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<th>Rank</th>
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<td>Joanne Penezic*</td>
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Individual Listing Agents
Closed Home/Lot – 2019 Jan 1-May 6

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<td>Eddie Addison*</td>
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*St. James Properties, LLC Agents

Source: Based on North Carolina Regional MLS Statistics

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   ST. JAMES PROPERTIES’ ANSWERS: We made 388 sales in 2018.

2. What is your marketing budget for St. James specifically?
   ST. JAMES PROPERTIES’ ANSWERS: Over $1 Million Dollars!

3. How many prospects physically come through your office annually?
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Editor's note

By Arthur Hill

This month’s cover, provided by POA Community Manager Dan Davis, records workers at the Regency Gate moving one of two, large oak trees to a new location on the entrance’s front side. Dan notes the tree is one of two oaks damaged during Hurricane Florence. The POA decided to move both trees, joining healthier survivors.

The symbolism of the moment hasn’t been lost on the Cat-Tales staff. Continuing our two-part series, “Finding home,” Associate Editor Mariza Arantes collected the memories of several residents who left their homelands, headed to the U.S. and, years later, moved to St. James. Their compelling stories are as diverse as the people they have become. They faced challenges adapting to their new countries, but they have succeeded.

Three other stories, written by adult children “left behind” when their parents moved to St. James, bring a unique perspective to our community. These writers had misgivings about their parents’ migration to North Carolina, but, as you will read, their feelings have changed over time.

All of us, of course, are from places other than St. James, and we’ve each brought our own talents with us. The latest in our crafters series includes Beth Klahre’s story on Tom Pelton, who makes harpsichords. Another, by Virginia Brown, explores the art of straw baskets created by St. James residents and their neighbors on Oak Island.

We’re observing Father’s Day this month with three stories about parenting — and grandparenting — provided by contributors Fred Ammann, Bill Eberle and Rich Mina.

June marks the start of the 2019 hurricane season. Remember to attend the annual Severe Storm Event on June 4, from 1 to 4 p.m. at the community center. Meanwhile, we asked POA Engineer Jack Noland to explain how our community’s stormwater management system operates. His answers are in this issue.

Finally, join your neighbors to commemorate the 20th anniversary of the Town of St. James. Several fun events are planned from June 28 through July 1, including a parade and fireworks. While you’re out, stop by the Regency Gate and give the oak trees your take on what it’s like to be a transplant.
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FEATURE ARTICLES

St. James from a younger perspective
The relatives of St. James residents talk about how special this community is.
Stories by Marcos Carzolio, Gregory Rudolph and Kimberly Sutton

Long-distance grandparenting
While June is Father’s Day, we also have some tips for being an engaged grandparent if you live afar.
Story by Fred Ammann

Father’s Day tributes and traditions.
Stories by Rich Mina and Bill Eberle

ON THE COVER:
"Transplanted"
Photo by Dan Davis

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.

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I would like to recognize the dedicated volunteers who put in countless hours to make St. James Plantation a better place to live. One of the great things about our residents is that the spirit of volunteerism is alive and well. Over the years, we have had literally hundreds of our friends and neighbors participate in one or more of our standing or ad hoc committees.

Currently, we do not have any active ad hoc committees. But there have been at least 10 of these committees in our 28-year history. For example, a POA committee was formed about 21 years ago to research and complete the paperwork for establishing the Town of St. James (TOSJ). For many reasons, that was a very smart move. The TOSJ celebrates its 20th anniversary this year, and I urge all of you to participate in the many events that start later this month.

The Master Declaration and Bylaws established a requirement for three committees — Rules and Enforcement, Nominating and Architectural Control Committees. As the community has grown, we have added another 11 committees. Today, we have more than 125 residents working on 14 committees. A full description of each committee and full membership can be found on the POA website. We continually recruit new members, so if you are interested in serving on any of these committees, contact the POA staff to determine which have openings.

While the workload and hours for each committee vary from month to month, all members dedicate a significant amount of their personal time to committee work. All committees have established monthly meetings — some meet once a month and some have two or more meetings a month. During development of the Annual Budget, the Finance Committee meets weekly until the budget is approved by the Board. The Communications Committee puts in countless hours outside of their established meetings to publish Cat-Tales, “What’s Up St. James?” and “Sports News.”

The Infrastructure Committee continuously reviews the status of our roads, parks and Beach Club to maintain these amenities for the benefit of all residents. The ACC meets twice a month, 6-8 hours per meeting, to review the construction plans for new homes as well as changes and modifications to existing homes. I do not have room in this column to describe the efforts put in by the rest of the committees, but they all do great work for our community.

While all committee members put significant hours into their committee work, I want to especially recognize the committee chairs who put in that extra effort to keep their respective committees on track. They are the schedulers, spokespersons, recruiters and advocates for their respective committees. They take the lead in the development of their annual budget; meet with the Finance Committee and with the Board to justify the requested funds; establish and lead the committee meeting; and, when required, recruit and train new members. They do all of this and more with little recognition.

I would like to take this opportunity to identify and thank these community leaders:

• Architectural Control: Elaine Waddell, chair
• Activities: Liz Ventura and Barbara McGreevy, co-chairs
• Communications: Jerry Iverson, chair (temporary)
• Community Gardens: Al Yoshimura and Cheryl Manger, co-chairs
• Finance: Pat Minan, chair; Mark Erskine, vice chair
• Infrastructure: Bill Lendh, chair; Larry Moulin, vice chair
• Information Technology: Steve Henne, chair
• Investment: Tom Brown, chair
• Landscape: Craig Farland, chair
• Nominating: John Malitoris, chair
• Ponds: Steve Brocker, chair
• Rules and Enforcement: Bruce Johnson, chair
• Safety & Security: Bob Wright, chair
• Transition: Clayton Black, chair
This month, the Town Council will approve the 2019-2020 budget. At recent regular meetings and work sessions, the need to create a disaster response fund dedicated to addressing events such as Hurricane Florence has been part of the budget discussion.

The Town was fortunate in the days immediately after Hurricane Florence to have the financial resources to quickly mobilize our debris removal contractor. Although we are still pursuing the matter, the Town has not yet received reimbursement for the Florence cleanup. Similarly, we have not been reimbursed for costs associated with past events.

“The Council believes it is prudent and responsible to establish a proposed disaster response fund of approximately $1 million to ensure we will be in a position to respond, as necessary, to the next event that impacts our town.”

The proposed budget will include a one-cent increase to the St. James property tax rate. If your current property value is $500,000, your tax increase will be $50.00. Our goal is to establish a fund to provide the timely and comprehensive response our residents expect. We anticipate having sufficient funding in three to five years.

Each year, the budget ordinance will specify that the revenue from this one-cent tax rate is to be dedicated to the disaster response fund. Once the goal is achieved, the one-cent tax for this purpose will end.

On June 4, the Town will hold the annual two-part Severe Storm Event from 1 to 4 p.m. at the community center. New residents should plan to attend, and longtime residents might consider stopping by for a refresher.

A hurricane seminar from 1 to 2:30 p.m. will focus on this season’s hurricane potential. It will feature speakers who would “work the storm,” including representatives from the National Weather Service, the Brunswick County Sheriff’s Department, the St. James Fire Department (SJFD), the St. James Property Owners’ Association, Town of St. James (TOSJ) officials and Brunswick County and TOSJ emergency services personnel. This year we will also have representatives from the North Carolina departments of transportation and insurance.

The second part of the event, from 2:30 to 4 p.m., is a hurricane fair. Representatives from government agencies, insurance companies, the SJFD and EMS, TOSJ Emergency Management, TOSJ Firewise Committee and storm-related vendors will be on hand to meet residents, share information and answer questions.

Carpooling is essential as parking is limited and this event is very well attended.

One final bit of information: Don’t forget to mark your calendars and to check page 8 of this magazine and the TOSJ website for the schedule of events for the Town’s 20th Birthday Celebration Friday, June 28 through Monday, July 1.
The St. James Fire Department (SJFD) participates in the Vial of Life program, designed to let first responders help you when you need emergency medical care. It’s a way to have — in one place — all your medical information, as well as information on any other person living in your home. It’s free, simple and easily implemented.

Here’s how it works. Stop by the SJFD firehouse and pick up a Vial of Life for each person in your home. The vial, a brown medical bottle capable of holding letter-sized pieces of paper, can be found in the blue newspaper stand on the right side of the front porch.

A form inside the vial includes directions on how to record the critical information sometimes forgotten during a stressful or chaotic situation. You need to list any allergies you have to food, medications, latex (those gloves EMS personnel wear for protection), and of course, the ubiquitous “other.” You’ll also be asked to indicate what conditions you have (diabetes, heart condition, kidney disease, etc.).

There’s a question on medical devices you might use — like a pacemaker, defibrillator, dentures, contact lenses and so on. A list of all medications, both prescribed and over-the-counter, that you take can be included in the form. Listing recent major surgeries is a good idea as well.

You are asked to indicate whether or not you have a living will; an advanced directive, or a “Do Not Resuscitate” (DNR) order signed by your doctor. The DNR must be available to show EMS personnel.

Finally, after you list your emergency contact person, place your vials in your refrigerator’s butter compartment. If you can’t tell us where they are, that’s the first place we’ll look for them.

**Vial of Life**

By Jim Carey

---

**Saturday, June 29:**
- 9 a.m.-1 p.m. Youth Fishing Derby (Woodlands Park pond)
- 1-4 p.m. Model Yacht Regatta (kids) (SeaSide pond)
- 4:30-7:15 p.m. St. James History Scavenger Hunt (maximum 50 cars)

**Sunday, June 30:**
- 10 a.m.-2 p.m. Classic Car Cruise-In (community center)
- 10 a.m.-2 p.m. Trilogy Band concert (community center)
- 11 a.m.-7 p.m. Two two-hour Intracoastal Waterway cruises (adult and family) and four one-hour cruises (from Marina)
- 2-2:30 p.m. and 6-6:30 p.m. Coastal Harmonizers (marina)
- 2:15-3 p.m. Classic Car Run (Main Gate, St. James Dr., Trailwood Dr., St. James Dr. to Grove Gate)
- 3:30-7:30 p.m. Shuttles from Town Hall and Members lower parking lot to Reserve Club
- 4-7 p.m. Picnic (food served 5-7 p.m.) (Reserve Club)
- 4-6 p.m. Kids’ games (Reserve Club)
- 4-8 p.m. Kids’ bounce houses (Reserve Club)
- 4-8 p.m. TOSJ history display and Artisans (Reserve Club)
- 5-9 p.m. Mike’s Garage Band concert (Reserve Club)
- 9:15 p.m. Fireworks (Reserve Club)
- 9:45-10:30 p.m. Shuttles from Reserve to Town Hall/Members
In last February’s issue of *Cat-Tales*, POA President Jerry Iverson discussed in broad strokes how the stormwater drainage system meets federal and state environmental guidelines.

To get more information on how the system works, we sat down with POA Engineer Jack Noland.

**Cat-Tales: What are the basic elements of the St. James stormwater drainage system? Is there a single primary system, or is it a network of subsystems?**

**Jack Noland:** The basic elements include swales, watercourse easements, ditches, ponds, creeks and streams. Each drainage area was designed under a separate stormwater permit. But since the drainage systems share many of the same waterways — Beaver Creek, Polly Gully, Ash Creek and the Intracoastal Waterway — I like to think of them as one big system.

**Cat-Tales: Who designed the system?**

**Jack Noland:** The Developer employed a handful of different environmental engineering consulting firms.

**Cat-Tales: Which government agencies have regulatory oversight of the system?**

**Jack Noland:** The North Carolina Division of Energy, Mineral and Land Resources (DEMLR) is the main agency responsible for stormwater. There was also input from many other agencies, like the North Carolina Division of Coastal Management and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Brunswick County has some oversight on the newer sections.

**Cat-Tales: Was the system incrementally constructed and improved as St. James expanded or was it built in its entirety during the early stages of the development?**

**Jack Noland:** It was incrementally constructed as new sections were built. There are more than 70 stormwater permits for different areas that were issued to the developer as the community was built.

**Cat-Tales: Are any of the system’s features unique or an improvement over systems in other coastal areas?**

**Jack Noland:** Other than the size, it’s not much different than any other private coastal community.

**Cat-Tales: What can residents do to help maintain the system?**

**Jack Noland:** Residents are encouraged to do their part by maintaining and clearing their drainage areas and driveway pipes on a regular basis. Never dump yard waste into the ponds and drainage areas and keep storm gates and outlets clear of leaves and pine straw. Maintain healthy amounts of vegetation on your pond banks to prevent erosion. Also, limiting fertilizer can help water quality and reduce algae. If you come across any major failures like pipes and sinkholes, contact the POA.

**Cat-Tales: How many of the ponds in St. James are part of the stormwater drainage system?**

**Jack Noland:** I consider all 240-plus ponds in the community to be part of the stormwater drainage system. Some require more maintenance, depending on how they are permitted.

**Cat-Tales: Are the ponds connected?**

**Jack Noland:** I’d say most of the ponds are connected in maybe 20 or so small watersheds.
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**Cat-Tales: Where does the network start and where does it end?**

**Jack Noland:** There is no specific starting or ending point, but for the most part, the flow is south.

**Cat-Tales: Can you control how the stormwater flows through the ponds network?**

**Jack Noland:** A handful of the ponds have board structures that raise or lower the water levels. They’re mostly on the Cate 9 of the Members golf course.

**Cat-Tales: We have heard that alligators sometimes use the network to travel from one pond to another. Is that true?**

**Jack Noland:** Yes, gators can move through stormwater pipes.

“Swales are there to direct runoff to drainage areas… Depending on weather and soil conditions, it is not uncommon for water to remain in the swales for extended periods.”

**Cat-Tales: Once the stormwater has drained into ponds, where does it go from there? Does it eventually find its way to the ocean?**

**Jack Noland:** Yes, simply put, all drainage eventually makes its way to the ocean. When a pond fills to its outlet elevation, the water will eventually make its way to Beaver Creek and the Intracoastal Waterway and into the ocean.

**Cat-Tales: Do federal and/or state officials periodically inspect the system? When was the last time it was inspected? Has it always met existing requirements?**

**Jack Noland:** Depending on the stormwater permit, some ponds are inspected annually throughout the year. Up to this point, only minor maintenance items have been pointed out; they are not classified as violations. Most ponds here are considered amenity ponds and are not on permits and thus aren’t inspected by environmental agencies. Since they are still an important part of the drainage system, we have various contractors inspect and maintain them.

**Cat-Tales: How important a part do the swales play in the drainage system?**

**Jack Noland:** Swales are there to direct runoff to drainage areas but, more importantly to DEMLR, their main purpose is to treat runoff prior to entering sensitive marshes and creeks. The vegetated swales on the roadides and easements achieve this by slowing down runoff, which limits erosion, filters pollutants and allows evaporation. Depending on weather and soil conditions, it is not uncommon for water to remain in the swales for extended periods.

**Cat-Tales: How important is the “impervious” requirement often imposed on builders and residents when constructing or remodeling homes in St. James. How important is this requirement in stormwater management?**

**Jack Noland:** Limiting impervious surfaces is one of the most important requirements of the stormwater permits. It reduces runoff that can create flooding, and it serves to limit runoff from hardscape surfaces that carry pollutants into the waterways, which can negatively affect water quality.
Located between the gated SeaSide entrance and the SeaSide Club, lot/home packages are still available starting in the upper $300s. Contact Carol Hobbs 910-619-0777 carol@kenthomes.net for details.

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ICYMI  In case you missed it

By Arthur Hill

Pier review. After two years, the Oak Island Pier, battered and left for dead in the wake of Hurricane Mathew, has been rebuilt and is once again serving the ocean-loving public. The successful re-launch follows months of uncertainty, when Oak Island leaders doubted money could be found to pay for the extensive repairs required. But in 2017, funds from FEMA and a private foundation helped pave the way for the rebuild.

Are big-city traffic jams heading our way? Area newspapers are quoting a report from the U.S. Census Bureau which ranks Brunswick County as one of the nation’s fastest growing jurisdictions. The county experienced the largest population growth of North Carolina’s 100 counties, with an increase of 4.6 percent from 2017 to 2018. Brunswick county also ranks fourth in the nation for percentage growth among counties with populations of 20,000 or more.

Frogs again. Just in case you didn’t get a satisfactory frog hit in our article on p. 33, here’s another peeper photo. Resident Barbara Matter, taken with the contrast between the frog and her deck furniture, grabbed her iPhone and got this shot.

Photo by Barbara Matter

By the numbers

Compiled by Rick Margin

It’s hurricane season again. St. James’ hurricane and tropical storm record

Key:
• TS is a tropical storm with winds under 73 mph.
• Cat is a hurricane category measured from 1 to 5.

Category Sustained winds
1 74-95 mph
2 96-110 mph
3 111-129 mph
4 130-156 mph
5 157 mph or higher

Michaels (2018) 35 (TS)
Florence (2018) 45 (TS)
Matthew (2016) 40 (TS)
Hermine (2016) 35 (TS)
Ana (2015) 40 (TS)
Sandy (2012) 30 (TS)
Irene (2011) 68 (TS)
Hanna (2008) 77 (Cat 1)
Cristobal (2008) 45 (TS)
Ernesto (2006) 70 (TS)
Ophelia (2005) 84 (Cat 1)
Charley (2004) 74 (Cat 1)
Kyle (2002) 35 (TS)
Irene (1999) 80 (Cat 1)
Floyd (1999) 90 (Cat 2)
Bonnie (1998) 100 (Cat 3)
Fran (1996) 100 (Cat 3)
Bertha (1996) 90 (Cat 2)
Arthur (1996) 40 (TS)

Source: National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA); data includes direct and indirect hits for Southport, Bald Head and Oak Islands since 1992, according to Wikipedia.
Most of us refer to winter as cold, harsh or mild. Tom Pelton, on the other hand, has piano winters and harpsichord winters. As the owner of two grand pianos and two harpsichords, Tom spends each winter playing the piano or the harpsichord, but never both.

“The technique is so different that I play one at a time all winter long,” he says. “And the following year, I switch to the other. Harpsichord key spacing, the touch and fingering are different and musical ornamentation is over the top compared to the piano.”

Ornamentation is musical embellishments — mostly added notes — that are not essential to the melody but decorate or "ornament" the line of music and provide interest, variety and expressiveness.

Tom was introduced to music at a young age by his stepfather, who played violin. Inspired, Tom took lessons on the Baldwin grand piano that now graces his St. James home. At the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Tom took piano and harpsichord lessons. There, he built his first harpsichord because “pianos are not very apartment friendly.”

Tom didn’t have any experience building harpsichords, but at the time he was working three jobs and the only way he could afford one was to build it. He connected with a group of university students also building a harpsichord. “That gave me some confidence,” he recalls.

After his post-doctorate studies at the University of Arizona, Tom did research for Dow Chemical Company, where he met and married Patti. The couple relocated to Strasbourg, France. During their eight-year stay, Patti purchased a Sperrhake harpsichord from East Germany as a birthday present for Tom.

While the Sperrhake is a true masterpiece, the real treasure is the harpsichord that Tom built in his Cincinnati, Ohio basement years later.

Tom understands the intricacy of the harpsichord. His explanations of the workings and construction get technical quickly. He simplifies, “The harpsichord is played using a keyboard. Pressing a key activates a lever and a small pick-like device called a plectrum that plucks, not strikes, the strings.”
There are 63 keys on Tom’s harpsichord. Each key has three strings. So, there are 189 plectra. Based on fabrication plans (like building plans) he purchased from Zuckermann Harpsichords International, Tom’s harpsichord mimics the earliest instruments of the 1500s. It has raven quills instead of plastic for plectra and boar bristle instead of wire for springs. Tom used a scalpel he handmade from volcanic obsidian rock to meticulously carve the European-supplied quills, one by one.

“Tom didn’t have any experience building harpsichords, but...he was working three jobs and the only way he could afford one was to build it.”

Tom says the keys are positioned in two rows called registers.

“The top register produces less volume than the lower register, and the timbre or tone is slightly different between the registers,” he says. With the flip of a switch, the registers can be mechanically coupled together, delivering a melodious sound.

When Tom plays his harpsichord, it’s magical. But the artwork on the spruce soundboard and lid is equally fantastic. The wood was air-dried, not standard kiln-dried. Over two months, Tom applied and sanded multiple layers of gesso to the lid until it became as smooth as glass. The artwork on the lid, a copy of a painting from the British Museum in London, was done by a “starving Russian artist” acquaintance. Tom did his own artwork on the soundboard, as well as all of the gold leaf trim.

Start to finish, the project took four years.

Tom says, “A harpsichord likes to be played every day. It is sensitive to temperature and humidity and requires lots of adjustments.” Despite the official 1996 completion date emblazoned on his harpsichord, Tom quickly adds, “I’m never quite finished.” A separate room in his home houses countless tiny parts and tools.


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A-tisket, a-tasket, they’re making baskets!

By Virginia Brown

Sue Duncan’s friend was in search of something fulfilling to enrich her life. She invited Sue to join her in a class on making pine straw baskets, offered by Brunswick County Parks and Recreation. “The class was held in an old school house with big windows and great light,” Sue recalls. While the class did not fill her friend’s need, Sue’s life was lit with a new hobby.

That first class was not without difficulties. Sue poked her fingers a lot and had to keep asking the instructor, Donna Davis (aka Zada Mae, her professional name), for bandages. Unlike the knitting she had tried in the past, there is never a pattern to follow in pine straw basketry. “It really involves problem solving,” Sue says. Problem solving is attractive to a retired science teacher.

In the three years since that class, Sue has become part of a community of area pine straw basket makers. Twice a month, a spirited Donna/Zada holds classes at the Oak Island Moose Lodge on Long Beach Road, which she kindly allowed me to visit. Beginners, including St. James residents Lyn Mangiapane and Peggy Gobble, and experienced basket makers from the community, gathered to learn from Donna and each other, to work on their projects and to share supplies and ideas.

Once Donna had the “newbies” underway and everybody was working, she offered information about the craft. Pine straw basket-making uses the same processes Native Americans, including Seminoles, Cherokee and Choctaw, have used for centuries to make coiled baskets. In this part of the country, the Gullah are known for their sweet grass baskets, but pine needles are more readily available.

The basket makers collect not the shorter loblolly, but long-leaf pine needles which range in length from 10 to 30 inches. Sewn together with artificial waxed sinew or waxed linen thread, the pine needles are fed through a short piece of plastic drinking straw which serves as a gauge to keep the coils uniform in size.

The basic stitch, accomplished using a yarn darner needle, is called a “split spiral.” There are numerous other stitches, some of which Donna has invented. The baskets’ bases are often thrift shop finds like coasters, but almost anything goes, including one genuine alligator head.

During the class, the 20 or so women and one man shared stories, banter and friendship as they worked. Donna said the first basket Reva Cook of Oak Island made was the ugliest she had ever seen. But Reva’s second was beautiful. Over 200 baskets later, Reva said making baskets “saved her sanity” at a difficult time. Her husband now makes bases for her projects faster than she can complete them.

St. James residents Beth Jones and Rose MacDonald have very different styles. While Beth fashions more traditional baskets, Rose’s creations include abstract wall hangings and gourds adorned with coils of pine needles. She and others sell their baskets online or in area shops, give them as presents, donate them for fundraisers, or just enjoy them. What could be more fulfilling than a beautiful object you made from the bounty of lovely pine trees?
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B.B. King once sang “The Thrill Is Gone.” Good news — I found it, not on Blueberry Hill but at the SoundHouse in Shallotte when I saw St. James’ own John Rogers and his band, Johnny & The Flipside, perform.

There’s an obvious synergy within the band. The drummer, Pete Thaye, sits stoically behind his kit, watching to make sure the boys in front, both named John, stay in line. Bass player John Stover assumes a commanding presence and, like Dusty Hill from ZZ Top, sets the foundation for the band with his booming bass lines.

Front man and leader John Rogers, a St. James resident for more than three years, sports a burly Paul Bunyan look. Like the mythical character, he also carries an ax or two (or more). The difference is John’s axes have either six or 12 strings. In total, John owns 25 guitars (and counting) but brings a coterie of five or six to each performance.

John was born and raised just outside Houston in Alvin, Texas, best known for baseball great Nolan Ryan and ZZ Top. John knows when his love for guitar started. “It was Christmas 1974.” He flirted with a career in music while playing in local bands throughout high school and college years but decided on pursuing a degree instead.

After graduating with a degree in electrical engineering from Texas A&M, John spent many years primarily working in the oil business as a technician, electrical engineer, software engineer and engineering manager for several companies, including Halliburton.

He is a bit of an enigma — not your idea of an engineer. When I had lunch with him, he easily went back and forth between discussing scientific methods of finding oil to the art of playing guitar and his favorites like Robert Cray, Stevie Ray Vaughan, Jimmy Page, Johnny Winter, Hendrix and Billy Gibbons.

In addition to his admiration for the Texas blues, he has an equal interest in listening and playing power pop.

We exchanged thoughts on groups like Badfinger, the Raspberries, Todd Rundgren and Grand Funk. Rogers frowns on much of the studio technology used today to enhance instruments, especially vocals.

“That is why I enjoy listening to Adele,” he says. “She is one of the few artists who can truly sing.”

Both John Rogers and John Stover are accomplished martial artists. John Stover is a 10th dan (rank) “grandmaster” and created his own system in Wilmington called Su Lum Fa Kung Fu. John Rogers is a 5th dan master in Chayon-Ryu, an eclectic martial arts system.

I asked the Flipside’s leader if there is a connection between engineering, martial arts and guitar. “Most definitely,” he said. “All three are about focus, dedication and commitment.”


I guess the biggest compliment the band received is several local musicians came to see the slinger play with his band. They clapped and shook their heads in admiration with the rest of us.
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If the residents of St. James had a theme song, it might be Nathaniel Rateliff & the Night Sweats’ “I Need Never Get Old.” A fast-paced, energetic song with a chorus that repeats like a mantra for baby boomers everywhere who refuse to believe age is anything more than a number.

And who can blame them? They’ve worked hard, paid their dues and earned the laissez-faire lifestyle that the rest of us daydream about between status meetings and production reports.

St. James is the idyllic backdrop for the portrait its residents are painting — one broad, improvised brush stroke at a time. Eighteen holes of golf in the morning? Bike rides to Waterway Park in the afternoon? Gin and tonics on the beach in the evening? It’s the kind of day depicted in the montage scene of bad romantic comedies American movie-goers throw their money at hand over fist.

No matter how cheesy or unrealistic it seems, many of us want it. And St. James is proof — or maybe motivation — that it’s real. It’s achievable. Take a seat on the deck at Tommy Thompson’s and look out over the marina. The scene can either inspire adventure or convince you to open a tab that won’t close until 9 p.m. It’s up to you. Or maybe it’s not. Maybe it’s up to the person next to you. Who cares?!

Of course, not everything in St. James is Tanqueray and two-putts. Last September, Hurricane Florence crippled the Southeastern U.S., resulting in an estimated $17 billion worth of damage. A storm like that could (and should) make the bravest person put down their glass of “not me” and run. So, like many others whose parents, grandparents, brothers and sisters are residents of St. James, my home in Richmond, Virginia became a refugee camp, open to my parents and their friends as needed.

During their six-day stay (it felt so much longer…wink, wink), I was kept abreast, in detail, of everything happening in St. James. And while listening to the conversations about who’s trees were still standing, who hadn’t managed to get out and where the so-and-so’s were retreating to, I realized this wasn’t just an address on a mailbox on a street being pounded by the worst storm in more than 50 years. This was their community.

And these were people they’ve invited into their lives, people they’ve chosen to spend their time with. And it was clear these friends cared about each other. It made me feel good to know that my parents are surrounded by people who care about their well-being like I do.

When they were finally able to return and assess the damage, we were relieved to learn their community managed to avoid much of the devastation that other nearby areas endured. A close call for sure, but strong communities like St. James aren’t easy to knock down.

In between road trips and FaceTimes, I rest easy knowing that Grammy and Granddaddy are doing exactly what they want to do — nothing. Or everything. And they’re enjoying it with friends they’ve chosen to surround themselves with.

It doesn’t get much better than that.
Pliny the Elder once said, “Home is where the heart is.” Having been born in Argentina, raised in Virginia, and now living in New York City, I have had many “homes.” And when my mother Mariza Arantes and her husband Bill Sutton retired and moved to St. James, one of my homes moved with them.

Mariza and Bill worked hard every day of their adult lives until they were ready to retire. I recall being unsure about the transition for them, since they were moving to an unfamiliar part of the country without any acquaintances in the area. Further, I knew they were not used to having so much free time on their hands. How would they spend their days? Whom would they befriend? What if they got bored or missed the suburban life?

Despite my concerns, it wasn’t long before their new neighbors became new friends. I got a taste of this on our first visit after their move. My girlfriend, my dad and I were visiting for Thanksgiving.

At the time, my parents’ house was still under construction. Needing a place to host the family and share Thanksgiving dinner, their neighbors, Kathy and Keith Lance, warmly and generously offered their house to accommodate us all while they traveled. It was during this trip that I first met the local alligator who had taken residence in a nearby pond. The introduction was made by another couple of new friends and neighbors, Michele and Nick Pasta, while we played with their lovely dog, Maya.

On my grandmother’s 80th birthday, the family once again decided to make the trip to St. James. This time, we stayed at my parents’ beautiful, newly finished home. On the day of my grandmother’s birthday, the family celebrated Mass. Unbeknownst to us, another couple of new friends and neighbors, Shirley and Tom McHale, planned a surprise blessing for my grandmother from the priest.

My grandmother was moved to tears because of this dedication, and I was at a loss for words for the act of kindness. Later that night, we had a dinner birthday party at the elegant Reserve Club. After dinner, we sang happy birthday and tasted the best carrot cake I’ve ever had — courtesy of Sandy Resenhoeft, a retired caterer, now also a new friend and neighbor.

Since these early visits to St. James, my mom and her husband have traveled with Kathy and Keith to Portugal, where we have family living in Lisbon. I have spent more time with their neighbors and friends, have learned that they are in great hands and company and now look for any excuse to visit again.

All of this is to say that, within no time, my concerns about my mom and her husband’s move to a foreign place washed away. Having been to a July 4 party on the Intracoastal Waterway, danced with family and friends at Tommy Thompson’s at sunset, and played with their new dog Nena on the beach at Oak Island, I am now more confident than ever in the quality of their lives.

So how does one describe St. James to those unfamiliar with it? “It’s a gated community near Southport, North Carolina,” or “It’s like a resort, but with private beach access, a marina, four golf courses and four clubhouses.”

I prefer something simpler — “It’s my North Carolina home.”
Young families prepping for a visit to the grandparents at St. James may think they’re getting ready for a trip to the ol’ plantation, where kid-friendly stuff is as abundant as a winning lottery ticket. I am here to tell you that’s not the case. In fact, during our most recent visit, we were happily surprised to be vacationing at a child-friendly, fun and relaxing location, which came chalk-full of extra doting grandparents everywhere we turned.

I’ll start by saying summer is incredibly fun in St. James. We have fond memories of the fountains at the edge of the swimming pool for the kids to play in, the marina with tons of boats to watch (and delicious food to eat), a playground in addition to my parents’ large backyard and, of course, the beach!

But this time we were headed down for my stepmother’s 60th birthday in winter. Yes, winter — no beach, no pool, no summer fun. So, we packed our car, headed out and arrived on a Thursday night. The rest of the family trickled in on Friday and we went to a friend’s house that evening for a happy hour. As we arrived, I thought, “How on earth will I entertain this kid for hours?” But I was greeted by a pair of the sweetest and most experienced grandparents and was almost immediately presented with a giant box of toys.

Our one-year-old, Owen, dove into the box of blocks, instruments, and puzzles with excitement (Look! New toys!) and the night ended up being a success. We enjoyed drinks, conversation, and a well-behaved and entertained kid — all thanks to our new happy hour grandparents.

Now for the main event — a birthday dinner for 15 people arranged in a private room at The Reserve Club. Again, I thought, “This place has a dress code and I have a toddler. This can’t possibly go well!”

We entered the room and the waitress spotted us pulling out a container of toddler munchies. “Let me take that,” she said. “I’ll store it in our cooler and serve it when we serve dinner.” I accepted, of course, thinking how extremely accommodating she was. Then, while the birthday girl greeted her guests, I went for a quick diaper change. As soon as we made our way down the hall, a group of grandparents spotted us, “Oh, what a sweet little boy! Look at his suspenders!” We smiled, Owen waved goodbye to his new hallway grandparents, and we headed to the restroom.

As we entered the room, we were spotted by yet another grandmother. “Oh, let me help you! How old is he? My granddaughter just turned 18 months,” she exclaimed while pulling his shoes right off his little feet.

Surprised, and grateful for the help, we worked on getting Owen changed while chatting. Pants — down! Diaper — off! Wipes — out! A grandmother we didn’t even know was getting this kiddo changed in record time. Before I could blink, Owen was fresh and ready for his dinner. We waved goodbye to his new grandma.

On our way back home, we recalled the encounters we had with welcoming grandparents’ smiles from all of Owen’s newly acquainted admirers. Our trip was a success from the moment we arrived, with the most accommodating, doting staff and residents. The warmth of everybody around gave us such a sense of belonging.

It is true “It takes a village to raise a child.” But I would add it takes a town — the Town of St. James — for young parents to relax on their vacation. And we can’t wait to come back! Even in winter...
Finding home

part II

Compiled by Mariza Arantes

Editor’s note: Part I of this two-part series ran in the May issue of Cat-Tales. In this issue, Associate Editor Mariza Arantes compiled comments from St. James residents like herself who have made St. James their home after being born in another country.

When Mariza Arantes moved from Brasilia, Brazil to Buenos Aires, Argentina in 1986, she didn’t know a word of Spanish. Five years later, when her ex-husband (Uruguayan, of Croatian descent), her two-year-old son (Argentinian) and she (Brazilian) moved to the melting pot of the Washington, D.C. area, Mariza made sure to enroll her son in a kindergarten run by Spanish nuns. “We wanted him to be able to communicate in the only language he knew at the time,” she says.

The following year, the nuns organized a presentation where all the kids were to wear national costumes from their respective countries. While insisting on being dressed as an Argentinian “gaucho,” Mariza’s then three-year-old son explained to her that nationality was something personal and that each person had their own — like his friends in school or his parents at home, of course!

Fast forward 28 years, Mariza, now remarried to Bill Sutton (Vermont of Canadian/Irish descent) and retired, wonders how diverse St. James, her new home, is.

In 1973, at the age of 22, Marcella Schuber left Chile to escape Pinochet’s dictatorship. She arrived in the U.S. with two small children and her mother, settling in Washington state before moving to New Jersey. Because she had been an exchange student in the U.S. as a teenager, it was easy to adjust to her new life. “I felt right at home,” she says, but she still missed her extended family who had stayed in Chile. Marcella and her husband Gary found St. James by accident, and they’re happy to live relatively close to their three adult kids and eight grandkids, who live at the Jersey shore and in Philadelphia areas.

Mike Haase, the leader of “Mike’s Garage Band” was born in Germany. His father was German and his mother was Latvian. Mike’s family immigrated to the U.S. in 1954, when he was only two years old. Twenty-five years later, he was working for Caterpillar and living in Munich — about an hour away from where he was born.

Mike’s son was also born in Germany. His wife was born and raised in the Chicago area, and his daughter was also born in Chicago. Mike’s wife went to grade school on Haase Street and to high school on Grant Street — his son’s name: Grant Haase. It was a surprise to learn that Mike speaks Portuguese, which he learned during the two years he lived in Brazil.

Marc Papillon was born in a French-Canadian household in Montreal, Canada. In 1970, his family left for Los Angeles with only 32 boxes. He was 13 years old, and even though he did not speak a word in English, he mainstreamed into ninth grade. Within one year, he was feeling right at home. Although his family moved around the U.S. many times, Marc adjusted quickly and thought it was positive to be exposed to new environments. In 1987, he became an American citizen. He has been married for 38 years to his wife Bernadette, and they have a 35-year-old daughter. Marc and Bernadette lived in six states and settled in St. James in 2015. After a 32-year career with Johnson & Johnson, Marc retired at the age of 55. His motto has always been: “People need luck, great mentors and hard work.”

After escaping from communist Czechoslovakia, Milo Paces’ parents and their three kids arrived in New York City in 1951. Born in Prague, Milo was only eight years old and did not speak English when he arrived in the U.S. He was told that when spoken to, he should answer by simply smiling and saying “yes.” His teacher told him that there was school after lunch and that he should return for the afternoon session. He smiled and said “yes,” but did not return to class in the afternoons until a letter was sent home.
Milo missed friends and relatives back home. But he had a good support system in the U.S., as there were lots of Czechs and Slovaks in his neighborhood. Milo’s family was thankful to be able to come to America. He retired after almost 40 years teaching history and economics in the New York City high school system.

Sam Hersh was born in Nuremberg, Germany and arrived in the U.S. on the Queen Mary in October of 1949. He went with his family to Mishawaka (South Bend), Indiana. At first, they lived with his father’s aunt, who spoke only English, so they could learn the new language (his parents spoke Hungarian when they didn’t want him to understand what they were saying).

Sam’s parents spoke several languages, as his father was born in Austria, Hungary (later to become Czechoslovakia after World War I) and his mother in Romania. Sam’s grandparents and several of his parents’ siblings were killed by the Nazis. His father spent two years at a labor camp and his mother spent several months at Auschwitz.

In 1976, Lidia Vogler arrived in the U.S. from Italy. She was 22 years old, although she says, “It seems like yesterday.” She missed the family and friends she left behind, but she felt more comfortable when she had her first child and bought a home. Soon thereafter she started her career, which made her life complete.

Although in Italy women keep their maiden name after marriage, Lidia took her husband’s last name when she got married. She says everybody thought she was German; even Italians didn’t believe her until she spoke to them in Italian.

Fernando (Fred) John Papandrea was born in Italy. He arrived in the U.S. on August 3, 1953 through the Port of Miami because he traveled from Argentina. He went to New York City, eventually arriving in Meriden, Connecticut. He remembers kissing the ground once he got outside the airport and that a traveler approached to help him, thinking he had fallen.

Fred was 33 years old when he arrived. He needed to learn English, so he asked his wife to help him out. But she refused and asked him to go to school. Fred attended night school for a short period of time but learned most of what he needed from his job.

Yupei O’Toole was born in China and was 28 years old when she arrived in Washington, DC, in December 1985. The family left behind was what she missed most. Yupei admits it took about 20 years for her to adjust to her new life and feel completely at home. Once, on her way to a July 4 parade and picnic, she stopped at a supermarket and bought a frozen apple pie so that it would stay fresh in the hot weather. When they tried to eat it at their picnic, the pie was defrosted, but completely raw. She didn’t know she was supposed to bake it.

Jim Campbell and his wife Ellen arrived in Cary, North Carolina from Scotland in 2003. They were both 50 years old. It was Jim’s job at IBM that brought them here. At first, they thought their American adventure would last three to five years or maybe a bit longer. Twelve years later, they became American citizens on the garrison lawn at Fort Johnston, as part of the July 4 festivities.

In the beginning, they missed good bread, good butter, the BBC and the British sense of humor. The year they arrived in the U.S., they went to Charleston to celebrate their wedding anniversary (in mid-September) and had to evacuate because of an impending hurricane. The following year, they decided to celebrate in Asheville, which was hit hard with 12 inches of rain that affected the local water supply from Hurricane Isabel. So they celebrated at T.G.I. Friday’s on paper plates and by drinking wine from plastic cups.

The next year, they decided to spend their anniversary in New Orleans but had to cancel due to Katrina. Last year, they decided not to go anywhere for their anniversary. But Florence happened, and they ended up celebrating as evacuees in Savannah.
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Jim admits they wouldn’t be surprised if their St. James neighbors want to send them somewhere else this year.

Yvonne Scheffer was born and raised in Sittard, a small town south of the Netherlands. In 1970, at the age of 22, Yvonne came to Buffalo, New York, then Augusta, Georgia. As her husband was in the military, the couple had to move to many different places and countries. They finally settled in Northern Virginia, where they lived for 34 years before moving to St. James.

The hills of Virginia reminded Yvonne of her home in the Netherlands and she was happy to stay in one place long enough to make friends and develop some history with them. Yvonne says she loves America, the opportunities, the beautiful landscapes, the openness and space and the ability to own your home. She missed the good Dutch coffee until Starbucks came around.

Born in Windsor, Ontario, Canada, Martha Lake and her family arrived in the U.S. in 1963, through Detroit, Michigan. She was 12 years old. Since marrying in 1975, Martha and her husband have lived near Detroit, as well as Long Island, Cincinnati, Minneapolis, New York’s Elmira/Corning, and finally St. James.

At first, Martha missed fish and chips (with halibut being the fish) — still her first meal whenever she goes back to Canada to visit family. Martha also missed eating french fries with vinegar. “Back then, it was hard to get vinegar in the U.S.,” she says.

Steven (Stefano) Sagri came to the United States from Ancona, Italy in October 1963, at the age of 13, with the intent of being adopted after his single mother had died. He learned to speak English after arriving in the U.S. and adjusting to his new life took a long while, at least 20 years or so. Steve initially missed his homeland foods and still appreciates a good Italian meal.

He first lived in Hillside, Illinois, a northern suburb of Chicago, then moved to a Chicago orphanage where he finished eighth grade. Steve’s next move was to Hoosier Boys’ Town in Schererville, Indiana. As an adult, he lived in Indiana, Michigan, Ohio and North Carolina. Steve eventually came to St. James by way of Topsail Island, where he has a vacation home, and by connecting with friends that had visited St. James.
Could it be Black Friday in April? Once again, the St. James Service Club pulled off a fantastic event for the people of Brunswick County.

By 7 a.m. on a Saturday in late April, the lines were already starting. When the doors opened, the crowd went wild. Standing by the cashier outside the “Man Cave,” I watched as the crowd eyed the prizes they most desired. Many reached out to friends and loved ones to describe items they wanted to purchase.

At precisely 8:01 a.m., those lucky enough to get there first had their prizes in hand and smiles on their faces.

There were three special moments for me this day. The first was when I checked out a gentleman who was purchasing a home-theater sound system. The item was clearly unused and worth well more than the $35 he paid for it. He hurried home to set it up.

The next special moment was watching a grandfather as he counted the money in ALL his pockets and came up with only $18. He walked away with a gently used bicycle for his grandson, originally purchased for several hundred dollars.

The third moment was when I was standing by the checkout while a purchaser of a beautiful bird cage was ready to load it into her car. I asked the little girl if she had a bird, and her mom responded; “She will get one for this cage once she learns how to read better.” Mom told me she finally had an incentive to get her child to work harder in school.

The photos tell all about the activity inside the Senior Center in Supply. Cashiers were all lined up and the people came in droves. Many volunteers took money and packed up treasures. Others in their black shirts with “Security” on them watched items in the holding area and made sure everyone stayed orderly.

Off to the side of the cashiers was the rug room. According to rumors, the room was sold out in two hours. In the back of the main room, the kitchen volunteers served chili dogs, hot dogs and all sorts of home baked goods.

All of this to raise money for Brunswick County scholarships, which will be awarded to graduating seniors in the next few weeks. The total profit for this event was $16,000.

The Service Club would like to extend a heartfelt thanks to the volunteers who spent at least 1,000 hours prepping. At the helm this year were co-chairs Linda Hurbanek and Teri Behnke.

Thanks also to Sentry Self Storage, Premium Moving and Troon for their help the past six months, and to all St. James donors without whose generosity this never would have happened. Kudos ladies and gentlemen, a job well done.
You might have spotted an unusual number of cars driving very purposefully and slowly down your street on Sunday, May 5. They weren’t just observing the speed limits; they were on a quest to find the listed yard art or objects that were part of a puzzle.

Around 35 teams gathered at the Woodland’s Pavilion for an afternoon of fun to raise money for Brunswick County non-profits during the St. James Service Club’s Cinco de Mayo Scavenger Hunt and Fiesta. A big thank you to chairperson Holly Mayberry and her committee for many hours of work preparing for this fun event.

At the conclusion of the hunt, the teams returned to feast on a taco bar and dance to the music of the Back Forty.
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Rainy day Racquet Relay

By Beth Erskine

As its name suggests, tennis is the main attraction of the Racquet Relay, the St. James Tennis Association’s (SJTA) annual fundraiser. Usually, tennis enthusiasts pay for the privilege of hitting balls under sunny skies for a good cause. However, Mother Nature makes the final call. This year, the rain fell early and hard, closing the Founders courts before the first ball was put in play.

In years past, a rainout all but doomed the event, as all the auxiliary activities were held outside on the Founders tennis deck. But since 2016, Troon has graciously offered the use of the Founders clubhouse, preventing Mother Nature from totally sabotaging the event.

Early on a Friday morning in late April, the transformation of the Founders lobby began, as 110 raffle and 39 silent auction items were organized for display. Throughout the day, tennis players and golfers perused the treasures on display, hoping to win an airplane ride, a fishing charter or a cruise down the Intracoastal Waterway.

For multi-sport athletes, or those wishing to become such, six St. James golf club professionals donated lessons as well as four Callaway wedges. The artisans of St. James donated artwork, photographs and jewelry. The Southport restaurant community offered meals, and local merchants donated goods and services. In all, 46 organizations and businesses sponsored the event.

Determining who should be the recipient charity is never an easy decision. Last year, Brunswick Family Assistance (BFA), a local non-profit helping low-income Brunswick County residents, piloted a food program providing children with breakfast and lunch each day for the 12 weeks of summer vacation. The overwhelming success of this program affirmed its value, but funding for 2019 was uncertain. Learning that, SJTA designated the Summer Food Program of BFA as the recipient of the 2019 Racquet Relay.

By late afternoon, guests had gathered in the Founders Club lobby. Amid the socializing and refreshments, raffle tickets sold at a brisk pace and silent auction bid sheets quickly filled. Stephanie Bowman, executive director of BFA, spoke about the increasing need for financial assistance within Brunswick County, particularly in the wake of Hurricane Florence.

As the evening drew to a close, it was clear the rain hadn’t dampened the generous spirits of attendees.

Early on a Friday morning in late April, the transformation of the Founders lobby began, as 110 raffle and 39 silent auction items were organized for display. Throughout the day, tennis players and golfers perused the treasures on display, hoping to win an airplane ride, a fishing charter or a cruise down the Intracoastal Waterway.

For multi-sport athletes, or those wishing to become such, six St. James golf club professionals donated lessons as well as four Callaway wedges. The artisans of St. James donated artwork, photographs and jewelry. The Southport restaurant community offered meals, and local merchants donated goods and services. In all, 46 organizations and businesses sponsored the event.

Determining who should be the recipient charity is never an easy decision. Last year, Brunswick Family Assistance (BFA), a local non-profit helping low-income Brunswick County residents, piloted a food program providing children with breakfast and lunch each day for the 12 weeks of summer vacation. The overwhelming success of this program affirmed its value, but funding for 2019 was uncertain. Learning that, SJTA designated the Summer Food Program of BFA as the recipient of the 2019 Racquet Relay.

By late afternoon, guests had gathered in the Founders Club lobby. Amid the socializing and refreshments, raffle tickets sold at a brisk pace and silent auction bid sheets quickly filled. Stephanie Bowman, executive director of BFA, spoke about the increasing need for financial assistance within Brunswick County, particularly in the wake of Hurricane Florence.

As the evening drew to a close, it was clear the rain hadn’t dampened the generous spirits of attendees. In fact, just the opposite occurred. Racquet Relay raised a record $23,700, ensuring the continuation of the Summer Food Program for the school children of Brunswick County in 2019.

For more information on this program and Brunswick Family Assistance, visit the BFA’s website.
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SUFA strikes a positive note

By Nancy Adelis • Photo by Rob Jerome

Stepping Up For Arts! (SUFA) awarded five fine art scholarships to students from West Brunswick High School (WBHS) and South Brunswick High School (SBHS), bringing the total to more than $26,000 in scholarship money awarded since 2010 to graduating Brunswick County seniors.

Chloe McLaurin, Andrea Dutton and Alyssa Robinson, all from WBHS, will be majoring in music/theater and art history education. At SBHS, awards were given to Alyssa Creech, who will major in music, and Katherine Tyson, who plans to use her visual art passion as an architect. Katherine also won the prestigious Barbara Brewer Scholarship, which includes tuition assistance for her sophomore year if she qualifies.

SUFA provides scholarships to students who pursue any fine art medium, including voice, theater, visual art, band or dance. These students do not have to major in the arts but need to pursue them in their elective courses, clubs or other avenues.

In January, SUFA awarded more than $7,500 in fine art school grants to 18 teachers from elementary, middle and high schools across Brunswick County. SUFA assesses applications against criteria that include the breadth and depth of need. For example, SUFA gave an award to Chris Cook, North Brunswick High School (NBHS) band leader to support their cause. The NBHS Band was chosen to be the North Carolina representative to the National July 4 parade in Washington, DC.

Ian Sands from SBHS received an award to advance his program in animation using iPads and Apple Software. Southport Elementary School received grants for keyboards. “Wow! How grateful I am to SUFA for helping me supply 13 pianos for my students,” Southport Elementary teacher Landis Yarovvy commented. “My heart is so full!”

Our hearts are also full. SUFA is thankful for the continued support of its benefactors — including the St. James Service Club. SUFA also appreciates the support of Constance Enis, Director of Fine Arts, Brunswick County. To make a donation, please contact Nancy Adelis at adelisdv@verizon.net.

Jeepers, creepers, where’d you get those peepers? By Arthur Hill

A former POA president received a call late on a rainy night several years ago. An irritated resident was on the phone, demanding the POA do something about the peeper frogs that were making so much noise it was impossible to sleep.

Unable to comply with the resident’s request, the POA’s chief executive took a philosophical view. “Peeper were here before we arrived,” he said. “They’ll be here long after we’re gone.”

Peepers are prominent this time of year, especially in the spring or during a heavy rainfall in the warm-weather months. As their name implies, male peepers use their high-pitched calls to attract females while stationed on the edges of wetlands (or, especially in St. James, on the edges of rain-swollen swales).

Even when they’re calling, peepers may be hard to find. But not always, as this photo shows. Ted Stephens’s shot of his grandson, Jack Agent, taken on the front porch of Ted’s Players Club Drive home, captures a rare moment in the life of a child — and a peeper. “It’s hard to stage a photo like this, especially with a two-year-old,” Ted said. He did a great job.

The next irate resident who calls the president of the POA to complain about peepers should get a framed copy of Ted’s photo.
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The Sausage Kings

By Kathy Rezza • Photo by John Muuss

Four men of St. James make 100 pounds of Italian sausage every few months at Ron and Kathy Rezza’s home on Bayedge Lane.

Their interest in Italian sausage began a few years ago, during a debate over the best pork delicacies from “Bel Paese.” To settle the dispute, Ron, Ray Hitney, Frank Caruso and Joe Rinaldi staged a sausage cook-off. Each contributed their favorite sausages from Chicago, New Jersey, New York and Connecticut.

Out of that event was born the Sausage Kings. The four link aficionados decided to go into production.

The first attempt to grind pork butts and stuff casings was made using a Kitchen Aid food blender and attachments. After many hours with very little production, changes had to be made. Following the acquisition of a commercial grinder, capable of grinding up to nine pounds of meat per minute, a commercial stuffer, and a large-capacity mixer, the Sausage Kings were ready to roll.

It takes about four hours to cut, grind, mix and stuff 100 pounds of sausage. The Kings produce hot and sweet sausage in equal amounts each time. And every batch the Kings have made has been proclaimed the best to date.

Meanwhile, the Sausage Queens — Kathy Rezza, Judy Caruso, Joan Rinaldi and Jane Hitney — ensure clean-up is done to perfection and take turns preparing a gourmet meal for all.

American Legion Post 543 honors the media

Story and photo by John Muuss

Three media outlets, including Cat-Tales magazine, were recognized for their support of American Legion Post 543 during a ceremony at its regular April meeting. Post officials said, “Without media support, the post would find it difficult to advise the community of its programs, projects and fundraising.” They said the media also helps the post acquire new members.

Accepting awards on behalf of their organizations are (l-r) Arthur Hill and Cheryl L. Serra, Cat-Tales magazine; Morgan Harper, State Port Pilot; and (far right) Si Cantwell, Star-News (retired). Mike Fegan, American Legion Post 543 Commander (second from right) presented the awards.

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The St. James Bikers visit Old Baldy in 2016. (photo by Vickie Johnson)

St. James Bikers cycle on

By John Lynch

Now in its eleventh year, a lot has changed for St. James Bikers, but the mission is still to explore this beautiful chunk of North Carolina and to share it with our neighbors and friends in St. James. Of course, we allow ourselves the pleasure of discovering interesting lunch places as the reward for a good morning workout.

Reflecting upon the past years, some interesting stories come to mind.

The bikers club started in February 2009 when new friends and avid bikers Al Blackburn and John Lynch wondered if anyone else shared their love of biking in flat North Carolina, often topped with an after-ride meal. Three months later the first ride was scheduled to Kure Beach with 11 “pioneers.” One year later Gary Johnson joined the crew and then Nate Lipsen. Recently, Jackie Sharkey signed on, so look for her on upcoming rides.

Has anyone ever gotten lost? Yup to that one. Our first trip to Brunswick Forest, for which we recruited a guide from another club, resulted in a slew of folks getting hopelessly lost. Fortunately, all were found.

What was the most embarrassing incident? It has to be when one of our leaders rode off the side of a wooden cart bridge in Brunswick Forest, rotated 180 degrees in the air and landed on his back in the swampy muck. That was quite a blow to his pride!

Have there been any interesting changes in a ride? We typically ride in Boiling Spring Lakes in August starting at 10:30 a.m. with lunch in the clubhouse afterwards. Since August mornings are quite steamy, one rider suggested we change the start time to 8 a.m. and have brunch afterwards. What a smash hit that turned out to be. It’s funny how simple changes can work so well.

This year’s Ocean Isle ride probably wins for most unusual. As usual, we ride and have lunch at the Giggling Mackerel. Then, we do the short drive to Silver Coast Winery for some wine tasting (not your parents’ bike ride, is it?).

Want some more interesting stories? Join us on one of our upcoming rides, which you can find on the POA website under Clubs/Groups, Sports.
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Pretty things

By Cheryl L. Serra

I like pretty things. A lot. Nature’s full of pretty things. Whether it’s the open petals of a flower seeking nourishment or a flock of dancing ibis, you needn’t look far to find natural beauties.

Our coastal location provides a backdrop for other types of beauty, including a shrimp boat trawling, nets open, waiting for the fresh bounty that will grace our tables, or a man teaching a young boy — moments ago a stranger — the joys of landing bait fish using a casting net.

Sometimes, I like to try making pretty things. Sometimes, I just buy them. There were plenty of recent occasions to do both in the area.

For the arts, Brunswick Community College’s (BCC) Southport center, where I take painting classes, hosted its first art show in May. More than 300 people attended, and 149 people, many of them students from St. James, entered their artwork in five categories — painting, pottery, silver, glass and other media. Attendees voted on each category’s blue-ribbon winners, and a panel of five local dignitaries determined which were Best in Show. That winner, Brenda McCarty, received a scholarship to cover her next class at BCC Southport Center. Cheryl Rogers from St. James won for her pottery, a coffee pot.

A group of St. James residents traveled to Lake City, South Carolina, for Artfields, that city’s annual, nine-day art competition and exhibition. Attendees noted the art was unlike what they’ve seen in galleries around St. James; much of the art was rooted in political beliefs and made statements about them. The exhibition also featured the work of rising students.

There have been street art festivals in Kure and Carolina beaches, and many more are planned. Up Your Arts, a nonprofit whose mission is “to support and enhance the creative and performing arts throughout the greater Southport area,” will present the 2019 Southport Plein Air Festival June 14-15. Outdoor painting, live music, artist awards and a wet paint sale — where you can buy the plein air artists’ work — are on tap. The Oak Island Art Guild offers a host of art-related activities, too.

Spring also marks the opening of farmers’ markets along the coast. The market in Southport has made two important changes this year — its name, now the Southport Summer Market, and its location, now at Franklin Square Park. Like many area markets, patrons can find baked goods, local arts and crafts, flowers, herbs and local farm fresh produce. Many of these towns and cities also have launched their summer concert series.

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Behind the scenes

By Stuart Pike

What do an aspiring young actress seeking fame in New York, a couple of senior citizens living in sin so they can both collect Social Security benefits, and a highly dysfunctional family in a broken-down VW bus have in common?

I don’t know either, except they’re the central parts of three area theater productions this month.

First up is the young aspiring singer/dancer who arrives in New York to seek fame and fortune. There, she is spotted by a powerful producer/director who casts her as an understudy in his next show. When the leading lady “breaks a leg” (ankle, actually), a “Star is Born” (it’s a different show but you get the picture). “42nd Street” is a rousing, big musical comedy full of great songs — “We’re in the Money,” “Lullaby of Broadway,” and of course “42nd Street” — as well as tap dancing and boy-meets-girl romance.

Opera House Theatre Co. is producing this performance, which will be staged at Thalian Hall. It opens Thursday June 6 for a three-weekend run. Contact the Thalian Hall box office for tickets or go online to the theatre’s website.

The next show is a bit closer to home and opens Thursday, June 13 for a two-weekend run at Brunswick Little Theatre. Many of us in the St. James community came of age in an era when our parents would have disowned us, or at least threatened to, had we announced we were going to live with our girlfriends/boyfriends. Now suppose today, finding yourself suddenly single again, you announced to your adult children your intentions to do just that? What would their reactions be?

Sam and Laura are two 60-somethings who find themselves in this exact scenario in the comedy, “The Second Time Around.” The cast features two St. James residents, Cathy Cagney-Rossi and Maria-Luisa Winslow, and is directed by St. James resident Don Fried. For ticket info call 910-447-2586.

Closing out the June offerings is the musical adaptation of the academy award-winning movie, “Little Miss Sunshine.” The set-up for the story centers on 10-year-old Olive, the quintessential “ugly duckling” enthralled with the juvenile beauty pageant ideal. Add to this her out of work, self-help guru wanna-be father, her over-taxed real estate agent mom, a Nietzsche-reading, vow-of-silence-taking brother, her suicidal gay uncle, and the retirement home evictee and coke-snorting grandpa, and we have the stereotypical happy family. When they cram themselves into a broken-down VW bus to travel to the “Little Miss Sunshine” beauty pageant, the stage is set for the travails of the Hoover family.

As with the movie version, this performance is very much a black comedy. So, despite the title, it’s not for young audiences. The show is produced by The Thalian association in conjunction with the theater arts department at Cape Fear Academy, where it will be staged in the Erin McNeil Fine Arts Center. For tickets call 910-251-1788 or visit the Thalian Hall website.
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Long-distance grandparenting

By Fred Ammann

Disclaimer – I do not hold degrees in psychology, sociology or family counseling. I also don’t claim to be an expert on grandparent-to-grandkid relationships. Yet, the editors of Cat-Tales, in their infinite wisdom, have asked me to speak to the topic. So here goes.

Most of us in St. James are already grandparents, and the younger residents, perhaps soon to be. Janice and I are proud grandparents to two sets of grandsons; teenagers (16 and 13) in Greensboro, North Carolina and toddlers (2½ and 1½) on Long Island. Here are some things we have found helpful in managing these long-distance relationships.

Stay connected.

FaceTime is a must, especially with the younger ones. It gives you a look at their world in live time and keeps you up to date. Hint: Let your kids call you at their convenience since you never know what chaos might be happening on their end.

Messaging, especially daily pictures and videos, is another way to stay plugged in. There’s nothing better than seeing those first steps or the game-winning goal. Try messaging with the older ones from time to time. They may not always respond, but at least you’ll be on their radar. You can also friend-in to their Twitter/Instagram/Facebook/Snapchap accounts for a glimpse of what they’re up to. Don’t be surprised at what you see, however.

Establish traditions and routines.

When our oldest two were kindergarten age, Janice started the tradition of making a gingerbread house during our Christmas visits. The tradition carries on to this day, although with less enthusiasm than in earlier times. But they still spend the time with Nanny. I also taught them to kayak at a young age. Now, no visit would be complete without the three of us launching from Waterway Park and playing follow the leader under docks and around pilings.

With the younger ones, we’re beginning to establish traditions as well. The candy house hasn’t been quite as successful so far. “Nanny, can I eat this one?” is asked with every piece placed on the structure. However, our fist-bump/finger-wiggle greeting is a hit I hope will continue for many years to come.

Big events.

While holidays are a given, try making it for those special occasions as well — including concerts, sports contests and graduations (yes, even elementary school). You’re not going to make them all, but a long drive or El Cheapo Air will get you to some. Depending on how many grandkids you have and where they reside, this could get expensive. Remember, however, you can’t take it with you, and as I was recently reminded, if you don’t spend at least some of it now, your kids will when you’re gone.

Visits – here and there.

If the grandkids visit here in the bubble, consider Camp St. James, but not for the entire week; maybe just a morning or two to learn golf, tennis or sailing. The rest of their stay should be together time. There is no place better than our beach or pools. Locally, we have mini-golf and jet-skis on Oak Island, waterslides in Wilmington and NASCAR go-carting in Myrtle Beach.

Chances are your kids haven’t had a romantic vacation in a while. Remember what they were like without the kids around? You can offer to babysit for that weekend getaway, or if you’re really brave, a week in the islands. That of course will require 24/7 uninterrupted coverage. We actually volunteered for a week this month with the young ones. Wish us well.

There’s no one-size-fits-all when it comes to bonding with your grandkids. Whatever works. Just remember, they grow up fast!
What and who shall we celebrate on Father’s Day 2019? Is it to be nostalgia or respecting and honoring fathers as they practice “fatherhood” right now? Fatherhood was, and is still, on-the-job training. There is no formal continuing education to add to your resume.

One day, like a door opening, you are face-to-face with fatherhood. I believe there is a natural hormonal reinforcement for women becoming mothers. I’m not sure dads get that or even expect a boost to help them accept the role of fatherhood. “Everything has changed. I get that. Now what?”

We fall back on assumptions, observations and even prior resolutions, “Well, I’m not going to be like that!” Fatherhood is just beginning with changing diapers, no sleep, trying to calm a crying infant, having someone good-naturedly spit up on you, and spooning food into a “pie hole” that moves around randomly and opens and shuts like some obstacles on a miniature golf course.

Newly minted fathers have no idea they will muddle through their kid’s romantic involvements with other teenagers. Nor do they know that teaching their kids to drive is followed by the feeling they have when that new driver leaves with the car to drive solo.

For many of us, Father’s Day is different than it used to be. Very likely, our fathers have died, perhaps years and years ago. Our kids have families of their own and are parenting our grandchildren. Further along in the circle of life, some of us have great-grandchildren. Some of us have grandparenting roles with people we have informally adopted into our families.

We may not have become experts, but we have become opinionated. For us, it is hard to tell the difference between the two. There is great joy on those rare occasions when one of your “kids” asks your counsel because they think you really know. Most of the time, I’m a consultant, waiting to be asked, to swoop in with the answer — even an answer I have discovered through painful trial and error.

Of course, what I have to offer isn’t the answer, it’s my answer. Sometimes, the kids don’t see a “problem” at all.

Our three “kids” have enlarged our nuclear family by getting married. We have a son, and our two daughters have given us one more son each that they chose for us. Our son has given us one more daughter that he has chosen for us. They are all wrapped up in the on-the-job training that is parenthood.

On this Father’s Day, my heart goes out to our three sons. I am father and father-in-law respectively. I am proud of them as fathers. They aren’t perfect, but neither was my father. They’re learning. As someone who has a never-ending series of situations, occasions and missteps that are meant to teach me humility, I am in good company.
“My father gave me the greatest gift anyone could give another person, he believed in me.” –Jim Valvano, the late North Carolina State basketball coach

If your father introduced you to golf, you can bet his patience and faith were often tested. While learning the game, you built lifelong memories wandering through stickers and swamps, seeking your errant hacks. In my early teen years, the bonding moments I shared with Dad might define golf anxiety.

When I was 15, Dad would roust me from my Jersey Shore vacation sleep for a 7 a.m. tee time. Gagging from Uncle Hugo’s stogie on the drive to the course, I knew my stomach flips were just beginning. This privately owned public golf course was innocently named Spring Meadow. Yes, someone would be waiting for me near the first tee. He was the course bouncer.

The first tee was directly beyond the kiosk where the Bennett sisters ruled over the course they owned. Spring Meadow was their inheritance, and they put up with zero nonsense. As names and pending tee times were erased and moved up the chalkboard, I putted and paced, glancing over as the seconds ticked off the black and white clock. De-stress at the range? There was no range — only a putting green. Just putt, pace, putt, pace and keep the breakfast down as our reservation moved up.

When Anne Bennett announced, “Mr. Mina on the tee,” judgement came from everywhere. Eyes turned to my practice swing. Queasy all over, I moved between the markers and fumbled for a ball and several tees in my pocket. My moment had come.

I tried to breathe while ignoring the bouncer’s beige Ford, idling roughly alongside the tee box. My thoughts flashed to other mornings, when I had watched it raise dust from the gravel road as it fetched players deemed unworthy. Thou shalt not hold up play! He who whiffs, skulls, tops, shanks, etc. on the first few swings shall be marked and bounced. They would be driven back and deposited near the kiosk. Onlookers grinned and averted their eyes as refunds came with a cordially caustic, “Please come back when we’re not so busy.”

Meanwhile, Dad’s faith in our group’s immediate future rested solidly on my shaky-kneed stance. Did either of us need such pressure? Was this bonding?

The gallery had more questions — Can the kid get off the tee? Can he get far enough down the fairway before they notice that swing? How come he needs four tries to steady his ball on the tee?

As we look back, many of us realize that our dad’s faith and belief in us were what we sought after all. He supported me on those days and many more thereafter. My Dad taught me about golf and life and how humbling they both can be.

Simply put, thanks, Dad. I’ll always have Spring Meadow where, through some miracle of faith, we never did get bounced.

Editor’s Note: The Clubs at St. James will host The St. James Men’s Golf Association 2019 Father & Son Tournament June 14 to 16. Contact Paul Dewey at ptdewey12@gmail.com for more information.
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