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ROWAN

PROGRESS EDITION 2024

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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Here's to the great outdoors

Rowan County has so many great things to offer its residents and visitors. I would know. I used to be a visitor before moving here with my now-wife, Abby.



Chandler Inions

We have loved exploring Rowan County, getting outdoors with our dog Ernie and soaking it all in. For outdoor enthusiasts, I can think of few places that offer more.

Between the parks, the trails and the lakes, there is plenty to keep you occupied.

This year's Spirit of Rowan edition from the Salisbury Post takes a look at those various elements of the county that make it such an indulgent destination for those who love getting outside. After all, it's

not called the "just alright outdoors."

It's easy with the day-to-day grind to forget the value of getting some fresh air, but we hope this edition will inspire you to lace up the sneakers and go outside.

The Spirit of Rowan will serve as your outdoor travel guide for all things Rowan County, whether you want to take in some wildlife at the Fred Stanback Ecological Preserve or get wet down on the Yadkin River.

If getting face to face with a four-legged critter doesn't appeal to your better nature, you may consider hopping on a bicycle and visiting our miles or greenways or just getting out and exercising with some tips from an assistant professor at Catawba.

The Spirit of Rowan also highlights some of the organizations that are taking the

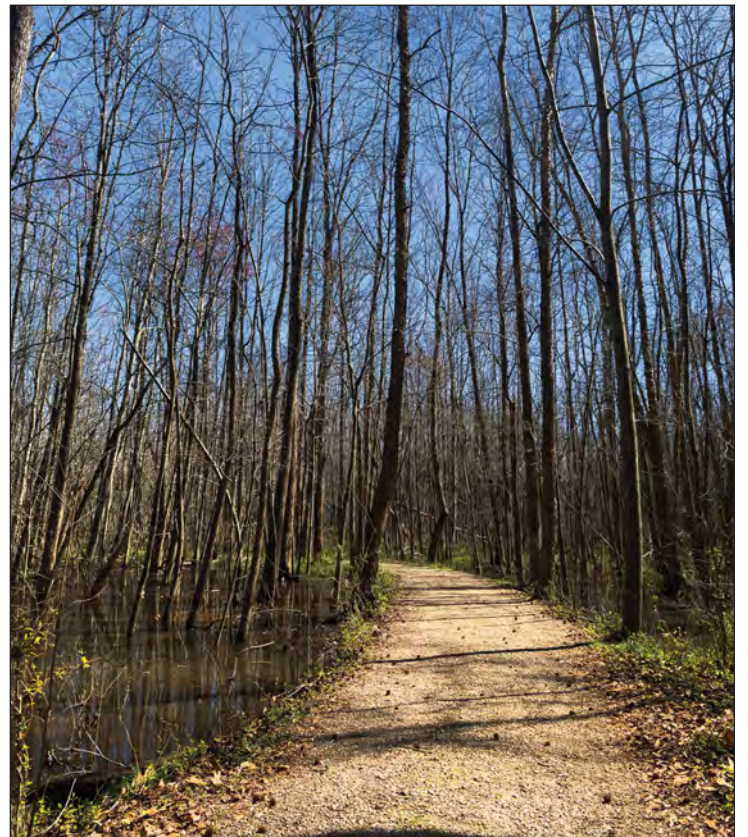
extra mile to preserve the outdoors and keep them great, such as Salisbury-based Three Rivers Land Trust and the Yadkin River Keeper.

This special edition also features a submission from a young, possibly up-and-coming journalist who documented her trip through time to the shores of the Yadkin River and all she learned while visiting with other students from the Salisbury Academy Upper School.

As you flip through the pages of this issue, my hope is that you will realize how lucky you are to call Rowan County home. It's made enough of an impact on me in a short time that we decided to set down some roots and stay a while.

Here's to living life and to the great outdoors.

Your editor,
Chandler Inions



The Fred Stanback Ecological Preserve at Catawba College has trails that wind through wetlands. (Andy Mooney photo)

ROWAN AT A GLANCE

Population

(2020 U.S. Census)

- Rowan County: 146,875
- Salisbury: 35,540
- Kannapolis: 53,114
- China Grove: 4,434
- Spencer: 3,308
- Landis: 3,690
- Granite Quarry: 2,984
- Rockwell: 2,302
- East Spencer: 1,567
- Cleveland: 846
- Faith: 819

Race and ethnicity

(2020 U.S. Census)

- White alone, not Hispanic or Latino: 68.18%
- Hispanic or Latino: 10.85%
- Black or African-American alone: 15.48%
- Native American: 1.02%
- Asian: 1.02%
- Pacific Islander: 0.05%
- Other/mixed: 4.12%

Land and water

- Total acres of land: 327,141
- Land area in square miles: 511.37
- Population per square mile: 287.2
- Total acres of farmland: 121,145 acres
- Water surface of High Rock Lake: 15,180 acres (Rowan and Davidson)
- Shoreline total: 365 miles (Rowan and Davidson)

Business and economy

- Median household income: \$54,382
- Total employer establishments: 4,405
- Work distribution: 34% blue collar, 65% white collar

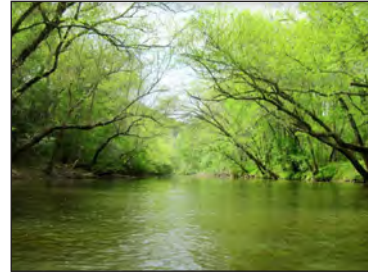
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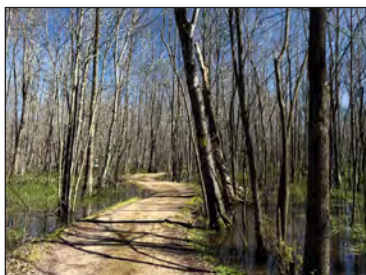
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Pedal Factory aims to make bikes accessible to everyone

On the cover

The lake at the Stanback Ecological Preserve at Catawba College is a popular draw for wildlife and outdoor enthusiasts. (Andy Mooney photo)

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WE ALSO OFFER





The planetarium at Horizons Unlimited. (Studio 35 Photography)

Expand your Horizons

Science center gives students a chance to explore ecosystems

BY KAREN KISTLER

karen.kistler@salisburypost.com

Imagine being able to visit a rainforest, outer space and the wetlands, all without leaving Rowan County. Students can do all this and more at Horizons Unlimited and Science, 1636 Parkview Circle, Salisbury.

The center, which was founded in 1967, offers multiple opportunities for

students of all ages to have a hands-on science experience.

One of the rooms where this can happen is Horizons touch pool room, which has a 1,300-gallon saltwater pool with starfish in it that they can not only see but can touch along with viewing sea urchins and a variety of fish.

Elise Tellez, director of Horizons Unlimited, said that this room “is a big hit because a lot of our students here

in RSS don’t often get a chance to leave the county.”

So when the students are learning about ecosystems and animal adaptations, “it’s really cool for them to get the chance to visit here and put their hands in the salt water.”

Another place that the center offers visitors to see that they may never experience is a tropical rainforest, simply by walking through a doorway.

“It’s one thing to read about a rainforest,” Tellez said. “It’s another to know what it feels like.”

Therefore, this one, she said, is an interesting experience and is set up complete with many tropical plants, a waterfall, some frogs and even some rain. Plus, it’s temperature-controlled to simulate what it would be like in the actual rainforest.

In addition to the animals in the touch

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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(Studio 35 Photography)



(Studio 35 Photography)

pool room, children can visit the adjacent room where they can see and learn about various land animals.

Tellez said they have “quite a collection of animals,” both aquatic and terres-

trial, including turtles, a bearded dragon named Taz, a lavender corn snake, lizards, toads, some snakes, all kinds of fun critters and a couple of insects.”

Emily Hitzfelder, science and animal

care specialist cares for the animals, which “serve a great purpose helping people of all ages learn about their ecological value and also their animal adaptations,” Tellez said.

When children enter these rooms and see the animals, Hitzfelder said that their reaction is one of excitement and awe for the most part.

“It is really cool because (for) a lot of folks, there’s a bad reputation for snakes and spiders and things like that. So it’s really cool for them to be able to see them up close and in a safe environment where these animals have been around for a long, long time and feel comfortable with us taking care of them. They just love making those observations, getting to experience the animals.”

Tellez shared that they can teach about adaptations and mutations as the children see the animals, noting that the color of the lavender corn snake makes it more difficult for it to survive in the wild and blend in and camouflage.

“So it’s really cool to show the kids the difference between an adaptation and a

mutation,” she said, and there are tons of things they can touch; we want them to make observations and explore,” which is at the heart of the entire center.

“It’s centered around hands-on science exploration. We believe that in science education, kids learn best by doing and getting to experience a lot of these science concepts, which helps them really retain that knowledge,” she said.

Tellez said there is a lot of research that shows both outdoor and hands-on learning helps children not only academically but also with their social and emotional development.

The Curiosity Room was next door, a big room which offers space for lots of different activities. One day, it became a shadow lab where students could learn about shadows and lights, shapes and darkness and shadows on the moon. Another time, it served as an open space for the children to explore robotics.

On the other side of the building, which Tellez shared was the first phase of Horizon in the ‘60s and ‘70s, was the Margaret C. Woodson Planetarium.



The touch pool at Horizons Unlimited. (Studio 35 Photography)

There, students can explore the universe and see the earth from space, take a trip to the different planets, go to the moon and even land on it, as Summer Howerton, science and communications specialist, pointed out, as they have a new digital star system which allows for all kinds of unique experiences.

In addition to studying the universe in this room, Tellez said they could also explore the underground and the sea using their 4K projector, where full dome shows can be watched.

“One of my favorites,” she said, “is Habitat Earth, where you can be flying in the sky with birds and then all of a sudden you are underground in tunnels with the ants, and then you are right next to sea otters in the ocean. So it’s just a really cool way to explore ecosystems and all of their interconnectedness as well.”

And being at the planetarium could also “motivate a student to want to become an astronaut and say, that’s cool, I want to do that,” she continued.

On one wall in the building is a full-size mural of a wetland along with ani-

mals native to North Carolina, allowing children to see and learn about another ecosystem.

Horizons Unlimited also houses a science lab where students can participate in different projects and have additional learning opportunities.

Coming up, Tellez said that the Rowan County eighth graders would be participating in a full-day water lab experience visiting Spencer Woods, learning about water quality, chemical water testing, gathering macroinvertebrates, building water filters and more.

Hitzfelder said she loved doing water studies with the students. “First off, gathering macroinvertebrates, yes, the science is cool, but just the fact of giving kids a net and they get to be a kid outside, which doesn’t happen very often these days, and just getting to explore the water and find these insects that look like aliens.”

Howerton agreed as she said, “I think it’s really cool that eighth graders get to spend the whole day outside. It’s not often when they get to spend the whole



(Studio 35 Photography)

day from morning till they go home.”

Their outdoor space is another classroom option, with the picnic area and nearby trail, which Tellez said is a little more than a mile loop that offers an

“interesting, diverse ecosystem. It loops down, and we have a beautiful wetland, which is great to talk to kids about how valuable wetland areas are for naturally filtering water as well. And it’s great that

we have wonderful neighbors,” as their preserve backs up to the Stanback Ecological Preserve at Catawba and Salisbury Greenway.

The trail is also open to the public on weekends, so anyone can come and enjoy the area.

Tellez said the public could also attend some entertainment times at the planetarium as they offer laser light shows to go along with the music.

Some of the shows include a Queen light show, The Beatles and more.

Owned and operated by the Rowan-Salisbury School System, Horizons Unlimited is the science curriculum department of the schools.

“I like to think of us as the hub of all science resources for RSS,” Tellez said.

And while they primarily serve RSS, with about 75-80 percent of the students being RSS kids, she said if another district wants to come, they can. It’s on a first-come, first-served basis, as visits must be scheduled and get on Horizon’s calendar.

Tellez said they are not there to take the place of a science class or concept but to “supplement it, enhance it, whether it’s a fun way to introduce a concept or a great way to review it. We want to showcase a great way to teach hands-on science and really help make that connection when they get back in the classroom.”

In addition to the programs for students during the school year, they also offer several programs for the public, including one coming in April to celebrate the eclipse, and a variety of summer camps, including two-day camps, a survival camp and an art camp, both in June, and week camps, which include a cooking camp in June; ecosystems camp and zoology camp, both in July.

Family Fun Friday events are also available, offering a space quest on June 21 and a Botany Bash on July 26. Cost is \$8 per person.

New is their Leader in Training for youth aged 13-15. It is free and teaches them how to become a leader.

If traveling or visiting the center is not an option, Tellez said they offer Outreach programming as there are some suitable to take on the road to the school.

They have also developed kits that have hands-on activities, “making it really approachable so if a teacher opens up a box, they could execute these hands-on lessons to teach a concept.”

The center is for all ages. As Tellez said, they have had college students come and participate, and some from



(Studio 35 Photography)



(Studio 35 Photography)

Trinity Oaks Retirement Living Center have come for the planetarium shows and other activities.

“We have said in the past that we serve pre-K to gray.

In our mission statement, we say

we are all about empowering learners to engage in science. Anyone can be a learner, whether you’re five years old or 65 years old. It does not matter.”

Horizons Unlimited has been around for quite a long time, Tellez said, and

has a long history of great work and is “proud to be a part of this organization.”

For additional information about their seasonal schedule, summer camps, laser shows and other events, visit Horizon Unlimited’s Facebook page.

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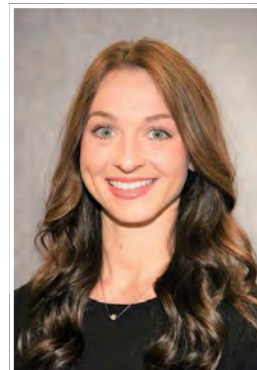


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Yadkin to Spencer Trail. (Brad Dountz photo)

Staying connected

Spencer has a plan to realize a 24-year-old objective

BY BRAD DOUNTZ

brad.dountz@salisburypost.com

For many small towns across the country, getting the right amount of money to match their ambitions is often the most difficult aspect of their planning process, and Spencer is no different.

After years of delays, it seems as if there is a light at the end of the tunnel for Spencer to fulfill its Northern Rowan Connector project.

The connector will join the Yadkin

River and downtown Spencer together through a series of sidewalks and trails. Town Manager Peter Franzese said the connector goes back 24 years with the county's greenway master planning process, but that iteration never took off after Spencer failed to accumulate their portion of matching funds.

It was around five years ago when the project began to pick up steam again. According to the town's website, the connector would go "from Yadkin River Park into downtown Spencer via Salisbury Ave./N.C. Highway 29; via Charles

Street/Oakwood Drive/Whitehead Street past three schools; connecting to the Stanback Educational Forest trail system at the 7th Street Trailhead; and via the Grants Creek Greenway, eventually connecting to Salisbury's Greenway System west of Old Mocksville Road."

The corridor will pass North Rowan Elementary, Middle and High schools and be ADA accessible for 5 or 6 miles on Spencer's segment.

Planning and Zoning Administrator Steve Blount said the town's staff modified the original plans to make the trails

more efficient and usable for residents and potential visitors.

"Instead of going down 3rd St. to Grant's Creek, wouldn't it make better sense to go down 7th St. to Grant's Creek where our trailhead would connect to the Stanback Forest," Blount said.

So far, the North Carolina Department of Transportation has been a major contributor to the connector. They have paid for a significant fraction of the project's feasibility study, which should be completed within the next six months.

"What it will do is help us move

further to the path of actually having a designed project that we can build," Franzese said.

Some of the advantages Spencer has going for it is that the town fronts the Yadkin River, and they already have existing infrastructure in place to improve upon.

"We're trying to build the connection pieces in between and then fix up the old sidewalks, add some trails where we need to make connections through the woods," Blount said.

Spencer already has a 1,000-foot asphalt trail at the Yadkin River Park Trailhead next to the Wil-Cox Bridge, and if their plan is fully realized, the entire system will be 10 miles long from the river to Salisbury. As they continue to add on to it, the price has obviously increased. As of now, it has ballooned to the \$14-15 million range.

While NCDOT has helped with that price tag, Spencer was not successful in applying for state funding last year, but they aren't giving up. They have had discussions with Hometown Strong, a state initiative, to assist in looking for other sources of state and grant funding. Overall, Franzese said Spencer is optimistic about where the connector is heading.

The town has recently hired outside firms like Kimley Horn to draw up strategies from topics like feasibility to outdoor recreation.

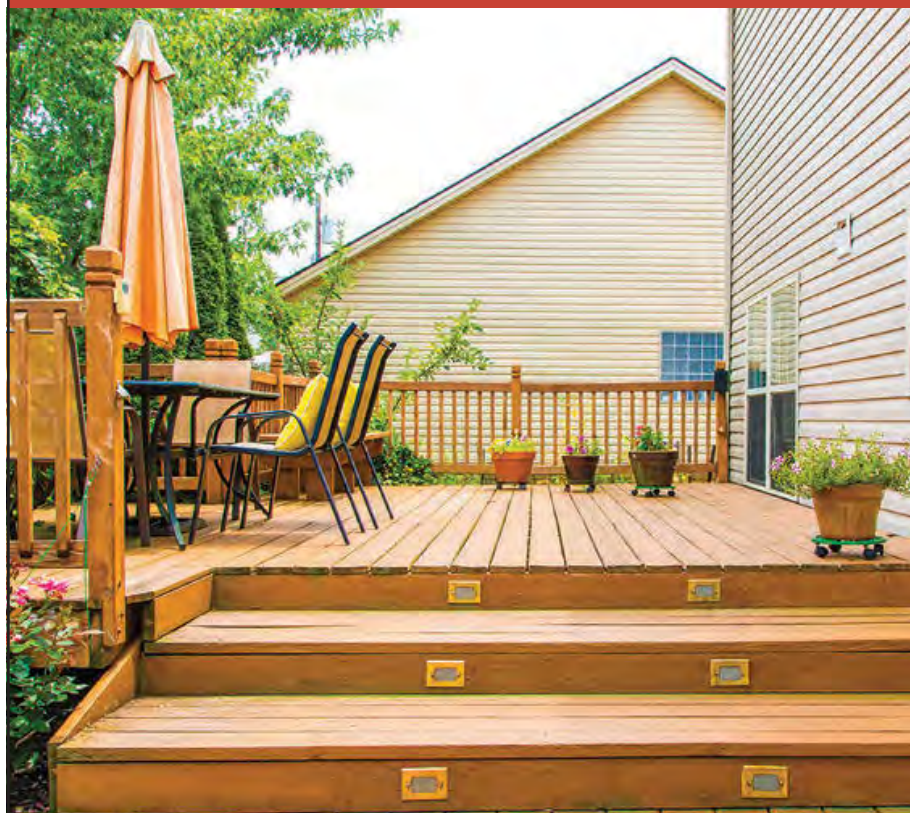
Blount also said more commercial growth will be at Long Ferry Road, and the walkability facet of the trail, which is so close to that development, is going to be appealing.

"The concept of a walkable community is attractive to people moving into any place and people have a lot of choice where they live nowadays and they want to see those amenities available to them when they get here," Blount said. "Walking friendly towns is a catchphrase that's important to any kind of urban development these days."

Though there is plenty more effort on the horizon for Spencer, Franzese said real progress for the connector will be "reachable" in the next few years if everything goes smoothly and there are no major hiccups. Still, having gotten this far is its own kind of victory.

"It's like when you're at the optometrist and you're looking at the chart, things are getting less blurry. We're getting to the point where things are starting to look a little less blurry and a little more clear about where this project is headed," Franzese said.

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The trail is carried by the Wil-Cox Bridge and goes by the Yadkin RiverPark, which offers fishing, camping and boating access. (Andy Mooney photo)

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Ducks in Lake Murtis are fed plenty and often by the hundreds of thousands of visitors to the park. (Robert Sullivan photo)

Park place

Over 50 years later, Dan Nicholas' donation continues serving Rowan communities

BY ROBERT SULLIVAN

robert.sullivan@salisburypost.com

Dan Nicholas was a man who wore a lot of hats in Rowan County: horse breeder, real estate mogul, businessman, orange grower. Maybe the most well-known part of his legacy, however, is the park that bears his name on Bringle Ferry Road in the eastern part of the

county.

Nicholas donated 200 acres to the county in 1967, after unsuccessfully trying to donate the land to the Jaycees, who did not have the capability to provide upkeep, and the city of Salisbury, who did not want to own a park so far outside the city limits. In the end, he was able to convince the members of the Rowan County Board of Commissioners to take the land off his hands by taking



Nicholas

them out to a steak dinner.

“Dan Nicholas is probably the only man in town who ever had to pay somebody to take something for nothing,” Salisbury Post reporter Ned Cline wrote at the time.

In the time between 1967 and 1970, when Nicholas died, he continued to donate the money for more and more land

to be added to the park. By the end of his life, the park had ballooned to 312 acres.

The idea for the park came to him while he was sitting under a tree at a park in Roanoke, Virginia, watching his grandkids play.

“Dan said, ‘Murtis, what do you think about giving that property? It sure would make a prettier park than this,’” Nicholas’ wife, Murtis, told Post reporter Mark Wineka in 1982.

Nowadays, the park is closer to 450 acres, just one way in which Nicholas' donation has continued to improve upon his initial vision in the last 54 years. Murtis had her hand on the steering wheel for much of that development as a member of the Rowan Parks and Recreation Commission.

Murtis died in 1988. By that time, the park had added picnic shelters with grills, a basketball court, horseshoe pits, volleyball courts, ball fields, miniature golf, playgrounds, fishing, paddle boats, a nature and environmental center, nature trails, animal exhibits, a gift shop, log cabin, family campground, Girl Scouts hut, tennis courts and an outdoor theater.

Rowan County has worked to improve the park since then as well. The park has added six log cabins for indoor camping throughout the years. Hurley Station was built in the 1990s and train tracks were built right behind the station, where tickets and souvenirs are sold. A carousel was built right next door just a few years later. Miner Moose Gem Mine was built and opened in 2000, and now serves as one of the main attractions for field trips and general visitors.

The gift shop was turned into a concession stand. Approximately 50 years after it was built, it now serves as storage. A new multi-purpose building, in-



The old concession stand, built over 50 years ago, still stands near Lake Murtis. These days, it is used as storage. (Robert Sullivan photo)



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As the summer heat begins to climb, The Water Plaza at Dan Nicholas Park becomes a popular spot for park visitors to come and cool off, if just for a few minutes. (Jon C. Lakey file photo)

cluding the new concession stand, was built overlooking the lake. The wooden paddle boat dock was torn down and replaced in recent years as well.

One of the larger projects in the park is one that is under construction currently, an expansion of the red wolf enclosure inside of Rowan Wild. Construction on the project began in early February. Megan Cline, the supervisor of Rowan Wild's nature center, said in October that the project would mainly allow the enclosure to hold more wolves, especially in an emergency situation. Currently, the vast majority of red wolves live on the eastern coast of North Carolina, where they are susceptible to having their environments disrupted by storms or even hurricanes.

All of these revisions and improvements mean that the park that Dan Nicholas built, the park that outshined the one he enjoyed so much in Roanoke, Virginia, has continuously evolved while staying true to its original mis-

sion. What started as a few picnic shelters beside a lake, which was renamed Lake Murtis in 1982, has evolved into one of Rowan County's most popular attractions.

At the event held to honor the renaming of the lake, a few attendees told Wineka that they found it hard to believe that the park had attracted 2 million visitors in the 15 years since Nicholas' donation. Nowadays, the park sees that number in approximately three years, with the county stating on its website that the average annual attendance is close to 700,000. Forty thousand of those come for Autumn Jubilee, a massive annual festival they put on. The park also often brings in over 100,000 students on field trips, who visit the gem mine and Rowan Wild.

"I know he knows and that he is here. He just loved the park and he was so proud when they named it after him," Murtis Nicholas told Wineka in the same article.



A family exits Rowan Wildlife Adventures at Dan Nicholas Park. (Ben Stansell file photo)

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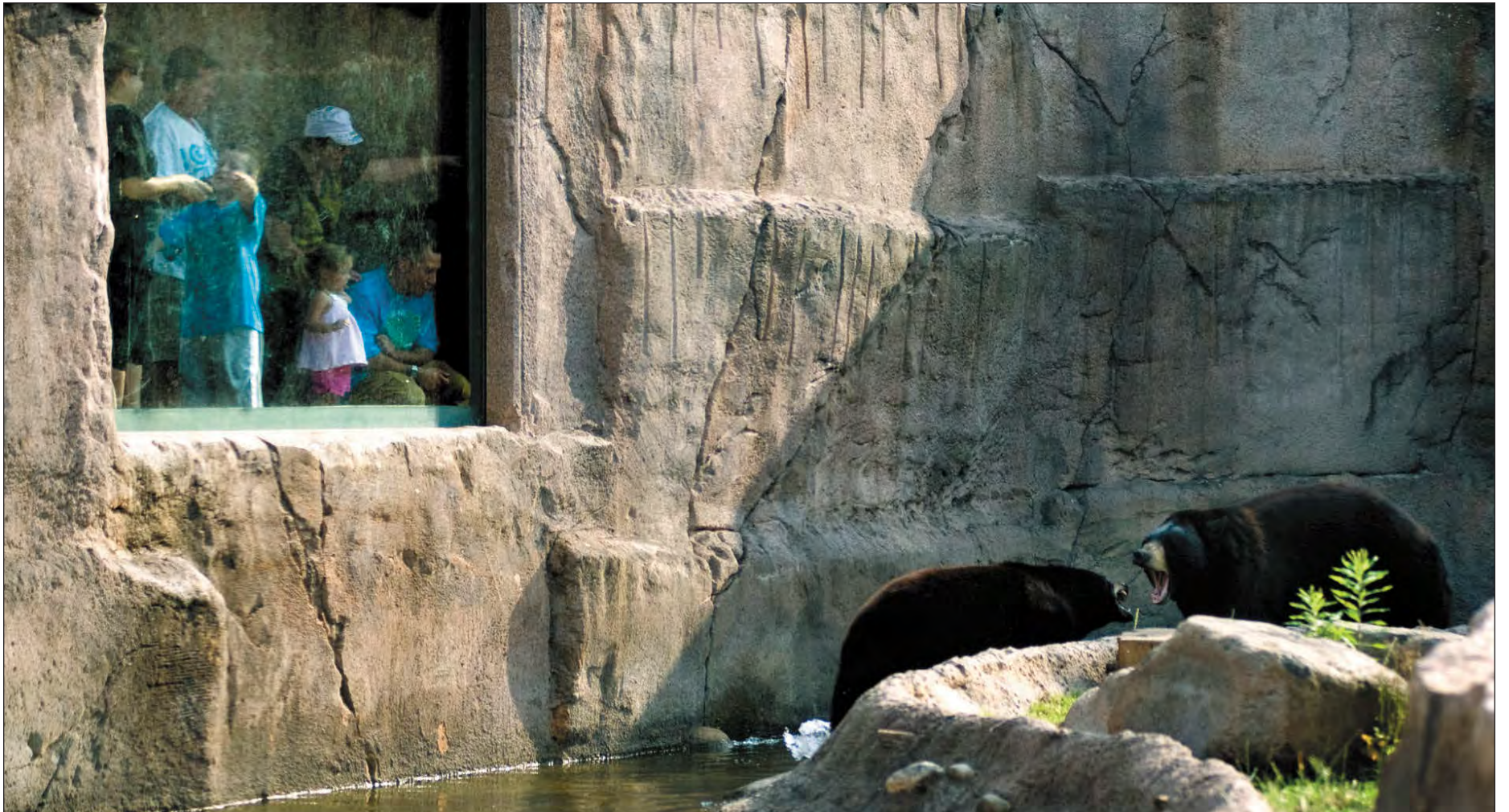
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Black bears interact under as visitors watch from one of the three overlooks at Rowan Wildlife Adventures at Dan Nicholas Park. (Jon C. Lakey file photo)



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The lake in Dan Nicholas Park was renamed in honor of Murtis Nicholas in 1982. (Robert Sullivan photo)

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The Fred Stanback Ecological Preserve at Catawba College has trails that wind through wetlands. (Andy Mooney photo)

Explore at our backdoor

*Stanback Ecological Preserve offers glimpse of area wildlife
for recreational outdoorsmen*

BY CHANDLER INIONS

chandler.inions@salisburypost.com

Catawba College is home to a lot of cool things, but one aspect — the Stanback Ecological Preserve — stands out for its commitment to capturing local flora and fauna in an accessible way for outdoor enthusiasts and just the recreational walkers to take in what the ecosystem has to offer.

Ecological Preserve Keeper Joshua Cool maintains the 189-acre preserve in addition to providing tours to interested groups.

“Having that much wetland habitat inside city limits is pretty cool,” Cool said. “You can go out there and see obligate wetland creatures not even five minutes from Innes Street.”

Cool takes school groups and other groups to give them more information of what they are looking at.

“I normally point out plants, and if we

do see some animals,” Cool said. “I tend to point out whatever is blooming at the time. Some of the asters bloom later in the year. It varies seasonally. Whatever plant is visually striking at the time. I point it out and tell them about it.”

As for animals, Cool said that it is easier to see animals in a smaller group than in a large group walking. While the preserve boasts numerous species, not all are native.

“As soon as we come down, one of the first things I tell people about is the

emerald ash borer,” Cool said.

Emerald ash borers are a visually striking beetle but are also an invasive species that Cool and other environmentalists worry will wreak havoc on East Coast ash tree populations.

Some of the more striking species to be seen in the preserve are avian.

“We have blue herons; big striking guys,” Cool said. “We have yellow-crowned night herons (and) green herons. Flycatchers are cool — little tiny birds darting over the water. You cannot



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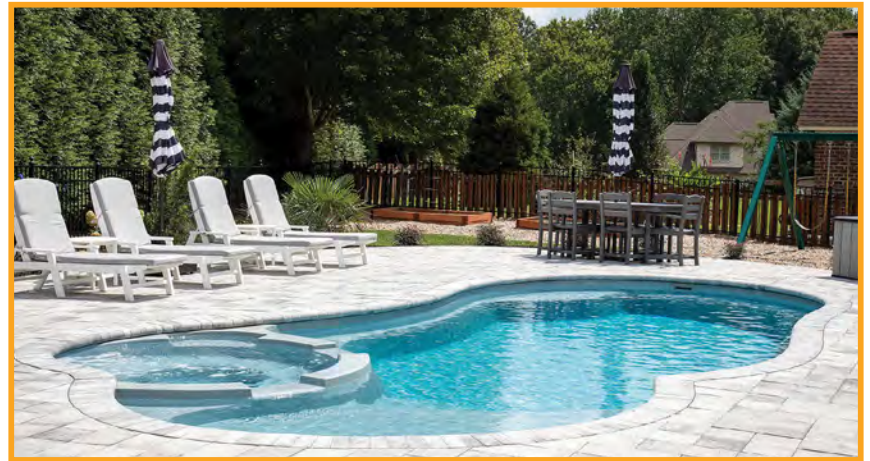
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see what they are going after, so it's just an erratic flight swooping over water.”

Other animals like to keep their feet on the ground like beavers, raccoons, coyotes, deer and otters.

For Cool, the preserve offsets a short-coming many young people have in today's digital world.

“Having seen the nature deficit that most kids seem to be experiencing, I think it is hugely important to get them invested in nature really early,” Cool said. “It's a great place for it.”

The preserve is hardly just a place for young people though and Cool's tour groups reflect that. His visitors have run the age gamut. He acknowledged that he's just happy to see people are interested in nature and the preserve.

The space also represents modern approaches to habitat restoration projects.

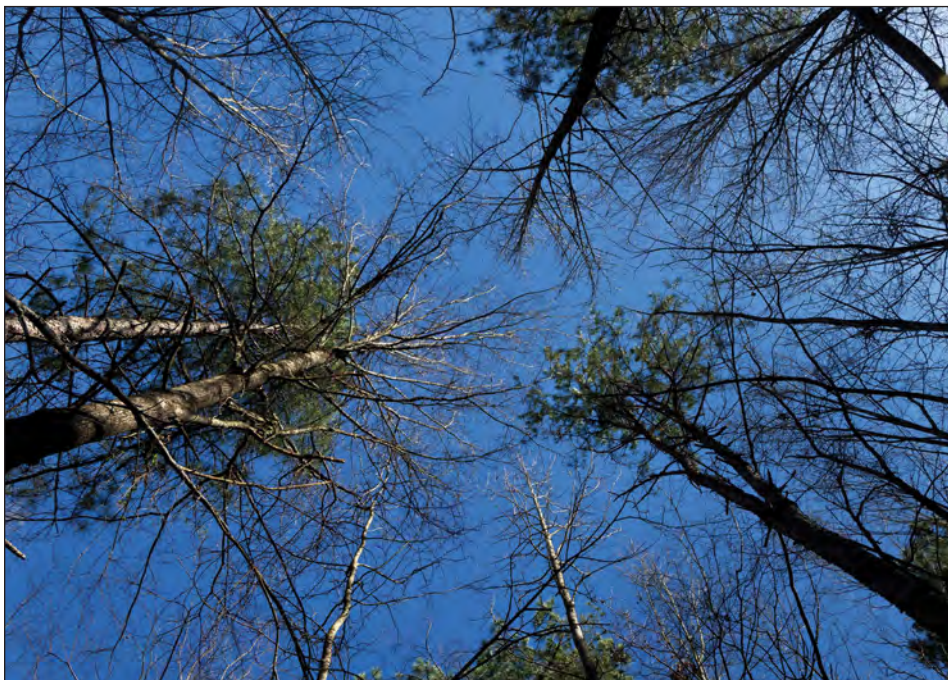
“For a long time, the idea of conservation was, well, you put up a wall around it,” Cool said. “You can't mess with it, and you are done. Thankfully, people



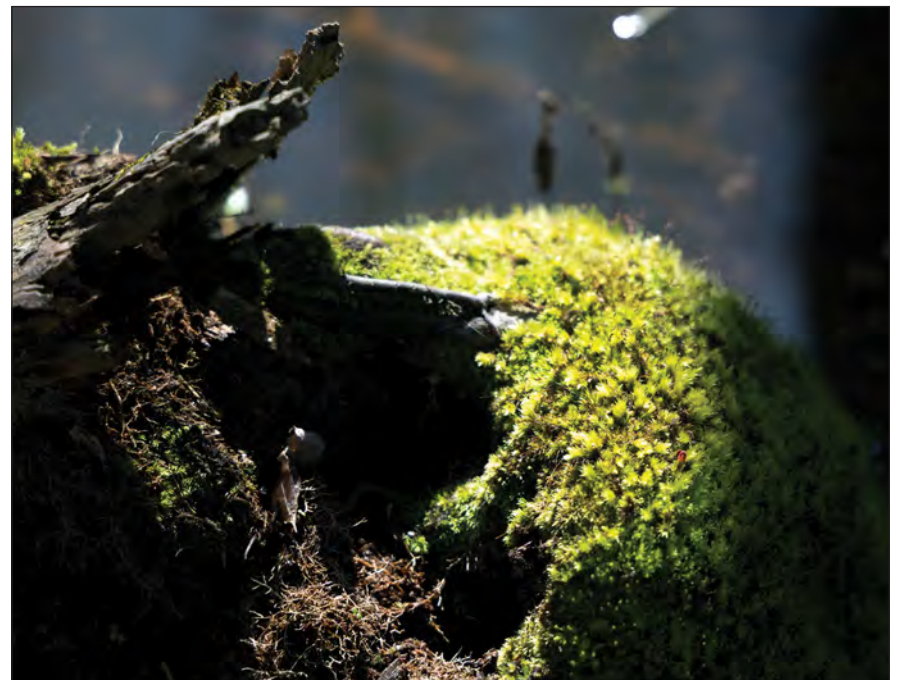
Birdhouses are a common sight on the preserve. (Andy Mooney photo)



The lake at the preserve is a popular draw for wildlife and outdoor enthusiasts, but fishing is not allowed. (Andy Mooney photo)



The preserve has a thick tree canopy. (Andy Mooney photo)



Moss grows on a stump. (Andy Mooney photo)



The preserve is home to a large variety of plant life. (Andy Mooney photo)



Geese hang out on the lake. (Andy Mooney photo)



are coming around to the idea that conservation needs more of a regenerative focus. We need to undo problems that were created for years and years.”

In many cases, assisting plant life viability goes up the ladder in terms of aiding the success of wildlife conservation.

Cool pointed to one species, the golden rod, as an example.

“Golden rod is a hugely important plant for a lot of butterflies and birds,” he said. “There has been a lot of long term planning for how we can make it a better place for wildlife.”

Accessing the preserve is just a matter of getting out there. It is located adjacent to Catawba’s campus.

The preserve is also an extension of Catawba’s Center for the Environment.

“(We have) a lot of students in the environmental programs,” Cool said. “The



preserve is a great value-add for environmental students at Catawba that can conduct field experiments that you might not get to do at another school.

“I assist them with things they need and help students pick our places that

they might have the best luck observing.”

For visitors, the preserve does have some restrictions.

“What we say is like general park rules — dusk to dawn,” Cool said.

Cool explained that much of the wild-

life forages for food at night, so human presence in the evenings is not ideal.

“At the end of the day, I tell people, it’s not a park, it’s a preserve,” Cool said. “There is a difference.”

The caretaker said that passive recreation is encouraged like walking and bird watching, but no bikes, fishing or hunting are allowed. Dog walking is permitted on a leash for more reasons than one, but one, in particular, highlights the delicate balance of life the preserve maintains.

The preserve features box turtles that have meticulous egg-laying tendencies.

“If a female mates, they can retain that for years,” Cool said. “They pick a good season and time to lay the eggs. With turtle eggs, the sex of the eggs is determined by the temperature of the ground. That is manipulated by the laying turtle. She will dig a nest at a certain depth.”

If someone is taking their dogs out to the preserve, Cool indicated that it really doesn’t matter how well-behaved the dog is; if it smells something and scratches, the careful work of the turtle that might have been years in the making is undone.

The preserve is a valuable asset to the community and one that should be treated as such. Continued enjoyment of what it has to offer relies on compliance with the protections enacted by its caretakers. Don’t miss an opportunity to get close to nature by visiting the preserve, but remember that its balance relies on dedicated observance of those guidelines and rules. With hope, the preserve will be around for years to come.



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Ray Barber stands at the highest point in Fort York overlooking U.S. Highway 29, the railroad trestle, Wil-Cox Bridge and the Yadkin River. He is standing on the fallen brick sign for York Hill Camp Ground. Without the bridges, this would be overlooking the site of the Civil War battle here. (Wayne Hinshaw file photo)

A trip back in time

Yadkin River area is rich in ties to the past

BY KYLIE BAILEY

For the Salisbury Post

The long dirt road to meet Dr. Wayne Koontz was bumpy and winding. The view of the Yadkin adjacent to the dirt road was a disappointing spectacle of muddy water with an icy top that proved how cold it was. Little did our class know, but we had just entered an area beside the Yadkin that had a history connecting to the very founding of our country.

Koontz, who has served the Salisbury community for decades as a pediatrician, waited for our arrival at the bottom of the path. He welcomed us and explained that he had been a landowner along the Yadkin River since 1979. He

then enthusiastically showed off his historic log cabin that was built in 1868, which Koontz moved along the river soon after he purchased it.

We entered the cabin and were amazed by the ongoing collection of family artifacts, which showed just how long he had lived there. There were wicker baskets made by hand, antique furniture, and heirlooms that made us feel like we were going back in time.

These items, although impressive, weren't nearly as old or fragile as the artifacts he showed next. Koontz led us to a kitchen table, the top of which was covered with towels, concealing our view of the lumpy objects beneath. Koontz began telling our class the history of the Trading Ford area, and when

he removed the towels, we got front-row seats to his personal artifact collection of arrowheads, pipes for tobacco, bowls and baskets woven by the Native Americans. Koontz explained that he found the items around the river, which were most likely left by the Sapona tribe, who lived, hunted and gathered food on the very land where his home now stood.

The Sapona, although peaceful themselves, weren't treated the same way by neighboring tribes. Koontz explained that the Sapona eventually moved north to Virginia to escape the violence. They were an agricultural tribe and settled along the Yadkin for the resources and easy travel the river offered. Their way of life was shown in what they left behind, preserved by the soil and water

of the Yadkin.

The European settlers arrived in the area in the mid-1700s, close to 40 years later. The Native Americans and European settlers most likely used the Shallow Ford to cross the river with ease. The Shallow Ford was an important part of the Yadkin because its combination of low average water level and solid rock base made it a perfect place for wagons, stagecoaches and army cannons to cross the river safely. Its geography made Shallow Ford a major trading spot and travel point.

Koontz explained that another more significant moment in the Yadkin's history was related to Shallow Ford during the Revolutionary War. Lord Cornwallis was in pursuit of Major General

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The Yadkin River has a rich history. (Andy Mooney photo)

Nathanael Greene and General Daniel Morgan, hoping their capture would end the conflict.

Greene and Morgan had other plans. They had fled the scene of the Battle of Cowpens, knowing Cornwallis would chase after them. General Daniel Morgan fled with more than 600 British prisoners, making a pit stop at Rutherfordton to send an express message to his commander, Major General Nathanael Greene. Greene set off on his trip to find General Morgan, stopping at Steele Tavern, where Elizabeth Steele gave him money for more equipment since Greene's men were severely outnumbered. Once more equipment was acquired, Greene moved his troops to the Yadkin, not 2 miles from where we sat at Koontz's cabin.

However, he soon realized the water was much too high to cross on foot. So, with the help of the people of Trading Ford, their boats, and their labor, the American troops were moved across the river. This helped Greene escape

the British and Cornwallis; when Cornwallis arrived at the same crossing, the water was still too high, and all the boats were gone. Cornwallis was stuck on one side of the river while Greene and his men were safe and sound on the other side, all thanks to the river and the community. To no avail, Cornwallis fired on Greene's men, who sat high on the other side of the river. Their artillery would not reach Greene's men. This forced Cornwallis to travel north to Mocksville to cross the river, giving Greene a huge lead. Cannonballs from the event would be found in the area of the River more than 100 years later, showing just how much history lies under the waters.

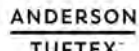
Through learning about the river's past, our class developed a deep appreciation for the Yadkin and was amazed to consider people drinking from a river with so much history. Conserving the river is something that people should try to do, considering the community connections it holds and the resources the Yadkin has always given us.

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Brooklyn Connor gives a big smile as he waits with The Pedal Factory staff member Tim Faucette as he fixes his bicycle seat. (Karen Kistler photo)

Rolling out cyclists

Pedal Factory aims to make bikes accessible to everyone

BY KAREN KISTLER

karen.kistler@salisburypost.com

Making bikes accessible to everyone, whether they are used for transportation, recreation or to improve one's health, is the mission of The Pedal Factory, a nonprofit community bike center.

To accomplish its mission, the organization depends on the community's

support for the most part, along with seeking some grants, said Mary Rosser, executive director and one of the founding members.

Rosser is also a member of the current board of directors along with her husband, Todd Rosser, Sharon Earnhardt, Bob Paolino, Bill Feather, Justin Oppman and Elizabeth Trick.

They have been in existence as an organization since October 2015 and set up shop on South Main Street. Needing

more space both for bikes and a place to work on them, plus having some building issues necessitated a move, and the center is now located at 311 E. Council St., Salisbury.

"This spot really fulfills the need for space," Rosser said, plus they have space upstairs for additional bikes they receive through donations. "All the bikes that are here have been donated. We don't have any new bikes," she said, and they use the grants to buy items like "tools

and new parts that are necessary for repairs, and then we, through the years, kind of evolved to sell used bikes that are refurbished, and just random other things that are donated and that helps us to stay afloat and helps the community in general."

The nonprofit got its start, Rosser said, when she and her husband met several others on a bike ride, and they began talking about how Salisbury was an easy place to ride bikes and the fact

that many rode bikes as their mode of transportation because it was the only way they had to get around.

Because of this, Rosser said it would be great to have a place where people could access a bike, make sure they are safe, and have access to needed tools and equipment.

Since the start, getting bikes or necessary parts into the hands of those who need them has been done through its Earn A Bike Program. Over time, the program has changed, but it “continues to be the heart of our organization,” she said.

The program allows individuals to come to the shop, volunteer some time and learn how to work on bikes, and it becomes theirs.

“We have evolved that because we wanted to make sure that people really understood how the nonprofit works, so we asked people to do some volunteer service by doing some things that help us stay afloat and then really make sure that people get some education on taking care of their bike and riding safely and once they get through the checklist, they come away with a bike, a helmet and a lock and a set of lights and there’s no cost for any of that,” Rosser said.

As for volunteering and learning how



The Pedal Factory hosts rides throughout town. (Submitted photo)



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to work on a bike, she said it's whatever they feel comfortable with or the needs at the shop when they are there, which could include moving inventory or pumping tires.

But she did share they want everyone to learn the basics of caring for their bikes, like knowing how to check the air in their tires and pump them, making sure the brakes work and their chain and knowing "when things need to be looked at and when things can be fixed" and not just throwing it aside thinking it's broken and not fixable.

The Earn A Bike program may vary for those younger than 13 in that volunteer service is not required, but they can participate if they want to.

For the younger recipients, Rosser said they want to teach them how to identify the different parts of the bike and how to take care of it and learn where they plan to ride it and their thoughts about the bike.

Staff mechanic Tim Faucette helps everyone go through the Earn a Bike program, "and he's become a very valuable part of the shop," she shared.

Those wishing to make a donation of a bike or parts can drop them by the shop whenever they are open, including Tuesday and Wednesday from noon to 6 p.m., Thursday from 4-8 p.m. and the first and third Saturdays from noon to 4 p.m.

Don't worry about the bicycle's condition, Rosser said, as they will take any salvageable parts, and those that are not, they recycle and can earn money from those to help the center as well.

No bike to donate? They also have a place on their website for online donations, which she said is "super helpful. It's always a struggle to keep paying the rent and the utilities, and there are expenses that go with it," along with paying staff members as they are not able to just be a volunteer-run organization as they were to begin with.

Volunteers are also welcome, and service hours can be logged.

"For each hour of volunteer service, that's worth \$5 of shop credit exchangeable for used parts or repair, anything like that," she said.

When it comes to bicycles, The Pedal Factory furnishes more than the actual bikes themselves, as events are also offered, providing the community the chance to get out and ride and teaching those who don't feel comfortable on a bike so they can gain confidence.

One such event takes place every Sunday as the center offers a social ride that leaves from the shop at 2:30 p.m. and lasts approximately an hour.

In the summer, when the weath-



The Pedal Factory hosts rides throughout town. (Submitted photo)

er gets warmer, Rosser said it might change to a morning ride, but it's always on a Sunday.

The ride, which she said is designed to help people feel comfortable on a bike and as a way to encourage people to get out, is described as being "low key, conversation pace with nobody's left behind. We stay together as a group and just ride locally so that people get familiar with riding in town because it's not a bad place to ride."

Additional events held by The Pedal Factory, in partnership with the city or another organization, include some Learn to Ride events designed for all ages. Some in the past have been held at Dan Nicholas Park and Essie Academy during which time the center took balance bikes and taught people how to ride, first, Rosser said, by learning to balance and then progressing to pedaling. We try to offer those a few times a year based on the funding."

Community rides are also offered by the center, as she noted they had one at Halloween and, just recently, one for Black History Month.

Summer camps are another event

they have done in the past; however, at this time, she said, that was not going to be a possibility this year.

The Pedal Factory also partners with the city to help manage the trails at the Salisbury Community Park.

"We have a couple guys that are not official board, but they are trail care crews," Rosser said. "They work with the city, and then we try to seek grants and seek volunteers to help them out as far as the trail-building efforts go."

Unsure of the exact number of bikes on hand, Rosser said with a laugh there

were lots, and "they've all been donated, and it's wonderful."

There's lots going on at this local nonprofit, with learning opportunities and community events, but Rosser said the most important aspect of the shop for her is they are "basically creating cyclists, and we look at every person as a cyclist. We're trying to make this a place where everybody feels like they belong and have something to offer as far as volunteer service, whether you know how to work on a bike or not. Everybody can participate in this space."

A graphic for Blue Bay Seafood. It features a blue banner with the words "BLUE BAY" in white, stylized letters. Below the banner, it says "Family Style Seafood at its Best!". There are two phone numbers: 704-639-9500 and 704-633-9585. Below the numbers are two addresses: 2050 Statesville Blvd. and 1007 East Innes St. At the bottom, it says "Serving Rowan County Since 1984" and "BlueBay-Seafood.com" with a Facebook icon. The background of the graphic shows various seafood items like shrimp, crab, and fish.

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(Submitted photo)

Preserving our land

Three Rivers Land Trust's effort to save North Carolina

BY BRAD DOUNTZ

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As more and more land development happens close to Rowan County and the rest of North Carolina, it can be easy to forget that in order to create sustainable communities, there still needs to be places that are untouched by apartment complexes and fast food restaurants.

Three Rivers Land Trust, a nonprof-

it organization based in Salisbury, has been a leading proponent of conserving land in North Carolina across 15 counties including Rowan. All told, they have conserved close to 50,000 acres of land and they have protected 350 miles of local streams and 18,000 local family farms.

"We conserve the local rivers, whether the scenic rivers, family farms, national areas of the central Piedmont, and historic places of the Piedmont," Executive Director Travis Morehead said. "We expand public lands by adding on to the

local parks, state parks; gain lands and national forest; we save family farms, which is a big push for us right now, trying to help farmers keep the farm going and stay on the farm; and we protect local waters."

Morehead and his staff concentrate on a multitude of different jobs like focusing on land protection projects, overseeing lands, communications, raising money and recruiting people to work with the organization.

Morehead said many people come to

them about their land if they have no one to inherit it, but still want it preserved. They will do this by "direct acquisition" or put a conservation easement on the property to make sure it is always a farm going forward.

"Every land is different. We try to stay away from small tracts and we try to stay away from urban tracts. We generally do better, from a conservation perspective, in the county areas, in the rural parts of the county, rural parts of the region. That way we're not competing with develop-

ment,” Morehead said. “We try not to do a lot of work inside municipalities because that’s where development should occur. They have public water, public sewer, public utilities.”

Conservation Lands Manager Katie Stovall said her job is to manage land the trust owns and “to improve the land for natural community restoration or for a particular wildlife species.”

“That’s a really, really important thing for farming and our food or even wildlife communities that are sensitive species to help ensure they’re going to be around for many years,” Stovall said.

According to Associate Director Crystal Cockman, Three Rivers Land Trust conserves lands through direct acquisition or conservation easement. They also conduct transfers to public agencies like state parks, national forests and local parks. Large portions of their time is engaged with grant writing, grant administering and collaborating with private landowners.

“People who want to conserve their land are generally good folks. So we get to work with some of the best people you would ever meet,” Cockman said.

Like many nonprofits, Three Rivers Land Trust is always on the lookout for



(Submitted photo)

funding to pay for their operational duties.

“We’re often limited with the monetary aspect or the time or the manpower to do so many things. So we can have a much bigger impact if we had all the resources to do so,” Stovall said.

Even with those restrictions, More-

head said Three Rivers Land Trust has been put in a great position to do their jobs adequately.

“We’re in the best financial shape we’ve ever been in thanks to a loyal base of donors, primarily here in Rowan County. We’re doing well, we’ve never had as much land on the docket that’s

fully funded and ready to close,” Morehead said

The logistics and process of acquiring and conserving land bears down on the people who are employed at the trust. The amount of larger properties is declining due to land becoming more sparse and surging developments under construction.

“Anything with real estate is going to be challenging because you’re going to encounter issues, whether it be mineral rights or title issues or surveying encroachment,” Cockman said. “It takes time and is intensive, but the results are that you see a tract permanently protected, which is very rewarding.”

Morehead said he grew up in Stanly County and when he looks back on his childhood and where he was raised, he feels as if Three Rivers Land Trust will be able to allow others to have the same kind of upbringing he did.

“I feel like I grew up in Mayberry. You knew your neighbors, you could fish in the neighbor’s pond, go hunt arrowheads in the field, all of that was how I grew up and I’d love for my children and eventually grandchildren to have that same opportunity, to have that rural aspect of our region,” Morehead said.

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The Granite Lake Park offers a short and comfortable walking experience which is very popular. An asphalt loop around a lake with access to spur trails through a wooded lot with a shallow rocky stream. (Jon C. Lakey, file photo)

Sprucing up

Granite Quarry has many different irons in the fire to improve outdoors experience

BY ROBERT SULLIVAN

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The town of Granite Quarry has put a lot of work into its outdoors presence. That effort is close to coming to fruition, as the town is close to implementing a new master plan for the Granite Civic Park, creating more walkable routes between all the town's parks, wayfinding signs and more.

When the town approved its Downtown Master Plan in 2015, the documents included some comments from citizens

that had been taken throughout the process. Some of the comments included the nice parks in the town being a favorite, people wanting the town to hold more and better promote events and music in the parks and people pointing to the town's green spaces as large draws. When the team handling the plan drafted a community vision statement based on citizen's input, the parks were featured prominently.

"Granite Quarry is a quiet, small Carolina town with a safe, family-friendly atmosphere. It is a place where residents enjoy a high quality of life with nice

parks, good schools, and a convenient location with access to larger markets," reads the first paragraph of the statement.

Recently, the town has taken that plan and expanded upon it, including working on a plan for a complete overhaul of Granite Civic Park, located at the corner of North Oak and West Peeler streets. Representatives from Stewart, the planning company handling the plan for the town, presented at the board of aldermen's planning retreat on Feb. 22.

The representatives presented two options to the board. Elements includ-

ed in the two plans were a dog park, splash pad, dedicated amphitheater space, a food truck area and more. The town is hosting community forums and an online survey to bring in as much community feedback and participation as possible. Stewart had received 147 responses to the online survey by the Feb. 22 meeting.

Acting Town Manager and Public Works Director Jason Hord and Mayor Brittany Barnhardt said that they had heard glowing reviews from members of the community about a meeting Stewart had run. Hord read a letter that had been



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The trail at Granite Lake Park. (Jon C. Lakey, file photo)

addressed to the town, thanking town and Stewart employees.

“To the individuals who ran the park feedback meeting, thank you. Thank you so much for a warm welcome, especially for my kids. They were so nervous that a bunch of grown-ups would not want them there or hear their opinions. They are used to adults not truly listening, but they came away laughing because they said the meeting was so great. Thanks for helping me raise involved and informed citizens,” read the letter.

Barnhardt said that she had spoken to some children at the community meeting and that one had wanted separate playgrounds for older and younger kids. She also said that she was appreciative and excited about the amount of engagement the town had received so far on the plan.

“When you get to this portion of the plan, people get really excited because they’re seeing that vision come to life. With the fluff leading up to this, it’s hard to encourage engagement. With us being a small community, I think it’s very fortunate the amount of engagement we’ve had. That is really exciting,” Barnhardt said during the meeting.

The town also recently approved an agreement with the North Carolina Department of Transportation that would allow the town to build sidewalks between all three of its parks. The sidewalk connector project would create walkable paths between Granite Civic Park, Granite Lake Park and the Centennial Park trailhead.

“This has been something of a vision project. It’s consistent with what we saw going forward, that it would fit our vi-

sion to connect the parks and that it fits our vision to follow these plans and do something about them,” Shelton said in the meeting when the agreement was approved.

Shelton also said that a recent NCDOT project on Bank Street had actually left the town with a little less walkability after removing the railroad crossing. This project, he noted, should help solve some of that issue and even improve upon it.

If completed, the sidewalk connector is the first project from the town’s Bike and Pedestrian Master Plan that will come to fruition. The plan, adopted in May of 2023, also calls for bike lanes along all major roads and another expansion to the sidewalk connectors that would add on pathways to attractions such as the Old Stone House and connect different neighborhoods.

The town held community surveys and meetings as part of that planning process as well. One of the questions was which parts of the town were most important to increase mobility and access to. The three areas that participants chose the most often were the same three parks that the town is working to connect now.

The town is also working on more outdoor improvements that could come to fruition in the near future. Hord said that he is coordinating with Healthy Rowan to create park mapping and signage that would be related to fitness and health. Barnhardt has said that she is excited about wayfinding signs that the town has on the way that would point to attractions and landmarks. By the end of the next few years, the town’s outdoor presence could look very different.



Around a dozen food trucks attended GraniteFest in October and provided food to the thousands of people who showed up. (Robert Sullivan, file photo)

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Laura Handley and her dog Fozzie Bear hike the trails weekly at Salisbury Community Park. (Sean Meyers, file photo)

This gym does not require a membership

Exercising outside has numerous benefits

Let's face it. Everyone could probably use a little more movement during the day, but between work and other responsibilities, it can be hard to find the time.

Dr. Ryan Fairall is an assistant professor of exercise science at Catawba College. He highlighted ways that getting outdoors can be a great way to encourage

exercise.

Fairall said that individuals can increase the likelihood of successfully following through on exercise goals if the outdoor activity is something they enjoy, citing walking, hiking, bicycling or playing a sport.

"It can even be something as simple as taking your dog for an extra-long walk, which your dog will never com-

plain about," Fairall said.

Finding ways to incorporate the outdoors with exercise opportunities can expand realized benefits.

"There could be some physiological benefits (to getting outdoors)," Fairall said. "If it's good air quality and the sun is out, then (you will get) vitamin D. It also breaks the monotony of being inside."

So you want to get outside and get a

break from the monotony but want to make sure the activity you are doing is productive?

Fairall explained that if someone, inspired by the incoming spring months, wants to take up running, they should make sure to "start out slow with your frequency, duration, distance and speed, especially if you were inactive during the winter months.



Meredith Abramson rides the trails at Salisbury Community Park. (Sean Meyers, file photo)

“If someone goes from doing absolutely nothing to something, they should start off light. For frequency, maybe three times a week to start.”

That means beginning with a light warmup, like brisk walking or jogging, to get the body and mind ready for the run.

“Warming up has been shown to decrease risks of injury,” Fairall said. “(It’s important to) increase body temperature and blood flow to that area. Mental preparedness is a big thing, too, with the warm up.”

A cool-down exercise following the activity will also have beneficial results.

“Be sure to complete a cool-down of walking and some static stretching of major muscles used, like your calves, quadriceps and hamstrings,” Fairall said. “A cool down lets your body come

back to homeostasis.”

The type of footwear someone picks matters, too.

“Be sure to wear proper footwear for the surface you’ll be running on,” Fairall said. “I suggest going to a footwear store, like Ralph Baker’s Shoes right here in downtown Salisbury, where their professionals will make sure you are purchasing the right footwear for your activity and foot type.”

Fairall also warned against worrying about the shoe’s aesthetic appeal compared to its practicality.

“A lot of people buy shoes for the aesthetic and pick out the pair that looks the best but it’s important that you are wearing shoes appropriate for the activity,” Fairall said. “I would not wear my basketball shoes to go running in.”

There is no reason for an exercise to be singular in scope, as Fairall pointed out.

If you are walking in the park, stopping at benches and doing some body-weight squats to the bench seat and some push-ups to the backrest can be a simple way to get some activity in to improve your muscular fitness,” Fairall said. “Some parks even have areas specifically designed for calisthenics or resistance training.”

While getting outdoors and exercising is going to bode well for one’s long term health, Fairall advised to be mindful about expectations.

“Sometimes, people get too into it and become too obsessed with the date and expect to see specific results over time,” Fairall said. “When they don’t (see those

results), they could get discouraged.

“Setting short-term realistic goals is your best bet as opposed to lengthy ones that might not be as attainable.”

In the local area, individuals are blessed with several great outdoor spaces to achieve their exercise goals.

Fairall personally recommended walking around downtown Salisbury and visiting the local storefronts as well as the Bell Tower Green. He also suggested the North Carolina Zoo.

“It’s the world’s largest natural habitat zoo, meaning you will be doing a lot of walking while you enjoy the wildlife and scenery,” Fairall said.

Whatever your health and exercise goals may be, remember that the great outdoors does not require a membership. What are you waiting for?

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DeWitt Brown, left, operations manager, and Jeff Moose, owner/operator pose for a photo in the Backcountry & Beyond store. They are joined by Ellie, Brown's Aussidoodle. (Karen Kistler photo)

Backcountry and Beyond

A store for outdoor enthusiasts and great place to hang out

BY KAREN KISTLER

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Described as a great place to hang out, Backcountry & Beyond is more than just an outdoor store. Owner/operator Jeff Moose likes to “call it an

outdoor experience,” adding that they are “an outdoor store for the outdoor enthusiasts.”

The store, which has three full-time and two part-time employees, has been in operation for a total of five and a half years, two and a half of which have been in its current location in downtown

Salisbury, at 322 S. Main Street, after moving from a smaller space closer to the interstate, he pointed out. It is open from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday through Friday, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturdays and closed on Sundays.

Home to a wide variety of merchandise for those who enjoy the great

outdoors, some of the items offered at the store include eBikes, a full line of Yeti products, Costa sunglasses, paddle boards, apparel, fire pits, Smithey cast iron cookware, health and wellness items such as vitamins, grills, and more, with the Traeger brand grills, which range in size from backyard

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Backcountry and Beyond. (Karen Kistler photo)

units to portable camping size ones, being the No. 1 seller, Moose noted.

When asked why he thought that was the case, he said, with a grin, “we all eat, so we’re all eating everyday. Food is a big part of our life, and what the Traeger grill can provide is a whole new cooking experience especially if you’re cooking outdoors.”

He explained that one could use it to not just do the traditional grilling, but you can also bake, barbecue and smoke items, sharing that he had used it to make cakes, banana bread and biscuits, whatever your regular oven can do, along with grilling ribs and steaks, thus offering versatility and flavor.

It also has a convenience factor, as he noted that just about every model has WiFi capability, allowing users to start cooking in person and finish it remotely.

Those who would like to see the grills in action can visit the store’s monthly Smokin’ Tunes, during which time the community can come together and

sample some different foods prepared on the grills and enjoy some music inside the store. The event takes place typically the second Saturday of each month, Moose said, from noon until 2 p.m. with the cooking out front and the music, provided by a local musical artist, inside.

The store remains open for its normal business hours on these days, he pointed out, “but 12 to two is kind of the magical time.”

In addition to the small grills, campers can find camping lights and batteries for those needing power sources and Smithey cast iron cookware to use during their outdoor adventures.

For those interested in going out and doing some hunting, the local store carries turkey and deer calls and scent elimination from a company named Dead End Game, located in Wilkesboro.

And, Yeti, Moose shared, “has grown their footprint into so many different categories now, so there are certain

things that definitely can cross over for the hunter or the fisherman.”

One thing that they have been able to do since moving to their larger location is expand their apparel offerings. They now have a nice selection of men’s and women’s attire, Moose noted, with brands such as Kuhl, Helly Hansen, Marsh Wear and more along with more brands of shoes including hiking footwear from Solomon and On shoes for running and hiking.

The apparel and footwear are “big, big offerings that we have available” and weren’t available previously.

In addition to the actual items sold at the local business, Moose said they also offer their knowledge about the products and assistance in selecting items that are the right fit for the customer.

“We try to pride ourselves on being knowledgeable on our products and being able to give the customer assistance on what to buy and what not to buy,” he shared.

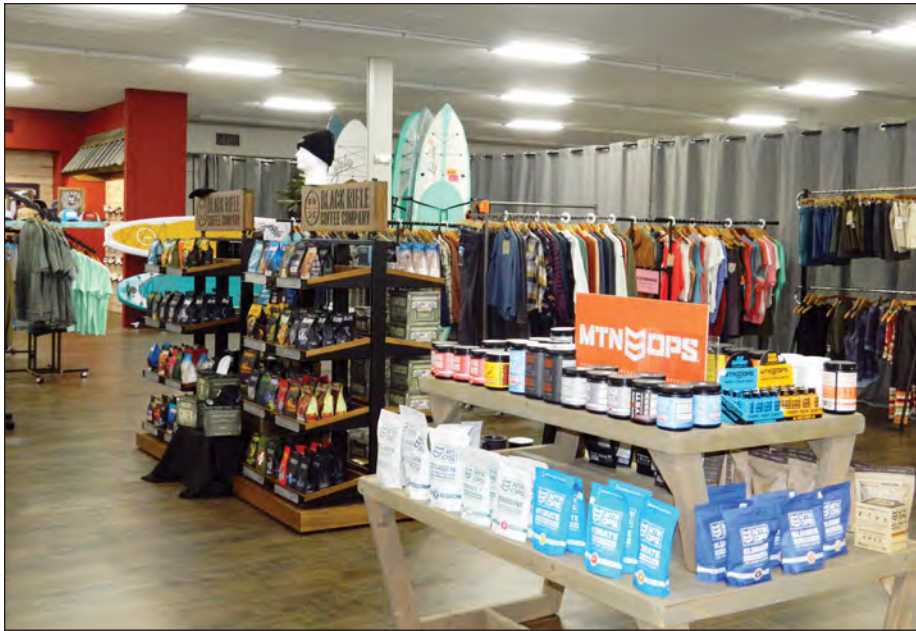
He also noted that if they don’t know something about the various products, they don’t mind researching it and finding out what they need to know so they can help the customer.

“We want the customer to leave feeling comfortable with their purchase or maybe their not purchase, but knowing they got the right information for what they needed,” Moose shared.

Providing people with a complete understanding of the product is what they strive for at Background & Beyond as Moose said when people purchase a grill, they offer free delivery, assembly and set up as they are “really trying to instruct people through the whole process.”

As for eBikes and paddle boards, they have delivered those as well, he noted, and with the bikes, customers are instructed on the different features of them, and “we let people go out and test ride them.”

Instructions on the use of the paddle



Backcountry and Beyond. (Karen Kistler photo)

boards are offered for those first-time buyers if they want it, as Moose said, if they are given a day's notice, they would take them to the lake, put them on a board and let you give it a try, showing them how to use it.

"So we do offer a lot of hands-on to help educate and teach and give people the right direction with the products," he said.

Additional evidence of their helping the community and being community

minded can be seen in the fact that they participate in all that the downtown offers including the Busker's Bash, Cheerwine Festival, Wine About Winter, along with the chamber's Dragon Boat Festival and they set up at the Tuck Fest, held at the Whitewater Center which offers lots of outdoor activities.

Their support extends beyond just the community events as Moose said they support the Three Rivers Land Trust by opening up a portion of their

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is what they do best.

shop for them to do their podcast on-site at what they call the Backcountry & Beyond studios, he said with a grin.

Plus they support the Trust's two Thru Hikes each year in the Uwharries by setting up a tent and providing support for one day of the four-day, 40-mile hikes. During this time, they provide the hikers with healthy snacks and some wellness items such as electrolytes or protein bars. Portable batteries so they can recharge phones is also offered along with ice water and chairs, thus providing them a rest station.

Growing up in the manufacturing industry as his family had a business that made carpet padding, Moose said they tried to diversity when housing slowed down. Therefore, they developed an archery target for bows and arrows.

Being in this business "put me in the outdoor industry a little bit more," and being outside is something he enjoys doing, he noted.

The family business was sold, but he remained in the archery target profession and shared that he wanted to do more, so he came up with the idea for the Backcountry & Beyond store.

He said he reached out to his friend and college freshman roommate DeWitt Brown, also an outdoor enthusiast, about joining him in the venture.



Backcountry and Beyond. (Karen Kistler photo)

Brown took him up on the offer and serves as the operations director of the business.

Offering a good variety and an open, shoppable space and providing that en-

vironment where people like to spend time and share about the outdoors and their travels are some of the reasons why Moose would encourage people to drop by and visit them.

"We enjoy the company, and we

want people to know us personally if they come in," he said. "Same thing, we want to know our customers, and if it's a first-timer, we want them to feel like they've been a customer their whole life."

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Withorn & Wineka
RIO GRANDE • PUERTO RICO • CAROLINE PETERS PHOTOGRAPHY

Melissa Darby Withorn and Bennett William Wineka were united in marriage on June 3, 2016 overlooking the El Yunque Rainforest, Rio Grande, Puerto Rico. Officiant Cynthia Moss presided over the 5:30 p.m. ceremony.

The bride's parents hosted a fantastic reception that included authentic cigar rolling and a special Pieneros band with dancers.

The bride is the daughter of Gloria and Thomas J. Withorn Jr. of Marietta, Ga. She is the granddaughter of Jean "Dinky" Withorn and the late Thomas J. Withorn and Hazel and Ernest Hale.

Melissa is a graduate of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and Portfolio Center of Atlanta, Ga. She is an associate creative director at Public School, Atlanta, Ga.

The bride was given in marriage by her father and attended by four of her dearest friends, Laura Ritchie of Durham, Claire Conarno of Atlanta, Ga.; Lauren Hughes of Atlanta, Ga.; and Sarah Whitworth of Washington, D.C.

The groom is the son of Lindsay and Mark Wineka of Salisbury. He is the grandson of David Robert Alford III of Oak Ridge, Tenn., and the late Dorothy G. Alford and the late Nancy and Charles W. Wineka of Dover, Pa. Benn is a graduate of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. He is a local broadcast manager at INFORM. He was attended by four best friends, including Samuel Have Wineka of Falls Church, Va.; Kyle Conarno of Atlanta, Ga.; Benjamin Cox of Raleigh; and Seth Leonard of Raleigh.

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TIPS: We can use images from CD, DVD, USB drive or by email: celebrations@salisburypost.com. Files should be a minimum of 300 dpi. Do not scan; please get digital files from your photographer. Write-ups that are too long will be edited at our discretion, so it's best to stay within the word count. Double-check all name spellings. Remember, our format requires the exact number and orientation of photos as shown above.



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How the Yadkin Riverkeeper is committed to helping a state benchmark

BY BRAD DOUNTZ

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It's almost too easy to take water for granted. Even though water covers over 70 percent of Earth's surface, only 1 percent of it is actually drinkable. Helping supply more than 841,000 people with fresh water is

the Yadkin River, a 200-mile river that weaves through Winston-Salem, Lexington and Salisbury before it turns into the Pee Dee River at Lake Tillery.

Even though the Yadkin River is an essential asset for North Carolina, it faces a motley crew of obstacles. Water pollution from wastewater treatment plants and land development near the river hin-

der its natural beauty and prevent people from enjoying it recreationally and as a resource.

To better protect the Yadkin River and educate the public on what they can do to help, the Yadkin Riverkeeper, a non-profit organization from Winston-Salem, has spearheaded the fight to raise awareness of the river's importance since 2008.

"Our mission is to protect and enhance the Yadkin River both in terms of the water quality and also recreationally use of the river and the lakes," Yadkin Riverkeeper Executive Director Edgar Miller said.

Miller has participated in environmental policy and advocacy for 40 years, but even with decades of experience, he



A man fishes in the large backwater of the Yadkin River at Yadkin River Park. (Jon C. Lakey file photo)



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The advertisement features a white Chevrolet pickup truck with a service bed, branded with 'S.A. Sloop Heating & Cooling' and the phone number '704-857-5684'. The truck is shown from a front-three-quarter view. The background is a dark blue gradient. The text 'Servicing the Community for 27 years' is written in a large, white, italicized serif font. At the bottom, the company logo 'S.A. Sloop Heating & Cooling' is displayed in a stylized, metallic font with a blue and orange glow, with the tagline 'Built on Integrity' in a white script font below it. The phone number '704-857-5684' and the website 'www.sasloop.com' are prominently displayed in large, bold, white sans-serif fonts.

still has to overcome some harsh realities to accomplish his goals.

“It’s a challenge,” Miller said. “The river has some pollution problems. High Rock Lake is currently considered impaired for pollutants by the state, and that impacts ultimately recreational use, particularly if we see algae bloom.

“Our hope is that we are educating and making people aware of potential threats to the river, the importance of the river to the region’s economy and the environment.”

Much of the main pollution sources originate from overdevelopment, agriculture runoff, municipal wastewater and sewer overflow. Miller estimated that the developed area in the watershed is said to “basically double” by 2060, and local and state agencies “are way overtaxed and overwhelmed” to properly enforce regulations.

“I’ve seen a lot of communities step up since I’ve been in this job to stop development and other projects that could impair water quality. I think we’re getting there, but right now, we’re in such an uptick with the development that it’s hard to keep up,” Miller said.

Joe Morris was the immediate past president of the Yadkin Riverkeeper and also served as the director of city



(Jon C. Lakey file photo)

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planning for Salisbury as well as a board member of Three Rivers Land Trust. Morris said the organization needs to increase its membership, but its financial situation has greatly improved thanks to large donations. Morris feels as though regular citizens are starting to become more aware of environmental issues that happen at a national and local level, such as localized flooding. He just believes what's being done from a government standpoint isn't enough for what the Yadkin River is dealing with.

"I am concerned about the regulatory environment," Morris said. "We don't have the support in the general assembly that we once did for environmental issues. I'm concerned about how some regulations might be relaxed that could have a negative impact on the river."

One of the major priorities for the Yadkin Riverkeeper is the High Rock Lake Nutrient Management Strategy, which is focused on protecting river buffers, reducing phosphorus and nitrogen, and having better stormwater control in the lake.

In addition, the Yadkin Riverkeeper is hoping to improve the Yadkin State River Trail and restore the watershed on the South Yadkin River.

Some of the things people can do to help the river is reduce fertilizer use, clear less land, join the Yadkin Riverkeeper, and make sure elected officials are not agreeing to overdevelopment.

"I'm very optimistic about the river, but I don't want to sound naive because I know there's development pressure, we have a growing population in this state, we're going to have more industrial agriculture, more animals. We need more protein for people," Morris said.

As executive director, Miller is realistic on where things currently stand with the Yadkin Riverkeeper. Still, when taking into account all of the work they have done in the past 16 years, he's ready for what the future holds.

"We are at a critical juncture that we have the opportunity to do right by the river and by High Rock Lake and the other lakes. I think bringing in community support, these new regulations that we clean up the river and the lake. There's still hope we can do that. I'm optimistic in that regard. I'm also very aware of the challenges we face," Miller said. "If we don't take steps now, we will end up with a lake that can't be used for drinking or swimming and not good for the fish either."



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