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.

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 880 Brunswick County REALTORS® combined.

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800-245-3871 Listing Agents St. James Properties - Karen Gaspar, Lisa Frye and Ben Styers

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Cat-Tales is published monthly by the St. James Plantation Property Owners' Association (POA) of St. James, North Carolina to communicate information of interest to its property owners. Reproduction in whole or parts is prohibited without permission from the publisher (POA). The views and opinions of the writers are their own and do not necessarily reflect that of the POA. Per the POA communications policy, the POA does not endorse commercial products, services, or does not publish advertorial, partisan political or religious belief articles.
Beginning this month, running a stop sign will be a POA Rules violation subject to a fine.

Security - St. James Plantation is a gated community, but it’s not immune to criminal activity. The Sheriff’s Office, the responsible agency for crime reporting and investigation, investigated several criminal incidents within our gates in 2017, including fraud, home intrusions and theft from vehicles. (See this month’s *Cat-Tales* article written by Bob Wright for more information.) The Sheriff’s Office recommends the best way to prevent crime is to lock the doors to your vehicles, garages and houses.

Happy New Year, 2018 - I would like to close this article with a New Year’s resolution from the entire Board: We resolve to stay fiscally conservative, to keep the infrastructure and common areas well maintained and attractive and to invest in capital improvements for the benefit of all property owners.
Normally, we reserve this space for a word from the mayor of the Town of St. James. Our next issue will feature an inaugural message from Jean Toner, our Town’s new mayor. In the meantime, you’ve got me.

*Cat-Tales*, a single-page, double-sided black and white sheet when first published, is now almost a quarter century old. In that time, it has evolved into a very different publication. It has grown as our community has grown, with the support and backing of residents whose contributions to its success have been an indispensable resource for nearly 25 years.

I’ve been the sole editor of *Cat-Tales* since last May. Before that, I worked as co-editor with Linda Eyler, who also served as the chair of the POA’s Communications Committee before deciding to take a well-deserved retirement. Linda’s powerful attention to detail (a requirement for all editors — mine is a work in progress), combined with her ability to see the big picture, was just what this magazine needed to continue its growth. Her willingness to churn out an article or two each month when we needed them was also appreciated.

Supporting Linda — and now me — is a dedicated group of volunteers for which I am eternally grateful. Our writers create articles to educate residents about activities in our community or simply to stimulate our imagination in exchange for the joy and satisfaction of seeing their words in print. Our assistant editors (who also write stories) work behind the scenes, reviewing copy and checking proofs from our printer as we move through the production process. Still others are excellent photographers, whose works of art and photo editing help bring our copy to life.

It’s a long list of folks. Take a look at our masthead and contributors’ list to read the names of your neighbors who are contributing their time and effort to our cause. If you want to sign up, please let us know.

Keeping us organized and productive is Cheryl Serra, our managing editor, sometimes writer and one of the few folks around here with experience in magazine publishing. With her help, we have deepened our bench, adding more talent and creativity. We’re well positioned for our next growth spurt.

You may already have noticed some of our new features, particularly on the graphics side. One of them is “St. James by the numbers,” a graphic depiction of interesting factoids about our community. Thanks to Rick Margin for suggesting it and collecting the data we use for each issue. Feel free to pass them along at your next cocktail party.

“*Cat-Tales*, a single-page, double-sided black and white sheet when first published, is now almost a quarter century old.”

Also, this month *Cat-Tales* has a new logo with the catch-phrase, “Your home. Your stories.” We’ve taken our new motto to heart. As *Cat-Tales* begins its second quarter century, we pledge to give our readers the information they deserve to make their lives in St. James informative and fulfilling.
Have you wondered why St. James collects aluminum cans for recycling?

Have you wondered what happens to them after you put them in the recycle bin?

Have you wondered how Cans4Kids began in St. James?

Former resident Bud Brown, who became known as “The Can Man,” is credited with starting Cans4Kids in St. James. He knew of this program in other communities and thought this would be an easy way for residents to dispose of their emptied and rinsed out aluminum cans.

When the Browns relocated to Pennsylvania, Steve Cherry of St. James P.R.I.D.E., a community cleanup program, assumed the Cans4Kids responsibility, continuing to donate the proceeds to non-profit children’s organizations in Brunswick County.

The St. James Fire Department adopted the project in 2016, when the Cherrys moved to Florida.

What happens to the cans after you drop them into the recycling bin? They’re collected by Southern Metals Recycling of Wilmington, which issues a check to SJFD. At the end of June 2017, donations of $350 each were given to Computers4Kids, Communities In Schools, the Civil Air Patrol and The First Tee of Coastal Carolinas.

Why recycle aluminum cans?

• It’s against North Carolina law to put aluminum cans in the trash or landfill.
• Recycling aluminum cans saves energy costs.
• Recycling cans improves the environment by reducing smelting, smog, greenhouse gases, acid rain, etc.
• Recycling cans helps unite the community in an eco-minded program.
• Recycling cans benefits the children of Brunswick County.

Are you wondering why a picture of an ironing board is pictured above? Clearly, it’s not an aluminum can. Yet, someone placed it, along with other items, with the aluminum cans for disposal. Some residents need to find alternative means to dispose of their non-aluminum can items.

Thank you to all the aluminum recyclers! You’re helping our earth and the children of Brunswick County.

Editor’s Note: Joan Madsen is vice president of the St. James Fire Department Board of Directors.
As a Firewise USA Community, St. James has raised awareness of the risks of living in an area prone to wildfires. The Town of St. James was developed from a former tree plantation. Today, our pine forests and flammable undergrowth can provide fuel for rapid burning. Many of us live on wooded lots that provide aesthetic appeal and a habitat for birds, mammals, reptiles, amphibians and insects. While beautiful, our natural areas also pose risks if a large wildfire approaches.

North Carolina experiences approximately 4,500 wildfires per year. Brunswick County has seen its share, including a large burn last year near Route 211 and Midway Road. Some are ignited by lightning; others arise from burning debris that’s not adequately monitored. Our St. James Fire Department is trained and equipped to handle such fires should they encroach on St. James.

St. James is one of three Firewise Communities in Brunswick County, along with River Run and Winding River. Firewise Committee members have met with their counterparts in these communities to share best practices and experiences. Based on these meetings, we will pursue new approaches to helping you stay safe and protect your property. We will also explore partnerships with outside organizations interested in conducting community projects to help advance Firewise objectives.

Responsibility for proactively protecting individual properties rests with each of us. Many of you have already implemented practical measures to safeguard your property against wildfires. To support property owners, the St. James Firewise Committee conducts educational outreach, including *Cat-Tales* articles and dissemination of literature at Town events.

In 2018, our focus shifts from raising awareness to measuring tangible impact. Many things that you might take for granted — cleaning up yard waste, trimming dead tree limbs, replacing pine straw with bark mulch or other materials around your home — all count towards risk reduction. In the coming months, we’ll develop systems to record what we’ve achieved.

We’re working closely with Firewise USA program managers at the North Carolina Forest Service. They will be updating our St. James Firewise Risk Assessment to reflect progress made since we joined the Firewise program in 2003. With your help, we look forward to continuing to be at the forefront of wildfire safety efforts.

*Editor’s Note:* Barbara Lemos is a member of the St. James Firewise Committee.
An example of an ACC-approved fire pit.

Architectural FAQs: What to know about fire pits
By Genna Porter

Chilly weather? It’s a great time to sit out with friends around a fire pit or outdoor fireplace, hot toddy in hand. If you’re thinking about installing one, don’t forget to get the approval of the Architectural Control Committee (ACC).

Use these guidelines to make the approval process go quickly so you can soon be roasting your marshmallows.

- Small fire pits and fireplaces available at hardware stores are permitted.
- The locations of fire pits and fireplaces must be shown on a site plan.
- If the fire pit or fireplace will encroach on the property setback, it can be up to 18 inches in height. Additionally, these items must be no less than five feet from property lines.
- For wood-burning fire pits and fireplaces, an ember screen is required.
- Permanent fire pits and fireplaces will count towards impervious usage on your lot, unless they are installed on an existing patio.

Submissions to the ACC must also include: color images of the materials to be used, dimensions, square footage and an example of the finished product. For further questions, feel free to email Genna Porter, the POA’s ACC administrator, at gporter@stjamespoa.net.

St. James by the numbers

<table>
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<tr>
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| Y-T-Y change| -19%        | +29%   | +41%   | -71%    | +.005%|

Traffic Violations (Y-T-Y Comparisons)
St. James Drive and growth: The April 1995 issue of *Cat-Tales*, like many issues that came before and after, was full of fun activities and updates on the community’s growth. Property owners were planning the Member Guest and Club Championship golf tournament, July 4 festivities and the annual meeting for property owners, who were also encouraged to plan their visits to St. James to coincide with these activities.

The issue also asked readers to “Pardon Our Dust,” in an article that said, “Property owners who have not visited St. James lately are in for a big surprise as the appearance continues to change.” The article talks about the progress being made on the paving of St. James Drive from the sales office to the Georgetown intersection, “and new home starts are too numerous to mention.”

What would you do if you received a telephone call from a U.S. marshal or a local police department demanding that you immediately pay a $1,000 fine to satisfy a warrant for your arrest because you missed jury duty?

That’s the underlying question in a Wilmington Star News article that ran in December. The answer, of course, is hang up, because it’s a scam.

According to the Federal Trade Commission, U.S. marshals don’t make such telephone calls to people — even those who really did miss jury duty. And asking for personal financial information over the phone should immediately raise several red flags.

The Wilmington Police Department (WPD), like the U.S. Marshal Service, will never make a phone call of this kind. And, as the WPD points out in a Facebook post, the maximum fine for skipping jury duty in North Carolina is $50.
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2017 Diamond Award Winner
Safety and security retrospective

By Bob Wright

With a population approaching 6,000 residents, 80 miles of road, an area of 10 square miles and four gates, St. James' Safety and Security Committee procedures require continuous assessment and modification to meet safety and security needs. With its rapid growth, St. James has dramatically changed for the better.

The most visible security change over the last year was the opening of the Grove Gate. Some less obvious changes are additional radar signs and another security rover on some shifts. Many of the signs are portable and are routinely moved throughout the community, primarily to heavily traveled roads. They remind motorists of the speed limit on that specific section of the road and display their current speed. The signs also collect data, including speed, volume of traffic on an hourly basis and a breakdown of numbers of vehicles’ speeds in five-mph increments.

We must remember that access to St. James is possible and we should secure our cars and homes.

Other changes include the construction of fences or barriers where a perimeter survey concluded access was susceptible. As you are aware, our security can only monitor and control vehicular traffic. Our mobile security is instructed to focus their night patrols on areas where there has been past entry by foot. In addition, at our request, the Brunswick County Sheriff’s Office (BCSO) has added patrols in those same areas.

The security “Post Orders” — a manual of operational procedures followed by our contract security firm — were thoroughly reviewed and updated to reflect our specific needs. We completed this review in December.

Over the years, individuals have committed crimes (mostly vandalism) after gaining entry on foot. This past year, an individual forcibly entered a residence while the homeowner was away and tried to get into a second home. He was arrested almost immediately by the BCSO.

There were seven other cases in 2017 when vehicle and residence doors were left unlocked and articles reportedly stolen. In most cases, those responsible have been identified and arrested. We must remember that access to St. James is possible and we should secure our cars and homes.

According to the Sheriff’s records, our area of greatest vulnerability is fraud — the largest crime affecting our property owners. So far this year, residents have reported 15 cases of fraud and three cases of identity theft. During last May’s POA monthly informational meeting, the Sheriffs’ expert on fraud matters addressed property owners. He described the most prevalent scams and the reaction a potential victim should have, including immediate BCSO notification. The Sheriff’s Office will take appropriate action, including investigating and sharing details with other interested law enforcement agencies. Our gates are not a barrier to fraud. It is important our property owners be sensitive to the techniques used by criminals and immediately advise BCSO by calling 911.

Editor’s Note: Bob Wright is the chair of the POA’s Safety and Security Committee.
'Twas the week before Christmas and all through St. James
Drove three intrepid judges, blearily searching street names
So went the judging of the first Cat-Tales Holiday Lighting contest, which ended December 15.

A few lessons were learned. First there are lots of roads in St. James, so next year the judges will map out their route to look at all the nominations before they set out on the dark roads.

Also, the judges saw plenty of winner-potential homes that weren’t nominated, so next year, please get out there and vote.

Thanks to all who nominated your neighbors and to all the folks who clearly spent lots of resources decorating their homes and mailboxes. We enjoyed looking at the results, and we hope the rest of the community will, as well!
I carried a pager for a week and listened to calls for assistance. I wore a fire jacket that weighed as much as I did. I not only fired the St. James fire hose, I took a figurative drink from it when I set out to learn about how the St. James Fire Department (SJFD) operates.

It only took a minute before I was welcomed into the pristine fire station, where I stood in front of two magnificent Class A fire trucks — two of the nine vehicles at the station, including an 85-foot aerial truck and an ambulance. St. James borrowed its first fire truck from Long Island, but now the SJFD owns all its equipment, including rescue gear for pets.

After meeting several of the 39 firefighters, I visited the classroom, where I learned that training is extensive and includes Firefighting Essentials coursework and hands-on instruction, most of it done in-house. Trainees also participate in a live burn at Sunny Point to test their physical and psychological firefighting aptitudes. Firefighters maintain their practical skills and knowledge through biweekly training drills. All equipment is thoroughly tested and meticulously documented.

During the week I carried the pager, I was initially challenged by the jargon and volume of calls, but eventually I could discern calls by location. Our hard-working firefighters have served in St. James as well as nearby Oak Island and Southport and further away in the Outer Banks, Sunset Harbor and numerous other locales.
I rode in the Command Vehicle with Fire Chief John Dahill to the site of the proposed new firehouse near Seaside, which will dramatically reduce the time to reach these future neighborhoods.

My highlight was participating in a drill at the marina. Wearing the heavy jacket, I was honored and humbled to be only the second civilian to ever ride in the aerial fire truck. I was assigned a job in the “bucket” at the end of the tower. Everyone became quiet when a voice on the radio provided details: victims, smoke and fire. At the marina, I aimed the hose, walked the ladder and observed the truck’s state-of-the-art Command Zone Advanced Electronics. The recap back at the firehouse: “All went well. No fumbles and good communication.”

Neither Scott Boyer nor Rich Palmer was a firefighter before moving to St. James. Since they are paid by only a T-shirt and an annual appreciation dinner, I wondered why they do this dangerous work. “My office in New York City faced the FDNY near the Trade Center, and I got to know those courageous men,” Rich said. “It is my way and now my time to give back.”

Scott added, “I am fortunate to be part of the SJFD, which helps others in desperate need no matter what race or religion.”

Chief Dahill summed it up. “We are a team,” he said. “More than that, we are family. This fire station is a gem to be polished and passed onto our future generations.”

I am overwhelmed by my drink from the fire hose. St. James firefighters are special people. To become one of them, contact Chief Dahill at 910-253-0999. Men and women are welcome.

St. James Fire Department fun facts

THE TRUCKS
Two Class A engines, each valued at $1.4 million
One 85-foot tower ladder truck
One brush truck
One light rescue truck
One chief’s vehicle
One quick response vehicle
One utility vehicle
One ambulance
45 degrees: The highest vertical angle of tower truck ladder
The fire hose provides up to 100 pounds of water pressure

THE MEMBERS OF SJFD
39 firefighters
18 fire police
29 EMTs
Available 24/7/365
Gear protects temperatures from 600-1,000 degrees F
30 pounds: Weight of air packs
The St. James POA Activities Committee sponsored an overnight trip to Winston-Salem in November. The highlight was a visit to the Reynolda House Museum of American Art. Attendees enjoyed docent-led tours of the Georgia O’Keeffe: Living Modern exhibition. The museum was the only southern venue to host this exhibition.

St. James residents who attended the overnight trip stand in front of the Reynolda House Museum of American Art.

Thalian Association volunteers recently performed Holiday Cabaret at the Members Club. There were traditional songs like “I’ll Be Home for Christmas,” “Winter Wonderland,” and “Hey Big Spender,” as well as pairing seasonal songs from upcoming Thalian shows to delight us all. Guests sang along to songs and joined in the “14” Days of Christmas, as only St. James Plantation can do. And, let’s not forget, by special invitation from Stuart Pike, the man in the red suit joined us too.

It has been a few years since Stuart, a St. James resident and longtime actor, created this wonderful partnership. A portion of the tickets cost is donated to the Thalian Association and, in turn St. James residents enjoy a dinner and incredible talent.

The Activities Committee thanks everyone who worked on this event, including organizers, ticket sellers, decorators, the Members Club staff, and most of all, Stuart and Thalian Association performers. Thanks also to those who attended this show. Everyone left with smiles on their faces and a little more Christmas spirit in their hearts.

Thalian performers treated guests to some holiday spirit.

Those who attended the Holiday Cabaret in December were treated to songs, laughs and dinner.

Activities Committee overnight trip

Story and photo by Jerri Wheeler

The St. James POA Activities Committee sponsored an overnight trip to Winston-Salem in November. The highlight was a visit to the Reynolda House Museum of American Art. Attendees enjoyed docent-led tours of the Georgia O’Keeffe: Living Modern exhibition. The museum was the only southern venue to host this exhibition.
Helen Gabriel is the executive director of Smart Start, an organization supported by the St. James Service Club. She was the guest speaker at the November general meeting.

The mission of Smart Start is to improve the early care, health and early education systems for young children. Its many programs include:

**Training** to assist child care providers.

**Child care subsidies** to help low-income families with funds to find quality child care.

**Assistance to child care providers** for on-site consultation, technical support, training and mentoring.

**A wage program** that offers salary supplements to child care providers based on their education.

**Parents as teachers**, which facilitates educators visiting homes to teach parents or caregivers appropriate activities for their children.

**Raising a reader** fosters a reading routine whereby children from local child care centers bring home bright red bags filled with high-quality picture books each week.

**Watch it grow** helps prevent childhood obesity by creating gardens in child care centers to stimulate children’s interest in growing, tasting and eating a variety of healthy vegetables. In addition, it promotes exercise and interest in outdoor physical activities.

Smart Start is constantly implementing new programs. Recent initiatives include:

**The Dolly Parton Imagination Library** mails a free book each month to all Brunswick county children aged birth to five years old.

**Block Fest** provides interactive block building to young children and their parents, helping to raise awareness of early math and science.

**Park Time Reading** provides free libraries in the children’s area of local parks. Currently there are two locations with a third coming soon.

Volunteers are needed to read to children and assist with book drives. Additional information can be found on the website http://www.smartstartbrunswick.org.

**Correction:** In the December issue of *Cat-Tales*, we erroneously referred to Bill Hogue’s “late wife.” Kay is alive and well!
St. James’ Artisans Gallery will be transformed into a warm and romantic winter wonderland this month and in February. It’s the premier event in a new program of themed art shows, when the Gallery will celebrate many St. James artists for two-month periods.

“Snowflakes and Valentines” is the first event in this series. The Artisans will highlight paintings and photos of winter scenes, winter-themed crafts and a host of pieces celebrating love and romance. As the photos show, it’s fascinating to see the variety of visual and tactile representations of winter’s beauty and romantic love the Artisans are showcasing.

So even if January and February turn out really cold in St. James this year, you can find a warm and welcoming haven at the gallery.
Tickets to the holiday home tours in St. James and Southport, as in years past, sold out before the December events took place, a testament to the quality and the joy, sense of community and spirit the community-wide events offer. The tours are a lookie-Lou’s (and Louise’s) dream come true, allowing people to peek into the dressed-up homes of their neighbors with utter abandonment. Actually, they’re encouraged to do so — learning about the home’s history in the process.

These events wouldn’t be possible without the Santa-like generosity of behind-the-scenes people, many of them neighbors.

The St. James Candlelight Holiday Home Tour showcased seven homes, with tour proceeds donated to charities in Brunswick County. According to Linda Burdoo, who with co-chair Arlene DeLong helped organize this year’s event, 800 tickets were sold. Linda said the homeowners opened their homes to guests after hours of decorating. Some “decked the halls” by themselves, others recruited friends and neighbors to help. More than 230 volunteers performed myriad tasks such as ticket sales, printing, communications and serving as home hosts. Fire and police personnel helped direct people and traffic to ensure community safety. Troon donated the food served at Members Club in the afternoon.

Meanwhile, St. James residents Judy and Earl Crotts, Al and Linda Dooley and Karen Andrews served as docents at the nine houses included in the Southport Historical Society’s 28th Annual Christmas Tour of Homes. Colleen Webster, who coordinated the docent volunteers for the tour, said she is grateful for the help the St. James volunteers provided to help make the event fun for all. Twelve hundred tickets were sold, and proceeds will be used for historical restoration, educational programs and a high school scholarship.

Karen said Colleen recruited her to volunteer. She agreed because she’s always looking for new experiences and a way to meet people. Although her post, a bathroom, may not seem glamorous (oh, but what a bathroom it was!), she still managed to interact with visitors.

The interaction was also the fun part for Al (his job was to greet guests). He said the first time his wife agreed to volunteer for the tour, she volunteered him, too. He had fun then, and he went willingly this time.

Judy said everyone had a wonderful time, despite the weather. “They didn’t even care that it was misty,” she said. “It’s just really a nice thing to do, and you get to meet nice homeowners and enjoy that part of Christmas.”
BUILDING homes designed FOR YOUR FUTURE.

- Building in St. James for over 15 years.
- Unlimited licensed N.C. builders, No Hidden Fees, licensed real estate agents, an interior designer and licensed landscape contractor all on staff.
- FOR SALE our latest model home at 3045 Moss Hammock Wynd, located in St. James.
When Wes and Diane Juda arrived at St. James, they found limited athletic opportunities for children and adults with intellectual disabilities. Wes contacted Steve Goodwin, Brunswick County Special Populations and Special Olympics Coordinator, and started a cycling program that has been rolling since 2013.

Wes is now Special Olympics volunteer chair for the county and has been working with Steve and many others to expand the fitness and athletic opportunities dedicated to the special needs population.

When Steve discovered that Wes was an avid tennis player, he asked Wes to start a Special Olympics tennis program for the county. To gauge the level of interest, a series of three clinics was offered to the county schools. The response was overwhelming. More than 50 special student athletes expressed a desire to join the program. Clearly, the organizers needed help.

Fortunately, Karen Holbrook, another St. James tennis enthusiast, was actively involved with the local schools as the Brunswick County Tennis Association youth program coordinator. At the time, Karen was working with Courtney Nix and her South Brunswick Middle School physical education class on a project to train the PE students to help teach the athletes in the exceptional children’s class. Sometimes, things just seem to come together.

In October, Wes, Steve, Karen and Courtney gathered groups of volunteers at the middle school for a train-the-trainer session provided by Lou Welsh, program coordinator for Abilities Tennis of North Carolina. By the end of the session, 20 middle-school PE students had acquired the skills they needed to work with the fledgling athletes.

In addition to the student coaches, Wes and Karen enlisted help from the St. James tennis community, including Diane Juda, Richard Trask, Carrie Guerrette and Mark and Denise Studt, as well as Bob Cause of Southport.

For three Mondays in November, this enthusiastic band of volunteers introduced more than 60 special needs students from across Brunswick County to the game of tennis. As one of the volunteers, it was a pleasure to participate in this unique learning experience that benefited everyone — athletes, student coaches, parents, teachers and volunteers.

The need is great, the interest is sensational, and the opportunities to contribute are plentiful. Our special needs community needs help. Do yourself a favor and volunteer. You’ll learn why it’s called Special Olympics.
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It was a cold February afternoon in 2009 when two new friends, Al Blackburn and John Lynch, were sitting at the Woodlands Park Amphitheater after a 10-mile bike ride. John leaned over and casually said, “You know, we like biking in flat North Carolina, do you think anyone else in town would like to ride with us?”

Al smirked and said, “Yeah, but they’d probably want to have lunch afterwards.”

And that was the beginning of a lasting friendship and the germ that sparked the St. James Bikers. Al and John both loved riding their bikes around St. James. They wanted to meet other cyclists who shared their passion and desire to see some of the natural beauty outside the gates. In April 2009, they announced a ferry ride to Fort Fisher followed by a bike ride to Kure/Carolina Beach — with lunch afterwards. Eleven “pioneers” enthusiastically responded. Soon, they met many more like-minded people who shared their enjoyment of riding.

Since 2009, the group has ridden across Oak Island, Bald Head, Lake Waccamaw, Wrightsville Beach, Boiling Spring Lakes, Holden Beach and many other local areas. In some cases, ferry rides to the day’s destination only added to the anticipation and excitement of a beautiful day under the North Carolina sky. Gary Johnson rode with them several times and soon joined Al and John as leaders. Next, Nate Lipsen signed on; he brought his enthusiasm and technical expertise. The team was complete!

To give a visual identity to their group, the club decided to wear blue and white matching shirts and received Developer approval to adopt the Clubs’ logo. Gary is the official coordinator for the shirts and has been busy taking orders.

Sampling some of the area’s cuisine seemed a natural reward after a long ride. Often, more time is spent deciding where to have lunch than choosing where to ride. This energetic bunch has also engaged in some not-so-physical pursuits like stopping at a local vineyard to sample some of the area’s wines.

The group decided from the beginning that the season would be from March to November. The season-ending ride is always in St. James. Lunch is at Tommy’s, where they enjoy autumn colors and cooler temperatures.

The bike crew is working to add some interesting new rides for 2018. The schedule should be ready by February and they encourage participation. The rides are free, bike helmets are required and nametags are recommended.

For more information, to sign up for a ride or to order a shirt, visit the St. James Bikers on the POA website at http://www.stjamespoanc.org/members/group.aspx?id=109671.
2017 *Cat-Tales* Photo Contest winners

The editors thank the photographers and judges for making this contest a success — 100 entries were submitted. Congratulations to the winners whose photographs are featured here.

**SPECIAL AWARDS**

*Essence of St. James*
Nick Noble *Music and Dancing at SeaSide*

*Technical/Composition*
Kathy Crispino *Docked*

*Editors’ Choice*
Chris Stitcher *Smoke Screen*
1st Place
Steven Sagri Oak Island Amigos

2nd Place
Paul Kubitschek Heron Walk

3rd Place
Dave Pearce Wingfoot Stare Down

Honorable Mention
Deb Voso Elusive Painted Bunting

Honorable Mention
Kurt Chismark Cody

Honorable Mention
Susan Harman Inquisitive
1st Place
Carol Scott Waterway Park Delight

2nd Place
Ross Gorman Hanging Out at the Beach

3rd Place
Elaine Harris Waiting for the Big Catch

Honorable Mention
Kathy Ivers My World Upside Down
SCENERY

Grand Prize & 1st Place
Kathy Crispino Docked

2nd Place
Nick Noble Waterway Park Sunrise

3rd Place
Paul Kubitschek Southport Sunrise

Honorable Mention
George Pappayliou Diamond Ring

Honorable Mention
Tish Gordon Surf at Sunset, Oak Island
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Ah, the winter doldrums; the blahs; the holiday letdown; the “I’m tired of this cold weather” season!

Such is the plight of the first month of each year, unless of course you’re fortunate enough to have a home in Rio or Belize or Caracas. The word January even sounds cold for some reason. Perhaps it’s the fact that I, along with so many others here in St. James, endured more than 30 Januarys in far less-hospitable climes. That, and having grown up in North Carolina, I know February here can be extremely pleasant. And the daylight lasts longer in February, too. So January, for me, is truly the dark, bleak month of the year.

What can we do to overcome this onset of seasonal depression? Readers of this column know my solution is to get out and see a production from one of the many community theater troupes in the area. This month will be no exception.

If you happened to miss the Opera House Theatre New Year’s Eve production of “Priscilla Queen of the Desert,” don’t despair. The show will run weekends from January 5 through January 21. The musical was adapted from the 1994 movie of the same name, which starred Treat Williams. The story recounts, in a campy, comical and yet poignant way, the journey of three drag queens through the Australian outback to help the estranged wife (yep) of one of the group’s members. They make the trek in a purple VW bus named “Priscilla.”

The show contains some of the great dance-floor favorites of the 70s and 80s to move the story along. Many of a certain age will be tempted to sing along to the likes of “Hot Stuff,” “I Will Survive,” “I Say a Little Prayer” and “Shake Your Groove Thing.”

For tickets, call 910-632-2285, visit the website (www.thalianhall.org) or go by the box office at 310 Chestnut Street.

Theater Now, 19 S. 10th St. in Wilmington, has a penchant for producing shows by local and/or new playwrights. Though not a new playwright, recent St. James transplant Don Fried is about as local as it gets in our quaint little community. About 10 years ago, after rummaging through his play idea file, Don took several ideas with similar themes and compiled them into a series of one-act plays. The “similar ideas” aspect is the intriguing part of the total package.

That theme should resonate with St. James residents as the title of the compilation is “Senior Moments.” Opening January 19 and playing Friday and Saturday through February 17, Theater Now will produce four of Don’s funny, touching and slightly naughty short plays about people in their senior years. I think of it as “Friends” for a sophisticated audience.

Theater Now is a dinner theater, but show-only tickets are available. To make reservations, contact Theater Now at 910-399-3669, or online at http://www.theatrewilmington.com.

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Two women who say they love to grow people and organizations hope to do that for two area arts organizations — the Brunswick Arts Council and Brunswick Community College’s (BCC) Southport Center.

Susan Sims Pritts was recently hired as the first-ever executive director of the council, while Barbara McFall, Southport Center director, recently announced an expansion at the center she has overseen since its inception. St. James artists and supporters of the arts have connections to both organizations.

Susan Sims Pritts started as the council’s first-ever part-time executive director in October. She wants people to know the Brunswick Arts Council isn’t just for artists. She wants to broaden the community’s knowledge about what it does and increase its membership and donor base.

The council serves as an umbrella for arts in the county. Membership includes residents, businesses, artists and members of the Artisans of St. James, Associated Artists of Southport, Oak Island Art Guild and the Waterway Art Association.

A board of directors, led by President Gary Halberstadt, oversees the council. Five divisions — literary arts, grants and development, performing arts, student arts education, visual arts and multicultural programs, each of which has its own president — make up the council.

In addition to informing the public about the council’s mission — “to inspire and promote appreciation, education, participation and support for a broad range of arts and cultural interests for the benefit of Brunswick County artists and arts-related organizations, students and the community at large,” — Sims Pritts has other goals. For instance, she wants to spread access to the arts to seemingly underrepresented groups, including those who live in rural areas. She wants to ensure cultural diversity of people served by the council and to make sure senior citizens and children are served.

Sims Pritts has been researching information about a variety of facets related to the arts. For instance, studies show children who participate in quality arts programs improve academically. From an economic development standpoint, tourists coming to southeastern North Carolina spend their money on arts and cultural activities. The population in the county is increasing, and predictions suggest it will continue to grow. So, the council’s position is to keep pace with the needs of the population, whether they’re artists or consumers of the arts.

St. James is home to a significant percentage of the adult students wielding paintbrushes, throwing clay pots, melting glass beads, hammering silver and participating in the beehive of artistic activity at BCC’s Southport Center. And in 2018, they and their creative colleagues will find some welcome additions at its facility, located at 710 North Lord Street in Southport, as well as to the faculty. When classes begin again January 8, there will be two new studios:

• An additional pottery studio adjacent to the current one, making an entire wing devoted to the clay arts, and
• A new glass studio, across the hall from the silversmithing studio.
The new pottery studio will allow expansion to nine sections of pottery, with four instructors working in diverse styles and methods. The center expects to serve nearly 100 potters this year. The new glass studio is equipped to support stained glass, lampwork (small scale hot glass) and glass mosaic. For spring 2018, the center will offer beginning and intermediate silversmithing and specialty topics in lost wax and repousse.

The classes are as fun as they are informative. Visitors often hear laughter interspersed with the sound of landing clay in the pottery class. Sometimes the art is set aside for social interaction. Southport Center Director Barbara McFall says she’s constantly on the lookout for professional artists to lead courses. For instance, she’s been talking with the Wilmington Area Woodturners’ Association (WAWA) about offering woodturning soon.

The entranceway of the Southport Center showcases a large chess set WAWA members have loaned to the center. WAWA anticipates offering a weekend workshop at BCC Southport sometime in March as an introduction. For regular programming however, the association would need a specially outfitted room.

Arts programs are often difficult and expensive to set up. But metrics indicate they’re worth it:

- When the center officially opened in 2015, there were three pottery classes with at least six students in each. In the spring of 2018, there will be nine sections of up to 12 students. Pottery is currently the fastest growing course offering.
- Five sections of painting will be offered at the Southport Center and two in Calabash this spring. Two years ago, there were three sections with far fewer participants.
- Four sections of silversmithing are on the books for spring.
- When BCC piloted stained glass for the first time in 2017, it had five students. The second time it had 20 students in two sections. This spring, the center will host three sections — beginning, intermediate and advanced.
- All told this spring nearly 300 students will participate in 37 classes.

In addition, Barbara is looking for people who might be interested in taking creative writing beginning in February.

This is great news for Barbara, who retired from West Virginia University (WVU) a few years earlier than she’d planned to grow the Southport Center. “I had built [programs] before, so I knew growth at the Southport Center was going to be a geometric progression” she said. “You never know how fast it’s going to catch. This caught immediately.”

Originally from Charlotte, Barbara has worked in the arts for most of her life. She drew portraits for live events, designed interiors, did graphic arts, and owned/operated an art and fine crafts gallery and frame shop. She earned a master’s degree and a Ph.D. and became an arts administrator, eventually serving as Director of the Division of Design and Merchandising at WVU. She rebuilt orphaned curriculum programs in interior design, fashion design and merchandising into what became — the year she retired — the WVU School of Design and Community Development.” She earned tenure as a full professor in the process.

“I like to grow things,” Barbara said. Growth at the Southport Center has been accomplished through the limited funding for the public institution. To date, there has been no fundraising for the arts programs and few grants. “We just came in and started working.”

It would be great, Barbara says, to find friends and patrons to help support the center’s growth. She will never see the full potential of the Southport Center realized in her lifetime, because she’s building it for 50 years into the future. With the help of people in the community spreading the word about what a gem it is, and with boosted funding, “I personally think given our location that we will be a major regional arts center,” she said. “Who wouldn’t want to come here?”

For the full range of spring offerings, see the CHOICES catalog (online.anyflip.com/dqjt/gkfb/mobile/index.html#p=31). Arts, crafts and cultural heritage offerings begin on page 31. The catalog is also available at the center.
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Providence Home celebrated its 20th anniversary in November at its Southport facility. The anniversary celebration included music provided by the Back Porch Rockers, pig pickin’ food, drinks and facility tours.

The organization opened its doors in 1997 and is the only emergency shelter for youth in Brunswick County. It provides shelter, food and clothing and attends to the medical, educational, emotional, recreational and spiritual needs of several hundred Brunswick County youth.

The Family Emergency Teen Shelter, Inc. (Providence Home) is a private, non-profit organization, as identified by the IRS code 501C (3). Providence home is licensed by the State of North Carolina and is a member of the Juvenile Crime Prevention Council of Brunswick County.

Twenty years after its founding, Providence Home continues to fulfill its mission, protecting and providing for children in need of out-of-home placement.

Three thrift stores operating under the name Sheltered Treasures are a major source of financing for Providence Home. Located in Ocean Isle, Calabash and Southport, the stores accept donated items such as clothing for men, women and children as well as household items, furniture, appliances and linens.

For more information about Providence Home or to volunteer or donate, call the Providence Home Office at 910-457-0440.

Editor's Note: Bob Lee is vice president of Providence Home of the Family Emergency Teen Shelter, Inc.
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United States Marine Corps veterans, their spouses and friends of Marines from St. James and the surrounding community celebrated the 242nd birthday of the Marine Corps at the Members Club in November.

More than 70 attendees viewed a video birthday message from the Commandant of the Marine Corps and enjoyed the traditional cutting of the birthday cake. Retired USMC Lt. Col. Dennis Courtnage, chairman of the birthday dinner committee, presented pieces of the cake to the guest of honor, USMC retired Col. Chuck Dallachie. Dr. Bob Iosue, the oldest Marine at the event, received a piece of cake and presented a piece to the youngest Marine present, Lance Cpl. Scott Miranda.

Active duty Marines from Fox Company, 4th Tank Battalion, Camp LeJeune, N.C., formed a Marine color guard and provided ceremonial support for the dinner. Chuck and Lynn Dallachie, recent residents of St. James, were guests of honor. Chuck provided a very personal recount of his experience in Beirut, Lebanon where in 1983, 220 Marines and 21 other service members died in a terrorist bombing.

The dinner, marking the Marine Corps’ November 10 birthday, has become a traditional event. All St. James residents who served in the Corps are invited to attend, as are spouses and friends.
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Marines thankful for Thanksgiving in St. James

Story and photo by John Muuss

About 110 Marines were thankful for the generosity of St. James residents this Thanksgiving. The Marines came to St. James on two buses from Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune to enjoy dinner during the annual program created and supervised by St. James resident Rick Quashne.

American Legion Post 543 awards scholarship to nursing student

Story and photo by John Muuss

The American Legion Department of North Carolina awarded its Colin Furr Memorial Nursing scholarship to Natalie Overton, a nursing student at Brunswick Community College. Post 543 nominated Natalie, who lives in St. James with her husband and two children, for the scholarship.

In announcing the award to Natalie, Post 543 Commander Mike Fegan said the scholarship was developed to address the nation’s nursing shortage. He added that Natalie, who will graduate next year and continue her studies in the field of geriatrics, is exactly the kind of student the American Legion had in mind when it created the program in 1988.

The scholarship was named by the American Legion to honor a past North Carolina Department Commander who championed programs to support nursing education.

(l-r) American Post 543 Commander Mike Fegan, scholarship recipient Natalie Overton, Rick Sessa, former commander and Chuck Blackburn, legioneer.
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The New 2018 Buick Enclave Avenir
Everyone in St. James comes from somewhere else. It’s one of the community’s endearing qualities. Even though it seems like everyone came from New Jersey or New York, St. James residents have moved to this corner of Brunswick County from all parts of the country (including, of course, the Tar Heel state).

Memories of our former homes arrived here with us immigrants. Some — traffic jams, freezing winters, grade-school bullies, failed high school romances, and similar unpleasantness — are best left behind. Other, more pleasant recollections of our one-time homesteads have found their way to the pages of Cat-Tales. They are entertaining and enlightening. They weave a fabric of diversity and community. They keep us grounded, even as we reach for new life experiences.

But what if we could recreate aspects of our past, not just in Cat-Tales, but by developing them for the enjoyment of our neighbors?

Here’s my suggestion: What if St. James had a hill?

I’m sure you’ve noticed, but it’s worth repeating — St. James is exceedingly flat. Not that the relaxed geographic contour of our community is a bad thing. But the terrain doesn’t make for much variety. I recently tested the idea of building a hill in St. James with some of my neighbors. They struggled with the concept, suggesting that flatness was a good thing, and wondering why it wasn’t enough that we have the “hill” we must climb to get to the Members clubhouse. There’s also that small, dog-legged slope on the sixth hole at Players which gives me nightmares.

Who among us that came from areas with steeply inclined terrain recalls them with anything but fondness? With their ups and downs, hills are symbols for change, which we sought when we moved here. Hills provide geographic variety, and a challenge to improve. Wouldn’t we all be in better shape if we had to climb a hill a couple of times each week? Hills promote strength and determination.

A tall, majestic hill in St. James would be a good thing. It would have to be big to be meaningful, taller even than Big Kill Devil Hill at the Wright Brothers National Memorial. No point in going halfway. People from miles around would see it. We could call it Mt. St. James, with slopes for winter skiing.

And where would we put this hill? I propose we build Mt. St. James on the site of the Beach Club. We could reconstruct the Beach Club on the top of the hill, giving us an even more spectacular view of the beach and ocean (and a rest area for skiers).

Diversity. Beauty. Strength. Unity. A link to our past and a challenge for our future. On the level, this would be a good thing.

Editor’s note: Perhaps readers have their own suggestions for the occasional series, “What if St. James had…” Send your ideas to cattaleseditor@gmail.com.
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Most people I know in St. James are active. Head to the gym and see the weights and machines constantly in use, or the courts at Founders with their non-stop tennis. You can’t drive anywhere without encountering bikers and walkers. I’ll even begrudgingly include golfers, provided they’re walking with a pull cart or doing 18 on a cart path-only day, when they must track down errant shots by foot.

My routine includes biking, kayaking, tennis and pickleball. I try to at least hit the daily double. Some days, feeling energetic, I’ll shoot for the trifecta and maybe even the superfecta. That was, until my orthopedist pointed out in graphic MRI detail the damage to my shoulder and advised surgery. To continue the abuse to my wing would make things progressively worse and painful. He didn’t have to tell me about the pain.

“I trekked to SeaSide to watch my buddies play tennis or pickleball, resolved to return to action sooner rather than later.”

In late November, five weeks after going under the knife, I was officially sidelined for 4-6 months. At first I thought I’d go crazy, and for the first two days, relying on pain meds after the nerve block wore off, I did. But you know what they say about lemons and lemonade!

I’m not a walker, and I was reluctant to amble about. But at least I was outside, getting some exercise. As the distances increased, so did my attitude, and I began to look forward to my daily strolls around campus. On some days, I’d head down to the marina and Waterway Park and picture myself back on the water. On others, I trekked to SeaSide to watch my buddies play tennis or pickleball, resolved to return to action sooner rather than later.

Two factors helped a lot on these initial journeys. I was thankful for the benches placed in strategic spots around town. Who knew walking would be so taxing? New home construction sites also provided the opportunity to practice one of my guiding principles: Never pass up the opportunity to use the bathroom, even a port-a-potty.

Next came trips to the gym, where I could ride the recumbent bike with the cool video that allowed me to cycle around France at a steady pace and high heart rate. With the start of physical therapy three weeks in, my range of motion improved, as did the strength in my shoulder. The light at the end of the tunnel was getting brighter.

During down time, I transferred the video on our old VHS tapes to DVDs. I watched hours of my kids play various sports, determined to make each a highlight reel. One depressing visual was how much younger Janice and I looked — her with the 80’s big hair and me with no gray.

By the time you read this, I’m hoping I’ll be recovered, or close to it. So, if you’re considering that surgical decision, I say go for it, if you stay positive and are determined to get back better than ever — or at least as good as you were before.
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New Year’s absolutions

By Bill Eberle

Instead of New Year’s resolutions, consider New Year’s absolutions.

Resolutions are great. But according to survey data, only eight percent are kept. I’m not suggesting we don’t need to change. I do want to be kinder, less apt to choose an adult beverage to relax, or seek comfort in — GASP — food, or spend less time, semi-comatose, in front of the TV with the remote lolling in my hand.

Sometimes, in an effort to change, we make plans and occasionally ask others to help us change by holding us “encourageable.” Suppose every time I fell short of my good intentions, I had a chance to reboot my daily life and habit patterns. I don’t know what percent of the problems with computers and other devices can be solved with the advice, “Turn it off, turn it on again.” I do know that heaping expletives on my laptop doesn’t seem to faze it — though I hope Alexa doesn’t hear me.

The specifics of my hopes provide ample opportunities to reboot. I know I want to be more physically fit, flexible and to develop my balance in the coming year. I want to be a more understanding husband, father, grandfather and even son-in-law. I’d like to learn new things or at least not lose my capacity to learn.

I’m quite able to sit at the keyboard and put things in writing. I once made a list of my lists. The temptation is neither to write things down nor share them with anybody, so I’ll be off the hook when setbacks come.

There will be setbacks with “mini-objectives” — steps along the path to become at least a more disciplined person, if not the person my dog seems to think I am. The question is, will I let the stumble stop me in my tracks?

January is named after a mythical figure who could look backwards and forwards at the same time. I think he was once in my car giving me directions (or was that the well-modulated voice of my GPS?).

This January, I’ll need guidance that slyly moves me in a circle, so I can head as I intended or hear the command in life that says, “When possible, make a legal U-turn.” The GPS was invented to foreshorten husband and wife spirited discussions as we drive down the road. Instead, we are being told what to do by a machine — which is okay, I guess, since the GPS is surely a distant relative of my TV remote.

So, I will make some plans, probably a list. But I will need absolution — many reboots — to pursue my resolutions, because I will stumble. I’ll need to sit at my life’s keyboard (“Ctrl-Alt-Delete”).
Novant Health Family Medicine Pine Forest

When it comes to your health, having access to the best care in a convenient location is a must. That’s why Novant Health Oceanside Family Medicine in Southport has moved to a new location at Pine Forest Plantation and changed our name to Novant Health Family Medicine Pine Forest.

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