

SEPTEMBER 2022

SALISBURY

the magazine

WHEEL *man*

Jake Speck is all about the classics

Power Cross

IMPARTS VALUES
INTO THE LIVES
OF YOUNG MEN

Running T Farm

KEEPS IT
ALL NATURAL



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FEATURES

28 NEW YARD

Expanded lot doubles
family's property

36 FAITH AND FOOTBALL

Ministry raises up young men

42 TOP GEAR

Car collector has garage
full of classics

52 ALL NATURAL

Running T Farm raises
grass-fed cattle



On the cover: Jake Speck takes his 1955 Chevrolet Bel Air out for a drive. (Andy Mooney photo)

On this page: Josh Teague works on the electric fencing at Running T Farm. (Sean Meyers photo)



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DEPARTMENTS

14



22

AT HOME 14 Green and blue

Gardens provide respite at High Rock Lake Airbnb

GARDEN 22 Bed of roses

Lowder has looked after Wallace House garden for decades

IN EVERY ISSUE

- Editor's Letter** p.8
- Through the Lens** p.10
- Bookish** p.11
- Rowan Original** p.12
- Local Colors** p.62

INDEX OF ADVERTISERS

Ace Hardware..... 27	Blue Bay 26	Edward Jones..... 61	Steven's Country Store..... 35
Ralph Baker's Shoes..... 5	Cozart Lumber 27	Carmandy Kruger/Lantern Realty.. 61	Stout Heating and Air 59
Bare Furniture..... 4	Dan Nicholas Park 25	Landis Plumbing..... 61	Tom's Carpet Care 27
The Barn at Cedar Hill 59	F&M Bank..... 7	Powles Staton..... 2	Trinity Oaks..... 57
Barnhardt Jewelers..... 35	Godley's Garden Center 27	Ritchie's Steamway..... 27	Windsor Gallery 58
Bargain Store Furniture 27	Cathy Griffin/Century 21 21	Rowan/Kannapolis ABC..... 61	Yatawara Gynecology..... 44
Baxter Consultants..... 27	Historic Salisbury Foundation 64	Sink Farm Equipment..... 61	Melissa Yates/Lantern Realty 59



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Cool off with a drink and a magazine

As I write this, it's one of those summer days where the temperature is pushing 100. I'm inside with the air condition running full-blast and the ceiling fans on, too. It's even too hot to go to the pool, which, if you know me, you know that's hot.

Of course, you'll be reading this column in September, which means it may cool off some by then.

I doubt it.

I was going to mention something about Indian Summer. But I found in my research that it technically doesn't happen until after first frost, sometime in the fall. Fall doesn't start, technically, until Sept. 22.

Indian Summer was originally called Indian's Summer. Native American peoples set prairie fires in preparation to harvest their crops. The haziness in the air caused the European settlers to call the phenomenon Indian's Summer.

You may have seen that list floating around online called "12 Seasons of North Carolina." According to that, we are right at Hell's Front Porch, between summer and False Fall, which is right before Second Summer and Actual Fall.

Whatever season we're in, I hope you'll take the time to read our September issue.

Margaret Basinger is back with a powerful review of "The Least of Us," a follow-up to Dan Quinones' 2015 book "Dreamland." Its subtitle: True Tales of America and Hope in the Time of Fentanyl and Meth. Quinones says that the only way to solve the drug problem is through community, and Basinger agrees.

Ben Stansell visits with Dr. Rebekah Julian, a longtime local vet and this month's Rowan Original.

Maggie Blackwell writes about the lovely Airbnb home of Dawn Holshouser and Jim Stricker at High Rock Lake. Even Maggie's homebody



Hubby loved it.

Local gardens are still producing, and Maggie has stories on two of them: the urban "farm" of Bailey Winger, and the Running T Farms out in Cool Springs, owned by Brandi and Josh Teague.

Speaking of gardens, if you walk or drive South Fulton Street on a daily basis, you've likely noticed that the rose garden at the Wallace House has put on more of a show than ever this year. Meet Eileen Lowder, the woman who has taken care of the garden since the late 1990s. My father adored roses, and he would have surely loved to meet Eileen and "talk shop."

Take a ride with David Freeze as he interviews Jake Speck about his collection of mostly classic Chevrolets. There's a T-bird thrown in for you Ford lovers.

Ann Wayne brings us the story of Power Cross, a Christian-based sports program for young men that Jeff and Natalie Storment built from the ground up beginning in 2006.

I hope you enjoy this varied list of stories, and I'll see you next month. And yes, I'll likely still be running the A/C.

— **Susan Shinn Turner**
Editor, Salisbury the Magazine



Like Eileen Lowder, Susan Shinn Turner's father Ed adored roses.

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THROUGH THE LENS by Brian Holiday



Brian Holiday captured a picturesque photo of a sunflower field on U.S. 601. To submit a photo for Through the Lens, send a high-resolution photo to andy.mooney@salisburythemagazine.com. Photos must be vertical orientation.

Quinones' new book delves into to worsening fentanyl and meth crisis

Fentanyl. The latest killer drug. As I am writing this review, I see in The Salisbury Post that five area youths died in the last two days from marijuana laced with fentanyl.

According to the May 20 edition of The New York Times, "In today's overdose crisis, the most damaging drugs do not come from plants. They are synthetic-manufactured in a lab usually requiring no plants at all. Last year, fentanyl — a synthetic opioid — caused more overdose deaths than any other has in a single year. The next deadliest was meth, which is also produced in labs.

"Together, fentanyl and meth helped make 2021 the worst year for drug overdoses in U.S. history."

This statistic is the basis of Sam Quinones' new book. The subtitle tells it all: "True tales Of America and Hope in the Time of Fentanyl and Meth." As in "Dreamland," Quinones, a former Los Angeles Times reporter, travels all over the United States collecting statistics and stories from those who have been involved in some way with drugs, particularly synthetic ones.

Just as he chronicled the devastating influx of black tar heroin from Mexico in his 2015 award-winning book "Dreamland," Quinones, using his investigative reporter skills, describes how plant-based drugs like marijuana and cocaine that require planting, watering and cultivating, have been replaced by synthetic drugs that can be created in a primitive chemistry lab (think "Breaking Bad"). Laced with the chemical fentanyl, they are deadly. He describes the neuroscience (brain chemistry) with how addiction impacts it in simple language. He uses his excellent storytelling skills to paint pictures of people and places affected by drug use and tragedy. Places like Salisbury.

When I come across an avid reader who regularly talks about interesting books, I always ask them where they get their "leads"? This was a term my mother, reader/writer/librarian, used to describe one's source of great reading material.

I don't have to go very far to get my leads. Our

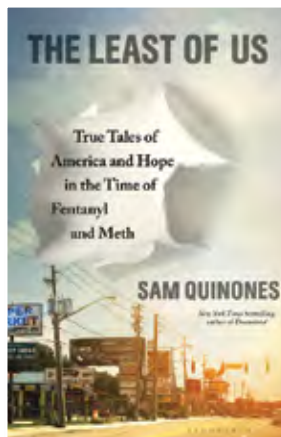
older son, John, is a bookaholic. He scours The Guardian, The New York Times Sunday Book Review section, Entertainment Weekly, and Amazon's Picks, among others and buys eight or so books at a time three or four times a year. He comments on the ones he likes on Facebook and he has a number of followers.

John read about "Dreamland" in Entertainment Weekly; Quinones released the book in 2015. He and I were so taken with its timeliness describing the drug crisis in America and how the Mexican drug cartels and improperly-prescribed pain medications were infiltrating both the cities and rural areas of America that I got in touch with community activist Karen South Jones, who brought Quinones to Salisbury for a Drug Prevention Forum. After his presentation, there was a meet-the-author dinner. My book clubs and I were fortunate to have the author sit at our table for further discussion. Since meeting him, I have friended him on Facebook, and I have eagerly awaited his next book, "The Least of Us."

I have not been disappointed.

When Quinones was at our table years ago, I asked him what he felt was the answer to this seemingly unsolvable epidemic of drug use and death, and he said very simply, "Community." He seemed worn out with hearing family after family tell their stories of sadness and loss. To find threads of hope, before, during and after the pandemic, Quinones spent the next seven years traveling to small towns across America using his investigative reporting skills to write "The Least of Us."

Chapter by chapter, Quinones interviews reformers in the judicial system who reduce jail exposure for drug users and suggest mental health assistance instead, as well as those who seek to assist recovering addicts identify triggers that lead to renewed drug use. While he describes the ever-increasing proliferation of drugs across the nation, he also gives examples of community efforts



that are rays of hope.

One of the most interesting ones takes place in Avondale, on the outskirts of Muncie, Indiana. A young man named Mike "Bird" McKissick lived there in the 1990s. From the time he was sixteen, he exhibited eccentric behaviors. That year he got his driver's license, he drove around the block three times. He never drove or rode in a car again, preferring to ride his bicycle. Near his house

was a community center that he adopted as his own. Eventually he became the director of the Ross Center.

With the Great Recession, the mayor cut funding to all the community centers, but Bird took it upon himself to keep it up. Sadly, he died of cancer at 59.

Although Bird had kept the center in good shape, the town of Avondale had, through the years, been deteriorating. Businesses closed down and their buildings became shabby. With Bird's death, the folks who lived around the center, in their own quiet ways, began to move toward community rejuvenation in his honor.

Within six months of his death, an art park, a community garden, and youth baseball diamonds all came into being. Meth houses were decontaminated, and people, hearing of the block's re-development, moved in and brought houses back to life.

All of this in response to one man's lifetime of commitment. Community.

"The Least of Us" gives story after story of hope in the face of our world's nightmare of drug abuse.

Can our town do more to offer a sense of community to our citizens?

Reading Sam Quinones' book, "The Least of Us," is a good way to begin. **S**

Retired educator Margaret Basinger is the author of "Tis the Season with Belle and Chuck." She lives in Rockwell.

Animal kingdom

Dr. Rebekah Frick Julian is up to the challenge

STORY AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY BEN STANSELL

Some people run from challenges. Others run toward them.

Dr. Rebekah Frick Julian belongs to the latter group. And she runs fast.

Julian, 46, owns and operates Lazy 5 Vets with her husband, Scott, 47. The clinic, separate from the ranch of the same name in western Rowan County, is one of the largest and highest rated vets in the area.

With six veterinarians and a staff of more than 40, Lazy 5 Vets offers everything from surgical services to boarding, each and every day of the year.

Born and raised in Rowan County, Julian first made a name for herself with blazing speeds on the track and trail. At East Rowan High School, she won first place in the 1992 3A North Carolina Cross Country Championships. In 1993, she built on that success by winning both the 1600 and 3200 3A North Carolina Championships.

Julian ran collegiately at the University of North Carolina at Wilmington, where she decided to pursue a career in veterinary medicine. She'd been interested in animals since she was a child, but it was a genetics class that convinced her to commit to being a veterinarian.

"I loved genetics because it was so hard," she said. "That was what clicked with me. I wanted a challenge. So, I chose to go the veterinary route because I thought it'd be a challenge and it is. Every day is different and you learn something every day."

Julian graduated from North Carolina State University's College of Veterinary Medicine in 2001. After a 1½-year stint with a high-volume, mixed-animal practice in Tennessee, Julian returned to her home county and joined James



Dr. Rebekah Frick Julian's love of animals and challenges led her to a career as a veterinarian. The Rowan County native now runs one of the largest vet offices in the area.

Animal Hospital and Lazy 5 Ranch Mobile Vet Service in October 2002.

Julian is proud to have shaped a practice that is welcoming to mothers like her who want to balance their careers with caring for their families.

"One of the biggest reasons why a classmate and I wanted to have a practice is because we wanted to have good quality medicine, but also we were mothers and so we wanted to have a practice that is conducive to raising children and being working moms," she said. "That was big

for us."

Of the six doctors on staff, five are female.

When she's not at her practice, Julian is logging miles on local trails or helping her children develop their own running careers.

Julian and her husband have three children: Noah, 19, Eli, 16, and Hope, 12. Eli was recently named the Salisbury Post's Track and Field Athlete of the Year.

Salisbury the Magazine caught up with Julian in her office for this Q&A. This interview has been edited for brevity.

Where did your love of animals come from?

When I was a child, I loved taking care of my dogs and that's really where it came from. I had a Cocker Spaniel and Golden Retriever and each one of them had a litter of puppies and I helped raise them, take care of them. I would go to the vet whenever they went. Honestly, for me it was just general care and I would always go through and examine them. Every animal I came upon, I was always looking at them: their teeth, their ears, their eyes. It was just something that came naturally to me.

Are you surprised at how much Lazy 5 Vets has grown?

Yes. Sometimes I've thought we need to stop, but it's one of those things I strive to be my best and to help our staff be their best and offer good, quality service. I also think the community needs that, so I have a hard time cutting it off. I want everybody who wants to come in the community to have that option.

Why is geriatric medicine a passion for you?

With geriatric medicine, a lot of times there are multiple problems going on with the older pets. It's kind of like putting a puzzle together, trying to find the right combination that helps a pet with their issues. And I like problem solving. I enjoy that and I enjoy trying to help people with their older pets so they can have quality of life.

What are some of the most common animal cases you all treat?

It changes. We're seeing more bladder stones these days. Some of that can be due to so many different types of food out there, with some more formulated than others. We do have a lot of behavioral cases we're working with. So, we do see more of those. We're actually seeing a lot more dental issues. Animals are living longer and so we're doing more extensive work on teeth because it's needed and the animal's general health is good other than its teeth.

What are some of the funniest or most outlandish pet names you've come across?



Dr. Rebekah Frick Julian completes an ultrasound on a patient. Julian's Lazy 5 Vets offers a number of services for pets, from surgery to dental work.

We've had a lot of political figures, all the presidents. We've had a Trump, an Obama, a Sarah Palin. We've had a Bob Dole. We have had a Coach K. We didn't have Roy Williams but we've had a Dean Smith. We've had a Princess Diana and some of the other (British) royalty.

How do you decompress after a stressful day at the clinic?

Running is my number-one stress relief. When I get on a trail and go running, I'm able to help relieve the stress of daily life.

How many miles do you run per week?

I used to run about 25 a week, but now it's probably only 15-20. It depends on the season.

Do you have pets of your own?

We have two golden retrievers, Dwight and Leia. I've stayed with the goldens. I have two of my own, but I tell people all the time I consider my patients' animals my animals as well

because I get so attached to many of them. I always treat them and enjoy seeing them the same as I would my own animals.

Your husband Scott is the practice manager. What's it like to work with your husband on a daily basis?

He does his department, which is business, and I do my department of practicing medicine. It's good. We complement each other well.

What are two things you always keep in your fridge?

Yogurt and lemonade.

What advice would you give to a young Rebekah?

It's going to be a journey, be patient, enjoy each precious moment, don't let the disappointments consume you, and remember that God's with you all the way! **S**

*A fire pit and benches
overlook High
Rock lake at Jim
Stricker and Dawn
Holshouser's Airbnb.*





Aqua flora

*Dawn Holshouser has cultivated acres of gardens
at High Rock Lake Airbnb*

WRITTEN BY MAGGIE BLACKWELL | PHOTOGRAPHY BY SEAN MEYERS

AT HOME

Jim Stricker and Dawn Holshouser enjoy some shade on their swing.



You may think the Airbnb destination “Driftwood Gardens at High Rock Lake” is an apartment with a garden, but in truth it’s the other way around. While the apartment is definitely top-notch, the gardens are everything at this property.

The owners are Dawn Holshouser and Jim Stricker. Dawn already owned the four acres just past Tamarac Marina when they married in 1999, but the peaceful gardens of today were a grassy field.

In 2009, Dawn, a master gardener, toured a local garden that had all the components she craved in her own property.

“That garden opened my eyes to paths and gardens,” she says. “It really spoke to me. I said, ‘One day I’ll have a garden like this.’ That garden was flat, though. Ours has so much slope, I knew I had to slow the water down. I needed to catch the water.”

With 400 feet of waterline, and a drop of 28 feet from the road to the lake, runoff was a serious issue. In 2014, Dawn took a six-month class in Greensboro on permaculture, developing a plan to remove the grassy lawns and build garden terraces to handle that runoff.

It wasn’t easy. The class required a 3D model of her plans based on what she’d learned. Dawn is a mechanical engineer and likes to do things right. She confesses when she went to Hobby Lobby for presentation supplies for the project, the myriad of choices was overwhelming. Despite the challenges, she persisted.

Initially, she planned to keep many things just where they were. Her vegetable garden was





Clockwise from top: A view of the boat dock and High Rock Lake; hanging pots and ornaments adorn the gardens; a sign showing the way to the guesthouse; the apartment's bedroom.





The second floor balcony, below, offers great views of the backyard gardens.



across the road on a relative's land with more available sun for her okra. She planned to keep the garden there.

But her advisors had taught her to grow food near the kitchen door, where it was easily accessible for daily maintenance and frequent harvest. When they saw her plan to keep it across the road, they rejected her hard work.

She redesigned the layout, positioning the vegetables at her back door, and won the approval of her advisors. Jim laughs as he notes they had to remove four poplar trees to put the plan into action.

"It was a struggle, yes," she says, "but I'm so thankful for the outcome. I couldn't imagine it anywhere else now."

The land across the road changed hands and she likely would have lost access to her garden, anyway. Having food just outside the back door is, in fact, much easier, and she's glad she followed her advisors' wisdom.

The garden is about 75 feet deep from the waterfront and is comprised mostly of shady beds with paths throughout. In the shadiest areas, she features 12 varieties of hosta as well as ferns. Other beds include banana trees, Canna lilies, daylilies, Tiger lilies, and hydrangeas. An arbor at the dock is covered in brilliant red trumpet flower, *Campsis Radicans*.

It's all set in a rich hollow filled with hardwood trees: shag bark hickory, chestnut, poplar, beech, gum, black gum, maple, oak, pawpaw, river birch, and magnolia.

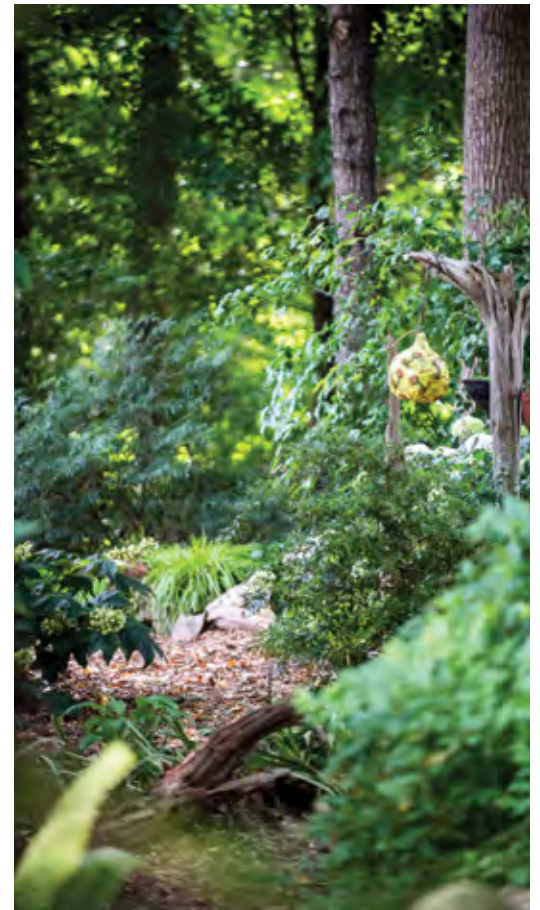
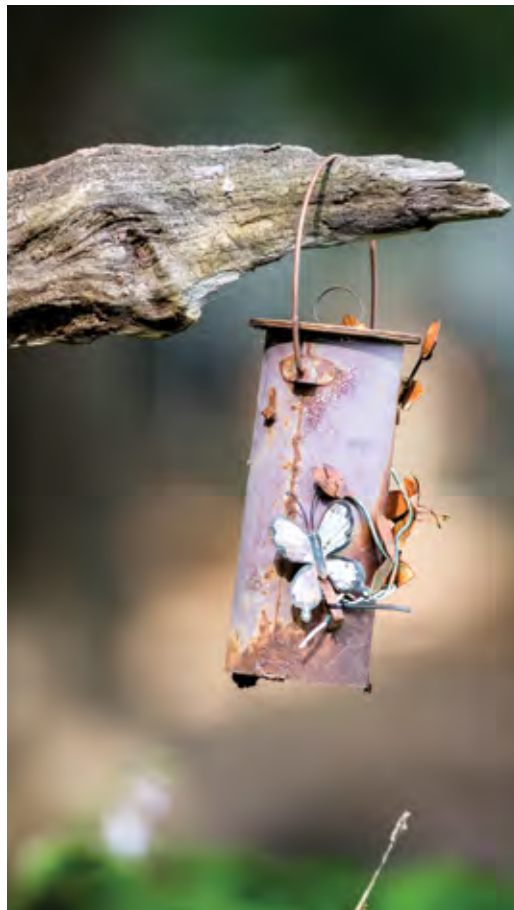
Despite the careful terracing, planting and paths, everything appears to have sprung from the ground naturally. It's not overcrowded, and the observer enjoys space as well as plantings.

"We've been intentional about doing more native plantings to attract insects, who in turn, attract birds," Dawn says. And they do have birds.

Amidst it all is a garage with an upstairs apartment with a small deck on the back, overlooking



The apartment's living room.





Swings and a play area for the kids are set up in the backyard.

the water. A pair of binoculars hangs beside the back door and a bird guide lays nearby.

Sitting on the little deck, a guest can enjoy the quiet susurrations of leaves, the calls of birds and the sound of water. Despite its proximity to the marina, the property is on a narrow inlet so there is virtually no boat traffic on their waterfront. It sounds trite to say it's idyllic, but in fact, it is.

Numbered keypads on the ground-level door and the door at the top of the stairs secure the apartment. The apartment is almost 800 square feet and has everything a traveler needs: a spacious, open living room with leather furniture and large TV that flows into a fully equipped kitchen; a full bath; washer and dryer; and a large bedroom with a king-size bed. All views are oriented to the lake. If you scroll through similar Airbnb listings, you'll see that the rate, at under \$100 a night, is quite a steal.

Dawn has employed a rich sense of humor in her gardens. A barren driftwood stump stands upright, adorned with fisherman's lures. In another corner of the garden, Jim's fire brigade boots are planted with lilies. Not one, but two, old rowboats are nestled among formal plantings, filled with plantings of their own. One of them features a fairy garden.

Jim devised an irrigation system using lake water in 2004. He installed strainers three feet off the bottom of the lake to keep silt out and send the pure water up to the gardens.

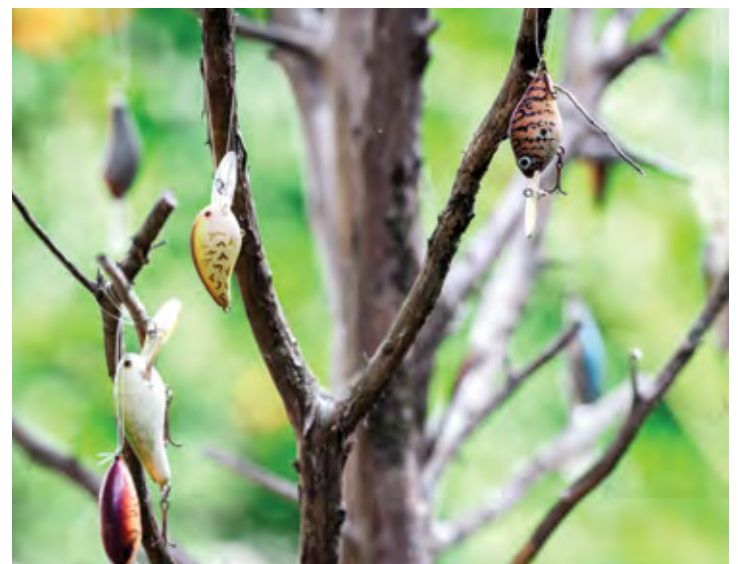
A massive retaining wall of stone lines the waterline, and Dawn has used what's available to define her terraces, including stumps, pipes, driftwood and limbs. The effect is that all blends in harmony with nature.

When they married, Jim had grown children and Dawn's children were still in school. They built the garage with an apartment to accommodate Jim's daughter, who was 19 at the time. When she moved on, a Catawba College student who needed a place to stay moved in.

Dawn had a friend who frequently shared stories about guests at his place on Lake Norman, piquing Dawn's interest in developing the apartment into an Airbnb. She checked out books from the library and researched online to learn all that's involved in being a good host.



A pair of Dawn's dad's boots rests in the yard near a boat.



Fishing lures hang from a tree.



The bathroom offers a peaceful view of the garden.



The entrance to the rental unit is decorated nicely.



An old boat serves as a small garden.

Jim was a little more skeptical. “I was afraid they wouldn’t respect anything I have to build, fix or do — the yard, the garden — but the guests surprised me! Everyone has been great. It’s been totally opposite of all I worried about. I guess there are a lot more good people than the bad.”

Dawn classifies herself as an optimist, “and maybe a little naïve. I just assumed people would be like me, go somewhere and take care of it like it’s my own.”

Most of their guests stay long-term. Dawn calls local people by name, who have stayed at the apartment as they moved to town for a new job. Others have come to visit family or work locally while keeping their homes out of town.

“We have the best guests!” she says. “They are so wonderful, so appreciative. Young or old, they are always wonderful. We just have great guests.”

Dawn is generous with her veggies and there’s a list on the apartment refrigerator showing what’s available in the garden. Guests are encouraged to help themselves. Several reviews mention food the guests enjoyed from the garden.

Many improvements to the property have been in response to guest feedback. The binoculars were requested by a birdwatcher. The safety grab bar in the shower was another request, and the large, “Guesthouse,” sign was another. An early guest requested a Keurig coffeemaker, so

the apartment now sports a flashy “duo” coffee-maker that makes drip or individual coffee.

Their reviews bear up their intentions. With 131 reviews on Airbnb, they have five stars out of five overall and in all categories: cleanliness, accuracy, communication, location, check-in, and value. Because of their consistently high ratings, they are ranked as a “Superhost” by Airbnb.

Dawn looks to the future with an eye for children. “If I had the room and could figure it out, I’d like families to bring children. I’m interested in building yurts one day. I love sharing the garden: the food from the garden, the plants, and I like sharing that with children.”

Then she laughs. “We’ve got all we can handle for now. I’m sure God’s got a plan for us.” **S**



Coming up roses

*Eileen Lowder maintains garden
at Wallace House*

WRITTEN BY SUSAN SHINN TURNER
PHOTOGRAPHY BY SEAN MEYERS





Eileen Lowder, 80, has been caring for the Wallace House's rose garden for almost 30 years.



If your morning walk or commute includes South Fulton Street, you've no doubt noticed the rose garden at the Wallace House.

Since the late 1990s, it's been lovingly tended by Eileen Lowder, and she and Mona Wallace agree that the roses have been more spectacular this season than ever.

"She is a perfectionist," Wallace says. "There is sheer beauty in her heart."

Wallace points out that there's a part of the deed that states that the roses must be maintained in perpetuity.

"It's a big deal," Wallace notes of caring for the rose garden. "We are honored and delighted to have Eileen."

Lowder didn't know a thing about caring for roses when she started working for the late Virginia Wallace.

She needed a job, so she placed an ad in the paper to clean houses. Virginia Wallace contacted her and asked her to wash the

downstairs windows. They agreed on a price, and when that task was complete, she asked Lowder to turn her attention to the rose garden — which needed some sprucing up.

Lowder went to Rowan Public Library's main branch, just a few blocks away, and checked out books about roses. Lowder started the process of weeding and cleaning out the garden.

"My granddaughter April Safrit helped me," Lowder says. "It took us a long time to get it in order. We just had to keep at it."

Lowder, now 80, works in the garden three or four mornings a week. In the summer, she'll start about 6 a.m. to beat the heat — a little later in fall.

"When I started taking care of the roses, I did all of the fertilizing and spraying for bugs and diseases," she says. About five years ago, someone else took over those tasks.

There's still much deadheading and weeding and hoeing to be done.

At the end of November, Lowder trims back the bushes to protect them from winter winds. She leaves the garden Dec. 20, returning March 1, when she cuts the bushes almost to the ground.

They start blooming around the first of May, and if the weather is just right — not too much sun or heat — the results are show-stopping, as they've been this season.

Lowder cuts roses to share with the Wallace family and friends, and drops stems off at Wallace's law office.

Not only does Lowder raise roses, she is raising her great-grandchildren, Wesley and Allison Safrit, 17 and 14, who have been with her most of their lives.

Lowder says that the young people do well in school. The family attends church each Sunday at Mount Hope Church.

Whether she's at home or in the garden, Lowder is working hard.

After all, she's a perfectionist. **S**

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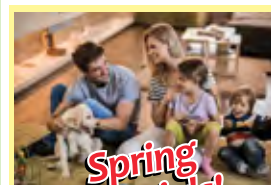
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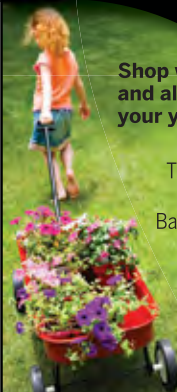
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The Wingler family used their time during COVID to turn their backyard into a garden and place to relax.



NEW LOT *in life*

Family redevelops backyard addition
after gift doubles property

WRITTEN BY MAGGIE BLACKWELL
PHOTOGRAPHY BY SEAN MEYERS



Zeplin Wingler holds his pet bearded dragon, Sunny Bojangles, while roaming around the backyard.

Dragons and ducks and birds, oh my! ... And a dog and a cat, too!

Bailey and Dustin Wingler have turned their tiny property into “Wingler Farm,” a tongue-in-cheek name for their menagerie and container gardens. Bailey, a talented artist in her own right, works as assistant to the art and design chair for Rowan-Cabarrus Community College. Last year she began teaching graphic design as well. Dustin builds exhaust systems for race cars.

The Winglers bought their charming 1915 home in Chestnut Hill as newlyweds in 2008. At the time the house had only a front yard about four feet deep, with an eight-foot concrete wall about a foot away from the rear of the house. There was no backyard.

A few years later, they had two boys: Zeplin, now 13 and Killian, now 11. With virtually no yard, they began looking for a home with land for the boys to play.

Enter neighbors Jim and Lucinda Epperson. The Eppersons were next door, facing a cross street. Their home was situated on a double lot, with the rear bordering the Winglers’ concrete wall.

An eggplant hangs from the vine in the backyard garden.





Above: From left, Zeplin, Killian, Bailey, Kobe the dog and Dustin.

Below: Sunlight reaches a place of serenity in the backyard.

One day Jim walked over to the Winglers' home and asked if they'd like to have the parcel that bordered the back of their home.

Bailey laughs as she recalls the day. "I said, 'Dustin, go back over there and be sure I heard what I thought I heard!'"

Dustin confirmed with Jim that he had, indeed, offered to give them the parcel, free of charge.

Lucinda passed away last year and Jim now lives in Chapel Hill.

"We had more yard than we wanted to take care of," Jim says. "Plus, we liked seeing and hearing the family at play. I had grown up in a hotel with no yard, so I understood their frustration. If we invested in the neighborhood by giving them a portion of our lot, all needs would be met. And it worked! Super family."

The transaction was duly processed with a deed as a gift from the Eppersons to the Winglers. The gifted lot doubled their land size. The Winglers remember their generosity with great appreciation to this day.

The new lot was entirely cemented, with a shed in the back, full of kudzu, poison ivy and old furni-





Clockwise from top: Killian, 11, feeds the ducks in the backyard; flowers bloom in the backyard; a mural painted by Bailey adds color to a drab cement block wall; Killian reaches for the darts on the board that hangs in the backyard.





Bailey snips some kale from their raised garden bed in the backyard.

ture. One caveat of the gift was that the Winglers needed to clean it up. They happily obliged.

“We had no idea what we wanted to do with it,” Bailey recalls. “But we filled two dumpsters over a couple of weekends and got it to a level where we could make use of it.”

Dustin had a Jeep with a winch at the time. He used it to give the concrete wall a good tug and it effortlessly tumbled. The kitchen window now has a full view of the new backyard, filling the kitchen with natural light.

Today it’s organized with container gardens, a basketball goal for the boys and a duck pond. The gardens include herbs, eggplant, tomatoes, cantaloupe, pumpkin, jalapeño, poblano, ghost peppers, Swiss chard, collard greens, broccoli, and Brussels sprouts. Although Bailey grew up in a gardening home, Dustin surely does his share, as well.

The resourceful family has built their raised beds from castoffs they found, including one the boys built from a discarded coffee table. Bailey has gotten many plants from friends and is proud that they’ve purchased very little.

“I enjoy looking around and recalling the things friends have shared,” she muses. “It all gives me great pleasure.”



The Winglers painted the outside of the fence to the backyard.



Zeplin, 14, stands near the duck pond they built during the pandemic.



The Winger's dog, Kobe, lies on the ground in the backyard.



***Clockwise from top:** The sun shines on the backyard garden; a hummingbird feeder hangs outside the backyard; a figurine adds decoration to the plants; an easel and artwork sit in the backyard with several of the family's pet birds; eggs rest in a container on a table.*



“My mother’s garden is always huge, and mine is slower. I always thought I’m not the gardener she is. Then, finally, I learned she uses buckets of Miracle Gro!” She laughs at the memory. “Everything here is organic. I don’t use chemicals. I guess I’m kind of a hippie that way.”

The duck pond was a Covid project for Dustin and the boys. They sourced old bricks from a nearby fallen chimney, dug the hole and lined it. Today the ducks happily splash around.

“On a rainy, nasty, miserable day, the ducks always have a happy day. They’re muddy, having the time of their life,” Bailey observes. She enjoys watching them through the kitchen window.

In addition to the Garden of Eden in the backyard, the Winglers have quite a collection of pets. Zeplin’s bearded dragon Sunny Bojangles often rides on his shoulder to the backyard. The six ducks, Kobe the dog, Maynard the cat and four birds in cages often join them.

Despite the concrete base, the backyard is a lovely little haven where the boys come and go easily. Comfy seating and a dinner table complete the tableau.

The paradise feeds the family well. The ducks produce 500 to 600 eggs a year, filling the family’s needs and providing gifts for friends and neighbors. Dustin built the filter for the pond himself, and when he cleans it, he uses the waste to fertilize the gardens.

The Winglers agree that they work as a team, with Bailey having the vision and Dustin as the voice of reality to tell her what’s feasible. They build



Dustin scratches Kablo’s head, a blue crossover pet parrot.

together. Bailey anticipates developing the shed into a greenhouse one day, and Dustin will help with design and construction.

“The yard has added another dimension to our lives that other people in the city may not have,” Bailey says. Meanwhile, the boys, the dragon, ducks, birds, dog and cat thrive at Wingler Farm. **S**

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Jamir Brown works through football practice one afternoon at Power Cross Ministries.



Raising up **LEADERS**

Power Cross Ministry imparts core values in boys from troubled backgrounds

WRITTEN BY ANN C. WAYNE
PHOTOGRAPHY BY SEAN MEYERS



Boys line up to get their lunches.

When T.J. Stormont was in the third grade, he brought three boys home with him from school one day and said to his father, “Dad, these boys need you.”

That day in 2006 was the beginning of Power Cross Ministry for T.J.’s parents, Jeff and Natalie.

Those three original boys came back week after week, and brought their friends with them.

A Christian-based sports program, Power Cross helps boys become spiritual leaders. Its foundational scripture is Proverbs 22:6, “Teach your children to choose the right path, and when they are older, they will remain upon it.”

Jeff, 47, and Natalie, 43, both had successful businesses.

“We were chasing green paper, but God told us to start helping these kids,” Jeff said.

The couple had been transporting the boys in their vehicles after school but felt the Lord nudging them to sell one of their vehicles and purchase a van. Power Cross provides transportation for all but a handful of the boys, the vast majority of which are being raised by single moms.

After two years, God placed it on Jeff’s heart to hand over his share of his business to a partner and work full-time at Power Cross. He



Coach Khalil Miller gives instruction and comments to the team during a football game film study indoors.

Patrick Duren, right, leads the team sprint during an afternoon practice.



knew that faith was the most important thing in Christianity and felt that the Lord wanted them to go “all in.”

Natalie said, “After Jeff gave his life to Christ, he felt God saying, ‘I’ve got you on my team and I’ve got a big job for you!’ We couldn’t say no to that.”

Jamir Brown works through football practice one afternoon.

Someone sent Jeff a check for \$3,500, and he opened a business account.

According to Jeff, God told him, “It’s going to get bigger than you.”

“We knew God would provide if we stayed in His word and relied on His truth,” Natalie added.

The first years were funded by donors in Knoxville, Tenn., the couple’s hometown.

After the Statesville facility, located on 1133 West Front St., was able to stand on its own, the couple diverted funds to Power Cross in Salisbury, located at 314 N. Ellis St. Individuals and small business owners donate 90 percent of the funds — from \$10 a month to \$100,000 a year. About 8 percent comes from foundations and 2 percent from churches.

“The program is not just a sports program,” Natalie said. “We are trying to raise young men to be responsible husbands, fathers, and community leaders. We choose to serve boys because we believe that building strong men and Christian leaders restores problems that our young ladies face, too. We believe biblically that males should lead.”

Statistics show that it takes two generations to make significant change.

“If young men can have positive role models, future generations will



be more likely to have a father in the home again,” Natalie said. “This will change communities.”

“We are an open-door ministry,” Jeff said. “We allow opportunities for all kids, no matter what their social status is. The program is free. We teach the boys that God does not look at our skin — he looks at our heart.”

The Storments knew that some areas of Salisbury had troubled youth. They researched neighborhoods that needed help. In 2014, Salisbury High School hosted a football camp for them. NFL players and collegiate players coached, and 350 kids showed up. They continue to participate three to five days each week.

“We like to keep the boys here as much as possible to keep them engaged and off the streets,” Natalie said. The high school guys from Statesville help with coaching and tutoring.

The Core Values of Power Cross are:

- Find the Father



From left, Patrick Duren, Justin Eldridge, Zaiden Pick and Rondarius Barnhardt play a game of Uno during lunch.



The Mighty Mite football team listens to coaches during a session indoors.

- Maximize Effort & Expectations
- Nourish Mind, Body, & Soul
- Expose & Advance
- Reshape, Rebuild, & Redirect
- Relationship

The leaders in Power Cross help the boys develop a vision and purpose, become spiritual leaders and graduate on time. They provide career development, with a job placement program for those who do not desire to go to college.

About 800 meals are served each week in Salisbury, prepared in Statesville and delivered to the Salisbury campus. A kitchen and cafeteria are in the works for Salisbury.

The boys enjoy the lessons from the Bible, the sports, and the food.

Jeremiah has attended one year.

“I really like the coaches,” he said. “They are fun!”

His grandmother found out about the program when Jeremiah wanted to play football.

“Coach Jeff is a lot of things to a lot of people. He stepped up to be my father when I didn’t have one. Lives are being changed and mine is one of them,” Deshon Holmes, class of 2018, said in a letter sent



Payton Hardin stretches out prior to Mighty Mite football practice.



Justin Eldridge leads the lunch group in prayer.



Lakai Weeks hustles through warmups during an afternoon football practice.

to supporters.

E'kiah Gillespie, one of the 20 staff members, has worked with Power Cross for five years. He graduated from the program and said, "My life goal is to give back to the youth in the area."

Gwin Barr serves on the board of directors and has volunteered for about three years.

"I love these boys with my whole heart," she said.

Her daughter, Lucy, a rising sophomore at Salisbury High School, works at Power Cross two afternoons a week.

"Do it!" Lucy said of volunteering. "It has been the best decision of my life."

"It is gratifying," her mom added. "The boys give me more than I give them. It's a valuable investment in your time, treasures, and talents."

Dr. Jason Gardner, then interim superintendent of Rowan-Salisbury Schools, contacted Holly Ridgeway, academic director for Power Cross and asked if the organization could host a pilot reading program for the boys called "Book Nook." The program was launched in January.

Tutors met with students one-on-one twice a week for 12 weeks. Holly said, "Reading levels were raised at least one grade level." The boys benefited greatly and developed interpersonal skills.

"We look forward to working with RSS in the future," Holly said.

Alumni photos cover the walls in the main building,



Mighty Mite coach Joel Reyes works practice with his players.



Left: Jayden Armijo makes his way through the obstacles during a Mighty Mite football practice. Right: Tavarius White finishes his pushups during a hot afternoon practice.

including Jeff and Natalie’s son T. J. He has a master’s degree from Texas Christian University and played football at Texas Tech. He is pursuing a career in the NFL, and leads the Power Cross Collegiate Disciple Program.

Most of the alumni are college athletes, but Eddie Lomas decided to serve his country instead.

There are \$8.5 million worth of scholarships on the walls. A boy has a good chance of receiving a college scholarship if he follows the 10-year plan of staying in the program.

“They come back and give back,” Natalie said. “The kids never outgrow the program, and we are often invited to special events for the students.”

Logan Davis was drafted by the Oakland Athletics. Zamari Stevenson received a full scholarship to Wake Forest University. Jabril Williams was on the CAA Leadership Committee for student-athletes with the NCAA and was an all-American football player his freshman year at Elon University.

The current facility in Salisbury was formerly the Rowan-Salisbury Schools Administrative Building. Originally, it was the Frank B. John Elementary School, the first integrated school in Salisbury in 1962.

“We are trying to bring this building back to life,” Jeff said.

It houses workout rooms, academic rooms, a locker room, and a game room. The classrooms

have virtual tutors and dry erase tables for kids to use. The restrooms have been renovated, but some extensive HVAC work needs to be done to replace the window units.

A football practice field was built and there are plans for a large athletic building. Currently, First Baptist Church nearby is allowing them to use their gym several nights a week.

Power Cross offers football, baseball, basketball, wrestling and an AAU Team.

“It’s a privilege for the boys to make the AAU team,” Jeff said. The boys must be coachable, respectful, and trustworthy to make this team.

The wrestling gym was a former swimming pool and there are batting cages that allow baseball teams to practice batting inside during inclement weather. A weight room is available for

the older kids.

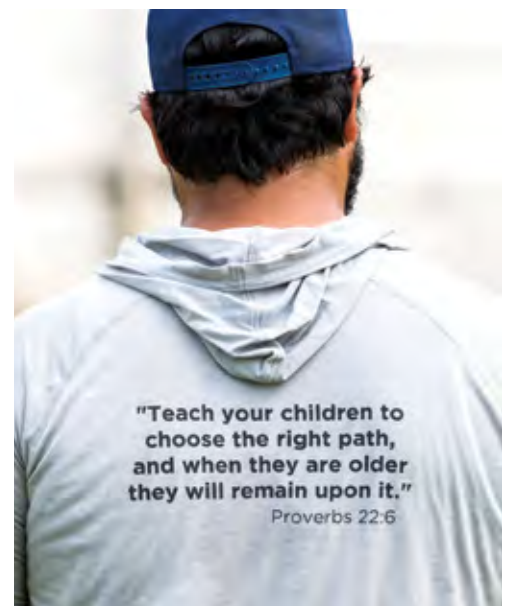
The next locations for Power Cross may be Gastonia, Hickory, and Winston Salem.

“The Lord has reached out to us in all three locations,” Jeff said.

Power Cross needs men who are willing to work with the boys and volunteers to serve food and provide meals.

Contact Cara Houston, volunteer coordinator, at cara@powercross.org or 704-380-3001.

Go to powercross.org and fill out a volunteer form, or stop by either campus between 10 a.m. and 7:30 p.m. weekdays if you’d like to become a financial partner. **S**





Members of the Mighty Mite football team practice on a hot afternoon.



Rahkeem Harris takes a drink during a hot afternoon practice.

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*Jake Speck sits on the tailgate
of his 1967 Ford pickup.*

MOTOR MAN

Car collector Jake Speck has a garage
full of classics, each with a story

WRITTEN BY DAVID FREEZE

PHOTOGRAPHY BY ANDY MOONEY

Jake Speck backs his 1955 Chevy Bel Air into his shop. The car is his favorite in the collection.



“M

y wife says I might be a little bit crazy.”

Jake Speck grins even while he says it. As an energetic 81-year-old classic automobile collector, Speck knows what he likes and he’s good at it.

“I’ll never make back what I spend on these cars but I want to do it right,” he notes. “It’s a costly hobby. And each car has its own story, some of them very special to me. It all got started with a 1936 Chevrolet pickup truck, one I kept for two years and then sold it in 1963 or ’64. I have pretty much been working with my vehicles ever since.”

Speck bought his 1967 Ford pickup for a work truck while he built houses and did cabinetry work.

“I worked out of it from 1967 to 1985 while I partnered with Rand Yost,” he says. “We worked together for 30 years, and I didn’t set out to treat the truck special, but we never had to remove a single dent when I restored it seven and eight years ago. Pete Kinney in Salisbury did the body work and Jason Hinson painted it.”

Speck’s grandson, Hunter Henrickson, took a liking to the truck right away. “He sort of claimed it from the start and we’ve had some good times with it. Hunter would drive it to a car show and I would follow in something else.”

Speck is the fifth owner of a black 1957 Chevrolet, with a 283 engine.

“I knew all the other owners well,” he says. “Ken Nance bought the car new, and his brother Alan came next. Jerry Rape bought it and drove it a



The interior of Speck’s 1957 Chevrolet.



Speck's 1957 Chevy Sports Coupe that is awaiting restoration. Speck got the car from a longtime friend after he passed away.





*Speck's bright green
and white 1956
Chevy 210.*

while. Rand and I built Jerry's house. Wayne Freeze bought the car next and now I have had it for 25 years. It was the first car I bought when I started collecting, starting a long series of '55s and '57s."

The showpiece of Speck's collection is a 1955 Chevy Bel Air with a 383 Stroker engine and full power accessories plus an impressive pearl white and burgundy paint job. The car took two years to rebuild, completed by one of the best in Perry Propst.

"You don't want to go too fast. Nothing should be rushed," Speck says. "Propst's company is Hat Creek Customs and everything he did is documented by photos. Elbert Efird did the interior. This is currently my favorite car, definitely the one I like the best."

A bright green and white 1956 Chevy 210 sports a fuel-injected 350 engine with a 700R automatic transmission. The car was done by Travis Noland of TR Custom Classics while Leon Brown did the interior.

"It was black and white and wouldn't run," Speck says of the vehicle. "We put a new full floor pan in it and the whole frame was cleaned and painted. We



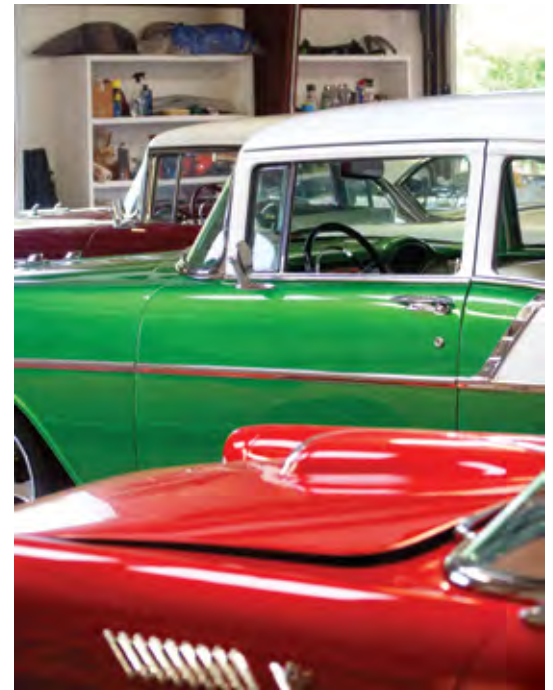
Speck starts up his 1955 Thunderbird.



The 383 Stroker in the '55 Bel Air is immaculate.



Speck also has an orange 1976 Corvette.



The cars in the collection are in a variety of colors.

try to make the cars nice and comfortable inside, but there is nothing we can do to change the ride unless the suspension is changed and that isn't usually a part of the deal. Nothing was spared to make this or the '55 Bel Air Chevy as nice as possible."

Notable with most of Speck's restorations are the batteries moved to the trunk and impeccable engine and trunk compartments.

One of the most unusual cars in the collection is a 1955 Thunderbird.

"It is one of my most sought-after cars because this year's model was the first one made," he says. "It has a 292 four barrel carburetor and was Ford's answer to the Chevrolet Corvette. The car comes with both a hard top and soft top, easily changed at any time. The hardtop comes off by twisting four snaps while the soft top waits patiently in the back to take its place."

Speck's wife Judy had made it clear that she wanted a Thunderbird. Also serving as the color consultant for her husband's car collection, she

says, "Colors are definitely the first impression!"

"I knew she wanted a Thunderbird and we had been looking for one for a long time," Speck says. "We heard about one nearby while we were on the job and bought it on the spot. I came home and told Judy that we had found one. She didn't believe it but the next day it arrived on a rollback."

In another twist, while Judy claims the Thunderbird as hers, 17-year-old granddaughter McKenna Henrickson will eventually get the

Speck bought his 1967 Ford pickup for a work truck while he built houses and did cabinetry work.





The restoration on Speck's 1955 Bel Air took two years.

car. Speck says, "It is small, and it just looks like her."

McKenna and Hunter are Speck's step-grandkids and Judy's daughter Aprille's kids. Speck says, "I couldn't be prouder of them. They are mine in every way."

Near the Thunderbird in shop location is a 1976 dual exhaust orange Corvette. It has been in the collection for two years and has only been out twice.

"I only had to change the carpet in it and Elbert Efrid did that," Speck says. "I haven't spent much on it and actually acquired it through a family connection."

There is one motorcycle in the collection, a 1972 Honda CL 350. Complete with high handlebars, the motorcycle still only has 6,352 actual miles.

"I bought it when the motorcycle license was just \$1 a year. Now it's \$15," Speck says. "An ex-brother-in-law was going into the military and needed to sell it. I rode it to the beach and back once, and for a short while afterward, and it's been sitting here ever since."

Waiting quietly in the back of Speck's shop is a 1957 Chevy Sports Coupe, with only 60,842 miles



Speck has been working on his vehicles since the early 1960s.



Speck's 1955 Ford Thunderbird is the favorite of his wife, Judy.



*Above and right: Spare trim pieces and supplies line the shelves in the shop.
Above right: Speck's 1976 Chevrolet Corvette.*



on the odometer.

“This car is special to me and has been for a long time,” Speck says. “It belonged to my long-time friend, Millard Goodnight. He operated Goodnight’s Exxon at the intersection of Miller Road and Highway 150. He had the car in the back of the shop, and I talked with him several times about buying it. He knew I wanted it.”

As Goodnight’s health worsened, he told Speck that things didn’t look good. Speck tried to buy it again, still with no success.

“The car had stuff piled on top of it and we think it hadn’t been driven since 1985,” Speck says. “I just couldn’t get Millard to sell it to me. But when he died, I was able to get it and the family said he wanted me to have it all along.”

Right now, the car is black, and little has been done to it. Speck has removed the seats and checked out the interior.

“There is no significant rust and most of it can be painted as is,” he says. “It has the best body that I have ever attempted to restore. When finished, it will be turquoise and white.”

Speck isn’t rushing to restore the car. He already knows that it will be one of his favorite cars because it belonged to his close friend and the memorable and meaningful conversations that seemed to never seal the deal, yet in fact they did.

A home builder since 1962 with Floyd Sechler and Rand Yost, Speck joined Yost to start their own company and worked together in home construction from 1969-99. When Yost retired, Speck shifted more toward his cabinet making business.

Rowan Custom Cabinets was formed in 2002 when Darryl Efir joined the company. Speck officially retired in 2015 but continued to work for about two more years. Efir shares Speck’s interest in classic cars and currently has two of his own.

With more time available, Speck has spent much of it doing the work on his cars himself. He continues with the same exacting specifications while working with a fine group of professionals. Currently, he is restoring a 1960 348 Impala and is about six months into the project. The original body of the car is about ready to be painted, but in the meantime, Speck is working



Speck is the fifth owner of a black 1957 Chevrolet. The other four owners were friends of his.



Left: The interior of the Ford truck. **Right:** Album covers from the 1950s and '60s hang on the wall.

on cleaning lots of spare Impala parts from two extra cars that he also bought. While he’s never sure how much money will be made in the original spare parts market, Speck says, “I just enjoy piddling with them.” He also maintains an extensive inventory in spare ’55 and ’57 Chevrolet parts. Speck also sold three ’57 cars at one time to another collector.

Clearly at home among his vehicles, Speck maintains a top-notch and very clean shop. He has kept all the license tags from his current and past vehicles. They are displayed on one wall while four Betty Sedberry prints from the classic car era adorn another wall.

“I only had one before Judy went to the sale at Goodnight’s Exxon and made them an offer on the others,” Speck says. “I’m glad to have them. Judy also has one section of the wall where she displays album covers from most of her favorite entertainers from the ’50s and ’60s. We had her

50th Landis High School Reunion here in 2009, complete with a juke box. Those album covers were decorations and they have been here ever since.”

Speck laughs about cars he didn’t keep, like the 1963 split back window Corvette.

“I didn’t spend much money on it but decided to drive it to Florida,” he remembers. “The car drove so hard, I promised to sell it even before we got home. And I did! Now it is worth a lot of money!”

Speck looks and sounds like a content man when he thinks about his current and future collection. He smiles often, yet still says, “Everything is for sale!”

Except maybe those vehicles he’s already promised his grandchildren. **S**

Freelance writer David Freeze lives in China Grove.

*Josh Teague leads the cattle
to a new grazing pasture
during the morning chores
at Running T Farms.*



MOO CREW

Running T Farms owners are passionate
about all-natural, grass-fed beef

WRITTEN BY MAGGIE BLACKWELL

PHOTOGRAPHY BY SEAN MEYERS



“Y

ou are what you eat. You are what your food eats, too.”

Brandi and Josh Teague at Running T Farms in Cool Springs are fervent about providing grass-fed beef, traceable to

the birth of the animal.

What’s the big deal about grass-fed beef?

Cows are ruminant animals, meaning they’re naturally grass-eaters. Industry-raised cows are fed silage high in sugar, starch and grain in order to fatten them up quickly for quick sales and higher profits. But that’s not their natural intake.

Their fat is high in omega 6, the unhealthy kind of fat.

According to the Mayo Clinic, grass-fed cows produce beef high in omega 3, the healthy kind of fat. Grass-fed beef is high in linolenic acid, a cancer-fighting agent, as well as more antioxidants like Vitamin E.

Moreover, many farms that claim to raise grass-fed beef, raise them to 800 to 900 pounds and add the last 300 pounds on silage before processing. The Teagues raise their calves on grass from birth through to processing. As soon as the mama cow weans the calf, it starts eating grass with the other cows.

To say the Teagues are passionate on the topic is to put it mildly. They remember the day they turned to grass-fed and

*Josh Teague moves
a trough during
a recent summer
morning.*





Josh Teague points to a juvenile sunflower in one of his pastures.



Brandi Teague carries a chicken feeder during the morning chores.



Josh and Brandi Teague, along with their identical two-year-old twin sons, Wil, left, and Wes.



Farm tools, supplies and materials rest in the back of the four-wheeler.

have never looked back.

“We attended the NC Cattlemen’s Conference in Hickory in 2015,” Josh says. “Alex Miller, from the Forage and Grasslands Council, was the speaker. A light bulb went off for me. He recommended the book, ‘How to Not Go Broke Ranching,’ by Walt Davis. I ordered the book before we got home.”

Josh says it was easy for him to join the movement, thanks to YouTube and the pioneers who preceded him. He also quotes Don Campbell, who says, “If you want to make small changes, change the way you do things. If you want to make large changes, change the way you see things.”

“We got home and it was a new world,” Brandi says. “Anything we were doing that hurt the soil, we stopped that day, saying we will make this work.”

Josh owns a construction company specializing in custom homes. His crew starts at 6 in the morning to avoid the heat, so he must leave home by 5 a.m. He moves the cows at 4:30 a.m., using a headlamp. He moves the cows to fresh grass at least twice a day.

“We give them sunshine, water and grass,” he says, “with no chemical dewormers, chemical fly control, or antibiotics — and no grain.”

He does concede that on the rare occasion that a cow is injured, he does administer antibiotics. He would never allow a cow to suffer. But



Cattle make their way out to pasture during a hot summer morning.

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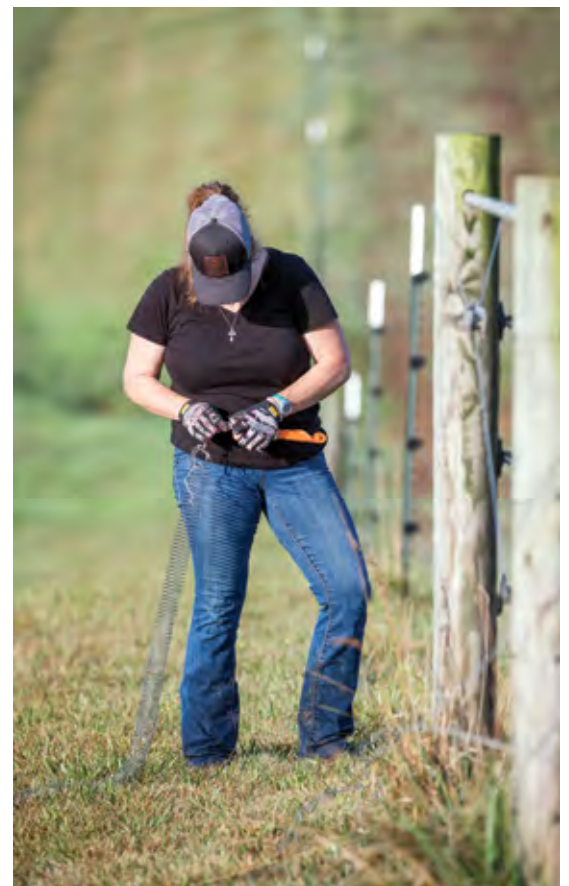


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Left: Wes and Wil Teague load up the feed buckets for the chickens. Right: Brandi works on the electric fencing.

that cow's beef is not marketed with the grass-fed beef.

The transition has led the Teagues to see pastures differently, as well.

Brandi says, "I've learned to look at things differently. I used to drive by a perfectly green pasture and think that was beautiful."

Josh adds, "But nowhere in nature where man is not involved, will you see a monoculture. We have 50 species of weeds, briars, bushes, and all that nature provides. Every plant is mining different minerals and nutrients from the soil. So when our cows eat the variety of grasses, they are getting a healthy intake. You learn to manage your cattle so they don't need chemicals."

Both the Teagues come from farming families. The farm is on Brandi's Niblock family land, which was part of a land grant in 1753 and has remained in the family ever since. Originally 300-plus acres, it's been split among family members through the years. Today the couple has 40 acres of the original parcel. They've bought additional land, increasing their total to 165 acres of pasture, with another 100 acres about a mile away. They have 127 cows.

Josh grew up in Taylorsville with a dad who was more of a hobby farmer and a grandfather who was a bit more intense. But Josh is the first to pursue the higher standard of regenerative farming.

They live in a white farmhouse built by Brandi's great-grandparents in 1926. Five generations of her family have lived in the house, including the Teagues' precious twin boys, Wes and Wil, 2½.

Recently the Teagues have added chickens to the farm. They're housed in chicken tractors (moveable coops) following the design by legendary natural farming pioneer Joel Salatin. Brandi moves the tractors at least



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The Teagues raise 100% grass-fed beef.

AT A GLANCE

Running T Farms' website:
www.runningtbeef.com

Facebook: Running T Beef

Instagram: @runningtbeef

Josh's YouTube channel: Running T Beef

Josh recommends these books for anyone who may be interested:

“Toxic Legacy” by Stephanie Seneff

“How Not to Go Broke Ranching”

by Walt Davis

“A Soil Owner's Manual” by John Stika

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Josh gets up at sunrise to move and place electric fencing to help guide his cattle to a new location.



Clockwise from above: Josh works on the electric fencing; the family also raises chickens; the farm has 127 cows; Brandi and her sons, Wes, front, and Wil, take a ride around the farm.



twice a day to provide access to new larvae for their healthy diet.

While Josh stays busy building houses and raising cows, he expresses high admiration for Brandi, who manages the business of the farm. They sell their beef and chicken on a website she maintains, and she ships packages all over the USA, thanks to their website being highly optimized. The website also offers pork, which they source from a local regenerative farm that they are sure is as pure as their own.

It's up to Brandi to predict how many cows to process each season based on business. She had to figure out last year how many animals to process this year between September and December. In January 2021, she made the decision to raise pasture poultry. Today she wishes she had planned more, because she could sell more. She has to make reservations with the processor a year in advance. It's all a mix of experience, knowledge and maybe a little luck. They agree her MBA has surely helped with her side of the business. She does it all while being a full-time mom to the boys.


Brandi laughs at their timing. "We launched the website in July 2019, and boom! A few weeks later, I found out I was five months pregnant — with twins! Had we known I was pregnant, we may not have taken all these risks without being sure of a certain payback."

Josh says the biggest challenge is land debt. In their area, he is competing with developers for land, which drives prices up. He says this is why people

are abandoning farming by the droves.

Business seems to be good. They're sold out of beef at this time, except for ground beef. They'll process more cows this fall and will offer bulk sales.

As to the future, Josh's dream is for the boys to take over the farm when they're old enough, if they want to.

"There's going to be some overlap where the farm has to provide a living for them and for us," he says. "No kid wants to work a farm that's losing money. So we are working to build a regenerative, sustainable farm that's profitable." 

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