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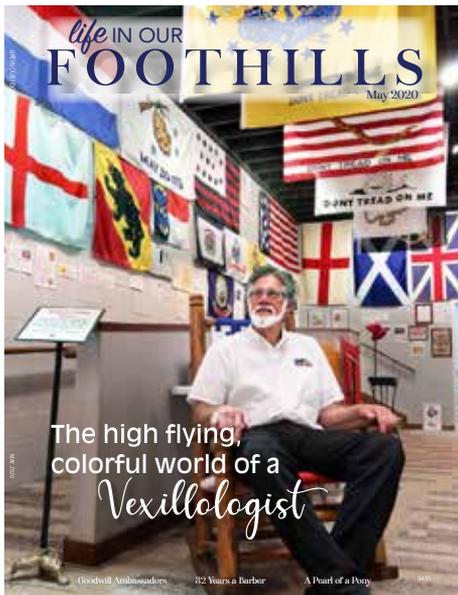
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Kevin Powell
General Manager

ON THE COVER



Robert Williamson

Vexillologist

(Story on page 14)

Photo by Vincent Verrecchio

FROM THE EDITOR



Writing this note for this issue, I realize that we should be in the middle of Spring Break. At least that's according to the Polk County School calendar. Thanks to current events, this season has turned into more like Spring Vacation, which could transition into Summer Vacation with no differentiation in between. What an interesting time that we are living in right now. Each year, there are words that jump to the forefront and become part of our everyday vocabulary. In the last few years, words or phrases that are thrown around are things like "Selfie," "Hangry," "G.O.A.T." and "Bye Felicia." Through the first three and a half months of 2020, I'm going to go out on a limb, predicting "Social Distancing" will be this year's winner.

In this issue, our feature stories go against the "Social Distancing" recommendations.

About once a month, those locks on our heads get a little shaggy and need to be trimmed up. Some people, myself included, are DIYers. Others prefer a little help having their hair styled for them. One place to have it cut is Paul's Barber Shop in Columbus. Paul has been cutting hair for 32 years and doesn't regret a single day of it.

Whenever we go on a road trip, one place my family always makes a stop is the Welcome Center for each state. My kids love to pick up magazines and flyers, not to mention go 10-100 (That's CB lingo for those familiar). Have you ever talked to one of the people behind the counter? We spent a little time getting to know these "Ambassadors" at the NC and SC Welcome Centers. After reading this, you may want to also.

Everywhere we look, there are flags; United States flags, North Carolina flags, College flags. What is their origin? What do they mean? Raise your hand if you know what a Vexillologist is. If you are unsure, flip through the pages of our magazine and the answers to the questions will be revealed.

We are all going through uncharted waters, much like Ponce de Leon in the early 1500's. After a legal conflict with Diego Columbus, the son of Christopher, over the governing rights of Puerto Rico, he set out to explore the western Caribbean. Eventually those waters lead him to Florida and discovering America.

To quote a good friend of mine, "Better days are ahead." I believe him. This will pass and we will come out stronger on the other side. Stay safe, and thank you for your continued support of Life in Our Foothills magazine and the Tryon Daily Bulletin.

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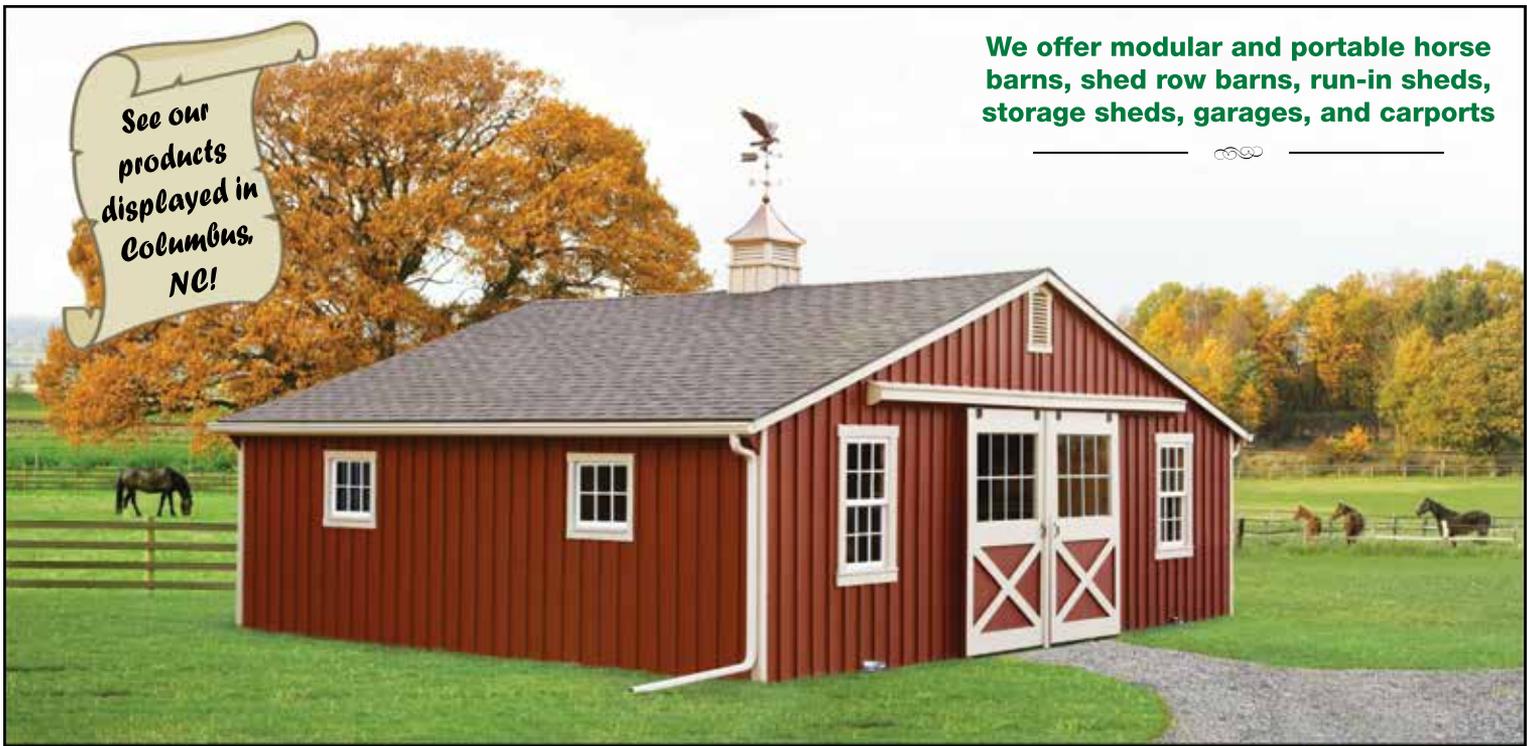
Alex Greene

life IN OUR FOOTHILLS

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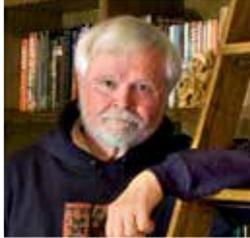
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Mark is retired from a career in education. In addition to the classroom he has had a lifetime of experiences earning a buck as a photographer, videographer, author, musician and camp director. You can follow his blog about people & places in the foothills at www.FoothillsFaces.com or check out his new podcast he enjoys with a friend of 50 years at www.garyandmark.com.



Vincent Verrecchio, Writer and Photographer

When not working in advertising as a copywriter, art director, photographer, creative director, and finally agency owner, Vince was on a horse with a camera on hand somewhere in North America, Europe, or Africa. Now lightly retired from advertising more than 40 years, he writes about whatever strikes his fancy, looks for interesting photos everywhere and wanders in the Foothills on a horse



Macy Cochran, Writer and Photographer

Macy is an English Writing student at North Greenville University. She is a lover of books, coffee and binge watching sitcoms from the 90's. As a creative writer, she often spends her time working on her novels, poetry and short stories.



Jimmi Buell, Writer

Jimmi is an extension agent for the Polk County Center of the North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service. She teaches cooking and nutrition classes with a focus on improving health with better food choices. She can be reached at jimmi_buell@ncsu.edu or 828-894-8218.



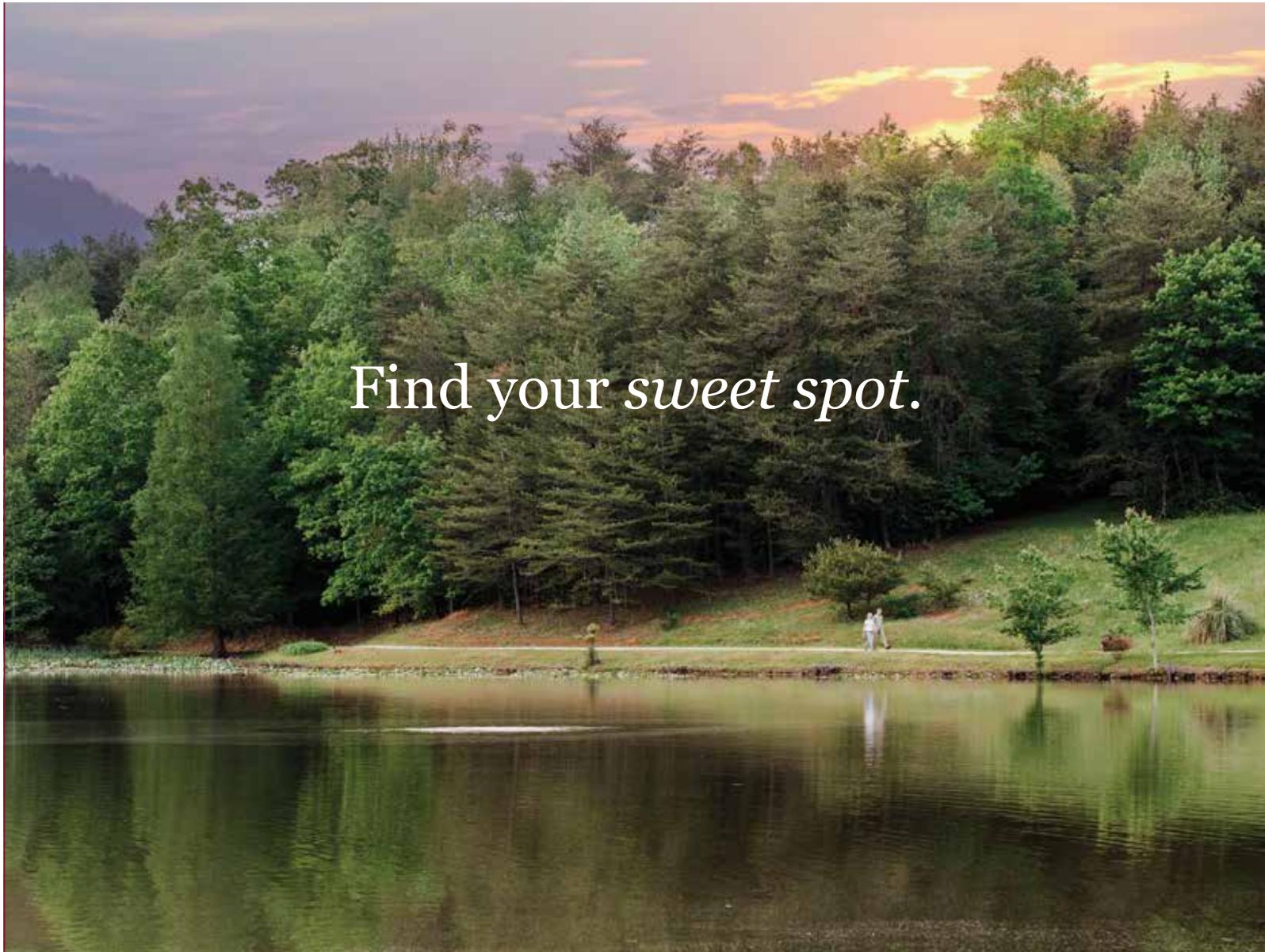
Pebbles, Writer

Pebbles is the “spokespony” for HERD, or Helping Equines Regain Dignity, a local nonprofit that saves equines from dire conditions and in many cases slaughter. She dictates her monthly columns about her adventures and what a rescue organization does to Heather Freeman. Pebbles and Heather can be reached through HerdRescue.org



Jullia Zeleskey, Photographer

Jullia has always had an passion for art and design. These two interests have blossomed into a career she can enjoy on a daily basis. As a photographer, her keen eye for that unique shot are showcased in the Tryon Daily Bulletin, Life in Our Foothills and Visitors Bulletin magazines. Most weekends, she can be found spending time outdoors hiking or mountain biking a trail off the beaten path or sipping a vanilla latte.



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Benefit for Bonnie

On Saturday, March 14, Landrum United Methodist Church hosted a spaghetti dinner for Bonnie Inman after she suffered from an accident last Fall. Many family members and friends, as well as numerous members of the community, came together to lovingly support Bonnie and her husband Pete Inman as she continues her road to recovery.

By Macy Cochran



Charlie Croft,
Paul Forster and
Debby Croft



Pastor Kevin
Dalton and
Martha Castro



Paul Forster, Nancy
Surface and Trudy
VanVoohist

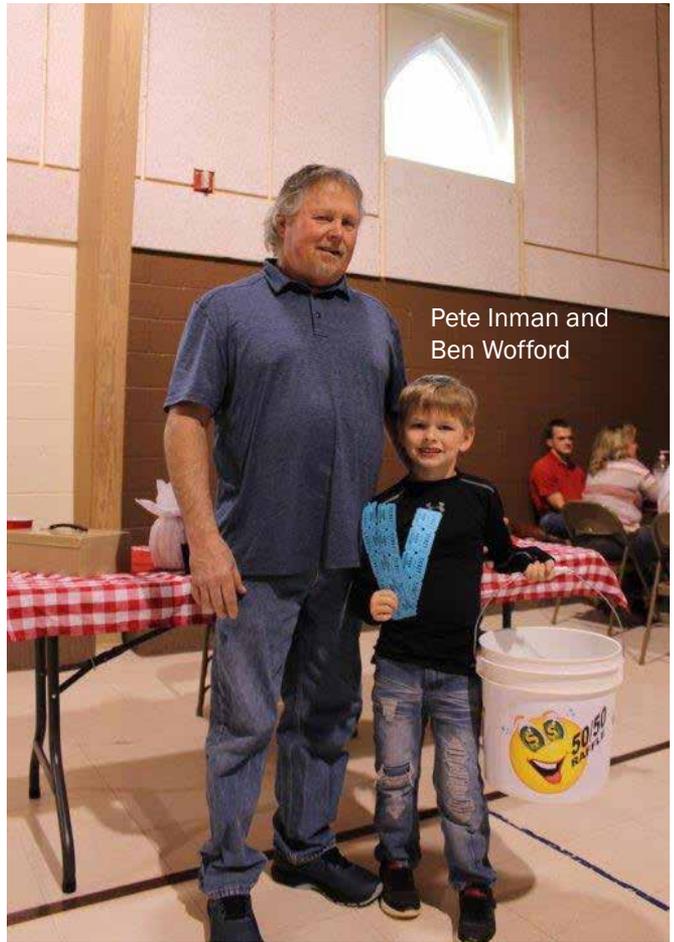


Wayne Hager and
Lou Nesbeca

Elbert and Cheryl Barto



Pete Inman and Ben Wofford



Sonya Levister, Michelle Fagan and Mary Hager



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St. Patty's Day in Landrum

On Saturday March 14, Trade Street in Landrum was covered in green to celebrate an early St. Patrick's Day! Kids had fun playing games while parents enjoyed BBQ, live music and shopping!

By Macy Cochran



Leaflin Winecoff



Liam and Ashley Walter



Bear Tyler



Vicki Cirby and Cindy Fowler



Amelia Resendiz



Donny McInerney



Alley Hutchens and Lindsay McGinnes



Keyanna Hill and Chelsea Faulkner



Jane Mann and Les Stork



Rebecca, Rachel and Leslie Henson



Scott and Susan Tompkins

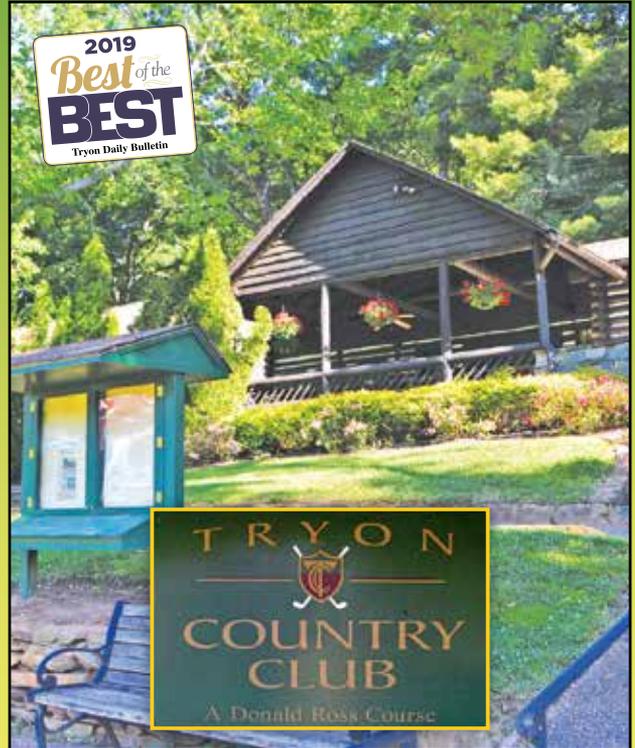


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In the switchback aisles of “The Only House of Flags Museum in America” there are hundreds of stories to be told. Robert and docents are eager to share them in a narrated tour or let visitors explore on their own to read the printed stories that accompany every one of the more than 300 flags.



The High Flying, Colorful World of a Vexillologist

Robert Williamson



Writer & Photographer Vincent Verrecchio

Before 1961, the term vexillology was nowhere in print, nor were derivatives such as vexillologist and vexillophile. Even though vexillographers worked in ancient Egypt and Assyria, no certain references can be found. “Vexillum” (flag) could be found in Latin and “logia” (study) in Greek, but it wasn’t until Whitney Smith put them together and published the term in “The Flag Bulletin” that it entered the English language as the study of the history, usage, art, and symbology of flags.

“Every flag has a story to tell,” says Robert Williamson, volunteer Curator/Executive Director of the non-profit House of Flags Museum located at 33 Gibson Street in Columbus. As we tour the 5,000 square feet of the former 4-bay fire station, he tells from memory the many histories and legends, romances and political back stories, foibles of Presidents and the epic of the United States told in its vexillography. Walking up and down the switchback aisles, it’s obvious that the vexillographer’s art of designing and producing flags is global. Many flags are beautiful, others crude, some simple, others complex.

We pass under draping colors and through valleys of yellows and greens and more across the spectrum, turning corners into reds, whites, and blues. We find, for example, twelfth century Wales, the Viking’s “Raven,” the initials of Ferdinand and Isabella that flew over the Santa Maria, the Fleur de Lis of explorer Giovanni da Verrazzano, the eagle



As a non-profit organization, the House of Flags Museum depends on patrons, donations and grants. For example, the History of the President's Flags was made possible by the Polk County Community Foundation.

taken by Santa Ana at the Alamo, and the rallying fabrics of the Revolutionary, Civil and World Wars, and Korea, Viet Nam, Iraq and Afghanistan. In the furthest room, we explore the saga of states from 1777. There I also touch the Betsy Ross flag in Braille.

Robert explains that Betsy Ross's grandson admitted that he wrote her now legendary story for the nation's centennial in 1876 based only on family oral tradition. The vexillographer of the first U.S. Stars and Stripes was actually Francis Hokinson as evidenced by the bill he submitted to Congress in 1777 and then again in 1778 when payment was not forthcoming. "We have a reproduction of that flag on exhibit," notes Robert, gesturing to invite inspection.

All along I've been assuming that Robert must be a long-time flag collector with his passion

founded in childhood, education or career.

"I am not a flag collector and never have been," states Robert. "I was raised, however, in a family where respect for the flag was simply part of who we were. Grandpa Leon Williamson always said 'any day is flag day' when he raised his huge flag at home on main street of our hometown, Tecumseh, Michigan." Robert also remembers his father rising on his own from his wheelchair, determined to stand for the flag passing in a Memorial Day parade.

Robert's passion for vexillology was in the future after he had worked as a mechanic, earned Degrees in Teacher Education and Tooling Design, directed the technical division in college, and consulted globally as a manufacturing engineer in such locations as a mile deep Canadian gold mine and Red Stripe Brewery in Jamaica.



On July 4, 2007, the 50 star flag became the longest flying flag in U.S. history. 17-year-old Robert Heft designed it in 1958 as a school project. His teacher revised the B- to an A after Congress adopted the design.

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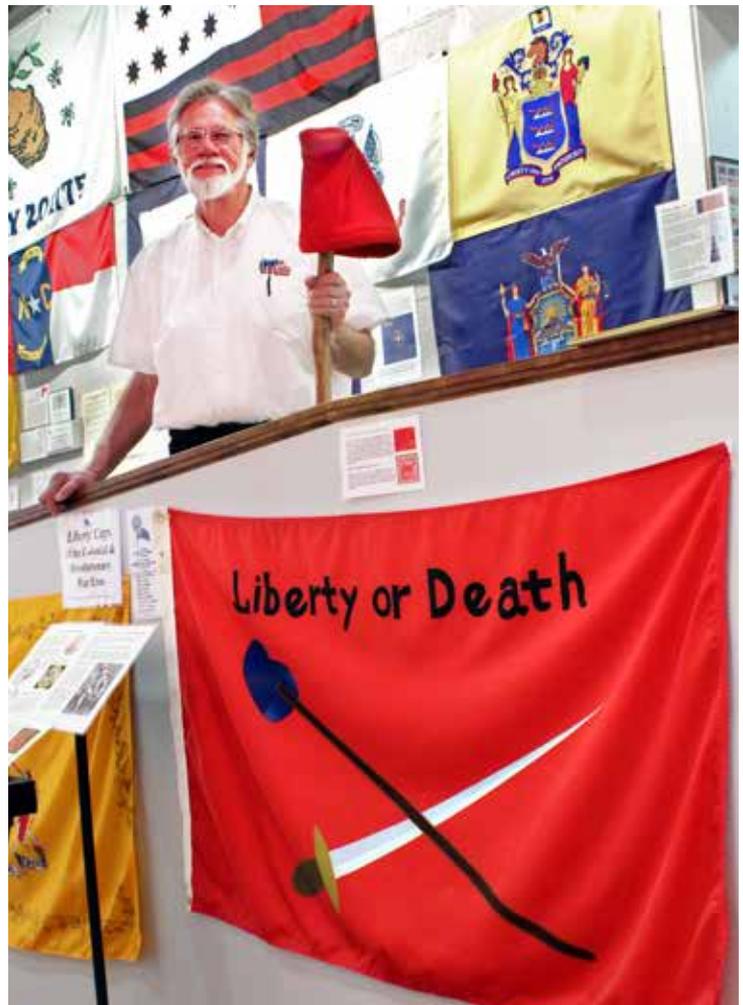
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Volunteer Curator/Executive Director Robert Williamson tells the story of the 245-pound slab of Texas limestone sculpted by Harris Fortier into the Star Spangled banner for the front of the House of Flags. From Reims, France, Fortier remembers stories of the World Wars from his grandparents and parents and believes flags are more than decorated fabric.



If a visitor cannot identify the black stick that crosses the sword on George Washington's flag from the Battle of White Plain, a docent or sign tells the story of The Liberty Cap.

Top center is a reproduction of the token of love cut from a curtain by Miss Jane Elliot and given to her fiancée with the words "Let this be your flag." Until the close of the Revolutionary War, the Eutaw Springs Flag waved in the forefront of every engagement of the Continental Light Dragoons, including Cowpens.



In the United States of America Room, each state flag is paired with the U.S. flag that shows its star added in the year of admission.



Robert believes that flags convey and embody many meanings. “They are the bearers of cultural, philosophical, educational, and humanitarian ideals.”

“My interest in flags was sparked when I met George Schoefield in 2004.”

George had been at a Columbus Fourth of July parade and was dismayed at the number of people who didn’t stand or remove their hats. To help teach respect and understanding of the significance of the flag, he and the VFW Post 9116 started the museum in 2001 in an old school shop building, announcing it as “The Only House of Flags Museum in America.”

“I started making signs for the museum, hearing stories from George, for example, the Eutaw Springs Flag from the Revolutionary War.” Robert gestures up to what seems to me to be the outline of a tropical fish in a field of black and red crosshatching.

Going off to battle, cavalry Colonel William Washington, cousin of George Washington, noted to his fiancée that he had no flag for his troops. Miss Jane Elliot cut a square from the bottom of a silk damask curtain, turned it 90 degrees clockwise, and said, “Let this be your flag.” Until the close of the war, Jane’s token of love waved in the forefront of every engagement of the Continental Light Dragoons, including Cowpens and Eutaw Springs, the last major battle in the Carolinas.

He tells the story with enthusiasm, and I listen expectantly for another. “This is a reproduction of the Bethel flag. The original was made from the skirts of the Woodfin sisters and flew at The Battle of Big Bethel in 1861...where the first regular army officer was killed.”

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The Viet Cong flag was captured in 1969 and donated by a CIA operative, code name “Carolina Boy,” a graduate of Rutherford-Spindale High School. Holes in the upper left corner resulted from trying to break a booby trap string with bullets fired from a safe distance.

At the next flag, I can identify a sword crossed with a black stick topped with an unidentifiable shape under the words Liberty or Death. “This was Washington’s flag at White Plains,” Robert explains. “What do you think is crossing the sword?” I can only shrug as he reaches for a wood staff topped with a red wool cap. “This may look like Papa Smurf’s hat, but it’s The Liberty Cap, symbol of the Sons of Liberty before there was a colonial flag. I wonder how many U.S. Senators know that it can be found on their flag? Or how many people know it’s in the North Carolina state seal, and the flags of the U.S. Army and West Virginia?”

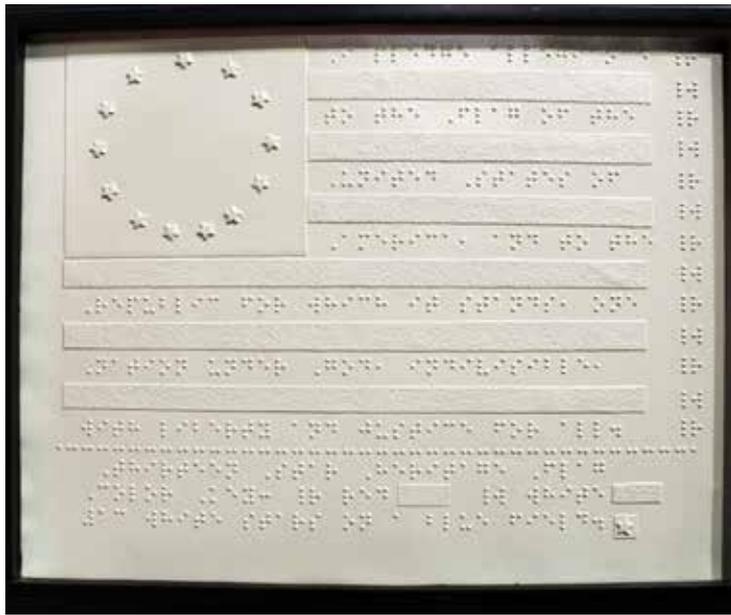
“How did you learn all this?” I ask.

“George taught me much. By the time he died in 2008, I had a sense of purpose as a forensic vexillologist...using the scientific method to

investigate flags. I researched, read, and learned from other vexillologists and curators, and still do. I am intrigued with authenticating originals. I inspect for signs of the era such as fabric, colors, markings, and assembly. I may use a microscope to examine stitching and wear.”

With an engineer’s appreciation for detail, Robert today has authenticated Presidential flags for Presidential Libraries and Museums, flag collectors, and antique dealers. He uses the same mindset when acquiring reproductions for the House of Flags or organizing a special display of originals, such as the Authentic Eisenhower Oval Office Flags in 2012. “It was well worth the year to curate,” says Robert. “We had 1,000 visitors in four days and George would have been pleased.”

Visit www.houseofflags.org for details on a free docent-guided or self-guided tour.



On the Braille 13-star Betsy Ross flag, the colors are represented by differing embossed textures.



To help teach respect and understanding of the significance of the flag, George Schoefield and the VFW Post 9116 started "The Only House of Flags Museum in America" in 2001. Through the following years he regularly waited for visitors to share his stories, shown here in 2007 at the original building. He died in 2008 and would have been overjoyed when 1,000 visitors came during a special 4-day exhibit of original Eisenhower Presidential flags in the new site, 2012. (Photo submitted by Robert Williamson.)

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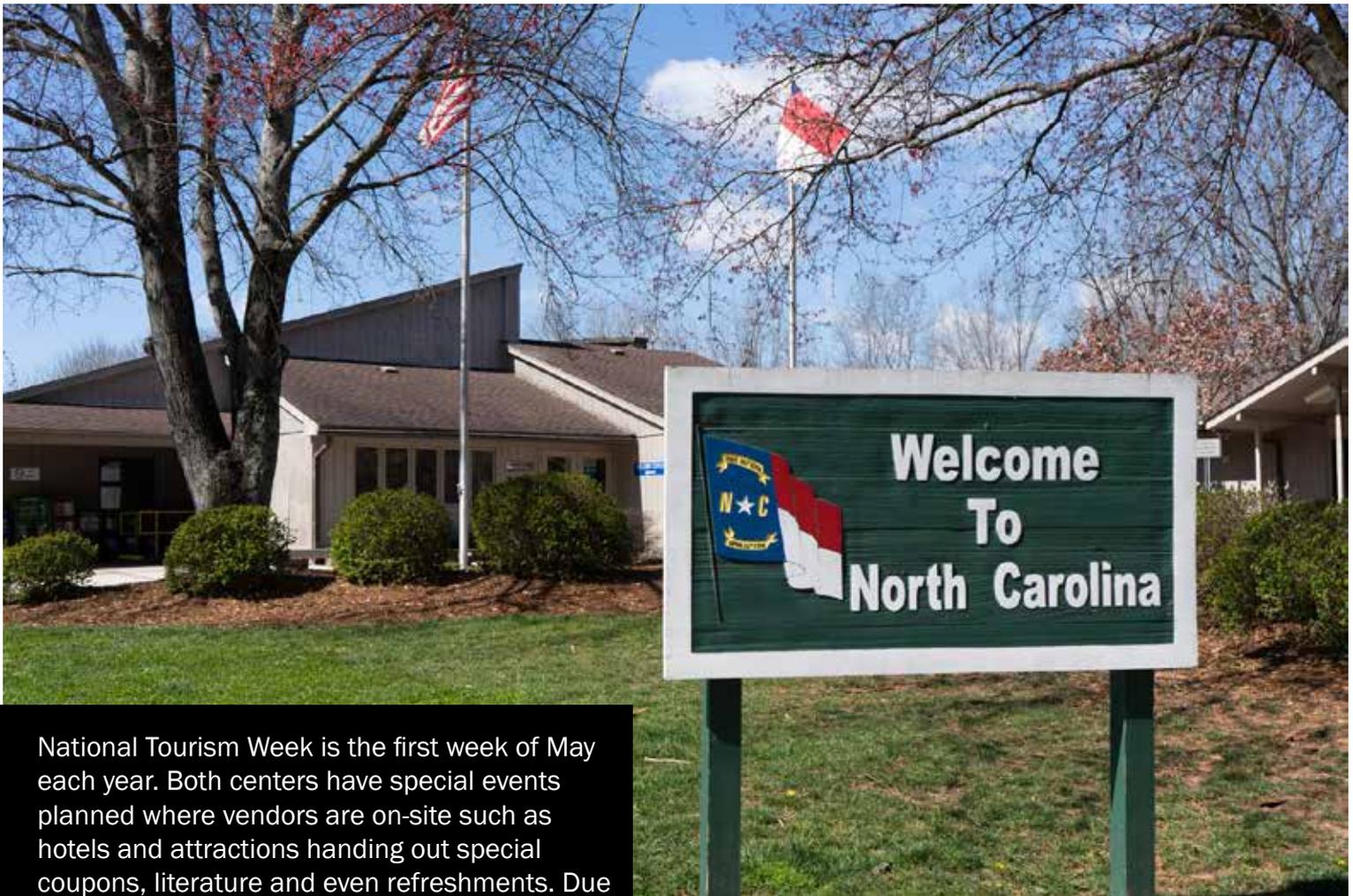


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National Tourism Week is the first week of May each year. Both centers have special events planned where vendors are on-site such as hotels and attractions handing out special coupons, literature and even refreshments. Due to current events outside of their control, these events are canceled for 2020.



A new “selfie-sized” version of this welcome sign will be installed around back.

Goodwill Ambassadors

Our North & South Carolina Welcome Centers



Writer & Photographer Mark Levin

Separated by just a few miles – two beacons of information, rest and relaxation welcome visitors coming into North and South Carolina by the thousands every week. Most locals don't give the Welcome Centers a second thought, but these attractive facilities are often the first impression visitors have of our foothills.

Rhonda Eldridge, manager of the South Carolina Welcome Center at Landrum, makes the point that they are the “front porch” of the state. Just driving through the parking lots is a U.S. geography lesson just waiting to unfold. It's not uncommon to find cars, trucks and motorcycles sporting license plates from a dozen or more states at any moment in time.

The North Carolina Welcome Center in Columbus (I-26 westbound) and the South Carolina Welcome Center in Landrum (I-26 eastbound) have a lot in common. For both, their number one priority is being that first important contact travelers have when they're entering the Palmetto or Tar Heel states. Managers Kathy West with the North Carolina Welcome Center and Rhonda Eldridge of the South Carolina Welcome Center know the importance of making a good first impression. Walk in their doors and you'll feel at home. The staff at both Centers know the importance of making everyone feel genuinely appreciated.

The Welcome Centers see an amazing number of travelers each year. Rhonda says the SC facility had 156,000 guests actually walk through the doors into their visitor center last year and they assisted nearly 102,000 of those folks. Kathy didn't have an actual number of visitors who walked into their visitor center, but over 1,200,000 travelers pulled into the complex. If you do the math, the numbers per day are just as impressive. Rhonda says they gave out over 373,000 pieces of literature to guests hungry for a taste of the Palmetto

state. If you check the supply closet of brochures in the North Carolina center, you can only guess they fly off the shelves as well.

The two welcome centers provide important and appreciated services for travelers. Staff will offer maps, directions and suggestions for any and all kinds of activities for not just the immediate area, but the entire state. They'll even find lodging and make the reservations. Travelers can get updated travel advisories, coupon books and the all-important road map for when the GPS loses signal. Kathy and Rhonda have both traveled to many of the attractions in their respective states and can offer insider information. A first-time visitor to either state or someone coming for the fifteenth time can always find new adventures to explore.

Both centers have charging stations for electronic devices, a feature often appreciated by younger travelers and free wi-fi is available, as well.

Of course, most of the thousands of travelers passing through each week just need a break to stretch their legs, grab some refreshments or use the restroom facilities. And those facilities, by the way, are probably cleaner than yours at home. They are constantly being monitored and cleaned during the usual operating hours. While the welcome centers themselves are open until 5 p.m. seven days a week, the restrooms and the snack machines are available 24 hours a day.

Both facilities offer ample tractor trailer parking for trucks, buses and RVs, though camping on their property is not allowed. Interstate truck drivers, who by law must have a set number of rest hours away from the wheel, are allowed to stay overnight.

While camping isn't allowed, the informative staff can suggest campgrounds and help with reservations for those as well. Picnicking is allowed and encouraged with several covered picnic tables at both centers and both, of

Kathy West, manager of the North Carolina Welcome Center at Columbus



Staff members Margaret Metcalf, Bonna Conner, Valorie Arms, and Kathy West. Not pictured, Vicki Bright. Between them they have over 70 years of service to this Welcome Center.



Visitors (left to right) Gail Phillips, Nancy Lyman, and Frances Hoover, all from South Carolina, took a stop at the NC Welcome Center. They admired the large quilt map by Suzanne Yowell. The ladies were on their way to a quilting show in the North Carolina mountains.

course, have dog walking areas complete with clean-up supplies. The North Carolina center has a wooded walking trail for those wanting to stretch their legs even more and it has picnic tables scattered along the trail. Kathy says they've even had weddings in the wooded settings.

The South Carolina Welcome Center at Landrum will celebrate its 50th anniversary this fall. Rhonda Eldridge has been its manager for the past six years, but she's no newbie to the hospitality business. For several years Rhonda worked as a campground host at Table Rock State Park. In fact, it was her training at the state park and learning to be comfortable with wildlife that led her to be known as "Rhonda, the Rattlesnake Wrangler." She recalls one day, a good-sized rattlesnake decided to sun itself near the main entrance to the center. Rhonda knew this snake deserved to live another day, and she managed to wrangle people more than the snake to get them to come in through a different door. Eventually she was able to shoo the snake into the neighboring woods. That was one of many memorable moments in welcome center history that she'll always remember.

Kathy, at the North Carolina Welcome Center, has

her own share of unique experiences. She remembers when a distraught lady came running into the center to tell them that her husband had left her. She didn't mean left her as in seeing someone else...but in physically leaving her at the Welcome Center as he headed up I-26. It seems the wife was asleep in the back of the van when the husband pulled in to use the restroom. Little did he know that while he was taking care of his business, his wife woke up and decided it was time to take care of hers. He returned first and must not have done a roll call, because he didn't notice his wife was missing. Kathy immediately called the North Carolina Highway Patrol and they finally intercepted the husband around Canton, NC – about 50 miles away. We can only guess what that reunion was like.

Both managers have plenty of stories about their work. Kathy has worked at the Columbus facility for 24 years and served as manager the past four. Kathy and Rhonda do know each other and enjoy occasional chats about interesting and unique things that they've encountered over the years. Both have had their share of helping locate elderly and disoriented travelers via the Silver Alert programs the states run. They both







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Rhonda Eldridge, manager



Rhonda Eldridge, Shannon Evans, and Rhonda Hightower go out of their way to make their guests feel welcome. Not pictured, Denise Herren.

have seen their share of pets that escaped and had to be located and the same goes for a variety of left items including cell phones and luggage. And then there was that one left wife.

The North Carolina Welcome Center is a major staging area when hurricanes start to approach the coast. I-26 is a natural evacuation route and the staff at the Columbus facility often work extra hours trying to find emergency lodging for evacuees including those with pets. Not only are they in contact with hotels and motels and other typical lodging options but are also in contact with emergency shelters. The North Carolina Center will work with Rhonda and the staff at the South Carolina Welcome Center to help guide people to available lodging facilities in the Upstate, as well. It's a team effort.

The South Carolina Welcome Center has recently undergone a major renovation. In fact, the Landrum location was chosen as the "pilot" facility for a complete overhaul. Instead of a central information counter, they went with an all-new ambiance including pods and a sleek concierge style. The center is very open with a large sunlight. Future update plans include special parking for military and emergency responders to show how much they're appreciated. The South Carolina Center also plans to erect a smaller version

of the large Welcome to South Carolina sign around back so that people taking selfies will not be so close to the entrance ramp.

North Carolina's Welcome Center at Columbus opened in December 1982. It has more of the "old school" look. Its arts and crafts style of architecture fits the feel of Western North Carolina with copious use of stonework and wood trim. A unique feature of the Columbus facility is all the commissioned handcrafted made in North Carolina furniture that fills the space. Kathy is also proud of the changing exhibits and displays that highlight work of North Carolina artists and craftspeople. A permanent piece of art is a large quilt map of the entire state created by Suzanne Yowell of Durham. The quilt took a thousand hours of work to complete.

Many local residents do stop in at the Centers for their share of maps and brochures to help plan their own vacations or even staycations. Some even stop for a picnic. But by and large, we don't realize the importance these facilities are to the millions of travelers who appreciate the fact that this help is available. The North Carolina and South Carolina Welcome Centers are a treasure for sure and is a one-stop place for making new memories.



Rhonda helps guest Teresa Oppold from Cincinnati, OH choose her next adventure.



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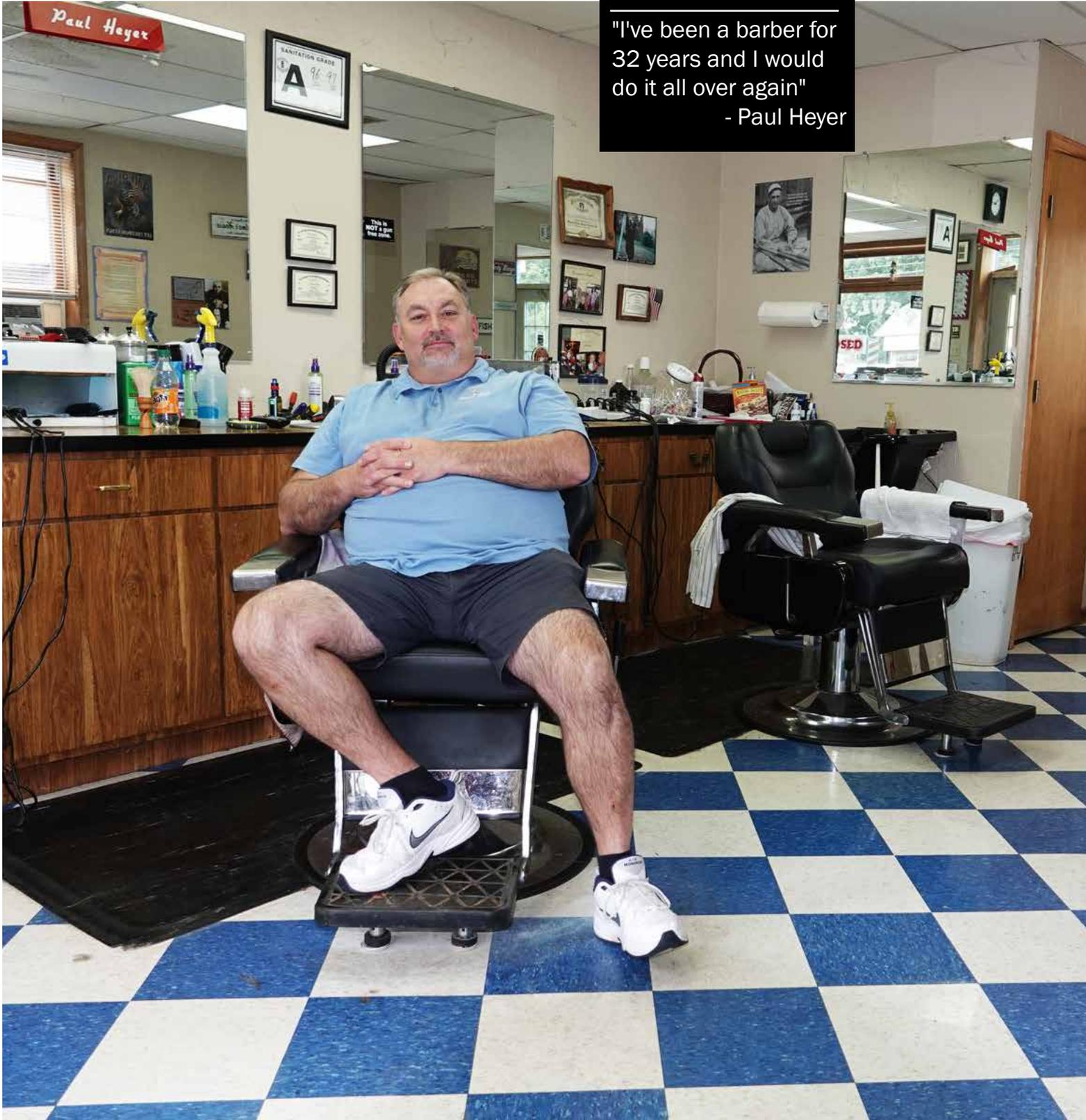
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"I've been a barber for 32 years and I would do it all over again"
- Paul Heyer



Cuttin' it up

The Barber, Paul Heyer



Writer & Photographer Mark Levin

Paul Heyer probably didn't believe being a barber would be his life's vocation when he gave his first haircut in Florida. But over 32 years later he says, "I wish I had started five years earlier." It's good to know Paul loves his job that much, especially when he holds your entire "looks" in the palm of his hand.

Paul has been a barber in Columbus for almost 20 years. He has been my personal haircutter-of-choice for all of those. Working along side him is his part-time assistant, Frank. You can't go wrong with either of them. But, the sign outside proudly states, Pauls Shop.

Paul knows just about every customer by name, which is quite an accomplishment when you only see some of them for fifteen or twenty minutes once every month or so. He does have a group of regulars who come in like clockwork every week or two. Paul says they like to "look the same" from week to week. I can understand the reasoning as I'm one of those who shows up only when my hair gets too shaggy. Paul mentions that his shop isn't just for the men; he has about a dozen ladies who come to Paul's Barbershop for their regular trims.

Paul is his own boss, but this doesn't mean he can just do what he wants! Since his hours are posted he's got to be there. His customers expect it. They aren't always forgiving if Paul says he opens at 7 a.m. but doesn't

MORE TO KNOW...

Paul's Barbershop is located at 40 East Mills Street in Columbus. 828-817-4598, but don't call for appointments. It's a wait your turn shop...but it's never a long wait!



make it in until 7:05. Paul says unless he's contagious he'll be there even when he's not feeling so great. Most of us would call in a sick day, but for the self-employed missing a day means you don't pay the bills. Paul talked about a time he broke his hand and had to plead with the doctor to leave two fingers free so he could at least hold a comb. Luckily for Paul (and probably his customers) it was his left hand, and Paul holds the clippers in his right.

Of course, no one could predict that current conditions we are going through would shut down his shop for who knows how many weeks? Paul says luckily, he can weather this storm. Like everyone else, he hopes this will soon be a bad memory.

Paul is very supportive of our men and women in uniform. His two sons are on active duty...one in the

Marines and the other in the Navy. He helps spread his pride by displaying a license plate on the front of his truck that reads, "Navy/Marines – House United." A sign out front proclaims, "Thank you, Veterans."

Paul does his part to pay it forward to our current and past service members by giving discounts to veterans on Veteran's Day and free haircuts to all active duty members of the military. He also gives a discount to retirees...and I'm happy to be able to take an advantage of that. On the other end of the age spectrum, a baby's first haircut is always free.

Paul enjoys his work and his customers. He has some memories of things that have happened in his shop including the time a would-be groom runs in looking for two "witnesses" so that he could get married over at the



Looking at this clock, it appears to read backwards. However, when sitting in the barber chair looking at it through the mirror, it reads perfectly clear.

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Polk County Courthouse around the corner. Two customers quickly volunteered, and as far as we know, the couple is still happily married.

Paul found a new love about a year ago. In June of last year, he married his new wife, Chamie. I'm not thinking the two marriage stories are connected, but who knows...

Paul has a few standing gags like occasionally spraying water over the small play area where little kids are waiting for their haircuts only to have it fall down from the sky. They look upward and Paul makes a little joke saying it must be from the leaking toilet upstairs. Well, they get grossed out. Paul has to explain that there is no upstairs. Some are still a bit doubtful and are not totally reassured.

Paul is a master of carrying on conversations with customers. Whatever the topic of the day is might be on the talking agenda. Or, a customer could bring something up and that brings the entire room into the conversation. It's never a dull moment in Paul's.

He has a devoted group of people who claim Paul's Barbershop as their own. However, there was one lone time when Paul did have to tell one old grouch that he needed to find another barbershop. And no, that wasn't me!

Over these past twenty years, Paul's Barbershop has become a fixture in downtown Columbus. And that's because of Paul. It's nice to know some good things never change.



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Pearl on departure day leaving her friends to head to training.

A Pearl of a Pony

By Pebbles



Who does not admire a beautiful, lustrous pearl? I have always said pearls dress up everything, including a band of fancy mares.

It's been about six months since we added our little two-year old Haflinger-cross pony named Pearl to the mix at the rescue farm. First, we put her in a pasture with the two long-legged mares she arrived with—elegant Appendix quarter horse Athena and Harmony, the 16.1-hand thoroughbred. This did not work out at all as they chased her relentlessly for sport.

Next, we tried her with smaller pinto Welsh ponies, Arizona and her daughter Sedona. Arizona chased her mercilessly, away from the water tank and hay, keeping

her as far as away as possible from her little filly baby. So, strike two, that was not the solution either.

Heather, my mistress who founded HERD, came up with another plan. She went out and talked to her favorite trail horse, Night Lark, who was also rescued five years ago as a yearling, hoping she would show some compassion to little Pearl. Well it worked like a charm. Night Lark and Pearl were moved to their own pasture all to themselves at the very back on the farm. This lush field had the best grass and a nice run-in shed. Night Lark adored Pearl. She gently shared her hay with her, and they settled right in together, grooming each other and napping in the shade.

Inca, Promise and Sophie, Heather's other mares, could convene with their friend Night Lark over the fence. They

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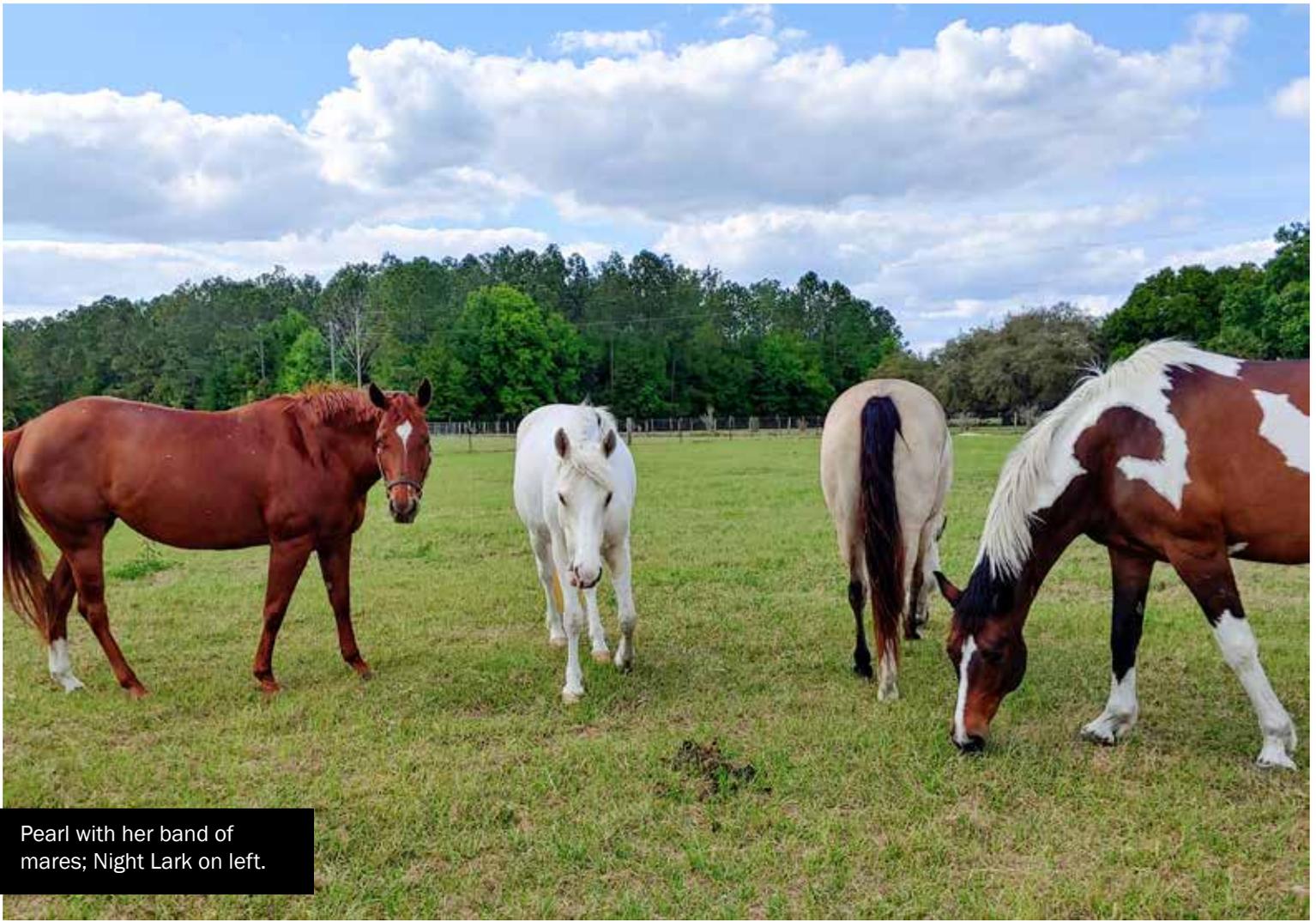
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Pearl with her band of mares; Night Lark on left.



She arrived to foster mom Kailey Nicole Holden in NC today.

could also slowly warm up to Pearl and before long, they met and greeted Pearl with squealing pleasure befitting a newcomer.

After two weeks' time, Heather opened the gate to let Pearl and Night Lark mix with her horses in the larger pasture. All went well with this merging of mares. Five feeding buckets were set up and each one found their place on the fence line to devour their grain daily. Hay time in the run-in shed became their favorite gathering place for snoozing.

Promise has always been boss mare of our band of mares. She was kind to me but let me know under no uncertain terms, she was in charge and got first bite of anything she wanted on the menu. This included me if I challenged her for a quick bite of the best hay.

According to our equine dentist, Promise has canine teeth that are more often only associated with stallions. Occasionally a powerful mare will have them too. At 16.1 and with big bones to match, Oldenburg mare Promise is something to behold, magnificent in size and stature.

In contrast, Pearl, a mere 13 hands can almost squeeze under the big mare. Sophie, Promise's full sister, is number two in the group and a tad smaller at 16 hands, followed by Night Lark and Inca, who are both 14.1 hands. Inca has always been the low member in pecking order. For her, Pearl was a welcome addition as she now had someone beneath her in the pecking order. However, this hierarchy would not last long.

One by one, each of the large mares fell for Pearl and her darling personality. Always the first to the gate for attention, Pearl was more like a puppy than an equine. Once everyone was smitten including Heather, Pearl got the upper hand. She was perfect for her baths, an angel for the farrier and good as gold rang true for catching her to put on her fly mask.

What changed was who oversaw the group. Pearl took over as boss mare. She ruled at the water tank for first drink, moved Promise down the line for feed time. She also dictated who got to eat from the hay piles first.

That little pony has some big gusto. With her mighty attitude, also came a more beautiful to behold Pearl. Her neck and body filled out, while her mane and tail became splendid too. She prances around like a royal and still maintains that melt your heart sweetness with people and her best friend Night Lark. I have to say I don't think Promise or Sophie care for her at all, and sweet Inca has moved back down to the bottom of the totem pole.

Pearl is ready now to begin training. We are certain she is going to make one fine show pony. She is fearless, confident and she sure can tango with her

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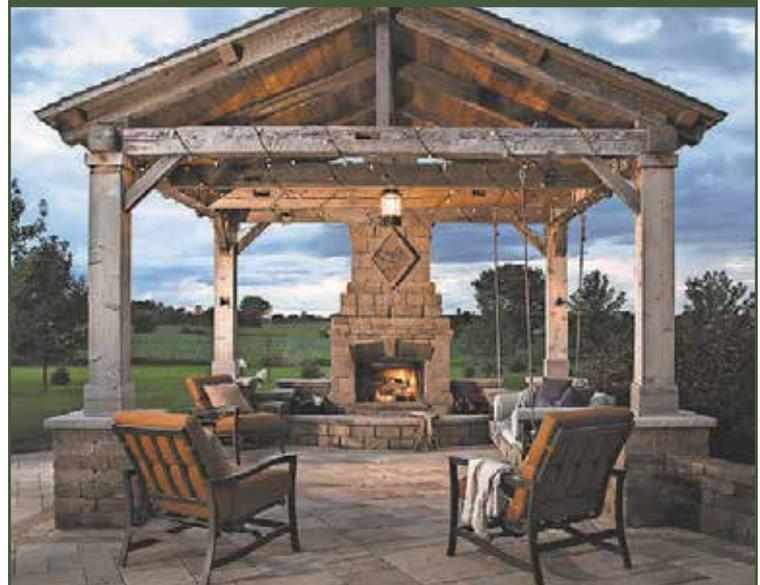
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Pearl with Volunteer Valerie Lowe after a spa day.

fancy movement. Night Lark is currently the only horse who dares correct her. She does this by pushing her away when Heather comes out to love on everyone in this field.

Soon Pearl will leave us to head into training with Kailey Nicole Holden in Rutherford, N.C. She specializes in show ponies and loves Pearl's gorgeous movement and looks. Heather's mare will resume their roles pre-Pearl. I am guessing only Night Lark will grieve a bit as the trailer pulls out the gate with her friend.

However, I can tell you one person who is going to cry her eyes out when Pearl departs and that is my Heather. She has fallen very much in love with this jewel of a pony. I must admit I am a tad jealous although I know she adores all of

us too whole heartedly. There is just something super special about Pearl.

In preparation for her departure, Heather had the vet come prepare a health certificate for travel. Pearl has been bathed and brushed for hours. She looks splendid!

I am in standby mode with a handkerchief as we all know that tissues are impossible to buy lately. It is with a heavy heart that we will wave goodbye to Pearl. Crocodile tears will be forthcoming as we will miss this sweet, sassy pony and hope the very best for her. Ponies are just so special. We each leave our mark, hoofprints on the hearts of those who love us well. Pearl is no exception, she is so much like me in small size, huge spirit!



Pearl in a slaughter pen being sold for meat weight when HERD saved her.



Pearl is at her low point in this photo. You can see the defeated look on her face. At age two, we thought Pearl would not have made it. So we brought her home.

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Creamed Pearl Onions



By Pebbles

Ingredients:

- 4 cups pearl onions
- 3 tablespoons butter
- 3 tablespoons all-purpose flour
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- Dash pepper
- 3/4 cup chicken broth
- 3/4 cup half-and-half cream
- 1/4 cup minced fresh parsley
- 3 tablespoons grated Parmesan cheese

Serves 6

Directions:

- In a Dutch oven, or large kettle, bring 8 cups water to a boil. Add pearl onions; boil until tender, 6-7 minutes. Drain and rinse in cold water; peel and set aside.
- In a saucepan, melt butter. Stir in the flour, salt and pepper until smooth. Gradually stir in broth and cream. Bring to a boil; cook and stir for 2 minutes or until thickened. Stir in the parsley, cheese and onions.
- Pour into an ungreased 1-1/2-qt. baking dish. Cover and refrigerate overnight. Remove from the refrigerator 30 minutes before baking. Cover and bake at 350° for 15 minutes; stir. Bake uncovered, 10 minutes longer or until bubbly and heated through.

Herb Cheese Stuffed Garlic Burgers

QUICK BITES

Serves 6

Ingredients:

- 2 pounds ground beef chuck, 85 percent lean
 - 2 tablespoons chopped garlic
 - 1/2 teaspoon kosher salt
 - 1/4 teaspoon ground black pepper
 - 3 tablespoons herbed garlic cream cheese, such as Boursin
 - 6 hamburger buns, split
- Oil for coating grill grate

The Grill

Gas: Direct heat, medium-high 425 F to 450 F; clean, oiled grate

Charcoal: Direct heat, light ash; 12-by-12-inch charcoal bed (about 3 dozen coals); clean, oiled grate on lowest setting

Wood: Direct heat, light ash; 12-by-12-inch bed, 3 to 4 inches deep; clean, oiled grate set 2 inches above the fire

Directions:

1. Heat the grill as directed.
2. Using your hands, mix the beef, garlic, salt, and pepper in a bowl until well blended; do not overmix. Using a light touch, form into 12 patties no more than 1/2-inch thick.
3. Put a portion (about 1 1/2 teaspoons) of cream cheese in the center of each of the 6 patties; top with the remaining patties and press together, taking care to seal the edges well. Refrigerate the burgers until the grill is ready.
4. Brush the grill grate and coat it with oil. Put the burgers on the grill, cover and cook for 9 minutes, flipping after 5 minutes, for medium-done (150 F, slightly pink). Add a minute per side for well-done (160 F).
5. To toast the buns, put them cut-sides down directly over the fire for the last minute of cooking.
6. If serving the burgers directly from the grill, serve on the buns. If the burgers will sit, even for a few minutes, keep the buns and burgers separate until just before eating.



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May is National Strawberry Month

By Jimmi Buell



Did you know that there are more than 70 varieties of strawberries? The most popular commercial varieties are Camarosa, Chandler, Sweet Charlie, Camino Real, Bish and Galleta. North Carolina is even the fourth largest strawberry producer in the nation.

Strawberries can be available year round, but peak season in the United States is May to July and in North Carolina is mid-April to mid-June. Some growers can produce ripe strawberries in the fall, winter or very early spring using high tunnels or greenhouses. Some growers are planting “day neutrals” which produce strawberries all summer.

Strawberries must be picked by hand because they are very delicate and bruise easily. North Carolina has many “pick your own” farms. Because strawberries will not ripen after picking, if you are doing your own picking, be sure to choose strawberries with a solid red color, and very little green or white. Strawberries should not have any mold or be leaky or damaged. The green caps should look fresh.

When storing strawberries in the refrigerator, keep them in their containers and place in the coldest part of the refrigerator where it is about 32-36 degrees. Typical shelf life is 5-7 days. Do not wash or remove caps from strawberries until you are ready to serve, though, so they will stay fresh longer.

Strawberries are a superfood— which means they are packed with nutrients. Strawberries are an excellent source of vitamin C and a good source of fiber. A cup of whole strawberries has around 50 calories and 140% of the recommended daily value of Vitamin C. In fact, eight strawberries contain more vitamin C than one orange! Vitamin C helps form collagen to hold muscles, bones and tissues together, protects us from infections and bruising, aids in healing, keeps our gums healthy, helps our body absorb iron and folate from plants and acts as an antioxidant to prevent cell damage. The insoluble fiber found in strawberries can help lower cholesterol and aids with digestion. Strawberries also have a variety of phytochemicals which act as antioxidants, preventing or repairing cell damage.

Not only are strawberries good for you, they taste good too! While we often think of strawberries as an ingredient in desserts, there are so many ways to blend them into your breakfast, lunch, or dinner meals. Try this fun and tasty recipe the next time you pick fresh strawberries.

Quinoa Strawberry Salad

Ingredients:

Salad:

- ½ cup dry quinoa, rinsed well
- 2 cups baby spinach leaves
- ⅔ cup sliced strawberries
- 2 tablespoons sliced almonds, toasted
- 1 handful of fresh basil leaves, sliced finely

Dressing:

- 2 tablespoons balsamic vinegar
- 1 teaspoon Dijon mustard
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- Salt and fresh ground pepper to taste

Directions:

1. Place quinoa in medium saucepan along with 1¾ cups water. Bring to boil, then cover and reduce heat to simmer for 15 minutes or until cooked.
2. Remove lid and cook until all water is evaporated. Remove from heat.
3. Make the dressing by combining all ingredients in a bowl or jar.
4. Place the quinoa, spinach, strawberries, toasted almonds and basil in bowl and combine.
5. Add and toss in dressing just prior to serving.

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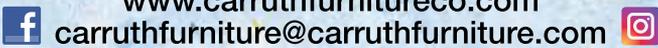
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No-Bake Strawberry Cream Pie

By Linda List

Springtime calls for delectable desserts that are light and fresh. No-Bake Strawberry Cream Pie is super fluffy, filled with fresh strawberries, and is served chilled for a beautiful, refreshing dessert. Strawberries are just showing up at roadside markets so it's the perfect season for this delicious pie. You might need a trip to the grocery store for some of the ingredients. Since this is a time for caution when shopping, follow all the CDC guidelines for staying safe.



Serving:

This is a delightful pie so select some pretty china dishes for serving. Garnish with a dollop of whipped cream on top and a few plump fresh strawberries on the side.

Ingredients:

- Prepared graham cracker pie crust at the store.
- $\frac{2}{3}$ cup Sweetened Condensed Milk
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup Strawberry Jam
- 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ cups Heavy Cream
- 6 oz Strawberries, fresh or frozen, chopped (defrost and then chop if using frozen)
- Whipped cream, for garnish

Directions:

1. In a small bowl, whisk together condensed milk and strawberry jam. Set aside
2. Beat heavy cream with a handheld mixer on high until it forms stiff peaks, 3 to 4 minutes.
3. Fold condensed milk and jam and chopped strawberries into whipped cream. Don't worry if everything isn't evenly combined - the streaks of ingredients will create a nice marbled look.
4. Pour filling over crust. Smooth out the top.
5. Freeze the pie until set, minimum of 4 hours.
6. Let the pie defrost for 30 minutes at room temperature or for 6 to 8 hours in the refrigerator before slicing and serving.

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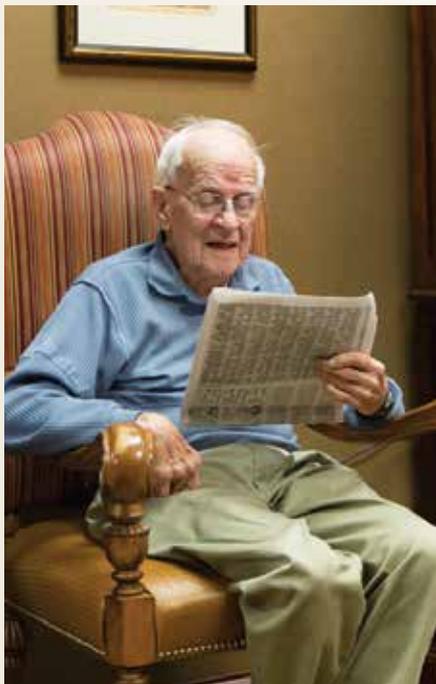
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