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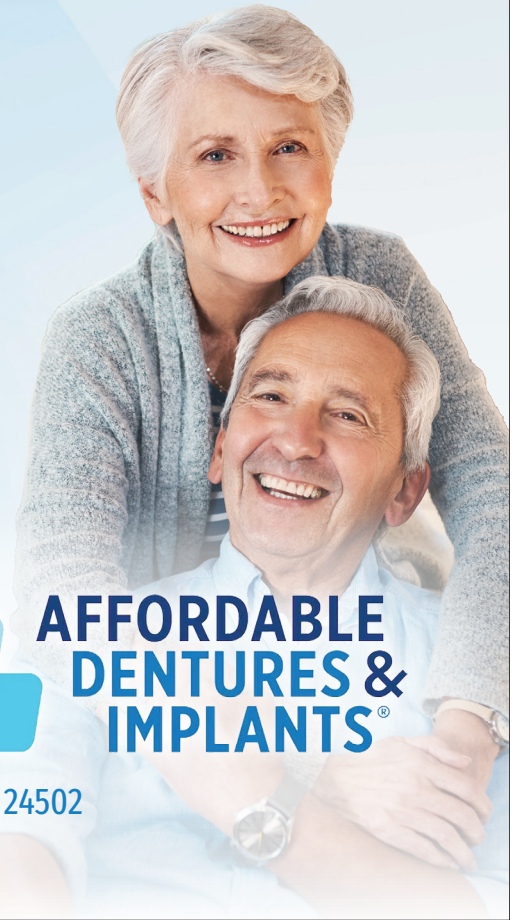
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Tell us something good



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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Where champions are made

Our hometown courts and fields introduce stars to the game.

THE CROWD fills the stands, row after row, of people in our high school's colors. The family in front of you sits down with a fresh hot dog from the concession stand. It's still steaming with a drizzle of ketchup laced across the top from end to end. It smells so good you think you "just might have to go to the concession stand and get your own." On the way there, you run into your old favorite teacher. You run into your old high school crush, wave, and maybe catch up. In the background, the scoreboard keeps ticking up, and the crowd's roar gets louder. The moths and other critters dance around the floodlights tens of feet in the air.

We've all experienced what it feels like to be at a high school football game under the Friday night lights. We know what it feels like to get the jitters as the first play begins — the excitement when our team scores the first touchdown. For towns across the country, sports like high school football bring us together. It gives cheerleaders the experience of a lifetime, pushing them to perform impressive stunts, flips, and lifts. The band students learn to perform in front of hundreds of people and how to work together to

make art. Hometown games are a perfect mixture of fun, family, nostalgia, and teamwork.

Healthy competition teaches things you can't learn alone at a desk. It shows the band, the players, and the cheerleaders how to have discipline. It shows them how to treat others. It pushes them to be humble and show sportsmanship. Because while we win today, next week may hand us a rough defeat. These qualities help make our town a better place. And the good news is — our town isn't the only place building up the next generation of young leaders. Schools across the nation, from California to Maine, are showing students what it means to be a team player.

As we grow older, we run out of time to do the things we love. We forget what it feels like to sit in the crowded stands with a warm hotdog in our hand and balance Dr. Pepper in our lap after sitting down. There's a hidden treasure in our county, and we shouldn't take it for granted. Hometown sports have shaped who we are, and they'll shape the next generation — and the one after that. Our hometown courts and fields introduce stars to the game.

This is where champions are made. GN

Wesley Bryant,
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

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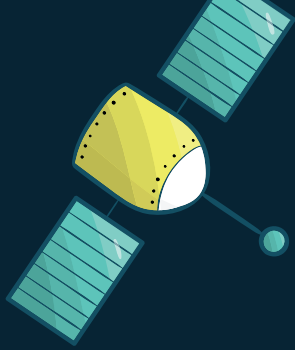
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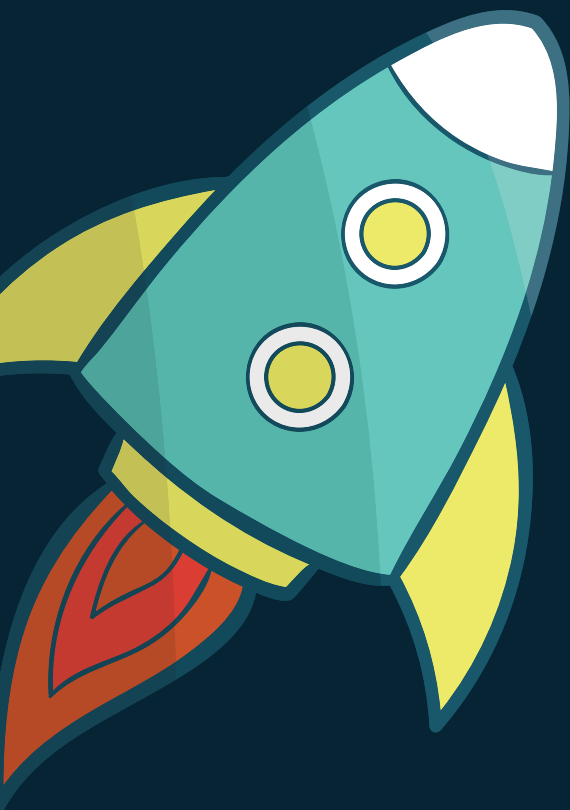
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Drones, robotics, and space have become key components of Forest Middle School's curriculum thanks to a NASA collaboration.

By Dave Lenehan // Photography by Chris Morris and submitted by Cindy Watson





Cindy Watson







WHAT DO space exploration, drone piloting, and robotics have in common? If your child is a student at Forest Middle School (FMS), all three subjects are taught as part of the school's science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) and career and technical education curriculum. The combination of the three subjects owes much of its start and continuing growth to STEM and career and technical education teacher Cindy Watson.

To better understand how Watson and FMS students got to the place of entering drone competitions and developing robots that can navigate maps of the planet Mars, it's important to see where Watson's connections led her over the past few years.

In addition to being a full-time middle school teacher, Watson works for the NASA Space Grant program, where she serves as a master teacher. She teaches online during the school year. In the summer, she spends some of her time either at the NASA facility at Wallops Island on the Eastern Shore of Virginia or at NASA Langley, working with some of the high school student academies NASA offers.

Last summer, when Watson and her students were at NASA Langley, she met a STEM coordinator for the facility. That coordinator told Watson that NASA wanted to help some schools around the region start drone competition teams. NASA even said it would help fund the teams. Once the connection with NASA's drone program was established, FMS also applied for and received the grant.


Watson, along with fellow FMS teachers, Karen Quintana and Steve Hammer, formed eight teams of kids who practiced drone flying and coding — software programming that needs to be written for the drones to fly. Watson pointed out that in competitions, every team has the exact same model of drone, so the testing falls much more on the students' hands-on skills.



During the competition, one of the categories is called “alliance flying.” Watson explained that students from different schools observe each other’s skills and draw up teams that could include some of the best pilots or coders from various schools. Watson said that high school competitors approached her middle school students and asked them to join the high school drone teams as alliance partners. That’s the reputation the FMS team holds.

In May, FMS students achieved great success at the Drone Competition National Championship in Chattanooga, Tennessee. Watson reported that the teams finished nationally fourth and eighth for flying and 10th and 23rd for piloting and coding skills. At the same time, Watson was recognized as the 2024 National Coach of the Year for the REC Foundation through the national championship hosted by Tennessee Valley Robotics.

After the team came home, Watson said, “I am grateful for our fabulous coaching staff, supportive families, and amazing students!” To FMS parents and local team sponsors, she added, “Thank you for believing in us!”



Watson’s connection to NASA also led some of her students to participate in a Q&A video session with astronaut Loral O’Hara at the International Space Station. Watson said that students submitted their questions via video, and then, through a NASA satellite downlink, O’Hara answered the questions on camera

from the space station. Watson’s students and some from Brookville High School were able to do a similar but live on-camera Q&A exchange with former astronaut Fred Haise from Apollo 13.

The robotics design side of the curriculum is also tied to space education. Watson said that her students draw topographical maps of Mars. Then, students build a robot vehicle to navigate specific locations and planet features that serve as key destination points. Additionally, the Mars vehicle has a drone attached to it that must be flown successfully from one point to another on the map.

Over the summer, Watson and other teachers conducted drone, robotics, and rocketry camps for fourth through eighth graders, which were taught by many of her former FMS students who are now freshmen and sophomores at the high school.

Why such a strong focus on the STEM curriculum?

Watson explained, “I want to share my love for math and science. They say 80% of jobs that are available for graduating students are STEM — then we should be spending 80% of our time on STEM.” She added a side note, “What if this is what it takes for a student to go into science or math?”

For Watson, having just one kid make that move because of their experience with the FMS drones, robotics, or space curricula would make all the time and energy totally worthwhile. GN





BETTER TOGETHER, STRONGER THAN EVER



MEMORIAL DAY 2024
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Carole Friend



**Nonprofit works to change the T1DE
for those with diabetes**

By Amanda E. West // Photography by Chris Morris and submitted by Nicole Marie Andraka



 Carole Friend

CAELA COHEN was like every other lively 5-year-old — until she wasn't. Tea parties with her favorite teddy bear and pillow forts sprawling across the living room carpet turned into round-the-clock monitoring of her blood sugar and painful insulin injections following her diagnosis of Type 1 diabetes. Caela, along with her parents, Jordon and Caroline, lived in Florida, and although her dad received the same diagnosis at 13, the Cohens found themselves wading into uncharted, turbulent waters. Fortunately, they found a local support group that offered encouragement, ready-made friendships, and an abundance of resources.

"The complexities were daunting, especially when she was first diagnosed," said Caroline. "The level of constant care, life-sustaining decisions regarding insulin needs, exercise, micromanaging her food intake with insulin dosing, sustaining blood sugars through growth spurts, or while traveling, combined with frequent sick days, hospital stays — it was absolutely overwhelming, and was a personal SOS call for us to form a similar support group when we moved to Virginia."

The Cohens founded "T1DE," which stands for Type 1 Diabetes Experience. This grassroots network provided a space for Type 1 families to connect and learn more about their child's diagnosis while providing crafts and playdates so that, for a time, their kids could just be "regular kids". As word spread and atten-

dance grew, so did the desire to fund programs for families and to increase awareness among their community. In 2015, the organization became an official 501(c)(3) nonprofit and now receives proceeds from the Memorial Day 10K and 2-mile walk.

"When we moved here, Caela was entering adolescence, which comes with many additional stresses and challenges," said Caroline. "Sharing resources and experiences with other families was my anchor while navigating through those times. We've met parents over the years who tell us how isolated they and their child feel. In fact, many parents, children, and adolescents reach out because they are having mental health concerns. Diabetes affects the family unit as a whole."

Like the Cohens, Carole Friend is also passionate about Type 1 diabetes. After her daughter received a diagnosis at the tender age of 2, Friend began working with Breakthrough T1D (formerly the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation or JDRF) but longed for a group closer to home that would eliminate the need for families to travel up to two hours one way to participate in activities.

Friend said, "I struggled to manage the constant blood sugar swings and often felt alone on this journey. When I found T1DE, not only did I feel supported, but my child had peers and mentors who had diabetes just like her. I was able to talk to other parents going through some of the same struggles I was, and I learned more about diabetes. It really made a difference."

“Sharing resources
and experiences
with other families
was my anchor
while navigating
through those
times.”

-Caroline Cohen



Caroline Cohen

Diabetes, especially Type 1, is becoming more commonly diagnosed, and the ages of children diagnosed are becoming increasingly younger. Even with the invention of glucose monitors and apps that track and alert families to impending dangers, families, teachers, coaches, grandparents, and anyone close to someone with Type 1 or Type 2 diabetes must remain vigilant.

“With younger children, it’s difficult to match the amount of insulin needed with the food they eat and their spontaneous exercise or activity,” said Friend. “While insulin is life-giving, an excess brings on life-threatening hypoglycemia, while a lack of insulin leads to hyperglycemia. Most [Type 1] children experience a rollercoaster of blood glucose throughout the day despite the careful attention of their parents and newer and better technology. This affects their ability to participate in life activities and increases their risk of future complications. They navigate this as their peers and educators around them lack a solid understanding of the nearly invisible challenges they experience.”

T1DE now offers a range of programs for those with Type 1 and Type 2 diabetes, including educational opportunities, camps for families, and funding training to school districts across the state. T1DE has a free book program instilling that knowledge is power, especially for families and individuals living with diabetes. The organization helps diabetics have access to needed medical equipment, funds scholarships for equine therapy through Serenity Strides, and partners with the Prayer Pony Foundation to offer “prayer ponies” to children who receive a diagnosis.

On Memorial Day, T1DE hosted its annual 10K and 2-mile walk. Little Critters Petting Zoo, face painting, Balloon Dude Travis, crafts, and Kona Ice provided fun for the entire family after the race. T1DE will continue to be a champion for everyone living with diabetes. **GN**

For more information, visit www.t1de.org.



ONE MILE AT A TIME

An 18-year-old treks
the Appalachian Trail — alone.

By Gabriel Grant Huff // Photos submitted by Mary Johnson



Byron Johnson on
Mount Katahdin, the
northern terminus of
the Appalachian Trail



▲ Byron with his mom and sister after completing the Appalachian Trail

FEELING SWEATY, tired, underprepared, and alone, Byron Johnson wanted to give up. He had walked over 70 miles, not even an eighth of the way to his targeted destination. Johnson had not packed enough food, so resupply trips were necessary. The teen thought maybe he made a mistake, having yet to experience the most difficult parts of the journey. But then he saw it — rows upon rows of hills covered in trees and bushes, running along with the outstretched horizon until firmament met land. Saliva's taste of victory formed in Johnson's mouth as he breathed in the scents of the Blue Ridge Mountains at the Georgia-North Carolina border. Beholding the glory of the land fabricated from highly deformed metamorphic rocks of the earliest geologic age and the endless sky is when this 18-year-old knew he could persevere on a journey that had just begun.

"Near the beginning, I almost gave up just because I wasn't sure if I could do it. And then I reached the first state border, and it pushed me to keep going because I realized I could actually make it."

-Byron Johnson

Every year, thousands of hikers endeavor to complete a thru-hike of the Appalachian Trail, famously called the A.T. Only about one in four sees the expedition's end, and anyone is fortunate enough to avoid encounters with bears, snakes, pathogens, or dangerous people. The notorious thru-hike spans 14 states of the Eastern United States, from Springer Mountain in Georgia to Mount Katahdin in Maine, and is over 2,190 miles long. The massive trek usually takes five to seven months to complete. In sports, the difficulty level for some parts of the world's longest hiking-only footpath may be described as "All-Madden."

Such a daunting resume failed to deter Byron Johnson. The West Virginia native moved to Virginia with his family at 12 years old. The relocation introduced



him to the Appalachian Trail. The teen desired to complete the thru-hike as his K-12 years were coming to an end.

“I was just getting out of high school, and a lot of people were telling me this will probably be the only chance I get,” Johnson recalled. “I figured this might be my only chance to go and hike, so I took it.”

Johnson began his trip alone in May 2023. However, he did not start the journey fully prepared, failing to plan as much as others. Weighing 220 pounds — probably the heaviest he had ever been — Johnson was also not physically primed. Starting out, he traveled eight miles at a time, going slowly.

“Near the beginning, I almost gave up just because I wasn’t sure if I could do it. And then I reached the first state border, and it pushed me to keep going because I realized I could actually make it,” Johnson said. “It was kind of just the feeling of crossing the border. There hadn’t been a big accomplishment so far, and I finally had something that I could actually prove that I had done something with.”

Because he started his A.T. hike later than most, he saw few people trekking about, and loneliness kicked in. At times, the hike felt more like a chore than a pleasure. He pressed forward, eventually running into other groups he could travel with. The most joyful part of the journey became meeting those new people and even forming relationships, which came in handy as fellow hikers encouraged him through fatigue all the way to his final destination in Maine, which he reached by the end of October.

Each crossed border provided more energy and a sense of success. The 18-year-old conquered rough terrains, elevation changes, and extreme weather between them. In the summer months, he endured temperatures above 95 degrees. During the early and latter parts of the journey, he battled cold weather that once reached below 10 degrees one night in the Smoky Mountains, forcing him to wait out the cold, huddled in a hammock. Heavy rain was common. Johnson specifically recalled the time a tropical storm caught him and others. The 18-year-old even saw about 40 black bears throughout the long hike — but they never posed a threat. Through it all, he did not quit, though he sometimes wanted to throw in the towel. Thankfully, his previous experience as a Boy Scout helped as he had learned the exterior skills of the outdoors and the interior values of relationships, hard work, and perseverance.



In the end, Johnson achieved his A.T. hiking goal, and for this young man, that’s part of what makes a true champion — the relentlessness of “going after your dreams until you accomplish them,” as Johnson said.

To all the dreamers out there — keep fighting. Never quit. The last storm will pass, and what was once a dream will turn into a reality, even if it takes one mile at a time. **GN**

Flavor ON WHEELS

Forest's food truck fleet

THE BACKYARD is a food truck park where you can find eats for any occasion, hosting Frankly Delicious Dogs, Al Pastor Tacos, American Melting Wagon, La Cocina del las Catrachitas, and more. The outdoor seating is covered so that you can find shade in the summer months, and it includes firepits, which make this a year-round favorite for food truck lovers. The BackYard is a personal favorite of mine, and I am always shocked to hear that locals have never heard of it.

On this trip to The BackYard, we made a stop by La Cocina de las Catrachitas for rice and beef pastelitos — a stuffed savory pastry — and delicious pupusas served with a citrusy slaw and refried beans. The pastelitos made me think of Cuban comfort food: warm, savory, balanced, and authentic. Between the smells and sounds wafting through the window of the food truck, it was clear that this meal was made with love and was born of family tradition.

After La Cocina de las Catrachitas, we walked over to Frankly Delicious Dogs and ordered a Rooney's Dog, a Trouble Baby, and fresh lemonade. The Rooney's Dog was the star of the show, loaded with toppings and tasting like a backyard barbecue on a bun with barbecue sauce, bacon, fried onions,





and baked beans. My husband said it was the best hotdog he had ever had.

In the last year, The BackYard has hosted drive-in movies, live music, trunk-or-treat, a family fall festival, and a fundraiser for a local sports program. So, whether you are in the mood to take your food to go or to sit and enjoy good food with good entertainment and good company, stop by The BackYard and tell everyone Good News sent you! GN

GOOD NEWS IS COMING TO DINNER!

We will feature a local food critic's thoughts as they dine in Lynchburg. This month Grace Hayes visited The BackYard.

The BackYard

15193 Forest Rd., Forest, VA 24551
www.thebackyardforestva.com
thebackyardforestva@gmail.com
Facebook: The BackYard Forest VA



Tailgate like a **CHAMPION**

Kick off the season with these game day recipes.

WHEN THE stadium lights blaze and the roar of the crowd echoes, true fans know the game-day experience begins in the parking lot. Celebrate your team's spirit with these tailgating recipes, which will fuel your revelry from kickoff to the final whistle.

From handheld classics to shareable spreads, these dishes pack bold flavors and endless energy — the perfect sustenance for cheering your champions to victory. Fire up the grill and get ready to tailgate in championship style! **GN**

Hot 'N' Tangy Wings

Submitted by Dennis Gardner

3 1/2 lbs. chicken wings
1 c. barbecue sauce
1/2 c. hot sauce
1/2 c. honey
1 t. brown sugar
1 t. dry mustard

Clean and dry chicken wings. Cut and discard wing tips. Cut the wings at their joints to make two separate pieces. Place chicken pieces in broiler for 8-10 minutes until chicken is browned, flipping pieces once. Place chicken in a slow cooker. In a small mixing bowl, combine barbecue sauce, hot sauce, honey, brown sugar, and mustard. Pour over wings. Cover and cook on low for 4 1/2-5 hours or on high for 2-2 1/2 hours.



Submit your recipes to be included in Good News Magazine and the Exchange Cookbook: www.southernaprons.com



Potato Salad

Submitted by Debbie Henderson

1 bag potatoes, 5 lb., cooked, peeled, and diced
6 dill pickles, chopped
6 hard boiled eggs, chopped
salt, to taste
pepper, to taste
5 ribs of celery, chopped
1/2 onion, chopped
1 can sliced black olives, drained
mayonnaise, to coat mixture
mustard, to color

Mix cooked potatoes, pickles, eggs, salt, pepper, celery, onion, and olives in large bowl. Add enough mayonnaise to coat mixture. Add just enough mustard to color salad. Chill salad for at least 2 hours.



Calico Cheese Dip

Submitted by Nancy Johnston

4 c. Monterey Jack cheese, shredded
4 oz. can green chilies, chopped
2 ¼ oz. can sliced, ripe olives, drained
½ c. minced, fresh parsley
4 green onions, sliced
3 med. tomatoes, diced and seeded
1 pkg. Italian salad dressing mix
tortilla chips

In a mixing bowl, combine the cheese, chilies, olives, onions, tomatoes, and parsley. Prepare salad dressing mix according to package directions. Pour over cheese mixture and mix well. Serve with tortilla chips.





JAMES CITY

**TURNING
THE PAGE ON
UNCERTAINTY**

James Citty's career pivot redefined his calling.

By Tina Neeley // Photography by Chris Morris



THE UNCERTAIN future stretched before James Citty like the blank pages of a new journal. His career as a youth pastor, which he believed was his calling, was now a chapter in his life — not the story. With the first home they ever purchased in their rearview mirror, the young family of four moved to North Carolina when Citty accepted a position teaching an elective course in Bible history in the county of his childhood. He accepted the job, assuming it would be a brief detour before returning to his former work.

“What I quickly realized was that teaching was everything I loved about being a youth pastor. I got to work with young people every day, and I felt a sense of fulfillment getting to support them,” Citty reflected.

A promotion at Liberty University for his wife, Samantha, prompted the

family's return to Lynchburg and enabled Citty to build on the momentum he found teaching in North Carolina. He settled into a challenging routine, balancing full-time positions as a father, husband, student, and employee.

“She did all the cooking, was the primary caregiver for our two day care-aged kids, helped volunteer with nonprofits, and worked a full-time job,” he said. “Since completing my master's degree, I now cook every meal. I don't know if I can overstate how much she sacrificed commuting to work before we moved to Lynchburg or the sacrifices caring for the kids.”

His college work shaped his understanding of the weight of assignments on his future students.

He said, “You understand more of what it's like for them as they take multiple classes and get assigned hours of homework. It

made me rethink how much work I assign outside of school because I want to help students understand the importance of boundaries and developing a life beyond just school or work.”

Upon obtaining his Master of Arts in teaching from Liberty University in December 2019, a new chapter opened in his life with a position at Heritage High School. Today, scribbled comments from his students fill the former blank pages of his future, a touchstone of inspiration and motivation passed along by Citty's student teaching supervisor through her thoughtful gift on his final day of placement. It inspires him still today — the journal with a unique challenge attached. She encouraged him to have students sign it every year.

“I've had kids sign my journal every year since, and it's such an encouraging reminder when I'm having a difficult day,” he said.



I've had kids sign my journal every year since, and it's such an encouraging reminder when I'm having a difficult day.

JAMES CITY

But City's not just a psychology and history teacher. He's also known as the "Voice of Heritage."

"I legitimately laugh a little when people say things like the 'Voice of Heritage' or the 'Voice of the Pioneers.' I never would've applied for a job announcing had it not been for my co-workers. Friends and fellow teachers asked me about it and encouraged me to apply, so I did. Apparently, no one else applied for it, and they hired me," he laughed.

Laughing is a big part of the voice heard at football, basketball, and baseball games.

"My whole motivation going in was that I wanted to have fun," he said, adding that making Mr. Camm, the ball spotter, and players laugh along with him fuels his broadcasting banter. The crowd fun includes singing "Take Me Out to the Ball Game" during his self-proclaimed fifth inning stretch and dad jokes told by his daughter, Lizzy.

And that same voice resonates in the classroom, both literally and figuratively.



“I like getting people excited and making the atmosphere more fun,” Citty explained. “In the classroom, I tend to have athletes who I already have a natural connection with. I announce their games and get to know them a little bit — to where it gives you a unique relationship as their teacher. It also translates into how I teach. I’m just naturally loud. I don’t yell or raise my voice. I honestly just project really well from years of coaching and growing up in a family where we all talked over one another, so you had to tell good stories and be loud, or else you were getting cut off.”

Heritage High School’s principal, Tim Beatty, agreed, “Without question, Mr. Citty is one of the most enthusiastic and energetic teachers in our building. His energy and presence in the classroom keeps his students alert and engaged throughout the class period. He has a good rapport with his students and uses a variety of instructional strategies and assignments to connect with his students.”

Citty, who also coaches golf and chairs the school’s National Honor Society chapter, does it all because he cares about students and wants to help give them the best. He hopes to leave a lasting, positive impact on his students.

“In the ‘Star Wars’ movie, ‘The Last Jedi,’ Yoda makes this comment that I love and that applies so much to teachers. ‘We are what they grow beyond.’ Students will go beyond and above us as educators in every way imaginable. To know that you made any type of a difference in a young person’s life is a legacy because, hopefully, they’ll carry on that impact by affecting others, and it is just exponential. The idea that our legacy moves through them and beyond is what I hope they remember me as for teaching.”

These are the hopes and dreams written upon the pages of the journal of Citty’s life, still being written with every game called, every assignment given, and every student supported through his choice to follow his calling. **GN**





LUTHER MADDY

**SHAPING
TOMORROW'S
CHAMPIONS
TODAY**

Luther Maddy knows if he can do it, they can, too.

By Tina Neeley // Photography by Chris Morris

FOR YEARS, he watched from the sidelines as his cousins suited up and hit the field. With each pass caught and tackle made, Luther Maddy's love for the game grew, and so did he. He was built for the game and urged by his family to try out for rec and middle school football, but South Florida guidelines admitted players within weight classes, and he was too heavy. He could have settled for following the game from the bleachers, but Maddy didn't give up.

Finally, his time on the field came as a ninth grader. His love for the game grew even greater, but his commitment and dedication to growing as a player exploded in his 11th grade year.

"I started taking it really serious ... when I actually saw that I had some talent, and I was putting in the work to become a big-time player. I had a great senior season, but I'm a late bloomer. I'm a two-star athlete, very lightly recruited," Maddy explained.

Dropping in to check out a rival, Virginia Tech's recruiters liked what they saw in Maddy's game film but were out of scholarships — until a player withdrew, opening a last-minute spot the day before signing day.

"Boom! They say, 'Luther, are you still interested?' It was an instant 'yes,'" enthused Maddy.

Maddy seized that chance, becoming a freshman All-American and multi-year team captain who made All-Conference honors. Yet a trio of knee surgeries, including one derailing his NFL Scouting Combine, threatened his pro career. Though undrafted, he earned camp invites only to suffer season-ending



ADOBE STOCK



I want to be a role model and show them you can be successful through hard work and dedication.

LUTHER MADDY

injuries with the Saints and BC Lions in the Canadian Football League.

“I could have easily given up ... but I continued to persevere and get over that hump,” Maddy said.

Maddy’s drive to maximize every chance stemmed from a deeper motivation — honoring his Haitian immigrant parents’ sacrifices to give him a better life in the United States.

“My entire family’s from Haiti ... they came to the States and gave me an opportunity,” Maddy shared. “The fact that they always kind of looked upon me as one of the success stories — being able to get a football scholarship — I feel like I had some of that weight on my back where I had to perform so I can find a way to give back to my family.”

Witnessing his parents work multiple jobs to provide for their family instilled in Maddy an unrelenting work ethic. A desire to make his parents’ sacrifices worthwhile fueled each obstacle he overcame, from being an overlooked recruit to battling injuries.

“Whenever I came up to those obstacles — realizing they were behind me,

looking at me — I think that really gave me an extra push to keep going,” he said.

The same perseverance that allowed Maddy to go from an under-recruited high school player to a college standout and pro prospect now drives his success as a realtor.

“People ask me all the time, and it’s a catchy slogan, but it really does remind me of football — being in real estate,” he mentioned.

Even on beautiful days perfect for golf, Maddy is hustling — waking up early and staying late to meet clients before heading out of town. In Lynchburg’s saturated market, with over 800 agents, he said he has to find creative ways to outdo the competition, just like outworking opponents on the field.

Maddy’s also leveraging his platform to empower youth in the area through annual football camps and work with the Boys & Girls Club of America and the Y.

“If I can do it, you can do it too,” he tells kids, using his story to inspire them to overcome obstacles and pursue their dreams, just as former players’ camps inspired him growing up.

“Those football camps gave me hope that I could play at a high level, too,” Maddy recalls.

Seeing hometown stars like Brandon Flowers and David Clowney give back motivated him to one day do the same. Now he’s paying it forward, hosting a free camp each July, purposely picking the hottest day to see how dedicated these athletes are. Maddy knows the value of cultivating perseverance — the same grit propelled him from being initially sidelined for his size to becoming an All-Conference player at Virginia Tech.

His nonprofit work also includes volunteering and clothing drives through his organization, MadAssist. However, his most profound impact may be through mentoring at the Boys & Girls Club of America, where he provides young people with a positive male influence.

“I want to be a role model and show them you can be successful through hard work and dedication,” Maddy said. “If they can see it in me, maybe they’ll believe it for themselves, too.”

From the kid on the sideline to the successful former player inspiring the next generation, Maddy motivates youth to cultivate the same relentless spirit that compelled him then and now. Through his football camps, nonprofit initiatives, and mentorship, he’s reflecting the light that shined into his darker places. Maddy’s life proves that no dream is too large when you refuse to stay sidelined.

By empowering young athletes and underserved communities, he ensures they have the tools to step onto their own fields of opportunity. His perseverance completes the cycle from a sideline spectator to a dream inspirer, encouraging others to chase their passions without limits. **GN**

For more information, visit themadassist.com or contact Maddy through email at madassist92@gmail.com.





DJ BEST

**FORGING
CHAMPIONS
ON AND OFF
THE COURT**

An E. C. Glass coach builds character through a family-focused approach.

By Tina Neeley // Photography by Chris Morris



SNEAKERS SQUEAKING on polished hardwood, the rhythmic thump of a bouncing ball, and the crowd's thunderous roar make up the soundtrack of DJ Best's world. But for this passionate E. C. Glass High School basketball coach in Lynchburg, the true echoes resonating long after the final buzzer are the voices of young men whose lives he shapes.

Best's journey into coaching was a natural progression fueled by his lifelong passion for sports and a desire to give back to his community.

"I realized that it's a great way to continue to give back to those around you even if you don't have a lot because you are giving the one thing that most people ask for — time," he explained.

Connected to the school through his wife, Desha, an alumna, Best seized an op-

portunity to volunteer with the basketball program as head coach of the junior varsity (JV) team. He connected instantly with the head coach's philosophy and infectious enthusiasm. When coach Roy Roberson left the program, leading the team was a natural progression.

About the transition, Best said, "The following year, the JV team was moving up to varsity, so they already respected me. We were able to understand [there were] going to be some changes, and we weren't going to be the best, but we had to keep working. We had to believe in the system and how things work and trust that it will improve."

Balancing his coaching duties with a full-time job at L3Harris is a rewarding challenge. Best finds joy and fulfillment in mentoring young athletes while being supported by his family's enthusiasm for the program.



“If you are doing something you love, are you really ‘working?’” he asked.

He doesn't just focus on basketball Xs and Os. He aims to build an integrated system or environment that supports the overall development of his players, the way L3's integrated systems support seamless communication across complex networks. Best's approach to coaching is rooted in creating a family atmosphere where players feel valued and supported both on and off the court. Mandatory study halls, team meals, and bonding activities foster a sense of camaraderie and accountability.

“One of the best things I've done is just a strong implementation of family,” Best explained. “We have mandatory study hall four days a week and team meals before

every game. We do bonding activities, we go hiking, we play things like bingo, and we have a lot of fun. My whole family is involved, and they all love their basketball brothers, sons, and so forth.”

This comprehensive approach extends beyond the court. Best opens his home to his players and remains a constant presence in their lives — even after graduation.

“I try my best to get to know every kid on the team outside of ‘just a basketball player on the team,’ but more so as a person,” he said.

With a current record of 99-37, Best's ultimate goal is to win a state championship, a feat the team narrowly missed in 2023. But his true measure of success lies in his players' personal growth and development. Because of Best, players leave the

basketball court with a mindset of excellence that will change their future

He added, “The goal is that others see their growth. My guys already know I believe in them, and I believe they can be better than any situation that they are put in. I want them to constantly think of ‘what would coach DJ do in this situation?’ An additional goal is to continue to make sure every person graduates and has the next steps in place.”

As he looks towards the future, Best hopes to be remembered not for his win-loss record but for the countless lives he has impacted and the young men he has helped shape into responsible, respected members of their communities.

“When it's time for me to hang it up, what I hope to accomplish is the

▼ DJ and Desir Best



When it's time for me to hang it up, what I hope to accomplish is the continued impact of the youth.

DJ BEST

continued impact of the youth,” he said. “I know people measure success by wins and losses. But as a coach, I want to be remembered for the number of lives I’ve changed, the impact I have made on young men, and how my impact on them from the hardwood helped make the school better but also helped them prepare for the real world.”

In a world where coaches are often judged solely by wins and losses, Best stands apart as a mentor whose true impact extends far beyond the basketball court. The lives of the young men he has guided will carry the echoes of his influence for years to come — a living example of how coaching can shape character and forge lasting bonds that transcend the game itself. **GN**



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Lynchburg Fourth of July Celebration - July 4



Photography by Chris Morris

Lynchburg came alive this Fourth of July with dazzling fireworks shows lighting up the night sky. Families and friends gathered at various spots around the region to celebrate the nation's birthday in vibrant colors. The festivities brought the community together, making for an unforgettable evening filled with joy and patriotism.

1. Heather Alto and family prepare to watch the fireworks

Bedford Farmers Market - July 13



Photography by Chris Morris

In the summer, Lynchburg’s area farmers markets burst with fresh, vibrant produce and handcrafted goods. Local vendors showcase their best seasonal offerings, from juicy berries to crisp vegetables, filling the air with the scent of farm-fresh delights. The markets become lively hubs of activity, where the community gathers to support local farmers and enjoy the taste of summer.



1. You never know what new furry friends you might meet 2. Visitors enjoy the music of Adam Markham
3. Michelle Sparks of Petal Ridge Farms helps a customer pick out the right flowers 4. Man’s best friend loves to take in the sights

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info@weareloveheals.org
www.weareloveheals.org

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www.lynchburghabitat.org

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(434) 845-5939
www.salvationarmypotomac.org

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www.amazementsquare.org

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www.lynchburgdailybread.com

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www.beaconofhopelynchburg.org

Lynchburg Area Veterans Council

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(434) 525-7925
www.alveteranscouncil.weebly.com



Lynchburg Community Action Group Inc.

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www.lyncag.org

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www.lynchburgartclub.org

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www.lynchburghistoricalfoundation.org

Friends of Lynchburg Community Market

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Making An Impact On The Community

"I'm so thankful to see Good News Magazine in my mailbox each month because it's the positive news I've been wanting to spur thoughtful conversations with my two teens about deeper issues, current events, and news. We've been reading the articles together as a way to expand their understanding of the world outside of themselves. Any chance to understand different perspectives and those who are different from us, helps them grow into more understanding people. Thank you for bringing this to Lynchburg, and selfishly, these stories and conversations into my home! What you and your staff are doing is making a difference in our community."

- Keeley C. Tuggle

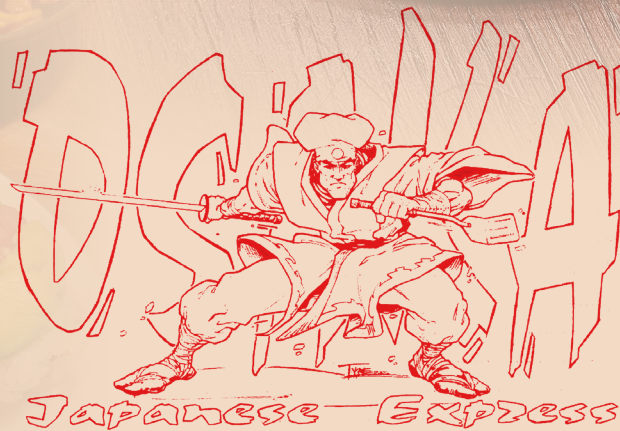
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- Filet Mignon Steak & Shrimp & Chicken\$22.15
- Jumbo Shrimp (12 pcs.) (w. broccoli).....\$14.85
- Filet Mignon Steak & Jumbo Shrimp (6 pcs.).....\$19.70
- Filet Mignon Steak & Salmon.....\$19.70
- Jumbo Shrimp (6 pcs.) & Salmon....\$19.70
- Filet Mignon Steak & Scallop\$20.85

Specials

(Comes with fried or white rice)

- Green Pepper Chicken/ Black Pepper Chicken.....\$10.10
- Green Pepper Steak/ Black Pepper Steak.....\$10.50
- Green Pepper Shrimp/ Black Pepper Shrimp.....\$10.50
- Green Pepper Filet Mignon/ Black Pepper Filet Mignon\$14.85

Chinese Specialty

(Comes with fried or white rice)

- Beef & Broccoli (flank steak).....\$12.85
- Chicken & Broccoli (white meat)....\$12.85
- Beef w. Mixed Vegetables (flank steak).....\$12.85
- Chicken w. Mixed Vegetables (white meat)\$12.85
- Shrimp w. Mixed Vegetables\$12.85
- General Tso's Chicken (w. pepper & onion).....\$12.85
- Sesame Chicken (w.broccoli).....\$12.85

Yakisoba

(Lo Mein Noodles) / Fried Rice

- Vegetable Yakisoba/ Vegetable Fried Rice\$14.99
- Chicken Yakisoba/ Chicken Fried Rice\$14.99
- Ribeye Steak Yakisoba/ Ribeye Steak Fried Rice\$14.99
- Shrimp Yakisoba/ Shrimp Fried Rice\$14.99

Japanese Express Restaurant

OSAKA

Call or visit us online to order: (434) 385-0182

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www.OsakaLynchburgVA.com

*Raw fish/Consuming raw fish may increase your risk of food borne illness.

