

Good News

exchange

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Hearts of Gold

ISSUE 11 2024

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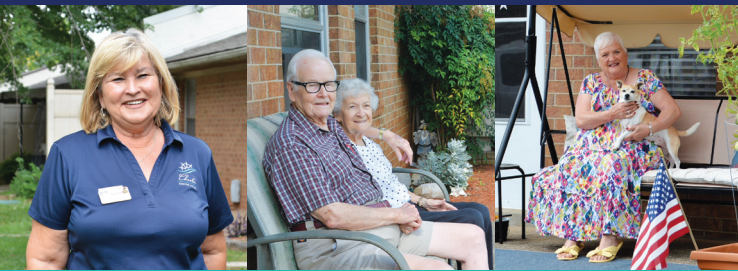


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14

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12

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18

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SMALL 6 LARGE 12

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Sauce
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BIG EASY SALMON GF

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Cajun Beurre Blanc
30

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ADD-ONS

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Garlic Mashed Potatoes,
Sautéed Mushrooms,
Champagne Cream Sauce
25

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Blackened Verlasso Salmon,
"Dirty" Fried Rice,
Cajun Beurre Blanc
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PASTA LOUISIANA

Blackened Chicken Breast,
Tomato, Bell Pepper,
Lemon Zest, Linguini Pasta,
Chorizo Cream Sauce
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Cajun Spice
24

SWEET TEA BRINED PORK CHOP GF

Bone in Pork Chop, Smoked
Cream Corn, Lardons,
Peach and Jalapeño Chutney,
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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Hearts of Gold

For every leaf on the ground, there is a heart of gold in our town.

AUTUMN SETTLES into our town like a puppy in a warm bed. There's a magic in the air that only this season can bring. Golden leaves drift gently from the trees, painting the sidewalks in shades of amber, rust, and crimson. We share our home with nature's beauty as it peppers our streets and lives with orange celebratory confetti. Some of these leaves catch our eye as they flutter down; others land quietly, unnoticed. They land all around us in crevices we didn't know were there.

In much the same way, we're surrounded by people whose acts of kindness add light and warmth to our lives — our neighbors, friends, even strangers, each with a heart of gold. Like those autumn leaves, some of these generous souls stand out for the ways they give back and lift others up, while others go about their good deeds quietly, adding to

the beauty and goodness that make our community special.

We often don't see the helping hands that work behind the scenes, the thoughtful words, or the selfless acts, but they are everywhere. They're in the volunteers who give their time to those in need, in the teachers who stay late to help a student, and in the countless people who are ready to lend a hand or a smile to make someone's day just a little bit brighter. For every bad day, there's someone here to meet it with hope and compassion.

Our community is not just a place to live — it's a place where love and kindness thrive. The world is not a dark place; it's filled with light and love because of people who give themselves without a second thought. This season, as leaves gracefully brush your shoulder from a 60-degree breeze, know that for every leaf on the ground, there is a heart of gold in our town. GN

Wesley Bryant,
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

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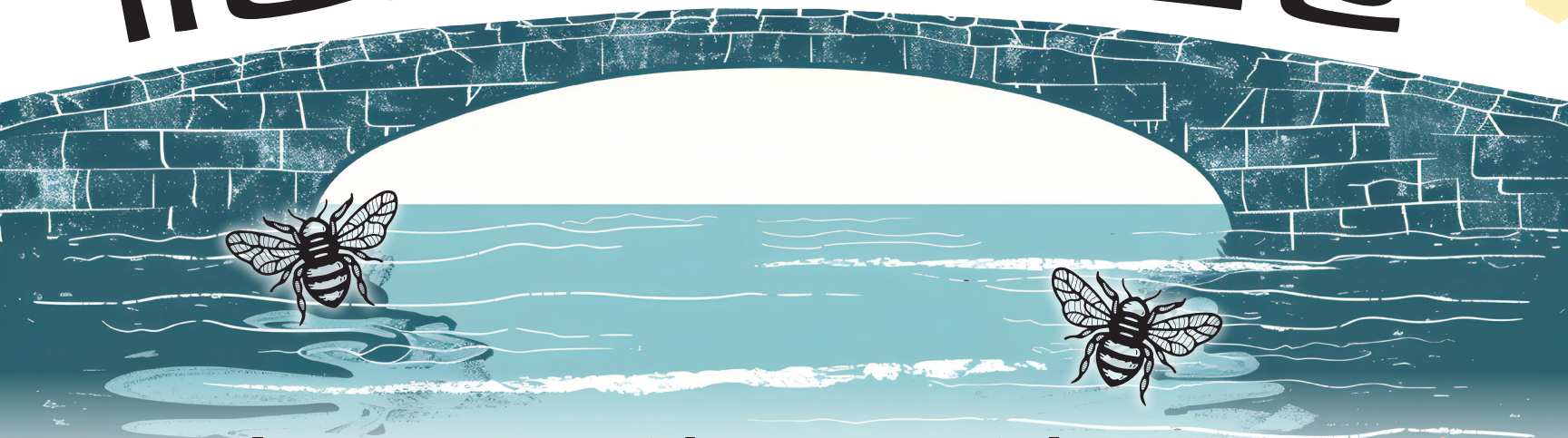
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LAURA ORSLAND

PHOTOGRAPHY BY BRADLEY SPITZER



BRIDGE OVER TROUBLED WATERS



The HIVE provides essential resources for people with disabilities.

By Richard J. Klin // Photography submitted by The HIVE

LAURA ORSLAND is the mother of a son with developmental disabilities. Like so many parents in similar circumstances, she was dissatisfied with the limited options for people with disabilities once they left high school. Everyone she consulted with — professionals, family members, people with disabilities, legislators, therapists — was acutely aware of the lack of resources and information.

The idea that developmentally disabled people are a separate constituency who need their own care, resources, and opportunities is relatively new and was not truly codified into law until the 1990s, which is relatively recent.

That dissatisfaction led to the creation of The HIVE — an acronym for Habilitation, Information, Vocation, and Education — a multi-purpose center that provides much-needed help for developmentally disabled people and their families.

The HIVE's mandate has many components. It functions as a clubhouse that provides social opportunities, learning experiences, independent living skills, safety, advocacy, and health. It also undertakes advocacy — on a local and state level — to raise awareness of the needs of people with disabilities.

The HIVE occupies an interesting niche. It is structured and informal and operates like any club — there's an application process to join. The HIVE is not an adult day care. Anyone who comes needs to bring a person to accompany them. It functions akin to a resource center and base point. The clubhouse is open from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Monday through Thursday, and the staff is available from 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday.

Orsland said the many resources are part of a “holistic approach.” The members can find magazines, newspapers, and online resources to help plan their week. There is help with



PHOTOGRAPHY BY BRADLEY SPITZER

longer-range plans — post-secondary education and potential employment. There are a variety of classes, with the option to pick what is most interesting or relevant. The HIVE currently services around 50 people, many of whom are on the milder support end of the autism spectrum but have social deficits that make employment and relationships difficult. Nor are they ready to be out in the world.

One unfortunate scenario is that with the parents working out of the house, the disabled youth stays home, falling into patterns of weight gain, depression, and

becoming targets of online exploitation. The HIVE can reverse that pattern.

The HIVE's broad age range starts at 14, and that is considered the transition age for people with disabilities. Orsland said that's when, in school meetings, they'll start talking to you about what's next or what will come after high school. Some teenagers come into The HIVE in the summertime, which ensures that they're very familiar with The HIVE and all it does by the time they age out of high school. And the membership range varies — there's a member who is 70.

The HIVE also extends its care mandate to the families and primary caregivers of people with disabilities who are under



enormous stress and pressure, plagued by higher-than-usual levels of divorce, loneliness, and depression. The HIVE is there for them as well.

Attendance is capped at two days or four sessions a week. The idea is for The HIVE clientele to get out into the community, which is inherently beneficial and also enables the potential for making community connections that could lead to employment or educational opportunities.

The HIVE partners with the Top Crops garden on Western Kentucky University's farm to further the goal of active community participation. The garden is planted, tended to, and harvested by people with developmental disabilities who sell the

produce at the community farmers market. Top Crops is located at the very tip end of the circle.

Orsland is more than thankful for the town of Bowling Green, which has repeatedly demonstrated its support. Their structure was badly damaged in a tornado a few years ago, and there was an exceptional outpouring of support.

Orsland sees her HIVE as akin to a beehive — a busy, close-knit community all working together for a common goal. And unlike a real beehive, one doesn't have to approach The HIVE with any apprehension whatsoever. **GN**

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 CONNECTING BOWLING GREEN

Creating a Family

VA clinic administrator connects veterans to the clinic and the community

By Sara Hook // Photography by Adin Parks

BOWLING GREEN is a city full of veterans and their families who served and sacrificed for their community. Many citizens of Bowling Green have taken up that torch to serve veterans in return. Still, Penny Ritchie, clinic administrator at the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) clinic, has done more for veterans.

Ritchie began her nursing career in Northwest Indiana but transferred to Bowling Green 22 years ago to find something better for her children. A few years later, she found herself wanting a change. A position at the local VA hospital seemed like a good fit.

“I had done well over 20 years of hospital care. [I] kind of did my tenure rotation in a lot of different departments, and I felt like I ... was at a point in my life where I wanted something different,” Ritchie said. “My husband’s father was a veteran, and I’d seen this position open, and I thought, ‘I would love to do that. I would love to be involved with our veterans,’ although I knew nothing about what it was going to be and how I was going to do it.”

She began her journey in June 2014, knowing very little about veterans and what they went through. That soon changed, and with it came a drive to improve things for those veterans.

A portrait of Penny Ritchie, a woman with blonde hair and glasses, smiling. She is wearing a white top with yellow daisies and a dark blue cardigan. The background features several framed pictures on a wall.

Penny
Ritchie



“To watch our veterans walk down the hall and see their comrades and the respect and love that they give towards that wall is amazing.”

- Penny Ritchie



“Sitting with them, hearing the stories, the heartbreaks, the triumphs, it just motivated me to become more involved,” Ritchie said. “They had gone through so many trials and tribulations that they deserved something more than I felt we were even giving.”

The clinic was providing outstanding care, but Ritchie felt it could be more personable. To that end, she started a “wall of honor” with pictures of veterans and things they are proud of, as well as a “news wall” to honor those veterans who are focused on community service.

“Having them come into the clinic and see that the clinic is part of their home is also very important to me,” Ritchie said. “To watch our veterans walk down the hall and see their comrades and the respect and love that they give towards that wall is amazing.”

Outside of the clinic walls, Ritchie started a clothing drive, which eventually

grew into a clothing store, now run by the Kentucky Veterans Brigade. She started a veterans appreciation cookout, which has grown from 500 veterans and their families in 2018 to over 1,500 in past years. Ritchie also makes an effort to attend veterans outreach events, whether it’s Veterans of Foreign Wars, American Legion, or elsewhere, to learn the community’s needs. At the clinic, she has created a veterans council to work toward addressing any needs that come up.

“I learn the needs so that I can help address those needs,” Ritchie said. “I go every month to the American Legion to be a part of that family so that I can hear any needs that they have, what they’re expecting of us, and what we’re not meeting in their expectations.”

The results of her efforts have come in many forms. The clinic has continued to grow from 1,500 veterans and two providers when it first opened in 2014 to over 4,400

veterans and four providers. More importantly, however, the culture has changed.

“Now, those veterans come in, and they know us by name,” Ritchie said. “It’s not an ‘I’m here for my appointment,’ it’s ‘Hi, how are you doing? I didn’t see you last week.’ It’s more of a family feeling.”

Ritchie said the clinic plans to continue partnering with veterans and the community to support and honor veterans. She hopes the clinic will grow until it can be a full-service clinic someday. In addition, she hopes to make all veterans feel warm and welcome in Bowling Green.

“Make sure that no veteran is out on the street, that every veteran gets a home, and every veteran has the health care that they deserve — those are the things that I want to see accomplished,” Ritchie said. “It’s a long laundry list, [and] you just have to tackle it one thing at a time. But with the clothing store and the housing, hopefully, we can get there someday.” GN





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**Debbie
Chyle**



BOWLING GREEN MOOSE LODGE 356

**A protector of
the youth and
older adults.**



By Sara Hook
Photography by Amanda Guy

A **MOOSE** is a powerful creature — one of North America’s tallest, largest, and heaviest animals. Moose Lodge 356 is perhaps a little more subtle than its animal counterpart, but its members are no less of a force of nature when it comes to serving the community.

Founded in 1888 as a men’s social club, the Loyal Order of Moose has an international membership of over one million. In 1912, the fraternity changed its priorities. Instead of a place to hang out, Moose Lodges became a place to serve. The 250 members of Bowling Green’s lodge have been excellent examples of that service heart.

“It’s known as the best-kept secret in Bowling Green because nobody usually has heard of us,” member Debbie Chyle said. “Most of the time when you say ‘moose,’ the people will think it’s a bar to go have a cheap drink at, watch television, and play sports — which we do have all of those — but that’s not what we’re about.”

The most significant projects Moose members take part in are Mooseheart, a boarding school in Illinois for children in need, and Moosehaven, a members-only retirement community. Each state and each local lodge does much more, however. The school system, the Salvation Army, and Isaiah House have all experienced the generosity of Moose members, along with numerous other organizations. Camp Courageous for Kids has received \$10,000 from members of the Moose Lodge — but their service goes beyond money.



▲ Emerson Parker

“When we do these community services, all of it is not just a cash donation,” Chyle said. “Like the Isaiah House, we also collected diapers and wipes. And last year, we did one for one of the veterans homes at Louisville, and we had tons of food.”

When the tornado came through in 2021, the Bowling Green Moose Lodge was a donation spot. A lodge from Indiana came down to help, and together, they fed over 2,500 people. The lodge is also a part of the international Youth Awareness program, where students educate younger children on healthy habits, bullying, drugs, and more. The state of Kentucky gives students who succeed in the local competition a \$1,000 scholarship. Those students then advance to the annual Youth Awareness Congress, where they have the opportunity to receive up to \$12,000 in scholarships. To date, two Bowling Green students have advanced to the annual congress, and one of those received a scholarship.

The lodge regularly works with some organizations. A stuffed animal named “Tommy Moose” can be found at police and fire departments and with ambulance crews and is used to calm children in traumatic situations. A Boy Scout

troop meets at the lodge every Thursday, a “Safe Surfin” group helps find lost children, and the Guardians of the Children motorcycle club meets at the lodge once a month.

“We’re not a club. We are a lodge,” Chyle said. “Our symbol, the moose, [is] the protector of the young and the elderly in a herd, and that is how we got the moose as our name and objective of taking care of children and seniors.”

For Chyle, that objective has kept her a member of the association for over 40 years. She originally joined to play darts in the local league but stuck with it because of the good she saw happening in the community and through Mooseheart and Moosehaven.

“Anybody that ever steps foot on that campus will never let their dues drop; it is rewarding,” Chyle said. “It touches your heart. The same thing with Moosehaven — I’ve been down there several times, and when you walk on that campus, you get a piece of serenity.”

Moose Lodge 356 is a gathering place for families and community and, even better, a staging ground for community service. It’s a spirit that all in Bowling Green can aspire to. **GN**



**Paul and
Debbie
Chyle**



//

**...when you
walk on that
campus, you
get a piece of
serenity.**

- Debbie Chyle

SAVOR THE FLAVORS AT ALLEY PUB & PIZZA:

HOME OF THE ALLEY CAT AND GREAT PIES.



Discovering deliciousness in
a quiet alley off the square

YOU MIGHT easily miss it unless you know to look for Alley Pub & Pizza. This bar and pizza spot is situated in a charming alley off Fountain Square, where you can often spot prom couples and newlyweds posing for photographers, taking advantage of the picturesque scenery.

The restaurant is located in a cozy bar featuring ample outdoor seating, where, if you're fortunate, an adorable alley cat might rub against your legs, claiming the Alley Pub as its home. The children we observed dining outside were absolutely delighted by this feline fixture.

The menu features classic pizza pub fare, including wings, breadsticks, pizza, and an extensive beer selection. However, the limited offerings are anything but ordinary; they're truly delicious. The plain breadsticks had a golden-brown exterior that was slightly crunchy, while the inside remained warm and fluffy. They were drenched in a butter and garlic parmesan topping. Another option of breadstick we

enjoyed was stuffed with marinara and savory, chewy bits of pepperoni.

The chicken wings were perfectly crispy and seasoned in buffalo sauce. The heat level was medium but tasty.

Pizza is the main star of the menu, with signature pies like the Pulled Pork BBQ pie with pork, onions, and dill pickles and a Philly Cheesesteak pie with a white cream base, peppers, onions, and steak. We sampled The Works pie, which we requested to be cooked well done. The pizza featured a medium crust, generously topped with delicious sausage, pepperoni, mushrooms, peppers, and onions. It was both traditional and chewy, making it exceptionally enjoyable.

Alley Pub & Pizza is a great spot to enjoy a fun meal with family and friends. Its laid-back atmosphere welcomes everyone. With its menu featuring delicious pizzas, mouthwatering appetizers, and refreshing beverages, there's something for every palate, including the kiddos. **GN**

GOOD NEWS IS COMING TO DINNER!

We will feature a local food critic's thoughts as they dine in Bowling Green. This month Eve Vawter visited Alley Pub & Pizza.

Alley Pub & Pizza

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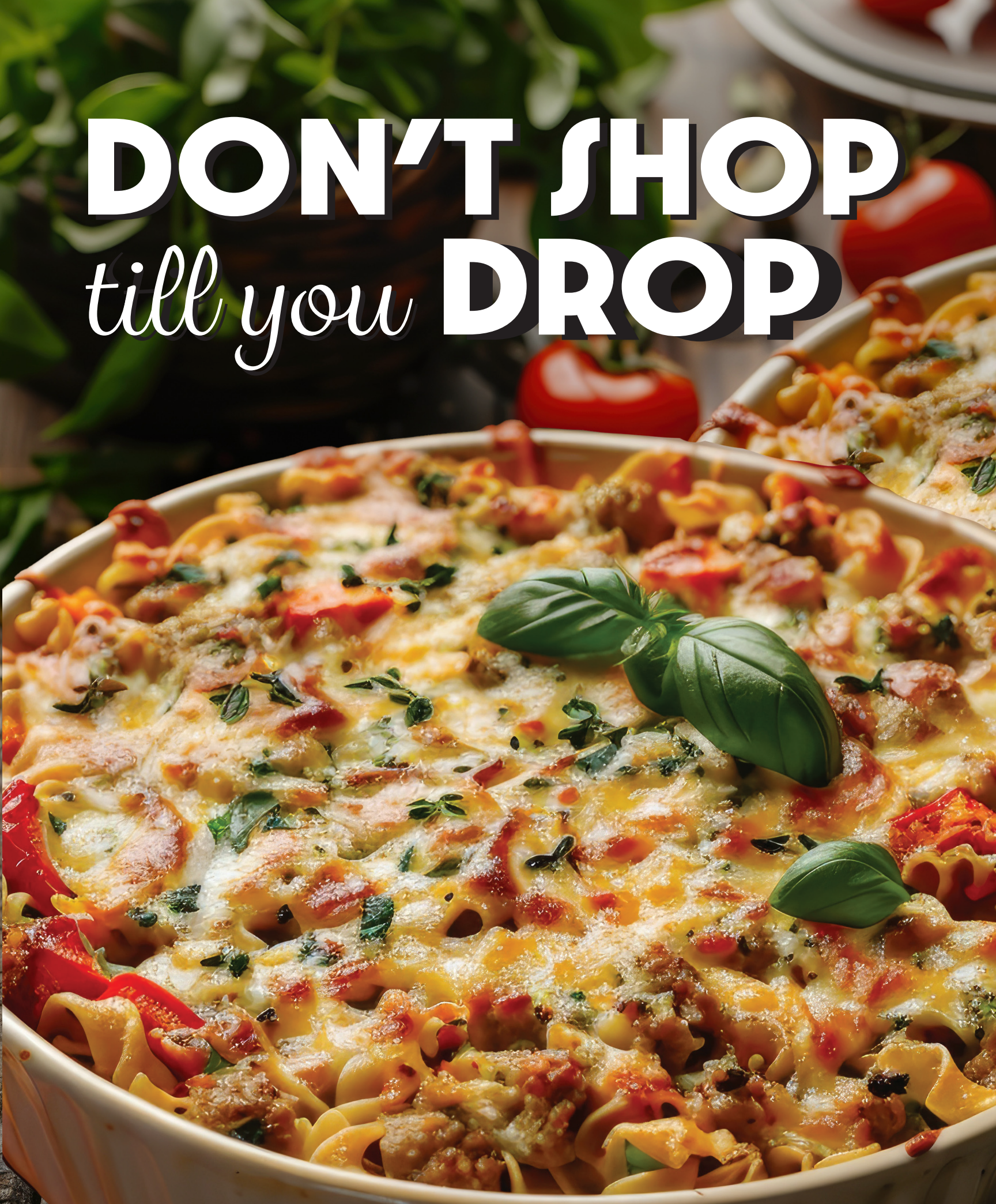




PIZZA TIME



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PLAN ON FUELING UP WITH THESE EASY DISHES THIS BUSY HOLIDAY SEASON.

AFTER A long day of holiday shopping, the last thing you want is to spend time in the kitchen. Plan ahead with these quick and easy dishes that can be whipped up in no time or waiting in the slow cooker. From cozy casseroles to satisfying soups, these recipes are designed to nourish and rejuvenate, making them ideal for those post-shopping evenings. Enjoy the convenience of delicious meals that allow you to relax and savor the season. **GN**



BEEF 'N' NOODLES CASSEROLE

Submitted by Emma Hardin

- 1/3 c. green onions, sliced
- 1/3 c. green peppers, chopped
- 2 T. butter
- 1 lb. ground beef
- 1 can tomato paste, 6 oz.
- 1/2 c. sour cream
- 1 pkg. med. noodles, 8 oz., cooked
- 1 c. cottage cheese
- 1 can tomato sauce, 8 oz.

In a large skillet, saute onions and green peppers in butter for about 3 minutes. Add beef and continue to cook until beef is no longer pink. Drain excess fat. In a medium mixing bowl, combine tomato paste and sour cream. Stir in noodles and cottage cheese. Layer half of the noodle mixture into a 2-quart casserole dish. Top with half of the beef mixture. Repeat layers. Pour tomato sauce evenly over the top of the casserole. Bake at 350° for 30-35 minutes, or until heated through.

MISS MAUDIE'S MEXICAN CORNBREAD

Submitted by Terri Sanders

- 1 c. cornmeal
- 1/4 c. oil
- 2 eggs
- 1 onion, chopped
- 1 c. buttermilk
- 1 sm. can cream style corn
- 1 sm. can green chili peppers
- 1 c. cheese, shredded

In a large bowl, combine cornmeal, oil, eggs, onions, buttermilk, corn, and peppers. Mix well. Pour half of batter in greased skillet or pan. Sprinkle cheese over batter then pour remaining batter over cheese. Bake at 425° for 25 minutes or until golden brown.

CROCK-POT BRUNSWICK STEW

Submitted by Cindy Crosslin

- 1 whole chicken, cooked and deboned, reserve 1 1/2 c. broth
- 2 cans barbecue pork
- 1 sm. onion, chopped, optional
- 1 sm. can cream style corn
- 1 can shoe peg corn
- 1 sm. can lima beans
- 2 cans tomatoes, crushed
- 1 lg. potato, cubed, cooked, and drained
- 3-4 T. ketchup
- 3-4 T. Worcestershire sauce

Place chicken, reserved broth, barbecue pork, onions, and both cans of corn in a slow cooker. Stir and add lima beans, tomatoes, ketchup, and Worcestershire sauce. Stir mixture and cook on low for 12-24 hours. The longer it cooks the better it will taste.

Being Kind For No Reason

*THE NO DEPOSIT BAND SPONSORS
ARTISTS THROUGH THE MARY LOU
WALLER SCHOLARSHIP FUND.*

By Sara Hook and Tina Neeley // Photography by Amanda Guy

ON STAGE, colorful lights silhouette the four-man band delivering the best of Woodstock-era rock and Motown music. Fans travel with them back in time while investing in tomorrow, supporting the No Deposit Band's give-back mission.

If it's the soundtrack of your youth, you easily remember returning bottles for reimbursement of the deposit collected at the time of sale. At the sight

of the "No return. No Deposit." stamp, you were out of luck if you were collecting bottles to line your pockets. For Jackie Hagan, one of the No Deposit Band's original members, it holds a little extra meaning.

According to the band's website, Hagan purchased his first Truetone electric guitar and 10-watt Truetone amp at his hometown Western Auto Store using the layaway plan. Hagan and his bandmates scoured the ditches, collecting hundreds of

JACKIE HAGAN



pop bottles and loading wagons and bicycle baskets full of them to pay for his equipment. It was a deposit on the group's future that continues to pay dividends today.

Hagan's mother, Mary Lou Waller, inspired the group's commitment to repaying kindness in the community. It is so important to them that all proceeds from their merchandise sales go toward the charities they run and support. The largest of these charities is the Mary Lou Waller Scholarship Fund. In the past three years, the No Deposit Band has donated over \$30,000 in scholarships and in support of other charities. All

of that work has been in memory of and to honor Waller.

Hagan said his mother was raised on Elvis and always loved music. She was a great supporter as he learned to play guitar and later when he and his friends began playing together in high school as the No Deposit Band.

"She always loved to be able to hear me play whenever she could," Hagan said.

After high school, the band members went their separate ways, but they reformed 40 years later to keep playing music and spreading their message: Be KIND for no reason.

"We're going to do a lot of really, really special things."

- Jackie Hagan



▲ The shirt designed for the Mary Lou Waller Scholarship

Waller embodied that message well. She was a cafeteria worker at Tompkinsville Elementary School and had such an effect on the students there that they would run to give her a hug when they saw her elsewhere in town. Hagan said it was an amazing thing to see.

"She loved working there, and the kids grew up, and they never forgot her," Hagan said. "She loved those kids."

When Waller died in 2021, Hagan knew he needed to do something to keep her memory alive. The perfect solution was a scholarship that helped young musicians, artists, and good citizens in the community. The No Deposit Band Scholarship grew out of that effort, and the band, which was already a fan of giving

back to the community, expanded its reach.

“I did not want her name to ever — her legacy to [ever] — fade away,” Hagan said. “I thought, ‘Well, I’m going to do a scholarship thing in my mom’s name,’ and I did. And so we started giving \$500 scholarships to some kids.”

The band itself initially maintained the fund, but it was such a success that others wanted to donate to it. Soon, the Mary Lou Waller Scholarship Fund became its own 501(c)(3). The band and the fund have raised money for scholarships, children with cancer, Shop with a Cop, the Junior ROTC, and veterans.

“I just want to help people. It’s just something that I wish everybody did,” Hagan said. “It’s just the little things — just to do the little things, [and] just to be able to smile at somebody.”

All of that work, Hagan said, is a great thing to have done in his mother’s name.

“I can’t even begin to tell you what an honor it is to get to do it, and it’s just really grown,” Hagan said. “We’re going to do a lot of really, really special things.”

One of those special things will be the band’s annual fundraiser. It began as a one-time event to raise money for a child with cancer. The event raised over \$10,000, and the band decided to keep the fundraiser going each year. Hagan also hopes to eventually be able to donate instruments to kids who want to learn music.

“I never dreamed that we would be where we’re at right now, so



▲ Jackie Hagan holds a picture of Mary Lou Waller.

there’s no limit on what you can do,” Hagan said. “God just has a way of bringing things and people into your life that you just really don’t expect.”

Hagan said he doesn’t know where the No Deposit Band or the scholarships will go in the future, but he and his fellow band members have no intention of stopping.

“Our shirt says ‘Be KIND for no reason,’ and ... we try to live by that,” Hagan said. “It’s not just a saying.” **GN**

Discover the music and mission of the No Deposit Band on Facebook or visit nodepositband.com.

Hearts of Gold

Stronger Together

DEBBIE HILLS AND UNITED WAY OF SOUTHERN KENTUCKY EMPOWER THE COMMUNITY AND CHANGE LIVES FOR A BRIGHTER FUTURE.

By Kali Bradford and Haley Potter
Photography by Elizabeth Newbould

DEBBIE HILLS has dedicated the last 25 years to making Southern Kentucky a better place for everyone. Through her leadership as president and CEO of United Way of Southern Kentucky, she continues a legacy that began over 135 years ago with United Way's mission to build stronger, more resilient communities. Founded in 1887 as the Charity Organization Society, United Way initially focused on collecting funds for

local charities, coordinating relief services, and connecting individuals with vital resources.

Today, that work endures across 1,200 local chapters in the U.S. and 1,800 worldwide, each striving to meet the evolving needs of communities.

Serving 95% of U.S. communities and 37 countries, United Way brings people together to tackle tough challenges through partnerships with private, public, and nonprofit sectors. It fosters

DEBBIE HILLS





improvements in education, economic mobility, and health care access.

In Southern Kentucky, United Way has been a vital part of the community since 1956. At its helm is president and CEO Debbie Hills, whose leadership over the past 25 years has strengthened the community she calls home.

Before joining United Way, Hills spent 17 years in management at Fruit of the Loom, handling trademark licensing, brand

management, and marketing. She thrived in her corporate role but made a tough decision to leave her career when her mother's health began to decline.

"I had opportunities to continue in the same field but would have had to relocate to places like New York or Los Angeles," Hills explained. "When I learned about a position with United Way, I felt it was where I needed to be, doing the work I was meant to do."

She started as the director of community impact, working with

volunteers and funding partners to allocate resources effectively each year. She also immersed herself in the community, identifying its unique needs and forming partnerships with local organizations. Hills quickly advanced, becoming executive vice president and now president and CEO for the last nine years.

"In a small nonprofit, there's a lot of role overlap," Hills said. "Each position [is] built on the skills and experience from the last. My business acumen from Fruit of the Loom has been invaluable in leading the organization and making strategic decisions."

Hills' determination has helped United Way of Southern Kentucky navigate numerous challenges. "Our biggest challenge is that there are always more needs than resources," she shared. "While we have a generous community, we must be strategic in investing the resources we have to create the maximum impact."

Early childhood education is a big part of United Way's strategy under Hills' leadership.

"We're committed to creating long-term change, focusing on education and kindergarten read-

“We’re digging in, working harder, and being smarter as we move forward.”

- Debbie Hills

iness,” she said. “When children enter school ready to succeed, it impacts their entire lives and decreases their need for social services as adults.”

Despite the challenges, Hills finds inspiration in the community’s resilience. “The generosity here is remarkable,” she said. “During the pandemic and the 2021 tornado, people immediately stepped up to support one another, with donations and volunteers pouring in. Following the tornado, over \$3 million was contributed to United Way to help victims, demonstrating the power of community in difficult times.”

Hills emphasizes that everyone can be part of United Way’s impact on Southern Kentucky. “There are volunteer opportunities throughout the year, and we always welcome contributions,” she said. “We’re also glad to educate people about our work so they can find where they best fit.”

Hills and her team are driven by a shared vision: “We want every member of the community to be educated,

healthy, and financially stable. While we’re far from achieving that goal, we’re seeing a movement that’s setting up children and youth for success. As they grow, their lives will follow a different, more positive path,” she explained.

“Though the pandemic and tornado set us back, they’ve only strengthened our resolve. We’re digging in, working harder, and being smarter as we move forward.” **GN**



PHOTOGRAPH BY AUSTIN ANTHONY

Habitat for Humanity

A GLOBAL NAME WITH A LOCAL FOCUS

By Richard J. Klin // Photography by Amanda Guy

HABITAT FOR Humanity, the housing assistance program made famous by Jimmy Carter, has a name recognition that few other charitable endeavors can match. Habitat's national fame presents a paradox — the backbone of the organization is the smaller, local advocacy centers. These are lesser known, but they're the real strength of Habitat for Humanity.

Matt Sheffield is Habitat for Humanity's chief development officer in Bowling Green. Habitat has been in Bowling Green

for 34 years. Its mission is to fight for affordable housing and home ownership solutions. Sheffield said the goal is to continue to build and partner with families on achieving and sustaining home ownership.

That goal is a herculean task. And it's a task that has gotten progressively more difficult. Bowling Green was struck with tornadoes in 2021 in which a crucial 400 units of housing were lost or critically damaged. Compounding the impact of storm damage, subsequent changes in

MATT SHEFFIELD, KYLE GOLDEN, AND MARK SOHN





◀ Kyle Golden
and Matt
Sheffield

the rental landscape have further increased the regional cost burden of simply having a place to call home. Investment real estate moved in. Investors from all across the country bought up properties in Bowling Green and made offers to local owners that they couldn't refuse. Some of these properties had long-term tenants who now had to live elsewhere. Rents went up. This, unfortunately, is a national pattern. High, ever-increasing rents, which used to be a difficulty faced by city-dwellers, is now a fact of life in much of rural and small-town America.

The difficulties have multiplied. Sheffield explains that it used to be relatively easy to build a house and put a family in it. There were a handful of forms and processes. Now, the forms and processes — from the lending standpoint — “are layers over layers of complexity.”

From a cost standpoint, what it costs Habitat to build a house — even as recently as 2017 and 2018 — compared to now is drastically more expensive. And the rent hikes put an extra stressor on affordability.

Bowling Green is experiencing welcomed economic development, which means an influx of people into the area — but not enough affordable housing.

Habitat's constituency in Bowling Green consists of people

who need a partner or support in buying their first home. They've rented in the past, but now they know they want to be in the area for five or 10 years and know it makes sense to purchase.

Unique to Bowling Green, one in seven residents of the area are non-native born, many of whom have come out of crisis situations. And so there is a wide swath of people in Bowling Green — both lifelong residents and people from all over the world — who wish to buy a home but may not be in a position to walk into a bank and get a traditional loan.

“They need help. Our rate historically has been no to low interest — a significant break

compared to standard rates. Our constituency is folks in the area who have a housing need, whether it's substandard housing or it's become unaffordable — but they want to be here. They want to live here. They want to have a home here,” Sheffield explained.

The numbers tell the tale. Twenty-five years ago, Habitat for Humanity in Bowling Green built around a house a year. That number gradually increased to around three houses a year. This year, Habitat will be constructing around 11. Those figures will certainly increase as the housing crisis continues.

Habitat is also involved with homelessness and housing-adjacent issues, but Sheffield stressed

“We're a long-term housing partner and a piece in a very large-scale community approach. And the biggest thing for us is to continue to be as active as possible.”

- MATT SHEFFIELD



▲ Several of the team's completed projects

that Habitat does not offer temporary or immediate housing solutions. “We're a long-term housing partner and a piece in a very large-scale community approach. And the biggest thing for us is to continue to be as active as possible.”

These are some huge issues — locally and nationally. Matt Sheffield feels that there is no end in sight for Habitat for Humanity's work. Rather than lapse into despair, though, he sees the endless work as a call to action. “We're going to keep doing it.” As long as there are groups like Habitat for Humanity, these awful economic conditions can be slowly and gradually combatted. **GN**

The Arts of Southern Kentucky - Oct. 19



Photography by Gretchen Clark

SKyPAC opened its doors for a free community event, inviting creative minds of all ages to explore and have fun. Attendees enjoyed pumpkin painting, hands-on experiences with musical instruments, behind-the-scenes stage tours, and opportunities to sign up for theatre classes.



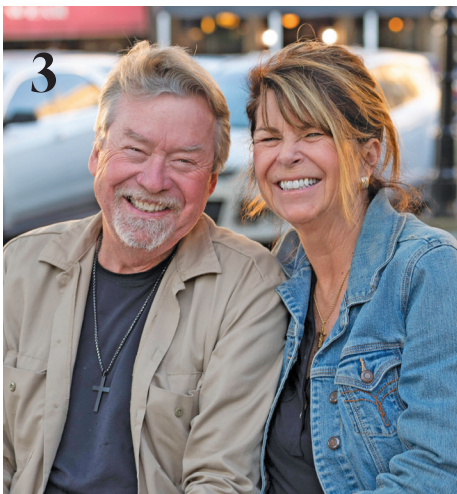
1. Paula Evans and Della Reynolds 2. Kids painting pumpkins 3. Nancy Coomer and Mr. Scott 4. Dillon Godolphin
5. John Soules, Kara Soules, and Vanessa Soules 6. Group of people looking at instruments

Fountain Row Fridays - Oct. 18



Photography by Gretchen Clark

Kick off your weekend at Fountain Row Fridays, where live music fills the air as you stroll around the square. Enjoy local shopping, savor dinner at nearby restaurants, and connect with fellow community members, all in the heart of Bowling Green. It's the perfect way to experience the charm of downtown while spending time with friends and neighbors.



1. Giliane Rasvold **2.** Diana Samble, Elena Adklins, and Daniel Samble
3. Patrick and Deborah Furlong **4.** Norm Stannard, Joel Whittinghill, and the Eddie Mills Band

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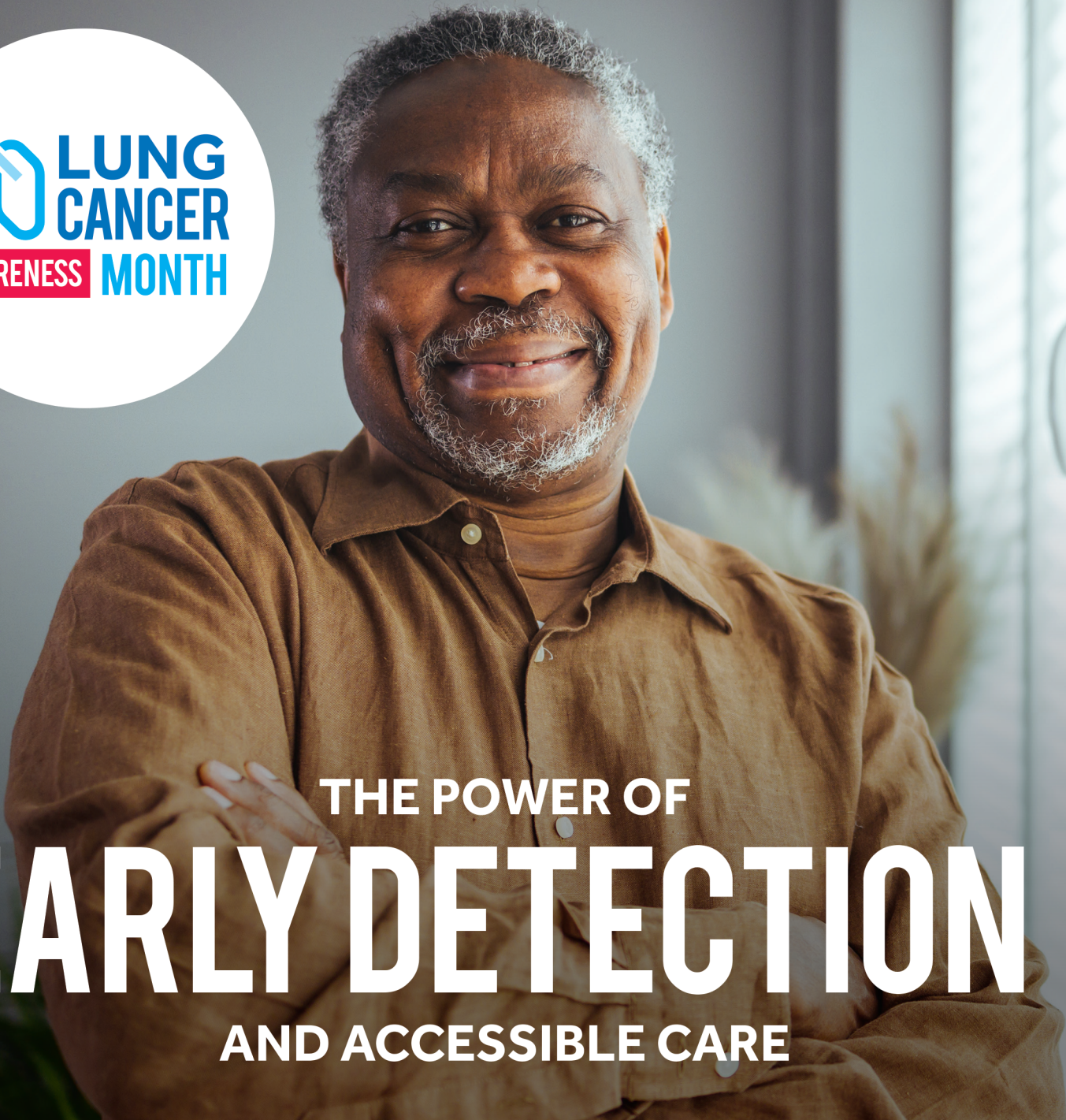


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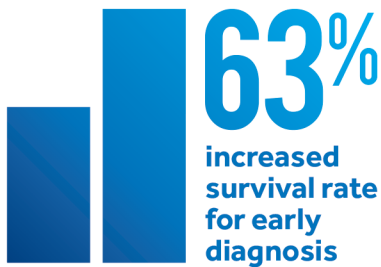
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