

MAY 2021

# SALISBURY

the magazine



## HAPPY TRAILS

*Mountain bikers find traction  
at Salisbury Community Park*

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**Bell Tower  
Green**

RICKY CRAVEN  
sells  
performance

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the magazine

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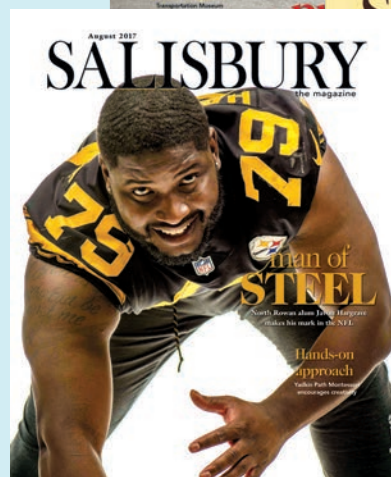
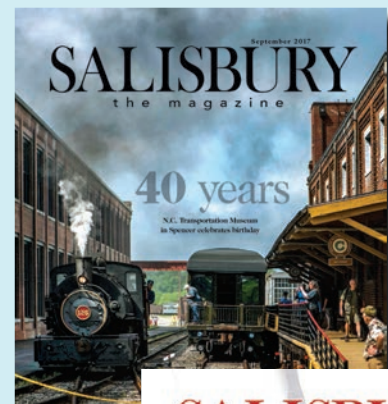
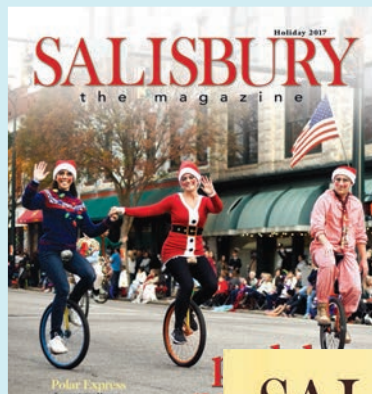
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by SUSAN SHINN TURNER

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***On this page:** Construction continues on the performance  
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# I want a new drug

**A**s we slowly emerge from under the rock of the pandemic — we're not there quite yet — it's probably time to take stock of how we have coped, or not coped, with our new normal.

I will speak from personal experience and say only that it's been weird. While sheltering at home as much as possible during the past year, my wife and I have watched a lot of television, and that's understating it. We've seen so many British-produced shows on streaming channels that I've started calling her "Governor," or "Guv," for short.

Now we even clink our day's fourth cups of coffee together and say, "Cheers, mate."

We have eaten plenty of Progresso soup at our house, especially after it goes on sale. So it's hard for me to understand how I've gained at least 20 pounds, until I remember, oh, yeah, I've been watching television and eating whole chickens, turkeys, hams, casseroles, hero sandwiches and tubs of ice cream to go with the soup.

It would be worse, if we haven't been walking a lot. We try to find new places to amble around as a way to leave the house, shed masks and get outdoors, and I tip my hat to the recreation folks in Salisbury and Rowan County because there are plenty of options.

Probably like many of you, we started the days of sheltering in a frenzy of home improvements and tackling things we had put off. But somewhere after a couple of weeks or months, pandemic fatigue set in and we went back to the television set, cursing politics and being annoyed by our cats.

I realized how bad things had become when I started writing down the names of all the television advertisements for drugs — weirdly named drugs, at that. I can't say with confidence that I've listed every one of these prescription medicines, but here are 40 of them:

Trelegy, Entyvio, Breztri, Prolia, Sunosi, Nuplazid, Xyzal, Zyrtec, Ibrance, Skyrizi, Tremfya, Kisqali, Biktarvy, Eliquis, Humira, Xeljanz, Ocrevus, Abbvie, Stelava, Rybelsus, Otezla, Xiidra, Nucala, Aimovig, Vraylar, Jardiance, Trulicity, Kesimpta, Rinvoq, Zyloric, Entresto, Cosentyx, Vascepa, Rexulti, Truliant, Trintellix, Enbrel, Dupixent, Prevacid and Gardasil 9.

My wife thought I was crazy when I'd stop the DVR for a drug commercial whizzing by. But I needed to write down the name and check myself on the spelling. After a while, she gave up and joined



the hunt. I don't want to downplay the quality-of-life improvements these drugs might bring to people, but if you've ever wondered how much of a role Big Pharma plays in our lives, here's some evidence.

I've been told there are companies out there whose main job is to come up with new names for drugs. I notice they have found ingenious ways to use letters such as "Q," "V," "X" and "Z," though the spell-checker on my computer is not a big fan.

I'm glad we settled years ago on "Salisbury the Magazine" as a name for this publication. While it's hardly creative, the name fit perfectly for what we do — give you a glimpse into the people and places in and around Salisbury. In this issue, escape into the world of mountain biking, hot cars, a new park, Cajun food, preservation, plants, new books and a municipal government maven.

Take it like a drug, Guv, and let's call this edition "Buryrizzi."

**Mark Wineka,**  
*Editor, Salisbury the Magazine*

**THROUGH THE LENS** by Angie Boyd



*Woodleaf residents Angie Boyd and her husband, Jeff, have been beekeepers on a small scale for the last eight years. Angie took this photograph in their backyard of flowers with her iPhone 4. 'The sun hit it just right,' she says.*



# Harvey brings strong female voices to Cape Carolina

**A**s a single mother who made “unusual” choices in how to come into parenthood (i.e. via local and international adoption), I have a very hard time reading books about characters who’ve made similar choices.

Characters in these novels are often cloaked in desperation with plots revolving exclusively around an insatiable hunger to become “with child.” This was not my experience, and finally I have not just read but devoured a book that hits on the fact that people come to be mothers and fathers in a multitude of ways that do



Harvey

not define their individuality, instead adding a new layer of humanity to their fully formed selves.

**Under the Southern Sky** (400 pp. Gallery Books) is Kristy Woodson

Harvey’s seventh novel. Mark my words, this is the book that will land her a screenwriting deal and solidify her presence not just on the Southern literary scene, but on the shelves of women’s fiction lovers across the globe; it is that good.

Amelia Paxton, the novel’s protagonist, knew early in her life that motherhood was not in her DNA, biologically or otherwise. She has created a fabulous, carefree life centered on her career in investigative journalism and built in Palm Beach, Florida, with her husband of many years. Yet when Amelia uncovers her husband’s

infidelity, her world instantly collapses, and she slowly comes to understand the lack of depth in her relationships formed since leaving her childhood home, Cape Carolina.

As Amelia returns to the seaside, there is a great romance to unpack, along with a “crazy” Aunt Tilley (complete with tragic back-

story) and a host of other characters who round out this extremely readable and compelling tale. Most importantly, this novel is centered on strong female voices (along with an incredible male ally, Parker, Amelia’s childhood friend).

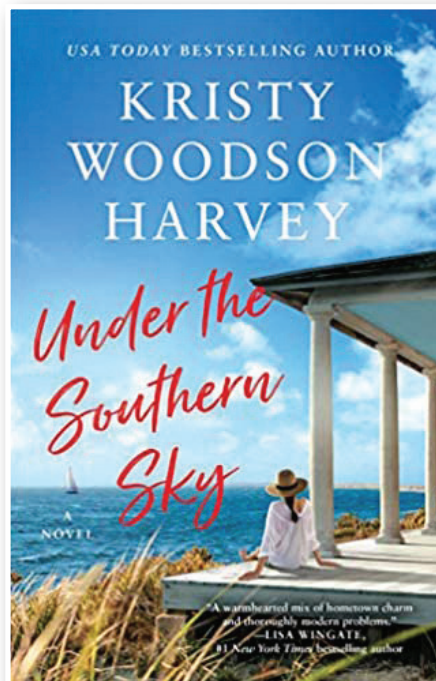
Each woman in the story makes incredibly painful choices — to raise a child not biologically theirs, to give birth to a child not biologically theirs, to harvest their embryos while deathly ill — yet choices involving motherhood are not the only ones their characters face in *Under the Southern Sky*.

There is such depth of character development and plot on display in this novel as Cape Carolina comes alive; I hope I get a chance to revisit this charming town in another KWH production very soon.

Many of us have known Kristy for years; her family is a delight, and her daily presence in Salisbury is missed. Read this book

as soon as you can get it in your hands to remind you of our dear friend, who has moved to the coast and is embarking on such incredible things in the publishing world.

Then come into South Main Book Company on Thursday, April 22, from 4-6 p.m. for Kristy’s book signing. Get your book personalized, and tell her how much you adored this world she has created in Cape Carolina. **S**



▶ All of Kristy Woodson Harvey’s titles are available at Salisbury’s independent bookstore, South Main Book Company, located at 110 S. Main St. Call 704-630-9788 or email [southmainbookcompany@gmail.com](mailto:southmainbookcompany@gmail.com) to confirm store hours and events. Alissa Redmond is the owner of this store.

| Q & A |

It's hard to believe, given all the noteworthy names in East Spencer's governmental history, but by the end of her current term, Barbara A. Mallett will be one of the longest serving mayors in the town's history at 10 years.

Not many people knew as much about town operations as the 74-year-old Mallett did when she became mayor. Previously, she had served 22 years as East Spencer's town clerk and finance officer and four as an alderwoman.

Mallett grew up as Barbara Avery in Morganton, where she went to Olive Hill High School. She had a big family. Her dad, Robert H. Avery Jr., who was the second of 10 children, served in World War II and came home to work at SGL Carbon. Her mother, Annie Mae Kanipes Avery, was the oldest of 11 children and a nursing assistant at Broughton Hospital in Morganton.

"They were proud parents of eight, and I am the second eldest," Mallett says.

Mallett has lived in East Spencer since 1976. But prior to that, she and husband Garry — they have been married 54 years — spent 15 years in Brooklyn, New York. Before working for East Spencer, Barbara found employment at Rowan Memorial Hospital as a night auditor under Rachel Terry. She also worked a short time at Cortex Mill.

"That was hard," she says.

Barbara Mallett attended Livingstone College and Rowan-Cabarrus Community College. She has an associate degree in accounting and received a bachelor's

degree in business from Shaw University.

The Malletts have two daughters, Crystal and Tarsha, and two grandchildren, Cameron and Amber. They also are expecting their first great-grandchild.

Barbara Mallett belongs to Southern City Tabernacle AME Zion Church in East Spencer and serves on several boards.

Salisbury the Magazine recently caught up with this Rowan Original for a quick Q&A:



# Municipal bond

*Mayor Barbara Mallett wants her dreams  
for East Spencer to come true*

Written by Mark Wineka / Photography by Jon C. Lakey

*Use five words or phrases to describe*

*East Spencer:*

Tenacious. Resourceful. Open to Partners. Diverse. Focused.

*What are two or three of the town's biggest accomplishments in recent years?*

I am proud of what our administrators and Board of Alderman have accomplished: the redevelopment of Royal Giants Park, preparation for the I-85 Corridor Development Plan at the Exit 79 Opportunity Zone, water and sewer improvements (\$5.9 million), especially the loop line on Choate Road. If you remember, it was birthed out of the necessity for water during the Dunbar (School) fire. Also, improvements in housing and town facilities.

*Likewise, what are a couple of the biggest challenges the town has ahead of it?*

Bringing investments and consumer services into town, getting a new I-85 interchange at Correll Street and McCanless Road, securing the town's future through annexation and development of our ETJ (extra-territorial jurisdiction) area and building our tax base.

*What do you like about your job as mayor?*

I love East Spencer and its people. Having a vision — big dreams — then seeing them come true for the city, that is fun.

*Being a mayor is sometimes a thankless job. What's the issue or complaint you hear from residents the most?*

It used to be water-sewer, now I think it is the streets, paving and repair. Just this past weekend I had a citizen stop me in the grocery saying his street had not been paved in a few years. As the job of the mayor, you must be always ready, that is what we signed up for.

*What's a surprising thing about the town of East Spencer that most people in Rowan County would not know?*

Today East Spencer has the lowest crime rate in the county. (As for history), the town has a long history dating all the way back to 1901 when the Southern Railway Shops were in full swing.



*Mallett and Alderman Albert Smith step outside the municipal building as Public Works Supervisor Kenny Clements drives by.*

*Who have been some of the most important influencers in your life? Any mentors?*

My God, my faith, my family, my friends all of them add substance to my life.

*What has been the hardest thing for you as a private citizen or government official during the pandemic?*

Not being able to connect with the citizens. We had celebrations before, but the Board of Alderman moved up to host larger events in 2019 to build our own identity— April Foods Day, Community Day and our outstanding Southern Soul Music Festival. These types of activities breathe life into a community.



*What's your pet peeve?*

People who do wrong and I can see it. Lately, I have been saying the Serenity Prayer: God grant me the courage to accept the things, I cannot change: Courage to change the things I can and the Wisdom to know the difference.

*What are two or three of your favorite television shows?*

(I'm) not much of a TV person — "60 Minutes, "Andy Griffith Show," "Judge Judy."

*In more normal times, when the world isn't dealing with a pandemic, what's your idea of a fun day out?*

Anything outside. I love to walk in the park, read and (take) one-day trips to the mountains to visit family.

*Where's a place you'd like to travel someday that you've never been?*

On an African safari.

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

In the fridge: apple and orange juice; pantry: garlic and onion powder. I am a surprisingly good cook.

*If you could, what advice would you go back and give to a 20-year-old Barbara Mallett?*

Read your Bible every day, dream big and never stop. **S**



*Morgan Ridge's chef Jason Nain and Deirdre Parker Smith collaborated on a cookbook of Nain's recipes.*

# A few of his favorite things

*Chef Jason Nain debuts cookbook seasoned  
with local talents and a bit of Cajun flair*

WRITTEN BY DEIRDRE PARKER SMITH / PHOTOGRAPHY BY JON C. LAKEY



*Nain's New Orleans Shrimp*

“**W**ouldn't it be cool if we could do a cookbook,” chef Jason Nain asked me one day when my husband and I were eating at Morgan Ridge Vineyards in Gold Hill.

Sounded great to me and I said yes. But we both had demanding work schedules and could never find the time to get started.

Enter the COVID-19 pandemic, and we both had more free time than we wanted.

Jason is an excellent chef, with many followers all over Rowan, Stanly and surrounding counties. He's creative — once he made sweetbreads covered in Pop Rocks. It worked, somehow.

But Jason doesn't use recipes much. He knows how flavors work together and creates on the fly. A native of Louisiana, he's got that Cajun flair and dozens of recipes in his head.

“I need your help, Miss Deirdre, with getting stuff written down,” he said.

I asked if he knew what he wanted to call it, and he answered immediately, “A Few of My Favorite Things.”

Chef Jason needed someone who could read his handwriting and knew a little about cooking techniques. We'd been friends for years, so I said yes, thinking a project would keep me from going off the deep end.

His parents, John and Karen Nain of Hickory, were a huge help, keeping us on track, outlining the business part of the deal. They were also taste testers.

“Come out today around 1 and we'll do some recipes,” Jason texted to me. “Mom and Dad will be here.”

So we sat in the empty tasting room at Morgan Ridge, masked and distanced, while he brought out the courses — Sweet Potato, Black-eyed Pea and Kale Gumbo, followed by Kale, Cabbage and Collard Slaw (an invention from a Riot in the Pasture event); Tuscan Chicken with a light batter, New Orleans Shrimp with lots of black pepper.

We'd taste, make suggestions and talk about the recipe.

“I trust you. Write what you think is right,” Jason said again and again.

“Come in the kitchen now, I'm gonna make the Shrimp Creole,” he said, and off we went, me with a notebook and him trying his best to measure things.



*Chef Jason Naim, center, with his family, co-workers and writer Deirdre Parker Smith, second from right in front.*

“That looks like a cup, doesn’t it?” And sure, enough, it was. “That’s about 3 good tablespoons.”

Jason often uses the same spices for his dishes — salt, black pepper, granulated garlic, granulated onion, Worcestershire sauce, Old Bay seasoning, Frank’s RedHot and his own blend of Cajun seasoning, plus a seasonal herb blend, like parsley and sage for fall and winter.

“I want you to see the technique,” he’d say. We made blond roux for the Creole, not letting the flour, butter and vegetables go too dark before adding liquid.

How do you keep shrimp tender in a dish that simmers on the stove? Don’t add it until the sauce is cooked. Turn off the heat, add the shrimp, cover for 5 minutes, done. And by the way, Jason said, save the shrimp shells for stock.

Something I thought people should understand is the difference between gumbo, jambalaya and étouffée.

“Gumbo should be like soup, and you serve it over rice,” Jason explained. “Jambalaya is like



*Mark Brincefield did the illustrations for the cookbook.*

a rice casserole that’s flavored with things like Andouille sausage and chicken.”

“Étouffée usually has just one protein, like shrimp or crawfish, and is thicker than gumbo.

Gumbo can have any protein and vegetables, cooked with a roux.”

Watching Jason cook helped us write the recipes with directions that made sense — at least

that was the goal.

I'd stand next to him, he'd list ingredients then we'd go over the cooking technique. Nothing was hard, but some recipes had multiple steps. Those steps, though, were repeated with different recipes, so it was like a cooking class, as well as recipe gathering.

Some recipes were written down already — sort of. He handed me one recipe that only listed ingredients, no amounts, no directions, and that required research into similar recipes and questions to the chef until we got to something we agreed made sense and worked.

And we tasted and tasted and tasted.

As we worked, Chef Jason's days got busier as restrictions eased, with meals possible in the large pavilion at Morgan Ridge, which can be opened up to the fresh air. He was still catering for regular clients and helping his cousin feed the National Guard.

During the weeks when the cookbook was coming together Jason and I talked to regulars, asking if they'd be interested in a book, and how much they'd be willing to pay for one.

Their excitement was encouraging, so it was time for big decisions.

How many recipes should we include?

Do we want more than one recipe per page?

Can we afford color photos?

How big should the book be — 6 inches by 9 inches? Bigger? Smaller? How many pages?

As we gathered recipes, we had to decide what categories to use. Jason is not big on desserts, but we felt we needed to include at least a few. I couldn't picture the recipes in the common categories we saw in community cookbooks. Jason didn't want it to be menu based, as in some glossy books. Once we had more than 50 recipes, I knew one section had to be Cajun specialties.

We researched printing options, deciding against the cookie-cutter formats of so many community cookbooks. We had some stories to tell, and the ingredients were extensive, more than a template the cookbook publishing sites used.

And we had to fund it. Neither the chef nor I had what was needed, so we explored a number of options. We learned a lot, too. Small, short-term loans have incredibly high interest



### *Upcoming events at Morgan Ridge to meet Chef Jason Nain and purchase a cookbook:*

- **Lunch and Learn**, cooking demonstration by the chef, each third Friday of the month. 12:30 p.m., reservations required.
- **May 8**, an evening with Lonnie Carpenter, featuring a buffet dinner. Advance tickets required.
- **May 9**, Mother's Day Brunch. Tickets go fast, so book early.
- **May 21**, Wine Pairing Dinner featuring recipes from "A Few of My Favorite Things" and Morgan Ridge wines.
- Go to [morganridgevineyards.com](http://morganridgevineyards.com) and follow the link to purchase a cookbook online.

rates and must be paid back fast. Internet banking has lower rates, but with more requirements. With so many people in desperate need, we didn't consider crowd-funding. We talked to a couple of potential investors.

Meanwhile, we had decided to use my friend, local artist Mark Brincefield, to do the art for the front and back covers. He would also do line drawings for the section dividers and other spots in the cookbook.

We wanted color covers, but decided the inside had to be black and white to save money. Brincefield's illustrations were perfect — eye catching and sometimes funny. My favorite is the shrimp jumping into the bowl of batter, as if it were a swimming pool.

By then, we had decided to make the book 100 percent local. Local chef, local editor, local artist, let's get a local printer. The turnaround time was better, and we could avoid shipping costs.

We ended up at A Bolder Image, which used to be Diversified Graphics, and they were very helpful and quick.

For financing, we turned to Morgan Ridge's owner, Tommy Baudoin, who wanted to print a lot of copies as cheaply as possible. He liked the idea of the cookbook as a sort of souvenir for the winery.

Kim Love, the marketing manager at Morgan Ridge, sent news of the cookbook out to the 5,000-plus names on her mailing list.

Jason insisted his kitchen staff get credit for all they did, including Ahlayna McClure, Matthew Solomon, Katelyn Morris and chef Daniel Tunks.

"And Cindy," he said of his wife. "She puts up with a lot. I couldn't do it without her."

What's next? Selling cookbooks, which are available at the vineyard in Gold Hill. You also will be able to order them online.

"So, when do you want to start on the next one," Chef Jason asked.

"What's it going to be?"

"A Few More of My Favorite Things."

*Deirdre Parker Smith is a freelance writer living in Spencer.*

# — Recipes by Jason Nain —

## CAJUN SPICE

- ¼ cup kosher salt
- ¼ cup white pepper
- ¼ cup black pepper
- ¼ cup ground fennel seed
- 2 Tbsp. dry mustard
- 1 Tbsp. cayenne pepper (or more to taste)
- 2 Tbsp. sweet paprika
- ¼ cup garlic powder
- ¼ cup onion powder
- 2 Tbsp. celery salt
- 1 heaping Tbsp. dried thyme
- 2 Tbsp. ground caraway seed

*Grind fennel seed and caraway seed in a small food processor or spice grinder. Mix all ingredients and store in an airtight container. This blend would make a nice gift for friends.*

## SWEET POTATO, BLACK-EYED PEA AND KALE GUMBO

- 1 pound dried black-eyed peas
- 3 large sweet potatoes, peeled and cooked
- 2 1-lb. bags chopped fresh kale
- 1 stick butter
- 2 Tbsp. vegetable oil
- 2 cups flour, divided
- 2 cups chopped onion, divided
- 2 cups chopped celery, divided
- 5 quarts chicken or vegetable stock
- 1 Tbsp. Frank's RedHot
- 1 Tbsp. Worcestershire sauce
- 1 Tbsp. black pepper
- 1 Tbsp. Tony Chachere's Creole seasoning or Jason's Cajun seasoning
- 1 Tbsp. Old Bay seasoning
- 1 Tbsp. granulated garlic
- 1 Tbsp. granulated onion
- 2 Tbsp. filé powder

To make this vegetarian and gluten free, use vegetable stock and rice flour.

**1.** Place black-eyed-peas in a large pot and add enough cold water to cover the peas by one inch. Bring to a boil and cook one hour, adding salt, black pepper and cayenne pepper to taste near the end of the cooking time. Drain and



set aside.

**2.** Place peeled, cubed sweet potatoes in the same pot and cover with cold water. Boil until tender, but not falling apart. Drain and add to the beans.

**3.** Melt one stick butter in a large skillet and add the vegetable oil, which will keep the butter from burning.

**4.** Add 1 cup flour to the butter and oil and cook, stirring constantly, until flour cooks and begins to brown, about 20 minutes. Do not walk away, do not answer your phone. Remove from heat and add 1 cup onion and 1 cup celery and stir to combine the roux with the vegetables.

**5.** Move mixture to a large stock pot. Return to heat and add 2 quarts chicken or vegetable stock or broth. Stir. Then add the rest of the onion and celery. Stir and bring to a boil, allowing the mixture to thicken slightly. Foam will form on top. Take a moment to skim it off and discard.

**6.** After skimming, add two more quarts broth or stock and let the pot boil vigorously for 20 minutes to concentrate the flavors. Skim the surface again. Add final quart of stock. Now add the black-eyed peas and sweet potatoes. Cook 10 minutes and stir. Then cook another 10 minutes and again skim the top.

**7.** Add the Frank's Red Hot, Worcestershire, black pepper, the Creole seasoning, Old Bay,

garlic and onion and stir. Add kale and a little more salt and pepper to taste; stir until wilted, about 1-2 minutes. Add filé powder and let the gumbo cook a few more moments. It will thicken and enrich the gumbo.

**8.** Serve with cooked rice and sprinkle additional filé powder over the top.

## KALE, CABBAGE AND COLLARD SLAW

- 2 cups cabbage, sliced thin
- 2 cups kale, sliced thin
- 2 cups collard greens, sliced thin
- 2 tsp. salt
- 2 tsp. pepper
- 1 Tbsp. apple cider vinegar
- ¼ cup whole grain Dijon mustard
- ¼ cup honey
- ½ cup mayonnaise

*In a large bowl, combine the greens and add remaining ingredients. Mix well, to coat all the greens.*

**Author's note:** This recipe was created for a Riot in the Pasture, a fundraiser for Bread Riot, a food resource nonprofit. The day before the event, Woodleaf farmer David Correll donated boxes and boxes of greens to Chef Jason, who had to come up with a quick recipe to use them all. **S**



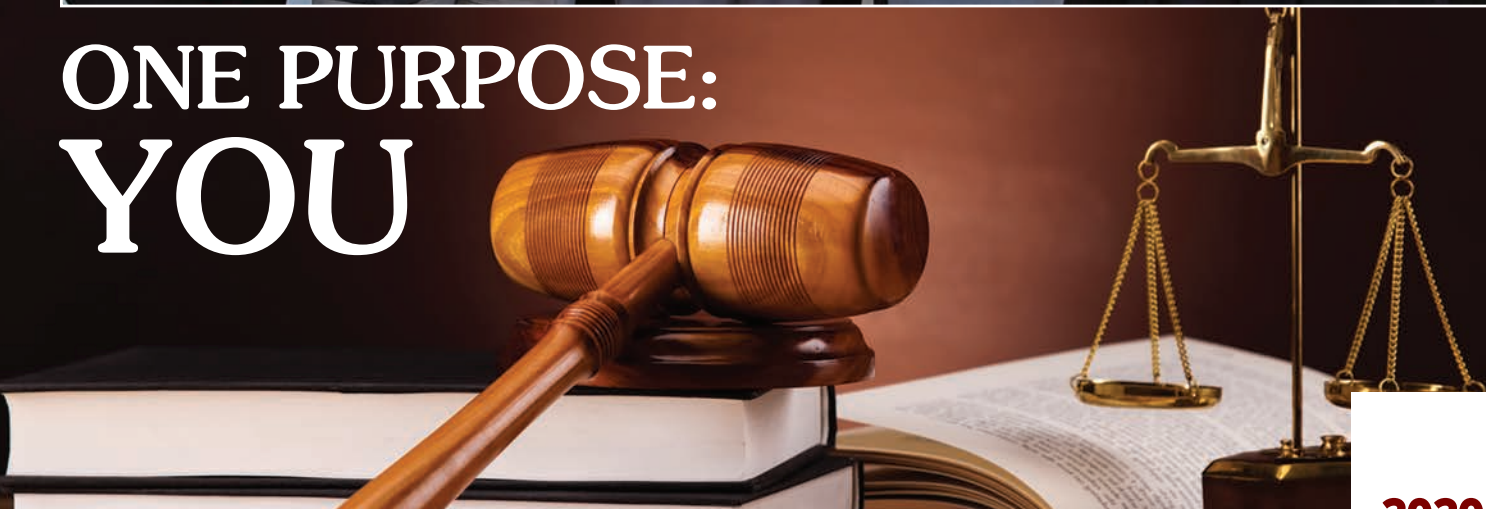
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GARDEN



# Sweat equity

*Student-mentor partnership at heart  
of new Trees & Plants Nursery*

WRITTEN BY MARK WINEKA PHOTOGRAPHY BY JON C. LAKEY





*Rick Turner, Chris Queen and Rob Watts stand inside the retail store of Trees & Plants Nursery and Garden Center, which opened in early April.*

Under a beating sun in August last year, Chris Queen and Rick Turner took on their toughest job.

At each end of one of their former greenhouses, a dump-truck load of gravel had been deposited. Their mission: to fill 5-gallon buckets with the gravel, lug them into the now open-air structure and spread the fill material in the narrow rows between the old greenhouse troughs.

“You’ll tap out before me,” Turner told Queen each day.

By the way, the rows were 400 feet long, and there were 11 of them — or 22 rows of 200 feet if you cut it in half from each pile of gravel. The tight space between the troughs prevented any help from machines, so the men had to haul and spread the gravel by hand.





The work exemplifies the sweat equity that Queen, 22, and Turner, 56, have put into their new business, Trees & Plants Nursery and Garden Center at 2213 Mooresville Road. It also demonstrates to Turner, in particular, the commitment Queen has to their enterprise.

“He hasn’t let up,” Turner says. “He hasn’t cried, ‘Uncle!’ ”

The gravel Queen and Turner hauled in last August created the paths over which customers now walk up and down, selecting the trees and plants they wish to purchase. They carry their items to carts in the middle that they easily push to the checkout.

The Queen-Turner partnership isn’t a conventional one. The age

difference alone is unusual, and they come into the business from completely different places.

Queen, a 2016 graduate of East Rowan High, was majoring in political science at East Carolina University. Over summer breaks, he had done landscaping, working some with landscape designer/builder Rob Watts. Queen also knew a lot about the old greenhouses on Mooresville Road through his father Rodney’s various business ventures.

A native of Miami, Turner had forged two careers — one in the Navy, then another in industry, managing maintenance departments and overseeing production lines for big companies (such as

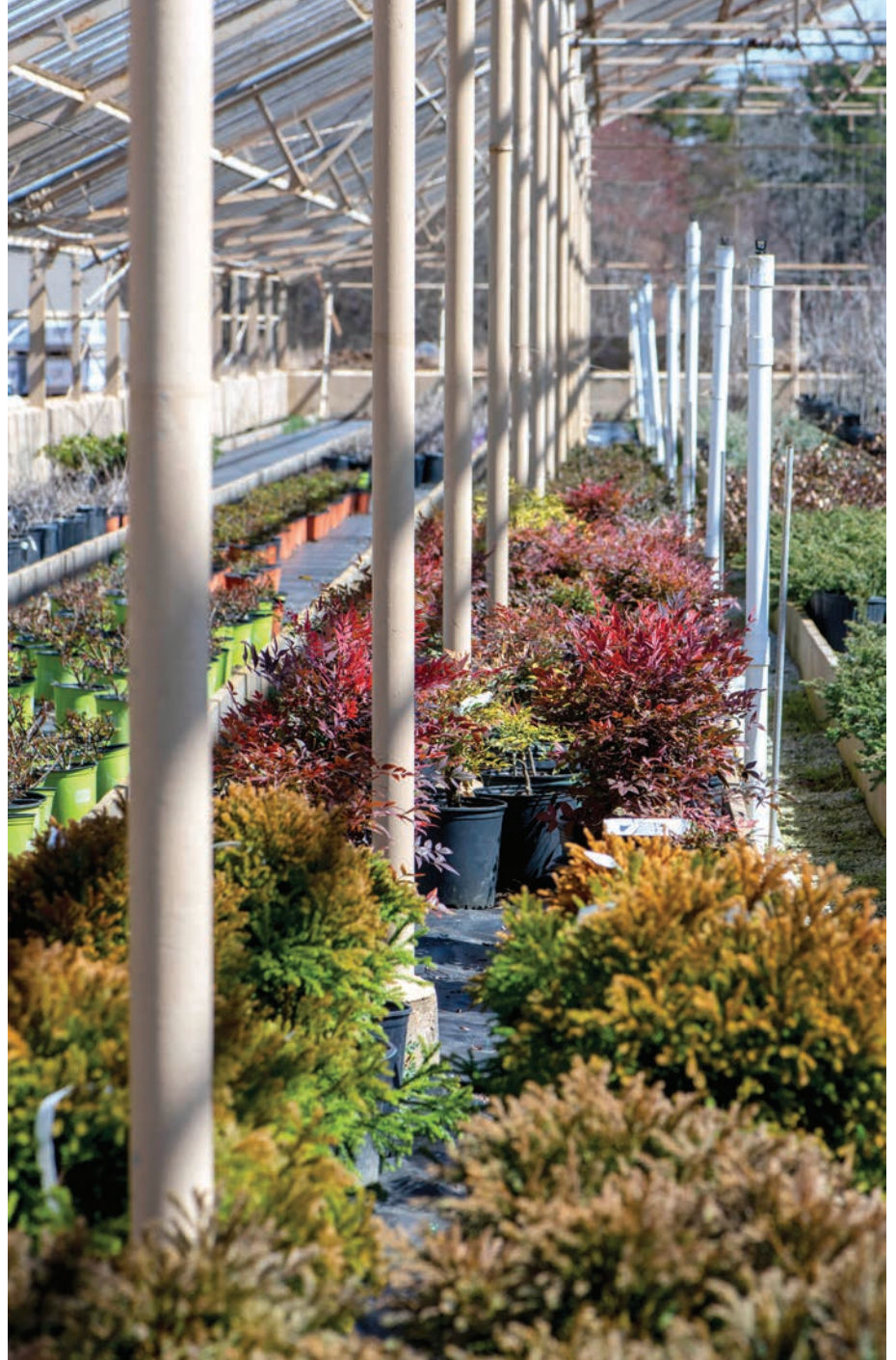


*Above: Chris Queen works in the nursery. Above right: Bryan Curtis and James Pressley set a stone cap on a wall near the entrance. Right: A sign greets customers in the retail area.*





**Top:** Queen holds a pot with a cutting rooted in the greenhouse last year. **Above:** Trees & Plants will offer lemonade to promote the Myers Lemon Trees it's selling. **Right:** A colorful array of plants on sale.



Philip Morris and Coca-Cola). On the side, he has coached club volleyball teams in Rowan and Cabarrus counties. He and his wife, a nurse, settled in the nearby Forest Glen neighborhood about five years ago.

Turner tried retirement and hated it. Watts built a patio for him in Forest Glen, so he had that connection, and inquiries about the Mooresville Road greenhouses led him to Queen. About eight years ago, the greenhouses had been stripped of most of their glass, but the huge, skeletal structures remained.

Turner had been driving by them every day,

always thinking something should be done to improve that site. "With Christopher, I decided we could take this to a new level," Turner says.

While Turner has a financial interest in their business, he also comes into their partnership with another goal in mind.

"It's more of a mentorship," he says. "... I'm not an easy person. I push him hard."

Turner acknowledges he's a taskmaster who believes in setting a timetable to get jobs done and sticking with it. He talks to Queen about the business/retail end, customer relations and future employee expectations, while Queen

constantly absorbs additional knowledge from Watts and Bud Cagle.

Queen provides his own knowledge and input, and after many long days, weeks and months of preparation, Trees & Plants was able to open the first weekend in April.

"It's really worked well," says Queen, who returned home from ECU last spring because of the pandemic. He hasn't gone back and plans to finish his college courses online and graduate this fall.

"To be honest ... I'd rather work with plants," he says. "I didn't realize I would be leaving for

the last time when I left, but this is the place to be.”

When they began leasing the property in June 2020, Queen and Turner confronted a pretty much abandoned, gone-to seed property that old-timers still remember as greenhouses for Hanford roses.

“Everybody calls it the rose houses,” Turner says.

The seven acres with the two former greenhouse structures are two or three owners removed from the Hanfords. Queen and Turner have a 10-year lease with an option to buy from the current owner, K&L Properties.

The men went up and down the old rose troughs and rows, hacking out weeds, dealing with old irrigation systems, setting up new irrigation and tackling the 50 years of stuff that had accumulated in the boiler room and garage, which is now their office. They also took down the remaining glass panels that were on the second greenhouse structure.

The two former greenhouses each measure 400 feet long and 100 feet wide. When they were glassed in and growing roses in

the winter, they were heated with steam. The smokestacks from those days are still visible on the roof of the old boiler room, a spacious area that Queen and Turner have converted to their retail store.

After parking in the gravel lot, visitors enter through the retail store and, if they want to proceed to the trees and plants area, they pass through a short tunnel to the former, now open-air greenhouses, which present an elaborate latticework against the sky.

Outside the store entrance, Watts has created an in-ground, geometric display of the various patterns and paving materials he can offer customers for their patios and outdoor kitchens.

Turner says there’s nothing better than being able to see those options in person. Greg Clark is Watts’ chief mason. Watts will be working closely with Trees & Plants on its design/build landscape and hardscape installations, and he brings 35 years of experience to the table.

“We lean pretty hard on Rob to tell us what we don’t know, like the Latin term for every plant,” Turner says with a chuckle. “Rob

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***Top:** The entrance showcases the stones and designs Rob Watts can offer for his patios, outdoor kitchens, walls, walkways and hardscapes overall. **Above:** Blooms pop from a peach tree in the early days of spring. **Left:** Sonja Turner, Rick's wife, carries armloads of pots into the garden center.*



has helped us immensely.”

For many years, Watts served as manager for Apple Baking and also ran his landscape design business on the side. With Trees & Plants, “I get to do what I’ve done best 100 percent of the time,” Watts says.

The Trees & Plants partnership also relies on Cagle, co-owner with his wife of Variety Produce in Rockwell. Cagle will be filling half of the second open greenhouse structure with a lot of his heirloom and specialty vegetable plants.

“He’s going to teach Chris,” Turner says. “... You’ll see a lot of his products out here.”

A smaller, domed greenhouse, covered with plastic, has been used to grow some of Cagle’s stuff in the fall and winter. Thousands of trees, flowers and other plants are on display in the first greenhouse structure. One 400-foot-long trough alone can hold 10,000 one-gallon pots.

While they eventually will be propagating many of their own plants, Queen and Turner also have sourced the things they have in stock now from about a half dozen nurseries.

The retail store will have a lot of garden tools, accessories and knickknacks, along with other locally crafted items being sold on consignment.

Because the skeletal structures of steel remain, complete with their peaked roofs, the former greenhouses are conversation worthy when you’re driving by on Mooresville Road. Visitors find them even more interesting as they walk the long rows of trees and plants, sitting in the troughs.

“People like the experience of walking into the houses,” Queen says, noting it’s not unusual to see customers taking pictures. “It’s a pleasant place to be.”

“You won’t go to Lowe’s and see this,” Turner says.

“It’s more of a mentorship. ... I’m not an easy person. I push him hard.”

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Getting the new business up and going has been an all-hands-on-deck effort from family and everyone else involved, Turner says, but he has been most impressed with Queen, the young guy in this unconventional partnership.

*Queen talks with Amira Reavis and her son, Oliver, about plants for the Reavis home in Woodleaf.*

“Chris has the drive and the work ethic,” Turner says. “I’m proud of him for it.”

For now, “every penny goes into making the property better,” Turner says, and they haven’t yet had to take out a loan, thanks to a different kind of contribution each man has made.

“I think sweat equity is more valuable,” Turner says. 

*Trees & Plants Nursery and Garden Center, 2213 Mooresville Road, Salisbury, is open from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Thursday-Saturday, 1-6 p.m. Sunday and Monday-Wednesday by appointment. Look for more information on its website ([treesandplants.com](http://treesandplants.com)) and on Facebook and Instagram.*



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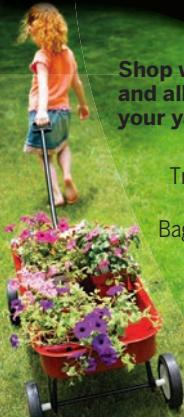
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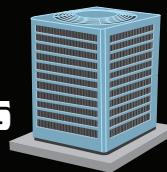
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# A third act for Ricky Craven

*NASCAR winner's new performance vehicle dealership  
sets up shop in Landis*

WRITTEN BY DAN HODGDON / PHOTOGRAPHY BY JON C. LAKEY



**F**or many race fans, their lasting memory of Ricky Craven comes from Darlington Raceway in the spring of 2003, when he drove the No. 32 Tide-sponsored Pontiac Grand Prix to his second and final NASCAR Cup Series win. His epic duel with Kurt Busch is tied for the closest finish in series history.

Others may remember Craven from his second racing-related career, serving as a studious and insightful analyst for ESPN and later FOX Sports until the end of 2020.

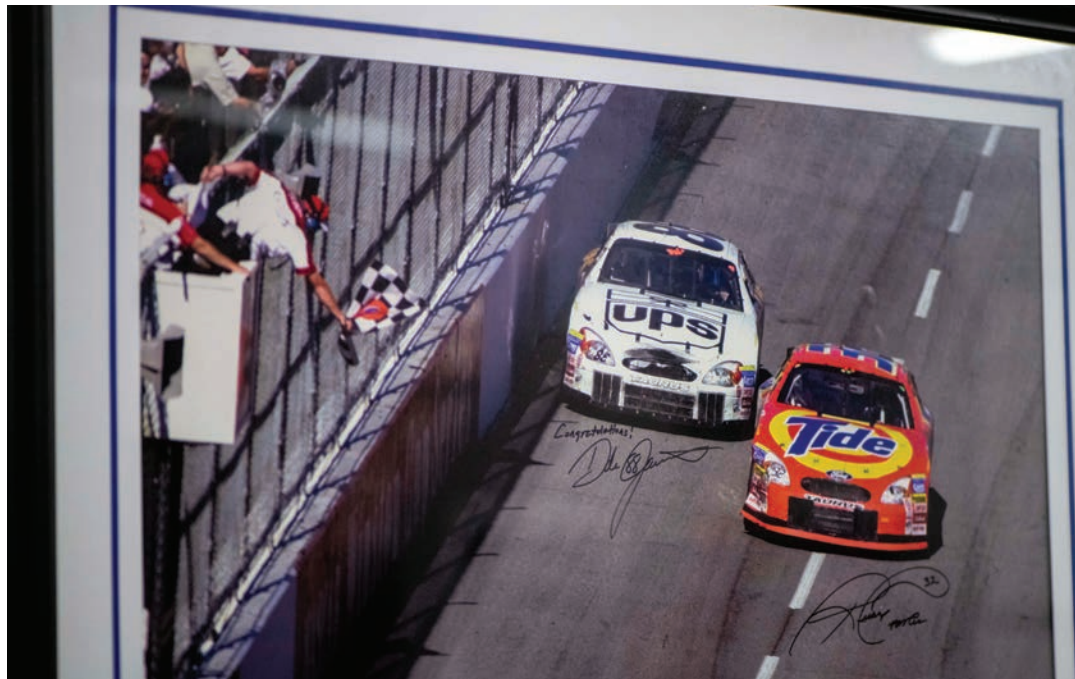
Now Craven, 54, is beginning what he calls his “third

chapter” in the form of specialty car dealership Ricky Craven Motorsports. The new business is on South Main Street in Landis at an old car wash in this southern part of Rowan County.

*Retired NASCAR driver and network race analyst Ricky Craven has opened a dealership in Landis that initially has specialized in one-owner, late-model Corvettes.*

“I like this little town, and the people in this little town,” Craven says. “I expect that 30 years from now that sign will be out there.”

Craven’s business opened Jan. 1 by appointment only, and as he builds his team, website and inventory, aims to be fully open by Memorial Day. Currently, Craven is focused on the collection and resale of the seventh-generation Chevrolet Corvette — the last of the front-engine models.



*Top: Helmets and memorabilia from Craven's NASCAR career. Above: Craven in his first NASCAR win at the 2001 Old Dominion 500 at Martinsville Speedway in the No. 32 Tide car. Dale Jarrett was a close second. Left: A black 2019 Grand Sport Corvette in Craven's office.*



*Craven sits in his Landis office not far away from a red 2019 Corvette Stingray and a black 2019 Corvette Grand Sport.*

Craven first came to the area when the late NASCAR champion and beloved broadcaster Benny Parsons asked him to play golf at a country club in Kannapolis three decades ago.

Craven lived at and was affiliated with the golf course for many years, and purchased the property where his business now sits with plans to use it as storage for his three race cars. One of them, in which he scored his first NASCAR Cup Series win at Martinsville Speedway in 2001, is often visible from the road.

“Everybody’s been very good to me,” Craven says. “It’s a good little location. I’m optimistic that two or three years from now there will be 30 or 40 hot rods out front and we’ll have created our niche.”

He’s keenly aware of his luck in life, but his competitive spirit remains intact, as does the thoughtfulness and intelligence that made him a fierce competitor.

“I’m not just going to do this, or anything that I do, for the sake of doing it,” Craven says. “I want to do it to succeed, I want to win. I still am very competitive. So I thought, ‘All right, I can do this, but what’s going to differentiate me from hundreds and thousands of other dealers?’ “

He determined his clean slate, good piece of property and ability to sell online or on the phone gave him a solid foundation. Plus, his background in racing provides an advantage in understanding how a car feels and drives.

“I just made up my mind that I’m going to buy cars that I love and it started with Corvettes,” Craven says. “That was always my favorite car. But





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A dealer plate on Craven's 2019 Corvette Stingray.

it's going to expand to a number of other cars, it's not just going to be what I love. There are other cars that I like but I wanted to learn all that I could about the Corvette. I'm still probably in the early innings of that, but I can't even describe to you how much fun it's been. I love connecting with people."

Craven hails from Newburgh, Maine, and grew up on a dairy farm in his home state. With no desire to be a career farmer, he spent many of his early years winning races and championships around New England. He eventually made his way south in the early 1990s and continued to climb the ranks. By 1997 he was part of vaunted Hendrick Motorsports — finishing third in that year's Daytona 500 behind teammates Jeff Gordon and Terry Labonte.

However, two crashes — one at Talladega Superspeedway in 1996 and the other at Texas Motor Speedway in 1997 — nearly derailed his promising career. The second forced him to miss two races during the 1997 campaign

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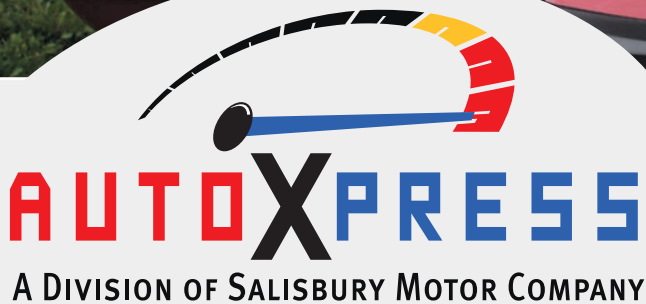
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*Craven, left, talks with Green Bennett, who popped into the Landis dealership for a recent visit. The men had not seen each other for several years.*



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# MOTORSPORTS

and several more the following year as he dealt with post-concussion syndrome.

One could easily look at Craven's time with Hendrick as a case of what might have been, and indeed the thought has crossed his mind. Yet he also is quick to note the power of positive thinking.

"When I go down that road it's very unhealthy," he says. "I share with people a key component to success is optimism, and if you have pessimism you need to eradicate it. If you're negative you've got to get rid of it. It's poison."

During the late 1990s and 2000, Craven drove for lower-funded teams, then in 2001, he found lightning in a bottle driving for Cal Wells and PPI Motorsports, a capable but underdog organization. Craven won his first-ever Cup Series race that fall after dueling with Hall of Famer Dale Jarrett at Martinsville, then went on to score the historic victory at Darlington



in 2003.

He retired from driving completely at the age of 40 in the mid 2000s.

Before long though, he realized something was missing. Craven spent a great summer soon after his retirement with his children in Maine, but upon their return to school began to feel as though he didn't have a purpose without racing. He had thrived on speed and adrenaline all his life and now says he will never fully retire again.

Craven eventually became involved with

television work and was a fixture in that world for 15 years. Still, during the COVID pause last spring he pondered what would be next in life, having seen many of his contemporaries in NASCAR say goodbye to the sport during his television tenure.

He ultimately connected with Dave Violette, a fellow Mainer who has run Corvettes North for more than 50 years in Waterville, Maine. Craven speaks highly of him and how his guidance over the past year has helped Ricky Craven Motorsports get established. In fact, he considers them teammates in many ways.

"He's a very particular person, he's very fussy, he loves Corvettes and he learns really fast," Violette says of Craven. "He's got a great personality, he's good with people and he speaks well."

Craven's latest venture is not his first foray into business ownership. He owned many of his own race teams in his formative years, as well as a powersports dealership in his home

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state during his driving career. It also bore the name Ricky Craven Motorsports, until it was lost in a fire on Labor Day Weekend in 2003.

Thus, running a business in the performance industry is not totally new to Craven. However, he's quick to say, "I don't know what I don't know."

Right now, he is focused on finding a niche. So far it has been locating original-owner Corvettes, many of which are so pristine that Craven often refers to them as "jewelry." In the past year, he has traveled the country to spend time with those owners who may be ready to buy the latest model, or are simply entering another stage in life. He helps others achieve their dreams of getting in the legendary cars.

He has even met customers in Landis. His business is located next to the popular Stringbean's BBQ & Family Restaurant, creating a built-in base of curious individuals, while the Ricky Craven Motorsports sign, some of the world's most spectacular cars, and his race-winning car from Martinsville also attract many visitors.

Craven is treating the business much as he did his driving career, seeing himself as an upstart underdog looking to build a team just like the one he was so proud to win with in the Cup Series.

It all works to serve his desire to both be approachable and maintain a sense of credibility.

"I think credibility is built from your reputation and your service, your



One of the Corvettes that Craven has to offer, a dark green 2014 Stingray.

quality, your product," Craven says. "I want to be proud of the cars that we're selling." **S**

*Dan Hodgdon, who recently moved to Landis, is a freelance writer and also works as a content producer at Theory Communication & Design in Charlotte, a marketing agency that handles automotive and motorsports clients.*

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*Connor Halpin,  
16, takes to the air  
on the Jump Line.*



# LEAPS

*of faith*

Dedicated volunteers keep building,  
cycling Mountain Bike Trail at  
Salisbury Community Park

WRITTEN BY MARK WINEKA  
PHOTOGRAPHY BY SEAN MEYERS







*Will Kepley soars  
over a jump.*



As he watches one biker after another take off, grab air, land safely on the other side and speed to the next jump, Paul

Effinger thinks of the thousands of hours he has put into making this a reality.

To him, the stunting, high-flying mountain bikers are poetry in motion.

“It’s just my thing,” says Effinger, who when he’s not building and making improvements to the Jump Line, is riding it with his 8-year-old son, Jonah. “It’s what makes me feel good.”

For the Salisbury Community Park’s Mountain Bike Trail, the Jump Line provides an extra amenity, especially popular with younger bikers. The half-mile, packed-dirt Jump line offers 17 jumps.

Effinger served as chief designer and builder of the Jump Line that is off-the-beaten-track fun for beginners to experts. The accompanying Flow Line beside it also has its share of jumps, bumps, humps and rollers. Later this year, Effinger would like to redo the Flow Line to make it more of a BMX track — “fast and fun,” he says.

Effinger’s dedication to the Jump Line mirrors the long-term commitment by others who have made the whole Mountain Bike Trail at Salisbury Community Park a growing destination for bikers, not to mention hikers and runners.

“As places go, I’d say this is pretty good,” says Drake Kerley, a mountain biker from Troutman who recently drove to Salisbury Community Park with two friends from Hickory. “They have good flow.”



• • •

The Mountain Bike Trail encompasses roughly 10 miles overall, counting the single-track Main Trail with optional loops such as the Down-N-Dirty, Curve & Swerve, Thunder Road, Turkey Loop, Rooty/Hilly Shortcut, Casey Jones, Humpty Dumpty, Sleepy Hollow and the Out-N-Back Loop.

Again, these multi-use trails also are open to walkers and runners, except for the Jump Line.

The trail builders — all volunteers — have given these various mountain bike routes and sections ratings of easy, moderate, difficult and advanced. The relatively new Jump Line gives bikers everything from easy go-arounds and roll-over tabletops to “very difficult” jumps, depending on their level of daring and confidence.

You could visit Salisbury Community Park (located off Hurley School Road) on a regular basis, walk its paved trail around the fishing lake, go for picnics or attend Little League ballgames and youth soccer matches without ever knowing the elaborate trail system exists in the bordering forest land, but it’s all part of the 300-acre park.

Local enthusiasts began the hard work of building the moun-

tain bike trail system about 15 years ago. Sean Meyers, who took the photographs for this story, has been one of the people building trails pretty much from the beginning in 2005.

Volunteers schedule weekend work days, particularly in the winter and early spring to chart out and blaze new trails, make improvements, rake leaves, chop out roots, dig holes, cross streams, clear dangerous limbs and more.

“I love it, man,” Meyers says. “We dig a lot of holes.” (The holes are dug so the volunteers can get down to the clay, which they use to pack berms.)

Along some areas of the Casey Jones, they’ve installed railroad ties, which also work great for constructing berms. The berms at strategic spots on the trail allow bikers to keep and build their momentum. Considerable thought goes into the

location of turns and erosion prevention, among other things.

“You want the trail to have flow,” Andy Pitner says. “... It’s nice when you see it come together.”

The builders create traditional farm fords to aid in getting over creeks where needed. Boy Scouts from Troop 448 built an impressive bridge for one creek crossing.

*Volunteers gather for a weekend workday to groom a new section of trail. Salisbury Community Park has become a destination for cyclists, bikers, and dirt jumpers as volunteers have continued to expand the multi-use trails within the 300-acre park.*

# STRENGTH EVERY STEP OF THE WAY



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**Thanks for these lessons and so many more, Mr. Paul.**

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Andrew Randolph, one of the trail builders and an avid mountain biker, says when a trail is new, it's kind of soft. "It will take a year for it to really mature," he says.

According to Meyers, the Salisbury Community Park trails drain quickly after heavy rains, thanks mostly to the area's sandy clay. "We've been open more than not," he says.

A recent workday attracted Meyers, Pitner, Randolph, Randy Brown, Eric Phillips, Nancy and Leonard Wood and high schooler Levi Rosser, who has used working on the trail as a way to earn his service hours for Gray Stone Day School.

"My job today is to cut trees," says Leonard Wood, who was identifying limbs along the Casey Jones trail that might pose safety hazards if not cleared away. He brought a chainsaw to help.

Otherwise, tools include wheelbarrows, shovels, tampers, ropes and pick axes — and it's hard work.

Wood, retired Rowan County health direc-

tor, was a road biker for a long time, but as he aged and was feeling more uncomfortable with automobiles and their drivers, "I swapped over to mountain bikes." He also helped in the earliest stages of trail-building up to present day with people such as Zorda Tucker, Rob Holmes, Gene Dehart and Meyers, who Woods says "is kind of the glue that's held this thing together."

The Woods visit the Mountain Bike Trail often. Leonard rides it, and Nancy often walks, then they also pitch in on workdays.

"The older we get the more we get out here," Nancy says.

The Woods say the trail overall is generally meant to be traveled in a clockwise direction, and riders find it to be more of a technical trek, difficult in stretches. You can go considerable miles without repeating anything. There also are a lot of entry points to the trail, if you know where to look for them.

"If you always turn left, you'll end up where you need to go," Pitner says. He first began mountain biking in the 1980s, fell out of it for

awhile then returned with a vengeance concluding, "You know what, riding my bike through the woods is still fun."

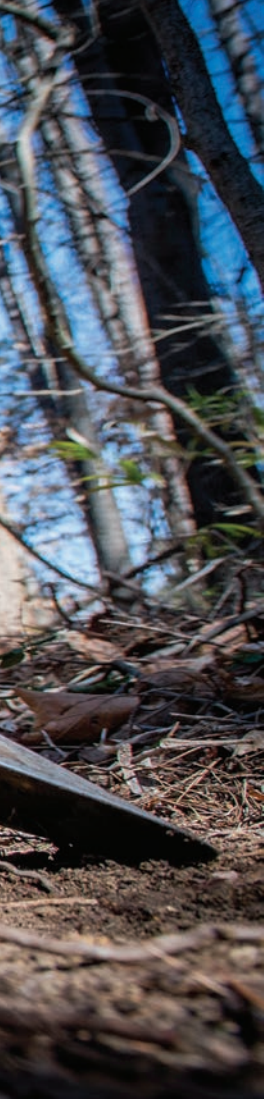
Brown, 59, first tried mountain biking about six years ago, when a co-worker loaned him a bike and he tried navigating his first trail. A Marine Corps veteran, Brown found he loved the freedom and exercise of mountain biking.

"This is what I want to do," he says.

Dedicated bikers can keep up with their times on a trail or particular sections of trail through the Strava cycling app on their phones. Randolph checks the app, for example, and notes 419 different people have logged in times for the Casey Jones loop.

Overall, mountain biking is exploding in popularity and new trails are being built everywhere.

"They're doing a lot to build community," Pitner says of trails as a whole, and the Salisbury Community Park trail builders hope to have a connection in the future to the Carolina Thread Trail.



**Above:**  
During a  
volunteer  
workday,  
Randy Brown  
takes a shovel  
to a trail he  
also likes to  
ride.

**Right:** Paul  
Effinger throws  
a trick.





*Paul Effinger grooms the Jump Line.*



*Nancy and Leonard Wood have been stewards of Salisbury Community Park and volunteering for over a dozen years to help with trail building and maintenance.*

The dedicated group has long talked about forming a nonprofit organization, which might help in the awarding of grants for future trail construction and improvements. The trail builders communicate and run their plans through the city's bike, greenway and pedestrian committee, and their liaison is Recreation Director Nick Aceves.

"I've been walking the Mountain Bike Trail since we moved here 12 years ago," says Salis-



bury attorney Laura Handley, hiking a loop that includes two creek crossings. They allow her dog, Fozzie Bear (and on other days, Cruiser), to get wet and have a drink.

Handley walks the Mountain Bike Trail a couple of times a week and has a route of about 3.5 miles. "It's just a really, really cool place to be," she says, describing some of the wildlife she's been able to see up close.

On her walks, Handley also has gotten to know the people who work on the trails. "They've done a fabulous job," she says. "They're a great bunch of guys."

As of this writing, Handley and her husband were preparing for a move and selling their Salisbury home. "There are a number of things I will miss about Salisbury," Handley says on the trail, "but this is probably the top."

• • •

John Whitaker took up mountain biking about a year ago, and it was tough at first. "I can

come out here and go 10 miles now," he says. "(But) it definitely took some adjustment."

He likes the fresh air and exercise, and says he has lost 10 pounds thanks to his new pastime. He travels to the Mountain Bike Trail about every week, navigating the trail system while his children, Riley and Ava, enjoy the ups and downs of the Jump Line.

"I don't try to do anything crazy like they do," says Ava, a sophomore in high school.

For years, former BMX racer Paul Effinger wanted to build a place to jump bikes and, at one point, he started construction on land behind his house, until it turned into a property dispute with his neighbor. Effinger considered buying six acres elsewhere for a jump line or jump park, but through folks such as Phillips, owner of Skinny Wheels, and trail builders such as Dehart, Meyers and Pitner, he connected with the city and received the go-ahead for a Jump Line at Salisbury Community Park.



*Above: Meredith Abramson rides the trails. Right: Andrew Pitner clears debris.*

“This is my six acres that I was looking for,” Effinger says. “They’ve given me my childhood dream.”

By May 2019, Effinger had consulted with a trail builder and called on friends with the right equipment. Over four days they had roughed out the Jump Line.

On day five, “I had my shovel in the ground, and I haven’t stopped since,” says Effinger who hand-built a lot of the rest. “It has grown exponentially since then. I like to ride, the kids like to ride. It just benefits everyone. ... There ain’t nothing like this around.”

Effinger says he was motivated by his joy of biking and wanting this kind of experience that both he and son Jonah could do together.

“I have done an incredible amount of work,” Effinger says. “But shovel a dump truck full of dirt, and your troubles melt away. You’re too tired to be





mad. It's spiritual work, man."

Effinger and the Jump Line receive high marks from the users.

"It's come a long way," says Jesse Ciancimino, 13, of Davie County. "There's nothing I could say could be improved. It's a good park."

"I love this place, it's so much fun," says Dustin Vanover, 15, who on this day is riding the Jump Line, but he also races for the Cox Mill High School NICA (National Interscholastic Cycling Association) team in Cabarrus County. He and friends sometimes ride the other trails in the park as practice for the NICA team.

"This is a great trail system," Dustin's dad, Kevin Vanover says. "He earns his Jump Line time by doing the trail system."

Kevin Vanover coaches the Cox Mill NICA team, and some of those kids also belong to a Cabarrus County composite NICA team. Phillips, of Skinny Wheels, organized and coaches the Rowan Rockhounds composite NICA team for kids in grades six through 12.



"The goal is to get more kids on bikes," Vanover says. "It's a really good organization and all-inclusive for kids not into the normal stick-and-ball sports."

Think of cross country running for boys and girls, only on mountain bikes.

Will Kepley, 17, of Salisbury, frequents the Jump Line, but he prefers BMX riding.

"Paul is a great guy," Kepley says. "We may not have a skatepark, but we have this. Paul's doing it for the community. You don't get many places like this that are free (and of this level) of quality. I love to throw tricks, and I love to go high."

Connor Halpin, 16, of Salisbury, is a dedicated biker who works at Skinny Wheels and helps Effinger build things on the Jump Line on occasion. He's also a member of the Rowan Rockhounds.

"It's a great place to come and hang out with friends," Connor says before taking off on another run of jumps. **S**







*Above: Laura Handley and her dog Fozzie Bear hike the trails weekly at Salisbury Community Park. Below left: Andy Abramson rides the trails. Below right: Jesse Ciancimino, left, and Dustin Vanover roar down the Jump Line.*





*A new sidewalk  
through the park leads  
to the Bell Tower.*



*on the*  
**BRINK**

As Bell Tower Green gets closer to reality, here are some things to know

WRITTEN BY SUSAN SHINN TURNER

PHOTOGRAPHY BY JON C. LAKEY



*The trellises will eventually be covered with vegetation.*

T

he \$12.7 million Bell Town Green in downtown Salisbury is slated to open in mid June. Here are five quick things you need to know about this transformative project:

**1.** The water wall. It's 65 feet wide and 15 feet tall. It has a splash pad. It has LED lighting. It's big.

"We decided early on we needed a wow!" says Dyke Messinger, president of the Bell Tower Green board. "That's the water wall."

Water features, he notes, are the number-one draw of parks.

**2.** Covered trellises. Right now, there are three huge circles, pretty bare, to be sure. Eventually, they'll be covered with creeping green plants. The trellises can also be lit. Underneath will be benches and yellow Adirondack chairs.

**3.** A children's play area. But it's not what you'd expect. It's non-traditional, Messinger says, meant to encourage creative play.

"The equipment is designed so that children can play with it in all different manners," says Allison Merriman, a registered landscape architect with LandDesign in Charlotte, which created the park. "It's not single-purpose."

**4.** A full-service restaurant with outdoor dining. The former Wrenn House will be renovated and Messinger hopes it will be open by December 2021, and it will offer rooftop dining. Next to the restaurant are the gazebo and the refurbished Bell Tower, where Messinger expects weddings to take place every weekend.

**5.** A performance stage. A 30-foot by 30-foot stage will host any variety of performances, Messinger says. "It's open to the whole community."

Messinger says events in the park will be about "people, protests and fun."

In other words, this is a park for the people — however they choose to use it.

“We want to signal to this community that this is an important thing,” Messinger says. “Our goal is to build the finest park in central North Carolina. I think we’ve done that.”



Dyke Messinger

Bell Tower Green is under construction within the city block bounded by West Innes, South Church, West Fisher and South Jackson streets.

So many other things have gone into making Bell Tower Green a reality, of course. Here’s a closer look at Merriman, the homegrown designer behind the park; the community-wide fundraising, which rallied behind a simple slogan; and how the park will address safety concerns:

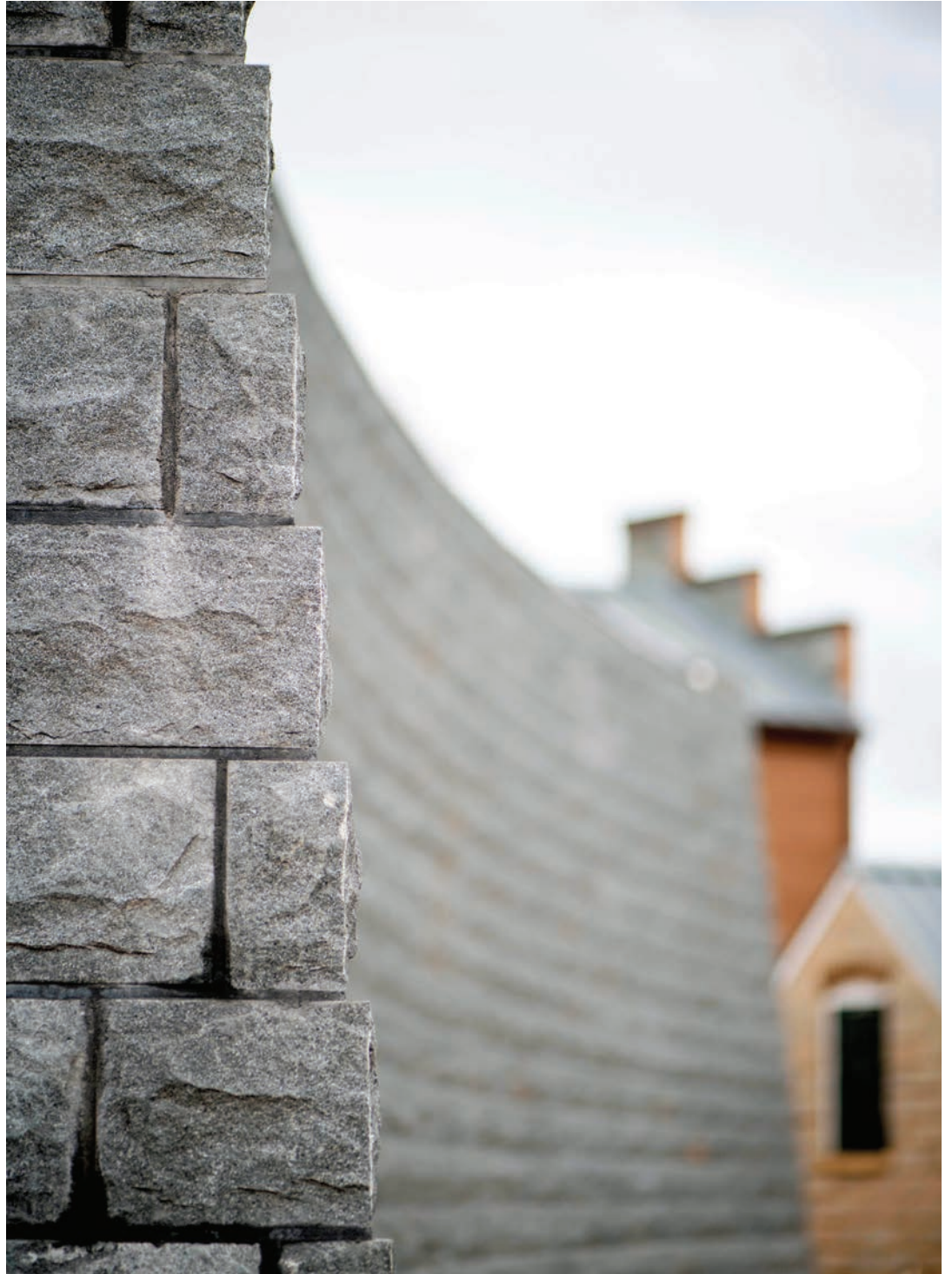
### **‘YOU PROBABLY SHOULD CHECK ON THIS’**

Landscape architect Allison Merriman is a Rowan County native who has left her mark on this project.

“My dad read a story about the park in the Post,” Merriman says, “and he said, ‘You probably should check on this.’ So I did.”

The daughter of Charlie Walters and the late Suzie Walters, Merriman is a graduate of East Rowan High School and Clemson University. She says she doesn’t remember much about the original First Presbyterian Church building, the only remnant of which is the iconic Bell Tower. She does recall when the rest of the original church was torn down.

Through the project, she says, “I started making connections again with people I knew or my parents had known when I was growing up.”



*The slight stairstep of the water wall will add to the cascade effect.*



Merriman is part of a three-person team with LandDesign and serves as studio leader. Her team has provided expertise in architectural, mechanical, electrical, plumbing, handicapped accessibility and lighting.

The team studied parks all over the country to discover what would best translate to Salisbury. They looked at the Romare Bearden Park in Charlotte — which her firm also designed — and a park in Rock Hill.

She contacted members of the arts community, parks and recreation, downtown neighbors, Rowan Museum, the library, city and county officials, and college students. She asked what they wanted. The park had a booth at the 2017 Wine About Winter and asked the same question. In all, she got more than 600 responses.

Huge garden hoops lead into the park to frame the view of the water wall, the park's signature piece. The hoops will eventually be planted with Carolina jessamine, trumpet honeysuckle and clematis. There are 28 yellow lounge chairs throughout the park.

“Our hope is that this is something that people will be proud of,” Merriman says. “We hope people are happy with it, and we hope there is something for everybody in the park.”



*The children's play area will offer artfully designed play equipment.*

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### *EVERY DOLLAR COUNTED*

Bell Tower Green has been truly a grassroots effort. The park received \$350,000 from the State of North Carolina's Parks and Recreation Fund and another \$500,000 from the City of Salisbury. But the rest of the \$12,750,000 budget was raised by private funds with the slogan, "Let's build a park!"

"I cannot thank Fred and Alice and (the late) Bill and Nancy Stanback for serving as our lead donors," says Messinger, president of the BTG board.

As of this writing, nearly all of the money has been raised. If the board has to borrow a small loan, that's OK, he says.



Paul Fisher

Messinger credits the Robertson Family Foundation for its vision in buying the property from First Presbyterian Church. The park then became a non-profit corporation, and a board was assembled.

The late Paul Fisher was part of the fundraising team. There are few large projects in Rowan County that didn't have his involvement.

"Paul was the inspiration, keeping everybody excited," Messinger says.

A donor wall in the park will list donations from \$25 up to hundreds of thousands of dollars, Messinger says. "We had one boy who cut grass and made a contribution to the park."





*Clockwise from far left: Climbing equipment in the children's play area; construction crews work on the roof for the performance stage; the amount of piping and pumps required to move the water across the face of the wall; landscape architect and Rowan County native Allison Merriman worked on the project.*



Fisher knew that every dollar counted. “He always focused on fair-share giving,” son Steve says. “He was as passionate about a \$50 gift as a million-dollar gift.”

It was not an easy period to raise money, but Fisher was undeterred, his son says. Fisher also likely knew the park would be his last big project. He died Oct. 30, 2020. “Paul would not like us expounding on him a lot,” his wife, Sue, says. “He would like us to praise the investors for making the park happen. He always looked at the big picture. To say Paul was excited about this park was an understatement. The real excitement is we know it’s going to happen. He lived, breathed and slept this park for a long time.”

When Fisher died, people who had already given gave again in his memory, “which was very touching for my family,” Steve Fisher says. His sister, Paula Fisher Philpott, lives in Greenville, S.C.

The Bell Tower Green board will eventually deed the park to the city.

### ***SAFETY FIRST***

A big part of a park has to be about safety, and safety has been a top issue from the beginning at Bell Tower Green, Messinger says.

“If anyone is panhandling there, the police will be called immediately,” Messinger

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says. "Granted, the park is a magnet. But we think it will be self-policed by the citizens."

The parks will have benches throughout, for example, but there will be arms in the middle to discourage sleeping on them. The park will also be lit 24 hours a day.

"No matter where you are, you can see anything in the park," Messinger says.

Meredith Abramson chairs the park's master plan committee. She's also a neighbor to the park.

"Next to parking, safety was the public's No. 1 concern," she says. "We redesigned the large trellises to make them more open."

She adds, "We have said many times that none of us has ever built a park, but we aren't afraid to ask questions and learn as we go. We hope there will be a police presence, of course. But we have an intention to keep the park programmed with lots of activity. Hopefully with lots of people and activities, it will be a positive and healthy place."

"We're not afraid to talk about the safety of the park," Messinger notes. "The more it's discussed, the more people will be aware."

As with other locations, when you're out and about, common sense should always prevail, Abramson says. "Look around and pay attention to your surroundings." **S**

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

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WHEN HISTORY SPEAKS



*The Meroney Theater, built in 1905, was saved from neglect by a group of local preservationists. (Sean Meyers photo)*

# Preservation as progress

*The past should always inform our future*

WRITTEN BY SADA STEWART



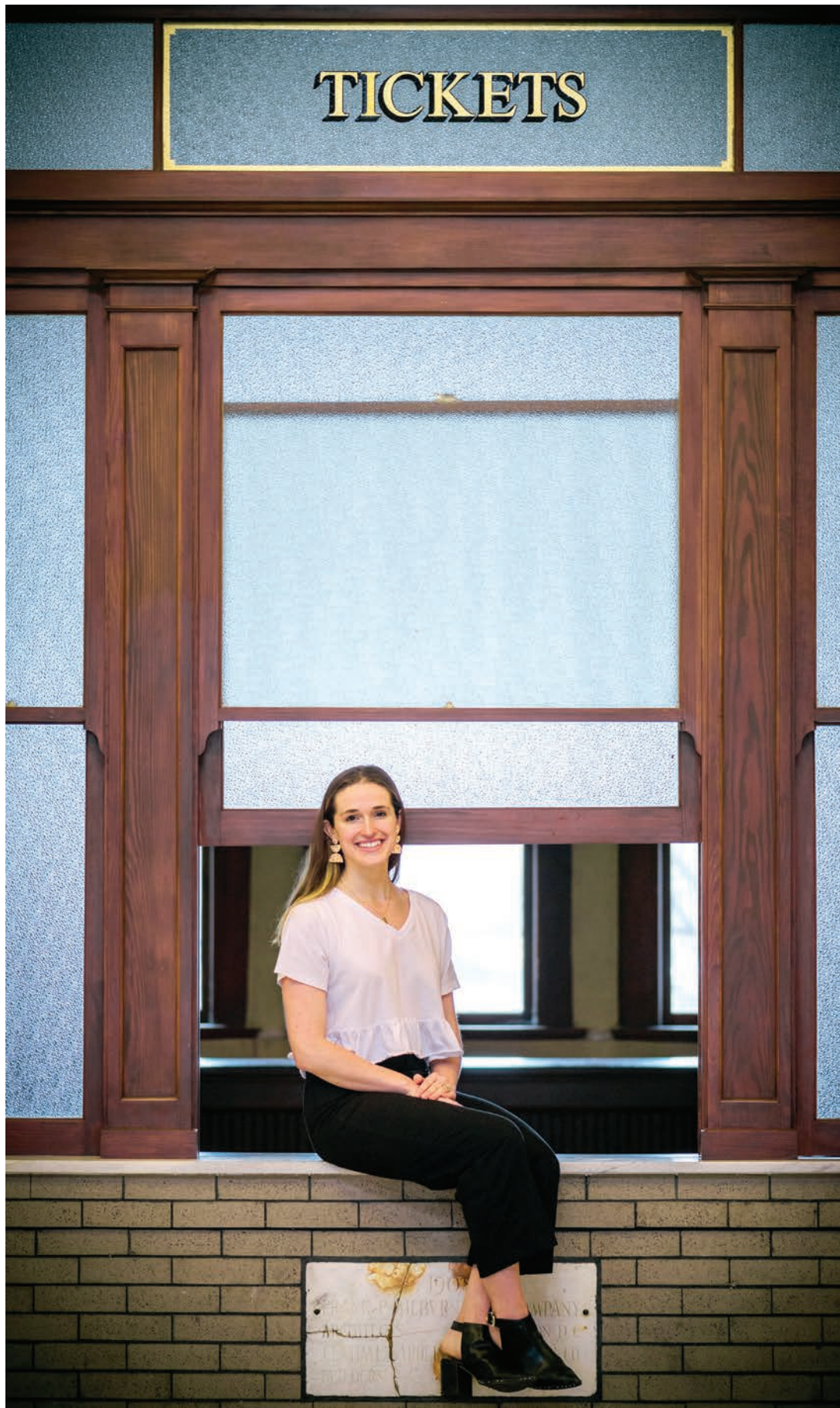
*The train depot downtown is a prominent historic structure in the city. (Sean Meyers photo)*

**Editor's note:** *When History Speaks* is a regular contribution by Historic Salisbury Foundation.

**M**y mother has the patience of a saint. As with most childhood reflections and revelations, I respect her patience now much more than I appreciated it as a kid. However, there was one thing she never had patience for: the “What If” game.

In our household, any question that began with, “What if...” (from any of us, at any age. Yes, even high school) resulted in the automatic response of, “And what if pigs came flying out of my nose?” Given the constant peppering of questions provided by four children, all born within five years of each other, I am shocked she always managed to counter with flying pigs and never anything more severe.

I have a confession though (sorry, Mom). Now that I am not under her roof, I engage in the occasional “what if,” and sometimes I come to conclusions that have nothing to do with pigs, wings or noses.



*Sada Stewart has been executive director for HSF since mid 2019. (Sean Meyers photo)*



Most recently, I have asked, what if, when history spoke, we listened? What if we use the past to inform our future? What if we utilize preserving our community to make progress as a City? Historic Salisbury Foundation is fortunate to be fighting for preservation at a pivotal juncture in social history, and we are excitedly re-envisioning how our organization engages with our mission: To preserve, protect and revitalize the historic fabric of Salisbury and Rowan County.

### **WHAT IF SALISBURY HAD NOT LOST THESE BUILDINGS?**

Despite our current mission, the foundation did not form out of pro-active measures, but rather out of reactive concerns. In the 1960s and '70s, Salisbury considered a new Main Street plan that was similar to one adopted by many other small towns across the country — defined in one word, demolition. Downtown buildings were to be torn down for a walking mall, similar to the ones that are being abandoned at furious rates today.

*Edward and Susan Norvell's house sits at the corner of Bank and Fulton streets.  
(Sean Meyers photo)*

Fulton Street homes would be gone and a mere memory, if that. Horah and Monroe streets would have entirely different configurations, likely impeding downtown traffic.

Edward Clement and his peers with their new organization, Historic Salisbury Foundation, advocated (quite successfully) for saving Salisbury's historic character in the form of architecture, streetscapes and neighborhoods.

Unfortunately, not all buildings were spared and saved for preservation.

Key among those lost buildings are local attorney and philanthropist Edward Norvell's family house, the Mildred Norvell House; an Innes Street Greek Revival house used as Western North Carolina Railway offices; as well as the Captain Charles Price House (now the site of the Prince Charles Apartments). Foundation founder Clement had this to say about the loss of buildings downtown:

"In the three decades following World War II, America lost hundreds of thousands of irreplaceable historic buildings.

"Salisbury was no exception. It lost major landmarks like the



“ *HSF strengthens our community as we promote sustainability, protect historic properties, improve neighborhoods, increase property values and build tourism.* ”

Price House, Davis and Wiley Bank, pre-Civil War houses along West Innes Street, large houses along South Main Street, the landmark First Presbyterian Church, the beautiful Chambers townhouse, Harrison House on South Main and other important buildings. However, in the early 1970s, Historic Salisbury Foundation, with the strong support of the city and community leaders, was able to stop the bleeding and begin to save the unique character, beauty and livability of our historic Colonial

*Before the massive undertaking of its restoration, preservationist Ed Clement and former Historic Salisbury Foundation executive Director Mark McDonald stand in front of the downtrodden Salisbury Depot. HSF preserved and restored what is today Salisbury Station, and HSF remains its owner. (Photo courtesy of Historic Salisbury Foundation)*

city.”

These properties are only part of a much longer, depressing list of properties lost to demolition over the course of Salisbury’s history. From the smallest detail of a nail to the larger entity of the structure, every building holds a series of stories woven together about a myriad of topics — construction, design, intent, inhabitants, families, important events, mundane days. Today, all Salisbury has is the absence of those stories for all buildings lost to time, begging the question, what if Salisbury had not lost these buildings?

**WHAT IF SALISBURY  
HAD NOT SAVED THESE  
BUILDINGS?**



Residence of Mrs. Charles Price

Again, Clement and the foundation stepped forward in 1972 with a vision and the drive to save Salisbury's historic structures. Though there have been some failures, the successes of buildings saved define Salisbury much more distinctly.

Foundation board member Sherry Beck shares the following: "I grew up in Statesville and remember The Playhouse Theater. I went there every Saturday for a double-feature matinee. They tore it down to build a bank."

Fortunately, we have our historic theater, the Meroney Theater, punctuating the 200 block of South Main Street. Built in 1905, the Meroney began as a stage theater and later became a movie theater before Hurricane Hugo and the early 1990s almost saw the end of the building. Though not a direct Historic Salisbury Foundation effort, the preservation of the Meroney Theater was due to fundraising efforts and pres-

*This home, which once stood at 300 N. Fulton St., was built for Capt. Charles Price, a Salisbury attorney and Republican leader. Fondly remembered for its ballroom, the house was razed to make way for today's Prince Charles Apartments. (Photo courtesy of Postcards of Salisbury book by Susan Sides)*

ervation-minded ethics of the community, and its latest renovation brought live theater back to the stage.

The Salisbury Station saw a similar fate pending as train travel waned in the mid-20th century, and eventually all traffic ceased through the iconic 1908 depot, designed by Frank Milburn. Left vacant and facing demolition by neglect, the station was sold to the foundation, which spent more than \$3 million of donated funds to meticulously restore the space.

Today the station still sees train passengers and will eventually experience expanded service as the N.C. Department of Transportation, the city and the foundation cooperate to design and build an architecturally compatible tunnel for increased passenger flow at the station.

In its first 49 years, the foundation added protective measures to over 100 historic properties in Rowan County and continues to add to that number with its Revolving Fund.

Both the Meroney Theater and the Historic Salisbury Station stand out as highlights saved in Salisbury, though they are by no means the only examples of historic buildings that contribute to the character and success of Salisbury.

As iconic as they are, they were almost lost to time, begging the question what if Salisbury had not saved these buildings?

Mom's refusal to play the "what if" game with us as kids was not an attempt to limit our



curiosity. It was a successful lesson in lifelong problem-solving skills. If we had a “what if” kind of thought, we needed to spend a little more time considering our topic, narrowing our scope and constructing a more direct and informed question.

That is exactly what we are doing here at Historic Salisbury Foundation. Fifty years ago, Clement and a number of his peers asked themselves, what if they stood up to fight for the community in which they lived?

Today the foundation continues that work. I, with the help of countless board members, volunteers, members, colleagues and friends, have spent a great deal of time reaching back to the beginning of HSF to consider our goals, align our focus and direct our efforts with the affirmation that preservation is progress in 2021.

As with most things in life, Mom was right — HSF does not need to ask, “what if preservation is progress?” Preservation most definitely is progress. HSF strengthens our community as we promote sustainability, protect historic properties, improve neighborhoods, increase property values and build tourism.

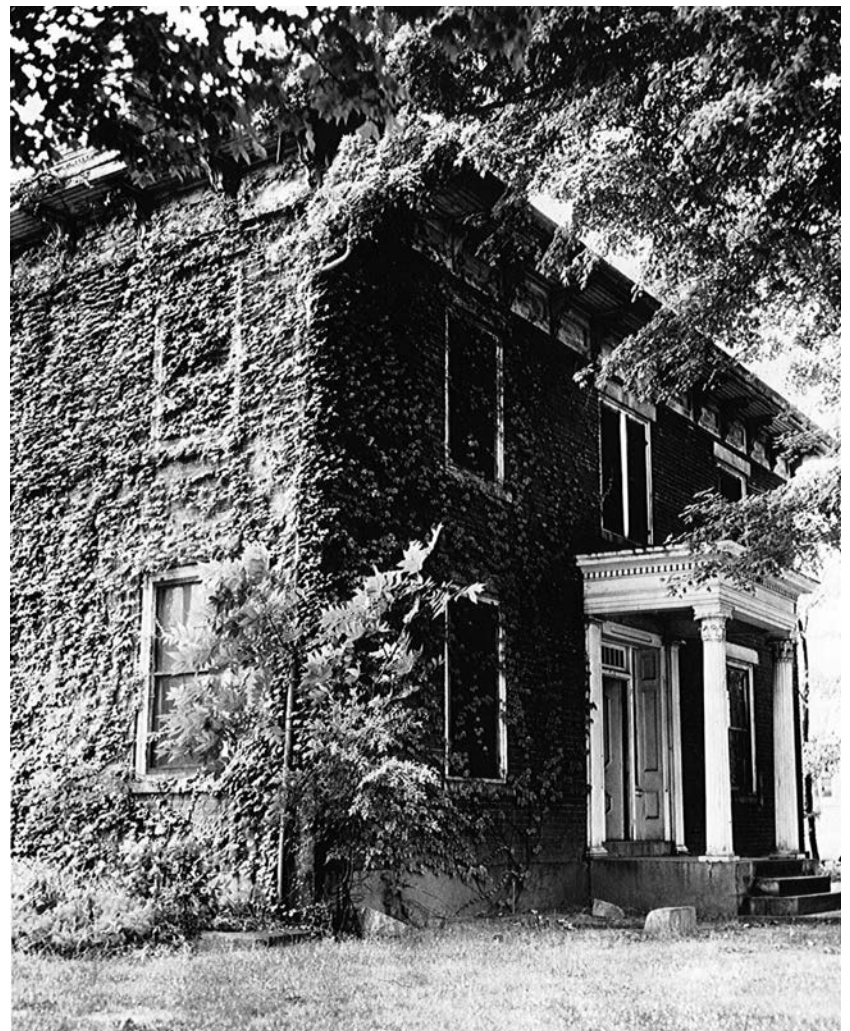
Excuse the italics, but we *save* the past for the

present and future generations. We *engage* the community as a volunteer and membership organization. We *encourage* tourism through our annual tour of homes and house museum. We *celebrate* preservation through events and activities. We *develop* pride in Salisbury as an historic city. We *increase* property values on historic homes and buildings. We *promote* adaptive reuse and sustainable building practices. We *teach* respect for our heritage.

To stop asking these “what if” questions and understand how we can all support Salisbury and Rowan County’s growth as a historic community with an eye for the future, join Historic Salisbury Foundation today. ([historicsalisbury.org/support/membership/](http://historicsalisbury.org/support/membership/)) **S**

*Sada Stewart is executive director of Historic Salisbury Foundation.*

**Below left:** *The Meroney Theatre at night. (Sean Meyers photo). Below right:* *This 1855 Greek Revival house, formerly at the corner of Innes and South Church streets, had been built by First Presbyterian Church for \$7,000. Over its life, the house was a private residence, offices for Western N.C. Railroad and finally headquarters for the county’s 1953 Bicentennial Committee shortly before the house was demolished. (Photo from Ed Norvell’s copy of ‘Salisbury Renaissance’)*



| *salisbury's the place* |



**‘IRISES’**

**By Doris Trexler — Acrylic**

Artwork of local scenes for *Salisbury's the Place* may be submitted to [mark.wineka@salisburythemagazine.com](mailto:mark.wineka@salisburythemagazine.com)  
Vertical orientation is preferred.

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