they say. Ever.

Shari’s attic is an event planner’s wonderland. The 15-foot ceilings accommodate dozens of tall shelving units with china, crystal and linens carefully organized. Moroccan lanterns

hang from the rafters. A wagon wheel sits in the corner. A life-sized concrete pig sports a bandanna around his neck. Stacks and stacks of char-

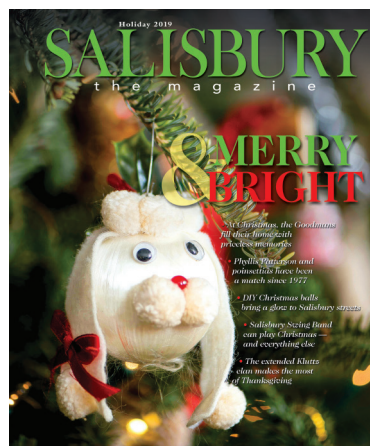
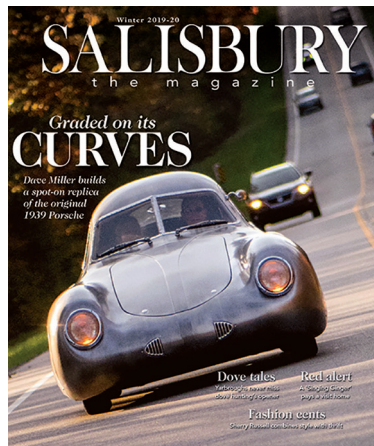
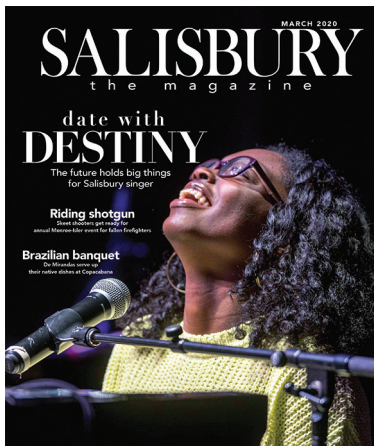


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gers and mirrors gleam in the dim light. Shari and Hen jokingly refer to the attic as “Graham Ridge,” making a play on the home decoration store, Garden Ridge. They repurpose everything.

“We’re lucky to have such a war chest of stuff,” Shari says. “We are mindful of using stuff that is beautiful for any occasion. If they want elegant, we have it. If they want simple, we have it.”

When St. John’s Lutheran Church asked them to direct their weddings, their work took off. They are paid for weddings, then they donate that money right back to the church.

They say a planner must be resourceful. They recall a wedding in Concord where the flowered archway looked sparse. On one of their many trips from Salisbury, Hen yelled out for Shari to stop the car. Shari watched for an angry farmer — or bull — to come charging as Hen ran through a field of wildflowers, gathering stems to augment the bower.

At another wedding, a florist forgot the flower girl, who was crying. The wedding party was lined up, ready to start down the aisle. Hen, who’d worked with the organist before, gave a silent signal to play one more song.

Pastor Rhodes Woolly asked what was going on. His eyes widened as Hen explained that Shari was in the columbarium. Shari, victorious, emerged and told Woolly she “may have taken a few branches of azalea.” The flower girl was beaming and the wedding proceeded, almost on time.

Their list of fundraisers reads like a who’s who of Salisbury nonprofits: Lee Street theatre; Hospital Foundation Ball; Salisbury High; Catawba College; Salisbury Symphony; 30 Days of Kindness; Quetzal Gala; Historic Salisbury Foundation; YMCA; Rotary Club; Family Crisis Council, Heart Ball, Oak Park Retirement Annual Prom; various political candidates. They say, “yes” to causes that are important to them.

When they had a conflict for the Young Life Banquet, an annual customer, Shari made a sample centerpiece and gave them a shopping list.

They’ve transformed St. John’s Bible School into a cave with real water, an African savannah and the bottom of the ocean.

“It’s such an honor to be asked to do these



The women have dubbed Shari’s attic as ‘Graham Ridge.’

events,” Shari says. “And rewarding. We make promises, and we deliver. It’s an honor to be asked back. They hand us an event and say, ‘Just do it.’ That’s a trust relationship.”

When the local Holiday Caravan parade shut down, City Council member Tamara Sheffield asked Shari and Hen to attend a meeting exploring a parade under new management. The “Tis the Season Spectacular” was born with Shari and Hen as chairs. It was August. They had two and a half months to organize a \$30,000 event with hundreds of participants.

Hen’s eye for detail and Shari’s flair for drama saved the day. Their first task was to develop a mission statement that included all citizens of Rowan County, as long as their entry is appropriate for families. They developed rules and responsibilities, then a structure to get sponsors. They’re proud they end each parade with a tiny “nest egg” to get the next year’s parade going.

They coordinated with the Tourism Bureau to manage phone calls, money, ticket sales, applications and bills. Today, there’s a website and everything can be done online.

Turns out the local high schools weren’t in love with the parade. With one school band having a scant 50 members and another having 100, there was no level playing field for the band

competition. Shari and Hen did away with the competition, saying, “It’s a celebration, not a competition.” They visited each high school personally to encourage participation. They’ve also reached out to minority communities to ensure everyone will join in the fun.

They’re thankful for committee members who had been involved with the Holiday Caravan. Tammy Pinkston advised them on parade marshals. Meredyth McDaniel hadn’t seen Shari since they’d worked together 20 years ago. The committee, they say, made saving the parade possible.

With no documentation from the former parade, they went to the Salisbury Post for a list of participants from the prior year’s ad. It was crazy at first, they say, but they made it.

“When we carried the banner the first time,” Shari says, “the rush, the adrenaline, was amazing.”

They introduce a new element each year to keep it fresh. Last year they added entertainment, the Salisbury Swing Band and horses. This year they have an exciting and surprising post-parade element — well, you’ll just have to pay attention and see what’s planned.

The payoff for their work is satisfaction. “We love it,” Hen says. “When it happens, it makes

all the climbing on ladders and 50,000 emails and texts at 2 a.m. (worth it), it's such a reward to see people have fun. At most events, we don't eat, we're in the corner watching."

Shari agrees. "It's joyous, heartwarming. We're in the back watching to make sure it stays on schedule."

Shari grew up in a blue-collar family and has never forgotten her roots.

"The fact that I've been blessed to have the resources to do it, to help others, it sounds corny, to be able to share it, how great is that to make someone happy every day?" Shari says. "To have a friend like this the rest of my life. It's a match made in heaven."

Hen agrees. "It's just fulfilling. My children are 10 years older than Shari's. I didn't need to be mommy to them anymore. The projects are like our children. It filled the void from the empty nest."

Then they say, at exactly the same time, "It's been a fun, fun journey." **S**

Maggie Blackwell is a freelance writer living in Salisbury.



Bob Setzer recognizes Shari Graham's work during the First Pitch dinner.



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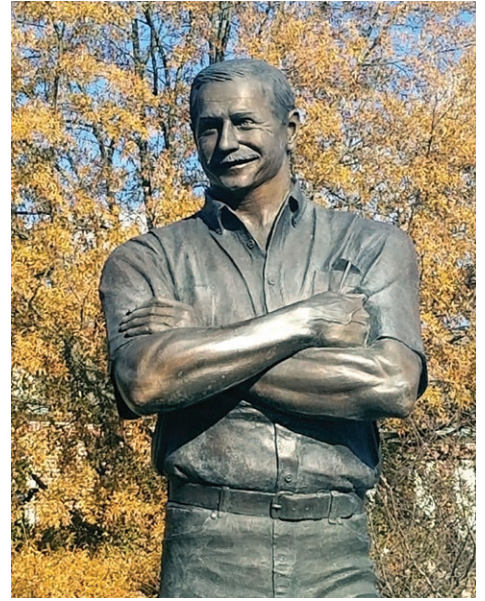
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THINGS TO CHECK OUT IN **KANNAPOLIS**

BY SUSAN SHINN TURNER / PHOTOGRAPHY BY JON C. LAKEY

Downtown Kannapolis is in the midst of a rebirth — a downtown baseball stadium, a new cityscape, new shops, a new hotel and more.

But some of the places that have been there all along remain treasures in this former mill town.

There will likely be a “new” Top 5 list sometime soon, but for now, here are five things to check out in Kannapolis.



1. GEM THEATRE



Generations of residents from Kannapolis and beyond have flocked to the Gem Theatre to see the latest movies at a reasonable ticket price — and enjoy reasonably priced refreshments to boot.

Steve Morris has been the general manager at the Gem since 1995. He bought out Clyde Scarborough's interest. Scarborough was a 49-year employee of the theater until his death that same year.

Morris grew up in Kannapolis and knew the theater well. Attorney Carlyle Rutledge, who'd been its president since the 1940s, asked Morris to start running the theater over lunch one day.

"I thought wow, that would be a fun thing to do, and it has been," says Morris, who bought out Rutledge's interest after his death at age 98. "He truly loved the Gem."

Had it not been for Rutledge and Scarborough's love of the theater and the movie business, Morris notes, "I don't think it would have survived."

Improvements to this historic building continue for future generations.

The Gem is one of the country's oldest single-screen theaters in operation today. And it holds so many memories, Morris says. "People saw their first movie here or had their first date here. I hear all kinds of stories."

2. DALE EARNHARDT TRIBUTE PLAZA

The late Dale Earnhardt Sr. has been gone since 2001, but a larger-than-life statue of his likeness remains among the top things to do in Cabarrus County.

The Dale Earnhardt Tribute Plaza is located at 109 West A St., deep in the heart of the NASCAR legend's downtown. It's part of a self-guided tour called the Dale Trail.

"Every time I'm over there, there are people who stop," says Annette Privette-Keller, communications director for the City of Kannapolis. She has even met a reporter from Australia.

Why was he so famous, she was asked.

"His charisma and his down-to-earth, blue-collar attitude," is her answer. "There's just



something about him that still attracts people. You see people at the plaza constantly."

During race week, the plaza gets more attention, as well as key dates in the racecar driver's life: his birthday and the anniversary of his death.

The centerpiece of the plaza is a 9-foot,

900-pound bronze statue of Earnhardt. Seven steps descending into the plaza represent Earnhardt's seven Cup championships, and the oval layout represents a racetrack.

To sponsor a brick at the plaza, visit kannapolisnc.gov, then click on Earnhardt Plaza Brick Order Form on the Parks & Recreation page.

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3. VILLAGE PARK



Not many cities have a carousel. Village Park in Kannapolis has a double-decker carousel. It opened in 2017, and the Rotary Express Train debuted in 2018.

Both have been huge hits. In 2018, ridership for the train was 63,898, and ridership for the carousel was 65,907. No doubt the numbers continue to grow.

Annette Privette-Keller, the city's communications director, was on hand the night the carousel opened.

"We had so many older people who took advantage of it being handicapped accessible," she says. "Their smiles were just as big as the younger kids."

The 17-acre park opened in the 1980s, but the city started making improvements in 2001 with a new playground. An amphitheater opened in June 2004, the largest in Cabarrus County. Each summer, it hosts family movies on Friday nights and its Summer Concert Series on Saturday nights. The splash pad, which opened in 2006, is also a popular summer spot.

In addition to its other amenities, Village Park offers a multipurpose room for wedding receptions, family reunions, showers, parties and corporate meetings.

But if you need a space for your next event, act quickly, Privette-Keller advises. "Every event space in the city we've got stays booked."



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4. NC MUSIC HALL OF FAME



The North Carolina Music Hall of Fame is home to about every genre of music you can think of, and its headquarters is in downtown Kannapolis.

The museum opened in 2009, moving to its current location five years ago. It shares a building with the Curb Motorsports Museum. Both are owned by Mike Curb, who helped bring the music museum to Kannapolis.

The museum honors musicians from the 1920s to the present day. Each fall, a new class of musicians are inducted into the hall of fame at a gala ceremony at the Gem Theatre.

Meanwhile, the museum is open 10 a.m.-4 p.m. Monday-Friday and offers free tours and free admission, but does accept donations. You can take a private tour or a self-guided tour through QR codes on each exhibit. You can listen to bios and music from all the artists.

The hall of fame has 107 inductees thus far, with 70 exhibits. Each inductee is asked to loan items.

The gala is always the third Thursday in October, says Veronica Cordle, its longtime executive director. "By far, it's our biggest event of the year. It's really why we're here — to honor these inductees."

To schedule a group tour, call 704-934-2320.



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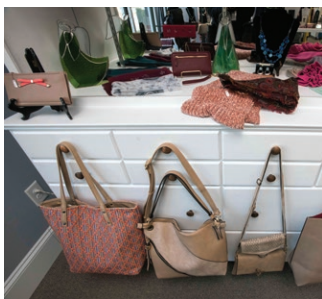
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5. VIRGINIA'S



Rebecca Measmer helps customer Mary Smith shop for a dress.



For decades, stylishly dressed women know the place to go in Kannapolis for special occasion attire, business wear and sportswear: Virginia's.

Owner Melanie Keziah has worked at the Downtown Kannapolis institution for a good 45 of its 78 years. Her grandmother, Bea Davis, opened the store in 1942, and Keziah started working there in high school.

In 2018, the store moved to brand-new digs at 315 S. Main St., its fourth location.

"It's been good," Keziah says of the move. "The street closures have affected us some, so we are still reaching out to people to let them know we are in a new location."

Things are still business as usual for Keziah.

"We had several fashion shows last year," she says, "and we have several already on the books for 2020."

With more housing coming to downtown, Keziah will soon have customers within walking distance. She knows that lookers make buyers.

"We are reinventing ourselves as far as letting people know where we're located," she says. "Social media helps. It's a time of transition, but this year is already better than last year."

She adds, "I'm just so thankful. I have a good husband who supports me. I enjoy what I do." **S**

Susan Shinn Turner, a freelance writer living in Raleigh, is a frequent contributor to Salisbury the Magazine.

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Taking a break from the Oyster Roast, John and Janet Haynes eye a sculpture exhibit at Waterworks.



Mike Shue of Virtual Sounds served as deejay.



Mack Kennedy, Ian and Brooke Swaim, Katie Fowler, Tyler Everhart and Zac and Laura Myers



Betsy Mowery, Elaine Holden, Kelly Alexander and Jennifer Seifert



Mark and Allison Doby

Waterworks' Oyster Roast

Waterworks Visual Arts Center held its 15th annual Oyster Roast at the F&M Trolley Barn. The night included oysters, shrimp, North Carolina-style barbecue, side dishes, wine, local ales, soft drinks and dessert. Guests wrote down their bids in a big silent auction, strolled through the galleries and danced to music all night long. The Salisbury tradition benefits educational and outreach programs at Waterworks.

— Photos by Tim Coffey



Above: Abigail Young and Meredith Bare Smith. Left: David and Marianna Swaim with Cyndi Osterhus and Brad Williams

Jackie Black, Waterworks' education coordinator, stands with board member M.T. Sidoli.



Left: Robin Rogers, Melissa Bowden, Tamara Sheffield, Kindra Steenson and Marnie Stoker



Right: Fran Misner and Erin Grey



Pam and John Sofley



Luanne and Chip Short



Will and Mary James, Dottie and Geoffrey Hoy, Ophelia Langhorne, Ed and Shirl Hull and Marie Langhorne



Robin Fisher, Tim Steinman, Jenny Steinman and Steve Fisher enjoy Coldstone ice cream waffle cones.



John Schuller and Von Poston



Tom and Leigh Ann Loeblein with Tim and Carolyn Byrd



Waterworks Executive Director Anne Scott Clement with Ray Paradowski



Marlene and Larry Owens



Nick and Emily Martin with Kala Powell



Master of Ceremonies Doug Rice



J. Michael Johnson and Howard Platt



The 2020 Catawba College baseball team

First Pitch

Catawba College baseball held its fifth First Pitch dinner in the college's Peeler Crystal Lounge and raised \$68,800 to support the baseball program. Special guest was Marty Brennaman, voice of the Cincinnati Reds for 46 seasons, who called his final game last fall. One of Brennaman's first jobs in broadcasting came in Salisbury. The evening also honored Brian Hightower, a longtime coach in this area.

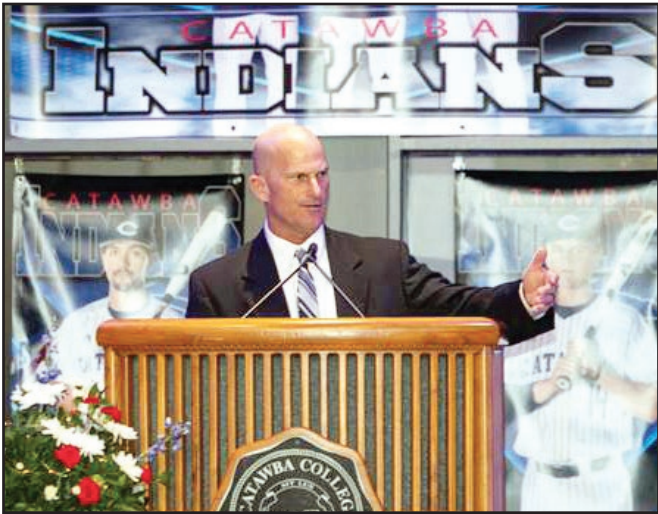
— Photos by Leslie Poteat



Caroline Graham, Russ Weiker and Lynn Weiker



Sandy Moore and Catawba College Baseball Coach Jim Gantt reveal the oversized check showing the amount of money raised by the First Pitch event.



Catawba College Baseball Coach Jim Gantt



Zach Queen, Adrian Gantt and Nan Whitley



Left: Brian Hightower and Lee Poteat. Above: Kaley Barts, Jeff Childress and Sophie Hirsch. Right: Ricky Joines with guest speaker Marty Brenneman



Tom Childress, left, and Judy Childress right, with Julie Chamberlain



Catawba College baseball players Sawyer Strickland, Mason Gwyn and Jake Rowden



Lynn Murphy, Maurice Ungaro and Carlotta Ungaro



Rick Williams and Amber Daniels



Julia Wilhite, Lori Coultriss, Sharon Grundahl, Heather Jemison, Judy Coultriss and Shaina Kelly

Wine About Winter

The Salisbury Post/Salisbury the Magazine was among 56 downtown businesses participating in the seventh annual Wine About Winter. The sale of more than 1,300 tickets made it the biggest Wine About Winter to date. Ticket holders stopped in at the various locations for a sample of wine and a chance to browse, buy and ask questions. The Post stop also offered popcorn, free magazines and a photo booth.

— Photos by Mark Wineka



Michelle Young and Erika McRae



Melissa Skeen, Paula Stogner and Amy Everhart



Sam Mauney and Ben Samelak



Deb Konczal, Cindy Sutton, Brittany Hill, Peggy Gold, Marin Tomlin and Ava Tomlin



Gene Krueger, Kathleen Dunn, Mike Mills and Lynn Mills



Rick Lewis, Sam Lewis and Debbie Lucas Lewis



Scott Hay, Roger Kitzmiller and Del Denny



This group of women with specially chosen T-shirts started out their Wine About Winter evening at the Salisbury Post/Salisbury the Magazine stop. In random order, they include Sie Watkins, Maria Daniels, Sparkle Chalk, Amanda Sturdivant, Jessica Hill, Tonya Clodfelter, Jasmine Jordan, Angie Key, Cheye Greene, Danielle Horton and Treasure Chalk.



Martha Curry, Debbie Faggart, Kathy Allen and Tamara Kepley



Tammy and Judy May



Donna Knotts, Sheila Sadighi and Robin Huden

Otis Garrigan, Jill Garrigan, Melissa Howard and Tim Howard



Kara Lefko, Patti Vallandingham, Lydia Hardy and Daniel Pirong



Keri Everhart, Samantha Rickard, Ivey Johnson and Taylor Everhart

April 2020

Upcoming events in the Salisbury-Rowan area

1 ***Scavenger Hunt: Kites***
 April 1, 8, 15, 22, 29: Rowan Public Library, 201 W. Fisher St. — A hunt to find kites around the library's children's room. Find them all to receive a prize. For more information: 704-216-7728, or www.rowanpubliclibrary.org.

2 ***'A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum'***
 April 2-5, 8-11: Meroney Theater, 213 S. Main St. — 7:30 p.m. or 2:30 p.m. April 5. A Piedmont Players production. Shenanigans of blackmail, hilarious disguises, and long lost children. Following the story of Pseudolos, a Roman slave, who falls for beautiful Philia, while trying to find love for his master's son. As Pseudolos desperately tries to follow up on his end of the bargain, the laughable complications weave an intriguing story. Tickets: \$17-\$20. For more information: 704-633-5471, or www.piedmontplayers.com.

4 ***Ring in Spring***
 April 4: Gateway Park, East Innes and Depot streets, Salisbury — 11 a.m.-2 p.m. Ring in Spring is the annual event to kick off the season in downtown Salisbury. There will be Easter crafts, snacks and family fun. Plus, a professional photographer will be onsite offering free photos with the Easter Bunny. After the event, spend the afternoon shopping and strolling in downtown boutiques and shops, grab a bite in downtown restaurants and enjoy your day.

4 ***Easter Bunny Express***
 April 4, 5, 10, 11: N.C. Transportation Museum, Spencer — 9 a.m.-5 p.m. The Easter Bunny is coming to town, and you're invited to take a 25-minute, treat-filled train ride. Multiple other activities will be offered including tattoos and coloring, inflatables, photos with the Easter Bunny, Easter crafts, face painting, bubbles and sidewalk chalk. You can upgrade your event to receive professional portraits with the Easter Bunny done by Carolina Portrait Designs, alongside breakfast, lunch or snacks with the Easter Bunny. On April 10 & 11 there will also be steam engine caboose train rides for an additional fee, and a challenge to locate the Bunny Hop Stops on the special children's map for a prize. On April 11 only, there will be an Easter egg hunt. Tickets: \$4-\$12. For more information: 704-636-2889, or <https://nctrans.org/Events.aspx>.

4 ***Colonial Spring Frolic***
 April 4: Old Stone House, 770 Old Stone House Road — 10 a.m.-4 p.m. Bring in the spring in an 18th century way at the Old Stone House, a Rowan Museum Inc. property. Dye Easter eggs the Colonial way, play games, dance and enjoy tasting some Colonial recipes. Cost: \$5 adult; \$3, student. For more information, call 704-633-5946, or go to www.rowanmuseum.org.

4 ***At the Throttle: Steam***
 April 4: N.C. Transportation Museum, Spencer — It's time for you to be "At the Throttle" of an authentic, restored, coal-fired steam locomotive, Jeddo Coal No. 85, also known as "Mack." No previous locomotive experience is required. The program is a unique opportunity for rail fans to live their dream of running a steam engine, taking a trip back in time to the golden age of railroading. A qualified engineer will be in the cab at all times, but participants will enjoy a full half-hour operating the engine (following a safety orientation), take home a certificate and a souvenir hat. For more information, call the museum at 704-636-2889.

4 ***Easter EGGstravaganza***
 April 4: Davie County Community Park Stadium, 155 Southwood Drive — 11 a.m.-2 p.m. Stuffed eggs, grand prizes and a bunny or two is all it takes to have a hopping time this Easter. Egg hunts will begin at 11:30 a.m. and are designed for all kids up to 10 years of age. New this year will be a hunt specifically for individuals that require special accommoda-

tions. Hunts will take place rain or shine. Food vendors will be on the site.

4 ***Catawba College Alumni Football Game***
 April 4: Catawba College — 10 a.m.-2 p.m. Get your cleats on and get ready to relive the glory days with the Catawba College Alumni Game. Taking place during the Blue and White Game, you can join other alumni in playing a game of flag football during halftime. For more information, contact the Alumni Development Office at development@catawba.edu, or 704-637-4394. Cost of registration is \$25 (includes lunch and a jersey).

5 ***Hurley Park Spring Celebration***
 April 5: Elizabeth Holmes Hurley Park, Annandale Avenue, Salisbury — 2-4 p.m. Bring the whole family for a day of fun at the 33rd annual celebration, ushering in the spring.

9 ***Historic Salisbury Foundation Annual Meeting***
 April 9: Salisbury Station on Depot Street — 7-9 p.m. Guest speaker Langdon Oppermann. The public is invited.

11 ***Easter Egg Hunt & Spring Fest***
 April 11: Historic Gold Hill Village, St. Stephens Church Road — 10 a.m.-1 p.m. Sponsored by Gold Hill Merchants.

16 *'The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time'*

April 16-18 and 23-25: Lee Street theatre, 329 N. Lee St. — 7:30 nightly. Christopher, 15, has an extraordinary brain: He is exceptional at mathematics but ill-equipped to interpret everyday life. He has never ventured alone beyond the end of his road, detests being touched and distrusts strangers. Now it is 7 minutes after midnight, and Christopher stands beside his neighbor's dead dog, Wellington, who has been speared with a garden fork. Finding himself under suspicion, Christopher is determined to solve the mystery of who murdered Wellington, and he carefully records each fact of the crime. But his detective work, forbidden by his father, takes him on a thrilling journey that jolts his world. For more information on tickets: 704-310-5507 or www.leestreet.org.

17 *Tractors and Trains Festival*

April 17-18: N.C. Transportation Museum, Spencer — The museum will celebrate the tools of the farming trade with the annual Tractors & Trains Festival Friday, April 17, for school groups and Saturday, April 18, for the public. Both days of the event will include lots of modern, antique, and steam tractors, farming demonstrations and tractor parades. More than a dozen agricultural groups will be participating from across Rowan County and North Carolina. For more information, call the museum at 704-636-2889.

17 *Shakers Dance*

April 17: Salisbury City Park recreation building, 316 Lake Drive — 3-5 p.m. This dance is for adults 18 and older with a developmental disability. Light refreshments will be served by sponsors and partnering agencies. The Shakers Dance is a partnership of The Arc of Rowan County, Rowan County Parks and Recreation and Salisbury Parks and Recreation.

18 *Touch-A-Truck*

April 18: Salisbury City Hall parking lot, 217 S. Main St. — 10 a.m.-1 p.m. Participants of all ages will have a free opportunity for a close-up and personal, hands-on educational experience to explore a wide variety of vehicles and occupations. Honking horns is encouraged! If you have an interesting or fun vehicle that you would like to display at Touch-A-Truck, call Vivian at 704-638-5294.

18 *Strides for Stroke 5k, 10k*

April 18: N.C. Research Campus, 150 Research Campus Road, Kannapolis — 7 a.m., registration and packet pick-up; 8 a.m., Doctors Dash, followed by the Kids Fun Run; 8:15 a.m., Stroke Survivors Lap; 8:30 a.m., 10k; 9 a.m., 5k. The sixth annual Strides for Stroke 5k/10k is part of the Run Kannapolis 5K Race Series and it's excited to be the first race to host a 10k in Kannapolis! The race also is part of the Atrium Health Livewell Race Series and brings awareness and support to local stroke survivors and their families. All proceeds will benefit the Cabarrus Stroke Support Group. Entry fees: \$10 for the Fun Run, \$20 for the 5k and \$30 for the 10k. Contact Lorrie Hampton at 704-403-2430 or Lorrie.hampton@atriumhealth.org for more information.

22 *'She Kills Monsters'*

April 22-25, Hedrick Little Theatre, Catawba College campus — 7:30 nightly. A Catawba College Theatre Arts production. Agnes Evans struggles with closure following the sudden death of her sister and parents. When she finds a homemade module in Tilly's room, she is determined to connect with her younger sister, as she jumps headlong into the world of fantasy, fairies, dungeons and dragons. In this comedic journey of self-discovery, Agnes learns the 1990s are a tough time to be a teenager, especially when you're a geek — but anything is possible by rolling the dice.

23 *'Madagascar'*

April 23-May 2: Norvell Theater, East Fisher Street, Salisbury — 7:30 p.m. shows April 23-25, April 30 and May 1-2; Also, 2:30 p.m. shows April 26 and May 2. Based on the smash DreamWorks animated motion picture, "Madagascar – A Musical Adventure" follows all of your favorite crack-a-lackin' friends as they escape from their home in New York's Central Park Zoo and find themselves on an unexpected journey to the madcap world of King Julien's Madagascar.

25 *St. Paul's Cruise 'n' Barbecue*

April 25: St. Paul's Lutheran Church, 205 St. Paul's Lutheran Church Road — 10 a.m.-4 p.m. Again this year, there will be no Poker Cruise, so all the day's events will begin at 10 a.m. This includes the Car Show, as well as the serving of Port-a-Pit chicken dinners, which will continue until 3 p.m., at which time trophies will be awarded, followed by drawings for raffle prize packages contributed by individuals and organizations. Meanwhile, there will be plenty

of music, ice cream, baked goods and other activities to be enjoyed throughout the day.

25 *Photowalk*

April 25: Rowan Public Library event whose location will be announced. 6:30-8 a.m. Bring your digital camera/phone to take photos together. Questions? Contact Paul at 704-216-7737 or Paul. Birkhead@rowancountync.gov. The Photowalk will last approximately 90 minutes.

25 *Pass the Plate*

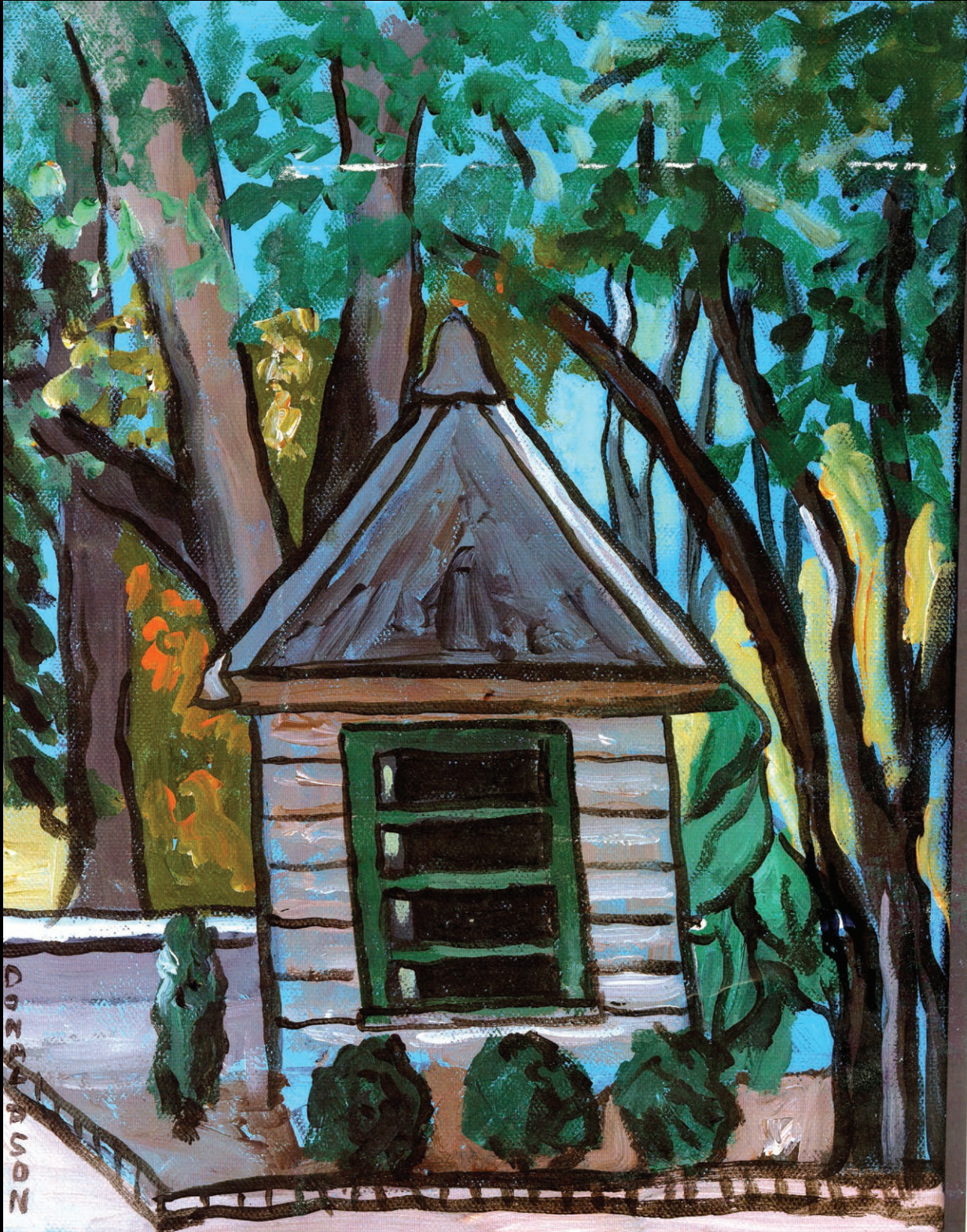
April 25: Country Club of Salisbury — 6-10 p.m. Annual fundraiser for Rowan Helping Ministries' programs and services. There will be delicious food, fun and music for all to enjoy. Mix and mingle as you browse a vibrant silent auction or fund one of RHM's urgent needs at the fund-a-need station. Tickets are \$60 per person and can be purchased online, by calling 704-637-6838, ext. 100, or mailing a check/cash to 226 N. Long St. with "Pass the Plate" on the memo line.

26 *Gold Hill Rail Trail Hike*

April 26: Gold Hill Mines Historic Park, St. Stephens Church Road — 2-4 p.m. The park will be host for a history hike along the Gold Hill Rail Trail with Catawba Lands Conservancy and Carolina Thread Trail organizations. Hikers will meet at Miner's Field (the softball field) at the northwest entrance. See more on the Catawba Lands Conservancy events page.

29 *Jiggy with the Piggy 5k (and festival)*

April 29-May 3: downtown Kannapolis — This big festival weekend begins early April 29 with the 6:30 p.m. Jiggy with the Piggy 5k. Register at runkannapolis.com, and dress in your best pork- or pig-related costume to win prizes. Barbecue competition teams arrive April 30, and the festival, which follows on May 1-2, has free admission. It includes a Kansas City Barbecue Society Competition, rides, over 100 artisans, concerts, a Saturday outdoor family movie, an All You Can Eat Pancake Breakfast at the Kannapolis YMCA, and People's Choice BBQ and Wings Tasting. Check www.jiggywiththepiggy.com for a full schedule. The May 1 free concert features country artist Sammy Kershaw. A Buff Dillard jazz concert will be held at Veterans Park from 1-3 p.m. May 3. **S**



'MONA LISA WALLACE'S DOLL HOUSE'

By James Donaldson

Pastel

Artwork for *Salisbury's the Place* may be submitted to mark.wineka@salisburythemagazine.com
Vertical orientation is preferred.

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