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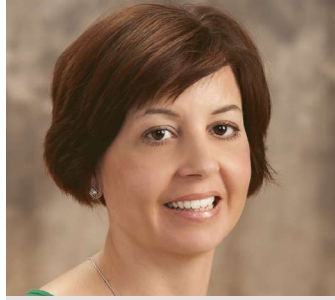
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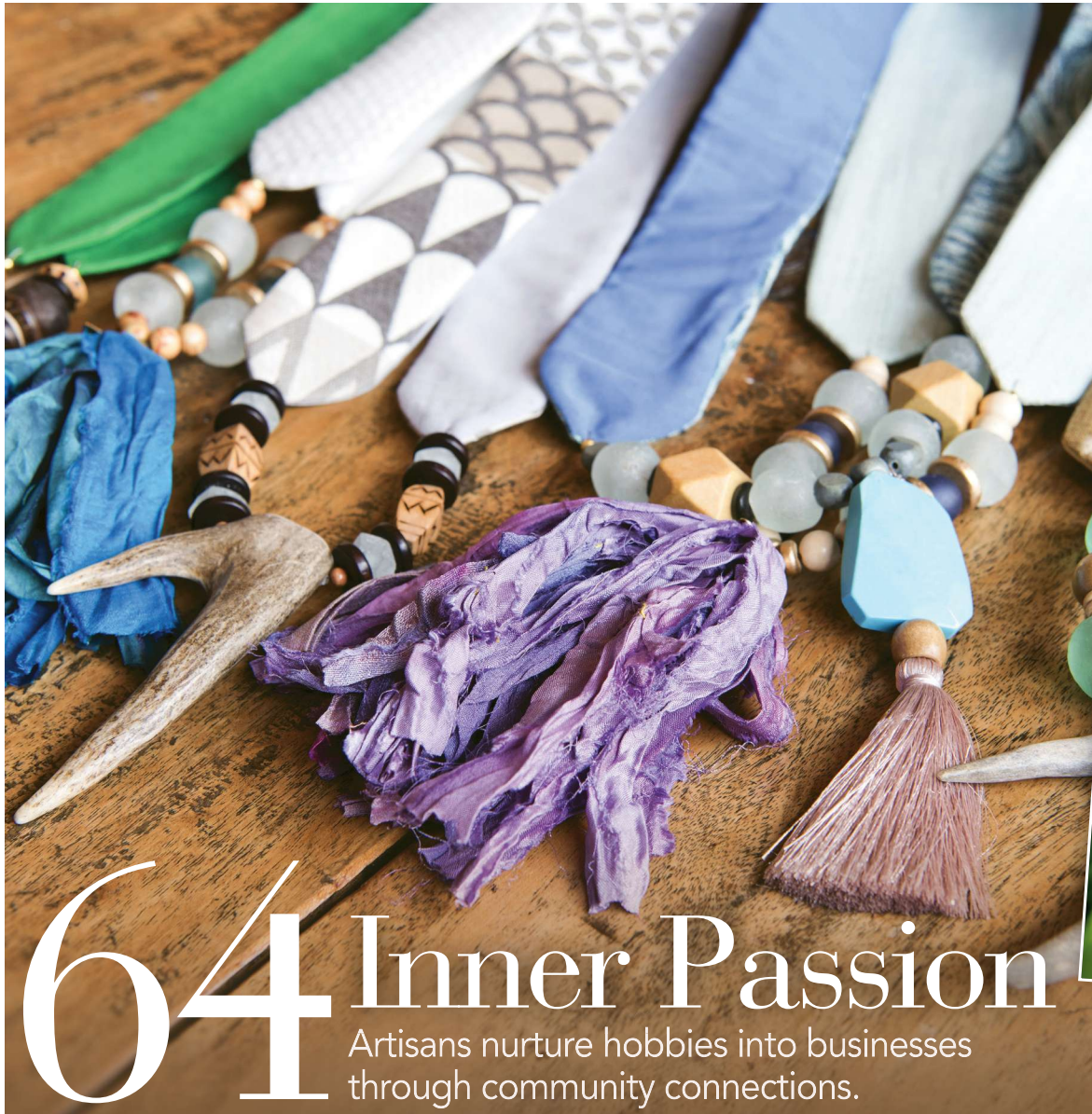
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FEATURES



64 Inner Passion

Artisans nurture hobbies into businesses through community connections.



ON THE COVER:
Susan Lipsey grew this striking gladiola in her backyard garden.
Photo by Ray Sepesy

How Does Her Garden Grow?

Through patience, flexibility and a generous spirit.

34



Vivaha, Ballantyne Style!

Indian-American couples tie the knot in traditional, fusion celebrations.

50



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DEPARTMENTS



46



48

WIRE 13
Plug in to what's going on in Ballantyne.

FACES 29
Our featured personalities move to life's beat.

STYLE POINTS 46
Designers rev up for the color(s) of the year.

FAB FARE 48
Pasta, tapas and more have patrons eating with Gusto!

WHO KNEW? 62
The Elon name in Ballantyne has an inspirational history.

EXPERT DIRECT. 74
Learn simple ways to cultivate the artist within.

SOCIAL SEEN 76
Look at who's stepping up — and out — for charities.

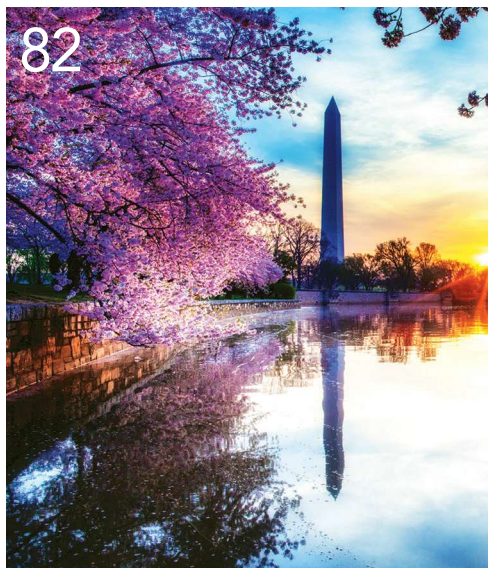
ESCAPE 82
The nation's capital toasts cherry blossoms and more.

TAKE FIVE 94
Here's how we know spring has sprung.

EYE LEVEL 96
This welcome site to gardeners spins a distinctive silk road.



74



82

BALLANTYNE magazine

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Bissell Media LLC

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www.bigsushi.com

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www.ballantynemagazine.com

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Spring 2016 Vol. 16, No. 1

Corrections – At Ballantyne Magazine, we are committed to accuracy. In our Winter 2015-2016 issue, Petr Vasicko's name was spelled wrong in a "Who Knew?" caption. In "Escape," we should have said Lexington Glassworks is in downtown Asheville, not the River Arts District.

Welcome Home to Longview



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Kaleidoscope Swirl

Our Seasonal Hues



AFTER THE WINTER CHILL, we greet spring with a brilliant pop of color. Our stories form a kaleidoscope swirl that captures the vibrant personality of Ballantyne.

In our cover story we visit the environmentally sustainable backyard gardens of Susan Lipsey. The eye-catching color spectrum she has created fuses nature, plants and beauty to produce a hidden masterpiece we are grateful to share.

Our plan for this issue
was to illuminate the
pages with a bright prism
of color to welcome the
warm beauty of spring.

The hue of Ballantyne's entrepreneurial essence is captured in our piece on two artisans whose growing businesses are taking off because of community connections.

Spectacular color and tradition are on full display in three Indian-American weddings performed at The Ballantyne Hotel & Lodge over the last year. Rich ceremonial rituals imbue the pageantry of these celebrations of love.

In Style Points, Whitley Adkins Hamlin artfully integrates the two Pantone colors of the year — Rose Quartz and Serenity—in both fashion and home design. In Expert Direct, artist Andy Braitman encourages us to nurture creativity by following simple steps to explore our innate artistic talents. Sketch pad, anyone?

The three individuals we profile in Faces exude vivid personalities, and one saturates the world with a cause painted in teal. In Fab Fare we visit Gusto! and taste the rainbow of flavors presented in menu offerings of fresh pasta, tapas and sangria.

Cherry blossoms glow in the sunshine as we travel to Washington, D.C., this spring in Escape. The delicate pink petals are truly a national treasure cultivated for us all.

Our plan for this issue was to illuminate the pages with a bright prism of color to welcome the warm beauty of spring. We hope you enjoy our palette.

Warm Wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Regina Robertson".

Regina Robertson
Editor-in-Chief



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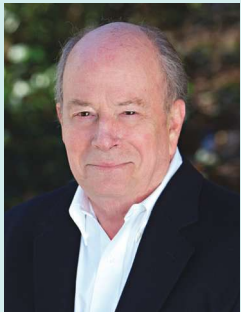
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What's happening in and **around Ballantyne**



The first EGGstravaganza Easter Egg Hunt in 2015 was a fun occasion.

Ballantyne Village Hosts EGGstravaganza

The second annual EGGstravaganza Easter Egg Hunt in Ballantyne Village, sponsored by Starrett Law Firm, is Saturday March 26, from 2 p.m. to 3 p.m. The event includes an

appearance by the Easter Bunny, live bunnies, crafts, games and more. Details: Leon Putman at lputman@ballantynevillage.com or visit www.ballantynevillage.com.

NEWS CUES



Sara's Y offers a wide range of health and wellness opportunities.

Check Out Sara's YMCA, Spring Events

The Ballantyne Village YMCA has transitioned into the new Sara's YMCA at the corner of Ballantyne Corporate Place and Brixham Hill Avenue.

A part of Morrison Family YMCA, Sara's Y is designed to enhance health and wellness offerings with a dedicated hot yoga studio, indoor/outdoor athletic training space, expanded group exercise room, personal training area, nutrition and wellness activities and cafe. Details: www.ymcacharlotte.org/saras.

The Morrison Family Y's Ballantyne School of Theatre showcases "Charlotte's Web" Friday, March 18, through Sunday, March

20. "Story Theatre" runs from Friday, April 15, through Sunday, April 17. Auditions for the upcoming production of "Once On This Island" are Saturday, April 16, by appointment only. Info: www.ymcacharlotte.org/bac.

Other spring events at Morrison Family Y are the RUN! Ballantyne 5K, 8K and Fun Run on Saturday, May 14, and the 16th Annual Charity Golf Tournament at Ballantyne Country Club on Monday, June 6. Contact lisa.schlachter@ymcacharlotte.org or call 704-716 4658 for event information.

Registration for the Y's summer day camp is now open, and registration for swim lessons begins Friday, April 1.

Corporate Park Celebrates Earth Day

Ballantyne Corporate Park holds its 7th Annual Earth Day Event on Thursday, April 21, at Brixham Green. The public event features free shredding and electronic recycling, music, giveaways and a variety of "green" vendors with information for the community. Details will be posted closer to the event date on www.go-ballantyne.com.



Greenway Hosts Naturalist Course

Anne Springs Close Greenway hosts a 12-week environmental training course Wednesday, March 2, through Wednesday, May 18, from 9:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. for anyone interested in becoming a certified South Carolina Master Naturalist.

The Catawba Master Naturalist Program teaches participants how to identify plants and animals and understand ecological concepts they can apply through volunteering in their communities. Experts in environmental fields teach the program. Info: www.ascgreenway.org/education.

Breakfast Club Meets in April, June



The Ballantyne Breakfast Club holds meetings this spring in April and June on Saturday mornings.

The April gathering focuses on continued development along Providence Road, with representatives from the Charlotte planning and transportation departments providing

details on growth and road improvements.

Meetings, which are free and open to the public, are at The Ballantyne Hotel & Lodge starting at 9 a.m., with attendees gathering at 8 a.m. to enjoy complimentary coffee and refreshments. For dates and further information, contact Ray Eschert at 704-651-1237 or reschert@aol.com, or go to www.ballantynebreakfastclub.com.

Gallery Offers Art by the Beatles, Dylan

A collection of hand-signed artworks created by Paul McCartney, Ringo Starr, John Lennon, George Harrison and Bob Dylan debuts Friday, April 1, at an evening reception at Charlotte Fine Art Gallery in Carmel Commons. The art is on exhibit and for sale through Sunday, April 3.

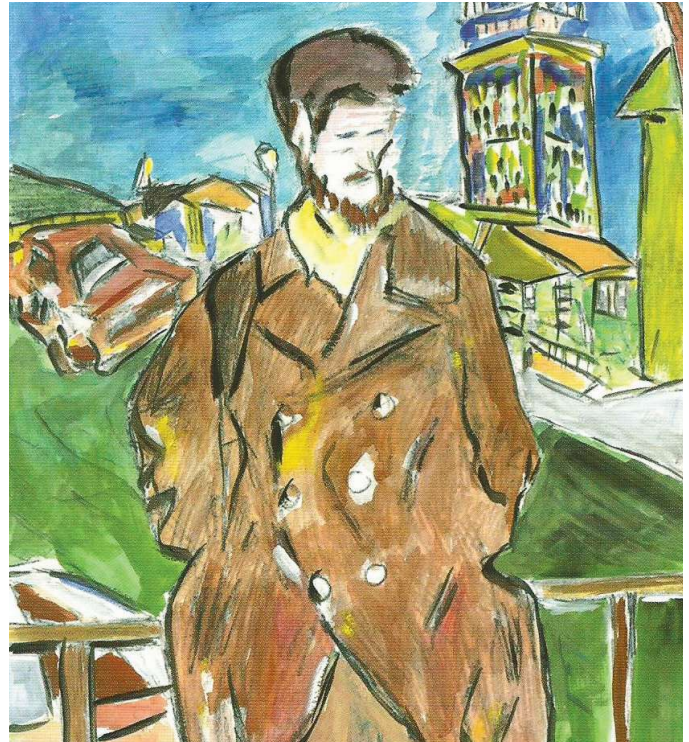
Neal Glaser, collection curator, as well as Ringo Starr's art publisher and Paul McCartney's art distributor, will be on hand during the exhibit to provide background and stories behind the artwork.

"Never before has one exhibit featured the hand-signed artworks of all four Beatles and Bob Dylan

together in one place," Glaser says. "This is a rare opportunity to see the creative minds of five rock legends."

Starr donates all proceeds of his art sales to the Lotus Foundation. Lennon only officially signed and released 14 artworks in his lifetime. The 1969 "Bag One" portfolio hand-signed in the exhibit was presented to Yoko Ono as a wedding gift and reissued after his death by Ono with her signature on it.

Charlotte Fine Art Gallery is located at 7510 Pineville-Matthews Road, Suite 9-A. Info: 704-541-0741 or www.charlottefineart.com.



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Pop by The Ballantyne Hotel & Lodge this Spring



St. Patrick's Day

Celebrate with a special Irish lunch or dinner, including a chocolate and Guinness dessert at Gallery Restaurant March 17-19. Black Bush Manhattans will also be available throughout the evening.

Tastings

Gallery Restaurant will offer weekly tastings on Fridays beginning at 6:30 p.m. with complementary light bites. Usually, the first and third Friday of the month will feature a certain type of wine, and the second Friday of the month will focus on cocktails.



Afternoon Teas

Afternoon Tea is served Wednesday through Saturday from 1 p.m. to 5 p.m. year-round. The following special teas are available this spring: Downton Abbey Tea, March 2-5, Easter Tea March 23-26, Queen Elizabeth's 90th Birthday Tea April 20-23 and Mother's Day Tea May 4-7.



Easter, Mother's Day Brunches

Celebrate with an elaborate buffet at The Ballantyne Hotel & Lodge for Easter, March 27, and Mother's Day, May 8. Brunch is served 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. Cost: \$75 per person; \$35 for children, ages 5-12; and complimentary for children ages 4 and under (pricing does not include tax or 23 percent service charge). Reservations required: 704-248-4100.



The Golf Club at Ballantyne

To take advantage of the following special offers, please mention them when you reserve your tee time at 704-248-4383.

Mother's Day: On May 8, moms play free with one paid round of golf at the daily rate.

Armed Forces Week: The Golf Club at Ballantyne is



offering half off the regular golf rate May 15-21. Golfers must present military identification on arrival.

Boot Camp Starts April 5

An eight-week boot camp led by personal trainers for people at all fitness levels is at The Ballantyne Hotel & Lodge Tuesday, April 5, through Saturday, May 28.

The camp consists of three hourly sessions per week, with classes on Tuesday and Thursday at 11:30 a.m. and Saturday at 7:30 a.m. Advance registration and payment are required by March 28. Details: 704-361-2799. Registration: 704-248-4348.

BIZ BUZZ

More Tenants Sign at Waverly

Charlotte-based commercial developers Crosland Southeast and Childress Klein have signed PetPeople, CycleBar, Viva Chicken and Panera Bread as tenants for the new 90-acre Waverly development near the intersection of Providence and Ardrey Kell roads in South Charlotte. PetPeople will sell pet foods and supplies in a 4,900-square-foot store, while Viva Chicken is known for its Peruvian rotisserie chicken. The 3,246-square-foot CycleBar is an indoor cycling concept that provides music, video graphics and rider-specific

performance data in a CycleTheatre.

The tenants join more than a dozen other retail shops and restaurants, including a 40,000-square-foot Whole Foods slated to open late this year. The 22,000-square-foot medical office anchor, Novant Health provides urgent care and family health services, including pediatrics and physical therapy. Novant opened in November.

Waverly, a multi-use master planned development, is a joint venture between the developers and the Matthews family. Info: www.waverlyclt.com.



Ballantyne Center Adds Classes

CPCC Ballantyne Center is expanding its course list this spring to include several new language classes as well as courses in database administration, QuickBooks and more. The center is also bringing back its most popular courses: Notary Public, Real Estate Broker and Project Planning and Control.

Since opening last summer, CPCC Ballantyne Center has served more than 550 individuals through non-degree job and career courses and programs. Info or registration: <http://www.cpcc.edu/campuses/ballantyne> or 704-330-4223.

Ballantyne Business Bash June 2

The annual Ballantyne Business Bash is Thursday, June 2, from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. in Ballantyne Corporate Park on Brixham Green at 15800 Brixham Hill Avenue.

Last year more than 500 attendees participated in the event, which featured samples from restaurants and information and giveaways from 20 corporate sponsors. Tickets will be on sale at Morrison Family YMCA for \$10 in advance, \$12 online and \$15 at the event. For further information, go to www.charlottechamber.com/ballantynechapter.



Market Showcases Outdoor Kitchen

The Butcher's Market in the Village at Robinson Farm is now displaying an outdoor kitchen system from Abate Design Group.

The semi-custom model manufactured by Danver Co. can be used as a standalone unit or incorporated within free-standing walls. It comes with a variety of color-coated and simulated-wood finish options. Info: www.thebutchermarket.com.



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Ellen Wofford

Wilmington PLC Acquires Local Firm

Wilmington PLC, which deals with risk and compliance, finance, legal and other business matters, recently acquired Financial Research Associates (FRA), a conference and networking provider of events in health care and finance, located in the Village at Robinson Farm.

Established in 2001 and managed by Chief Operating Officer Ellen Wofford, FRA employs 17 people in Ballantyne who focus on conference operations, marketing and sponsorship sales. As a result of the acquisition, the company plans to hire more conference producers and sponsorship sales staff. Info: 704-341-2384 or www.frallc.com.

Salon Expands, Gains Notice

Salon M2, a "green" salon opened in 2011 by Michele Matkovich at the Village at Robinson Farm, has opened a second location in the midtown area at Kings Court Shopping Center. Salon M2 was recently honored by Salon Today magazine as a 2016 Top 200 Salon in North America. Info: 980-939-1983.

School Offers Youth Lessons, Team Play

Boys and girls ages 13 and under can participate in PGA Junior League Golf June 20 through July 31 at Dana Rader Golf School.

The league provides youngsters an opportunity to learn golf in a fun, social setting, where they play on teams in a popular scramble format. A PGA or LPGA professional coaches each team to assure all golfers are welcomed and included. Info: www.danarader.com, 704-542-7635.



Local Chamber Holds Spring Meetings

The Ballantyne Chapter of the Charlotte Chamber of Commerce holds its Thursday luncheon meetings this spring on March 3 at Ballantyne Village Theatre and on April 7 and May 5 at Ballantyne Country Club. Meetings are from 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m.

The fee is \$25 in advance and \$30 at the door if space is available. Register at www.charlottechamber.com/events.



Melinda Hopkins



Renee Kilminster



Stephen Toth



Hughon Haye



Kelly McKay



Ben Austin



Elizabeth Belote



Nancy Harvey

Bissell Organizations Hire, Promote Staff

Bissell has hired Melinda Hopkins as senior property manager and Renee Kilminster as property manager.

Stephen Toth has been named Gallery Restaurant manager at The Ballantyne Hotel & Lodge. Hughon Haye has been promoted to guest service manager at Aloft Charlotte Ballantyne.

At Dana Rader Golf School, Kelly McKay has been hired as director of sales and marketing and Ben Austin as golf instructor. In promotions, Elizabeth Belote is now office manager, and Nancy Harvey, an LPGA Class A professional and master instructor, is director of instruction.



Kelly Ellis



Erin Gannett



Tresa Grossman



Beth Haemmerlein



Keith Hensel



Jennifer Leathers



Beth Leonard



Mariana Smith

Agents Join Helen Adams Realty

Helen Adams Realty in Ballantyne, now celebrating 16 years of operation, welcomes the following new agents: Kelly Ellis, Erin Gannett, Tresa Grossman, Beth Haemmerlein, Keith Hensel, Jennifer Leathers, Beth Leonard and Mariana Smith. Contact them at 704-341-0279.



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Sergey Belov

Belov has played the International Tennis Federation junior circuit, college tennis and continues playing professionally. He will offer private lessons and clinics for both juniors and adults. Details: 704-841-7529 or www.blakeneyclub.com.

Sergey Belov, a 5.5 rated player by the United States Tennis Association, has joined Blakeney Racquet & Swim Club as its head tennis pro.

Belov has played the International Tennis Federation junior circuit, college tennis and continues playing professionally. He will offer

Business Group Focuses on Social Media

Ballantyne Briefings, a local networking group, will meet Tuesday, April 5, from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m. at Aloft Charlotte Ballantyne.

Greg Gentner, chief operating officer of rFactor, will discuss "Social Media in Business, Re-defined" and explain techniques for transforming social networks into channels for driving business success. Info: Allen Starrett at ars@starrettlawfirm.com or facebook.com/ballantynebriefings.



OPENINGS

CHOPT

Creative Salad Company

Salad Eatery New to Blakeney

Blakeney is home to Chopt Creative Salad Co.'s second location in Charlotte, opening in April. Chopt specializes in globally inspired salads and vegetable dishes with artisan dressings. Details: www.choptsalad.com.



Firm Joins Corporate Park

NutriMost Charlotte is now open in Ballantyne Corporate Park next to the Allen Tate Realtors® on Don Lochman Lane. NutriMost offers weight-loss programs. Info: www.nutrimostclt.com.

Pub Serves Handcrafted Drinks

Growler USA has opened a location in Toringdon Circle. The microbrew pub features 104 styles of handcrafted drinks, including local breweries Triple C, Birdsong, Olde

Mecklenburg, D9, The Unknown, Sugar Creek and Lenny Boy.

In addition to beer and pub fare, Growler USA serves hard cider, draught wine, handcrafted root beer, cold-pressed coffee and kombucha tea. Growlers will also be available for take-home purchase. Details: www.growlerusa.com.



Soft Surroundings

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Blakeney Welcomes Lifestyle Brand

Soft Surroundings, a lifestyle brand of apparel, beauty, gift and home-decor products targeted to busy women, opens its first store in the Carolinas in Blakeney in mid-March. Info: www.softsurroundings.com.

Vitamin Store Now Open



Live Fit Nutrition USA is now open in the Village at Robinson Farm. The health and nutrition business co-owned and run by Leah

Noe, a certified trainer by the International Sports Sciences Association, sells supplements, vitamins and products aimed at sports nutrition and weight loss. Info: 704-752-3222.

Store Focuses on Women's Apparel

Vestique, a women's clothing and accessory store that sells everything for under \$100, is now

vestique
clothing + accessories

open in Blakeney. This is the store's eighth location in the Carolinas. Info: 704-543-0403 or www.vestique.com.

Store Sells Fair Trade, Artisan Goods



Gratefully, Danielle, a lifestyle store offering home decor, gifts and accessories is now open in The Shops at

Piper Glen. The store, run by Danielle Vincent and her mother, Ruth Vincent, focuses on fair trade products and creations by local artisans. Info: 980-585-3222.

Boutique Opens in Blakeney

K-la, a women's clothing, accessory, gift and lifestyle boutique, is now open in Blakeney. Info: www.shopkla.com.

K·la

Coffee Shop Adds Wine Bar

Rush Espresso in Ballantyne Village is now Rush Espresso and Wine Bar. The bar has added more than 35 wines by the glass and offers bottles as well. The menu has expanded to include small plates, flatbreads, local pimentos, artisan cheeses and charcuterie, along with French desserts made locally.

The shop also has extended its hours until midnight Wednesday through Saturday and until 8 p.m. Sunday. Wednesday is open mic night, and Friday and Saturday evenings feature musicians. Details: www.rushespressocafe.com.



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SWEET CHARITIES



Jimmy Gubelli, Hailey Rorie, Lisa Freeman, Nicole Heath, JJ Bissell and Matt Sexton are pleased with computer donations to boost technology in Guatemala.

Tenants Donate PCs to Foundation

The Ballantyne Corporate Park (BCP) computer drive benefiting the Heineman Foundation surpassed previous efforts, producing 5,966 pounds of recycled computer equipment. Each piece of equipment will be refurbished and donated to the Technology for Education project in Guatemala.

Since 2011, the Heineman Foundation has donated more than 14,000 computers to this project thanks to the generous support of Charlotte-based organizations. The foundation will return to BCP at the Earth Day Event on Thursday, April 21, to offer the community another on-site opportunity to recycle computer equipment.

Accessory Store Supports Turning Point

Creative by Nature Home, a home accessory store in Blakeney, raised \$5,000 for Turning Point during the holiday season through sales of a featured ornament. This brings donations over the past four years to \$20,200 to the organization that serves victims of domestic violence, sexual assault and child abuse. Details: www.cbnhome.com, www.turntoday.net.



Drive Yields Over Three Tons of Food

Ballantyne Corporate Park partnered with the Mecklenburg County Council of the Boy Scouts and the Western North Carolina Conference of the United Methodist Church to collect non-perishable food for Loaves & Fishes during the Super Bowl Keep Pounding Food Drive.

Coupling that with a donation from Food Lion, the collection of physical items at Ballantyne Commons East and monetary donations, the Ballantyne community collected over three tons of food for Loaves & Fishes.



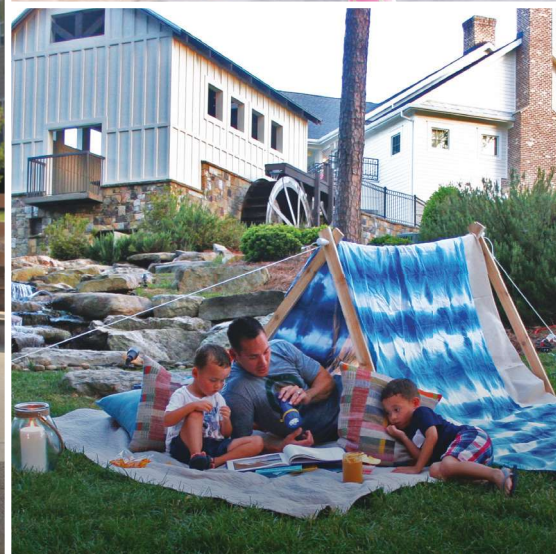
Cadets, Switchin' Kitchens Aid Veterans

The cadets of Ardrey Kell High School's Marine Corps Junior ROTC and Switchin' Kitchens, located in the Fountains at Ardrey Kell, will join forces for the fourth year Thursday, March 10, to provide gourmet-quality "take and bake" meals to needy veterans in the N.C. National Guard.

Each meal comes with a personal thank-you note that this year's Hawk Ridge Elementary fifth graders wrote as a school mentorship and crossover activity. The goal this year is to reach the 1,000th meal for delivery by Operation Homefront. Meals go to families or disabled or single veterans who need cooking assistance. To contribute or learn more, call Switchin' Kitchens at 704-844-2002.



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Dash for Down March 19

The Down Syndrome Association of Greater Charlotte holds the third annual 3-2-1 Dash for Down Syndrome 5K and one-mile fun run at 8:30 a.m. Saturday, March 19, at 8835 Blakeney Professional Drive. Last year the event drew 900 participants who raised \$38,000. Details: www.dashfordownsyndrome.racesonline.com.

Relay For Life June 4-5 at Ardrey Kell

The American Cancer Society holds its fourth annual Ballantyne Relay For Life from 6 p.m. Friday, June 4, to 4 a.m. Saturday, June 5, at Ardrey Kell High School.

At Relay For Life events, individuals and teams camp out at an athletic track, park or other gathering area, with the goal of keeping at least one team member on the track or pathway at all times throughout the evening.

Last year the event exceeded its goal in raising \$130,000. The fundraising goal for 2016 is \$129,500. A Survivor's Dinner is scheduled two weeks prior to the event to honor and celebrate cancer survivors. Details: www.relayforlife.org/ballantynenc.



Photo courtesy of Bissell

Gingerbread Lane Tops \$8,500

The Ballantyne Hotel & Lodge brought in more than \$8,500 from its Gingerbread Lane competition in December to benefit Levine Children's Hospital.

Out of 44 gingerbread creations, Cathy Christiansen won the People's Choice Award with her "North Pole General Store," pictured here. Attendees voted for their favorite gingerbread structure with a minimum donation of \$1 per vote to the hospital.



Bryan DeGabrielle (from left), Mike Conley, Joe Stewart and Stephanie Cox enjoy the check presentation.

Tourney Supports Children's Hospital

Charlotte-based Eastwood Homes raised approximately \$58,000 for the Levine Children's Hospital at the homebuilder's third annual charity golf outing last fall. Eastwood's three golf tournaments so far have raised approximately \$150,000 for the hospital. Info: www.eastwoodhomes.com.

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Meck-South volunteers Wally Olson (from left), Tony Hunter, June Thoreson-Rogers, Deb Corbett, Joni Brown, Vickie Yeingst, Michael Knight and Dick Bowden.

Rotary Prepares Friendship Trays

Rotarians from Mecklenburg County-South Rotary Club and their families recently gathered at Friendship Trays, a nonprofit meals-on-wheels program, to prepare 700 food trays for homebound Charlotte residents.

The club's other community service efforts include cleaning greenway sites and working at the Beds for Kids warehouse. Meck-South Rotary meets at 7:30 a.m. Fridays at Another Broken Egg Cafe in Ballantyne Corners. Info: www.mecksouthrotary.org.

Foundation Recognizes Studio



Carolina Dance Capital, a dance studio in Toringdon Circle, recently became an official Circle of Hope Studio.


Carolina Dance Capital won the recognition from the Circle of Hope Dancers Foundation for contributions to the group, which provides financial assistance to dancers affected by cancer. Info: www.carolinadancecapital.com.

Remi Supports Dove's Nest

The Remi Group's annual fall fundraiser benefited Dove's Nest, the women's program of the Charlotte Rescue Mission. Through collection drives since 2008, Remi has donated over \$21,000 worth of toiletries, medical supplies, bus passes and food for the 120 men and 80 women and children at the rescue mission.

Tour de Cure American Diabetes Association

Corporate Park Welcomes Event

The American Diabetes Association Tour de Cure is hosted out of Ballantyne Corporate Park this year on Saturday, April 30. The event will start and finish at Brixham Green. Participants can choose from four courses. Registration: \$15, fundraising minimum \$200. Details: 704-373-9111, ext. 3262, or Rolly Sauls at rsauls@diabetes.org. 



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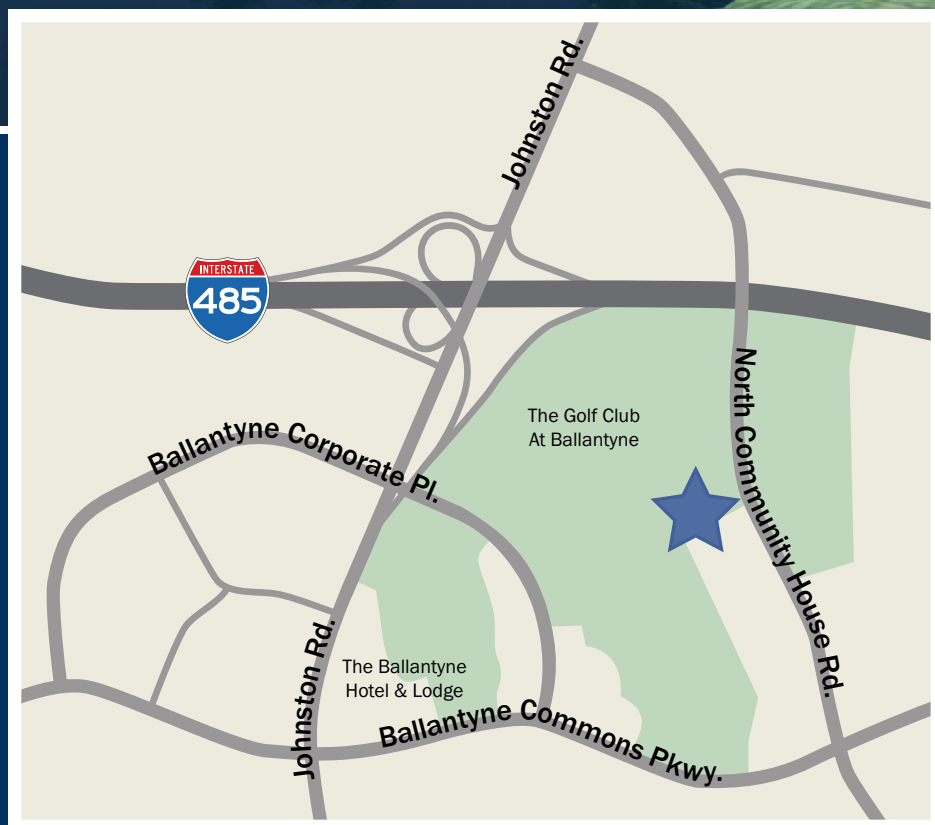
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Photos by Ray Sepesy



THE THEME SONGS OF OUR featured personalities qualify them for our next party invitation: “Better When I’m Dancin’,” “Happy” and “Ain’t No Stopping Us Now.”

And when the music pauses?

They might be traveling to San Francisco, Scotland or exotic islands for their dream vacation.

Or, they could be engrossed in helping their favorite charities — Teal Butterfly Challenge, the Isabella Santos Foundation or the Morrison Family YMCA and Rotary.

To find out more about our fascinating Faces — Wil Brooks, Amy Roberts and Theresa Foust — you’re invited to turn the page.

AMY ROBERTS

Birthplace: Charlotte, N.C.

Job: Senior Claims Processing Specialist.

What do you like most about your job?

Learning about the insurance industry and how different states handle claims. My co-workers are pretty cool, too!

What's your guilty pleasure?

Cake and cupcakes. I don't need a special occasion to stop by the bakery to get my fix!

Do you live in Ballantyne?

Yes, I have been in Ballantyne for 11 years. It is a beautiful area.

What is your favorite Ballantyne-area restaurant?

Stone Mountain Grill.

What is your favorite outdoor activity?

Going on walks with my daughter and having family cookouts.

Describe your dream vacation.

An all-expenses-paid trip to San Francisco, including tickets to a Giants game with VIP passes to meet the players, tickets to the San Francisco Zoo & Gardens and a 1967 Austin-Healey convertible to cruise on the Golden Gate Bridge and around the city.

What would your theme song be for walking into a room?

"Better When I'm Dancin'"
by Meghan Trainor.

What is your favorite news source?

"Good Morning America."

What charitable organizations are you involved with?

My friend Janine DeFeo and I started a nonprofit in the spring of 2015 called the Teal Butterfly Challenge. Our goal is to spread awareness of ovarian cancer. The original challenge was to paint your nails teal, make a butterfly symbol with your hands, post a picture on social media and challenge others using #tealbutterflychallenge. The challenge went global!

What is your biggest pet peeve?

People texting and driving.

What is a hidden gem in Ballantyne?

The ponds in Ballantyne Corporate Park.

Share something that someone would never guess about you.

I was asked to try out for the Dallas Cowboys Cheerleaders.



**WIL BROOKS**

Birthplace: Macon, Miss.

Job: Owner and Agent, State Farm at Ballantyne.

What do you like most about your job?

I enjoy helping my clients protect their assets and plan for their family's future. I also enjoy giving them reassurance during times of unexpected stress.

What's your guilty pleasure?

Watching "House of Cards" on Netflix with my wife.

Do you live in Ballantyne?

No, SouthPark.

What is your favorite

Ballantyne-area restaurant?

Blue Taj in Ballantyne Village.

What is your favorite outdoor activity?

Golf!

Describe your dream vacation.

Return to the beach at Turks & Caicos. Play St. Andrews in Scotland.

What would your theme song be for walking into a room?

"Ain't No Stopping Us Now" by McFadden & Whitehead.

What is your favorite news source?

CNN.

I would be rather caught dead than wear ____.

Black socks with shorts.

What charitable organizations are you involved with?

The Morrison Family YMCA and Rotary. The YMCA provides so many services to families, strengthening the body and mind in a healthy, active environment. Rotary is dedicated to service above self. It provides a way for business people to connect while giving back to both their local community and the world at large.

What is your biggest pet peeve?

Emails — when people hit "Reply All."

What is a hidden gem in Ballantyne?

Gallery Restaurant at The Ballantyne Hotel & Lodge.

Share something that someone would never guess about you.

I have bachelor's and master's degrees in chemistry.

THERESA FOUST

Birthplace: Wilmington, Ohio.

Job: Assistant Vice President & Head of Community Relations, MetLife.

What do you like most about your job?

The diversity of activities we get involved in and the opportunity to interact with so many people at MetLife and in the community.

What's your guilty pleasure?

"Game of Thrones." Can't wait to find out what happens to Jon Snow!

Do you live in Ballantyne?

Close. Between Ballantyne and SouthPark.

What is your favorite Ballantyne-area restaurant?

I frequent Which Wich the most since it is across the street from our building. I also enjoy Basil Thai and Jade.

What is your favorite outdoor activity?

I enjoy water skiing, paddleboarding, kayaking, swimming or just hanging out on the water.

Describe your dream vacation.

Tahiti with the magnificent ocean, vast blue sky, warm sun with a sea breeze, family and friends laughing and enjoying wonderful food, great music and a cool adult beverage in hand.

What would your theme song be for walking into a room?

"Happy" by Pharrell Williams.

What is your favorite news source?

The Internet is most often my first search tool. If it works in my morning schedule, I enjoy "Your World in 90 Seconds" on the CBS Morning News. I'm also a sports fan, so ESPN is on in my home at some point during the day.

I would be rather caught dead than wear ____.

Spandex in the office.

What charitable organizations are you involved with?

During the past year, we were involved with the Isabella Santos Foundation on several events. What a great organization and wonderful cause. We also partner with several military nonprofits and the YMCA.

What is your biggest pet peeve?

Dishonesty.

What is a hidden gem in Ballantyne?

On the Green Deli.



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BY DAWN LILES

PHOTOS BY
RAY SEPESEY

MASTER GARDENER SUSAN LIPSEY is the quintessential picture of the modern Southern gardener. She is a health-conscious, sustainable-living advocate with an eye for aesthetics in both her garden and home. She also has a generous and giving spirit.

Her abundant

garden in Providence Downs is well planned and designed but uncomplicated and changeable. "Gardening is an experiment," Lipsey says. "If you try something and it doesn't work, you can replace it with something else." Her method for tracking



"I HAVE
SO MANY
WINDOWS VIEWING
MY OUTDOOR
GARDENS THAT I FEEL
LIKE THE GARDEN IS
ALREADY INSIDE WITH
US. IT'S BETTER THAN
A PAINTING!"

MASTER GARDENER
SUSAN LIPSEY



what works and what doesn't is as uncomplicated as her garden. She keeps a large three-ring binder filled with tags, taped to the pages, of plants, flowers and vegetables she grows. She makes notes next to each tag about when the item was planted and how it fared in her garden. A lifelong gardener, she earned the designation of master gardener in 2011 through the Extension Master Gardeners of Union County. To earn the designation, participants complete 10 classes on a range of gardening topics and pass a final exam.

In her garden, she easily mixes flowers, shrubs, vegetable plants and herbs in raised beds and wooded areas of her backyard. Her flower gardens include ginger lilies, zinnias, oakleaf hydrangeas, coneflowers, Shasta daisies, lantana, drift roses, morning glories, Russian sage, wisteria, pineapple lilies, sunflowers, creeping jasmine and black-eyed Susans, interspersed with herbs such as tarragon, oregano, thyme, sage and basil.

She grows vegetables such as green beans, butternut squash, okra and fennel in raised beds, which reside near beds of strawberries and several blueberry and blackberry bushes.

Last spring, she grew tomato plants indoors from seed, which involved planting organic seeds in a seed-starting mix and placing them under fluorescent grow lights to maintain a consistent temperature of 75 to 85 degrees. Seeds need 12 hours of light per day to germinate. "The main



The backyard garden in Providence Downs reflects a wide variety of plants.

continued on page 40



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■ continued from page 37

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reason for growing tomatoes from seed is to guarantee the plants are non-GMO heirloom," says Lipsey. Her resulting tomato plants became a focal point of her 2015 garden.

Sharing the Dirt on Soil

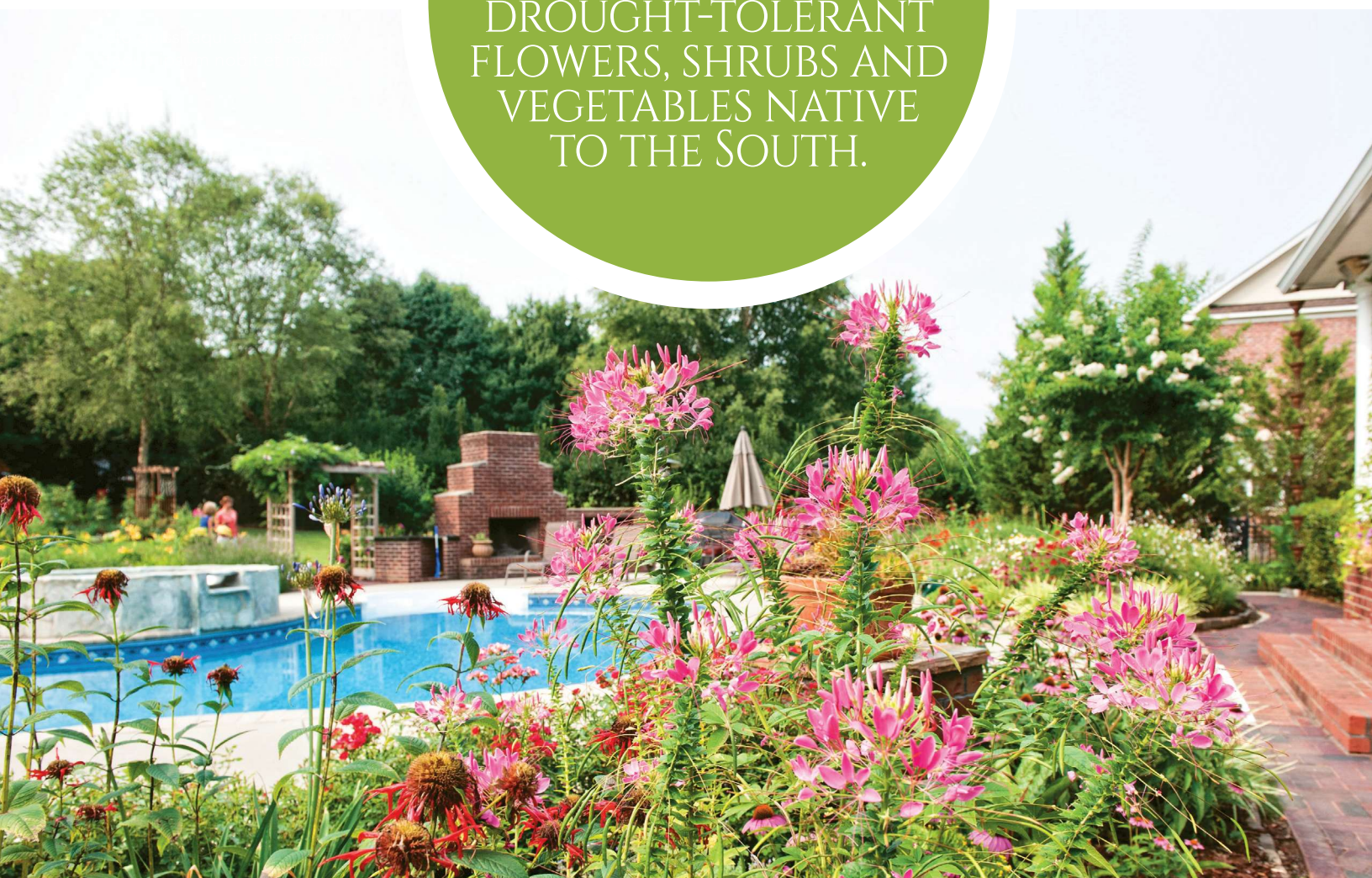
Nutrient-rich soil is the foundation for a beautiful garden. Lipsey improves her soil through vermicomposting using red wiggler worms, which break down food scraps and create microorganisms beneficial to the soil. An alternative is to make vermi tea from the worm castings and spray it on plants for natural protection against plant diseases. On top of her garden's healthy compost layers, she prefers mulch, mainly because it retains moisture better than pine straw.


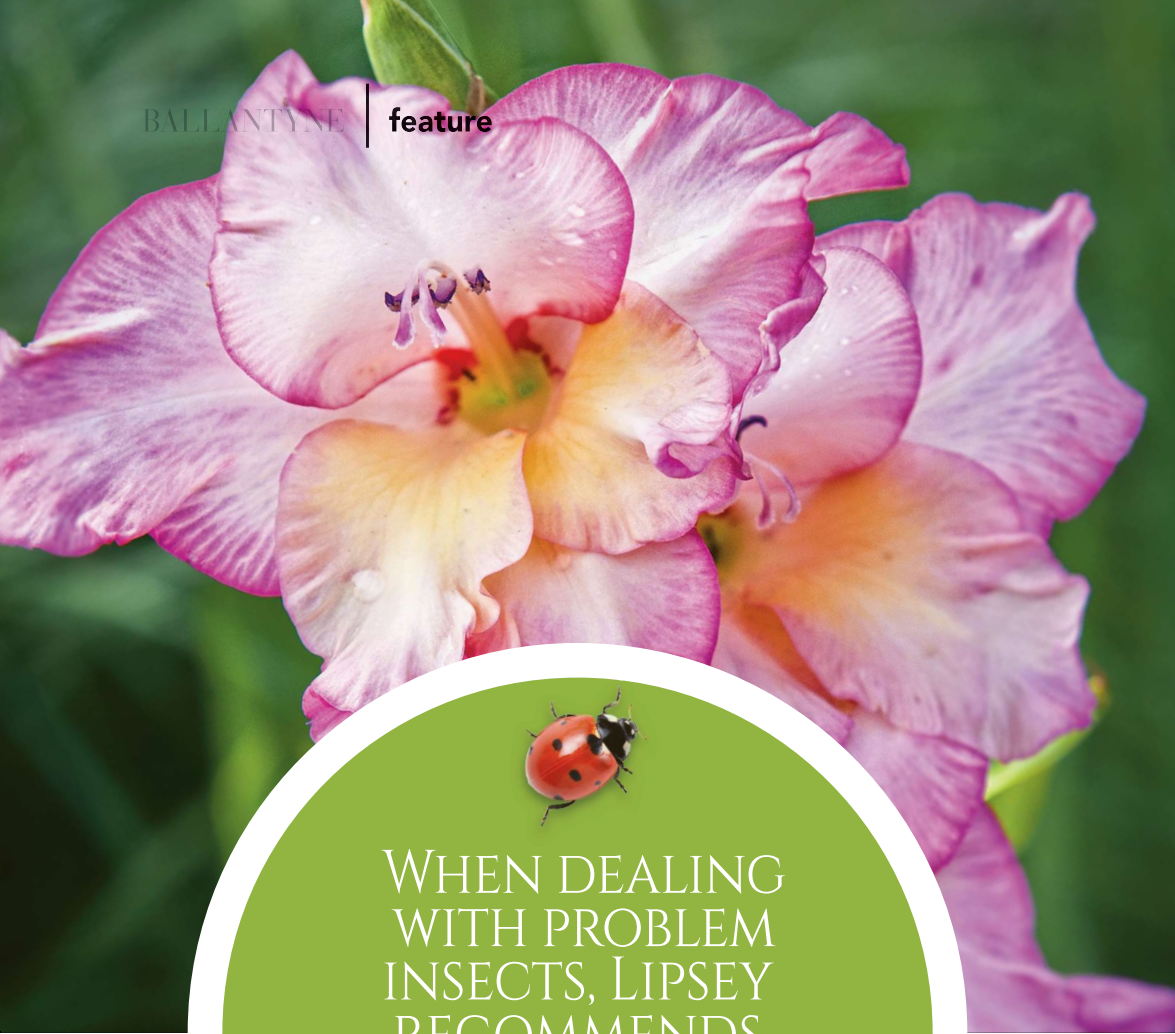
Another natural, chemical-free and inexpensive method Lipsey prefers for building her garden is called "lasagna gardening." The name refers not to the pasta but to layering organic materials that will be absorbed over time, resulting in rich soil that helps plants thrive.

Lasagna gardening creates new beds through several simple steps, Lipsey says. First, take cardboard, remove all the tape and break it down to flat pieces. Then cover the new bedding area with a layer of cardboard, making sure to overlap grass or weed areas so nothing can grow. Cover the cardboard with a three-inch layer of compost, and then cover the compost layer with wood mulch. The bed will need to lie dormant for



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GARDEN THRIVES
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at least six months before planting. This allows time for the worms and beneficial insects to come and help kill the grass and weed areas and decompose the cardboard.

Weed, Pest Control

The majority of the time, Lipsey's garden thrives because she plants drought-tolerant flowers, shrubs and vegetables native to the South. Even her praying mantises, which are a safe alternative to pesticides for controlling insects and bugs, are native to the area. "You want to look for the brown Carolina praying mantis," she says. "The green ones are from Asia and are not native. Why introduce something foreign into your garden?" When dealing with problem insects, Lipsey recommends using an organic solution such as horticultural oil or neem oil. Both can be purchased online, at garden stores and are safe for bee pollinators.

For killing weeds, she suggests two alternatives to chemicals. For the first, combine one gallon of vinegar with one ounce of dish soap in a spray bottle. Generously spray weeds in the garden, but only when the forecast calls for two consecutive days of sunshine. A second method, using baking soda, is mainly used for eliminating weeds in sidewalks and pavement areas. Simply take the powdered baking soda and sweep it into cracks and pavement spaces.

continued on page 44

The garden is a blend of flowers, shrubs, vegetables and herbs.

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■ continued from page 42

Giving Nature

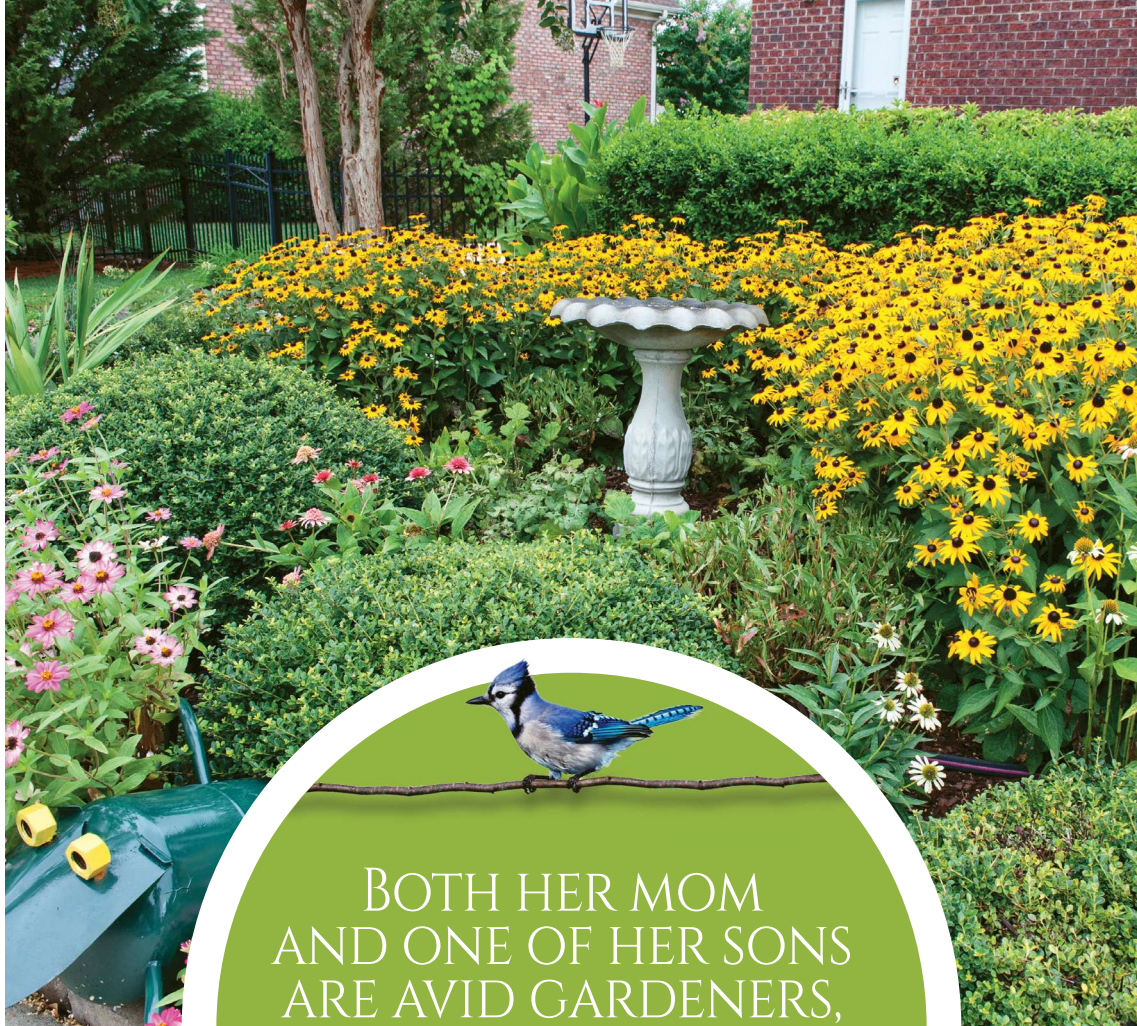
Lipsey's lifelong interest in plants began when she was a little girl, gardening next to her mother. "My mom is now almost 80 and is still a big gardener," Lipsey says. "She has 48 tomato plants and shares her tomatoes with friends and family."

That sense of sharing and community is big in Lipsey's family. Both her mom and one of her sons are avid gardeners, and they all offer vegetables and cuttings to everyone they know. It's rare, however, that Lipsey cuts flowers to bring indoors. "I think it's mainly because I have so many windows viewing my outdoor gardens that I feel like the garden is already inside with us. It's better than a painting!"

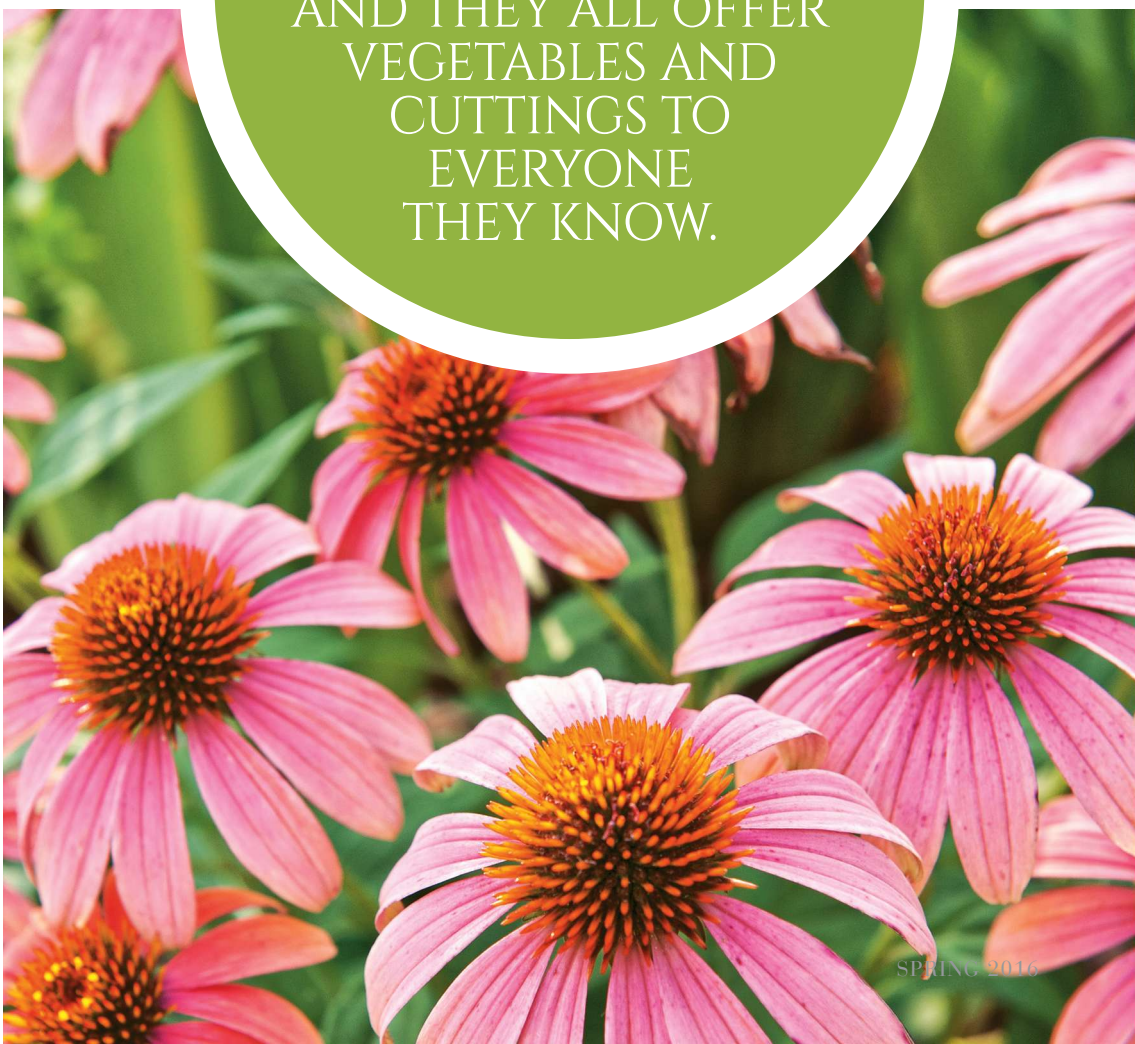
Her generous nature extends beyond the garden to her work as a guardian ad litem, a volunteer advocate appointed by the court to support the rights and best interests of a child involved in a court proceeding. Lipsey would like to see others volunteer as well. More than 150 children in Mecklenburg County are in need of a guardian ad litem, she says.

Perhaps her philosophy of life can be best summed up in a quote from alternative medicine guru Deepak Chopra that serves as a tagline on her emails: "If we share with caring, lightheartedness and love, we will create abundance and joy for each other. And then this moment will have been worthwhile." 

Coneflowers (right) are among many perennials (top) in the lush landscape.



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AND ONE OF HER SONS
ARE AVID GARDENERS,
AND THEY ALL OFFER
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CUTTINGS TO
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2 better than 1

Colors of the Year!

By Whitley Adkins Hamlin
www.thequeencitystyle.com

YEAR AFTER YEAR through the use of color, texture and pattern, we see inspiration in design cross from fashion to interiors and vice versa. These days fashion designers such as Cynthia Rowley and Trina Turk can be found reaching beyond clothes to designs for pillows, towels and even home furniture. Meanwhile, delving into the craft of accessorizing fashionably are interior designers such as Jonathan Adler and Kelly Wearstler.



Addison Weeks
Everett Studs, \$132,
www.addisonweeks.com



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Lauren Voile Boyfriend
Shirt, \$89.50, Belk



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Grecian Crepe
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AMEDEO
Cameo
ring \$2,300,
Available
on Farfetch
via Capitol

Astoria Table
Lamp, \$400,
Neiman Marcus



Rosalind Beere
Millinery Calla Lily
Headpiece, \$305,
www.rosalindbeere.com



Since 1983 American lifestyle designer Ralph Lauren has done both. Perhaps one of the most literal and recognizable expressions of this design phenomenon can be seen in "The Sound of Music" when Julie Andrews' character, Maria, uses bedroom curtains to make the von Trapp children matching green and white play clothes.



Macy's The
Cellar Set of
Four Stemless
Wine Glasses,
\$43, Macy's

Lane Small Round & Small Square Box - Brass + Rose Quartz Faceted, \$86 each, www.addisonweeks.com



Addison Weeks
Ring Box Brass \$68,
www.addisonweeks.com

Each year in December, Pantone Inc., the company best known for its fan-style color swatch books, releases its famous color of the year for the following year. The color of the year is “a symbolic selection, a color snapshot of what we see taking place in our culture that serves as an expression of a mood and an attitude,” says the Pantone website.



Traci Zeller Interiors,
www.tracizeller.com

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Nordstrom



Kate Spade
Ellis Street Pink
Rosebowl, \$75,
www.belk.com



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Saint Laurent
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Leather Platform
Sandal, \$895,
Neiman Marcus



For the first time, in 2016, Pantone introduced two shades, Rose Quartz and Serenity, as the collective color of the year, explaining it this way: “As consumers seek mindfulness and well-being as an antidote to modern day stresses, welcoming colors that psychologically fulfill our yearning for reassurance and security are becoming more prominent,” says the Pantone website. “Joined together, Rose Quartz and Serenity demonstrate an inherent balance between a warmer embracing rose tone and the cooler tranquil blue...”

Throughout the year ahead, we can expect to see these soothing shades of pink and blue in everything from purses and dresses to glassware and bathroom accessories. Who knows? Maybe if we get lucky, we'll see Missoni, Pulitzer or Pucci incorporate Rose Quartz and Serenity into their festive patterns for fall. 

Shinola 34mm
Birdy Rose Golden
Double-Wrap
Watch, \$525,
Neiman Marcus



Mike & Ally Rose Quartz
Seven-Piece Vanity Set,
\$6,568, Neiman Marcus



Chloé Loose Top
\$895. Available on
Farfetch via Capitol





This beet salad with baby kale is one of Gusto's many creative salads.

Eating with **Gusto!**

Pasta and Tapas Restaurant Serves Fresh, Flavorful Food

By Amy Rogers Photos by Ray Sepesy

IT'S NO SECRET THAT TAPAS ARE TRENDY RIGHT NOW. These small plates of Spanish meats, cheeses and vegetables are especially popular with cosmopolitan diners in urban settings. But area residents might not yet know that Gusto is taking that citified experience and re-creating it in the suburbs of Ballantyne.

The restaurant combines a casual environment and modern decor with fresh and flavorful food. Rather than mimicking the heavy menu and lengthy pace of formal "white tablecloth" dining, Gusto focuses on fast service times that appeal to families, business people and others on the go.

There's lots of activity: cooks bustle in the open kitchen next to a section of counter seating where guests can watch the action; chefs prepare dough in an alcove with a picture window; the Wood Stone oven crackles as it bakes handmade pizzas and calzones.

Eclectic Menu

Chef Gonzalo Lopez is well known for his work in fine-dining restaurants around Charlotte. He oversees the evolving and eclectic menu. Most any kind of pasta imaginable can be created: beet, zucchini and squid ink are just a few varieties from a rainbow of choices made in-house. Tapas can be endlessly crafted to suit most palates, even particular ones.

Salads range from old-school Caesar to creative combinations of baby kale and beets or a quinoa tabbouleh that's gluten free. (Plenty of items are vegetarian or gluten free; each is marked on the menu. There's a kids' menu, too.) Best of all, adventurous diners won't feel



Gusto's space can be configured for many occasions.

Owners Kristian and Carolyn Kellogg brought their sensibilities as self-proclaimed "impeccable foodies" to the restaurant.



Chicken Manetone comes with oven-roasted lemon potatoes and asparagus.


limited, and less daring guests won't feel overwhelmed.

Sangria drinkers can take their glasses embellished with the Gusto name home as a souvenir of the fun. General Manager Anthony Garcia won't divulge the exact recipes he devised for the restaurant's signature blends because they're a long-standing family tradition. But he reveals that the mainstay begins with a base of sweet Spanish wine, which is then enhanced with brandy, triple sec, orange juice, cinnamon and other citrus flavors. Weekend brunches feature a Bloody Mary and mimosa bar, along with live music for a jazzy experience.

Comfortable Space

At 4,500 square feet, Gusto occupies a large space, but it feels comfortable, not cavernous. It's smartly arranged with three private rooms that can be configured for book clubs, corporate meetings up to 100 attendees, private parties — even an indulgent, leisurely dinner on a special occasion. The restaurant's patio is small and cozy.

Owners Kristian and Carolyn Kellogg brought their sensibilities as self-proclaimed "impeccable foodies" to the restaurant (Kris confesses that as a perfectionist, what he does best is personify the "annoying customer who wants everything in their experience.") Construction started on the space, which didn't even have plumbing, in spring 2015, and the restaurant opened in October.

Gusto has deliciously taken the "uptown" experience and brought it "downtown" to this enclave south of the city center. And that won't stay a secret for long. 

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Vivaha, Ballantyne Style!

Indian-American
Couples Tie
Knot in Traditional,
Fusion Celebrations

By Nan Bauroth

IN AMERICA IT'S "HERE COMES THE BRIDE." In India, it's "Here Comes the Groom." Instead of wearing a tuxedo, however, the fiance makes a grand entrance in a brocaded sherwani coat and bejeweled safa wedding turban, driven in a horse-drawn carriage

Before her wedding, Shilpa Patel participated in "mehndi," a ritual in which her hands were covered in elaborate designs of henna paste. Her bangles are made of clay and wrapped in silk, signifying oneness with nature.





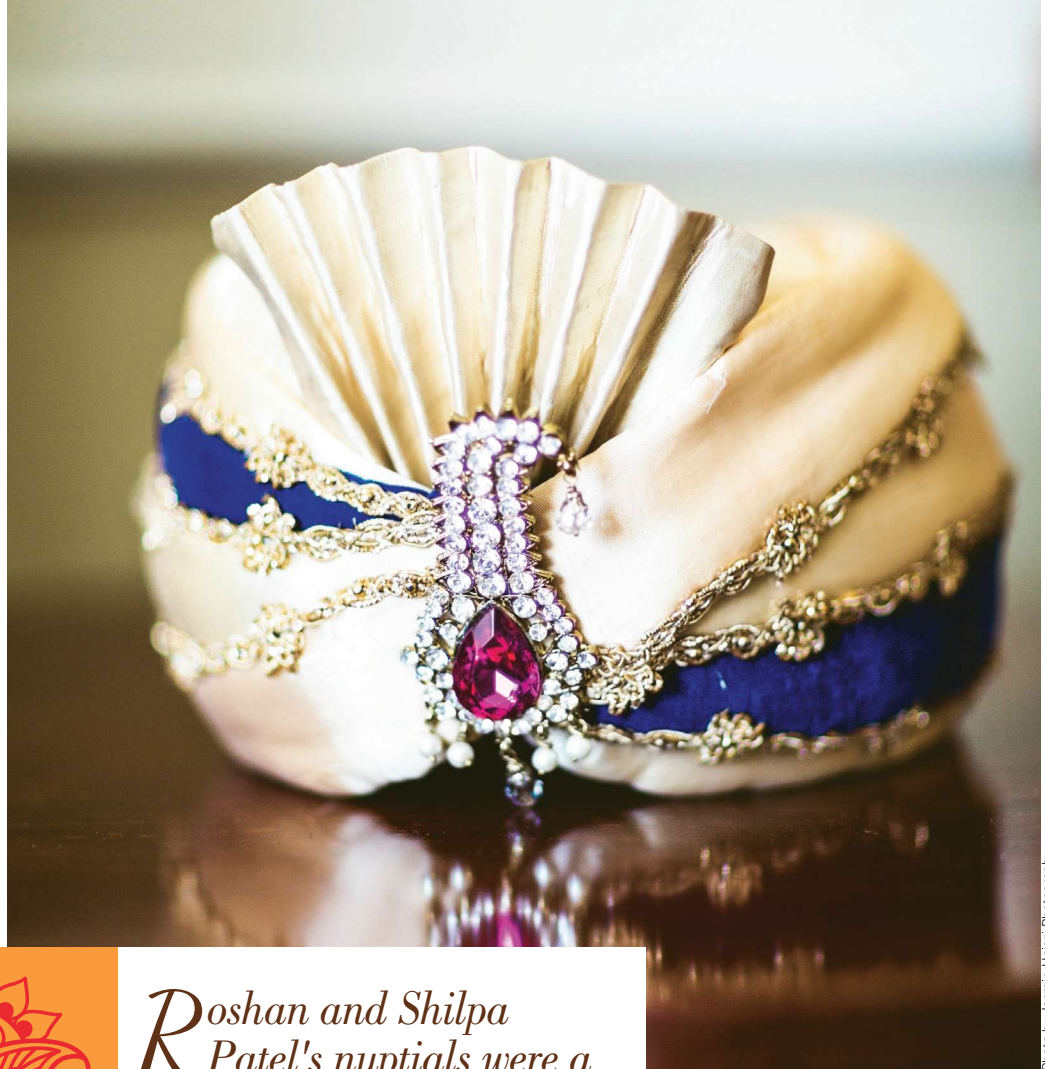


Photo by Jasmin Hejazi Photography



Roshan and Shilpa Patel's nuptials were a three-day extravaganza that featured traditional elements of Indian weddings.

The Patels sit in throne-like chairs on a mandap. Roshan wears a safa wedding turban, and a mang tikka jewel adorns Shilpa's forehead.



Photo by Jasmin Hejazi Photography

or astride a white steed blanketed in embroidery. Known as the *baraat*, the groom's arrival at the wedding locale is a joyous procession accompanied by his family singing and dancing.

As the Indian-American population grows here, the spectacle of a *maharajah* (Indian prince) on horseback is no longer a fantasy. One of the top wedding venues in Charlotte, The Ballantyne Hotel & Lodge has become a nationwide destination for Indian weddings lavish in cultural detail. In the past year, five such unions have taken place, drawing brides



Photo by Crystal Stokes Photography

Sandeep and Swathi Rao held their wedding in Ballantyne after an aunt suggested it.



In a traditional Indian wedding, the couple marries on an “auspicious day,” determined by horoscopes assuring their stars are aligned.

and grooms from Texas, Kansas and Georgia for their vivaha (Hindu for marriage).

Swathi and Sandeep Rao, who live in El Paso, held their nuptials last October after one of Swathi’s aunts who lives here suggested



Photo by Crystal Stokes Photography

it would be ideal for a traditional Indian wedding. "Sandeep was raised in Texas and I was born in India and grew up in West Virginia, so North Carolina was in-between," Swathi says. "I also had a lot of family coming from India, and it is easy to fly to Charlotte. I couldn't have asked for a better place or more perfect location for our wedding."

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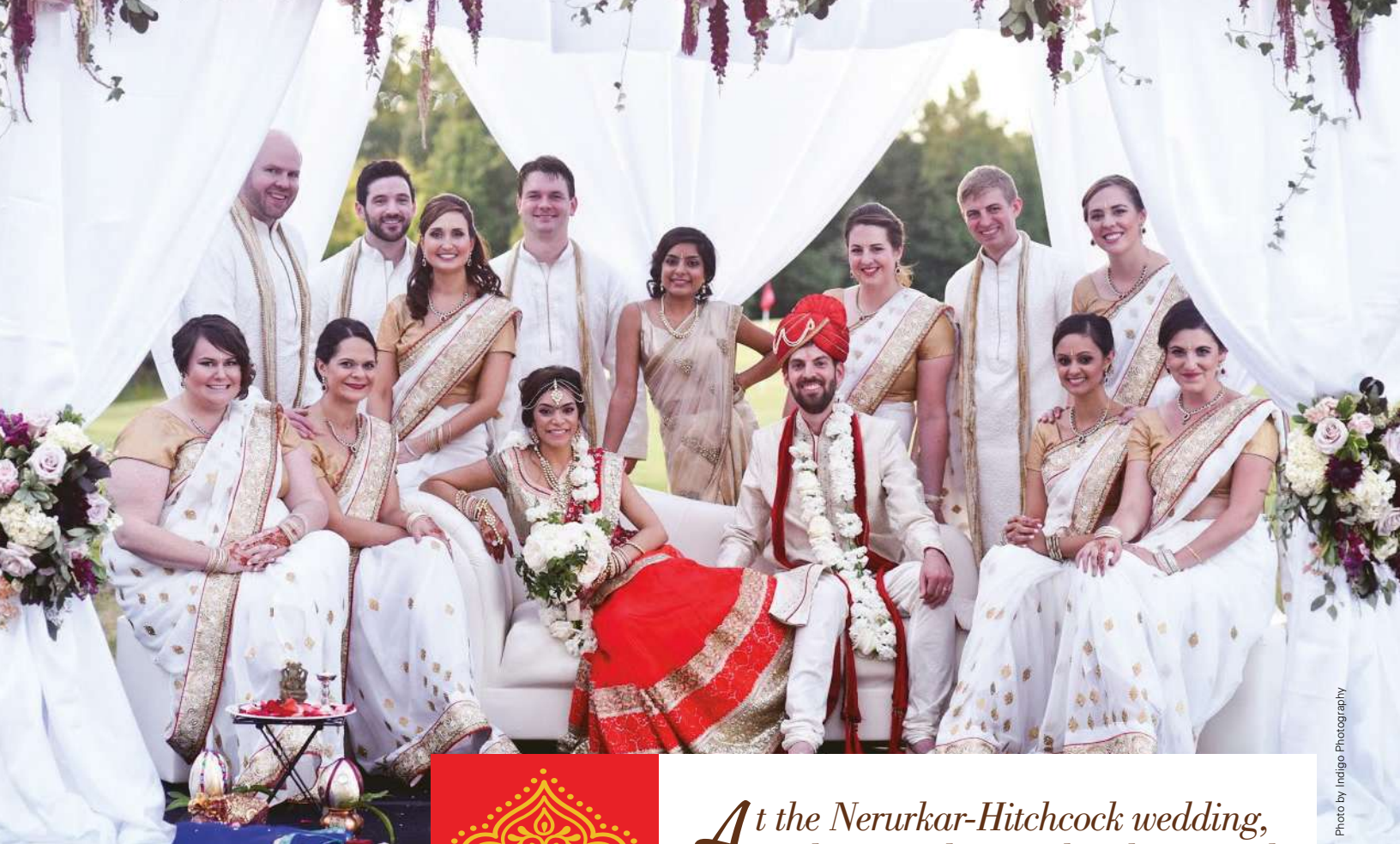


Photo by Indigo Photography



At the Nerurkar-Hitchcock wedding, Niclo entered on a white horse, with the mandap staged on the hotel lawn.



Photo by Indigo Photography

Blush pink, gold, marsala and ivory gave the wedding a romantic flavor.

Blending Cultures

Neesha Nerurkar, who grew up in Ballantyne and then moved to Kansas City where she fell in love with Niclo Hitchcock, a non-Indian American, thought the hotel would be right for their fusion

wedding as well. "In a fusion wedding you blend the bride's culture with the groom's culture," Neesha explains.

Shilpa and Roshan Patel, residents of Atlanta, were the first couple to stage a big Indian-style wedding at the hotel, choosing it a year ago for a three-day extravaganza combining traditional and fusion elements.

A key factor for the brides



Photo by Indigo Photography

was the willingness of the hotel to have local Indian restaurants cater the food, ensuring guests enjoyed authentic fare. Another advantage was the hotel's wedding planner, Ashley Nguyen, had coordinated several Indian-style weddings. "I know how to handle the ceremonies and timing, which means fewer worries for the bride," Nguyen says.

'Auspicious Day'

In a traditional Indian wedding, the couple marries on an "auspicious day," determined by horoscopes assuring their stars are aligned. For the Raos, this meant the reception was on Saturday, with the baraat and wedding on Sunday. Holding to South India tradition, Swathi chose peacock colors of midnight blue, violet and emerald for the mandap, a four-pillared canopy festooned in vivid colors and blossoms that serves as the altar. "A curtain separated me from Sandeep until our auspicious time, then the ceremony commenced," Swathi notes.

Clad in a brilliant green sari, Swathi plaited her hair in a braid intertwined with jasmine flowers, another Indian custom. "We were both raised traditionally," she says, noting their parents introduced them. "It made sense that our wedding would also be conducted that way."

At the Hitchcock wedding, Niclo entered

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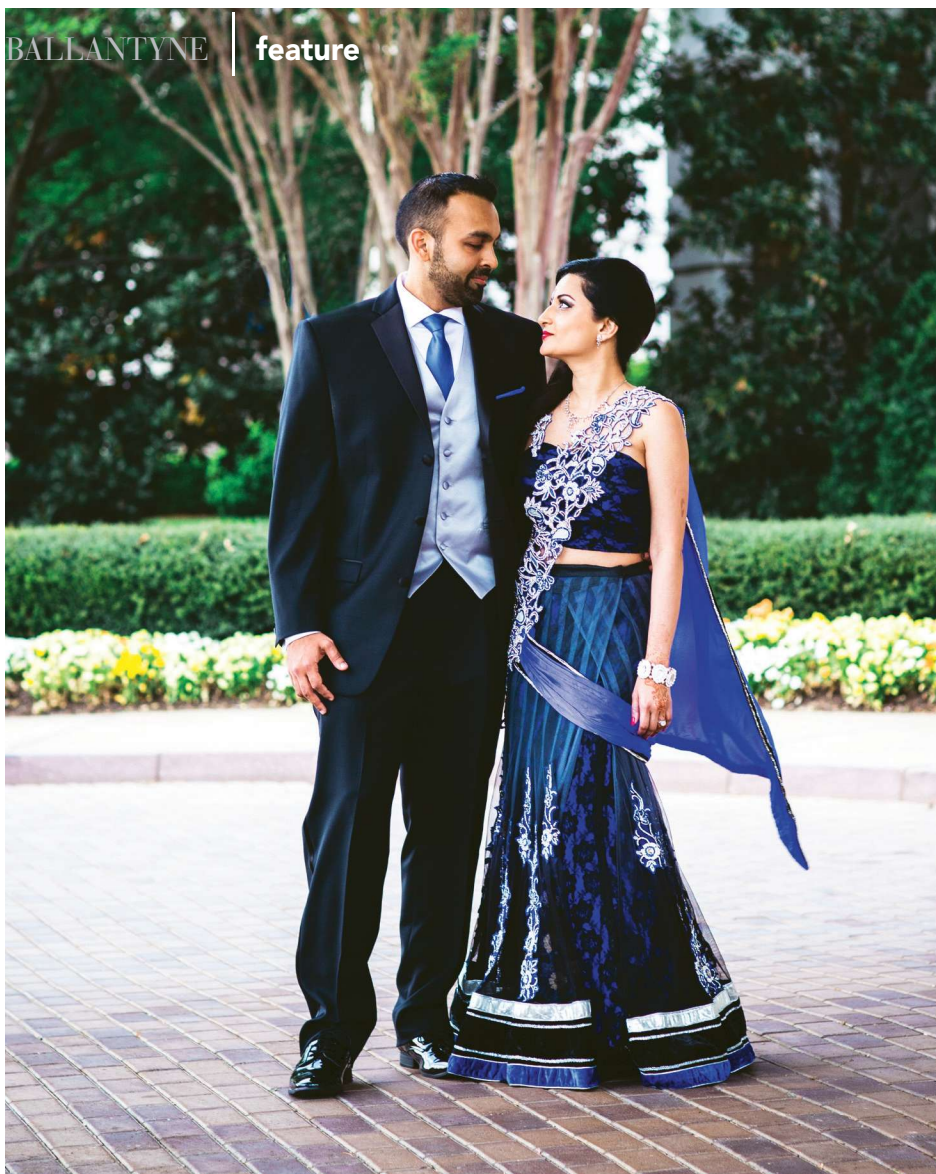


Photo by Jasmin Hejazi Photography

Roshan and Shilpa Patel's wedding brought "our old world traditions into our modern generation," Shilpa says.

on a white horse, with the mandap staged on the hotel lawn. "To make it more fusion, I chose a palette of blush pink, gold, marsala and ivory draping, giving it a softer and more romantic look," Neesha says. The couple had bridesmaids and groomsmen, and Neesha's father walked her down the aisle instead of her maternal uncle, as is Indian

custom. A shorter Hindu ceremony was followed by a non-denominational Christian rite.

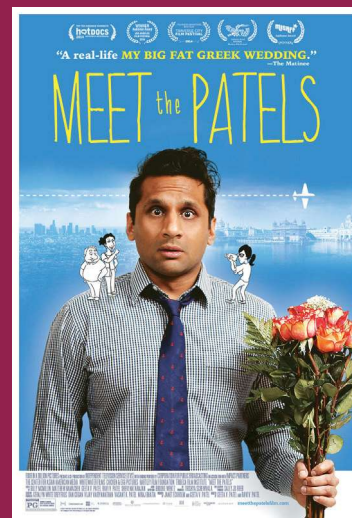
Dancing to The Temptations

In another fusion twist, Neesha wore a sari to the nuptials but switched into a white wedding gown — and Niclo into a tux — for the reception. "My dad and I performed the father-daughter dance to a Temptations song, then broke into a traditional Indian dance," she says. "The best part of the wedding was watching our friends and family

so happy and excited the way they embraced the cultures."

The Patel wedding entourage lodged at three hotels in Ballantyne Corporate Park. "I was born in the United Kingdom and have family in India and the United States, so it was a destination wedding," Shilpa says. "My brother's family and aunt and uncle's roots in the Ballantyne Indian community played a key role."

Since Shilpa was raised in America, she desired fusion elements.



HIT COMIC DOCUMENTARY Has Ballantyne Tie

In 1972, Ballantyne residents Vassant and Champa Patel were introduced by their parents on an arranged date in India, wed five days later and have been happy ever since. So when their son, Ravi, was still single at 30, they determined to find him a match through Patel relatives in India, never realizing the experience would turn into a comic documentary.

"It's a hilarious film, but at same time emotional and a real story," says Vassant, explaining that Ravi and their daughter, Geeta Patel, both work in Hollywood. After Geeta filmed the matchmaking trip to India, the project morphed from a PBS show into a documentary that includes snippets from Vassant and Champa's wedding, as well the parents discussing their matrimonial plan for Ravi in their Ballantyne kitchen.

Since premiering last fall, "Meet the Patels" has played at 10 film festivals and theaters nationwide and debuts this winter in London and on iTunes (see the trailer at www.meetthepatelsfilm.com).

The success of the documentary prompted Fox Searchlight Films to engage Geeta to write and direct the story as a major motion picture. "There's the possibility of Ravi and us starring in it again," Vassant says, clearly delighted the love story has become a surprise hit.



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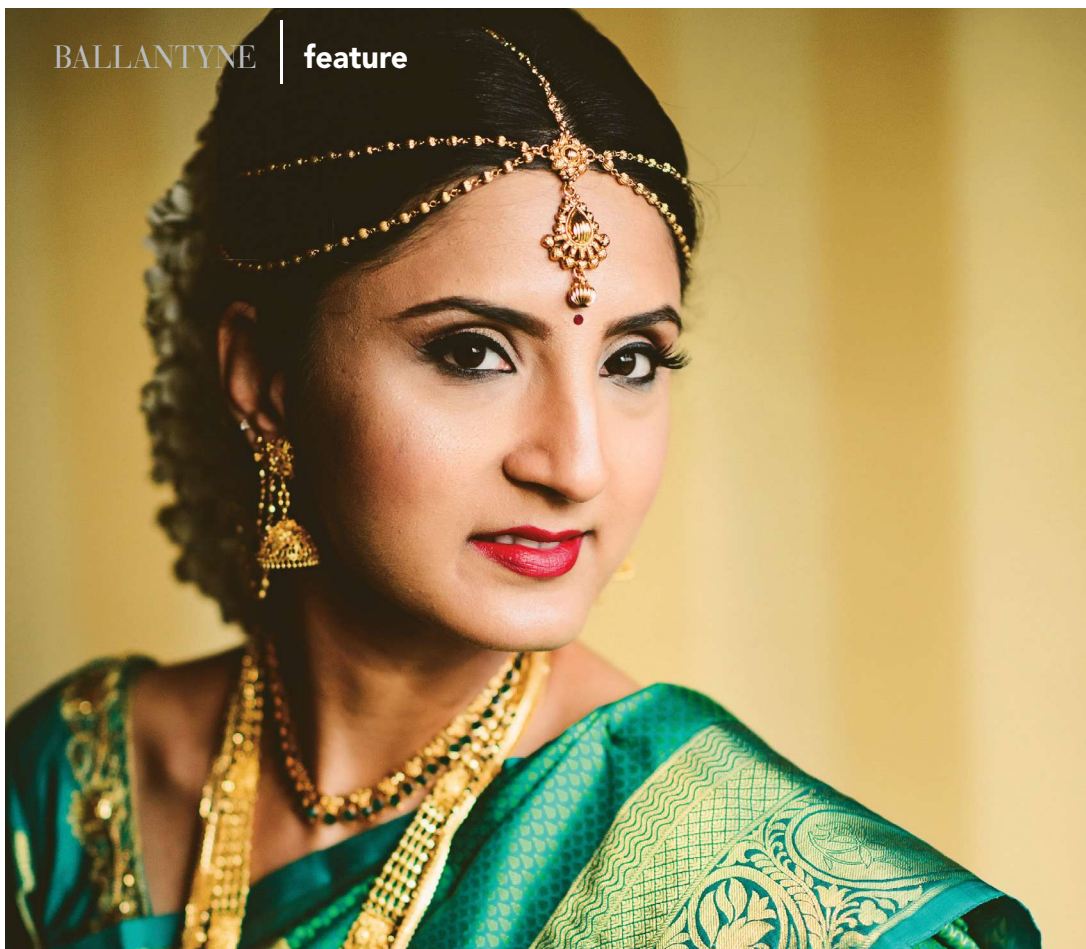
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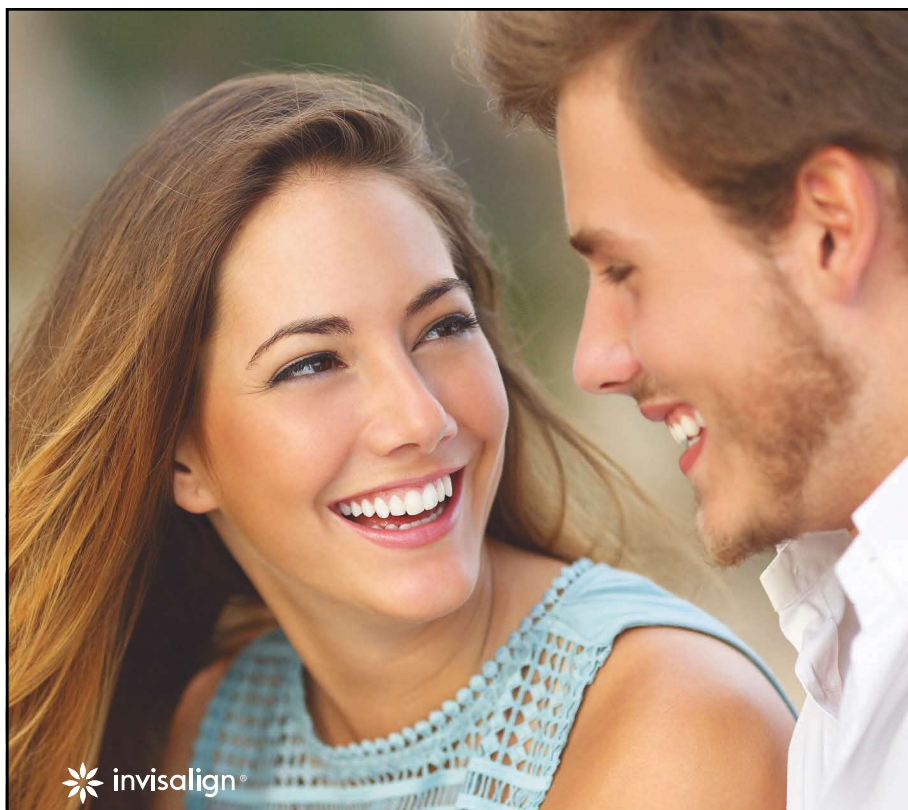
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Swathi Rao's vivid sari and plaited braid with jasmine flowers are Indian customs.

Roshan entered in a magnificent carriage drawn by a white horse, but the traditional Indian ceremony incorporated bridesmaids and groomsmen, Shilpa's father and mother bringing her down the aisle and a ring exchange. "I felt happy and fortunate to have our wedding at such a beautiful location and stay true to our customs and culture. What we envisioned became reality, bringing our old world traditions into our modern generation." 

Photo by Crystal Stokes Photography



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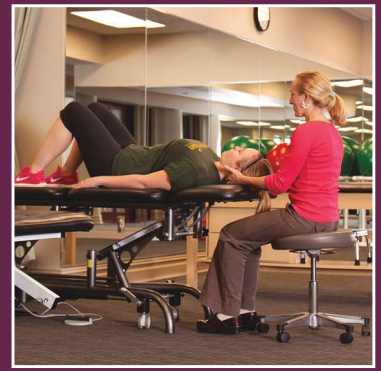
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Inspirational Legacy

Elon Name in Ballantyne Long Tied to Helping Children

By Nan Bauroth

BALLANTYNE DATES ITS FORMAL ROOTS as a community to the 1990s, but the area was long home to others, including youngsters in desperate straits who were provided a safe haven at Elon Homes for Children. It once occupied the 120-acre site that is now home to Elon Park Elementary School and Elon Park.

The little-known story of how the children's home came to be built here began in 1961 when Fred Johnson Kennedy Jr., an intrepid social worker and counselor in the Mecklenburg County juvenile court system, saw many boys in such terrible plights that they had to be removed from their homes.

Convinced state correctional facilities only made their situations worse, Kennedy determined to build a residential unit where these youngsters could put their lives back together in a secure, nurturing setting.

To achieve his dream, Kennedy assembled Charlotte philanthropists and community leaders to raise funds. Notables included Jim Babb, then CEO and president of Jefferson-Pilot Communications; business consultant Ty Boyd; Charlotte Observer columnist Kays Gary; and attorney Gaston H. Gage. Thanks to their efforts and the generosity of others, in 1970 Kennedy opened the first cottage of a haven he named Boys Town.

Stable Environment

"My father wanted a stable environment where these boys could live and grow up," says David Kennedy, who now serves on the Board of Governors of Elon Homes and Schools for Children. He recalls living with eight of the boys in that first cottage during the summer of 1971 when he was only five years old and his father was searching for foster parents for Boys Town. "The cottage was way off Ardrey Kell Road," he recalls.

Sadly, Fred Kennedy never lived to see his full dream come true, passing away in the early 1970s at only 39. "The day slated for the groundbreaking of a gymnasium at Boys Town ended up being the day of his funeral," Kennedy says.

In 1985 The Duke Endowment helped Boys Town merge

with Elon Homes for Children, established in 1905 by the Southern Convention of Christian Churches at Elon College, located just west of Burlington, N.C. Boys Town became the Kennedy Campus of the larger organization, and in 1987 the first girls were admitted. In 1995, a privately licensed school was created on the grounds to meet the children's specific needs.

Selling the Land

Three years later, the school and Elon Homes moved to Sharon Road West. "We owe much to Gaston Gage," says Jane


"My father wanted a stable environment where these boys could live and grow up."

— David Kennedy



Grosse, vice president of institutional advancement for the nonprofit. "He negotiated the purchase of the (Ballantyne-area) acreage for \$140,000 and then sold it for \$9 million, providing us with significant funds."

Today, Elon Homes and Schools for Children — which has transitioned to one of the largest and most respected resources for foster care of children who are in Department of Social Services custody — is entirely located on the campus of Johnson C. Smith University in west Charlotte.

"I love telling my father's story," Kennedy says, noting that his mother, Gail Kennedy, is still involved with the organization. "Dad gave those boys the chance to be like other kids, to give them hope for a brighter future." 



Ashley Hall's necklace creations began with fabric remnants she had from a home-decorating project.

LAST FALL ASHLEY HALL was designing necklaces from her dining room table. Sales increased as word spread about her creations, crafted from rich textiles and natural materials. Needing more space, she recently renovated her home office, which includes a display wall where her designs hang from faux steer-skull fixtures. To the south in nearby Waxhaw, Michael Downing works out of his



Inner Passion

garage, hand crafting cutting boards, cheese trays, jewelry boxes and custom furniture. Sales for his pieces have also been on a steady rise.

Both artists reported a busy holiday season. As entrepreneurs fulfilling their artistic passions, Hall and Downing each have a professional website and a dynamic social media presence capable of reaching a national

Artisans Nurture Hobbies
into Businesses

By Kerry Singe Photos by Ray Sepesy



Michael Downing's love of woodworking started when he was a teenager.

audience. Yet, both artists say it's been local connections that have jump-started their businesses and helped them grow.

'Festival was Key'

Downing, 45, has enjoyed woodworking since he was 15 years old. He started making gifts for family and friends. Five years ago, he incorporated and created MiDo Creations. He focused at first on building a website and securing lumber. Downing's biggest worry was when the site

went live he wouldn't be able to keep up with orders coming in. But nothing happened.

"I was like, 'Uh-oh. How do I market this?'" says Downing, who works full time for Bank of America in business development in the small business department. He tried Google ads, Etsy and consignment stores, which were too expensive, he says. Then he showed his pieces at Waxhaw's Autumn Treasures arts and crafts festival.

"That was perfect," he recalls. "I was able to show my work and meet and talk with people about woodworking and taking care of the cutting boards. I love that."

Downing got his first custom order at the festival from a former manager of Vine American Kitchen. He commissioned 50 custom boards to use with flatbread pizzas. Downing now regularly attends the fall show and the Waxhaw Art Kaleidoscope festival in the spring.

"The festival was key. It kept me busy enough and it justified why I was doing (the business)," he says.

Business strategists agree that community connections can be a big advantage for small businesses. Shoppers feel good supporting local artisans and like talking with artists and developing a more intimate connection with the piece being bought.

Real estate agent Cheri Ritter uses Downing's pieces as housewarming gifts, proud they are made locally and customized to each client's kitchen.

Ritter, who lives in Waxhaw and works out of the Allen Tate Co.'s Ballantyne office, knew Downing through their children. When she started



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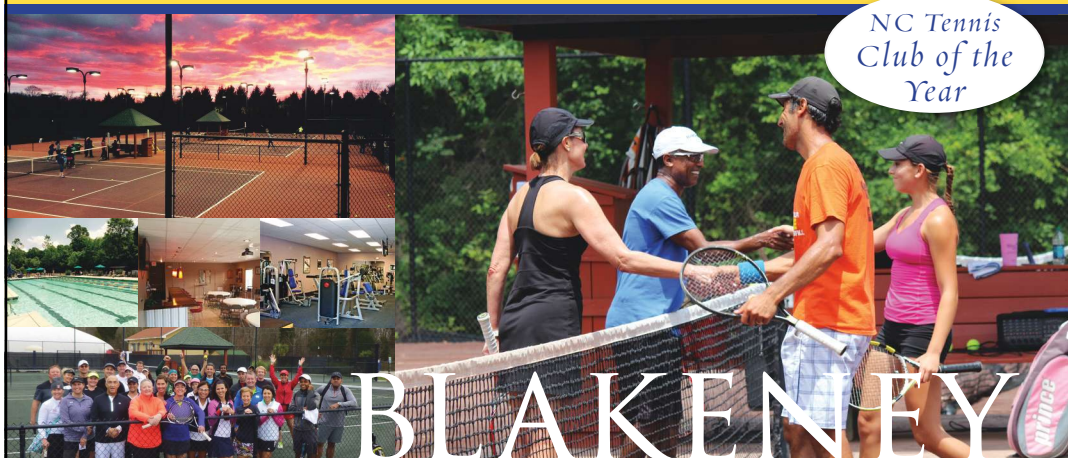
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Downing enjoys making cutting boards, cheese trays and other customized wood pieces.



selling real estate two years ago, she wanted a unique gift to give clients and thought of Downing's cutting boards. They now have an arrangement where Ritter tells Downing the kitchen's color scheme and he uses his artistry to pick complimentary woods, patterns and grains. Ritter presents the board to her client with a locally baked Bundt cake.

"You can tell the time he puts into it. It's a quality piece of art," Ritter says. "I point out that this was

continued on page 71

"I was like, 'Uh-oh. How do I market this?'"

— Michael Downing



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“I walked into a store with my girlfriend, and a girl happened to be a buyer and she said, ‘I love your necklace.’ We met a couple days later, and they bought a bunch on the spot.”

— Ashley Hall



Hall's necklaces are bands of fabric adorned with objects such as bone, shells, antlers and recycled glass.

■ continued from page 68

custom made to my specifications for them. My clients think it's a showpiece."

Boutiques Spur Necklace Maker

Hall's jewelry design business, Hands High Designs, grew out of her interest in fabric remnants from a home redecorating project and has thrived thanks to interest

from friends and local boutiques. A horse enthusiast, Hall named her business after the unit of measure for horses.

A former teacher and a mom of three children, Hall, 35, has always loved fashion. Born and raised in New York, her first job was working as an assistant to a Fortune 500 CEO who was married to a supermodel. Hall later lived in Arizona and fell in love with the natural, boho vibe. She and her husband, John, moved

to Ballantyne about nine years ago.

Hall was redecorating her home last year when she felt a connection with the fabrics. She woke up in the middle of the night with a vision for how she might use them and put together a necklace using a grey, cream and black tribal print. She wore that first necklace around town and received a stream of compliments. This led to a friend hosting a trunk show so she could showcase her necklaces, which are



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After starting with necklaces, Hall branched out to making bracelets and other jewelry.



Packaging by Hands High Designs makes for an attractive gift.

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bands of fabric adorned with objects such as bone, shells, antlers and recycled glass.

Inspired by positive feedback, Hall started posting on social media. She received orders, but it became time-consuming managing feeds, messages and orders. She now uses her website as the central contact point.

Her biggest confidence boost, however, came from the local attention. Walking into shops with her daughters, owners would ask about the jewelry they were wearing (Hall also designs a line of necklaces for children, Little Bits). Her jewelry is now carried in at least five local boutiques, a number expected to grow.

"I feel like it's been organic growth," Hall says. "I walked into a store with my girlfriend, and a girl happened to be a buyer and she said, 'I love your necklace.' We met a couple days later, and they bought a bunch on the spot. From there I felt like, 'OK, the ball is rolling.'"

Another valuable relationship started online but it soon became clear it was a local connection. Charlotte-based interior designer Lauren Nicole and her assistant were arranging and posting photos of fall vignettes on Instagram



Hall started her jewelry design business out of her home and continues to work there.


Business strategists agree that community connections can be a big advantage for small businesses.

and noticed a comment from Hands High Designs.

Nicole didn't realize it at first, but something about it made her think she knew the poster personally. Turned out the two have children in the same school and live within five miles of one another. After getting to know one another more, they saw that Nicole's interest in design connected well with Hall's interest in jewelry.

Earlier this year, Hall visited Nicole at her Ballantyne-area

retail shop, Lauren Nicole Home. Hall pulled out some of her necklace designs. Some featured a gray and yellow plaid fabric, which perfectly matched the store's new tablescape, a springy end-of-winter scene with cream napkins and linens with gray and yellow accents. The store now carries Hall's necklaces.

"This really fits in so nicely and we love supporting local artisans," Nicole says. "I really believe in (Hall) and her product line." 



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Daily sketching can be a great way to explore creativity.

Cultivating Creativity

Discover the Artist Within

By Andy Braitman

YOU KNOW THAT ONE PERSON AT THE GYM WHO MAKES YOU THINK, “I really want to look like that!”

Yet, you never hear someone say, “I’ll never look like that, I’m not *talented* enough.”

So, why would you look at a painting and think you’re not creative enough to do something similar because of “talent”? We are constantly interpreting the visual world. We even make up pictures in our brains while we’re sleeping because we just can’t get enough of it! Each of us has the visual understanding needed to create art. What some of us need is a process that allows us to explore our creativity freely.

Self-Kindness

Since the idea of “natural talent” is silly, the first thing you should do to explore your creativity is to be gentle with yourself. If you think too much about your goals, you will become less natural in your process. If you are honest with your process, you won’t have time to tell yourself your creation looks bad. If you are a human, being gentle with yourself will be a constant struggle, but you “officially” have permission to go easy on yourself while you are exploring your creative mind — so, step one is to practice self-kindness.


Your second step is to choose a daily process for exploring your creativity. It is best to choose a process that allows you to be a keen observer of the world first and a creator of things second.

One example of a daily process is a sketch journal. It’s a great way of paying more attention to what you are seeing rather than what you are creating. No one else will see your journal so you can go nuts! Just record what you see and have fun; make pictures you love and drawings your mother-in-law won’t approve of. Just be sure that you are paying more attention to the visual source than you are the final outcome. And remember, since it’s a process, consistency is key. Don’t get too busy with the real life of kids and/or the dog so as to skip your daily sketch journal.



Since the idea of “natural talent” is silly, the first thing you should do to explore your creativity is to be gentle with yourself.

Andy Braitman is a Charlotte-based artist and art teacher. You can learn more about him at www.andybraitman.com.

art to explore your creativity. Just remember to be gentle with yourself and your expectations, find a process you love and embrace it, and seek out a community to provide you with support. Now, get out there and make some art. If your search is authentic, your images will be too. 

Like-minded People

Finally, remember the person you were admiring at the gym? You saw them there because being in a community of like-minded people helps us develop the drive to “keep at it.”

Workshops, classes and drawing groups are all fantastic ways to further our creative insight while mixing things up. Don’t be shy about being a beginner in a group of artists; we all start somewhere and you’ll benefit from everyone else’s years of practice and mistakes just by being around them.

No matter the person you are or what kind of experience you have, you can use visual



INSPIRE! BENEFITS YMCA, WELLNESS

Guest enjoyed the 8th Annual Inspire! Ballantyne Gala at Ballantyne Country Club on Dec. 5.

Cocktails and a dinner buffet along with a silent auction and spirited putting contest helped raise funds for the Morrison Family YMCA and its partnership with the Levine Cancer Institute Cancer Wellness Program.

Photos by Ray Sepesy

1. Valerie Sancibrian, Nancy Smith, Regina League, Diana Howell
2. Nadine and Walter Agumbi
3. Jeremy Yaekel and Kari Amore
4. Jessica and Brian Vest
5. Sarah Clabaugh, Vonda Huss, Mary Mack, Laurey Cosentino, Skyler Armah, Carrie Baker, Alyssa Magnarini
6. Tara Dockery, Ryan Splain, Jason and Bria Mulholland
7. Michael and Julie Naifeh
8. Madison and Brian Mooneyham
9. Megan and Arron Romeo
10. Ryan and Natalie Ramsey, Kelsey and Matt Cleary
11. Emily Sessa, Ray Evans, Diane Mohan, Ashley Evans, Rosalie O'Rourke
12. Matthew and Ivanna Campbell
13. Keith and Johnna Meads



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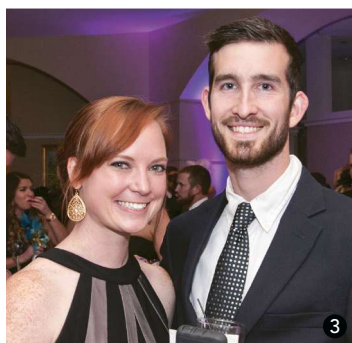
BALLANTYNE BALL AIDS THE SANDBOX

Masquerade intrigue was the theme of the Ballantyne Ball at The Ballantyne Hotel & Lodge on Feb. 13. Guests were feted to a cocktail reception followed by dinner and dancing. Silent and live auctions added to the evening.

Ballantyne Ball is a charitable event that supports local causes to enhance lives in the community. The Sandbox, which assists families whose children have cancer or another life-altering illness, was the beneficiary of this year's event.

Photos by Ray Sepesy

1. Amanda Cella, Jeremy Campbell, Jenna Lilly, Kristen Cella
2. Tonya and Bobby Dole
3. Courtney and Michael Thames
4. Allen and Hillary Starrett, Lori and Tim Jones
5. Mitch and Carolyn Bonner, Mary and Craig Schroeder
6. Jennifer and Michael Littleton
7. Brad and Alisa McKeiver
8. Stewart and Val McLean, Jackie and Dan Haggerty
9. Krista Aidala, Ray and Kim Lechner
10. Pam and Joe Moody

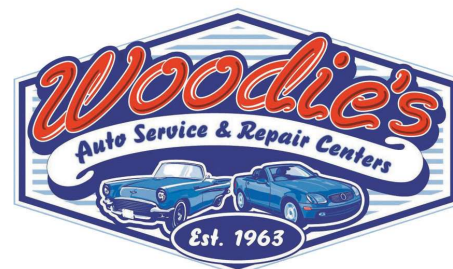


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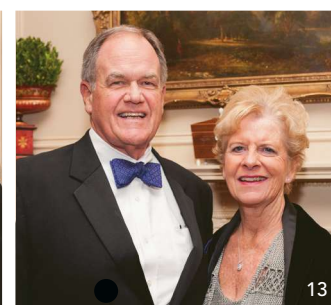
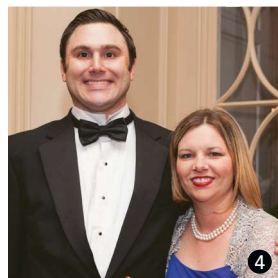
ALLEGRO HOSTS BALL TO HELP CHILDREN

Allegro Foundation and its Board of Directors hosted the 7th Annual Ambassador's Ball on Jan. 9 at the Quail Hollow Club. Ambassador Gary Doer of Canada was honored. Her Excellency Maguy Maccario Doyle, ambassador of Monaco to the U.S. and Canada, was a special guest.

All proceeds from the ball go to Allegro's free movement-education programs, which serve more than 700 children with disabilities in Charlotte and Fort Mill.

Photos by Hayley Watson

1. Larry Sprinkle
2. Arlene Ferebee, Angela and Jesse Cureton, Stephen and Anastasia Walker
3. Stephanie and Ron Rivera
4. William and Mandia Culp
5. Robbie and Heather Johnson
6. Dara Sowell, Felix Sabates, Tim Black
7. Gary Doer, Ron Rivera
8. Emily and Bill Oliver
9. Boguslaw and Zydunt Jablonski
10. Andrew and Nancy Imbeau, Robert Pittenger, Gary Doer, Katherine Pierce, Cathy Bessant, Pat Farmer, Mike Hawley
11. Ted and Debbie Reynolds
12. Thomas and Elaine Pacicco, Donna and Alvero de Molina
13. Art and Alice Gallagher
14. Trenton and Courtney Whalen
15. Nancy and Andrew Imbeau, Betsy and Ben Knight



RELAY FOR LIFE KICKS OFF 2016 SIGN-UP

The American Cancer Society's Relay For Life Ballantyne Kickoff was held Jan. 12 at Bravo Cucina Italiana in Blakeney.

Guests enjoyed games, prizes and treats as they began enrolling for the 2016 Relay For Life of Ballantyne, scheduled June 3-4 at Ardrey Kell High School.

Photos by Hayley Watson



1. Tanya and Floyd Smith, Danny Liebl
2. Dee Gyorody, Ken Palmoski, Holly Curtis
3. Jeanne and Thomas Huber, Josie and John Knill, Marilyn Borrelli, Dee Lindley
4. Keira, Matt, Christian, Danielle and Collin Francis
5. Back Row: John Harris, David Doward, Ryan Sullivan, Luke Stancombe, Amy Roberts, Greg Record, Grant Cradle, Front Row: Tanya Smith, Matt Francis, Felisha Fletcher, Stephanie Barringer, Lauren Wilson, Lisa Farenga, Kendall Roberts, Roberta Keener
6. Matthew Fulton, Anthony Farenga
7. Katelyn Raspani, Brittany Klopfer
8. Roberta Keener, Patrick Dunlavy
9. Luke Stancombe, Lauren Wilson, Grant Cradle, Kendall Roberts, Amy Roberts
10. Ryan Sullivan, Stephanie Barringer, Greg Record

Nation's Capital
Celebrates Spring
with Blossoms, Embassy
Tours & More

cherry picked

By Nan Bauroth

Photo by Buddy Saez



GEORGE WASHINGTON WOULD NEVER HAVE IMAGINED “Foggy Bottom” and surrounding areas as a cosmopolitan city on the world stage. Nor could he have imagined 1,700 cherry trees gifted by Japan lining the Tidal Basin in early spring, their ethereal pink blossoms framing the National Mall in a picture-perfect setting. Our

The Tidal Basin, near the Washington Monument, is awash each spring with fluttering pink petals of cherry trees.



During the festival, Peacock Alley at the historic Willard InterContinental hotel draws many local residents.

first president also would be humbled that this city named in his honor serves not only as the federal seat of government but a perennial draw for citizens enjoying its wealth of distinctly American museums, galleries and monuments.

An ideal time to capture Washington, D.C.'s essence is during the National Cherry Blossom Festival, which creates a spectacular backdrop for the mall and nearby area. This year's festival runs from March 20 to April 17. Average peak bloom is April 4, but blossoms last 14 days so there's a good window of time to catch the show.

You can immerse yourself in the fluttering pink froth by walking, taking the National Mall Circulator bus or riding a bike (rent from Capital Bikeshare or popular Bike and Roll DC, which also offers tours). For a festival route map and peek at the

continued on page 86

The Willard InterContinental hosted the Japanese delegation when it presented the cherry trees to Washington.

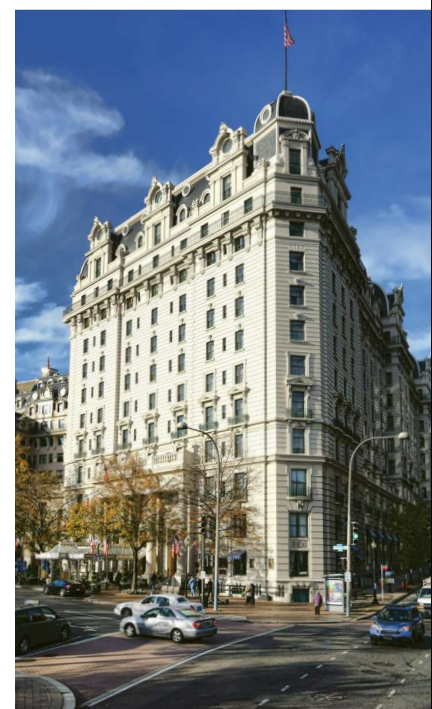
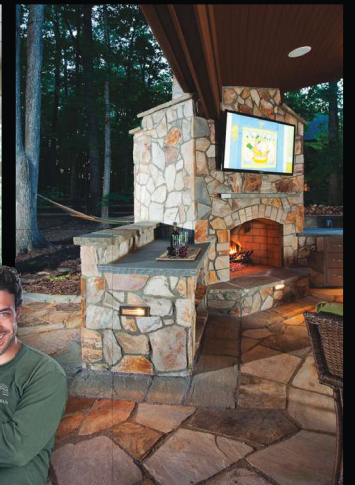
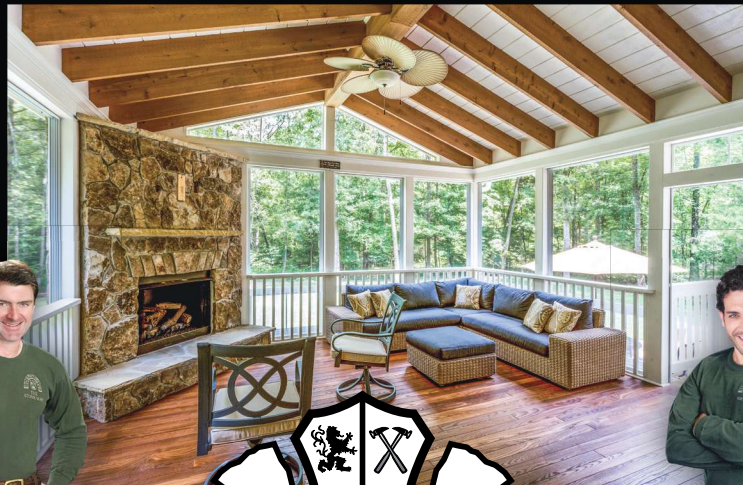


Photo courtesy of Willard InterContinental

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The cherry trees usually bloom from mid-to-late March through mid-April.

"You can't have this experience anywhere else in the world."

— Steve Shulman,
Cultural Tourism DC



Photo by Buddy Secor

Blossoms flank the Tidal Basin near the Jefferson Memorial.

■ continued from page 84

Blossom Cam, visit www.nationalblossomfestival.org.

In 1912, the mayor of Tokyo gave Washington 3,000 cherry trees, some of which have died or are planted in spots other than the Tidal Basin. The festival celebrates the generous gift with events and activities. Beltway insiders especially savor cherry-themed afternoon tea in Peacock Alley at the historic Willard InterContinental, one of Washington's poshest places to stay and home to the Japanese delegation during its presentation of the trees.

Passport DC

In President Washington's time, our fledgling government

continued on page 88

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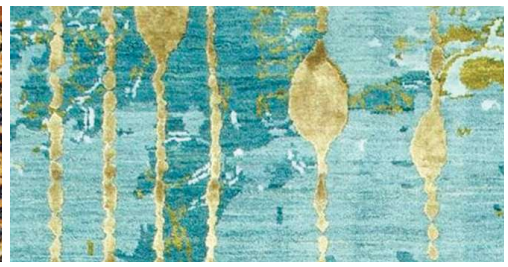
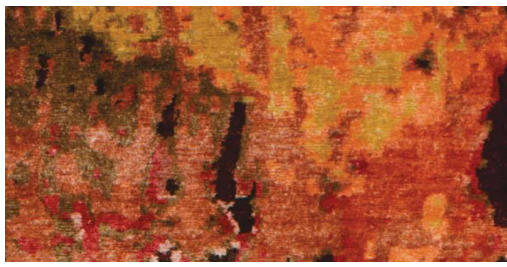
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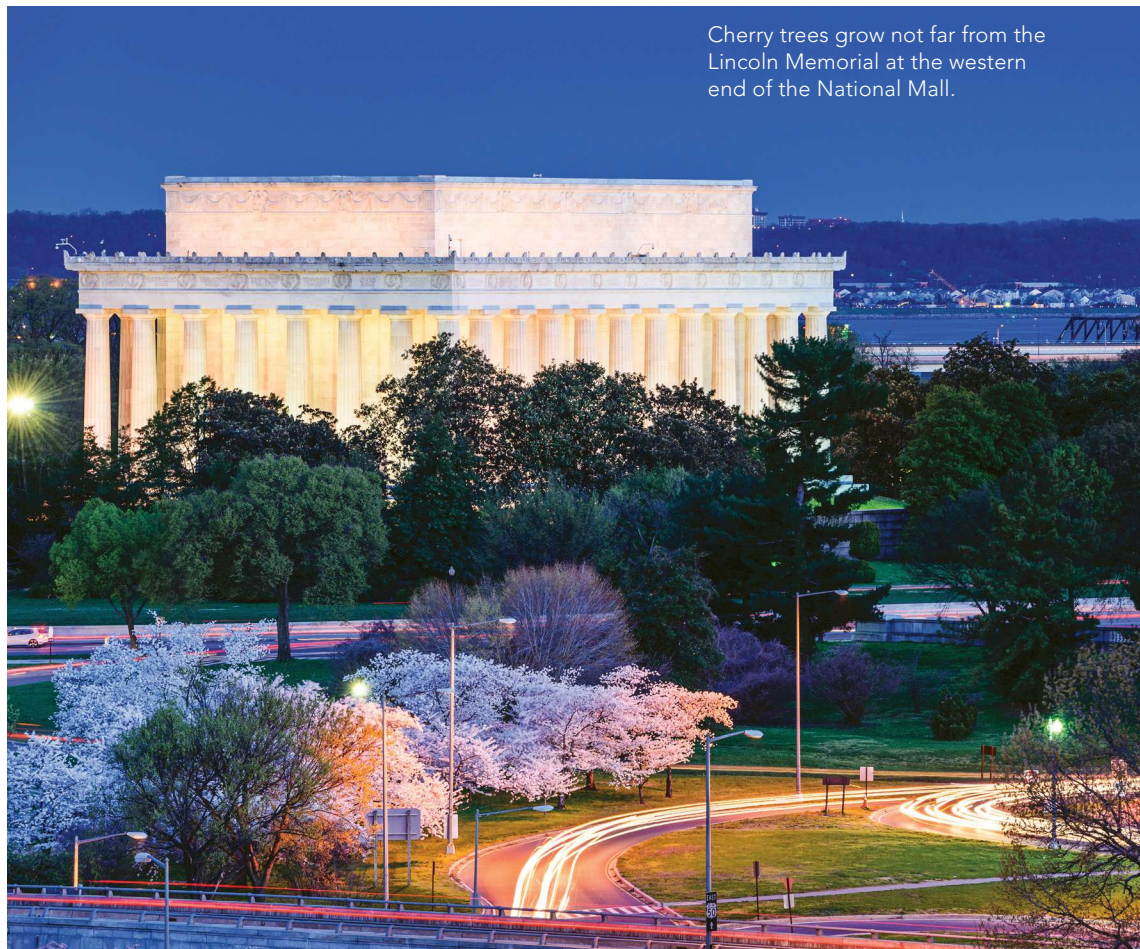
Photo courtesy of Willard InterContinental

Afternoon tea at the Willard's Peacock Alley during cherry-blossom time is a beautiful sight unto itself.



■ continued from page 86

sent emissaries abroad seeking favor from foreign governments. Today, 180 embassies, consulates and diplomatic missions have a presence in the nation's capital. "Every foreign country wants to be here," says Steve Shulman, executive director of Cultural Tourism DC, a nonprofit that on May weekends stages Passport DC, a rare opportunity



Cherry trees grow not far from the Lincoln Memorial at the western end of the National Mall.

for the public to get inside 70 or so embassies.

The event kicks off Saturday, May 7, with the "Around the World Embassy Tour," when 45 non-European countries open their doors from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. along Embassy Row and in International Court (another embassy neighborhood). "You can't have this experience anywhere else in the world," Shulman notes. "From the Philippines, you cross the street to Australia, then back to Peru. One year the Australian ambassador was cooking shrimp on the barbie for everyone." Lines can be long at larger embassies, but countries often entertain people out front with music and dance.

Saturday, May 14, brings "A Shortcut to Europe," with 28 countries in the European Union (EU) inviting the public inside. Belgium samples its chocolates, Ireland its beer and the United Kingdom its tea. Saturday, May 21, is Fiesta Asia sponsored by embassies in that region of the world, and the final weekend features the Embassy Chef Challenge.

While in the area, you can dine at 100 restaurants within 10 blocks, including B Too, a contemporary Belgian eatery run by the former official chef of the EU, who offers a wonderful children's menu.

Monuments

The National Mall is resplendent with monuments memorializing beloved presidents and patriots. Kate Gibbs, media relations director for Destination DC, suggests visitors consider different times of day to experience them. "Monuments are staffed by park rangers up to 9 p.m.," she says. "You could see some monuments



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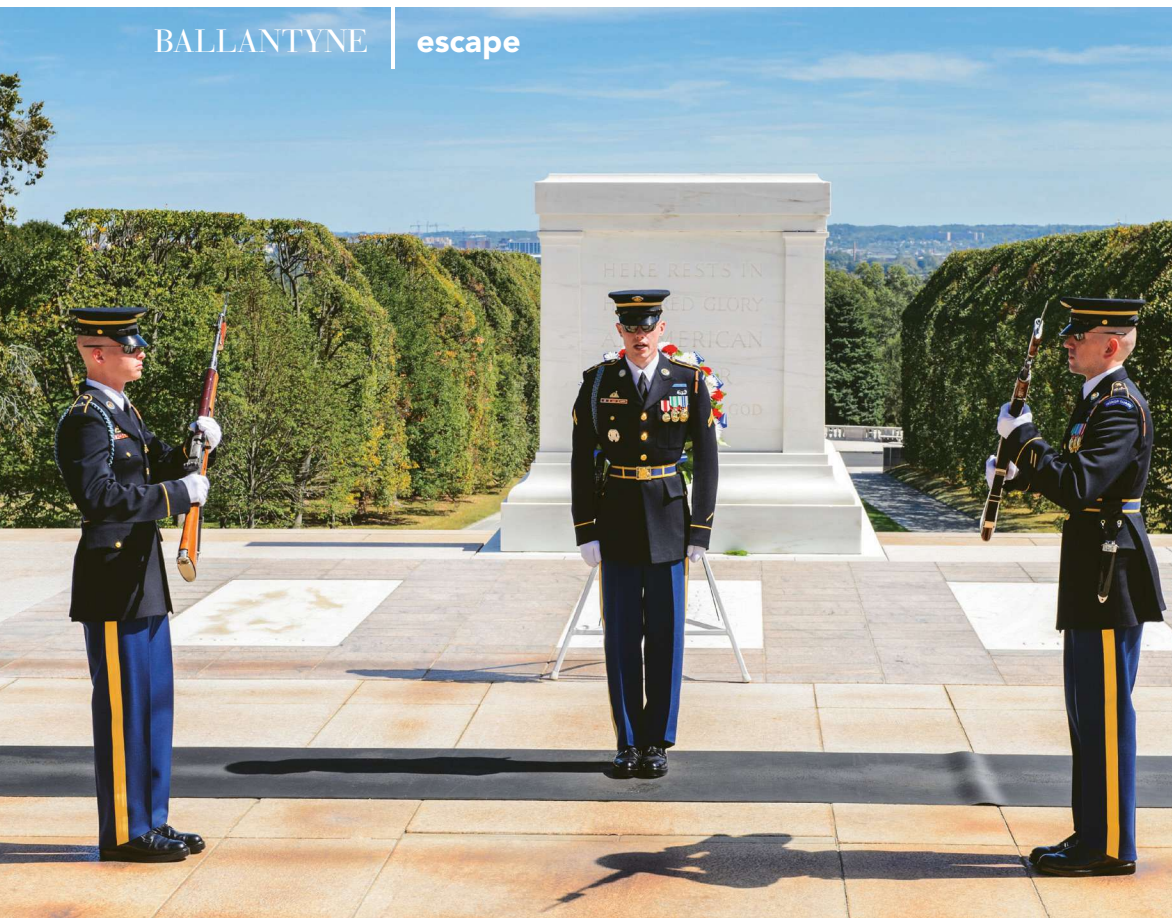
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during the day, then return to see others illuminated with the cherry trees in the moonlight.”

For lunch nearby, she recommends Paul, a large French patisserie that sells delicious salads and baguette sandwiches and has plentiful seating for families. Teens often prefer the funky food mall at Union Market. 701, across from the National Mall at 701 Pennsylvania Ave., offers adults a sophisticated lunch deal at the bar.

Another must stop is Arlington Cemetery, where you can catch the moving ceremony of the Changing of the Guard at

Left: The Changing of the Guard at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier is a moving ceremony at Arlington Cemetery.

Below: The National Air and Space Museum features the Wright Flyer.



If you drive into Washington, parking usually costs \$50 per night.



The Barron Hilton and other aircraft are part of the air and space museum.



You can walk or take a bus tour through beautifully kept graves of fallen heroes at Arlington Cemetery.

the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier every hour, and then walk or take a bus tour through beautifully kept graves of fallen heroes.

Museum Madness

Even if you've been to Washington's major museums, there are always fabulous new exhibits. This spring the National Air and Space Museum launches "A New Moon Rises" with stunning photos from the Lunar Reconnaissance Orbiter Camera. For a high-flying sugar fix during your visit, order freeze-dried astronaut ice cream.

For an intriguing conclusion to your capital adventure, surveil the International Spy

Museum, delving into America's espionage tradecraft dating to 1776. View the "Exquisitely Evil: 50 Years of Bond Villains" exhibit, and blow your last dollars on ingenious souvenirs like Wi-Fi cuff links with a secret flash drive for hiding classified intel. Bond would be proud.

Getting There and Around

If you drive into Washington, D.C., parking usually costs \$50 per night. Instead, Gibbs suggests putting your car in long-term parking at Reagan National Airport, then catching the Metro to your hotel. Luxe accommodations include the Willard InterContinental and the uber modern Mandarin Oriental. Families on a budget like Kimpton's 11 boutique hotels, including the Madera and Rouge with bunk beds that fit four into one suite.

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Left: The air and space museum houses a wide variety of exhibits and historical information.

Below: A current display at the International Spy Museum is "Exquisitely Evil: 50 Years of Bond Villains."

To get around, the Metro, National Mall Circulator bus, cycling and walking are your best bets. Here's an inside tip: Don't be an "escalafter," Beltway commuters' pejorative for tourists who stand on the left side of Metro escalator stairs during rush hour, blocking those in a hurry. 



TICKETS TO THE CAPITOL, WHITE HOUSE

Free tickets for the U.S. Capitol tour are available through N.C. Congressman Robert Pittenger's Washington office (202-225-1976), where staffers take groups of 15 or fewer, helping you avoid the general lines. For free tickets to White House tours, you must call at least 21 days ahead, but it's advisable to request tickets up to five months in advance.

Since White House tours can be canceled on a moment's notice, Destination DC's Katie Gibbs suggests visiting the White House Visitor Center for a touchscreen tour and then shopping at the White House Historical Association Gift Shop for an unusual memento, such as a letter opener with a saber designed for George Washington or White House Christmas ornaments.



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Our Spring Palette

Bissell Media paints five thoughts of spring with our love of lush strawberries, jewel-toned jelly beans and more. We tiptoe through the tulips in our bright yellow galoshes and cheer the Derby while sipping sweet mint juleps.



Advertiser	Page Number	Advertiser	Page Number	Advertiser	Page Number
Allen Tate Co.	38-39	Dermatology Practice of the Carolinas	73	Premier Sotheby's International Realty	45
Aloft Charlotte Ballantyne	27	Diamonds Direct	BC	Providence Day School	55
Aten Family Dentistry	60	Dickens Mitchener	1	Rug & Home	87
Ballantyne Acupuncture	93	Fink's Jewelers	7	Sara's YMCA	71
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Ballantyne Commons East	3	Golden Properties	89	Smoke Modern Barbeque, StoneCrest	57
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British American School	26	Jeff Genant, State Farm	89	The Club at Longview	9
Carolina Dance Capital	15	Jo Butterworth, Helen Adams Realty	57	The Stone Man	85
Carolina Dental Arts	77	LS3P Associates	33	Top 5 Media	19
Carolina Neurosurgery & Spine Associates ...	61	Malak Jewelers	43	TPC Piper Glen	4
Carolinas Vision Group	33	Med Boutique	21	Tracy Delgado, Realtor®	26
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Though scary in the looks department, the black and yellow garden spider endears itself to gardeners by helping control insects. A signature silk-road zigzag highlights its web. Thanks, Dan Reiss, for your close-up of this fascinating creature.

Silk Road

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Eye Level showcases the sights, scenes and joys of Ballantyne. We love images of pets, friends, family, nature, events, activities — anything with a compelling local flair. Email your high-resolution image (300 dots per inch or higher) to news@ballantynemagazine.com and include your name and contact information.

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