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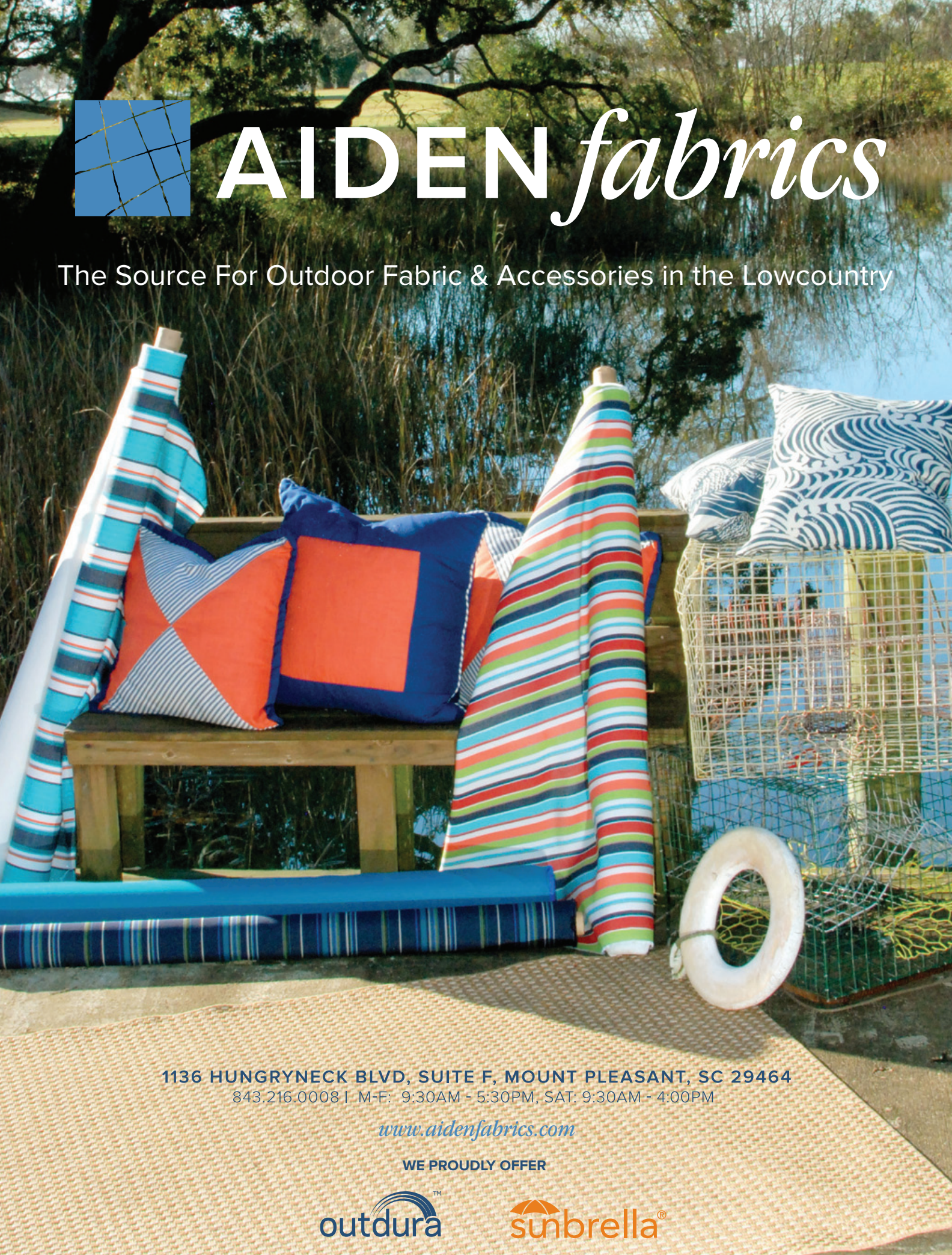
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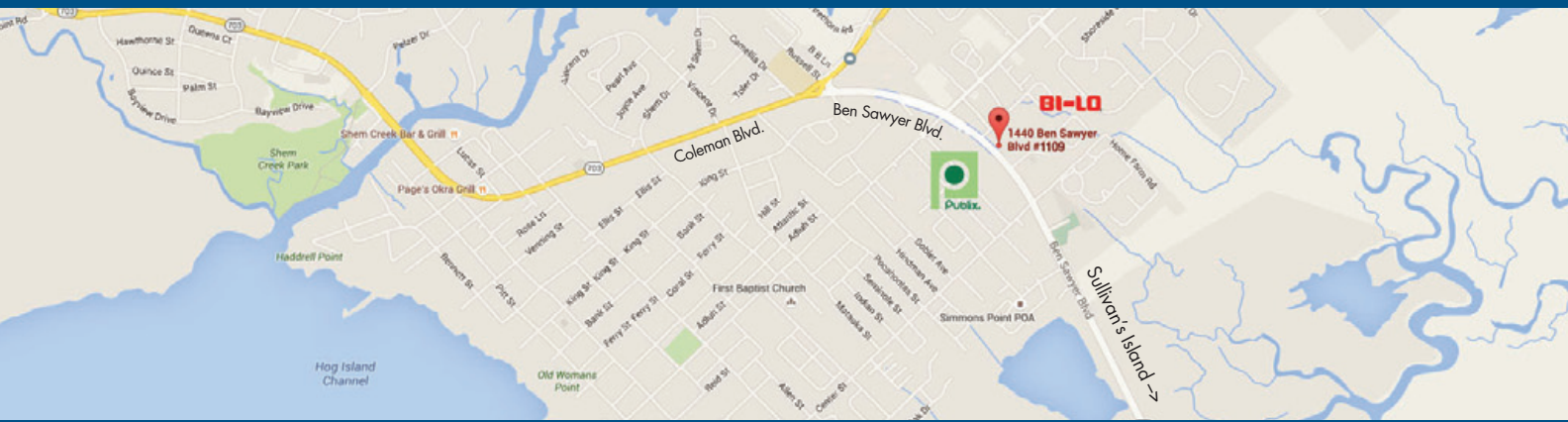

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Publisher's Note

THROUGHOUT MY PUBLISHING CAREER, I'VE BEEN blessed to have a few significant moments that I felt produced something exceptional. When I was living in Gainesville, Florida, and producing my first magazine, *Gainesville Magazine,* I had the opportunity to publish the University Of Florida's basketball program. I considered that to be an honor.

Ten years after moving to East Cooper, I experienced Hurricane Hugo. I decided to document this fierce act of nature with a magazine called *Storm Of The Century - Hurricane Hugo.* Next, I visited south Florida after Hurricane Andrew left its massive devastation and documented the storm with another magazine. And, as a bonus, by publishing the magazine, we were able to raise money for those in need.

It is so gratifying to knock on the door of a hurricane survivor's home and offer some good news. In many cases, they opened the door and I saw clouds peeking through holes in the roof. As I would hand them some financial relief, their deep sense of despair faded, and they expressed how much they appreciated the help. That was another significant moment in my career.

Today, I am proud Mount Pleasant residents and visitors enjoy *Mount Pleasant Magazine*. And this issue – featuring the 2016 Best of Mount Pleasant cover – represents another important moment in my career. It all started when we wanted a way to express excitement over the fact that our readers cast more than 61,000 votes on this year's "Best Of" ballots, compared to 36,000 votes in 2015. The Best of Mount Pleasant is growing steadily and has become an annual resource that guides new residents and visitors to the best places, people, businesses and services.

Because this issue represents the best East Cooper has to offer, we wanted to create something extraordinary. We hope in your eyes our cover represents just that. To me, this represents another significant moment in my years of publishing.

I knew this issue's cover was going to be special the first time I told my printer, in business since 1914, about my vision, and they replied they had never printed this kind of cover. After a dozen more e-mails and conversations, we worked through how we would produce the cover you're looking at today.

Publishing is a team sport, and the Best Of 2016 edition, including the cover, was produced by what I think is a top-notch publishing team. All of us here at *Mount Pleasant Magazine* hope you will enjoy our special cover and the entire Best Of issue.

Thanks for spending some time with us, and please feel free to join us on www.Facebook.com/MountPleasantMagazine.

Until next issue,

Bill Macchio

— BILL MACCHIO
Publisher

MOUNT PLEASANT MAGAZINE

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Publisher/Editor
BILL MACCHIO
Publisher@MountPleasantMagazine.com

Managing Editors
DENISE K. JAMES
BRIAN SHERMAN
Editor@MountPleasantMagazine.com

Art Director
DANA COLEMAN

Senior Photographer
JENN CADY

Production Manager
CRISTINA YOUNG

Designer
KIM HALL

Webmaster
GEORGE CONKLIN

Internet Marketing
SHERMAN PAGGI

Contributing Writers
PAMELA BROWNSTEIN
EILEEN CASEY • MARY COY
NATALIE CAULA HAUFF • BILL FARLEY
JAKE LUCAS • KALENE MCCORT
CHARLIE MORRISON • BARBARA M. PATRICK
JOE SEMSAR • ANNE TOOLE
JOHN TORSIELLO

Contributing Photographers
BRANDON CLARK • CHRISTINA MARIE RILEY
BRIAN SHERMAN • RICK WALO

Media Consultants
BRANDON CLARK
Brandon@MountPleasantMagazine.com
CULLEN MURRAY-KEMP
Cullen@MountPleasantMagazine.com
JULIA REED
Julia@MountPleasantMagazine.com
TATIANA THOMAS
Tatiana@MountPleasantMagazine.com
BERT WOOD
Bert@MountPleasantMagazine.com

Administration & Bookkeeping
DIANE PAULDINE • GINGER SOTTILE

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Inquiries to: *Mount Pleasant Magazine*
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From the Managing Editor

HAPPY NEW YEAR, Y'ALL! WELCOME TO OUR BELOVED Best of Mount Pleasant issue. We're lucky to start the year off this way – listing the restaurants, bars, retail shops, salons, services, physicians and outdoor spaces that make East of the Cooper an outstanding place to live. In other words, instead of pondering how to make things better in the new year, we get to celebrate how fabulous things already are.

Speaking of celebrations, our foldout cover for the Best of Mount Pleasant issue had all of us raising a toast. It was truly a group effort. My appreciation goes to Jenn Cady, our senior photographer; Dana, our art director; Ginger and Brandon, our loyal team members; Bill, our energetic publisher; and the helpful folks at Vanity Salon, Harborside East and GDC Home. We couldn't have done it without you.

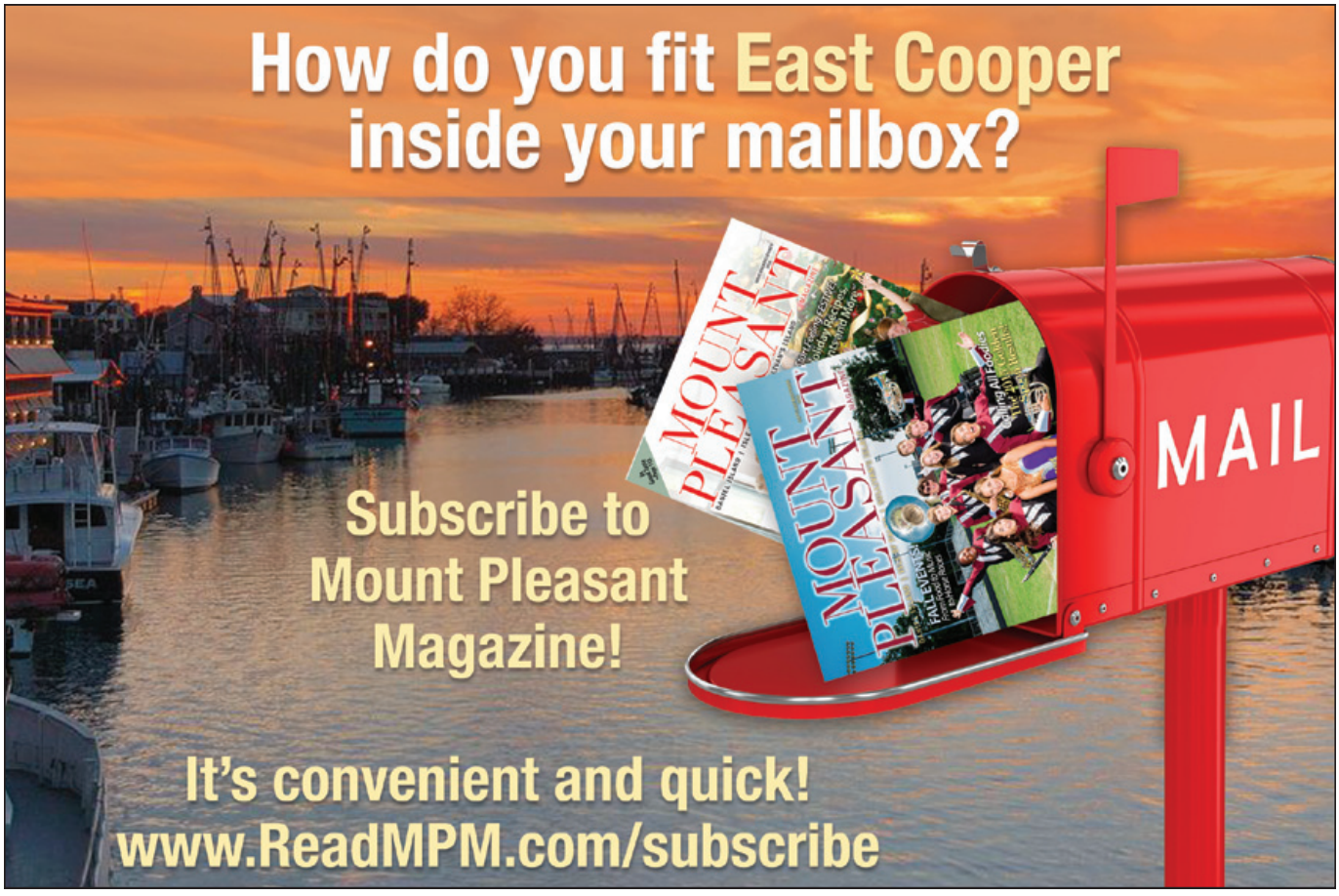
Don't our cover stars look extraordinary? These first place winners are, left to right: Jack Little of East Cooper Community Outreach; Brooke Ryan of Mix 96; Rob Fowler of WCBD News 2; Dr. Jack Hensel of Lowcountry Plastic Surgery; Dr. John Knepper of Sewee Family Medicine; Michele Hensel of Lowcountry Beauty and Wellness Spa; Jason and Keenan Harn of Loy Harn Jewelers; Chrissie and Willie Hopkins of East Cooper Auto Pros; Dr. Margarita Murphy of Colon Surgeons of Charleston; Josh Atkinson of Atkinson Pools and Spas; and Wes Sellew of Mortgage Network. What a crew!

Elsewhere in this issue are even more reasons to celebrate Mount Pleasant, including the feature Brian and I wrote about our favorite indie coffee spots; Jake Lucas' story on local craft beer; Bill Farley's scoop on the Billy Swails Parkway; Natalie Hauff's story about the legacy of Edmund Jenkins – plus much more.

Now, just for a moment, forget about your resolutions and give yourselves a pat on the back. Because I think we all make up the Best of Mount Pleasant, dear readers – from our leaders and business owners to the scenery and residents, we each do a part in making East Cooper an epic place. I hope you'll read through this issue and agree with me.

Until the days lengthen and spring is here, enjoy the issue – and happy 2016!

Yours,
DENISE K. JAMES
Managing Editor



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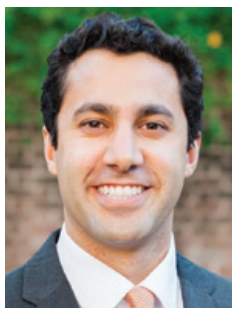
Our Contributors

Following a long career in print and broadcast journalism, **Bill Farley** spent 25 years as a senior executive for Playboy Enterprises, Inc. in Los Angeles. He retired in 2005, moving with his wife, Judy, to Mount Pleasant. Bill writes frequently for local publications and has published a novel. He plays guitar and keyboard and fishes "when someone with a boat invites me out."

Charlie Morrison brings more than a decade of newsroom experience, his first story hitting the shelves in the *Charleston City Paper* back in 2002. Since that time, he has published more than 600 articles for *West Of*, the *Charleston City Paper* and the *James Island Messenger*, which he owned until April 2015. He is now freelancing on a wide variety of topics.

Mary Coy is a fourth-generation Charlestonian and a graduate of the College of Charleston. A former teacher in local classrooms, museums and historic sites, she continues to educate as a guest speaker at special events and by giving tours through her company, Charleston 101. She has written six books about Charleston, and her articles have appeared in national and local publications.



Joe Semsar is a lifetime resident of Mount Pleasant. He currently works as a business management consultant with Deloitte Consulting LLP, helping organizations become more productive and profitable. Semsar earned a bachelor's in Political Science from Clemson University and an MPA from the University of Pennsylvania's Fels Institute of Government. He is a Teach For America alumnus and a former teacher of the year recipient.

Notes from Friends

We love feedback from our friends, whether it comes from our Facebook page (facebook.com/MountPleasantMagazine) or by email, snail mail or MountPleasantMagazine.com. Letters are edited for length and clarity.

"Your November/December issue, "Big Hearts for Little Hearts," made my heart shine this morning! Thank you for publishing about love in the Lowcountry. "

-Anonymous
via Facebook.com/MountPleasantMagazine

"Loved the article you did on Rein and Shine! Thank you so much. "

-Catherine Tallman
via email

"Love seeing so many faces I know! What a great cover!"

-Blair Clark Perry
via Facebook.com/MountPleasantMagazine

"I love the magazine! I've learned lots about new businesses that are in the area. Great local magazine and excited to see the Best of!"

-Katherine Kuszmaul
via Facebook.com/MountPleasantMagazine

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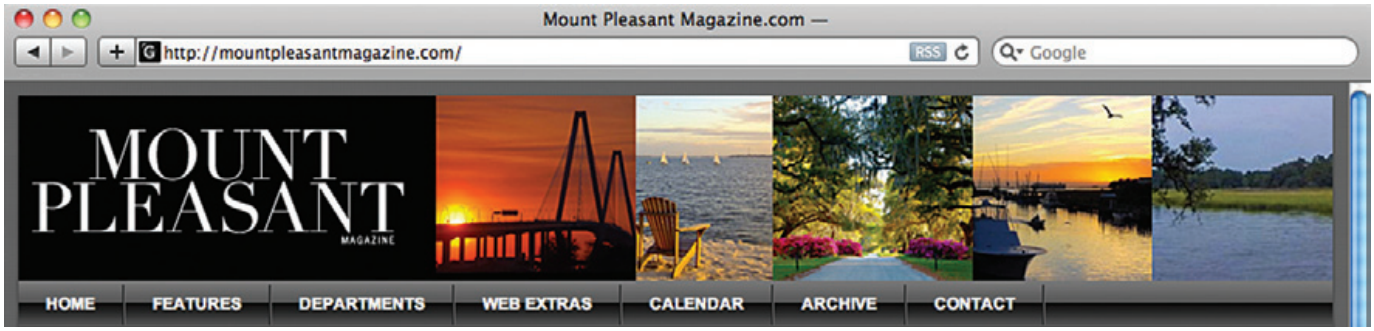

VISIT **WWW.MOUNTPLEASANTMAGAZINE.COM** FOR MORE THAN WHAT YOU SEE IN THE PRINT MAGAZINE: more stories, more photographs and more fun stuff in general.

Our shoot for the 2016 Best of Mount Pleasant cover deserved its own video – which is why we hired local videographer Gavin Shelton to record the highlights of the event at Harborside East and turn them into a **mini-movie about our cover.** Featuring comments from senior photographer Jenn Cady as well as the illustrious winners, you'll definitely want to check this out! Visit YouTube.com and search Mount Pleasant Magazine Best of 2016 Cover Shoot.

It's that time again – submit your **favorite and mom and dad nominations** for our popular May/June Favorite Moms and Favorite Dads contest! Your loving mother and heroic father deserve it, after all! Visit http://mountpleasantmagazine.com/favorite-mom-and-dad/ to enter.

The summer pet issue is approaching again! And that means we're ready for our readers to submit **fun pictures and stories** about your pet at MountPleasantMagazine.com/PetPhotos for a chance to show off your cuddly kitten or devoted dog in a future issue of *Mount Pleasant Magazine*. Your dog, cat or parrot deserves its 15 minutes of fame!

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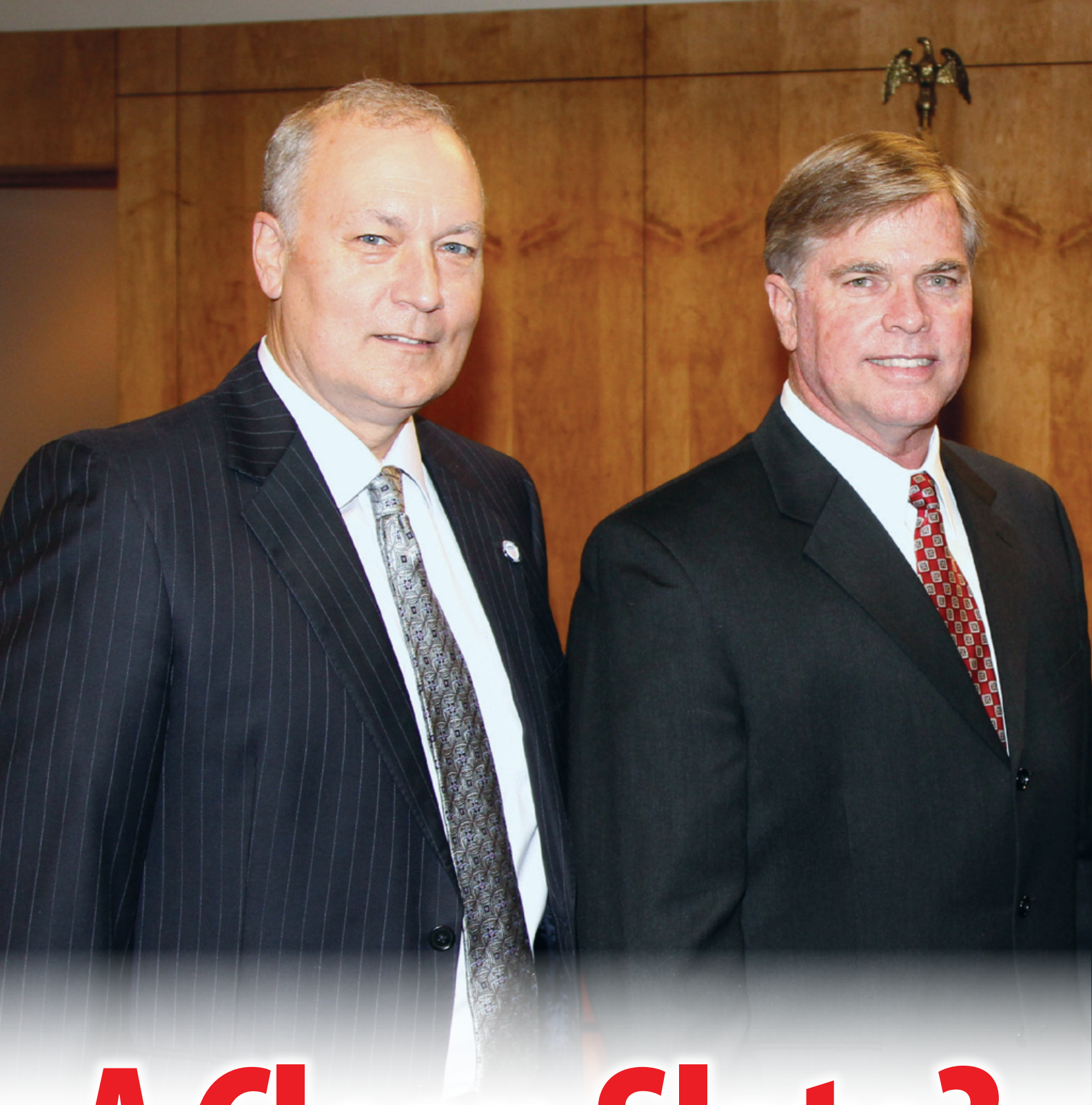

A Clean Slate?

VOTERS SAY NO TO COUNCIL INCUMBENTS

Photo by Rick Walo.

Four new members were elected to the Mount Pleasant Town Council in November. Left to right: Will Haney, Jim Owens, Bob Brimmer and Joe Bustos.

Story by Brian Sherman.

WAS LAST NOVEMBER'S MOUNT Pleasant election a blatant rejection of the policies established by a Town Council intent on adding fuel to the fire of unbridled residential growth? Did a grass-roots movement that grew out of a simple website morph into a force powerful enough to take down three sitting councilmen and replace them with its own chosen slate of like-minded candidates? Or were the political aspirations of Ken Glasson,

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Chris Nickels and Chris O'Neal simply crushed by the wave of anti-incumbent sentiment that seemingly has swept the nation at every level during an especially contentious political season?

The answer to these questions depends on who you ask, of course, as does the issue of whether former Councilman Joe Bustos and political newcomers Will Haney, Jim Owens and Bob Brimmer were part of a slate supported by Save Shem Creek, an organization launched in 2014 by "people who felt the voice of the people wasn't being heard," according to founding member Jimmy Bagwell.

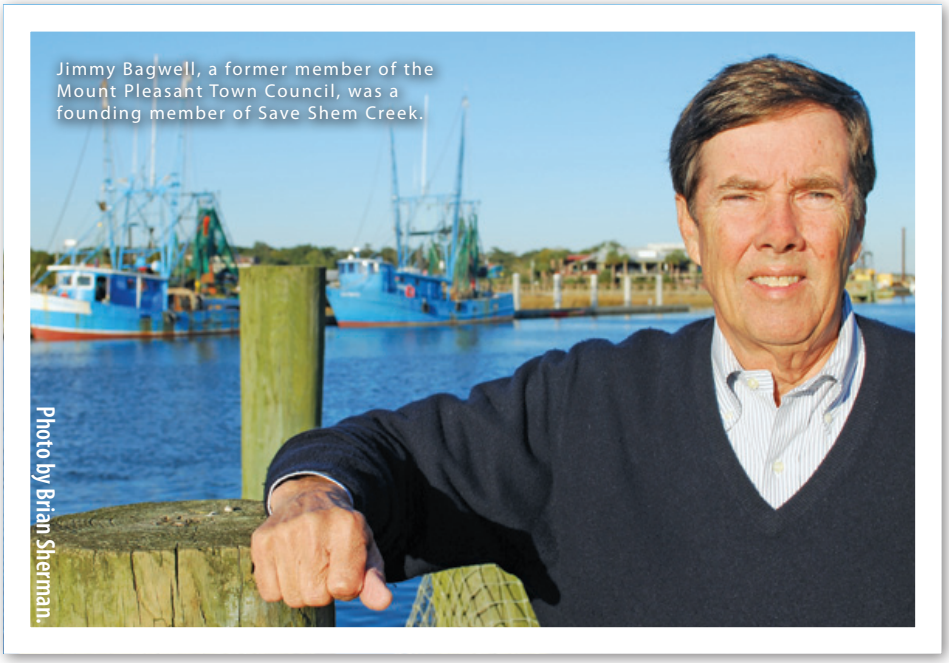
Jimmy Bagwell, a former member of the Mount Pleasant Town Council, was a founding member of Save Shem Creek.

Photo by Brian Sherman.

What is not open to conjecture is that by the time the votes were counted in the ensuing runoff, it was obvious that the makeup of the Council was about to change in a drastic way. Glasson, Nickels and O'Neal were gone, along with Thomasena Stokes-Marshall, who did not seek re-election, replaced by four candidates who received, at the very least, tacit approval from the Save Shem Creek board of directors.

According to Brimmer, a former member of the town Planning Commission, there was little the incumbents could have done to save their seats on the Council.

"It wasn't about them. They got caught up in an anti-incumbent wave," Brimmer said. "People were concerned about the direction of the town, and they took it out on the incumbents. That concern was hard to overcome."

Brimmer, Bustos, Haney and Owens all denied that there was a Save Shem Creek slate, though the incumbents disagreed.

"There was no official slate. It was just four guys with similar ideas, and Save Shem Creek recognized that," Brimmer said.

Bustos, who served on the Council from 2000 until 2009, was quick to point out that his campaign didn't receive any money from Save Shem Creek, while Bagwell, a councilman from 1975 to 1980 and again from 1981 until 1988, said "not one cent was given to anyone or spent on a campaign."

"Save Shem Creek is not a political action committee and there was not a slate, but, as individuals, our members expressed a personal opinion as to who should be elected," Bagwell said.

The three former councilmen disagreed with Bagwell's assessment of the situation, each of them insisting that Save Shem Creek was well-organized and armed with an efficient battle plan.

"If you look at the votes, the people who backed them were very consistent in voting for all of them," said Nickels, who served on the Council for four years. "There wasn't a large discrepancy in their vote totals."

"We learned about the power of social media," he added. "Things can go out on social media and spread quickly, whether they are factually correct or not."

"Their ground game was more substantial than I had given them credit for," Glasson, a Council member for nine years, said. "People aren't going to do research. They're going to believe what they hear."

All three incumbent councilmen cited a long list of accomplishments during the past four years, including: road work on Highway 17, Johnnie Dodds Boulevard and Hungry Neck Boulevard; the beginning of phase 2 at Shem Creek Park; new restrooms at the farmers market in front of Moultrie Middle School; construction starting on the new Town Hall; extended hours and free parking at Memorial Waterfront Park; body cameras for Mount Pleasant police officers; improvements in the town's recreation program; the establishment of a $30-million reserve fund; the town's contribution to the Medal of Honor Museum at Patriots Point; and a program that dedicates funds for infrastructure issues every year.

They also pointed to the town's excellent rating from both Standard & Poor's and Moody's, which reduces

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Mount Pleasant's borrowing costs.

"There's no way they can improve on what we've done," said Glasson. "Show us an area where we can improve. They'll undo a lot of what we did. In time, they'll realize the things we did helped the town."

O'Neal, who served on the Council for four years and earned a spot in the runoff before finishing third to Owens and Haney, said he was disappointed but not upset about his loss.

> "I enjoy it. People have asked me why I run for office. What keeps me going is that the little guy needs help."
>
> ***- Former Councilman Ken Glasson***

"I don't know anything I could have done," he remarked. "Elections are interesting things, and this one had interesting results. I don't think anyone can say I didn't do a good job."

Though the construction of an office building/parking garage at Mill Street and Coleman Boulevard provided the impetus for the creation of Save Shem Creek, for all practical purposes, the election was framed as a battle about growth: a fight among those who wanted to use the gas pedal and those who favored the brakes. That, at least, was the word Mount Pleasant's voters seemed to hear, though neither side would admit to intentionally sending that message.

Chris Nickels

"The board members of Save Shem Creek are not against growth," Bagwell insisted. "It's a myth that we are opposed to growth. We want sensible growth."

"We needed to go forward with a sense of responsible growth, not urgent growth," said Owens, a founding member of Save Shem Creek. He resigned from the board of the organization before taking the Council oath of office.

"The issue was growth and all that accompanies growth," Haney pointed out. "But we'll go with what is prudent. We're not talking about drastic measures."

Neither Glasson, O'Neal nor Nickels ruled out the possibility of returning to the political arena sometime in the future.

"I enjoy it. People have asked me why I run for office. What keeps me going is that the little guy needs help," Glasson said.

"The race has to be right and the time has to be right," O'Neal said. "I don't see the results of this election as an indictment of the job I did."

> "I don't know anything I could have done. Elections are interesting things, and this one had interesting results."
>
> ***- Former Councilman Chris O'Neal***

Nickels also was optimistic about his political future.

"I feel like I have something to offer," he said. "I feel like there will be opportunities in the future, and, if an opportunity presents itself, I'll take a long, hard look at it. For now, I am going to support my new Council. I'm going to pay attention to what they're doing. I'll be a cheerleader for the town of Mount Pleasant."

Chris O'Neal

And, taking one more stab at explaining why Mount Pleasant's voters sent three incumbents packing, he commented: "When you look back on this election, you'll see that 6,000 people were really motivated by believing, legitimately or not, that their town government was allowing unfettered growth. The Save Shem Creek political movement did a great job of collecting information and putting together a slate of candidates."

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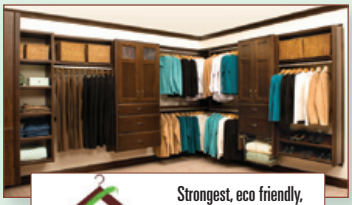

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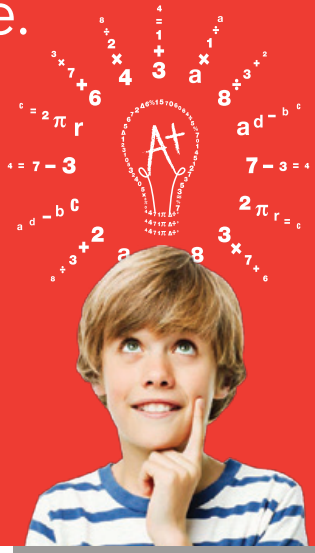

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Four *New* Faces

A LOOK AT MOUNT PLEASANT'S INCOMING COUNCILMEN

Story by Brian Sherman.
Photos by Rick Walo.

Mount Pleasant voters chose four new councilmen when they went to the polls in November 2015. Here's a look at the quartet of newcomers.

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BOB BRIMMER

Bob Brimmer

Until 2015, Bob Brimmer showed little interest in the political arena, choosing instead to get involved in his adopted hometown by donating his time and talent in a variety of appointed positions. His decision to place his name on the crowded Council ballot was based on his belief that he could do more to make Mount Pleasant a better place to live, work and play.

"There was a disconnect between what the Town Council was doing and what the public was saying," he explained. "It concerned me. I wanted to bridge that disconnect."

The top recipient of votes in the Nov. 3 election, Brimmer said much of his support came from people who agreed with the direction he followed during his six years on the town's Planning Commission.

"Those folks were aware of my votes and decisions. That's what attracted them to me," he remarked.

A native of upstate New York who moved south to earn a bachelor's degree in Psychology at Lander College in Greenwood, South Carolina, Brimmer has served on the town's Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee and two blue ribbon education committees. He said his 15 years of service to Mount Pleasant gave him the experience to move seamlessly into his seat on the Council.

"I had a front row seat to development issues, what we were doing right and what we could do better," he commented, adding that he was ready to "take public service to another level."

Brimmer, who serves as a regional director for the state Department of Social Services, insisted that the recent election, which produced four new councilmen, was not simply a battle between "no growth and pro growth." He said the campaign was more about how quickly the town's population will expand, what type of development will be permitted and whether Mount Pleasant's infrastructure – its roads, water and sewage systems and other critical services – will be able to keep pace with its growth.

"We're going to grow," he said. "This is a desirable community. But we need responsible, balanced growth, and Mount Pleasant's future needs to be decided by Mount Pleasant, not by outside forces."

According to Brimmer, in the past, the Council has been too "development friendly," granting variances to the town's Comprehensive Plan and rezoning too much property from commercial to residential.

"There will be fewer exceptions, and the town will stick closer to the rules," he commented. "Residential and commercial development have to be balanced."

Brimmer, who earned his master's in Higher Education/Counseling Psychology at James Madison University and has lived in the Lowcountry for 25 years and in Park West in Mount Pleasant since 2003, pointed out that he is not opposed to high-density residential development. He said he would like to see Coleman Boulevard serve as Mount Pleasant's main street, with taller buildings and more density on Johnnie Dodds Boulevard.

He added that increasing the capacity of Highway 41 will be a priority for the new Council.

Brimmer and his wife, Dianne, have been married for 23 years. Their daughter, Haley, is a senior at Clemson University, while their son, Alec, is a junior at Wando High School.

JOE BUSTOS

Joe Bustos

Joe Bustos' message is much as the same as it was during his first stint as a Mount Pleasant councilman: Growth is not a problem; uncontrolled growth is.

"The situation is similar: crowded schools, lots of traffic and people wanting things to slow down a bit," said

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Bustos, who served on the Council from 2000 to 2009 and reclaimed his seat in November. "I don't think we're in a bad place right now, but we will be soon if we don't take action."

Bustos grew up in Mount Pleasant and graduated from Moultrie High School in 1968. He earned an undergraduate degree from Columbia College and a master's from Central Michigan University and spent 24 years in the U.S. Army, reaching the rank of Lieutenant Colonel. His military career took him to places as diverse as New Jersey, Georgia, Kansas and Korea, but picking a place to retire was an easy decision for Bustos and his wife, Kathy, a graduate of Bishop England High School. They returned home in 1995.

"We looked around and couldn't think of a better place to live than Mount Pleasant," he said.

An unsuccessful candidate for the post of mayor of Mount Pleasant in 2009 and again in 2013, Bustos said he ran his entire Council campaign for around $3,000 of his own money.

"I didn't want to be beholden to anyone," he explained. "If you take money, you will feel obligated. People expect things when they give you money."

He explained that he and his wife "walked a lot, used social media, visited folks in their homes and sent emails. That's how we campaigned."

Bustos, who worked as a stockbroker after leaving the Army, found his retirement job at the Mount Pleasant Regional Airport. He learned to fly at the age of 53 and enjoyed his time in the air so much that he earned his instrument rating and commercial license and now teaches others to "slip the surly bonds of Earth."

Bustos said he was a supporter of preserving the charm of Shem Creek even before the recent controversy over the construction of an office building and parking garage near the iconic waterway. When he chaired the Planning Committee during his previous term on the Council, he helped establish the Shem Creek Overlay District and spearheaded the town's purchase of 40 acres of land that is now home to Shem Creek Park.

"There have been plans to build condos and a marina on the creek, which would have squeezed out what was left of the shrimp boats," he remarked.

In Bustos' mind, the town of Mount Pleasant would be better off pushing economic rather than residential development, in part because businesses pay taxes and other fees but put little strain on services provided by the town.

"We need real economic development so people can live here and work here," he commented. "Creating 50 or 60 minimum wage jobs is not economic development."

The Bustos' have a daughter, Kelly, and a son, Brian, and a grandson, Nathan.

WILL HANEY

For three years of his life, Will Haney was a student at East Cooper School, a now-defunct educational institution housed in a building that later became part of Mount Pleasant's Town Hall. He'll be spending a lot of time on that same campus, but instead of learning to read, write, add and subtract, he'll be making decisions that affect the future of one of the fastest-growing municipalities in the country.

Haney, a writer, newspaper columnist for the *Moultrie News* and other publications and a public relations and marketing consultant, was successful in his first-ever

Will Haney

political campaign in November, claiming a seat on the Mount Pleasant Town Council by finishing in the top two in a three-way runoff. His prior political experience was as press secretary from 2000 to 2002 for then U.S. Rep. Charles H. Taylor of North Carolina.

Haney said he entered the Council race, at the urging of his wife, to provide a voice for the people of Mount Pleasant.

"The townspeople did not have as much influence as the developers and outside organizations," he said. "If it's not true that a person who owns a modest house in Mount Pleasant doesn't have as much access and voice as a person who owns an expensive home, we're not the democracy I thought we were."

Haney, who came out on top in 31 of 39 precincts in the runoff, said one of his priorities in his new job would be to make sure developers are required to abide by the town's building regulations.

"Why do our ordinances appear to be so negotiable?" he asked. "We're going to stick to the guiding documents and regulations we have, things like commercial property not being rezoned to high-density multifamily. This is not a no-growth scenario. It's a compatible growth scenario."

According to Haney, the Mount Pleasant election was all about the town's ever-expanding population. He pointed out that the previous Council passed a growth management plan two weeks before voters went to the polls, "too late to convince the public that slowing growth was a priority."

"Our rate of growth is not a matter of opinion any more," he remarked.

Haney moved to Mount Pleasant at the age of 5, went to high school in Sumter, returned to Mount Pleasant for a while in 1987 then on a permanent basis in 2010. Expanding on ideas he broached in columns for two newspapers in Western North Carolina, he published a book titled, "When My Cellphone Blinks 'Roam,' Do I Have a Call from Italy?"

Haney, who in 1983 earned a degree in Business Administration at The Citadel, where he was the top-ranking cadet at the military academy, is working on a second book, this one about Col. Harvey M. Dick, former assistant commandant of cadets at the school.

Haney and his wife, Suzette, a teacher at Jennie Moore Elementary School in Mount Pleasant, have a blended family that includes two sons and two daughters.

JIM OWENS

Jim Owens, who has spent his entire life in the Lowcountry, thinks he has a lot to offer to the place he calls home. A licensed construction

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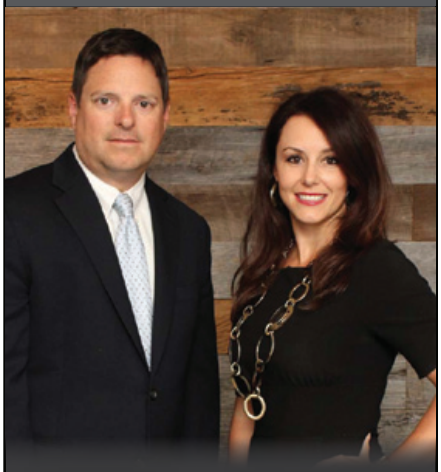
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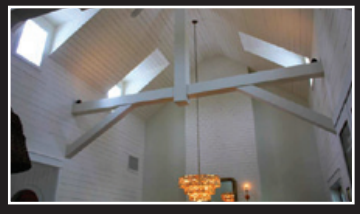

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manager, utility contractor and real estate agent, he has a good idea about how to help manage the future of one of the fastest-growing towns in the United States.

"I know what infrastructure should look like," said Owens, who culminated his first political campaign by claiming a seat on the Mount Pleasant Town Council in November's runoff election.

Jim Owens

During his career, Owens has worked on projects including Daniel Island's infrastructure, the Mount Pleasant Memorial Waterfront Park, the Center for Advanced Studies on the Wando High School campus and the utility infrastructure at Mount Pleasant Regional Airport.

Owens, who graduated from Wando High School and attended the College of Charleston and Trident Technical College, said he launched his political career because "It's something I always wanted to do." He added that he had been attending Council meetings for about two years and was concerned that local residents had only two minutes to speak about what he considered to be serious issues.

He actually waded into the local political scene in October 2014 as a founding member of Save Shem Creek, after establishing a Facebook page aimed at opposing the construction of an office building and parking garage at the corner of Mill Street and Coleman Boulevard, not far from the creek.

"We don't need to negate what made Shem Creek so great to people who settled here initially," Owens commented.

He suggested that it might be a good idea to consider other options besides an office building near the west side of the creek, including a museum, an open-air market or a park.

Will the results of November's election bring drastic changes to the way land is developed in Mount Pleasant? Owens insisted that the town will continue to grow, "but at a steady and reasonable rate." He said he wants to eliminate many of the special exceptions that have been granted to developers by the Council in recent years.

"We will review the growth management plan. We'll see what needs to be done and make adjustments to the plan," Owens commented. "I don't think we should allow development that impacts residents in a negative way."

He added that he is optimistic about the future of Mount Pleasant.

"I know our best days are ahead, and I'll do everything in my power to make sure that takes place," he said. "I can't imagine growing up in an area that has a sense of community like Mount Pleasant. My friends in those days are my lifelong friends today."

Jim and Lydia Owens have been married for 14 years; their blended family includes five children.

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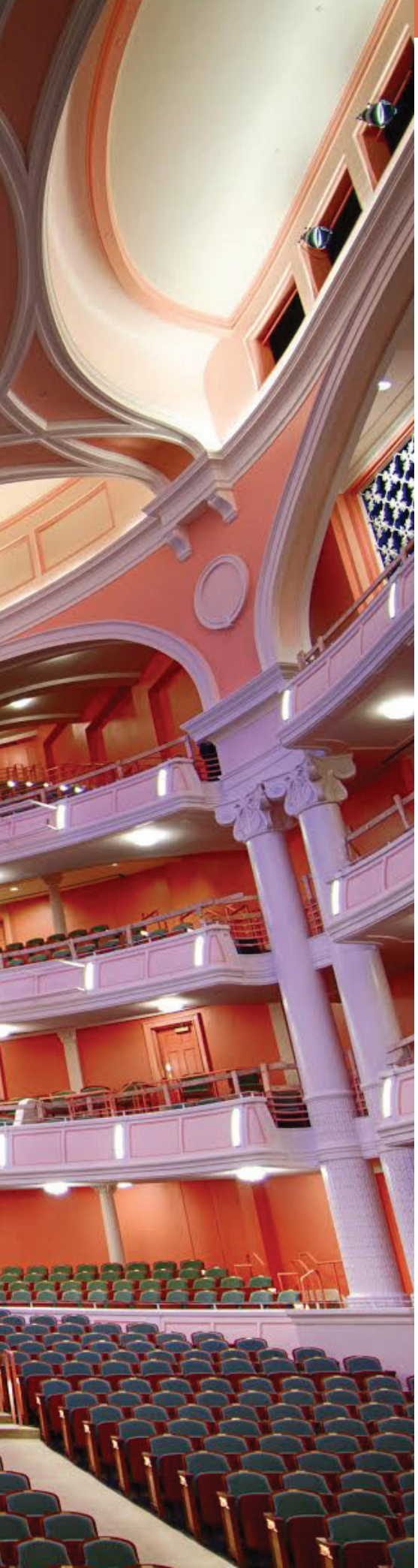

Not a Bad *Seat* in the House

THE NEW GAILLARD CENTER

Story by Denise K. James.
Photography provided by The Gaillard.

WHEN KEVIN CARLON, DIRECTOR OF external affairs at the Gaillard Center, moved from Boston to RiverTowne in Mount Pleasant last year to accept his current position, he already had plenty of experience in the entertainment field, mainly in sports and the arts. And though he'd worked in "stadiums, arenas and all kinds of places," Carlon especially appreciates the remodeled Gaillard for its impact on the entire community.

"This is a new building with a new mission," he pointed out. "And we've put together a new team to make it work."

Of course, it's not entirely new – the "old" Gaillard, which closed in 2012 and was a well-regarded institution in the Lowcountry, is still there in frame – but it is completely renovated inside. More importantly, the updated

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neoclassical facility will take an even larger community role than before, with new programs that, according to Carlon, will instill appreciation for the arts in people who might have missed the opportunity to enjoy the Gaillard in the past.

"Our president, Executive Director Tom Tomlinson, had a vision for a community arts venue, and we all share that vision," Carlon remarked. "We want this facility to be enjoyed by everyone. Since opening last October, we've scheduled shows in every genre."

He isn't kidding, either. A perusal of the Gaillard schedule for early 2016 includes a wide variety of must-see entertainment. Shows are broken down into classical productions such as choir concerts and operas; Broadway productions; dance productions, including a performance this spring by the New York City Ballet; and pop productions such as the "Experience Hendrix" mini-festival, slated for February and featuring musicians who played with the famous guitarist in years past.

"We wanted comedy, classics, rhythm and blues, country – a little something for everything," Carlon emphasized.

Besides an assortment of shows for all tastes, another tactic to attract devotees is the Kids' program for 2016, headed by Rick Jerue, director of education, outreach and strategic initiatives. The program is targeted to schools in the tri-county area, particularly Title 1 schools, where students might not have adequate exposure to the arts.

Approximately 15 shows throughout the year will count as educational performances. Students will begin with a study guide and briefing inside their classrooms and learn about the background of the show before attending.

"We have an education assistant who will teach the kids about these shows and go over the study guide with them," Carlon explained. "That's followed by an actual field trip to see the show here at the Gaillard and then a discussion afterward."

Carlon mentioned one such show held shortly before our interview, where a student looked up in awe at the stage and solemnly declared the event to be "the best day of his life." Clearly, the program is already doing its job.

Meanwhile, another inaugural program is underway at the Gaillard – Charlton Singleton is the first artist-in-residence. A popular local musician and leader of the

Jazz Artists of Charleston, Singleton's accomplishments in organ, trumpet and voice make him a great first choice for the annual program.

"One of the artist-in-residence's tasks is to meet with coordinators at the local schools and discuss other ways to get kids more active in the arts," Carlon explained, noting that both the artist-in-residence program and the educational show program are "aggressive" and meant to propel Tomlinson's plan for a performing arts center that accommodates everyone.

So what does a typical day consist of for the Gaillard Center's director of external affairs? A little bit of everything, according to Carlon. Matters such as obtaining sponsorships, implementing marketing plans and generating revenue are all fair game – anything on the "business side," he said. But it's clear from a chat with Carlon that establishing relationships is what he loves most about his new job.

"We've all developed a good rapport with all the big events in Charleston," he pointed out. "Events such as the Southeastern Wildlife Expo, Spoleto Festival USA, DIG South and others. We're also home for the Charleston Symphony Orchestra. This is a wonderful, world-class venue for Lowcountry events."

I was lucky to tour the entire Gaillard Center with Carlon as my guide. I sat everywhere inside the Martha and John M. Rivers Performance Hall: the orchestra seats, right by the stage; the box tier seats, offering a flavor of exclusivity; the dress circle, which was my personal favorite: Even though they were high up, I didn't feel my usual fear of heights, thanks to awesome engineering; and the gallery seats, offering breathtaking scope of the entire performance hall. In other words, there's not a bad seat in the house at the Gaillard Center. Not to mention the elegant lobbies and hallways, with their high ceilings and beautiful natural light, which make a person feel like royalty.

But don't simply take it from me – book tickets to see a show there and you'll understand for yourself.

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Breaking Through Barriers

MOUNT PLEASANT'S FIRST BLACK TOWN MARSHAL, EDMUND JENKINS

Story by Natalie Caula Hauff
Photos courtesy of Deborah Jenkins-Lewis.

> "Change has to come one day, and I'm not sure when the change comes if I'll be living. Hopefully, I'll be able to help with the change while I'm on this Earth."
>
> *~Deborah Jenkins-Lewis*

DEBORAH JENKINS-LEWIS never met her great-grandfather, but she's made it her life's mission that he be remembered for breaking through racial barriers in a tumultuous time in South Carolina's history.

Jenkins-Lewis, 58, grew up hearing the stories about her grandfather's father, Edmund Jenkins, an African-American veteran of the Civil War who was elected as Mount Pleasant's first black town marshal.

Jenkins, who, according to his family, was born a slave in McClellanville, served the town of Mount Pleasant from the 1890s until the late 1920s, according to the Mount Pleasant Historical Commission. His tenure during the age of Jim Crow laws was rare, according to Jenkins-Lewis.

"My great-grandfather was an ordinary man who led an extraordinary life by virtue of the times he lived," she said.

Damon L. Fordham, a South Carolina historian who wrote about Jenkins in his book, "True Stories of Black South Carolina," said that based on the interviews he conducted, Jenkins kept order largely among the black community at that time.

"He was so well thought of that when he died in 1930, the newspaper published his obituary and referred to him as Mr. Jenkins, when such titles were not given to blacks during those days or even obituaries were written about them," he said. "During that time, that was miraculous."

Details about his life, however, are hard to come by nowadays. Little else has been written about Jenkins, who died on Dec. 26, 1930.

"There's a lot of people not aware of it," said Jenkins-Lewis.

People in the Lowcountry are surprised when they hear about Edmund Jenkins, according to Fordham.

"There are a lot of great heroes from that period that people are shocked to learn about," he said. "Almost without exception, they are shocked to learn there were educated black people in those days. Students are always shocked to learn that."

Deborah Jenkins-Lewis gives a goody bag to a child after a ceremony at the Edmund Jenkins Home in 2002.

The town of Mount Pleasant erected a historical marker for Jenkins in 2006, while a public housing facility built in 1952 was also named the Edmund Jenkins Homes in his memory.

Jenkins-Lewis is grateful for the recognition, but she's hungry for more. She wants her great-grandfather's legacy ingrained in the state's history. She is currently advocating for street signage in honor of Edmund Jenkins and is determined to keep the memory of him alive.

"I'm not going to give up," she said. "It's very important for me to continue this move for the legacy of my family."

Jenkins-Lewis lives in Chicago, where a movement to end racial injustice has recently taken center stage. She said

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A public housing facility built in 1952 was named in honor of Edmund Jenkins.

she is disturbed by recent police shootings of black men around the country.

"It's very disappointing. It's heart-wrenching. I never dreamed of this. But so many times, justice has not prevailed for any of us," she said. "Change has to come one day, and I'm not sure when the change comes if I'll be living. Hopefully, I'll be able to help with the change while I'm on this Earth."

Fordham believes that valuable lessons can be learned by sharing the stories of Edmund Jenkins and others like him. He believes these lessons can help shape our country's future.

"Once you get a better understanding of the past, you have a better understanding of your future," he said.

Jenkins-Lewis, meanwhile, is confident that sharing the story of her great-grandfather's bravery and determination to be equal among men will resonate today.

"I want them to know that in spite of what we are experiencing in the times today, change is very critical for the United States of America, and he was an example of that," she said. "We must change. My great-grandfather led by example, in spite of what he had to endure."

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Teal is a popular accent color, according to Kimberly Tall, interior designer at Aiden Fabrics.

POP Goes the Color

ENHANCE YOUR SPACE IN 2016

BY STACY E. DOMINGO

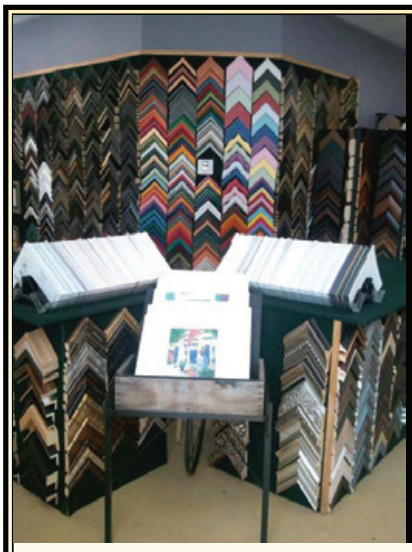
COLOR PALETTES ARE LIKE taste buds, only much more permanent – which is why designing a home is sometimes a task that engenders both anxiety and optimism.

"Gray has been the new neutral for over a year," explained Kimberly Tall, interior designer for Aiden Fabrics. "The accent colors people are opting for tend toward teal, burnt orange, lipstick red or salmon colors."

Tall, whose design career was launched in California, noted the differences between the two coasts.

"California is more eclectic and earthy, with a little bit more edge. Also, design choices tend to change more often," she explained. "The East Coast, especially in Charleston, sticks with a traditional foundation mixed with chic and beach."

People tend to stay with what reflects their personalities, according to Tall.



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"I've even seen people choose throw pillows that match their favorite shirt," she said.

Jenny Keenan of Jenny Keenan Design, who has been in business in the Charleston area for more than a decade, sees a change in the Lowcountry.

"Things are becoming less formal," she noted. "People like to mix inherited pieces that are more traditional and then add items that tend toward a more relaxed style to fit with kids – one big open space with an eclectic mix of things with pops of color."

Color forecasters around the world get their inspiration from many different avenues, including runway fashion and even automobiles.

"People listen to the color forecasters, but often design trends have been pulled from different countries, such as Old World or European," Tall explained. "A popular choice lately is white on white with textured cream leather."

Incorporating patterns and designs is a way for you to make a house a home. Feeling comfortable in your space is important, and, for most, it means redesigning every 10 years or so.

"A great way to live within a budget is to utilize neutral colors such as beiges or grays for your bigger pieces and then accent with the livelier colors," said Tall. "That way you aren't trying to replace an expensive sofa. Think about replacing throw pillows or lamps to change your living spaces."

Keenan agreed. She is a big fan of working with a white house and adding fabrics to create individualized living space.

"I love block print palettes," she said. "Essentially, you can just continue to layer patterns over patterns. I love mixing textiles."

It is important to choose a color that makes you comfortable, and, if you are concerned about using a specific color, you should start small.

"Add little pieces in one room, and, if you find you like it, then expand to another room," said Keenan.

She also recommended choosing a paint color with gray undertones.

"Of course, it depends on how vibrant you want the color to be, but having a gray undertone doesn't mean it is going to look gray on the wall. It simply translates better and is not quite so bold. My clients seem to be happier with this. What color people want most often is a good blue," she said.

When choosing a color, Keenan said you shouldn't simply go by the small color samples or color wheels: "Paint a test sample on a board – or several samples – and then carry it around the room to see if it is going to work."

For many, one of the most important rooms to design is a nursery. Winn Query, owner of Baby Bloomers in Mount Pleasant, has been guiding clients for nearly 13 years, helping them make sure the room will be ready when the baby arrives.

"Neutrals and grays are definitely trending in nurseries, but white is still the most popular color choice," said Query. "We always start clients off with furniture pieces because that is the biggest decision, yet the easiest, for people to make. There are fewer options in color tones in regards to furniture. Then we move on to fabrics, such as chevron, which was popular a few years ago, and from there the clients' tastes will guide them in the proper direction."

While the furniture pieces and wall colors are typically guided by the tastes of the parents, the remaining colors that add the pizazz and character have for decades been dictated by the sex of the child.

"For both male and female babies, adding pops of color to the neutrals and grays is important. Even today, pink is most often chosen for girls and blue for boys," Query explained. "However, a common mistake is getting too many things going on at one time. Add one bold pattern and then build around it if that is

According to Jenny Keeney of Jenny Keenan Design, it is important to choose a color that makes you comfortable.

what you want. Although not everyone wants bold for a nursery, and that is why we are here."

Popular gold and metallic embellishments have stayed the course for a few years, as have earthy, raw or rustic tones in nurseries. Inspirational words or phrases placed around nurseries have also remained popular, while vintage floral patterned wallpaper or decals seem to be making a comeback.

Some Lowcountry nurseries also seem to work with furniture pieces and accents that work for both sexes: deep blues, raspberry or even kelly green.

The impressions colors make reach beyond the interior of the house: The exterior is the first statement made about a home. Jan Clouse, owner and president of Carolina Lanterns, has seen changes since starting her business.

According to Jan Clouse, owner of Carolina Lanterns, copper is an excellent choice for the exterior of the home.

"In 1999, the most popular color was black, but today people have expanded to more traditional lanterns with copper," she said.

Clouse went on to explain that a house with copper gutters, roof and lanterns is a wonderful choice: "Nothing says quality more than copper on the exterior of a home. It is the only thing you can put on your house that gets better with time."

Copper turns naturally, offering an exquisite patina that goes through several stages of color, she added

"In the Lowcountry, you can pair it with Charleston green, which is a beautiful shade that never goes out of style," she said. "It is timeless."

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Photo by Brian Sherman

Remembering Lucy Beckham

A MOUNT PLEASANT MAGAZINE TRIBUTE

FEW PEOPLE HAVE HAD A greater and more positive effect on the future of East Cooper than Lucy Beckham, the longtime Wando High School principal who passed away Dec. 13 at her home in Mount Pleasant. Beckham, a former national Principal of the Year, was promoted to the position of executive principal of Charleston County's District 2 earlier this year.

I've written two articles about Ms. Beckham, and I've also listened to her speak a few times to the Mount Pleasant Business Association. Though she was always busy, she was generous with her time and constantly heaped praise on her staff and teachers. And she never tired of bragging about the students who passed through Wando during her 17 years there.

The last time I saw Ms. Beckham, I interviewed her for an article I wrote about her new job with the school district. While I was at the campus, she beamed with pride as she walked me through the Center for Advanced Studies. I was impressed and looked forward to another interview sometime soon so I could write an article for *Mount Pleasant Magazine* about the almost brand new center of learning. I regret now that I didn't return sooner and that when I do write the article, I will be touring the building with someone other than Lucy Beckham.

Here are some other memories of Lucy Beckham, courtesy of the *Mount Pleasant Magazine* Facebook page.

Visit mountpleasantmagazine.com/lucy-beckham for more memories.

Brian Sherman
Managing Editor

I grew up with Lucy in Fountain Inn and knew her and her family as long as I can remember. We are shocked to hear of her passing. My thoughts and prayers are with Lucy's family and friends.
• Anne Bell Stockman

In 2002, my son was personally dealing with a terrible tragedy, and Lucy called him on the phone to give him strength. We will always be grateful to her!
• Barb Bachus Ferson

From bagels with Beckham to encouraging my strong reader to holding graduation in 2009 because half of the children graduating were stuck on 526 for hours because of a bad accident, Lucy went above and beyond to show her love to the children of Wando. The speech she gave to Wando JROTC and Chief Costa was a very special moment I was able to be a part of. Lucy was one of a kind.
• *Sandra Reed*

I wouldn't have even passed high school without her help and support. She did so much for Wando and our community, and I'm going to miss her so much. Thanks to her, I graduated high school and got into college.
• Caitlyn Ann Tobin

I grew up with Lucy. Her mom taught me, and I finished my teaching career in the area where her mom's family lives. Such a wonderful student at Hillcrest High in our graduating class. I know she will be remembered for her love of students!
• Melanie Barbrey Davis

Lucy Beckham was an amazing leader and educator with CCSD. I am a retired bookkeeper from CCSD and had the honor of attending many meetings with Lucy and meetings she hosted at Wando. She was an influential force in Mount Pleasant. I had the pleasure of working with her son, daughter and son-in-law. She will truly be missed!
• *Terri Edwards Pye*

Each student she touched is better for having known her. She always had a kind word for my son, a cashier at Publix. He will miss her.
• Franne Schwarb

Not only did she care for her students, she cared for and cherished her staff! My husband currently works there, and, from what I saw and heard, she was always very intentional about encouraging and building up her team. She was a great leader and mentor to so many! She will be missed and always remembered.
• Amy Crockett

Wando was the venue, but Ms. Beckham's mission in life was to provide the best education possible for all students. When she spoke, you felt her passion.
• Sheila Powell

Both of my daughters attended Wando while Lucy was principal. She was a great leader and example for the children attending Wando. Because of her foresight and drive, our children received the tools they needed to become successful adults. I am forever grateful!
• Cindy Parnell Dawson

Coffee

HELPING STRANGERS CONDUCT BUSINESS SINCE WHO KNOWS WHEN!

By Denise K. James & Brian Sherman.

COFFEE IS ONE OF MY VICES – I drink it daily, usually more than once. In fact, coffee was one of the first bonds that I shared with my co-editor, Brian Sherman. He and I both love the stuff, although he drinks his totally black, no cream or sugar, and I like to experiment a little more with lattes, espressos, cappucinos or whatever woos me at the time.

In addition to coffee, Brian and I both love supporting independent businesses. We recently discovered several awesome places that are serving java around East Cooper, so we decided it was time to share our favorite spots to get a caffeine jolt with our readers. After all, winter is the perfect time to sip a hot drink and contemplate what your plans are for the coming year.

SIP

Brian: Part of the Mount Pleasant coffee scene since September, Sip offers indoor seating, as well as a patio facing Ben Sawyer Boulevard. On a beautiful Lowcountry day, we dropped by to visit with owner Mark Dewitt,

and, for some reason, we chose to sit inside.

Sip is more than a coffee shop, offering breakfast, lunch, dinner and desserts, as well as wine and beer. Coffee, though, is its most important commodity, at least in my humble and sometimes overcaffeinated opinion. Mark set me up with a mug of black coffee: no sugar, no cream, no swirly design staring back at me from the steaming hot liquid – the way coffee is supposed to be consumed. My only issue was the gargantuan size of the mug, forcing me to chug rather than sip. Once coffee falls below a certain temperature, it loses its allure – almost. I guess next time I can request a smaller cup.

> *"I like to create a concept, hire good people and get out of the way."*

Mark said he chose King Bean Coffee Roasters as his supplier on the recommendation of a committee of taste-testers.

"Coffee drinkers are loyal. People who come in once come back," Mark remarked, adding that Sip is the eighth business he's started from

Laura Alberts
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the ground up.

"I like to create a concept, hire good people and get out of the way," he said.

Denise: Cam Brune, one of Sip's morning baristas, brought me a caramel macchiato, though he admitted that plenty of people go for the vanilla lattes and cappucinos. The macchiato is made with a caramel bottom, vanilla bean syrup, two shots of espresso and steamed milk and is a sweet treat, right down to the caramel-drizzled whipped cream on top. I'd definitely save this for special occasions – fortunately, for a magazine editor, that could be any day. And if it was a REALLY special occasion, I might leave with a six-pack of beer or some wine.

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METTO COFFEE & TEA

Brian: I can't remember the names of all the coffee shops that have come and gone in Mount Pleasant in the past decade or so. I do know that Metto is not among them. It's been a popular hangout for coffee lovers for

> *"It's lively. That's how we like it."*

more than nine years now, thanks in part to its drive-thru window, its awesome outdoor seating and the enthusiasm of owner Sarah Parrish.

I grabbed the last parking space in Metto's lot the day we stopped in, so I wasn't surprised by the large crowd inside.

"It's lively. That's how we like it," Sarah told us before disappearing for a few minutes to make me a pour-over, a steaming hot cup of black magic with the wherewithal to cure all that ails you. Am I making too much of the wonder of coffee? Maybe just a little.

The coffee was grown in Ethiopia and roasted in Seattle by Zoka, Sarah's former employer.

Metto, which also serves made-from-scratch pastries, is the only independently-owned coffee shop in Mount Pleasant with a drive-thru, the source of 40 percent of her business, Sarah pointed out. And, of course, there's the tree-shaded deck, one of the best places in East Cooper to enjoy a hot cup of coffee.

Sarah added one more important reason why Metto has succeeded while other Mount Pleasant coffee shops have failed.

"Determination and the support of my family," she explained. "That's why we're still around."

Denise: One of my all-time favorite coffee drinks in Mount Pleasant – or anywhere – continues to be the honey latte at Metto Coffee & Tea. Thus, I was secretly pleased when that's the signature drink they brought me to "try." Made with espresso, steamed milk, real honey plus vanilla and a dash of cinnamon, the mug warmed my hands while Sarah Parrish, Metto's owner, told Brian and me how important coffee is to her. I couldn't help but think it shows.

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Brian: It seems that most people who own independent coffee shops in Mount Pleasant have an interesting

> *"We always have the same coffee. That's what people like."*

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story to tell. Take, for example, Saveurs Du Monde Café, where we talked with owner Thierry Chateau. He gave up his job as an attorney in France to travel around the world on a sailboat with his wife, Christiane, and two children. They home-schooled their kids during their five years at sea.

"Being an attorney was too much work, and there was not enough time with the kids," he said.

In May 2014, Thierry and Christiane decided it was time for a new adventure, so they opened their French café in Seaside Farms. In addition to coffee, the menu includes a variety of breakfast, lunch, dinner and dessert items.

The cup of black coffee Thierry served me was roasted locally by King Bean Coffee Roasters. He pointed out that coffee drinkers generally are creatures of habit who appreciate the taste and aroma of a consistently good cup of joe.

"We always have the same coffee. That's what people like," he said.

Thierry said Saveurs Du Monde Café sold 28,400 cups of coffee from October 2014 to October 2015, serving around 400 customers a day. And youngsters who haven't yet developed the urge to caffeinate are treated to a small cup of hot chocolate.

Denise: I'd never ordered a mocha before, but, thanks to the friendly owners of Saveurs Du Monde, I likely will in the future. The heavenly drink they served me perked me up – way up – and is made with espresso, steamed milk, homemade chocolate from the cafe's own kitchen and a generous dollop of whipped cream. I was crazy-awake when Brian and I left a while later – so I'll probably be back after a late night out.

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BROWN FOX COFFEE CO.

Brian: On most weekdays, rain or shine, you'll find Brown Fox Coffee in a gravel parking lot on Simmons Street, just off Coleman Boulevard and across from Moultrie Middle School. However, if you stop by for a hot or cold cup of instant energy and the lot is empty, you can always use Facebook or Instagram to find Biz Foxworth and her coffee truck.

Biz and her 16-foot trailer have been in business since February. Many of her loyal customers are teachers or parents of students at Moultrie Middle, but the coffee truck has also been at corporate events, farmers markets

> *"I love coffee and I love people."*

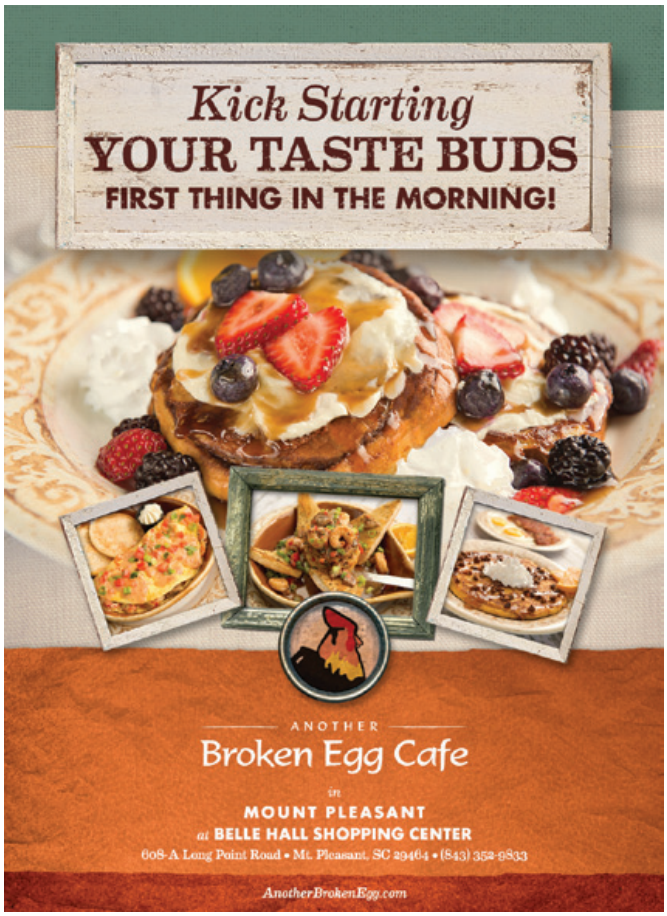
and Charleston County School District seminars. Brown Fox has traveled to the First Flush FesTEAval on Wadmalaw Island and the Boone Hall Plantation Pumpkin Patch, and, in November, Biz brought her own brand of coffee lovers' heaven to a local wedding.

Denise and I visited Biz on a beautiful Lowcountry afternoon and enjoyed our caffeine fix at one of two shaded tables along Simmons Street. Biz fixed me a pour-over from medium-roasted beans grown on the La Amistad Farm in Costa Rica. She said her customers also like a dark roast from Cameroon in Africa. All her coffee is roasted by Lowcountry Coffee Roasters.

Biz told us she generally serves around 80 cups of coffee a day, from 7 a.m. to 4 p.m. She also sells CG Pralines, peanut butter energy balls, muffins, scones and other snacks. She thinks she has found her calling.

"I love coffee and I love people. And I always wanted to be in the hospitality industry," she said.

Denise: I go to visit Biz at the Brown Fox Coffee Truck often enough that I have a couple of "usuals" – the



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Southern pecan roast and the Mexican Fox latte, which are both delicious. But on our official coffee article visit, I tried a little something new: the raspberry white mocha, made with espresso, steamed milk, raspberry syrup and a lot of love. Then I enjoyed it outdoors while feeling happy and inspired. You might say it was "berry" good.

Brown Fox Coffee Co.
307 Simmons St.
Mount Pleasant, South Carolina
www.brownfoxcoffee.com

COOPER RIVER COFFEE ROASTERS

Brian: Is there any better way to spend the final hour or so of a magnificent Lowcountry morning than filling your belly with coffee and filling your brain with useful information?

That was the case when Denise and I took a short drive down to Cooper River Coffee Roasters. Co-owner Paulette Sullivan made me four pour-overs from coffee

> *"We like to think of ourselves as a coffee roaster with a small coffee shop up front."*

grown in four different countries: Peru, Ethiopia, Bolivia and Columbia. Meanwhile, her husband, Sean Sullivan, showed me how he roasts coffee beans.

"We like to think of ourselves as a coffee roaster with a small coffee shop up front," Sean explained during the 12- to 15-minute roasting process.

Cooper River Coffee Roasters, open since late October, sells to local restaurants and boutique shops. Sean and Paulette ran a coffee roasting company in Ohio before they made the move to the Carolina coast.

The Sullivans, who import green beans from Brazil, Rwanda, Sumatra, Ethiopia, Guatemala, Costa Rica, Bolivia, Mexico and Columbia, are passionate about coffee, of course, but Paulette also takes great interest in the efforts of companies that supply them with coffee from around the world. For instance, Organic Products Trading Company, which imported the coffee I tried from Bolivia, financially supports women who produce coffee "in various fundraising activities that go directly to help women, their families and their communities" through the Café Femenino program, which empowers "female farmers using the production and sale of their own product as the vehicle to create social change."

Denise: I left Cooper River Coffee Roasters pretty much feeling like I could fly – meaning, of course, that I tried the variety of pour-overs that Brian tried, except, unlike Brian, I'm sensitive to caffeine. I'm happy to report that my favorite of the bunch was the Ethiopian variety, which was smooth enough that I did not even require cream. Brian said he was proud of me, which made it all totally worth it.

Cooper River Coffee Roasters
1303 Ben Sawyer Blvd., Suite 5
Mount Pleasant, South Carolina
843-810-7917
www.facebook.com/cooperrivercoffeeroasters

VINTAGE COFFEE CAFE

Brian: Vintage looks more like a stately old home – complete with a porch that doubles as a spacious outdoor seating area – than it does a coffee shop. In business since mid-September, it's the kind of place you go when you want to relax, sip a steaming hot cup of coffee and enjoy the Lowcountry sunshine.

Vintage offers breakfast and lunch, including a kids' menu, but the star of the show here is coffee. Manager

> *"I want people to love good coffee. I want them to realize what the differences are."*

and Art Director Powers Gray considers part of her job to be to teach local residents about the wonders of coffee.

"I want people to love good coffee. I want them to realize what the differences are," she said. "We're focusing on educating people about coffee."

The day Denise and I visited Vintage, Powers brought me a pour-over of Bonta, a coffee grown on family farms in Papua New Guinea and purchased from CounterCul-

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ture in Durham, North Carolina. Powers said Vintage will buy from other roasters in 2016, including Heart Roasters in Portland, Oregon; Intelligentsia in Chicago; and Slate in Seattle. She said Vintage uses around 50 pounds of coffee a week.

When I asked Powers what sets Vintage apart from the many independent coffee shops that opened their doors in East Cooper in the past year, she insisted that one doesn't stand out above the others – not even her own place of business.

"We're not above anyone else. We just want to share the knowledge about coffee," she said.

Denise: The cinnamon latte at Vintage, one of my favorites of the new spots in East Cooper, had some of the best latte artwork I'd seen, besides being made with homemade cinnamon syrup. Not too sweet and just frothy enough, it's the perfect afternoon drink when you're working on a deadline and in need of extra inspiration. Not that I ever wait until the last minute for anything.

Vintage Coffee Cafe
219 Simmons St.
Mount Pleasant, South Carolina
843-654-9606
www.vintagecoffeecafe.com

JOEY BAG A DONUTS

Brian: During Joey Casale's formative years in an ethnic neighborhood in Cleveland, he was known as "Bag a Donuts," which, he explained, means "heavy set Italian man." He brought the nickname with him to Mount Pleasant, where he, his sister (Kim) and their mom (Mardy) are the proprietors of a family-run coffee shop and bakery.

I sipped a hot cup of black coffee when we visited with the three owners recently. Joey let us know that the coffee was imported from Italy, but he chose not to reveal which company roasted the beans. I guess he preferred to keep that information from competitors who read *Mount Pleasant Magazine*.

Joey Bag a Donuts, which has been featured on The Travel Channel, has been offering its loyal customers

> *"It's OK to press your nose to the glass."*

more than just imported coffee for the past six years. The menu also includes sandwiches, bagels, muffins, 60 different flavors of donuts that are baked on-site and even homemade Stromboli, a nod to their Italian heritage.

Kids certainly are welcome at Joey Bag a Donuts, where the display case is low to the ground so people who have not yet reached their adult height can get a good look at the bakery items. According to the company's website, "It's OK to press your nose to the glass."

It's also OK for kids to let Joey, Kim and Mardy know that they are grateful for the respect they are shown at Joey Bag a Donuts. The walls are decorated with notes of appreciation from youngsters who have visited the local establishment.

Denise: Sometimes you need a dose of sweetness in an otherwise "meh" day, and the salted caramel macchiato at Joey Bag a Donuts is perfect for those occasions. In fact, I think it was the first drink I ever sipped at the coffee shop – right before I promptly became jealous of residents of North Mount Pleasant who get to visit Joey Bag a Donuts all the time. Made with salted caramel syrup, fresh espresso and milk that is both steamed and frothed, this drink defines decadence.

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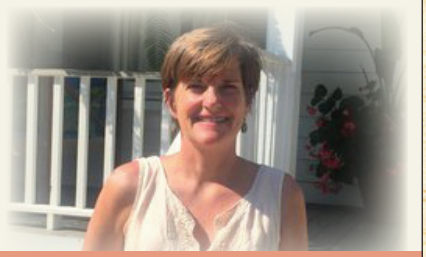

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"It is inhumane, in my opinion, to force people who have a genuine medical need for coffee to wait in line behind people who apparently view it as some kind of recreational activity."
- Dave Barry

"I like coffee because it gives me the illusion that I might be awake."
- Lewis Black

"Science may never come up with a better office communication system than the coffee break."
- Earl Wilson

"If it wasn't for the coffee, I'd have no identifiable personality whatsover."
- David Letterman

"Coffee smells like freshly ground heaven."
- Jesse Lane Adams

"Adventure in life is good; consistency in coffee even better."
- Justina Chen

"I believe humans get a lot done, not because we're smart, but because we have thumbs so we can make coffee."
- Flash Rosenberg

"What goes best with a cup of coffee? Another cup."
- Henry Rollins

"No coffee can be good in the mouth that does not first send a sweet offering of odor to the nostrils."
- Henry Ward Beecher

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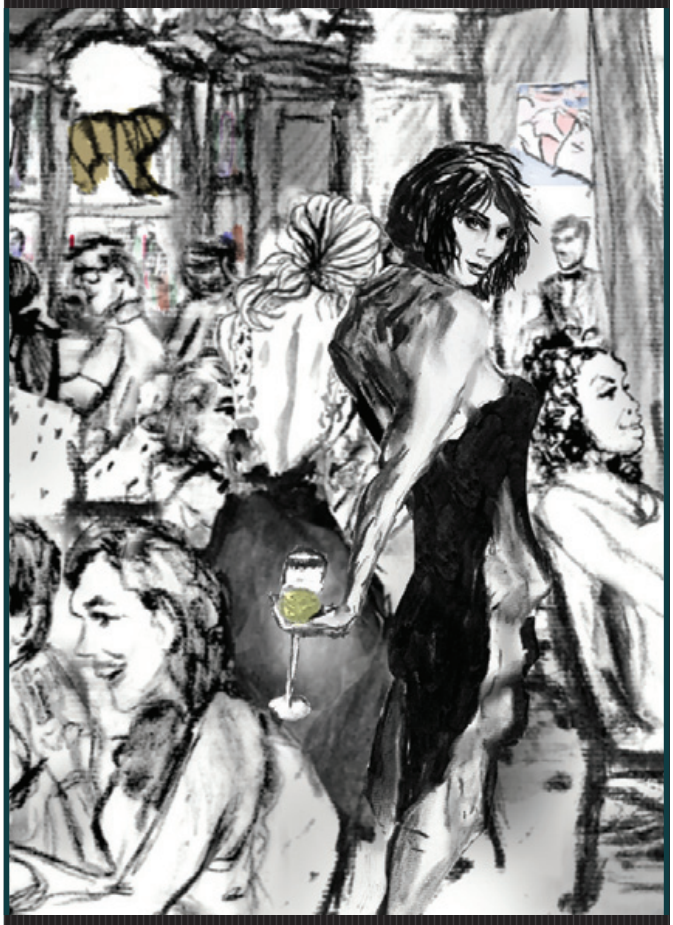

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We're Getting Crafty

THE BEER BOOM IN MOUNT PLEASANT

Story by Jake Lucas.

Left to right: Josh Parker, John Kosky, Jim Leonard and Patrick Davis enjoy a brew at Ghost Monkey. Below: John Mutter adds a yeast starter to the wort of his Mount Pleasant IPA.

Photo courtesy of Ghost Monkey Brewery.

THE GUYS AT GHOST MONKEY and Two Blokes breweries looked all over the Charleston area for a place to set up shop, but, in the end, they all settled on Mount Pleasant.

"It's got the perfect demographics for craft beer," said Jim Leonard, one of two brewers for Ghost Monkey.

Like Ghost Monkey, Matt Symons and Sean Geddis of Two Blokes looked at Mount Pleasant and saw an undertapped market, and now they are looking to open shop nearby on Long Point Road.

With craft beer exploding in Charleston, Mount Pleasant has developed an impressive scene in its own right, with dedicated craft beer bars, a home brew shop and now a second and third brewery set to open sooner than later.

Westbrook Brewery has been the only brewery in Mount Pleasant since setting up shop off Long Point Road in late 2010. But soon, Ghost Monkey will be their neighbors in a 2,800-square-foot facility with a three-barrel brew system. Meanwhile,Two Blokes will be nearby in a 4,500-square-foot building with a seven-barrel brew system.

To put that in perspective, Holy City Brewing in North Charleston has a 15-barrel brew system.

It's no coincidence that both new breweries will feature a 2,000-square-foot taproom. State law requires brewers to go through a distributor to sell their beer to bars and stores, which squeezes profit margins, so the taprooms will be the one place they can sell directly to the drinking public.

"It's a way to get in front of the folks who matter most," said Geddis, who handles the sales and public relations side of things for Two Blokes. "And it's also a revenue thing."

As such, you might expect the breweries to view each other as competition, especially being in such close proximity, but the opposite is true.

"All the small brewers don't view each other as competition because, as the waters rise, we all come with it," said Leonard.

Westbrook also has a taproom in its brewery, with 12 of its beers on tap and a selection of bottles and cans.

"I think we're going to attract a certain amount of beer tourism," said Symons, the head brewer for Two Blokes. "Whenever I go to a new city, I look up the craft bars but also the breweries."

About 75 percent of Two Blokes' volume will go out the door and be distributed, as will some of Ghost Monkey's. When it does, there are more than a few places in town where

it could end up.

Coleman Public House has long been a reliable spot for craft beer drinkers, including the Two Blokes themselves. It has 16 rotating taps, a few of which always feature beers from local breweries.

In June 2011, House of Brews became Mount Pleasant's first dedicated craft beer bar, with a huge range of bottles and cans for sale, as well as a rotating selection of eight beers on tap that can be taken home in a growler.

When House of Brews first opened, it was hard to get people interested, according to owner Rob Davis, but, in the end, "a lot of it was really just talking to people about beer." When someone walked in looking for a Miller Lite, for example, he would suggest a craft pilsner instead, and slowly, he saw palates change.

Sure enough, a little over two years later, Mount Pleasant got a second craft beer bar when Crafty Draught set up in Seaside Farms with 26 taps of rotating craft beers.

It wasn't long before the craft beer scene matured in another direction with the opening of Yeast Everything Homebrew, which, as the name suggests, is a dedicated home brew shop that offers everything from supplies to classes. Peter Kinslow opened the store after doing some research and, like the new breweries coming to town, discovering an underserved market. He also said he expects the interest in home brewing will grow with the rest of the industry.

Photo courtesy of Two Blokes Brewing.

Matt Symons and Sean Geddis are the two blokes who started Two Blokes Brewing.

"The craft brewers, they make home brewers," he said. "People start to learn about the craft beers, what goes into them, why does this taste one way and this taste the other, and they get more curious."

To people who were already home brewing in Mount Pleasant, the store itself is a catalyst for progress.

"You have to have that expert, that one person who brings everyone together," said John Mutter, a mobile developer for IBM who lives in Dunes West. He started a home brew club that meets every five to seven weeks and makes a couple of batches of beer. He used to buy

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Photo by Jake Lucas.

his materials online, but, since Kinslow opened up his shop, he gets everything he can locally because he knows the importance of having someone who can answer questions and teach new home brewers the finer points of the craft.

"It just takes the tiniest hint of bad stuff to make the worst flavors," he said.

On a warm Sunday in November, Mutter was on his patio stirring wort – a frothy soup of hops and grain sugar that ferments into beer. The concoction featured three varieties of American hops, a twist on a recipe that Mutter found online that he dubbed the Mount Pleasant IPA. As the beer began to ferment and he cleaned his equipment, he pondered just how big the craft beer industry could get in Mount Pleasant.

Mutter decided that "the real winner here is the consumer, who is getting access to so many flavors and ideas about what beer should be."

Photo by Jake Lucas.

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MOUNT PLEASANT IPA

Derived by John Mutter from a recipe by Ritz Burrows

INGREDIENTS

Steeping Grains
9 ounces of caramel/crystal malt 60L (60 SRM)
5 ounces of pale malt (US 2 row) (2.0 SRM)
2 ounces of roasted barley (300 SRM)

Extracts
3 pounds of extra light dry malt extract (3.0 SRM)
6 pounds of golden light liquid malt extract (4.0 SRM)

Hops
4 ounces of Chinook hops (pellet)
2 ounces of Cascade hops (pellet)
2 ounces of US Fuggles hops (pellet)

Yeast
White Labs East Coast Ale Yeast (WLP008) or Safale US-05 Dry Yeast

DIRECTIONS

1. In a 12-quart pot, steep the grains in a hop bag in 1.5 gallons of sterile water at 155 degrees for half an hour. Remove the grains.
2. Add the 2 cans of the liquid malt extract and the package of dried extract and bring to a boil.
3. For the first flavoring, add a 2-ounce pellet of Chinook hops. Boil for 45 minutes.
4. For the second flavoring, add a 1-ounce pellet Fuggles hops and 1-ounce pellet Cascade hops. Boil for 10 minutes.
5. For the third flavoring, add a 1-ounce pellet of Fuggles hops and 1-ounce pellet of Cascade hops. Boil for 5 minutes.
6. Add 2 gallons chilled sterile water into the primary fermenter and add the hot wort into it. Top with more water to total 5 gallons. There is no need to strain.
7. Pitch yeast when wort temperature is between 70 and 80˚. Fill airlock halfway with water.
8. Ferment at 68 to 72˚ for about seven days.
9. Rack to a secondary fermenter after seven days. Add 2-ounce pellet Chinook hops and ferment for 14 more days.
10. To bottle, dissolve corn sugar into 2 pints of boiling water for 15 minutes. Pour the mixture into an empty bottling bucket. Siphon the beer from the fermenter over it. Distribute priming sugar evenly. Siphon into bottles and cap. Let sit for 2 to 3 weeks at 75˚.

Healthy Recipes

Enjoy these recipes this New Year!

Acme Lowcountry Kitchen

Pan Roasted Local Tilefish with an Heirloom Tomato Cream, Carolina Blue Crab Jumbo Lump, Tri-color Cauliflower and Sautéed Cremini Mushrooms and Arugula

Recipe for 4 servings

Ingredients:

2 pounds of tilefish fillets, cut into 4 portions (can substitute grouper or wreck fish)
1 pound of cremini mushrooms
1 pound of arugula
3 heads of colored cauliflower (can use white cauliflower as substitute)
6 peeled garlic cloves (divided)
8 ounces of Carolina jumbo lump crab
Olive oil
Fresh thyme
1 red onion
1 pound heirloom tomatoes (stemmed)
1 lemon
Kosher salt
Fresh ground black pepper
1 teaspoon butter (optional)
½ cup heavy whipping cream (optional)

Preparation:

FOR FISH

Season each fillet with a pinch of salt and pepper.
In a sauté pan, heat 2 tablespoons of olive oil on high heat until it just begins to smoke.
Sear tilefish at high heat until golden brown. Turn fish over and place in 350 degree oven for 5 to 8 minutes, until cooked through. Fish will be flaky and slightly translucent in middle when cooked.
Pull fish from oven and top with butter. (For an even healthier dish, skip this step).
In a separate pan, sauté mushrooms and arugula until soft. Set aside.

FOR CAULIFLOWER

Cut florets away from base and take away any leaves.
Toss the florets with olive oil, 1 tablespoon of kosher salt and ½ tablespoon of pepper.
Add four peeled cloves of garlic and ½ bunch of fresh thyme to the cauliflower mixture and place in roasting pan.
Roast at 350 degrees for 12 minutes or until tender.

FOR HEIRLOOM SAUCE

Roughly dice tomatoes. Peel and thinly cut 2 garlic gloves.
Pick 2 tablespoons of fresh thyme
1 teaspoon of salt
½ teaspoon of black pepper
½ cup heavy cream

In a sauce pan, heat 2 tablespoons olive oil over medium heat. Add diced tomatoes and simmer for 5 minutes or until tender. Add garlic, 2 tablespoons fresh thyme, 1 teaspoon salt and ½ teaspoon black pepper.
Let simmer again for 5 minutes over medium heat.
Add heavy cream. (Omit for a healthier option).
Let sauce reduce for another 5 minutes.
Puree mixture to desired thickness.

FOR CRAB

Juice half a lemon.
Pick crab thoroughly for shells without breaking apart the lumps.
Toss with lemon juice.

Assemble fish on top of mushroom mixture. Top with tomato sauce and crab. Serve cauliflower on the side.
Enjoy. ■

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Vintage Coffee Cafe
Spiced Apple Chai
Recipe for 2 servings

Ingredients:
8 ounces Rishi Masala chai concentrate
16 ounces pure apple cider
Cinnamon

Preparation:

1. Mix chai concentrate and cider together in a pot.
2. Heat over low heat and bring to a simmer.
3. Once desired temperature preference is reached, pour into your favorite mug.
4. Sprinkle some love and cinnamon on top.
5. Enjoy! ■

Triangle Char + Bar
Shrimp and Spaghetti Squash Sauté
Recipe for 1 serving

Ingredients:
1 tablespoon oil
1 teaspoon minced garlic
1/2 cup diced tomatoes
1/4 cup white wine
5 ounces cooked spaghetti squash
1/2 cup vegetable stock
1 tablespoon feta cheese
Small handful of spinach
Salt and pepper to taste
5 large grilled shrimp

Preparation:

Sauté garlic and tomatoes in oil. Fold in the next five ingredients and continue cooking until heated through. Top with shrimp and feta. Serve. ■

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Sesame Burgers & Beer
Asian Salad
Recipe for 4 servings

Ingredients:
4 cups mixed assorted greens
1 cup shredded white cabbage
1 red bell pepper, sliced thin
1 carrot, peeled, sliced into thin strips
⅔ cup alfalfa sprouts or other kind of fresh sprout
1 cup honey roasted peanuts
⅓ cup sesame orange dressing (recipe follows)

Preparation:

Toss the dressing with the greens and the cabbage. Top the salad with the remaining ingredients and serve.

FOR SESAME ORANGE DRESSING
½ cup pure sesame oil
¼ cup sesame seeds
1 cup canola oil
¼ cup fresh orange juice
1 orange zested with juice
½ cup honey
½ cup rice vinegar
1 tablespoon sriracha
2 tablespoon soy sauce

Toast the sesame seeds in the sesame oil until golden brown in a skillet over medium heat. In a bowl, whisk together the orange juice, zest, honey, vinegar, sriracha and soy sauce. Add the toasted seeds and oil, still hot, and whisk to combine. Stir in the canola oil until emulsified.

Season with salt.
There will be more dressing than you will need for the salad recipe. Store in an airtight container and use on chicken, fish or other salads. ■

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Former Mount Pleasant Mayor Billy Swails, far right, and family members posed for a photograph after the groundbreaking ceremony.

READY FOR GROWTH:

THE SEEDS FOR THE HUNGRY NECK CORRIDOR

Story by Bill Farley.
Photos courtesy of the town of Mount Pleasant.

WHAT CONSTITUTES the "heart" of Mount Pleasant? There's plenty of room for debate. Some might say it's Pitt Street and the Old Village itself, while others might opt for Shem Creek or even Towne Centre.

But there's no room for doubt about what constitutes our town's "circulatory system." It's the roadways that carry tens of thousands of motorists from the Ravenel Bridge to the edge of Awendaw, from the Wando Shipping Terminal to the Isle of Palms Connector and beyond.

None of these roadways is more important to the

The segment of the road that normally would be built last was completed early to offer an additional route to the new Laing Middle School and Jennie Moore Elementary School.

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health of Mount Pleasant than the two major north-south arteries – Highway 17 and Coleman Boulevard/Rifle Range Road. Yet as the town has grown exponentially in recent years, it has become increasingly obvious that these all-important arteries are no longer adequate to handle Mount Pleasant's ever-growing traffic issues.

Enter Billy Swails Parkway, part of a road that eventually will run from Highway 17 to Porchers Bluff Road, going by various names along the way, including Hungry Neck Boulevard and Sweetgrass Basket Parkway. The most recently completed part of the road is named for the man who served as the town's mayor from 2009 through 2013.

All but the final segment is already in place. The project is being completed somewhat "out of phase," in that the segment that normally would be built last, the one linking Porchers Bluff Road and Hamlin Road, was completed early to offer an additional route to the new Laing Middle School and Jennie Moore Elementary School. Without this option for motorists heading to and from these large campuses, Hamlin Road would have been overwhelmed.

Now, all that remains to be completed is the 1.3-mile section that will link Six Mile Road and Hamlin Road.

"This last link is estimated to cost around $11 million," according to Town Administrator Eric DeMoura.

He said that the design phase is underway for the roadway, and construction is anticipated to begin in the fall of 2016. The Hamlin-to-Porchers Bluff segment initially will be a two-lane road, one in each direction, with sidewalks and a median with palm trees, continuing the look of the other components of the north-south corridor.

He pointed out that few right-of-way issues are anticipated because the road will use a portion of 250 acres of recreation land owned jointly by the town of Mount Pleasant and the Charleston County Park and Recreation Commission.

DeMoura added that the roadway is being designed to meander through the tract in order to impact the property as little as possible and will have the capacity to be expanded to two lanes in each direction if necessary. At present, the completed route is expected to handle some 12,000 automobiles per day, siphoning off many of those vehicles from the heavily-traveled Highway 17 and the Coleman/Rifle Range corridor.

Unfunded as yet but included in Mount Pleasant's overall transportation plan are new or extended thoroughfares running perpendicular to the three north-south arteries, DeMoura said, adding to their effectiveness in routing traffic smoothly throughout the length and breadth of the town.

"Conceptually," DeMoura noted, "we've discussed creating a new road next to Christ Episcopal Church to connect with Long Point Road and extend a new transportation corridor all the way through to Rifle Range Road."

Long-awaited by residents and travelers alike facing increasing traffic congestion through Mount Pleasant, the seeds for the greater Hungry Neck Corridor were planted before DeMoura's tenure at helm of the town.

"I credit my predecessor, longtime Town Administrator Mac Burdette, and the elected officials during his tenure for initiating what they then called simply the Hungry Neck Roadway. The genesis of the project was the realization that as the town grew, more north-south traffic capacity would become a necessity."

At the same time, town officials had run into significant resistance to any widening of rural, rustic Rifle Range Road.

"Also, much of the property along Rifle Range Road was and is owned by Charleston County, not by the town, adding another layer of difficulty to any proposed changes in the route. Mount Pleasant's leaders knew they had to come up with a different plan," DeMoura said.

He observed that any attempt to replicate the simple, effective road patterns of the Old Village would be doomed

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Billy Swails Parkway will be completed when the segment that links Six Mile Road and Hamlin Road is finished.

as the town's population marched increasingly northward.

An aerial view of Mount Pleasant shows that north of Highway 41, only about a half mile of land keeps the town from being an island.

"Being a linear peninsula presented numerous challenges from a transportation standpoint. There simply weren't any ready options to ease the flow of north-south traffic," DeMoura explained.

He added that Route 41 itself is the subject of ongoing planning for a much-needed widening.

"It's a major east-west perpendicular that is also a hurricane evacuation route, and it's struggling to handle its traffic flow today," he said.

So while the heart of Mount Pleasant might be anywhere, the arteries, veins and capillaries are the roads large and small that handle the all-important flow of traffic through residential neighborhoods and business zones alike.

When the final section of Billy Swails Parkway is complete, the new route will do much to calm the "blood pressure" of the town – not to mention that of its frequently frustrated motorists.

FAILURE WAS NOT AN OPTION

By Brad Morrison • Town of Mount Pleasant Transportation Director

When the town took on the ambitious task of developing a parallel route to Highway 17 and Rifle Range Road, the initial phases of Hungry Neck Boulevard were dubbed Mount Pleasant's "Manhattan Project" by then Mayor Harry Hallman.

Even 15 years ago, that's the recognition this corridor was given for serving the long-term mobility needs of town residents. While there were challenges during the preliminary planning and design phases, the town's leadership understood that failure was not an option and made difficult decisions to see the task through.

In all, it will have taken six separate construction projects to complete the corridor, each with its own unique hurdles. One of greatest challenges is building roads in an urban environment, while minimizing the impact to homes, businesses and natural and cultural resources and making sure the project is financially feasible. This involves intense study and evaluation. Mount Pleasant's town leaders have historically been very sensitive to this aspect of road building and have done an excellent job balancing the impact on local areas with the needs of the community as a whole.

The various phases of Hungry Neck Boulevard are now providing for the transportation needs of the people of Mount Pleasant and will be even more valuable to motorists once Billy Swails Parkway is complete. When the last phase is finished, drivers will be able to travel more than five miles from Bowman Road to Porchers Bluff Road without ever touching Highway 17 or Rifle Range Road.

The Mount Pleasant Police Department received its accreditation from CALEA July 25 in Colorado Springs. Left to right: CALEA Executive Director W. Craig Hartley Jr., Mount Pleasant Police Capt. Blair Martin, Capt. Mark Arnold, Inspector Chip Googe, Chief Carl Ritchie and Commission Chairman Richard W. Myers.

Photo courtesy of the Mount Pleasant Police Dept.

Making Connections

THE MOUNT PLEASANT POLICE ON SOCIAL MEDIA

BY NATALIE CAULA HAUFF

IT'S DIFFICULT FOR CHIP GOOGE TO put his phone down. The Mount Pleasant Police Department inspector is one of the most connected police officials in the tri-county. Googe controls the following social media sites for his department: Facebook; Twitter; Instagram; Next Door, which is a neighborhood watch app; Vine; YouTube; and even a blog.

He also takes care of media requests and was responsible for submitting the Department's successful application to the Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies (CALEA). How does he have time to do it all?

"I honestly have no idea," he joked. "My phone goes off all the time. This is what people have grown to expect. They want information quickly."

This social media and community presence is one of the many reasons the department was awarded a sought-after national police accreditation – and its social media reach is only growing. The department recently expanded the roles of some of its officers to include sharing on Twitter. Officers assigned to the Social Media Team now have their own accounts to make it easier for them to

engage the community.

"We were looking for a way to encourage more interaction between officers and the community," said Googe. "This gives our citizens more access to officers from different bureaus."

The department is encouraging citizens to ask questions and get to know the officers who serve the community. It's this kind of outreach that helped the department shine during their evaluation by CALEA, according to Googe, who supervised the work that went along with submitting the application.

To receive the Gold Standard accreditation status, the Mount Pleasant Police Department needed to comply with 484 standards that focus on all facets of the agency, from the examination of their evidence collection to their use of force. Googe, who began his role as the accreditation manager in 2014, worked for a year on collecting and submitting proof the department had met all the necessary standards.

"Our process is so successful because of the commitment given from everyone in our organization. Line level officers up through our command staff believe in this endeavor," said Police Chief Carl Ritchie. "Having our process examined by an outside agency shows that we are in pursuit of accountability and transparency."

The accreditation puts the department in a small club, since only 5 percent of agencies in the country are accredited, according to Googe.

"Police accreditation is very important to our town and residents. It is the gold standard in public safety by which we measure ourselves. It is a voluntary, grueling process that takes a look at all our entire operation with a fine-toothed comb. It holds us accountable to ourselves and to the community we serve," said Mount Pleasant Mayor Linda Page. "The Police Department has been accredited for nearly a quarter of a century now, an amazing span of time. I believe that national accreditation is the true measure of excellence."

The accreditation lasts for three years, and Googe is already working on the next one.

"It's a full-time job. Not a day goes by that I don't do something related to our accreditation," he said. "There's no doubt about it. It was hard. I would come in in the mornings and blink, and then it was the afternoon and

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Blog: http://mppdnews.blogspot.com

time to go home. It's tedious but fulfilling."

The analysis even included visits from CALEA assessors, who were impressed by the department's social media outreach and community involvement, according to Googe.

Googe embraces the idea that knowledge is power, which is why he's worked so hard to create a high standard of service online. The department has more than 14,000 followers on Twitter and more than 3,000 on Facebook. Questions on social media pour in at all hours of the day and night, on subjects ranging from traffic accidents to road closures. Googe has some help, including six patrol officers who rotate to assist him in fielding questions and keeping the community informed.

"We were doing it to get the community involved, and it wasn't something I was expecting to take off as it did," said Googe.

During the recent historic flooding, Googe posted photos of flooded roadways, lists of road closures and answered questioned posted on Twitter throughout the several days of rain. Members of the local community expressed their gratitude.

"Thanks so much and thanks for your service," said one follower on Twitter. "Thanks for the quick response, too!!"

ABC News 4 New Media Manager Sam Tyson, who handles social media for the local television station, praised Mount Pleasant's dedication online.

"They are probably one of the best law enforcement agencies on social media, especially where it matters most, on Twitter," said Tyson. "They get the information out really quickly and are very responsive."

According to a 2014 survey of 600 law enforcement agencies by the International Association of Chiefs of Police, 95 percent of agencies use social media and 55 percent of those not using social media are considering it. The study also showed more than three quarters of agencies believed social media had improved police/community relations.

"I think they are more responsive to the community they serve. I think the community has a greater understanding of what they are doing," said Tyson. "I think every police agency in the country will have to be more aggressive in their social media campaign because it's just where everyone is right now. The people are going straight to the police agencies and wanting information immediately. And that's not going to change."

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So What's the Plan?

TIPS FOR YOUR WEDDING

Story Barbara Millen Patrick.
Photos by Nick McRea Milak.

I started performing wedding ceremonies in 2010. Each ceremony is solemn yet joyous and filled with emotion. So many couples are ready to repeat their vows but not prepared for the intensity of their feelings at the precise moment. I've seen tears of joy welling up in the eyes of both bride and bridegroom. I've heard giggling and laughter. It is an amazing moment. But there is a lot of planning leading up to that perfect moment.

Weddings are expensive and the costs can quickly get out of control. Many brides attempt to skimp in some areas to try to keep the cost low, but that can backfire. And your wedding is way too important to take that risk.

If you're recently engaged, here are some very important things to consider.

• **First, set a budget and do your best to stick with it.** You'll see so many ideas you like, and the budget can double or triple before you know it. A spreadsheet is helpful to keep track of your spending.

• **Determine the size of your guest list.** This is one area that can get out of hand very quickly, so be prepared to cut the number of guests. It is better to have a simple ceremony with family and friends who are most meaningful than to go into debt paying for a big party with lots of people you don't even know.

• **Hire a wedding planner.** If you can't afford a full-service planner, look for a day-of planner to oversee the wedding. No matter how efficient you are, you will not be in the mood to handle last-minute snafus while you are getting ready to walk down the aisle. You can always ask a friend or family member to handle this chore, but remember they would like to enjoy the festivities, too.

• **Come up with a theme for your wedding and reception.** It doesn't have to be over the top, but you will want the event to be coordinated, down to the color of the napkins. For the reception, you'll need to consider table settings – from linens, dishes and glassware to centerpieces. A caterer may take care of these details for you with your direction.

• **Choose your venue.** Charleston has many great wedding venues. Some are small, designed for small groups. Others are large enough to handle 200 or more guests. Weekend dates are usually most expensive, so you can save quite a bit by choosing a weekday. Many venues require you to use their vendors – or pay a premium for the vendors of your choice.

• **Choose your caterer carefully.** You may not have time to enjoy even a bite, but your guests will remember forever how wonderful (or how unpleasing – yes, it happens) the food was. It's smart to ask friends for recommendations and to meet with several caterers to sample dishes. Ask questions. You need to know if food will be prepared in advance and brought to the location and how many servers there will be to handle your group. The same goes for beverages. Will you have just wine and beer or a full bar? Will there be licensed bartenders? Many venues have specific rules for caterers and bar service.

• **The photographer will be responsible for recording the memories.** The wedding is a moment in time, and you will want amazing photos to remember every moment of the day. Photographers may seem very expensive, but they typically work eight to 10 hours, taking thousands of shots. This is not the time to have a friend or relative do you a favor. You want a professional taking these very important pictures.

• **Many brides don't consider how expensive flowers can be.** A simple bride's bouquet made with in-season flowers can average up to about $200, but some flowers such as peonies can send the cost skyward. Adding bouquets and boutonnieres for the bridal party plus decorations for the ceremony and floral centerpieces can easily make flowers a considerable expense.

• **Cutting the cake** is expected at the wedding and it does make for fun photos, but, again, it is essential to shop around and visit the bakers. It's wise to schedule a consultation well in advance to discuss the flavor and style of the cake. Professional bakers can create amazing designs that will reflect your personality and your excellent taste, but this service does come at a price. A good alternative is cupcakes in a variety of flavors, but you may still want a cake for cutting.

• **Find an officiant you like.** In South Carolina, notary publics can perform marriages, and so can ordained ministers. The officiant must sign the marriage license and file it with the court.

It's easy to plan a perfect wedding if you have unlimited funds, but it also is possible to create a beautiful and memorable wedding on a budget. Invite just the people you really love. Choose a weekday ceremony to save on a fancy venue. Consider a city park or the beach. Keep the flowers simple and, if you have a talented friend or relative, ask them to make bouquets and centerpieces. Get some supplies from a craft shop and invite your girlfriends to make wedding favors. Design your own invitations – or purchase a design from a site such as Etsy – and take them to a printer.

And remember, whether your wedding is small gathering in a friend's backyard or a large formal event at an exclusive venue, it's really about the two of you making a commitment to each other.

A Blur in the Rearview Mirror

ONE GROOM REFLECTS ON WEDDING PLANNING

BY JOE SEMSAR

WEDDINGS AIN'T WHAT they used to be, or at least that's what my mother tells me. When she married my father in the early 1980s in McMinnville, Tennessee, a few friends and family members gathered at their local church and then showed up afterwards for a light reception in the fellowship hall, followed by dinner at a local steakhouse.

Although that's likely an oversimplification of their big day, today's weddings are intricate, action-packed affairs with many lead-up events that involve a great deal of planning. I know this because I spent the past year "helping" my now-wife, Jenna, plan our wedding.

Last year, on Christmas day, I surprised Jenna by driving up to Easley, South Carolina, to do Christmas dinner with her family. Little did she know when I arrived that I had a bigger surprise in store.

I first met Jenna at a Clemson football tailgate, and it took me about five seconds to fall for her. Initially, she didn't feel the same. It took her five months to give in to my persistence. But as I drove up to Easley last Christmas,

after a few years of dating, I was confident that both of us were ready to take the next step in our relationship.

After we finished off Christmas dinner, I asked Jenna's father for her hand in marriage and told him my plans for the proposal. The next morning, I asked Jenna if she wanted to drive over to Clemson for breakfast. We made the 15-minute trip, had a small meal, drove around campus and then decided to walk through the South Carolina Botanical Gardens.

Midway through the walk, when we got to a really sunny spot on the middle of a small bridge, I got down on one knee, and asked Jenna to marry me. After jumping up and down and spinning around, she grabbed the entire ring box and shouted "Yes!"

That's all I remember from this past year, because the next nine months were a whirlwind.

Within an hour of getting engaged, excitement turns to talk of when, where, guest list, wedding party, dress style, engagement parties, band or DJ, honeymoon destination, first dance song, suit or tuxedo, bachelorette and bachelor parties, wedding cake, flower girls, ring bearers – scratch that: no flower girls – florist, photographer, videographer, first-dance lessons, and on and on and on and on. …

Joe and Jenna Semsar met at a Clemson football tailgate.

After the celebratory selfies and facetimes with friends, we spent a few weeks trying to find an open wedding venue for the fall of 2015 that wouldn't be too hot, wouldn't fall on the same day as a Clemson home football game and wouldn't leave us eating Ramen noodles for the next five years. The Atlantic Coast Conference wouldn't give us inside information on the Clemson schedule, so we took a gamble and booked an event hall in Greenville, South Carolina, for Sept. 26. We finally had a date. Cross one item off the infinite to-do list.

Once we started sharing the date with friends and family, many folks asked incredulously, "Can y'all really plan a wedding in nine months?" I couldn't believe it! Nine months seemed like an eternity. Heck, if expecting parents can prepare themselves over nine months for a newborn, surely we could piece together a successful wedding.

But these folks were on to something. They had been through it. They knew.

To be fair, being engaged is an exciting time. From engagement parties hosted by friends to wedding gifts and congratulatory notes, it's humbling. But make no mistake, there's a lot of work to be done.

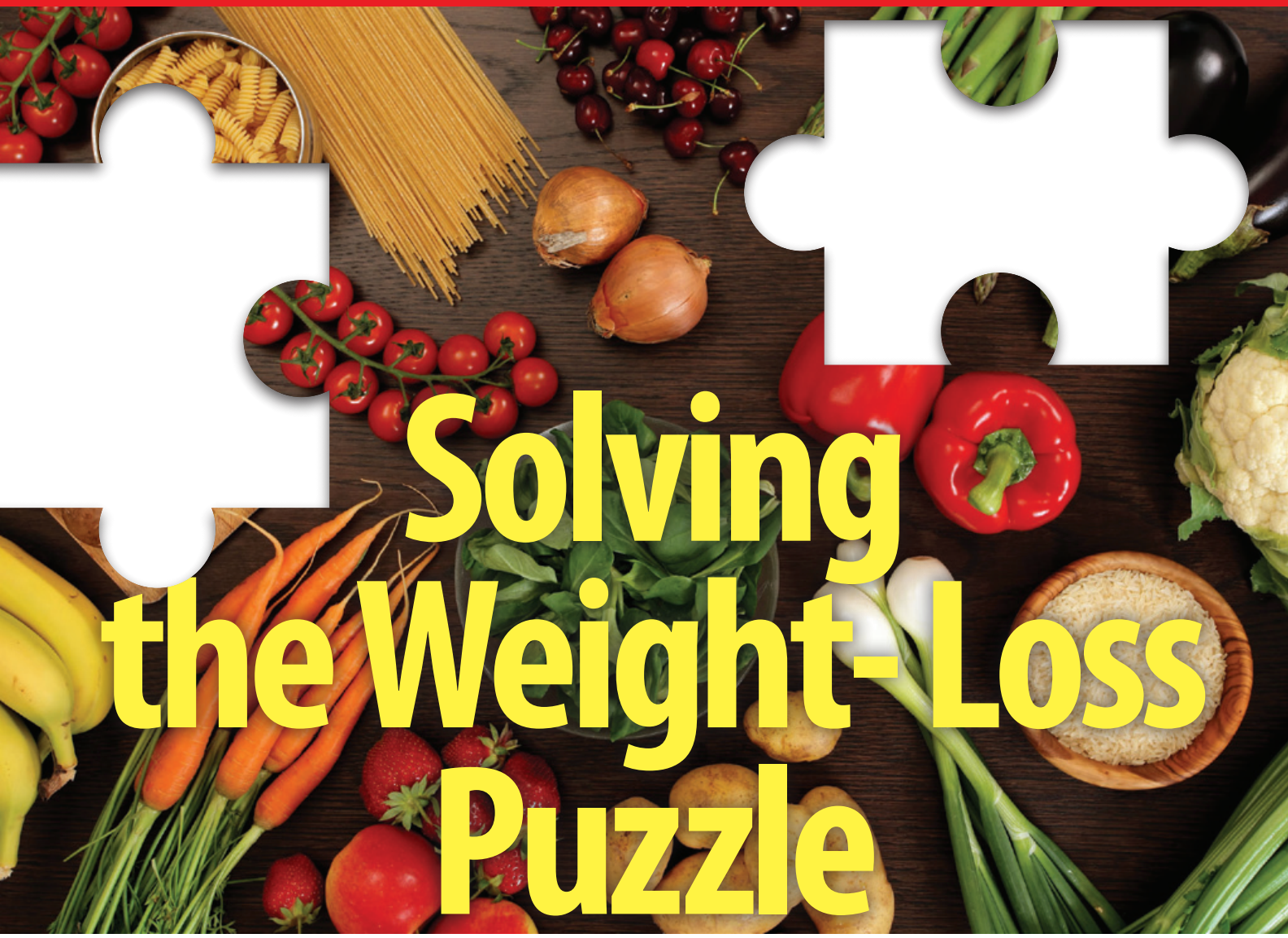
In reflecting on the tumult of planning save-the-dates, engagement photos, thank you cards, hotel blocks, wedding websites and the multitude of other stuff Jenna did that I never saw, I came to realize that much of that stuff – which, don't get me wrong, is likely mandatory in this day and age – becomes a blur in the rearview mirror.

What mattered, or at least what I distinctly remember, is the time we carved out to focus on why we wanted to spend the rest of our lives together and what that might look like in a practical sense. For us, East Cooper Baptist Church's pre-marital classes gave us a chance to think through some of these tough questions, focus collectively on what we wanted from the marriage and agree on what would be the foundation of our marriage.

In the hubbub of planning, we often become fixated on the details: "No, the band cannot play the Macarena!"; "Ham biscuits over tomatoes and mozzarella skewers"; "Yes, let's announce the wedding party"; "No, no need for a groom's cake"; "Yes, of course, to the multi-flavored wedding cake"; "Why not? to ending the reception with hot Papa John's pizza."

These details are a manifestation of what weddings have become in the 21st century. But, even though the details may have changed over the years, the main idea remains the same. In reality, we could have wiped out all of these details and still rode away from the wedding reception happy. We had each other, we had grounded our marriage in our faith and we had our friends and family there rooting us on.

Here's some sage advice to those of you planning a wedding: Don't sweat the small stuff. Take some time to think about what will constitute a happy marriage. And, finally, do like we did: If you're going to have a wedding in the fall, pick a bye weekend for Clemson football. Go Tigers and happy wedding planning.



Solving the Weight-Loss Puzzle

ADVICE FROM EXPERTS

Story by Pamela Brownstein.

OFTEN THE PIECES OF modern life – from a busy job to a hectic family schedule – leave little time for thoughtfully prepared meals or going to the gym. It's easy to get stuck in an unhealthy place where things don't fit – as in your clothes or all the things you need to squeeze into a single day.

This is the time of year when a lot of us take a step back to re-arrange our lives with an eye toward getting into shape and living healthier, more fulfilling lives.

Weight loss is a puzzle that can be difficult to put together. An overwhelming amount of conflicting information exists, and it can be hard to determine which pieces are most effective or where to even begin.

We spoke to local experts, who help people lose weight and improve their overall fitness, about the keys to weight loss success and how to reach personal goals. Through experience and the most current knowledge of exercise and nutrition, these trainers broke down the essential pieces needed to build the perfect cocktail for losing weight and staying in shape.

For Andrew Duffy, owner of DUFF Training, located off Long Point Road in Mount Pleasant, there are three major components for success: the right type of compound functional exercises – meaning multi-jointed exercises that work the entire body; the right ratio and intensity of cardiovascular training; and sound nutrition (as in no fad diets).

"There are so many questions people should ask themselves when it comes to losing weight, but the

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number one thing is: Are they working out the right way? To create change in your body, you have to challenge yourself in the right capacity," said Duffy.

Meredith Nelson, owner of PrimeTime Fitness, has been helping the community get healthy since 2000. After 15 years on Sullivan's Island, PrimeTime recently moved to its new location on Ben Sawyer Boulevard in Mount Pleasant.

She said it is important to exercise every day with a variety of intensities and activities. Her workout schedule includes cardiovascular training at varying levels of intensity, which means interval training once or twice a week and lower-intensity training for a longer period of time once a week (this can be anything that gets the heart rate up and makes you sweat).

"Include strength training two or three times a week," Nelson said. "And stretch regularly. Mix it up – your body loves surprises!"

Patience also plays a role because the longer it takes to lose weight, the longer it will stay off.

"Be patient and stick to a healthy diet and exercise regularly (at the right intensity) and your weight loss is more likely to be permanent," Nelson advised.

At Iron Tribe Fitness, local owner Corky Alexander emphasized a similar balance between healthy eating and working out. He described the four-week introduction program at his facility, located off Johnnie Dodds Boulevard in Mount Pleasant, as a chance to guide participants into a healthy lifestyle by teaching them basic movements and how to eat right.

"It's about cutting out sodas and processed foods – cut out cookies, cut out doughnuts – and eating clean – meat, vegetables and fruit," he said.

Nelson echoed this simple philosophy: "Eat clean; eat real food, and don't eat too much of it."

Writing down everything you eat, or journaling, allows you to pause and think about what you're putting into your mouth, said Alexander. It's also a tool that holds people accountable for their food choices.

"Journaling helps create a new habit of eating better," he pointed out.

All three trainers agree proper guidance and support can aid weight loss efforts.

"It's very important to have your spouse, roommate, friends and family on board and supportive," said Duffy.

"Make sure you are using your time effectively," Nelson added. "Schedule a session with a personal trainer or even get involved in group exercise for guidance and direction."

She also believes solving the weight loss puzzle requires drinking enough water (64 ounces a day) and getting enough sleep.

"Lack of sleep can increase your stress hormone cortisol, which can make weight loss difficult," Nelson said.

While each piece of the weight loss puzzle is important, you need to have the motivation and proper mind-set to maintain a new, healthier lifestyle in the face of temptation and the stresses of everyday life.

"We all have to be mentally prepared to stay healthy," said Alexander. "As a family man, for my kids and my wife, that's the motivation that keeps me going."

Duffy focuses on food, viewing it as fuel and thinking about how each item he consumes will benefit his body.

"I start my day off with a healthy breakfast. It sets the tone for the rest of the day," he said.

For Nelson: "Getting my workout in is top priority. It's how I stay physically and mentally healthy. I try to

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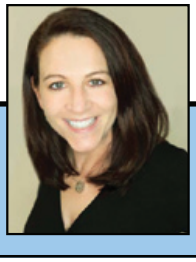

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get at least 30 minutes of exercise every day."

The final piece of advice these fitness folk shared for losing weight is that consistency is key. Have a plan to exercise at least three days a week in order to see results.

"If you do it the right way and take it day by day and week to week, you will be a lot more successful," according to Duffy.

Just as each person is unique, so are the components needed to achieve individual weight loss goals. Find the pieces that fit right for you.

GO-TO TIPS: THE PROS WEIGH IN

• **Breakfast:** This oatmeal concoction combines a half cup of dry, quick-cooking oatmeal, a fourth of a cup of raisins or berries, one tablespoon of vanilla flavored brown rice protein powder and a half to three quarters of a cup of water. Microwave for a minute and 45 seconds, then add a fourth of a cup of plain nonfat Greek yogurt. Mix well and enjoy. (Tip: Make this ahead of time by mixing all the dry ingredients with water in a mason jar, then refrigerate it until you are ready to cook.) Meredith Nelson said, "It's the perfect blend of complex carbohydrates and protein to start the day."

• **Snack:** Andrew Duffy recommends hard-boiled egg whites with hummus instead of the yolk, and a side piece of fruit. Vary the hummus with a different flavor each time.

• **App:** My Fitness Pal is free, user friendly and works well for tracking food intake and exercise patterns.

CONTACT INFO:

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• **Iron Tribe Fitness** • 1145 Johnnie Dodds Blvd., Mount Pleasant • 843-388-8892 • www.irontribefitness.com.

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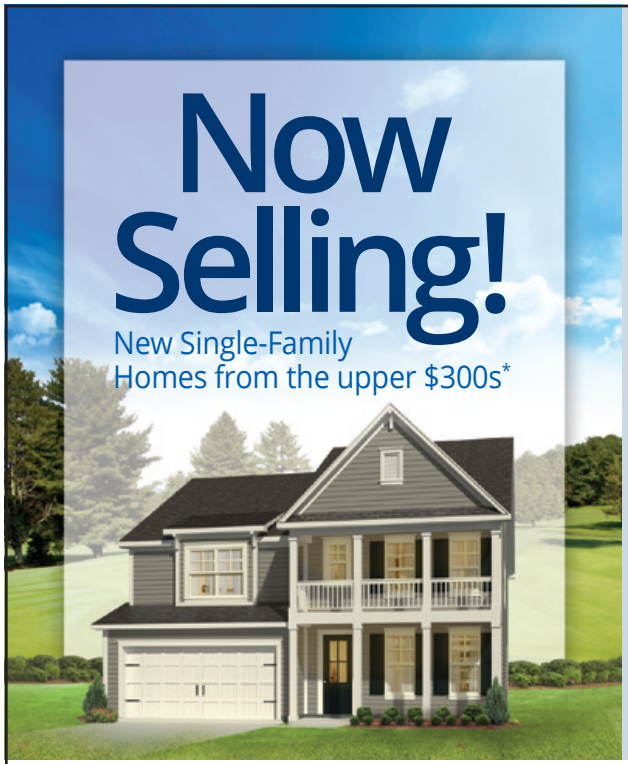

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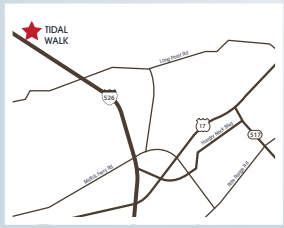

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Keen Care That Meets Your Budget

The Joint

BY KALENE MCCORT

DAILY ROUTINES CAN WREAK HAVOC on our bodies. From working out at the gym to prolonged time spent behind an office desk, the day-to-day can often show up in the form of sore joints and muscles. Lucky for us, The Joint … The Chiropractic Place offers full-service chiropractic care. Its experienced staff of licensed chiropractors strives to get to the root of what ails you. Providing top-notch care in an environment that is both professional and relaxing, this is one establishment you'll want to frequent time and again.

"Initially people are drawn to The Joint because of our excellent pricing," said franchise owner Michael 'Mici' Fluegge. "What makes them repeat customers is the convenience aspect that we offer. They can be in and out in as little as five to 10 minutes."

In today's fast-paced world, scheduling and committing to appointments can be tricky. The Joint understands that fact and encourages walk-ins. Unlike other clinics that typically require costly X-rays, health insurance and strict yet limited appointment hours, The Joint is, well, flexible. Your initial visit is only $19, including consultation, exam and adjustment.

From the secretary on her lunch break to the pro athlete seeking relief, The Joint's clientele is as varied as the ailments its patients present. From sciatica to neck pain, these professionals take pride in getting to the core of the problem instead of simply masking it.

"Twenty to 30 percent of the people that come through our doors have never experienced chiropractic care before," said Fluegge. "We want this to be an exploratory process for them, in which keen care that meets their budget is readily available."

Photo by Rick Walo.

Originally a power player in the world of bodybuilding and personal training, Michael "Mici" Fluegge fell in love with chiropractic when he sought help to alleviate his own pain.

Originally a power player in the world of bodybuilding and personal training, Fluegge fell in love with the time-honored medicinal practice when he sought chiropractic help to alleviate his own pain. Now he revels in making chiropractic treatments accessible for all, regardless of income.

"In my years as an athlete, getting treated by a chiropractor helped me immensely," said Fluegge. "The Joint is lowering the threshold for people to receive exceptional care on a daily basis."

With a goal of helping others achieve overall wellness, The Joint encourages clients to make chiropractic visits a regular part of their self-care routine.

"We take preventive steps to help our clients live with less pain and in greater comfort," said Fluegge. "We want to correct the issues our clients face so that it doesn't hinder their lifestyle down the road."

Should you find yourself out of town when in need of an adjustment, The Joint has got you covered. With currently 275 open clinics, folks have the option of being seen at any location nationwide.

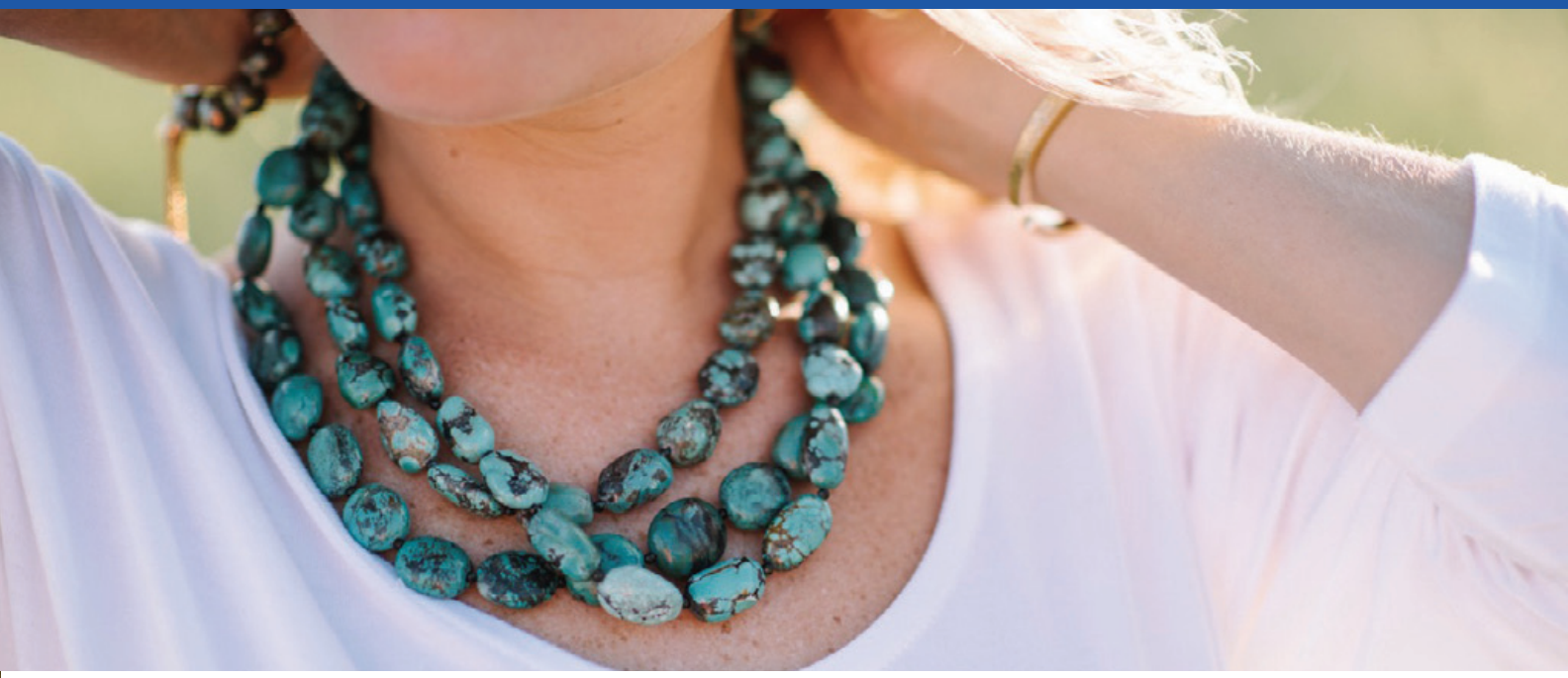
Dr. Todd Gough, Dr. Tim Harris and Dr. Neil Rabin are ready to help Mount Pleasant residents six days a week. With a combined total of over 60 years of experience, this dream team is keeping Lowcountry residents aligned and standing tall. Swing by The Joint and discover the undeniable benefits that come from putting your health first. Delivering results you can feel and see, at a price that won't strain your bank account, The Joint is sure to be an ideal fit.

The Joint is located at 1113 Market Center Blvd. in Towne Centre. To learn more, call 843-605-0204 or visit www.thejointmountpleasant.com.

Showcasing at SEWE

EAST COOPER ARTISANS

Story by Kalene McCort. Photos provided.



EVERY FEBRUARY, ARTISTS, OUTdoorsmen and nature lovers gather in the Lowcountry for a three-day event unlike any other. At The Southeastern Wildlife Exposition, attendees truly get to experience the best of the great outdoors. Where else can folks sip on the region's tastiest bourbon, beneath mossy oaks, while getting to see a bald eagle show off his impressive wingspan?

Now in its 34th year, SEWE continues to attract visitors from across the country eager to learn more about the winged beauties and various creatures that share our marsh-filled peninsula. Not only does this event generate funds to keep conservation projects blooming, it also serves as a launching pad for up-and-coming-artists. To be featured at SEWE is a high honor – one that has made many a career soar.

"It's really exciting and almost surreal to have been chosen as a vendor at SEWE," said Tom Mauldin, owner of HookNHide – a company specializing in handcrafted fish-inspired belt buckles and bottle openers. "The exposure that artists get at the event is amazing."

As a second-year participant, Mauldin has seen firsthand the positive impact SEWE has had on his business. The amount of buzz generated by being showcased at the renowned event can connect an artist to the right audience. An avid fisherman and resident of Sullivan's Island, Mauldin found plenty of inspiration for his innovative product line in the environment that surrounded him.

"I would definitely say that being on Sullivan's was a great experience for me during the growing stages of HookNHide," said Mauldin. "My love for the ocean and the natural setting of this area definitely fueled my creative juices."

Fusing art with functionality, HookNHide products make the perfect gift for that male in your life who seems nearly impossible to shop for. The detailed depiction of a bull dolphin or rainbow trout stirs emotion in those who have reveled in ocean waves and choppy chill.

"I am so grateful to everyone who has dedicated time and effort in helping me to be where I am and especially all the great customers who like my product," said Mauldin.

Another SEWE artist who gathers inspiration from her natural surroundings is Haley Keisler, owner of Hermosa Jewelry. At the young age of 12, she discovered her passion by reconstructing pieces of vintage jewelry into new accessories. By the age of 15, she has already started doing trunk shows and selling to a loyal clientele in Charleston. Now she is a complete one-woman-show, singlehandedly orchestrating all aspects of her thriving company.

"I feel so blessed to have found my passion as a young girl," said Keisler. "It has given me a direction to pursue and brought so much purpose to my life."

From delicate turquoise earrings to chunky, multistrand abalone statement necklaces, the variety of stunning pieces Keisler crafts is unmatched. She has found great inspiration in her various travels, which always seem to provide new experiences that translate into fodder for her designs.

"I feel honored to be one of the featured artists for SEWE," said Keisler. "I am a conservationist myself and love that this event celebrates wildlife and nature, which is what makes Charleston such a special place for me to call home."

Like Mauldin, Keisler is fueled by the very landscape her backyard provides. She counts on her time spent emerged in nature to leave her recharged and eager to jump into a new project.

"The Lowcountry has directly inspired my 'Oyster Collection,' made from locally found oyster shells," said Keisler, who rocks this specific creation at all the season's

roasts. "The idea for this collection started from a walk on Morris Island on a hot summer day. I find so much beauty in the colors, textures and shapes of shells."

SEWE wouldn't be complete without a man who has made a budding career out of helping others discover the limitless joy that our local waterways and uncharted paths provide. Chris Crolley, of Coastal Expeditions, has been hailed by *Garden & Gun* as one of the state's most knowledgeable naturalists. With a curious nature and an unrelenting desire to learn more about our ever-changing ecosystem, Crolley and his team of guides make the outdoors accessible to all. Built on adventure and fueled by fun, Coastal Expeditions takes exploration to another tier.

"By February, our guides are ready for the temperatures to warm so that the spring season can begin," said Kari Crolley, Chris' wife, who also happens to be a skilled plant pathologist and horticulturist. "While the SEWE weekend always seems to be the coldest weekend of the year, it signals to everyone that it won't be long before they are out on the creeks leading kayak tours every day."

At SEWE, Coastal Expeditions plans to display a whole collection of various finds that only the Lowcountry can provide. In their interactive tent, participants can get up-close-and-personal with discoveries that one would find on display in a natural history museum.

"As naturalists, we enjoy being able to interact with guests at SEWE, so we fill our tent with Lowcountry treasures like skulls, shark teeth and fossils for people to pick up and investigate," said Crolley. "Our guides are ready to talk one-on-one about the expeditions that we lead to help them plan an outing with us or on their own. It's an interactive tent that just gets better every year!"

During SEWE, Coastal Expeditions will have scheduled excursions to Bulls Island, a local landmark known for its hauntingly beautiful trees, unique variations of shells and 293 species of birds.

"It's a gratifying experience to be the person to take a group down a saltwater creek for the first time and watch their emotions as nature unfolds in front of them," said Crolley. "We simply get them to the right place, while the fields of spartina, Spanish moss, overhanging oaks, bottlenose dolphins, black skimmers and the sun setting over the marsh do the real work."

Get wild this winter. With fine art, dog retrieving competitions at Brittlebank Park, chef demos at Marion Square and live animal presentations by famed conservationist Jack Hanna, this is one event you're not going to want to let slip away. SEWE is scheduled for Feb. 12, 13 and 14. Tickets are available online at www.SEWE.com.

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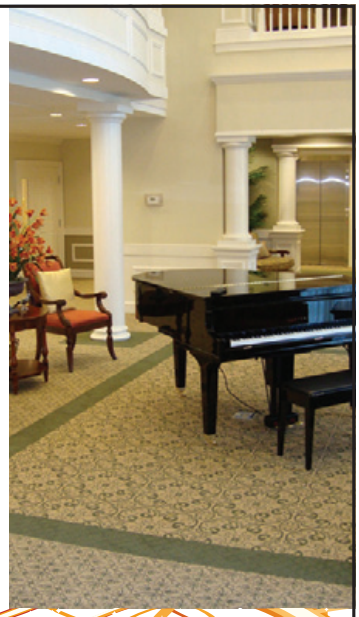

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The Best Of Mount Pleasant 2016

Y'ALL ROCKED THE VOTE!

WELCOME TO OUR fourth Best of Mount Pleasant issue for 2016! It's one of our favorite editions of the year, due the fact that our readers (that's you!) help us write it. Without our readers, the Best of Mount Pleasant would not exist – nor would it exist without the businesses, people and places throughout East Cooper that grace the ballots.

On the cover are a few winning members of the community. Left to right: Candice Mahala, owner of Bistro Toulouse; George McLaughlin, owner of Bottles Beverage Superstore; Caleb Pearson, owner of Caleb Pearson Real Estate; Katie Lorenzen-Smith, executive chef at Tavern & Table; and Tricia Burgess, director at The Sunshine House on Long Point Road.

We had 61,432 votes in more than 160 categories for the 2016 Best of Mount Pleasant, and we could not be more excited. We know the Best of Mount Pleasant will continue to foster relationships between businesses and patrons, and we are already seeing the proof when certificates from the previous years appear in windows and on walls at local businesses. Readers, you have yourselves to thank for sharing all this good news throughout East Cooper.

Turn the page to see the list of who placed in each category, in addition to fun, humorous blurbs about the first-place winners written either by yours truly or Bill Farley.

Thanks again for your vote in the 2016 Best of Mount Pleasant!

Denise K. James
Managing editor, vote counter and enthusiastic resident of Mount Pleasant • www.BestOfMountPleasant.com

Final Results For Best of Mount Pleasant 2016

Best Bakery - Kudzu.

Food & Drink

BEST ASIAN

"Use your noodle" is one of my favorite expressions. And frankly, every time I use it, I think about our readers' favorite spot to enjoy noodles, at **Basil Thai Restaurant**. The pad Thai there is a no-brainer.
Second – P.F. Chang's
Third – Tsunami Sushi

BEST BAKERY

Life is no piece of cake, but that's why we have bakeries. And our readers know where to get their cakes, cookies and other pastries – at **Kudzu Bakery**. It makes everything a little sweeter.
Second – Publix
Third – Village Bakery

BEST BAR

What do you picture when you imagine your ideal watering hole? A friendly bartender? An amazing beer list? A cute guy or girl eyeballing you? A view of South Carolina's natural beauty? Find all of this – plus throngs of our thirsty readers – at **Red's Icehouse**.

Second – The Southern Bar & Grill
Third – Dog & Duck

BEST BBQ

Sick of watching what you're eating? Well, we're giving you permission to "pig" out (pun intended) along with our readers at **Home Team BBQ** on Sullivan's Island. After you do that, stay around for the yummy drinks and the live music. Remember, dancing burns calories.

Second – Melvin's Barbecue
Third – Mamma Brown's BBQ

BEST BREAKFAST

They say breakfast is the most important meal of the day – but "they" never told you that the place to get that important meal is at **Page's Okra Grill** in Mount Pleasant. Luckily, our readers knew the deal.

Second – Eggs Up Grill
Third – Charleston's Cafe

BEST BRUNCH

On Sunday mornings, it's tempting to just stay in bed. But not in Mount Pleasant! Around here, our readers can barely contain their enthusiasm as they leap from beneath the covers and into the next available seat at **Page's Okra Grill**, where brunch with a bacon bloody Mary is top priority. After all, you can sleep when you're dead.

Best Brunch
- Page's Okra Grill

Second – Red Drum
Third – Vickery's

BEST BUDGET-FRIENDLY MEAL

After a day of shopping at Towne Centre with wild abandon, where do my pal Rachel and I get cheap eats with our last couple of bucks? At Chick-fil-A, of course, the same spot as our financially-savvy readers.

Second – MOSAIC
Third – Charleston's Cafe

BEST BURGER

In East Cooper, we prefer to use the phrase "I have beef with that person" to indicate something positive, such as a friendly meal around a table of yummy burgers. Our readers are scheduling those meals at **SOL Southwest Kitchen + Tequila Bar** these days. Let's all "meat" there, shall we?

Second – Tavern & Table
Third – The Americano

BEST CATERER

Just about everyone enjoys having someone else cater to them. And when our readers are in the mood to put their feet up and let someone else handle the cooking, they call **MOSAIC**. After all, a frazzled host or hostess puts a real damper on a party.

Second – Dish & Design
Third – Charleston Bay Gourmet

BEST COCKTAIL

During the great rainstorm of 2015, I decided to brave the streets of Mount Pleasant (they weren't SO bad) in the name of grabbing an above-average cocktail. I soon found myself at **SOL Southwest Kitchen + Tequila Bar**, enjoying the famous jalapeno margarita. And I can only guess the rest of that rainy day crowd was made up of *Mount Pleasant Magazine* readers.

Second – Tavern & Table
Third – The Americano

BEST COFFEE

Not only will **Starbucks** customize your drink for you, they'll even write your name on the cup so you feel like a special little snowflake. But in our opinion, if you're drinking corporate coffee instead of a cup at one of our own local establishments, you're a flake anyway.

Second – Metto Coffee & Tea
Third – The Collective

BEST CRAFT BEER

When someone says that they're "crafty," it sometimes means that they spend hours looking at Pinterest pages. But when our readers say it, they mean they're hanging out at **Westbrook Brewery's** tasting room or in a bar that

Best Craft Beer
- Westbrook Brewery

serves Westbrook on tap. But I'm willing to bet some of them are Pinterest fans, too.
Second – Liberty Tap Room & Grill
Third – Triangle Char + Bar

BEST DOG-FRIENDLY RESTAURANT

Who let the dogs out – and took them to lunch or happy hour? Our readers did, of course, and with good reason. At **Red's Icehouse**, pooches are gladly welcomed along with everyone else. After all, they're a family restaurant, four-legged members included.
Second – Dog & Duck
Third – The Shelter Kitchen + Bar

BEST DELI

When my co-workers and I are looking for a quick and delicious sandwich or wrap to bring back to the office on a particularly busy day, we head to **Mozzo Deli**. Our worker-bee readers are right there with us in the lunch crowd. In fact, we got the idea from them.
Second – East Bay Deli
Third – Publix

BEST DESSERT

There's an entire movement that says eating dessert first might actually benefit us in terms of burning calories. So if you're planning to "spoil your supper," as my grandmother would say, join our readers at **Page's Okra Grill**, where the revolution could even be televised.
Second – Liberty Tap Room & Grill
Third – Village Bakery

BEST FOOD TRUCK

Imagine for a second that your favorite restaurant, just like your Visa, is everywhere you want to be. That's how it works with the **Coastal Crust Pizza Truck**. These guys are serving hot, yummy slices of gourmet pie at a variety of spots in East Cooper.
Second – Lowcountry Creole
Third – Dashi

BEST FRENCH RESTAURANT

It doesn't matter to the folks at **Bistro Toulouse** that you only took French for a semester in college (and it was just to sit near the cutie in the next row), and now the only word you remember is "oui." They'll still serve you an authentic, delicious meal, according to our readers.
Second – Annie's Bistro Francais
Third – Saveurs Du Monde

BEST FRIED CHICKEN

I once witnessed a fellow writer purchase a fried chicken plate from **Publix** after she'd stayed up all night, either writing or partying – I'm not sure which. She said it completely revived her, and apparently our readers feel the same way.
Second – Page's Okra Grill
Third – Bojangles' Famous Chicken 'n Biscuits

BEST FROZEN YOGURT

Our readers like to get creative; there's no doubt about that. And they consider **TCBY** to be one of the best places to do so. With dozens of possible flavor combinations, you can practically become the van Gogh of frozen treats – except with both ears.
Second – DIYogurt
Third – sweet Frog Premium Frozen Yogurt

BEST GROCERY STORE

Every weekday morning, I go get my breakfast from **Harris Teeter**. The ladies who work that shift know my name – they practically know my VIC card number. With that kind of service, I can't blame our readers for voting them the best.
Second – Publix
Third – Trader Joe's

BEST HAPPY HOUR

Happiness pretty much never eludes us here in Mount Pleasant. But in case it does, we know we can find it at **Water's Edge**, where, according to our readers, the happy hour will elevate the most questionable of moods.
Second – SOL Southwest Kitchen + Tequila Bar
Third – The Shelter Kitchen and + Bar

BEST HOT DOG

Let's face it. Those basic hot dogs you had as a kid during summer camp outs don't even stand a chance against the delicious options at **Jack's Cosmic Dogs**. So don't be a weenie about it, and go all the way. Our readers say it's worth it.

Second – Skoogies
Third – Johnny's Hot Dogs

BEST ICE CREAM

Nothing is more old-fashioned and idyllic than an ice cream cone after a sunny day at the beach. According to our readers, **Ye Ole Fashioned Ice Cream & Sandwich Cafe** is the perfect place to enjoy delicious ice cream and a dose of nostalgia.

Second – Marble Slab Creamery
Third – Baskin-Robbins

BEST ITALIAN

Italians are known for being passionate about food, and our readers think it shows at **Bricco Bracco**, where every dish is made with love.

Second – La Pizzeria
Third – Carrabba's Italian Grill

BEST KID-FRIENDLY RESTAURANT

I don't have kids, but a few of my best friends do – and I often meet their crew at **Chick-fil-A**, where the adults can enjoy a half lemonade, half iced tea while the kids go nuts on the playground. Our readers couldn't agree more that it's a crowd pleaser for all ages.

Second – Dog & Duck
Third – Steel City Pizza

BEST MAC 'N' CHEESE

This rolled dough and fromage delicacy has been around at least since 14th-century Italy. No, not **Crave's**! Their mac 'n' cheese is prepared daily with only the freshest ingredients. That's why readers voted their rendition of this classic the best in town.

Second – Page's Okra Grill
Third – Coleman Public House

BEST MEXICAN

For fajitas that sizzle to burritos that bomb your belly with delicious goodness, it's hard to beat **La Hacienda**. This friendly eatery combines a huge selection of authentic Mexican dishes served with true Southern hospitality. Enjoy a margarita (or two) with your meal and feel like a mariachi!

Second – Los Arcos
Third – Santi's

BEST NEW RESTAURANT

Tavern & Table's proud owners say this gorgeous boite was created to be a gathering place where people sit in comfort and share small plates for the table or enjoy a hearty meal. They succeeded, and tossing in both indoor and outdoor dining on beautiful Shem Creek didn't hurt.

Second – The Americano
Third – On Forty-One

BEST PIZZA

One person's "best pizza" is an opinion; two persons' is a disagreement; three usually involves fightin' words. But in Mount P., our readers' accolades go to **La Pizzeria**. This family owned and operated restaurant offers a varied menu of Neapolitan delights.

Second – Mellow Mushroom
Third – Andolini's

BEST PLACE TO DINE OUTDOORS

Al fresco, or dining outdoors, literally means "in the fresh air," and, if you love your fresh air brisk with the saltiness of Shem Creek, there's no better place in town to kick back with a cocktail or enjoy a fine meal than **Tavern & Table**.

Second – Red's Icehouse
Third – Water's Edge

BEST PLACE TO TAKE AN OUT-OF-TOWNER

Can **Tavern & Table** do no wrong? It's new, it's exciting, it's attractive and it's situated on the banks of historic Shem Creek. Don't take any visitor here who you wouldn't want to pick up and move to Mount Pleasant.

Second – Shem Creek Bar & Grill
Third – Red's Icehouse

BEST RAW BAR

Whether a stand-alone restaurant or a section of one, a raw bar is where live shellfish are shucked and served. But you know that, if you're a raw seafood buff. And, if you are, **Shem Creek Bar & Grill** is the place for you. If you're not a fan, well, why not?

Second – Red's Icehouse
Third – SALT at Station 22

BEST RESTAURANT SERVICE

Page's Okra Grill labels its dining experience "local food for local folks," which may be why its parking lot is filled day and night. Snag yourself a parking spot, walk inside and you'll be treated like a relative – from the good side of the family!

Second – Red Drum
Third – SOL Southwestern Kitchen + Tequila Bar

BEST RIBS

An out-of-state visitor wrote: "Good service, cool vibe, super friendly staff … would've bought a sampler pack if we weren't traveling." Even folks "from off" understand quality and that you can enjoy great ribs right here at **Sticky Fingers Ribhouse** on Johnnie Dodds Boulevard. A word to the wise: extra napkins!

Second – Home Team BBQ
Third – Melvin's Barbecue

BEST SEAFOOD

The Wreck (of the Richard and Charlene) claims it's "where taste buds do the judging." They must be right because from shrimp to scallops, oysters and more, readers judged this bistro number 1. Looking for fried chicken or a steak? As they say on Shem Creek, "fuggedaboudit!"

Second – R.B.'s Seafood Restaurant
Third – Shem Creek Bar & Grill

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BEST SHRIMP 'N' GRITS

Who would think that a place that looks like an upscale diner (which it used to be) would have the best of this quintessential Southern seafood specialty? Our readers would. Just give **Page's Okra Grill** a chance to tickle your taste buds and learn what good is!

Second – Acme Lowcountry Kitchen
Third – Old Village Post House

Best Shrimp 'n' Grits
- Page's Okra Grill

BEST STEAK

If you're seeking a "classic fine dining experience that fuses Lowcountry and global flavor," look no further. Whether your taste is for center cut filet, New York strip or bone-in dry aged ribeye, **Langdon's Restaurant and Wine Bar** never fails to satisfy. Carnivores only need apply!

Second – Outback Steakhouse
Third – LongHorn Steakhouse

Best Steak
- Langdon's Restaurant and Wine Bar

BEST SUSHI

Whether it's nigiri, sashimi, classic or specialty rolls, **Locals Bar** never disappoints. Plus, it's probably the only first-rate sushi bar that's also a sports bar offering a corn dog appetizer and special events including a trivia night and a Thursday night football party. What, no sumo Saturday?

Second – Fuji Sushi & Bar & Grill
Third – Wasabi

BEST TACO

Come early to **SOL Southwest Kitchen + Tequila Bar**. Better yet, camp out overnight. This place is so popular it deserves its own highway off ramp! Plan on sipping one of their specialty tequila drinks (or more), then enjoy outstanding tacos filled with fish, steak and even veggies.

Second – Taco Mamacita
Third – The Americano

BEST UPSCALE RESTAURANT

Need to propose, apologize or close on a business deal? Fast food won't cut it. Our readers suggest the **Old Village Post House** as the upscale restaurant for great atmosphere and delicious cuisine.

Second – Water's Edge
Third – The Granary

Best Upscale Restaurant
- Old Village Post House

BEST WINGS

Bones or boneless, you can sauce your wings with any of 33 flavors (at last count), ranging from mild to absolutely searing! When "wings" is in your name, you'd better do 'em right, and **Wild Wing Café** does. Bonus for Mount Pleasant wingsters: two locations: one on Coleman, one at Oakland Market.

Second – Home Team BBQ
Third – Blue's Local Grill

Best Board Shop
- Parrot Surf & Skate

Shopping and Goods

BEST ANTIQUE STORE

Ah, antique shopping: the excitement of finding something with an interesting story behind it and then giving it fresh perspective. Our readers can vouch for how many stories you'll hear at **Mount Pleasant Mall,** where you can find your own piece of history.

Second – Six Mile Antique Mall
Third – Page's Thieves Market

BEST ART GALLERY

Generally, no one is a fan of a naked wall. But if your walls happen to be shamefully naked, where can you go to find proper adornments? Our readers tell us that the **Treasure Nest Art Gallery** is the perfect place.

Second – Karen's Korner Frame and Art Gallery
Third – Sandpiper Gallery

BEST BABY GOODS

So you got invited to a baby shower and are hoping to find a gift that is unique, memorable and adorable? Our readers approve of **Baby Bloomers** for the best pink and blue selection in town – you're guaranteed to hear a chorus of oohs and aahs.

Second – Ragamuffin Children's Boutique
Third – Southern Belles

BEST BOARD SHOP

Don't sit around the house feeling bored – get your feet ON a board instead. And whether you prefer land or water as your method of travel, our readers say that **Parrot Surf & Skate** has the perfect board to put beneath your feet.

Second – Odyssey Board Shop
Third – Half Moon Outfitters/Sealand Adventure Sports/Time Out Sports/Play it Again Sports (Tie)

BEST BOUTIQUE

Let's say you need a super chic outfit to wear to a hip new restaurant with your extraordinary date. This is not the time to find any old outfit at a big-box store – instead, join our readers at **Teal: A Swanky Boutique** for one-of-a-kind threads.

Second – Copper Penny
Third – Il Brunettes

BEST BRIDAL STORE

Best Bridal Store
- Jean's Bridal

When you think about it, the aisle you stroll down on your wedding day pretty much doubles as a runway – so you and your party had better wow the audience. No worries; **Jean's Bridal** has everything you and our readers need to say "I do" in a fashionable setting.

Second – White
Third – Gown Boutique of Charleston

BEST CHILDREN'S CLOTHING

Best Children's Clothing
- Ragamuffin Children's Boutique

Face it: kids have to look good on the playground, just like you have to look good at the office. So don't send them out into the world looking sub-par – buy them cute outfits at **Ragamuffin Children's Boutique**, recommended by our readers and their sharp-dressed kids.

Second – Southern Belles
Third – Shrimp & Grits Kids

Parrot Surf & Skate

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Thank you for voting us the Best Board Shop year after year!

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BEST COCKTAIL/DRESS ATTIRE

Do you seize with panic at the words "black tie" written on an invitation because the last formal outfit you purchased was in the 1990s? Well, then, join our readers at **Gwynn's of Mount Pleasant** and get spruced up for 2016. You might want to update your CD collection, too.

Second – Copper Penny
Third – Belk

BEST CONSIGNMENT CLOTHING

Around Mount Pleasant, one chick's trash is another chick's awesome wardrobe because we, along with our readers, shop at **Uptown Cheapskate**. It's just like scoring items from your best friend's closet – except, be honest, you don't have this many friends.

Second – Angels and Rascals/ Butterfly Consignment (Tie)

BEST CONSIGNMENT FURNITURE

Where are you going to stow your coziest sweater, best silverware or

family photos? For that matter, where will you put your feet up or place your glass of iced tea? For unique answers to these questions and others, our readers suggest visiting **Next to New**.

Second – Coleman Collection/ Mount Pleasant Mall (Tie)

BEST DEPARTMENT STORE

Sometimes I need a whole new life, from my lipstick to my bedsheets, and I know without a doubt that I can find it at **Belk**. Our readers think they're winners in every department, whether you're shopping for the new or the old you.

Second – Gwynn's of Mount Pleasant
Third – Kohl's

BEST FISH AND TACKLE SHOP

I don't fish much, but I have to report that I like visiting **Haddrell's Point Tackle and Supply**. Where else can I go for a batch of fresh crickets to feed to my friend Ava's pet toads? Plus, our readers voted them best, so I doubt anyone would find my devotion fishy.

Second – The Charleston Angler
Third – Atlantic Game and Tackle

BEST FLORIST

As a single gal, I often woo myself with flowers. Nothing cheers me up better than a bounty of colorful blooms and a copy of *Mount Pleasant Magazine* on my coffee table. For your own bouquet of bliss – or to treat someone else you love – our readers say **Buy the Bunch** has awesome flower power.

Second – Belva's Flower Shop
Third – Out of Hand

BEST FURNITURE STORE

So you just became an empty nester and you want to celebrate with some sharp corners, plush fabrics and snow-white chairs? Our readers say you'll score the pieces you always dreamed of at **GDC Home**. Just don't be surprised when your birdies come back to the new and improved nest for a spell.

Second – Celadon
Third – Stuckey Brothers Furniture of Mount Pleasant

BEST GARDEN CENTER

Read our tulips: According to our readers, **Abide-A-While** is the place to go when you'd like to plant new seeds in life and watch them grow tall. And no worries if you lack a green thumb – they have plenty of hardy ones to choose from, too.

Second – Lowe's
Third – Hidden Ponds Nursery

BEST HARDWARE STORE

Let's say your kid wants a homemade playhouse and you have a string of Saturdays available to build her one. Our readers urge you to visit **Royall Ace Hardware** to nail your plans together. They'll sell you a hammer, too.

Second – Lowe's
Third – Sweetgrass Ace Hardware

BEST HOME GOODS

What if tonight is your big dinner party and you suddenly realize you need new glassware? A red pillow to accent the sofa? Or a lamp that casts flattering light on your date? Head to **Marshalls**, where our readers shop for chic décor. Will your guests know your secrets? Maybe, if they live around Mount Pleasant.

Second – Kirkland's
Third – GDC Home

BEST JEWELRY

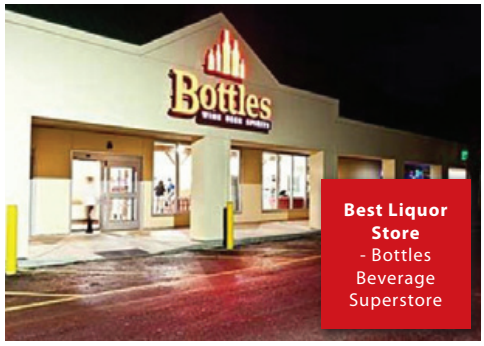
Attention, fellas: When Beyonce sang "put a ring on it," she didn't mean one that came out of a 25-cent gumball machine. She meant one from an established, local jewelry store with great service and selection, just like **Loy Harn Jewelers**. Apparently, they've been decorating the ladies who read *Mount Pleasant Magazine* for years.

Second – Polly's Fine Jewelry
Third – Skatell's

BEST LIQUOR STORE

So your job, relationship or faith in God is on the rocks? Sounds like you need a trip to **Bottles Beverage Superstore**, stat. Our readers say your cup will runneth over with new inspiration in no time. Just make sure you find your inspiration responsibly.

Second – Clarey's Liquors
Third – Palmetto 80 Liquors



Best Liquor Store
- Bottles Beverage Superstore

BEST MENSWEAR

When ZZ Top sang "Every girl's crazy bout a sharp-dressed man," the gents in Mount Pleasant were luckily paying attention. As a result, our readers check into the **Belk Men's Store** for a dapper look that we ladies approve of.

Second – Gwynn's of Mount Pleasant/Jos. A. Bank (Tie)

BEST PLACE TO BUY A BOAT

The Lowcountry is a playground of water, and those of us who love water head to **Seel's Outboard** for the right boat to navigate our ocean, harbor, rivers and streams. After all, life in Mount Pleasant is but a dream.

Second – Hall Marine
Third – Longshore Boats

Best Place to Buy a Boat
- Seel's Outboard

BEST PLACE TO BUY A CAR

Letting someone drive your car is a sure sign you love them, as the song goes. But letting someone drive your car you bought at **Baker Mercedes Benz of Mount Pleasant**? Our readers say that that's a sign of happily ever after.

Second – Lowcountry Volkswagen
Third – Mount Pleasant Chevrolet

BEST PLACE TO BUY A GIFT

They say that when it comes to gift giving, it's the thought that counts. And if you want your recipients to know that you are thinking hard about what they want the most, go to **Palmetto Moon**, where our readers shop for the perfect present.

Second – Zinnia
Third – Gwynn's of Mount Pleasant/Raffia Accents & Personalized Gifts (Tie)

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BEST RETAIL CUSTOMER SERVICE

There's nothing worse than wandering a store aimlessly, trying to figure out where the heck the fitting rooms or the formalwear sections are. But that never happens at **Gwynn's of Mount Pleasant**. Our readers tell us they're bound to ask if they can assist you as soon as you step foot inside.

Second – Belk
Third – Baby Bloomers/Henry & Eva/Kohl's (tie)

BEST SHOE STORE

Cinderella's shoes changed her entire destiny, and our readers suggest the **Designer Shoe Warehouse** for your own life-changing pair. Plus, you'll be able to wear them after midnight, and you'll never have to share them with family members (unless you want to).

Second – Copper Penny Shooz
Third – Belk

BEST SPORTING GOODS

We're guessing that the folks at **Dick's Sporting Goods** were good sports about winning this year. They probably shook hands with all the second and third place winners – even the losers. So it's no surprise that our readers voted them the best place to get prepped for a game.

Second – East Cooper Sporting Goods
Third – TrySports

BEST SWIMWEAR

The people who live in East Cooper tend to have a wardrobe of swimwear, from cruise ready bikinis to family friendly tanks. And according to our readers, if an occasion on the water presents itself and the perfect suit is missing, Belk is the

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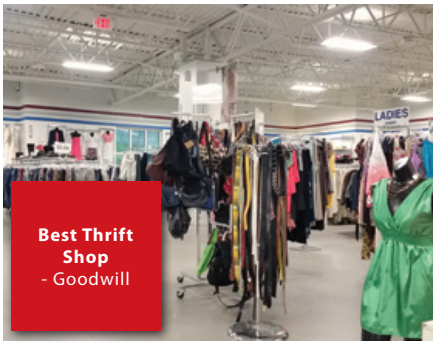
place to find it.
Second – Drift
Third – Athleta/Parrot Surf & Skate (tie)

BEST THRIFT SHOP



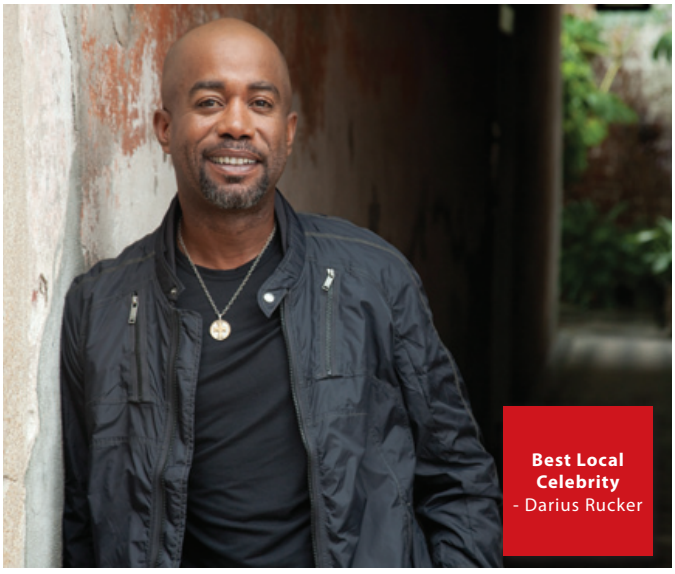
Ugly sweater parties. Halloween costumes. Pretending that you ran a race and bought a t-shirt when you slept through it. **Goodwill** can take care of all these and then some. That's why our readers voted them the best place to drop off donations and score a new-to-you treasure.
Second – Habitat for Humanity
Third – Mount Pleasant Mall

BEST TOYS

Our readers secretly don't want to grow up, which is why they are more than happy to visit **Wonder Works** along with their children. With fun and educational stuff that will entertain everyone for hours, it's easy to forget the bills for a while – until the late fees roll in, that is!
Second – Hollipops Fine Toys & Gifts
Third – Learning Express

BEST WOMEN'S ACCESSORIES

Coco Chanel, one of fashion's classic icons, urged ladies to always remove one accessory before leaving the house. But our readers know if Coco had shopped at **Versona**, she would have told us to pile it on. With so many choices, who could narrow it down?
Second – HandPicked
Third – Gwynn's of Mount Pleasant



Personalities and Services

BEST AUTO REPAIR BUSINESS

Your car is a trusty steed that takes you from Point A to Point B. So when something goes wrong with it, you need someone equally trusty to make things right. Our readers tell us **East Cooper Auto Pros** will get that motor purring in no time – we know you can't wait to get on the road again.
Second – Automotive Excellence
Third – Hudson's Import Service

BEST ASSISTED LIVING FACILITY

Assisted living is only one component of the **Franke at Seaside** experience, but it's a key one. This meticulously designed and professionally staffed facility is organized to help residents live at the maximum level of independence possible.
Second – Sandpiper Village
Third – Somerby of Mount Pleasant

BEST ATTORNEY

"Big Business" should be **Pflug Law Firm's** middle

name. They're tops in areas including commercial real estate, the environment, employment and labor, corporate and limited liability, and civil litigation. Suing over your neighbor's barking dog? Probably not.

Second – Harvey & Vallini, LLC
Third – Emily G. Johnston family law

BEST AUTO GLASS COMPANY

There's something about damaged auto glass that makes people crazy – a pitted or cracked windshield, a smashed door window, a stemless martini glass. **Glasspro** fixes them all to perfection and faster than you'd imagine possible. Except the martini glass. No one should drink and drive. At least not martinis.

Second – Lowcountry Auto Glass
Third – AAA Carolinas

BEST BODY SHOP

Whether you've been in a fender bender or you're looking to paint your new Lamborghini chartreuse, **East Cooper Paint & Body Shop** can get the job done. Additionally, they maintain great relationships with all the major insurance companies so they can help get your job done quickly and painlessly.

Second – Ascue's Auto Body and Collision Center
Third – Mt. Pleasant Collision Center

BEST CAR WASH

Liquid Highway sounds like a great name for a canal. In Mount Pleasant, it's the place to clean your ride, with one of their economy washes or a full-on detailing. If your Rolls is already sparkling, just drop by and hang out in their fabulous waiting room. The fish tank is mesmerizing.

Second – Cactus Car Wash
Third – Americana Car Wash & Detailing

BEST CHILD CARE

There's a lot of everything for your child at **Sunshine House**, from infant and toddlers through pre-school and school-age. Nothing is more important to your little loved ones than getting a terrific start in life and finding a place that offers quality care and where education is paramount.

Second – Kids Play Garden
Third – Children's Discovery Center/Children's Center at Carolina Park (tie)

BEST DANCE STUDIO

When it comes to mastering the art of terpsichore East of the Cooper, **Tapio School of Dance and Gymnastics** pirouettes to the top with its small classes and traditional approach. From neophytes to seasoned veteran dancers, your star-to-be can count on individualized attention from trained professionals.

Second – Creative Edge Dance Center
Third – Dance Carolina

BEST ELECTRICIAN

If there's one household project the average homeowner should never try, it's messing with things electrical. Always turn to a professional such as **Frampton Electric** for these often hazardous and occasionally deadly tasks. Changing a light bulb? O.K. Rewiring your entire house? Don't even think about it.

Second – Mount Pleasant Electric
Third – McClellan & Claiborne/Osborne Electric (tie)

BEST FINANCIAL PLANNER

A wise man once said that there are two kinds of

people in Mount Pleasant – well-off retirees and everyone else who hopes to become a well-off retiree. Edward Jones gets high financial marks from readers of *Mount Pleasant Magazine,* ranking third overall and first through agent **Philip Cingolani**.
Second – E & R Wealth Management
Third – Edward Jones

BEST GYMNASTICS FACILITY

If you don't know a Shaposhnikova from a side aerial or a Kolman from a kip, drop by **Tapio School of Dance and Gymnastics** and find out. Better yet, bring your budding Nadia Comaneci to learn either competitive or non-competitive gymnastics in a pleasant, safe environment.
Second – GymMasters Gym Academy
Third – The Little Gym/Rock Solid Gymnastics (tie)

BEST HAIR SALON

Best Hair Salon
-Vanity Salon

The Bard wrote, "Vanity, thy name is woman." Here in Mount Pleasant, Vanity is Kim Coleman, who established **Vanity Salon** a decade ago. It quickly became the go-to place not only for "routine" hair and makeup but for bridal and special events styling as well – even spray tanning.
Second – Stella Nova Spa Salon
Third – DonVia Salon

BEST HEATING AND AIR COMPANY

Best Heating and Air Company
- C & C Myers Heating & A/C

Unlike people, when it comes to your heating and air unit, you want it to blow hot and cold. And if it doesn't? You can call **C & C Myers Heating & A/C** according to our trusted readers. Soon that perfect Hawaii-esque temperature will be yours again.
Second – Carolina Custom Air
Third – Austin Air LLC

BEST HOME CLEANING SERVICE

Best Home Cleaning Service
- Maid Pure

You've probably heard of organic produce, organic chocolates and even organic coffee. But have you ever heard of organic house cleaning? Meet **Maid Pure**, a company that will leave your abode immaculate without using harsh, toxic materials. Try them, then invite Ralph Nader over for dinner.
Second – Molly Maid
Third – Mount Pleasant Cleaning Technicians/Have It Maid (tie)

BEST HOTEL

Best Hotel
- Comfort Suites

Within living memory, the term "Mount Pleasant hotel" would have been an oxymoron. Today, there are numerous places where a traveler (or a not-so-close friend or relative) can lay his or her head comfortably in our town. Rating these excellent hostelries is a tough task but one our readers took to with gusto, citing **Comfort Suites** at the IOP Connector as the top place to stay.
Second – Hampton Inn and Suites
Third – Wyndham Garden

BEST INSURANCE AGENT

Best Insurance Agent
- Billy Swails State Farm

Woody Allen once speculated that the worst torture in the world would be to be sealed in an underground box with an insurance agent. Clearly, Mr. Allen never met the man behind **Billy Swails State Farm**. Former councilman; former mayor; current chairman of the Charleston

County Aviation Authority; great guy. Maybe Woody was wrong.
Second – Sam Schirmer
Third – Jack Tankersley

BEST INSURANCE COMPANY
If Billy Swails is Mount Pleasant's best insurance agent, it kind of makes sense that his company, **State Farm**, would be the first choice of our voters as well. When the results came in, we double-checked them. Then we even "discount double-checked" them.
Second – Atlantic Shield
Third – Allstate

BEST INTERIOR DECORATOR
"Lowcountry Chic" is the signature style of **CHD Interiors**, the top vote-getter in Mount Pleasant among custom interior design firms. While embracing the casual Lowcountry lifestyle, CHD helps clients use traditional and contemporary designs to craft quality living spaces that reflect their personalities and individual styles.
Second – Joy Lang
Third – Domain Interiors & Design

BEST KENNEL
Pampering a pet rises to new heights at **My Three Dogs**, where canine companions can play indoors or out, go for a refreshing

swim or just kick back with their new four-legged friends in air-conditioned comfort. Maybe whoever called this "a dog's life"

was right!
Second – Paws in Paradise
Third – Pooch Palace

BEST LANDSCAPER

Customized lawn maintenance programs; landscape design and planting; pruning, tree and palm trimming; debris removal; irrigation installation and repairs. **The Lawn Rangers** offer all this and more, plus a name that's a tongue-in-cheek pun.
Second – Long Point Services
Third – Palmetto Green

BEST LOAN OFFICER

The old saying goes, "neither a borrower nor a lender be." But **Wes Sellew** has never paid attention to that. He loves lending money to home buyers, according to our readers. And it's clearly working out for everyone involved.
Second – Robert Tennyson, CresCom Bank
Third – Andy Collier, DHI Mortgage/Lorcan Lucey, Lucey Mortage (tie)

BEST LOCAL CELEBRITY

Just like Hollywood, Charleston and Mount Pleasant have A-listers who walk among us. And of those A-listers, our readers love **Darius Rucker** in particular for his laid-back attitude and undeniable talent. In fact, those people in Hollywood should take lessons from him.
Second – Bill Murray
Third – Brooke Ryan/Rob Fowler (tie)

BEST NAIL SALON

There may be other topics that more women "beg to differ" about than the virtues of where they get their nails done, although probably not many. But scores of online reviewers and *Mount Pleasant Magazine's* readers cut to the chase. East of the Cooper, it's **Princess Nails and Spa.**
Second – Nails So Dep!
Third – Silver Nails & Spa

BEST NONPROFIT

East Cooper Community Outreach – ECCO – has become such an important symbol of caring in East Cooper that it's virtually impossible to imagine living without it. Each year ECCO serves more than 4,500 families with basic needs, health care and more.
Second – East Cooper Habitat for Humanity
Third – Shem Creek Fisheries

BEST PEST CONTROL COMPANY

Life East of the Cooper could hardly be more perfect, except for one thing: the bugs. In our Southern paradise we've got termites, bedbugs, mosquitoes, palmetto bugs and zillions of "no see 'ums." That's where outstanding pest control companies such as **East Coast Pest Control** make all the difference.
Second – Mosquito Joe
Third – Buzz Off

BEST PET GROOMER

There is no shortage of ways to treat your dog more like a four-legged child around here. For the real royal pooch treatment, our readers insist that **aFORTable Grooming** is the best in town. They'll have your pup looking show-dog ready in no time.
Second – My Three Dogs
Third – Pleasant Paws Dayspa

BEST POOL AND SPA COMPANY

Atkinson Pools and Spas considers itself the Lowcountry's only full-service swimming pool and spa provider, and for more than 30 years they've been a leader in the field. The company prides itself on using the highest quality materials and handling every aspect of each pool or spa project.
Second – Leslie's Pool Supplies
Third – Lowcountry Pool House

BEST PLACE OF WORSHIP

Feel the need to sing a hymn of praise? Then join our readers at **East Cooper Baptist Church** and kick off your Sunday festivities. You'll leave feeling renewed and ready for the week.
Second – Christ Our King Catholic Church
Third – Christ Episcopal Church

BEST PLACE TO GET A MORTGAGE

Shelter is one of those basic needs in life, and **Mortgage Network of Mount Pleasant**, according to our readers, is equipped to meet not only your needs but also your wants. Well, some of your wants, anyway. For the others, you might want to ask your spouse or your parents.

Second – DHI Mortgage
Third – Lucey Mortgage

BEST PLACE TO HAVE A WEDDING

You've found the man (or woman) of your dreams. The photographer of your dreams. The cake baker of your dreams. So make it extend to the venue and take this tip from our happily hitched readers: **Boone Hall Plantation** will complete the fairy tale in your mind.

Second – Alhambra Hall
Third – Dunes West Club

BEST PLACE TO HOLD AN EVENT

Family reunions, graduations, bar mitzvahs and other gatherings of the human race are much better with a beautiful view of the Lowcountry. That's why our readers chose **Alhambra Hall** as the place to book for all your occasions. But whittling down the guest list is still up to you.

Second – Boone Hall Plantation
Third – Mount Pleasant Memorial Waterfront Park

BEST PLUMBER

Water inside the home is fine, provided it is contained within a whirlpool tub, fish tank or sink of warm suds. But when the water is not fine, our readers advise to give **Coastal Plumbing and Gas** a call. They'll handle it so you can tuck your high-water jeans back into the drawer.

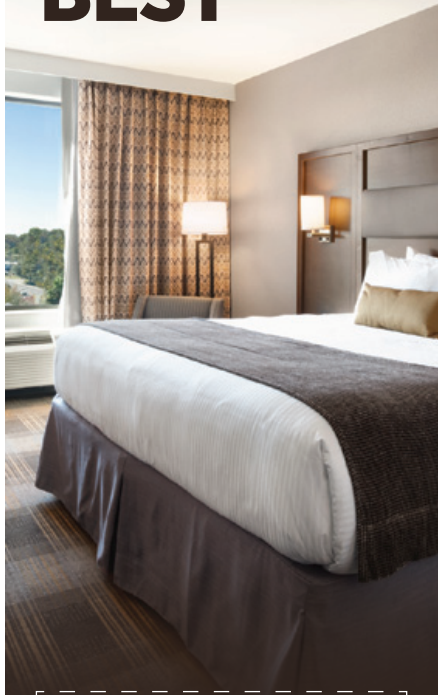
Second – Atlantic Plumbing/Harrington Plumbing/Heins Plumbing (tie)

BEST PRIVATE SCHOOL

When people who live East of the Cooper are asked what they love most about life in these parts, they inevitably name "great schools!" as part of that list. Likewise, when we ask our readers to name the best private education that East Cooper has to offer, **Palmetto Christian Academy** tops that list.

Second – Christ Our King-Stella Maris
Third – Bishop England

COME REST WITH THE BEST



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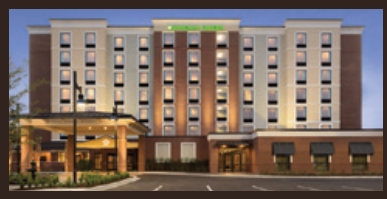

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BEST PUBLIC SCHOOL

As public schools go, **Wando High School** is known for offering a lot more than just "readin' ritin' and rithmatic." Voted best by our readers not only for academic but also professional preparation, this is one school that will make sure your kid won't move into your basement after graduation.

Second – Jennie Moore Elementary
Third – Laurel Hill Primary

BEST RADIO PERSONALITY

Despite the new forms of technology that constantly debut, radio is a perennial favorite for our readers, who all appreciate the local flavor and voice of DJ **Brooke Ryan**. There's our proof that video did not kill the radio star!

Second – Tanya Brown
Third – The Bert Show

BEST RADIO STATION

Whenever I ask people what they listen to, they always reply with "Oh, you know, everything." And I take that to mean that they listen to the new **Mix 96**. Our readers say it's the best for hearing everything from Bruno Mars to Gwen Stefani.

Second – WEZL
Third – 105.5 The Bridge

BEST REAL ESTATE COMPANY

Your house is where you hang your hat, and you can hang it even sooner thanks to **Carolina One's** diligence in selling you a home – or selling yours. Our readers say their door is always open.

Second – Berkshire Hathaway
Third – The Cassina Group

BEST REAL ESTATE TEAM

Teamwork isn't just for sports. It's also for houses. And the **Caleb Pearson Team** was voted best by our readers. Why have just one professional join you on your home hunt when you can have an entire crew?

Second – Greater Properties Charleston
Third – Dede Warren and BV Messervy/Healthy Realty

BEST REALTOR

You know the warm, fuzzy feeling you get when you find the perfect home or sell yours to the perfect buyer? **Caleb Pearson** knows it, too – and he knows where to get a fix. So call him for a dose of home buying and selling bliss.

Second - Anton Roeger/B.V. Messervy/Dan and Laura Pape (tie)

BEST TANNING SALON

In the Lowcountry, we're fortunate to have sunny days most of the year. But in case it gets cloudy, we have **Ultra Tan**. Thus, there are no excuses for showing up to a party looking pasty. Just ask our readers.

Second – Sun Station
Third – Planet Fitness

BEST TV PERSONALITY

We love our Netflix, Amazon and other television services, but we still tune into good ole network TV to get our dose of **Rob Fowler** along with our readers. He lets us know the weather with a constantly warm, sunny disposition. And more often than not, the weather follows suit.

Second – Dean Stephens
Third – Josh Mathers

BEST VETERINARIAN

Nobody greets you at the door and snuggles you on the sofa quite the way your pets do. So when they're feeling poorly, show them that same love and take them to **Pet Vet**. Our readers say you'll both be feeling good in no time.

Second – Park West Veterinary Associates
Third – Advanced Animal Care

Best Hospital
- Roper St. Francis Mount Pleasant Hospital

Health and Wellness

BEST ALLERGIST

How are you supposed to stop and smell the proverbial roses if you can't quit sneezing and sniffling? Don't fret – our readers told us that **Dr. Bruce Ball** can help you. Just wipe your watery eyes, get out the phone and give him a call.

Second – Dr. Ned Rupp
Third – Dr. Thomas Murphy

BEST AUDIOLOGIST

Best Audiologist
- Advanced Hearing Care

Your ears are essential for jamming to tunes, enjoying conversation with family and friends and listening to the birds sing. The friendly staff at **Advanced Hearing Care** understands this – and will work to make sure your ears are in peak shape. I guess you could say they hear you.

Second – Charleston ENT
Third – MUSC Health East Cooper

BEST HEARING AID

Haven't heard birds chirping in a while? Wondering why Black Sabbath sounds more like an easy listening band? Get out of those hearing doldrums and come into the digital age with a custom-fitted hearing aid from **Advanced Hearing Care**. With it, you can wipe "what?" out of your vocabulary.

Second – Zounds Hearing of Charleston
Third – Daniel Island Hearing Center

BEST CHIROPRACTOR

Dr. Brian Class is a dedicated chiropractor practicing "holistic and alternative medicine," which, loosely translated, means he treats more than your spine – although he's great at that as well. Listen for him weekends on his popular "Maximized Living" radio show and learn how to treat your body like those of the Olympic athletes he works with.

Second – Drs. Gina and Michael Courson
Third – Dr. Ed Rak

BEST COLON AND RECTAL DOCTOR

Best Colon and Rectal Doctor
- Dr. Margarita Murphy

A partner in Gastrointestinal Surgical Specialists, **Dr. Margarita Murphy** is one of only two female colorectal surgeons in the Lowcountry. She is a passionate advocate for young girls considering medical careers and encourages everyone with any concerns to seek medical attention for colon or rectal problems.

Second – Dr. Kerry Hammond
Third – Dr. Jeffrey Joyner

BEST DENTIST

You've seen **Pleasant Family Dentistry** in the news providing free dental treatment to 100 needy patients in one day. Now, and find out how they treat every patient with compassion, caring and the highest professional standards.

Second – Water's Edge Dentistry
Third – Crossland Dental Associates

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Gear for Men

BEST DERMATOLOGIST

Dr. Marguerite Germain seems to win a lot of awards, and now here's another one! Readers named her and her practice best in town in a wide range of services, from cosmetic and medical dermatology to laser surgery to dermal fillers, Botox and much more.

Second – Dr. Sam Stafford
Third – Dr. Leslie Davidson

BEST EYE DOCTOR

Whether you're a baseball umpire or a local resident having difficulty seeing the game on TV, **Dr. Brad Bodkin** and the optometric specialists at the Vision Center at Seaside Farms are the people to see when you start hearing that you ought to have your eyes examined.

Second – Dr. David Eulau
Third – Dr. Brad Majors

BEST FITNESS CENTER

In Mount Pleasant, **East Shore Athletic Club** offers one-stop fitness with high-tech equipment, exercise classes, personal training and more. And, with four great locations around town, the excuse that you'd work out but the gym is too far away doesn't hold water – or energy drink.

Second – Planet Fitness
Third – Ecofitness

BEST GERONTOLOGIST

Jus like with friends, the family members who stick around as the years go by are valuable. Show them you feel that way by recommending **Dr. Rex Morgan** as a gerontologist. Our readers say he'll treat your family like his own.

Second – Dr. John Kleckley/Dr. Stephen Murk (Tie)

BEST HOSPITAL

It's good to have a good hospital nearby – even better if it's in your backyard. It would have to offer inpatient and outpatient surgery, an intensive care unit, a 24-hour ER, home-like labor and delivery suites and more. Which **Roper St. Francis Mount Pleasant Hospital** does.

Second – East Cooper Regional Medical Center
Third – MUSC East Cooper

BEST LASIK SURGEON

Best Lasik Surgeon - Dr. Kerry Solomon

If you haven't heard of **Dr. Kerry Solomon**, try listening to the radio. That's because you might not be able to read about him or see him on TV without the Lasik surgery he's so well-known for. It offers freedom from eyeglasses or contacts while promising better vision all around.

Second – Dr. David Vroman
Third – Dr. George O. Waring IV

BEST OB/GYN

Remember in those old movies when fathers-to-be paced nervously outside the room where their baby was being born? Our readers think that if **Dr. Bridget Williamson** had been their OB/GYN, they would've been relaxing in a chair instead. That's how good she is.

Second – Dr. Karen Hallmark
Third – Dr. Delinda Terry

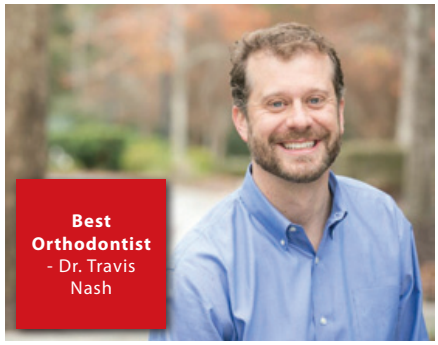
BEST ORAL SURGEON

Best Oral Surgeon - Dr. Courtney Shelbourne

What can you say about an oral surgeon whose name sounds as if it would be more at home on a movie marquee than on a dental school sheepskin? Well, for one thing, you might say he's likely the best at what he does. That's what our readers think about **Dr. Courtney Shelbourne**.

Second – Dr. Matthew Barefoot
Third – Dr. Philip Prickett

BEST ORTHODONTIST



Best Orthodontist - Dr. Travis Nash

In Mount Pleasant, when it comes to helping patients achieve and maintain a beautiful, healthy smile, **Dr. Travis Nash** is your man. Plus, if you want to take a field trip, you can visit his James Island office, too.

Second – Dr. Jed Kelley
Third – Dr. Roberta Gardner

BEST ORTHOPEDIC SURGEON

Have you been lying around in bed, unable to extend your limbs to the floor? Call up **Dr. John Graham Jr.**, our readers' pick for Best Orthopedic Surgeon. You'll be back to tap dancing in no time.

Second – Dr. Billy Estes
Third – Dr. William Carroll

BEST PEDIATRICIAN

Best Pediatrician - Coastal Pediatric Associates

When your kid doesn't feel well, he or she will let you know. And when you need a doctor, our readers are there to let you know to call **Coastal Pediatric Associates**. They'll get your child off the couch and back to school so you can turn off Nick Jr. and watch your soaps in peace.

Second – Mount Pleasant Pediatrics
Third – Parkwood Pediatric Group

BEST PHYSICAL THERAPIST

If you find yourself struggling to do the Hokey Pokey properly lately, our readers suggest a visit to **Imagine Physical Therapy**. They'll have you back to moving and grooving soon enough, and you won't have to embarrass yourself at any more dances.

Second – Rehabilitation Centers of Charleston
Third – Atlas Physical Therapy

BEST PLASTIC SURGEON

Breast surgery, body contouring, facial rejuvenation, Botox, chemical peels, weight loss and more. When it comes to accentuating your curves, enhancing your figure and providing a more youthful appearance, **Dr. Jack Hensel** at Lowcountry Plastic Surgery Center does it all. Their special bridal packages will have you looking "picture perfect" on your wedding day.

Second – Dr. Thomas Funcik
Third – Dr. Patrick O'Neill

BEST PRIMARY CARE DOCTOR

Sore throat? Stomach ache? Or feeling fit as a fiddle but in need of a checkup? For all of the above (or something else), our readers voted **Dr. John Knepper** as the primary care doctor to call. He'll make it all better.

Second – Dr. Lee Allison
Third – Dr. John Rowe

BEST URGENT CARE

Health First has four Lowcountry locations, but the one at Highway 17 and Route 41 is the one our readers like the most. Inspiration for the mini-chain that offers primary, urgent, emergent and pediatric care came from a sermon at Seacoast Church. Take two aspirin and say amen to that!

Second – Doctors Care
Third – MUSC

BEST UROLOGIST

One patient said, "Love, love this doctor! Personable, caring, knowledgeable. Excellent bedside manner." Another said, "I will be referring him to my family and friends." You just can't buy recommendations like these. That's why **Dr. Alan Fogle** is rated tops in town.

Second – Dr. Dennis Kubinski
Third – Dr. David W. Brandi

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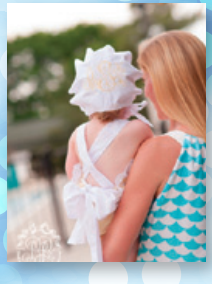

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BEST WEIGHT LOSS PROGRAM

We're fortunate to have abundant choices for food and drinks in East Cooper. And when we've overindulged, we're lucky to have **Lowcountry Beauty and Wellness Spa**, according to our readers. Their weight loss program will get us back in our skinny jeans just in time to go out again.

Second – Weight Watchers
Third – Metabolic Medical Center

BEST YOGA STUDIO

If you saved all the drama for your mama and now both of you are totally stressed out, sign up for a mother-daughter session at **Bikram Yoga**. And next time, spare your poor mother those details. That's what husbands are for.

Second – Charleston Power Yoga
Third – Gaea

Best Place to Fly a Kite - Sullivan's Island

Entertainment and Leisure

BEST ANNUAL EVENT

In most parts of the world, the post-holiday slump in January is very real, and no one looks forward to that time of year. But not in Mount Pleasant, where our cheerful readers get ready to suck and slurp at the beloved **Lowcountry Oyster Roast**. The fun never ends around here!

Second – Blessing of the Fleet
Third – The Mac Off

BEST APARTMENT COMMUNITY

If a one- or two-bedroom apartment meets your needs and you want a new home in a golf-side development with plenty of amenities, **Thickett Apartments** is calling out to you. In addition to outstanding design, this community offers a fitness center and a swimming pool, and pets are welcome.

Second – Belle Hall Apartments
Third – The Boulevard

BEST PLACE TO PUT YOUR BOAT IN THE WATER

There's no wrong place to put your boat in the water, but **Shem Creek**, according to our readers, is the right place. You're bound to run into friends, soak up plenty of ambience and maybe enjoy some bird sighting before you even get on board.

Second – Remley's Point
Third – Sullivan's Island

BEST CONCERT VENUE

Our readers say there's no better place to enjoy performances by some of the most popular acts in the world than at what was once known as the **Family Circle Cup Tennis Center**. Its name has changed to Volvo Cars Stadium, but fortunately, the quality of a good time to be had won't change.

Second – Boone Hall Plantation
Third – Awendaw Green

BEST CUSTOM BUILDER

Emerald/D.R. Horton has always promised affordable new homes built with unmatched efficiencies and uncompromising quality. The proof of that pudding – or, in our case, those grits – is on view at Mount Pleasant's newest residential community, Oyster Point, which offers "a unique opportunity to live near the last remaining Civil War fortification" in the Lowcountry.

Second – David Weekley Homes
Third – Structures

BEST KIDS ACTIVITY

Kids are known for making boxes into playhouses and mud into cake batter – but even kids need a structured activity sometimes. When that happens, head to **Blackbeard's Cove Family Fun Park**. Our readers think you'll have a good time, too, without any mud involved.

Second – Sky Zone
Third – Boone Hall Events

BEST MOVIE THEATER

Hats off, literally, to a great place to enjoy really good food and equally outstanding films. Better yet, raise a toast to **Cinebarre**, whose name hints at this venue's full-service bar! Food, drink, fine entertainment – all that's missing is plenty of parking. Oh yeah, it has that, too.

Second – Palmetto Grande
Third – Mount Pleasant Waterfront Park pier

BEST NEIGHBORHOOD FOR FAMILIES

A good part of **Park West's** appeal is a "village" quality. There's a swim and tennis club, all manner of recreational opportunities, restaurants, shops and schools within its landscaped confines. This community boasts that you could live your life happily without ever traveling on nearby Route 17. Unless, of course, you want to go anywhere else.

Second – Oyster Point
Third – The Old Village

BEST NEIGHBORHOOD FOR RETIREES

No bivalve represents the Lowcountry better than the noble oyster, so retirees should be "shellfish" and snap up the homes at **Oyster Point**, a community with the affordable prices and excellent amenities to make anyone's golden years shimmer! No shucking required!

Second – Dunes West
Third – Park West

BEST PLACE TO FISH

Where are the fish biting? We aren't sure we can tell you. But we can tell you that our readers voted **Mount Pleasant Memorial Waterfront Park** as the best spot to cast a line. It's the kind of place where even if you don't catch anything but a sunset, you'll go home satisfied.

Second – Pitt Street Bridge
Third – Shem Creek

BEST PLACE TO FLY A KITE

If someone calls you "flighty," or says "your head is in

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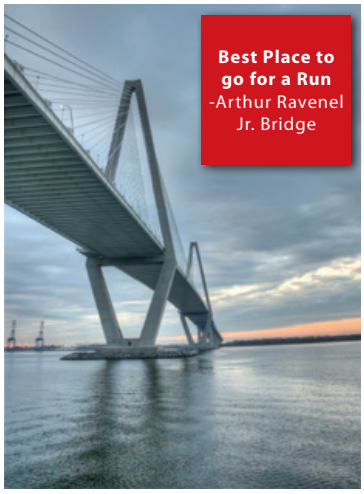
the clouds," it can only mean one thing – you're ready to head to **Sullivan's Island** along with the rest of our readers, launch a colorful kite into the sky and watch it soar.
Second – Isle of Palms
Third – Alhambra Hall

BEST PLACE TO GO FOR A RUN



Let's say your car breaks down, your niece permanently borrows your skateboard and you have no other means of transportation except your two feet. Well, our readers suggest preparing for such scenarios with regular sprints across the **Arthur Ravenel Jr. Bridge**. It'll keep that God-given vehicle in shape!
Second – Old Village
Third – Sullivan's Island

BEST PLACE FOR A CHILDREN'S BIRTHDAY PARTY

Fun, fitness and flying through the air are what **Sky Zone** is built on. Is this place great for kids? One guest observed unsolicited, "I felt my 5-year-old was safe because the staff kept an eye out to ensure the older, larger kids didn't get too close."
Second – Blackbeard's Cove
Third – Teacups and Trucks

BEST PLACE TO HAVE A PICNIC

We won't judge you based on whether your picnic basket contains fresh baguettes, organic grapes and brie – or just a couple of sandwiches slapped with bologna and American cheese slices. We'll just tell you that our readers say **Mount Pleasant Memorial Waterfront Park** is the best place to dine in open air.
Second – Palmetto Island County Park
Third – Pitt Street Bridge Park

BEST PLACE TO MEET SINGLES

Charleston Wine Pairings offers singles opportunities to meet like-minded men and women in safe, fun environments that promote romance! If you think you're falling for a potential partner who complains that the sommelier isn't offering Ripple, you'll know it's time to move on.
Second - SOL Southwest Kitchen + Tequila Bar
Third – Red's Icehouse/The Shelter (tie)

BEST PLACE TO PADDLE BOARD

Paddle boarding is a hot trend that has caught on well in the Lowcountry, and those who want to be on trend can visit **Nature Adventure Outfitters** on Shem Creek for professional paddle boarding guidance. You'll be using hip lingo like "SUP" in no time."
Second – Ocean Fitness/Odyssey Board Shop/SUP (tie)

BEST PLACE TO GOLF

This Arthur Hills-designed, 6,871-yard par 72 layout has garnered top marks from *Golf* magazine, *Golf Digest, Golfweek* and now *Mount Pleasant Magazine* voters. **Dunes West's** magnificent course never plays the same way twice, and its marshes, creeks and bunkers present challenges to novices and pros alike.
Second – Patriots Point Links
Third – Charleston National Golf Club/Wild Dunes Resort (tie)

BEST PLACE TO PLAY TENNIS

With 10 lighted, meticulously maintained courts and programs including private lessons, group lessons and league play, **The Tennis Center at Dunes West** provides great play for kids and adults at all skill levels. Find out how to release your inner Djokovic or

Williams. Either Williams!
Second – Family Circle Tennis Center
Third – Live To Play Tennis Club

BEST PLACE TO RIDE A BIKE

Here's a riddle. What involves two wheels, a seat, handlebars, terrific views, fresh air and friendly neighbors? A bike ride through the **Old Village of Mount Pleasant**, which our readers voted as the best place to shout "Look Ma! No hands!" Just remember your helmets.
Second – Isle of Palms
Third – Palmetto Islands County Park

BEST PLACE TO WATCH SPORTS ON TV

If your favorite TV channel is PBS, and your favorite food is white truffles, this high decibel eatery is not for you. If you love beer, wings, great bar food and rooting for your favorite teams on TVs both indoors and out, well, pull up a chair and cheer at **Wild Wing Café**.
Second – King Street Grille
Third – Big Game Bar & Grill

BEST PLACE TO WALK YOUR DOG

Dog walking is an underrated art form. It requires being friendly to other owners, courteously picking up poop with a plastic bag and not letting your dog run amok. And walking your dog on the **Isle of Palms**, according to our readers, will make you feel like you're inside a work of art for sure.
Second – Palmetto Islands County Park
Third – Sullivan's Island

BEST PLACE TO VIEW THE BRIDGE

The big, famous cities of the world always pride themselves on their beautiful skylines, and the Ravenel Bridge just happens to be the Lowcountry's unique skyline. What better place to admire it than from our own **Mount Pleasant Memorial Waterfront Park**? It's guaranteed to be Instagram-worthy.
Second – Patriots Point
Third – On the bridge

BEST PLAYGROUND

The kids will be more than happy to turn your living room into a playground – but why let them do that, when a perfectly good one exists at **Mount Pleasant Memorial Waterfront Park**? Then they can leap over something besides your coffee table and swing from something other than your chandelier!
Second – Alhambra Hall
Third – Palmetto Islands County Park

BEST PUBLIC BEACH ACCESS

The beach is a luxury all its own, but when you want that luxury to include clean restrooms, picnic tables, swings and a parking lot, our readers strongly suggest a day at the **Isle of Palms County Park**.
Second – Isle of Palms Front Beach
Third – Station 22 at Sullivan's Island

BEST VOLUME BUILDER

D.R. Horton homes are everywhere in Mount Pleasant, from RiverTowne to Park West and from Tidal Walk to Oyster Point. This quality builder offers three-bedroom to five-bedroom homes geared to meet just about every buyer's needs!
Second – David Weekley Homes
Third – Lennar Homes

The View From The Top

Our 2016 Winners Speak Out

NOW THAT YOU'VE READ through the results in the 2016 Best of Mount Pleasant – and hopefully enjoyed a chuckle or two – you might be curious about what, precisely, makes those folks good enough to be voted "best" by East Cooper residents – unless, of course, you voted for them yourself. Whether we're talking about a restaurant, a dentist or a liquor store, it's useful to know the business' philosophy and learn a thing or two about what goes into being a winner.

In the following special section, many of the winners will present their success stories. You will find several of this year's first, second and third place winners and read their special business profiles, all tailored to discuss why they were chosen as the best.

The 2016 Best of Mount Pleasant is a special publication to be enjoyed all year long. At the rate that Mount Pleasant and the surrounding islands are growing, we're certain that newcomers and visitors will find this information useful, so be sure to pass this along to a friend.

On behalf of everyone at *Mount Pleasant Magazine*, thanks for being part of the 2016 Best of Mount Pleasant. It has been an astounding success, and we can't wait for next year.

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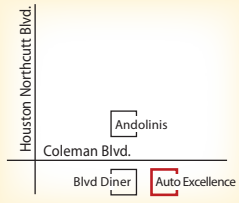

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The Best is Yet to Come
Palmetto Christian Academy

BY KALENE MCCORT

SINCE 1992, PALMETTO CHRISTIAN Academy has been shaping the lives of students through Christ-centered learning. What started with a few families trying to establish an ideal education for their children has blossomed into a school that is consistently voted "the best" in Mount Pleasant.

One man who has played a vital role in PCA's success is Dr. John Graham. As a parent invested in the school since its early years, Graham has seen the progressive growth of the institution and is spearheading a new project sure to add another dimension to PCA's vibrant academic environment. Plans for a brand new Student Life Center are underway and will soon mark another milestone in PCA's rich history.

"Our Student Life Center will be a state-of-the-art, multi-use facility. This will include a full-sized gym for sports events," said Graham. "We will have new classrooms dedicated to science, technology, engineering and mathematics courses in one wing, with another wing devoted to spiritual life classes and fellowship. On our campus, we will have a refitted area for performing arts and arts education."

Photo courtesy of Palmetto Christian Academy.

Built on lifelong learning and unity, PCA strives to have a lasting impact that exceeds far past a student's graduation.

Whether students desire to shoot hoops with a winning team or star in the school play, they now will have a new home in which to do it. This exciting facilities expansion corresponds with PCA's 25th anniversary. As the school honors those who have built a foundation of seeking excellence in all things, the Student Life Center will serve the next generation, building on a tradition of spiritual, academic, athletic and artistic excellence.

"PCA is a covenant school, in that we assist Christian parents in the education process," said Graham. "Our family joined the effort in 1995, just before our daughter started kindergarten. She was a member of the inaugural PCA graduating class in 2009 and has returned to PCA in order to realize her dream of teaching."

The fact that Graham's daughter returned to work at the very school she graduated from is a testament to PCA's tightknit community and its ultimate goal of helping future generations achieve greatness. Built on lifelong learning and unity, PCA strives to have a lasting impact that exceeds far past a student's graduation. Faculty members become true mentors, instilling priceless wisdom and always providing an attentive ear.

While spiritual development is a huge aspect of life at PCA, the extracurricular activities and outstanding academics are equally important. Wanting to craft an experience that caters to each child individually, PCA offers an array of sports and artistic projects for students to pursue. The Student Life Center will no doubt spark more engagement and bring about new ways in which students can express themselves and reach their full potential.

"As our culture becomes increasingly challenging and relativism is the norm, educational choice becomes critical," said Graham. "Our academics, athletics, fine arts programs and our achievement scores are competitive."

From humble beginnings with a modest enrollment of 25 students to a now thriving population stretching just beyond 600, PCA is proof that all things are possible with faith.

"The Lord has surely shown favor on our school," said Graham. "We desire to honor Him as we continue to grow our school to instruct our children and develop leaders for the next generation."

To learn more, visit www.palmettochristianacademy.org or call 843-881-9967.

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Seeing the Best in Everyone

East Cooper Community Outreach

EMPOWERMENT IS THE name of the game at East Cooper Community Outreach, not only for the folks who receive aid, but also for the volunteers. In the last year, the local nonprofit – more often known as ECCO – has been quite busy empowering others. And, according to Executive Director Jack Little, they don't plan on stopping any time soon.

BY DENISE K. JAMES

More projects should bring big things in 2016, and the staff at ECCO is looking forward to impacting more people than ever.

ECCO has opened a new location in Huger. The new campus is a great example of the good things going on, with members of the surrounding community pitching in to make the facility shine.

"Monsignor James Carter from Christ Our King, Rev. Dr. Stephen Love and Matt Sloan of The Daniel Island Company wanted to open a new campus in Huger," Little pointed out. "Knowing the community, Rev. Love discovered a building. We met for a year-and-a-half with the community's leadership to find out what their interests and needs were. We wanted them to invite us into the community. "

The new campus, known as the Baldwin Carson Center, is offering resources the residents asked for, including medical and dental clinics, cooking classes, home repair, education and job readiness.

Still, the winner of the Best Nonprofit category in the Best of Mount Pleasant competition hasn't dealt only in new projects lately. Little pointed out that mainstays of the organization, such as the savings matching program, are still turning lives around.

Photo courtesy of ECCO.

Cooking classes are offered at the Baldwin Carson Center campus.

"We match someone's savings if the money is going to higher education, housing or starting a business," Little explained. "We had three matches in 2015 – one high school graduate from McClellanville is attending Methodist University in Fayetteville, and the other two started businesses."

Last year's flood victims received help, too, thanks to steadfast ECCO volunteers and donors. Items such as bedding and cleaning materials were distributed in Mount Pleasant, Huger, Awendaw and McClellanville. Collaborative partnerships were made to pay for roof and ceiling repairs with Seacoast Church, United Way and The Salvation Army.

"I am so blessed to work with such a talented and compassionate staff and an active board. They always rise to the occasion when troubles arise," Little said.

Another of Little's goals for 2016 – and a shared goal for the organization – is to investigate how at-risk teens can take their futures seriously and continue their education.

With that in mind, ECCO recently began another program at Lincoln High School in McClellanville. The program helps seniors who have no plans for further education. ECCO's case manager of education, Sheila Russell, addresses topics like budgeting, personal taxes and other life skills.

"She also took the students on field trips to visit job sites," Little pointed out. "The spring class had nine students with no future plans. Now all of them are going to either a technical school or college. We will teach the class again in the spring."

To learn more, visit www.eccocharleston.org or call 843-849-9220.

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Your Best You
Lowcountry Beauty and Wellness Spa

BY STACY E. DOMINGO

BUSINESS SUCCESS DOESN'T come easy, though the team at Lowcountry Beauty and Wellness Spa has certainly made it look that way.

Michele Hensel, owner of Lowcountry Beauty and Wellness Spa, is a walking testimonial, and her patients respond to that.

"We opened in 2010 after Dr. Hensel, myself and four other people did the hCG weight loss program for ourselves. Between the six of us, we lost over 150 pounds. Our patients kept asking what we did to lose the weight in such a short amount of time. We finally decided that we wanted to be able to help our patients reach their weight loss goals, so we started teaching the hCG program in our office and had so many happy patients that we continued to expand the hCG and other services."

Photo by Jenn Cady.

Patients are indeed happy, and the success of Lowcountry Beauty and Wellness Spa continues to grow through word of mouth. For the second year in a row, it was voted the Best Weight Loss Program by the readers of *Mount Pleasant Magazine*.

"All of our patients can expect great care and amazing guidance to help them meet their weight-loss goals," said Hensel. "The success that our patients experience from the services we offer has led to referrals to their friends and family."

The staff at Lowcountry Beauty and Wellness Spa is careful when treating new patients because they really do care about what is best for each individual patient.

"We always want to make sure we are considering each individual's needs and choosing the right procedure or plan for them," explained Hensel. "We don't want to just 'sell' a service. We want to make sure we are making the right choices for each individual."

Patients often report that Lowcountry Beauty and Wellness Spa go over and above to create pleasant patient experiences. "We don't just bring our patients into the office, sell them a package and send them on their way. We follow them every step of the way to make sure they get the most of their weight-loss program. We hold our patients accountable and offer them a plan that is designed for each individual's needs," said Hensel.

The professional staff at Lowcountry Beauty and Wellness Spa includes three medical aestheticians, two nurse injectors, a weight loss consultant, a medical assistant and a phenomenal ancillary staff, all working together with one goal in mind: patient satisfaction.

Hensel and her staff work hard to stay ahead of the technology curve and have recently introduced a very successful new plan. The 10-Day Reset boosts patients' metabolism to help them look and feel their best.

"We would like to thank all our patients for trusting in us to help them meet their weight-loss goals. We really appreciate your business and all of the referrals over the years. We look forward to helping our patients continue to meet their weight-loss goals, not only taking off the weight but helping with the maintenance of the newly acquired you," Hensel said.

Lowcountry Beauty and Wellness Spa is located at 1205 Two Island Court in Mount Pleasant. To learn more, visit www.lowcountryplasticsurgery.com or call 843-971-2860.

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A Significant Impression on the Market – and Voters

The Caleb Pearson Team

ONLY A FEW YEARS AFTER he opened the Mount Pleasant RE/MAX/Alliance office, Caleb Pearson has made a significant impression on the Charleston area real estate market.

He and the Caleb Pearson Team earned "Best of Mount Pleasant" honors in two categories: best individual agent and best real estate team. In addition, Pearson has the number one producing RE/MAX team in Charleston and the number three RE/MAX team in the Carolinas region. They also have received national recognition – they are one of the top producing teams in the country.

BY JOHN TORSIELLO

Photo courtesy of the Caleb Pearson Team.

The company handles home purchases, home sales and vacant land sales. Caleb Pearson, Clay Pearson, Justin Teachey, Brandon Bott, Matt Alderman, Chris Street, Amanda Perry, Jonathan Hoff, Justin Batt, Pamela Lazarus, Chelynne Crowell and Alexis Webb make up the Caleb Pearson Team.

"I graduated in 2011 with a business degree and had a job lined up in Raleigh," Pearson explained. "The job didn't start until the fall, so I decided to move to Charleston for a few months. I met a woman, Betty Gales, who was successful in real estate. She took me under her wing and mentored me, along with her partners, Robert Jeter and Hank Johnson. From there things started to really take off."

Pearson called the culture at his agency "unbelievable," adding, "We all absolutely love what we do. The personalities on our team are tough to beat. Each person on our team goes above and beyond for the client. Our main focus is to treat everyone as though they are our only client."

Real estate is not about a commission check to Pearson. Instead, he wants to do what is best for his clients, sometimes even advising them to rent a home or wait for the market to improve.

"I would love to have the sale, but they will come back to me down the road when the timing and the market are right. I also find myself turning down listings if the client has unrealistic expectations. It is not fair to the client to take a listing when they believe the house is worth more than it actually is."

Pearson believes he has become more of an educator than a salesman over the past few years. His goal is to make sure his clients understand what it takes for a home to sell for top dollar.

"It is not my job to sell the client on using me as their Realtor. It is my job to educate them and guide them along the process. It is ultimately their choice on where to price the home."

Pearson believes Mount Pleasant is the best area in Charleston for him to do business.

"The school systems are great, the real estate market is booming, the people are phenomenal and everything is right at the tip of your fingers – beaches, restaurants, shopping."

As for receiving recognition as one of Mount Pleasant's "Bests" Pearson said, "It is extremely humbling. It is a team effort though. A lot of hard work, long hours and growing pains have gone into our growth."

To learn more about the Caleb Pearson team, visit www.viewcharlestonareahomes.com or call 843-566-5251.

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BY BRIAN SHERMAN

JIM CLARK, OWNER OF C & C MYERS Heating & A/C, began his business as an environmental consultant. His job was to discover the source of mold, moisture and other problems and recommend what needed to be done to make life more comfortable for people suffering from the effects of allergens that had invaded their homes and businesses. Unable to provide the customer service he felt his clients deserved, he expanded his company by purchasing one heating and air contractor and then another.

Today he owns the most reliable heating and air conditioning company in the area, according to the readers of *Mount Pleasant Magazine.* In 2010, he bought Myers Heating and Air Conditioning from Tim Myers, who is still his service manager. Three years later, he purchased C & C Heat & Air, a 38-year-old company with roots in East Cooper.

"The owner wanted to hand over his customers to someone with integrity, someone who would take care of them," Clark explained.

Photo courtesy of C & C Myers Heating & A/C

Clark and his 48 employees have changed the heating and air conditioning industry in the tri-county area.

When he started his first company, Environmental Solutions and Service, he was tasked with "finding out what was making people sick in homes and businesses."

"We were getting referrals from ENT doctors," he said. "But when we found what the problems were and we asked local mechanical contractors to help, the common response 'We've never done it that way.'"

A board-certified indoor environmental consultant who studied mechanical engineering at North Carolina State University, Clark and his staff can now find the problems that cause sneezing, coughing and other medical issues and fix them as well.

"We test; we don't guess. C & C Myers uses state-of-the art high-tech equipment to test the home, solve problems and offer real solutions with guaranteed results," he said.

"It gets down to trust. We guarantee the solution. If it doesn't work, we'll give you your money back," Clark stated. "It is our goal to make every customer happy, and we go the extra mile to make that happen."

Top-notch customer service and knowledge of heating, air conditioning and building principles are important aspects of C & C Myers' success in the tri-county area, but employees and their education also are vital to the company's continued growth.

"We are huge into training," Clark explained. "We have internal training twice a week. Tuesday is mechanical. I do the training on Thursday, everything from building science principles to leadership and how to handle your finances."

"If I can help an employee be a better person, he or she is going to serve the community in a whole new way," he added. "If employees are educated, appreciated and well-paid, they're going to deliver 'wow' service."

Speaking of serving the community, C & C Myers does its share to support its friends and neighbors. For example, following this year's heavy rains, the company donated $100 of every flood victim's system or duct replacement to the Trident Flood Recovery Fund.

C & C Myers Heating & A/C, the only company of its kind in the tri-county area with an environmental consultant and an engineer on staff, has been recognized by groups other than the readers of *Mount Pleasant Magazine.* This year, the company was cited by Inc. as one of the fastest-growing companies in the country, and Bryant Heating and Cooling Systems presented Myers with its Medal of Excellence for customer satisfaction and sales for finishing in the top five in the country.

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The Best Dose of Confidence

Lowcountry Plastic Surgery Center

BY STACY E. DOMINGO

THE EXPERTS AT LOWCOUNTRY Plastic Surgery Center, a 5,000-square-foot facility in Mount Pleasant, have established a stellar reputation since opening their doors in 2001. Led by Dr. Jack Hensel Jr., the practice offers a full range of plastic surgery services, both reconstructive and cosmetic.

The readers of *Mount Pleasant Magazine* certainly recognize Dr. Hensel's expertise – they chose him as the area's Best Plastic Surgeon.

Originally from the Kansas City area, Dr. Hensel earned his medical degree at the University of Kansas School of Medicine and completed general surgery training in Charleston and in Akron, Ohio.

In December 2000, he finished plastic surgery training under a fellowship with Nashville Plastic Surgery under internationally renowned surgeons Dr. G. Patrick Marshall, Dr. Jack Fisher and Dr. Mary Gingrass.

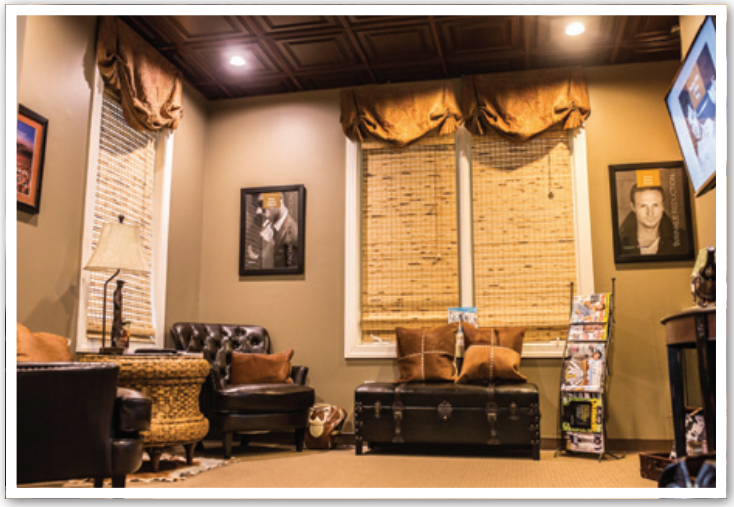

Photo of The Manor by Jenn Cady.

Leaving Nashville, Dr. Hensel made Charleston his home and opened Lowcountry Plastic Surgery Center. His goal is to enhance his patients' self-confidence.

"I want my patients to feel better about themselves," said Dr. Hensel. "I appreciate our patients for trusting in us and letting us be a part of their goals."

When asked why patients have responded so positively to him as a surgeon, Dr. Hensel replied, "I am just a normal guy with a great bedside manner and surgical skill. I never put myself on a pedestal, and I listen to my patients and understand their needs."

Lowcountry Plastic Surgery Center offers many procedures, the most popular including body sculpting and facial procedures. The center also has the largest coolsculpting facility in South Carolina and Georgia.

"We do a lot of breast augmentations, SmartLipo, skin tightening procedures and tummy tucks," he explained. "We also do a lot of eyelid procedures and facial skin tightening."

"We always seek out the newest, latest and greatest in technology. We seek to educate ourselves to make sure we are offering the best in invasive and noninvasive technology," Dr. Hensel added.

The highly-trained, motivated team at Lowcountry Plastic Surgery Center love to help patients look and feel their best. Recently, the Center introduced "The Manor" which provides an environment geared exclusively toward men. Procedures include body sculpting, hair removal, tattoo removal, male breast reduction and skin treatments.

"Over the last 10 years, services for men have grown exponentially. We have watched this trend in our office and decided to build a nice, manly environment that men could feel comfortable being a part of. Our men love to come in, hang out in their own space and get the services that they deserve to help them look and feel their best," said Dr. Hensel.

Lowcountry Plastic Surgery Center is located at 1205 Two Island Court in Mount Pleasant. To learn more, visit www.LowcountryPlasticSurgery.com or call 843-971-2860.

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The Best Patient Experience

Pleasant Family Dentistry

BY STACY E. DOMINGO

THE SUCCESS PLEASANT FAMILY Dentistry has experienced since its opening in 1989 just keeps adding up. For instance, the practice once again has been voted as Best Dentist by the readers of *Mount Pleasant Magazine.*

To be at the top when there are so many options from which to choose comes down to a few simple ideas that Pleasant Family Dentistry does well: state-of-the-art technology and a knack for knowing how to maximize the practice's full potential. However, what really sets them apart, they said, is a no-brainer: Put the patient first – always.

"We are constantly looking for ways to grow in order to improve the patient experience," said Dr. Rick Jackowski.

This past year, the team at Pleasant Family Dentistry has grown with the hiring of another associate, Dr. Lauren Callison.

"Dr. Callison has been a wonderful addition to the team. Her patients love her compassionate personality and passion for her work. She fits perfectly with our PFD family," said Dr. Greg Johnson.

"I could not be happier with my decision to join Pleasant Family Dentistry. Our patients are fantastic, and the team has welcomed me with open arms," said Dr. Callison.

In addition to expanding its team, Pleasant Family Dentistry also has expanded its hours to better serve its patients. Because they now stay open until 7 p.m. during the week and until 5 p.m. on Saturday, patients can schedule an appointment when it is most convenient for them rather than waiting for a time that suits the dentist.

"We want to be open when our patients need us, and we don't want them to have to further complicate their schedule to get here," said Dr. Jackowski.

In addition, Pleasant Family Dentistry is now offering IV sedation so patients are unconscious for their procedures. This is especially appealing for those who are nervous or just want to complete complicated or lengthy procedures in one visit,.

Photo courtesy of Pleasant Family Dentistry.

"I am thrilled to be able to offer our patients the option of IV sedation," explained Dr. Rob Carimi. "We are now better able to serve our patients who have anxiety or busy schedules. It has allowed many people to complete treatment in one visit that would previously take two or three visits."

The future looks promising for Pleasant Family Dentistry, which will be breaking ground in 2016 on a building expansion, adding six new operatories, including two surgical suites, and a call center. These improvements are aimed at enhacing the patient experience.

Pleasant Family Dentistry offers a multitude of services, including same-day CEREC crowns, implants and teeth whitening.

"It's great to be recognized for doing what you love to do," said Dr. Jackowski. "Our patients inspire us to excel every day, and for that we say, 'Thank you.'"

To learn more, visit Pleasant Family Dentistry at 1204 Two Island Court or online at www.pleasantfamilydentistry.com. Call 843-654-4679 to schedule an appointment.

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Tried-and-True
The Mortgage Network

BY JOHN TORSIELLO

WES SELLEW, BRANCH manager at Mortgage Network, Inc. in Mount Pleasant, employs a tried-and-true formula for doing business.

"I treat everyone equally and always make certain I establish the correct expectations. When interviewing a client, I take into account not only what their needs are right now but also what they could be in the future," he explained. "Once I have a grasp on their needs, I can effectively formulate a mortgage plan that is custom suited to their requests and lifestyle."

He also stays in touch with each client, calling to schedule an annual mortgage review or just to say hello and ask about their family.

"For me, each of my clients is not just another job to be completed and then forgotten," he said.

It is no wonder that Sellew's business was chosen by readers of *Mount Pleasant Magazine* as the best place to obtain a mortgage.

"To me, 'Best Of' means someone who is selected for an honor due to the unique and exemplary methods they employ to offer only the best of everything to the people who are in need of assistance," he commented. "As this town is my home, it is a tremendous reward to know that the work we are doing here is so greatly appreciated by so many of my neighbors."

Sellew began working for the Hilton Head branch of the Mortgage Network during the final semester of his senior year at Wofford College. In the brief time he was there, he gained insight into the mortgage industry and realized he had found his vocation. After graduation, he was offered a position at the company's headquarters. During the six months he spent in Boston, his understanding of the intricacies of the mortgage world were greatly enhanced. He gained experience and insight, in turn becoming more efficient in his job.

Sellew left Boston to became a mortgage banker in Hilton Head, where he remained for the next three years. He moved to Mount Pleasant to manage the Mortgage Network office in 2005.

"In the 10 years I have lived and worked in Mount Pleasant, I have been privileged to meet and assist many wonderful people. That has been my desire since that first position I held while in college, and I look forward to seeing this continue for many years," he remarked.

Photo by Rick Walo.

Wes Sellew believes communication is key in his line of work.

Sellew believes communication is key in his line of work.

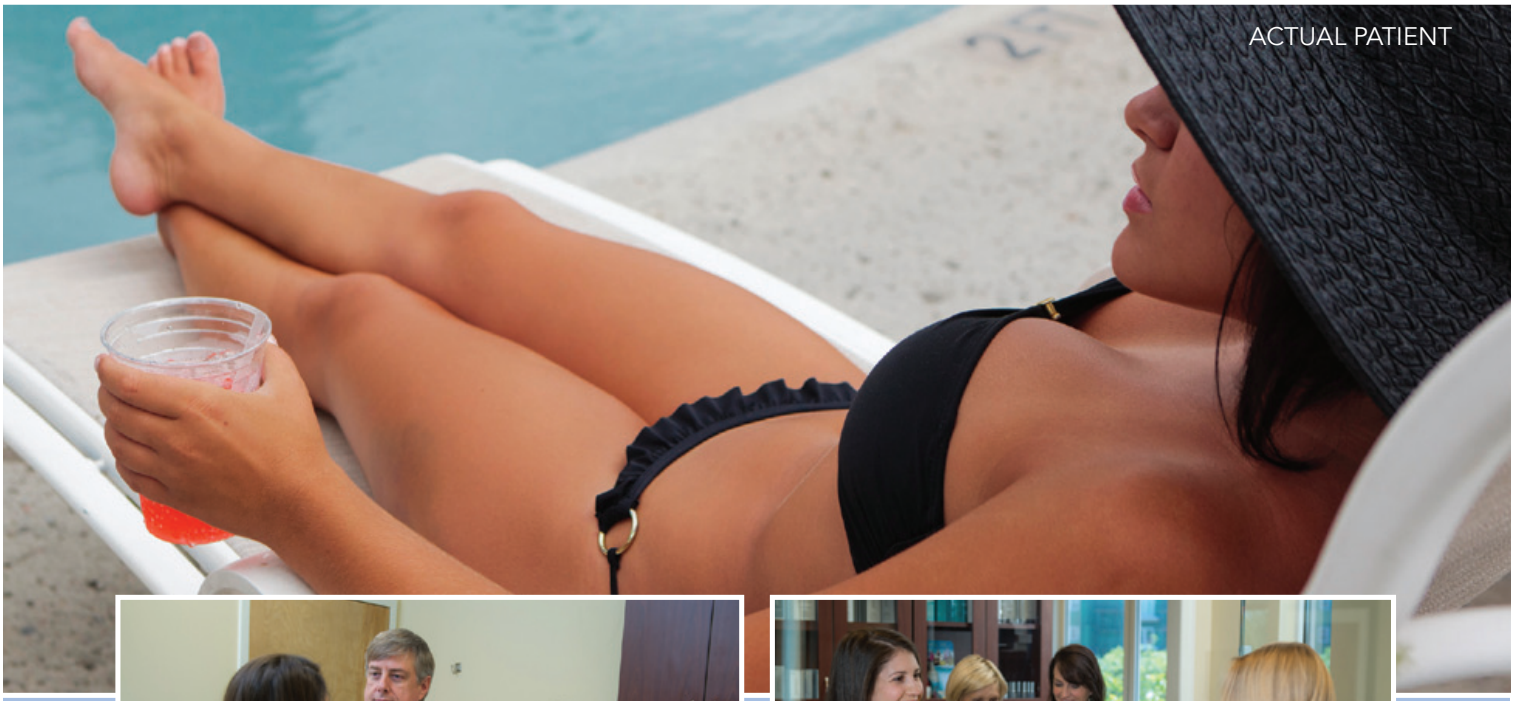
"The amount of parties involved in one transaction, all of whom depend on my services, can seem overwhelming. The only way to make certain a transaction flows smoothly and without complication is to keep everyone involved and updated on the status of the transaction so we are all on the same page. I still find myself learning something new every day. This always reminds me to be better, so that I can provide my absolute best for those looking to me for guidance."

Sellew said Mount Pleasant is a great place to work and live and has one of the strongest real estate markets in the area.

"Most importantly, my job allows me to meet my new neighbors on a daily basis. I believe it will always be a wonderful place to live and work because of the great culture we have – the history, dining, beaches and schools. All of it comes together to form a diverse place that I love to call home," he said.

The Mortgage Network is located at 321 Wingo Way in Mount Pleasant. To learn more, visit www.wessellew.com or call 843-388-1772 or 843-368-2124.

Patrick J. O'Neill, MD
Plastic Surgery
Cosmetic & Reconstructive



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ACCORDING TO DR. PATRICK O'Neill, the opportunity to use an artistic touch is one of the greatest things about his profession as one of East Cooper's best plastic surgeons.

"I love the artistic challenges that come with being a plastic and reconstructive surgeon," he acknowledged. "Whether we have a cosmetic or reconstructive procedure, the most gratifying part of my work is making patients feel better about themselves."

He doesn't do it alone – Dr. O'Neill described his office staff as being trained, dedicated and hardworking employees who do an incredible job.

"We all work together to create the best possible experience," he mused. "I would not be successful without them."

A proponent of patient education, Dr. O'Neill emphasized the importance of potential patients learning more about plastic surgery before experiencing any procedure.

"Not knowing the facts can hurt not just your appearance but your health and budget," he commented. "It's important to ask a lot of questions, stay well-informed and make sure the physician you select is board-certified."

After earning his degree at the Medical University of South Carolina in Charleston, Dr. O'Neill enhanced his education and experience with nine years of additional training. He completed a full general surgery and a plastic surgery residency, both at the Medical University of South Carolina, and a hand and microsurgery fellowship at the Christine M. Kleinert Institute for Hand and Microsurgery in Louisville, Kentucky.

Dr. O'Neill was an attending surgeon at the Medical University of South Carolina, starting in 2000, and he continues to work and teach at MUSC as a clinical associate professor of surgery, helping future plastic surgeons refine their skills. He opened his own practice, O'Neill Plastic Surgery, to meet the unique cosmetic needs of Lowcountry residents.

Photo courtesy of O'Neill Plastic Surgery.

Now conveniently located on Daniel Island and serving residents of Mount Pleasant and the surrounding areas, O'Neill Plastic Surgery offers a number of surgical techniques, including cosmetic procedures such as liposuction, tummy tucks and breast enhancement plus cosmetic procedures such as face, brow and neck lifts. Nonsurgical procedures – laser resurfacing, Botox and fillers – are also available.

And how did Dr. O'Neill feel about the news that the readers of Mount Pleasant Magazine cited him as one of East Cooper's best plastic surgeons for 2016?

"I am humbled and honored to be voted as one of the best," he said. "It is even more rewarding since the voters are my patients, family, friends and the community. I hope it is a reflection of how dedicated my office staff and I are to patient care."

Meanwhile, Dr. O'Neill's patients explain best why *Mount Pleasant Magazine* readers rated him among the best:

"I wanted to express my gratitude and thank you for taking such good care of me during the process, as well as after the procedure. I truly appreciate it."

"I have had such a wonderful experience with Dr. O'Neill and his amazing staff. Everyone is so friendly and makes you feel so comfortable and confident with the decision you make."

"Thank you all for everything. You didn't treat me like a patient; you treated me like family. You made me feel pretty!"

To learn more, visit www.oneillplasticsurgery.com or call 843-881-2130.

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Focusing on What They Do Best

The Pflug Law Firm

BY ANNE TOOLE

FIVE YEARS AGO, CHAUN PFLUG, Esq., left his job at one of the largest law firms in South Carolina to open his own practice in a 150 square-foot office in I'On. Since The Pflug Law Firm opened, it has grown to four attorneys and two support staff, a larger Mount Pleasant location and a second location in North Charleston. Most importantly, he has won the trust of his clients and the Mount Pleasant community.

"One year after opening, we bought an office near Shem Creek. Thankfully, there was more space, because business picked up and the firm grew," Chaun said. "I have represented Palmetto Railways, a division of the South Carolina Department of Commerce, on some major economic development projects, and business has continued to grow."

Photo courtesy of the Pflug Law Firm.

Chaun Pflug and his wife, Sarah Pflug, a partner in the firm, met while attending law school in Manhattan.

Chaun and his wife, Sarah Pflug, Esq., a partner in the firm, met while attending law school in Manhattan. They returned to Sarah's hometown of Mount Pleasant and have been practicing law in the area for 12 years.

The Pflug Law Firm's four attorneys each have their own practice within the firm, allowing them to focus on certain areas of law.

"Of course we help each other on client matters, but by focusing on what we each do best, we provide better service for our clients," Sarah Pflug said.

Chaun Pflug focuses on environmental, commercial real estate and business law, while Sarah Pflug's forte is residential and commercial real estate transactions. William Kleindienst, Esq., handles employment, business, environmental and real estate matters, while Katherine Dahlheim, Esq., provides criminal defense and also works on residential and commercial real estate transactions.

The Pflugs are passionate about what they do and find inspiration and fulfillment through their work.

"The projects I work on help create economic and job opportunities," Chaun Pflug elaborated. "My work impacts the state, and to see my community and my state benefit in many ways from the work I do is tremendously rewarding."

Sarah Pflug finds that building relationships and connecting with her clients – as well as the lenders and Realtors involved in the closing process – is what drives her.

"Whether I am working with a first-time buyer or a seasoned client, I really enjoy helping people through the entire process from beginning to end," she said.

The two agree that exceptional client service is one of the reasons The Pflug Law Firm was chosen as the best by *Mount Pleasant Magazine's* readers.

"In our profession, client service is as critical as providing excellent legal services," Chaun Pflug explained. "We try to make ourselves available as much as possible seven days a week. Our clients have our cell phone numbers and can reach us any time of the day."

But the Pflugs also give credit to those they work with.

"We are not only thankful for the other attorneys who work with us and our wonderful support staff but also for our clients and the Realtors, lenders and many others in the community we have developed relationships with over the years," Sarah Pflug said.

Most of all, The Pflug Law Firm credits its clients and the community at large for the success it has found.

"Those are the people who make us who we are, and we are thankful for that," Chaun Pflug concluded.

To learn more, visit www.pfluglaw.com or call 843-647-7774.

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The Best Decision for Improving Hearing Health

Advanced Hearing Care

BY BRIAN SHERMAN

ADVANCED HEARING CARE isn't concerned about selling hearing aids. Instead, the doctors at the longtime East Cooper business concentrate on developing long-term relationships with their patients and providing "the highest quality hearing health care services in the Lowcountry," according to Audiologist Dr. Mary Anne Larkin.

That, most likely, is the major reason the readers of *Mount Pleasant Magazine* chose Advanced Hearing Care as the Best Audiologist and Best Hearing Aid Provider for 2016.

"It all comes down to taking care of our patients," said Dr. Larkin. "We listen to them, find out what their concerns are and formulate a plan to improve the quality of their life through better hearing."

Advanced Hearing Care, founded by Dr. Larkin in 1993, offers a comprehensive plan that includes much more than simply fitting people with devices that help them hear better. Dr. Larkin pointed out that many of her referrals come from local health care professionals.

Photo by Brian Sherman.

Dr. Casey Adkins runs hearing tests on patient Lib Tiller.

"Physicians know we're not going to just sell their patients hearing aids," she commented.

Dr. Larkin earned her bachelor's and master's degrees at Purdue University and her doctor of Audiology degree at the University of Florida. She gained valuable experience at a speech and hearing clinic in Florence, South Carolina, and at two ENT offices in Charleston before opening Advanced Hearing Care. Her associate, Dr. Casey Adkins, did her undergraduate work at the University of Kentucky and earned her doctor of Audiology degree at Purdue University.

Neither of them plan to finish learning about hearing any time soon. They both earn 30 to 40 hours of professional continuing education in the field of Audiology each year.

Dr. Larkin has garnered several professional honors, including the national Leo Doerfler Award for excellence in clinical practice; the Southeast Audiologist of the Year Award; and the Elizabeth P. Wade Memorial Award for dedication to the profession.

Dr. Larkin was quick to point out that she and Dr. Adkins listen to what their patients are saying. Here are just a few testimonials from the people who depend on Advanced Hearing Care to help them hear as clearly as possible:

"The doctors and staff have always been very thorough, caring and generous with their time."

"My life changed the minute I began wearing hearing instruments. I started noticing sounds I had never noticed before, such as the birds singing, cars passing me along the road and the hum of my refrigerator."

"Coming to Advanced Hearing Care was the best decision I have made to improve my hearing health. I saw other audiologists, but Dr. Larkin was the first one that really listened and validated my concerns and then immediately helped me."

These patients and others have come to count on Advanced Hearing Care to maintain their hearing health. According to Dr. Larkin, though, not enough people pay attention to their hearing issues. That's why the practice offers free hearing screenings for everyone over the age of 50.

"You have your eyes and teeth checked annually; check your ears often as well," Dr. Larkin and Dr. Adkins recommend. "If it's been years – or decades – since you have had your hearing tested, now is the time. Seek the professional advice of an audiologist and find out the status of your hearing. If a change in your hearing is discovered, do something about it. The earlier you receive treatment, the easier it is to keep your ears and brain stimulated and improve your health and quality of life overall."

Advanced Hearing Care is located at 900 Johnnie Dodds Blvd. in Mount Pleasant. To learn more, visit www.advhearing.com or, to schedule a free hearing screening, call 843-606-5658.

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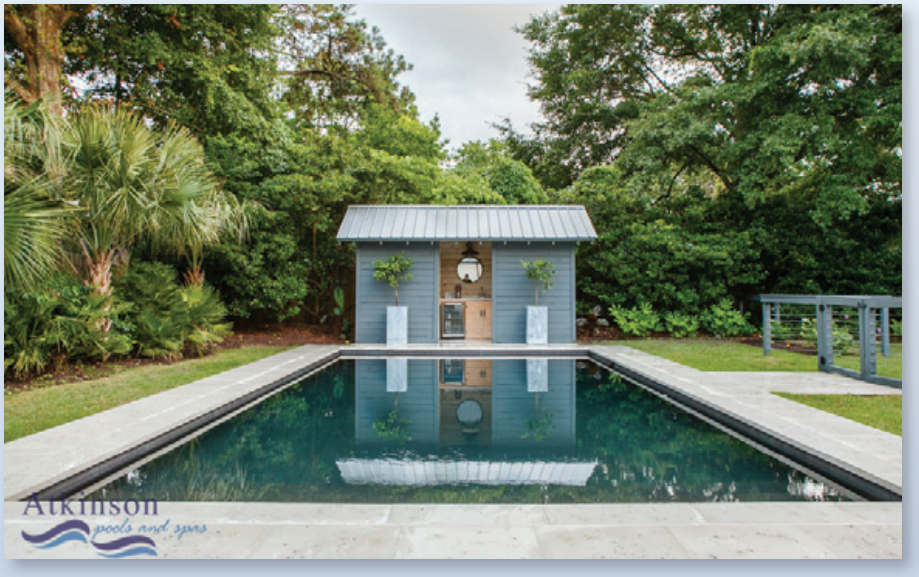

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Making Waves in East Cooper

Atkinson Pools and Spas

BY JOHN TORSIELLO

ATKINSON POOLS AND SPAS has come a long way from its inception in 1984, when Rex and Jenny Atkinson founded the firm as a small pool maintenance company. The couple's business started in a red supply shed, with nothing more than a pickup truck for making calls. Atkinson Pool Company has grown to become the Lowcountry's only full-service swimming pool and spa provider, with more than 40 full-time employees.

"Rex started the business 32 years ago," said Josh Atkinson, "and I have had the pleasure of working with both my father and my grandfather (Ralph). We are so pleased to be where we are after starting as a small company."

Josh joined the business over a decade ago and has been building pools full-time since. He pointed out that Atkinson Pools is more than just a swimming pool builder and supply store.

"We service over 500 pools per week, do commercial construction, maintenance and repair, sell hot tubs, repair pools and spas and are the only warranty center for every major manufacturer in town," he explained. "One of our biggest selling points is that we are the only company in town with our last name on the side of the building. That may not mean a lot until it all boils down to reputation, which is everything to us. It's extremely important to us to provide our clients with something that would not only serve them well long-term but also something we would want for our family and friends long-term."

It is this commitment to quality and customer service that played a part in Atkinson Pools being selected as the best in Mount Pleasant, according to the readers of *Mount Pleasant Magazine*.

"We are extremely honored to have been selected as a Best of Mount Pleasant," said Atkinson. "As the longest-standing business of our kind in Mount Pleasant, it's easy to be content with our business day in and day out. We really strive to be the best we can be in our industry, and it's really nice to have that backed up by our own residents."

The company adheres to a simple business philosophy that has served the firm well.

"Respond to your client and do the things you do well the best way you can," said Atkinson, adding that the company's ultimate goal isn't to sell its clients what is easiest or most popular. "It's about providing the best possible resource and product to them for the long-term health of their investment. Outside of a car or a house, often times a pool will be the largest investment our clients will make in their lifetimes. It's our responsibility to provide them with lasting and durable products and design choices."

Photo courtesy of Atkinson Pools and Spas.

Josh Atkinson (center) has had the pleasure of working with both his father and grandfather over the years.

Atkinson Pools offers custom-designed swimming pools, HotSpring Spas and a full line of Bioguard products, carrying the "highest-quality products on the market." The staff has more than 200 years of combined experience in the pool and spa industry.

"Mount Pleasant is a great place to do business," Atkinson said. "It has tremendous potential and growth. As a native, I love working in my own town and working with people to make their homes and spaces a better place to live."

Atkinson Pools and Spas' showroom is located at 1113 Bowman Road in Mount Pleasant. To learn more, visit www.atkinsonpools.com or call 843-881-3068.

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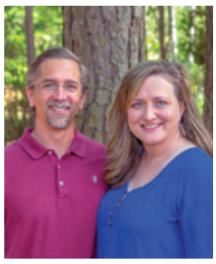

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Going the Extra Mile for Four-Legged Patients

Advanced Animal Care

BY NATALIE CAULA HAUFF

AT ADVANCED ANIMAL CARE, the patients are not just pets – they're family. And veterinarians Leslie and David Steele and their staff go the extra mile for their four-legged patients.

"We like to offer a level of care only certain people are looking for, but for people whose pets mean a lot to them," she said. "For some, the animals we see feel like their children."

For Leslie Steele, becoming a vet was always in the cards.

"It's all I ever thought about since I was 6 years old," she said.

The Alabama native received her bachelor's degree in Microbiology before attending Auburn University's College of Veterinary Medicine, where she met her husband, David. They moved to the Lowcountry and opened Advanced Animal Care in 2001. The practice specializes in dogs and cats and offers services including wellness visits, vaccinations, cardiology, oncology, diagnostics and more. Both veterinarians and their team stay up-to-date with the latest techniques in advanced veterinary medicine, including laser therapy.

Photo courtesy of Advanced Animal Care.

Drs. David and Leslie Steele treat their patients, but they also help pet owners make difficult decisions.

For surgeries, Steele uses a carbon dioxide laser for routine procedures, which causes less swelling and bleeding and offers a faster recovery time than surgery with a traditional metal scalpel. The practice is accredited by the American Animal Hospital Association.

The patients are not the only ones meant to feel like family at Advanced Animal Care, according to Jessica Hecker, a veterinary technician manager who started working at the practice four years ago.

"I immediately fell in love with both the vets here and the way they care about their staff," she said. "I feel like I have found my home here at Advanced Animal Care. It's definitely an amazing environment to work in. It's very positive."

The staff consists of three technicians, an office manager, a receptionist and Drs. Leslie and David Steele.

"We're a tightknit bunch," said Hecker. "We consider ourselves a small family."

The positivity of the practice can be seen in the treatment of the patients, according to Hecker and Dr. Leslie Steele.

"We like to develop and enhance the animal/human bond," said Hecker. "We make sure the animals have a good experience. Some pets are traumatized going to the vet. We are focused on trying to eliminate that fear."

Veterinarians wear many hats, according to Dr. Leslie Steele. While they treat their patients, they also console the pets' owners and help them make difficult decisions, such as deciding when to let their longtime friend go. Hecker and Dr. David Steele are currently working on the development of a hospice program to assist clients with the terminal palliative care of their pets in a home environment, providing comfort for the animal and support for the owner.

"Of course, the worst part of our job is euthanasia," said Dr. Leslie Steele. "We know it's something the owner will remember forever, so we make it as peaceful as possible."

Since the Steeles want to be sure their employees are doing their best in treating their patients with the respect they deserve, the staff is now undergoing training for low stress handling of pets.

"Instead of holding a dog down, we take it more slowly, work with treats to gain their trust," she said. "Our goal is for every pet to be happy to walk through the front door."

Advanced Animal Care is located at 3373 South Morgan's Point Road in Mount Pleasant. To learn more, visit www.advancedanimalcaremp.com or call 843-884-9838.

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Tops for Raising a Toast

Bottles Beverage Superstore

BY STACY E. DOMINGO

BOTTLES BEVERAGE SUPERSTORE was voted as the best liquor store by the readers of *Mount Pleasant Magazine,* which is no small feat. Liquor stores dot the landscape no matter where you travel, and yet the people of Mount Pleasant flock to Bottles.

"When we began creating the concept of Bottles in 2010, the owners agreed to never try and fool a customer. Instead, we wanted to offer the best products and prices," explained George McLaughlin, owner and managing member of Bottles. "We find the most esoteric products that you can't find anywhere else and offer them at an affordable price."

From a large selection of wine to local craft beers and many types of spirits, Bottles utilizes its 15,000-square-foot location to cater to all customers.

The employees are educated in all of the products that line the shelves so that each customer can have a personal experience.

Photo courtesy of Bottles.

Bottles gives customers the freedom to make their own choice, and the people of Mount Pleasant appreciate it.

"If you are a first-time customer, always start at the front of the store, meet one of our awesome associates and they will walk you through the entire store. Let us know what you like because we love helping you to find it," said McLaughlin. "Bottles is a fun, unique place and not intimidating for our customers."

Bottles gives customers the freedom to make their own choice, and the people of Mount Pleasant appreciate it.

So whether you are seeking professional advice on quantities and selections for a party or just looking for a gift, Bottles' expert staff, on-site ownership and one-stop shopping convenience makes it the one place to fulfill all your beverage needs.

"All of the owners are from the hospitality industry, not the retail industry, and that sets us apart," said McLaughlin.

Further, Bottles provides service to more than 80 restaurants in the Lowcountry, six days a week. And, as one of the largest liquor buyers in town, Bottles is able to pass along its savings.

If you are interested in purchasing wine, beer or spirits at a single location, McLaughlin recommends staying on the east side of the Cooper River.

"Prior to opening Bottles, we were tired of crossing the river and getting the bait and switch. We wanted to make sure our customers received what they wanted," he said.

Bottles in Mount Pleasant has been so successful that, in 2015, a second location opened in Columbia, South Carolina. For the owners, their mission is the same: to treat every customer with respect and to share their knowledge.

"We very much appreciate the people of Mount Pleasant for believing in us and supporting our business. We still learn from our customers every day, so it is a great two-way street," said McLaughlin. "We are thankful for all the support we have received, and the future for Bottles looks great."

Events at Bottles include weekly wine and spirit tastings as well as Tap Takeover, all with complimentary tastings.

Bottles is located at 610 Coleman Blvd. in Mount Pleasant. To learn more, visit www.shopbottles.com or call 843-849-9463.

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Relationships Are Her Best Medicine

Dr. Margarita Murphy

EVER SINCE SHE CAN REMEMBER, Dr. Margarita Murphy wanted to be a doctor. She pursued her dream with gleeful and dogged persistence and has established herself as one of the leading gastrointestinal surgeons in the Lowcountry. It is no surprise then that Dr. Murphy was chosen as "Best of Mount Pleasant" by the readers of *Mount Pleasant Magazine.*

BY JOHN TORSIELLO

"I wanted to be a doctor to help people, to get close to them, create a special bond and cure them from devastating diseases like cancer. As I started medical school, I realized that this was definitely my calling. I fell in love with surgery when I realized that I could do exactly what I had always wanted," she explained.

Dr. Murphy believes having a "special relationship" with her patients has been a key to her being successful in her practice.

"To have that relationship with my patients that they will trust me enough to allow me to operate on them and allow them to live a long and full life: What a blessing," she beamed.

Photo courtesy of Dr. Margarita Murphy.

On receiving the plaudit as a Mount Pleasant "Best Of," Dr. Murphy said, "It is a great honor to have been chosen as best colon and rectal surgeon in the area. I feel that my genuine concern for people and hard work is valued and apparent. My team and I love our patients and having been voted 'Best Of' feels like they are loving us back."

She continued: "It is very common to hear lots of laughing if you stand outside my exam rooms. Those patients who walked into the office completely scared and embarrassed to be there in the first place are now laughing with me. I really get involved with my patients. I get to know them as people, moms, daughters and dads. It is part of making them part of our family at the office."

Dr. Murphy owns and manages two different businesses: a surgery practice – Gastrointestinal Surgical Specialists – and a surgery center – The Colorectal Endosurgery Institute of the Carolinas.

"It is all about priorities. Number one is God, two is my family, and three my patients. Also, I live in Mount Pleasant and feel committed to this wonderful community. That means putting my two businesses here, having my kids in the Mount Pleasant public schools and living in Mount Pleasant. I also feel that because I am blessed I have to give back. My husband and I participate in multiple local programs designed to give specialty care at a discounted fee or completely free," she said.

Dr. Murphy believes that because she practices only GI surgery and not general surgery, she is much more experienced than others in intestinal resections for such issues as cancer, diverticulitis, ulcerative colitis and Crohn's disease.

"My partners and I created the first-in-the-country JCAHO-approved Center of Excellence for minimally invasive colorectal surgery. We achieved this by showing excellent expertise in laparoscopic bowel resections with better results and lower complication rates than the national average. We utilize the latest treatment options, including transanal endoscopic microsurgery and sacral nerve stimulation."

She said Mount Pleasant is a "wonderful place to work and to live," adding, "The greatest asset in this area is the people. We have a community with great principles and two great hospitals to do surgery at and better cater to our patients."

Dr. Margarita Murphy's office is located at 1439 Stuart Engals Blvd. in Mount Pleasant. To learn more, call 843-853-7730.

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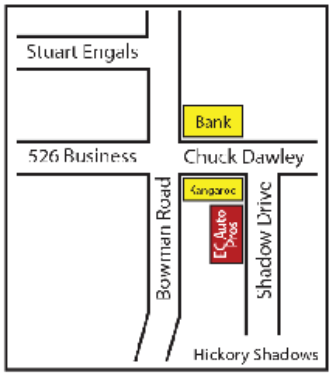

SERVING EAST COOPER FAMILIES SINCE 1994

On the Road – and the Winner's List – Again

East Cooper Auto Pros

BY DENISE K. JAMES

IT'S ALWAYS A PLEASANT SURPRISE WHEN we find that automobile mechanic we can trust throughout our years of driving, from fixing that first heap of junk in college to fine-tuning the family SUV. The team at East Cooper Auto Pros, including owner Willie Hopkins and his wife, co-owner Chrissie Hopkins, aren't surprised that their patrons cast enthusiastic votes in the 2016 Best of Mount Pleasant. They've spent years building relationships – and cars – that last.

One lifelong patron of East Cooper Auto Pros, Lori Bates, even goes so far as to drive her car from her current home in Ravenel. A former resident of Mount Pleasant, Lori values the service she gets from East Cooper Auto Pros well enough to settle for nothing else.

"They've been working on my car for over 20 years," she mused. "I found them back when I owned a little Honda CRX. It had broken down, and I was carpooling one day with Cindi Perez back when I taught at McClellanville Middle School. Cindi suggested that I take the Honda to East Cooper Auto Pros."

Lori never looked back. Now married, a mother and a driver of a Chevrolet Tahoe, she's still an enthusiastic customer who said Willie and his team "stand behind what they do." In fact, her staunch belief in their work converted her husband, who now takes his car there, too – but Lori isn't afraid to go solo.

"I know women think about mechanics taking advantage if they don't know much about cars," she said. "But you don't have to worry at East Cooper Auto Pros. They're always straight up and honest – and I'm not a bit surprised they won."

Bringing along the whole family seems to be a common theme for customers of East Cooper Auto Pros. Adele Franz, a local attorney, admitted that having children who drove older cars – and having Willie to keep said cars running – has certainly helped cement her business.

"The fact that I trust East Cooper Auto Pros with my kids' cars is the biggest seal of approval I can give anyone," Adele pointed out. "And I feel they take care of my family's vehicles as if they were their own."

Photo by Christina Riley.

Lori Bates and Tom Reed, far right, with East Cooper Auto Pros owner Willie Hopkins, center, and manager Bob McCormack.

Tom Reed, a local business owner, drives a great deal for the sake of work and has trusted Willie and team to keep his car in top condition for the last eight years. Tom noted that the positive reviews he heard from his neighbors when he first searched for a mechanic encouraged him to check out East Cooper Auto Pros.

"I've been self-employed for a while, and I believe in referrals," he said. "That first time I brought my car in was the beginning of a long relationship. They've earned my business."

"I'm probably East Cooper Auto Pros' biggest fan," Adele added. "They're all good people, and Mount Pleasant is fortunate to have a local business like them."

East Cooper Auto Pros is located at 1198 Shadow Drive in Mount Pleasant. To learn more about this local business, visit www.eastcooperautopros.com or call 843-881-2820.

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Envision Your Best Home
Encore Interiors

BY KALENE MCCORT

OUR HOMES ARE TRULY A reflection of us. From where we slather the toast with butter each morning to where we lay our heads at night, the décor of our abode sets the stage for countless memories formed along the way. One Mount Pleasant shop owner is playing a vital role in ensuring home interiors match the vibrancy of moments shared within those four walls. Amey Nicoll, owner of Encore Interiors, is changing the living spaces of clients one boldly-colored throw pillow at a time, and, with a longtime love of design, this innovator shows no sign of slowing down.

"I want visitors to be in awe when they walk through our doors and have an instant rapport with the items they see," said Nicoll. "I want them to be able to envision themselves in those spaces that resonate with them."

Photo courtesy of Encore Interiors.

Since taking over the space in April 2015, Nicoll has transformed the 14,000-square-foot shop into a delightful feast for the eyes. A cornucopia of historical remnants and modern-day gems grace the nooks and crannies of this winding wonderland for those that revel in fantastic findings.

The daughter of a Realtor mom and construction-industry dad, Nicoll claims her destiny with "all things home" was an obvious one. Innately drawn to the way textures and colors intertwine to create a mood, she approaches each work day with the same enthusiasm she had when she started out in interior design.

"Even as a child, I would set the Barbie home up and marvel at the way everything complemented each other," said Nicoll, who once was a sought-after stager enlisted by Realtors to make houses sell in record time. "There are no rules when it comes to design."

Whether you're searching for that authentic Moroccan rug to drape over your hardwood or you are in need of a framed oil painting to adorn the hallway wall, Encore Interiors has got you covered. A treasure-seeker with an impeccable knack for pairing the unusual with grace and style, Nicoll houses an array of one-of-a-kind pieces sure to entice everyone, regardless of personal taste.

"I love to be able to continuously surprise people," said Nicoll. "Whether that's with a truly unique piece that they wouldn't normally go for or with an incredible deal on something they never dreamed they could afford."

From handcrafted Korean furniture to an ancient rug that was once touched by the soles of British royalty, you never know what you might find in this antiquer's paradise. Intricately carved Southwestern cow skulls, beaded chandeliers and vintage mirrors oozing with character are just a few of the many items up for grabs.

"It's extremely rewarding to provide young working professionals with pieces that they couldn't find elsewhere," said Nicoll. "We truly have something for everyone. From the very funky to midcentury modern, you'll find such a variety here."

Nicoll also finds a great sense of pride in running a green business that focuses on reusing products rather than mass-producing new ones.

"I love the stories each piece tells," said Nicoll, admiring two crimson repurposed doors that once adorned a New York City brownstone. "Our homes become sanctuaries, and it's great to be able to provide people with pieces that add real depth to their homes."

Encore Interiors is located at 665 Johnnie Dodds Blvd. in Mount Pleasant. To learn more, call 843-352-7863 or visit https://encoreinteriors.wordpress.com.

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Keeping Your Spine in Top Shape
Accurate Chiropractic

DRS. MICHAEL AND GINA COURSON met at the University of Georgia while working on their undergraduate degrees. Following a few unfulfilling attempts working in other fields, they both decided to go back to school after Gina's grandfather, a personal injury attorney, suggested the art of chiropractic.

Six years later, in 2000, the Coursons decided to move to the Lowcountry. Now, 16 years and two offices later – still going strong – Gina and Mike have built a strong reputation in Mount Pleasant with Accurate Chiropractic.

"We both found that the philosophy behind chiropractic really fit our thinking of health that we already had," Gina pointed out.

"Chiropractic is the science, philosophy and art of detecting misalignments in the spine. These misalignments can cause nerve impingement or pinched nerves. Sitting too long at the computer, repetitive motions, weight lifting and driving for prolonged periods can cause these pinched nerves in our spines," Mike continued.

"By adjusting these vertebrae back into normal motion, we are encouraging these spinal joints to move better than before and unpinch the nerves," he added.

Accurate Chiropractic offers a variety of services, including cold laser therapy, intersegmental traction, detox/energy balance and massage therapy. The two Dr. Coursons pride themselves on offering low impact ways to adjust and tailoring the adjustment to the needs of each patient. Speaking of patients, the list has grown significantly – no surprise, since the office was voted one of the best chiropractic practices in the area by the readers of *Mount Pleasant Magazine.*

"As Mount Pleasant grew, so did the need to have two offices, one on each side of town. Now we are able to accommodate patients from all over," Gina pointed out. "We are open six days a week, from early morning to late evening, and see everyone from newborns to the elderly. We love all people and do our best to keep them healthy, happy and vibrant. It's our passion," she concluded.

To learn more, visit www.mtpleasantchiro.com or call 843-971-8814.

Fashion for the Family
Ragamuffin Children's Boutique

BY EILEEN CASEY

THE RAGAMUFFIN CHILDREN'S Boutique, locally owned and operated by Windi McKeithan for the past 32 years and really three shops in one, was chosen by the readers of *Mount Pleasant Magazine* as the best place to buy children's clothing.

"My dream since college was to have my own shop, and, after studying fashion merchandising, along with years of experience in retail and as a buyer, I bought The Ragamuffin Children's Boutique and Stride Rite Shoes," Windi explained. "I added Radical Rags for older kids about a year later."

"We are so honored as our customers mean so much to us," she added. "We have relationships with them, and multiple generations of the same families come to us. We love to work with them to find the right items for their children from head to toe. We are known for offering the most sought-after brands, including Southern to European styles, casual to dressy and everything in between."

"We strive to be the customer's go-to store for any occasion, from babies to tweens and from mothers to great-grandmothers," she went on to say. "We have everything they may want under one roof. We know how to put clothes together to create awesome family pictures, wedding parties or whatever the occasion, along with a complete dance shop for ballet, tap and jazz."

With a daughter in medical school and a son at Clemson University, Windi acknowledged, "Running a small business is tough, but when you have a team of great co-workers and wonderful customers, it makes it a lot of fun."

The Ragamuffin Children's Boutique is located at 210 Coleman Blvd. in Mount Pleasant. To learn more, visit www.ragamuffinchildrensboutique.com or call 843-884-4814.

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BEST of MOUNT PLEASANT 2016

Look and Feel Your Best

Vanity Salon

BEAUTY RUNS DEEP IN THE EAST COOPER area, from the landscape to the people – and Vanity Salon has been aiding in that endeavor since opening in 2005.

A full-service salon, Vanity Salon makes its clients look and feel their best. For the fourth year in a row, readers of *Mount Pleasant Magazine* have voted Vanity Salon as the Best Hair Salon.

BY STACY E. DOMINGO

"I would like to thank our clients for their loyalty and support over the years," said Kim Coleman, owner of Vanity Salon. "We continue to educate ourselves so that we stay up-to-date on new trends and styles for our clients. We love bringing new ideas to help customize the right look for our clients."

As one of the top wedding stylists in the Lowcountry, Coleman leads her staff in a professional manner that repeatedly showcases their work for all to see.

"Our clients love to see us everywhere. It's just as exciting for them to see what we have done as it is for us to be given the opportunity," said Coleman.

Working around 200 weddings a year and several photo shoots annually, Vanity is more than just the average salon.

"Our team has been behind the scenes at the Miss America pageant, been seen in many local and national publications and on stage and in print. Vanity Salon is the home of the one and only Style Bus, which is available for on-site occasions," Coleman said.

To see what the hype is about and get your style on, call 843-216-7181 for an appointment or check out Vanity Salon online at www.vanitysalonsc.com or in person at 1909 Highway 17 North in Mount Pleasant.

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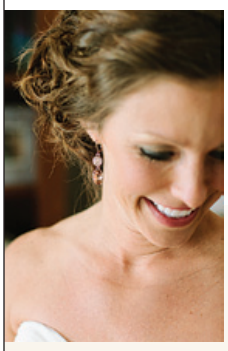

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Breathe Easy
Charleston Allergy & Asthma

BY BARBARA MILLEN PATRICK

DR. BRUCE BALL DIDN'T START OUT to be a doctor but, luckily for his patients, he took a postgraduate anatomy class and worked in an emergency room, where he discovered that he "was fascinated by multiple areas of medicine."

Together with his colleagues, he sees patients of all ages at Charleston Allergy & Asthma, treating a variety of conditions from seasonal allergies to asthma to immune deficiencies. He enjoys the challenges brought by each patient, which spur him to keep up with the most up-to-date information.

"Each day I'm thankful to see patients who have put their trust in us to provide the best health care we are capable of giving," Dr. Ball said. "However, if I didn't have great staff who treat the patients with respect and kindness and who also enjoy their jobs, it is unlikely this award (Best of Mount Pleasant) would have come in my direction."

Charleston Allergy and Asthma currently has three offices, with six board-certified allergists who are committed to excellence in patient care. Each one listens carefully to devise treatment plans that help pediatric and adult patients breathe easily and enjoy life to the fullest.

Although Dr. Ball does not suffer from allergies himself, he finds that many people "put up with bothersome allergy disease" that could be better controlled with an appropriate treatment plan designed by an allergy specialist.

"The most rewarding part is seeing my patients improve their quality of life," Dr. Ball said. "It is a privilege to work with infants, families and all age groups as we work to build treatment plans that yield positive results."

To learn more or to make an appointment, visit www.CharlestonAllergy.com.

It's a Long Way to the Top
But Page's Okra Grill Got There

BY BRIAN SHERMAN

YOU COULD PROBABLY STOP IN AT Page's Okra Grill at opening time in the morning, stay there most of the day and sample a taste of why the readers of *Mount Pleasant Magazine* rated the local restaurant among the best in seven separate categories.

Page's, a local landmark since 2006, took top honors in the magazine's Best of Mount Pleasant competition for Best Breakfast, Brunch, Dessert, Restaurant Service and Shrimp 'n' Grits. Run by sisters Courtney and Ashleigh Page, the restaurant claimed second place in two other areas: Best Fried Chicken and Best Mac 'n' Cheese.

The success of the Page sisters, who purchased Billy's Back Home Restaurant, changed the name to Page's Okra Grill and eventually moved down Coleman Boulevard to their current location, is based on four factors, according to Courtney: top-notch customer service, high-quality ingredients, good value and "an atmosphere that feels like home."

Hard work doesn't hurt, of course, and none of the restaurant's 108 employees put more of their heart and soul into the business than the Page sisters. Ashleigh runs the kitchen, showing up before the sun rises on most days to bake biscuits from scratch, while Courtney manages the business, waits on tables, greets customers and even sweeps the floor, if necessary.

Page's Okra Grill's rise to prominence in the East Cooper restaurant scene wasn't easy. When the Page sisters purchased Billy's, they served only breakfast and lunch. When dinner hours were added, they soon outgrew their 52-seat capacity, so they purchased the building that housed Alex's Restaurant.

"When we bought the building, we worked all day at Page's, then came down the street to clean up Alex's," Ashleigh commented.

It's obvious that all their hard work paid off.

To learn more about Page's Okra Grill, visit www.pagesokragrill.com or call 843-881-3333.

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One Stop for Everything Baby

Baby Bloomers

BY PAMELA BROWNSTEIN

HAVING A BABY IS AN EXCITING time in people's lives, but for many first-time expecting families, deciding what to get for a new bundle of joy can be overwhelming.

That's where Baby Bloomers steps in and provides a one-stop shop for everything baby. The store has been helping parents prepare for their new arrivals for 13 years. From the big items – cribs, strollers and car seats – to the smallest essentials such as pacifiers and burp cloths, they have taken the guesswork out of buying for baby by offering only certain lines and high-quality products.

"We have a very knowledgeable staff, and we love to help new parents who don't know what they need," said owner Robin Query. "We work really hard to carry what we feel like are the best products out there."

This commitment to quality and customer service earned Baby Bloomers 2016 Best of Mount Pleasant honors for Best Baby Goods.

"It's clearly an honor that our customers voted for us," Query acknowledged. "We're serious about what we do; the award means a whole lot."

Query knows it can be hard for parents to buy an item online without being able to see or touch it – especially when baby's safety and comfort are concerned. If someone buys a crib from her store and there's a problem, Query said her husband, Winn, will visit the house and personally assist the client.

"Customer service is very important to us; we stand behind everything we sell," Query said. "People who are having babies need to feel good about the purchases they are making, so it needs to be right."

Baby Bloomers, located at 616 Coleman Blvd., is open Monday through Saturday, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. To learn more, call 843-856-9277 or visit www.babybloomershome.com.

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Shining in 2016
Loy Harn Jewelers

BY NATALIE CAULA HAUFF

LOY HARN JEWELERS HAD A HUMBLE beginning when Loy Harn opened the doors in February 1980. Loy quickly became a master of his craft and built an incredible reputation and following in Mount Pleasant.

Unfortunately, in 2002, Loy passed away suddenly and the store was left to his son, Jason Harn, who was only 20 at the time. Jason is now married and has a 1-year-old daughter and another daughter on the way, due in May. He and his wife, Keenan, attribute their success, and being awarded Best Jeweler in Mount Pleasant, to getting the store back to its roots of being a family jewelry store.

"We like for our customers to feel like family and for them to know that they are in good hands. Loy built an amazing reputation for the business, and we strive to continue to provide our customers with a memorable experience when they shop with us," said Keenan.

The jewelry industry has evolved over the years, but Loy Harn Jewelers has always operated as a fine jewelry retailer and a full-service jewelry repair shop.

"Our main focus now, and the majority of the work that we do, is custom jewelry design. We often have customers come in with handfuls of inherited jewelry that we will sort through, identify, repair and create new pieces out of broken and outdated pieces. Custom engagement and bridal pieces are also a large part of what we do," said Jason.

Loy Harn Jewelers is proud to be celebrating its 36th year in business in Mount Pleasant this February. There are many new and exciting things in store for this family business in 2016.

To learn more, visit www.loyharn.com or call 843-881-0111.

Loy Harn Jewelers

Let us turn your old and broken jewelry into something that you will love, or let us help you design your dream engagement ring!

"I have always appreciated the heartfelt kindness that Loy Harn Jewelers has offered me for over 25 years. The highlight was when they helped me to create a beautiful custom pearl and diamond necklace for my daughter's wedding a few years ago."
- Ann Apperson, P.A.

"The team at Loy Harn was wonderful to work with. I can't imagine a better experience for creating my DREAM engagement ring! It was like they took the picture out of my head, made it, and now I get to smile every time I look at my hand."
- Amber Dover

"I knew Loy Harn for a very long time. He created a number of one-of-a-kind custom pieces for me over they years. Though I am sad that he is no longer here, his son, Jason, and his staff are just as sweet. They have continued to create custom pieces for me and I would highly recommend going there!"
-Dana Woodberry

Thank you Loy Harn Jewelers for making this gorgeous custom cameo piece for our wedding! It was perfect!"
- T.K. Garris Wall

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A Favorite for French Cooking

Bistro Toulouse

BY ANNE TOOLE

WHILE THERE ARE A HANDFUL of other French restaurants in Mount Pleasant, Bistro Toulouse earned a place of honor on Mount Pleasant's "Best Of" list thanks to its great service, culinary creativity and high-quality food and drink.

Owners Candice Mahala and Matt Schulz met while attending The Culinary Institute of America. They've spent 15 years working around the East Coast – Mahala as a cook, pastry chef and catering manager and Schulz cooking in fine dining kitchens. Most recently, Schulz worked with French and Belgian chefs in Washington, D.C., where he mastered the art of French cooking.

"This is the type of food we love; it's comfort food," said Mahala. "Onion soup gratiné, steamed mussels. These are dishes we crave."

While daily specials offer a wide variety of modern interpretations of French dishes, and a section of the menu evolves based on seasons and customer suggestions, Schulz keeps the most popular items, such as Steak & Frites, available year-round.

The Bistro Toulouse team uses only fresh ingredients and boasts extensive beverage options. With more than 20 different wines offered by the glass, Mahala designs the wine program to offer producers and varietals not typically found in other restaurants and that pair well with the menu. Weekly "Wine Wednesdays" feature $10 off all bottles of wine. Classic and creative cocktails, along with craft beers, also change with the seasons.

"Food and beverage together create an experience," Mahala said. "That's what we do at Bistro Toulouse, and I think that's why we've become a town favorite."

Bistro Toulouse is in the Sea Island Shopping Center. To learn more, visit www.bistrotoulouse.com or call 843-216-3434.

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Best Shopping Secret

Teal – A Swanky Boutique

BY BARBARA MILLEN PATRICK

VOTED MOUNT PLEASANT'S BEST boutique, Teal may well be one of best shopping secrets in town. Teal is a perfectly curated collection of stylish clothes and select home accessories. The atmosphere is as relaxing as the scented Rewined candles, the clothes are eye-catching and surprisingly affordable and it is wise to check back often because the selection is ever-changing. Regular clients know that the stock is on trend and as fresh as the name Teal.

"Teal has always been my favorite color, and, when trying to pick a name, after going through a million options, it just felt like the right one," said owner Jessica Crittenden.

After working as a buyer for another boutique, Jessica knew that owning her own boutique would be wonderful.

"We only buy limited quantities of the styles we pick for the store to give our customers that exclusive feel – you won't walk around town and see several people wearing your same outfit," Jessica said. "Plus, we are a local, small business which I think people appreciate."

Naturally, she is pleased that Teal was named Mount Pleasant's best boutique.

"I would hope that it's because customers have a really great experience shopping at Teal for not only great styles and price points but also for the customer service they would only receive from a local boutique," she said.

Why swanky?

"I think our customers think swanky means stylish, sassy and posh. We are just not any boutique – Teal is a swanky boutique!"

Teal, a swanky boutique, is located in Mount Pleasant Towne Centre and also online at www.ShopTeal.com.

A Dog's Best Experience

aFORTable Grooming

BY BARBARA MILLEN PATRICK

IF DOGS COULD VOTE FOR THE BEST groomer in town, they would cast their ballot for Briggs Fort at aFORTable Grooming. It isn't just that she loves dogs – she also knows how to pamper them. As a professional groomer, she provides a complete array of services, from a simple nail clip to a full bath, brush and trim.

For clients who have shedding issues, Briggs offers FURminator services. She'll even brush their teeth.

Local dogs may not have voted, but their "parents" certainly did, naming aFORTable Grooming best in class.

"I just love dogs," Briggs said, adding that she truly enjoys working with them.

It's clear that Briggs has turned her passion for dogs into a successful business. She offers a full slate of services, using quality products for shampooing and conditioning in a stress-free environment. For older dogs or those with anxiety issues, aFORTable Grooming provides a kennel-free option.

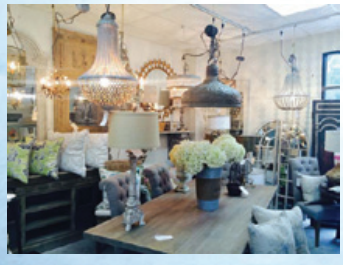
Briggs is thrilled to be named best groomer in Mount Pleasant.

"I'm glad they love my grooming," she exclaimed.

Her clients concur. Every dog leaves the shop feeling a little prouder and stepping a little higher.

aFORTable Dog Grooming by Briggs Fort is located in The Shoppes of Brickyard. Walk-ins are welcome. To make an appointment for "an experience your dog cannot afford to miss," call 843-972-8660. To learn more, visit www.afortablegrooming.com.

Mount Pleasant Mall



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The Best Prices and Selection
Next To New

BY EILEEN CASEY

CATHERINE MOOREHEAD, ONE OF the owners of the Next To New furniture consignment and home interiors shop, knows her customers.

Having recently been named "Best Consignment Furniture" by the readers of *Mount Pleasant Magazine,* Catherine acknowledged, "We have received recognition in the past and always appreciate it. We value our customers and are thrilled that they, in turn, value our efforts to showcase their items to their greatest advantage."

Most items come from customers who are moving, downsizing or redecorating. The inventory at Next to New includes home decor needs from furniture to china – just about anything to furnish and decorate your home.

Catherine revealed, "Our customers tell us we have the best prices and selection in town, and we strive to provide the best customer service as well. We also enhance the experience for our customers with staging, where we set up vignettes so customers can imagine the items in their own home."

Another marketing tool that Catherine believes customers appreciate is the online service that is available so that customers can track the progress of their items. Consigned pieces will be kept for up to three months, with the sales prices split 50/50. Consignors are welcome to retrieve their unsold items after the three-month period. Otherwise, the items are donated to Habitat For Humanity.

Commenting on the success of the store, Catherine stressed the importance of her staff: "It really 'takes a village' to run Next To New. We have a wonderful group of dedicated, talented women who make shopping and consigning at Next to New a great experience."

Next to New is located in The Shoppes at Brickyard. To learn more, visit www.nexttonewsc.com or call 843-606-2715.

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A New Approach

The College of Charleston's School of Professional Studies

BY PETER SPEARMAN

SINCE ITS FOUNDING IN 1770, THE College of Charleston has earned a stellar reputation as one of the top liberal arts universities in the nation. Most people associate the institution of higher learning with images of 20-somethings and downtown Charleston, but the School of Professional Studies at the North Campus is living proof that the College of Charleston community is more than just young adults learning against the backdrop of a historic city.

The School of Professional Studies offers a new approach to earning a College of Charleston diploma. Students who have completed some college work can finish their degree while holding down a job and dealing with family responsibilities. Local residents also can take continuing education and professional development courses that help businesses and employees alike. Whether you are trying to finish what you started or just want to learn a skill in order to advance in the workplace, the School of Professional Studies at the College of Charleston has something to sink your teeth into.

Photo courtesy of the College of Charleston.

Approximately 100,000 people in the greater Charleston area have earned credits toward college work but have not yet earned a degree. Most of them are working and find it difficult to squeeze school into their schedule, unless, of course, classes are held at night and on weekends, which is the case at the School of Professional Studies.

Students can earn either a bachelor of Professional Studies or a bachelor of science in Business Administration degree. Adults who aren't interested in a degree can take professional development courses in areas such as leadership, digital marketing and social media, and many Mount Pleasant-area residents are taking advantage of these and similar courses. In fact, 16 percent of all non-degree-seeking students in the School of Professional Studies are from East of the Cooper.

Students who aren't seeking a degree are generally older than those who are – their average age is 38 – but they have access to the same resources as their younger counterparts. In addition to sharing its faculty with the downtown campus, the North Campus is a full service model – complete with admissions counselors and academic advisors.

Local businesses are taking advantage of the high-quality education and non-degree courses offered by the School of Professional Studies, in many cases providing financial help for their employees to enhance their educational opportunities. Blackbaud and other companies are paying for their employees to learn.

"Blackbaud supports the career and personal development of its employees by offering tuition-reimbursement programs for degree-seeking and continuing education classes," according to Ben Brownlee, a board member for the School of Professional Studies and a Blackbaud employee.

In addition, entities such as Jear Logistics, Johnson & Johnson, Morris Financial Concepts and Patriots Point all have employees who are taking classes at the College of Charleston's School of Professional Studies.

Serving the community is at the heart of it all, according to Godfrey Gibbison, Ph.D, dean of the School of Professional Studies.

"Regions are sustained and nourished by their local colleges and universities," Dr. Gibbison pointed out. "The North Campus currently serves 650 students and hopes to serve more in the future."

With plans to add more degrees and additional courses, the School of Professional Studies is poised to continue to serve the educational needs of the Lowcountry. The school is proof that an academic institution can add to its prestige by being responsive to the needs of the local community.

To learn more about the School of Professional Studies, visit http://sps.cofc.edu/programs/undergraduate-degree-completion.

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A Mount Pleasant Tradition

Billy Swails State Farm

BY ANNE TOOLE

IT'S NO SECRET THAT MOUNT Pleasant is not the same as it was decades ago, but one thing that has withstood the test of time is Billy Swails' State Farm insurance agency. Taking the old adage literally, this business has been there for its Mount Pleasant clients, "come hell or high water," for 50 years.

Billy Swails' father started the insurance agency in 1965 and invited Swails to come work with him in 1980.

"The first time he offered, I said 'no' and that I didn't like the business. There was too much going on at one time," Swails laughed. "He offered again in August of 1980 and I went to work."

To his surprise, Swails found he enjoyed the insurance industry, particularly gaining knowledge of his product and getting to work with so many different people in the community. He became the agent of record in 1990 when his father retired.

"I've seen it all," he said. "We helped people here during Hurricane Hugo. The longest 10 days of my life were when we went down to Florida with other State Farm agents to help victims of Hurricane Andrew. I had 25 Hurricane Katrina victims that temporarily moved to the Lowcountry, and I helped them with additional living expenses; some of them never moved back. Even the record flooding we had last October – when there is a disaster, we're here to help."

Swails attributes the long-term success of his business to several factors.

"First of all, State Farm is a great company. It's in the top 40 of the Fortune 500 companies," he explained. "We've had to fight the competition – niche markets and Internet agencies – but State Farm holds the line. They do the advertising; we work with our clients."

He also credited his 13 co-workers, many of them family members, and the others who have become like family.

"I used to think I was a hard boss, but people come here and want to stay. Together we have over 125 years worth of experience, and we know our products well. One of our biggest core values is family, and we work together to accomplish what we need."

Above all, Swails said that it is the community that has kept the agency in business for half a century.

"Buy local; spend local. We all live local," he said. "The way we do business is how we keep our business. I think you need to give back. In my opinion, if you take care of clientele, your clientele will take care of you."

Swails reinforces his relationship with the community by sponsoring a wide variety of local events and charities, ranging from local recreational sports teams to church fundraisers to Coastal Crisis Chaplaincy and the March of Dimes.

Swails' agency is a multiple line insurance company, offering insurance policies for auto, homeowners, renters, boats and businesses, as well as life insurance and even mutual funds.

While Mount Pleasant continues to grow and change, Billy Swails State Farm remains steadfast, helping its local clients and the community weather it all, come hell or high water.

Billy Swails State Farm is located at 1047 Johnnie Dodds Blvd. in Mount Pleasant. To learn more, visit www.billyswails.net or call 843-884-5149.

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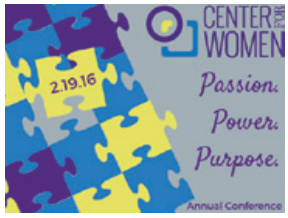

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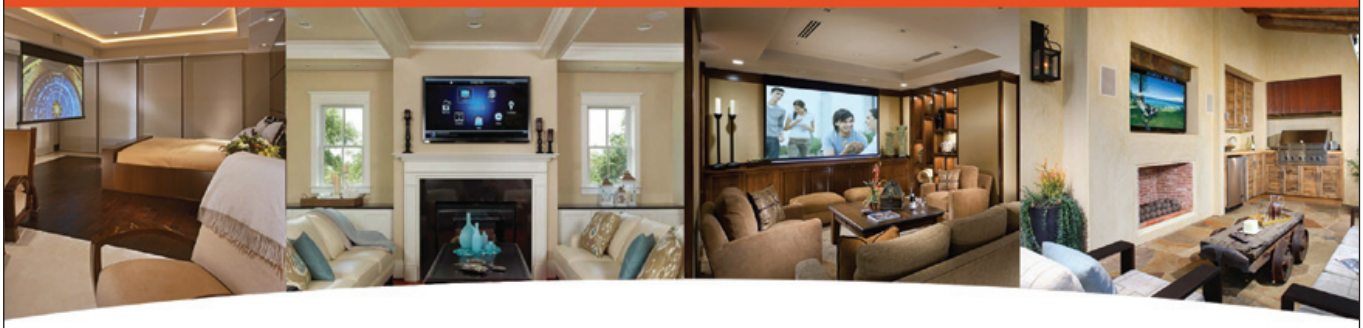
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The Art of Reinvention

Salt Wood Co.

BY KALENE MCCORT

THE LOWCOUNTRY IS FILLED with historic remnants that stir our curiosity. One Mount Pleasant-based company is transforming treasures of days gone by into aesthetically pleasing home furnishings that delight the eye. From repurposed barn doors to chic bed swings, Salt Wood Co. offers a variety of one-of-a-kind pieces sure to complement your abode.

"Reclaimed wood was a natural fit for not only the green aspect but also the story behind the origin of the wood and the character that comes with it," said Salt Wood Co. owner Vann Cochran. "We use wood from old houses in downtown Charleston and old structures as far away as California, Kentucky and Virginia."

Salt Wood Co. is made up of a team of experts who are incredibly skilled at perfecting the art of reinvention. Seeing the untapped potential in 18th century barn wood or old floorboards, they go to work to bring out the beauty that only time and dedication can produce.

Open since 2013, Salt Wood's work can be found everywhere from hotel lobbies to family homes. Working one-on-one with clients to ensure their visions become realities, Salt Wood Co. thrives on completing imaginative projects that push boundaries.

"There is no better feeling than delivering a piece and knowing the client not only had a good experience but truly appreciated what we built for them," said Cochran. "It's all about expectations and with reclaimed wood. With patience, we can mold even the most unruly wood into what the customer has envisioned."

Crafted by hand, with thought and passion, these works radiate charm that simply cannot be found in a department store showroom. Discover the artistry of statement pieces that are not only stunning but also durable.

To learn more, call 843-714-1850 or visit www.saltwoodco.com.

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WHEN SEARCHING FOR a litigation lawyer, often it's the flashy television commercials with people holding up bundles of cash that come to mind, but that is not Waggoner Law Firm's style.

"Small firm attention, big firm punch," said owner Geoff Waggoner. "That's our goal here."

Waggoner, who has been practicing law for more than 35 years, opened Waggoner Law Firm eight years ago in Mount Pleasant. The small firm is comprised of Waggoner, attorney Julia Flumian and two support staff.

BY ANNE TOOLE

Photo courtesy of Waggoner Law Firm.

"We are trial lawyers. That means we'll go to court if we have to, unlike some of those you see on television," Waggoner explained. "Without television marketing, I can't rely on a high volume of callers looking for a quick monetary fix. We depend on word of mouth and referrals from past clients or other lawyers who are familiar with what we do. If I take your case, I take you on as my own client and I will fight for you."

As the walls of his office reflect, Geoff Waggoner has handled personal injury cases ranging from auto accidents to medical cases, inadequate security against crime, malicious prosecution, false arrest, defective products and defamation.

"It doesn't have to happen on the roadway or in an operating room," he said. "But it almost always involves an individual who has been hurt because of wrongful conduct."

The firm also handles divorce and probate cases, primarily by Flumian.

Waggoner hasn't always dreamed of being a lawyer. In fact, he had an interest in medicine from a young age. After working with a doctor on an Indian reservation in North Dakota when he was 15 and later assisting with autopsies at a hospital, he attended Duke University as a pre-med student.

"In my sophomore year, I was persuaded that I didn't have the aptitude for higher level sciences," Waggoner laughed. "But as a child, I liked lawyer shows, and I liked to debate. So I switched gears. There are two sides to every story, and being a lawyer is like playing chess: You anticipate moves; you know your strengths and weaknesses and play off them. Luckily, what I do now sometimes involves medicine. I can keep the interest up and refer to the medical texts without having to understand upper level chemistry. I actually love being a lawyer."

After graduating from Duke with a degree in psychology, Waggoner spent a year as a criminal investigator for the state of New Jersey before attending law school at the University of South Carolina.

"I'm fact-driven. My grandfather on my mother's side was a cop, and my father was a reporter, so I'm all about evidence and bad guys vs. good guys. Kind of like David and Goliath, I like fighting for the individual," Waggoner said.

Today, he finds inspiration through a variety of experiences, such as growing up in Europe while his father was a foreign correspondent for *The New York Times,* and, more recently, by immersing himself in the local community, serving on the board of directors for Crime Stoppers of the Lowcountry and the Exchange Club of Mount Pleasant. In addition, he is a former member of the Charleston County School Board.

"I'm not out there trying to bring in every case," Waggoner explained. "But for the cases we do take on, my intent is that you get very focused representation – small firm attention; big firm punch."

Waggoner Law Firm is located at 501 Belle Hall Parkway, Suite 202, in Mount Pleasant. To learn more, visit www.waggonerfirm.com or call 843-972-0426.

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Clay White

Lives in: Mount Pleasant, South Carolina.

From: Mount Pleasant, South Carolina.

Education: Bachelor's degree from Furman University.

Employment: Blackbaud, freelance musician.

Favorite Reading: Travel books.

Favorite music: Slow Runner, David Bazan, Floating Action, the Elwins.

Activities: Live music, travel, adventures, spending time with my friends, driving too much.

Interests: Nature, self-driving cars, languages, music performance, composition and improvisation.

Likes: Nature, international cuisine, curiosity and learning, music, friends.

Favorite quote or philosophy: "If people are good only because they fear punishment and hope for reward, then we are a sorry lot indeed." · Albert Einstein

Katie Jones

Lives in: Isle of Palms, South Carolina.

From: Greenville, South Carolina.

Education: Junior at College of Charleston.

Employment: Full-time student.

Favorite reading: Harry Potter series, "Catcher in the Rye," "Pride and Prejudice."

Favorite music: Alt-J, Death Cab for Cutie, Kings of Leon, The Smiths, Vampire Weekend.

Activities: Listening to music, bike riding, Pop-Up Charleston, reading, cooking, playing guitar.

Interests: British and American literature, Wes Anderson movies, traveling.

Likes: Horror movies, live music, cooking for others, listening to music, playing music, British culture.

Favorite quote or philosophy: "I think if you take care of yourself, and then maybe try and take care of someone else, that's sort of how you are supposed to live."
· Bill Murray

Susan Z. Spearman

Lives in: Mount Pleasant, South Carolina.

From: Lancaster, Pennsylvania.

Education: BS in Child Development, Winthrop University.

Employment: Nelson Printing · Direct Marketers of Charleston.

Favorite Reading: "The Yearling."

Favorite music: Neil Young or whatever my children are playing.

Activities: Windwood Farm/Family Services, MPBA, Sertoma.

Interests: Gardening.

Likes: Windwood Farm, children, children's charities.

Favorite quote or philosophy: "What is past is prologue."

Andy Whitfield

Lives in: Mount Pleasant, South Carolina.

From: Atlanta.

Education: Associates degree in Arts from Trident Tech.

Employment: Youth minster at Sunrise Presbyterian Church on Sullivan's Island.

Favorite Reading: "Infinite Jest," by David Foster Wallace.

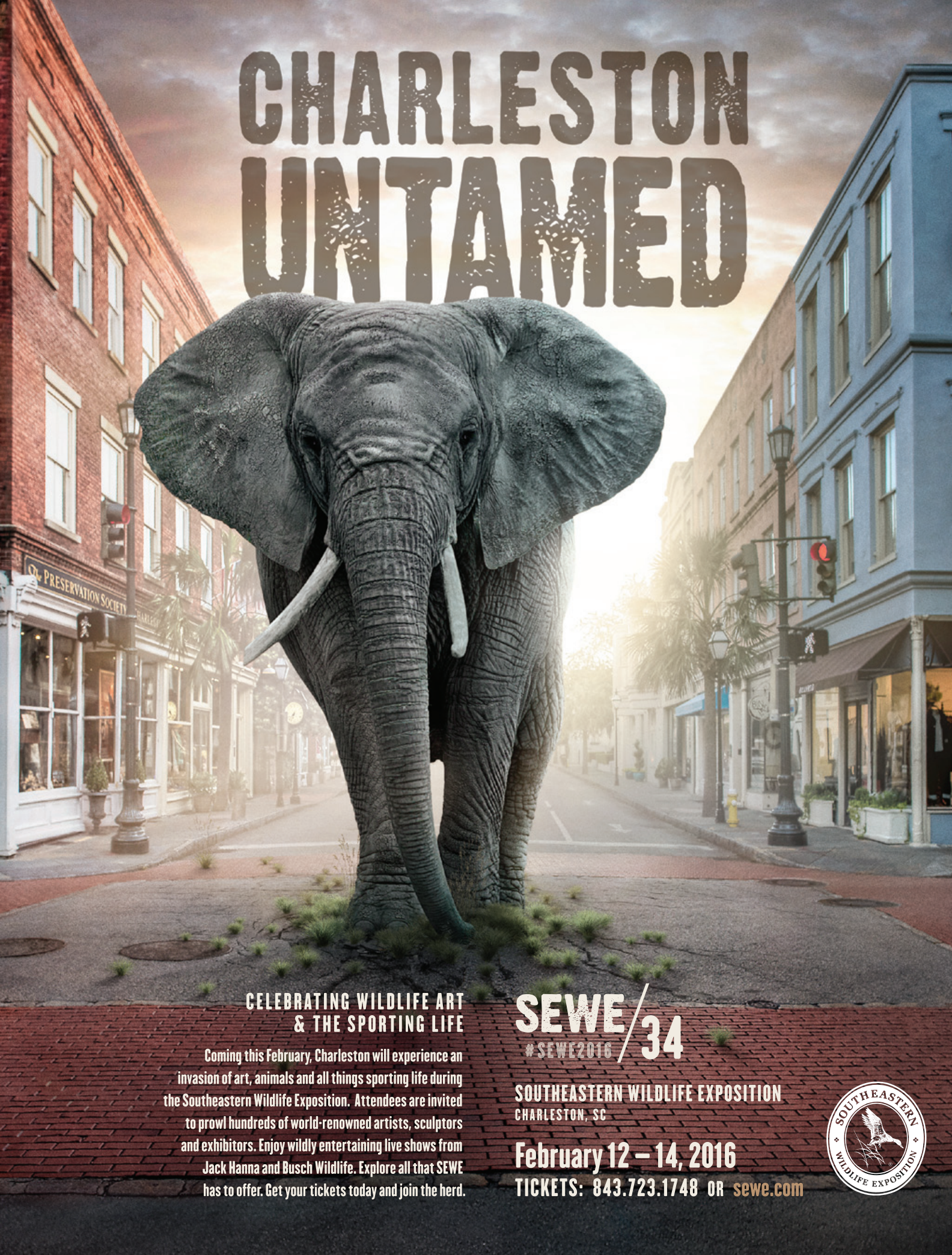
Favorite music: Brand New, All Get Out, Manchester Orchestra.

Activities: Watching movies, playing video games, pet taxidermy, walking my dogs.

Interests: The sun, astrology, baseball, making ice cream.

Likes: Friendship, church, walks with my dogs.

Favorite quote or philosophy: "You will become way less concerned with what other people think of you when you realize how seldom they do." · David Foster Wallace



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