

SEPTEMBER 2020

SALISBURY

the magazine



puppy love

Amanda Collins has
a passion for
goldendoodles

Therapeutic comedy

Belliveau's film focuses on depression
with help from Busey, miniature horse

Good boat hunting

Only ducks don't like Taylor's custom crafts

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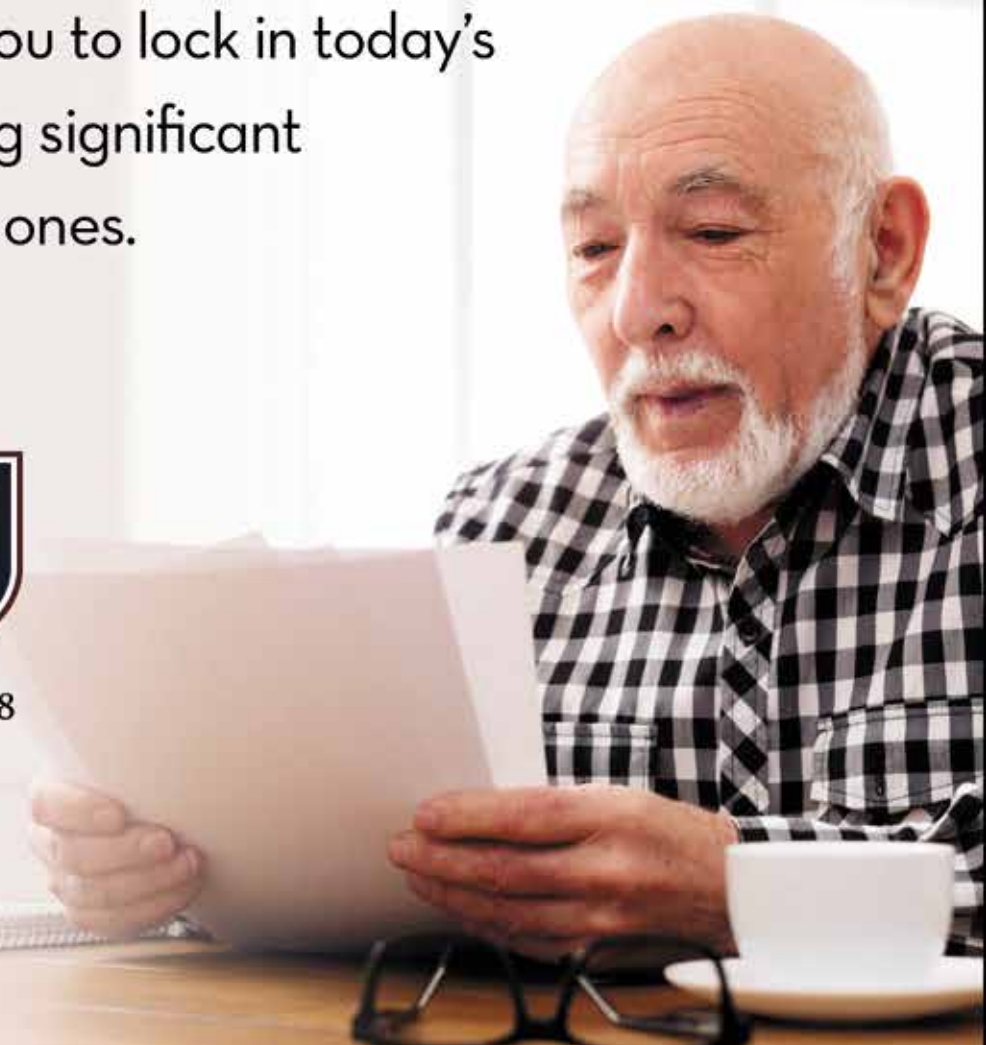
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PUBLISHER-John Carr
john.carr@salisburythemagazine.com

EDITOR -Mark Wineka
mark.wineka@salisburythemagazine.com

CREATIVE DIRECTOR-Andy Mooney
andy.mooney@salisburythemagazine.com

EDITORIAL

Natalie Anderson
natalie.anderson@salisburythemagazine.com

Josh Bergeron
josh.bergeron@salisburythemagazine.com

Carl Blankenship
carl.blankenship@salisburythemagazine.com

Mike London
mike.london@salisburythemagazine.com

Shavonne Potts
shavonne.potts@salisburythemagazine.com

ADVERTISING

Dennis Davidson
dennis.davidson@salisburythemagazine.com

Andrea Fleegel
andrea.fleegel@salisburythemagazine.com

Malynda Peeler
malynda.peeler@salisburythemagazine.com

Jason Slusser
jason.slusser@salisburythemagazine.com

PRODUCTION

Susan Baker
susan.baker@salisburythemagazine.com

Lisa Jean Humphrey
lisa.humphrey@salisburythemagazine.com

CONTRIBUTORS

Darlene Ball, Elizabeth G. Cook,
Wayne Hinshaw, Sean Meyers,
Kris Mueller, Alissa Redmond,
Susan Shuping Linn

On the web:
www.salisburythemagazine.com

On Facebook:
www.facebook.com/salisburythemagazine

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by KRIS MUELLER

On the cover: A goldendoodle puppy
rests during a hot summer day at Rowan
Doodle Goldendoodles in Rockwell.

On this page: Filmmaker Jacques Belli-
veau is also an avid musician and built
the electric ukulele on the right.

(Sean Meyers photos)



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Animal magnetism draws you in

I don't know exactly when it hit me, but I realized one day that the September issue of Salisbury the Magazine — the one you're holding in your hands right now — has a lot to do with animals. Call it happenstance and further evidence that little planning goes into these magazines on my part.

As for the animals, let's start with goldendoodles. If you thought you've had it rough sheltering at home during the 2020 pandemic, imagine sharing these days with 21 highly social puppies. Amanda Collins, who has been breeding goldendoodles for the past couple of years, found herself in that situation, but she's not complaining.

Amanda loves this side business in which she has immersed herself, especially when she knows some of her puppies will be trained later as therapy or service dogs. She feels it's her small way of paying forward the kindness shown to her after the loss of a cherished Labradoodle in 2016.

While we're on therapy animals, I should mention contributing writer Kris Mueller's story on actor/director/producer/comedian Jacques "Jack" Belliveau and his recently completed movie, "Reggie: A Millennial Depression Comedy."

One of Belliveau's co-stars in the picture is a therapy miniature horse named Reggie (Kiwi, in real life). Yes, there are such things as therapy miniature horses. And yes, Belliveau's film also features actor Gary Busey, who fits right in with this picture.

When the movie is released, you will notice several Salisbury friends and familiar places throughout.

The accidental animal theme doesn't stop there. Writer Carl Blankenship brings us the story of three Rowan Countians — Drs. Allison Baucom, Abby Lane and Joseph Wiggins — who graduated together in May from the N.C. State College of Veterinary Medicine.

The new doctors already have jobs elsewhere, and here's hoping they serve as inspiration for all the kids who are back at school this fall, no matter what the circumstances wrought by the coronavirus.

Let's move on to ducks. Since 2003, woodworker Brad Taylor has made more than 40 custom boats for duck hunters, and he offers a look at the latest model from his shop.

Contributing writer Elizabeth Cook gives us a peek at a house dubbed "Sweet Pea" by the couple who restored it, Diane and Luke Fisher. It's a Sells Road cottage whose transformation many of us watched with interest as we drove by.

On another vegetable-related matter, read about a dedicated team of volunteers and clients whose "Garden of Eatin'" has provided fresh food to the Rowan Helping Ministries kitchen throughout the growing season.

Elsewhere in this issue, Shavonne Potts sits down for a Q&A with Anthony Smith, who is this month's Rowan Original. Artist Susan Shuping Linn provides a portrait of one of her notable relatives in Salisbury's the Place. Darlene Ball provided this issue's Through the Lens photograph.

In Bookish, Alissa Redmond reviews a book that's quite timely for the days we're in.

Thanks go to photographers Sean Meyers and Wayne Hinshaw for providing the majority of the images in this issue.

As you can tell, Salisbury the Magazine has been a bit different during the pandemic. Noticeably missing are "Scene" photos of people attending various events in Rowan County. Those gatherings simply aren't happening now, but we hope they return in months ahead. If they do, so will our Scene pictures.

The monthly and bi-monthly calendars of events also have been absent for much the same reason — no events. The calendar will return someday, too. Hang with us in the meantime, and we hope you at least go ape over this issue.

It would be appropriate, you animal.

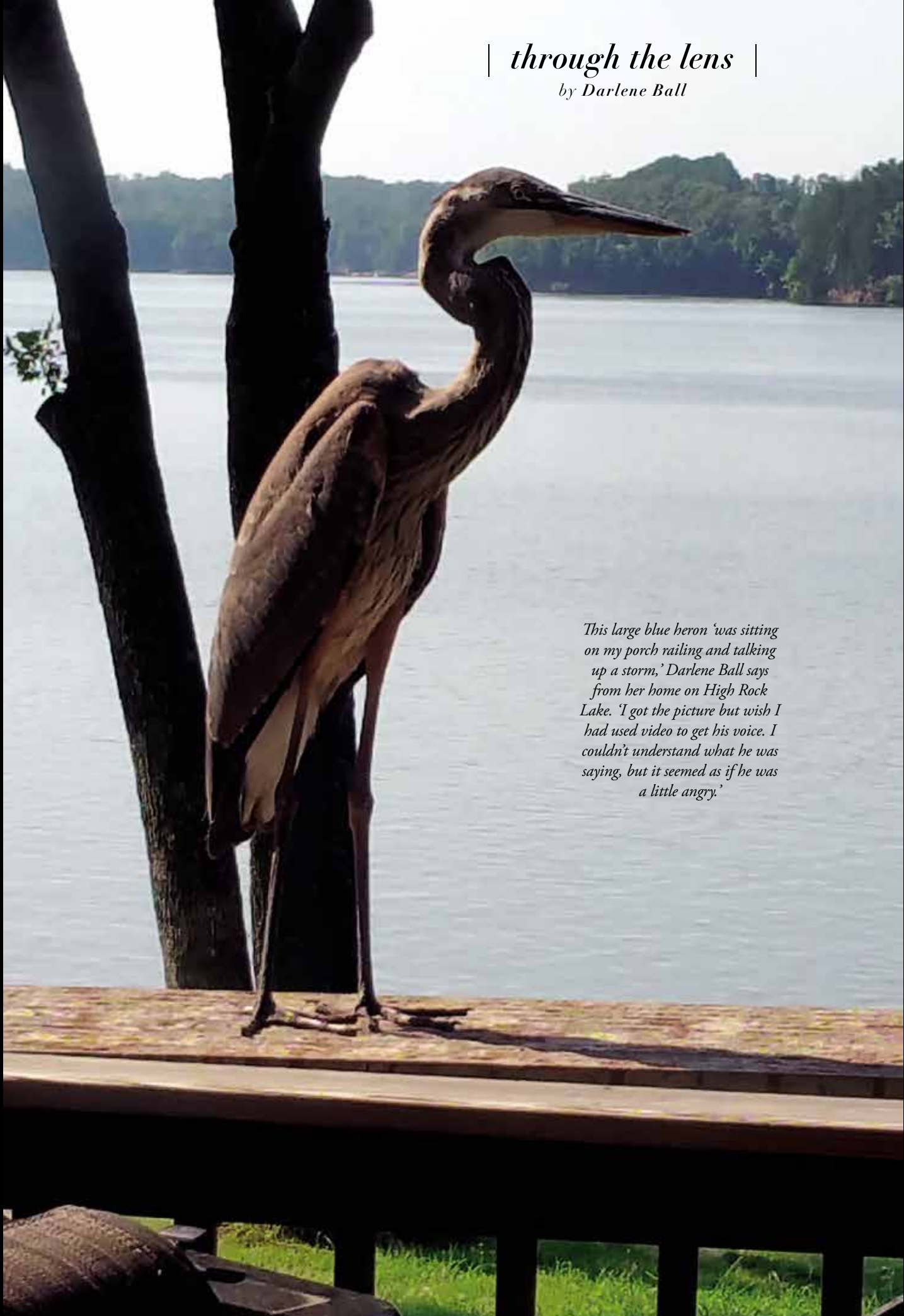


Mark Wineka,
Editor, Salisbury the Magazine

| *through the lens* |

by Darlene Ball

This large blue heron 'was sitting on my porch railing and talking up a storm,' Darlene Ball says from her home on High Rock Lake. 'I got the picture but wish I had used video to get his voice. I couldn't understand what he was saying, but it seemed as if he was a little angry.'



Transform the world through ‘Revolutionary Love’

I was on maternity leave in Hong Kong bonding with my newly adopted toddler daughter during the winter of 2016 when I first encountered the work of civil rights activist Valarie Kaur.

This period of time, you may recall, was a particularly interesting one to be an American diplomat overseas, as our presidential election results had just shocked the world; it was also an interesting time to find my footing as the single mother of a child of a different ethnicity — and U.S. immigration status — than my own. Prior to this time in my life, I’d fleetingly recognized my own privilege, but now I felt an overwhelming surge of love for someone who would never know some of the privileges I’d been raised to carelessly expect and enjoy.

I felt breathless with anxiety for my small family’s future as I clicked on a video clip virally circulating on my Facebook page that winter. In the six-minute clip, Kaur spoke eloquently to a Protestant church’s packed congregation of the challenges faced when raising brown bodies in a country where racism continues to thrive. I felt suddenly renewed with energy as she asked her audience to ponder, “Is this the darkness of the tomb, or of the womb? ...What if our America has yet to be born?”

Kaur’s central hypothesis was — rather than watching the end of our nation’s history unfold, as so many feared at that unsettling time — perhaps we were living in a transitory period where Americans could utilize the tools of revolutionary love to manifest an America truly capable of providing hope and prosperity for all its inhabitants.

Kaur’s **See No Stranger: A Memoir and Manifesto of Revolutionary Love** begins with a dedication: “This book is for anyone who feels

breathless. Maybe moving through this world, in your body, is enough to make you feel constriction in your chest. ...Your breathlessness is a sign of your bravery. It means you are awake to what’s happening right now: The World is in transition.”

She goes on to describe her philosophy of Revolutionary Love as “the choice to enter into wonder and labor for others, for opponents, and

community.”

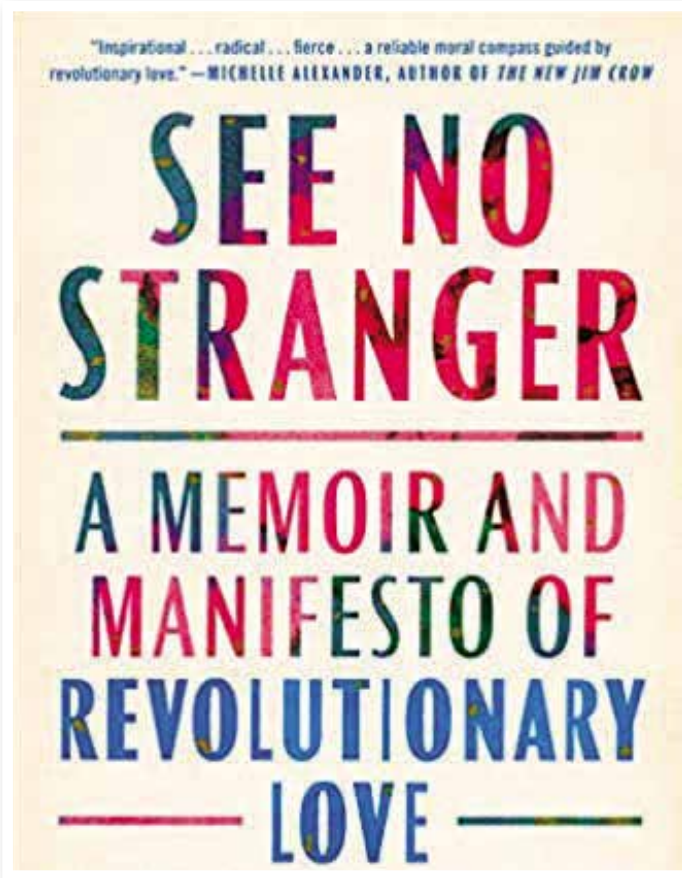
“See No Stranger” is, on its face, a memoir, describing Kaur’s background steeped in the Sikh faith on her family’s farm in California. Her world, along with so many others, was rocked on Sept. 11, 2001, and she found a path towards healing through her study of U.S. constitutional law and her work with Guantanamo Bay detainees.

But it is her descriptions of motherhood and its impact on her worldview that resonate most deeply with me. While describing her pregnancies, she raises infinitely larger questions regarding our society’s founding principles. “If we see the story of America as one long labor, then we have ... a series of expansions and contractions, and each turn through the cycle brings us closer to what is being born. ...Transition is the most painful and dangerous stage, but it’s also where we begin to see what comes into the space we open up.”

I cannot recommend this book enough for those struggling to find their voice and role in confronting both the challenges and opportunities facing our country in this moment. One of the great joys of my summer has been helping folks find the right book to begin their antiracism work. I hope this title speaks to you and other members of your family, and that after reading it, you strive to work to strengthen our community in any positive direction you are capable of as we move towards a brighter future for all

our neighbors. **S**

This title is 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 owns the store.



for ourselves in order to transform the world around us. It is not a formal code or prescription but an orientation to life that is personal and political and rooted in joy. Loving only ourselves is escapism; loving only our opponents is self-loathing; loving only others is ineffective. All three practices together make love revolutionary, and revolutionary love can only be practiced in



*Anthony Smith keeps fighting
for the best in ourselves*

STORY AND PHOTOGRAPHY
BY SHAVONNE POTTS



Anthony Smith has been seen on the frontlines of protests and as part of national groups not afraid to ask tough questions about systemic racism, poverty and justice. The advocate, activist and organizer has been surrounded by community-minded people his whole life.

Smith is the lead pastor of Mission House, a multiracial church whose mission is to mobilize an army of love for the good of the city and surrounding neighborhoods.

Beyond the church, he belongs and sometimes has been a founder of myriad groups advocating for justice, fairness, involvement and change.

The list includes the Salisbury-Rowan NAACP, the city's Housing Advocacy Commission, Rowan Concerned Citizens, the Salisbury Circle of the Poor People's Campaign National Call for Moral Revival and the Truth, Healing, Hope and Equity

Project, which is modeled after the Truth Commission in apartheid South Africa.

In addition, he also is part of the leadership team for the nonprofit Transform, which provides training for cultivating communities at the intersection of faith and justice. He is a board member of Inside Out Global, a nonprofit teaching filmmaking to youth, and part of the leadership team for Liberating Church.

A native of Birmingham, Alabama, Smith moved to Rowan County in 2009 after he met his wife, Toni, fell in love and joined her in the community in which she was raised. He jokes that they settled in Rowan County because she had no plans to live anywhere else.

The couple together have four sons, two daughters and four granddaughters. Smith is a U.S. Navy veteran. Salisbury the Magazine recently caught up with Smith for this Q&A, which includes additional notes from reporter Shavonne Potts.

Q. *You are a community advocate, activist and organizer. How did you get into community work?*

It goes back to my childhood — to my grandfather, who was a community man. He was respected in his community. My grandmother's first cousin — the Rev. Charles Kinzie Steele — he was really close friends with Dr. (Martin Luther) King (Jr.). Steele helped King form the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, and he actually led the first bus boycott in Tallahassee, Florida, before King did the same in Montgomery.

I was raised around men in my life who were activists and who were community-type people. It was an evolution of things. I lived in Seattle for several years and was engaged there in community work, primarily through church.

Note: *Smith took part in some national organizing and protests in Washington, D.C. He's written books about the role of the church in activism and in social justice as well as co-authored theological jour-*

nals and study bibles. He's been a featured speaker at churches and universities, including Yale University.

"When I moved here," Smith continued, "I was pretty much done with that, but what happens is you begin to mess up when you begin to pay attention. So I began to pay attention to Salisbury and what was happening. I quickly realized certain black justice voices I was used to hearing in larger cities that I had lived in that I didn't see here.

Who inspires you and why?

Alex Clark, who would've turned 50 this week. He definitely inspired and continues to inspire just by his knowledge, his wisdom, his compassion and his own acts of service. I learned a lot from him. He taught me a lot about Rowan County. My mother-in-law, Pastor Annie Rice. She pastored a storefront Pentecostal church in Cooleemee called New Harvest. She literally loved me out of my darkness. She showed me unconditional love. She taught me how to really pastor and love on people and walk with people where they are. The thing that inspired me the most was her relationship with God.

Ash Love, who is a member of my church and a fellow activist/co-conspirator. She inspires me the way that she is fearless when it comes to justice and her deep compassion and tenderness to people. She really challenges me. She holds me accountable as an activist.

Most importantly is my wife, Toni. She is a very spiritual person. She's experienced a lot of suffering in her life and has a very powerful testimony, which helped me put my life in perspective. She came out of poverty, single mom. She made a decision that she would do something with her life. She went to school and got her cosmetology license and she's been doing that for several decades now. Her boldness, her love for God. She doesn't just accept what is.

Note: *Smith also mentions his youngest daughter, Deborah, whom he describes as very thoughtful, compassionate and not afraid to challenge him and his thinking. She calls him out when needed and shows unconditional love, he said.*

What is the best advice you've been given?

You're only as good as your friends. You can tell a person by their friends. I believe in clas-

sical literature. The Greek philosopher Aristotle talked about three friends: friends of pleasure — people that we have fun with; friendships of use — networking or building a relationship because you're useful to me; (and) the highest form of friendship, which is the friendship of virtue — when a person calls the best out of you and you call the best out of each other.

What would your perfect day look like?

It would be a day where there is no violence in my community because everybody is taken care of. People would have a sense of purpose and just enjoying each other's company. A perfect day would be seeing the community come together across differences, around things that truly matter and impact other people's lives beyond themselves.

Note: *On a more personal aside, Smith said Saturday is about his only day off, so he would start with a great breakfast. It would include seeing children playing in the streets, laughing, smiling with not a care in the world, he said, adding his perfect day would end with a big block party to celebrate each other, not tear each other down.*

Name a book title or an author who you just can't put down?

"Resident Aliens" by Stanley Hauerwas, which Smith said rekindled his faith in God to work in the church. "Where Do We Go from Here: Chaos or Community?" by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Also, "Pedagogy of the Oppressed" by Paulo Freire and "Sisters of the Yam: Black Women and Self-Recovery" by Bell Hooks.

Smith said between his Kindle and his phone he believes he has 2,000 or more books. He typically reads about 10 or 12 books at a time. He added music also is part of the "mind palace." He listens to soundtracks from movies and studies the lives and creative processes of composers of different genres from classical to minimalists.

"Right now my favorite composer is Hans Zimmer, who does a lot of sound composition to a lot of famous movies," Smith said. "Music from all genres and cultures including Malian, chant, opera, hip-hop and old-school gospel."

He's also into art and poetry and writes poetry himself including haikus.

How do you try to inspire others?

By not trying to be something that I'm not. I try not to be a superhero. I try not to be a celebrity, but what I try to do is be consistent in my community and, hopefully, people see that. Being consistent, being true to my convictions and trying to live a life that is more in awe and wonder of God than other humans. I try to live my life after the pattern of Jesus — a first-century, troublemaking rabbi that we find in the Gospels and New Testament. I try to pattern my life after his teachings.

I try to be very transparent about my own struggles, my own weaknesses as a person. I don't think, "How can I inspire people?" I try to live the story that God has given me. I have this innate stubbornness to live into the story that God has set out for my life.

How do you try to embody the spirit of Rowan County in all that you do?

Smith said he has been intrigued by the county's "Be An Original" brand. "Part of my own work here is calling people to who they are; their truest self," he said. "Who am I when I am my truest self? I'm always in this ongoing struggle, process of discovery for myself. Being willing to take the plunge into self-discovery. I'm always curious and intrigued by people who start things that are original (such as) calling for a small Southern city to embody and ask itself, how might we become an antiracist city in the South in a place that has a long history of systemic racism?"

Describe yourself. You are ...

An astronaut, because I can take people into different mental worlds for the collective good and take our community to another world, to another imagination than what we receive.

A cartographer, someone who makes a map of uncharted territory. Part of my work is to make ministry maps to do ministry, organize ministry in a way for a world that we're not used to yet.

A soul artist (because he thinks he is here to make, create, expand, innovate, redeem and liberate people from suffocating orthodoxies).

A gadfly and a God-lover.

I love God, and because I love God, I love my neighbors. I can love God because God loves me and that's what keeps me. God is bigger than anything that we can imagine." **S**

| food |



*Art Wiles and Julie Apone
harvest potatoes in the
Garden of Eatin'.*

'God's in it'

Rowan Helping Ministries' clients, volunteers tend to their Garden of Eatin'

WRITTEN BY MARK WINEKA / PHOTOGRAPHY BY SEAN MEYERS



During the growing season, the Garden of Eatin' crew reports to the corner at North Long and East Liberty streets every Monday and Wednesday morning.

This team consists of Joseph Cranfield and Art Wiles, who are clients at Rowan Helping Ministries, and community volunteers Julie Apone and the Rev. Steve Combs.

Before them stands a modest plot where they tend to collards, cabbage, radishes, potatoes, tomatoes, kale, onions, squash, cantaloupe, watermelon and peppers.

"I'm not much on kale," Cranfield acknowledges.

The foods harvested from the Garden of Eatin' go straight up the hill to the Rowan Helping Ministries kitchen, where the vegetables are welcomed by Food Operations Manager Kristine Wiles and her staff.

The bounty finds its way onto the plates of shelter guests.

"They put some really nice cabbage out on the tables a couple of weeks ago," says Kristine Wiles (no relation to Art).

On this particular Monday morning, Cranfield, Art Wiles, Apone and Combs are watering, weeding, spraying liquid fertilizer, tying up some tomato plants and spreading compost.

They also decide it's time to dig up more potatoes, which are always welcome at the shelter kitchen. This morning's harvest of potatoes gives the Garden of Eatin' crew room for something new.

"If we take that row right there," Art Wiles says, pointing, "we could plant some green beans."



These freshly washed potatoes, harvested from the Garden of Eatin', lie next to some flowers, which serve as pollinators for the garden. The potatoes will provide food for Rowan Helping Ministries' shelter guests. (Submitted photo)



From left: Joseph Cranfield, the Rev. Steve Combs, Art Wiles and Julie Apone sit on a bench built by Cranfield.



And that is how easily decisions are made at the Garden of Eatn'. If there's any leader to the group, it's Combs, a retired Methodist pastor.

"Steve's out here religiously, pun intended," Kristine Wiles says. "It takes that dedication."

Combs tries to deflect any praise directed his way when it comes to the garden. It's all about Cranfield, Art Wiles and Rowan Helping Min-

istries, he says. Apone agrees.

"These guys make it fun," she says. "It wouldn't be fun on our own."

But Apone and everyone else report that Combs checks on the garden daily, beyond the Monday and Wednesday morning sessions.

"It has really been my salvation," acknowledges Combs, who a year ago was wondering how

he would transition into a new stage in his life — retirement.

"I said, 'I really need to be doing something, and I know there's something out there for me.'"

The garden started last August. Ashley Honbarrier of Happy Roots helped in the tilling of the corner spot. Young Graham Shue assisted in the planting.

The garden grew, so to speak, out of a New Tomorrows class at Rowan Helping Ministries. Combs used to have New Tomorrows participants help with a garden at his former church, Milford Hills United Methodist.

The idea easily took root and translated to this corner spot adjacent to Rowan Helping Min-



*Julie Apone
gathers
potatoes.*

istries. A house once stood here, and when the ground was tilled, the digging unearthed a lot of old bricks.

Kyna Grubb, executive director of Rowan Helping Ministries, says the dream of an on-site garden managed by shelter guests and volunteers was something her board talked about for 10 years.

“This is better than I envisioned,” Grubb says.

Apone loves that the small Garden of Eatin’ crew starts or ends its Monday and Wednesday mornings with a prayer.

“That for me is so refreshing,” Apone says, “and he (Combs) always asks if we can pray for someone we know who needs a little help.”

At times, Combs will ask Wiles to offer the blessing. “I think Art feels serenity (in the garden) and attributes that to a connection with God he feels there,” Apone says. “His prayers al-



ways have a theme of gratitude, Steve’s are always focused on us and our families and friends and who may need a prayer lifted up.”

An accomplished gardener in her own right, Apone enjoys mixing flowers in with the vegetables. They serve as the garden’s pollinators.

“I’m not a flower guy,” Wiles says. “I just like to eat what I plant.”

Combs and Apone say Cranfield and Wiles have taught them a lot about gardening.

“I’m no master gardener, but I know a little bit,” Cranfield says.

“We all know what we’re doing,” Wiles adds.

Wiles recalls days when he used to tend a big garden every year. He always lived by a maxim that every seventh year, you give your garden a season to rest — just to provide a break for the played-out soil.

“The problem today,” Wiles said, “is there’s a generation that doesn’t even know how to hoe.”

Wiles reports that people are amazed at the little garden as they walk or drive by on the well-traveled North Long Street. One reason, he adds quickly, is that “God’s in it.”

Wiles also likes to use Combs’ push mower to cut the grass bordering the garden. The clippings are strewn into the garden as compost. Other



discarded vegetation from the garden is returned to make for a richer loam.

The team of Cranfield, Wiles, Apone and Combs have been surprised not to find many worms in the earth. They're hoping the compost and full season of gardening will lead to their comeback.

A hose connection and rain barrel supply the water. To save room, Happy Roots provided the lattice for the squash vines to spread up and not out, and the rows of tomato plants are nicely tied.

The group expects a bumper crop of tomatoes, and Apone eagerly talks about the shelter guests participating in a tomato sandwich contest pitting Hellman's mayonnaise against the Duke's brand.

Trees provide generous shadows over the garden in the mornings, which makes the work much more tolerable in the summer. The shade hadn't seemed to hurt the garden's production, but a violent summer storm July 31 knocked huge limbs from nearby walnut and maple trees into the garden.

The team lost numerous tomato, bean and squash plants.

"A couple hours of cleanup with Pastor Steve and Gary Readling got most of it out," Apone reports, "except for a zillion unripe walnuts! I guess Mother Nature heard us saying we needed more sunlight in that area."

Sitting in what's left of the morning shade next to the garden is a wide and roomy bench made by Cranfield. Combs brought him the lumber, and it took Cranfield about seven hours to construct. He based the design on a lounge



Above: Joseph Cranfield fertilizes the garden.

Above right: David Freeze is among the volunteers chopping vegetables from the Garden of Eatin' at Rowan Helping Ministries' kitchen.

Right: Volunteers spend a moment in prayer at the garden after a day's work.





Julie Apone cuts some string for tying up tomato plants.



chair he saw once, but says he made it more upright.

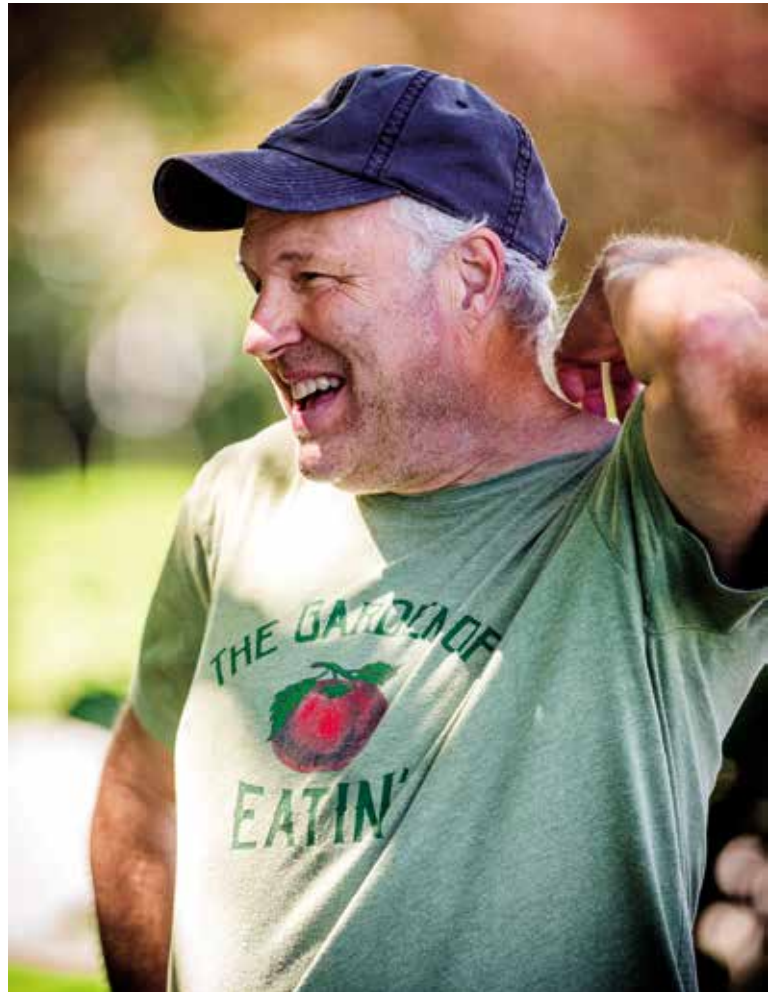
Wiles recalls that a lot of names were suggested for their patch of earth, but Garden of Eatin' just filled the bill on many fronts.

"I think the name we came up with is just a blessing in itself," Wiles says.

They even made T-shirts, and Clyde, a local artist, fashioned a sign for the garden spot.

On this particular morning at the garden, the crew's work ended in prayer, and Combs asked Wiles to do the honors.

As Wiles spoke, Apone reached out and put a hand on his arm — a gesture that says they reap what they sow together. **S**



Top: Art Wiles mows the lawn around the garden. *Above:* A homemade sign, ladder, pots, flowers and a bit of landscaping provide a title page of sorts for the Garden of Eatin', located at North Long and East Liberty streets. (Submitted photo) *Right:* The Rev. Steve Combs.



Brad Taylor and his son, Cole, 12, stand near the front of the duck hunting boat during construction. The fuel tank is in the front of the boat.

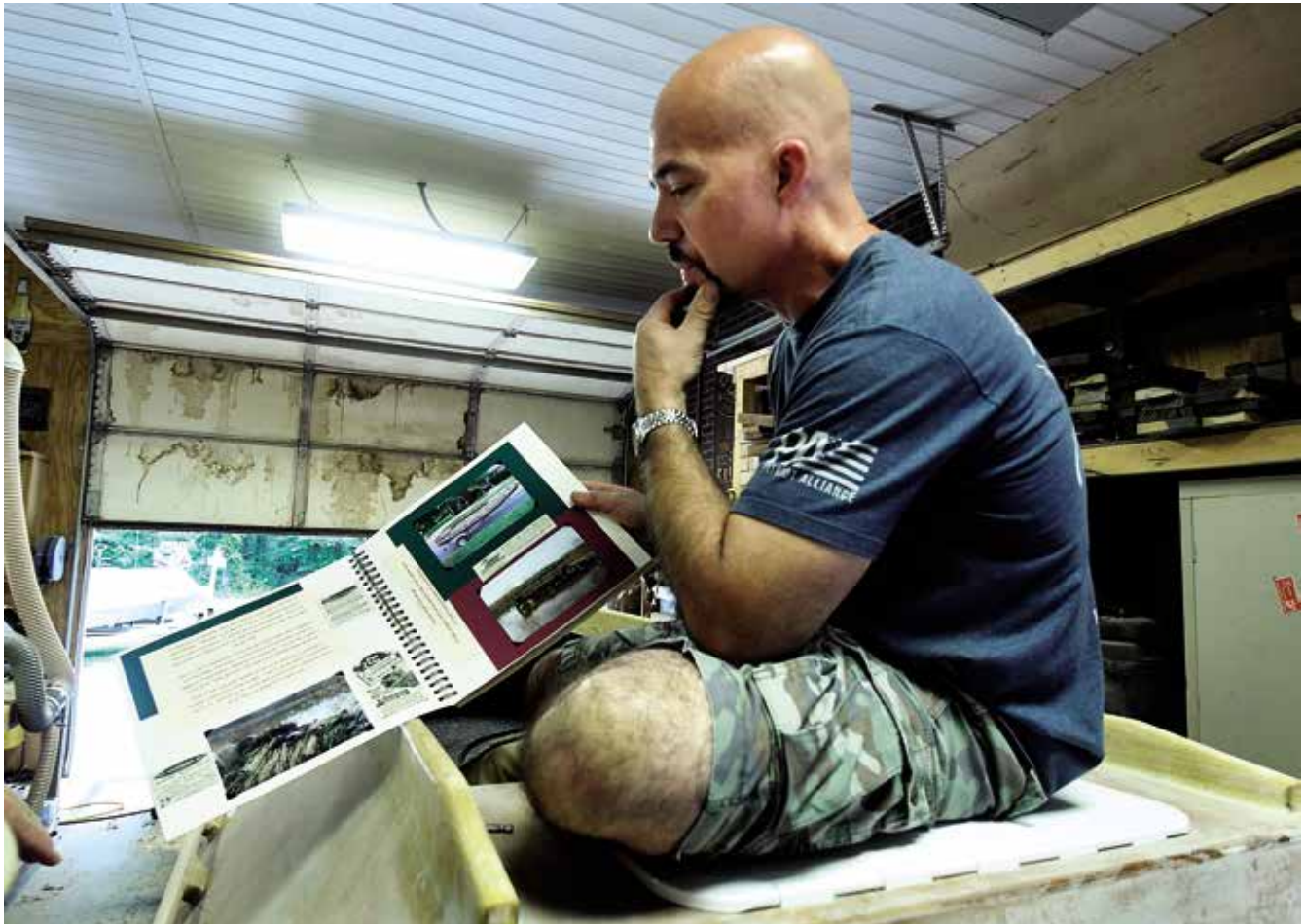
With the grain

Taylor's custom boats are just ducky for hunters

WRITTEN BY MARK WINEKA / PHOTOGRAPHY BY WAYNE HINSHAW



Left: A woodworker such as Taylor relies on many different varieties of wood. **Right:** The duck head mounted on Taylor's own boat's motor came off an old decoy he found on the river.



Brad Taylor looks over photos of other duck hunting boats he has built.

Of all the duck boats woodworker Brad Taylor has custom made — and there have been more than 40 — this one has to be the most bittersweet.

Taylor never met his customer in Arizona, but they had talked frequently on the phone since last September. That's when Taylor agreed to build him one of his Air Traffic Control (ATC) models in 2020.

"It was his personality and timing that had convinced me to build a boat this year," Taylor says.

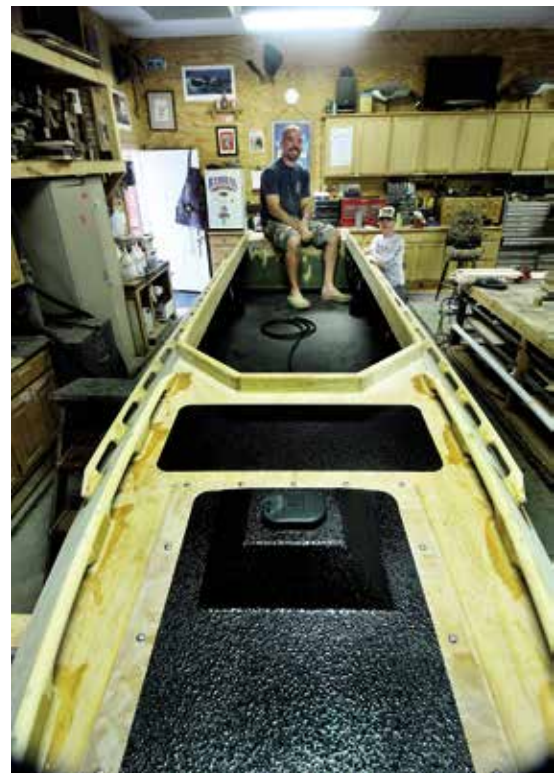
Taylor had endured a three-year, self-imposed hiatus on boat-building to concentrate on other, more profitable woodworking projects. By day, he also was a science teacher at China Grove Middle School.

He started this 16-foot, 450-pound ATC in his shop at home during spring break, then used the summer vacation from school to go full bore on the project. But during the spring, his Arizona friend received a cancer diagnosis. By early July, he died.

The customer had planned to drive across the country in August and pick up his duck boat in person.

"I was truly floored and had looked forward to putting a name with a face," Taylor says. "Andy was one of the most genuine people. ... He was 70,

During construction, Taylor sits at the back of the Air Traffic Control model, where the motor will eventually be mounted.





In his shop, Taylor sands the back of his Air Traffic Control model.



Taylor calls the boat-making side of his woodworking Toller Boatworks. This is his personal No Fly Zone HD model.

or about to turn 70, and had been looking at my boats for years. He was so excited and I was truly glad to be building one for him.”

Taylor told the man’s wife he would try hard to find her a buyer for the boat and its trailer, which were already paid for.

Through his Toller Boatworks, Taylor now has built custom duck boats for hunters in 15 states — from Maine to Florida and New Jersey to Oregon.

He even made one — undisclosed to him at the time — for the U.S. Coast Guard for testing purposes. He’s proud to say that aside from four minor infractions involving wording and sizing on his capacity label, markings on the bow light and height of the stern light, his No Fly Zone craft passed all the government requirements.

Meanwhile, magazines such as Wildfowl and American Waterfowler have featured his boats. In 2016, Garden and Gun invited him to submit some of his boat designs for its “Made in the South Awards.”

In 2014, Taylor also did a vintage boat restoration of an 1870 scull boat, originally from New Haven, Connecticut.

Salisbury the Magazine featured his other woodworking business, Compass Woodworks Co., in its April 2019 issue. In recent years, Taylor has concentrated on making cutting, cheese and bread boards; serv-



Taylor poses outside his shop with his personal No Fly Zone model.



Left: Taylor's carpenter apron hangs on the door of his shop. **Right:** Taylor also makes cutting boards (foreground) as one of his woodworking side businesses.



Left: A teacher, Taylor also has crafted more than 40 wooden duck-hunting boats since 2003. **Right:** Taylor takes the protective cover off the ATC model he completed in mid July.

ing trays; laser-engraved memento boards; and his own “board butter,” which he hands out with many of his creations.

While teaching from home during the COVID-19 restrictions in the spring, Taylor thought at first the isolation might provide him extra hours for his Arizona customer’s boat.

But after sitting at his computer all day communicating classroom tasks to students, “I didn’t have the energy,” Taylor says. So most of the work on the ATC boat was done during his more conventional summer break.

This coming fall, after 19 years as a middle school science teacher, Taylor is starting a new job as a carpentry instructor at South Rowan High. It will be a big change, but he’s excited to work with South Rowan High Principal Amanda Macon, “and I know a bunch of the kids,” Taylor says. “Half of them came through China Grove Middle.”

Taylor comes by his woodworking skills honestly, having learned a lot from both his father,

Robert Taylor, and his stepfather, Gary Russell. Brad Taylor attended Granite Quarry Elementary, Erwin Middle and East Rowan High schools before heading off to N.C. State University, where he majored in fisheries and wildlife science.

It wasn’t until college that he started duck

hunting — and became hooked for life. It’s a passion he has passed on to his 12-year-old son, Cole.

Now he likes to say with conviction that his boats are made for duck hunters by a duck hunter.

“I build every one of them like I’m building

While perched on the newest boat during its construction, Brad Taylor and his son, Cole, look over photos of other duck hunting boats he has built.



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them for myself,” Taylor says.

Taylor built his first duck boat — a Gatorboats Duckhunter marshboat — in 2003 when he was a young teacher “with not a lot of money” and no garage for a workshop at his then Wiley Avenue residence. He decided to lease a 10-foot-by-20-foot storage unit, whose rate was \$20 for the first month, then \$100 a month after that.

To avoid ever paying the higher fee, Taylor resolved to build his wooden boat in a month. It was unheard of, he says now, considering it was the first time he had worked with Fiberglas or epoxy, which are necessary materials beyond the wood he was using.

For his power tools, he ran a drop cord to the unit’s light socket.

Taylor made his 30-day deadline. “The paint was drying as I went down the road,” he says.

After that original boat, which he personally used for 10 years, Taylor gained access to a friends’ (the Mabrys’) barn as a workshop. “I lived at their house in the summer,” he says. In 2004, he built his second boat and sold it — and the word among duck hunters was out.

Taylor and his wife, Teresa, moved to their present home on a finger of High Rock Lake in 2005. He acknowledges hardly looking at

Taylor climbs into the boat for a closer look.

the house on their first visit. He saw instead the detached garage and its potential for being his shop. He soon had it filled with his wood, decoys, boats and waders.

Later, Taylor built a bigger separate shop, which he claims is also becoming cramped.

Teresa once complained they had five separate garage doors but no place to park any of their cars.

Taylor’s Toller Boatworks offers five main designs: The Duck Hunter 1 and 2, No Fly Zone, Air Traffic Control and Hellcat. They range in length from 14 to 20 feet and in basic price from \$6,000 to \$18,500, depending on options.

There’s a military edge to Taylor’s later designs. The Hellcat was named for a tank and is Taylor’s biggest model, able to seat up to four hunters.

The building of a wooden duck boat takes a lot of planing, laminating, cutting and sanding — yes, plenty of sanding.

“If you don’t like to sand, don’t build a boat,” Taylor says. “I don’t want to see any imperfections anywhere.”

The ATC in his shop this summer was built of Okoume marine plywood, with an interior framing of ash. Ash also was used for the coaming and grass rails. Taylor sheathed the boat’s exterior in Fiberglas and epoxy and coated the lower hull and bottom with Kevlar. He also added a below-deck fuel tank.

Beyond the basic structure, Taylor does the necessary wiring, plumbing, lighting, stenciling and painting. He provides storage compartments, antenna and USB ports. All of his boats have a custom camouflage pattern.

“It’s loaded out,” Taylor says of his late Arizona customer’s boat. “Nothing is optional.”

Working by himself with something this heavy can be a challenge.

“You want to minimize how many times you flip it,” Taylor says. When he has to turn a boat over, and there are no friends around, he relies on carts and Styrofoam and finds a way to use the grass rails to spin and balance the boat.

“It’s quite comical,” he says.

Taylor figures he puts 100 to 125 hours into a boat. Most duck hunters usually go for the more standard johnboats of aluminum, so Taylor is definitely specialized.

“It’s a niche, and there’s a market for sure,”

he says of his wooden vessels. "There's definitely a craftsmanship part to it. Cutting boards are far more profitable and easier to do. ... Last year, I turned down five boat orders to do cutting boards."

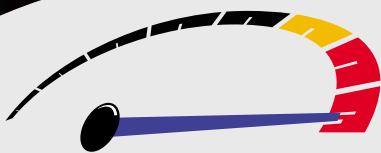
The word "toller" in Toller Boatworks, is an old duck-hunting reference to dogs and decoys. Taylor hopes to return to building at least one duck boat per year.

What's Taylor's main bit of advice for anyone with one of his boats? When they're not in use, keep them out of the sunlight. "Do that, and they can last forever," he says.

For information on Brad Taylor's duck boats, go to www.tollerboatworks.com. 

Taylor takes a break in his woodworking shop with the latest duck hunting boat nearby, during its construction this summer.





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A woman with curly hair and glasses, wearing a white top and light-colored shorts, is sitting in a large, round, wicker hanging chair. The chair is suspended from a black curved metal frame attached to the ceiling. The room has a white shiplap ceiling, white kitchen cabinets, and a colorful patterned rug. In the background, there is a dining table with colorful stools and a chandelier.

Diane Fisher relaxes in her art studio, the second floor of a house she and husband Luke remodeled on Sells Road.

Oh, Sweet Pea

Diane & Luke Fisher help old cottage blossom anew

WRITTEN BY ELIZABETH G. COOK / PHOTOGRAPHY BY SEAN MEYERS



The 'Sweet Pea' name comes from flowers that grew in abundance on the lot.

Diane and Luke Fisher have turned a worn cottage on Sells Road into a double blessing, with a two-bedroom retreat on the ground floor and a spacious studio above.

They call the house Sweet Pea. More about that later.

It all started the day attorney Glenn Ketner Jr. called and asked if Diane and Luke would be interested in the little house situated in front of the family home built by Luke's late father, Carrol.

Carrol's property was L-shaped, and the Wise tract filled in the L perfectly.

Wade Wise, a Navy veteran who was on the beach at Normandy, had lived in the cottage for decades before he passed away. By 2017, daughter Susan was ready to sell. "as is, where is."

The Fishers were well acquainted with Wise, a quirky, brilliant man who cared for his invalid wife many years, according to Diane. Using his vintage Minneapolis Moline tractor, Wise had helped Carrol clear the land for the Fisher house in the 1980s. "He was a good neighbor," she says.

When all the Fishers gathered at Carrol and Sonia Fisher's home for a meal, they often took food to Wise, the children a little intimidated by his bushy eyebrows and frankness.



***Above:** The double front porches on the remodeled house give it a more welcoming look than the second floor deck, below, that used to face Sells Road. The 'doors' on the first floor porch are actually windows. **Below:** This 'before' photograph shows some of the mystery that confronted the Fishers with the 1948 house. Facing the road, the house appeared to have no first-floor entrance, and many people referred to it as the 'beach house.'*

Wise would open the top of his Dutch back door — the only entrance to the living quarters — to receive the food and greetings, Diane says.

Yes, the Fishers would like to buy Wade Wise's house.

Built in 1948, the two-story structure was a ghost of itself when Diane and Luke acquired it. Peeling white paint on the outside reflected the state of things inside — sturdy but in need of an update.

Wise's daughter asked Luke, who is in the construction business, if he planned to tear the house down, Diane says. Luke was just stepping in the door at that moment, but he saw the potential.

"He looked around and he said, 'My wife would kill me if I tore this place down,'" Diane says.

They thought they might create an outdoor terrace on the property, Diane says. But bigger plans soon took shape. They would turn the first floor into a guest house to rent out. And the second floor would fulfill a dream of Diane's — her own art studio.

She's been painting since she was a little girl growing up in Burlington. "I could walk to my art teacher's house when I was in about fourth grade."

She has continued to work with pastels and



paint ever since. Life, however, didn't always yield a lot of time for her art. For many years she was busy raising their three children, who are now adults — Ben, Liza and Tom. Then came her leadership at Salisbury Academy, where an unexpected appointment as interim head of school turned into a position that stretched out six years.

"That's when I got away from my art."

But she'd get back to it eventually — and in her own space.

PUZZLING STRUCTURE

Before the Wise house could provide artistic inspiration, it needed what turned out to be a thorough and much-watched transformation.

To people who drove by on busy Sells Road



each day, the house on the curve had been a bit of a mystery. On the front, facing the road, it had stairs leading to a second-floor deck, prompting some people to call it “the beach house.” But there was no first-floor entrance in sight. Was that the only way in? The home had sat empty for several years, slowly deteriorating. What could anyone do with a house like that?

It was a puzzle for the Fishers to work out, too.

“The biggest challenge was to determine how to get upstairs and make the street side look like a front,” Diane says.

After considering different configurations, they removed the old front deck and put a new one across the rear of the house for easy access to the Dutch-door entrance. Stairs to the sec-



Clockwise from upper left, some personal touches from Diane’s studio include a large rabbit figure she’s been known to dress for the holidays, her easel and art supplies, and vintage cookware that belonged to her grandmother. Below, left to right, a detail from the oak music stand, the double Dutch door that serves as the main entrance to the living quarters, and some of the sweet peas making a comeback in the yard.





ond floor now rise from the new deck up the side of the house, where a window was enlarged into a doorway. Coated aluminum railing lines the stairs.

Back out front, they gave each floor a porch that faces the road. Upstairs, French doors lead out to the porch. On the first floor, the porch is more of an aesthetic touch or illusion; the two windows there are trimmed out to resemble an entrance, but that porch has no door to the inside.

REVIVED LIVING SPACE

The Fishers had the interior of the house cleaned up, fixed up and modernized — to an extent.

Workers jacked up and leveled the slightly sagging structure. On the ground floor, they replaced asbestos flooring with oak in the kitchen and ceramic tile in the bathroom. Wood floors elsewhere were refinished. The bathroom kept its original tub, surrounded by new fixtures, tile and hardware. The kitchen was reconfigured and updated with new white cabinets and a subway tile backsplash. Wifi and security were installed.

While the house acquired a lot of newness, the Fishers



Knotty pine paneling, top, brings warmth to the den and eating area, even on the ceiling. Above, the 'God Bless Our Home' piece decorating a shelf was found in the home after the Fishers bought it.



Clockwise from upper left, the kitchen before and after, with new cabinets, appliances and flooring; much of the artwork in the house had been collected by Luke's mother, Sonia Fisher; Diane gazes out the large picture window; the fireplace is just for looks now; the bathroom has bright white tile.

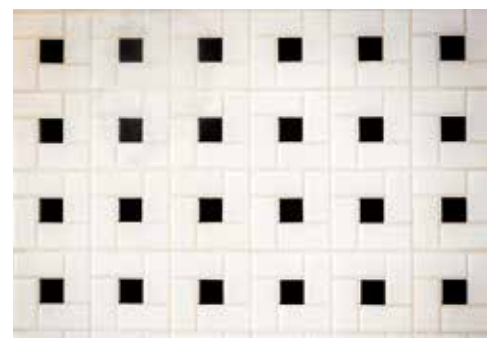


| at home |



Clockwise from above left: A wooden figure illustrates the human form; the master bedroom on the first floor; the bathroom's new tile floor and a brushed gold faucet in the studio kitchenette.

Below: The kitchen has some homey touches; a grate covers old ductwork.



held on to (and cherish) a good bit of the old — knotty pine paneling on the den walls and ceiling, big gray stones in the fireplace and blue slate in the hearth. Luke and Diane have the same materials in their house on North Road, also built in 1948.

“So that felt really like home to us,” Diane says.

They painted the old mint-green trim white. Diane resisted advice from some to lighten up the knotty pine ceiling, but she did paint the paneling above the fireplace. At the paint store, when she saw the shade of blue she had in mind, she found it was called “Retreat.”

“I thought, that’s my sign,” she says.



Diane lived out her belief in repurposing when it came to furnishing the house.

“We just used stuff we had; I was really determined to do that,” she says. She dove into the trove of furnishings that had belonged to her and Luke’s late parents, as well as their own extras. She filled the gaps with pieces found in consignment shops.

So, for example, rattan furniture in a couple of rooms came from a beach house they bought



furnished. Upholstered chairs in the den belonged to Luke’s mother, as did several of the original paintings on the walls. An oak music stand in the small hallway belonged to Diane’s grandmother. Above it hangs a framed embroidered piece that says “The Old Oaken Bucket.”

The “God Bless Our Home” sampler on display elsewhere was found in the house.

And in a corner hutch, a sign made by son Ben Fisher says “Sweet Pea, Est. 2018.” The house’s name comes from the plants that covered the front-yard bank when they bought it, wild sweet peas with little pink flowers. Not knowing the plants’ significance, workers pulled them out to make way for a new retaining wall and walkway during the remodeling. But the rugged sweet peas are making a comeback, with a few new plants emerging this year.

The house is experiencing its own comeback.

“I think it’s the best of both worlds,” Diane says. “It’s up to date, with all the conveniences,



Clockwise from above: Away from the street, a new deck leads the way to the house's main entrance and stairs to the studio, which sports a new dormer window; before, the back of the house had only one door, hidden by overgrowth when the Fishers bought the property; the oak music stand belonged to Diane's mother.





but still has the character. I didn't want to lose the character."

During the height of the COVID-19 shutdown, daughter Liza stayed in the house while her Raleigh office was in "work from home" mode. Soon after that, the Fishers rented the unit to an executive new in town whose house was not yet ready. And the house has come in handy during the holidays when they need a place for members of their extended family to stay.

A ROOM OF HER OWN

A trip outside and up the side stairs leads to Diane's studio, an open, sunny room with a daybed, kitchenette, bistro table, bathroom and — most important — ample space for her easel and art ma-

terials.

The greatest contributor to the room's airy feel may be the dormer window added to the back of the roof. This was Ben's suggestion, Diane says, to give the studio a view of the woods. She chose an elegant arched window for the spot and completed the new nook with a window seat.

The arched window was one of Diane's few splurges, amid all the practicality and scrimping. Another splurge was the antique gold faucet she chose for the studio's kitchen sink. "Lorna Medinger helped me with that," she says, referring to a friend at Hughes Southeastern Supply.

The second floor area may have been an apartment at one time; its entrance is completely separate from the rest of the house. But the Fishers found only things that had belonged to Wise there, including hundreds of National Geographic magazines that filled the bookshelves.

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Now paints, brushes and works of art fill those shelves. An easel stands nearby. Art supplies that had been stowed in different places at the Fishers' home are now right at hand.

"A lot of the artistic process is getting your materials set up," Diane says. If you have to store them away after painting and then pull them all out again in order to paint more, it can dampen enthusiasm.

Diane says almost all her art has been portraits. She's getting away from that now, painting landscapes and things that don't have to be that exact and she can be more creative.

On the easel is a scene she's creating from her travels. She likes to photograph people and places that catch her eye, then create new scenes by combining them — in this case, a man from one photo walking down a street from another.

Paintings she admires by others are propped here and there for inspiration. She even has room for her college sketch book.

This space is all hers, with bright, flowery upholstered furniture and rugs, touches of metallic and a hint of whimsy, such as the wicker chair that swings on a frame in the middle of the room.

It's like no place else, and that's just the way Diane likes it.

"When I come here I feel like me." **S**

Elizabeth G. Cook is former editor of the Salisbury Post.



The second bedroom in the living quarters has twin beds and room for the current tenant's two bikes, as well.

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A photograph of Amanda Collins, a woman with long blonde hair, wearing a colorful striped shirt and multiple gold bangles. She is sitting outdoors, holding a brown and white Goldendoodle puppy close to her face. Several other puppies of various colors are visible around her. The background is a green chain-link fence.

Amanda Collins, owner of Rowan Doodle Goldendoodles near Rockwell, snuggles with one of the 21 puppies she bred this spring and summer.

PUPPY LOVE

BY BREEDING GOLDENDOODLES,
COLLINS ALSO FINDS A WAY TO 'PAY IT FORWARD'

written by MARK WINEKA | photography by SEAN MEYERS



Nolan Bullock holds his son, Clويد, as they meet their goldendoodle puppy Nova for the first time. Nova will be trained to be a therapy dog for Clويد, who is autistic.

The Saturday morning drive from Harnett County took Elaine and Nolan Bullock a little over two hours. Their youngest child, 2½-year-old Clويد, slept much of the way, having no idea the gift waiting for him at the Cornelius Farms home of Amanda Collins in Rockwell.

Once he rallied awake and took several gleeful rambles around the Collinses' yard, Clويد met Nova, an 8-week-old goldendoodle. The Bullocks huddled together as Nolan held Nova, while Clويد and Elaine gave her soft pats on the head.

"This is new to us, for sure," Elaine Bullock said.

Clويد is autistic. After about six weeks of getting acclimated to her new family's home in Angier, Nova will go off to school at Gray Wolf K9 in Sanford, where she will be trained as an autism therapy dog for Clويد, specifically for stemming and elopement.

In addition, Nova will learn search and rescue.

"She'll be trained to stay in position, so he (Clويد)

can't run," Elaine Bullock said, explaining one of the benefits and adding Nova will supplement the family's efforts at ABA (applied behavior analysis) therapy for autism.

"I am hoping this will be a game-changer. ... Safety, that's probably the No. 1 thing."

Wearing a T-shirt that said "Stressed, Blessed and Doodle Obsessed," Collins once again delighted in seeing one of her goldendoodle puppies meeting and going home with a new family. It's especially rewarding when she knows that a doodle will become a service dog.

"Nova" might be the perfect name for the Bullocks'

*Goldendoodles love
the attention.*



doodle.

“It means ‘new,’ and this is a new beginning for this family,” Collins said.

Since 2018, when she started breeding goldendoodles, Collins has seen six of her 40 puppies go on to be service or therapy dogs, helping kids and adults facing challenges such as anxiety disorders, Type 1 diabetes, autism and epilepsy.

Collins’ passion for goldendoodles, a breed representing the cross of a golden retriever and poodle, grew out of a tragedy.

In March 2016, Collins lost her 6-year-old Labradoodle, Lilly, who went outside at 5 a.m. one day for a bathroom break but never came back. It became apparent someone had snatched Lilly, and she was found dead two days later along a road in Gold Hill.

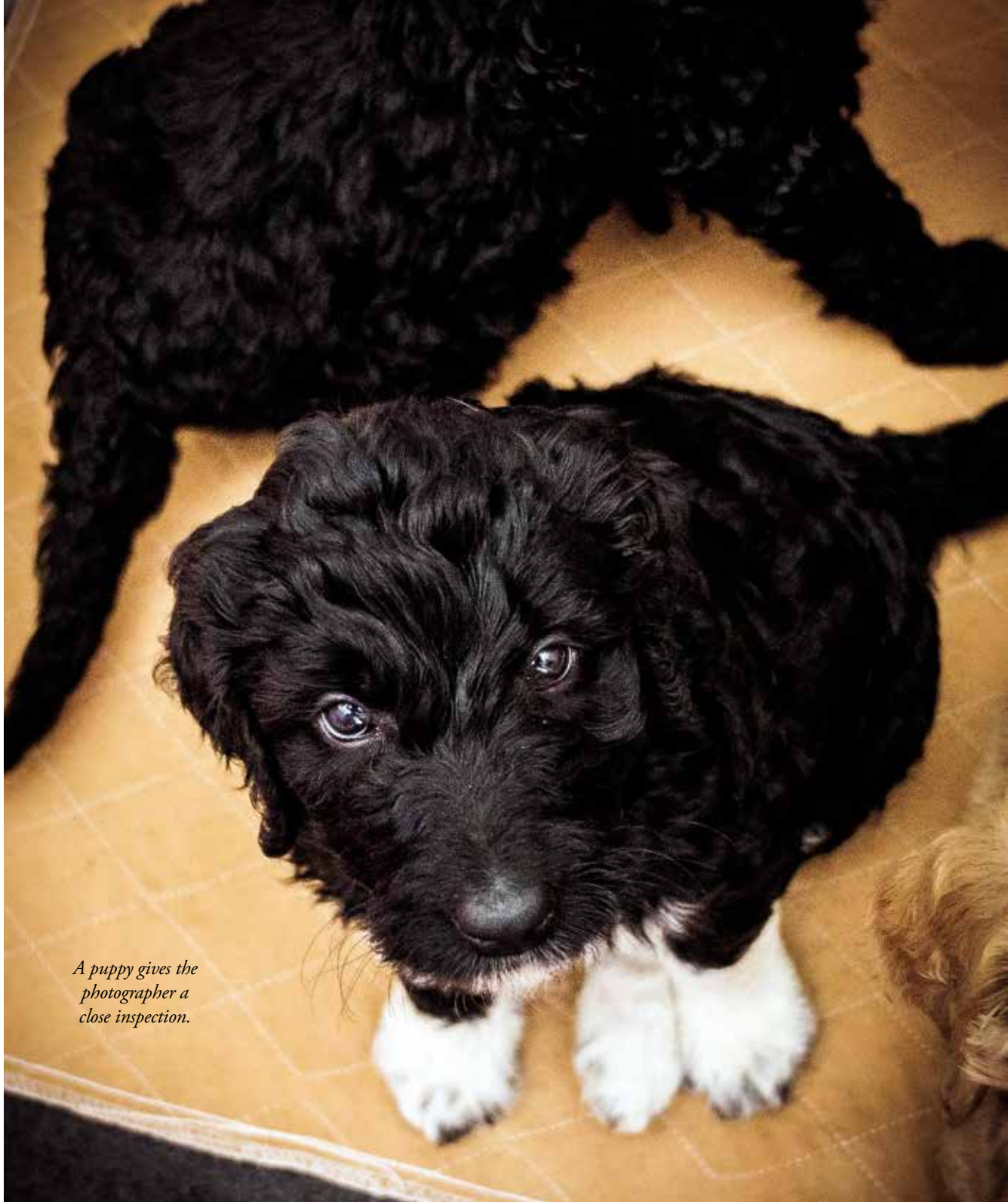
She had been shot.

The random theft and killing of Lilly became highly publicized. When a Monroe woman, Amber Helms, heard the story, she gave Amanda a 10-week-old goldendoodle pup named Willow. It was quite a gesture, because goldendoodles can cost upwards of \$1,500 each.

“It was an amazing gift,” Amanda says. “I didn’t know how I would

*With lots
of puppies,
you need
lots of toys.*





A puppy gives the photographer a close inspection.

ever pay it forward.”

Willow quickly became a new family member for Amanda and Tim Collins and their daughter, Emma, who is now 17. The opportunity for Amanda Collins to help someone else, as Helms did for her, came in 2018 with Willow’s first litter of pups.

Collins gave a puppy named Harley to a cou-

ple whose child has Type 1 diabetes. Gray Wolf K9 would train Harley to recognize and alert parents and teachers when the child’s blood sugar levels were in need of attention.

Since then, Gray Wolf K9 has connected other families, such as the Bullocks, to Amanda Collins for goldendoodle puppies that can be trained as therapy dogs later.

On the day the Bullocks came for Nova, another family was scheduled after them to pick up Lola. A Nationwide Insurance agent in Salisbury by day, Collins has named her side business Rowan Doodle Goldendoodles, and with each puppy going to a new home, she sends along a gift bag with items such as dog food, treats, toys and the blankets they are used to sleeping with.



This sign reflects members of the Collins family including Amanda, husband Tim and their daughter, Emma.

“Doodles are like potato chips. You just can’t have one.”

The people and puppies also pose for a photograph on Collins’ front porch, where a sign next to them says, “Our family has expanded by 4 feet.” Over this particular week, Collins had assigned pick-up time slots for 10 puppies overall on Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and Saturday.

“It’s been a whirlwind week,” she said, knowing that in two more weeks, 11 more puppies would be going to new homes.

Yes, there was a time this summer when the Collins household had 21 goldendoodle puppies, not to mention four other goldendoodles (Willow, Spade, Trump and Palin) the family has as its own pets. And the family also kept one of the pups, Blakely, out of the most recent litters. “She’s my future, she’s my unicorn,” Amanda said.

Once you’re hooked, it is an obsession, as her T-shirt claims. Collins has had at least three re-



Nova was adopted by the Bullock family to be trained as a service dog for their son, Cloid. Amanda Collins holds Nova on the morning he went home with the Bullocks, who live in Harnett County.

peat buyers.

“Doodles are like potato chips,” she said. “You just can’t have one.”

As a rule, Collins said, goldendoodles are loving, trainable, social and great for family outdoor activities.



***Top:** Amanda Collins owns and operates Rowan Doodle Goldendoodles from her home in Rockwell. **Above:** New goldendoodle owners receive gift bags from Collins when they come to pick up the new members of their families. **Left:** This front-door sign welcomes people coming to take their goldendoodle puppy home.*



“That’s one good thing about these dogs — they don’t fight,” husband Tim Collins added, watching some of the puppies romp in his backyard.

This hybrid breed first came into popularity in the 1990s. Their colors can be golden, cream, red, black, brown, white and gray. Their hair might be straight, wavy or curly, but the dogs are known and sought after for being minimal shedders and better for people with pet allergies.

Several things in Amanda Collins’ house pay homage to the golden-doodle.

They basically rate as good companions and increasingly are used as therapy dogs. “This is changing people’s lives,” Collins said of the service aspect for goldendoodles. “It’s amazing to see what these dogs can do.”

Of the 40 total puppies she has bred since 2018, Amanda has delivered each one. “Those first few dogs are crucial,” Collins said of being with the moms during labor. Willow has had three litters, with this latest one in spring tabbed as her last — a retirement litter.

Collins relies on another female, Stella, who lives in a guardian home and for whom she has the breeding rights. This spring, Willow had 11 puppies; Stella, 10. Interestingly, all of Stella’s pups were girls, except one. (Willow had seven boys.)

The father for these pups is named Timber, owned by Zach and Laura Myers. The honeymoons between Willow and Timber and Stella and Timber happened at the Collinses’ house.

“When I say I’m here for everything, I’m here for everything,” Collins said.

This year’s 21 puppies represented the most Collins has had at one time. All of the goldendoodles quickly became spoken for. Collins does a little vetting on her own to make sure the

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*A goldendoodle
puppy rests
during a hot
summer day.*



puppies are going to good homes. She acknowledged having turned away four to five prospects in the past, but overall “the right people have come my way.”

For the first three weeks, the puppies depend on their moms for nourishment. Food is introduced around four weeks, and Collins likes to have the puppies weaned by five to five-and-a-half weeks. The latest puppies went through about 35 pounds of food every five days.

Because of COVID-19 precautions, Amanda set up staggered pickup times over several days, rather than doing it all at once. When they left

her house to be with their new families, the puppies averaged 10 to 12 pounds each.

Does it pain Collins to see her puppies leave? “It does, but I just see the joy in people, so it makes it easy,” she said. “It’s an adjustment for everybody when they go home.”

Her telephone is constantly “blowing up,” she said, with pictures and texts from the happy families as the puppies grow into maturity.

For her business, Collins does all her promotion and a lot of her communication with customers through Facebook and FaceTime. She also belongs to a private group of goldendoodle

owners called Rowan Doodles.

“I have truly come to love these people,” said Collins, who once was host for a birthday party of 13 grown goldendoodles.

Collins hopes to be able to offer puppies twice a year, but having just taken care of 21 and finding homes for them might be enough for 2020. She was surprised that breeding goldendoodles became such a passion for her.

“I wish everyone could have one,” she said. “It’s not a job. It’s fun. I enjoy it.”

Tim Collins smiled: “I just know it makes her happy.” **S**

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Elaine Bullock holds her son, Clويد, as they meet Nova, their goldendoodle puppy. Nova, who was bred by Amanda Collins of Rockwell, will be trained as a service dog for Clويد, who is autistic.



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Filmmaker Jacques Belliveau, owner and creator of HafCaf Productions, created the full-length movie, "Reggie: A Millennial Depression Comedy," here in Salisbury. (Sean Meyers photo)

JACK MAKES A MOVIE

BELLIVEAU'S 'DEPRESSION COMEDY'
TURNS LENS ON MENTAL ILLNESS

written by KRIS MUELLER



*Cigar in hand, veteran actor Gary Busey has a laugh with Jacques Belliveau and Ariella Sanchez.
(Caroline Boone photo)*

It could be said that Jacques Belliveau walks a fine line — the proverbial one that narrowly separates creative genius from mental illness.

Like the comedy heroes of his youth — Robin Williams and Chris Farley — he has used humor, paired with other creative outlets and exercise, to quell the anxiety, depression and pent-up emotions he has suffered since childhood.

His latest project — a full-length feature film titled “Reggie: A Millennial Depression Comedy” — turns the camera lens on mental illness, using Salisbury and Rowan County as its backdrop and local citizens as actors. The film is semi-autobiographical, said Jacques, who is called “Jack” non-professionally.

“It is based on my struggles with mental health, as well as how I built and destroyed many relationships in my life because of the mental health issues that I have had and struggled with,” he said.

But before you worry that this story is spiraling downward, continue reading and pay close attention. In Jacques’ inventive mind, as you will see, reality and fiction can often become intertwined.



STARRING JACQUES BELLIVEAU KIM THE MINI HORSE
WITH RYAN 'SPOUSE' PETERS AND GARY BUSEY



Belliveau often takes a morning drive in his Mazda MX5 to clear his head before work. (Sean Meyers photo)

The storyline for “Reggie” centers on Mitch, an engineer in his early 30s with a great job, friends and a beautiful car (Jack’s own 2018 Mazda MX5 named Matilda). Mitch, played by Jacques, is hiding — or believes he is hiding — depression and anxiety caused by a difficult childhood and home environment. One day, Mitch’s perceptive, well-meaning friends break into his house to conduct an intervention with him, complete with visual aids and a pie chart.

“The intervention makes me (Mitch) evaluate my relationship with my core group of friends,” Jacques said. “It makes me realize that everything I have is surface level because I keep everyone at a distance. That way, it is easier to break it off when I want to. Eventually, you see but are never told, that each of my friends also has issues. That is the big thing about the mov-

Belliveau edits from his one-bedroom apartment at the old O.O. Ruffy Building on East Innes Street. (Sean Meyers photo)





***Above:** In character, Jacques Belliveau walks in downtown Salisbury with one of his co-stars, Kiwi. (Bryan Lowe photo) **Below left:** Belliveau plays the guitar and ukulele. (Sean Meyers photo) **Below right:** Jacques Belliveau, Jon Bowlby, Thomas Barker and Jerod Jacobs (sitting) play back a scene on the set of 'Reggie.' (Ariella Sanchez photo)*





***Above:** Hanna Brown, Kiwi the mini horse and Jacques Belliveau shoot a scene outside the Larabelle Baby store in Salisbury. (Bryan Lowe photo)
Below: Belliveau holds a piece of art created by him and the miniature horse from the film. (Sean Meyers photo)*



ie. It's all about mental illness, but not in a way that it's thrown in your face."

Mitch tries therapy but gets frustrated by his lack of progress. While in the therapist's waiting room, he notices a brochure about miniature therapy horses. He scraps therapy to drive to the horse farm. There he meets the owner, played fittingly by Oscar-winning actor Gary Busey, no stranger himself to mental health challenges personally or in his acting roles.

Mitch notices a miniature horse named Reggie, whose own bad behavior, anxiety and anger issues have put her at the back of the line of therapy animals. No one wants her as a therapy horse. Mitch connects with her immediately and makes a snap decision to take her home.

Reggie is played by a real therapy horse named Kiwi, an active member of the Stampede of Love animal therapy program in Raleigh. Kiwi was born with "a few different abilities and health issues," including dwarfism. Just 25 inches tall, this very small minia-

ture horse stands on spindly legs and tiny feet that remarkably support his wide girth. Despite his long, blonde bangs and soft brown eyes fringed by thick eyelashes, Kiwi has plenty of sass in real life, but nothing like the giant attitude that Reggie displays in the movie.

Somehow, Mitch manages to get Reggie home (remember he has a two-seat convertible), but Jacques does not want to spoil the movie's surprise. Once home, the "therapy" and the fun begin.

"We basically have the same issues," Jacques explained, "so we butt heads a lot. Like, I want to take Reggie for a walk, but no, Reggie wants to stay in. I say it's time to go outside and she refuses then poops all over the floor." (Quick plot point: Kiwi the real horse is male, but Reggie the fictional horse is female.)

The relationship is tricky at first but gradually mellows. Reggie attends therapy appointments with Mitch and hangs out with

Manning the camera, Jerod Jacobs goes into the tub to shoot a scene which has Jacques Belliveau in the shower. (Ariella Sanchez photo)



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his friends. They begin dressing alike — Mitch in his blue hoodie and blue Converse shoes, Reggie in a blue horse blanket and miniature Converse.

Belliveau, right, gets an assist in the shooting of the movie from Dominic Moore. (Ariella Sanchez photo)

“My character is very impulsive, like I am in real life,” Jacques said. “Mitch interprets what the therapist says to mean he should have an intervention on his friends. Toward the end of the movie, the tables turn, and things come full circle in a public coffee shop. I don’t want to ruin it in real life, by any means, but nothing is ever tied up in a neat bow. The ending is very open to interpretation.

“People wanted me to change the ending. They wanted more of a happy ending with no loose ends, but I wouldn’t do it.”

Downtown Salisbury is Jacques’ domain, where he lives and works, so scenes are filmed at Mambo Grill & Tapas, Koco Java, Integro Technologies, South Main Book Com-



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pany and other locations. Salisbury residents also play characters, including Jacques' comedy partner Jax Benson, local musician Duke Wicker and Iain Rocco, owner of Lost & Found.

The script for the movie came from one of Jacques' stand-up comedy routines that involves a wife, a child and, no surprise, miniature horses as therapists. He is not sure why miniature horses dwell prominently in his psyche, except that they are used in therapy and he was unhappy with his traditional therapy at the time.

"I know.... it's a little crazy up there," he said, pointing to his head. "My comedy is very, very silly — like the part about me talking to a horse therapist."

One night, Jacques was rehearsing the routine while

Gary Busey pauses for a moment on the set with Mary Bergham, Tara Needham and a mini horse named Peaches. (Caroline Boone photo)



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Belliveau said the movie “is based on my struggles with mental health, as well as how I built and destroyed many relationships in my life because of the mental health issues that I have had and struggled with.” (Sean Meyers photo)

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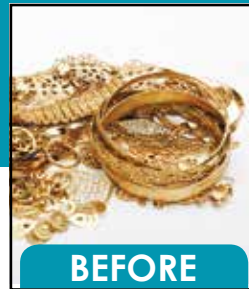


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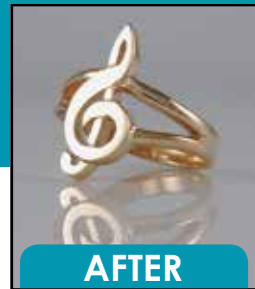


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pondering that day's therapy session and listening to a song that spoke to him, "Where Would I B Without U," by hip-hop artist "Spouse." It may be stating the obvious to say that Jacques suffers from what he calls ADHD — Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Impulsive Disorder — which adds impulsivity to his inability to focus and remain calm.

That evening, all of those thoughts converged into the first draft of his movie, which he wrote in just eight hours. He immediately sent it to seven film companies and, within two days, received several offers to buy the movie idea. The companies wanted to cast, direct and produce the movie themselves, with Jacques helping with scriptwriting, but Jacques wanted to direct it and play the lead character. So he decided to make the movie himself.

He hired a local media production company — sixfootkitten, LLC, owned by Jerod Jacobs — and planning and production began.

"I sold everything I owned," Jacques said, "except for my car, because the car is a character in the movie. And my ukuleles. I had to keep those for my comedy routines."

Filming took 43 days, relatively quick for a movie of this scale, and there were only a few glitches. Jacques found he was highly allergic to his equine co-star, and working with a celebrity actor gave them some challenges but many stories to tell.

"He's insane," Jacques said about Gary Busey. "It was a crazy few days with him. He had just had knee surgery and could not walk so we had to change scenes around. But looking back at the footage, it was perfect. When he is not in front of the camera, he is a wild card, but when we said 'Action,' he was super straight, very professional."

The film was completed just as COVID-19 caused a national shutdown, and the fall release in theaters has been delayed. Once Jacques can meet with the distribution company in New York, he will begin planning a movie premiere event in Salisbury. All those involved in the film will attend, including Kiwi and Gary Busey, and tickets will be sold to the public. Following the movie premiere, music artist Spouse, who also appears in the film, will perform a concert.

Meanwhile, Jacques stays busy with his exercise routines, his professional comedy work in the region, and the children's shows he creates with Jax Benson, Iain Rocco and Jason Roland, a children's librarian. Their family-friendly, story-time show called "The Zillion Story House" is free to all libraries, teachers, home-schoolers, or anyone who needs a story-time resource for children during the COVID-19 crisis.

Spouse has written a children's book, "Pinecone Pete Is Not Impressed," which Jacques uses when reading to children at local schools. He even built and wears a giant pinecone costume during the readings.

"When I began taking the program to schools, it was a huge hit and I decided to film it to give to people to use during the pandemic," Jacques said. "I never learned how to edit or do any of the production stuff but decided I would learn. I made a whole 10-minute story using Spouse's book and people love it. We are going to try to make another season of stories to be available for next semester."

Jacques also organizes and appears in comedy fundraisers for causes such

as the National Multiple Sclerosis Society, Stampede of Love and Prevent Child Abuse Rowan, for which he is a two-time Volunteer of the Year.

"I don't sleep," he explained. "It's hard for my mind to shut down. I always have new ideas, so it's very difficult to deactivate the brain sometimes."

Early each morning, he takes a long drive in his Mazda, riding through western Rowan County or out to High Rock Lake. He uses this time to think, plan and set a calm framework for the day.

Jacques now takes medication for his condition which helps him think more clearly about how to lessen his depression and anxiety. As a result of making the movie, he now is more open about his challenges and has learned better how to develop relationships and collaborate with people.

"I don't know if it's because the movie is not yet released or what," he said, "but it is still hard to say what the movie's impact has been. But if even one person gets the message of the movie or it helps someone, it will be worth it, even if I never make a penny off it.

"It has a very powerful mental health message. And the whole point for me was to show that the one-size-fits-all approach to mental health is not necessarily the best, and that you can figure out things in a different way." **S**

Kris Mueller is a freelance writer living in Salisbury.



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Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, the 2020 veterinary graduates at N.C. State couldn't have the normal graduation exercises. Here, as part of her own celebration, Dr. Allison Baucom poses with the Terry Companion Animal Veterinary Medical Center sign.



***Left:** Dr. Joseph E. Wiggins stood outside the N.C. State College of Veterinary Medicine on his graduation day in May.*



***Right:** Dr. Abby Lane is now an associate veterinarian with Pineview Veterinary Hospital in Wilmington.*

Doctors in the house

Rowan County produces three N.C. State veterinarians in one year

WRITTEN BY CARL BLANKENSHIP / SUBMITTED PHOTOS



Rowan County, by way of N.C. State University, produced three veterinarians this year.

Abby Lane, Allison Baucom and Joe Wiggins graduated from the university's College of Veterinary Medicine in 2020. They all grew up in Rowan County, but their career paths were unknown to each other until finding themselves in orientation at the CVM.

Looking around, they were surprised. It's common to have several folks from Charlotte, a smattering from the Triangle and a handful from the Triad in a class, but three from Rowan County seemed special. This is not a story of

three friends who worked toward a collective dream together, either. These new veterinarians went to different high schools in Rowan.

"I thought it was unusual," Wiggins said. "I was the one that brought it up to them."

And Wiggins let other people in their class know they were from Salisbury and Rowan County. He said Salisbury may not be the biggest or best known city, but he enjoyed

where he grew up.

When you run the numbers, the Rowan trio are a bit more unique. There are 100 students admitted to the veterinary program each year, and 80 of those are North Carolinians. There

In orthopedic surgery during her clinical year, Allison Baucom, right, uses a bone drill to insert a bone plate for a animal.



are about 10.5 million people in North Carolina and 142,000 in Rowan County.

The county has about 1.4% of the state's population, so there are decent odds of one person from Rowan County ending up in a class, but three people is almost three times as many as you would expect.

Baucom and Lane knew of each other because they attended elementary and middle school together. Lane went on to graduate from North Hills Christian School; Baucom, from West Rowan High; Wiggins, from North Rowan High.

At N.C. State, the trio ended up being friends. Lane and Baucom became particularly close.

Even if they were not close at the beginning, Baucom said, it was nice to have other people in the school from home who could understand things happening back in Salisbury.

Wiggins and Baucom treat companion animals, mean-

Story continues on page 64.



Above: Dr. Joe Wiggins married his wife, Zakiya, on July 20, 2019. Here they are on the N.C. State campus about a week before their wedding. **Above left:** As she held this baby goat at the N.C. State Teaching Animal Unit, Allison Baucom was in the midst of performing examinations, collecting blood and practicing FAMACHA scores to assess for parasites in small ruminants.



Abby Lane holds a foal on the day it was born at the N.C. State Equine Health Center in Southern Pines. She was performing the foal exam that morning.



Above: Allison Baucom administers anesthesia to a koi. It was part of her laboratory animal species lab at N.C. State.

Below: Dr. Allison Baucom examines a cat.





Above: Wiggins gave the Class of 2020's message during May 8 virtual ceremonies for the N.C. State College of Veterinary Medicine. Below left: Baucom stands with two alpacas at the N.C. State Teaching Animal Unit (TAU), where veterinary students have a course each semester giving them opportunities to become familiar with animals such as horses, goats, sheep, chickens, turkeys, pigs — and alpacas. TAU is the College of Veterinary Medicine's on-campus farm. Below right: During her neurology rotation, Baucom treated this dachshund, Snap, who had intervertebral disc disease and required hemilaminectomy surgery to correct it. 'He was in the hospital and was my patient for 11 days post operatively (out of the 14-day block rotation) before going home,' Allison says.

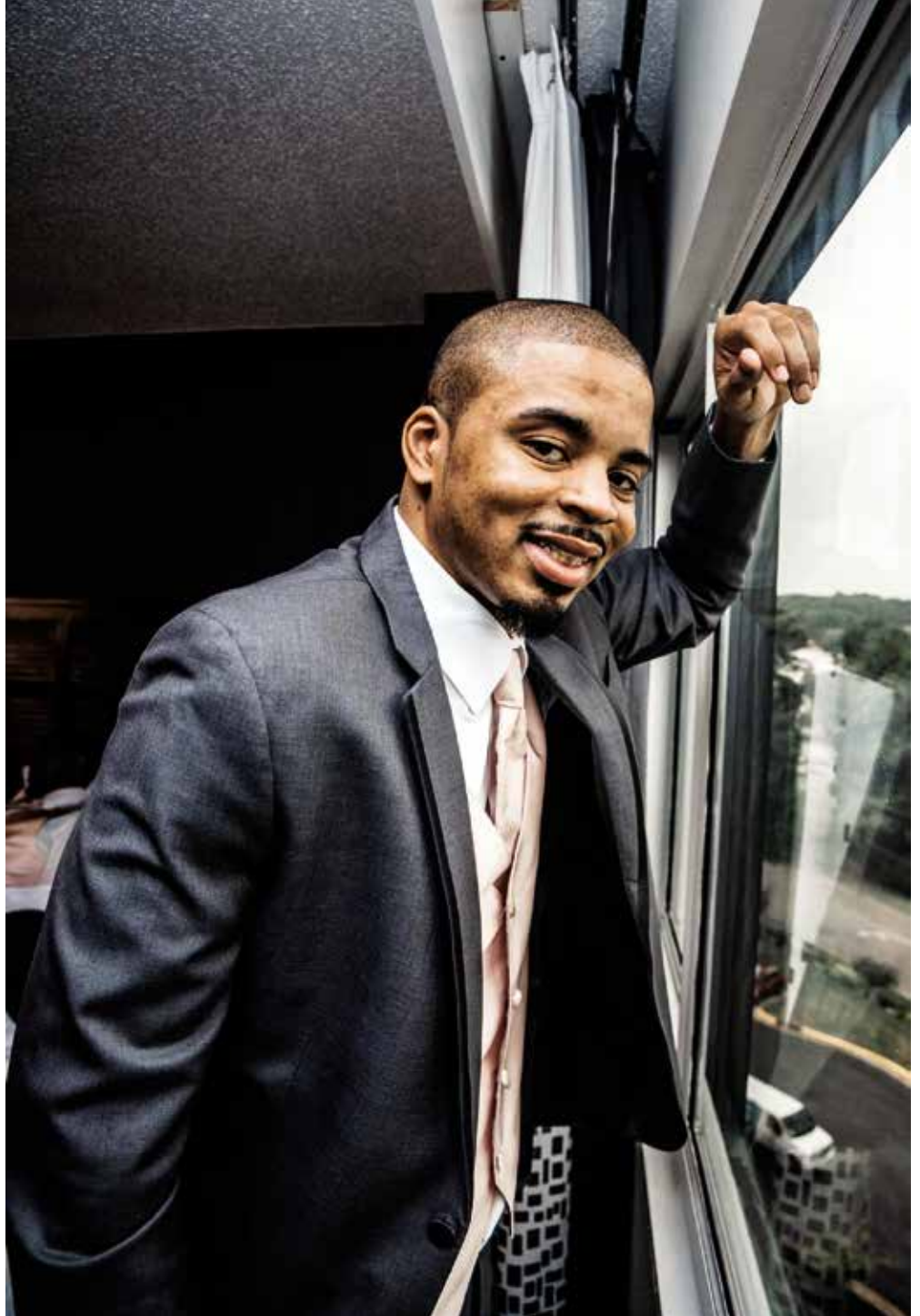




*Abby Lane cleans a wound
on the hip of a donkey at the
American Fondouk Veterinary
Hospital in Fes, Morocco.*



Above: Baucom practices sedation and venipuncture in the school laboratory.
Right: Dr. Joe Wiggins



ing primarily cats and dogs.

Baucom remembers thinking about becoming a veterinarian after her family had to take their cat to an emergency clinic in Salisbury during her freshman year at Catawba College.

Baucom does not have much of a preference between cats or dogs and is a fan of both. She said she does not see too many “cool” animals, though in veterinary school the trio had to do everything from anesthetizing frogs to handling birds.

“When I was on my anesthesia rotation, I anesthetized a porcupine,” Baucom said.

Wiggins said he was always fond of animals growing up. He and his brother were adopted by his grandparents at a young age. His grandma fed stray cats in their utility room. Wiggins would sit on the porch and wait for the cats to approach him. He became invested in being a veterinarian during his undergraduate studies.

The family always had dogs as well, though if he had to choose, Wiggins thinks he is a cat person. He likes their independence and their attitude — that they are small but still have a way of demanding what they want.

Lane took a different path. She works with horses and food animals in the field. She said only a handful of students in the college go into large-animal medicine like she did, noting the sheer number of cats and dogs in homes.

After they graduated in May, the three new

doctors from Rowan County all started working. Wiggins stayed in Raleigh. Baucom found her way to a practice in the Monroe area, and Lane works for a large animal practice in Wilmington. The morning Lane interviewed for this story, she finishing getting her truck loaded up for the day to travel to her patients.

Lane started working for a large animal practice in Salisbury when she was a teenager and fell in love with the field. She said her experience in high school set her on the path to becoming a

veterinarian. The freedom of working in the field drew her to concentrating on large animals.

“We kind of like the creativity we get to have with it,” Lane said. “A lot of times you end up on a farm or at an owner’s place and you come upon some kind of situation. Equipment wise, because you’re limited to what is in your truck, you have to kind of MacGyver things together.”

Horses are Lane’s favorite animals to work with. An experience that stuck with Lane while she was studying was working in Morocco with pack animals such as donkeys and mules.

“I just got to see a wide variety of diseases and conditions we don’t see in the United States a lot,” Lane said.

Wiggins said vet school was extremely challenging, and while stress would sometimes build up while he was studying, it never made him question if he wanted to do this.

Wiggins gave the 2020 class message during the college’s virtual graduation this year. COVID-19 denied the usual graduation ceremony.

“My grandparents gave up a lot to adopt my brother and I and nurtured us into young, mature men,” Wiggins said. “Whenever I had my doubts, I just knew they gave up so much and I wanted to just show that all their efforts would materialize into producing a doctor.”

Baucom said COVID-19 denied some closure at the end of veterinary school and, in the private sector, also has resulted in a higher caseload because some other practices are not seeing as many patients. She said she has been extremely busy so she is never bored, and she already has been exposed to a wide variety of animals and their ailments.

As with her fellow Rowan County doctors, she is enjoying herself. **S**

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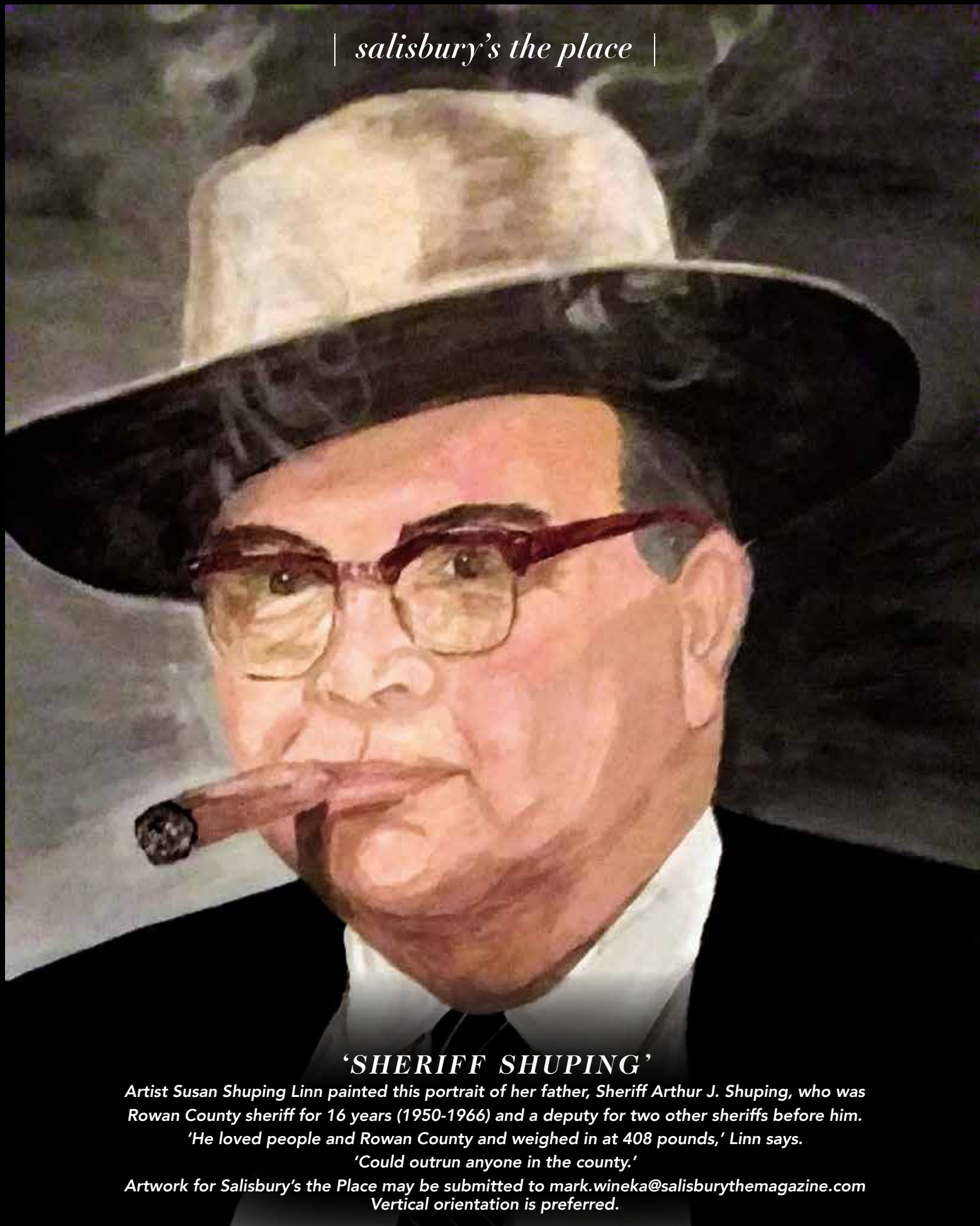
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‘SHERIFF SHUPING’

Artist Susan Shuping Linn painted this portrait of her father, Sheriff Arthur J. Shuping, who was Rowan County sheriff for 16 years (1950-1966) and a deputy for two other sheriffs before him.

‘He loved people and Rowan County and weighed in at 408 pounds,’ Linn says.

‘Could outrun anyone in the county.’

Artwork for Salisbury's the Place may be submitted to mark.wineka@salisburythemagazine.com
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