and the Apollo 11 moon mission
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<th>Individual Agents – Home/Lot Sales – 2019 Jan - June 4</th>
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<th>ST. JAMES PROPERTIES’ ANSWERS</th>
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<td>1. How many St. James sales did your company make in 2018?</td>
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<td>2. What is your marketing budget for St. James specifically?</td>
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<td>Over $1 Million Dollars!</td>
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<td>3. How many prospects physically come through your office annually?</td>
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<td>We had 1800+ on-site tours in 2018.</td>
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<td>4. Do you specialize in St. James Plantation?</td>
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<td>We concentrate solely in St. James.</td>
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910.253.3001 LISTING AGENTS - LISA FRYE, JOANNE PENEZIC, LISA NIEVES AND BOBBY GROVE

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Chances are, if you’re of a certain age, you remember exactly where you were and what you were doing on July 20, 1969. That was the day Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin became the first two human beings to set foot on a terrestrial body other than Earth.

For this month’s issue of Cat-Tales, we asked St. James residents for their memories of that celestial event, because it’s been 50 years since it took place. Time flies. We received several responses, ranging from personal reactions to the recollections of some residents who played a role in the Apollo 11 mission. Rick Margin, our strategy advisor, wrote a piece on the historic event, and Associate Editor Laurie Danko introduced the collection of memories. Together, these articles help bring the Apollo 11 mission closer to all of us.

Meanwhile, back on Earth, be sure to read Cheryl Serra’s piece on the annual return of the ibis to our area. You can read more about local animal life in a set of five stories on organizations that befriend and care for dogs, cats and perhaps other household pets (most of whom, in return, befriend and care for us).

This month, Mike Haase, the leader of Mike’s Garage Band, retires after four decades of musical entertainment. With the exception of Homer Wright, Mike may be the most famous person in St. James. Be sure to read Judy Rubin’s story about Mike’s contributions to St. James and Brunswick County.

Of course, with July 4 comes our annual love affair with fireworks. As Jim Carey points out in his piece featuring the St. James Fire Department, take good care if you’re handling your own fireworks. Better yet, enjoy one or more of the displays around the area conducted by professionals. They may not produce memories as lasting as the Apollo 11 mission, but they’re another pleasant way to pass the time in St. James.
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St. James and the Apollo 11 moon mission:
The world and St. James residents remember this momentous event that occurred 50 years ago.

Michael Haase – the humble man, a lasting legacy
Michael Haase has generated more than $1 million contributions to charitable organizations and helped create countless happy moories.

Later than usual, the white ibis are here.
In the past, unwelcome island visitors scared them away.

By Judy Rubin

By Cheryl L. Serra
We are now in the 29th year of development and are continuing to grow at a rather rapid pace. In this article I address the current status of the community and recent growth trends, including: (1) development of new home sites, (2) construction of new homes, and (3) sales of homes/lots over the past 18 months.

**Development:** The development of new homesites is nearing completion. The more recent additions are primarily located along Oceanic Drive and include Oceanic Bay, The Towns, Knollwood and Bluffton Woods. Since July of 2017, an additional 150 homesites have been added to the community. In addition to these developments, there are three other areas in the planning stage. The first is located on the northwest side of the Oceanic/Wyndmere traffic circle, where approximately 90 additional duplex units are planned. On the southwest side of that same circle, there are plans for about 40 single-family homes. The last area in the planning stage is a parcel outside the SeaSide Gate to the south of the Dosher Medical Building, where about 40 single-family lots are planned.

At the end of May, there were a total of 1,255 lots still available for construction (not including the approximately 170 lots in the planning stage). Property owners own 89% of these remaining lots and 11% are owned by the Developer and various builders.

**Construction:** Over the past six years (2013-2018), an additional 1,295 homes have been added to our community — more than 200 units per year. The banner year was 2018 with 266 new home permits issued. This year, through May 31, 2019, there have been a total of 106 new home permits issued, so we are continuing that trend. At this time, there are more than 200 homes under construction and that construction pace has remained constant for the past five years.

Currently 4,932 homes/lots have been annexed into the POA. Individual property owners own 97% of these homesites and the remaining 3% are owned by the Developer and various builders. There are 3,675 completed domiciles within St. James, with individual property owners having title to more than 99% of the completed homes.

**Sales:** We started capturing sales data beginning in 2018 to determine what kinds of sales were being made — new lots, spec homes, resales, etc. In 2018, there was a total of 518 homes/lots sold. About 19% of the sales, consisting of vacant lots, were sold by the Developer to property owners or home builders. Another 17% of the sales were made by home builders that built spec homes and then sold those homes to new property owners. The remaining 64% of sales (331 homes/lots) were sold by property owners primarily to new property owners.

For 2019 through the end of May, more than 200 homes/lots have been sold. Lots sold by the Developer accounted for 30% of these sales and the sale of spec homes by builders accounted for another 16%. The resale of homes/lots by property owners was again the largest category with 54% of all sales.

**Current Status:** For the last eight years, we have been using the metrics “Sold Out” and “Built Out” as a measurement of the development of St. James Plantation. This has always been measured against the properties owned by the Developer. With the sale of remaining parcels to home builders, Developer-owned properties are 99.5% Sold Out. When using ownership by individual property owners, excluding builders, we are currently 94% Sold Out and 72% Built Out.
June was a busy month in the Town of St. James. At its June 4 meeting, the Town Council passed the 2019-2020 budget, which included a one-cent tax increase dedicated to funding a $1.5 million reserve for natural disaster recovery. The one-cent increase represents a $40.00 property tax increase on an assessed valuation of $400,000.

The increase was not an easy decision. Although we were able to absorb the costs associated with hurricane Florence cleanup, we believe it is prudent to ensure we have sufficient funds to address future events of a similar or more severe nature.

“[T]he Town Council passed the 2019-2020 budget, which included a one-cent tax increase dedicated to funding a $1.5 million reserve for natural disaster recovery.”

Speaking of natural disasters, the Town’s annual Severe Storm Seminar was also held on June 4. The event was well attended, and we hope that both new and long-time residents found the presentations interesting and informative.

The Emergency Management Team always does an outstanding job putting this event together, and they will continue to be very busy this summer establishing their operations in their new home on the second floor of the Oceanic Drive fire station. The move to a dedicated site allows the team to permanently set up its computers and other communications equipment, enhancing our ability to prepare for and respond to events.

On July 1, the Town of St. James celebrates its 20th birthday with a parade, picnic, concert and fireworks. The three days of celebration leading up to July 1 were also busy with many activities for the young as well as the young-at-heart. As Mayor, I was privileged to participate in most of the events and especially enjoyed passing out pizza and awards at the fishing derby.

I would like to thank The Clubs at St. James, the St. James Fire Department, the Fishing Club, the Model Yacht Club, the Classic Car Club, the Artisans, Mike’s Garage Band, the Back Porch Rockers, the Trilogy Band and the Coastal Harmonizers for their participation and help in making the celebration such a success. I would also like to recognize and express my sincere appreciation to the 20th Anniversary Committee volunteers, sub-committee chairs and committee chairs, Becky Dus and Rita Wissinger, for their tireless efforts over the last six months to create and organize such a memorable event.
Fireworks warning from the St. James Fire Department  

By Jim Carey

Each July 4, thousands of people are injured while using consumer fireworks, many of them children and teens. But despite a general awareness of their dangers, few people understand the associated risks, like burns, traumatic injuries, fires and even death.

In 2017, hospital emergency rooms treated an estimated 12,900 people for fireworks-related injuries. Children younger than 15 years of age accounted for 36% of the estimated injuries. To date, your St. James Fire Department (SJFD) has been fortunate not to have dealt with any fireworks-related injuries or fires.

The months of June and July account for the majority of the annual fireworks-related, emergency department-treated injuries nationally. Between June 16 and July 16, 2017, the innocent sparkler was the number one cause of injuries.

But isn’t it fun to help the grandkids celebrate Independence Day with sparklers — often purchased with other pyrotechnics at roadside stands — and to watch the adults set them off? While your SJFD does not condone using fireworks or sparklers, the federal government has provided guidelines if you’re inclined to purchase and use them:

- Make sure consumer fireworks are legal in your area before buying or using them.
- Never use or make professional-grade fireworks.
- Do not buy or use fireworks packaged in brown paper — a sign they were made for professional displays and are not intended for consumer use.
- Never allow young children to play with or ignite fireworks, including sparklers. Sparklers burn at temperatures of about 2,000 degrees Fahrenheit.
- Never place any part of your body directly over a fireworks device when lighting the fuse. Move safely away immediately after lighting fireworks.
- Light fireworks one at a time, then move away quickly.
- Keep a bucket of water or garden hose handy.
- Never try to relight or handle malfunctioning fireworks. Soak with water and throw them away.
- After fireworks finish burning, douse them with plenty of water from a bucket or hose before discarding the device to prevent a trash fire.

If something goes wrong, call your SJFD at 911.
Outdoor landscape lighting: Aside from your family, your home is your pride and joy. You want its character to shine, not only during the day but evenings as well. Many residents highlight their homes’ features and landscape characteristics at night by contracting with outdoor lighting professionals.

They can help determine the right number of highlights to express your personal taste while ensuring you’re not lighting up neighbors’ dining rooms, shining spotlights into their hot tubs or making your driveway look like an airport runway. Just like everything else, it’s about being good neighbors and adding simple, tasteful lighting to make your home the one-of-a-kind it truly is.

Installing outdoor landscape lighting first requires Architectural Control Committee (ACC) approval. A Modification to Existing Dwelling application must be completed and submitted along with the $50 review and $500 bond fee. The documents can be located on the POA website under ACC Documents, Modification of Existing Dwelling Application. Contact the POA office if you have any questions.

“The POA strongly suggests property owners secure a copy of their As-Built from their builder when construction of their home is complete.”

As-Built Surveys: When requesting any modification to your property, the ACC administrator will want your As-Built Survey — a document your builder should have given to you when your house was built. This document is the final revised plan provided by a land surveyor that reflects changes made in the project after the original site plan was produced. The dimensions of the lot and structure, the utilities locale, your impervious surface coverage and any easements and setbacks are included in this plan.

The POA strongly suggests property owners secure a copy of their As-Built from their builder when construction of their home is complete. If that didn’t happen, check with us to see if we have a copy. As of mid-2018, we started saving As-Built Surveys on a database. Prior to that, As-Built Surveys may be in storage. Prior to 2004, As-Built Surveys were not issued to the POA. In that case, a property owner may have to produce an up-to-date As-Built from a local surveyor, which could cost $500 or more.

Impervious surface coverage: Merriam-Webster defines "impervious" as not allowing entrance or passage. When applied to our properties, it refers to hardscape driveways, walkways, cement and paver patios, or any other surface that water cannot penetrate.

When you are given your maximum allotted impervious surface coverage on your lot, it’s important to stay under that figure to ensure proper water runoff for you and your neighbors. Wooden or Trex decking does not affect the calculation of impervious surface coverage, as openings between the boards allow the water to fall to the ground.

The ABCs of ACC:
Many property owners have questions about the New Construction and Modification Applications process and the definitions associated with many terms in the Design Guidelines. Following are definitions for As-Built Survey and impervious surface coverage.
Fifty years ago, on July 20, 38-year-old American astronaut Neil Armstrong proclaimed, “That’s one small step for man, one giant leap for mankind.” It was 10:56 p.m. Eastern Time on Sunday when the largest global TV audience in history witnessed one of civilization’s crowning achievements.

The space race between America and the Soviet Union had commenced a decade before this milestone. And, for most of those years, the USSR was winning. The Soviets accomplished virtually every meaningful technical step ahead of the U.S. — successfully placing a satellite in space, launching the first human into space, the first man to orbit Earth, the first planetary flyby (Venus), the first dual-crewed spaceflight and the first spacewalk. The list goes on. Although the U.S. effort was fast paced, NASA clearly wasn’t winning.

In 1961, President Kennedy defined leadership in space as successfully landing a man on the moon and returning him to Earth. His declaration established the playing field where the space race would be contested. The Soviets never questioned Kennedy’s definition of the space race and were probably confident they could win.

But victory was ours. No Russian has ever stepped on the moon, compared with 12 Americans who have. NASA flew to the moon nine times between 1969 and 1972. We made it look so routine, in fact, that many Americans lost interest (I didn’t).

Like many American teenagers in the ‘60s, I was in awe of everything space-related. My uncle was the quality control director for Convair/General Dynamics, the builder of the Project Mercury Atlas missile, which successfully propelled John Glenn and three other U.S. astronauts into orbit. My family took potential launch failures personally. Fortunately, our manned flight record was perfect.

Fast forward to 1968, only five short years after Project Mercury’s completion, America was preparing to launch its first manned Apollo flight on the massive Saturn 5 rocket, designed specifically for flying to the moon. It remains the tallest, heaviest and most powerful rocket ever built. It carried a payload of 155 tons (two empty space shuttles), weighed 3,100 tons (1,550 average American automobiles) and generated enough power to light up New York City for an hour and a half.
On July 16, 1969, NASA successfully launched the fourth manned mission — Apollo 11 — commanded by Neil Armstrong. Buzz Aldrin was the pilot of the lunar module, nicknamed “Eagle.” Michael Collins piloted the command module, nicknamed “Columbia,” which orbited the moon while Aldrin and Armstrong conducted their historic moonwalk. The 9:30 a.m. launch was dramatic and perfect, with an estimated one million on-site spectators. Roughly three hours later, Apollo 11 left Earth’s orbit and pointed the Columbia at the moon.

Three days later, Apollo 11 began the first of 30 orbits around the moon. Well rested and a day later on July 20, Armstrong and Aldrin began their 2.5-hour lunar descent into history. As the world tensely waited, at 3:17 p.m. ET, Armstrong spoke the words that produced goose bumps for millions of viewers: “Houston, Tranquility Base here. The Eagle has landed.” It was man’s first landing on another terrestrial body, this monumental accomplishment taking less than a decade after the the initial manned space mission.

After almost six hours, the hatch opened and Armstrong began his nine-rung descent without being able to see his feet due to his chest controls. He activated the TV camera and 17 minutes later stepped off the ladder to utter his first words. About 20 minutes later, Aldrin became the second man on the moon, a tag he later came to loathe.

It was late Sunday night in most of America, and TV was experiencing its largest audience ever. The moonwalk broadcast had a 93% audience share, which means 93% of the total viewing audience at that time was watching. In New York, the broadcast was measured by Nielsen at a 100 share. CBS claimed its viewership was 150 million out of a total U.S. population of 202 million. Globally, 600 million more people watched. If you weren’t smiling and shaking your head in wonderment, you weren’t human.

During their 2.5-hour moonwalk, Armstrong and Aldrin collected roughly 50 pounds of lunar rocks and installed several research devices. Twenty-two hours after landing, the Eagle blasted off from the moon, leaving behind a U.S. flag and a plaque bearing the inscription: “Here men from the planet Earth first set foot upon the moon. July 1969 A.D. We came in peace for all mankind.”

Four hours later, Eagle and Columbia safely docked, and the crew prepared for its return to Earth. Roughly three days later, Columbia splashed down successfully in the Pacific. It had traveled more than 700,000 miles in eight days.

Following a three-week quarantine, the celebration began with ticker tape parades in New York City and Chicago. The astronauts then began a 38-day world tour that included 22 countries.

Last year, following his death in 2012, Armstrong’s two sons auctioned his professional collection of 700 items. The ‘60s teenager inside me couldn’t help himself. I purchased Armstrong’s personal, postal-addressed 1969 copy of Sports Illustrated. Long live Apollo 11.
One giant memory for mankind

Introduction by Laurie Danko

It was a cool July evening in the Colorado mountains. I was a 19-year old counselor at a ranch, and we were in the loft of a barn-like lodge. The large window’s wooden doors were thrown wide open to the starlit skies beyond, framing a perfectly centered moon.

Right next to this, perched atop bales of hay, was a black-and-white TV. We were spellbound and excited, listening to Walter Cronkite chronicle what we were seeing — a man on the moon — right there on TV and 239,000 miles out the window.

In our lifetime, there have been moments we remember with a clarity that defies the years. Apollo 11 is certainly one of those, and Cat-Tales is delighted to share some memories about this historic event, provided by St. James residents.

Jerry Biffle: “I graduated from Georgia Tech in August 1968 and went to work for IBM at Cape Kennedy the next month. Our department was responsible for the computer on board the Saturn vehicle. I was in the control room for the Apollo 10 launch and watched just outside the building as Apollo 11 lifted off. It certainly made all my subsequent jobs seem less important by comparison.”

Harry and Lynn Comer: “We and our children watched a small screen TV with a large crowd in the lobby of the Stanley Hotel in Estes Park, Colorado.”

Lee Ferguson: “An anecdote from moon-landing day: My parents and my fiancée’s had not yet met. To rectify the situation, her parents invited mine for dinner. As an added highlight to the visit, all of us went to the screen porch and, with drinks in hand, watched the landing take place. A memory never to be forgotten.”

Don Flattery: “My father worked on NASA’s space programs and took my family to the moon launch in 1969. The excitement at the launch site was palpable, and I remember to this day the incredible rumble of the rocket engines and the vibration felt in my chest as the liftoff seemingly stood still for an amazing few seconds before catapulting up and away.”

Frank Grecco: “I was working for Westinghouse in Hicksville, New York as a financial officer. My office was adjacent to Grumman Corporation, which was busy making the lunar module for Apollo 11. The lunar excursion module, or LEM, as it was called, would be the vehicle to land the men on the moon. Westinghouse was supplying Grumman with various essential electrical components for this project. The best-known contribution was a color TV camera system located in the command module of the LEM, which would bring video from liftoff to the lunar landscape. July 20 was a very exciting day for me personally and for the country. Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin landed on the moon in the LEM, nicknamed “Eagle.” Stanley Lebar was the Westinghouse scientist who televised Neil Armstrong’s first steps on the moon.”
Jerry Iverson: “In the summer of 1969, I was a first lieutenant in the U.S. Air Force, stationed at Langley Air Force Base in Virginia. I was selected to fly on a mission carrying communications equipment and a command staff to Mauritius Island in the Indian Ocean. Our mission: to establish a backup airborne command and control structure in case Apollo 11 was forced to land in the Indian Ocean. Two C-130s carrying equipment and staff left Langley AFB on July 4 and landed on Mauritius Island on July 11, where we remained until July 24, when Apollo 11 successfully splashed down in the Pacific Ocean. While our services were not required, the mission gave me a two-week vacation lounging on beaches and enjoying the island life.”

Sherry and David Jargo: “Watched the landing at our friend’s home on a TV with rabbit ears. The reception was so poor, it looked like it was snowing on the moon.”

Marcia Jones: “The moon landing occurred when I was 13, and I distinctly remember my dad saying I should go out and purchase a newspaper, because ‘it would be valuable someday.’ Being an obedient daughter, I promptly did as he said. I still have the paper.”

Bernard Lech: “In the late 1960s, I worked at MIT’s Draper Laboratory, developing and testing software for the two Apollo 11 onboard guidance and control computers. The Apollo 11 lunar landing occurred on our first wedding anniversary. What a gift!”

Barbara Matter: “I was a fortunate 21-year-old living the single life in Honolulu, panicking because my roommates and I had no TV set. TV programming itself was on a seven-day delay, but this was to be broadcast live! Fortunately, our kind landlady let us watch on her 15-inch TV. Unforgettable.”

Editor’s note: It was the first live TV event in Alaska, as well.

Rich Mina: “From the sudsy floor in our group rental in Belmar, New Jersey, we cheered and high-fived Armstrong’s walk [as we watched] a portable TV. The bars could wait — it was ‘Rock on, Apollo 11!’ Next month? Woodstock.”

Editor’s note: Thanks to Rick Margin for collecting and organizing the contributions we received from St. James residents for this article.
Rachel Carson, whose 1962 book “Silent Spring” helped shape our understanding and awareness of Earth’s environment, was equally prescient about the meaning of what lies beyond our planet. She said, “The more clearly we can focus our attention on the wonders and realities of the universe about us, the less taste we shall have for destruction.”

To help us focus our attention on the universe, we can thank Jim Gerlach, St. James resident and ardent outer space photographer. Jim’s extraordinary photographs are not only pleasing to the eye; they also inform us about the elements and circumstances that help shape our universe.

St. James resident Jim Gerlach in his driveway with the telescope he uses to take pictures of outer space (photo by John Muuss)

Jim’s daytime job is a nuclear medicine technologist for Los Angeles-based Cedars-Sinai Medical Center, one of the largest nonprofit academic medical centers in the U.S. He is a highly specialized health care professional who uses nuclear medicine to help doctors diagnose and treat disease.

A Canadian by birth, Jim’s affinity for things technical led him to his field. His career began in 1976, before the migration of nuclear medicine from film to digital technology. “I embraced the computer adaptation,” he says.
The Heart Nebula, located in the Milky Way, is part of the Cassiopeia constellation. Its name is based on its valentine-heart shape, and at its center is a newborn cluster of massive, hot stars. (photo by Jim Gerlach)

The Dumbbell Nebula is located in the constellation Vulpecula (The Fox). It is termed a “planetary” nebula as there is a dying star (white dwarf), resembling a planet, visible at its center. This is what our sun will go through in about five billion years when it dies. (photo by Jim Gerlach)

He began working at Cedars-Sinai in 1998. During that time, he met and married Colleen, born in California and raised in New Jersey. When Jim was hired by another company, the couple moved to Jarrettsville, Maryland. A year later, he decided to return to Cedars-Sinai. But he stayed in Jarrettsville and telecommuted to work, a convenience he has continued since Colleen and he moved to St. James in 2015.

Jim’s interest in technology, combined with his expertise in imaging, led him to astrophotography — capturing images of astronomical objects, celestial events and areas of the night sky. As with many hobbies, taking nighttime pictures of stars requires a financial commitment. Jim purchased his first telescope in 2003 at Costco for $200. Over the years, his investment has grown. The equipment he uses today is worth almost $20,000.

When they moved to St. James, the Gerlaches made sure their home on Shady Pine Circle passed muster. The couple told their real estate agent street lights could not overly interfere with Jim’s hobby. They also insisted the driveway where Jim photographs his celestial images had to be oriented toward the North Star.

Jim says he learned astrophotography on his own and that he endured a “steep learning curve.” The equipment he uses is largely automated, but his hobby still can be time consuming. On any given evening during the “season” for astrophotography (October through mid-April), he sets up his telescope and camera in the driveway. Then he connects them to a computer, which points the telescope to the objects he wants to photograph, focuses the camera and takes the pictures.

The results are compelling and tremendously satisfying to Jim. Some of his finished photographs, such as the Heart Nebula (7,500 light years from Earth), are combinations of up to 70 individual images. Sometimes, Jim uses color filters to produce images that are not only spectacular but also indicate the makeup of the glowing dust clouds or interstellar gas he photographs.

Jim’s skills have reached a point where scientists are using his work. He belongs to a group of fellow astrophotographers who analyze moving images of asteroids. Jim’s work helps astronomers keep track of the flying objects and also increases knowledge about the topography of these wanderers of the universe.

Astrophotography teaches us that some of the most stunning objects in creation can’t be appreciated without the help and effort of people like Jim. Focusing our attention on the reality beyond our immediate surroundings is inspiring. Rachel Carson would have liked Jim Gerlach.

The Heart Nebula, located in the Milky Way, is part of the Cassiopeia constellation. Its name is based on its valentine-heart shape, and at its center is a newborn cluster of massive, hot stars. (photo by Jim Gerlach)
North Carolina’s canine — lovable Luke

Story and photos by Cheryl L. Serra

Silence Siri. Put a gentle gag order on Google. There’s no phoning a friend and you can’t ask Alexa. In this Cat-Tales issue on animals, who here knows the answer to a very important question (drum roll, please)? What is the official state dog of North Carolina?

Two rawhide chews to anybody guessing the Plott Hound.

Unlike most of the dozens of breeds originating from Europe and recognized by the American Kennel Club, our state pooch is from the mountains of North Carolina. So says North Carolina Field and Family magazine, a quarterly publication produced for members of the North Carolina Farm Bureau Federation.

The foundation stock for the dogs that became Plott Hounds came to America with Johannes George Plott in 1750. The Plott was a mountain breed, raised and trained to hunt animals such as bear and wild boar. According to Field and Family magazine, “Department officials say a family story indicates five dogs were a gift from Plott’s father, Elias, a gamekeeper near Heidelberg, Germany. Elias Plott bred the animals to be multipurpose workers.”

Then they saw Luke sitting there. Linda says Jim looked at those eyes and decided to take him for a walk.

“And that was it,” Linda recalls.

After taking Luke home, they realized he had separation anxiety when left alone. Through their patience — slowly increasing the time they were gone, when they left him outside of his crate, for instance — Luke finally realized they were always coming back home to him. He’s been great ever since.

Looking into Luke’s beautiful brown eyes and scratching his long velvety ears, you picture not a wild hunter as Elias Plott envisioned, but a love bug. Which is exactly what he is, according to Jim and Linda. Luke does, however, like to occasionally hunt lizards, moles and fish. He can also be a bit hardheaded but enjoys company, not seeking love but accepting it when offered.

It wasn’t until later Jim and Linda found out about the Plott Hound’s status in North Carolina. They now have a book about the breed. Luckily, Plott hounds don’t have any inborn genetic problems, other than that hardheadedness. Lovely Luke can bark a little but usually gets over whatever’s annoying him. They estimate Luke is five or six years old. The breed can live 14 years.

There are plenty of nearby places to find a four-legged companion to bring home to St. James. These next stories explore just a few.
The Acacia – A New Plan from Arthut Rutenberg Homes
Come see this model home in The Bluffs on the Cape Fear at 3820 Silver Melon Road in Leland.
A dogs’ tale

As Hurricane Florence drew closer last year, Paws Place Operations Director and St. James resident Peggy Durso became concerned about the well-being of the 23 dogs in her care. With inflatable beds, a portable grill and enough food, Peggy, husband Tony, who is on the Paws Place board of directors, and volunteers Cheryl and Russel took up residence in case the morning volunteer crew couldn’t make it.

Paws Place is a non-profit, no-kill shelter founded in April 1999 with a barn for storage/laundry and outdoor kennels for the dogs. Today, it operates with a board of directors, numerous volunteers — including about 10 from St. James — and Peggy at the helm. It exists thanks to donations and fundraising efforts.

Through a benefactor’s generosity, Paws Place began construction on a new site in 2014 that would contain indoor kennels with doggy doors for outside play, offices, a laundry, a kitchen and a meet and greet room where dogs were hopeful to meet new forever families. The project was completed in 2017 and rested securely on a spacious property, not in a flood zone.

Hurricane Florence knocked out power. On Saturday the volunteers noticed water accumulating around the building, eventually entering the kennels. Paws Place was in constant contact with the county shelter to keep them apprised of their status. At this point volunteers were up to their knees in water but couldn’t evacuate as both the property and their vehicles were underwater.

At approximately 3 a.m. Sunday, a call was placed to 911. With a harness and leash attached to each kennel, supplies, dog food, computer equipment, files etc. were moved to a higher location. The volunteers began assembling portable crates previously used to transport dogs in the Pawsmobile, which now was also under water.

What a welcome sight when the fire department arrived around 4 a.m. and waded up to the front door. They were followed by a National Guard uncovered truck containing four guardsmen. They immediately went to work assembling crates and placing dogs in them. The first group of 12 dogs plus dripping wet Cheryl were taken in the truck to a nearby gas station for shelter. The guardsmen returned to the kennel for the remaining dogs and personnel.

Two additional guard trucks were on their way but were having trouble due to rising waters. Once they arrived, all dogs, together with medications, food and whatever else could be salvaged, were loaded in the trucks and headed for the county shelter. The Humane Society of the United States had been called in by the county prior to the hurricane in anticipation of an influx of dogs. As the shelter was filling, the Paws Place volunteers and 23 dogs were transported to Brunswick Community College, safe and dry.

The National Guard helped save dogs and supplies during last year’s Hurricane Florence. (contributed photo)

Thanks to all the volunteers, shelter workers, fire department, Dog Days Boarding in Southport, who boarded the dogs while the kennels were scrubbed and sanitized, and the National Guard for all they did for Paws Place.

When all was said and done and after reconstruction, Paws Place officially reopened two months after the ordeal. The majority of the dogs have since been adopted and are now in their forever homes.

Editor’s note: The author volunteers at Paws Place, walking dogs, washing dishes, doing laundry and a host of other duties as needed. She says her favorite activity is puppy duty, “when I get to sit in the kennel with the litter and play.”
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About SOAR
By Steve Salerno

Founded in 1992 by Jeannine Friday Bicknell as a no kill animal rescue, Southport–Oak Island Animal Rescue (SOAR) is the oldest operating private animal shelter in Brunswick County. It is the only private, no kill, nonprofit shelter for homeless cats and dogs in Brunswick County and the only one in the greater Wilmington area that provides housing for cats infected with the Feline Leukemia and Feline Immunodeficiency viruses.

SOAR is a nonprofit organization, which accepts tax-exempt donations as provided under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. It’s funded solely by private donations and proceeds from various fund-raising activities. SOAR’s relatively small-scale operation is supported almost exclusively by a group of some 20-25 volunteers. Catherine “Cathy” Fitzgerald is the director.

The shelter is located at 3376 St. Charles Place on a secluded three-acre tract nestled between St. James to the west, the Intracoastal Waterway to the south and the Cape Fear Regional Jetport to the east. Visitors will find well cared for dogs and cats living in spacious kennels and a large fenced exercise yard with agility equipment, or in cattery buildings featuring attached screened porches and large open rooms with play structures — all set against a park-like backdrop of big hardwood trees and grassy expanses.

Friday Bicknell continued as SOAR’s private owner until late 2015, at which point she sold the SOAR property. Ownership was transferred from her to SOAR, the nonprofit organization. Cathy Fitzgerald has served continuously as SOAR’s on-site director and manager since 2013. Oversight is provided by a SOAR board of directors.

In 2018, 70 of SOAR’s cats and dogs found new homes — a very good number considering the organization’s modest size and the fact that Hurricane Florence significantly disrupted operations over the final quarter of the year. SOAR also continued being good stewards within the local community through activities like hosting visiting church and school groups. The organization also provided mentoring support for area high school students interested in learning about animal rescue and animal welfare issues.

By spring of this year, SOAR was just about back to the operating level that existed before the hurricane. The facility is open every weekday, except Thursday, from 8 a.m. to 12 p.m., and on Saturdays from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Editor’s note: Steve Salerno has been a dedicated SOAR volunteer for 14 years.

Paws4people builds a new home
By Harry Martens

Paws4vets is the national service dog organization headquartered in Wilmington. The organization is currently creating ADDIE’s Way, the first K9-centric campus for post-traumatic growth in the U.S.

Located in Castle Hayne just outside of Wilmington, the buildings on the 11-acre site are now being renovated to house veterans, service members and civilians with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and other trauma-related diagnoses. Clients will be able to temporarily reside at ADDIE’s Way in a safe, comfortable living and working space while learning to utilize their assistance dogs to control, regulate and mitigate the symptoms of their disabilities.

The paws4people foundation — the parent organization of paws4vets — was founded by Kyria Henry in 1999 when she was 12 years old, with the goal of using dogs to help people. The organization has 500 highly trained assistance dogs certified to provide support in areas such as mobility and psychiatric service, educational and rehabilitative assistance and therapeutic visitation. Together, these dogs have made more than 1 million therapeutic contacts.
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BRUNSWICK COMMUNITY COLLEGE
Sheriff’s Office Animal Protective Services improves happy home hopes

By Cheryl L. Serra

Based on a need to help pet owners and animals in Brunswick County, Animal Protective Services (APS) became a unit within the Brunswick County Sheriff’s Office (BCSO) in July 2012.

Previously, the Brunswick County Health Department had the responsibility. But it was common knowledge that wherever neglected and abused animals are found, other problems often exist. “There are also other issues to investigate such as violence, drugs and other illegal activities,” according to Belinda Musgrove, Outreach Coordinator for APS.

The transfer has been a success. Since taking over the role, the live release rate — the percentage of animals that APS retained and then returned to their family or adopted to a new family — has increased from 17% in 2012 to 74% last year.

While the number of adoptable pets varies throughout the year — for instance, there’s usually an influx of cats in the spring — APS accepted 2,036 dogs and 2,242 other animals in 2018. Musgrove says they come from throughout the county. Some are surrendered by owners; others are picked up as strays. The animals are held for five days, more than the state requires, before they can be adopted.

Once taken in, animals must pass an evaluation that includes assessments for food, toy, dog or cat aggression. An animal’s reaction to childlike behaviors and an assessment for obvious medical impairments are often part of the standard operating procedure before it becomes available for adoption. Musgrove says staff and approximately 250 volunteers spend time with the pets each day to learn as much as they can about them so they can find their perfect pet parent.

“Our volunteers are an extension of our family here at Brunswick County Sheriff’s Office Animal Protective Services,” Musgrove says. “They’re involved in many aspects of our shelter’s daily functions, from animal adoption fairs and cat and dog socialization to laundry and front office work. It is with certainty that we always state that our shelter could not have obtained the success that we have without our cherished shelter volunteers.”

The facility has 120 dog kennels and 78 cat kennels. Each pet is provided with fresh food, water and bedding daily. The animal care specialists assess each animal when it arrives at APS to make sure it will be comfortable while there.

When Hurricane Florence hit, APS transferred the animals in its shelter to the Humane Society of United States facility to make room for animals displaced or lost during the storm. They also managed animals at all shelters.

Musgrove is obviously proud of APS’s work. “It’s a great facility that many shelters across the state and nation have looked to as an example,” she says. “Our placement rates are very high and improving each year. Last year, we placed 3,238 animals either through adoption, returned to their owners, or transported to other rescue organizations, barn buddy and stray release programs.”

Musgrove says there are some common misconceptions about the program. She says the animals “don’t have a shelf life” and won’t be euthanized if they aren’t adopted within a certain number of days. She also denies the shelter is a sad place. “In fact, it is a place where lost or unwanted animals become part of loving families and have a wonderful life.”
Michael Haase
– the humble man, a lasting legacy

By Judy Rubin

“It’s not about me or the band, it’s about the people you touch.” Mike Haase

Mike Haase was born in Germany, his father German, his mother Latvian. The family immigrated to Youngstown, Ohio when Mike was 2 years old. His dad found a job in sales and his mom became a homemaker.

At the age of 12, wanting to play the guitar, Mike’s parents arranged for lessons, and the bands followed soon after that. The first was a high school rock and roll band. Then came The Stone Cliff Band, The Rejuns, The Plastic Mushroom Band and, finally, the famous Mike’s Garage Band of St. James (MGB).

“Mike has a passion for music — especially 60’s rock and roll, a genuinely positive attitude towards life and is a giving and reliable friend.” Chuck Krambuhl, MGB member

The band follows two simple rules. First, the songs must be instantly recognizable. Second, the band has to have fun.

Mike majored in marketing and management at Drake University, where he met his wife, Lyn, of 43 years. His career at Caterpillar, Inc. spanned 35 years. He accepted positions all over the world, including Switzerland, Japan, Brazil and Germany. He speaks German, Portuguese and a smattering of Spanish and French. The couple has two children living in North Carolina — son Grant in Apex and daughter Erica in Holly Springs.

In the fall of 1973, while at Drake, Mike invited some fraternity brothers to join him for some songs at a fraternity party. That lead to the formation of the Plastic Mushroom Band, a venture that allowed members to earn a little extra cash during their senior year.

After graduation, the group scattered to distant locations. Last year, Mike organized a “Grateful NOT to be Dead Reunion” and invited the old (and older) crew with their wives to perform at St. James.

“One of the most talented musicians I have ever known.” Dave Rich, fraternity brother and member of the Plastic Mushroom Band

Mike and Lyn moved to St. James in 2010 to enjoy retired life. One day, Mike attended a party at the home of Tony DeFilippis and noticed two guitars hanging on the wall. Tony explained he played the guitar and always wanted to be in a band. “I play and I have been in a few bands,” replied Mike.

That conversation — and a blurb in the St. James newsletter — was all it took. John Staryak: keyboard and vocals; Chuck Krambuhl: guitar and vocals; Mike Horgan: guitar; Marty Wozniak: drums; and Ken Haubrich: bass, answered the call, and Mike’s Garage Band was formed.

“Mike loves music and he loves people.” John Staryak, MGB member

Later personnel changes included current bassist David “Cosmo” Reed and drummer David Holly. Katherine Weeks and her crew came aboard as sound engineer and set-up crew.

The band follows two simple rules. First, the songs must be instantly recognizable and danceable, inviting the audience to reminisce about younger and more carefree days. Second, the band has to have fun.

Speaking of young, Mike jokes that the band’s toughest job is staying awake through the last set. “We don’t take breaks, we take naps,” he says.

“He has displayed an indomitable spirit and an enthusiasm for pursuing a variety of interests and activities, like a human Energizer Bunny.” Mike Horgan, MGB Rhythm Guitarist
Mike’s Garage Band’s 2011 debut was scheduled for Woodlands Park. But bad weather forced a move to the Community Center. Expectations varied. If things went well, the band thought 25-50 neighbors and friends would come. Or, they might play to an empty house. Neither expectation emerged; 300 people showed up to sing and dance the night away. “The Community Center may have exceeded its room capacity,” said Ken Haubrich.

A guitar case was opened to collect donations to cover cleaning expenses. The $500 the band collected was much more than needed. Band members unanimously agreed to donate the money to Operation at Ease, a unique St. James charitable organization awarding military families a weekend getaway after deployment.

As the band’s reputation grew — and grew — 26 annual performances became the norm, and the proceeds from each event were donated to a worthy cause. Over the years, the band has raised more than $1 million for charities around Brunswick County. In May 2017, Governor Roy Cooper presented Medallion Awards to the band’s members in recognition of their philanthropic work.

After Mike was diagnosed with Parkinson’s Disease in 2005, it became difficult for him to play the guitar. But the disease didn’t affect his voice. He took up harmonica, never missing a beat. The instrument blended right in perfectly.

“He might be over 60, fighting Parkinson’s, but put him up on the stage with a guitar in his hand and a dancing throng in front of him, and suddenly the world is a 1965 Malibu convertible and he’s got the keys.”

Author Jim Hughes of Ideal-Living, November 2014

Mike Haase turned retirement into refinement. As an organizer for the St. James Model Yacht Club, passersby can find him piloting boats on the pond. Or, you might see him playing table tennis at the Community Center and almost anywhere else peddling T-shirts (“Never Give UP Do Not Fail”), with proceeds forwarded to the Michael J. Fox Foundation for Parkinson’s Research.

Mike probably never dreamed he would be recognized as a philanthropist or be selected as the mayor of Woodlands in the 15th Town of St. James float parade. He has written more than 20 songs, including a tribute to the town of Southport (view it on the MGB website).

His last gig was at the Town of St. James 20th Anniversary party on July 1 at the Reserve. Mayor Jean Toner presented Mike with a token of his community’s appreciation.

Mike leaves an indelible mark on St. James, and on Brunswick County. The residents of this community and those who have benefited from his contributions to the region offer a huge, hearty thank you.

“Mike’s work ethic, fortitude and determination have been a real inspiration to all members of the band. With his retirement, we realize that some of that has rubbed off on the remaining band members. As a group, we will continue the musical journey Mike has set us on, and we will continue to serve the people of Brunswick County in his honor.”

Tony DeFilippis
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The St. James Community Center has some new residents — a soon-to-be family of killdeer. According to the Audubon Society, these birds are often found at the water’s edge. But they also live in pastures, fields and at times nest on gravel or on lawns. They are artful actors and masters of camouflage nesting. Who hasn't felt sorrow at seeing what was believed to be a wounded bird scurrying along the ground, only to find that an Emmy award-winning killdeer has successfully drawn attention away from its nest?

Usually, killdeer lay up to four eggs directly on the ground in places where the eggs appear to disappear into the background — completely blending in with the environment. Both parents monitor incubation for 24-28 days. The youngsters leave their nest soon after hatching. Even though they are tended by both parents, they will feed themselves.

American Legion Post 543 Memorial Day Ceremony

Story and photos by John Muuss

About 300 people attended the annual American Legion Post 543 Memorial Day Ceremony at the St. James Community Center. Bill Morgan was the master of ceremonies, which included a presentation of the missing man table — also known as a fallen comrade table. This ceremony and memorial honors fallen, missing or imprisoned military service members.

Dennis Ryan plays bagpipes at the Memorial Day Ceremony.

300 people attended the American Legion Post 543’s Memorial Day Ceremony.
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We started preparing for our move to St. James three years ago. I think I’m a collector, but my wife insists I’m a hoarder, so she took on the role of declutter director. Her mandate was simple and admittedly made sense — “Throw out stuff we don’t use or need any more that will take up space in our new home.” Of course, most of the stuff was mine. And the biggest target was my record collection.

My son assured me everything is on Spotify and reminded me I listen to Kid Leo play all my favorite songs on Sirius Satellite Radio every afternoon. I hoped my children would want my vinyl one day but, like much of our furniture, they showed little interest. One by one, I extracted memories from the shelves, including The Allman Brothers, ZZ Top, Bob Seger, The Police, Jackson Browne, Paul Simon and Thin Lizzy.

Fortunately, I did manage to save some of my Beatles and Springsteen pieces plus several hundred coveted 45 picture covers. I get great joy sitting back every so often and, for the first time in 30 years, thumbing through some seven-inch sleeves like “Jumpin’ Jack Flash,” “Viva Las Vegas,” “Summer in the City,” “Sheena Is A Punk Rocker,” “Cathy’s Clown,” “Penny Lane,” “Sweet Hitch-Hiker,” “Breaking Up Is Hard To Do” and “Instant Karma! (We All Shine On).”

Then there are the special moments spent holding and gazing at albums like “Sgt. Pepper’s Lonely Hearts Club Band,” Dylan’s “Highway 61,” “Led Zeppelin IV,” The Raspberries’ “Side 3,” Bowie’s “Ziggy Stardust” (officially, “The Rise and Fall of Ziggy Stardust and the Spiders from Mars”), James Brown’s “Live at The Apollo” and, of course, Springsteen’s “Born To Run.”

I had breakfast one morning with a collecting kindred spirit, music enthusiast and St. James resident Fred Ammann (also a frequent Cat-Tales contributor). After some initial texts, we met at Tommy’s and for two hours shared samples of our record collections and memories.

I knew Fred was cool when he handed me Mountain’s first LP featuring Mississippi Queen, Laura Nyro (wow!), The Doors’ first, Brian Augur, Cold Blood from San Francisco, Layla, Workingman’s Dead, Electric Flag and Blues Project featuring Mike Bloomfield and Al Kooper, respectively. Those names ignited memories of how they helped transform Bob Dylan’s sound. That led to a discussion about New York Radio (another article). Fred opined that the music he grew up with had more to do with attitude than age.

Today, Fred has turned to the internet for his music. But he still has a jones for something tangible. We shared our conundrum about how to take this art work out of our crates and closets and put it on display.

A week later, Fred contacted me to explain his idea. “I searched the internet for images of my favorite pieces. I scanned them on my computer. I fit 12 images on each sheet. The next step was to have them framed. Fred can proudly showcase 132 memories, including Santana, The Airplane, Chicago, Hendrix, Jackson Brown among others. Now, Fred is a bona-fide rock aesthete, a connoisseur of rock cover art.

Editor’s note: Feel free to contact Kevin at dukestking1@yahoo.com if you would like to have a fun music get together to share memories, songs, concerts and or collectibles.
In a true hands-on experience, the St. James Photography Club (SJPC) held a workshop at Thalian Hall to give members experience in taking photos from low light to harsh light with moving subjects. It was quite a challenge for members who had never photographed under these types of conditions.

The SJPC tries to do several workshops a year with a minimum of one per quarter. This workshop involved nearly six months of work and planning by Alan Bryant and Ken Haubrich.

The play was “Damn Yankees,” a musical comedy based on a book by George Abbott and Douglass Wallop with music and lyrics by Richard Adler and Jerry Ross. The story is a modern retelling of the Faust legend set during the 1950s in Washington, D.C. — a time when the New York Yankees dominated Major League baseball. The play is based on Wallop’s novel, “The Year the Yankees Lost the Pennant.”

The show ran for 1,019 performances in its original 1955 Broadway production. In 1956, it won a Tony for Best Musical. The film version debuted in 1958. One of its classic songs is “Whatever Lola Wants.” (Cat-Tales contributor Stuart Pike wrote about the play in the April 2019 issue.)

Thirteen SJPC members were at Thalian Hall in the afternoon to take photos of the cast practicing in street clothes prior to a dress rehearsal. Once some production lighting issues were resolved, members could move around freely to try to get some images that tell the story of this play, as well as pictures of the crew doing their jobs.

The play opens with middle-aged Joe Boyd wishing his Washington Senators baseball team could beat the Yankees and win the pennant. Shortly thereafter, Mr. Applegate appears and makes a deal to turn Mr. Boyd into Joe Hardy, a young home run slugger. The Senators’
Mathis Turner as Joe Boyd sings to his wife, longing to return to her after realizing that the love of his life is far more important than being a baseball hero. (photo by Ken Haubrich)

last game is September 25 and, if Joe plays, he must remain Joe Hardy forever. But if he walks away the night before, he can return to his life and wife. Of course, Mr. Applegate does everything he can to prevent Joe from breaking his contract.

It was a wonderful play, with an outstanding performance by St. James resident Stuart Pike playing Mr. Applegate. It was Stuart’s 13th play at Thalian Hall. Sydney Jones as Lola and Mathis Turner as Joe Hardy were great together as they tried to counter Mr. Applegate.

The SJPC is currently putting together a book with some of the photos taken to give to Thalian Hall in appreciation for letting club members work there.

Editor’s note: Jack Eyler is president of the St. James Photography Club.

Sydney Jones as Lola and Stuart Pike as Mr. Applegate at Thalian Hall during an exercise to shoot photos in varying light availability and with moving subjects. (photo by Jack Eyler)
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Harbormaster ladies honor mothers

By Liz Hughes

The ladies of Harbormaster attended a luncheon at the Reserve. The event, held in honor of Mother’s Day, was hosted by Liz Hughes, Debbi Bromley and Linda Wetterman. Their theme was “Hats Off to the Ladies of Harbormaster.”

St. James Service Club Foundation is established

By Rick Margin • Photo by John Muuss

The St. James Service Club (SJSC), the largest charitable organization in St. James, announced the establishment of the St. James Service Club Foundation. The foundation, whose focus will be Brunswick County youth, will initially be funded by a very generous $50,000 donation from the families of the original St. James developers Homer Wright, John Atkinson and Claude Smith (deceased).

A reception was held June 12 at Members Club to accept the check. Attendees included Homer, John and members of the three developers’ families, along with former SJSC presidents, current board and executive committee members, the mayor, Town Council members and representatives from both the POA board and Troon.

A representative from the North Carolina Community Foundation (NCCF) was also at the reception. This organization will partner with the SJSC to manage the foundation’s assets. The NCCF is the only statewide community foundation and has made more than $145 million in grants. It supports 1,300 statewide endowments and has more than $270 million in assets.

The SJSC was created in 1997 as a 501(c)(3) charitable organization and has 350 members. Residents interested in donating any type of asset to the foundation should contact Geri Margin at SJServiceClub@gmail.com.
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St. James/Troon Relay for Life continues the fight

By Robyn Smith • Photo by John Muuss

According to the National Cancer Institute and the American Cancer Society, nearly 1.8 million people, or one in three Americans, will be diagnosed with some form of cancer in 2019. Of those, more than 600,000 will die as a result of the disease. We all know someone who has been diagnosed with cancer. We all want to see less suffering and more survivors.

Relay For Life is the signature fundraiser cancer walk for the American Cancer Society and is staffed and coordinated by volunteers. Many on the St. James/Troon Relay for Life team are cancer survivors. Or they have or have had loved ones with cancer, taking them to treatments, taking care of them after a chemo round, holding their hands when they needed a friend. Many have stepped up to the plate to raise funds for the American Cancer Society (ACS).

Why they relay

Cindy Kirwan is still fighting. Originally diagnosed with stage 0 breast cancer in 2003, she was involved with Relay for Life and Rally for a Cure for many years while living in Ohio.

“In 2016, when I was diagnosed with Stage 4 metastatic breast cancer, the mission statement of the American Cancer Society took on a whole new meaning,” she recalls. “For me, the continued research that is conducted by the ACS is so vitally important.”

Vicki Raspino’s father-in-law, husband and cousin all had cancer, as did a close friend of hers who Vicki drove to treatment. Here, she saw firsthand the impact treatment can have on even the strongest individuals.

Dena Quinn volunteers on the ACS Relay for Life team to fundraise in hope of advancing research to find a cure. She lost her mother to breast cancer six years ago and participated in the relay to help find a cure.

The St. James/Troon team has been raising money for the American Cancer Society for 18 years. For the past three years, Liz Knapp and Wendy McIver have been the team leaders and have recruited an enthusiastic group of volunteers.

According to Liz, “We raised $50,000 the first year and $76,00 the second year. So far, the St. James Team has raised $88,066 this year. Our goal was $80,000 and we are very excited to have exceeded that.”

The funds came from the 5K run in March, the Purple Bow Campaign, Wine Nights, the Silent Auction and Concert in April along with sponsorship for the events, luminary purchases and individual donations.

Thirty team members worked on Relay for Life events this year, involving more than five months of planning, marketing and orchestrating. Spearheading the efforts were Dena Quinn, logistics chairperson; Adrienne Lee DeMarino, Silent Auction chairperson; Becky Richards, luminary chairperson and Terene Knauer, purple bow chairperson.

Liz said she was proud to co-captain the team with Wendy and noted team members’ passion for the event. “Of course, our success is a result of the generosity of the residents of St. James,” she said. “You have made a difference in a cancer patient’s life. Thank you.”
The Beautiful Monsters and the Rugged Maniac

By Liz Knapp • Photos by Dennis Werner

Why would anyone want to drive more than two hours to climb over walls, crawl under barbed wire, jump over fire or swing on a rope into a pool of muddy water? Sounds crazy, right?

Well, a crazy group of 12 women and one brave man did just that at the Rugged Maniac event in Rockingham, North Carolina — a race spanning more than three miles and including 25 obstacles. Of course, mud and water are also involved, adding to the level of adventure and excitement.

Did we enjoy it? Emphatically. “I so enjoyed running this course with a great group of strong women — and one great man,” said Beautiful Monsters team member Lynne Doctor. “I surprised myself with the obstacles I tackled. I want to do it again to work on the obstacles that I didn't try before.”

The decision to compete in Rugged Maniac came last year when I asked a few fellow St. James exercise enthusiasts if they would like to do a mud run with me. I’d done several over the past 10 years and was itching to try another. The idea was a little intimidating, but I recruited five friends. We met Saturday mornings for five months and worked on core and upper-body strength.

The exercise regimen consisted of pullups, hanging, step-ups and some running — anything we could think of that would help us on the course. We started at different levels of fitness, but everyone improved their strength and endurance as we prepared for the event. “I love working as a team and making sure that no one is left behind,” said Ginny MacColl.

The first race was in October in Burlington, North Carolina. Rain had fallen the entire previous day. The air was cold, the water was colder and the mud was heavy and deep. But the contestants attacked every obstacle with all their hearts and completed the race. They had so much fun they decided to do another.
The team set its sights on May’s Rugged Maniac and recruited others to join. The Saturday morning workouts resumed and the team grew. Anyone at SeaSide on any given Saturday morning saw this group training together.

Race day was sunny, mid 80’s and not a drop of rain in sight. Perfect!

Comradery is key and this team had lots of it. No one left behind was the rule, so the team stuck together and made sure each person made it through to the next obstacle. The smiles got bigger as the race progressed. Each person overcame a personal obstacle.

The best part of the race for the veterans was watching the new monsters. Like the first team in 2018, they stepped out of their comfort zone. Nervousness was replaced with excitement and pride.

“I couldn’t have done it without this amazing team of inspirational and strong women — and Lou,” said Jackie Weller. “I was looking forward to the challenge and was completely taken by surprise by the level of support, teamwork and comradery that went along with it. When do we sign up for the next one?”

The Beautiful Monsters will again tackle the Rugged Maniac in 2020. Anyone else want to join the team?
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Kentucky Derby Spring Soiree in a runaway
By Angela McGreevy • Photos by Kelly Starbuck

The St. James Plantation Activities Committee (SJPAC) and Wilmington’s Opera House Theatre Company (OHTC) sponsored a May evening of fun, celebrating the Kentucky Derby at the Community Center.

The event featured entertainment provided by talented members of OHTC; auctioned items to benefit the OHTC; a buffet featuring appetizers, pulled pork with all the sides, desserts and mint juleps from the open bar.

There also was a complimentary photo area to remember the experience. To view the photos, visit the Opera House Theater Company page on Facebook and click on Photos.

A king and queen were crowned from among the dapper men and lovely ladies for best hat and Derby attire. The highlight, of course, was the Kentucky Derby race, projected onto a large screen. Quite a few people won ticket vouchers to an OHTC performance by preselecting the first-place horse — when Maximum Security was first announced as the winner and then when Country House took the top honor.

Thanks to all those who attended the first SJPAC Kentucky Derby Spring Soiree. Thanks also to the Kentucky Derby committee members, the OHTC and all who made this event a great success.
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Clubs recognized for efforts to eliminate use of plastics

By Richard Ishler • Photo by John Muuss

Richard Ishler, St. James resident and member of the board of directors of Keep Brunswick County Beautiful, an affiliate of Keep America Beautiful, presented six certificates, one for each of the six restaurants in St. James, to Lindsey Krause, the Clubs of St. James’ director of Food and Beverage. These certificates recognize what the Clubs have done to eliminate the use of plastics. The Ocean-Friendly Restaurant designation is jointly awarded by Plastic Ocean Project and Keep Brunswick County Beautiful.
The Rodanthe model home in St. James Plantation
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Writing, editing, logistics, photos, proofing and printing — in a nutshell, that’s what it takes to get Cat-Tales to your mailbox each month. Then, guess what? It happens all over again the next month, and the next, and the next....

Publishing Cat-Tales would not be possible without the wonderful people who contribute their talents, time and again, to support the activities noted above. And the Cat-Tales team is always looking for additional volunteers to help get it done. So, on June 6, the editorial staff of Cat-Tales sponsored a four-hour retreat for participants interested in learning more about the production of the POA’s monthly magazine.

“Attending the retreat was a way to gain first-hand knowledge about editing, writing, photo shoots — whatever is needed — to contribute to the production of Cat-Tales.”

Some participants had an inherent inclination toward writing. Some had gained modest skills in editing, writing, taking photos or printing publications connected to their former jobs. Others had no experience in writing, editing or publishing. Some are current contributors; some attended to consider becoming involved. But one commonality among all was the desire to learn something new. Attending the retreat was a way to gain first-hand knowledge about editing, writing, photo shoots — whatever is needed — to contribute to the production of Cat-Tales.

Cat-Tales editor Arthur “Tui” Hill opened with remarks, introductions and a review of the day’s jam-packed agenda. Tui is modest about his “nearly fulltime job” as editor but shouldn’t be — his contributions, guidance and knowledge are invaluable. After opening the session, Tui asked current contributors to share what initially piqued their interest in writing, editing and contributing photos for Cat-Tales.

Managing editor Cheryl L. Serra presented an overview of the process to publish each monthly issue of Cat-Tales. Cheryl has impressive experience in publishing, and her presentation was very informative. Most compelling was her personal passion for and pride in producing Cat-Tales. Cheryl’s session stimulated beneficial discussions among participants.

Keynote speaker Justin Williams, CEO of Carolina Marketing Company, Inc. (the company that publishes “North Brunswick Magazine,” “South Brunswick Magazine” and Discovery Map) gave a first-hand account of his team’s daily work, responsibilities and challenges — including the tradeoffs between his hard-copy magazines and digital communications associated with these publications. Interesting dialogue and comments followed Justin’s presentation.

The final activity of the day was a fun and challenging exercise. Teams of participants were given three story ideas, generated ahead of time by attendees, with instructions to discuss and then report on the ideas’ pros, cons, challenges, opportunities and potential twists and turns for these story ideas.

This was a highly interactive learning opportunity, and after group discussions ended, many participants chose to leave the retreat with an assignment — turn an idea into a future Cat-Tales article, a win-win for Cat-Tales, its new writers and its readers.

The Cat-Tales Contributors’ Retreat is held each year. But even if you missed this one, you can still contribute. Just write to the editors at cattaleseditor@gmail.com to learn more. And keep your eyes open for information in Cat-Tales and What’s Up St. James about the retreat next June.

Justin Williams, CEO of Carolina Marketing Company, which publishes “North Brunswick Magazine” and “South Brunswick Magazine,” was the keynote speaker.

St. James resident Beth Klahre, a frequent contributor to Cat-Tales, describes how she became involved with writing for the magazine.
Later than usual, the white ibis are finally here

Story and photos by Cheryl L. Serra

Flying to the place off Southport’s shore where they will nurture their young about a month later than usual, thousands of soon-to-be-nesting white ibis arrived on May 7 at Battery Island, also referred to as Bird Island. For us two-legged, non-flying creatures who walk the area, the ibises’ beauty, grace and sheer numbers are yet another reason to love this coastal avian playground that’s home for many species.

As noted previously in Cat-Tales, the Battery Island Audubon Sanctuary in the Cape Fear River is North Carolina’s largest ibis nesting grounds. It’s been an important nesting site for wading birds since 1928 and has supported most of the nesting white ibis population in southeastern North Carolina since 1963.

Lindsay Addison, coastal biologist for the North Carolina State Office of the National Audubon Society, says the ibis usually arrive here in mid-April and “get right down to it,” selecting mates, courting and making nests for the eggs of their offspring. At that time this year, however, only a few small flocks came and perched in trees but didn’t show signs of nesting. But on May 7, thousands of ibis came to Bird Island from points south, presumably, as well as from other locations in North Carolina. They sat in tree branches, holding sticks, looking like they were picking their nesting sites.

Nest-picking is quite strategic. The most experienced mating partners know the center of the island is great real estate, providing plenty of sturdy-branched cedar trees for protection from predators swooping in along the coast. This spot, Addison says, fills up quickly.

Local ibis watchers have been delighted to see the birds this year. Partway through the 2017 nesting season, when young ibis chicks were hatching, a couple of juvenile bald eagles ate the chicks. Addison says eagles are scavengers and opportunists who will steal other birds’ food. The 2017 ibis colony broke up early and had fewer living chicks. In 2018, possibly remembering this traumatic event, the ibis chose to nest on the west side of the river, avoiding Battery Island altogether. Simply put, they go where the food is and where they can safely birth and grow their chicks.

When courting, the female and male ibis have bright red bills and a gular sac — a lumpy pouch in their long necks. This, Addison says, is attractive when mating. Once they start incubating eggs, their beaks turn to pale pink, the gular sac goes away, nesting begins and courtship ends.

I never for a day gave up listening to the songs of our birds, or watching their peculiar habits, or delineating them in the best way I could. ~John James Audubon
Nesting ibis mates begin home building by gathering sticks, a competitive endeavor. Addison says while the male gathers more sticks than his mate, the females take the lead in nest-building. Ibis may have the same mate year after year, but Addison says that’s hard to study. Many species of birds stay with the same mates unless one dies or has a traumatic event like a predator eating the chicks.

Incubation, which lasts three weeks, is crucial and can be peril ridden. The body temperature of the ibis is 103 degrees and they need to keep their eggs at just the right temperature. This can mean shielding them from blistering heat (such as the temperatures in late May) to keeping them warm at night. Once chicks are born, both parents will gather food and regurgitate it to the offspring. Addison says she’s often observed the chicks grabbing and pecking at the parents’ bills and making gurgling noises that stimulate the parents to feed them.

Addison says that Audubon does a count of all colonial (group) nesting waterbirds at their 20 sites every three years as part of the statewide Colonial Waterbird Census, looking for trend data and distribution patterns. This census was last completed in 2017, when the colony was “huge” at 10,162 mating pairs. Addison recalls they filled the trees, making the outer parts of them “look like flocking on a Christmas tree.” This year, the island isn’t “stuffed to the gills.” But Addison guesses there are up to 5,000 pairs of nesting ibis.

Addison pleads for boaters coming near to the island — closed from April through August due to nesting birds — to be very quiet. In addition to ibis, the island is also a seasonal home to American oystercatchers. Our cautious ride past the island may have caused one to leave its nest. In hot weather, this could be catastrophic. The eggs could literally cook in the heat.

The oystercatchers’ population had been on the decline, Addison says, but with some help such as protecting their nesting sites, there are now 100 pairs of them on the river, representing about a quarter of the state’s species population. There are up to 1,500 pairs of nesting brown pelicans, too.

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