Thinking of listing your property?

The EVOLUTION of St. James Properties

Historical perspective. While we were always the leader in resales for almost 20 years, St. James Properties sold more developer sales. Understandably, many owners still maintain that perception.

But times have changed. Here’s why. After more than 4,700 sales over a 23 year period, more and more properties come up for resale. That’s what happens as a community matures. As a result, there are far more resales available than developer sales.

So, a few years ago, we changed our whole approach to sales.

We became Buyer’s Agents versus Seller’s Agents. We also formed a separate exclusive group who are Listing Agents. They work solely for our listing owners.

We specialize in St. James Plantation only, while other real estate firms sell and list all over the county.

Million dollar marketing budget. For the past 20 years, we have spent over $1,000,000 annually to promote St. James. This consistent effort results in over 2,000 prospect tours each year. Think about that! The typical REALTOR® brings in 100 or less prospects to their office.

2018 Sales

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<td>Discover NC Homes</td>
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<td>RE/MAX Southern Coast</td>
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<td>$1,408,800</td>
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Source: Based on North Carolina Regional MLS Statistics

QUESTIONS TO ASK

Before you list your property with anyone.

1. How many St. James Plantation sales has your company made in the last 12 months?
2. What is your marketing budget for St. James Plantation specifically?
3. How many prospects physically come through your office annually?
4. Do you specialize in St. James Plantation?
5. Are you an exclusive buyer’s agent?

Results.

As a result of the changes, approximately two-thirds of our total sales are now resales. Moreover, we sell more resales in St. James Plantation than the other 970 Brunswick County REALTORS® combined.


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Submit address changes to POA

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ON THE COVER:
“2017 Memorial Day Ceremony at St. James”
(photo by John Muuss)
Our new tagline, “Your home. Your stories.” is one we take seriously. Originally, we thought these few words would inspire our contributors to write more articles about the residents of St. James — their lives, their interests and what makes them tick.

We’re still running such stories, and the tagline may have inspired our contributors to take an extra step. This month, for example, we’re featuring articles by two residents who share some personal thoughts and experiences on life and living in St. James.

Gina Mancinelli’s “Empty Nesting” is a witty and thoughtful story that’s appropriate for Mother’s Day on May 13. All of us, even fathers, can relate to Gina’s memories of children growing up and moving away. Her light style touches the heart of any parent whose children — and grandchildren — are too many miles away from St. James.

Meanwhile, contributor Fred Ammann also reaches out to his kids in “Swedish Death Cleaning.” It’s a humorous tale about making life easier for his children by decluttering his Trailwood Drive residence. This isn’t the first time that Fred has written in

"Have you ever wondered about the origins of the sign that awaits residents and visitors as they pass through the main gate of St. James and wind their way south on St. James Drive?"

Cat-Tales about the half-life of stuff. Last October, he wrote about how St. James garages enable our hoarding tendencies.

Do you know which of our golf pros loves munching on M&Ms while practicing chip shots, or which pro’s favorite movie is “Rocky?” For the answers to these and other questions about our 11 PGA pros, read Rich Mina’s story, “Do you know your golf pro?” See if you can figure out who’s who, based on their golf histories, favorite movies or much-loved snack foods.

Speaking of The Clubs, be sure to read our conversation with Kent Silhanik, the new general manager. He’s been here only a few short weeks, but he’s making his presence known.

Robyn Smith, a once and future (we hope) Cat-Tales associate editor, reminds us in her story that some of our favorite residents aren’t human. Check out “Sandie, the rescue dog” to learn why the best-laid plans for this lab mix didn’t pan out, and why that doesn’t make any difference.

Have you ever wondered about the origins of the sign that awaits residents and visitors as they pass through the main gate of St. James and wind their way south on St. James Drive? The one that begins, “If Change did not exist....” Homer Wright tells contributor Judy Rubin how the sign got to be there in “The evolution of change.”

Finally, we’ve dedicated our cover this month to Americans to whom much is owed. May 28 is Memorial Day, a time to reflect on Americans who have died in war. Like many cities and towns around the country, St. James will hold a ceremony marking Memorial Day. We encourage residents to attend this event at noon on May 28 at the Community Center, hosted by American Legion Post 543.
This month marks the start of new penalties for speeding and stop signs infractions. The new penalties were first publicized in a March 26 email to give residents a 30-day notice. The new penalties also apply to contractor vehicles and delivery trucks. However, instead of losing RFID privileges, they are barred from entering the plantation. The table below provides a summary of the new penalties; items in the table with an asterisk reflect the number of days RFID privileges are suspended.

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Offense</th>
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<td>Third</td>
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A suspension means that repeat offenders will have to use the visitor/contractor entry lane when entering the plantation instead of the property owner lane. Every day after 7 p.m. and all day Sundays, entry for vehicles without RFID tags will be restricted to the Main Gate on North Carolina Route 211.

The period for a repeat offense is a three-year rolling window. This means any offense will remain on your record for three years – like state laws and insurance company rules.

We received a lot of feedback on this subject, including emails, phone calls, social media and golf course discussions. For the most part, the feedback was positive. By my count, 80 percent of the written comments we received were positive — meaning individuals are concerned about traffic safety and support increased penalties.

I’m sure you have seen the radar signs positioned on the streets throughout the community. We have 12 of these signs and they serve two purposes. They provide drivers with the actual speed of their vehicles and a reminder to adjust their speed if necessary. They also provide the Board with data about vehicular speed on selected roads.

The signs are moved around and normally remain in a designated position for a one-month period. The Board reviews this data monthly and the data over the past few months was the major factor in our decision to increase penalties for traffic rules infractions.

We have not provided this information in past POA Open Information Meetings, but we will do so in the future. As an example, in the month of February, nine roads were monitored — five with a 20-mph speed limit and four roads with a 30-mph limit. We recorded the speed of 168,651 vehicles during that period. A total of 75,412 vehicles (45 percent) exceeded the posted speed limit.

Especially alarming was the number of vehicles exceeding speed limits by more than 15 mph, ranging from 18-40 mph more than the posted speed limit. Clearly, our roads are not designed to accommodate such high speeds.

We ask for your support in obeying posted speed limits and warning signs and stopping at stop signs. Working together, we can make St. James a safer place to live and play.
In this month's column, I would like to provide an update on recently completed projects and let you know about a few that are on the horizon.

We recently completed an update of the Town website (http://www.townofstjamesnc.org/). It has been reorganized, it is easier to navigate and its content has been expanded. Check out the new section on Environment and Animal Control for tips on co-existing with the local wildlife.

"I would like to provide an update on recently completed projects and let you know about a few that are on the horizon."

We completed the street light improvement project in February, six months ahead of schedule and on budget. Additional light poles were installed to improve safety in poorly lit areas. Full cutoff lights were installed in neighborhoods bordering the Intracoastal and areas where lighting was extremely close to housing to reduce light trespass. In all project areas, the metal halide lamps were replaced by LEDs to reduce light intensity, energy use and carbon footprint.

In October 2014 the Federal Emergency Management Agency presented proposed area Flood Protection maps. We recently learned that the maps will finally be going into effect in August 2018. The new maps represent a positive change for many St. James properties and for some, no change at all. The Town Council and Planning Board will need to update and amend our Flood Damage Prevention Ordinance prior to August for the maps to be effective for St. James.

You can review the proposed maps by going to http://rfris.nc.gov/fris/Index.aspx?FIPS=019&ST=NC&user=General%20Public. View map panels 2166, 2167, 2176 and 2177. The Town can't offer information or advice regarding flood insurance coverage or premiums, but you can contact your personal insurance agent regarding flood insurance matters.

The Town Council held a retreat in March to discuss issues and challenges that we will face soon. The meeting began with a discussion of the five-year budget forecast. At this time, we do not foresee anything that will stress the property tax rate. We anticipate that revenues generated from sales and property taxes will continue to increase and should offset projected increases in expenditures.

The North Carolina Route 211 widening project continues to be a topic of discussion. We do not have a project schedule, but the Department of Transportation anticipates beginning construction in September 2019. In the meantime, the Town will be working with the POA to develop a construction communication plan to keep residents informed.

We have reviewed the yard debris removal program and we will be considering service alternatives. Any proposed changes will be discussed at a Town Council meeting.

As there have been ongoing problems with the Community Center’s outdated AV system, we will pursue appropriate replacement options.

In other areas, we will establish policies regarding remote participation by councilors in Town meetings, the authorization process for contacting the Town attorney and an annual inspection of closed-session minutes to identify any that are ready for public disclosure.

— SAVE THE DATE —

The Annual Emergency Management Team Severe Storm Seminar is scheduled for June 5, 2018.
The “basic training” St. James Fire Department (SJFD) firefighters undergo is consistent with the requirements for North Carolina Fire Fighter levels one and two. During this training period, most of which is didactic, firefighters also receive hands-on training, working in individual companies or units. The hands-on training gives them opportunities to put into practice the skills learned during the classroom portion of their training.

The training doesn’t end there. Your SJFD trains each Monday and Wednesday for two hours each day. Companies, led by a lieutenant, are divided into truck units, with each company assigned to a specific truck for a month. In addition, all firefighters rotate between the trucks throughout the year, so they become familiar with each piece of apparatus.

Individual firefighters also rotate through the different companies. Firefighters at your SJFD don’t live in the firehouse, as depicted on TV. When they answer the alarm, each firefighter is assigned to different trucks by a captain, who makes the assignment based on levels of expertise. By training in rotating companies, firefighters learn how to operate with their brothers and sisters and become generalists — all the better to serve you.

Back to the training. The twice-weekly training sessions include truck checks to ensure equipment is in the right place. Tools and equipment can be misplaced following an early-morning call. Practice scenarios put skills into practice and develop good muscle memory.

Did I mention working on a fire truck, even in a training environment, is strenuous — basically hard work? The department’s officers design practice scenarios to include tasks performed when arriving on scene and tasks when fighting a fire. Trucks and the assigned crew are given such tasks as:

- Attaching the large-diameter hose (LDH) to a fire hydrant and the pumper truck;
- Running fire hoses from the truck to the interior attack team (inside the structure, fighting the fire);
- Assembling and positioning a ventilation team to reduce smoke inside the structure;
- Laying out hoses, in case a stand-by is needed;
- Laying out additional LDH to a pumper, if necessary;
- Identifying and positioning a rescue team in case the attack team runs into problems.

Other tasks need to be accomplished, but this is the basic layout. They’re performed at every company training session for a structure fire (vehicle fire practice is another training regimen). Emergency Medical Service personnel occasionally train with firefighters to sharpen skills when supporting us during the real thing.

Through the efforts of Lt. Bob Hardison, your SJFD uses the firefighter training facility at Military Ocean Terminal Sunny Point. This excellent training facility and the strenuous training protects firefighters and helps protect you and your property.

If you’re interested in joining the St. James Fire Department, call 253-9990 and ask for Chief Dahill. He would like to talk to you about the opportunities at your SJFD.
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Feel confident in your home no matter what nature brings.
There were lots of chatty tidbits about what was obviously a growing St. James in a 1994 issue of *Cat-Tales*.

As you read our continuing coverage of birds in St. James in this issue of *Cat-Tales*, a July 1994 article titled “Not just for the birds” notes unofficial birdwatching was one of the many pleasures residents enjoyed. “The reason we might call it unofficial is that you don’t have to don hiking clothes and make an expedition to find the birds, but merely look around your yard and the Gauntlet,” the article says.

The front page of the two-page 1994 issue shared two other stories — one about the Summer Four Seasons (full seven-course) Dinner. The other was a full report on a collaboration of Brunswick County Parks and Recreation Department and the Gauntlet to offer Aquacise, a water-based fitness program at the club’s pool. Eating and exercising. It seems like a good plan, doesn’t it?

Another article thanks the community for the directory residents had received a month earlier and encourages something still supported today — meeting your neighbors.

“Even if you are not now living on site, you can still put your directory to work,” it reads. “Why not look up property owners who [live in] your area and get to meet them?” The article goes on to report how several residents did exactly that.
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Architectural FAQs: Outdoor showers
By Genna Porter

Did you ever play in the rain as a kid? It was so refreshing and fun! If you want to relive that memory, an outdoor shower may be just what you need.

Before speaking with a contractor, you’ll need to know a few things to apply for ACC review. Your shower must be located within the setback of your lot. If you’re installing a concrete pad, it will count towards the impervious use on your lot.

The shower walls must be the same material and color of your home and can be up to six feet high. To screen the shower from common areas and adjacent lots, non-deciduous landscape plantings at a minimum height of three feet are required. You can find more information on outdoor showers in the 2018 Design Guidelines under “Exterior Accessory Structures.”

If you have any questions, email Terry Bramm, the POA’s Architectural Committee administrator, at ACC@stjamespoa.net.

St. James by the numbers Compiled by Rick Margin

Active New Construction By Neighborhood
Total new homes - 255

Source: POA; Developer.
Shoreline Comfort Systems
HEATING AND AIR CONDITIONING
SALES - SERVICE - INSTALLATION
EMERGENCY/AFTER HOURS SERVICE AVAILABLE
NC License #22286

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Fax: 910-457-4470
www.shorelinecomfortsystems.com

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* Annual Percentage Yield (APY) effective 02/09/18. CDs offered by Edward Jones are bank-issued and FDIC-insured up to $250,000 (principal and interest accrued but not yet paid) per depositor, per insured depository institution, for each account ownership category. Please visit www.fdic.gov or contact your financial advisor for additional information. Subject to availability and price change. CD values are subject to interest rate risk such that when interest rates rise, the prices of CDs can decrease. If CDs are sold prior to maturity, the investor can lose principal value. FDIC insurance does not cover losses in market value. Early withdrawal may not be permitted. Yields quoted are net of all commissions. CDs require the distribution of interest and do not allow interest to compound. CDs offered through Edward Jones are issued by banks and thrifts nationwide. All CDs sold by Edward Jones are registered with the Depository Trust Corp. (DTC).

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The AUSTIN

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Evolution of Change

By Judy Rubin • Photo by John Muuss

Just past the main gate to St. James is a sign that says,

“If Change did not Exist,  
a Flower Would Be Just a Seed  
Hidden in the Ground.  
Change Is a New Beginning.  
Welcome to St. James Plantation”

Did you ever wonder where the phrase on the sign came from, why Homer Wright placed the sign there, what it means and the changes he envisioned? And why the name, St. James?

When the question was posed to Homer, he smiled and said, “I remember very well where I found that phrase.” It seems that Homer had hired a “gentleman” to do some work, which was not as productive as he had hoped it would be. Even so, the gentleman sent Homer a Christmas card with that very phrase. Homer readily admits to the plagiarism, but adds, “It mirrored the vision I was looking for.”

“Change is a New Beginning.” What were the changes Homer brought to St. James? New golf courses and clubhouses, tennis courts, a marina, more neighborhoods, fitness centers and pools. If you talk to the pioneers, they will say, “Everything that Homer promised us, he delivered.” If you talk to Homer, he credits the homeowners. “They were great people,” he says. “We listened.”

“Change is the New Beginning.” Consider the changes in the lives of the people who call St. James home. Many are recent retirees, so their pace of life is different. They make new friends, participate in new activities, enjoy more free time and have healthier eating habits. They live in a new home, often with different furnishings and appliances — the list continues.

Great eateries surround us, and exercise activities are in abundance. The POA website lists 31 different clubs and activities to fill your dance card.

Why the name, “St. James?” Ethelann Stumpp, an early St. James resident, wrote: “Around 1740, political conflicts arose between Maurice Moore, founder of Brunswick Town, and the residents of Newton, later renamed Wilmington. Therefore, one of the leading families, the Brunswicks, divided the Cape Fear area into two parishes, St. James, embracing the territory to the east side of the river, and St. Phillips, embracing the west side.”

Another theory is that St. James is the patron saint of pilgrimage, and the adage often used to describe our community is: “People here come from somewhere else.” So, you’ll find the Polish Club, the Italian Club, the Nutmeggers, alumni tailgate parties and sports flags — all offering clues to the past lives of residents.

Need more proof? How about license plates? GBtoNC (Great Britain to North Carolina); SNONOMOR (Snow No More); TEE52SEA (golf in Fairfax to golf AND ocean); EX-CONN (a reference to Connecticut, we hope!).

On the St. James website is a quote, this one from Homer Wright, “It was always about creating a place that was exciting, but calming, a place where your family couldn’t wait to get to, a place that was awe-inspiring. But mostly, St. James just meant to be home.”

“Change is the New Beginning.”
You can’t miss Kent Silhanek, the new general manager of The Clubs at St. James Plantation. He’s been on the job for only a few short weeks, but with his six-foot-plus presence and easy going manner, he’s hard to miss and ready for conversation. He’s also been busy, but Cat-Tales editors got a few minutes of his time to answer some initial questions about his brief tenure in St. James and his hopes for The Clubs.

CT: Now that you’ve had some time to get grounded, what are your initial impressions?

KS: After six weeks on the job, I’m most impressed with the sense of community among the members of The Clubs. Clearly, everyone has chosen to move into St. James and to become members of The Clubs because of the wide range of amenities that makes it such a special place. But the sense of community and the welcoming membership stand out the most.

I’ve been particularly impressed with Troon, as this is my first position with the company. My management has been so supportive and willing to help my team and me in any way needed. Working for them as the new owners of The Clubs will be a huge benefit to both the membership and to the staff.

Lastly, I’ve been impressed with the competence and positivity of the current management team and the overall staff at The Clubs. It’s great to see their level of commitment, dedication and desire to please me and particularly the membership. That positivity helps translate to making the membership happy and providing them with memorable experiences each and every day — which is our ultimate goal.

CT: What are your goals for The Clubs in the near- and long-term?

KS: From a short-term standpoint, I’m trying to familiarize myself as quickly as possible with the members and what’s important to them. I aim to make myself as visible as possible and to stay active and involved in as many member activities as possible.

I try to visit the restaurants as often as possible to stay in touch with the membership. In addition, I will work closely with KJ on the golf side and Dustin Strickland, our new Director of Agronomy, and his team as they work hard to provide the best golf experience and conditions possible.

Also important to me is doing everything I can to prove myself to the staff and gain their respect, trust and confidence. For the better part of my first year, I intend to watch, learn and evaluate.

My short-term goal of watching, learning and evaluating will be a huge factor in determining long-term goals. Without getting specific, it will be important to continue enhancing the amenities offered to the members and provide value for the dues that they are paying. A few of the things on my mind are providing even more of a uniqueness to each of the dining facilities, enlarging some of the tee boxes to improve tee conditions and continuing to explore adding pickleball as one of the amenities.

CT: What about your new position do you think you’ll enjoy the most?

KS: That’s an easy answer and why I got into the club business so many years ago. It’s the people and developing relationships with the members. I love being able to see the same members each day, working to provide that special experience for them and getting to know them.

Also, with an operation this size, there’s never a dull moment. Each day is different from any other. I love that aspect of the business and the challenges that arise.

Of course, the improved year-round weather compared to the northeast and mid-Atlantic regions doesn’t hurt either.
CT: Are there any changes in services Clubs members can expect in the near term?

In the near term, any changes will be more subtle than substantial while I observe the operation, listen and respond to members and evaluate what is successful and which areas have room for improvement. That said, the one positive change that I think members have already noticed is increased communication. I have always tried to email letters to the members on approximately a monthly basis to keep them informed and up to date on what events might be upcoming and what is happening around The Clubs relative to all activities and sports. The better informed the membership, the easier it makes my job and that of the associates within The Clubs.

CT: How is your transition to North Carolina going?

KS: The transition is going very well. The one thing that has helped make it smooth are the many connections with the members and my background — whether it’s related to my Philadelphia-area roots, my 12 years spent in the New York metropolitan area or my Cornell education. Having so many ties to the mid-Atlantic region has enabled me to develop these all-important relationships quickly.

Living outside the gates of the St. James Community, the change from my mid-Atlantic home to the South has gone fine. It will take me more time to adjust to the slower pace and the lesser sense of urgency in North Carolina, but there’s nothing wrong with me slowing down a little each day after I leave the comfortable confines of St. James.

CT: Talk about the H2B program at St. James this summer.

KS: The H2B program allows foreign nationals to work in the U.S. at a single property for up to six months. We have applied for and been approved for 12 new associates and they’re slated to arrive and start working here the middle of this month. As it stands now, five of them will work in our kitchens, with the other seven working as servers spread throughout our restaurants. Many of them have been working at another Troon managed property — Ballenisles Country Club in in Florida — for the past six months, so they have strong experience.

We are extremely excited about their arrival, as this will allow us to have our various restaurants open on normal schedules with enough staff to service the needs of the membership throughout the busiest part of our year.
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THE ARTISANS' CORNER

Compiled by Barbara White

The Artisans are welcoming May and June with a full-blown Garden Party at the Gallery. For two months, talented artists’ paintings, photos, sculptures and decorative objects, each created using North Carolina gardens as a theme, will decorate the gallery.

Kathy Caruso is a new artisan who joined the group in March. When asked what the Garden Party-themed show will inspire her to do, Kathy said, “Everything is new to me. However, since I do floral design, gardens are always of extreme interest to me. My greatest love is flowers!”

For this show, Kathy may use more garden-type containers, such as baskets, cages and gazebos. She may also do some work with moss and succulents.

Donna Kanich, an accomplished potter, says spring is “the most wonderful time of year.” She says she looks forward to seeing emerging flowers and experiencing warmer weather. “I can start to work on making my garden ready,” she says. “Garden totems can be put back outside after the winter. The new pots I’m throwing now remind me of flowers — with petal edges — and it’s nice enough go outside and glaze.”

Jane Riddle says the Garden Party theme is stretching her imagination about new ornaments. She’s looking forward to creating some new ornaments with flower sequins that she found in various colors. Her enjoyment of flowers and gardens will be on full display through her ornaments.

Jane Corrie is another painter who loves flowers (who doesn’t, really?). She said that their fragrance and beauty “are so endearing,” and that she likes to paint them, ”usually one by one.” What is novel for Jane’s newest oil painting, “The Players Club,” is the large garden in front of the club. Her medium isn’t new, but the color is always a bit different in all her paintings since, as she states, “sunshine comes in all forms.” She says what’s new to her is painting a large garden “without it becoming a visual mishmash,” adding “It will take everything I have learned and any new thing I can discover as I go.”

Photographer Tricia Hill says her time in gardens is both inspiring and therapeutic — flowers, birds, butterflies and dragonflies are among her favorite subjects. From her collection of butterfly photos, Tricia has created a collage printed on glass, which allows the light to reflect the vivid colors in her photos.

Celebrate the season with a visit to the Artisans Gallery, just around the corner from Tommy Thompson’s. We hope you’ll be inspired by the Garden Party offerings and take advantage of the opportunity to chat with the many talented folks whose works will be on display.
The St. James Memorial Day ceremony, commemorating those who gave their last full measure of devotion to our country, is the responsibility of the American Legion’s Richard H. Stewart Jr. Post 543. But this annual event is only one of its programs.

Who we are
The St. James community has helped make Post 543 one of the most successful in the American Legion. Its 185 members continue serving America through the Legion’s Four Pillars — Veterans Services, National Defense (for active-duty military), Americanism and Youth.

Who funds us
For the fiscal year ending June 30, we will receive donations totaling approximately $52,665. The Donations to Post chart has information on each source for donations that come from individuals who earmark their funds for a specific purpose ($14,000) or from those who make no specific request.

St. James Military Appreciation Day (SJMAD), which raised $37,500 during last July’s event, is the largest single source of donations. These funds are used primarily for the veterans, active-duty military and Americanism programs.

What we do
The Expenditures by Post chart depicts a breakdown of Post 543’s current $51,745 budget. More than half is devoted to 20 different veterans’ programs and to active-duty military and their families. Veterans’ programs range from helping one vet (a disabled veteran needing home repairs) to supporting hundreds of veterans at Wilmington’s regional Veterans Experience Action Center. We also donate to the Special Operations Warrior and Folds of Honor foundations.

Programs for active-duty military include meals for young Marines who participate in the St. James November golf outing. We also support the USO and the Wounded Warriors Project during the “American Experience Day” of fishing on Oak Island in March, prior to the Marine Corps Trials. Some programs, including the Wounded Warrior Project and Fisher House, assist veterans and active-duty personal alike.

Americanism programs are 22 percent of the budget. They attract much of Post 543’s local media coverage. Our Honor Guard participates in parades and our 9/11 Remembrance, Memorial Day and Veterans Day ceremonies, Wreaths Across America and the Constitutional Speech Contest also receive media attention.
Youth programs — an important Pillar of the American Legion since its founding in 1919 — are rooted in the diaries Americans kept while in combat, many of whom wrote they were fighting for the children back home. Programs include the robotics team at Brunswick Early College High School, the Ritchie Hat Trick Scholarship, nursing scholarships and Computers 4 Kids.

Post operations account for 18 percent of our budget and are used for office supplies, postage, insurance, website license and maintenance, tokens of recognition for jobs well done and travel.

You can help
We have major donors, but we also rely on folks who contribute to their SJMAD neighborhood signs. From the $10 contribution for each sign, $8.20 goes to veterans’ programs, active-duty military and their families, honoring America and helping youth. Our programs are listed on our website, www.NCPost543.org, as is information about joining our Post.

Editor’s Note: Mike Fegan is the commander of American Legion Post 543.
The St. James POA Activities Committee sponsored a bus trip to The Hammock Shops Village on Pawleys Island, South Carolina and historic Conway Glass.

The first stop was Bistro 217, where the 33 participants enjoyed a fashion show during lunch. Then they were off for shopping and strolling through the historic grounds. At the next stop, attendees were treated to a private glass blowing exhibition. It was fascinating to watch the owners, Ed and Barbara Streeter, create a glass bowl from start to finish.

The St. James Activities Committee plans day and overnight trips to various locations throughout the year. To learn more about future trips, check “What’s Up St. James.”
In the April issue of *Cat-Tales*, we noted St. James’s new status as a bird sanctuary and talked about the St. James Birders. We continue our coverage of our avian friends this month with descriptions of some of the raptors, owls and vultures in St. James.

**Bald eagle.** With its seven-to-eight-foot wingspan and distinctive white head and tail, the “king of the raptors” and our national symbol is easily recognizable. This majestic bird is often seen gliding over the Intracoastal Waterway and St. James.

**Great horned owl.** Nicknamed “Silent Death,” the great horned owl hunts for rodents at night. Its wing feathers allow it to fly silently and swiftly. It’s easily recognizable by its large size (25 inches) and ear tufts. In the early morning and at dusk you can hear the male hooting four to five times and the female responding with five to eight hoots.

**Osprey.** Our “fish hawk” circles a pond, hovers over its target and plunges feet first into the water to catch its prey. If successful, it retires to a tree or its nest to feast. Osprey nests are clearly visible on the top of navigation sign poles in the waterway or in the tops of tall dead trees. St. James Birders have erected an osprey nesting platform near the Founders club.

**Red-tailed hawk.** The largest of our hawks (19-25 inches), the red-tailed hawk with its distinctive rust-colored tail is most often seen soaring in high circles over St. James golf fairways or in a tree looking for squirrels — its favorite meal.

**Cooper’s hawk.** At 14-20 inches, this raptor is a medium-sized hawk with a slate-grey back and rust colored striping on the chest. It’s a lethal, agile, low-flying hunter capable of snatching birds in mid-air or right off a bird feeder. In fact, this hawk often sits in trees and watches bird feeders.

**Sharp shinned hawk.** This 10-14-inch raptor is the smallest of the woodland hawks in St. James. Like the cooper’s hawk, it has a slate-grey back and rust colored striping on its breast. It’s a fast, low-flying raptor that commonly terrorizes the birds at feeders.

**Turkey vulture.** Like its black vulture brother, the turkey vulture is not a “bird of prey,” but rather serves as our waste management team. These birds are scavengers, usually seen soaring in large circles looking for carrion and road kill on our area roads. They’re often seen sitting on the tops of the electric poles along North Carolina Route 211.

**Editor’s note:** The contributors are members of the St. James Birders.
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COVERINGS
Another rescue dog story in St. James – really? But yes, the hundreds of dogs who have found their forever homes here are testament to the people who live in St. James and share their lives with animals who might not have had a chance. To be a beloved part of a household here is doggie (or kitty) Nirvana.

Sadly, Sandie’s back story is all too common. She didn’t find her forever home until July 2015 when she was three. But when she did, she made two humans and one aged black Lab extremely happy to have her in their lives. Bleu’s final 6 months were enriched by his new sister, and her presence provided some comfort when he left us.

I started to write this story during the summer of 2016. I envisioned a wonderful ending where Sandie has become a therapy dog like Sophie Zyga and visits the patients at Carillon Assisted Living in Southport, regularly sharing her happiness with others and bringing some joy to their lives. Nearly two years later, I can accept that this scenario is not in the cards.

One can never know what our rescued animals experienced in their earlier lives. What is obvious to Mike and me is that Sandie is mostly afraid of men. Add a hat, a golf club, or any kind of tool and the reaction is fear. Yet when I host 11 ladies for bridge, Sandie’s greatest dilemma is picking out the one to sit next to and beg for affection, usually someone dressed in dark clothing.

In the past couple of years our girl has made huge strides in being comfortable with people. On our morning walks, we often meet two ladies during their walks. Carol always has biscuits for her canine friends. When we first met, Sandie was much too afraid to accept a treat. Gradually she became increasingly brave and took the treats from Carol’s hand. Now when she sees “her ladies” in the distance, we all make sure to be on the same side of road. I let go of her leash and Sandie runs to meet Carol and Julie as fast as she can. She likes the treats Carol gives her, but she likes being loved up by both her ladies even more.

Oh, back to the therapy dog attempt. She doesn’t travel well in the car. We went to Wilmington to see if Sandie might learn how to give back. She threw up in the back seat before we arrived. There were several tests, most of which she failed. The highlight was when I was instructed to leave the room so that Sandie could stay alone with the handler. Separation anxiety doesn’t begin to describe it. The lady testing her said, “When you were out of sight, she almost turned me into butter.”

Never mind the therapy dog scenario. Sandie has other talents and we are delighted to have this girl in our family as are so many of the people of St. James with their forever friends. Good for all of us!
Life at St. James has taken a turn for the better for many of the singles, thanks to new friendships and lots of fun activities planned by a group hoping to get singles together. The group recently held its first Nine and Dine with six foursomes playing on a beautiful Sunday afternoon. A second Nine and Dine was held in mid-April and more than 30 people attended. Everyone came back with some fun stories and smiles on their faces.

There have been many additions to the St. James Singles Club in the past few months. Recently a chance encounter between two women in the ladies’ room led to one of them, who hadn’t known of the group, coming to its nearby event to learn about all its planned activities.

The Singles Club has bimonthly bowling/dinner nights which are totally (well, almost) non-competitive and absolutely a fun night out. Bimonthly happy hours are held at Founders Club on the second Wednesday and the fourth Thursday of each month, providing a good opportunity to get out and meet some new people in a comfortable environment. Wine tastings at some of the local venues (the Wine Rack on Friday nights and Uncorked by the Sea on Thursday nights) have been popular. Club members learned how to make a grapefruit martini, bruschetta, grouper, roasted asparagus, multi-grain rice and a raspberry chambered frappe for dessert during the first two Singles Club cooking classes led by Chef Olivier Monod. More of these classes will be planned in the future. Also scheduled are a painting class at Pescado Y Amor, game night at the community center and other activities depending on the weather.

This singles group has been gaining in popularity since its inception less than a year ago. The people who make up the group are all interesting and enjoyable, and now that they have been given a variety of exciting and fun activities to participate in, they are a happier group of people. The only requirements for joining the group is to be single and to either live or own property in St. James. The club welcomes new members.

For more information about the St. James Singles Club please contact Stacey Saveth at sevanlee53@gmail.com or visit the St. James POA website under the Clubs/groups, Social tab.
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These are some of the obstacles that can literally trip up the novice beach-goer; I barely avoided them last year during a day trip to Oak Island on a holiday weekend. I’d been spoiled by having the beach nearly to myself over the previous fall and winter; the only other hearty souls — fellow walkers enjoying the wide expanse of beach to get in their winter exercise. I was not prepared for the holiday onslaught of folks, many of whom may need a refresher on beach etiquette.

Turn the tide on possible pitfalls of a beach day by remembering some simple unofficial rules of consideration. Sometimes we may need to remind visitors of this, as well. After all, beach time is play time.

**Cover your holes in the sand.** Actually, this is also an official rule aimed at protecting people and our precious turtles. Sure, it’s fun to show the visiting grandkids how to dig a tunnel to China. But please, fill it in if it’s going to be unattended. A turned ankle from the tumble is not fun.

**Stay with your fishing lines.** If you’re walking at a brisk rate or gabbing as you stroll with a pal, those nearly invisible fishing lines stretching from shore into ocean are easy to not even notice. Make sure passersby see them.

**Control your toys.** Whether it’s an errant kite or an untamed bocce ball, toys can be dangerous if they hit someone.

“Basically, we want everyone to have a great time and to be safe,” says Lisa Stites, Oak Island’s assistant manager/town clerk, who shared the town’s official rules for the beach:

- No glass containers of any kind are allowed on the beach or in beach accesses.
- Beach gear and personal items cannot be left overnight on the beach. If left unattended between 8:30 p.m-7 a.m., these items will be removed and can be recovered after paying a fine.
- Gear cannot be placed on the beach until 7 a.m. Also, items cannot be placed on the dunes and must be at least 10 feet away from turtle nests and 15 feet away from marked emergency accesses.
- Pack up your trash and take it with you or use one of the containers at the beach accesses.
- Use only designated walkways to get to the beach; stay off the dunes.
- Don’t forget to take some sunscreen.
- During tourist season (March 16-October 15), dogs must always be on a leash.
- Use a plastic bag to clean up after your pet and dispose of used bags in trash containers, not the boxes containing unused bags.

Lisa wants to remind people who bring their pets to the beach to also bring shade and plenty of water for them.
Enjoying the grace of the world

Story by Russ Yarrow • Photos by John Muuss

I come into the presence of still water.
And I feel above me the day-blind stars
waiting with their light. For a time
I rest in the grace of the world, and am free.
From “The Peace of Wild Things,”
by Wendell Berry

About 18 miles outside the main gate of St. James,
down North Carolina Route 211 and a little more than
five miles after it crosses State Highway 17 in Supply, is
a time machine. Within minutes, you’re in a habitat that
looks almost exactly as it did two centuries ago.

You’re in the Green Swamp Preserve, a nearly 17,000-acre ecosystem managed by the Nature Conservancy.
It’s one of the last remnants of a great longleaf pine forest that once spanned more than 90 million acres from Virginia to Texas.

The pressures of development took a toll. Today, the longleaf pine forest is less than five million acres and the Green Swamp Preserve is one of the largest remaining contiguous pockets of the longleaf ecosystem.

The longleaf pine forest was an important resource basin as the U.S. grew rapidly in the 19th century. Longleaf pines produced tar, turpentine and timber (known as "naval stores") for commercial and military ship production. The durability of longleaf logs, some as old as 500 years, was renowned. Many of the ships that landed at Normandy in World War II were made from longleaf timber, according to Robert Abernathy, president of the Longleaf Alliance and a resident of Duplin County.

In 1977, the Federal Paper Board deeded a large tract of land in the Green Swamp to the Nature Conservancy, a national conservation organization, which has managed the property since then.

The Nature Conservancy’s focus is on gradual clearing of loblolly and slash pine, quick-growing species introduced by the lumber industry. At the same time, it’s promoting more robust reproduction of longleaf pines, primarily through controlled burns. These carefully managed fires clear the ground of brush and fungi, promoting more robust growth of longleaf seedlings.
Today, Green Swamp is home to 14 species of carnivorous plants, including the Venus flytrap, as well as several endangered animal species, such as the red-cockaded woodpecker, Henslow's sparrow, Bachman's sparrow and Hessel's hairstreak butterfly.

The swamp is also home to alligators, fox squirrels, bobcats and a black bear or two. In addition, orchids and a profusion of other wildflowers can be found there.

Peak season at Green Swamp has started.

“From April through October, there is a succession of different wildflowers blooming in Green Swamp,” said Roger Shew, a naturalist and lecturer in geology at University of North Carolina, Wilmington. “It’s like different chapters in a long book.”

Shew recently delivered an informative talk on Green Swamp to the St. James Birders, and his enthusiasm was contagious. “People from all over the world visit Green Swamp,” he said. “I once ran into someone from Germany who traveled all the way here to see a Venus flytrap.”

Green Swamp is also notable for being part of a recognized biodiversity “hotspot.”

In 2015, the North American Coastal Plain, which stretches from Cape Cod to northern Mexico, was recognized by the Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF) as the 36th biodiversity hotspot in the world. To qualify, an area must contain at least 1,500 endemic species (those that are not found elsewhere) and have experienced 70 percent or more of habitat loss.

Preserving those natural habitats is critical to a healthy environment, Shew said. “Fragmentation of natural ecosystems is devastating.”

Visiting Green Swamp is a great way to while away a morning or afternoon. Take state Route 211 toward Supply. About 5.5 miles past Route 17, a small sign marks a parking area on the right-hand side of 211 (also known as Green Swamp Road through this area). Park next to a large pond called the “borrow pit” (so named because it’s where sand was “borrowed” to build nearby roads).

From there, follow the trail marked by red diamond tags on the trees. After a half-mile, you’ll enter a prime example of a longleaf pine savannah — a vast, open field of pines and grasses bordered by a thick growth known as a “pocosin,” a Native American word for “swamp on a hill.”

Now, here’s one of the best ways to experience Green Swamp Preserve and connect with the spirit of the Wendell Berry poem extracted above. When you’re in the savannah, stand still or sit down — whatever’s comfortable. Wait for the skies to clear of airplanes. Wait for the road to clear of traffic noise. Take a deep breath. Listen to the breeze through the pines, the songs of the birds, just as it was 200 years ago. Feel time slow down, and experience “the grace of the world.”

Editor’s note: For further reference, see the Nature Conservancy’s website, www.nature.org, or www.longleafalliance.org. Also, “Longleaf, As Far as the Eye Can See,” published by UNC Press, is a wonderful coffee table book available on Amazon.
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NC Catch
Building sustainable fishing communities

By Cheryl L. Serra

What would you suspect is one of North Carolina's niche products, something with the smell of the coast that also has your mouth watering? You’ve got it — seafood.

How to promote this asset in an increasingly global and competitive marketplace was one of the topics discussed recently at the NC Catch Summit held in Southport (you can read a recap here: https://nccatch.org/blogs/94). Regional catch groups such as our Brunswick Catch in Brunswick County established NC Catch in 2011 to promote the North Carolina seafood industry through education and marketing.

The two-day summit featured a myriad of presentations and activities, including a self-guided tour of the Maritime Museum at Southport and presentations on topics such as “Fish as Food: The Value of Local Products” by Barry Nash of Sea Grant and Adam Stemle of the Division of Marine Fisheries. Also included were demonstrations on shucking oysters, de-heading shrimp and choosing fresh local catches.

Participants watched a film called “Ugly and Wild: Learning to love NC Fish,” presented by Robyn Stout of the NC 10 Percent Campaign. The film promotes spending 10 percent of a family’s or organization’s food allowance on items grown and raised in North Carolina. Robyn showed folks some of the ugliest fish in North Carolina, including the Sheepshead, which has some pretty creepy human-looking teeth but tastes great when cooked well.

Attendees had opportunities to sample North Carolina’s niche asset, too, including a taste from Southport restaurants, an oyster roast and a live auction.

Jon Haag, owner of Haag & Sons Seafood in Oak Island, is also board chair of Brunswick Catch, which has more than 30 members from the county. Bobbing on his orange crocs, Jon addressed a group attending a “Net to Napkin Tour” at Potter’s Seafood in Southport. Royce Potter, who owns the business, is a fifth-generation fisherman whose family started fishing and selling seafood in the Yacht Basin in 1899.

Royce invited the group to tour his shrimp boat to see how it works and to dispel myths that shrimping is detrimental to the environment. In the 1950s and 60s, some 50 shrimp boats docked in the Yacht Basin. Today, it’s less than a handful. The high price of fuel and increased coastal development has added to the financial burdens of small commercial fishermen.

Royce says the solution is to educate consumers about the value of fresh seafood and to encourage them to buy local. He also encourages local restaurants to do the same. “Cheap imported shrimp being passed off as local is hurting the shrimpers,” he says.

In addition to ocean seafood, North Carolina has boasting rights to fish from fresh waters. A portion of the 95 percent of our imported seafood comes from countries with less stringent requirements for water cleanliness; the North Carolina industry provides great fresh fish from clean water. And people fortunate enough to have easy access to these sweet treasures should make sure they’re buying local to guarantee the industry survives in North Carolina.
Royce Potter, a fifth-generation commercial fisherman, shows attendees his shrimp boat. (Photo by Cheryl L. Serra)
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For many impacted by cancer, the American Cancer Society and its Relay for Life have been a bright spot in a life dimmed by the disease. Relay for Life provides funds for research and cancer support programs. St. James held its very first Relay for Life 5K walk/run in March. Out of 306 registered participants, 239 crossed the finish line, helping raise $4,500 towards the total amount the team has raised to date of over $50,000.

The top three finishers among the men were (in order of their finish) Michael Balducci, Andrew Flanagan and Jeff Zalles. The top women winners were Eileen Scott, Randi Lee Demarino and Peggy O’Connell. Event organizers want to thank event sponsors Logan Homes, Quest Diagnostics, Jewell Entertainment and Troon.

The Relay for Life campaign culminates on Friday, May 4 at West Brunswick High School, where Relay teams from across Brunswick County meet and continuously walk the high school track from 4:30 p.m. to midnight to symbolize the struggle endured by cancer survivors, their caregivers, and those who have ultimately lost the battle.
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Parade of Homes Diamond Award Winner.
The St. James Service Club has sponsored another successful fundraiser, this one the “Wags and Woofs” Easter event at Waterway Park.

The stars of the show — canines of all stripes — paraded with their Easter bonnets to the music of the Back Forty playing “Who Let the Dogs Out?” Someone noted they heard growling among the owners, but the event was friendly and enjoyed by all.

More than 40 beautiful raffle baskets were on display, as were many auction items. There were smiles all around when the six-foot-one Easter Bunny appeared to the tune of “Here Comes Peter Cottontail.” With the help of animal trainer Amy VanDyne, several dogs sat and stayed for photographs with the Easter Bunny. A local dog groomer brought his van and trimmed the nails of pampered pets.

Capeside Veterinary Hospital’s Dr. Hanby answered dog care questions.

Fundraising was the main purpose of the event, with proceeds going to no-kill dog rescue organizations in Brunswick County. But much fun was also dispensed.
Golfers should never overlook the importance of blending their personal tastes with those of the pros. John Hughes, a PGA golf instructor, understands the importance of selecting your teaching professional. “The golf instructor you ultimately choose to assist you needs to be someone you trust, can communicate and relate to as a person…other variable factors of similar interests or beliefs off the course can add up to establishing a great relationship with your golf instructor.”

How well you know your pro may be the missing link to improving your game. We asked our 11 pros some “tough” questions, including their favorite snacks, films, high school experiences, aces and high single-hole scores, their easiest and hardest holes at St. James and PGA stars they admire most. See if you know your pro based on their answers.

1. This pro is a chip lover who munches while watching movie mysteries. He’s already forgotten the seven he once took in a competitive round. Like several others on staff, he awaits his first ace. He likes his birdie chances at the Reserve’s No. 9, but a watery bogey may loom at No. 13. Playing on average only two holes per week, his swing is still Watson-like smooth.

2. This pro loved watching Tiger Woods over the years and would like to own DJ’s swing. He showed athletic prowess in high school soccer while majoring in lunch. His single-hole nine in competition didn’t keep him from his calling in golf. His strong short game helps with birdie looks at Players No. 5. Founders’ mountainous No. 15 might be a +1 on the card. Averaging nine holes per week leaves time to “build relationships with members and staff.”

3. Strengthening the short game with handfuls of M&M’s gives this pro a chocolaty smooth touch. When not watching videos of Freddy Couples, his go-to TV show is “American Dad.” High school sports included baseball, football and basketball, and the favorite subject area was biology. Playing only nine holes weekly gives this pro little time to add to his two lifetime aces. Who is this Michael Jordan fan?
4. Working through a box of donuts while watching Duval mow down the field was this youngster’s relaxation. Now, if he could copy Louis Oosthuizen’s swing, the donuts could wait. A science guy in high school, this pro also played baseball and basketball. Strength lies in the long game, but the 12 he took in competition makes us all feel a little better. A birdie at Players No. 5 is a strong possibility, as is the bogey at the 10th.

5. Another admirer of the Oosthuizen swing, this pro feels strength in the middle irons. As a math and physics student in high school, he had no time for any other sport besides golf. He acknowledges two career eights on the card, but he also boasts one ace. Watching "Curse of Oak Island" and getting Reese’s Peanut Butter cups on everything is a good way to unwind. Reserve No. 8 might be his bogey hole at St. James, but Founders No. 6 evens the score.

6. This high school tennis player enjoys watching "Rocky" while savoring some Peppermint Patties. The toughest and easiest holes at St. James are both at Reserve — a potential birdie on No. 2 and a bogey warning at No. 18. This golf professional’s rewards come from, “Making our members feel at home on the course and challenging them to improve their skills.” The former looper from New York state loves the St. James climate.

7. As a fan of horror, this pro enjoys driving along cart paths and watching us swing. His acknowledged single-hole competitive score of 10 reveals his honesty. A fan of Adam Scott’s swing, this pro is self-described “driver-fairway strong.” He looks forward to playing nine holes each week, with a special eye for birdie on Players No. 5 and bogey on Members No. 17. Who is this lover of cars?

8. Talk about honesty. This pro acknowledged a competitive score of 15 on a single hole. Baseball and golf showcased his athletic talents in high school, while history was his favorite subject. This pro is a fan of "The Dan Patrick Show" and the "Star Wars" film series. Averaging only nine holes of golf per week, he most enjoys “being around others who are passionate about the game.” Who is this Adam Scott wannabe?

9. This ex-high school hoopster watches Marvel Superhero films and Adam Scott’s swing. He grew up snacking on pizza and watching the talents of Nomar Garciaparra on the baseball diamond. He feels the strength of his game in wedge play. His toughest hole at St. James is Founders No. 15, while Players No. 5 may yield a birdie.

10. Although John Daly’s swing was not a favorite on the survey, this pro would like to own it (maybe not the pants). Eating ice cream and watching Arnold Palmer’s swagger had a childhood influence on this high school baseball player. He scored a competitive high of 10 and has recorded two aces in his career. He favors the yin-yang of bogey and birdie chances on consecutive Members holes — a bogey on No. 17 and birdie on No. 18.

11. This popular professional loves Tiger’s swing (some versions of it) and Bart Starr’s leadership. As a strong math student, he had no trouble counting the 10 he once took on a single hole. His six aces put him on top of our leaders’ board for St. James professionals. During his one round of play per week, he looks to Players No. 4 as a chance for birdie. Putting is his strength, but he most enjoys “helping the membership to enjoy every day at The Clubs.” Who is this chip-eating former cross-country guy?

Thanks to our Troon professionals who were, as expected, great sports in completing their surveys. To see how well you scored, check out the answers at bottom of page.
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The birds of St. James were in exquisite form a few weeks ago, serenading us while we played tennis at Founders. They produced a cacophony of sound as if in a chorus, and then they stopped. Seconds later, after my snarky remark that maybe they needed a potty break, they resumed with full gusto.

The birdie extravaganza that morning brought back childhood memories of hunting for robins’ eggs fallen from their nests, reminding me of my own empty nest now.

When No. 1 ventured out on his own, it was no biggie, as there were two others to nurture with my Dr. Spock expertise. Then No. 2 left for her life’s big adventure, leaving just my little guy to entertain me for the next 11 years or so. As my husband traveled frequently for work, No. 3 had me all to himself. My new little buddy. I became the volunteer extraordinaire — class trips, room mother, scouting events, soccer coach and, my favorite, football mom. Cheerleaders had nothing on me.

It’s not that I didn’t do things with my other two, but between job and all three with activities, I was spread thin. (I wish.) Where did the time go? Suddenly we were scoping out colleges and jumping for joy as acceptance letters rolled in.

With a list provided by his college to ensure an easy transition to freshman life, I fought back tears as we set out on a day-long trek around the suburbs of Atlanta, scouring stores for the perfect stuff. Mostly, the tears were held in check, as nothing could cheer me up more than a day of mandatory shopping.

And so, off we all went on a six-hour ride to Kentucky to meet school ambassadors at our designated time at the dorm. Within minutes, they had our car emptied and its contents stashed in his new room; we didn’t lift a finger. Just as well, as I needed all of mine to replenish tissue after tissue as the deluge of tears began and continued through most of dinner.

The next morning was bittersweet as we said goodbye and left him to start his own adventure at freshman orientation. Good thing I rehydrated during the night, because the ride home became known as the day Mom cried through three states — Kentucky, Tennessee and Georgia. I may have lost a few pounds as well.

Wow, was he surprised when I told him, “Hey, I just bought season football tickets, so now I can see you more often.” He grew to like these weekend visits, as I always showed up at the frat house with food for the whole gang. In return, he sent me home with his dirty laundry. It’s a wash!

I wonder if the mommies of those singing birds that day felt as I did when their birdies left the nest. I suppose there is a commonality between us — whether birdie or kiddie, both tweet!
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Swedish death cleaning

By Fred Ammann

I recently came upon an article called “Swedish Death Cleaning.” Apparently, Swedes are concerned about leaving too much stuff for their heirs to sort through once they check out. It seems you can hold on to the memories without the memorabilia; becoming a minimalist to not burden your kids after you’re gone. “Don’t hang on to the things that nobody other than you wants,” the essay encourages.

With that in mind, I found myself in the attic, peering into my college trunk and the mementos from days passed.

The first item to go was an easy choice — my bowling-ball-sized aluminum foil ball, assembled with a summer’s worth of Reynolds Wrap that encased the cold cuts I ate for lunch when I worked at Wonder Bread. Who needs bread from home when fresh hot loaves come straight from the ovens? I didn’t want to create family disharmony while my three kids fight over such a prize.

A boxful of dusty track medals from high school was next. Unlike in the military, when you get to proudly display your awards when wearing dress blues, I couldn’t imagine showing up at our 50th reunion sporting gold, silver and bronze. Gone!

My copy of “In God We Trust: All Others Pay Cash” will go to my son-in-law, a voracious reader. Perhaps one day my grandkids will appreciate Jean Shepherd humor. Likewise, the 1990 “A Reference Guide: We Didn’t Start the Fire,” written by my sixth-grade students who researched all 118 headlines, and the follow-up thank you letter from the Piano Man himself, will be forwarded to Woodhull Elementary School.

Various plaques and commendations, athletic and professional, that never found wall space in our den will not again see the light of day, along with retirement mugs and a desk clock thanking me for 32 years’ service.

The process was reminiscent of my annual spring cleaning — getting rid of the extra stuff that has accumulated over the past year. Imagine the kitchen junk drawer, stripped bare of broken rubber bands, bent paperclips, plastic bag ties, dead pens and expired BOGOs to Fuzzy Peach. A year’s worth of magazines, gone from under the coffee table, with only the Sports Illustrated Swimsuit issue remaining, purely for future reference purposes.

Other areas ripe for a spring purge include our walk-in closet, where the results are usually less than impressive. My wife’s mantra is, “If you haven’t worn it in two years, out it goes,” a philosophy I can abide by. While understanding the theory behind it, Janice nonetheless has a hard time putting it into practice. What once was a 50-50 distribution of clothing and related accessories (did I mention shoes), is now heavily skewed 70-30 in her favor.

What survived my Nordic clean-up? My block “O” from Oswego, to document I wasn’t always old and was pretty fast at one time. The other item making the grade was my high school yearbook from senior year. It was good to remember we once looked young and thought ourselves invincible.
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    Only this I knew,  
But to herself,  
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I never saw her young,  
    Never knew her young,  
Running, playing among white puff dandelions  
    And pink balls of thistles,  
Jet black hair flowing free.

Never knew her when she  
    Fell and cried,  
Sought love within her mother’s arms,  
    Her perfect refuge, never denied.

I never knew her when  
    Suitors came to call,  
The rush of life, a hope for love . . .  
    To touch it all.

Never knew her when she married;  
    Struggled for respect,  
Silencing tears in shadows of night,  
    Praying, “Dear God, please make it right.”

I only knew her for my selfish needs,  
    Troubles, woes, and foolish deeds.  
Only for myself, my stubborn pride.  
    Thinking of myself, the day she died.

Only now do I understand . . .  
    My children know me only as I am.  
My hopes, my dreams, my life and loves,  
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