

MARCH 2026

SALISBURY

the magazine



COMMON LAW

*Salisbury attorneys Sh'Myra Moore
and Ryan Stowe are both graduates
of N.C. Central University*

**Catawba College works
with local students
to provide outdoor learning**

**Salisbury Dance Company
builds skill at any level**



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Salisbury the Magazine
P.O. Box 4639

Salisbury, NC 28145-4639
Published 9 times / year



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On the cover: N.C. Central University graduates Sh'Myra Moore and Ryan Stowe both practice law in Salisbury. (Sean Meyers photo)

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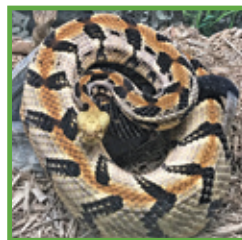
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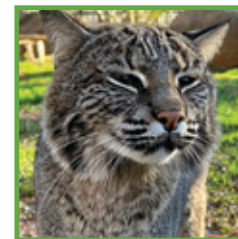
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The turning of the seasons

As you read this, the crocuses are likely in bloom and daffodils are peeking their wee heads through the ground. As I write this, I can see 14 inches of snow out my window. Ah, the magic of magazine deadlines!

Being from snow-deprived Alabama, I go nearly hysterical anticipating snow. "It's gonna snow! It's gonna SNOW! IT'S GONNA SNOW!"

I can sit for hours at the window, watching the mysterious flakes floating from the sky. Or, as in the case this week, watching them hurtle from the sky.

I anticipate snow; I love snow and all that goes with it: a fire in the fireplace, warm drinks in my favorite mug, hours to read. Yet after a few days, I'm ready to move on with life.

That's how we are, isn't it? What we longed for, soon becomes what we discard. The carloads of items we drop off at Goodwill were once things we valued and traded money for. The child who begs for a puppy soon drags his feet to feed or walk her. The snow we treasure soon banks on the curbs resembling dirty Styrofoam.

This month, Pete Prunkl writes us a story on a unique partnership between Rowan-Salisbury Schools and the Catawba College Center for the Environment. With the help of Nature Queen Lisa Pope, students learn about permeable and impermeable surfaces, heat conductors and the health of trees. We're so fortunate to have Lisa and the Center in our community.

Salisbury has two Black attorneys who both attended Salisbury High and NCCU. Their offices are even walking distance from each other! There the similarities end. Ryan Stowe serves as a criminal defense attorney in his own practice while Sh'Myra L. Moore, a partner with Darrell Hancock, specializes in estate law. Both have happy memories of high school, college and law



school. Lovetta Ealy Moore is technically not a new writer for us; she's recently reviewed several books. This article, her first feature, gave her a chance to get to know the young attorneys.

Like many businesses, Salisbury Dance Academy developed from a community need. Owners Spencer Anne Brown and Kristie Thomas started as dance instructors for Steppin' Out Dance Company. When Steppin' Out closed in 2020, Brown and Thomas saw an opening for a new studio. Today they've served over 200

young (and older) dancers. Individuals and teams have earned trophies that line the walls of the studio. Brenda Zimmerman visited the studio to learn how the dancers — and the business — are flourishing.

Our Rowan Original this month is Kathy Sanborn, chair of the Rowan-Salisbury Board of Education. Kathy knew she wanted to teach at a very young age. She retired after almost 32 years in education, then returned to fill interim positions for the system: again, and again and again. She lost her first bid for the school board but, undaunted ran again. She was unopposed.

Brenda Zimmerman reviews four books by author Marie Benedict, all about women who were the strength behind their men. Benedict's style is compelling; the more you read, the more you want to read.

That's the March issue! Please enjoy it and I'll go shovel a walk or something. See you next month.

Maggie

— Maggie Blackwell
Editor, Salisbury the Magazine

THROUGH THE LENS by Noah Merrell



Noah Merrell captured a small herd of sheep who have become part of the family.

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

Benedict books

Everyone knows that Einstein was a one-of-a-kind genius. The fact that Carnegie was an incredible philanthropist is internationally acknowledged. Hedy Lamarr was a highly recognized actress. Many names we recognize elicit certain assumptions. News and textbooks give us details about their lives and accomplishments, but according to Marie Benedict that is just the surface. Numerous stories exist below that surface that give depth to their lives as well as those who supported them.

Benedict researches the subjects of her chosen historical characters beyond the accepted context. From letters and journals, rare interviews and obscure personal accounts, her books put together a readable story that can change your perspective on an icon of our culture. At times, a person behind the scenes is never acknowledged for his or her contributions. Benedict seeks to change that.

One of the most interesting of her books is "Lady Clementine." Winston Churchill's wife was his confidant, sounding board and motivator. He discussed any major decision with her. They talked over potential outcomes and benefits of his actions. She ran his household, raised their children, hosted dignitaries and was always by his side. It was well known that he was not himself when he traveled without her. He was known to send her a telegram across town to get her opinion before making decisions in meetings. Early in their relationship, she pulled him from the path of a racing train when he was attacked by a stranger; Benedict makes it clear that was the first time of many that Lady Clementine would save her husband literally and figuratively. She was Winston Churchill's steady pillar during his tumultuous career.

In "The Other Einstein," it is immediately obvious that Albert's wife challenges him academically. As the only female student in an elite academic world, Mitza's contributions to con-



Books by Marie Benedict reviewed: "The Only Woman in the Room," "Lady Clementine," "The Other Einstein," "Carnegie's Maid," "Personal Librarian."



by
**BRENDA
ZIMMERMAN**

versations with his contemporaries were often ignored. In time she ably expanded and explained his own ideas to him. She wrote papers equal to and often better than his own. He repeatedly published her work and their joint endeavors under his name only. He explained to her that a published work by a woman would be overlooked as unimportant in the world of science. Throughout their professional careers and tenuous marriage, she was repeatedly placed in the shadows. The book leaves you asking the question, "Who was really the genius?"

A young Irish immigrant took on the identity of a deceased girl going to accept a job as a lady's maid for Andrew Carnegie's mother. The new maid turned out to be a work in progress with no clue of what a lady's maid did. In time she fit herself to her new role. A bit like Mary Poppins, Clara Kelley became "practically perfect in every way." The

lady's maid became very capable. She created a career for herself by being indispensable. She and Andrew shared mutual interests in literature and art. Her feelings for him grew, but she had to take care that he not discover her true identity. Over time, Carnegie trusted her as they talked about many aspects of his business. With her voicing ideas about his ability to help others because of his own blessings, his life of philanthropy took root. He had the money, but apparently it was a quiet librarian who urged him to make his massive industrial successes create success for others. Benedict weaves the story of the professional relationship as well as the personal relationship between the two.

She became the full-time librarian for J. P. Morgan. Her first task was to organize and inventory his existing personal library. Her continuing task was to expand and build his collection to be the finest in the world. As the daughter of the first black graduate of Harvard, "Bella de Costa Greene" is the name Bella Greener assumed. Her complexion and the De Costa name allowed her to pass as a white woman of Portuguese descent. She walked a fine line, however, between two worlds. Clara wanted to prove to her father that she was not ashamed of being Black, while sustaining her mother and siblings by having a career as a white woman in a white world. Because of her mixed-race heritage, she would not have been permitted to work as she did. She became an international figure traveling the world buying ancient manuscripts, important literary collections and art masterpieces. Her sharp business acumen and ability to complete purchases were the basis of the massive collection known as the Pierpoint Library. Benedict and co-author Murray bring a specific face to racial inequality of the time and the complex nature of operating in a business world that is incongruent with the character's own family.

Hedy Lamarr became a beautiful Hollywood icon in the 1940s. Known for dramatic roles and making fashion statements on screen, few people know of her life prior to coming to the United States. She was a woman determined to create a life to protect herself in a world at war. While in

a questionable acting career in her home country, she married an Austrian arms dealer who was intimately involved in work with Hitler. Early in the Second World War, she sensed danger for the world as she knew it. Fearing for her life and her husband's treatment of her, she began playing a role long before she hit the big screen. The fact that she was a woman made her invisible in many ways. On the contrary, as a well-educated scientist, she was an arsenal of knowledge. She served meals, mingled elegantly with her husband's constituents, sat in smoke-filled rooms watching men drink and talk. It never occurred to any of those men that she understood what they were discussing or that she was paying any attention to detailed plans men of The Third Reich were making. When a self-created opportunity matured to leave Germany, she brought all she knew to the U.S. military. She proposed a particular use of radio waves to the U.S. Navy. It involved blocking signals for torpedoes. Though not fully developed at the time, her studies are considered the foundation of current Wi-Fi and Bluetooth technology. Her story is rarely mentioned in American history. Benedict brings de-

tail to her story that creates a page turner.

In Benedict's research, she discovered an unusual friendship between two women in history. Eleanor Roosevelt and Mary McLeod Bethune were early supporters of civil rights for all citizens. Mary Bethune was a leader the African American community. It was not considered proper for the wife of the sitting president to invite her into the White House, socially or otherwise. Though Bethune came in and out of the presidential home quietly, the friendship the two shared was not hidden from anyone, least of all the president himself. The two women pooled their ideas and often presented concepts to him that he found he could not refuse. So, while he wrote the proclamations and made speeches, they were quite often the work of his wife and her friend who were looking for practical ways to address real-life needs of people. Another rarely mentioned relationship becomes a part of the novel as well. Several references are made to Eleanor's usual closeness to her personal secretary of many years. In conversations between Mary and Eleanor it is obvious that the secretary is far more a part of Eleanor's life than

people realize. Mary accepts this facet of Eleanor's life without judgment and is supportive of her when elements of the relationship change. Benedict and Murray's sensitive treatment of the lead characters gives depth to the relationship that gently pushed the president to make huge changes in our world.

These books are only a series in the sense that Marie Benedict searches for women who are in some way disregarded, dismissed or overlooked. They were instrumental in either supporting or directing someone famous or they were never recognized properly for their own contributions. Each book is a stand-alone read: Benedict's writing style has realistic settings with believable conversations reflecting historic moments that keep the reader engaged. In no particular order, current titles include but are not limited to the following: "The Only Woman in the Room," "The Other Einstein," "Carnegie's Maid" and "Lady Clementine." "First Ladies" and "Personal Librarian" were co-written with Victoria Christopher Murray. As a Black writer, Murray brought a perspective that Benedict felt was important to give authenticity to the novels. **S**

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A woman with short brown hair, glasses, and a purple jacket stands in a school hallway. She is smiling and looking towards the camera. The hallway is blurred in the background, showing other people and school lockers.

SCHOOL STEWARD

School board Chair Kathy Sanborn has always had a teacher's heart

STORY : MAGGIE BLACKWELL | PHOTOGRAPHY : SEAN MEYERS

W

hen 18-year-old Kathy Sanborn was selecting colleges, she took into account her love of the beach, open water and sunshine. So, she chose Appalachian State over the University of North Carolina at Wilmington. That decision tells a little of her personal discipline.

Today, Sanborn serves as chair of the Rowan County Board of Education after serving as an educator before retirement for 31 years.

“Before retirement” is significant because after retirement, she has returned to work for the school system five times to serve in interim positions when they needed her. She declined some additional interim positions due to her lack of knowledge in those areas. Her interim positions ranged from one month at Overton Elementary School to 10 months at Salisbury High School.

In first grade, Sanborn’s teacher always put her in charge when leaving the classroom. That’s when she knew she was a teacher at heart. In third grade, she befriended a student who was likely on the autism spectrum. One day when he locked himself in the boys’ room, the principal sent Kathy in through the window to talk him out. After that, she knew she had a place in her heart for kids with special needs.

When she went to college, only two universities in the state offered Exceptional Children certification: App State and Wilmington. Kathy chose App so as not to have the beach calling her from her studies.

Although she’d always envisioned herself teaching elementary school, her first job was at a middle school in Stanly County, 68 miles each way from her home.

She taught in a self-contained classroom with students ranging in age from 12 to 21 in a K-8 school. The class grew until she ultimately had 20 students.

Kathy’s special education director gave her license to do what she needed for her kids. Students had a woodworking shop where they made teddy bears and rocking chairs. They sold them to finance more materials. They also had access to a kitchen where students made lunch for the entire class on Fridays. Every Thanksgiving, they made a full Thanksgiving dinner and presented it to their families. In spring, they prepared a picnic dinner for the families with ham and potato salad.



Kathy Sanborn speaks with East Rowan High School Assistant Principal Adam Clark.

“It was fun,” Sanborn says, “Nothing in the special ed world today compares. Those were my glory days. Those were the days when I felt I made the biggest impact.”

“I still have a few of those families with whom I share Christmas cards. One young man is 50 now; he has had a stroke and is in a nursing home. I visited him several years ago.”

Sanborn says she loved being an assistant principal later and working at the Central Office but her biggest impact was in New London, working with kids and helping them to be as independent as they could become — and working with parents to allow them to be as independent as they could be.

Sanborn was the first EC teacher in Stanly County to get her National Boards, a rigorous national certification that demonstrates superior understanding of the job. Her principal encouraged her to leave the classroom and have a bigger impact on education.

Sanborn was offered a position at East Rowan High School to supervise the EC program. It was right at her back door. She took the job.

Not long after starting work at East, she was offered the position as director of high schools. In effect, she would become the director of her current boss.

Meanwhile, Sanborn’s first husband, Mike McDuffie, had contracted colorectal cancer. School Superintendent Judy Grissom was extremely gracious in allowing Sanborn to be with Mike when she needed to be. He died in 2008.

Sanborn retired in 2013 and worked as interim Salisbury High principal for six months. She married Bruce Sanborn in 2014.

Sanborn ran for school board in 2020, losing to Brian Hightower. Hightower later resigned from school board, leaving an opening in the East District. The board members appointed Sanborn to fill the spot in September 2023.

“Bruce was so supportive of my running for school board in 2020,” she says. “He was the tipping point for my decision.”

She ran unopposed in 2024 and became vice chair to Alisha Byrd-Clark. In 2025, she was selected as board chair and she is now serving her second term as chair of the school board.

“I think I may have a better understanding of the effects of our decisions, having worked in the system. Our first priority at all times is to do what’s best for the kids first.”

She says the main thing is to hire a strong superintendent. Finding a fit for the community is so important.

“Kelly Withers is that fit because she knows our system so well. I’ve worked with eight superintendents and Kelly has the best overall grasp yet. It’s kids, curriculum, then instruction.”

In her off time, she loves to decorate her home. She spends as much time as possible with her grandchildren, tutoring at their school every week. She helps their classrooms as needed, runs three committees at church and loves spending time at their beach house.

Finally. She can enjoy the beach.

*North Carolina Central
University graduates
Sh'Myra Moore and Ryan
Stowe both practice law in
Salisbury.*





COMMON LAW

Attorneys Sh'Myra Moore and Ryan Stowe are both graduates of Salisbury High, N.C. Central University and practice locally

STORY : LOVETTA EALY MOORE | PHOTOGRAPHY : SEAN MEYERS



Within walking distance of the Rowan County Courthouse, Koco Java, Hap's Grill and each other's offices are attorneys Sh'Myra L. Moore and Ryan M. Stowe. Sh'Myra and Ryan share several similarities. Both are graduates of Salisbury High School. During those formative years, Moore's most fond memories occurred during her senior year. She says all her years there were memorable but

it was during her last year as a Hornet she served as Student Government Association president, was elected homecoming queen and was a member of the varsity basketball cheerleading team.

Stowe's years at SHS were filled with club activities and SGA positions. He said his best memories are of Friday night football. He remembers the pep rallies during school, the roar of the crowd during the games and Dr. Windsor Eagle announcing the



Above: Salisbury attorney Ryan Stowe at his office on North Main Street.

Above right: A gift celebrating the law firm shines in the library reading room at Sh'Myra Moore's office on North Main Street.



games over the PA system.

It was during her time at SHS that Moore developed a deep love for literature, reading and writing. With these influences, her future seemed likely to be around education or becoming a professional author. Stowe, on the other hand, was undecided on what his future held. One thing he was sure of it would not be math, his least favorite. He remembers this shortcoming giving him the nudge to excel in his favorite subjects which were history, political science and governmental affairs.

From the halls of SHS, both ventured to Eagleland in Durham, N.C. Though entering North Carolina Central (NCCU) several years apart, both selected this Historically Black College and University (HBCU) because of the strong academic programs, high graduation rate and proximity to home. Both were encouraged by family and friends to further their education at NCCU.

Stowe's mother is a NCCU grad as are several other family members. Moore's mother, however, is a graduate of N.C. A&T State University, the biggest rival of NCCU. The two universities have participated in the Aggie-Eagle Classic Football Game since 1922.

At NCCU, Moore was an English major with a minor in political science. She focused on becoming an English teacher but the influence of her mentor led her in another direction. Jeffrey Gadsden, an attorney in Durham, explained to her the rewards of being a legal representative. Gadsden is also credited with recommending Drake University School of Law in Des Moines, Iowa to her after she obtained a master's degree. Moore found Drake to be challenging and rewarding. Graduating in 2010, had it not been for the harsh winters, she might have remained in Des Moines, instead she returned to the milder climate of N.C. to prepare for the N.C. Bar Exam. Returning home, she was introduced to attorney Darrell Hancock by her late grandfather, Robert L. Ealy, who was a client of Hancock. Hancock



Sh'Myra Moore displays law degrees at her office.

became her mentor and offered his office as a study place while Stowe prepared for the N.C. Bar Examination. Then he became her employer. She is now a partner with Hancock and Moore PLLC, Attorneys at Law, which specializes in Estate planning and estate administration.

Moore said, “Encouraging people to prepare a will is not always easy.” She explained most people think they don’t need a will or trust because they don’t have vast amounts of money or property. When clients first approach her, she explains to them, it is not necessarily how much you have, but how you want what you do have to be dispersed. The conversation is not just about material possessions but how having a detailed will may cause less family discord and friction.

Having been in practice for over eight years, Moore does not regret the fact she returned to Salisbury. She says Drake Law School gave her the fundamental elements to practice law but being in an office, interacting with clients and understanding different circumstances has been the real learning experience. In person, you learn to deal with different personalities, different family dynamics and different levels of knowledge concerning wills and trust. Fundamentally, some people are hesitant about dealing with attorneys, either from past experiences, family horror stories or misconceptions gained from outside influences.

“Most clients are uncertain about the process which is where I can assist them. I can clarify the process, offer recommendations and calm their nerves. Oftentimes, my clients become the ones who refer others to me because of the service I render.”

Stowe was a political science and history double major headed toward a career as a politician, but he had a change of mind and heart after serving as a congressional aide to U.S. Representative John Conyers. Heeding advice from attorney Ronald Williams, Stowe decided becoming an attorney would be a rewarding profession. Although he was accepted into eight different law schools, he chose to attend NCCU’s School of Law and remain in Durham. Returning to Salisbury after graduating from law school was not in his plan. Williams, however, pointed out the positive aspects of practicing in Salisbury. Becoming an attorney in one’s hometown could be professionally beneficial, especially a small town like Salisbury. Being an African American attorney in a city such as Salisbury would provide a wider clientele and less professional competition. In Salisbury, Stowe is one of very few African





North Carolina Central University graduate and Salisbury attorney Sh'Myra Moore at her office on North Main Street.





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American attorneys, especially one having grown up in the city. This has proven to be advantageous to him. Today, Stowe is a criminal defense attorney and is the managing attorney with Stowe Law Firm, PLLC. His practice focuses on traffic violations, DWIs and expungement relief. He said, “I take pride in my job. Sometimes, I’m the only person in court supporting my client. Family will show up and support you at positive events, such as graduations, sporting events or even church activities, but few will show up in court.” He recently completed an extensive instructional session to increase his knowledge as a criminal defense attorney by the N.C. State Bar Board. Stowe emphasizes the fact some citizens are not aware attorneys must continue their education to be abreast of current laws.

As the conversation began to conclude, it shifted to aspects of their personal lives. The last question was, “What excites you about NCCU Homecoming?” Both giggled loudly, showed gleaming pearly white teeth and dancing eyes. Almost in unison they declared, “THE BOWL!” This is the gathering location on campus for students, alumnus and visitors during the homecoming activities. This is the hot spot for reminiscing with old friends, meeting new acquaintances and a chance to “just be me.” At “The Bowl” you are not anyone’s mother, father, husband or attorney, just an Eagle returning to the nest. “The Bowl” is filled with sunshine, laughter, music, food and fun. Conversations center on campus memories, stories of dreaded final exams, the dreams and goals one had back in the day and concern for long lost classmates. They agreed this one event is highlighted yearly on their social calendars.

Moore and Stowe share more similarities. They grew up in Gethsemane Missionary Baptist Church, where Stowe’s grandfather, the late Rev. James L. Stowe, served as pastor for many years. Both are members of Greek letter organizations. Moore is a member of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority Inc. and Stowe is a member of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc. Moore has held leadership positions in the sorority and has been a presenter at various community forums on the topic of estate planning. Stowe is a member of the Salisbury Rotary Club, serves on the boards of Salisbury Academy and Rowan Public Library. Each would like to be more involved but say their professions are demanding and neither wants to be on committees or boards and not be able to fulfill the necessary duties.

They have high hopes Salisbury will grow culturally, economically and in diversity. They would like to see more industries locate to the area, more affordable housing, and continued political opportunities for citizens. **S**

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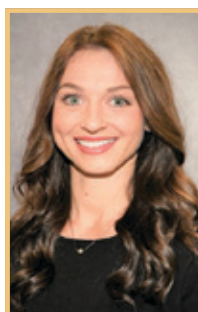
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Fourth graders in Michelle Gannon's science class display seed pots from their heat mapping project.

OUTSIDE OF THE BOX

Catawba College works with local students to provide outdoor learning

STORY : PETE PRUNKL | SUBMITTED PHOTOS



Years ago, children came home from school, changed into their play clothes and set off on their bikes, not returning until dinner-time. Parents rarely asked where their children were going. If they did, the typical answers were the city park, school yard, library, downtown or simply, “just out.” Never mentioned were frozen ponds, the woods, a construction site, railroad tracks or an empty lot — exciting places with greater opportunities for friendship, fresh air and adventure.

For many young people today, the great outdoors has been sidelined by the screen. According to Lisa Pope, an environmental professional at the Center for the Environment at Catawba College, on average, grade school students spend 30 minutes a day outdoors. Parents of middle schoolers are increasingly likely to set boundaries on those 30 minutes by restricting play to roughly 300 feet from home. That small play zone rarely includes ponds, the woods or even a city park.

Despite these societal changes, there is hope for today’s sunshine-deprived youth and their concerned parents. Since 2024, outdoor learning has been an integral part of the North



Fourth grade student Aiden Staley shows the laptop he used to make a presentation to the class about the heat mapping project.

Carolina Science Standards for students in kindergarten through 12th grade. Rowan County teachers have been introduced to these updated standards and how to implement them at free summer workshops organized by the Catawba College Center for the Environment as part of their ForestSmart Program.

Lisa Pope, coordinator of the ForestSmart Program, prepared for the workshops by examining the N.C. Science Standards for each grade level. She then combined several standards into a

grade-appropriate research project — one project for each grade. Fourth graders, for example, are expected to understand energy transfer, the nature of light, which environmental changes enable organisms to survive, and how our planet’s surface changes over time. Pope then wove these standards into practical research topics to create the curriculum guide, “Heat Mapping for Healthy Schools.”

In addition to standards, goals and objectives, Pope’s eight-page heat mapping plan asked students to research some intriguing ideas: What is the hottest surface you have ever walked or run on? Place aluminum foil, sand, colored construction paper, soil, wet sponge, dry sponge,



Planting the micro forest. Catawba College students rescued the plants for the micro forest from various local construction sites.



Michelle Gannon (center) and her home room science class at Granite Quarry Elementary School visit their micro forest.

wood, metal, rubber and rocks outside in the sun. Measure their temperatures and place the materials from hottest to coolest. Were there any surprises? Now place the same materials in the shade. How does shade benefit people and animals? Which materials act as insulators – something that slows down the movement of heat or sound? Which are conductors — material that allows heat or sound to pass through it?

Half of the guide concerned a heat map of the school’s campus. One aspect of the project involved determining the percentage of impervious surfaces — like streets, parking lots or sidewalks — that surrounded the trees on campus. Trees surrounded by zero to 32 percent impervious surface tend to be in good or excellent condition. On the other hand, if the percentage rises to 62 to 100 percent, trees in those environments are usually in poor condition.

Last summer, Catawba College grad Michelle Gannon, a fourth-grade science teacher at Granite Quarry Elementary School, participated in the college’s workshop and left with a mission. She planned to implement the Heat Mapping for Healthy Schools curriculum in her three classrooms.

CATAWBA COLLEGE



“On our first day right after the Labor Day break, we made ultraviolet bracelets to understand UV light and the energy it transfers,” said Gannon. “From there each class made a list of all the places outside where they spend the most amount of time.” Using thermal scanners — high tech thermometers given to the school by the Center for the Environment — the students checked the temperatures in each of 11 areas in and around the school three times a day. These findings were then charted, graphed and compared by all three fourth grade science classes. Each student then prepared a brief talk about the project and presented it to their class.

The campus hot spots were the blacktop

parking lot, the upper parking lot, the little playground and the shelter. The students then devised a plan to create a micro forest on the school grounds to help cool their school. The location was critical and the students came up with a big idea. Rather than directly cool the hottest areas, they would look at the big picture and plant trees, plants and grasses in an area that was surrounded by zero percent of impervious surface. Only cool soil would surround the Granite Quarry Micro Forest.

Lisa Pope, with support from Constructive Plant Rescue (CPR) and its founder, Dr. Carrie DeJaco, worked with Catawba College students to visit local construction sites to salvage



Catawba College students visited Granite Quarry Elementary School to plant native trees, shrubs and grasses for the school's micro forest.

trees, shrubs and grasses that were about to be destroyed. All plants are native to North Carolina. The Catawba College students brought their rescued plants to Granite Quarry Elementary, helped prepare the soil for planting and then showed the fourth graders how to properly plant each tree. "It was amazing to see how many questions my students had of the Catawba College students," said Ms. Gannon.

The fourth graders have continued to nurture their micro forest. They water the plants several times a week, especially if there is minimal rainfall. "In the spring when everything starts to

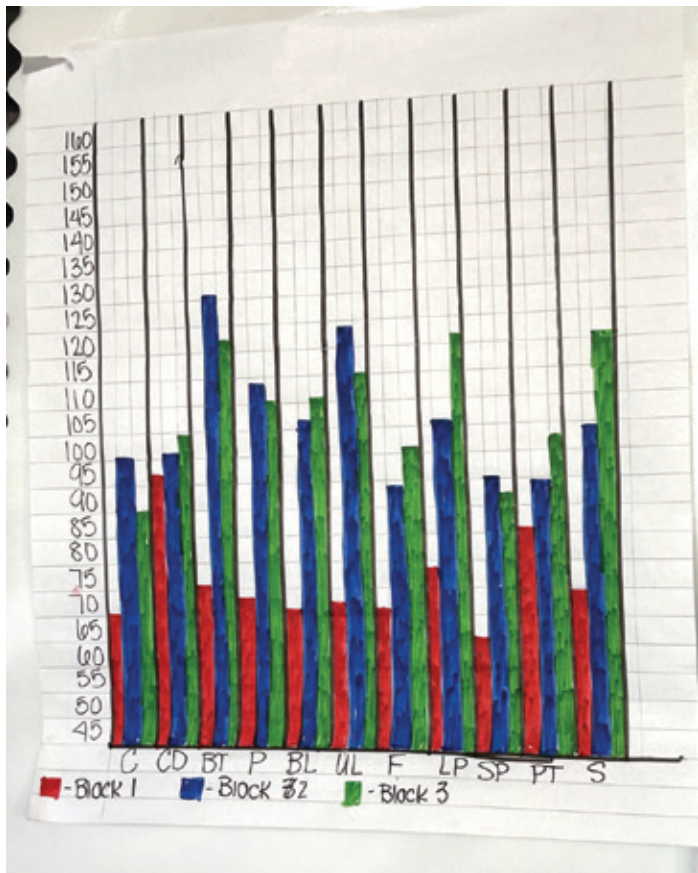
bloom, we will go out and restudy the garden," added Gannon.

Last fall, your reporter visited Granite Quarry Elementary to see the micro forest and ask the students a few questions about the project. Answers were detailed with genuine passion and excitement. I asked them, "Why would your school principal allow a group of 10-year-

olds to plant native trees, grasses and shrubs on campus?" After some hesitation, one student responded, "Because we are smart." But was that enough? Another budding scientist chimed in with "Because we have proof! We did our research."

Thanks to Catawba College's Center for the Environment and teachers like Michelle Gannon, not only did these future scientists do the research, but they completed it outside in the fresh air. **S**

Pete Prunkl is a free-lance writer from Salisbury.



The results of the heat mapping study at Granite Quarry Elementary. The temperature at 11 places on campus was measured using thermal scanners provided by Catawba College. Included are C (courtyard), CD (cafeteria door), BT (black top), P (playground), BL (bus lot), UL (upper lot), F (field), LP (little playground), SP (side playground), PT (picnic tables) and S (shelter).



The micro forest just after planting



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Salisbury Dance Company builds skill at any level

STORY : BRENDA ZIMMERMAN | PHOTOGRAPHY : SEAN MEYERS



Instructor Kristie Thomas, left, works with Lincoln Brown in the upstairs space.



Inside Salisbury Dance Academy (SDA) at 204 S. Main St., the first thing one sees are multiple walls of trophies. Every one of those brightly colored awards represents the achievements of individual dancers or teams who have competed on regional, state and national levels for the academy. Trophies didn't come first.

Spencer Anne Brown and Kristie Thomas were teachers in the Salisbury-Rowan School System and at Steppin' Out Dance Company. When Steppin' Out announced they were closing, Brown and Thomas saw an opportunity. The students from Steppin' Out who wanted to continue dancing needed a place to go. A new studio would provide opportunities for new students as well. From a concept in March of 2020, doors opened in June of that same year.

Since opening, the academy has served more than 200 students, ranging in age from 2 years old to adults. Students can begin classes at any placement level. The youngest learn balance, rhythm and following directions. Many students advance through various classes based on age and skill. The goal is to meet them where they are, whether that means no skills at all, or advanced skills learned elsewhere. Then as skills improve, they move up in different classes. The broad range of opportunities for dance includes ballet, tap, lyrical, contemporary, pointe and hip hop. Additional offerings are mommy and me classes, acrobatics/tumbling, adult classes and private lessons. With a degree in vocal performance and music from Catawba, Brown



Anna Gill, center, performs during a ballet class.



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Spencer Ann Brown gives instruction to a ballet class.



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Competition evolved when interest was shown by students. Thomas had been a competitive dancer and knew the circuit. Both instructors recognized that the very nature of competitive work builds teamwork. Various dance competitions occur at all levels including individuals, duets, trios and small groups. The entire competition team also performs full-stage productions. The original competitive team started with 12 former Steppin' Out members and grew to 40. The two primary venues are The National Expressions Dance Company and Show Stoppers.

Ariana Walker practices ballet jumps during class.



Competitions are a complex process of everything from stage solos to large groups. Judications and competitions can go on for several days. All performances are ranked through a variety of set criteria based on skill, age, choreography and execution. As each series of scores is presented, the dancers are set to compete once

again. During these levels of competition, there are a wide range of prizes awarded for all levels of performance. In the first year, the studio claimed 24 awards for performances. This past season, there were 205, including two national first places.

The instructors say that although the students are very competitive, they are also very supportive of each other. Students offer suggestions to one another, cheer each other on and celebrate the victories. Brown stated, "Many times, once choreography for a sequence is provided, the

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dancers involved will get together to work how to best execute a given set of moves. They figure it out themselves by trial and error. If one is succeeding, they are all succeeding.”

Addison Connell has been dancing since she was three. A high school sophomore, she is a member of the SDA Competitive Team as well as the dance team at Davie County High School. Whether dancing on a stage or on the sidelines of a football game, she sees her role as one that is supportive. “Being part of a team encourages me to do my very best. It makes me see things I want to try. It is just such a positive environment to be in. The more we improve on individual skills, the higher our performance as a team.”

Thomas notes, “There is a sense of community within the school which I think sets us apart from similar programs in the area.” Students, families, instructors and volunteers all work together for the success of the academy. Relationships in the academy are further reinforced as students work together away from dance with school, sports, church and community events that are parts of their lives.

Bryson Johnson is one of two male students in the group. He started with the academy when they opened. He stated, “I love the way the music and movements go together and just become one.” He is in several classes and is on the competition team. The competitions are costly: costumes, shoes, hotels, meals and transportation. Fundraisers are an essential element in the dance competition world. In addition to community sales of premium cards from local businesses, another popular program allows parents the ability to bank funds for their child. Through the Competitive Champions of the Carolinas Scholarship Program, parents are scheduled to work the concessions at the Panthers games, other sporting events and concerts. Money is paid into a fund they can access for dance-related costs. This includes a variety of expenses associated with classes as well competition costs.

The dancers are active in the local community. They have been in the area holiday parade since 2020. Additionally, they have visited schools and set up information tables that included demonstrations at career fairs. They also are active with Piedmont Players Theatre, Lee Street theatre, Relay for Life and the annual Polar Express at the N.C. Transportation



Zoe Burnett practices during class.



Bryson Johnson practices during class.



Museum. They have performed at a Cannon Ballers' game and at the Wallace Cancer Center.

In one evening, a tap class is taking place, a small group is rehearsing, an older ballet class is taking place and a young lady is spending one-on-one time with Thomas to fine-tune a solo she will perform for competition. All spaces are occupied. The tap group is stretching and practicing; not a single click, step or clack is together. The second the music starts, however, everything synchronizes and the rhythm is loud and clear: one sound, due to the experience of several years of dance shows with the graceful movements of the older students in the ballet class. Thomas, four months pregnant with her second child, leads the class with poise and elegance.

Both Thomas and Brown feel that the academy offers much more than just dancing. Students learn important life skill. Qualities like respect, self-discipline, problem solving, accountability and setting priorities all play into building self-confidence and team-building concepts throughout their lives. Elizabeth Gill's 10-year-old twin girls are active at the academy. Ava has been taking 5 years; Anna two years. Gill notes how much confidence they have gained over the years. "When Ava started, she was so shy. Trying new things



Jinae Spruill poses during ballet class.





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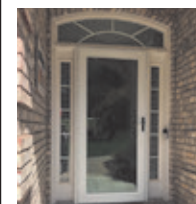
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on stage scared her. Recently she asked her instructor if she could add a newly learned back flip to her solo routine. “She told me trying new things wasn’t scary anymore because she knew she could it.” Gill also noted how the teachers take an interest in whatever the students are doing both at the studio and in their school lives. Anna has issues with delayed speech. Brown started working with her on voice lessons that helped her day-to-day conversational skills. Offering this supportive element means the world to Gill. “Dance can be an expensive and time-consuming venture, but you cannot measure what the students learn in dollars and cents. The rewards of being a part of this dance family are endless.”

In addition to regular classes during the school year, Salisbury Dance Academy has a calendar full of camps and events coming up for the summer. Go to salisburydanceacademy-mync.com or email salisburydanceacademy@yahoo.com for information on Under the Sea Dance Camp for 3–6-year-olds, Leaps, Tricks and Turn for grades 1-5 and grades 6-12, Fearless and Fierce Hip Hop Camp for grades 1-5 and more offerings. Regular classes close in the spring but will reopen on Aug. 17 following an open house on Aug. 8. 



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By Connie Eads

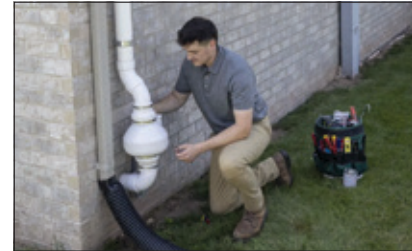
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