

SUMMER 2021

SALISBURY

the magazine



She's so FLY

*The skydiving thrill
at Rowan airport*

GETTING THE SCOOP AT
Dairy Queen

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sisters

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On the cover: Moments after exiting an airplane nearly 13,000 feet high, Salisbury the Magazine reporter Natalie Anderson experienced almost a full minute of free fall at an acceleration of 100-plus miles per hour during her skydive jump with instructor Allen Taylor at Piedmont Skydiving in Salisbury. **On this page:** A delicious dollop of vanilla dangles from the vending machine at the Dairy Queen on West Innes Street. (Sean Meyers photo)

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Here's the scoop: Adventure lies ahead

Over the past year or so, Salisbury the Magazine hasn't exactly ignored the pandemic, but as much as possible, we've tried to show life marching on. One big exception was last summer's issue, dedicated to the kinds of things we were doing while sheltering at home. Readers sent us photos of their gardens, crafting, artwork, Zoom meetings, building projects, recreational outings and just how they were coping in general during those early days when things were maybe the scariest.

Those hundreds of images had a sense of comfort, beauty and reconnection to them. It's as though the pandemic allowed us to take stock of things and realize what was important. Often, it came down to family.

I go back to those pages on occasion as a reminder of where we've been, while also thinking of all that has happened since cases and death counts became familiar numbers in the news. Sure, many of us are vaccinated now, but the real shots in the arm — or slaps to our heads — have led us to realize, first, we have much to be thankful for and second, we still have a lot to learn, even considerable growing up to do as humans.

So here we are, a year later, and we now bring you a summer issue much different than the one in 2020. The following pages are filled with adventure, cute cats and dogs, swimming, art — and a stop at the Dairy Queen! Excuse the exclamation point, but Salisbury's DQ has that effect on me.

Staff writer Natalie Anderson provides the adventure part. When asked whether she would jump out of an airplane for the magazine, Natalie took the bait and went skydiving at Rowan County's Mid-Carolina Airport.

In this issue, Natalie writes about the skydiving enterprise and also gives a first-person account of her tandem jump. She had a camera strapped to her that provides some of the images, while photographer Jon Lakey shot the rest.

Contributing writer Ben White and photographer Sean Meyers worked together in bringing the story and pictures behind a landmark establishment in Salisbury — the 70-year-old Dairy Queen on West Innes Street.

Elsewhere, sportswriter extraordinaire Mike London caught up with the Knorr sisters, Emily and Katie, whose accomplishments as swimmers at Salisbury High School are now taking them to Division I competition in college after they graduate this spring.

The Summer 2021 issue actually includes a sheltering story, but



this time it's about the Faithful Friends Animal Sanctuary in Salisbury. The nonprofit, no-kill shelter has been finding great homes for dogs and cats since 2007 while also preaching the importance of spaying and neutering.

In *When History Speaks*, Leah Champion of Historic Salisbury Foundation shares how adaptive reuse worked in transforming the Salisbury depot into Salisbury Station, which has long been an important events venue in town. There's a good chance you've been to a wedding reception or fundraiser at the depot.

Street artist Joe Heilig answers questions as this edition's *Rowan Original*. Beth Taft provides the artwork for *Salisbury's the Place*, and Katie Scarvey took the photograph for *Through the Lens*.

Please put the past year aside for now and escape into these pages that follow.

Then remember what the pandemic has been teaching us: It's always a good time to reconnect, take stock, jump out of airplanes and order a dipped cone at the Dairy Queen.

Mark Wineka,
Editor, Salisbury the Magazine

THROUGH THE LENS by Katie Scarvey

Katie Scarvey shot this photograph in Catawba College's Nature Preserve, a favorite place for her to walk. She used an iPhone 11 and says, 'I like to take pictures of the trees when they're sort of bare because they look so other-worldly in those swamp conditions. The contrast with the new green of spring made me happy.'

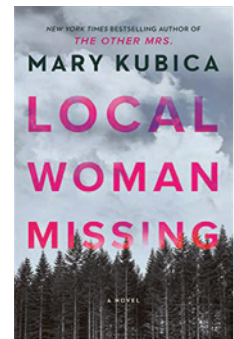


Fill summer with suspense, tragedy, wolves

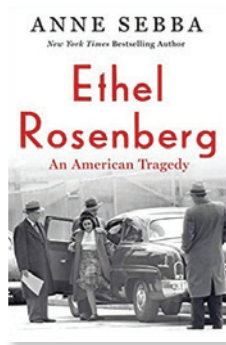
This summer will be a fantastic one for new releases. We, as readers, will finally start to reap the benefit of all this time great authors have had under the pandemic to craft their next manuscripts, and what I've read so far is good! As you plan your travels, near or far, here are a few books to pack in your bag this summer:

Local Woman Missing by Mary Kubica (352 pp, Park Row) will be the first of these titles to hit our shelves on May 18. In a quiet neighborhood where everyone knows everyone, Shelby Tebow is the first to go missing. Not long after, Meredith Dickey and her 6-year-old daughter, Delilah, vanish just blocks away from where Shelby was last seen, striking fear into their community. An elusive search yields more questions than answers, and the case eventually goes cold until 11 years later, Delilah returns.

I devoured this thriller in two sittings, once at work, where I never seem to find time to read! If you are looking for suspenseful family drama, look no further. This one will help you get through the dog days of summer.



To be released June 8, make sure you don't miss *Ethel Rosenberg: An American Tragedy* written by Anne Sebba (320 pp, St. Martin's Press). In June 1953, Julius and Ethel Rosenberg, a couple with two young sons, were led separately from their prison cells on death row and electrocuted moments apart.



Both had been convicted of conspiracy to commit espionage for the Soviet Union, even though the U.S. government was aware that the evidence against Ethel was shaky at best and based on the perjury of her own brother. Seventy years after her trial, this is the first time Ethel's story has been told with the full use of the dramatic and tragic prison letters she exchanged with her husband, her lawyer and her psychotherapist over a three-year period, two of them in solitary confinement. Hers is the resonant story of what happens when a government motivated by fear tramples on the rights of its

citizens.

The Rosenbergs are such an American cultural phenomenon, yet I learned so much reading this balanced depiction of Ethel's culpability, which was nil or next to nil. Also there was her loyalty to family — even up to the early days of her arrest — towards her mother and horrid brother. This book is the first in more than 30 years to focus on one half of that couple, and much new evidence has surfaced since then.

I cannot believe this is the first full biography of Ethel Rosenberg published in my lifetime, and I cannot recommend it enough as an example of loyalty to family in the face of grave personal peril.

Coming Aug. 3, *Once There Were Wolves* is the second novel by Charlotte McConaghy (272 pp, Flatiron Books). McConaghy's debut work, *Migrations*, was one of my most recommended staff picks in 2020 — a gorgeous book about a woman's incredible adventure to track the final migration of a flock of rare birds across the world.

This new novel brings us a scientist, Inti Flynn, who arrives from afar to reintroduce wolves to the Scottish Highlands. Inti's efforts to re-wild the dying landscape, however, are met with fierce opposition from the locals, who fear for their safety and way of life, and become increasingly vocal as farmers begin to interact with the wolves.



"Once There Were Wolves" is a story of violence and tenderness, about the healing power of nature and the re-wilding of our spirits in a world that has lost so much.

This novel is slow to build, and frankly not quite as compelling as McConaghy's near perfect *Migrations*, but it has a strong finish that resolves some compelling "mysteries." If you appreciate nature and the power wildlife can display in the lives of humans, this is tale well worth your time — after reading McConaghy's phenomenal first book.

▶ The titles mentioned above 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 to confirm store hours and events. Alissa Redmond is the owner of this store.



| Q & A |

Call me 'Joe'

Drawing daily from his South Main Street bench, artist Heilig has become a downtown fixture

WRITTEN BY MARK WINEKA | PHOTOGRAPHY BY JON C. LAKEY

There's a good chance you've seen Joseph Heilig, pencil in hand, drawing something from the sidewalk bench outside of Fuller Market at 112 S. Main St.

Or just as likely, you've talked to him. Heilig is a good conversationalist. On the public bench, he surrounds himself with samples of his work, or he pulls out a big album stuffed with other examples. He has a radio tuned to a rhythm-and-blues station and says he finds the music soothing and inspiring.

A book near Heilig's side is titled *Think and Grow Rich: A Black Choice*. Always the busi-

nessman, he says he has read the book three times. He also has had business cards printed that say, "Joseph Heilig/Street Artist," and he'll write his cellphone number and email address on the card if you're a customer.

At the time of this interview, Heilig was staying nights at the Rowan Helping Ministries shelter. He had been sharing an apartment with someone else before being told to leave, he says, "for my political beliefs."

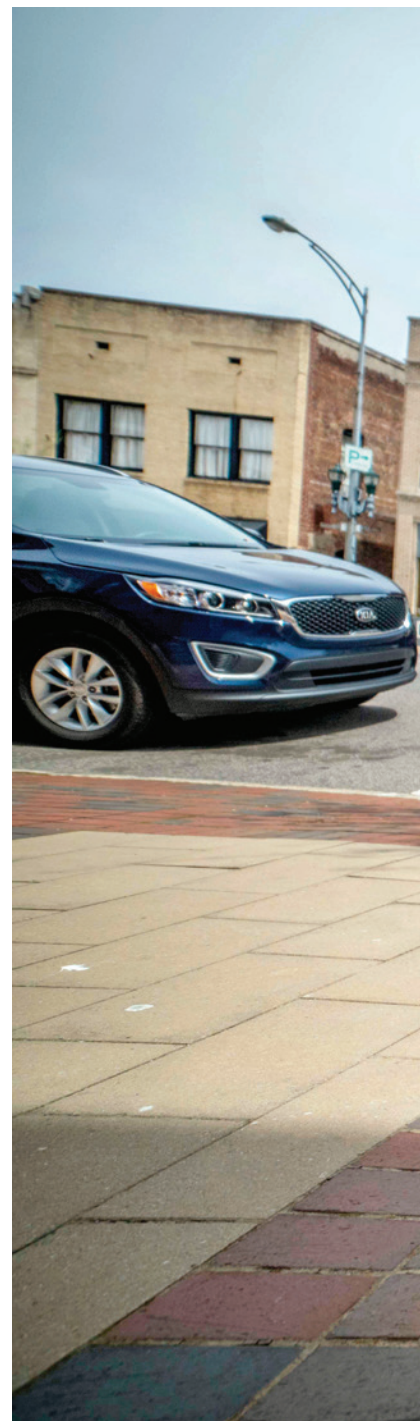
Heilig spent much of his childhood and adult life in New York, residing in the Queensbridge Houses community of Long Island City. He describes it as six blocks of multi-storied

housing — 96 buildings altogether covering 29 acres — one of the largest public housing projects in the country.

"There was a lot of people, a lot of drama going on," Heilig says. "There were a lot of good people and programs, but we also had a lot of crime in our community. I'm thankful I was able to move on and get out of there."

"I had good friends who lost their lives. Others have now moved on to better lives."

In 1999, Heilig himself moved south to Salisbury, where his mother had been born and he still had family connections. He found





Artist Joe Heilig helps Timeless Wigs owner Dileika Wilson-Ballard by taking her dog, Halo Sophia, for a walk.

work at various places such as Sam's Car Wash, in food service and at nursing homes. He also lived with and took care of an elderly man, now deceased.

He kept being lured back, however, to a passion he has had since he was a kid — art.

"I've created my own business through hard work — drawing people," Heilig says.

Heilig, 64, receives a small amount of Social Security monthly and otherwise depends on his art and donations. Salisbury the Magazine recently caught up with this Rowan Original in the downtown.

Do you mind us calling you a street artist, or what would you like to be called?

They basically call me "Joe," but you can call me street artist, too, or plain artist. Sometimes people kill me when they call me "Painter Man." I really don't like that. "Hey, Painter Man" (laughs), but I'm actually drawing.

How long have you been working from this bench here on South Main Street?

I'm going to say over seven years now.

How often are you here during the week, and what are your "office" hours?

I make it down here between the hours of 11 and 3 every day, except for Sunday.

Why is this a good location?

They have a bench. At one time this place was called Innes Street Drug. I figured if I was going to get any business, I need to sit here while people were coming out of the store.



Heilig is an integral part of life in downtown Salisbury. Along with his interaction with pedestrians passing the bench where he works, he has forged friendships with several store owners.

What are the kinds of things people usually ask you to draw for them?

The main thing people love is their pets, and when I say “pets,” I mean their dogs. Next come their children, Next come individuals, things that they know and love. They bring you these photographs and pictures.

Are you almost always working from a photograph?

Yes, yes, yes. To have people just stand still, that’s a little challenging. I used to do what they call quick sketches, basically it’s like a character sketch. Some of the character sketches I did — two or three people have shown me their phone, and they actually still have them on their phone.

People say when I finish, “Your artwork looks better than the photograph.” Those type of accolades I get from the public inspires me and keeps me driving and doing what I do. It’s an occupation, but I have fun with what I do. I’m so happy. I’m able to draw. I can make my own hours. I can draw for five minutes, or I can draw for eight hours.

What’s the turnaround time in getting a drawing back to a customer?

The time period is anywhere from two weeks

to a month-and-a-half, if I have people ahead of you. All I ask of my customers is to be patient and you’ll get that call someday to pick it up.

On average, how much do your drawings cost? Do you ask for payment up front?

Half the money down as deposit. On completion, they bring me the other half. I go to Office Depot and make copies for myself and maybe for them. I give them maybe one or two copies, in case they have a loved one they’d like to pass it on to.

I charge \$160 or up to about \$300, depends on what you want. I mean, I went up on prices, but people are still willing to pay because of the quality of artwork I’ve done. At one time, I was charging \$120 up to \$240, but I’m also open to negotiation if people can’t afford that much, to bring the price down. But I still have to live and eat.

Do you make a living at this, or is it a continual struggle?

No, it’s actually a real good living. It kept a roof over my head before I told you about being kicked out of that place for my political beliefs. I was able to pay my bills, never missed a beat. Anytime I get money, I don’t squander it.

Right now, actually, I got the hood term “two

racks.” That means \$2,000 I have in savings and I’ve been staying over two months now in the shelter, and I’ve been putting the money away so I can find me a place on my own. I’m also looking for housing close to downtown Salisbury, within walking distance. I don’t own a car.

How many conversations do you have with people a day?

Down here, I conversate with anybody that stops by.

Does it give you time to work?

I split the time between conversation and also doing artwork, and I can talk to you while doing artwork.

Is this bench your studio or more of a sales room? Do you do most of your drawings here or somewhere away from here where you can have more privacy?

This is the main studio here, outside. The way I look at it is if construction people, firemen, mailmen — if they can all do outside work, I can do outside work, too.

Do you offer drawings only?

Right now, it’s basically 100% drawings.

Just pencil?

Pencils, colored pencils, pen and ink. Also I can paint with acrylics. I've got oil paintings. I might have one pastel, but it's a long time since I messed with pastels.

What's the most unusual thing you've been asked to draw or paint?

Nudity. I really don't like to do any nudity, and I don't like skeletons and blood drawings. Please don't bring those things to me. My favorite is pets, animals and serene situations where it's drawing water, birds, flowers. I can do stuff like that.

When did you first know you were an artist?

When I was in the kindergarten. When I got my first coloring book. I picked up the crayon and colored everything evenly inside the lines. As I started to progress and colored some more, I started seeing shadows, and I saw creative shadows in my drawings in maybe first or second grade. And believe it or not, when I was in the third grade, they elected me to paint the background of our school play. That was amazing.

I know you're self taught mostly, but what training did you receive?

As I was bad-boying in New York City, because I was 19 and doing a lot of things people from the hood were doing and didn't know better, I went to a school called "art and design," and I went there basically on probation. That's when I got some training in art and how to go about scaling, blending sticks. Some of that stuff I incorporate today. How to draw a cube. How to look at perspective. And vanishing point, and all that stuff there.

Then a couple years back, I went over to RCCC to take up some art classes or to get at least an associate degree in art, but that failed because of some New York stuff that was going on with my schooling, I had gotten a loan and the Pell Grant when I was taking up air-conditioning, heating and refrigeration. When I went to apply for a loan and grant, they denied me because they said, "You're in default."

But you got your GED down here a couple of years ago, didn't you?

Oh, yeah, at the age of 55 I got my GED



Heilig holds up one of his finished works at Fine Frame Gallery.

right here. And guess what, it took me only three or four months, which I surprised myself, because other people not in school, it was taking them a year or two years.

Where do you hang out when you're not here?

I like to find myself a quiet place somewhere in Salisbury, what you might call a "cut." I'll sit there and listen to music and just enjoy life itself.

How tall are you?

6-6. They wanted me to be a basketball player. First thing people ask me — some people who don't know me assume I played basketball growing up. My real interest at heart was artwork. It was there since the kindergarten.

You've become a downtown fixture. Who are a couple of your favorite people around here?

Fine Frame Gallery — Jackie and Bruce (Wilson). Justin and Sam (Wells) at Fuller Market. They're very supportive of me. They're really good people. I have lots of great support down here. The Wine Shop, Sidewalk Deli. I eat out of Sidewalk Deli basically every day. That's my place to eat. The bookstore, the girls at the Stitchin' Post and the other store.

What's in the future for you? What other things would you like to be doing beyond drawing at this bench?

I want to get a bunch of my T-shirts with my art printed on it. To be marketed and some type of distribution to where it can go to different stores and boutiques. I got some real special art. I think I'm sitting on top of a million dollars or more right now.

With the artwork I've done, it's not just for one person to buy. It's for multiple people to buy. I have different sayings and different logos. **S**



Double feature

Twins Emily and Katie Knorr rule the pool

WRITTEN BY MIKE LONDON | JON C. LAKEY AND SUBMITTED PHOTOS

Salisbury High girls swim coach Sallie Pittman recently had an amusing experience. She encountered a student who wasn't aware the school had a swim team.

"We're a well-kept secret with all the excitement about basketball and football," Pittman said with a laugh. "But I told her we've got twins who won five state championships this year. It says good things about the twins' character that everyone doesn't know about our swim team. It's not like they're walking around the school bragging on themselves. They've stayed humble."

The Knorr twins, Emily and Katie, are as identical as any two humans can be physically, as alike as peas in a pod

or pennies in a jar.

"People ask me all the time if we're twins," Emily said with a delighted laugh. "I think the answer to that should be obvious."

While they didn't put Salisbury High swimming on the map, the Knorr twins have done more than their share to keep it there.

The sisters are seniors — they turned 18 in May — although they could still pass for 15-year-olds ready to try for their first learner's permit.

The Knorrs look completely unimposing on land. Once they're in the water, it's a different story. They're basically fish. They don't mind crushing people.

Swimmers are made, not born.

One of the Knorr twins swims in a competition in Asheville when she was 5 years old.



Katie, left, and Emily Knorr accounted for five state swimming championships during their most recent season at Salisbury High.



As their high school careers come to a close, Emily and Katie are heading off to different Division I programs — Emily to West Virginia University; Katie, UNC-Wilmington.

The mother of the twins, Jamie Knorr, grew up in Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania, as did their father, Dr. Eric Knorr.

Jamie shakes her head vigorously at the suggestion that there might be a magical swim gene that is passed on through generations.

“I swam for fun, but I wasn’t ever a competitive swimmer,” Jamie said. “Neither was their dad.”

The oldest of the five Knorr children is Stefan, 24.

“He got the ball rolling,” Jamie said.

Stefan graduated from the University of Alabama in 2019 with a chemistry degree. He didn’t swim in college, but he competed at a high level in high school for the North Carolina School of Science and Mathematics in Durham.

“I was still coaching at North Rowan then, before I moved over to Salisbury,” Pittman said. “I was at the state meet and our guys competed against Stefan. That was my first introduction to the Knorrs. I remember (Salisbury boys coach) Ryan Starrett telling me Stefan was the first of five swimmers in the family.”

Allison “Allie” Knorr, 22, grew up swimming, but she became more fascinated with



The Beatles and may be the former Fab Four's biggest fan in the USA. A 2020 business and accounting graduate of Catawba College, she recently earned a master's degree from the University of North Carolina at Charlotte.

Ethan, the middle Knorr, would become the family's first high school state champion.

Ethan was in the pool at age 5. By age 9, he was seriously devoted to the sport. He had the

drive and determination to go at it year-round, making trips to Greensboro to train beyond the brief high school season. Ethan was inspired by Stefan, and he was further energized as a youngster by Olympic swimming phenom Michael Phelps.

The twins were three years younger than Ethan, so they watched his competitions from an early age.

They relished their brother's growing success. They watched him having fun in the pool. They joined in.

"Because of Ethan, the twins grew up on a pool deck," Jamie said.

The twins kicked soccer balls and shot hoops as little kids, like everyone else, but they quickly condensed their athletic interest to swimming.

"Swimming is a sport that requires a huge

commitment,” Jamie said. “The twins were willing to make that commitment.”

The Pittmans, Sallie and her husband, Tim, a long-time wrestling coach, frequently discuss what’s the toughest high school sport in which to excel. Sallie votes for swimming. Tim says wrestling. They agree swimming and wrestling are the toughest two — and both of them have coached cross country.

When the Knorr twins went all-in for swimming, it meant 5 a.m. practices before school. It meant travel and meets and more practices, while maintaining stellar GPAs.

“It meant swimming 11 months a year,” Emily said. “We took August off.”

By the summer of 2016, when the twins were 12, going on 13, they were competing in major YMCA events against regional and national competition.

“It was fun to compete and it was fun to see your times dropping,” Katie said. “It’s fun when everything starts clicking.”

Ethan won two state titles for Salisbury High as a junior and one as a senior. The twins were Salisbury freshmen his senior year.

“Ethan was winning state championships,” Emily said. “That was great motivation for Katie and me to try to do the same.”

The girls had different personalities.

Emily was focused and driven. Katie was more laid-back, less competitive by nature.

“Katie would gladly give you her last piece of candy,” Jamie said. “Emily was a go-getter. She was more matter-of-fact.”

Pittman saw the potential in both girls when they were freshmen to become state champions.

“They were so tiny, scrawny little girls then,” Pittman said. “But they were already holding their own with the best. We still had Kathryn Morrison (an East Carolina signee) on our team their freshman season, Kathryn was a two-time state champion backstroker, but Katie (Knorr) wasn’t that far behind her.”

Different strokes for different folks. The Knorrs chose different paths to gold. That divergence helped the Salisbury Hornets maximize team success.

Emily is a distance phenom. She has laser-fo-



Katie (left) and Emily Knorr have earned an impressive amount of swim medals.

cus and doesn’t get bored. The longer, the stronger. Her last stroke in a 200 or 500 freestyle event is just as smooth as her first. She’s never out of breath.

Katie prefers variety. Her high school events have been the 100 backstroke and the 200 Individual Medley, which requires 50 yards each of four different strokes — butterfly, backstroke, breaststroke and freestyle. There’s no way to get

bored doing that.

Emily cheerfully admits she’s awful at the breaststroke, but Katie is at least pretty good at everything.

The twins joined forces on two four-person relays for the Hornets. On those events they generally swam with teammates who were fine soccer and tennis athletes, but not year-round swimmers. Those weren’t events Salisbury was going to win at the state level, but the Hornets were good enough to be state qualifiers and conference champs.

“As club swimmers, the twins had to learn

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A Tradition for Life



the aspects of being part of a high school team,” Pittman said. “They embraced the team thing. It would have been easy for them to not go as hard in the relays as in their individual events, but they never let up. They were always excited for the relays.”

Emily became a perennial state champ in the 500 freestyle, winning the event three times. After getting out-touched by two taller girls in the 200 freestyle in the state meet as a sophomore, she used that heartbreak as massive motivation to win the 200 as a junior and senior. As a senior, she broke meet records in both of her individual events with 1:49.11 in the 200 and 4:49.04 in the 500 and was named the meet’s Most Outstanding Swimmer.

In her last high school meet, Katie joined her sister as a champion for the first time, winning the 100 backstroke in 57.96 seconds and the 200 IM in 2:04.4

While attendance was limited, the twins’ mother got to witness every bit of it.

“I was lucky enough to be on deck as a swim official,” said Jamie, who is in the midst of a career change from optometry to nursing. “I knew Emily had a good chance. I knew how hard Katie had been training. I was hoping she could do it.”

She did it.

The twins aren’t done. They’ll keep at it in college. The longer college events should be in Emily’s wheelhouse.

Katie will swim at UNC-Wilmington. She had quite a recruiting saga. She committed to East Carolina shortly before the university announced it was ending the swim program. That



announcement also affected Ethan, 20, who swam for two seasons for the Pirates. He stayed on at ECU and is finishing work on a biomedical engineering degree.

“When I first got the news that East Carolina wouldn’t have swimming, I was really sad,” Katie said. “But then I looked at it as a chance to take a closer look at other schools. I feel very lucky. I think UNC-Wilmington is a second chance that worked out for the best.”

As for Emily, she found exactly what she was looking for on a recruiting trip to West Virginia University.

She went to a basketball game on her visit and got a fantastic offer two days later. She picked West Virginia over Penn State. Both schools offered her just about everything except her own pool.

“West Virginia was excited to get her and she’s dropped times since they recruited her,”



Jamie said.

Those scholarships made all those 7,000-yard days in the pool worthwhile for the twins. Getting to their level takes countless hours of total dedication.

When they’re not in the pool, the twins relax, tease each other and watch movies. They excel in the classroom.

Both say they’re better in the math-and-science portion of academics than the liberal arts side of things.

“They really are amazing athletes, and they’ve started to add muscle,” Pittman said. “It surprised me a little bit that they’re going to different colleges, especially since they both want to go into physical therapy. But I think they’ve decided it’s time to branch out. Time to move out of the comfort zone. That’s a good thing.”

Time to be Emily Knorr and Katie Knorr — rather than the Knorr twins.

Jamie offered the most telling words.

“Emily and Katie have been great support for each other and great competition for each other,” she said. “I wish all my children could have had a twin.” **S**



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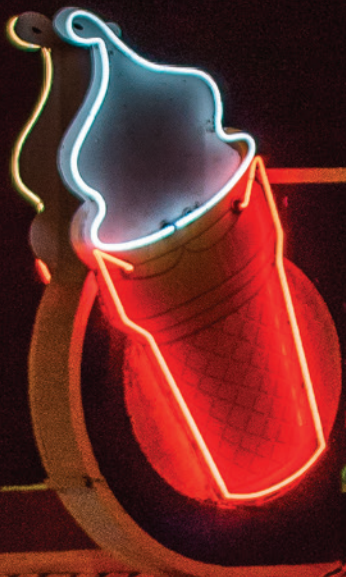


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DAIRY QUEEN



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West Innes Street Dairy Queen
serves up smiles in its sweet story
of success

WRITTEN BY **BEN WHITE**
PHOTOGRAPHY BY **SEAN MEYERS**

N

ow in its 71st year, the Dairy Queen located at 1004 West Innes St. is a time capsule that is too nostalgic and too cool to renovate. The neon sign and faded, red-striped metal awnings and sliding windows

highlight its 1950 structure — a 500-square-foot reminder of a much simpler time in American culture.

From the days when freezers hummed for the first time and young faces initially greeted customers choosing a variety of ice cream (actually ice milk) flavors amid freshly painted walls, no one could have guessed the incredible joy this roadside Dairy Queen would provide over the next seven decades.

The tradition continues with a present-day black-peg letter board centered between wooden windows where decision making is put to the ultimate test with options such as Vanilla, Mint Chocolate, Heath Bar, M&M, Coffee, Banana, German Chocolate, Reese Chocolate Chip, Chocolate Extreme, Coconut, Peanut Butter, Strawberry, Cheesecake, Banana Split, Root Beer, Butter Finger, Tropical, Banana Pudding, Hawaiian Pineapple, Pecan Clusters, Cookie Dough and Georgia Mud.

And that is just for starters. Add to that list Chocolate Covered Cherry, Butter Pecan, Black Cherry, Pinacolato, Vanilla Wafer and Snickers.

The list of sundaes — Peanut Butter, Hot Fudge, Strawberry, Chocolate, Caramel and Cherry — get the taste buds moving. Dill Bar Flavors consisting of Heath, Cherry, Chocolate Mint and Chocolate make the decisions even more difficult. People from around the county continue to choose longtime Southern favorites such as dipped cones, Oreo Blizzards and hot fudge sundaes.

The Dairy Queen on Innes Street has been a sweet story of success for an exceptionally long period of time. The city's iconic location first opened to the public 71 years ago when West Palm Beach, Florida, entrepreneurs Gerald Grumbly and Robert Wiederman served DQ tasty treats to Salisburians for the first time. In 1981, the business, as well as the much-coveted Rowan County territory, was purchased by Robert Utley and his partner, Bill Link. Just after Utley closed the deal, Melissa, a native of nearby Lexington, joined the company at age 16 as a



Zachary Garner takes an order.

The Dairy Queen, which opened on West Innes Street in 1950, is a regular spot for locals to beat the heat with soft-serve delights.



From left, Noelia Martinez, Rienery Martinez and Angelito Martinez peer through the window as they enjoy their cones.





Andrew Watson prepares to hand off some goodies to a customer during a busy Sunday.

part-time high school employee.

A relationship between Melissa and Robert developed and eventually led to marriage in 1991. Robert, a commercial pilot with US Airways for 23 years, passed the DQ management responsibility over to Melissa in 1991, and it has remained Melissa's pearl for the past 29 years. Their two children, Nick and Jessica, grew up dreaming of hard-shell toppings, whipped cream and the smells of walnut syrup, but they are grown now and have moved on to careers of their own. The Utleys have owned the DQ for over 40 years.

"Once we started having children, we started staying open all winter," Melissa said. "Now, our youngest child is 26. We close three days a year, which is Christmas Eve, Christmas Day and Thanksgiving Day. Other than that, we're open from the morning until late at night. I'm a phone call away if I'm not here, so it's a big job."

One of the most rewarding parts of Melissa's day is meeting new and regular customers who come by the store. Ann Friang and her cousin's grandson, 3-year-old Elliot Gordy, drop by the DQ weekly.

"What's not to love about Dairy Queen?" Ann said. "Elliot and I have a play date every Thursday. I live more toward the China Grove area. I love the chocolate dip cone. Vanilla and sprinkles are his favorites, but he gets chocolate ice cream when his Mom and Dad say yes. Elliot lives in Rockwell. It's really neat

Melissa Utley owns and runs the shop with her husband, Robert.



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to come back here.”

Beverly Shakur, a native of Salisbury, has patronized this Dairy Queen for much of her life. From an early age, it was the place generating some of her greatest memories.

“We used to walk here from the west side, but now I drive.” Beverly said. “I was born here but I was raised in New Jersey. I came back here when I was 17 and I’ve been here in Salisbury ever since. I just love coming to Dairy Queen. When we came here to town to visit family, we came to Dairy Queen so I’ve been coming here all my life.”

No doubt, Melissa could make a banana split in her sleep, considering the many thousands she has made over the past 40 years. The relationships with her family of customers are immeasurable, as they are friends she has known much of her life.

One man told his wife after leaving their Sunday church service that the steering in his car was pulling badly to the right. Once they arrived at the Dairy Queen, they turned into the parking lot and suddenly the steering issue suddenly improved.

“There are lots of folks that we know by their orders but not their names,” Melissa said. “For instance, there’s ‘Oreo Blizzard Guy,’ and they have their money ready and you know what they want. There are a lot of people we serve. We send items to nursing homes who are regular customers because all they want is Dairy Queen. That is absolutely amazing to me. That might be relatives, but also caregivers and also people who come by with gift certificates for some folks that are homebound, and she would keep bringing those gift certificates back to us.”

Melissa’s younger brother, Derek Porter, remembers a regular

Jacob Fagan gives his dog, Bosco, a treat during a visit to the DQ.



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Dormalie Martin places an order with Savannah Charles during a busy Sunday afternoon.

customer he has known for years who surprised him with his appearance on a recent day.

“He had long hair and wore a hat,” Derek said. “That was the way he always dressed. Well, one day he came in with his mask on and had his hair cut. So, I said, ‘Hello, sir. What can I get for you?’ He said, ‘You know what I get every time I come. It’s me.’ He pulled his mask down for a second and smiled. But with the shorter hair and the mask, I didn’t recognize him. I laughed and went to work getting his usual order together. ... We both laughed.”

Derek has been working at the Innes Street Dairy Queen since the early 1990s when he caught some summer hours. As it turned out, he never ventured far from the cones and milkshake cups of his younger days.

“I enjoy working with the public,” Derek said. “The people. The customers. It’s a quick pace and I love it,” Derek said. “I love working in food service, period. I have a food concession business myself working state fairs and festivals, such as that. I enjoy it when we’re busy. I enjoy the rush and movement of

the crowds. I’ve been working here since I was in the seventh grade. It’s something I really love to do. (Laughter) I plan to be here as long as she (Melissa) will allow me to be.”

There is one incredibly important part of the overall equation for success that Melissa is extremely thankful for. Without it, her business would be in great danger of failure.

“Honestly, I don’t want to get teary-eyed about this, but the employees I’ve worked with over the years have been so wonderful,” Melissa said. “I feel very fortunate that I usually get the best of the best to work for me and I feel I have the best right now. I’m so blessed. I have always found that the teenagers that are the busiest and the ones that are involved in sports in school and in church and volunteer to help those in need make the best employees.

“When you find them, you find their friends and they are good, too. That’s what I’ve tried to do. I think it’s a kind of job with flexibility and I’ve been flexible and appreciative because I am so appreciative of our employees, especially during COVID. I mean, they have rolled with the punches better

“There are lots of folks that we know by their orders but not their names. For instance, there’s ‘Oreo Blizzard Guy.’”



Left: Clockwise from top left, friends Houston Peeler, Kevin Holloway, Donnie Mabe and Blair Peeler enjoy an afternoon at the Dairy Queen.



Right: Derek Porter works the counter.

than I have. We've just all worked together. I try really hard to be easy to work for. I really do."

Savannah Charles, an employee with Dairy Queen for three years, enjoys the atmosphere and serving those coming for their favorites.

"It's really a lot of fun to work here," Savannah said. "We all get along really well. We see some of the same customers and always have a

good time. Melissa is a great boss and is flexible with us and it's a great experience to work with her. My brother, Chris Charles, has also worked here. And I have to say my all-time favorite is our Oreo Blizzard."

There is one aspect of the job that is far sweeter than any amount of ice milk that's ever been sold on the premises. It can all be summed up nicely in the eyes and the smiles of

those on the receiving end.

"There is nothing like seeing kids on the other side of the window watching you," Melissa said. "It brings happiness to your heart that's always a good job to have, especially in this world." **S**

Ben White, an award-winning NASCAR writer, lives in Salisbury.

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Kris and Lauren Schultz meet Papa Mingo, a 10-month-old Newfie, for the first time in a play area at Faithful Friends. The couple ended adopting Papa Mingo.



FATHEFUL

Friends

Nonprofit, no-kill sanctuary works diligently to put homeless dogs, cats on the right track

WRITTEN BY **MARK WINEKA**
PHOTOGRAPHY BY **SEAN MEYERS**



P

apa Mingo is a 10-month-old, 105-pound brute. Already in his short life, he has been given up by a previous owner because his size and energy didn't mesh well with a 3-year-old in the house.

The Newfoundland also wasn't disciplined. He came to the Faithful Friends Animal Sanctuary in Salisbury a week earlier, and in that short time, he has been neutered, instructed on getting in and out of a car, walked on a leash and given whatever tests, vaccinations and parasite treatments he needed.

His availability on a Pet Finder post attracted interest immediately — big breeds such as Newfies are in high demand — and on this particular morning, Lauren and Kris Schultz from Jonesville were invited to come see Papa Mingo in person.

Mary Padavick, director of Faithful Friends, did her usu-

al background investigation into the couple and thought they would be a good match for the young Newfie.

"We have to set this guy up to succeed," Padavick says. "We need to get him on the right track. ... The goal was to get him in and out of here quickly."

The Schultzes live on 40-plus acres and have a lot of experience with big dogs. They presently have a Great Dane and a mastiff, and they have owned and adopted Newfies in the past.

"Pictures don't do him justice," Mary says while watching Papa Mingo ramble around a play yard. "He's communicating to us. He's had enough of his small kennel."

...

Founded in 2007 by the late Anne Ingram, Faithful Friends Animal Sanctuary is a nonprofit, no-kill, licensed, mandatory spay-and-neuter shelter with prescribed rules for accepting homeless cats and dogs — pets surrendered by their owners or animals considered strays.

From left, Angela Vagner, Marcia Parrott, Ally Wilhelm and Mary Padavick pose in the lobby with pet paintings from Cara Reische behind them.



Clockwise from above: Snoop, a 'Chiweenie,' searches for a treat in an outside play area; a cat hangs out in the play tube inside the sanctuary; portraits of dogs and cats, created by Salisbury Academy students, line the walls at the sanctuary.





A photograph of Anne Ingram, the founder of the sanctuary, adorns a wall.

On the morning the Schultzes met Papa Mingo, the sanctuary had 24 dogs and 18 cats housed in the 5,000-square-foot facility off Grace Church Road. The sanctuary has several artificial turf-covered play areas in back for dogs and a patio porch for cats.

“People don’t realize the time, money and care given to these animals,” says Faithful Friends President Marcia Parrott, who also volunteers at the sanctuary three times a week. “They are cared for as well as mine at home.”

Volunteers and staff also are able to take the dogs for walks on several of the wooded trails that are part of the 10.75-acre property, which used to be a drive-in movie theater and still has the decaying remnants of the projection building and concession stand.

Faithful Friends has been operating out of its 220 Grace Church Road location since 2012, and the lobby and reception area are filled with artwork and plaques signifying donations given for the building itself and spaces such as the adoption, quarantine, examination, feeding and staff rooms; cat cage banks; dog kennel runs; cat porch; and director’s office.

There’s an impressive memorial garden on the grounds given by the Hurleys in memory of Liz Rankin.

Potential owners come to see particular dogs or cats they are interested in adopting by appointment only. Padavick says Faithful Friends



has a good success rate in adoptions, especially looking for homes in which the owners have a proven record of pet responsibility and stability.

“I want people who are thoughtful about the process,” Padavick says.

The usual dog adoption fee is \$250, but customized fees with some dogs, such as Papa Mingo, run up to \$350. The adoption fee for cats and kittens is \$125.

“We know we’re not going to break even,” Padavick says.

Adoptions are a full-disclosure process, according to Parrott, who says the pluses and minuses of each animal are spelled out for the person adopting. If things don’t work out, which is rare, the animals can return to Faithful Friends.

“We’re their safety net for life,” Padavick says.

• • •

Providing a no-kill shelter — the first in Rowan County — along with the emphasis on spaying and neutering are central to Faithful Friends’ whole philosophy.

Marcia Parrott, president of the sanctuary’s board of directors, feeds a treat to Pete the Chihuahua.

According to the Best Friends Animal Society, there are now more than 2,000 no-kill shelters nationwide, meaning 44 percent of the country’s shelters are no-kill.

Things are trending in the right direction. Since 2016 the number of cats and dogs killed in U.S. shelters has decreased by 58 percent, the animal society reports. North Carolina is, however, among the top five states “with the most dogs and cats to save,” Best Friends says. Other states in that category are California, Texas, Florida and Louisiana.

In the latest numbers available, dogs and cats killed in the United States dropped from roughly 733,000 in 2018 to 625,000 in 2019. It’s a surprise to many people, but almost seven out of 10 of the animals killed in shelters are cats.

Padavick stresses Faithful Friends is not an open-admissions shelter. If a pet being surrendered, for example, exhibits behavior that is too severe, the sanctuary will not take it in.

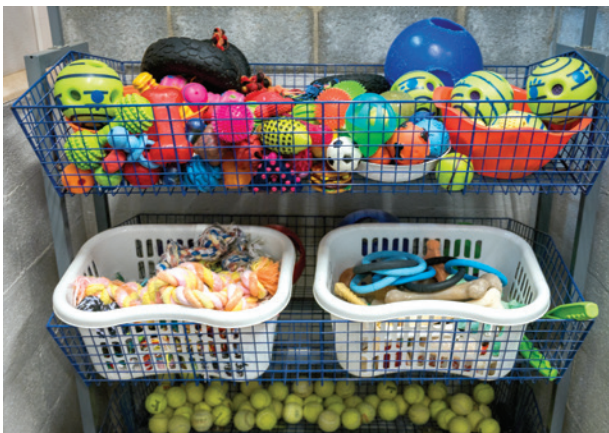
“We’re looking for more adoptable animals,



Left: Cats hang out at the sanctuary. Right: Lizzie, a rescued Shih Tzu mix, drops a ball in the automatic launcher while getting some exercise.



Left: Faithful Friends Animal Sanctuary, located on 11 acres off of Grace Church Road, is a haven for homeless dogs and cats. Right: Portraits of dogs and cats, created by Salisbury Academy students, are part of the artwork at the sanctuary.



Left: Bins and baskets overflow with toys for the animals. Right: A sign designates a donated outside play area at the sanctuary.



to help either their rehabilitation or health to get the animals back on track,” Padavick says.

• • •

The days at the sanctuary start with staff and volunteers arriving at 8 a.m. They feed the dogs and cats, get them out and clean up their overnight spaces.

“This is the cleanest place you can be,” Padavick says. Visitors can always seem to catch a whiff of Chlorox and Dawn dishwashing detergent.

Cleaning the cat areas and having all the food and water bowls refreshed takes at least a couple of hours. Laundry connected to cats is done once a week.

Volunteers brush, clean ears, hold the cats and socialize with them through the day. A health and safety inspection happens in the last hour before staff leaves at 6 p.m.

“It takes a little more to clean the dog areas,” Padavick reports. When staff arrives in the morning, the dogs immediately go outside for potty breaks, they are fed when they come back in, and the kennels are washed down, the bedding is cleaned, and the dogs take turns in 30- and 60-minute intervals of going into the artificial turf-covered play yards outside.

Toys, dishes and blankets are washed daily. A groomer travels to the sanctuary regularly. A grooming business also is on call. Salisbury An-

Director Mary Padavick receives donated goods from Ann Powlas.

imal Hospital is Faithful Friends’ veterinarian, and the hospital offers good discounts for the non-profit, “but even at that, an animal might break the bank real quickly,” Padavick says.

Another feeding time at the sanctuary comes at 4 p.m., and all the cats and dogs have their individual nutrition needs spelled out on blackboards. To help them cope with the long period of no human interaction — the sanctuary staff and volunteers are not there from 6 p.m. to 8 a.m. — the dogs are given frozen yogurt-filled treats to help them calm down and sleep.

• • •

Some of the names on the dog kennel doors include Pork Chop, Cliff, Pete, Snoops, Yogi, Ranger, Freedom, Pablo, Mollie and Lizzie, who might be the smartest dog the sanctuary has ever seen, Padavick says.

Lizzie could play with her ball machine all day, as she loads in tennis balls and dashes off to retrieve them as soon as the machine spits them out.

“She’s not a laid-back dog,” Parrott says.

Pork Chop was a stray. Snoop, 6, saw four of her daughters adopted, but she was allergic to fleas, chewed off all of her fur and had to get weekly medicinal baths to help in her recovery. Snoop is now healthy enough for adoption.

The cat population includes Luvabella,



who was dumped at the bottom of the Faithful Friends’ driveway in a crate with her obese mother and a note saying her owner was terminally ill.

“She is the queen bee,” Parrott says of the cat and her assertive personality. Now that Luvabella has lost weight, she’s able to groom herself and doesn’t have to be shaved.

Another cat, K.C., has his run of the reception area, where a sign says “Think Pawsitive.” He’s diabetic, a condition Faithful Friends has been able to control through his diet, but he can’t be in with the other cats. His owner died five years ago, and he has sort of become the shelter’s mascot, friendly to anyone who will



Emmaline Meyers, 10, gets some kisses from Aries, a Chihuahua rescue, during a visit to the sanctuary.

pay him attention.

Faithful Friends has a full-time director, full-time kennel manager and two part-time kennel managers. There is always a paid staff member on site during work hours.

When she was 14, Ally Wilhelm had an animal science course as a freshman in high school and thought about someday being a veterinarian. As part of her 30 hours of community service requirement at school, she started volunteering at Faithful Friends and has stayed “faithful” herself ever since.

Now attending Rowan-Cabarrus Community College, the 20-year-old Wilhelm works as a part-time kennel manager.

“The animals and the people — it’s like a little family,” says Wilhelm, who still lives at home and has resisted adopting any of the cats and dogs she sees all the time. “I’m sure in the future I probably will. My dad says no more animals.”

Faithful Friends has an active board whose professional talents often match some of expertise the organization needs. Accountant Katie Matthews helps, for example, with payroll and taxes.

“I’ll take that all day long,” Padavick says of that kind of assistance. “Everybody’s not here doing the menial stuff like mopping floors and sticking their hands in dog poop.”

Parrott has been board president almost

a year. She’s had a love for animals her whole life, remembering a childhood filled with monkeys, dogs, cats, fish and rabbits. She started with Faithful Friends as a volunteer. “I just love it,” she says. “I love all the animals.”

Volunteers are crucial to the care and socialization of the cats and dogs, fundraising and maintaining the grounds — mowing the grass, weeding and even controlling fire ants. Padavick says Faithful Friends volunteers are huge animal advocates who understand the responsibility of owning pets and running a rescue.

Padavick worked in the corporate world for 25 years before becoming Faithful Friends’ director in 2014.



“This is a different kind of hard work,” she says remembering how Anne Ingram once told her, “If it were easy, someone would have done it a long time ago.”

•••

Beyond the animals, fundraising is “front of mind” for Faithful Friends, Padavick says.

“Obviously, funding is huge,” she says. “That’s probably the most challenging piece. You have to think of that piece every day.”

A dog house used as a library for reading to the animals and honoree plaques adorn the entrance to the sanctuary.

Grants meant for mandatory spay-and-neuter shelters serve Faithful Friends well. Donations and fundraising events help, of course, and an contribution no matter how small is welcomed.

“Friends of Rowan has been a huge, huge help as well,” Padavick says of the local charity that matches any contribution to Faithful Friends with a like amount.

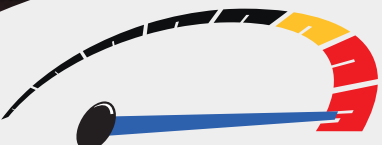
Aluminum cans have been an important financial resource for Faithful Friends, which has six drop-off sites for cans in Rowan County. The organization has raised \$77,000 over 10 years from recycling cans, and Padavick says it has paid for a lot of spaying and neutering.

Food Lion happens to be a big supporter, and its employ-



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ees often conduct supply drives for Faithful Friends. Small businesses such as Stitchin' Post & Gifts also are hold special events tied to the organization, and individuals routinely drop off pet supplies.

"If we can't use it at the sanctuary, we find ways to turn it into cash," Padavick says.

Faithful Friends offers numerous educational programs, including the summer's Camp Pawtastic (see box) and opportunities for children to read to cats and dogs.

For staff and volunteers, the reward is seeing adoptions and their animal friends on a new path.

• • •

Kris and Lauren Schultz took their time introducing themselves to Papa Mingo, the big Newfie. The longer they interacted over the morning, the more Papa wound down.

"When they run hard, they go, but the beauty of the big dog is that when they crash, they crash," Kris says, turning his attention back to Papa. "... There we go, man, much better, I know, man, you don't get it. Now you have all these rules. It doesn't look like he's had a lot of boundaries in 10

months."

The Schultzes returned to Faithful Friends the next day to see how Papa Mingo and their 140-pound Great Dane would interact.


"We've done this before," Kris says, "and it's never a walk in the park introducing a new dog." But with Newfies, he adds, you end up with an incredibly lovable, loyal dog.

"We've always looked for the larger breeds," Lauren says. "They want to be loved, and if you love them, they give it back tenfold."

After rearranging their schedules to have some off days so they could focus on acclimating Papa Mingo, the couple traveled to Salisbury a third time later in the week to make the adoption official.

From that first meeting, Padavick was encouraged.

"I loved them," she says. "The man didn't hesitate. I loved their questions. I love their concerns."

For more information on donating, volunteering or adopting from Faithful Friends, visit its website at www.faithfulfriendsnc.org. The phone number is 704-633-1722. 

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SKYFALL

As sport grows, Piedmont Skydiving shows 'there's just nothing else like it'

WRITTEN BY NATALIE ANDERSON | PHOTOGRAPHY BY JON C. LAKEY

A crowd of friends and family look up for signs of their skydivers.



Chasen McCook, from Twin City, Georgia, stretches out and shows the wing suit he is going to be using on his next jump.



Instructor Kyle Stubbs prepares to touch down.



Tandem instructor Allen Taylor, right, and Natalie Anderson prepare to board the plane. Chasen McCook walks ahead.

“F

or 60 seconds, there’s nothing else in the world.”

Michael Wadkins has been skydiving professionally for 30 years. But what keeps him in the sport every day is reliving his first jump

each time he’s strapped to someone else, gliding through the air more than 12,000 feet high.

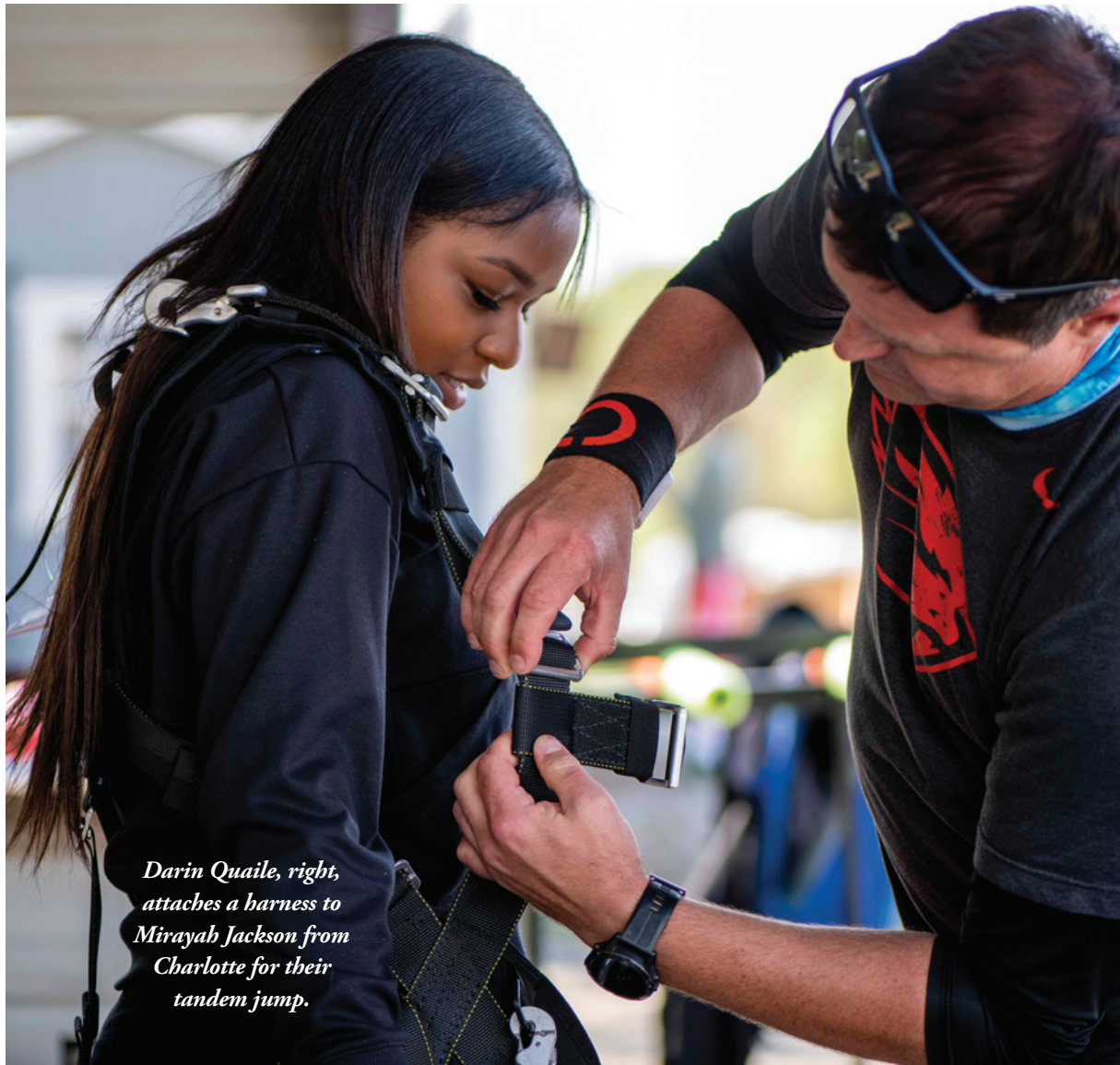
“There’s a sense of freedom with free-falling,” he said. “Quite frankly, we’re flying.”

Wadkins, who works for the U.S. Parachute Association, said 225 registered drop zones across the nation and more than 200 abroad are indicative of a sport that continues to grow among people of all ages in leaps and bounds. Such is the case for Piedmont Skydiving, a local skydiving drop zone located at Mid-Carolina Regional Airport.



Lauren Navarro walks back to the departure facility after making her first solo jump.





Darin Quail, right, attaches a harness to Mirayah Jackson from Charlotte for their tandem jump.



Piedmont Skydiving was founded in 2010 by Jim Laningham, who was accustomed to hours-long commutes to skydive. He was inspired to establish his own drop zone near his Charlotte home, and the Mid-Carolina Regional Airport was the perfect spot.

Derek Delbuono and Devin Blonker ride the shuttle trailer over to the airport to board the jump plane.

He took on his own adventure in 2015, and sold Piedmont Skydiving to skydiving buddy and Marine Corps veteran Dan McNulty, who is now the current owner. McNulty became a licensed skydiver in 2004 and served with Special Operations until 2009 at Camp Lejeune.

But Piedmont wasn't McNulty's first drop zone. He opened Skydive the Wasatch in Utah a year before purchasing the Piedmont operation.

McNulty was attracted to Salisbury's location in the Pied-

*Kayla Countess
watches as the other
solo jumpers land.*



*Above: Jerry Blanton, aka Jumper 1, has delivered countless jumpers to 13,500 feet for Piedmont Skydiving.
Left: Skydiving student Joey Griffin comes in for a landing on his third solo jump.*



Amanda Bestmann, from Asheboro, lifts up her legs during her tandem jump.



mont region. With the knowledge of how many people live within an hour from Salisbury, he knew it was the right market for growth. And now, he's "seeing his baby grow."

Tandem instructor Charlie Countess repacks his parachute after a solo fun dive.

Originally, the location of Piedmont Skydiving was on Red Acres Road. But after multiple delays, the facility moved to its location on Airport Road last year to make room for the growing number of first-timers and those looking to advance in the recreational sport. McNulty said by the time construction is finished, it will increase the skydiving center's footprint five times over.

Additionally, despite nearly two months of closure due to the pandemic, the skydiving center still experienced a record-breaking year. By the end of this year, McNulty estimates Piedmont Skydiving will have ushered in at least 20,000 unique visitors to the city of Salisbury and Rowan County.

Melinda Emerson, self-proclaimed unofficial president of the Piedmont Skydiving center fan club, describes an

average day at Piedmont Skydiving: “It’s trying to calm first-timer nerves, and the smell of airplane exhaust and those amazing airport sunsets.”

Between the laid-back, fun atmosphere and the fact that tandem instructors can call the skies their “office with a view,” Emerson likened the skydiving center to an “adult playground.”

First-time jumpers are required to strap themselves against one of Piedmont’s tandem instructors, who are trained to keep jumpers stable, pull the parachute and steer for a soft and safe landing. It’s recommended for first-time jumpers to take part in the regular jump from 12,500 high, but Piedmont also offers the highest altitude jump in North Carolina — a mighty 17,500-foot fall that requires supplemental oxygen.

*Instructor
Kyle Stubbs
checks Joey
Griffin’s
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While being harnessed, jumpers are briefed with detailed instructions on what the next hour will look like. Up to 17 jumpers and their instructors then board a trailer hooked to a truck that transports them to the runway of the Mid-Carolina Regional Airport. From there, it's a 12-minute plane ride to reach altitude.

A PAC P-750 XL aircraft, or what's sometimes known as a "bone simple airplane," is the plane used for skydiving jumps. It's a utility airplane with a conventional all-metal, low-wing monoplane design, with a fixed tricycle undercarriage. It can reach a maximum speed of 196 miles per hour. Piedmont's Cessna 182 model is a smaller aircraft sometimes used for fun jumpers and tandem skydivers, and can reach 170 miles per hour.

Jumpers free-fall for 50 seconds at an average of 120 miles per hour before the parachute is

“It’s fun to come to work, and we get paid to jump out of airplanes. Not everyone gets to do that.”

deployed. From there, it's less than a 10-minute soar back to the check-in area.

And for those looking to level up to a solo jump, Piedmont offers an Accelerated Free Fall program, which encompasses 16 jumps that emphasize various free-fall and parachuting skills.

Allen Taylor, a tandem jump instructor who joined Piedmont last year, took his first jump when he was 18 years old. But skydiving really changed his life in his early 30s when he decid-

ed to leave his job as an industrial mechanic to pursue skydiving.

“I wasn't satisfied with the type of work I was doing anymore and wanted something different,” he said. “I just one day decided to go for it. That's what I did, and I'm glad I did it.”

But becoming a licensed tandem instructor isn't just fun and games. It requires at least 500 jumps and a license for at least three years, along with a coach rating course. Taylor explained that courses include scenarios with different problems that can occur to test jumpers. Even then, each jumper has their own goals and areas to improve upon, whether it be different ways to fly the parachute or different free-fall formations.

“On a busy day, a lot of times we're in the plane all day,” Taylor said. “So it's up, down, up, down, up, down. We might get a break every



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four loads or so. It's fun to come to work, and we get paid to jump out of airplanes. Not everyone gets to do that."

Taylor's favorite part of the jump? The first three seconds after the jump. His advice to first-time jumpers is to go into the experience with an open mind and be willing to learn.

Chasen McCook gives a quick sign and a smile before jumping out of the plane in his wing suit.

With tandem jumps comes a range of creativity in making the moment one to remember. Piedmont is accustomed to birthday celebrations, with one mom last fall celebrating her son's birthday with a full spread and live music. Additionally, husband-hopefuls have coordinated with friends and family to greet jumpers with marriage proposals and lavish bouquets of flowers. But the most poignant jumps are often those with far



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less fanfare, such as the man celebrating the anniversary of his kidney transplant or the women

Charlie Countess slides across the cleared ground that will become the location of a new building for the skydiving school.

faced with a cancer diagnosis looking to strike another goal from the bucket list.

Most drop zones in the nation, including Piedmont Skydiving, adhere to the U.S. Parachute Association requirements, which sets a minimum age for skydiving at 18 years old. But exceptions can be made, however, in cases where a child is terminally ill. Emerson recalls Piedmont previously granting such a jump to a terminally ill 16-year-

old.

Employees also partake in personal jumps outside of their daily jumps. Unlike her coworkers, Emerson isn't a licensed jumper. But since joining the team, she has championed herself as the unofficial president of the Piedmont Skydiving fan club.

"I'm not an adrenaline person," Emerson said. "My favorite ride at the fair is the carousel, and yet I think skydiving is the best thing I've ever done. It may not be the sport for everyone, but I wish everyone would try it at least once. There's just nothing else quite like it."

Wadkins said if someone is looking to experience pure freedom for 60 seconds, perhaps jumping out of a plane two miles high is the best way. • • •

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*4Solo skydiving student
Joey Griffin is all smiles
after landing on his third
solo jump.*

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Reporter Natalie Anderson is all smiles aboard the plane with tandem instructor Allen Taylor as they prepare for the jump.

Taking the jump

Intrepid reporter carries journalism to new heights



by NATALIE ANDERSON

Months ago, magazine editor Mark Wineka threw out some ideas for stories in future editions. I made sure to call dibs on the skydiving suggestion before anyone else could.

Jumping was not a requirement, and Mark made that clear. (Photographer Jon Lakey even fondly took heed to that advice and decided a plane ride was enough for him.) To me, taking the jump was no question. It was something I had always wanted to do, but never knew if the opportunity would arise or if I would make the time and effort to go for it myself one day.

Now was my chance.

I wouldn't call myself an "adrenaline junkie," but I'm certainly always open to new experiences or turning everyday moments into experiences. That's what fuels my passion for journalism and what ultimately led me

to take the jump.

There are some assignments I take as a reporter that end up not feeling like an assignment or job in the moment at all. This was one of those times.

The staff at Piedmont Skydiving and the tandem instructors truly made the jump feel like a memorable experience, and I completely understand why Piedmont is likened to an “adult playground.” In addition to their tandem jumps, instructors also practice and challenge their own skills. I elected to be the last tandem jump of the day, and one of the instructors joined us equipped with only a wingsuit.

I can recall the feelings I felt at certain times throughout the experience. Some may enjoy the 50 seconds of free falling most, while others relish the tranquility of literally gliding through the air for a few minutes with a canopy parachute. If I had to pick my favorite parts, it would be the first few moments after the jump from the plane (when it hits you that you’re actually doing this) and the slow glide back down to Earth.

Personally, I didn’t tell many of my friends — and certainly not my family — until after the jump. The surprise made it more special in my opinion, and your family may thank you for that. (My mom didn’t want to know any details about the jump or when I was taking it until afterward, in an effort to spare herself from becoming a nervous wreck.)

But I felt safe and secure the entire time. My instructor showed me the main parachute

and an emergency one, and I was strapped to him from the moment we boarded the plane until we landed safely on the ground. While jumpers are looking around and taking in the whole experience, the instructors are adjusting things, loosening and tightening things and ensuring they’re prepared for any scenario that could arise. Kudos to them, because given the hundreds of hours needed to train for this sort of thing, it’s a lot to keep in mind each jump.

“If you ask me, jumping out of a perfectly good plane and living to tell about it is kind of badass.”

In the weeks following my adventure, I saw at least two different references to skydiving in a movie or TV show, and I immediately got goosebumps. “I really did that,” is what I tell myself now.

If you’ve been considering it or want to do something you would never normally do — because, ya know, life — consider this your sign to make the jump.

Oh, but just a couple tips before you do.

First and foremost, don’t make my mistake. Take motion sickness medicine beforehand. I elected not to eat a few hours before the jump, for obvious reasons, but I did not pre-

pare for the wind and all of the “jerking” that was necessary that day to steer the canopy for landing. I didn’t have any sick feelings when I grabbed the parachute to steer myself, but the nausea set in when my instructor took over the parachute to position us for landing.

Also, invest in the media package. Lakey was able to capture incredible photos as always, but nothing beats the shots that the camera strapped to your wrist is able to catch moments after jumping out of the plane. (See the magazine cover.) I found myself laughing at so many faces and expressions the camera caught when reviewing all my pictures and video footage after the jump.

Another tip: be OK with not knowing what to expect. Lean into the adrenaline and “good” anxiety and excitement.

But like the instructors will tell you, the most important rule is to have fun. I asked a few of them how many people they’ve witnessed back out or change their minds last minute. Fortunately, they can only recall a few, but the expression among those folks always says the same: They immediately regret not jumping as the plane heads back to the airport for a new set of jumpers.

I don’t know, but if you ask me, jumping out of a perfectly good plane and living to tell about it is kind of badass, excuse the expression. Next time, I’ll go for the high-altitude jump from up to 18,000 feet high. **S**

For footage of Anderson’s jump, go to bit.ly/3f16Y4m

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WHEN HISTORY SPEAKS



*The exterior of Salisbury's
1908 depot, designed by
Frank Milburn.*

Destination station

*A place for multiple events, Salisbury's historic depot
serves as shining example of adaptive reuse*

WRITTEN BY LEAH CAMPION | PHOTOGRAPHY BY SEAN MEYERS



The grand waiting room became well-suited for social events.

A train station.

The in-between place. A stopover. On the road to somewhere else. For passengers traveling Southern Railway, there was always another destination in sight. But what if that train station is the destination — a place to gather and stay awhile while celebrating life's pivotal moments?

Years ago, a group of preservationists from Historic Salisbury Foundation saw the potential in the rundown, long-abandoned, Salisbury Depot and reinvented it as a “celebration station,” a destination for parties, corporate events and educational opportunities.

Frank P. Milburn designed the Salisbury Passenger Railway Station in the Spanish mission style in 1908. After rail passenger service stopped in 1979, the building sat neglected and vacant, a hulking reminder of the decrease in train travel and the depression of Salisbury's railroad corridor. In 1984, Historic Salisbury Foundation acquired the station and raised funds from the local community for its restoration and rebirth.



In 1986, a young Edward Norvell, the new president of Historic Salisbury Foundation and just returned from law school, found himself on the cusp of a massive restoration project with Executive Director Mark McDonald, likewise new to his job.

Together, they assembled a team to take on fundraising for the project to create what Norvell called a “people place,” a spot where the community and visitors could gather, with shops and a restaurant. The initial phase of the

project called for the restoration of the area now home to the Amtrak Station and the HSF offices, at a price tag of \$1 million.

Overall the fundraising efforts of the team brought in roughly \$2 million, including a large gift to restore the garden space on the south side of the station named McCurdy Park. While the plans changed and a restaurant and shops were no longer in the mix as of 1991, a daunting task remained in the restoration of the main waiting room of the station into the event

center we see today.

One of the more nerve-wracking pieces of the puzzle concerned the floor. Because the structure was originally built on a filled creek bed, the room’s floor had collapsed significantly in multiple places, so concrete was pumped into 81 small holes drilled in the floor to raise and level it.

The renovations, completed in 1993, brought back the grandeur of this impressive landmark, and Salisbury Station (as it was named) now

The concourse offers additional outdoor space that is covered and ideal in the spring, summer and fall.



sees thousands of visitors each year for special events.

It is notable for being a catalyst for the redevelopment of the surrounding railroad corridor with The Salisbury Emporium (saved by HSF during the station renovations), Lee Street Theatre, Morgan Ridge Railwalk Restaurant, and other office and art gallery spaces in historic warehouse buildings. Salisbury Station is a national landmark, listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1976. Maybe you have

been to its replica exhibit in the Smithsonian Museum? The re-creation of the depot's waiting room is exemplary, down to the floor tile.

Since 1993, the Station has been a sought after venue for brides wanting an old school flavor for their special day. Stained wood, hexagon tile mosaic floors, soaring ceilings with reproduction light fixtures, and original fireplaces in three parlors all add up to an early 20th century vibe.

Two sets of double doors facing the train

tracks open onto the concourse where large, vintage luggage carts sit waiting for use. The Station has the benefit of both indoor and covered outdoor spaces for seasonally appropriate celebrations without the threat of weather. Another asset of the property is the aforementioned park with a large expanse of grass surrounded by landscaped beds, benches, and a brick and wood trellis focal point, perfect for an outdoor wedding ceremony.

The Station is the site of various fundraising



The historic Salisbury Station has become a popular location for meetings, weddings and other social functions.

and corporate events throughout the year. The historic space has played host to numerous organizations including Three Rivers Land Trust, Salisbury Symphony, Historic Salisbury Foundation, Smart Start Rowan, school proms, Food Lion, Chandler Concrete and the Main Street Conference.

Various sized rooms, all serving a different purpose in the original layout of the station, are now utilized as conference and intimate party spaces. Hollywood has also made the Station a destination in the form of movies filmed at the site, with George Clooney's "Leatherheads" in 2008 and Kevin Willmott's "The 24th" in 2019.





Clockwise from above: Historic Salisbury Foundation Executive Director Sada Stewart recently used the Salisbury Station for her bridal shower; the station features classic architecture; the depot is a hive of activity during a recent event; Abigail Young, left, and Amber Troutman set up for a Salisbury Station gathering.



WHEN HISTORY SPEAKS

While the Station has “celebration” locked down, its advantages as an educational tool should not be overlooked. Historic Salisbury Foundation welcomes elementary to high school students seeking to learn about rail travel, architecture, maintenance, and marketing of an adaptively reused space.

HSF has hosted the youngest students, eager to witness a passing train or follow the leader on a nervous, giggle-inducing trek through the passageways of the Station’s basement levels. High school groups have toured the property, learning how to best market an event space, especially one in an historic structure.

High school interns work in the archives and revolving fund files of the foundation office and in the trenches with the volunteer brigade,


A full kitchen was added to the structure to accommodate events.



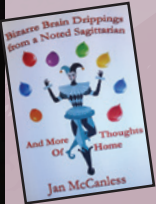


learning how best to repair and maintain an historic building. Most recently, a group of Rowan-Cabarrus Community College students used the station as their learning lab, cutting wood for an historically accurate façade replacement

on the concourse canopy. The past continues to inform the present and acts a valuable tool for today’s young people.

The heart of the Salisbury Station may currently serve as an event space, but Amtrak con-



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tinues to maintain a presence on the Station grounds with an office and platform for train travel. In fact, train travel is on the rise, and the Department of Transportation has plans to add an additional platform on the east side of the railroad tracks, connected to the Station side by an underground pedestrian tunnel.

Historic Salisbury Foundation welcomes the improvements that will continue to bring more people to Salisbury and solidify this landmark at the forefront of the historic railroad corridor.

Adaptive reuse of historic buildings in a downtown's core serves to maintain an authentic sense of place for communities while providing services essential to today's way of life.

Norvell said one of the most important things that made the restoration of the Station successful was the community investment. He quoted Jimmy Hurley, the late philanthropist and Salisbury Post publisher: "You can't ask for money unless you've given money."

HSF and community members opened their wallets and invested their time, asking the same of the community at large to save an historic piece of Salisbury's downtown. Preservation projects such as the Station rely on that community investment to ensure that destinations in a small town — Salisbury included — maintain their presence for future generations. **[S]**

Leah Campion is events coordinator for Historic Salisbury Foundation.



Above: Historic Salisbury Foundation Executive Director Sada Stewart, center, at her Salisbury Station bridal shower. Below: The Salisbury Depot is a popular subject for artists, such as this pen-and-ink drawing by Andy Mooney.



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THE SCENE



Zach Collins holds a nice catch from his fly-fishing trip on the South Platte River in Colorado with father, Dave, and brother, Josh.



Karen Carmichael took this photo of the attractive rail fence at the Old Stone House in Granite Quarry.



Angelica, a cat belonging to Kathy and David Pulliam, isn't sure what to make of their replica of *The Child-Grogu-Baby Yoda*, as seen on the television series, *'The Mandalorian.'* Angelica is named after Angelica Schuyler from the musical *'Hamilton.'* In 2016, the Pulliams saw *'Hamilton'* in New York.



Charlotte Hall says her 3-year-old granddaughter, Savannah, fixed herself a nest on the mini-trampoline one day and settled down to read a copy of *Salisbury the Magazine*.



Linda Holshouser provided this photo of her friend Emma Lou McCall, reading her daily Bible devotion. Holshouser says Emma Lou's motto is 'I do my best and God does the rest.'

Out and about with readers

While we all have been dealing with the confines of a pandemic, the Scene pages showing folks at various events in and around Salisbury have been on a long sabbatical. They will return with a vengeance once we are freer to move around and congregate. Meanwhile, readers have sent in a few photos that we wanted to share. They come from their walks around the county, visits to friends, their jobs, homes, gardens and travels. — **Mark Wineka**



Left: Debbie Hoffman of Salisbury used her artistic talents to create this hanging flower planter, made from a milk jug. **Right:** Betty Bonner Steele holds a half-day-old lamb at the Renn Bee Farm.



David Correll submitted this photo from Correll Farms of lettuce plants being readied for spring planting.



On a trip to Winston-Salem, Thomas McCora of Salisbury couldn't pass up taking this photo of an original Arby's sign still in place at the longtime fast-foot restaurant.



Julie Cline found herself reading one day under the watchful eye of Spanky, her Pomeranian.



Karen Carmichael noticed this elaborate spider's web on the steel bridge of Richfield Park in Stanly County.

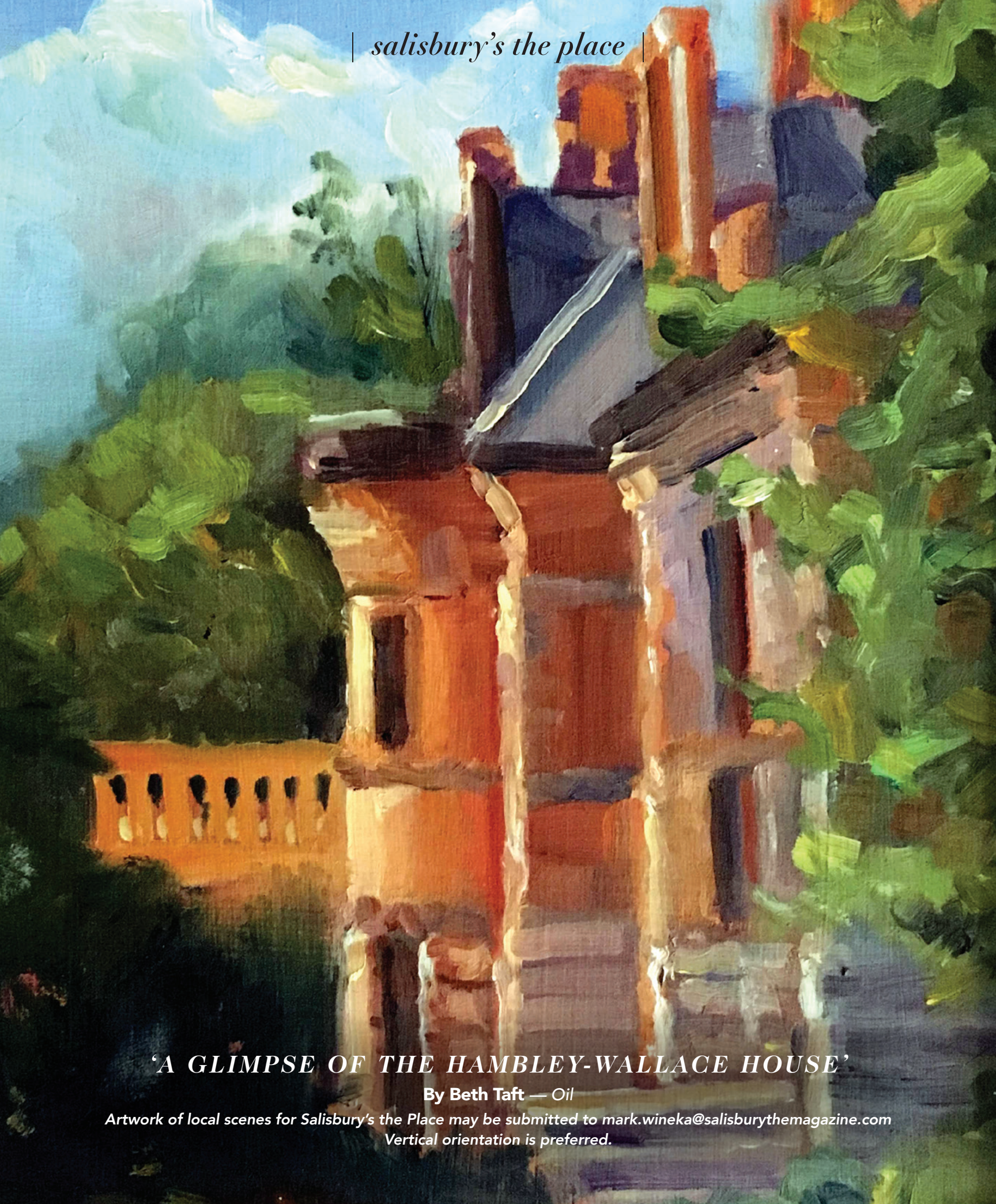


Above: Karen Carmichael captured some Canada geese playing follow-the-leader at Dan Nicholas Park. **Left:** Dave Collins sent in this photo from a fly-fishing trip with his sons, Zach and Josh, on the South Platte River in Colorado.



Jeanie McDowell, district recruiter for Rowan-Salisbury Schools, took this photo at the swearing-in of new RSS Superintendent Dr. Tony Watlington. The hands under the Bible, holding it for him, belong to his sons, Tony Jr., Aaron and Caleb.

| *salisbury's the place* |



'A GLIMPSE OF THE HAMBLEY-WALLACE HOUSE'

By Beth Taft — Oil

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

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