

APRIL 2023

# SALISBURY

the magazine



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# SALISBURY

the magazine

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New Livingstone  
building caters  
to high tech research

**On the cover:** Students Sydney McDonald, left, and Eve Beyan experiment making Elephant's Toothpaste, a reaction with hydrogen peroxide and dish soap at the F. George Shipman Science Center at Livingstone College. (Sean Meyers photo)

**On this page:** Executive Director Bill Johnson shares a moment with 102-year-old Naomi Brown at Trinity Oaks. (Submitted photo)





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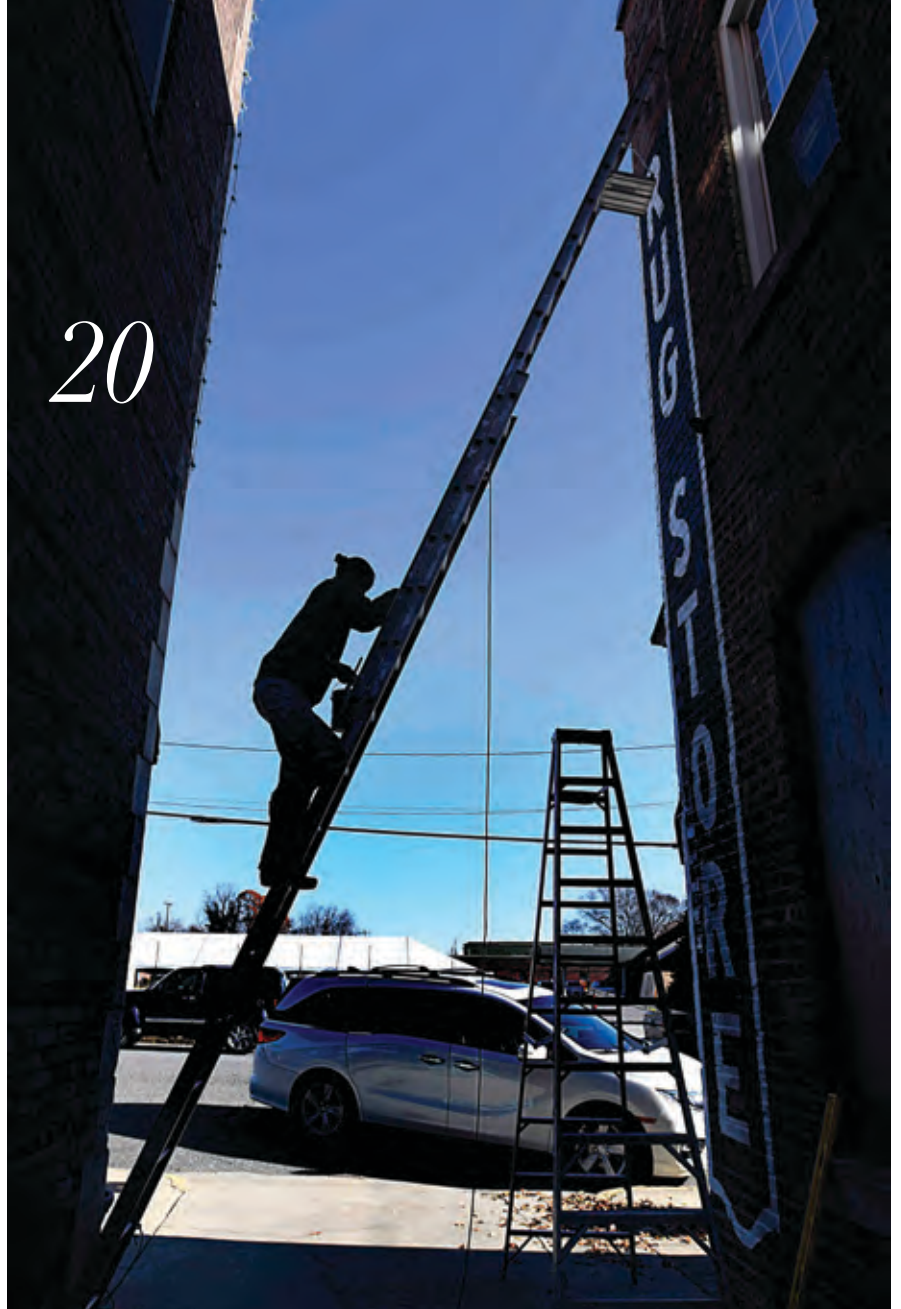
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# Plenty of options on the menu

Welcome to April — the month we fantasize about until pollen covers all! We have a panoply of articles for you to read in the safety of your home.

In our cover story, big things are happening at Livingstone College. If the new F. George Shipman Science Center weren't enough, how's a \$2.2 million grant, an immersion theater and a spankin' new Liquid Chromatography Mass Spectrometer? Dr. Dawn McNair has been leading the science department with a new focus on STEM and passion for science. Her calm demeanor and commitment to the job combine with her experience as a National Science Foundation Fellow to make her perfect for the job. Members of the elite new White Coat Society are proud of their achievements and the school is soon opening the facilities to the public.

Just a couple of miles away, the folks at Trinity Oaks are celebrating their 30th anniversary of providing a full spectrum of services for seniors. They recently celebrated by opening their newly renovated dining room, where residents can enjoy three yummy meals a day. The facility was ahead of its time in offering a variety of levels of care to residents. Retired Trinity Oaks employee Brenda Zimmerman shares with us the evolution of Trinity Oaks, residents' remarks and how the place got its name.

Writer Pete Prunkl joined the heart attack club a year ago this month. He shares his experience at the Novant Cardiac Rehabilitation Program, where survivors perform cardio exercise while hooked up to heart monitors. The program includes equipment, trainers, medical staff



and education. Pete graduated after completing 36 sessions at the facility; he explores why many heart attack survivors don't avail themselves of the service at all.

Local artist Tim Propst creates realistic and surreal paintings in monochrome or color, acrylic or oils. Some of his work makes political commentary; other pieces feature his students or kids on his track team. A few works mimic the paintings of Caravaggio. Like many, Propst loved to draw as a kid, got away from it as a working adult and is now making his way to pursue art full-time. Read about the incident that caused him to re-think his entire career. Kudos to his mom and dad for quietly encouraging him through the entire journey.

Our Rowan Original is Century 21 Realty overachiever Cathy Griffin — what a hoot! Cathy clearly never met a stranger; her many connections help her stay among the top ten salespeople in this international organization.

Supporting her all the way is Realtor Ashley Flippin. Cathy took some time with me to reflect on the changes in the industry over the past 33 years; her appearance on the popular HGTV show, "House Hunters;" the major impact Town & Country owner Dianne Greene had on her career — and the apples of her eye, her two sons. You'll have to read the article to see her most unusual way of relaxing!

Susan Shinn Turner took some time with local-ish muralists Earle Kluttz Thompson and Raines Thompson Kuppin. Earle is the daughter of former Salisbury mayor Margaret Kluttz and banker George Kluttz. She and Raines are sisters-in-law who have painted numerous murals at the UNC Children's Hospitals. They also renew "ghost signs" — faded advertising painted on buildings — in Salisbury and Spencer.

The artists have small children and their work allows them to be flexible around their schedules. You'll read how UNC basketball player Eric Montross played into the arrangement.

In this month's Bookish, Deirdre Parker Smith reviews "Indigo Field" by Marjorie Hudson, a haunting North Carolina story that weaves a current experience in among Native American tales, crime and spirits. It's an enthralling story you won't want to miss.

*Maggie*

— Maggie Blackwell  
Editor, Salisbury the Magazine



# Mysteries of the past fill ‘Indigo Field’

**T**he earth reveals much in Marjorie Hudson’s new novel, “Indigo Fields.” The North Carolina author weaves in the little-known history of the Tuscarora Indians with modern-day crimes and prejudices and the story of a man lost to himself and his family.

The story involves the retired colonel Rand, his delightful wife Anne, and the characters across the road from their comfortable house. Miss Reba is a force to be reckoned with, a tiny woman of mixed race who is known as a foster parent and a woman of strong beliefs.

Jolene is a farmer raising goats and crops with her child-like teen son, Bobo.

Characters from the spirit world wield their eerie, ancient power.

“Indigo Field” the book is about the place, Indigo Field, and these disparate personalities. They’re trying to survive in a world that doesn’t make much sense anymore, and they’re about to face a challenge that literally turns that world upside down.

Rand doesn’t like the retirement community in eastern North Carolina. It’s too cute; his wife Anne, is too involved with the other residents and the community at large.

He wants something else — anything else — but hasn’t figured out what it is.

Knowing he has a bad heart, he runs in the intense heat and humidity of summer, hoping to hasten his death, the only way he can think of to escape his dissatisfaction. He can never tell Anne how unhappy he is.

On his runs, he discovers Indigo Field and the tiny farm Jolene tends. He feels a kinship to the land and the small house, having grown up on a hardscrabble farm in a family that defines dysfunctional.

In the woods of the field, across the road from the fancy Stonehaven community, the reader meets Miss Reba. She believes in spells and spirits and the wisdom of the natural world. Standing solemnly in her yard are three large cedar statues that memorialize her sister and brother and the niece who was murdered by a “whiteman.”

From this point, the story belongs to Miss Reba. She is the strongest, most incredible character in the woods, the source of forgotten, but vital history, the stone that will be tossed, but not moved.

To bring this group into the same orbit, Hudson brings in the Tuscarora past, burials in clay jars, and an archaeological site where Rand’s tough-luck son Jeff finally connects to his own future.

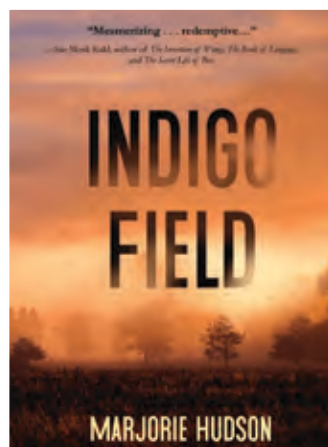
At the novel’s end, you’ll see how much reading and research Hudson did, from North Carolina’s history of indigenous peoples, especially the Tuscarora, but other tribes, as well. This may be fiction, but Hudson, who is also known for her book about Virginia Dare, grounds it all in fact.

Her excellent short story collection, “Accidental Birds of the Carolinas,” also resonates with authenticity. She manages the sections featuring Old Lucy and her Tuscarora lore so beautifully, while narrating the shocking violence that has brought Miss Reba and the others to this point. Lucy is, truly, the most fascinating character in the book.

Using the stories Miss Reba tells the box of niece Danielle’s ashes, Hudson creates a world of prejudice and backwoods violence all too familiar to our history.

When Rand’s plans to die fail, tragedy drops in, leaving him alone and even more detached from life, including his children. He knows Jeff is a hopeless screw-up, and that daughter Carrie is too wrapped up in her own world to set foot in his.

At the same time, Miss Reba is asked to take in TJ, son of the “whiteman” who murdered her Danielle. This certainly stretches belief, but it sparks more challenges, more hurdles for Miss



## “Indigo Field”

by Marjorie Hudson. Regal House Publishing, 2023. 410 pp.

Reba and the others.

Trouble confronts everyone. Just as Jolene is trying to get ahead, she gets a notice of foreclosure on her farm, a tactic by a greedy banker who wants to force her to marry him to save her land.

Rand runs away to the mountains of North Carolina, to an odd tourist cabin with a sad and frightened boy bringing him meager supplies. Here, the reader learns Rand’s deep secret, another trigger for impending tragedy.

Sweet Bobo, Jolene’s son, loved Rand’s wife, who was

kind to him, and he quickly befriends TJ, juvenile-delinquent-in-training, and the erstwhile Jeff, who falls in love with Jolene at first sight, even as they discover more about the jars of bones in the river’s cliffside.

As Miss Reba tells ever more disturbing stories to the late Danielle, Armageddon is brewing.

Bobo finds a gun; TJ, Jeff and Rand are in danger.

An unexpected hurricane will blow ill winds into the growing maelstrom of these lives — Rand running away, permanently, from his sorrow; TJ in trouble yet again; Miss Reba under suspicion of murder; Jolene about to lose her farm, her home, her safe place for Bobo.

The storm is relentless, destroying things once sacred to this place. It must wipe out the evil that has taken residence, and it will test the minds and hearts of all.

Here Hudson uses her powers of description to narrate every terror of the storm, to describe the destruction of a tarnished Eden. It moves at a compelling speed that catches the reader up in the winds.

What will be the outcome of this disaster? Will it be redemption or destruction? Will it be the revenge of the Tuscarora?

Hudson skillfully weaves an ending full of surprises. The book is a bit long but stick with it; you’ll be rewarded. **[S]**



by

DEIRDRE  
PARKER  
SMITH









# *Through the lens*

**Left:** Paul Hess captured the south end of the Backshop at the N.C. Transportation Museum at night.

**Above:** A photo by Wes Teeter shows a nice juxtaposition of transportation in our area. The N.C. Transportation is a popular tourist destination and the 1973 Corvette exemplifies the interest for classic sports cars in the Salisbury area.

To submit a photo for Through the Lens, send a high-resolution photo to [andy.mooney@salisburythemagazine.com](mailto:andy.mooney@salisburythemagazine.com). Vertical orientation is preferred.





Century 21 real estate  
agent Cathy Griffin

Q & A

# Down home girl

*Century 21 real estate agent Cathy Griffin*

WRITTEN BY MAGGIE BLACKWELL | PHOTOGRAPHY BY SEAN MEYERS

“I’m just Paula Deen without the butter.” Cathy Griffin smiles as she remembers her appearance on HGTV’s popular show, “House Hunters,” in 2015. A young couple with only \$100,000 wanted to buy their first home, and Griffin was the agent. Her favorite quote from the show: “Paint’s cheap, baby.” The episode was aptly named, “Tight Budget in Salisbury.” It’s from Season 104, Episode 2.

“Honey” and “baby” are regular parts of her vocab. So are, “Darlin” and “Sugar.” She’s quintessentially Southern and doesn’t make any bones about it.

Griffin has been recognized nationally three times as among the Top Ten salespeople in the Century 21 network. Having been numbers nine and ten in the past, this year she made it to number seven. That’s no small feat in a company with 14,000 offices in 86 countries and over 147,000 sales professionals.

Here in North Carolina, she’s been the Number One agent for 10 consecutive years and says she’s Grand Centurion every year. Grand Centurion is recognition that Griffin is in the top one percent internationally of salespeople in Century 21; the measure is by units sold as well as gross close commissions. Griffin says she qualifies both ways.



**Q.** *Tell me about your early years.*

I was born and raised right here in Salisbury. I was the only child and my parents were older. I was definitely a Daddy's Girl! My daddy and Uncle Wink Wansley built Winks Fish Camp in 1970. I was 14 and it wasn't long before I started waiting tables. My parents were Fred and Annette Shoaf.

***How'd you get your start in real estate?***

I've known Dianne Greene all my life. We all knew everyone in town. One night, I was serving her oyster stew and she said, "I want you to get your real estate license." I said, "Dianne, I'm slinging fish." Back then, it was a six-day course: Monday, Wednesday and Friday for two weeks. I made the highest grade in the class! I sold real estate by day and slung fish by night for three years. I came to work for Dianne Greene in 1990, and I've never left.

*Note: Realtor Dianne Greene owns Town & Country Century 21 Real Estate.*

***You've been with her 33 years?***

She has been so good to me. She has taught me so much. I've had many opportunities. My first sale was at the river. I was so excited. Dianne held my hand the whole time. It went very smooth.

***How did you build your business?***

"People don't care how much you know until they know how much you care." It's hanging on my office wall. I listen. I love people. I built my business by sending five thank-you notes a week — all handwritten. I never ask people for their business; I just drop a business card in with the card.

You've just got to listen! When a couple want different things, I try to bring them together. There's always something they both want. I try to focus on that. I can always find one or two things for each person. But between you and me, nine out of 10 times, the woman rules!

***Has the business changed over 33 years?***

When I started in real estate, the contract was two pages long. Now it's 16. We had no ad-



**Cathy Griffin with associate  
Ashlee Flippin**

dendums. No inspections. It was buyer beware. Now there are disclosures, lead-based paint disclosure, due diligence money. So many things have changed in 30 years.

I remember the first time I saw a fax machine. I didn't sleep for three days I was so scared, thinking, "I'll never be able to use that."

When I started, we had to go to companies and get the house keys. There were no lock boxes.

In 1992, the Century 21 program was two-and-one: Two listings and one sale a month. We couldn't live off that today! Oh my gosh, we average 15+ closings a month.

***Do you have family?***

I have two boys and they are my life. Trent owns Griffin Guitars. Braxton flips houses and films for big companies like ABC, CBS and big events. My ex-husband is my best friend.

***How do you relax?***

I work about 80 hours a week and then I'll go to Vegas for two or three days. I used to go three or four times a year; now I go twice a year. My daddy taught me to play poker: I've won

Texas Hold'em tournaments! Men don't like to play with women. We intimidate them.

***What's Ashley's role?***

*Realtor Ashley Flippin shares an office with Griffin.*

Ashley's been with me eight years. I had sold her parents' house. She walked at Catawba and started her real estate license the very next day. I have doubled my business since she started with me. She's my partner in real estate. She's everything."

"It wasn't hard to approach Cathy at all," Flippin says. "I knew her and she was so easy to talk to."

***What's your best advice for someone just starting out?***

It's not about you; it's about them. Stick with it. I built my business sending those five notes a week. I always tell agents: Hand write the note. Thank someone for doing something. I never ask them for their business. That's tacky. I thank them for something and put my card in there.

I sure love what I do. You know how people say, 'If you love what you do, you'll never work a day in your life'—? That's me. Life is good and I'll love what I do until the day I die. **[S]**



Artist Tim Propst prepares a canvas for his next painting with a white texturing paint.





Propst's oil painting titled 'The Hurdler' is of North Rowan hurdler Aniya Brown. Propst was her hurdler coach.

# Painting the canvas of life

*Teacher, coach is devoted to love of art*

WRITTEN BY **MAGGIE BLACKWELL**

PHOTOGRAPHY BY **WAYNE HINSHAW**





Propst's 'black light' paintings on exhibit being photographed under black light. The acrylic paint colors pop out more vividly under black light.



Propst holds the tubes of acrylic paint that he likes to use for his 'black light' paintings that have such vivid colors.



A wall of paintings in Propst's current exhibit. These beach scenes are paintings from photos that he made at Engelhard.



**A**s local artist Tim Propst waxes on about the artists Artemisia Gentileschi, Caravaggio, Van Gogh, Albert Camus, da Vinci and Charles Meacham, it can get a little tough to keep up. When he mentions he was an accelerated student in school, it all makes sense.

Propst, a largely self-taught artist, has a booth at Railwalk Art Gallery on North Lee Street in Salisbury. His work includes both oils and acrylic and encompasses a wide range of styles and subjects.

Author Toni Morrison once said, “The best art is political and you ought to be able to make it unquestionably political and irrevocably beautiful at the same time.” Propst clearly takes this admonition to heart with several of his pieces, including a portrait of former President Donald Trump, a metaphoric painting of his battle with kidney stones and a classroom depiction of recent events.

Propst was always drawing as a kid. “When I got bored in school,” he says, “I drew monsters, jet fighters and tanks. I was pretty good at it.” He remembers two art teachers in school who helped him learn fundamentals: Mrs. Anita Cox and Mr. Beam.

Somewhere in adulthood, Propst dropped his art. His mom continued to look for inspiration for him. “Mom would find tubes of paint or brushes at estate sales, then pass them on to me, saying I might well do something with all of this.” He chuckles. “That’s how to be a mother. She knew I need to do what I’m good at, what I enjoy.”

A track coach and science teacher, he’s now teaching PE at North Rowan High School. His work includes a couple of portraits of his students. Each portrait includes something the student really likes. One depicts fireworks in the background; another includes the track where the student runs.

Propst taught science at Knox just as COVID was ramping up. He and Matt



**Propst stands beside two self-portraits.**





**Left:** A Craftsman tool box keeps supplies organized.

**Right:** Paintings of bees and a butterfly Propst made from photos taken in his home garden.



Beaver, a co-worker friend, caught it at the same time. Propst missed the first month of school. Beaver passed away.

His teaching license expires this year, and he doesn't plan to renew it.

After leaving Knox, he started painting again. "You can forget yourself working a job and paying bills," he says. "I don't want to do that."

"I realized you can replace things. People and experiences, that's what matters. You can't get time back. This is a realization I had this year. Teaching is my job; art is my work. I expect to die a pauper with a barn full of paintings."

He worried a bit about telling his dad he planned to stop teaching and pursue his art, saying his dad's opinion is the one he cares about. He's quite aware of the phrase, "starving artist."

"True, I was looking for validation," he says. "But I know if I don't do this, I will regret it."

His dad's response: "I was wondering when you were going to start back."

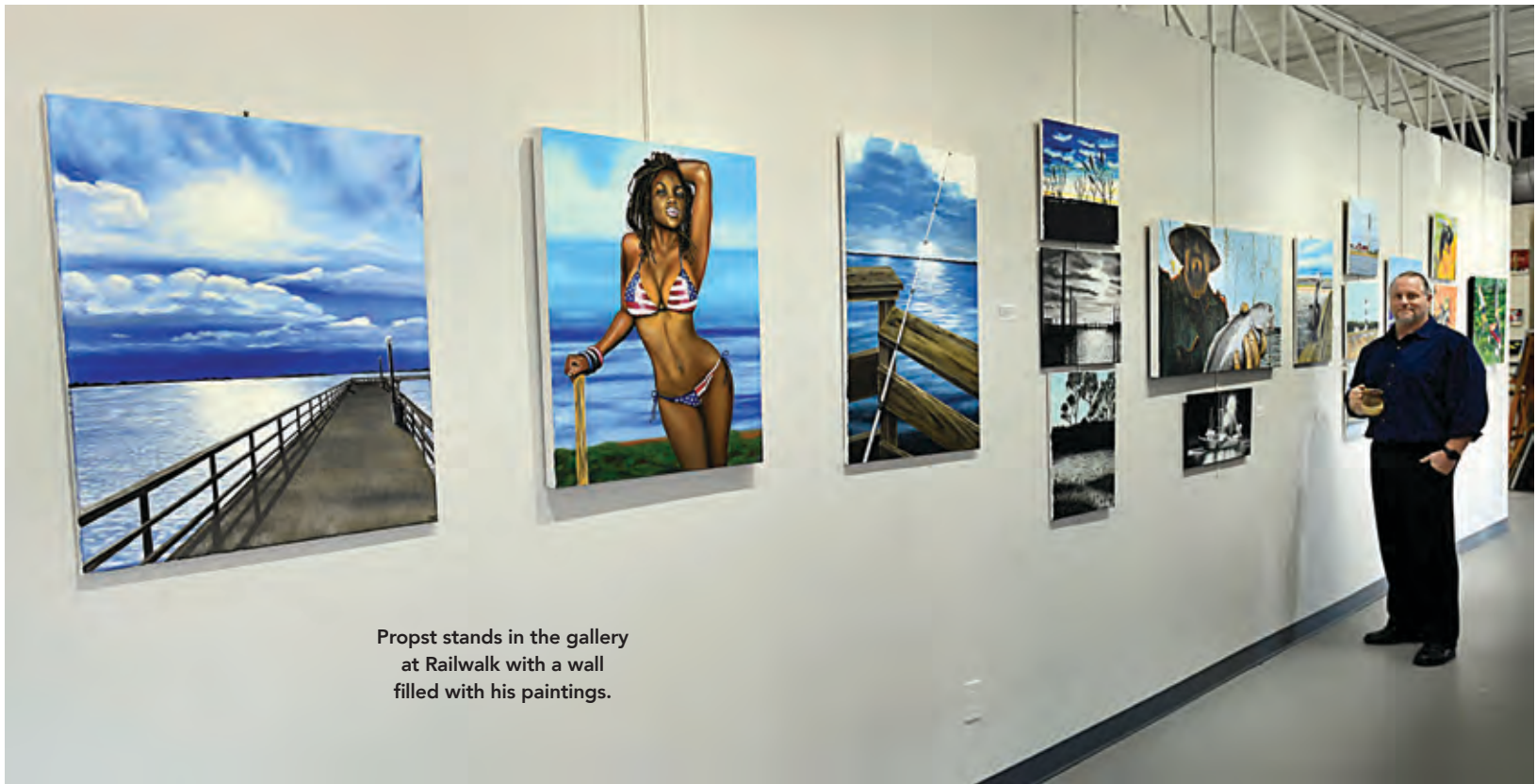
Propst had a show at Railwalk last month and continues to paint and sell his work there. He appreciates both acrylic and oil, saying oils are forgiving and acrylics are quick.

He sees progress in his work over the last two years. The show last month demonstrated a wide variety of skillsets and styles, as it started with his high school ribbon winner and progressed through to current works. Subject matter ranged from lighthouses to barns to insects to portraits. There was even a dog portrait in there. "Truck" the dog was a commission, which is tough, Propst says. "Commissions sometimes feel like jobs because you're asked to do something perhaps you aren't drawn to."

He's not limited to any style or subject matter, he says, and loves composition. Nudes, he says, are a challenge because flesh is difficult. It's transparent and it's not. The challenge to get the correct skin tones requires lots of practice; "the more, the better."

"No matter what the painting, it's like falling in love all over again," he says. "There's a sense of discovery. You get enamored of it, and sometimes you don't realize until you're almost done with it. Then, when you're done with it, you can say, 'Yeah, that's it.'" **[S]**





Propst stands in the gallery at Railwalk with a wall filled with his paintings.



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A close-up photograph of a woman with dark hair tied back, wearing a grey hoodie, painting a brick wall. She is holding a paintbrush with black paint and is applying it to the mortar joints of a brick wall. The wall is made of red bricks, and some areas are already painted white. A silver ladder is visible behind her.

Earle Kluttz Thompson paints the black trim around the letters of the sign. The paint is black but is wet and reflecting the blue sky overhead.

# A touch of magic

*Sisters-in-law create hospital murals, restore local 'ghost signs'*

WRITTEN BY **SUSAN SHINN TURNER**

PHOTOGRAPHY BY **WAYNE HINSHAW**








The 'ghost sign' painting project includes this wall on 5th Street in Spencer of three other newly painted signs.



A woman with her hair in a bun, wearing a grey hoodie and a white apron splattered with paint, is crouching on a sidewalk. She is using a paintbrush to work on a sign. In front of her is a blue plastic crate filled with paint cans and brushes. A silver thermos and a paint palette are also on the ground. The background is a brick wall.

Earle Kluttz Thompson works with her supplies as she paints a drug store sign in an alley off of 5th Street in Spencer. They are called 'ghost signs' because they are old ad signs painted long ago that have faded away.

For years, folks have asked Earle Kluttz Thompson and Raines Thompson Kuppin if they were sisters — even twins. Fact is, they're sisters-in-law and business partners. Since 2000, they've served as muralists for UNC Children's Hospitals.

Locally, they've helped to restore the Downtown Salisbury mural. These days, they're in the process of meticulously restoring old advertising signs on buildings in Downtown Salisbury and Downtown Spencer.

Earle calls them "ghost signs" — until she and her sister-in-law work their magic to bring them back to life.

Earle, 46, and Raines, 45, got connected to the hospital through Eric Montross, a UNC alumnus who works for the Educational Foundation, and serves as a broadcaster for the men's basketball team. He's a member of UNC's 1993 national championship team.

Earle and Raines, recommended by local designer Linda Dukelow, had done some mural work in the Chapel Hill home of Eric and his wife, Laura, for their children.

"From there, we were just so taken with their work, we thought, wow, why can't they do work for the children's hospital?" Eric recalls.

His relationship with UNC Children's Hospitals goes back to his days



Raines Thompson Kuppin, left, and Earle Kluttz Thompson in front of one of their completed murals at the UNC Children's Clinic in Raleigh. (Submitted photo)









Two faded signs on 5th Street will also get a makeover.



Earle Kluttz is visited by Walt Lyman, who stopped to admire her work on his way to get lunch.

as a student athlete.

“We always brought a little bit of a smile to patients,” he says. After all, the 7-footer remembers, he had to duck through the doorways.

“We were recognized because our teams were really good back then,” he adds.

After graduation, Eric was encouraged to start a summer basketball camp.

At first, he says, he wasn’t so enthusiastic about it. Then he realized: proceeds could benefit UNC Children’s Hospitals. “It was attached to something we had personal buy-in to. We felt like we could help.”

Eric points out that both his parents and Coach Dean Smith instilled in him to help wherever he could.

“If you have a platform and a voice, you can do good with it,” he says.

Which brings us back around to Earle and Raines.

“We were looking for some way to enhance the children’s hospital space and make it less clinical,” Eric says. “It’s been a great feeling to

watch Earle and Raines grow in the scope of their work. They have just enhanced the space so much. They’re so talented and they care so much about their work. They’ve just become part of the fabric of this hospital.”

For example, Eric says, the duo used glow-in-the-dark paint to create an outer space scene in a radiology room.

They placed an alphabet of A-Z objects hidden around a procedure room to distract young patients.

“They just created a magical touch in a space that was anything but playful,” Eric notes.

The duo are continuing their creativity at the UNC Children’s Clinic in Raleigh. There are three stories



Eric Montross

to the building, and the first story has a coastal mural — complete with sea turtles, fish (maybe you can find Dory and Marvin?), whales-- even a shipwreck! The second story is a Piedmont scene including grazing deer and trees full of squirrels, cardinals and bluebirds. The third story has a mountain scene with a young bear family surrounded by pink rhododendron with the peace-





ful Blue Ridge mountains in the background.

The projects in Chapel Hill and Raleigh have special significance for Raines, herself a cancer survivor. She completed her final chemotherapy treatment for Hodgkin's lymphoma just after Thanksgiving 2021.

Recently, they've also been working on advertising sign restoration projects, first in Salisbury and now Spencer.

They restored one old Cheerwine sign at the Park Street Community Center. CEO Cliff Ritchie liked what he saw and asked them to work on others around town.

"As a fifth-generation company, we are proud of our history, especially our history in Salisbury, where Cheerwine was founded," Cliff says. "It's a thrill for our family to see these vintage signs in our community, restored to their former glory. We think Earle and Raines did a terrific job."

The duo has since restored two Coca-Cola signs and the Fisher-Thompson Hardware Sign at the farmer's market. The latter held special significance for Earle since her great-grandfather was a silent partner in the business.

"That was kinda cool — bringing back family history," she says.

In Spencer, they've restored a Stanback Headache Powder sign, a Coca-Cola sign and a 5-cent sign. More sign projects in Spencer are also in the works.

Back in the day, Earle explains, advertisers would simply paint their ads on the side of buildings — it didn't matter if there were already another sign there.

"The signs are layered," Earle says. "You've got one product over another."

They've pulled lots of photos from the History Room at Rowan Public Library for reference.

Earle was an art major at UNC and did an internship with a local muralist. Raines, a journalism major at UNC, studied art in Australia and Flor-

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Earle Kluttz Thompson and her father George Kluttz take a break to see how the painting is going.

ence. Her grandmother was a portrait painter.

Raines says that their work at UNC Children's Hospitals is "like a never-ending project. They're constantly building buildings and redoing rooms."

Which is a good thing for these working moms. Earle and her husband Bo are the parents of twin daughters Millie and Clare, 8. Raines and her husband Warner are the parents of daughter Bo, 7 — named for her uncle — and son Win, 5.

It's also easy for the women to work around their children's schedules.

Not surprisingly, Raines says, "We don't ever get caught up."

But, Earle adds, "We can take time to be with our kids. It's not the end of the world if we don't make it to work."


"I'm just trying to keep all the balls in the air," Raines says.

While Earle is an avid walker, Raines says she exercises when she can.

But most of all, it seems, they like working together.

"I feel like we have a really good relationship," Earle says. "Raines is my therapist and sister. Early on, we learned how to work with each other. I wouldn't want to work with anybody else."

"We're great complements to each other," Raines says.

"Raines pushes me to paint things differently," Earle says. "She keeps me on my toes. I'm a procrastinator, but Raines likes to get things done." 



The duo works together on the mountain mural located on the third floor of the UNC Children's Clinic in Raleigh. (Submitted photo)



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WELLNESS

# Help for healing hearts

*Cardiac Rehabilitation Program keeps the blood pumping*

WRITTEN BY **PETE PRUNKL**

PHOTOGRAPHY BY **SEAN MEYERS**





**Opposite:** RN Jennifer Williams, left, and Sabrina Melchor assist Donald Ingram prior to his exercise routine at Novant Health Rowan Medical Center's Cardio-Pulmonary Rehabilitation & Wellness Center. **Above:** Patients follow instruction during a stretching routine.

**L**ike one million other Americans, I joined the Heart Attack Club last year. Luckily, I was among the 85 percent who survived the induction ceremony.

I quickly learned that a room on Novant Health's second floor might lower my risk of a second kick in the chest. Access to that special place was controlled by my new best friend, Dr. Telly Meadows, a Novant cardiologist. He referred me to Novant's Cardiac Rehabilitation Program after placing three stents in my left anterior descending artery. Grateful to have dodged a bullet and wondering how I might navigate the post-heart attack world, I took advantage of his referral.

A heart attack is not the only way to punch a ticket to cardiac rehab. Bob Fuertinger's trip through the 36-session program began with congestive heart failure and a pacemaker. Bob used a cane to steady himself during rehab. "They got me in pretty good shape," said the 82-year-old. Others are referred after bypass surgery or heart valve replacement.

A typical day at rehab involves donning a mask, arriving 15 minutes before class, weighing in, having your blood

pressure checked, attaching a three-lead heart monitor to your chest, chatting with your fellow survivors and waiting for the signal to begin. The monitor broadcasts our heart rhythms to computer screens at the nurse's station. A registered nurse and college-trained exercise physiologists watch the tracings for abnormalities that could signal trouble. The monitor is a source of comfort for those of us concerned about just how much our repaired hearts can handle.

Exercise time per machine is about 10 minutes; then it is on to another one. Staff sanitize machines before each use. Total time engaging the machines is 30 minutes on Tuesday and 45 minutes Monday and Thursday. A half hour is set aside on Tuesday for education. On Monday, a staff member leads the group in muscle-building using stretch bands and on Thursday with dumbbells.

Novant's cardiac rehab room resembles a gym, but it is not what most expect from a place like the Y, the Forum or Planet Fitness. In the cardiac rehab room there are no protein shakes, ESPN-tuned televisions, steam rooms, tanning beds, showers, changing rooms or 150-pound barbells. Participants are not body builders. They arrive and leave in





Dean Klutz, 78, utilizes the facility after receiving two stents in August.



their workout clothes. The machines they use such as stationary bikes, treadmills, ellipticals, and rowing machines emphasize aerobics – raising heart rate and oxygen consumption. Unlike a modern gym where every conceivable muscle group can be strengthened, here resistance or strength training is minimized.

There are at least two similarities between a gym and cardiac rehab. Both venues have hydration stations and upbeat background music.

Cardiac rehab has two important features that cost extra at most gyms: education and personal attention. There was a lot to learn about my new role as a heart attack survivor. Dr. Meadows prescribed five new medications and Jennifer Williams, RN, explained all of them during a Tuesday education session. I needed to be more careful about my diet and Dietitian Sarah Berkshire discussed how to dine out and eat in while protecting my heart.

During exercise, staff members checked my blood oxygen percentage and asked about my motivation and effort. I learned quickly that the right answer to “How hard are you working?” came from the Rate of Perceived Exertion (RPE) scale. My answer was either a number like “13” or a statement like “Somewhat Difficult.” If I was taking it easy that day, I would say my effort was “11” or “Light.” Hard work was “15.” Staff modified the scale and added “A walk in the park” for 12. My RPE





Novant Health Rowan Medical Center's Cardio-Pulmonary Rehabilitation & Wellness Center team, from left: Dennis Barber, Sarah Berkshire, Sabrina Melchor, Reagan Borden, Jennifer Williams, Nicole Gleason and Hope Facemyer.



A patient's vitals, including heart rate and blood pressure, are closely monitored during each workout.



Sarah Berkshire, left, shares a moment with Glenda Morrison during a recent class.



Blood pressure devices, above, and Heart monitor pads, right, wait to be used.







log documented my progress.

For a variety of reasons, many survivors never open the rehab door. The 36-session program takes place during daylight hours, the typical time one spends making a living. It is also expensive. Most of us would probably skip the program if it were not for Medicare, Medicaid or private insurance. To help those with no or inadequate health insurance, the hospital foundation has a rehab scholarship program.

Even when insurance pays for rehab, some choose not to bother with it. One of my rehab-mates came in only after his third heart attack. "Distance is a major reason for non-attendance," said Dennis Barber, the manager of the Novant rehab unit. Some who have never exercised be-





**Above:** RN Jennifer Williams, right, checks Brenda Russell's blood pressure prior to Russell's exercise routine. **Below:** Reagan Borden monitors the vital signs of a patient as they exercise.





fore may find the array of rehab machines unfamiliar and stay away. Others may feel that arthritis would make exercise too painful or that they are too old or infirm to exercise.


Arthritis and infirmity may be the *best* reasons to go through rehab. An 80-year-old gentleman who graduated a week before me related that on his first day in rehab, he was in a wheelchair. He gradually transitioned to a walker, then a cane and finally he was walking the circuit unassisted. Rehab was especially successful for him.

Despite its advantages, the American Heart Association found that only 26 percent of those referred to cardiac rehab ever attend. “We do better than that,” said Barber. One reason for better attendance, said Barber, was the age of his participants. For 2022, the average Salisbury rehab participant was 68 years old, on Medicare and retired. “Fifty-one percent completed all 36-sessions and graduated,” he added.

Progress is what rehab is all about. “The most gratifying clients are those who are hesitant at first about coming in,” said

exercise physiologist Sabrina Melchor. “They are initially overwhelmed by all the machines. At the end of their 36 sessions, many feel comfortable with exercise and exercise machines.”

Hopefully, that comfort and familiarity translate into regular exercise at home or at a gym after graduation. Real progress comes from continuing what was learned at rehab. “Our overall goal is lifestyle modification,” said Dennis Barber. “That means building healthier habits such as getting more physical activity, quitting smoking, and eating a heart-healthy diet.” For some graduates, the cardiac rehab room becomes their gym. They pay a monthly fee to continue exercising there.

Bob Fuertinger and I returned to the Forum as smarter and healthier Cardiac Rehab grads. I trust that my diploma doubles as my resignation letter from the Heart Attack Club. 

*Pete Prunkl lives in Salisbury and has survived cancer, kidney stones and a heart attack. He has worked as a freelance writer for the past 30 years.*

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Army veteran Jim Ferrer works out on an elliptical machine.

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# *a* COMMUNITY *within our community*

Trinity Oaks senior living celebrates 30 years

WRITTEN BY **BRENDA ZIMMERMAN**

PHOTOS BY **BRENDA ZIMMERMAN** AND SUBMITTED





Clockwise from top left: Uta Braun, left, and Margaret Kelly enjoy a ride on the light rail in Charlotte on the way to dinner in downtown; the private streets through the campus make cycling on a pretty day a great way to pass the time for Ray Perkins; fresh flowers adorn the dining room tables each day; 30-year







Regularly scheduled water aerobics classes are available as well as open pool times.

“Trinity Oaks is a family,” says Lutheran Services Carolinas (LSC) President Ted Goins. “It’s a community within the Rowan community.” The senior living community, an affiliate of LSC, is celebrating 30 years of creating that family atmosphere for its residents.

That sense of community and family was a drawing card for Dining Services Waitstaff Director Sherrie Burgess. When Connie Antosek gave her a building tour on the campus in 1989, she stopped to ask a housekeeper how his daughter was doing. “There was a sense of family and concern,” she said. That sense of family has continued to follow Burgess as she transitioned from one area of the campus to another over the last 36 years.

Trinity Oaks Retirement Community grew from an obser-

vation in the early growth of Lutheran Homes. Often a spouse would need assistance in caring for their partner, but not be ready for extended care for themselves. To address this issue, Lutheran Services created 12 apartments in the lower level of what is now Trinity Oaks Health and Rehab. This option allowed for a couple to move together with the assurance that increased care would be available when needed. While one of the pair may need health care, the other would be just steps away in an independent apartment. Trinity Oaks was an early adapter of the trend that is now defined nationwide as a continuing care retirement community.

The cluster of 12 apartments was always full. Over the years, the need for a continuum of care became an important option for adults as they aged.

The nursing home sat on a tract of 27 acres purchased by Lutheran Homes in 1960. Many years later, Rev. Bob Shaner and





**Director of Waitstaff Sherry Burgess prepares a table for an upcoming meal.**



**Suzanne Springfield and Harold Mecham enjoy time with their dogs at the on campus dog park.**

a group of board members were walking in a wooded area, considering the prospect of building additional apartments when they saw a large tree with three distinct trunks coming up from the ground. In that moment, they decided to name the community Trinity Oaks because the tree reminded them of the Holy Trinity. Groundbreaking for this new phase of planned living was on October 13, 1991.

On January 12, 1993, the first residents moved into the spacious new apartments. Virginia Thompson, Betty Scott Lentz, Margaret Safrit, Phyllis Newport and Gerry Draper were the first members of the new community. While moving in, Betty Scott Lentz said, “This was the place to have security, health care and continuing care.” It’s still true 30 years later. When you’re there, you’re family.

Rev. Robert Myers and his wife Carolyn saw Trinity Oaks as a positive option for their own retirement while visiting with a friend who was living in one of the 125 apartments. A second phase of building was in the planning stage with a layout of 42 cottages. The cottages appealed to the Myers, who were still very active and involved in their own community. Robert said, “I was no longer able to manage home repairs and yard work. Things like my age and weather were an issue.” They were able to customize their cottage as it was being built with personal choices for flooring, wallpaper and window treatments.



**Bill Grieg and Bea Hall share a toast on the Leslie Patio Garden with friends.**

Carolyn saw the wide variety of amenities such as prepared meals, housekeeping services, group trips and educational opportunities as an advantage. “Exciting things are always happening here,” she says with a smile. With fewer to-do lists to keep a household running, both were able to enjoy a new community life.

Instead of heavy yard work, they could tend to small gardens they enjoyed. Living in this

setting gave them more time to enjoy programs, speakers, entertainment and travel. Instead of maintaining property, they were suddenly able to take care of themselves and their interests. Carolyn and Robert became active members of the Trinity Oaks community by serving on committees, leading classes and helping with resident publications. They volunteered their skills to undergird campus programs and develop opportunities in much the same way they had done in the community at large.

The Myers have also experienced the con-





**Resident Montye Furr enjoys working in flower beds near the main entrance.**



**Mayor Karen Alexander, center, assists with the ribbon cutting for the newly remodeled dining room. On the left is the eldest resident at Trinity Oaks retirement community: Naomi Brown, age 102. Resident Pat Weeks is holding the scissors.**

tinuum of care during their 23 years on campus. Carolyn had two knee replacements over the years which required extensive physical therapy and rehab. Robert was able to be with her daily until she could come back home.

Trinity Oaks has many organized programs but also offers opportunities for individual social needs. A fitness center includes exercise equipment and a pool. Private spaces can be reserved so that residents can host their book clubs or church meetings. A library and an on-site bank are used regularly. Residents have spaces available to host family gatherings.

Residents can choose to eat one to three high-quality meals a day in the beautifully appointed dining room. Take-out service is also an option. Daily meals as well as holidays and big events showcase feasts prepared by a trained chef.

Trinity Oaks University is a campus-based community program for lifelong learning experiences. Residents are involved in educational programs and excursions that involve cultural programs, state-of-the-art innovations and entertainment opportunities.





The front sign at Trinity Oaks.



Trained chefs prepare quality meals three times a day.



The traditional gift for a 30th anniversary is a strand of pearls. Trinity Oaks received a grand new dining room.

Lynn Barringer came to the Trinity Oaks campus in 1986 as a Certified Nursing Assistant at Trinity Oaks Health and Rehab. Like Burgess, she felt the sense of family in the relationships with residents and staff. "People were on waiting lists to work here. It is a good place where teammates treat residents like they would want their own parents treated. Staff members work as a team to get things done," Barringer said. Early in the 36 years she has been on campus, she moved into the activity department. As the Life Enrichment Director for the 38 assisted living residents in the retirement building, she now brings her experience and a multitude of skills to the table. She provides a wide range of recreational and educational programs as well as connectivity to the community.

The evolution of the campus is not just the growth of buildings and additional living facilities. One thing that stands out is the impact by Trinity Oaks residents on Rowan County. Retirement residents are known in Salisbury for many group service projects as well as individual philanthropic



A bus loaded and ready to roll for one of many day trips enjoyed by residents.





Residents enjoy a Native American Lore presentation by Rev. Dr. Fleming 'Chief Holy Eagle' Otey.

contributions. Trinity Oaks residents are active with local agencies such as Ruffy-Holmes Senior Center, The Literacy Council and Crosby Scholars as well as the local hospital and the many local churches they attend. They sponsor programs for the Salisbury Symphony and commit hours of service to local projects such as a recent trash pickup along Klumac Road. Additionally, of the 2,200 teammates employed under the LSC ministries umbrella, over 400 career opportunities impact the local economy.

"When new residents move in, and these are not just locals, but folks from all over the country too, we see them quickly becoming part of the Trinity Oaks family," Executive Director Bill Johnson said. "Our broad range of activities and special interest groups allow for small group bonding that cultivates deeper relationships. These bonds lead to volunteerism on campus and out in the community. Through their local churches, civic groups and non-profit work, our

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residents are enjoying their best life during retirement years by staying active and engaged. It's a very giving community."

Not only do the campus amenities attract new residents, but they are also drawn to the life of the local community at large. Salisbury has a wonderful small-town feel with shopping and entertainment. The town has three theaters, a symphony and choral opportunities. It boasts four local colleges, a large public parks system and museums. For many choosing this LSC option, Trinity Oaks was enhanced by its geographic position in the state. Right off I-85, Trinity Oaks' location allows for easy visiting by families of retirees.

Trinity Oaks was greatly impacted by COVID. Socializing and communal dining came to a standstill at the peak of the pandemic. Quarantines, vaccinations, and meeting the needs of everyone were paramount in

keeping the virus under control on the entire campus. Now that the restrictions are fewer and the social life is returning to normal, residents are even more appreciative of the many elements that create the community that Salisbury proudly calls Trinity Oaks.

"The Trinity Oaks team has taken hospitality to the next level," said Goins. "No one matches the Trinity Oaks team in providing the LSC vision of abundant living to the people they serve."

Trinity Oaks, Trinity at Home and Trinity Oaks Health and Rehab are affiliates of Lutheran Services Carolinas. The not-for-profit ministry includes retirement options, elder care, family and child services, immigration service and transitional housing for over 6,300 individuals annually. For more information regarding Trinity Oaks and other services offered through LSC, visit [www.LSCarolinas.net](http://www.LSCarolinas.net). 



Rev. Robert and Carolyn Myers share a quiet moment in their apartment. They have enjoyed living on the Trinity Oaks campus for 23 years.




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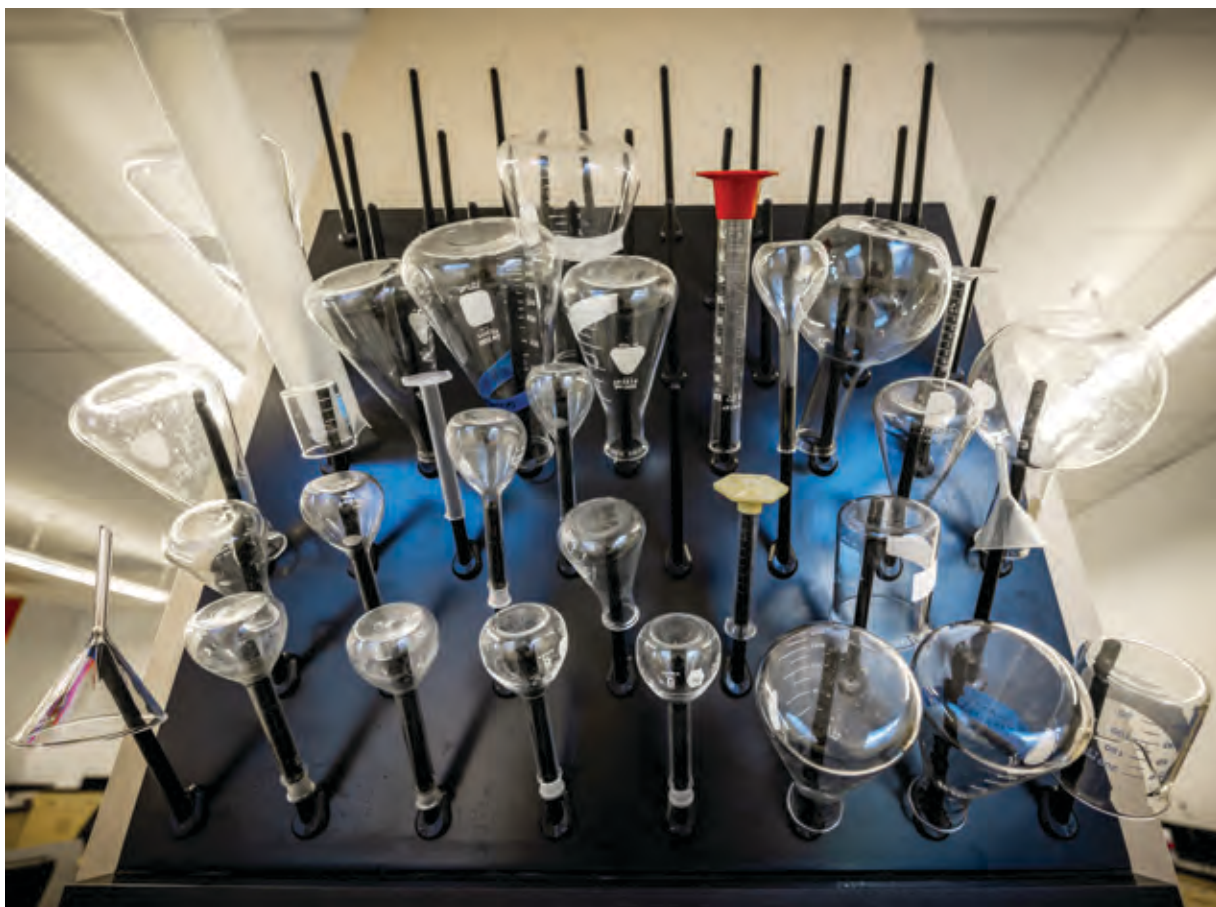
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SCIENCE

New Livingstone building caters  
to high tech research

WRITTEN BY **MAGGIE BLACKWELL** | PHOTOGRAPHY BY **SEAN MEYERS**





From left, Eve Beyan, Sydney McDonald, Dr. Jo-Sette Wilkes and Kaliyah Pettie discuss a science project.

The words of a former Livingstone president are etched in the sidewalk at the entrance to the new science building named for him: “I respect the individual for his worth and for what he is capable of becoming.” — President F. George Shipman.

Dr. Dawn McNair is the dean of math and sciences and associate vice president for research. She comes from a STEM family, with an industrial engineer for a dad, a brother who’s a science teacher and a brother who does environmental data entry. She comes by a career in education honestly: her mom is the associate vice president of student success at Central Piedmont Community College.

On her arrival at Livingstone in 2019, the 16,000-square-foot F. George Shipman Science Building was just coming out of the ground. Several faculty members were researching, and there were pockets of student activity. She set a goal to develop a more strategic approach with students in STEM.

“So many of our students need to have a STEM identity,” she says. “They don’t see themselves as having the potential to do that. We must convince them, yes! — you belong in a lab! That’s been a large part of our effort.”

When she accepted a position at Johnson C. Smith University 14 years ago, they required that she return to school. Her under-

grad degree from Chapel Hill was in math instruction — not research. So she earned her Ph.D. in applied mathematics from the University of North Carolina in Charlotte.

“It taught me the power of taking an individual approach. I was working and had been out of school for a while,” she says. “I translated that concept to leading here. I knew most of our students are first-generation college students and may not know how to navigate higher ed. I translated my own experience to the classroom experience.”

She says educators know the need to support students in the sciences; she added the conceptual framework to tie it all together at Livingstone.

A middle school teacher saw something in McNair that she didn’t see in herself, she says, and encouraged her to excel in math. She continued to take accelerated math throughout high school. When the math was extraordinarily challenging, she learned how to learn on her own. The teacher who changed her life, she says, made her understand the importance and power of developing the trajectory of the student.

While at Johnson C. Smith, she was selected to be a National Science Foundation fellow, quite a prestigious opportunity. Every year the Foundation receives about 14,000 applications and chooses only 2,000 fellows. McNair learned how to prepare future leaders in STEM and pursue leadership and science at a





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different level. She's been applying those principles while at Livingstone.

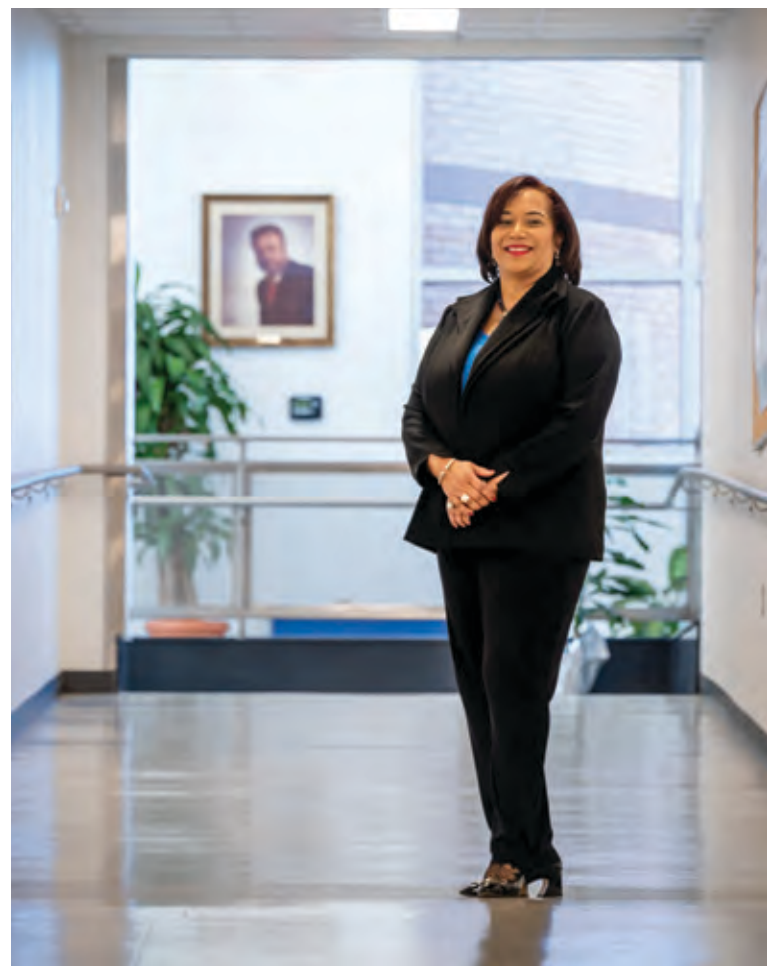
Today, every Livingstone student who declares a science or math major receives an assigned faculty mentor in addition to their adviser. The mentor challenges the student: "Where do you see yourself beyond college?" Then together, student and mentor develop a detailed plan to reach that goal. It's an evidence-based practice, she says, that helps the students understand the validity of the classroom experience out in the world.

Upon her arrival at Livingstone, she began application for a National Science Foundation grant, and won the largest grant ever awarded to Livingstone — a whopping \$2.2 million.

Part of the money was used to purchase a liquid chromatography mass spectrometer, an instrument typically reserved for schools with an R1 Carnegie Classification, meaning they have doctoral students and very high research activity. The R1 classification is the highest in the Carnegie ranking. Only 130 schools in the nation earn this ranking, including Harvard, Yale, MIT and University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

"To see this equipment in a school solely serving undergraduates,"

**Livingstone's  
dean of math and  
sciences Dr. Dawn  
McNair leads  
the F. George  
Shipman Science  
Center.**







Gas outlets used for experiments adorn the tables in the lab.



Students Sydney McDonald, left, and Eve Beyan experiment making Elephant's Toothpaste, a reaction with hydrogen peroxide and dish soap. The result is a foamy concoction that resemble a large flow of toothpaste.

she says, "is an anomaly." Livingstone is a small, baccalaureate-only school with only 845 students. One vendor asked McNair, "Does your administration understand the magnitude of this acquisition?"

What's important, she says, is that the students will understand the importance of STEM. They'll have used the instrument for four years. The school is also making the spectrometer available to high school teachers, and because the spectrometer can be applied for forensics, she has made it available to the Salisbury Police Department, as well.

In addition, the school has installed an immersion theatre, where 3D films are projected on a dome, making the viewer feel that he is in the middle of the action. Full feature presentations will be available to students after the opening on April 22.

"We are responsible for maximizing the curiosity and talents of all our students," she says. "For finding that good fit."

Livingstone is an HBCU — a Historically Black College/University. The mission of the HBCU, she says, is to



Kaliyah Pettie works with the spectrometer.





provide educational opportunities to populations who many not have access to the experience.

“The students we serve, we empower in the science division,” she says. To that end, the department has developed the White Coat Scholar program. Students who meet specific criteria are gifted with a white lab coat in a ceremony that proceeds to the Blue Bear on campus with candles.

Dr. Emmanuel Williams, chair of Biology and Dr. Jo-sette Wilkes, assistant professor of chemistry and head of the Honor Society, had an orientation with each of the students about expectations and asked each student to meet them halfway.

“After two or three months, we floated an application and they overwhelmingly applied,” McNair says.

About 30 students, including two freshmen,

made the cut. Entry to the society requires research, presentation and communication, skills often demonstrated over time by upperclassmen.

Sydney Joy McDonald is one of those freshmen. “I didn’t really feel confident because it’s very special,” she says. “Everyone else is a big dog and I’m just a baby. But I’m a science kid; I don’t like much of anything else.”

With great apprehension, she applied, including her transcripts, teacher recommendations and a personal statement identifying what kind of doctor she wants to be. She plans to be an anesthesiologist and plans to graduate from Livingstone in her junior year.

Eve Beyan is an international student from Liberia. She, too, is a biology major. Eve says she wanted to be a doctor as a child and has always excelled







The new immersion theatre at the F. George Shipman Science Center will be a place where students will have a virtual-reality experience in human anatomy, physics, astronomy and earth science.

in science. An initial foray into geology when she started college, did not go well. As she told her parents, “Geology is not my calling.” When she got the opportunity to transfer to Livingstone and travel to the U.S., she decided to major in biology and pursue a career as a nurse practitioner.

After spring break, the department has a full-blown schedule of rotating students in to introduce them to the spectrometer with faculty supervision. There, McNair says, students can even develop their own testing protocols. This serves two functions: research and entrepreneurship, as many people have patented their testing protocols.

Dr. Jo-sette Wilkes is a chemistry professor and has been at Livingstone just a little over six years. She says, “I’ve gotten to wit-

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ness the transformation of our department. Dr. McNair's vision was clearly to enhance the STEM ecosystem here. She's a master at writing grants and has brought millions to our institution.

"This equipment is a game-changer," she adds. "It will prepare students for employment or graduate studies."


A new greenhouse stands just outside the science building. McNair says they've grown — and given away — over 1,000 heads of lettuce. They're experimenting now with aquaponics, a system using water to support the plants and fish in the water making waste to feed the plants. The roots feed the fish. It's a whole cycle in itself.

Plans for the summer include a STEM experience for the community, sponsored by Atrium Health. The program will offer high school and middle school courses in robotics, biology, chemistry, algebra and data analytics — all free of charge, on a first come, first served basis.

The school recently held an open house for alumni and advocates. Samaydah Kearney, a recent graduate of Livingstone, came out of the immersion theater in tears. "I just want you to know I never thought I'd see this here," she said. "I'm blown away. I just hope the students realize how unbelievable this is."

"I'm humbled and honored," McNair says. "I get to see these things in

real time. I think about all those young faces. I love coming to work because something new happens every day."

To learn more about opportunities at Livingstone, or to apply for the Summer STEM Experience, go to [www.livingstone.edu](http://www.livingstone.edu). 



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The sold-out event provided plenty of opportunity for dancing.



Ka'ron Crawford and daughter Eliza visited the dance for their first time.

## Father Daughter Dance

Salisbury City Parks and Recreation held the 27th Annual Father Daughter Dance in February. It was, as usual, a sold-out event. Dads and daughters arrived in dressy attire to dance the night away.

— *Maggie Blackwell photos*



Rob and Megan Easter stepped outside to cool off.





Larry Jones with daughter Layla



Emma and Mark Stephenson enjoy Emma's favorite song, 'Let it Go.'



David and Candace DuBose



Damian, Vesper and Vyra Moore with friend Seraphina Byers



Richard and Naomi Allen wore matching outfits.



**Left:** Vivian and Josh Brincefield have attended five times.

**Right:** Daniel Lancaster with daughters Kirsten and Aubree. They've been coming to the dance for four years.







N.C. District 76 Rep Harry Warren, former Salisbury Mayor Paul Woodson



Jackie and Mark Curran, John Sofley



Winnie Mikkelsen, Mary James, Dan Mikkelsen



Rockwell Alderman Chuck Bowman and wife Linda

# Oyster Roast

Waterworks Visual Arts Center held its 16th Oyster Roast fundraiser in January. As usual, the event was sold out.

—Maggie Blackwell photos



Ed and Shirl Hull



Local artist Keyth Kahrs and Rowan Chamber President Elaine Spalding



Abigail Young and Greg Shields tended bar.



Mark and Caroline Stephenson



‘BELL TOWER  
NO. 3’

By Marshall Stokes — Oil

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[andy.mooney@salisburythemagazine.com](mailto:andy.mooney@salisburythemagazine.com)  
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