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ISSUE 4 2024

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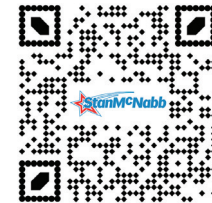
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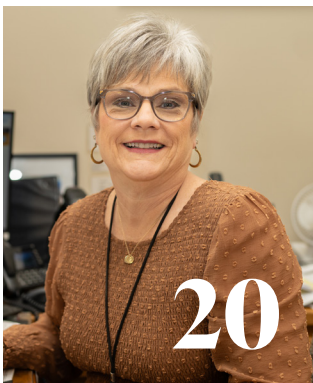
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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

The impact of ‘shop local’


Together we can ensure that their legacies continue, our economy is kept stable, and our community continues to thrive.

THE ECONOMIC Policy Institute reports that for every dollar spent at a locally owned business, 68 cents of it stays in the local economy. Compare this to 32 cents staying in a local community when spending money at a chain store. The University of Florida conducted an analysis that showed how local businesses help fight high unemployment rates. When large companies lay off workers, local businesses are able to provide employment opportunities and maintain a consistent workforce. This is critical in sustaining our community and keeping money flowing within it.

Our locally owned businesses have helped our community become what it

is today. The long-standing staples in our community have created bridges between the generations. People who were once shoppers at a young age are now the mature employees who always greet you with a smile. And as new decades come and go, their smiles never fade. And the young shoppers they smile to will one day be in their shoes.

We should all continue to make an effort to support our local businesses. Not only does it help create a stronger economy for our town, but it also helps preserve the memories and traditions of generations before us. Together we can ensure that their legacies continue, our economy is kept stable, and our community continues to thrive. **GN**


Wesley Bryant,
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

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GOOD NEWS IS PUBLISHED BY Exchange Media Group, Inc.

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▲ Michelle Costanzo
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"I want to help each agent and staff go to another level. We want to see one another excel and grow as individuals, a team, and a family."

- Susan Gatlin

Pulling Together in the **Direction** of **Success**

**Team Gatlin of Leading Edge Real Estate
is a picture of effective teamwork.**

By Tina Neeley // Photography by Brooke Snyder

AFTER MONTHS of checking out local home listings and daydreaming about a move, you're finally ready. The real estate market seems like a maze, and the idea of navigating it might be overwhelming, but there's also excitement about entering a new phase of life. Selling your home is a crucial piece of the puzzle. So, where do you start, and how do you ensure you have the best guide to help you find the keys to your dream home?

Why not start with the power of a team of agents working together to bring you the best possible experience?

Pulling together in the direction of success like a tandem of yoked oxen, Team Gatlin of Leading Edge Real Estate Group (LEREG) is a picture of effective teamwork — cooperation, mutual support, shared goals, and the recognition that success is a collective effort. It's an effort that began when Susan Gatlin and Charlie Sullivan partnered in 2016 as Charlie started his journey as a full-time real estate agent under Susan's mentorship. From a cramped trailer on Gatlin's property, the duo focused their energy on the Fayetteville real estate market as Leading Edge Real Estate agents.

Their first year set the bar for the future as Susan was the top producer for LEREG, and Charlie received Rookie of the Year. The Fayetteville brokerage office of LEREG



▲ Diana Johnson, Trish Bouldin, Susan Gatlin, Charlie Sullivan, Libby Jump, Heather Kirkland Johnson, and Vivian Fisher

Team Gatlin of Leading Edge Real Estate

Susan Gatlin – Team Gatlin Leader/Agent

Charlie Sullivan – Team Gatlin Agent

Vivian Fisher – Team Gatlin Agent

Libby Jump – Team Gatlin Agent

Susan Allen – Team Gatlin Agent

Heather Kirkland Johnson –
Team Gatlin Agent

Trish Bouldin –
Marketing Rep & Community Liaison

Diana Johnson –
Team Administrative Assistant

opened the following year with Susan as broker and leader of the newly formed Team Gatlin. She knew cultivating an environment that manifested the hallmarks of a team was at the heart of retaining agents — a culture that equally benefits the team’s clients.

The idea of a yoked team well represents Team Gatlin’s multiplied efforts as they share responsibilities and challenges while providing assistance, encouragement, and cooperation to achieve the common goal of a successful real estate transaction.

“I want to help each agent and staff go to another level. We want to see one another excel and grow as individuals, a team, and a family. We are now focusing on incorporating life-changing habits that help us reach the next level of excellence. I know we can do this as a team!” said Susan.

Team Gatlin Agent Libby Jump said, “Being part of the team enhances my ability to help clients by offering a collective knowledge pool. We collaborate on client needs, share responsibilities, and leverage diverse expertise. This ensures

that clients receive well-rounded assistance, even if I'm out of town or another team member is better suited for a particular client."

Just as a yoke makes sure a team all moves in the same direction, a shared vision and common objectives align the efforts of team members, keeping the team on the same focused path and promoting unity. Susan's faith guides her as she guides the team.

"We've found a unique bond in prayer and the belief that we're all divinely put together as a team. The admin team and I have weekly prayer sessions and study together. Our whole team meets weekly to go over plans, life events, and training. These meetings help strengthen our bond and ground us as a team. When one agent needs help, there are five others to pick them up," said Susan.

Agent Susan Allen sees the full-circle benefits of the team.

"Team Gatlin is my backbone in the real estate game. We share insights, cover each other's blind spots, and celebrate wins together. It's a collective effort that amplifies success and makes the journey more enjoyable," she said.

Susan's leadership unites the team as they focus their efforts on their collective success.

"I knew before I joined the team almost five years ago that I would learn a lot from Susan, but the training and support that I have received have exceeded my expectations. What I did not expect when transitioning from a solo agent was the strong camaraderie we would foster together in both my business and my personal life," said Vivian Fisher, Team Gatlin Agent.

The team's success isn't just for their own benefit. The vision is community wide.

"I'd like to ensure that Team Gatlin creates and leaves a legacy for our community. I want to create a legacy of honesty,



▲ Charlie Sullivan

integrity, and hard work that is recognized when people see the words 'Team Gatlin.' Additionally, I want us to continue to be top producers and the number one team in Lincoln County, Southern Middle Tennessee, and Alabama — a close-knit team truly enjoying working alongside one another," said Susan, the 2021 recipient of the prestigious Crumrine Award for character and achievement.

It's a reasonable goal. The award-winning team has consistently been LEREG's top-producing team from its inception in 2016 through 2022. LEREG covers Southern Middle Tennessee and Northern Alabama with over 200 agents and many teams.

The team is serious in its pursuit of leaving a community legacy work. Five of their eight team members completed the local Leadership Lincoln program. Two are on

the board of directors and have served as immediate past president and president-elect.

The community-wide impact they seek goes beyond accolades and awards; it focuses on values and contributions. As they continue to navigate the real estate maze, the keys to your dream homes are more than symbols of successful transactions; they're the milestones of a shared journey and a legacy built on principles that stand the test of time.

In every real estate transaction, Team Gatlin doesn't just find the perfect property for you; they build relationships, contribute to community development, and create a legacy that proudly echoes "Team Gatlin." GN

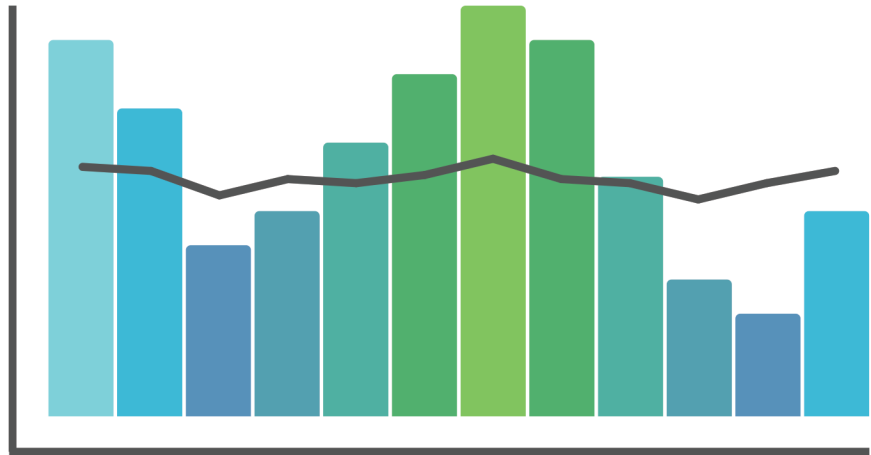
For more information, follow Team Gatlin Leading Edge Real Estate on Facebook, visit teamgatlin.com, or call (931) 433-4070. Offices are located at 1423 Huntsville Hwy., Suites A&B, Fayetteville.



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By Tina Neeley
Photography by Brooke Snyder



▲ Jamie Sandlin, Mary Jane Porter, Donna Mills, Lauren Pigg, and Donna Collier

AS YOU shuffle through the day's mail, a single envelope erases your good mood in the blink of an eye. The return address is enough to tell you it's almost time to pay your property taxes. Even worse, you seem to recall talk of a tax increase. Can your budget handle it? Will your mortgage payment nudge out your ability to pay for other things you really can't live without?

When you have these and other related questions in Lincoln County, your first trip or call may be to Trustee Mary Jane Porter's office. And by the time you leave, your taxes may not have changed, but your disposition likely will. Although Porter and her staff are juggling the stress common to taxes and financial matters daily, kindness and courtesy are consistently among their checks and balances. Assisting you is their highest priority.



▲ Lauren Pigg



▲ Jamie Sandlin



One of the most impactful ways they help is by bringing awareness to all the available tax relief programs. The staff assists property owners in navigating the programs' application processes, easing any overwhelm that always comes with completing paperwork and meeting qualifications. Since Porter took office, the number of properties on tax relief has risen from about 400 to over 1000 this year.

Property owners over 65 or those who are disabled or are disabled veterans or their widows may qualify for one of the available tax relief programs. Porter and her staff gladly assist taxpayers with applying for the relief.

"That's the highlight for all these ladies in here because we want to help people," Porter said. "Sometimes, this process may take weeks. It might take 14 phone calls or me going to a house to pick up something, bring it [to the office], make a copy, and take it back. Because a lot of these people who can qualify don't have transportation, they don't have any way to make a copy of anything."

Age is a requirement to qualify for relief under the over-65 program, and there are limitations based on income for consideration. There's no age limit for disabled taxpayers, but there's still an income limit. Disabled veterans or their widows may qualify regardless of age or income.

For most of us, our experience with Porter's office relates to property taxes, but she is responsible for much more. Time and the pandemic have expanded her work.

"Things have changed so much in my 22 years of governmental finances. I'm the financial institution for the county, so every dime that comes through this county comes to my office," she said. "It used to be that I had four accounts, and now I've got 21 checking accounts or CDs. COVID brought in so much more money, and everything's got to be set up separately. Each governmental fund that you're given has a different set of criteria on how it's to be spent."



When Porter took office in 2002, her experience at her former job with Fayetteville City Schools eased the learning curve as the office transitioned to computer records just before she took over. She's responsible for records storage, with rules requiring some be kept for 10 years while her office must maintain others for a lifetime. Porter and her staff work with the Clerk and Master's Office, where delinquent taxes are transferred for collection, the Tax Assessor's Office, and the City of Fayetteville.

Porter is quick to tell you she couldn't do it without the help of her team: Donna Collier, Jamie Sandlin, Lauren Pigg, and Donna Mills. They are committed to assisting everyone who enters their office, often going above and beyond what's required or expected.

With a love for finance, local politics, and a good puzzle, the position was a natural fit for Porter, who chose to run when faced with the reality of college tuition for four children on the horizon.

She said, "I told my children, 'Guys, if y'all want to go to college, you're gonna have to help me,' and all four of our children got out and knocked on doors."

More than two decades later, Porter has no regrets.

"I live in a wonderful county, and I love serving the people of Lincoln County. I feel honored that I've been chosen to do this, and I'm thankful I can for a little longer if the people will let me," said Porter. **GN**





“

I live in a wonderful county, and I love serving the people of Lincoln County. I feel honored that I've been chosen to do this, and I'm thankful I can for a little longer if the people will let me.

-Mary Jane Porter



▲ Carrie Mills and Lauren Pigg



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Doug Watt and Michelle Costanzo



Carla Stovall, Michelle Costanzo,
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AN ANCESTRY.COM DNA KIT MOVES MICHELLE COSTANZO TO FAYETTEVILLE.

BY TINA NEELEY
PHOTOGRAPHY BY BROOKE SNYDER
AND SUBMITTED BY MICHELLE COSTANZO

TIME COULDN'T pass any slower. Hope cracked open a door in 1996 when an Arizona liaison located Michelle Costanzo's birth mother in Pennsylvania. But when her response finally arrived, it appeared to close the door instead of throwing it wide open. The response closed her mom's heart and the file that would have allowed Costanzo further contact with her or her three biological half-sisters. Instead, she could now complete a medical history from her mother's side of the family and knew the most basic information about the woman who gave her life.

Costanzo's adoptive parents, though, gave her a life and strong foundation and never withheld from her that she was adopted. Grateful for their love and support, Costanzo answered the letter and enclosed a photo of her with her oldest and only child at the time, a son, and resigned herself to the likelihood of never connecting with her siblings. She also had little hope of ever finding her biological father.

It was long before "Finding Your Roots" with Louis Gates, Jr. was a thing and DNA test kits were offered to the public.

"In 2017, my husband, Jimmy, bought me the ancestry kit for Christmas. My youngest son and I followed the instructions and sent it off. We were all hoping that my half-sisters would somehow be on the ancestry site, and that would be how we could connect," Michelle said.



*Doug Watt, Carla Stovall, Troy Watt,
Farley Newton, and Michelle Costanzo*

“YOUR FAMILY AND FRIENDS ARE NICE, BUT STRANGERS ARE EXACTLY THAT – STRANGERS. I’M NOT SURE IF IT’S THE SMALL TOWN OR JUST A TENNESSEE THING, BUT PEOPLE HERE ARE JUST NICE AND GRATEFUL.”

-MICHELLE COSTANZO



The results were numerous. With Michelle’s hopes dashed on her father’s side, she expected any connection to those listed would be through her mother.

“I started to send messages to the closest matches to see how we could be connected, and, lo and behold, one girl took an interest in me, where I was located, and my story,” Michelle said. “She messaged me something along the lines of, ‘I don’t think we are connected via bio mom; I think this is bio dad. Let me do some digging and asking around, and I’ll be in touch.’ I basically hung it up because there was no way I would find out anything about my bio dad!”

But there was a way. Once again, the ancestry.com test kit provided missing links; this time, she was met with open arms instead of a closed door. Two brothers and two sisters on her father’s side live in Tennessee. Her father, who died in 2017, lived in the Metro Phoenix area, 20 to 30 minutes away from her at any given time — so close, yet worlds away.

She and her brother, Doug, spent two hours on the phone while he filled her in on her biological dad and his children. An Easter meet-and-greet over FaceTime with the whole family

did more than complete her family tree; it eventually drew her to move to Fayetteville.

“My husband booked us two tickets to Nashville from Phoenix in April 2018, and we spent an amazing weekend here in Fayetteville meeting them for the first time. They are the most amazing people — so accepting — and their arms were wide open with nothing but love and acceptance,” said Michelle.

Fayetteville also watered their desert souls. Lincoln County’s rivers, creeks, and rich green landscape were as welcoming as its people and her new family.

She said, “Your family and friends are nice, but strangers are exactly that — strangers. I’m not sure if it’s the small town or just a Tennessee thing, but people here are just nice and grateful.”

Michelle and Jimmy moved to Houston in 2019, when he took a dream job as a helicopter pilot with a large corporation. But the pandemic arrived just after they did, leaving no margin for his position. He went back into business in Houston as a locksmith, his former trade in Phoenix, but they weren’t happy there. Tired of desert life, the couple easily decided in 2021 that a move to Fayetteville would be refreshing.



Jimmy relocated his locksmith business here, and it wasn't long before Revolt Locksmith took off. Specializing in auto keys, key fobs, remotes, safes, and commercial and residential locks, he has two vans on the road and someone in the office Monday through Friday.

Later, when Jimmy asked Michelle what kind of work she'd like to do, she knew the answer after observing the community's commitment to shopping locally. The post office provided the only shipping service.

"Jimmy saw that the building at 929 Winchester Highway was for sale. He called the number, and it turns out that the owner of that building was good friends with my half-sister, Farley," said Michelle. "So, we bought the building for the Pack and Ship. There [is] so much space that Jimmy [has] a little lock shop and plenty of parking inside for his locksmith van."

Revolt Pack and Ship offers shipping with FedEx, UPS, and USPS. They have physical and virtual mailboxes, notary services, faxing, photocopying, scanning, emailing, packing and shipping, freight services, and space for drop-off and pick-up with lift gate services. Michelle hopes to add fingerprinting services soon. Retail services are also available.

"My main goal is to be the one-stop shop for hard-to-find gifts. I'm working on adding more retail as time progresses. We are dabbling in a bit of retail — candy, soaps, candles, bags, funky socks, kitchen towels, quirky air fresheners, magnets, boxes, moving materials, packing materials, and more. Business is good, but business will be great [when] more people hear about us. We love being here for the people of Fayetteville and Lincoln County," she said.

With an emphasis on customer service, Michelle believes in treating everyone as you'd like to be treated — with dignity and grace. Greeting every customer with a smile and handling them with patience, she repays what she's found in Lincoln County.

She said, "No one in this town makes you feel like a stranger."

Michelle found family and community here. The door is always open. **GN**



Michelle Costanzo



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LIKE MOST other small towns, Fayetteville has some of America's most popular fast-food restaurants where you can get a mediocre cheeseburger and fries. You can even get your sweet treat fix through a drive-thru (that is, if the soft serve machine is working). It seems like every time I pull through a drive-thru these days, the food prices have increased yet again. It immediately upsets me, knowing I could drive a little farther to Old Taft Depot to get a burger and fries that are beyond amazing for the price.

Taft is a small, unincorporated community in Southwestern Lincoln County. There's one red light, so don't blink, or you might miss it. There's a post office, a Dollar General, and a few other small businesses. However, the one business that stands out is the Old Taft Depot Restaurant. If you drive by after the sun goes down, it's the brightest place in town due to the beautiful, glowing strings of lights lining the patio area.

I have eaten at this hidden gem several times. There's something for everyone to enjoy, from juicy burgers and hearty sandwiches to delicious plate lunches, mouthwatering wings, and more. The made-from-scratch desserts include fried pies, banana pudding, and pecan pie — just to name a few. Hand-dipped ice cream is on the menu, too. Anyone searching for a delicious breakfast can stop by from 6 a.m. to 10 a.m. daily. Lunch is served from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. Orders can be called in for pick-up at the convenient drive-thru, or you can dine inside or on the patio.

During my visit, I had the pleasure of speaking with co-owners and sisters Lorraine Graham and Judy Kolle. With encouragement from their family, they opened the restaurant in 2018. Lorraine and Judy have satisfied many hearty appetites and happily attribute their success to the skilled cooks who work for them. Judy says if you eat at the Old Taft Depot once, you will definitely want to come back. I know this to be true because I'm already planning my next visit! **GN**

GOOD NEWS IS COMING TO DINNER!

We will feature a local food critic's thoughts as they dine in Fayetteville. This month Michelle Allison visited Old Taft Depot.

Michelle Allison
Michelleallison615@yahoo.com

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Good Stories

▲ Kelley and Kyley Spindle
Photography by Brooke Snyder

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WHEN YOU shop locally, you're making a statement – and not the kind that causes controversy or makes people pick sides. You're taking a stand for your neighbors. You're spending your time and money on people who are just like you. Our local stores probably don't have billionaire investors, but they can have the most important investment of all. It means more. It has a greater impact on lives. And it lasts much longer than the ink on a printed contract. You have the opportunity to be that investor. And no, we're not talking about

getting into a pricey business deal. We're talking about just showing up.

When you walk into a store, and the owner hears the *ding* from the bell above the door, you're giving the gift of love. It's a simple affirmation of a smile and burst of joy that someone walked into this local store, but it's good enough to make someone's day.

That's the statement and investment that can change a life. So visit your local businesses. Your support changes not only you and the owner but the community as a whole. **GN**



Fayetteville



Evelleys Treasures

Crafting Memories

Evelleys Treasures invites you to make your own today.

By Tina Neeley // Photography by Brooke Snyder



▲ Kylee Spindle

TREASURES ARE something highly prized or valued, yet not so easily defined. Our treasures may have no value in the form they exist but become priceless when they connect us to a dear friend or family member. A dollar store platter displayed in a china cabinet never fails to spark memories of Sunday dinner around Grandma's table. The souvenir mug from your family's beach trip in the '90s is your favorite for morning coffee. The ivy trailing from the chipped ceramic pot on your windowsill takes you back to an evening with friends gathered around a studio table, laughing and painting.

Kelley Spindle understands tomorrow's memories often live in the treasures we make today. The hunt for such memory-making prompted her search for a paint-your-own pottery studio like the one she and her family frequented when they lived in Albany, Georgia. She found Simpler Times Ceramic Crafts. A Facebook post said the shop was moving from Cowan to Winchester, so Spindle called for the new address only to find out it'd not reopened and might be closed forever.

"Well, do you think you would want to sell the business?" Spindle asked the sweet voice of Mrs. Mary Bledsoe on the other end.



Kelley Spindle



▲ Kiley and Kelley Spindle

She was as surprised by the question as Mrs. Mary, who said she didn't know but would talk it over with her husband, Danny, while they were out of town.

"I left my number, and as they say, the rest is history," said Spindle.

Evelleys Treasures opened on July 25, 2023. The new paint-your-own ceramic shop maintains the heart of Simpler Times Ceramic Crafts while expanding upon the foundation of the former store. Located on Huntsville Highway, the shop's name combines parts of Spindle's three children's names: Everett, Annabelle, and Kiley.

"I say Evelleys Treasures has been in the works for many years — at least the name has," she said. "It's a name I made up with the help of my Mom when she was alive."

The prior owners of Simpler Times Ceramic Crafts have been gracious in their support of Evelleys Treasures.

Spindle said, "Though the store name has changed, and there is a new owner, you will still find what I hope is the love and relaxation started by such a sweet family. Mr. Danny and Mrs. Mary had a wonderful shop. I'm so glad they've helped me start my business and have trusted me, a com-

plete stranger, to follow in their footsteps."

Book a birthday party, date night, or girls night out, and paint your own ceramic piece while you enjoy the snacks and beverages that you provide. Watch Evelleys Treasures' Facebook page for special events like the monthly Read and Paint, where young children enjoy storytime, light snacks, and a themed painting project. More events are in the works and will be announced on the studio's page when scheduled.

"Our motto is, 'We want you to come in and make memories and treasures that will last a lifetime,'" said Spindle.



“

The biggest reward is the people who have come in. They've been wonderful and supportive. I love meeting new people and hearing how they remember doing their own ceramics.

- Kelley Spindle

Like all new businesses, there are challenges, but Spindle finds the positive in them. Getting the word out about a new place to create your own treasures takes time, especially when its owner is still relatively new to the area.

She said, “The biggest reward is the people who have come in. They've been wonderful and supportive. I love meeting new people and hearing how they remember doing their own ceramics.”

It's a shared connection. Spindle's memories of painting ceramics with her three children led her to this new chapter of her life, even though she never imagined owning a studio before she called Simpler Times Ceramic Crafts, hoping to book a painting session for her and her youngest daughter.

Coming full circle, the Spindle family now makes new memories, helping others create ceramic treasures. All three children and Spindle's husband have roles in the business operations.

“I couldn't do it without them,” she said. “We still have a lot to learn, but I love having the space to be creative and let other creative minds grow.”

For Spindle, the shop isn't just a canvas for creativity; it's a tapestry woven with memories. Each mug holds a chipped dream, each vase cradles a whisper of laughter, and each plate reflects a shared family meal. Spindle and her family aren't just selling ceramics; they're custodians of stories, witness to

the quiet magic that unfolds when the brushes silently bring a piece to life as imagined by its maker. And that is more precious than any gilded glaze. **GN**

Evvellys Treasures Ceramic Paint Studio is located at 2634 Huntsville Hwy., Suite A, Fayetteville, and can be reached at (931) 532-0713. Follow the studio on Facebook for special announcements.



Brooke Fanning

Family Serving Family

Brooke Gallant Fanning and her family stand with Lincoln County's grieving hearts.

By Tina Neeley // Photography by Brooke Snyder

IT'S A familiar but uncomfortable tradition and way of life. Countless times, we've walked the sidewalk as slowly as possible to the front doors of the funeral home, mentally rehearsing our condolences or recalling our favorite memories. It's an uncomfortable dance with the past and the present designed to give closure and comfort to grieving friends and families. We know our way to its kitchen and restrooms, and we know before the doors open that the fragrance of lilies will be as likely as the patterned throws and decorative wind chimes sent in memory of the one whose time here has passed.

At one time or another, before the obituary appeared in the local paper, we sat with family around a table in the funeral home's conference room. Overwhelmed by the decisions to be made and consumed with the loss of someone so dear and close to us, the kindness and compassion of people like Brooke Gallant Fanning, a third-generation funeral director at Gallant-Riverview Funeral Home, moved our hearts.

In 1952, Brooke's grandparents, Charlie and Lee Gallant, began serving Lincoln County families at Gal-

lant Funeral Home at 119 N. Main Ave. Their oldest son, Brad, followed in their footsteps and owns the business today, now located at 508 W. College St. The Gallant family cares for your family, a message Brooke sends loud and clear as she continues her grandmother's legacy.

"My grandmother was quite the woman and trailblazer. She was very small in stature but very big in perseverance. She became a funeral director and ambulance driver at a time when there were very few women pursuing such a career. She was the first female licensed ambulance driver and funeral director in our community and served as an ambulance driver until 1972, when the hospital took over the ambulance service," said Brooke.

Lee's presence had a calming effect during difficult times. "She brought compassion and a motherly approach to serving families at times of grief," Brooke said. "Oftentimes people are unsure of what to do after someone dies, and she was very good to hold their hand or hug their neck and reassure them they were doing great and that they would make it through this difficult time."

Growing up, Brooke and her family lived in an apartment at the Hazel Green branch of the funeral home, which has been sold. Her father grew up in the residence incorporated into the original North Main Avenue location. The needs of local residents ordered their day-to-day lives; death and grief were and are a normal presence.

“Growing up in the funeral business made me understand the importance of not only having funerals but also the importance of the job of a funeral director and how that service ministers to families who are grieving,” said Brooke.

The many tasks and work behind the scenes are tailored to each family served. Just as no one grieves the same, no two services are the same. Brooke and her family serve the same families year after year and generation after generation, honored to know they are trusted to take care of loved ones during such a time.

But the little girl who grew up playing “funeral home” with her sisters didn’t always expect to follow in the footsteps of her dad and grandparents. Lee and Brad took over operations of the family’s two funeral homes and its cemetery, Riverview Memorial Gardens, after Charlie’s death in 1991. The Hazel Green location was sold in 2003 when Lee’s health began to decline, but she continued to work in the business until her death in 2008.

When Lee’s health began to decline, Brooke felt the call to carry on her grandmother’s legacy of serving families with compassion and concern. She holds a bachelor’s degree in business and marketing from Auburn University and obtained her funeral degree from John A. Gupton Mortuary College. Brooke is married to John Fanning and lives in Elora on his family’s Century Farm with their two-year-old daughter, Sloane. John, an educator, helps at the funeral home whenever time allows.

Brooke said, “My greatest challenge is balancing motherhood and home life, which is my very most important calling, with the demands of my job. Funeral service is a 24/7, 365 job, and it should be. I always take into account that while working weekends and holidays can become draining, my job is to serve a family who has lost a loved one.

“And I’m very fortunate to be able to provide that service. I want my daughter to grow up and remember that her mom was able to help people in a way that many others can’t. Funeral directing isn’t a job most people are drawn to, but it’s just a way of life for me. I’ve never not known the funeral business and this way of life.”

The Gallant-Riverview Funeral Home stands as a testament to the Gallant family’s commitment to their community. It remains a place where compassion and care converge — a sanctuary for those seeking solace during life’s most challenging moments. It’s family serving family. Serving the community since 1952, the Gallant family remains devoted to a timeless mission of offering comfort and understanding when it’s needed most. **GN**

Gallant-Riverview Funeral Home is located at 508 W. College St., Fayetteville. For more information, visit gallantfuneralhome.com or call (931) 433-4511.





“

My grandmother was quite the woman and trailblazer. She was very small in stature but very big in perseverance.

- Brooke Fanning



English Family Molasses

A Sweet Southern Tradition

The English family honors “Molasses Man’s” request.

By Tina Neeley // Photos provided by Crystal English



▲ Jimmy English

FRESHLY BREWED coffee steaming in your favorite cup patiently waits as you fill a small plate with pats of butter. You slowly pour sorghum syrup over them, then swirl it together until the sweet, amber, ooey-goey goodness is just right for your hot buttermilk biscuit. You don’t rush it; you savor it. It’s not just something sweet to finish your breakfast; it’s an experience. And for one area family, crafting sorghum molasses is a seventh-generation tradition.

Every year, the English family fires up the stove under the cooker and connects electricity to the presser mill originally powered by mules. Timing is everything, from the perfect weather (a cloudy day is not your friend) to skimming and pouring at the right time. They’ve never missed a year.

For one day in late fall, the past is alive, and life slows down. On the Century Family Farm deeded to William Bryson English and his wife, Sarah Jane Kidd English, upon their marriage in 1867, William became the family’s first-generation molasses maker. He passed the sweet tradition to his youngest son,



Tim, Jedidiah, and Buddy English

Charlie Ross English, who taught his son, James Cullum English. The skill was passed on from him to his son, Jimmy Thurston English.

Jimmy Thurston “Molasses Man” English didn’t want the tradition to fade like sepia photographs in albums of memories. Like those before him, Molasses Man understood the value of the relationships and bonds formed when a family works together, catching the juice mashed from the sorghum cane and hovering above the stove, faces semi-obscured by the wisps of the cooker’s smoke. It’s a labor of love, and he wanted his son, Buddy, to preserve it.

But the work begins in spring when Buddy’s son, Jedidiah, plants three or four acres in a tall, broad-leaf plant that resembles corn and isn’t to be confused with the sugar cane used in traditional molasses. Sorghum loves our Southern climate’s hot and dry conditions, and farmers loved the cheaper, more accessible sweetener when it was first introduced.

Buddy said, “Seed is readily available in several different places. You can keep the seed back and replant it, and co-op gets the old-time sorghum that Granddaddy used to plant.”

Like the seeds of tradition first planted on the property over 150 years ago, good things take time. Early spring rains and summer’s sun coerce the cane out of the soil, and when the days grow shorter and the nights cooler, it’s time to make molasses.

The family pairs off as grinders and cookers. Grinders cut the cane fresh from the field, and its pressed juice is heated in the cooker.

“A lot of people kept the circulating pan, but you can’t get it as thick as we do with the stationary pan,” Buddy said. “You have to get the skimmings off, and it’s thicker when it comes off.”



▲ Jedidiah, Bryson, Charlie, and Buddy English

This isn’t the time when a little goes a long way. It takes 10 gallons of juice to produce one gallon of molasses.

Buddy said, “We make 30 to 40 gallons a year. We don’t make a lot; we just do it to keep the tradition alive. The tradition is that the granddaddy taught the grandson how to cook in my generation. My granddaddy was doing the mule while the other men were doing the cookers.”

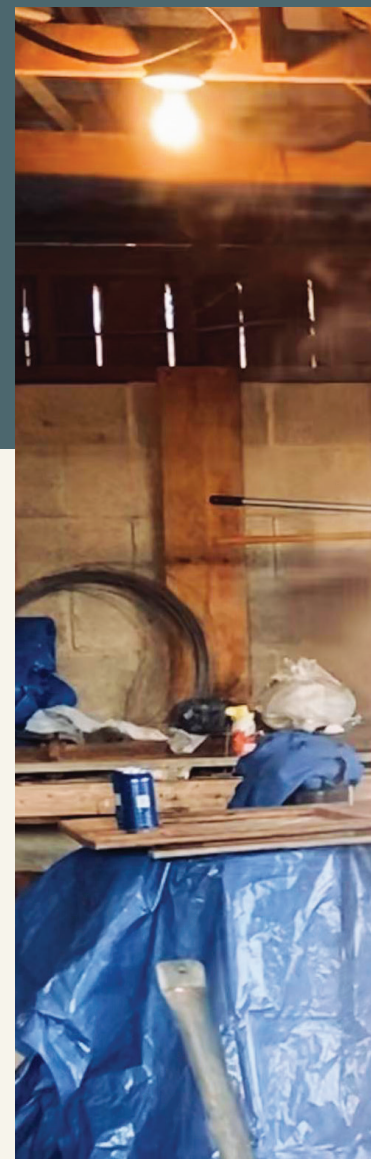
Today, Jedidiah carries the molasses torch, honoring the wishes of Molasses Man, and passing it down like Jimmy wanted.

Today, Buddy joins Jedidiah at the cooker as Jedidiah continues the tradition with his children, Emree, William Bryson, Charlie Ross, and Jeremiah — two of whom are named after previous generations.

“They’re learning. They’re young, but they’re learning,” Buddy said about the latest generation of molasses makers.

It may be amber-colored, but it’s more like liquid gold. A limited number of jars are available at Fayetteville Lumber, and the English grandchildren sell some directly to those lucky enough to catch them.

For a time, school buses filled with members of the local Future Farmers of America group gathered to watch the family work. Neighbors who never tire of watching



► Jedidiah, Jeremiah, and Buddy English

the time-honored process continue to enjoy watching the family work today.

As the embers in the cooker fade and the aroma of sorghum interweaves with the autumn air, you realize the syrup isn’t just a sweetener; it’s a living history book, its pages whispering of resilience, family bonds, and the enduring spirit of tradition.

Seven generations have poured their hearts into this legacy, each year echoing the one before. From Charlie Ross English’s first harvest to Jedidiah’s son looking over his shoulder at the cooker, the flame of tradition has never flickered. Yes, time brought changes — tractors re-



▲ Charlie Ross English

placed mules, and electricity powers the presser mill — but the core remains unchanged. The patience with the weather, the meticulous skimming, and the shared laughter around the cooker are the timeless ingredients that give the molasses its soul.

In the eager eyes of the next generation, the English family's sorghum story doesn't end with the final jar. It waits, simmering like the golden syrup itself, ready to be passed down, savored, and shared, ensuring that the sweet taste of tradition continues to warm hearts and connect generations for years to come. **GN**

“

We make 30 to 40 gallons a year. We don't make a lot; we just do it to keep the tradition alive. The tradition is that the granddaddy taught the grandson how to cook in my generation.

- Buddy English

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▲ Lance Bonin
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Read Across Fayetteville for Dr. Suess' Birthday - March 2



Photography by Brooke Snyder

Starting at 11 a.m. on March 2, readings on the hour at The Book Inn made for fun in Lincoln County. Friends came to the square to celebrate Read Across Fayetteville for Dr. Seuss' birthday. Birthday cake made by Suzy Q Bakery was served at noon.



1. Eva and Charlotte Howard 2. Charlie Byrd, Melvie Myrick, Mary Gentry Byrd, and Josiah Dunn 3. Lincoln Ogle
4. Karen Welch 5. Amy and Hannah Howell 6. Tammy Moore and Gary Houk

Intro to Wreath Making with Heidi Ables - March 3



Photography by Brooke Snyder

Friends purchased tickets in advance to Intro to Wreath Making with Heidi Ables at the Fayetteville Arts Center. On March 3, a large variety of wreaths were available to create your own way. Memories were made, and the finished products were beautiful.



1. Heidi Ables 2. Nicki Urban and Mary Jo Dulaney 3. Tracy Holder 4. Angelea Mateo-Sullivan, Debbie O'Farrell, Sarah Hornbuckle, Jean Gully Reed, Abby Underwood, Camille Hester, Tracy Holder, Heidi Ables, Sherri Lyon, Chris Golden, Nicki Urban, Brenda Miles, Trina Hyman, MaryAnn Meyer-Schuck, and Mary Jo Dulaney

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campblount@gmail.com
www.campblount.com

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<https://lincoln.tennessee.edu/4-h-youth-development/>

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Facebook: Lincoln County Anti-Drug Coalition

Beyond Sorrow

Grief Support Group

6:00 PM at

Higgins Funeral Home

Led by Joe Self & Hope DeJarnatt

2024 Meeting Dates

April 25 • May 23 • June 27 • July 25
August 22 • September 26 • October 24
November 21 • December 19

Beyond sorrow is a grief support group with the purpose of allowing those who have lost a loved one to share their struggles with others who have experienced a similar loss.

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- Learn how to ask for and receive support.
- Learn how to offer support to others.
- Learn ways of problem-solving from peers.

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