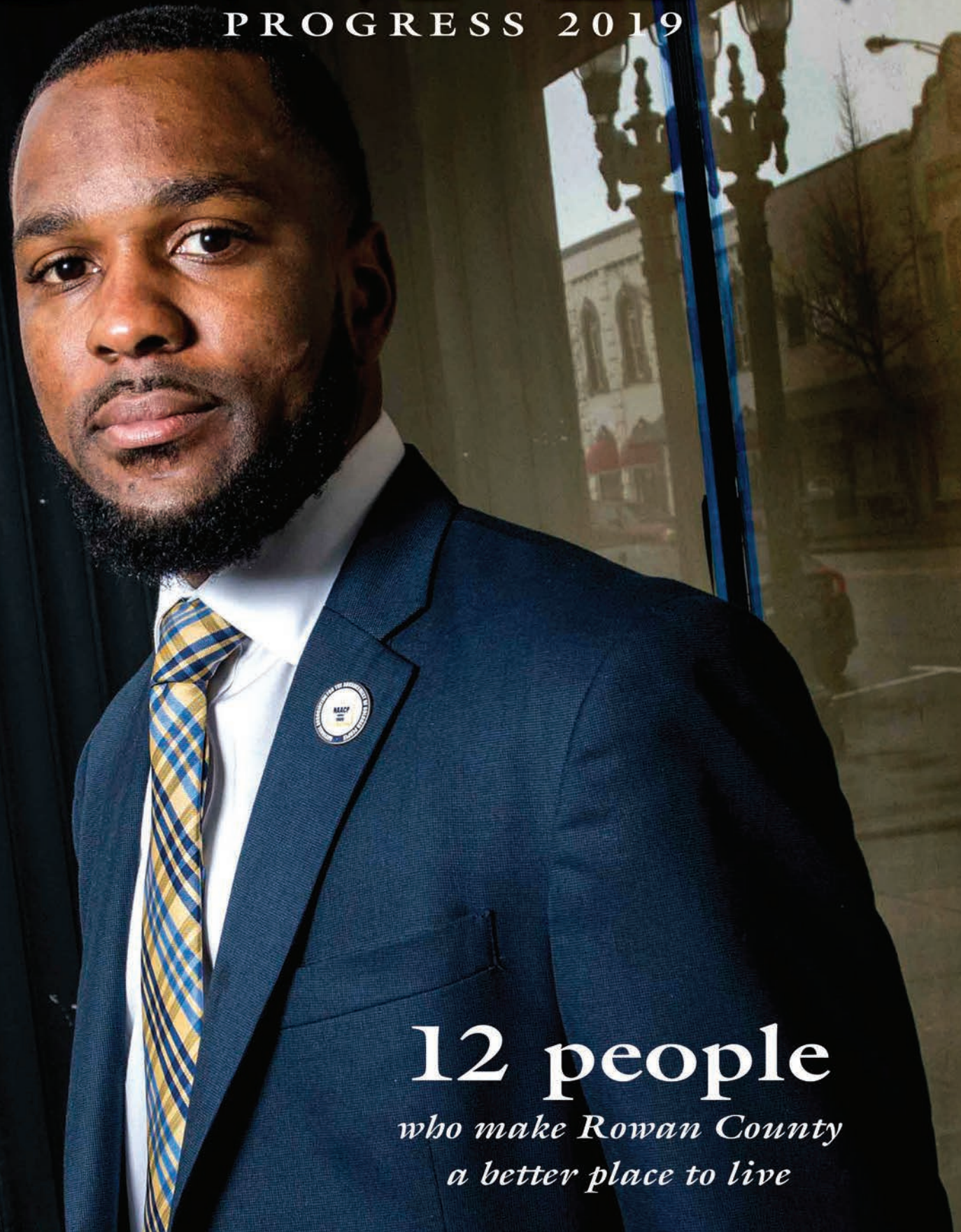


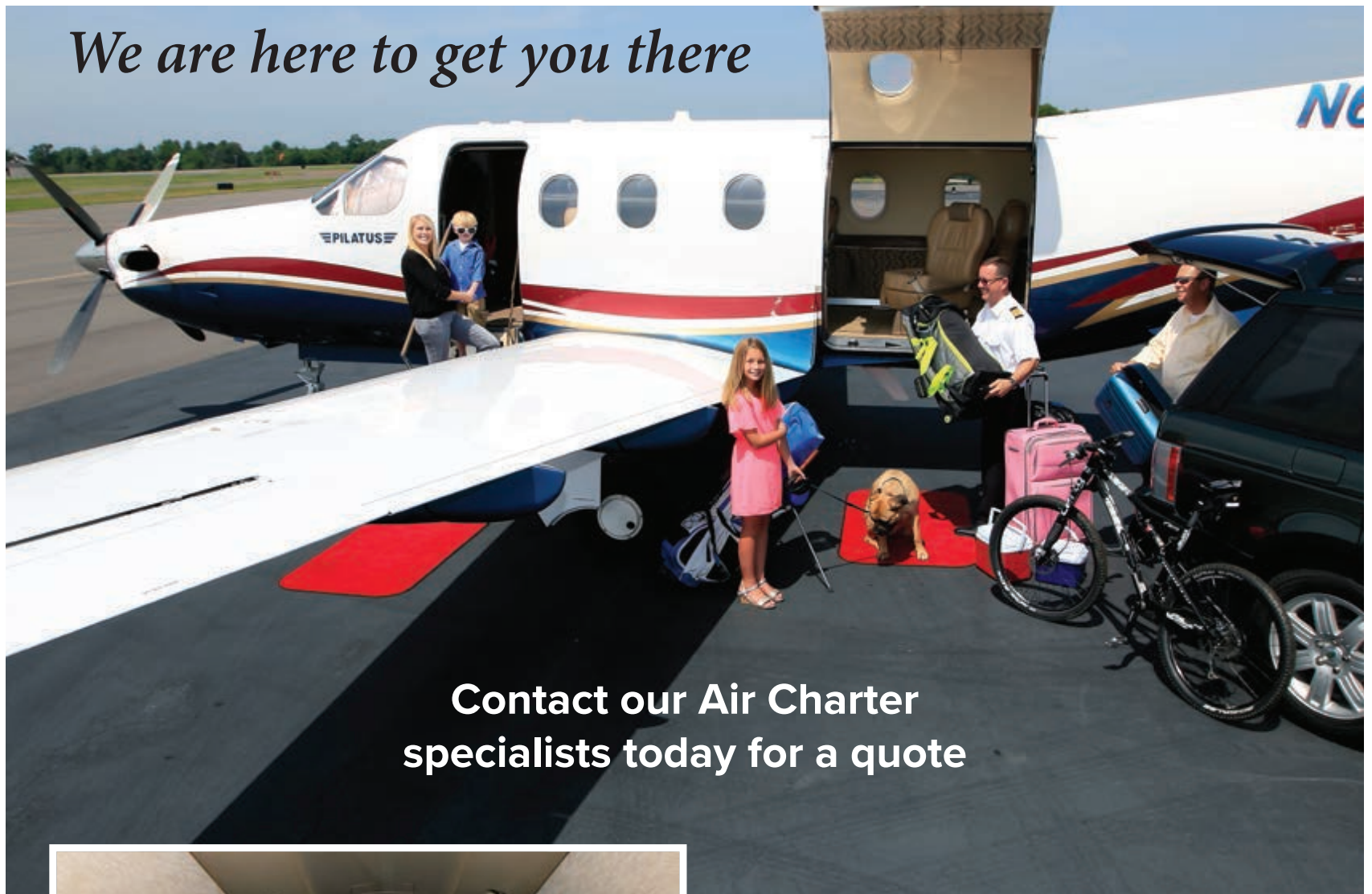
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WELCOME

Progress is all around us

With each passing year, it seems Salisbury and Rowan County are making progress toward a better life for those who live in our community.

Through the opening of new businesses and the construction of new commercial developments, it's economic progress. Among our many nonprofit organizations, it's progress toward making a better life for the less fortunate. Progress is present, too, in the groups who simply seek to get people of different backgrounds around the same table or the coaches who aim to build camaraderie and character among their players.

And while physical structures like buildings can be seen as symbols of progress in Rowan County, it's the people who make it happen — from Brooklynne Witherspoon, a 10-year-old who has created an organization that she says aims to “keep people off the streets” to Rocky Cabagnet, whose goal is to “put the community and action back into the Community Action Agency.”

Each year, the Salisbury Post publishes a special edition called “Progress,” where we take a step back from the daily grind of the news cycle to highlight how our community is changing for the better. This year, we're focusing on people.

In the pages of “Progress,” you'll find stories about 12 people who make Rowan County a better place to live — from Vivian Hopkins, an ambassador for Gold Hill and bluegrass music, to Salisbury Police officer Scotty Robinson, who wants to see better for children in the community and the school that he patrols.

Our list is certainly not comprehensive, as there are many more people who are doing things to improve life in Rowan County and its 10 municipalities, but we hope it serves as a sampling of the diverse array of people who do.

Take Cabagnet, the Community Action Agency executive director. He moved to Rowan County at age 5, graduated from Salisbury High School, worked in jobs that took him from Washington, D.C., to Florida and has returned to work “in the spirit of the community coming together to focus on real problems.”

Mean Mug Coffee's Evelyn Medina relocated her coffee shop to downtown and employs students with disabilities from Rowan-Cabarrus Community College's Skills, Opportunity, Awareness, Readiness Program.

West Rowan coach and businessman Jimmy Greene put it best when he told former Post Editor Elizabeth Cook “there are so many good things happening around us that you just can't ... get buried in the negative. We continue to fight to make ourselves better.”

We hope you enjoy reading about just a few of the many people in Rowan who make our community a better place to live.

— **Josh Bergeron**
Editor, Salisbury Post



— Photo by Jon C. Lakey

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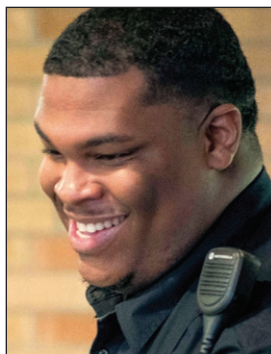
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On the cover: Gemale Black, president of the Salisbury-Rowan NAACP, poses for a photo near Salisbury City Hall downtown. — Photo by Jon C. Lakey

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Gemale Black, president of the Salisbury-Rowan NAACP, poses for a photo near Salisbury City Hall. — Photo by Jon C. Lakey

Working together

NAACP President Gemale Black proves that ‘young people do have a voice’

BY MAGGIE BLACKWELL
For the Salisbury Post

“I like to say, ‘How can we help?’ instead of ‘Why are you ...?’ We always need to bring something to the table. Some people ask why I don’t do a lot of whooping and hollering out there. I say I don’t need to. We can resolve our differences by sitting down and having a discussion.”

Gemale Black, the youngest local NAACP president in the state ever, is entering his second term.

He’s passionate about a few things: justice, schools, young people, and his family.

“I like to ask, ‘How can we work together?’ because we can ally our forces together. If we work together, this will be a better world. That’s what it takes, working together. That’s how we’re going to get it done.”

Black grew up in Salisbury and has a twin sister and two brothers. He has two daughters, ages 7 and 2.

His parents, George and Linda Black, have been married for 30 years. His mom works at Rowan Salisbury Community Action Agency. His dad recently retired from Innospec to help with the family catering business.

“Everywhere I go, they go. We went to Montgomery and San Antonio. I wanted

to fly, but they said, ‘No, we’re going to drive.’ It doesn’t matter where I go, they go with me. I’m blessed to have them both. They roll with me.”

Black works for S.L. Nussbaum as a recertification specialist. He’s currently working to recertify Brenner Crossing. His flexible work schedule enables him to serve as NAACP president, a job he laughingly refers to as a 24-7 job.

“If it ain’t complaints, it’s policies you’ve got to watch.”

He serves as the young adult chairman on the state level. He travels to the state office in Raleigh at least once a week. Soon that office will move to Greensboro, and he’s thankful his com-

mute will be cut in half.

The national NAACP has a new program called Next-Gen, which accepted competitive applications. The top 15 applicants attend a yearlong leadership program, once a month in various cities with all expenses paid. The second tier chosen attend with tuition waived, but they must pay their own travel expenses.

“They received 300 applications. I applied last year, and I learned in January that I made it to the top tier. I’ll be training in Detroit, Chicago, Minneapolis. In addition, we’ll have webinars and conference calls. I’ll be traveling monthly for a year. After the year is done, if you’ve completed everything, you



graduate. They can open special jobs on the national level for the graduates.”

Black is quick to praise his board. “Yolanda Woods is my vice president. She’s been there, done that. She was president before, so she surely knows what she’s doing.”

He has praise as well for secretary Leaneese Woods, assistant secretary Velveeta Reed Hairston, treasurer Ruby Steele and assistant treasurer Levonia Corry.

“The committees in our chapter do the research and recommend a path of action.”

He lists the committees as political, education, community coordination, housing, freedom fund and criminal justice.

He says today’s biggest issues are voting, education, economic development and housing. The NAACP has is working now to address the federal government’s

latest document on impediments to fair housing in the community.

Having been elected as president at age 28, he’s acutely aware of his youth.

“Some folk say, ‘Look at that young guy,’ but I promise you I’ve studied that policy and I can go toe-to-toe with you on it.

“Sometimes my youth helps, sometimes it hurts. Sometimes older people give me -- well, older people get more respect. When I first came in, maybe two years after, it was hard to get respect, hard to get people behind me. It got to the point, ‘Should I give up? I’m working my tail off to support this community, and where are they?’

“But the positive side is qualifying for Next-Gen and the possibility of national opportunities. Another good side is I have plenty of energy. A downfall is at


See **Black**, page 9

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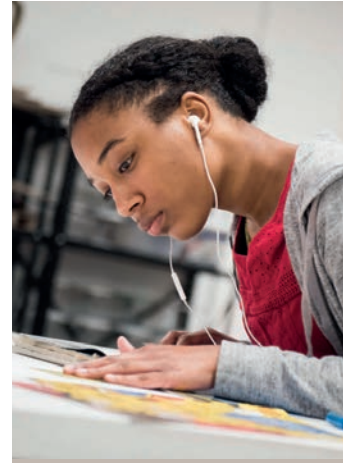
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Black

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my age, I still have to work. It's good I have a strong VP."

Black's energy has led to changes in the approach of the local NAACP chapter.

"My leadership style is very different. If we always keep things the same,

where would we be? I'm not sure the national level would've lasted 110 years if it hadn't changed with the times — or our local chapter 40 years."

"One thing I want to accomplish, when I'm done, I hope they can say, 'Gemale impacted the change needed in Rowan.' I hope by being level-headed, having a seat at the table, they can say, 'Young people do have a voice. Young people can do the work.'"

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Jimmy Greene, longtime softball coach for West Rowan middle and high schools, is excited for the start of the new high school season. Greene leads a practice at West Rowan High's varsity team. — Photo by Jon C. Lakey

Pushing for success

West Rowan softball coach Jimmy Greene fights for his team, community

BY ELIZABETH COOK
For the Salisbury Post

By day, 48-year-old Jimmy Greene is a partner at Fisher-Greene Insurance, helping clients and building relationships.

But in the late afternoon for much of the year, Greene heads out of the office to help girls learn how to get along with others, how to push themselves to excel and how to give back to their community.

He also coaches them in softball.

Greene has been coaching for a long time. He put in about 10 years with Salisbury Parks and Rec. He started

coaching softball at West Rowan Middle School eight or nine years ago. A few years later he applied to coach softball at West Rowan High, too. The middle school team plays in the fall. The other plays in the spring.

At the high school, Greene started this season with a 85-34 win-loss record.

Though daughters Peyton and Parker played on his teams and excelled at softball — they play club softball at N.C. State now — Greene says his motivation was broader.

"I never did this for my daughters; I did this for all of 'em," he says. "I have a saying when I coach. ... 'These are my girls,' and I fight for my girls to get

things."

That includes raising funds for supplies and making improvements to the softball field.

Greene makes a lasting impression on the Lady Falcons. Consider the following comment former player and West graduate Arrington Ali posted on Twitter recently:

"I truly need someone to work out with me and by 'work out with me' I mean someone to scream at me to push harder like my softball coach used to (shout out to coach Greene, your voice is still in my head), Ali said.

Asked about the tweet, Ali said Greene always pushed her and her

teammates to do their best.

"He helps me daily and doesn't even know it," she said.

God blessed him with a coach's voice, Greene says. But it's what he says that spurs players on.

"He's an outgoing coach. He cares for all of us and loves the game," senior Mary Sobataka says during practice one day.

Hannah Roberts, another senior, describes Greene as "very verbal."

"He'll yell at you but pat you on the back at the same time," Roberts says.

"He's not going to put you down," Sobataka adds.

Greene expects more than good play.

When students express an interest in being on the team, he requires them to prove their commitment. First, they have to volunteer at least six hours at the concession stand, the ball field or elsewhere. They also get a handbook spelling out team rules and sign a contract.

He wants this kind of service to be ingrained in his players. “Keep them understanding that you have to always give back. You just can’t show up and have something handed to you.”

■ ■ ■

The opportunity to help kids build better lives is a blessing, Greene says — a multi-faceted blessing, in his case.

He serves on the board at Smart Start Rowan, an agency focused on helping children get a solid start before they enter kindergarten. His annual “Read to Me” visit to a childcare center is an activity he wishes everyone could experience. “The joy of reading to a child will enhance you,” he said in an opinion column in the Post.

As a board member at Partners in Learning, he serves on the committee looking for a new site for the five-star childcare center currently located on Catawba College’s campus.

He’s on the board of trustees at Christ United Methodist Church and serves as president of the West Rowan High School Boosters Club.

He and wife Donna, a social worker at Novant Health Rowan Medical Center, have four children. In addition to Peyton and Parker, ages 21 and 19, respectively, there’s West Rowan sophomore Pressley, 16 and the couple’s youngest daughter, and son Paxton, 14, an eighth-grader at West Rowan Middle.

Pressley, by the way, does not play softball, and that’s fine with Greene.

■ ■ ■

Greene credits his dad — Jim Greene, now a Rowan County Commissioner — for passing along a servant attitude.

“You’ll hear me quote my dad a lot; my dad’s one of my heroes,” the younger Green said.

And he says his mom, Cynthia Dwiggins, is “still a rock for me.”

Greene went to school in Rowan until fifth grade, when his mother took a teaching job in Davie County. His parents had divorced, but Greene says he was blessed with full support from both.

He was “average” in football, basketball and baseball at Davie, he says. Coaching is more his forte, and he figured out fast that he couldn’t coach young women the way he was coached.



Jimmy Greene, longtime softball coach for West Rowan middle and high schools, says, ‘I fight for my girls all the time. I fight for my team.’ — Photos by Jon C. Lakey



Pitcher Whitley Arnott warms up her arm with Greene.

“Boys have to win to feel good. Girls have to feel good to win,” Greene said.

He has to make sure his players are on board, and then they’ll do well, he says.

“It’s amazing how much of a guidance counselor you are in high school sports now,” he said. “There are so many issues going on.”

Coaching girls is different in another way.

“My No. 1 rule is I have to match my clothes,” he says.

His players won’t take him seriously

if he does otherwise, he says. It distracts them.

And Green does his best to bring around players who, at first, balk at his rules and advice. Players don’t have to be friends, but they should be friendly, he said.

“Uncoachable kids make unemployable adults,” Greene says, quoting University of Alabama softball coach Patrick Murphy.

He tells players they don’t always have to like him — or all their teammates — but they have to find common

ground to get along and strive for a goal.

“In life, you’re going to have the same thing,” Greene says. “You’re going to have somebody you can’t get along with, you don’t like. But you can’t just run away; you can’t quit. You’ve got to fight through it.”

■ ■ ■

The word “fight” comes up often in an interview with Greene — even when talking about Rowan County.

“I think the spirit of Rowan, honestly, is we are a lot of fighters here,” he says. “I think we’ve seen a lot of growth all around us, yet we’re still here. We’re still trying to make ourselves better.”

It’s easy to get discouraged when you hear that 67 percent of Rowan-Salisbury students qualify for free and reduced lunch, and there’s so much poverty, he says.

“But yet there are so many good things happening around us that you just can’t ... get buried in the negative,” he said. “We continue to fight to make ourselves better.”

Greene said he has been inspired by people who are passionate on the issue.

“You kind of have to draw on that. It’s contagious,” he said. “I fight for my girls all the time. I fight for my team and I love to fight for my county. What can we do to better it?”

A message from the Rowan County Board of Commissioners



Back Row: Craig Pierce, Judy Klusman, Mike Caskey, Jr.

Front Row: Jim Greene, Greg Edds

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Tony Hillian (seated, left) is an alderman for the Town of East Spencer. Recently the town held a yearly retreat to discuss town projects. Hillian talks with fellow board members John Noble (standing) and Deloris High (right) during a break. — Photo by Jon C. Lakey

‘Serve people and help somebody’

Tony Hillian is passionate about youth, community

BY SHAVONNE WALKER
shavonne.walker@salisburypost.com

EAST SPENCER — Since his youth, Tony Hillian has followed in the footsteps of a family of community leaders, but as an adult, the East Spencer native has continued to forge his own path as a community leader.

In 2017, Hillian, 44, made his first leap

into an elected office and was voted onto the East Spencer town board.

“God gives me the strength to do this,” he said quickly.

In his first year in office, Hillian said he’s learned this position requires his undivided attention, focus and most of all integrity.

He admitted his first year went by fast, but said he’s grateful and excited about the work ahead.

Hillian said he enjoys engaging with people in the community, but does desire to see more people take an interest.

“The meeting hall should be packed every month,” he said.

He said if getting residents to meetings means he has to knock on doors and talk face-to-face to explain the issues at hand, then he’ll put in the sweat equity.

“Sometimes you have to bring the meeting to them,” he said.

Hillian was first thrust into the public spotlight at 14 when his uncles Darrell and Kenneth began an anti-drug focused drill team. The team was formed in 1987 with about 20 young men and expanded to over 150 youth and became co-ed.

The drill team opened the door for various opportunities that included taking part in an episode of BET’s Teen

See **Hillian**, page 16

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Hillian

Continued from page 14

Summit and an assortment of civic awards and accolades.

He attended Rowan-Cabarrus Community College and realized early on that that learning environment wasn't a good fit for him. He would go on to receive a bachelor's degree in business from Shaw University in 2013 and in 2018, he received a masters in business from Strayer University.

Hillian has held a number of jobs within the East Spencer and Salisbury communities, most of which have involved working with youth.

He began a program, Boys to Men, through the Rowan County Housing Authority, which was held at Weant Street Apartments and focused on manhood training.

He then landed a job in 1999 as an activity director for the then-Paul Dunbar Resource Center. While there, he began an after-school program. He said most of the youth were interested in basketball so he made a deal with them — homework and community service before play.

Hillian said he loves working in the community, "just seeing where I was

needed."

He coached Amateur Athletic Union (AAU) basketball, within the police athletic league, as well as the Youth Basketball of America (YBOA) for more than 16 years.

Hillian said, in the beginning, he didn't know anything about basketball, but it was more important for him to be

a mentor for young men than a skilled coach.

"I ask God to show me the way. My duty was to serve people and help somebody. If you just help one, then your living is not in vain," he said.

Hillian then became a volunteer for the North Rowan High School girls basketball team and then became head

coach for six years.

In July 2018, Hillian was hired with the City of Salisbury as a recreation aide.

A very important part of life for Hillian is Sunday dinners with family. It's often he'll get a phone call asking "who's cooking?" he joked.

"Without family, you don't have support," he said.





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Rowan at a glance

Population

(2017 U.S. Census estimates)

- Rowan County — 140,644
- Salisbury — 33,849
- Kannapolis — 48,806
- China Grove — 4,202
- Spencer — 3,256
- Landis — 3,144
- Granite Quarry — 2,983
- Rockwell — 2,142
- East Spencer — 1,550
- Cleveland — 875
- Faith — 796



People

- Births in Rowan County: 1,588 (2017)
- Deaths in Rowan County: 1,691 (2017)

Race

- White: 79.6 percent
- Black or African-American: 16.8 percent
- American Indian or Alaska Native: 0.6 percent
- Asian alone: 1.2 percent
- Native Hawaiian / Pacific Islander: 0.1 percent
- Two or more races: 1.7 percent

Land & water

- Total acres of land: 327,141
- Land area in square miles: 511.37
- Population per square mile: 270.7
- Total acres of farmland: 121,145 acres
- High Rock Lake
- Water surface covers 15,180 (Rowan and Davidson)
- Shoreline totals 365 miles (Rowan and Davidson)



Economy

- Median household income: \$46,978
- Median value of owner-occupied homes: \$130,400
- Median gross rent: \$742
- New commercial building permits: 37 (2018)
- New residential building permits: 402 (2018)
- Dollars spent by tourists in Rowan County: \$174 million (2017)
- Total hotel rooms and AirBnBs: 825
- Labor force: 67,212 (Dec. 2018)
- Total people employed: 64,702 (Dec. 2018)

Animal intake

by Rowan County Animal Control

- Bats: 8
- Cats: 3,162
- Chickens: 73
- Dogs: 2,258
- Ferret: 2
- Goats: 8
- Guinea pigs: 13
- Hawk: 1
- Horse: 2
- Lizard: 1
- Opposum: 8
- Pig: 19
- Rabbit: 11
- Sheep: 1
- Skunk: 6
- Snake: 3
- Wild bird: 6
- Other: 13



Sheila Igo, owner of Greystone Salon and Spa at the new downtown Salisbury studio. — Photo by Jon C. Lakey

Giving back

Greystone Salon owner Sheila Igo wants to help people feel better

BY LIZ MOOMEY

liz.moomey@salisburypost.com

Life is good for small business owner Sheila Igo.

Named the Rowan County Chamber of Commerce's small business of the year, Igo's Greystone Salon & Spa opened a second location in downtown Salisbury. The first location is on Klumac Road.

But her successes haven't come without some struggle.

Igo, who is originally from Chattanooga, Tennessee, grew up in Kannapolis. She became a mom at 19 years old

and dropped out of the American Business & Fashion Institute in Charlotte. By 26, she was a single mother with two kids.

Her desire to give back comes from her history. She once was in need, and the community came to her aid. Igo remembers a woman leaving groceries on her porch when she was a struggling single mother.

Igo can't forget that.

Now, Igo says she has the ability to make someone else feel better, especially those who are in need like single parents or someone diagnosed with terminal cancer. She has provided haircuts

to foster kids before a new school year and helps with Novant Health's breast cancer awareness programs. She gives spa packages to Rowan County's teacher of the year.

"Experiencing that love and somebody giving to me in my time of need made me see how important it was," she said. "It was almost like paying it forward -- like when someone does something for me, let me do it for somebody else. I have a love for people that runs deep, and I feel like it's part of God's plan."

When she sees others going through struggles similar to those she experi-

enced, she understands and lifts them up in the way that she was.

"I've walked through seasons of life that were winters," Igo said. "That were cold, dark and lonely. When I see people going through that, my heart goes out to them and I'm like, 'I've been there.' Sometimes I wonder if I've walked that path so that I can look in somebody and be very transparent and authentic and say, 'I know what you're going through. I've hurt like that before.'"

After working for years as a makeup artist and a restaurant manager and at various spas in Concord, Igo, at 45, opened the first Greystone Salon. She

wants people to know that despite adversities, they can reach their goals at any age.

“Life is not always a mountaintop. Sometimes you have valley experiences,” Igo said. “Through those valleys, I’ve always been told that’s where the flowers are beautiful and grow. That’s where you’re going to grow.”

Every year, Igo gives her staff a word. This year it’s inspire. For Igo and her staff, “inspire” is to breathe life into people.

“Not only by making their hair look great; we want them to feel great,” she said. “We want them to walk out and feel inspired.”

Igo says she knows the importance of having inspiration. As a business owner, it’s important to find a mentor who is wiser, older and more successful, she said. She looks up to her parents. Her late mother was a hard worker with a love for fashion and spas, and her father was an entrepreneur. Her two children, Bryn and Brittany, inspire her to be a better person, she said.

“You, as a small business owner, it’s almost like a bucket you’re pouring all the time, and someone needs to pour into you,” Igo said.



Sheila Igo sits for new medical needle procedure from Julie Joseph. — Photo by Jon C. Lakey

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Staying involved

Vivian Hopkins serves as ambassador for Gold Hill, bluegrass

BY MARK WINEKA

mark.wineka@salisburypost.com

GOLD HILL — Coming from the park, Kimberly Corl led her friend Kim Martin across St. Stephens Church Road toward the 1840 E.H. Montgomery General Store.

Corl was looking, of course, for Vivian Hopkins, the go-to person in Gold Hill. Hopkins was talking to other visitors and taking advantage of some late winter sun on the planked sidewalk.

Just inside the front door of the store, one of several shops in the historic village of Gold Hill, Hopkins and her husband, Glenn “Hoppy” Hopkins, have on display books, brochures and maps about Gold Hill and mining — many works that Vivian herself has authored.

The store serves as the unofficial Gold Hill visitors center, and Hopkins gives impromptu history lessons on Gold Hill’s glory days as a mining town, how the present-day Gold Hill Historic Village and its shops came to be and information on how you go about reserving the park amphitheater or its handsome Russell-Rufty Veterans Memorial shelter.

“This place, I just want to push as much as I can and keep people aware of it,” Hopkins says. “... I’ve just been involved for so long.”

Not far from the pot-bellied stove in the middle of store, musicians gather every Friday night for a bluegrass jam session, with Vivian serving as the emcee. She makes introductions, announcements, and sometimes will grab her big bass fiddle and join in.

Add it all up, and Vivian Hopkins remains constantly on the move.

She serves as president of the N.C. Bluegrass Association. She is a Road Scholar with the N.C. Humanities Council, giving talks on Gold Hill’s mining history.

Hopkins also is vice president of the Historic Gold Hill and Mines Foundation, which oversees the impressive park adjacent to the village.

She emcees and promotes various fiddlers conventions and bluegrass festivals throughout the region. She has been a booking agent, radio show host and music store owner.

With noted musicians Mark and Maggie O’Connor, Hopkins builds teacher support for O’Connors’ summer strings camp in Charlotte.

Thanks to the foresight of Bill Russell, Hayden Moose and Glenn Isenhour and their preservation of old photographs, Hopkins is compiling a pictorial history of more than 200 images of Gold Hill.

And Hopkins continues putting together an album that will be a collection of her father’s music. She already has composed the liner notes for each of the late Ralph Penninger’s songs.

In short, Hopkins is an ambassador for Gold Hill and an ambassador for bluegrass.



Vivian Hopkins, whose efforts have helped promote the Village of Gold Hill, poses for a photo at the E.H. Montgomery Store in Gold Hill. — Photo by Jon C. Lakey

“I enjoy both,” she says. “My heart’s in the music because it’s how I grew up, and I want to carry on my daddy’s legacy.”

A native of North Wilkesboro, Hopkins grew up around the music scene with her father, who also was a luthier. When her family moved to the Gold Hill area in 1969 during her high school years, Hopkins took an interest she already had in earth sciences, geology and history and did extensive research on Gold Hill’s past.

Marriage to Hoppy and various pursuits intervened for many years. It wasn’t until 1989 that people in Gold Hill wanted to have a community day (today’s Gold Hill Founders Day), and they asked Vivian to arrange for her dad’s bluegrass band to perform, as well as the clogging class she was teaching.

As a member of the event planning committee, Hopkins suggested the formation of the historic foundation and served on the original board.

Today, she continues as chief promoter of the village, the park, the trails and Gold Hill as a destination spot. She talks enthusiastically of bringing tour groups to see what Gold Hill has to offer and the need for younger blood to keep the Gold Hill story going.

“The shops are just awesome,” she says. “The merchants — every one of them — are talented at what they do, and we have all the shops filled now.”



Vivian Hopkins is the emcee for the weekly bluegrass jam sessions at the E.H. Montgomery General Store, as well as serving as the vice president of the Historic Gold Hill and Mines Foundation. — Photo by Jon C. Lakey

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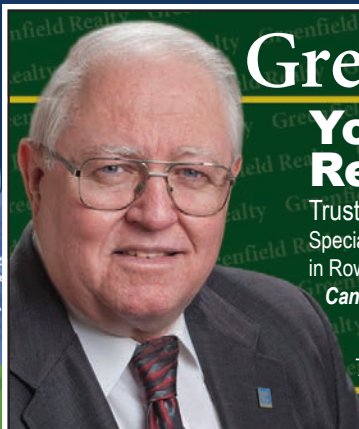
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Evelyn Medina (center) is surrounded by members of her serving staff that will work at her Mean Mug Coffee Company. Mean Mug has opened a new location on North Main Street in downtown Salisbury. At the new location, Medina plans on employing graduates from the Rowan-Cabarrus Community College's S.O.A.R. program. Skills, Opportunity, Awareness, Readiness (S.O.A.R.) is a community college program designed specifically for adults with intellectual disabilities. — Photo by Jon C. Lakey

Touching lives

Evelyn Medina opens new Mean Mug location, employs students from S.O.A.R. Program

BY LIZ MOOMEY
liz.moomey@salisburypost.com

Evelyn Medina got an email one day that brought tears to her eyes.

It was from architect Pete Bogle asking if she would be interested in opening a Mean Mug coffeeshop in downtown Salisbury and employing students with intellectual disabilities from Rowan-Cabarrus Community College's Skills, Opportunity, Awareness, Readiness program.

What Bogle didn't know at the time is

that her brother, Harold Mollinedo, has cognitive disabilities and was a student in the S.O.A.R. program. Medina said she knew the struggles people with intellectual disabilities face in getting a job.

"It was a God-given that Pete and I found ourselves at the right intersection — at the right time in his life and my life and in our business ventures," Medina said.

Medina moved to Salisbury in 2001 for an unsuccessful business venture and stuck around. In 2006, Mollinedo joined his sister in Salisbury and she began searching for a job for him. In

Los Angeles, Mollinedo had worked for various companies from Walmart to a lawn care service. After more than a year of looking with Rowan Vocational Opportunities, they could not find a job for Mollinedo.

"The thought hit me, 'Well maybe I should start a business where Harold could work,'" Medina said. "At the time, my kids were 4 and 5 years old, and there was no way I could. I was still very new in this community trying to find my own voice and my own way. That thought sat in the back of my head."

Medina opened Mean Mug on South

Fulton Street in 2015, concentrating on building a place where community residents could come to have a cup of coffee and feel welcome. She added a piece of her roots: coffee, a staple in Guatemala, where she was born.

"I was more focused in community," Medina said. "I wasn't thinking much of Harold in that sense. I was thinking about how cool it would be to have a place in Salisbury where people can just hang out as a community."

Medina is now established as a small business owner of Mean Mug and Medina Construction, which she started

in 2008 with her husband, Rigo. She can make decisions that positively impact the Salisbury community, so at the coffeeshop she started a pay-it-forward model — a give-give-give.

Medina said it allowed customers to feel a sense of pride buying a drink to pay it forward. It gave the baristas an opportunity to help a customer who was short of money, and importantly, it helped people in need in a way that made them feel comfortable.

With her new location at 110 N. Main St., Medina knows it will be a challenge employing people with special needs. Her teenage daughter, who has watched and helped her run Mean Mug, warned her that it was not going to be easy.

“If she learns nothing else, she needs to learn that the most rewarding things in life take hard work,” Medina said. “It’s just the way it is.”

The glow in the eyes of Bridget Henderson, the lead instructor of S.O.A.R., or Nicholas Black, a S.O.A.R. student who will work at Mean Mug, makes potential hardships worth it.

“You don’t have to change the world. You just have to touch one life. And if I can accomplish touching their lives in my lifetime, that’s all I need,” Medina said. “I can die happy.”



Evelyn Medina gives a tour of her new location. Medina started a pay-it-forward model — a give-give-give. Medina said it allowed for customers to feel a sense of pride buying a drink to pay it forward, it gave the baristas an opportunity to help a customer who was short of money, and importantly it helped someone in need in a way that made them feel comfortable. — Photo by Jon C. Lakey

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Nick Means talks to students from Rowan County Early College about the importance of budgeting and keeping finances in order. — File photo by Jon C. Lakey

Team player

Nick Means guides kids in sports, life

BY MAGGIE BLACKWELL
For the Salisbury Post

It's a fiercely competitive basketball game. Players are 7 to 9 years old. Coach Nick Means runs the court the whole game, mostly backward. He's got a team to support.

"I coach because I love kids and I love sports. It's about that simple," Means says, beaming his trademark smile. "Sports gives me the opportunity to help kids in sports but also teach life lessons. Individually, we're all part of something better than ourselves. When you're part of a team and you're not at your best, you're negatively impacting the group as a whole."

Means is the training and develop-

ment officer at F&M Bank. He was an all-regional and all-conference football player at Catawba College and was inducted into the school's football hall of fame in 2002. He grew up in a close-knit family in Thomasville. Both parents graduated from N.C. A&T State University.

"I grew up privileged," he says. "There was a philanthropic spirit, with my grandfather being a pastor, my dad, a coach, and my mom, a teacher. All I saw was them serving others. At college, Coach Bennett preached community service — and that was the spirit at Catawba.

"This organization (F&M) holds the same values. Steve Fisher got me into coaching here. I enjoyed it. I feel like

a lot of times, the most vulnerable people are the ones we forget. Often that's our youth. When they raise themselves and make the best decisions they can for themselves, based on their limited experience, then we have not done the things we need to do, to provide the guidance they need."

Means has a way of crediting others in his life for his accomplishments. He says Coach Mark Woody told him something he never forgot: "Be who you needed when you were younger."

Alex Clark said, "Learn what you can, share what you can, while you can, because if you don't share your talents, you waste them, and you've wasted your energy."

"Things can change in the blink of an

eye," Means says.

Means' best friend was shot on campus at Catawba on a night he'll never forget. Means had just left a party and was headed back to his dorm when he heard shots.

"I grew up in a good home in a great small town rich in tradition. Everybody knew everybody," he says. "It gave me the foundation to come here to Catawba and get a free education through sports. While I was there, a terrible event happened, but the values instilled in me since the day I was born carried me. When I dealt with it, it went from a burden to a blessing. I didn't lose a best friend; I gained a guardian angel. It's the whole tragedy-to-triumph story. I don't want anybody to look at this and

“Sports gives me the opportunity to help kids in sports but also teach life lessons. Individually we’re all part of something better than ourselves. When you’re part of a team and you’re not at your best, you’re negatively impacting the group as a whole.”

— Nick Means

feel sorry for me. It gave me the strength to become a better person.”

Means is 6 feet tall and lanky; he weighs just what he weighed in college, 175 pounds. His hand rests on a worn black leather notebook where he keeps notes — real notes in his tiny handwriting, with important parts highlighted. He’s recently read “Motivation Manifest” and “The Twelve Universal Laws of Success.”

“I read a chapter first, then I go back and make notes. So basically I do the book twice.”

Another brilliant smile.

He serves on boards and commissions throughout Rowan County and coaches at North Rowan High School as well as Hall’s Gym.

“Accolades don’t matter. I think in our society we have made everything about accolades. Because we’ve done that, that becomes the goal. So I’m reluctant to talk about any accomplishments. The only accomplishment I care about is that smile I see on a kid’s face. The smile on my daughter’s face. No trophy, no plaque, no amount of money can top that. Regardless of money, car, house, when we’re stretched out in front of that altar, people only care how we made them feel.

“I’d be remiss if I didn’t take the time to mention I couldn’t do anything I’ve done without the people in my life to support my and allow me the time to do that. My family, including Lacardo, Patty, Kristy, Dennee, Shayla -- the reason I name those people, a lot of times people give me a lot of credit. Without these people, I’m not who I am. There are many others, but those right there are my backbone.

“I say it jokingly, but it’s the God-honest truth: When it’s all said and done and I retire or die, I want someone to say their life is better because I was a part of it.”



Nick Means leads his youth basketball team in the huddle during a recent game. — Photo by Maggie Blackwell



North Rowan coaches Jason Causby and Nick Means react from the bench during a recent game against Carolina International School. — Photo by Wayne Hinshaw



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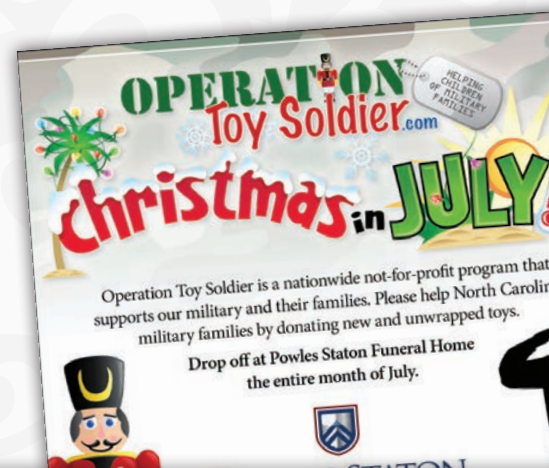
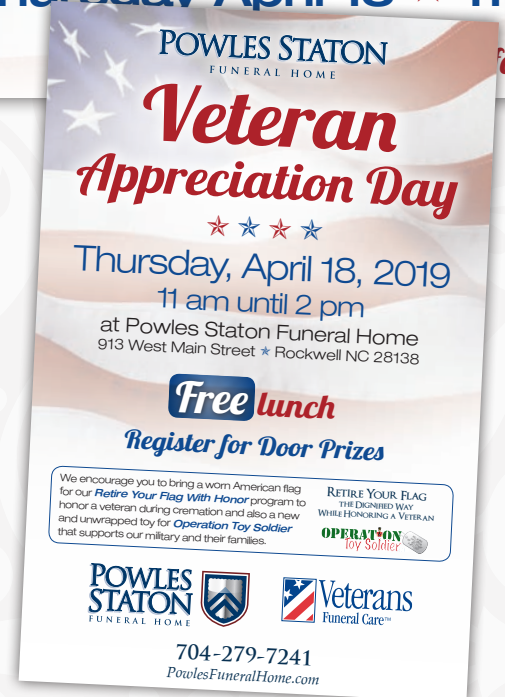
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Laurie Lyda, branch supervisor at the Frank T. Tadlock South Rowan Regional Library, poses for a photo among the library's shelves. — Photo by Jon C. Lakey

An open book

Library supervisor Laurie Lyda wants to make a difference

BY DEIRDRE PARKER
SMITH

deirdre.smith@salisburypost.com

Call her Dr. Lyda if you like. Rowan Public Library's Laurie Lyda has a doctorate degree.

She once read every astronomy book in her elementary school library.

She's now the supervisor of the South Rowan Regional Branch of the library, but she does so much, it's hard to keep up. Everything about her background makes library work seem natural — her education and experience have been a

good fit for her job.

"My parents are readers, so I grew up in a household where reading was encouraged and the value of books was recognized," Lyda said.

Lyda moved to Salisbury in 2015 as a visiting assistant professor of English and started working at the library in June 2016. She started as the East Branch supervisor in Rockwell and went to South in 2017.

"I like to be engaged in my work, and I am happiest in an environment where I can be creative and use a variety of skills," she said. "So, working for Rowan

Public Library has been wonderful."

But she doesn't just supervise the South branch in China Grove. She is the public relations coordinator for the system.

"I get to work with wonderful staff, plan programming — like our upcoming Star Party on April 12 — and compose, create, and/or edit promotional materials," Lyda said.

She got her bachelor's and master's degrees at Appalachian State University, and her doctorate at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro — all in English. Her doctorate's concentration

was in 19th and 20th century British literature and literary theory.

Lyda admits to being a library nerd, having spent so much time in libraries during her education.

"Even when my primary employer was a college or university, I always had side projects or jobs, and many of them involved organizing events, coordinating advertising, writing and editing," she said. "I love creative things — whether it's a play or an art show or a great film. I've always been a fan of

See **Lyda**, page 34

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movies, from classics — think Bette Davis or Cary Grant — to the current Marvel movies.”

Lyda also loves to travel, even if it’s just to walk along a quiet beach. One of her favorite places is Lake Louise in Banff, Alberta, Canada. Lyda says she still remembers the scene of the frozen lake surrounded by snow-covered mountains.

One of her favorite things to do when traveling, she says, has always been to visit libraries because of what she’s able to learn about the community.

“For me, libraries have always provided opportunity and knowledge — and as someone who grew up without the Internet or ready access to bookstores, that access was a gift. It still is.”

Lyda spent after-school hours in her local library because it wasn’t far from her mother’s office. She knew the staff and they knew her. It was one of those staff members who encouraged her to read Jane Austen and sparked her interest in British literature.

But Lyda initially didn’t think she’d be a librarian. However, she spent many

hours at her local library when she was a kid, “and my two semesters as a student worker in UNCG’s interlibrary loan department were a highlight of my Ph.D. program.”

As a branch supervisor and public relations person, Lyda’s days are full.

“I always tell people that what I love about my job is that I learn new things every day. That’s important to me, and the variety involved in my particular position ensures that I am always learning,” Lyda said. “I like working with special programs — like helping to plan and coordinate West Fest, which was held last October in Cleveland — and working with promotional materials. I also enjoy connecting with people in the community, whether that’s providing a resource they need or facilitating a program platform opportunity.”

How does she keep up?

“I live by to-do lists, and I even have a wall chart in my office that keeps track of big events and due dates,” she said. “I like to figure out ways to work

smarter, not harder, so I’m always looking for ways to improve organizational skills.”

She believes libraries are the center

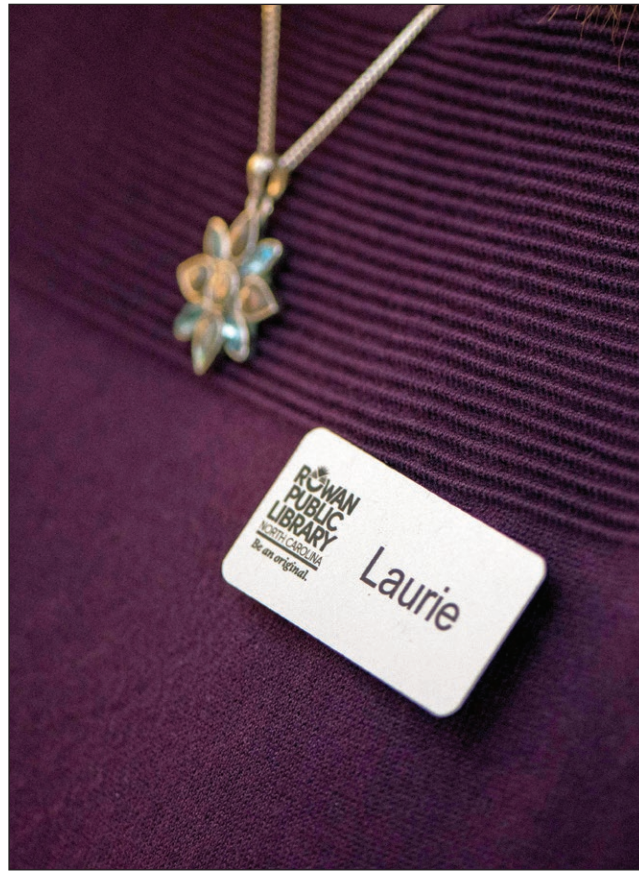
of their communities and says that’s true of the Rowan Public Library, too.

“By providing free access to wi-fi and information services and resources, plus the physical and digital circulating collections, RPL plays an integral role in the lives of Rowan County residents,” she said. “The library seeks ways to serve its communities, and I appreciate being a part of that and ensuring that everyone has access to knowledge and opportunity.”

Lyda says she’s motivated by doing her job and inspired by creativity, positive energy and people who make an effort to make the world a better place.

Now, Lyda said, she excited about seeing the West Branch in Cleveland become a reality and about Rowan Public Library having four branches.

“There are so many great opportunities coming, and it will be wonderful to see the community take advantage of them,” she said.



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"I like to be engaged in my work, and I am happiest in an environment where I can be creative and use a variety of skills," Lyda says. "So, working for Rowan Public Library has been wonderful."

— Photo by Jon C. Lakey

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Tackling tough issues

Rocky Cabagnot thrives on community action

BY DEIRDRE PARKER SMITH

deirdre.smith@salisburypost.com

His motto is “I want to put the community and action back into the Community Action Agency.”

Rocky Cabagnot, the executive director of Salisbury-Rowan Community Action Agency, came home to Salisbury to rediscover a mission that predates the Economic Opportunity Act of 1965.

He thinks back to the people who made Salisbury and Rowan come up out of struggles: Lash, Alexander, Isenberg, Overton.

“It was cross-racial,” Cabagnot says, and had a focus on poverty and the need to get something done about it.

Cabagnot hopes to work “in the spirit of the community coming together to focus on real problems.”

The agency he leads has become a huge service provider. Its biggest part is overseeing Head Start in five counties, Rowan, Davidson, Stanly, Moore and Montgomery.

SRCAA focuses on family self-sufficiency programs, federal funding for workforce development and helps to move people from poverty to self-sufficiency through good jobs.

Coming to lead SRCAA has been his biggest challenge, “but really, the most enjoyable” even more than his lost dream of teaching law school.

“Every day is new and there’s always something to learn,” Cabagnot said. “We are really looking hard at getting people access to early childhood education and affordable, quality child care.”

He wants to be a leader in economic and community development and help people to become a lure to new companies or for companies to expand.

The agency could focus on any job that needs certification, from truck driving to certified nursing assistant.

“If you look at community action,” Cabagnot says, “it’s always been, historically, an incubator for innovation and social programming.”

SRCAA is one of 34 such agencies serving all 100 counties in the state.



Rocky Cabagnot is executive director of Salisbury-Rowan Community Action Agency, Inc. a nonprofit agency that serves Early Childhood Education programs and other services. — Photo by Jon C. Lakey

Those agencies were inspired by people like Fred Rogers, who encouraged a closer look at early childhood education. Legal services started in community action.

Cabagnot wants to focus on early childhood and what is now identified as ACEs, adverse childhood experiences that can have an impact on the child's future. "We want to innovate how we can explore trauma with children under 5."

That may not happen within the context of a Head Start class, but what does happen there is giving children a boost, and he praises Greg Alcorn's Apseed readers, giving children access to a screen to get them reading.

Cabagnot wants to get back to the roots of the founders of the original agency, to the town elders who saw a problem and tried to fix it. Some issues don't go away, like poverty, but Cabagnot wants to approach the problem from a different angle. He wants to help the working poor do better, to make sure children are screened for hearing problems or learning disabilities, to make sure children get nutritious food.

"I'm hoping we can continue that tradition of being an incubator for progressive social innovation; we're looking at



See **Cabagnot**, page 40 Rocky Cabagnot speaks with Price Headstart Center Manager Ginger Jenkins. — Photo by Jon C. Lakey

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~ Terry Osborne

Cabagnot

Continued from page 39

local food and trying to work that in. ... We're going to talk about the history of food and agriculture here and how we can produce a public health issue and economic development."

Cabagnot moved to Rowan County at age 5, when his mother took a job at the Salisbury VA Medical Center.

He went to elementary school at Sacred Heart Catholic School, middle school at Knox and graduated from Salisbury High.

He graduated from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in 1996 and went to law school at the University of Florida.

His first job out of law school was with Americorps as a housing attorney.

"That was a life-changing experience. I became very concerned about low-income, working class people," he said.

He got an equal justice work fellowship in public interest law in Washington, D.C., and did rural community lawyering. He was a "legal aid cowboy" in North Florida, he defended people losing their homes around the 2008 financial crisis, but after a while, he "grew weary of litigating housing and foreclosure. I was more interested in building affordable housing, so I turned to community and economic development."

As his time in Florida was ending, his parents here in Salisbury were getting older, and he thought it was time to come back. He met a man from the Charlotte School of Law, and got a job there teaching community and economic development.

"Teaching was my dream job," he said. "I developed a clinical legal program, supervising law students working with clients through my license."

For five years, he worked for nonprofit groups, mostly in the Charlotte area. He was commuting from Salisbury. Then, he met his wife, who had a son, and Cabagnot convinced her and son Daniel to come to Salisbury.

"Coming back was a real blessing," he said.

But Charlotte School of Law was folding, and he was losing his dream to be a "gray-haired, tweed-coated professor."

Then, he found a job listing for the Salisbury-Rowan Community Action Agency.

Attorney and Salisbury City Councilman David Post became his mentor, and Post's private practice, the Center for Access to Justice, was seeing a spike in interest. So Cabagnot ending up help-



"If you look at community action, it's always been, historically, an incubator for innovation and social programming."

— Rocky Cabagnot

ing out.

It just so happened Post was on the board of directors for SRCOA. The pair talked about Cabagnot's interest in community action but not in a direct leadership position.

"I had never been the CEO," Cabagnot said.

Still, Post encouraged him to apply and, after a set of what Cabagnot called "grueling interviews," he got the job.

"I was blessed to come in and have a very strong team members and ... good program directors," he said.

Cabagnot said he had a lot of fires to put out at first, but he and the team are turning things around.

"I'm a born again Salisburian or Rowan Countian. I feel really blessed to be back home and bring back skill and knowledge that can help others," Cabagnot said. "I will always be a cheerleader for equitable community development in Salisbury and Rowan County, either in my job or as a citizen lawyer."

He's happy to be hanging out with his parents and raising his family with wife Leslie, who he said is his best friend, soulmate and conscience.

"I have to give a shout out to community action work," Cabagnot said. "My being here has changed the dynamic, but I have a great team around me of talented individuals and a great board."

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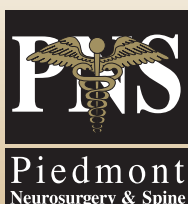
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Salisbury Police officer and Salisbury High School Resource Officer Scotty Robinson works security at a recent basketball game at the school. — Photo by Jon C. Lakey

‘Everybody deserves a chance’

School Resource Officer Scotty Robinson wants to make a difference in students’ lives

BY SHAVONNE WALKER
shavonne.walker@salisburypost.com

Scotty Robinson has tried to not be defined solely by his position as a school resource officer with the Salisbury Police Department. He wants to see better for the children in the community and the school that he patrols.

Not long after becoming an officer with the Salisbury Police Department,

Robinson was sidelined when he broke his ankle. After returning to duty, he was encouraged to become an SRO, a position he’s held for seven months.

“I try my best not to use a title. I’m just a person who wants to see better for our kids,” he said.

In the beginning, some students had such a bad perception of law enforcement that they would see Robinson and turn the other way. Now, he can’t get rid

of them, Robinson teased.

He graduated from East Carolina University and worked for the Rowan-Salisbury School System as a district recruiter, a football coach for Livingstone College and a recruiting coordinator for the school. He then worked as an admissions coordinator at Catawba College and, most recently, as a human resources analyst and a public safety recruiter with the City of Salisbury.

“I recruited myself,” he joked.

Robinson, who grew up in Salisbury, never envisioned his career path leading to one in law enforcement. He said there were a number of police officers who poured into him when he was younger, including the late Mark Hunter and retired officer Lynn Foster.

Foster was a school resource officer at Salisbury High when Robinson attended.

He said Southeast Middle School Assistant Principal Chris Boylan was also someone who positively impacted his life. As a child, Robinson said, Boylan saw potential in him even when he was a “jerk” in class.

“All of the teachers saw things way beyond what I was,” Robinson said of Salisbury High.

“I had a village at this school,” he said. He was scared to let the people in his circle down.

“Growing up in Salisbury, it could’ve went the other way for me,” Robinson said.

Robinson said the students he encounters each day are dealing with way more issues that he or his friends dealt with growing up.

“Kids will tell you what they are going through. These kids taught me that I have no idea what they face. We have to listen to them; that’s the only way to affect change,” he said.

Robinson said there needs to be a better job among community members of giving kids a chance and letting them understand they have worth.

One phrase that he’s tried to live by came from the youth of the “A Bridge 4 Kids” after-school program, which created

See **Robinson**, page 44



Officer Robinson buys a Cheerwine slushy from Jay Dees at the concession stand for 4-year-old Bishop Allen. Officer Robinson offered to buy Allen a slushy if he could spell the word ‘hat.’ — Photo by Jon C. Lakey

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Robinson

Continued from page 43

a thank you sign for him that had part of an anonymous quote — “work for a cause, not for applause. Live life to express, not to impress.”

“Where we go wrong is when we do things and look for what we want to get out of it, and we fool ourselves into thinking kids don’t see that,” he said.

Not only does he get motivation from his own children to get up and go to work every day, but often he comes into contact with a student who reminds him not to judge them based on what they’ve done.

“I’ve come to realize you can’t save everybody, but everybody deserves a chance,” he said.

When he’s at the school, Robinson says he makes it a priority to interact with as many people as possible.

“Every missed opportunity is that one that I could’ve made a difference,” he said.

His mission is to pay forward opportunities he received to students he encounters.

Robinson also has two nonprofits — HUB City Sports Group and Beyond the Lights Foundation — both created to reach at-risk youth.



Officer Robinson plays a little keep-away from Salisbury starter Bryanna Troutman before a playoff basketball game.
— Photo by Jon C. Lakey

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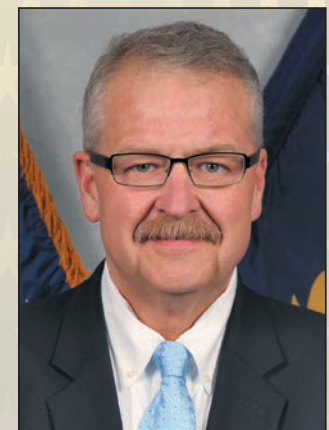
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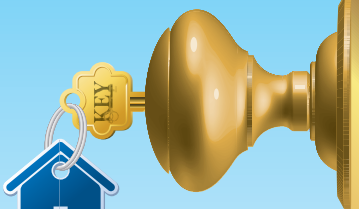
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Bringing people together

P.J. Ricks' goal is to unify the community

BY LIZ MOOMEY
liz.moomey@salisburypost.com

Bringing people together: P.J. Ricks' goal is to unify the community

P.J. Ricks has made her mark on the community.

She is on the foundation board at Rowan-Cabarrus Community College, teaches at Rowan Helping Ministries, serves on the Salisbury Planning Board, created Conversations in Faith, helps with Senior Morning Out at Trinity Oaks, is a member of the Leadership Rowan class and sings with her Crown in Glory Lutheran Church choir. Ricks sits at a lot of tables in the hope of bringing unity to Salisbury.

"If you're not at the table, you can't influence what comes from that table," Ricks said.

Ricks with Carl Repsher made efforts to unify the faith community bringing together two seemingly different communities — the First Presbyterian Sunday school class and the Crown in Glory Lutheran Church, an historically African-American church. In 2016, the two groups began meeting once a month to discuss a range of issues, from the Confederate statue Fame to immigration.

"Not only am I an unifier, but through Conversations in Faith, we've made in impact in lowering racial tensions," Ricks said. "More than racial tensions, an understanding of the fact that we're all people. We just have different views. We may look different, but I want people to hear (each other)."

The two churches continue to meet.

Ricks spends her time volunteering at Rowan Helping Ministries, although retired from Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools as an addictions counselor, she continues to be an educator.

"My work at Rowan Helping Ministries not helps only the community, but it allows me to give back the education that I got and that I worked in all my working life," Ricks said. "It's either education or alcohol/drug prevention."

Through connecting guests with the community, she hope they understand the value of volunteering themselves.

"I'm hoping to instill in them not only a love and understanding of this community that they live in but also an awareness so that they can continue to give back," she said.

Unifying the Salisbury community is a lofty goal, but Ricks said she has seen success. One was bringing the 1906 Salisbury lynchings forward. Although Ricks grew up in Salisbury, the



P.J. Ricks leaves New Sarum after a tour by Leadership Rowan Class. — Photo by Jon C. Lakey



P.J. Ricks helps out with the recent Pedal Thru the Past, a black history bike ride hosted by Salisbury's The Pedal Factory. — File photo by Mark Wineka

history of Salisbury's own lynchings was unknown about until several years ago. In January, the Salisbury City Council passed a resolution acknowledging the lynchings of three African-American men, Nease Gillespie, John Gillespie and Jack Dillingham. The next step is bringing the historical marker to Salisbury.

"It was meant to pull people together and now we're talking about bringing the marker that I saw and got pictures of when we went to Montgomery," Ricks said.

Ricks knows that unifying all across the community is impossible but wants to continue toward togetherness.

"I'm not looking for glory," Ricks said. "I'm looking to help. I'm looking to be that person that connects one area with another that unifies that situation. I'm not foolish enough to believe that I'll accomplish unity in Salisbury, but I do believe that I can accomplish a goal where people actually listen."

Ricks has deep roots in Salisbury. She was born on Horah Street and attended Salisbury schools and graduated from Livingstone College. She knows most of the people in the downtown Salisbury mural.

Salisbury is home, and she wants to make a difference.

"I'm glad that we are a part of Salisbury, because Salisbury is small enough that you get to know people and it's large enough that you can make an impact," Ricks said. "You can be a part of and make an impact on the city and what happens here in the city."



P.J. Ricks takes part in many public activities that happen in the Salisbury area, whether it is serving on boards or helping out with parades and community events. — Photo by Jon C. Lakey

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At left, Brooklynne Witherspoon, 10, started the program A Bridge 4 Kids, which is geared toward youth in kindergarten through 12th grade. The group meets at Hall's Gym. — Photo by Jon C. Lakey

Kids helping kids

Brooklynne Witherspoon focused on serving area youth

BY SHAVONNE WALKER
shavonne.walker@salisburypost.com

This year, 10-year-old Brooklynne Witherspoon has made it her mission to find a summer job for her friend Princess Chambers. It's just one of the many goals this Overton Elementary School student has set.

Nearly two years ago, Brooklynne created an after-school program called "A Bridge 4 Kids," which initially began as a way to divert her sadness following the 2014 murder of her cousin, 7-year-old A'yanna Allen.

The program gives area youth something to do and, according to its founder, will also serve to help local children find jobs, stop violence and teach them how to interact with law enforcement.

"I want to keep people off the streets," Brooklynne quickly said about her mission.

The young girl comes up with ideas for her program, but does receive help with logistics from her mentors — grandmother Sharon Freeman-Johnson, dance instructor Gloria "GG" Gray and Beverly House-Kerr, creator of Kujamani Creative Arts.

A group of about half a dozen or more children meet each Wednesday at Hall's Gym, 1402 W. Bank St., to discuss what's going on in their lives and hear from a community speaker. Most recently, the children heard from House-Kerr about what place, if any, religion holds in their lives.

Brooklynne and grandmother Sharon Freeman-Johnson collaborated on the name of the program. The two were texting, discussing the main mission of the program — to bridge the gap. Gradually, it became "A Bridge 4 Kids."

Brooklynne said she's inspired by

the people in her life, including her parents Cedric and Erika Witherspoon, her program mentors as well as Salisbury Police Officer Scotty Robinson, who has spoken to her group. She hopes to inspire younger children by leading by example.

"I want to inspire them by doing good in the community," she said.

Brooklynne said she would encourage any area youth with ideas to "go for it," "believe in yourself" and "be determined."

"I'm really proud of her," House-Kerr said.

Tayloria Kesler's 5-year-old daughter, Zamaria Ellis, joined the program in August 2018. The great attributes she said in Brooklynnne, Kesler said, was one of the main reasons she allowed her daughter to join the program.

"I thought she had great character," Kesler said.

Kesler said she hopes her daughter will be able to build confidence and meet different people.

Although the program is still in its infancy, Brooklynnne has already seen some detractors, who said she couldn't possibly have come up with a structured program. This pre-teen, however, is unbothered, saying she doesn't listen to the naysayers. Instead, she spends late nights delving deeper into creating ideas for her program.

"You just can't think about other people. I don't worry about negativity," Brooklynnne said.

Brooklynnne said in five years she hopes the program will have grown to include more youth and incorporate a dance/step team. For now, "I really want to see Princess get a job," she said.

As to the future of her program, Brooklynnne said growth "would be amazing."



Brooklynnne Witherspoon, right, hugs 5-year-old Zamaria Ellis as James Hobson, left, watches. — Photo by Jon C. Lakey

Since the start of "A Bridge for Kids" in 2017, its members have participated in the Martin Luther King Jr. parade, made connections with local law enforcement, firefighters and local community and elected leaders.

When she's not commanding an after-school pro-

gram, the Salisbury resident is involved in dance, likes to draw, aspires to participate in gymnastics and enjoys reading books from one of her favorite authors, Raina Telgemeier and the Baby-Sitter's Club books. She's a school representative/leader and is a member of the Overton Elementary School Jump Rope Club.

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1949 ~ 70 Years

SHOWROOM
with competitive
pricing!



704-857-2284

1949 ~ 70 Years



Salisbury Venetian Blind, LLC
4101 Statesville Blvd.
Salisbury, NC 28147
www.salisburyvenetianblind.com

704-636-4641

1950 ~ 69 Years



"Locally owned & operated"
Many thanks to all our customers!

1004 West Innes Street
Salisbury, NC

Like us on Facebook:
West Innes St., Dairy Queen

OPEN ALL YEAR!

1953 ~ 66 Years

Vogue Dry Cleaners & Shirt Laundry

"Your Hometown
Cleaners"

Mon.-Fri. 7am-5:30pm
Sat. 8am-12pm

106 North Long St.
Salisbury, NC

704-633-5411

1955 ~ 64 Years

Olympic Drywall Co.



For All Your Drywall Needs,
Residential & Commercial,
Ceiling Texture Removal

2605 Artz Rd., Salisbury
olympicdrywallcompany.com

704-279-2600

1960 ~ 59 Years



Serving Clemmons,
Lewisville,
Winston-Salem,
Forsyth County

clemmonscourier.net

336-766-4126

1960 ~ 59 Years



1205 Lincolnton Rd.
Salisbury

www.descoinc.com

704-633-6331

1968 ~ 51 Years



400 North Long St.
Salisbury

www.chandlerconcrete.com

704-636-4713

1968 ~ 51 Years

WAYNE MULLIS TRAVEL, INC

Salisbury's ONLY locally owned
& operated travel agency!

www.mullistravel.com

Trent
tmullis@mullistravel.com
Wayne

w.smullis@yahoo.com

704-633-1081

1969 ~ 50 Years



Helping the world hear better
Lee Wade would like to
thank Angela & Matt
for their dedicated work
in carrying on the next
generation of the newest
in technology and service.

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1969 ~ 50 Years



1005 South Main St.
China Grove

Serving all your
HVAC & Electrical
needs!

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1970 ~ 49 Years

Myers Septic Tank Company, Inc.

Owner, Benny Myers
Pumping & installing septic tanks
and portable toilet rentals.

Quality is long remembered
after price is forgotten.

1882 Briggs Rd.
Salisbury, NC 28147

704-633-3962

1972 ~ 47 Years

Charles Shuler Pool Company



604 N. Main St.
Salisbury, NC

704-633-8323

1974 ~ 45 Years



700-C N. Long St.
Salisbury

www.dgiprint.net

704-636-3113

1977 ~ 42 Years



Owner: Reid Link

ReidLinkConstructionCo.info

704-633-2659

1978 ~ 41 Years



1 Samuel Spencer Drive
Spencer
www.nctrans.org

704-636-2889

20
19

BUSINESS HONOR ROLL

Congratulations on your Anniversaries!

2019

BUSINESS HONOR ROLL

Congratulations on your Anniversaries!

1979 ~ 40 Years

Coptical

1632 W. Innes St.
Ketner Center
Salisbury, NC 28144
copticalinc2@yahoo.com

704-637-3293

1980 ~ 39 Years

CENTURY 21

Towne & Country

"Technology helps us stay
connected, but nothing
replaces face to face
communication"
474 Jake Alexander Blvd.

704-637-7721

1980 ~ 39 Years

**Shulenburger
Surveying
Company, P.A.**

Land Surveyors

614 North Main St.
Suite A, Salisbury, NC
shulenburgerco@gmail.com

704-637-9623

1981 ~ 38 Years



**Tom's
Carpet
Care**

Salisbury's Best Choice
for Highest Quality Floor
and Upholstery Care
Commercial & Residential
Free Estimates
Senior Discounts

704-633-7030

1984 ~ 35 Years

**Windsor Gallery
Jewelers**

Salisbury's Eclectic Jeweler

1810 W. Innes Street
Salisbury, 28144

www.windsorgalleryjewelers.com

704-633-7115

1984 ~ 35 Years



4243 South Main St., Salisbury

"Your source for indoor comfort solutions"

www.stoutheatingandair.com

704-633-8095

1984 ~ 35 Years



Prompt,
professional
service

WhiteHillHome
Improvement.com

704-932-6878

704-363-5491

1985 ~ 34 Years

K-Dee's Jewelers

112 East Innes Street - Downtown Salisbury

Monday-Friday 9:30am-6pm

Saturday 10am-3pm

Hometown full-service jewelry store.
Everything from diamonds and pearls,
gold, and sterling, and a great selection
of fashionable jewelry! Clock & watch
repairs.



704-636-7110

1985 ~ 34 Years

**Rowan Precision
Machining, Inc.**

Special Machining &
Repair Small Tool & Die
Work. All types Brazing &
Welding
Reginald Hall, Owner
707 N. Salisbury Ave.
Granite Quarry

704-279-6092

1986 ~ 33 Years

**Neil's Paint &
Body Shop, Inc.**

Professional Body Repairs
All Work Guaranteed
Estimates Available
Since 1986

1685 Kluttz Rd.
Salisbury, NC

704-279-5605

1988 ~ 31 Years



**Glenn Hester
Auctions**

We believe in providing
high quality, professional
auctions. Call us for quality,
professional service.

Glenn M. Hester
NCAL 4453

704-239-9298

1988 ~ 31 Years



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SO/IATF 16949 Certified • ISO 14001 Certified
BS/OHSAS 18001 Certified

119 Mazeppa Rd., Mooresville

www.ngkceramics.com

704-664-7000

1989 ~ 30 Years



ALAN F. BURKE CPA, PA
Accounting, Financial Plan-
ning, Bookkeeping, Payroll,
Tax Preparation

430 Jake Alexander Blvd. W.
Salisbury, NC

www.AlanBurkeCPA.com

704-633-8697

1989 ~ 30 Years



**Godley's
GARDEN
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& NURSERY, INC.**

Your complete One Stop Nursery, Landscaping,
Garden Center & Christmas Shop.
2281 Statesville Blvd., Salisbury NC 28147

www.godleysgardencenter.com

704-638-0082

1989 ~ 30 Years

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Ionic Jewelry
Cleaners, Made in
Salisbury

1810 W. Innes Street
Inside Windsor Gallery
Salisbury, 28144

speedbriteusa.com/ink/

704-633-7115

1990 ~ 29 Years



Brad Brady
Eric Brady

Jennifer Myers

"Piedmont Regional Team"

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Salisbury, NC

704-633-0722

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1990 ~ 29 Years



Cathy Griffin
www.cathygriffinhomes.com



**#1 in North Carolina &
#6 in the Nation!***
*among Century 21 agents

704-213-2464

1991 ~ 28 Years

Nicholson-Taylor, Inc.

Conveyor & Power
Transmission Belts
408 Liberty Street
Rockwell, NC

www.nicholsontaylor.com
Fax: 704-279-6983

704-279-6973

1991 ~ 28 Years



COMMERCIAL & RESIDENTIAL
Landscaping • Design & Build
Grading • Landscape Lighting • Hardscape
Lawn Maintenance

704-636-4480

1992 ~ 27 Years



215 Lash Drive
Salisbury

www.laurelsofsalisbury.com

704-637-1182

1993 ~ 26 Years

**Salisbury
Emporium**

85 unique shops filled
with gifts, antiques, local
artwork, furniture, home
decor & much more!

230 East Kerr St.
Salisbury, NC

704-642-0039

1994 ~ 25 Years



550 Dunns Mount Church Rd.
Salisbury, NC

704-637-2016

1997 ~ 22 Years



111-A West Fisher St.,
Salisbury, NC
mleonardhampton@gmail.com
www.leonardhamptonhomes.com

704-239-3096

1997 ~ 22 Years



Replacement Experts
24 Hour Emergency
Service
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Financing Available
www.sasloop.com

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2000 ~ 19 Years

Ketner's Services
*Let Us Bid on
Your Property!*

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- ❖ Leaf Removal/Gutter Cleaning
- ❖ Aeration, Seeding & Fertilizing
- ❖ Pressure Washing
- ❖ Bobcat Work/Stump Grinding
- ❖ Tree Removal



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SEASONAL
SERVICE**

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2000 ~ 19 Years

**Kepley & Son
Tractor Repair
& Restoration**

2315 Briggs Road
Salisbury, NC

Gene & Billie Kepley III

704-633-7756

2001 ~ 18 Years

**Greg Wagoner,
Auctioneer**
NCAL # 3779

Auctions on-site or at
Greg Wagoner's location
A licensed auctioneer
for 40 years

704-213-4101

2009 ~ 10 Years



Teresa Rufty • Owner
Broker in charge
131 E. Innes St., Suite 305
Salisbury, NC 28144
www.tmrrealtyinc.com
704-245-6184
704-433-2582

2010 ~ 9 Years

— **Tanya G. Williams, DMD**



Gentle Dental
125 W. Kerr St.
Salisbury, NC
28144

www.drtanyawilliams.com

704-636-1533

2013 ~ 6 Years



210 East Innes St.
Salisbury

www.salisburysalonspa.com

704-310-5941

2015 ~ 4 Years

**Family Closet 2
Consignment Shop**

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Fri. & Sat., 10am-7pm

*Training those
with special needs*

1935 Jake Alexander Blvd.
Salisbury

704-310-8749

2016 ~ 3 Years

**Faye's
Microblading**

Brows & Eyeliner

*See Faye at
Shear Creations*

806 S. Salisbury Ave.
Granite Quarry

980-332-9050

2018 ~ 1 Year



1404 S. Salisbury Ave.
Spencer
www.compasshcr.com

704-633-3892

2018 ~ 1 Year



Vietnamese Cuisine

111 N. Main St., Salisbury
www.phouy.com

704-216-1562

Salisbury Post

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ROCO****gold**
PEOPLE'S
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THE BEST in
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Salisbury 704-636-0200
katanafusion.com**Mexican Cuisine****EL PATRON**1030 Freeland Dr., Salisbury
704-636-5300
elpatronsalisbury.com**Best Caterer****DEBBIE SUGGS CATERING**

Salisbury; (704) 637-2016

Food Truck/Food Stand**THE HOT DOG SHACK**408 South Salisbury Ave (HWY 52)
Granite Quarry (704) 209-1024**Take-out Food****KATANA JAPANESE FUSION**475 Jake Alexander Blvd. W #101
Salisbury 704-636-0200
katanafusion.com**Patio/Outdoor Dining****GO BURRITO**115 W Fisher St, Salisbury (704)
754-4755 goburrito.com**Frozen Treat****DAIRY QUEEN W. INNES**1004 W. Innes St., Salisbury
704-636-8653
dairyqueen.com**Burrito****GO BURRITO**115 W Fisher St, Salisbury
(704) 754-4755**Seafood****BLUE BAY**1007 E Innes St
& 2050 Statesville Blvd
www.bluebay-seafood.com**Sushi****KATANA JAPANESE FUSION**475 Jake Alexander Blvd. W #101
Salisbury 704-636-0200
katanafusion.com**Wings****EAST COAST WINGS**211 Faith Rd, Salisbury
(704) 633-2464
eastcoastwings.com**Place to Entertain Kids****DAN NICHOLAS PARK**6800 Bringle Ferry Rd, Salisbury
www.rowancountync.gov/185/Dan-Nicholas-Park**Late Night Entertainment****GO BURRITO**115 W Fisher St, Salisbury
(704) 754-4755**Park****DAN NICHOLAS PARK**

6800 Bringle Ferry Rd, Salisbury

Tourist Attraction**NC TRANSPORTATION
MUSEUM**1 Samuel Spencer Drive, Spencer
(704) 636-2889 www.nctrans.org**Chiropractic****JETER CHIROPRACTIC**1001 N Main St, Salisbury
(704) 633-5156
jeterchironc.com**Dentist****FORTNER DENTAL GROUP**1834 Jake Alexander Blvd W.
Salisbury (704) 636-1848
www.fortnerdentalgroup.com**Place To Work Out****YMCA**Several locations
www.rowanymca.com**Assisted Living Facility****TRINITY OAKS**820 Klumac Rd., Salisbury
704-637-3784
trinityoaks.net**Medical Facility****NOVANT ROWAN MEDICAL CENTER**12 Mocksville Ave, Salisbury
(704) 210-5000
www.novanthealth.org**Local Pharmacy****THE MEDICINE SHOPPE**1357 W Innes St, Salisbury
(704) 637-6120
www.medicineshoppesalisbury.com**Best Antiques****SALISBURY EMPORIUM**230 E. Kerr St., Salisbury
704-642-0039
salisburyemporium.com**Health/Organic Items****SIMPLY GOOD**128 E Innes St, Salisbury (704)
636-0889
www.simplygoodnaturalfoods.com**Best Prom/Bridal****A PERFECT DRESS**590 Corriher Gravel Rd.
China Grove 704-855-2427
aperfectdresscg.com**Shoes****RALPH BAKERS**428 N. Main St., Salisbury
704-636-1850
ralphbakershoes.com**Flooring Provider****GROVE SUPPLY**1600 N. Main St., China Grove
704-857-2415
www.grovesupplyflooring.com*Runner Up: Young's Flooring*110 East Main St., Rockwell
704-279-2278**Landscaping Servie****ON THE JOB LANDSCAPING**704-239-1191
onthejoblawn.com**Real Estate Company****CENTURY 21 - TOWNE &
COUNTRY**474 Jake Alexander Blvd W,
Salisbury (704) 637-7721
www.century21tc.com**AC/Heating Service****STOUT HEATING & AIR**4243 S Main St, Salisbury
(704) 633-8095
www.stoutheatingandair.com**Best Painting Service****RICHARD'S PAINTING**112 E. Council St., Salisbury
704-856-8101
richardspainting.net*Runner Up: The Property Pal*2840 Statesville Blvd., Salisbury
704-762-4619**Handyman****THE PROPERTY PAL**2840 Statesville Blvd, Salisbury
(704) 762-4619**Cleaning Service****WIFE FOR HIRE**(704) 633-9295
www.wifeforehireinc.com**Carpet/Upholstery
Cleaning****RITCHIE'S STEAMWAY**622 E. Council Street, Salisbury
(704) 633-9418
ritchiescarpetcleaning.weebly.com*Runner Up: Tom's Carpet Care*120 Pine Valley Rd., Salisbury
(704) 633-7030
www.tomscarpetcareinc.com**Mani/Pedi****SALISBURY SALON & SPA**210 E Innes St, Salisbury (704)
310-5941
www.salisburysalonspa.com**Skincare Facility****SALISBURY SALON & SPA**210 E Innes St, Salisbury
(704) 310-5941**Spa/Massage****SALISBURY SALON & SPA**210 E Innes St, Salisbury
(704) 310-5941**Hair Salon****SALISBURY SALON & SPA**210 E Innes St, Salisbury
(704) 310-5941**Pet Food/Pet Items**

First local

MAIN STREAM PETS5675 S. Main St., Salisbury
704-642-0004
mainstreampets.com**Boarding/Sitting Service****LAZY 5 VETERINARY HOSPITAL**2916 S Main St, Salisbury
(704) 636-1100 lazy5vets.com**Grooming Service****LAZY 5 VETERINARY HOSPITAL**2916 S Main St, Salisbury (704)
636-1100*Runner Up: Main Stream Pewts*5675 S. Main St., Salisbury
704-642-0004 mainstreampets.com**Veterinary Service****LAZY 5 VETERINARY HOSPITAL**2916 S Main St, Salisbury
(704) 636-1100**Dry Cleaner****VOGUE CLEANERS**106 N Long St, Salisbury
(704) 633-5411
salisburydrycleaners.com**Oil Change/Auto Repair****AUTO WORKS**429 S Main St, Salisbury
(704) 310-5718**Pre-Owned Car Dealer****SALISBURY MOTOR COMPANY**700 W Innes St, Salisbury
(704) 636-1341
www.salisburymotorcompany.com**Best Financial Institu-
tion****F&M BANK**www.fmbnc.com**Best Law Firm****NANCE & OVERBEY**214 E Innes St, Salisbury (704)
637-5590
www.nolawfirm.com**Best Realtor****JAYNE HELMS**354 George W Liles Pkwy #40,
Concord (704) 798-5726
jaynehelms.engagereagent.com**Funeral Service Provider****POWLES STATON FUNERAL HOME**913 W Main St, Rockwell
(704) 279-7241
www.powlesfuneralhome.com**Best Customer Service -
Retail/Service****DON FORTNER**1834 Jake Alexander Blvd W.
Salisbury (704) 636-1848
www.fortnerdentalgroup.com

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Novant Health is proud to partner with Spirit of Rowan to improve the health of our community. Collaborations like this make a remarkable impact on the lives of those around us, providing individuals with the tools they need to get better and stay healthy.

Making healthcare remarkable

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