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Good News MANCHESTER™

NOVEMBER 2022

THE FOOD ISSUE

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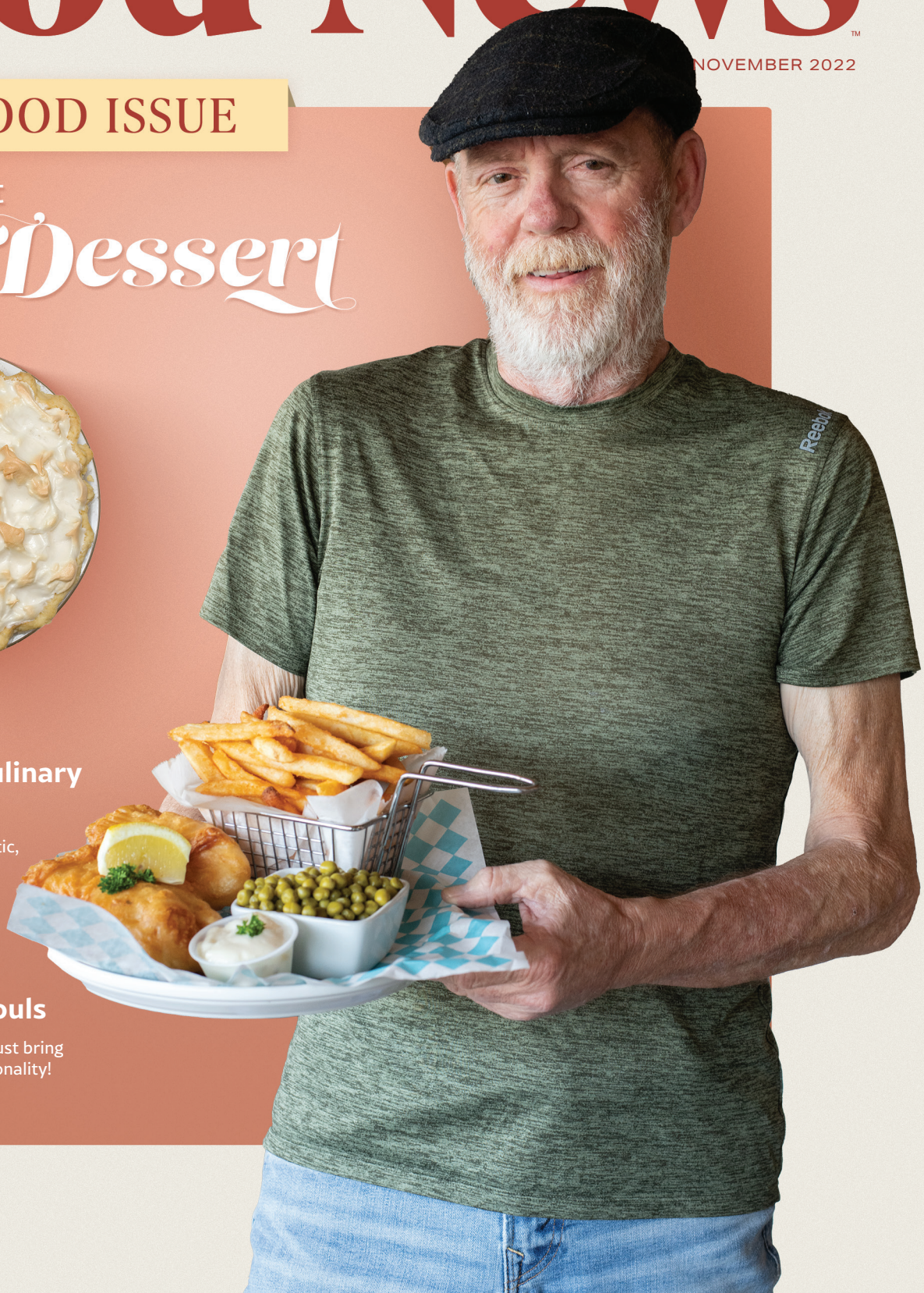
Eat Dessert



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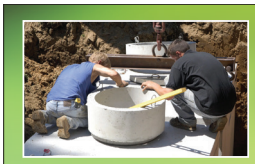

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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Life's short; eat dessert.

The fall holidays bring food of connection, made with love.

WE DUST off the artificial pumpkin decorations and pull orange and purple wreaths from storage. We pull out rakes and sweaters as the weather drops like the leaves do. The weather feels therapeutic and makes you want to go for a walk on your lunch break instead of sitting in a car with the air conditioner on full blast. Along with the flannel and pumpkin spice latte, we bring out the dinner plates. And this time, it's the heavy hitters: turkey, gravy, stuffing, potatoes, veggies, and pie. You may even sit in the gentle breeze on the front porch with your favorite aunt and carve pumpkins together. We make memories that still pop up every time we taste pumpkin seeds and sweet potatoes.

Our taste is just one of our five senses, but it's oh so powerful. It can make your mouth water and your stomach growl. It can bring back cherished memories. Hands of love gently merge spices and ingredients together. It makes its way from the pot to paper as a recipe that lasts generation after generation, creating a new cook to take the throne as Nanny with a recipe no one can beat.

We took food from just something to give us energy and keep us alive to something that brings us together. It gives birth to much more than just a tasty dinner; it creates what we're all looking for: connection.

This issue of Good News is a special food edition. We're featuring cooks, generations of family, the connection between cook and customer, and hard-working business owners who give us delicious food options on every street in our towns…

Life's short. Eat dessert.

Wesley Bryant,
MANAGING EDITOR

From our readers

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— Kay Bartley, Good News reader

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GOOD NEWS

There is enough bad news out there. Good News is hearing about your neighbor's successes. It's listening to your five-year-old niece tell a story that seems to go on forever; she stumbles over her words, but it's worth listening to. Good News is everywhere. It's in our community; it's in our homes; it's in our future.

GOOD NEWS STAYS ALIVE AS LONG AS WE SHARE IT.

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I ♥ THE
80's

▲ Janice Lynn

GOOD LEGACY NEWS

Wrapped up in hope

Patriotic quilts offer healing and comfort to veterans and servicemen.

By Amanda E. West // Photos by Ashleigh Newnes

IF YOU stop and listen, you might hear computer keys clacking. Local author Janice Lynn has been busy crafting her latest manuscripts, "Celebrating all things Christmas," "Sweet Romance," and "Quilts of Valor" (QOV) for Hallmark Publishing. "For me, Christmas is the ultimate holiday; everything is just magical. I love and advocate for QOV because their foundation wraps our active and inactive military with patriotic quilts of healing, comfort, and a big welcome home. My son is in the Army National Guard, so this proud blue star military mama wants to wrap as many of our military veterans and servicemen in these quilts as I can."

QOV founder Catherine Roberts believes "quilts equal healing." Since 2003, over 300,000 quality, hand-sewn quilts have been awarded to veterans. In between writing deadlines and working full-time as a nurse practitioner, Lynn has crafted and donated three quilts for the program and is currently working on two more.

"Quilts and a good Hallmark book (or movie) can also be healing," Lynn said. "In my novel 'Wrapped Up in Christmas,' Sarah had donated a quilt to the QOV. That quilt made its way to a wounded warrior named Bodie Lewis. All Bodie had ever wanted was

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"Love, and not just romantic love, is the greatest healer, and in my stories I'm able to sprinkle it everywhere and hope my readers go on that journey with them and feel wrapped in love as well."

– Janice Lynn, published author

to be an Army ranger, but he was injured in an explosion. In the hospital, he receives a handmade quilt. Later, he sets out on his final mission: to find and thank the maker. Bodie expected Sarah to be an elderly lady, not a lovely young woman. Sarah's presence and the small-town spirit bring Brodie something he thought he'd left far behind on the battlefield: hope."

"Being a nurse practitioner has molded my writing in many ways. I often wish I had a magic wand so I could heal the ailments of my patients and remove mental and emotional barriers to happiness. In writing for Hallmark, I take my wounded warrior on a journey of finding peace and help him look at the world differently. Love, and not just romantic love, is the greatest healer, and in my stories I'm able to sprinkle it everywhere and hope my readers go on that journey with them and feel wrapped in love as well."

Lynn has also published "Wrapped Up in Christmas Joy" and "Wrapped Up in Christmas Hope" which also include the QOV theme. Lynn is the winner of multiple awards including the National Readers Choice Award, The Golden Quill, and the Holt Medallion Award of Merit. She is a Wall Street Journal, USA Today, and Publishers Weekly best-selling author. Lynn has earned numerous awards, taken first place in contests, and was honored as the Grand Marshall of the Old Timer's Parade on October 1.

"Everything about writing for Hallmark has been exciting," Lynn said. "My hometown sharing in the joy of my books warms my heart in so many ways. I think the people of Manchester embody the very meaning of living in the Volunteer State." **GN**

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▲ Stacey Stone

GOOD COMMUNITY NEWS

Hats off to Coffee Community Chat

The voice of Manchester

By Amanda E. West // Photo by Ashleigh Newnes

OVER THE years, Stacey Stone has worn many hats. She's known as "the realtor who wears many hats." She's donned graduation caps from both Manchester Central High School and Middle Tennessee State University, the hat of an officer in the United States Army, and that of a real estate broker with a thriving real estate business. "I try to make a difference in the lives of those I serve; yet I have always felt I wanted to do more. So in 2021, I started the Facebook podcast Coffee Community Chat."

"Growing up in Manchester I couldn't wait to leave this small community. However, it didn't take me long to realize how much our community offers and how much I missed the people. Coffee Community Chat is my effort to prevent others from having the same misconception."

"The online forum serves many purposes. I created it to add value to our great community and its people. I've interviewed local professionals, upcoming singers, politicians, the chamber of commerce president, founders of charities, local event chairpersons, the general managers of local radio stations, the host of a radio show, a local young man in kidney failure who needs a donor, and performers from The Oldies Show. I've interviewed other realtors and auctioneers, and I have guests lined up for the near future."

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Jan Muse Reasonover - Tullahoma
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My wife and I have been married for 32 years and have two children, Weston is 23 and Megan is 30 and we're the proud grandparents of our first granddaughter. I've been in the business for 33 years and the last 9 have been at Al White Ford Lincoln. When I'm not selling cars I love watching the Titans & College Football as well as College Basketball. Please give me a call and let me help you find your next car or truck.
- Chris Eaves
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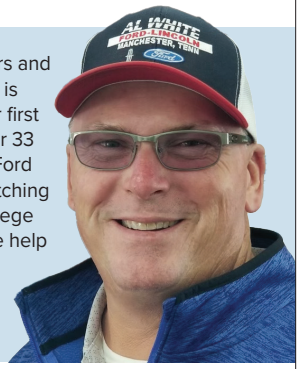

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"So much good can be accomplished when we all work together. Imagine if everyone would use just one of their talents and do one thing to make a difference... the possibilities are endless."

– Stacey Stone, Coffee Community Chat

Stone said, "It's all about making a difference, adding value, and helping people. Some have asked, 'Who pays you to do this podcast?' It's completely a volunteer show. The podcast is very informal with a simple laptop and unscripted conversations. By providing information and a media forum, the people of our community will become more involved and realize how fortunate we are to live in Coffee County. I want our youth to see local success stories. You don't have to leave to be successful, you can be successful right here!"

"Small towns offer more than many realize. The personality of our community is giving, loving, and helpful. When there is a tragedy, our people are the first to rally to help. Coffee County offers something many others lack — heart!"

"With the continual growth of Coffee County, I believe it's possible to preserve our community's personality. Instead of losing our small-town feel, we can wrap our arms around those relocating and invite them to join us. Coffee Community Chat will hopefully serve as a tool to welcome these new friends."

"Please like the page, view the videos, and hit the share button. Contact me with ideas for guests, news that needs to be spread, and any ideas you may have for future shows. If you know anyone in the community needing help, with their permission I'll announce it each week. I want to add value to our community, help people, and give hope to others. So much good can be accomplished when we all work together. Imagine if everyone would use just one of their talents and do one thing to make a difference… the possibilities are endless." **GN**

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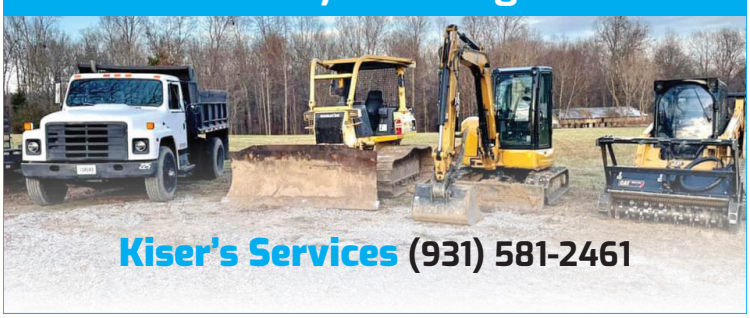

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Christianne Montoya

GOOD COMMUNITY NEWS

The "ship of the line" on the "tip of the spear"

Fighting battles one caller at a time.

By Amanda E. West // Photo by Ashleigh Newnes

"TIP OF the spear" is a phrase used by the United States Military to describe being stationed at the forefront of battle where the pendulum can swing from life to death with no warning. Retired chief hospital corpsman Christianne Montoya knows this phrase well. "I was stationed aboard the USS Carl Vinson CVN 70 when the attack on 9/11 happened," said Montoya. "We were rounding the tip of India en route to the Arabian Gulf when we changed course and headed to the North Arabian Sea. Our battle group launched the first strikes of Operation Enduring Freedom. For 72 days the battle group remained and conducted more than 4,200 combat sorties in the War on Terrorism."

Serving as advanced biomedical engineering technicians, Montoya and her husband Bill have a joint enlistment of 40 years in the Navy. "Why did I choose biomedical engineering?" Montoya asked, jokingly. "Because someone told me that I couldn't. It was a heavily male-dominated specialty, and I was a skinny, girly sailor in my first enlistment. Looking back, I see it was a rebellious response to someone drawing a line [that] I didn't

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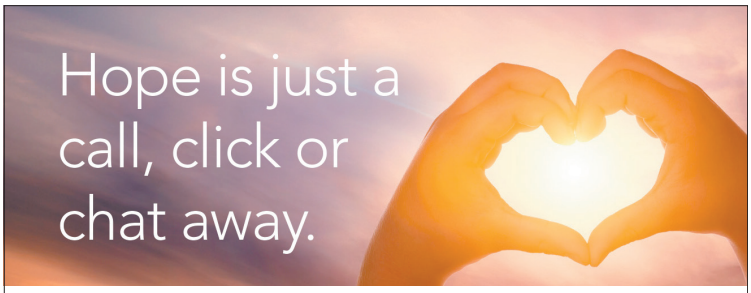

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PHOTOS SUBMITTED BY CHRISTIANNE MONTOYA

like. Good thing it was a good fit! But it prepared me to fight for things I wanted to accomplish. I was also fortunate to have unique opportunities and great leadership that taught me what a good leader should look like."

Montoya retired from serving her country in 2007 but hasn't retired from serving the community that she's grown to love. In 2021, she put her leadership skills into practice and became the director of Access Hope. "We are a 24/7 crisis call center staffed by volunteers," said Montoya. "We are available 365 days a year actively serving Coffee County and nine surrounding counties free of charge. Our volunteers work really hard. [All together they have] contributed more than 21,000 hours and served 4,099 [suffering] people in 2021. The need is increasing and call volume is nearly 40% greater than this time last year. We always answer the phone in person. It's something I'm proud to be able to say when asked what makes Access Hope different."

With the increasing need for mental health in our communities, Access Hope is actively recruiting volunteers who are willing to lend an ear. "I could have been the final straw, and this young man could have been lost forever," said Montoya, of a recent caller. "We need more people to answer phones especially during the day and early evening hours. No experience is needed. If you're a people person, I also need help with outreach events and fundraising."

When a Naval ship stands strong in the line of battle, it's referred to as the "Ship of the Line." Together Montoya and Access Hope are the "Ship of the Line" on the "Tip of the Spear" for better mental health in Coffee County. **GN**

To reach a volunteer, call (844) 269-4673 or go to www.accesshope247.com

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PHOTO BY ASHLEIGH NEWNES

▲ Jessica & Joe Licata

A night out for

No experience needed!

By Sara McClaran

creative souls

Just bring your creativity and personality!

Photography by Ashleigh Newnes

▲ Staff: Pam Posch, Olivia Lewis, Emily Douglas, Ashley Kidder, Lisa Ellison

THE CREATIVE souls of Manchester regularly enjoy wonderful, relaxing evenings at Manchester's Board & Brush Creative Studio learning how to create signs as well as many other things from etched glass to charcuterie. The studio opened in February 2020, and while Board & Brush is a franchise, Pamela Posch and Lisa Ellison have made it their own with fun classes, good drinks, and a homey atmosphere.

What is most impressive is that both co-owners have full time jobs. They opened their shop after attending a similar class, deciding that it was an important addition to the town.

"[We] decided we can do this, and Manchester needs something like this," Posch said. "Just having some place like that in Manchester for people to go to and do things has been a huge benefit because there's not anything else like that here."

Along with the basic and specialty classes, Board & Brush offers a location for private parties, business parties, bachelorette parties, and birthday parties with entertaining activities and very little cleanup. With so many options, the business has been going nonstop – even in the beginning, during COVID-19. The result was a very busy schedule keeping track of each of their three kids on top of two jobs.

"Balancing that family and work and then a full-time job, has probably been the biggest challenge," Posch said. Both co-owners have worked incredibly hard to make their business available for the Manchester community and doing that involved a lot of cooperation.

"Lisa has her strengths, and I have my strengths," Posch said. "I'm the dreamer, and she's kind of what keeps me grounded – but that grounded person also needs somebody to push them out of their comfort zone."

Unfortunately, many in Manchester mistakenly think the studio is a pet groomer – instead of understanding the uniqueness of the business. The closest similar businesses are in Murfreesboro and Chattanooga. Like those studios, creating at Board & Brush involves more than just painting a pre-made project or even simply assembling from a kit. The workshops teach how to distress the raw wood, stain it, paint it, and stencil it as well.

▲ Olivia Lewis

"[We] walk through the whole process," Posch said. "It's kind of like… a night out without having to go too far."

"A night out" often involves food and drinks brought in by the customers, and everyone goes home with a beautiful project. The work and activities that go on in the Board & Brush Studio have been so attractive that several customers have come back – to be employees. Who wouldn't, when the job is to create and help others create? Posch and Ellison also love being at the studio, often going to work on days when the business is closed. Their love echoes what many of the customers feel after a workshop.

"It's like a stress relief," Posch said. "We have so much fun up there [that] it's hard not to want to be there every day." GN

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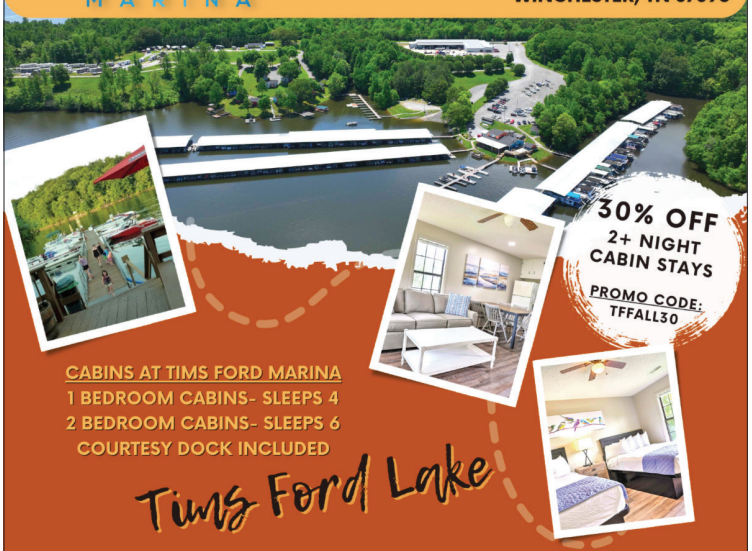

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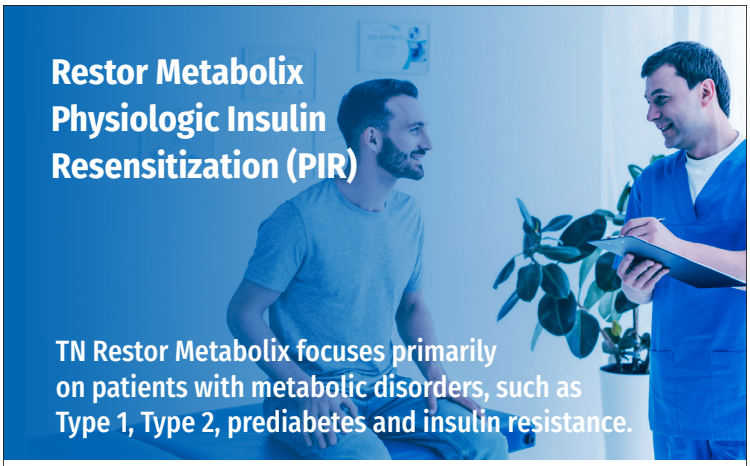

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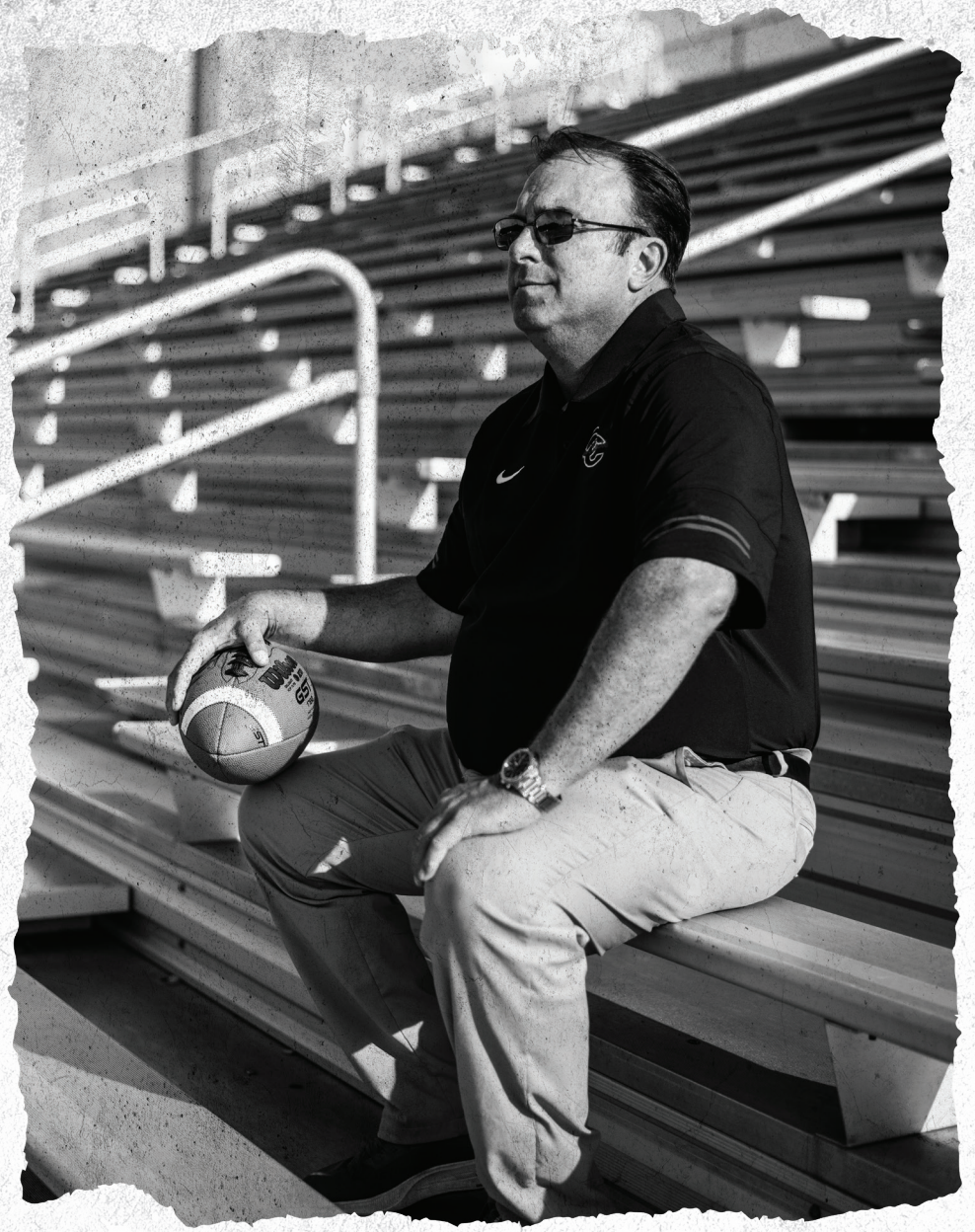
“We’re all standing on somebody’s shoulders.

Honoring the history of Red Raider football.

By Sara McClaran // Photography by Ashleigh Newnes



▾ Doug Greene

EVERY CITY has its history, and Coffee County has more than most with its historical sites and festivals. What people may not think about, however, is the history behind its athletics. Head football coach Doug Greene, and Josh Peterson of Thunder Radio are among those who have rectified that exact issue. After all, 2022 is Coffee County Central High School's 100th year of Red Raider football.

As part of the festivities, each home game has celebrated that history in its own way. Several individuals were honored, including Alontae Taylor, and BJ Schoff, an alumnus who died in the line of duty in Iraq. Alumni night is the biggest celebration aimed to honor over 150 alumni from as far back as the 1940s. The new jumbotron showed a video commemorating the Red Raiders' history, with photos even from 1923, and a voiceover from Mike Keith of the Tennessee Titans. Greene said that part of the aim was to show the students what they could do with their life as well as to remind them that their successes were built upon those of other people.

"We're all standing on somebody's shoulders," Greene said. "We're doing what we're doing today because somebody else did it before us."

If you don't respect the tradition of the people who did it first, Peterson said, you don't really have a grasp on what you are doing. Because of that, students need to have a good understanding of history.

"You play for your family, you play for your team and your town," Peterson said. "But you [also] play for the people who came before you."

The celebration of history won't stop once this football season has ended. Peter-

son said the goal is to continue several of the events, like the Red Raider in Real Life program.

"We look at people who were former players who are out doing big things in the world," Peterson said. "We're going to try … every year moving forward, to keep past players involved and tied into the current program."

Thunder Radio has been a major part of the effort, advertising events and games, and sharing photos and videos from their archives. For Peterson, it was natural to be involved.

"Thunder Radio's been involved in Coffee County athletics for as long as it's been around," Peterson said. "So you know we're naturally tied in with the football program and all of the athletic programs."

Peterson is also native to Coffee County, which helped drive his interest.

"I'm born and raised in Manchester, went to school in Coffee County, played sports in Coffee County, [and] our kids go to Coffee County High School; they play there." Peterson said. "So we're very involved."

That is the same story many in Coffee County could tell, and all have been affected by the high school and its activities. Sports has always been a community activity and football is no different. There is the team, of course, but also the band, the cheerleaders, the coaches, the families, and the fans. The 100-year celebration aimed to remember how all of those past people helped the team and community in the present day. None of the events could have happened without the help of all the members of the committee formed for the celebration. Jerry White, Prater Powell, and Holly Peterson were involved, as well as Greene and Josh Peterson, who designed logos and organized events.

"I just want to showcase our community," Greene said. "Remember good times, good memories, and just … reconnect." **GN**

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The Fellowship of the table

Seated around a table, we share more than a meal; we share our lives.

By Julia Eads

ONE OF the most sacred places in the world is a seat at the table. A seat at the table means you belong. It means come as you are and don't worry about what you lack. Come, bring what you have even if it's just yourself.

A quaint mountain town, Buena Vista, Colorado is home to the nation's largest dining room. With a population of merely 2,900 people, the small community gathers yearly to share a meal on the main drag in town. At dawn on the day of the event, the streets are shut down and an army of local volunteers hustle around to set up rows of tables and chairs. By dinnertime, the tables are carefully set with white linen. They are festive and ready for an evening of breaking bread, laughing, drinking, and being merry. The town of 2,900 ends up serving dinner to closer to 5,000 people. Why? Because they understand the sacredness of sharing a meal. At their banquet table, all are invited, all are fed, and all are welcome. Everyone has a seat. The town practices hospitality that doesn't look past differences but embraces them. They welcome and prepare for not only themselves but for strangers and bystanders as well.

A community coming together and sharing life around food doesn't just exist in Colorado. It happens right here in Middle Tennessee too. Therefore, we invite you to sit down and rest amid your everyday workload. A well-crafted meal will be set before you momentarily. Let the salivating smell of pot roast float up toward your nostrils bringing a smile to your face and eliciting a growl from your stomach. Did you know you were thought of and considered as this meal was prepared for you? Utmost care and intention went into every detail. So give thanks and eat up; let this food bring the much-needed refreshment to your body.

After you've had your fill, don't hurry off. Relax and recharge. Maybe even eat dessert. A table is where all of life's demands and toils can and should be set aside for a moment. Sitting around the table is not just a place to fuel your body but also a place to connect and engage. Recline, bump elbows with your neighbor, and be vulnerable and free. Put down your phone. Tell a joke. Ask a question. You might find that connection is just the nourishment your soul needs.

In time, you will find that sitting around a table is not just about sharing a meal, but sharing life. We present to you: people hard at work in your community who make this fellowship of the table possible. Cheers! **GN**

Broadening Culinary Horizons

On this side of the Atlantic, a taste of Europe.

By Paige Cushman // Photography by Ashleigh Newnes

LOCAL BUSINESS owner and restaurateur Kevin Greenwood has traveled around the world. Originally from England, he worked in the entertainment and movie industry in California before moving to Manchester in the 1990s. He came for Itchycoo Park, a big show that was being put on in Middle Tennessee. Itchycoo would go on to become the massively popular music festival Bonnaroo.

"I did that for many, many years," Greenwood said.

He had started his own company, Stage Tops USA, which designs and manufactures vinyl mesh for concert staging, sporting events, award shows, and more.

"A lot of my shows are in this part of the world," he said.

All of the backdrops used for the Country Music Awards' Riverfront Stage were from Greenwood's company based in Manchester. His prints are used for festivals from Oregon to Louisiana. And Greenwood regularly travels to Las Vegas, California, and Nashville to work at events like the NFL draft and the Oscars, and for touring artists like Garth Brooks.

Greenwood said he was the first British person to settle in Manchester and the first to move a company to the area from California. While he didn't come to open a restaurant, he decided he needed more to do when shows weren't keeping him busy. And he said he wanted more for the community.

"Manchester could be known for more than Bonnaroo," he said.

Kevin Greenwood ➤

▾ Kevin Greenwood

In 2017, he brought the European dining experience all the way to Middle Tennessee with authentic fish 'n' chips, schnitzel wiener, and Neapolitan-style pizza – made with Italian Caputo flour and homemade marinara and baked in a brick oven.

"I opened up a little restaurant because I wanted some food that I missed," he said. "I just wanted to do something different in the South, that's all."

Now he meets people from all over the country visiting from out of town. Bites of Europe is best known for its fish 'n' chips, reuben

egg rolls, and wagyu burgers. But the menu features dishes from all over Europe and a variety of weekly specials like Mediterranean pork kofta burgers, and British bangers (sausages) and mash (mashed potatoes). They take orders to go and have an impressive selection of desserts from their bakery, like tiramisu and creme brulee.

"We do a bit of Greek, a bit of Italian, German, [and] English," he said. "We do a bit of everything. We cook from scratch, we don't cook from packets."

His casual German pub-style restaurant and bar has a large variety of imported beers from Germany, Belgium, Italy, and more. Their pizza is made with quality toppings imported from Italy. They use real ingredients, their dishes are made from scratch, and Greenwood said the meat is locally sourced.

"I try to support my town as much as I can," he said.

The restaurant hosts regular tournaments at their pool tables, happy hours, karaoke nights, and "Live at Bites," where you can bring a lawn chair and watch local artists perform on the patio – bringing Greenwood's passion for live music to his local restaurant. He said he's dreamed of bringing another music festival to the area at some point.

When the weather is nice, the restaurant opens its dog-friendly patio creating the perfect place to bring family and four-legged friends for some of the best European options in the state.

"TripAdvisor said we were in the top 10% of restaurants in the world," Greenwood said. "Must be doing something right. I imagine they don't just tell that to anybody."

Reviewers have raved about the variety of dishes on the menu, large portion sizes, relaxed and fun atmosphere, and friendly staff.

"I have lived in the U.S. on and off for the last 30 years, and they have the best fish and chips I have had since I left the home country," one reviewer from the U.K. said. "Definitely worth the trip, and we will go back."

Bites of Europe, located on Interstate Drive, is open Monday through Wednesday from 4 p.m. to 9 p.m. and Thursday through Saturday from 11 a.m. to 10 p.m., but Greenwood said he'll stay open if people want to stay later. The restaurant takes call-in orders for pizzas and calzones, and desserts from the bakery. **GN**

We've got the Sauce

Not too sweet. Not too savory. Exactly what they're looking for.

By Paige Cushman // Photography by Ashleigh Newnes

IT STARTED with the sauce. Take crushed tomatoes, add a splash of red wine, a whole lot of basil, and a few secret ingredients, and you get a hearty and authentic Italian red sauce that's not too sweet, not too savory, and exactly what the families in Manchester were looking for.

Before the age of 10, Jessica Licata was making spaghetti sauce for her family. By the time she was old enough to chop an onion, it routinely became her job during family dinners.

Her father – an amazing cook – traveled internationally for work. While abroad, he'd ask people how to make the foods that he liked. He'd come home with new recipes and ingredients to try. His food tourism, and summers spent with Italian family members instilled in Jessica a deep appreciation for food.

Her husband Joe is also a foodie. His parents used to own a coffee shop in Manchester, and they convinced Joe and Jessica to move to the quaint, affordable town at the beginning of their marriage.

"My husband went to check it out, and he came back and said 'this could be a game-changer for us'," she said.

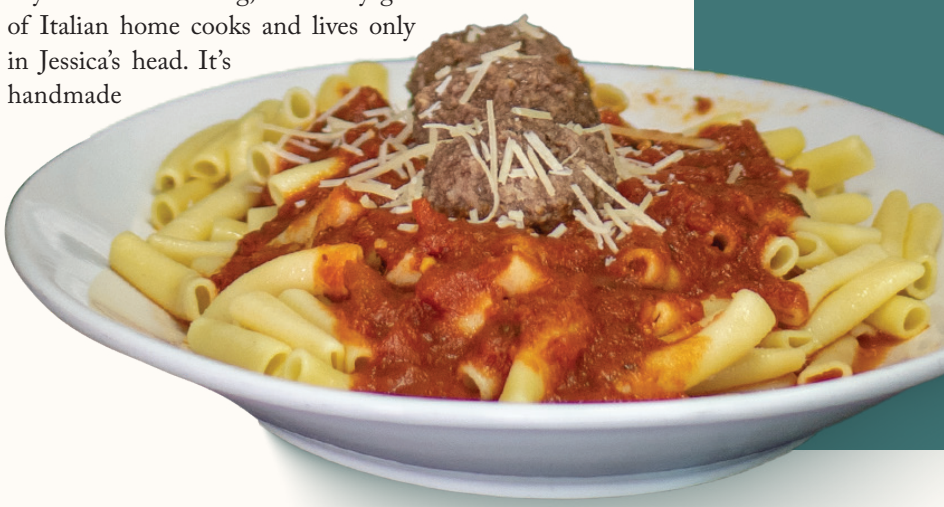
And it was. They moved from their home in Florida to Tennessee and began building a life together. Joe got a job as a car salesman, and Jessica got pregnant shortly after finishing beauty school. Being a stay-at-home mom became her full-time job.

"I did that for a really long time and loved it," she said. "And that's how this all came to be."

While raising two children, Jessica made spaghetti at least once a week (like many families). She said that there was no authentic Italian food in the area, so if you wanted good Italian food you had to drive to Murfreesboro to get it.

"Even then you may not be getting something that's truly homemade," she said.

She knew that her sauce was special. The recipe is years in the making, crafted by generations of Italian home cooks and lives only in Jessica's head. It's handmade



locally, in small batches. There's no added sugar or salt. (it's unnecessary when the ingredients are this flavorful, she said).

"I figured if people were going to go to the store and buy a jar of something full of God-knows-what … I started to think maybe somebody would be interested in this," she said. "This would take care of somebody's dinner for tonight."

In the summer of 2021, she set up a stand at the weekly Community Market to sell her sauce. At first her goal was to sell to just one person.

"It wasn't about the money," she said. "I just wanted to feed people. It's what I enjoy doing."

But it became a hit, selling out at the market week after week.

At the beginning of 2022, Joe lost his job.

"Trying to find something that we could support ourselves on was very difficult," Jessica said.

Neither of them had any experience in the restaurant business, but Jessica continued to sell out at the Community Market. Joe suggested that if they were going to "do this," they should "do it 100%."

They made a plan to begin selling more homemade Italian dishes, such as desserts, handmade pasta, lasagna, and garlic bread. But to meet health department standards they needed a certified kitchen.

Joe connected with Mercantile Cafe and Sweet Simplicity owner Renee Holt. What started as a conversation about tourism in Manchester ended with Holt offering the couple a space in her commercial kitchen so they could expand their business.

"That was when everything went from zero to 100," she said.

Holt had also started selling goods weekly at the Community Market before becoming a successful local restaurateur.

"She knows all about it, because she lived it," Jessica said.

▼Jessica Licata

At the beginning of July, Mama Licata's Italian officially opened its storefront on High Street for hot-plate lunches a few days a week (as they work around Holt and her staff in the Mercantile kitchen).

"We thought 'let's go really slow and see how we can make this work, if we can make this work,'" Jessica said.

They are making it work. They continue to sell out most Saturdays at the market, and their hot lunches have brought in hoards of new customers.

"We hear so many people say, 'We love having something Italian in this town,' or 'There's no food like this here,'" Jessica said. "All of our customers are so nice and so supportive."

Some customers have even forked over their own home-grown herbs for the greater good of the sauce – several of them gifting to The Licatas, fresh basil from their gardens.

"Which has been so awesome, because we use a lot of it," Jessica said.

She and Joe are getting the restaurant's schedule and menu down pat before they open for more days and move into a kitchen of their own.

"I will never give anyone anything that I wouldn't eat myself," Jessica said. "I'm a perfectionist when it comes to that. I don't want anybody to get cold food or too small of a portion."

Mama Licata's menu regularly features spaghetti and meatballs, lasagna, handmade pasta (by the bag), garlic bread, garlic butter, and cannolis. They also offer specials, like manicotti, Italian ratatouille, and other desserts that are added weekly. While Joe and Jessica are mastering new dishes all of the time and broadening their horizons (onto alfredo) as new business owners, one thing remains the same: Mama Licata's Italian has got the sauce.

"I know my sauce is good, but I guess I never really saw it going to this level," Jessica said. "I just wanted to feed people." **GN**

▾ Jessica & Joe Licata

A labor of Love

Lunch, dinner, and dessert made fresh from scratch.

By Sara McClaran // Photography by Ashleigh Newnes

IF YOU'RE looking for classic comfort food or freshly baked goods, The Mercantile Cafe in downtown Manchester is the perfect spot. Their wide variety of easy-to-grab selections for lunch and dinner have made the cafe one of the staples of the historic downtown square.

Renee Holt's love for cooking and sharing meals started at a young age with a family that cooked and canned and baked. Before getting involved with The Mercantile and the Sweet Simplicity Bakery, she sold baked goods, jams, and jellies at farmers markets around Middle Tennessee. However, it was her mother who inspired her to become a business owner.

"When I was in high school, [we] would drive around looking for places on the square to open up a sandwich shop. It was kind of just something we always talked about but never did," Holt said.

Unfortunately, that dream had not been realized when Holt's mother passed away from cancer 16 years ago. Holt's love of cooking led her to sell at farmers markets, but she also regularly cooked or baked for other people – sometimes just in her office and sometimes all around town.

"I enjoy the immediate satisfaction that people get with having a good meal," Holt said. "I just loved cooking."

Some eight years later, Holt took the plunge to take over The Mercantile Cafe. The location – 210 N. Irwin St. – was no accident either.

"I never wanted to be anywhere else but on the square," Holt said. "I love the history of our town, the… small town feel of our square, even though it's grown tremendously in the past 10 years."

The small-town, relaxed feel and the community of small business owners has made the square a very attractive place to have a business, and The Mercantile is a significant part of that.

"I know the names of most of my customers when they come in here, [and] if I don't know them, I get to know them," Holt said. "We want people to feel at home when they come in here to eat."

The Mercantile offers a wide variety of options, not just sandwiches. There are cafeteria-style meals that offer freshly made mashed potatoes, green beans, and creamed corn, as well as a salad bar. You can order burgers, chicken tenders, or chicken and waffles from the menu on the wall. The deli case is full of homemade chicken salad and pimento cheese. On top of that, the restaurant caters for weddings, office parties, funerals, private events, and birthday parties. Their dining room and food truck are also available to be booked for events. Anywhere you want their food, they can come.

"We've catered in Nashville, Hendersonville, Chattanooga, all over Middle Tennessee," Holt said. "It's not for the weak of heart, I can tell you that. It's a lot of hard work; a lot of hours. A lot of people don't understand why we're here on days we're closed, but we're here seven days a week."

Most of those hours are spent cooking and preparing the meals and desserts that The Mercantile is known for.

"We make a point every day to make chocolate meringue pie, coconut meringue pie, banana pudding, all those things that you can't get pretty much anywhere else in town – that is made fresh and not from a mix."

▲ Renee Holt

the Mercantile Café
Café, Bakery & Gift Shop
Corn and
Red Bell Relish
the Mercantile Café
Café, Bakery & Gift Shop
Chow Chow
NET WT. 16 OZ. (454g)

Hot Pickled Peppers
INGREDIENTS:

In fact, the vast majority of The Mercantile's food is made fresh, with ingredients from local sellers and even Holt's own backyard. Holt said their goal is to "Do it like your granny used to do it."

"Even now, my husband puts out a huge garden, and we grow berries and grapes and all the things that I still make." Holt said. "I still preserve many of the items that I sell in the cafe in my gift shop. Many of the items we use in our recipes and in our cooking at the cafe."

Owning the business has not come without its challenges. Staffing shortages and supply chain issues have affected The Mercantile and Sweet Simplicity just like everyone else, making running the restaurant even more of a challenge than usual. Despite this, Holt and the other staff members have continued making the cafe a community-driven business.

"It's definitely labor, I can tell you that," Holt said. "It's just a labor of love more than anything." **GN**

Eat Dessert first

Desserts highlight our favorite memories.

By Tina Neeley

LET'S BE honest – most of our traditions and favorite memories are made around food, and the sweetest ones are often tied to desserts. Aunt Suzy's chocolate cake and Granny Smith's lemon meringue pie with peaks and pikes so tall you were sure they'd tumble are standard. Although their recipes have been shared from generation to generation, no one can ever make it exactly the same as they did.

Maybe it's time to start the next sweet tradition. Finding new recipes can be time-consuming, but even though it feels like there's nothing new under the sun the new memories you make around an old, standard recipe are their own reward.

If you don't have time to search for a new favorite, give one of ours a try but don't forget to write it down and pass it on. **GN**

Chocolate Caramel Nut Cake

Submitted by Melinda Dyer

1 pkg. German chocolate cake mix with pudding, prepared according to package directions
1 bag caramels, 14 oz.
1/2 c. butter
1/2 c. milk
1 c. pecans, chopped
1/2 c. milk chocolate chips

Spoon half of the prepared cake batter into a greased and floured 13"x9" baking pan. Bake at 350° for 10 minutes. Cake will not test done; cool for 10 minutes. Combine caramels, butter, and milk in a saucepan. Cook over low heat, stirring constantly until caramels melt. Spread over the cake. Sprinkle pecans and chocolate chips over caramel mixture. Spread remaining cake batter evenly over top. Bake for 20-25 minutes. Cut into squares and serve.

Mom's Apple Crisp

Submitted by Debbie Miahnahri

5 med. tart apples, peeled, sliced
1 1/4 c. sugar, divided
1 3/4 t. ground cinnamon, divided
1 c. AP flour
1 t. baking powder
1/2 t. salt
1/2 c. cold butter
1 c. water

In a large mixing bowl, combine apples, 1/4 cup sugar, and one teaspoon cinnamon. Transfer to a greased 8" square baking dish. In a small mixing bowl, combine flour, baking powder, salt, and remaining sugar. Cut in butter until crumbly. Sprinkle over apples, pressing down to smooth top. Slowly pour water over the top. Sprinkle with remaining cinnamon. Bake uncovered at 400˚ for 45 minutes or until apples are tender. Serve warm.

Nana's Pumpkin Pie

Submitted by Gabby Madewell

4 eggs, beaten
1 can pumpkin, 29 oz.
2 c. brown sugar, firmly packed
1 t. ginger
¼ t. cloves
2 t. cinnamon
1 t. nutmeg
2 T. flour
1 t. salt
3⅓ c. evaporated milk
2 T. flour
2 pie shells, unbaked, 9"

Preheat oven to 425˚. In a large mixing bowl, combine eggs and pumpkin. Blend in sugar, spices, flour, and salt. Add evaporated milk and mix until well blended. Pour mixture into pie shells. Bake for 15 minutes. Reduce heat to 350˚ and continue baking for 35-40 minutes or until done. Cool before serving.

FAITH

Go straight to the best

Martha, Mary, and the well woman knew the secret ingredient.

By Tina Neeley

Jesus replied, "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry again. Whoever believes in me will never be thirsty."

- John 6:35 NLT

TAKE A deep breath and smell the aroma of lunch cooking in the kitchen.

It was a very important meal. Jesus and the 12 stopped in to visit the home of Martha and Mary, in Bethany. Through the swirling steam of the boiling pots, Martha glimpsed Mary sitting at the feet of Jesus. Sitting was a luxury she couldn't afford with all the cooking to do. Surely Mary knew she needed her help in the kitchen.

I bet Martha really wanted to sit with Jesus. I imagine she told herself she would as soon as she finished the task at hand. She meant well, and the desire was sincere, but the tyranny of the next urgent thing forced itself before her like a spoiled child demanding to be reckoned with or else.

And while we're boldly imagining, suppose Mary really meant to help Martha or even planned to help Martha as soon as Jesus paused in His teaching. But perhaps He alluded to something that left Mary believing He'd explain it in more detail, so she lingered longer. She

knew she preferred Martha's burning you-knew-I–needed-you speech over missing Jesus' words, sensing a possibility that their days with Him were numbered.

Martha was worried and anxious over lunch when the bread of life was in the house.

The Samaritan woman at the well was looking for something to control. She'd go to the well at noon, the hottest hour, to draw water in order to avoid drawing gossiping crowds. Five husbands and living with a man that she wasn't married to gave them plenty to talk about. She could avoid the heat of their condemning gazes and whispers of disapproval. This was something she could control.

She was unnamed in the story. Perhaps her lifestyle caused her to be guarded in sharing it, her shame naming her.

Strain and listen for the low screech of the wheel that lets down the rope with the bucket day after day, sweat trickling relentlessly down her back. She was looking to fill the caverness hole in her heart until she encountered the living water; Jesus.

Look at their shoulders, Martha and the well woman, how they're keened forward under the weight of their loads.

Feel the heat – the scorching noonday sun, the steam from the boiling iron kettle pots.

What would one good, long drink do to satisfy parched lips?

Like Martha and the Samaritan woman, we stand, our hands reaching for the potholder, glancing over our shoulders at Mary as she sits at Jesus' feet, straining to hear a word of encouragement or a nugget of truth. We let down our empty buckets, tired and weary of the world's demands and so many times draw it up only half-filled or empty altogether.

But we don't have to.

Time spent with Jesus will refresh and renew our spirits and fuel us for the day ahead. He is the one thing needful, and He is always waiting for us to come to Him with our empty buckets and weary hearts.

Our time, our heart, and our presence are all He needs. **GN**

RECIPE FOR REST:

When life is too noisy, and you are dying for the smallest of breaks to catch your breath before the next wave crashes, sneak away and spend time with Father. Go back again and again and let Him refill you with His truth about you. As one glass of water can never satisfy a lifetime of thirst, He invites us to come and be filled.

GOOD TIMES

"There's nothing to do in a small town." We hear it often, but is it true? There are Good Times every weekend in our community. It doesn't matter if it's a s'more at a bonfire, a lazy day with a book by the window, or exploring the town with the people you love most—there is something to do.

ALL WE HAVE TO DO IS SAY YES.

PHOTO BY ASHLEIGH NEWNES

SKYWHEEL
PROUDLY PRESENTS
MODERN MIDWAYS
The SKYWHEEL
KING OF THE MIDWAY
DDAIRBAGS

IT NEVER GETS OLD

A tribute to Elvis; The Ultimate Oldies show brought the house down!

By Paige Cushman // Photos submitted by Kerri Kairdolf

THE "ULTIMATE Oldies" traveling show brought the house down at the Manchester Arts Center during their Elvis Tribute in October. The group started in 2010 as a way for founder and director Jamie Harden and his friends to have a good time and put on a show for their community. Now, it's a full-on traveling production with multiple shows a year across several states. They showcase the music from the '50s, '60s, '70s, and '80s with occasional special productions like the Elvis Tribute which they put on every few years. This year it was a happy accident that it fell in line with the massive blockbuster biopic "Elvis."

"Obviously, Elvis still in 2022 has made such an impact around the world that he's still relevant and popular today," singer Kerri Kairdof said.

The Ultimate Oldies starts with the King of Rock 'n' Roll's early hits and works their way through his expansive catalog. There are group numbers and renditions of Elvis favorites performed by both men and women during the tribute. It just so happened that after solidifying their show schedule with Elvis on the setlist this year, Warner Bros. released "Elvis."

"We create our show calendar over a year in advance – it just so happened that the movie and this Elvis buzz fell at the same time," Kairdof said.

She has been involved with the Ultimate Oldies group for eight years and like all of the singers and members of the band, contributes to the show in her spare time.

Jay Jewell, Jamie Harden, Kerri Kairdolf, Cliff Roberts, Jesse Hanks, Laurie Burger, Paul Hatton, JD Toliver

"Every person within the band–singers, everybody–we enjoy each other's company," she said. "We have a lot of fun. There isn't this sense of dread like when you're going to work sometimes. It's just fun."

The group is made up of five primary singers – three men and two women – and a skilled band. Some of them are seasoned musicians, some have theater experience through amateur productions, all of them are supremely talented.

"It's capturing a little bit of something that we all thought we might do more of in the future," she said. "It's a dream for a lot of us to get to go out and travel and perform."

The best part? The opportunity to connect with different audiences, and Kairdof said it happens everywhere they go.

"You can see in the audience that they are connecting to the music, and they're just buzzing when we're done," she said.

While they only perform oldies, Kairdof said that it never gets old. A lot of the group's audiences skew older, and Kairdof said that it's rewarding to see their performance bring back sweet memories and reach people.

The group rehearses at the Manchester Arts Center every week and puts on one or two shows a year to help raise funds for the arts organization. Harden is a board member at the Manchester Arts Center and has lived in the city for years.

"We consider Manchester our home base and without that support from Manchester from the very beginning, I don't think we would be where we're at," Kairdof said. "It's been really important for our growth as a group. It has allowed us to get our feet underneath us and present a show that's really great and then even present it outside of Manchester."

You can see Ultimate Oldies shows like the Elvis Tribute or their '50s, '60s, and '70s shows throughout Middle Tennessee and surrounding states all year long. **GN**

COMMUNITY EVENTS

Fried dough and ferris wheel

Photos by Ashleigh Newnes

The folks of Coffee County came out to enjoy good food, fast rides, and fun games for the annual Coffee County Fair held at the Coffee County Fairground. Whether you were ax throwing, enjoying a delicious fried delicacy, or screaming with excitement on a ride there was something for fair-goers of all ages to enjoy.

Kim Foutch, Christi Keith, Melanie Messiani

Wyatt Finley and Joseph Lundy

Nostalgic '80s bash at Common John Brewery

Photos by Ashleigh Newnes

Bright colors, teased hair, and big fun were enjoyed by all at Common John Brewery for their mixtape 1980s party. Patrons enjoyed an evening of stepping back into the era of big and bold with good music and of course a most excellent brew provided by Common John.

Nancie Thompson and Tammy Price

LeBron Haggard, owner of Common John Brewery

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EVENTS CALENDAR

October 8

10:00 am **Miriam House Craft Fair Fundraiser**
1886 McArthur St.
Manchester

Calling all crafters, vendors, businesses, & ministries. We invite you to register and come set up a booth. Vendor booth fees will go to Miriam house. Each vendor will keep their profit from the day.

3:00 pm **Singing at the River**
288 Beechwood Cir.
Manchester

Bring chili or soup, soft drinks, cornbread, side dishes, or desserts, and your lawn chair.

October 15

6:00 pm **Beauties in Business Ladies Networking Night**
Jeffersons
Manchester

October 15

6:00 am **New Union Fire Department Breakfast**
19 Brandon Rd.
Manchester

Breakfast menu includes country ham, sausage, eggs, biscuits, and gravy.
Drive-thru pickup only.

5:30 pm **Friends of the NRA**
Coffee County Fairgrounds

October 18

1:30 pm **Operation Joy**
Autumn Oaks Senior Living
1621 McMinnville Hwy.
Manchester

Join us for a USO-style show put on by the local VFW.

October 22

1:30 pm **Creepy Cryptids Monster Market**
Coffee County Fairgrounds

Join us for handmade crafts, food trucks, a cryptid scavenger hunt, Halloween costume contest, and a photo booth.

October 25

1:30 pm **Operation Joy**
McArthur Manor Senior Living
19 Bryan Ave.
Manchester, TN

Join us for a USO-style show put on by the local VFW.

November 10

6:00 pm **Beauties in Business Ladies Networking Night**
Jeffersons
Manchester

November 12

9:00 am **Holiday Open House**
Foothills Craft & Gift Shop
19 Brandon Rd.
Manchester

Join us for door prizes and refreshments.

December 4

11:00 am **Manchester's Christmas Cheer**
Manchester Coffee County Conference Center

Come shop over 50 local businesses! Crafts, boutiques, decor, food, and fun! Santa arrives at noon. Free admission.

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