

WINTER 2024

SALISBURY

the magazine

DREAM TEAM

builds new Partners in Learning



Two-wheeled tour

FATHER AND SON
TAKE CROSS-COUNTRY
MOTORCYCLE TRIP

Pages of time

BOOK CLUB
CELEBRATES
125TH ANNIVERSARY



Bare
FURNITURE
CO.

1660 N. Main St. China Grove, NC 28023 • 704 857-2619 • BareFurnitureCo.com

ADMINISTRATIVE

PUBLISHER John Carr

john.carr@salisburythemagazine.com

EDITOR Maggie Blackwell

maggie.blackwell@salisburythemagazine.com

CREATIVE DIRECTOR Andy Mooney

andy.mooney@salisburythemagazine.com

ADVERTISING

Dennis Davidson

dennis.davidson@salisburythemagazine.com

Brendan Hill

brendan.hill@salisburythemagazine.com

Randy Perdue

randy.perdue@salisburythemagazine.com

Amy Williams

amy.williams@salisburythemagazine.com

PRODUCTION

Susan Baker

susan.baker@salisburythemagazine.com

CONTRIBUTORS

Sherry Beck, Elizabeth G. Cook,
Sean Meyers, David Powell,
Sydney Smith Hamrick,
Aaron Stevenson, Glen Yost

On the web:

www.salisburythemagazine.com

On Facebook:

www.facebook.com/salisburythemagazine

To subscribe

call 704-797-4213 or online at
salisburythemagazine.com

Salisbury the Magazine

P.O. Box 4639

Salisbury, NC 28145-4639

Published 9 times / year

FEATURES

30

TWO-WHEELED TOUR

*Father and son create lasting
memories on cross-country
motorcycle trip*

40

“WHAT WE HAD WAS PASSION”

*A dream team
builds Partners in Learning*



On the cover: Development Director Amy Vestal, center, takes a group of students back to their classroom at Partners In Learning. From left, Lola Jade Ellis, Scarlett Paton, Josie Holladay, Caleeyah Ellerbe and Hudson Barber. (Sean Meyers photo)
On this page: The lack of air conditioning, car radio, creature comforts or even the 108-degree temperature did not deter Micah Stevenson from making the trek across Northern Arizona to see the Grand Canyon with his father, Aaron. (Aaron Stevenson photo)

FUEL YOUR RESOLUTION!



**RALPH
BAKER'S SHOES**

428 N. Main Street | Salisbury, NC
704-636-1850 • www.RalphBakerShoes.com

Locally owned & locally operated
HOURS: MON. - SAT. 9:30-5:30





The 2023-24 Catawba College Cheerleading team is poised on the field, waiting to cheer their team to victory!

WE'RE CHEERING BECAUSE YOU VOTED!



We can't thank you enough for voting F&M Bank the "Best Financial Institution in Rowan County" for a stunning 13 years in a row. It's our privilege to be cheerleaders for our clients and the communities we serve, and we thank you for the opportunity to do so every day. Here's to another winning year of exceptional service!

fmbnc.com

Member FDIC

DEPARTMENTS



THE ARTS 14 Through the pages of time

Christian Reid Book Club celebrates 125th anniversary

AT HOME 20 Reviving soul

David Garling and Frank Labagnara restore Murphy-Murdoch House

IN EVERY ISSUE

Editor's Letter p.8 **Rowan Original** p.12
Bookish p.9 **The Scene** p.50
Through the Lens p.10 **Local Colors** p.54

INDEX OF ADVERTISERS

Ace Hardware..... 11	Blue Bay Seafood.....28	Randy Marion Honda56	The Barn at Cedar Hill.....48	Yatawara Gynecology and Wellness49
Ralph Baker's Shoes4	Cabarrus Eye Center53	Osterhus Outdoors27	TMR Realty47	Melissa Yates — Lantern Realty 49
Bare Furniture.....2	Cozart Lumber.....11	Putnam's Carpet..... 11	Tom's Carpet Care.....11	
Bargain Store Furniture 11	F&M Bank.....5	Ritchie's Steamway..... 11	Trinity Oaks.....29	
Barnhardt Jewelers.....48	Godley's Garden Center11	Rowan Kannapolis ABC.....53	Windsor Gallery.....49	
Baxter Consultants 11	Cathy Griffin/Ashley Flippin ..7	Stout Heating and Air47		

**AS WE RING OUT THE OLD
YEAR AND RING IN THE NEW,
WE WOULD LIKE TO
WISH THE BEST TO EACH
AND EVERY ONE OF YOU.**

HAPPY
2024
New Year



**CATHY
GRIFFIN**
REALTOR
704-213-2464
c21cathy@bellsouth.net

Cathy is #1 in the state & #7 in the nation among Century 21 agents. Born and raised in Rowan County.



**ASHLEE M.
FLIPPIN**
REALTOR
704-267-3371
c21ashlee@gmail.com

Ashlee was born and raised in Rowan County and is a Catawba College graduate.

**WE APPRECIATE THE OPPORTUNITY TO SERVE YOU,
AND LOOK FORWARD TO YOUR CONTINUED FRIENDSHIP.**

21 Century 21
Towne & Country

**474 Jake Alexander Blvd.,
West Salisbury, NC
704-637-7721**

New year, new beginnings

The Roman philosopher Seneca is credited with saying, “Every end is a new beginning,” and at no time of the year is it more evident than at the New Year. My dear friend Michele is closing her home office in favor of fancy new digs a couple of miles away. After moving everything out, she took a moment to photograph her barren room and thank it for having served her well. I learn so much from her and I plan to reflect this New Year’s Eve on recent endings in my life and thank them for the precious moments they gave me. What thoughts do you give to your endings?

This month’s magazine offers us a story of a new beginning for Partners in Learning, a childcare and family services center, which opened a new \$12-million facility in late 2023. It never would have happened if not for the passion and drive of a dream team, many of whom gave hundreds of hours of expertise for free, and the community, who donated the funds to make it happen.

We read about a new beginning for the Murphy-Murdoch house, owned by Frank Labagnara and David Garling. The story was written by Sherry Beck, local interior and landscape designer, who led the renovation. She and the owners sourced treasures locally, nationally and internationally to create a stunning home.

Aaron Stevenson brings us a spectacular photo essay about the cross-country trek he and his 11-year-old son Micah took last summer on a motorcycle. They slept under the stars, picnicked with immigrants and cooled off in the river with ~~strangers~~ new friends. At night, they both journaled about their days. You won’t want to miss this dear story and its magnificent photography.

Many thanks to Elizabeth Cook, who stepped in when I had Covid to cover the Christian Reid Book Club’s 125th anniversary. She reports that on Nov. 1, 1899, Bessie Henderson said the min-



utes needed to be fuller. At that point the secretary, a Miss Kluttz, resigned and suggested that Miss Henderson serve as secretary — a matter duly recorded in the minutes — a good lesson to us all to keep our bright ideas to ourselves unless we’re willing to take on more responsibility. Sadly, membership in this elite book club is limited to 12 but we salute those members of today and from years past who have kept their tradition of sharing the love of reading alive.

Our Bookish is brought to us by Sydney Smith Hamrick. She reviews “Con/Artist: The Life and Crimes of the World’s Greatest Art Forger, a Memoir”

by Tony Tetro. It’s an enthralling story by the infamous forger himself. He lays out details of how he created fakes of famous artworks by a variety of Old Masters and then concocted stories credible enough to sell them for fortunes.

This month’s Rowan Original is Gary Blabon, President and CEO of Novant Rowan Medical Center. He gives the inside story of what it was like to manage Covid in the early days, when no one knew much about it. His partnerships with a variety of agencies led the hospital to serve as a regional cohort for the then-frightening disease.

I sincerely hope your 2024 is filled with kindness and grace, my two keywords for the coming year. And may every ending bring you a bright and hope-filled new beginning.

Maggie

— Maggie Blackwell
Editor, Salisbury the Magazine

Forged art, secret rooms and a gentle entry into the true crime genre

One of my favorite genres is true crime. I'm fascinated with the deep inner workings of human nature and the psychology behind why people choose to commit crimes in the first place. Though I read about all types of true crime, my favorite subgenre of it is the crimes in the non-violent, no gore category, which led me to my latest favorite read: "Con/Artist: The Life and Crimes of the World's Greatest Art Forger, a Memoir" by Tony Tetro.

Tetro begins his memoir by giving readers a glimpse of his Fulton, New York childhood. The child of an Italian immigrant family, Tetro recalled how the heavy Irish-Catholic and Italian immigrant influences of Fulton melded together to create the "business of making it in America." By his account, Tetro's childhood was a typical all-American kid experience.

Though his parents tried to guide him into many extracurricular activities, Tetro always found himself returning to painting. When his mother bought him a cheap set of beginner's oil paints, she sparked a lifelong obsession with art. Tetro's first (and only) art instruction came in high school. Tetro explains that he became a father at only sixteen years old and realizing that he had to take responsibility for his actions, he committed to being a father by going straight to work.

Tetro begins to explain why he eventually veered into a life of crime. His salary as a furniture salesman was bleak but he was able to find a couple hours' peace and satisfaction in the evenings when he returned home to paint. He'd spend hours recreating famous paintings he saw in books checked out from the library. Over time, he noticed his work was more than good...it was spot-on for the originals. After a few failed attempts to sell some of his "original pieces he'd inherited from a recently deceased grandfather," he managed to pass off one of his forgeries for consignment, which sparked his life of crime.

I really enjoyed how insightful this story was. I knew nothing about art forgery before picking up Tetro's memoir, and one



by
**SYDNEY
 SMITH
 HAMRICK**

line really stuck with me after finishing it: "If you think about it, the key to being a great forger is not being a great painter but rather a convincing storyteller. Like the best con artists, you must create context and a backstory that justify an otherwise unbelievable circumstance." Wow. Bear in mind, this revelation is coming from a gentleman who can perfectly replicate pieces by Dalí, Rembrandt, and Caravaggio. Seriously, his forgeries sold for hundreds of thousands of dollars in many instances, fooling even the shrewdest art appraisers—and even he is explaining that the art portion of the con was only half the battle.

What made this true crime memoir so enthralling was the intersection of a few main points. Firstly, Tetro is extremely relatable—who among us hasn't worked a miserable job and wanted to follow their passions more than a flimsy paycheck? I knew nothing about the long, storied past of art forgery before reading this book. While the parts about Tetro's personal life are also interesting, I was shocked at how complex art forgery is. Every detail, down to the specific brands of art supplies Tetro used, to the decision to install an entire hidden room that opened with a secret code on his phone's keypad, was neatly coordinated.



I think one of my favorite parts of the book was when Tetro's personal life intersected with the act of the crime, such as when he'd make certain paintings look aged by rubbing them with a concoction of dirty cigarette butt water he'd been using as an ashtray during long painting sessions. The personal touches throughout the memoir—where the man meets the crime—really made me sympathize with Tetro's experiences and enjoy him as the main character in his own story.

If you're searching for a gentle entry into the true crime genre, or if you prefer to read true crime that doesn't enter violent, disturbing territory, I can't recommend this book enough. Not only does the memoir lead you through Tetro's relatable life story, but it also serves as a crash course in the world of art forgery, making it a fascinating read. **S**

A female cardinal perches atop snow-covered leaves.

To submit a photo for Through the Lens, send a high-resolution photo to andy.mooney@salisburythemagazine.com. Vertical orientation is required.



Your Home & Garden HEADQUARTERS



Shop wagonloads of plants, flowers and all the gardening aids to nurture your yard's growth potential.

Landscape Design
 Trees - Shrubs - Perennials - Annuals
 Pavers - Stone - Mulch
 Bagged & Bulk Products - Garden Tools
 Water Features - Garden Decor



Godley's GARDEN CENTER & NURSERY

Monday - Saturday • 8:00 AM - 5:00 PM
 Closed on Sunday

2281 STATESVILLE BLVD., SALISBURY, NC 704-638-0082
 godleysgardencenter.com

HELP MAKING YOUR HOUSE A HOME!



BAXTER CONSULTANTS

Your Trusted Residential & Commercial IT Partners

Computer Repair + Upgrades
 New + Refurbished Retail Sales + Smart Home Automation + Custom PC Builds + More!

BAXTERCONSULTANTS.COM

walk-in service + appointments available
 mention this ad for 10% off



409B S Salisbury Ave.,
 Granite Quarry, NC
704-209-7000

Salisbury's Best Choice for Highest Quality FLOOR & UPHOLSTERY CARE

Commercial and Residential



Professional Steam Cleaning • Carpet - Tile Upholstery - Wood • Oriental Rugs
 (Pick-Up/Delivery available)
 We can assist you with flood damage



Since 1981 **TOM'S CARPET CARE**
 SALISBURY, NC

FREE ESTIMATES SENIOR DISCOUNT **704-633-7030**



W BRING THE BEAUTY OF THE INDOORS OUT

WOLF DECKING & RAILING | OUTDOOR LIVING | BUILDING PRODUCTS
 302 Link St., Rockwell, NC
 704-279-4115
 cozartlumber.com






RITCHIE'S STEAMWAY CARPET CLEANING

Steam Carpet Cleaning • Hardwood Floors Upholstery Cleaning • Tile and Grout Oriental Rug Specialists

52+ years in business.
704-633-9418
 322 E. Fisher St. Suite 105
 Downtown Salisbury

Furniture and Home Decor For Every Room In Your Home!




8525 Hwy 52,
 Rockwell
704-209-1367
 Check us out on 



Hardware of Rockwell

The helpful place.



Traeger, Green Egg and Weber Grills
 Mon.-Fri. 8-6;
 Sat. 8-5, Sun. 1-5
**229 East Main St.
 Rockwell, NC
 704.279.5269**

PUTNAM'S CARPET



CALL TODAY FOR A QUOTE!
704-279-3526
 418 China Grove Hwy.
 Rockwell, NC

Gary Blabon, President and CEO of Novant Health Rowan Medical Center, moves through the halls of the hospital, greeting staff all along the way. Everyone gets a bright word and a fist bump. Their responses are clearly genuine — their eyes light up, they smile and several engage in gentle teasing. Blabon remembers that one doctor had a recent hip replacement and asks why he's back so soon. "I love the place, ya know?" the doc replies, walking backward to maintain eye contact as they pass in the hall.

Blabon, a Fort Lauderdale native, played football in high school and received a full scholarship from Catawba.

"I came up in my senior year to see the campus," he says, "and fell in love. It was everything a college campus should be, with the brick buildings, spacious layout and, of course, they were paying. It was a wonderful opportunity."

He'd never seen snow, he says, or experienced fall or winter. He didn't have much in mind for a career. His mom encouraged him to go into accounting, but, he says, he's a people person.

After an injury sidelined him, he underwent rehabilitation for his knee and developed a passion for sports medicine.

He remembered a doctor who would provide free clinics on Saturdays and oversaw injuries on Friday nights for his high school team. An internship with orthopedic surgeon Bill Mason allowed him to come into surgery and observe — and he fell in love with it. He graduated from Catawba with a degree in sports medicine. The whole world was ahead of him, but a certain beautiful cheerleader two years behind him at Catawba was his motivation to stay local.

He went to work at Stewart Physical Therapy, where they asked him to start a sports medicine wing. He was 23 years old. He wanted to work Friday football games, so during the week he worked in physical therapy in the mornings and visited high schools in the afternoons to see injured athletes. Each day of the week, he visited a different school. On Saturday mornings the Stewart Clinic provided a free injury clinic for anyone hurt at games or in training. It was, he says, a perfect blend of all his interests. He

Full circle

Novant Health President and CEO Gary Blabon



WRITTEN BY MAGGIE BLACKWELL
PHOTOGRAPHY BY SEAN MEYERS

stayed there five years.

Then Dr. Chip Comadoll came to town, interested in sports medicine. He hired Blabon and they began Salisbury Orthopedics. Blabon worked as an orthopedic clinical assistant, putting on casts, splinting injuries, assisting in surgery.

“This was surreal for me because I’m scrubbed, handing them sutures, looking over my shoulder and there are interns from Catawba. I had come full circle.”

Meanwhile Blabon had married that beautiful cheerleader, and he and Deirdre had their first child, Jacqueline. Blabon’s parents had retired to Chattanooga and the young couple thought it would be good to have Jacqueline’s grandparents nearby. So, the little family packed up and moved to Tennessee.

It was there that he gained “the most incredible mentor” of his life. After working three months as an orthopedic physician assistant, the head physician asked to speak to Blabon. Dr. Bruce Short told Blabon he saw something in him that he didn’t see himself and asked him to run their entire practice. He assured Blabon he would support him and they would work as a team.

“From that day, I moved from wearing scrubs and going to the operating room, to being the administrator of the practice. And I grew it, adding physicians, therapists, an MRI and prosthetic clinic. We did well.”

He and Deirdre loved Chattanooga and loved everything they were doing. Dr. Short was “wonderful,” teaching Blabon the business side, how to care for staff, how to appreciate staff to be sure they want to come back the next day.

After five years, Dr. Short called Blabon into his office once again. “It’s time,” he said. “It’s time for you to move on. You’re a big fish. This is a small pond. You’re going to do big things someday.”

In 2005, he, Deirdre, Jacqueline and new baby Gabrielle “Gabby” moved back to Salisbury, where he served as administrator for Ro-Medical, started by Dr. Chip Comadoll.

“I fell in love with medicine clinical administration,” he says, “and told Deirdre someday I want to be a hospital CEO by the time I turned 50. She said, ‘OK, I don’t know how we do it, but let’s do it.’”

He was named interim president at Novant Health Rowan Medical Center at age 50. He

became permanent in the position in March 2020.

That date might ring a bell. The hospital was in the midst of Covid. It’s a mammoth job in normal times, with an annual operating budget of \$255 million (five times the budget of the city of Salisbury), serving as one of the county’s largest employers, with 937 fulltime and 377 part-time staff and 651 credentialed physicians. The facility served 55,990 patients between December 2022 and November 2023.

But with the addition of Covid, Blabon had to hit the ground running, with long hours, daily conference calls and lots and lots of backup plans.

The Novant network selected its biggest hospitals in each geographic region to serve as “cohort” hospitals, meaning they were the central hospitals to receive Covid patients. Smaller hospitals like Kernersville, Thomasville and Clemmons would send Covid patients to Winston-Salem. Mint Hill, Matthews and Huntersville would send patients to Presbyterian in Charlotte. Novant Rowan was the cohort for our area.

Blabon was communicating with Novant Health, our local public health official Nina Oliver, the VA hospital and Atrium Cabarrus. He had to stay in touch with Richard Reinholz, COO of Rowan Cabarrus YMCA, as the JF Hurley YMCA would be the field hospital if one were needed. Meanwhile, procurements had to order enough supplies just as they were figuring out exactly what supplies were needed, facing shortages in PPE and other critical items. Meanwhile the hospital was continuing to people with non-Covid issues like having babies, strokes and heart attacks.

After long days, Blabon would arrive at home, removing his clothing in the garage so he did not infect their living quarters and go directly to shower.

“But it brought us all closer together,” Blabon says. “So many of our team members here are from Rowan. They are hometown, home grown folks and they care about our community. We were taking care of their families, their neighbors.”

It’s here that he gives a shoutout to his friend Cora Greene. During this time, former Novant President Dari Caldwell was retiring. Blabon was Senior Director of Operations; Greene was Chief Nursing Officer; Tom Trahey was VP of

Medical Affairs. “It was the three of us, with me as a new interim president, and Covid.”

Today things have normalized. Covid is still around, but it’s not the specter it once was. The newest challenge is a nursing shortage. The UNC School of Nursing predicts a shortage of 12,500 nurses in North Carolina over the next ten years — at a time when needs will be heightened because of aging in the Baby Boomer sector, the largest age group of our population.

The hospital is working on several fronts to address the shortage. They’re identifying high school juniors in underserved areas who may be interested in nursing. They can participate in paid internships sponsored by the Rowan Medical Center Foundation and local philanthropy.

“Here in the medical center,” Blabon says, “we heard from certified nursing assistants, yes, they’d like to go back to school but they may be a single mom with a couple of children working fulltime. We pay her tuition, books, paid time off to study for classes. It’s working out well.”

Here at home, Blabon has served on the United Way board, was a recent Chamber of Commerce president, Chaired the Rowan Economic Development Committee, served as a trustee for both Catawba College and RCCC. “My wife has threatened bodily harm if I say yes to anything else,” he grins. He is proud of the team members at work who serve on boards throughout the county.

In his limited free time, Blabon’s choice is time with his family. Both daughters were very involved in sports growing up. Now they’re both completing college in majors like their dad’s.

“I love seeing them thrive as young women,” he says.

He and Deirdre love the community and they enjoy travel; she likes the ocean and he likes the mountains.

He’s lucky, he says, to have a knack for remembering names, and cares deeply about relationships. When he meets someone, he tries to remember something about them. That gives him the energy to talk with them, check on their weekends.

Last year at Catawba he was asked to deliver the game ball — so he came in on the helicopter and landed on the 50-yard line, delivering the game ball to the Catawba president.

“I’m so thankful and so blessed for the job that I do, the people we are able to work with and the people we serve.” **S**



Genealogy librarian Gretchen Witt brought in book club artifacts collected through the years. The Christian Reid Book Club recently celebrated its 125th anniversary.



Through the pages of time

*Christian Reid Book Club
celebrates 125th anniversary*

WRITTEN BY **ELIZABETH G. COOK**

PHOTOGRAPHY BY **SEAN MEYERS**



Gretchen Witt points out names in an old minutes ledger to Deborah Messinger during a recent meeting.

The fact that the Christian Reid Book Club is going strong in the 21st century might amaze its 19th century founders.

Established in 1898 or thereabouts, the group remains the longest-running book club in Salisbury and may be the oldest active book club in the state.

A group in Charlotte claims to be older, member Susan Waller says, “but they haven’t proved it.”

Christian Reid members celebrated the club’s 125th anniversary in the fall by gathering at Rowan Public Library for a group photo and a chance to review club minutes and scrapbooks donated to the library’s History Room.

The club’s longevity might also surprise Frances Fisher Tiernan, the Salisbury author who used Christian Reid as her pen name on 46 books as well as several plays, poems and other works.

Born in 1846, Frances came of age in the Civil War era. Her father, Col. Charles Frederick Fisher, died leading a charge at the First Battle of Bull Run. To help her family financially after the war, Frances started writing light romance novels.

Among her works is “The Land of the Sky,” whose title has become synonymous with the North Carolina mountains. Her poem, “Gloria Victis,” was read at the 1909 dedication of the Confederate Monument that once stood downtown.

Some newspaper articles report that Frances was a member of the Christian Reid Book Club. Minutes of the first meeting, however, do not mention her in the list of members. Nor is it likely the renowned author would have joined the club, says Gretchen Witt, local history and genealogy librarian at Rowan Public Library.

A group called the Salisbury Book Club started five years earlier, Witt says, and Tiernan may have had a hand in that. The club faded out long ago.

Also in question is the founding date of the club that honors Christian Reid.

Though 1898 is noted in minutes as the beginning, the date of Oct. 18, 1897 is engraved on the club gavel, made from a boxwood that stood in Frances’ yard in the 100 block of North Fulton Street. The house has since been torn down. Frances gave property there to her beloved Sacred Heart Catholic Church, which for many years stood on the corner



From left, Alice Ketchum Brady, Krista Woolly, Adair Doran and Hen Henderlite listen to the presentation during a recent meeting.

of Fulton and Council streets.

Club membership is limited to 12 and currently includes Sandy Combs as president, along with Margaret Almeida, Alice Brady, Sherry Mason Brown, Betsy Cunningham, Adair Doran, Lillian Gascoigne, Hen Henderlite, Carol McNeely, Deborah Messinger, Patsy Wilson and Krista Woolly.

They include educators, nonprofit leaders, an ordained minister, a designer, a purveyor of antiques and collectibles — book lovers, one and all.

• • •

This club has been multi-generational, and directly so for at least two members whose mothers brought them in. Mothers' friends became their friends.

"I loved hearing their take on books and on life," says Betsy Cunningham, who joined about 20 years ago at the invitation of mother, Ann Coughenour Boyd.

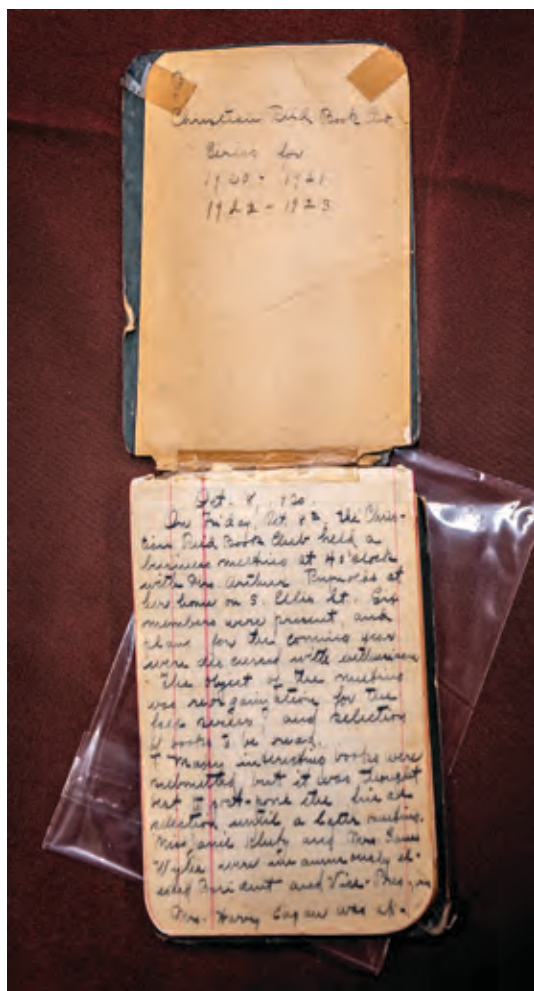
Betsy is proud of the tradition of reading and sharing that the club established. When her childhood home at 129 S. Ellis St. was on OctoberTour in 2011, she displayed several books by Christian Reid, the club gavel and a book of club minutes



The library houses the original call-to order gavel for the book club.



Back row, from left: Patsy Wilson, Alice Ketchum Brady, Carol McNeely, Adair Doran, Krista Woolly, Deborah Messinger. Front row: Betsy Cunningham, Sherry Mason Brown, Susan Waller, Sandy Combs, Hen Henderlite and Gerri Blackwelder.



The library houses a 1920s-era Christian Reid Book Club ledger.

opened to 1927, the year her late mother was born.

Accounts of meetings past mention “beautiful tables, lovely silver and whatever flowers,” Betsy says. “That doesn’t happen anymore.”

But the deep affinity for the written word is timeless. Betsy hopes the years ahead will be as rich for the club as those in its past.

“We’ll be striving in the future to get younger people in, so the story will live on,” she says.

• • •

Susan Waller was the youngest member when she joined at the invitation of her mother, Mary Rouzer, more than 30 years ago.

A longtime teacher, storyteller and historian, Susan stepped away from the club a few months ago, but her membership is the longest among the current generation.

She remembers getting to know “some of the most delightful older ladies,” such as Katharine Osborne and Martha Trotter. A poet, Katharine brought one of her creations to each meeting to read.

Members all brought items to share, usually newspaper or magazine articles — “anything that somebody thought was interesting,” Susan says.

“We didn’t always discuss them, just as we didn’t always get around to talking about the book,” Susan says. “It was never boring.”

The members took turns hosting at their homes, and Susan recalls the cleaning up and baking that went into preparations. “My husband used to say, ‘You ought to have book club once a month.’”

Why has the club lasted so long? “Because we just refuse to let it quit,” Susan says. “Having one of the best libraries in the state doesn’t hurt, either.”

• • •

During the 125th anniversary meeting, club members savored chocolate chip pie and perused old minutes written in elegant but nearly illegible handwriting.

The club stopped keeping minutes long ago. It’s clear the records were once a high priority, though. Rosalie Kizziah Laughlin, whose



Left: A monument honoring Christian Reid, aka Frances Fisher, sits near where her home once stood. **Right:** Krista Woolly, left, and Hen Henderlite look through an old newspaper article.

grandmother Beulah Wiley was a charter member, deciphered the minutes several years ago and shared what she found.

On Nov. 1, 1899, Bessie Henderson said the minutes needed to be fuller. At that point the secretary, a Miss Klutz, resigned and suggested that Miss Henderson serve as secretary — a matter duly recorded in the minutes.

• • •

Though she was famous in her day, Christian Reid’s works are hard to find today beyond the library’s rare book collection.

Book club member Lillian Gascoigne, a collector of rare books herself, admires the author.

“Christian Reid is a lovely writer,” Lillian says. “Her prose is beautiful, very eloquent and she has a poetic sensitivity to nature.

“Frances Fisher Tiernan is a valiant figure in Salisbury history, my favorite, actually.”

A book-shaped granite monument honoring Tiernan stands on the West Fisher Street grounds of Rowan Public Library. Once referred to as “the most versatile of North Carolina writers,” she died in 1920 and was posthumously inducted into the N.C. Literary Hall of Fame.

Still, her name is unfamiliar to many.

One woman remembers searching for the right book to bring to her first meeting as a member. She took the club’s name literally and

presented the group with “When Jesus Came to Harvard: Making Moral Choices Today” — a good, Christian read.

• • •

Patsy Wilson, a member for 27 years, says the group is united by its auspicious beginning — being named for Christian Reid — and its love for books.

She describes the members as friendly, well-educated and avid readers who seldom invest time in fluff.

“I really enjoy being around the women,” she says. “There’s a uniqueness about them.”

She’s enjoyed meeting in members’ homes, talking about books and occasionally hearing from guest speakers.

For example, at one meeting local attorney Mona Lisa Wallace discussed “Wastelands,” a book written about her legal battle with Chinese-owned Smithfield foods over pollution from pork farms in eastern North Carolina.

• • •

Early members did not work outside the home, but following generations included many educators such as Dr. Betsy Detty, who brought a sense of organization and purpose to the meetings.

“It was serious,” remembers Hen Henderlite, who joined about 20 years ago. “It was more

than chatter.”

Members arrived, sat in a circle, shared their news items and described the books they were currently reading, taking care not to spoil the ending for others.

The club later changed, with members all reading the same book each month and sharing their varied perspectives. That often means reading a book they might not all choose otherwise.

“It’s fun to be with others and to get out of your comfort zone with what you read,” says Alice Brady, a member for about 15 years.

Adair Doran, who leans toward science fiction and fantasy, says the club chooses the most current titles, often only available in hardback. November’s selection was “The First Ladies,” by Marie Benedict and Victoria Christopher Murray, followed in December by William Kent Krueger’s “The River We Remember,” both published within the past six months.

Not everyone literally turns the pages of a book, though; several members read e-books on electronic devices or listen to audiobooks.

While the reading format may change, Hen believes the club has endured because of the ritual or pattern that was maintained.

“I think we all appreciate that heritage and the history of it,” she says. “You don’t want to be the group that stops when the women before us put so much care and passion into maintaining it.” S

AT HOME

Reviving soul

*David Garling and Frank Labagnara
restore Murphy-Murdoch House*

WRITTEN BY SHERRY BECK
PHOTOGRAPHY BY SEAN MEYERS





Colors from the entry-way wallpaper are echoed in the "Coco Chanel" room.



The Murphy-Murdoch House at 229 West Bank Street.

Working in the historic home of David Garling and Frank Labagnara during the COVID-19 pandemic added an extra challenge as we developed the gardens and extended their outdoor living spaces. The couple purchased the home at 229 West Bank Street with a desire to stay in the West Square neighborhood, just a few blocks from their previous home. Together, our delightful relationship began with the shared goal of restoring the historic soul of the house.

The construction of the Murphy-Murdoch House began in 1850 in the Greek Revival style. It was a wedding gift from Andrew Murphy for his bride, Helen Long. The house survived the Civil War and hosted such visitors to Salisbury as Thomas Edison and Woodrow Wilson. We developed a plan to unearth the history and recapture the essence of the house.

The magical journey of auctions, estate sales, antique stores and online sources from all over the world began in June 2021.

David, the designer of the team, and I often agreed to differ on what the word “edit” meant. But together we worked out the compromises it takes to accomplish such a loving and creative task as restoring a historical home.

An important part of the process was incorporating the many beautiful items from David and Frank’s previous homes into the restoration of this home. Our goal was to combine family heirlooms, antiques and collections that the couple had collected overtime with contemporary and modern pieces.

Today, three years and lots of musing over the possibilities and elbow grease later, from the moment one steps across the porch and through the foyer, the house has soul. Looking out over the fountain on the Jackson Street side, the drink tray is positioned to dispense cocktails upon arrival. For a more formal gathering, the dining room seats 12. From the kitchen and back deck areas the growing garden offers focal points across the green space.



Frank Labagnara, left, and David Garling pose in the back yard.



An arch was added to the existing hallway to allow for visual flow.

FOCAL POINTS OF THE HOUSE:

Foyer. Beginning in the entry hall, beautiful 9-foot tall and 14-foot wide hand-painted wallpaper from France was selected to allow the groundwork for the house to unfold with its beautiful colors and pattern. The chandelier shipped from France was lovingly restored. The contemporary rug, marble statuary and grandfather clock invite you in.

Coco Chanel room. Colors from the entry-way wallpaper are echoed in the “Coco Chanel” room to the right on the ceiling, molding and walls. You find two beautiful glass and brass etageres filled with Frank’s collections of Russian lacquer boxes, Swarovski crystal figures and gifts collected over the years. The curved, powder-blue sofa sits in front of an elaborate Chinese screen, inlaid with mother-of-pearl, jade and other sources of color. David’s passion for shopping with his wonderful eye echoes in the three eclectic chairs that were finds from our own Habitat for Humanity restore.

Arches. The house is unique in that it has 3 foyers. An arch was installed during the last renovation, and we added one more to keep the visual flow. The eye follows the three crystal chandeliers through the hallway and help to spotlight elaborate Chinese furniture, mirrors and art collections in the adjoining rooms.

The jade green wall color was selected for the library that features oil paintings of various dogs, antique paintings from William Secord Gallery in New York, leather-bound books and a pair of Old Hickory Tannery custom-leather chesterfield sofas made in North Carolina.

The powder room features a me-



The breakfast nook was reimagined into a cozy sitting room.



Above: A wrought-iron fence was added to the large yard.
Right: A sculpture welcomes guests in the foyer.





tallic gold pattern on cork. When David ordered a pair of 1800 sconces, again from France, every tradesman told him “No,” they cannot be repurposed. David did not give up and his persistence did the trick.

The dining room boasts a reimagined Chinoiserie wallpaper, velvet drapes, traditional furnishings with a twist — a modern inspired mesh chandelier and leopard print rug. The double windows look out onto the new fountain area that looks as if it has always been a part of the home.

The kitchen is the typically most challenging to upgrade. Because of the previous owners’ renovations, it was not necessary to start over. We converted one set of cabinets into a beautiful bar with glass shelves and gold appointments. Because the existing hardware was not standard, it was impossible to upgrade. The solution was to enlarge the pulls and add decorative back plates. An antique French fire back is the spotlight for the mother-of-pearl tile backsplash. The stove rests just under the magnificent black and gold custom hood.

The breakfast nook was reimagined to a cozy sitting room. It provides a comfortable spot with friends for 5 o’clock cocktails. Four chairs surround the mirrored table that came from David’s grandmother Blanche. David recalls that she loved Deco and Mae West.



Clockwise from top left: A new koi pond and fountain were constructed in the side yard; in the kitchen, a converted set of cabinets was fabricated into a bar with glass shelves and gold appointments; hand-painted wallpaper adorns the entryway; a fire screen and figurines in the formal dining area.





Your Backyard Supplies

Keep your backyard and pool picture perfect for the season!



*Come visit our
showroom for all
your backyard needs*

Patio furniture
Pool chemicals
Recreational goods
Cleaning tools and supplies

 805 Klumac Rd. Salisbury, NC 28145 • www.rowanpoolwarehouse.com



Her childhood included horse-drawn carriages.

The back deck was not suitable for the owner's five rescue dogs. A custom dog track was installed for them to access a fenced outside area. Expanding the deck for entertainment and adding a lift were welcome additions.

The landscape of a property tells you what to do with it. This is especially true in a grand home. Larger boxwood, camellia and heirloom shrubs replaced small plantings.

A pair of gates were another find. A local craftsman built the new "old" entry and added the appropriate railing on the entry stairs.

Wrought-iron fencing surrounded a portion of the property but granite posts stood as sentry to what was originally there. Matching wrought-iron panels were found,

attached and completed the Jackson Street side of the property. A wooden privacy fence was installed as a backdrop for the new landscape and statuary.

After months of searching, the **cast iron fountain** was brought from Georgia to be the central focus of the new fountain. Six lighted columns, black penny tile surround and spouting bronze lion heads are features for the backdrop of water plants and fish. The new slate path and courtyard areas are places to enjoy the sound of the water.

This home has a bigger-than-life quality, restoring the goal of historic glamour, represented in the elegant furnishings, collections and attention to details found within. These two men have restored more than just a house but have brought back hospitality to the much loved 229 W Bank Street home. **S**

Sherry Beck and husband Steve are principals of The Designing Eye, a local landscape and interior design/install service.

BLUE BAY

DELICIOUS SEAFOOD & Your Favorite Entrées

DAILY SPECIALS

- Senior Citizen Discounts •
- Children's Menu • Healthy Choices

Voted Best Seafood!

2022 ROCO gold Salisbury Post

2023 ROCO gold Salisbury Post

2021 ROCO gold Salisbury Post

2020 ROCO gold Salisbury Post

2018 ROCO gold Salisbury Post

2017 ROCO gold Salisbury Post

2016 ROCO gold Salisbury Post

Two Locations to Serve You

2050 Statesville Blvd. 704-639-9500

1007 East Innes St. 704-633-9585

Follow us on

www.bluebay-seafood.com



The jade green wall color was selected for the library that features oil paintings of various dogs and antique paintings from the William Secord Gallery in New York.

Trinity Oaks, an Active Senior Continuing Care Retirement Community

- 24-Hour Security
- Club Style & Outdoor Dining
- Fitness Center
- Hair Salon
- Housekeeping
- Indoor Heated Pool
- Library
- Lifelong Learning
- Local Transportation
- Maintenance Free
- On & Off-Site Activities
- Pet Friendly



SMILING FACES & FRIENDSHIPS ABOUND

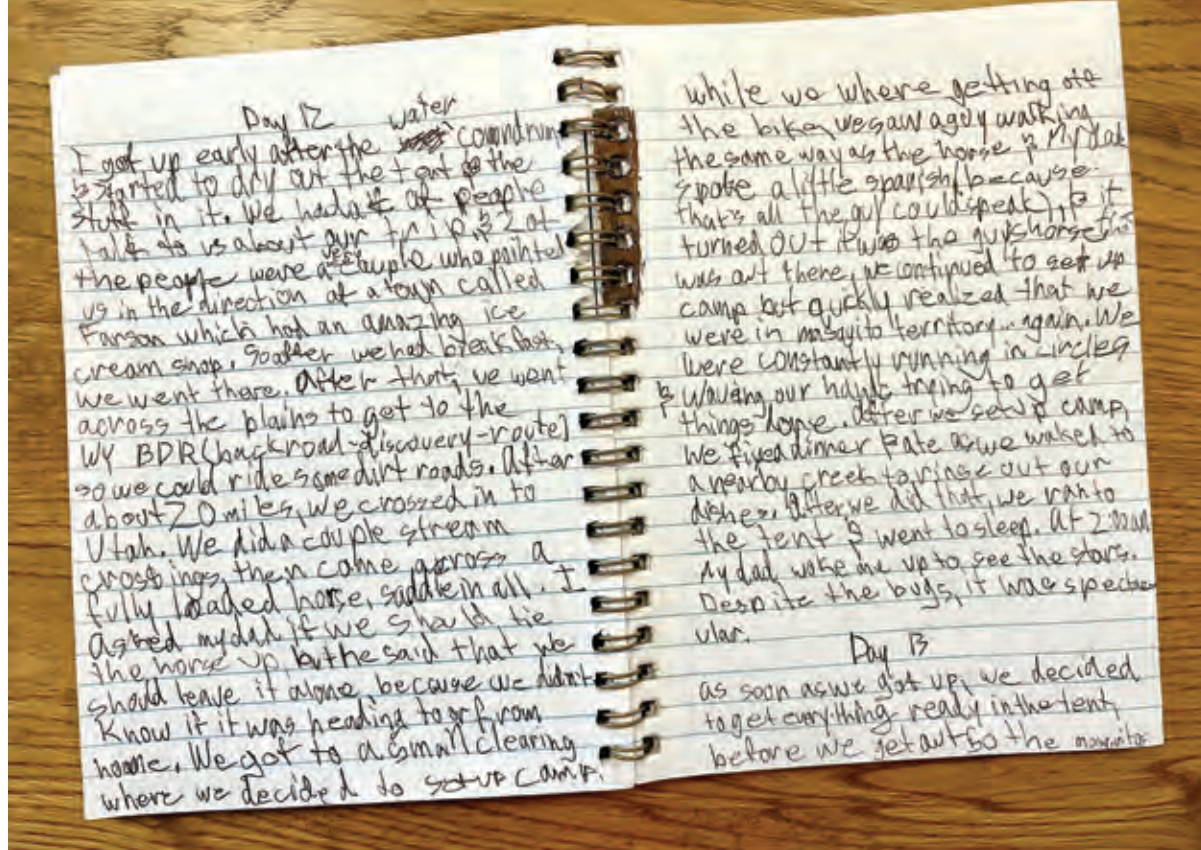


704-603-9202 • trinityoaks.net • 728 Klumac Road • Salisbury, NC 28144





Badlands, South Dakota. The sun sets over the badlands as Aaron Stevenson and his son Micah finished their first big day in South Dakota. This is where the off road adventures truly began.



This excerpt from Micah's journal describes his day. Every day had its own story, and this day was no exception. The duo came across a fully saddled horse without its rider.

TWO- WHEELED TOUR


Father and son create lasting memories on
cross-country motorcycle trip

STORY AND PHOTOS BY AARON STEVENSON

T

raveling across America by motorcycle: just the words conjure a romantic image. In our mind's eye, we see the lone rider crossing the plains, battling the elements, having epic adventures and numerous encounters along the way. A picture inviting enough for many to undertake the journey. For others, the story is a means to experience the trip through the written word and photographs. How exciting would it be for an 11-year-old boy to live that adventure? This past July, my son, Micah did just that. Sitting behind me on a 700cc dirt bike, we rode backroads, dirt roads and off-road trails for 6,600 miles through 18 states in a little over three and a half weeks. It's a trip of a lifetime that has a beginning and hopefully, no end.

Before we left, my son asked me, "Dad, how did you come up with the idea to do this trip?" That has a multi-layered answer. My dad was a post-Depression era child and Korean War veteran. Like most dads of that generation, he worked hard and provided well for his family. And like most kids, what I wanted more than anything was to spend time with my dad. Sadly, we spent very little "just us" time. My father and I never did any sort of a father and son trip. In the delivery room when my son Micah was born, I was blessed to receive my son from his mother's womb. From the moment I held him in my hands, I vowed to be the type of father I never had.



Once off road, the Stevensons were on their own — satellite phone, tool kit, first aid and a full tank of gas. Many days, they never saw another vehicle. Micah sits near the bike in this barren land.

In 2021, I became gravely ill and my future looked bleak. Fortunately, a good team of doctors returned me to full health. During that dark time, I made myself a promise: if I could get my health back, I would take my son on a cross-country trip.

I envisioned bonding time to give him solid memories of his father. As I've told my son many times, "The true treasure in life is not in money or possessions but in the experiences, memories and time that we spend together." And the last part of the answer: many years ago, I read the book "Zen and The Art of Motorcycle Maintenance." This book had a profound impact on me when I read it but even more impactful after I became a father. The story centers around a father and son as they journey across America by motorcycle. In the book, the author's son is 11 years old, old enough to develop solid core memories and young enough not to be caught up in

teenage angst. I made the decision that 11 was the right age so I planned for summer 2023. Now the question was, "Can Micah hold up to 400-mile days on the back of a motorcycle?" And not just the mileage, my goal was to expose Micah to parts of America that less than 1% of people will ever see: rock-strewn trails at high altitude in the Rockies, high desert plains on dirt roads that seem to go on forever, canyons with 1,000-foot dropoffs, wild horses running free — images that will sear into his mind and never fade.

And not just the images but time for reflection from hours of conversation made possible by helmet communicators as we rode mile after mile, sometimes in burning heat, sometimes in pouring rain. Not sheltered by a windshield and a metal cage but in the elements; feeling, smelling, hearing and absorbing everything Mother Nature gave us.





South Dakota, Micah's first day in big-sky country. The road disappears into the horizon.



Before we began our journey, a good friend of mine suggested that we document our trip, so I purchased two small journals. In the evenings, we would sit and write about our day, what we experienced and how we felt. Thirty years ago, I traveled across

"Dad, I really want to go to Four Corners." I heard this from Micah for two years. Racing across the plains and high desert, they arrived 15 minutes before closing, then made numerous photos and shared this moment.

America by motorcycle when there were no smart phones, helmet communicators or GPS devices. While I eschew the constant barrage of technological interference now, the helmet comms provided exactly what I hoped they would, daylong conversations with my son. Since the age of 4, he's been sitting on the back of my motorcycle. We have a variety of hand signals to point out wildlife, scenic views, approaching vehicles and inputs like rapid acceleration and braking. Now, we talked. And talk we did. From the time we pulled out of the driveway until we returned, there were long conversations. Quiet moments were broken up by me breaking into song. "John Jacob Jingleheimer Schmidt..." which was

followed by his helmet smacking into the back of my helmet as a sign of his displeasure or a punch to my shoulder. Yeah, dad humor rules! And of course, that was the only line I sang... for a month. Micah found other ways to get even.

Canyonlands National Park. Once the Stevensons descended, they traveled the rocky canyon trail for many miles on their way to Moab. The road twisted and turned as it followed the Colorado River. Petroglyphs were carved into the canyon walls and antelope dotted the landscape.





Micah relaxes and reflects amongst the Alpine flowers in Yellowstone National Park.



Northern Utah Backroad Discovery Route. After a long day of off-roading, the duo made camp in an Aspen Grove (10,000 feet elevation). With a full belly, the bear bag (food) hoisted in a tree, Micah takes shelter from the biting insects and prepares to journal his day.

Because the helmet comm was linked to my iPhone, I found that I could dictate as I rode. Now I could journal in the moment. Thoughts and feelings poured out as we rode. I could feel my son pressed against my back. The emotions became words, sentences and paragraphs.

To truly make this an adventure, there were no set times to make a destination. We just needed to be home by Aug. 1. I had a general idea of where we were going and major sites to see. My real goal was to avoid major highways, ride only backroads, dirt roads and trails (BDR — Backroad Discovery Routes and TAT — Trans America Trail) as we crisscrossed America from North Carolina to Montana to Arizona to home. By doing this, we saw Americana. Farmland, small towns, desolate areas where I would say, “We’re in the middle of nowhere.” Micah was quick to correct me and say, “Dad, it’s somewhere for the folks who live here.” Touché!

Destinations and sites were plentiful, so we had to pick and choose as we went. A sampling

of America would be all that time would allow but that too would be plentiful.

Before we left, I told Micah again and again, “The first three days and the last three days will be the hardest. We’ll ride 400-500 miles a day to and from home. We want to maximize our time out west.”

While every day and every mile were part of the adventure, visually, it really began as we entered South Dakota’s big-sky country with the road unfolding like a ribbon into the distance. Cresting a butte, Micah squeezed me around the waist and said, “Dad, thank you for taking me on this trip.”

Wow. Just wow.

This came after three 450–500-mile days including a full day in the rain, a BIG dad moment.

As the sun dropped low on the horizon, we arrived at Badlands National Park, set up our tent and snapped a picture of our first night of camping. Before we left, I told Micah, “The sights we

see are just a small part of our trip. The people we meet and the friends we make on the road are every bit as special.”

Every day became an adventure and every day had its own story.

In Deadwood, South Dakota, my friend Gary Kinsler taught Micah how to use a plasma cutter. I watched as Micah cut shapes and made metal art.

In Midway, Utah, renowned fine art painter Teri Cates Peña spent an afternoon giving Micah art lessons where he produced his own abstract painting.

In Buffalo, Wyoming, the backdrop for author Craig Johnson’s Longmire books, Micah took in the stories from locals including tales of 19th century cowboy gunfights complete with existing bullet holes in the saloon adjoining the Occidental Hotel.

In Lander Wyoming, we happened upon the International Climbers’ Festival where climbers gathered from around the world. I watched curi-

Canyonlands National Park, Shaffer Trail. This narrow rim road with 500-1,000-foot drop-offs descends to the basin of the canyon offering spectacular views... for the passenger!



"Dad, when we get out west, we have to have a snowball fight." Mid-July on the border of Wyoming and Montana, the Stevensons did just that. Aaron lost.



Camping next to the Animas River at 11,000-foot elevation, in the distance, Uncompahgre Peak (14,321 feet) holds the last rays of light. In just a short while, the Milky Way would reveal itself.



"Dad, I told you not to go down this road." The night before, there was an inch of rain. Micah warned that the road sign said "Impassable When Wet." The duo unloaded, used their portable winch, then they were on their way.



Alpine Loop, Colorado. In a meadow at 11,000 feet elevation with Cinnamon Pass behind them, this photo captures the culmination of the Stevensons' adventure. They packed up and began the trek home. Micah is holding the Columbine, the state flower of Colorado.

ous conversations unfold between my son and the people he met.

Just south of Helper, Utah, with temps exceeding 106 degrees, we stopped at a reservoir to swim. A Central American family clan with relatives attending their reunion from as far away as Australia had stopped for a picnic and swim. Invited to join them, we exchanged stories in English and Spanish and shared photos while cooling off.

At the South Rim of the Grand Canyon on a 104-degree day, a family from Laos adamantly insisted that we join them for lunch and accept cold bottles of water.

And that's only a smattering of our journey.

The most memorable moment for me came on a clear night near Mesa Verde, Colorado. Standing in an open meadow by our tent while staring at billions of stars and the Milky Way, my son hugged me and simply said, "I love you, dad."

This "On the Road" Kerouac-type experience of self-discovery took on an almost surreal feel. My son living the first act of his life while I am in my third. Having lived this long and experienced many of my own adventures,

to experience it again through my son allowed me greater insight to become a better father. We are home now but the best part of the journey has yet to begin. **S**

Former professional photographer and national motorcycle racing champion Aaron Stevenson dedicates his life to being a father and helping veterans through his outreach program countersteerlife.org



Ute Reservation near Four Corners. As the sun set, the day was far from over. That morning, the Stevensons had left the South Rim of the Grand Canyon, ridden through Monument Valley, taken photos at Four Corners and were riding into the night to camp near Mesa Verde, Colorado, where a spectacular sky and evening awaited.





“What we had was
PASSION”

A dream team
builds Partners in Learning

WRITTEN BY **MAGGIE BLACKWELL**

PHOTOGRAPHY BY **SEAN MEYERS**



Above: Celia Jarrett stands next to a portrait she made of her mom, Dr. Shirley Ritchie, that hangs in the Partners in Learning lobby.

Left: From left, Liam Mitchel, Asher Peay, Henderson Bell, and Presley Taylor take a break for play time outside.



Morgan Snyder, center, works with Lydia Peay, left, and Westin Williams during an outdoor class.

“**N**orma is a force of nature — like a hurricane. She took Dr. Ritchie’s heat and energy and sucked it into a hurricane and nothing will stay in its path. Everyone who came into it bought into it.”

That’s Bill Wagoner describing Norma Honeycutt, Executive Director of Partners in Learning Child Development and Family Resource Center in Salisbury. The center just opened its 22,000-square-foot learning center off Martin Luther King Avenue.

Partners in Learning is a childcare center but also offers many additional services. They serve 205 children daily in the childcare center and 235 children weekly with clinical services ranging from developmental delay to autism. They care for children with diabetes, feeding tubes, walkers and catheters — services not offered by most childcare centers. Partners in Learning ensures that children with special needs will be served by staff trained to meet their needs.

“We try to be sure their basic foundation is met. You can’t be the ideal parent if you have basic needs unmet. When we see a need, we find a way. It has become our mantra.” Honeycutt says.

The Center is the dreamchild of the late Dr. Shirley Ritchie, professor of education at Catawba College. Her daughter, Celia Jarrett, serves as the center’s board chair today. Dr. Ritchie taught special education to rising educators and when the state began offering degrees for teachers of children ages zero to five, she could not find a model center for her students to observe best practices. She fought for — and won — the ability to serve special children in childcare centers through several agencies before finally founding Partners for Learning on Catawba’s campus, the predecessor to today’s Partners in Learning. Her vision established a model of 30 percent special needs children, 30 percent financial needs children and 30 percent general community, “All together, learning together.” This model continues to be alive today at Partners in Learning.

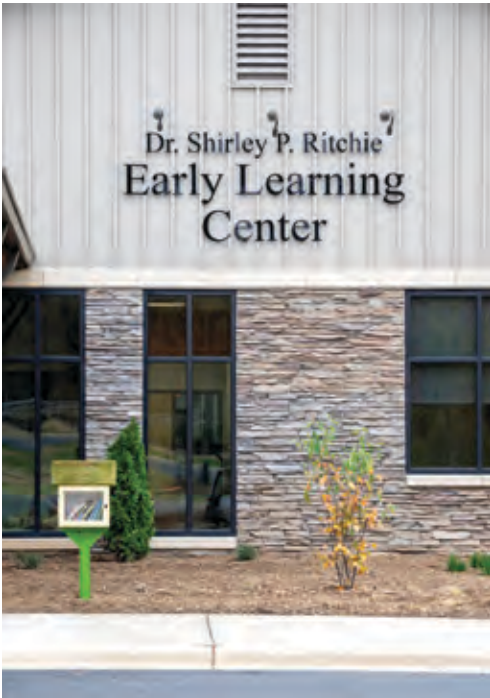
Today’s director Norma Honeycutt met Dr. Ritchie 25 years ago. “We shared a passion for children with special needs, well, all children,” Honeycutt says. “She was able to mentor me, share



Above: Butterflies adorn the walls in the campus hallway.

Right: Bill Waggoner, left, and Executive Director Norma Honeycutt stand in one of the special-needs teaching rooms.

Below: Partners In Learning is a leader in early childhood education and recently opened its new facility on Martin Luther King Jr. Avenue.



Lupe Pinel, far right, keeps an eye on a group of kids, from left, Ryen Stowe, Westin Williams, Hattie Coarsey, Elijah McCarter, Lydia Peay and Eliana Taylor as they play in the sandbox during a morning out at school.



Samuel Harborth takes a peek at what's going on inside during a recent school day.

her dreams and vision and passion. I have a social worker heart and she definitely did. She was quite a visionary and I am a visionary as well, although sometimes to a fault.

“By the time a child is three years old, 85 percent of his brain is developed. When you read in the news about graduation rates, it goes way back to their early education.”

Jarrett is proud of the way Salisbury has supported the vision. “If there is a just and right need in our community, you won’t have to do

it alone. People will rise up and walk with you. Norma said to us, ‘Don’t worry. It’s a need. People will rise up.’”

And people did rise up. Honeycutt began dreaming of a larger, all-in-

clusive center in 2019, when the board noticed the lease at Catawba expired in November 2023.

“I got involved in the dream phase,” Wagoner says. “How do you make the dream real? We had a drop-dead date with that lease. In late ’19, we began with the clock ticking on all the work to go from dream to occupancy. We were already behind.”



Kari Justus works with Heiress Cowan during a recent session.

“I had never even built a house,” Honeycutt says. “Bill is an amazing teacher. As a project manager, he told me I was taking on a second full-time job and I was going to make 10,000 decisions. I didn’t believe him.

“I got decision fatigue. Bill could sense that. He knew. I got email after email about our adventure forest and I was overwhelmed. Bill came by and said, “I think we need to sit down and meet.”

Wagoner, the third-generation owner of Wagoner Construction, had years of experience to

guide Honeycutt, and he held her hand from dream to ribbon-cutting — and beyond — for no fee, although you must press him to get him to admit it. He knew that construction is only the final component of the project. The hard work is in developing the dream into a viable concept. He guided Honeycutt through decision after decision, looking two phases ahead to have decisions ready by the time they were needed. Together they developed a list of criteria for a site for PIL. They drove through the county several times and made lists of every

PARTNERS IN LEARNING

- The center has 25 staffers who work in 16 counties to identify children ages zero to three with developmental differences.
- The center contracts with the Rowan Department of Social Services to provide mental health services to children identified by the county as well as by Salisbury Pediatric.
- The center provides services to children on the autism spectrum, both in the classroom and in pull-out classrooms.
- They provide family support services, contracting with DSS in Rowan and Davidson, providing parenting classes for parents who have lost or may lose custody of their children. They teach and observe the parents interacting with the children to ensure the skills are being integrated fully.
- If they learn parents do not have food or laundry facilities, or are struggling with mental health issues themselves, they find access for them.



The main entrance foyer greets students and visitors warmly.

available site that might fit the criteria, striking through many because they didn't fit this or that need.

When Honeycutt presented to the Salisbury Rotary Club about Partners in Learning and the dream of a new site, Wagoner observed local auto dealer Gerry Wood getting inspired. He later approached Wood with the idea of buying a couple of acres of his land on MLK for a couple hundred thousand dollars. Wagoner laughs as he recalls the conversation, saying, "I thought he'd say he'd go think about it." Wood surprised him by saying, "If I can work out with my CPA, I will give it all to you. We were stunned."

At one meeting, Wagoner told Honeycutt they could go no further until they had their design team assembled. They still had to get an architect, and go through bidding, contracting, licensing, construction and all the layers of state and county inspection for childcare.

"If you looked at November 2023 and counted backwards," he says, "it was a tight fit."

Because the center is a nonprofit, they had the luxury of hiring their architect at will. When Bill Burgin and project architect Diane Gibbs from Ramsey, Burgin, Smith were available, Wagoner knew they were a vital part of the dream team. He had worked with Gibbs over decades on multiple projects and knew she was the right person.

In 2019, the original estimate to build the center was three million dollars. Covid-19 hit and building prices skyrocketed. In 2021, the three million became eight million and in 2022, rose again to \$12 million — four times the original estimate. With each increase, cuts were made to the original plan. In the end, two entire classrooms were slashed in favor of clinical services.

"Other places can offer classrooms," Honeycutt says, "but we're the only ones who offer these services to those who need them."

Honeycutt drafted staffer Amy Vestal, an ABA therapist who worked with children on the autism spectrum, to serve as director of development. She saw in Amy a drive that Amy didn't see in herself. Community do-gooder Hen



Katlyn Leonard works with Maximus Chapman one-on-one during a recent session at school

Students take a break and play in one of the several playgrounds on the campus.






HIGHLY TRAINED EXPERTS IN CUSTOMER SATISFACTION.



WE STAND BEHIND EVERY TRANE.

WE'VE GOT YOU COVERED COMING AND GOING.

Dependable. Sincere. Stubbornly loyal. However you want to describe us, our mission as your independent Trane Comfort Specialist™ dealer is simple: Deliver reliable year-round comfort you and your family can count on. And because we're stand up guys, you have our attention and support before, during and after every service or installation job. For a positive customer experience that's as unstopplable as a Trane system, call us anytime.

STOUT

704-633-8095

www.trane.com

Contact us right away, your local Trane Comfort Specialists™ with the reputation for reliability.

© 2017 Trane. All rights reserved.

From our Home to Yours,
We wish you a Blessed New Year
& Look forward to helping you
make a move in 2024!



TERESA RUFTY

teresa@tmrrealtyinc.com



MICHELLE KULD



JANET EDWARDS



SHELLE STUBBS



JILL DICKSON



TARA SETZER



JASON SHRADER



LAUREN ROBISON



KACI GULLEDDGE



STEPHEN BOAZ



Teresa Rufty

Owner, Broker In Charge

Office: 704.245.6184 • Mobile: 704.433.2582

107 North Main Faith St.
Salisbury, NC 28146

www.tmrrealtyinc.com



Voted No. 1 Real Estate
Company for 2nd Straight Year!



A view of the new classroom and lounge area.

Ring It In

Make her new year rock with a dream-come-true engagement ring.



Financing available
 Certified diamonds
*Free lifetime cleaning and rhodium plating
 with any engagement ring purchase!*

YOUR HOMETOWN JEWELER

BARNHARDT JEWELERS

112 E. Innes St. • Downtown Salisbury • 704.633.0618

CEDAR HILL

WEDDINGS & EVENTS

VOTED BEST WEDDING VENUE IN ROWAN COUNTY 3 YEARS RUNNING!

2021
gold
1st Place

2022
gold
1st Place

2023
gold
1st Place

BRING YOUR VISION TO LIFE WITH OUR FULL-DAY PACKAGE OR
 ENJOY A STRESS FREE EVENT WITH OUR ALL-INCLUSIVE PACKAGES

THEBARNATCEDARHILL.COM
 CHECK US OUT ON FACEBOOK AND INSTAGRAM!

Henderlite was drafted as capital campaign chair — and she didn't disappoint. A team of PIL folks including Vestal and Henderlite visited, spoke, gave pamphlets, to virtually every community group in town, encouraging support of the project. And citizens responded in kind, opening their checkbooks to help fund the amazing dream.

Food Lion donated funds to build the kitchen, a behemoth of stainless steel, with the proviso that the center would provide classes in healthy cooking, preparing baby food or how to cook on a budget to parents. Vortex Construction served as builders. Honeycutt says, "We can't sing their praises enough."

Honeycutt says, "And then came, 'how are we going to furnish this place?' Celia and I were overwhelmed. I had no idea. I knew construction was over my head, but hey! I've watched enough HGTV and felt I was fully capable. Then we met with our fundraising leader, Hen Henderlite, who bought in Sherry Mason Brown to select everything. I didn't want to go to this meeting, thinking we cannot afford a designer. She is just going to pick out all this expensive stuff. We had already cut so much out of the plan.

So, I go to this meeting and I listen. The more I listen, I get sick to my stomach. Finally, I ask Sherry to send me a proposal and she said, 'I'm doing this for free. How much do you want to spend?' I gave her a ridiculously low budget and she simply said, 'OK.'"

After that, Honeycutt laughs, the contractor would call and ask, what lighting fixture she wanted. She sent them to Mason Brown.

Mason Brown came in and observed classes to see how they functioned,

what they needed, and where. She developed notebooks specifying items for each room and their placement. Today the center looks just like Honeycutt had dreamed. When a visitor walks in, he is greeted with color, texture and form. It's stimulating and many of the textures just beg to be touched — even by adults.

The Dream Team affirm there are many not listed who were critical players in the building of the center. Vestal sums it up by saying simply, "What we had was passion."

Honeycutt adds, "This place was built by the community and it's here to serve the community." 







From left: Shirl Hull, Ed Hull, Linda Chirico, Susan Sharp, Olen Brunner, Diana Banks, Leon Gaither, Cynthia Hendricks, Ricky Rice and Jeffrey Sharp



Above: Donny Clement, veteran Chili Cook with his helpers Johnny Leonard and Tommy Isenhour.

Right: Will James dons his 10-gallon hat.



Waterworks Big Chili Cook-off

The Big Chili Cook-off fundraiser benefits the Waterworks education and outreach programs. Volunteer chili makers simmered up and served their favorite chili and guests voted for the winner.



Front row, from left: Karen Alexander, Kim Porter, Shanna Glawson, Chef Maria Marquez, Donny Clement, Misty Ratcliff, Reg Boland, Mike Greene, Krista Wooly, Ed Hull, Sarah White-Harvey, Anne Scott Clement, Nathan Valentine. Back row: Michele Biggers-Smith, Bill Budusky, Prof. Alphonsus Osiezagha, Elijah Marshall, Damian Grooms, Hampton Ratcliff, Debbie Lucas, Kathleen Bergeron, DJ: Mike Shue



Above: Ed Hull, WVAC Board President, assists with the annual Big Chili Cook-off fundraiser Nov. 4 at the F&M Trolley Barn. Right: It's Electric, boogie, woogie, woogie...



From left: Anne Scott Clement, Allison Navarro, Alice and Fred Stanback, Molly Brooks

From left: Henderson Lentz, Cameron Walker, Ruth Clement, Callie Lentz and Reese Overby



Sustained Notes Photography



Happy Roots events committee

Happy Roots gala

Celebrating seven years of service, local nonprofit Happy Roots hosts its first gala with a Chef-prepared, all farm-to-table and school garden-to-table Harvest Dinner at Vista at Walnut Hill in Cleveland. North Carolina Americana/Bluegrass legends, Chatham County Line, performed for the cause.



Erle Craven Photography



Sustained Notes Photography



Aron Bureson, Samantha of Mother's Finest Urban Family Farm, Ashley Honbarrier and Tony Hiller of Harlem Grown.

CABARRUS

 EYE CENTER

**TOP
 OF THE
 CHARTS**

State-of-the-art
 cataract surgery
 and other eye surgery
 close to home.

- More than 60,000 procedures in over 30 years.
- Area's only surgery center focused Exclusively on eye surgery.
- We have surgery staff with 30+ years of experience. Call for an appointment.



704-782-1127
www.cabarruseye.com
 201 LePhillip Court NE
 Concord

**ABC UPWARD! WANTS YOU TO
 KNOW THE LAW!**

Under 21 it is ILLEGAL to:

- **purchase** alcoholic beverages
- **possess** alcoholic beverages
- **consume** alcoholic beverages
- **use fake ID** to attempt to buy alcoholic beverages



- **drive** after drinking **ANY AMOUNT** of alcoholic beverages

**SUPPORTING OUR COMMUNITIES
 BECAUSE**

Together We Care.

Rowan-Kannapolis
ABC Board

Safer Communities. Stronger Knowledge.



Learn More at talkitoutnc.org



“AMERICAN FLAG”

By Glen Yost
— Watercolor

Artwork for Local Colors may be submitted to
andy.mooney@salisburythemagazine.com.
Vertical orientation is required.

Discover

everything you love about Rowan County



Start your subscription today!
Call 704-797-4213 or go to
www.SalisburyTheMagazine.com

SALISBURY
the magazine

9 issues for only \$18. Gift subscriptions also available.



THE KING OF PRICE!

VISIT ANY OF OUR 3 SALISBURY LOCATIONS



414 Jake Alexander Blvd S.
Salisbury, NC

704-216-2675

randymarionhonda.com



529 Jake Alexander Blvd S.
Salisbury, NC

704-216-2685

randymarionkia.com



525 Jake Alexander Blvd S.
Salisbury, NC

704-216-2686

randymarioncdjrsalisbury.com

Hours: Monday-Friday 9am-9pm • Saturday 9am-8pm • Closed Sunday