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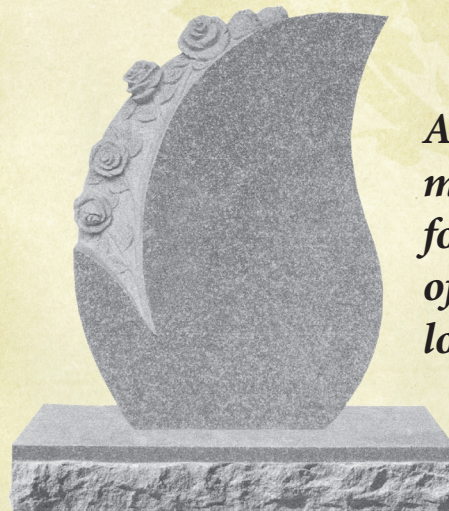
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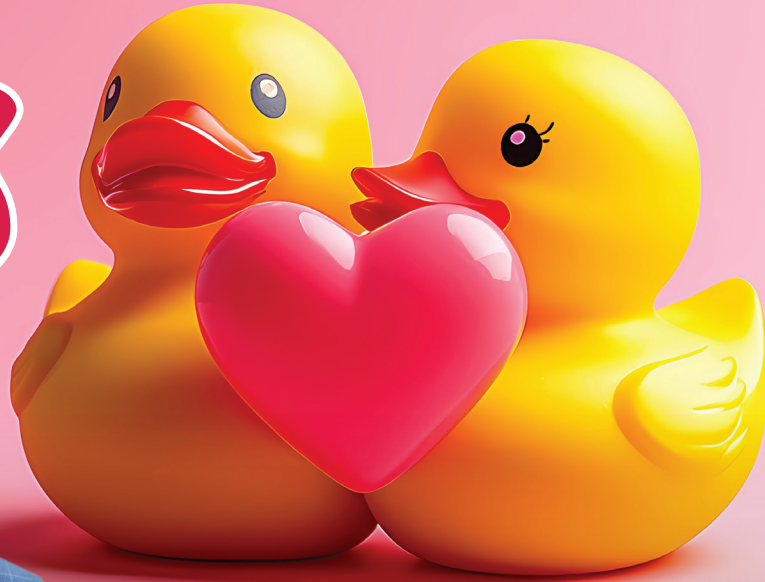
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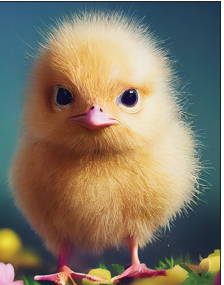
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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Love is in the air

Good News celebrates the love that strengthens communities, brightens hearts, and makes life more beautiful.

YOU KNOW that first breath of spring? The way the warmer air gives you goosebumps — the air is soft, full of promise, carrying hints of something new. After months of cold, we step outside, and for the first time, the sun lingers a little longer, warming our hands, our faces, our hearts. Maybe it's still daylight when we get home from work. Love is a lot like that. It's the warmth that lingers after the winter. The breath that fills our lungs when we didn't even realize we were holding them.

Love exists in big acts with large sums of money, sure. But more often, it's in the small acts — the moments we miss that swirl through the air like dandelion seeds, taking root in ways we may never fully see. It's checking in on a friend, even when they insist they're fine. It's the extra few seconds we hold the door open, the way

we buy the person behind us a coffee in the morning. It's letting go of old grudges, choosing forgiveness even when it would be easier to stay cold.

The beautiful thing about love is that it multiplies. The more we put out into the air, the more it spreads, catching in the wind, drifting far beyond where we first let it go. Love is not just an action or money, either — it's a kind of magic that moves everything it touches in the right direction.

This issue of Good News is dedicated to that love. Not just romantic love but the kind that makes communities stronger, hearts lighter, and life a little more beautiful. Love rooted in appreciation, in gratefulness, in the quiet choices we make every day to make the world a little warmer.

So breathe it in. And then send it back out into the air. **GN**

Wesley Bryant,
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

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Timeless traditions

The Hall family's journey continues, connecting past and present with every piece of furniture and every encounter.

By Jeriah Brumfield // Photography by Brooke Snyder



SEVENTY-FIVE YEARS ago, Isaac Hall laid the first brick in a foundation that would stand the test of time — not in mortar and stone, but in trust and integrity. On brisk mornings, when the sun broke over the square here in Franklin County, you'd find Isaac greeting his neighbors with a firm handshake and a warm smile, ready to serve as a businessman but, more importantly, as someone who deeply loved his community. Those who worked alongside him, whose names still linger in the company's history, shared a code of ethics that defined the business' identity.

Though the location of their business has changed over the decades — new walls, new streets, new faces — the core of their mission remains the same. Loyalty to the community, good customer service, and firm principles are the values that continue to guide the business' leadership, linking past to present, from one generation to the next.

Step into Hall Furniture, and you're instantly embraced by what feels like a family reunion. There's something about the air in this place that carries a feeling of history, trust, and belonging that has been passed down through generations.

Isaac Hall, the great-great-grandfather of one of the current owners, Carlie Gaby, purchased what was once the E.H. Lehman Furniture Store in 1948. At the time, Isaac was manager of one of Lehman's eight stores in Winfield, Alabama, and owned a modest 10% of the business.

When the opportunity arose to exchange that share for full ownership of the Winchester store, he seized it, packed up his family, and moved to Tennessee. Isaac didn't know that the Winchester location had just undergone a going-out-of-business sale, leaving the store empty.

Isaac walked into the store for the first time, expecting a busy operation, only to find bare shelves and silence. It was a moment that would have sent most people packing. But Isaac wasn't like most people. Girded with little more than a dream and extensive knowledge of the furniture industry, he rolled up his sleeves and got to work. With the support of his wife, Mary Gladys, and their five children, he transformed that empty shell of a store into a vital part of the community.

Hall Furniture officially opened its doors on Jan. 2, 1949, in a modest building just off Winchester's west side square. Over the decades, the business evolved and relocated four times, each signifying a rebirth.



◀ A newspaper article about Isaac M. Hall (photo on the left) — this was Jerry Hall's father, who started Hall Furniture.

By the late 1970s, three of Isaac and Mary Gladys' five children — Don, Jerry, and Patsy — took the reins and built upon the foundation their parents had laid. Over time, Don departed, leaving Jerry, Nancy, and Patsy to keep things running. Each brought their unique touch, like Jerry's knack for connecting with customers and Patsy's attention to detail.

The next generation soon found their way into the business. Jerry's daughter, Tammy Stevens, joined in 1987, followed by his son, Mitch Hall, about 15 years later. Both initially pursued other careers — with advanced degrees and dreams outside of retail — but eventually felt the pull to return to the family business.

In 2018, the youngest generation joined the team when Jerry's granddaughter, Carlie, brought fresh energy and ideas to the table. Today, Mitch and Carlie carry the torch, continuing the tradition of hands-on leadership.

"It was something that we were always around growing up and something that we always valued and were rooted in," Carlie explained.

One of Hall Furniture's long-standing core values is building trust and maintaining customer loyalty and satisfaction. Isaac Hall believed in the golden rule: treating people how he wanted to be treated, and this same philosophy has been passed down to every generation.

"My grandfather used to let people make a down payment and take their word with a handshake," Carlie shared. "Although that's changed a lot over the years, we try to work with every individual that comes in the store."

Great customer service doesn't end when the sale is made. The Halls pride themselves on "service after the sale," a promise that has earned them the community's trust for over seven decades.

Hall Furniture's offerings have expanded over the years to meet the needs of new customers. They carry traditional



▲ Jerry Hall, second generation; Carlie Gaby, fourth generation; Mitch Hall, third generation; and Tammy Stevens, third generation

pieces and contemporary designs that cater to various tastes and budgets. But no matter how styles evolve, one thing remains the same: the Hall family's love for their community.

The family has consistently supported local schools, nonprofits, and ministries. They've donated furniture to organizations like Isaiah 117 House and contributed to numerous fundraisers and events.

Another way the family shares their heart for the community is through Small Business Saturday. On this special day, they open their space to other small businesses — food trucks, coffee vendors, and entrepreneurs without storefronts — the perfect marketplace to make connections and enjoy local business offerings.

Customers flock to enjoy the festive atmosphere year after year. Last year, in honor of the holidays and the family's 75th celebration, Santa joined the fun, strolling through the crowd, greeting families, and snapping photos with wide-eyed little ones. The day is a celebration of togetherness, revealing the magic that happens when a community comes together to support one another.

Yet, with success comes challenges. Balancing work and personal life in a

family business is not always easy, but open communication and perseverance have been the foundation of the Hall family's story.

What is the secret to their longevity? Carlie didn't hesitate: "We never gave up. We just put one foot in front of the other."

Reflecting on it all, the Hall family feels immensely blessed to serve the community through their family business. One of their proudest moments was being named Small Business of the Year by the local chamber of commerce.

Along with promoting their own business, they encourage customers to explore Franklin County — whether enjoying a meal on the square or supporting another local shop. Franklin County is like family to them, and that sense of closeness makes everything they do even more meaningful.

In Hall Furniture, you'll find a little more than beautiful pieces for your home. You'll find a family heritage built with hard work, trust, and a love for the people of Franklin County — a heritage that will endure for generations to come. **GN**

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**Megan
Moorehead**



STRENGTH in NUMBERS

A local hurricane relief effort proved that even small contributions can make a massive impact.

By Jeriah Brumfield // Photography by Ashleigh Newnes and submitted by Megan Moorehead

"NORTH CAROLINA needs us," Megan Moorehead thought to herself.

The moment her phone rang, Moorehead knew something was wrong. It had been days since she'd heard from her friend in North Carolina after Hurricane Helene tore through the region, leaving destruction in its wake. Cell service was down, roads were washed away, and entire neighborhoods were unrecognizable.

"Megan, it's terrible, but we're safe," her friend said.

The relief was short-lived as the call continued. Children were left orphaned, homes were reduced to rubble, and survivors were running out of food and supplies.

"We need help," her friend pleaded, describing the chaos around her.

Moorehead's "mom mode" kicked in.

"Challenge accepted," she thought as her vision turned into action. Within moments, she began organizing an effort that would evolve into a community-wide movement spanning Middle Tennessee to Northern Alabama. It soon became apparent that people in Middle Tennessee and surrounding states love their neighbors near and far.

This initiative, spearheaded by Megan Moorehead, her loved ones, and customers from The Intimacy Boutique, proves that ordinary people can do extraordinary things when disaster strikes.

When disaster strikes, empathy mobilizes action.

Hurricane Helene was not just another headline. The storm ravaged the lives of thousands across the Southeast. Floodwaters swept away cars, homes, and businesses, leaving entire Middle Tennessee and North Carolina communities stranded with limited access to necessities.

The images on the news were devastating: streets turned into rivers, families huddled in shelters, and volunteers working relentlessly to rescue those trapped. But for Moorehead and many others who had loved ones in the area, the devastation was personal.

With its outpouring of love, resources, and support, this is where Middle Tennessee transformed one simple initiative into a movement.

Moorehead's first step was to simply ask for help. Her network of customers and community members had always been a reliable source of support for local causes, but this time, the need was more significant.

"If anybody needs help, I specifically go straight to my customers because they always back me 100%," she explained.

Moorehead's friend owned a small private airport just outside the disaster zone. With the airstrip intact, it became the perfect space for delivering supplies. Moorehead reached out to her cus-



▲ Pilot, co-pilot, and Megan Moorehead

tomers and community, explaining the dire situation. She didn't just receive support — she was overwhelmed by it.

In less than 48 hours, her call to action on social media yielded a wave of donations. Local businesses, individuals, and even strangers brought resources like food, blankets, building and cooking supplies, tents, sleeping bags, toiletries, baby formula, and dog food.

The logistics, however, created a challenge. Given the large volume of supplies, their initial plans to transport items by car proved impractical. That's when pilots began volunteering their planes.

The beauty in community

To show her appreciation to the pilots, Moorehead posted on social media requesting donations for jet fuel. Within hours, the group raised \$1,000.

"It wasn't just me," Moorehead said. "Hundreds of people made this happen."

"We had three hours for people to donate, and they made it happen. And we had so many supplies that we bulked out of the plane before we weighed out. We got roughly 4,000 pounds in the air."

Volunteers worked around the clock to gather, sort, and load supplies.

Six small planes were ready to transport supplies into North Carolina within days. But when a larger cargo plane became available — capable of carrying 5,500 pounds — Moorehead took on the challenge of filling it.

The domino effect was astonishing. Moorehead and her team's efforts inspired others to take action. Strangers heard about her initiative and offered support, while local businesses anonymously donated money and resources.

The first flight carried roughly 4,000 pounds of supplies, the remainder of which were sent on later trips.

Lessons in empathy and action

The outpouring of support Moorehead witnessed was humbling but unsurprising. In moments of crisis, community bonds are strengthened, and empathy becomes an impetus.

"You've got to think, 'What if I was in their shoes?' And that's what I kept relaying to everybody through social media," she said.

So, Moorehead began sharing her friends' personal accounts of what happened during and after the hurricane. She hoped that through her posts, the community would empathize with the hurricane victims on a deeper level and be inspired to help in any way they could — whether through physical effort or monetary support.

"It changes your life when you get to hear firsthand exactly what's going on. Sharing personal experiences with them and telling them what these people are going through, and hearing it directly from the source, instead of the media or the news, is really what people should try to look for in the future when it comes to disaster relief."

Moorehead and her team's hurricane relief efforts challenge the "bystander effect," the social phenomenon where individuals assume others will step up, ultimately leading to inaction. Instead, it shows the power of a few individuals' initiative to mobilize an entire community.

"So many people don't want to be named. There were hundreds of people who made this happen. I wouldn't have been able to do it without my customers and all the local businesses. They spanned from Manchester to Winchester to Fayetteville, down to Alabama."

There is strength in numbers.

This hurricane relief effort started with a single phone call but grew into a movement that brought hope and relief to countless families in North Carolina. From the pilots who volunteered their planes to the businesses and individuals who donated supplies, this story proves that small actions, when combined, create monumental change.

It's also a call to action for all of us. Whether through donating, volunteering, or simply offering a helping hand, we all have the power to make a difference.

Moorehead said, "When people come together, amazing things happen."

Now is the time to act. Find a cause, get involved, and show up for your community. You never know whose life you might change. **GN**



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SMOKED WITH LOVE, SERVED WITH FAMILY

I LOVE BARBECUE — whether cooked low and slow or hot and fast. Grilling, smoking, or searing meat creates an irresistible aroma that fills the air and makes the outdoors feel like home.

Today, instead of enjoying my own barbecue, I had the pleasure of visiting a quaint little barbecue joint called Pigalicious BBQ in Decherd. This spot is more than just a restaurant — the owners treat you like family, and every meal tastes homemade, unlike something reheated from a store.

Whenever I visit a place I plan to write about, I make it a point to try multiple menu items. Today, I ordered a brisket plate with potato salad, fried okra, and a half rack of ribs paired with more potato salad and baked beans. For my drink, I chose unsweet tea. (Yes, you read that right — no sugar in my tea!)

Let us start with the brisket. Those who smoke their own meat know the standards: a dark, crispy bark, a beautiful smoke ring when sliced, and fat rendered to make the meat tender and juicy. It should droop slightly but not break when picked up. Pigalicious nailed it and hit all the marks. The brisket was tender, flavorful, and perfectly seasoned — not too overpowering — allowing me to add sauces to suit my taste.

When you take a bite of the potato salad, you have an “oh my gosh” moment. Imagine a fully loaded baked potato turned into a cold, creamy, chunky side dish. It is easily one of my favorites anywhere, and I could eat it by the bucket loads. The baked beans are made with peppers and onions and have a bold, unique flavor. Lastly, the ribs were also smoked to perfection: tender, with a slight tug when you bite into it, leaving nothing on the bone, and seasoned just right.



In short, Pigalicious BBQ exceeded my expectations once again. With its welcoming atmosphere, friendly staff, and food that tastes like it came straight from a backyard cookout, this little barbecue joint lives up to its name.

Pigalicious is delicious. **GN**

GOOD NEWS IS COMING TO DINNER!

We will feature a local food critic's thoughts as they dine in Franklin County. This month Shannon Beebe visited Pigalicious BBQ.

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LOVE THROUGH THE SEASONS

What has kept the Swanns' marriage strong for nearly five decades? Friendship, patience, and always choosing each other.

By Jeriah Brumfield
Photography by Brooke Snyder

DURING THE 1970s, weekends in Franklin County meant gathering with friends at the local Dairy Queen. It was a time when life moved slower, and the small things like milkshakes and fries created memories that would last a lifetime. Life moved at an easy pace, and the chime of a jukebox and the smell of sizzling burgers set the stage for small-town memories. It was also when Ronnie first laid eyes on Linda. Ronnie, a young man with a gift for making friends and a heart full of big dreams, couldn't take his eyes off her. Introduced by Linda's brother, their first meeting was brief, but it was undeniable. Something clicked, and that flame grew into a love that would change their lives for decades.

In the early days of their relationship, Linda's father, the chief deputy of the local sheriff's depart-

ment, made a strong impression on Ronnie. A certain respect — and maybe a little intimidation — came with being around him, and Ronnie quickly learned to appreciate both.

Ronnie remembered the blue lights and sirens that often followed them during their outings, but over time, he and Linda's father developed a special relationship in which they shared hobbies like hunting and cooking.

"Her daddy was one of my best friends," Ronnie explained. "In our neighborhood, we'd have fish fries and cookouts, and all our neighbors and friends would come over."

By 1975, it was clear their love was meant to last. On Valentine's Day, Ronnie popped the question, and Linda said "yes" without hesitation. That summer, on July Fourth — Linda's mother's birthday — they tied the

LOVE
IS IN THE
AIR



RONNIE AND LINDA SWANN



▲ Linda and Ronnie spent many summers at Tims Ford Lake camping and enjoying the company of one another.

“

I think you have to like one another. You have to read the other person as well. Relationships are give and take.

- Ronnie Swann

knot in a simple but intimate ceremony at a lakeside campground. True to their resourceful, down-to-earth nature, Linda and her best friend gathered daisies from the roadside to create a sweet, homespun wedding arrangement.

“They had a really nice setup for it,” Ronnie recalled.

They spent their early years together building a life and raising their two boys, Kris and Derrick, on a piece of family land where they built their dream home in the early 1980s. The house became the perfect setting for precious memories, reminding them of their own childhood. Christmas mornings were filled with the smell of Linda’s famous desserts, and summers were for barbecues with neighbors while Kris and Derrick played in the yard with friends.

“Those years with the kids, raising them, were some of the most memorable,” said Ronnie.

Ronnie worked at a local dealership during those years, and both he and Linda worked hard to build a future for themselves and their family.

Throughout the years, Ronnie and Linda always left room for new adventures. Ronnie fondly recalled the many trips they took for his job, both close to home and far beyond.

One of their most memorable work trips took them to Palm Springs, where Linda got to drive combines and tractors — which Ronnie said she really enjoyed.

But the adventures didn’t stop there. The couple also ventured across the pond, making several trips to Europe. The last of these was a breathtaking journey to Barcelona, followed by a scenic cruise up to Italy and France.

They also made their way to London, where they hopped on the Eurostar train and rode it down to



Paris for a week of sightseeing and soaking in the charm of the City of Light. Monte Carlo was another unforgettable destination that they visited during their early travels.

“Those were things we never dreamed we’d be able to do,” Ronnie said.

While their business allowed them to travel, it was always about balancing work with time for family and each other. Those adventures remain some of Ronnie’s most valuable memories, and the highlight was having Linda by his side, sharing in the joy of every experience together.

“It always seemed like wherever I went, she came along,” he reminisced.

Linda worked in bookkeeping at a local gas company then, but the couple soon realized they wanted to settle down and build a future on their own terms.

In 2012, Ronnie took a leap and opened Swann Equipment, a family business for agricultural repair and the consignment of used machinery. Around the same time, Linda retired from her own job, and her health began to decline. Though she had to step back from supporting Ronnie’s business, her support for Ronnie never faltered.

Even as Linda’s health deteriorated, Ronnie recalled how her spirit remained strong.

“She’d put on that happy face, even when things weren’t so great,” he said.

“She never complained,” he added. “I’d often know when she needed a blood transfusion before she even said anything. She’s just that kind of

person — always thinking of others before herself.”

Ronnie joked that the secret to a long-lasting marriage is to “stay broke,” but he admitted the true secret was friendship and love, which carried them through financial struggles, health challenges, and the ups and downs of life.

“I think you have to like one another. You have to read the other person as well. Relationships are give and take.”

Today, while their adventures may look different than they once did, Ronnie still finds contentment in the small moments he spends with Linda. Even some-

thing as simple as driving her to appointments has become a cherished experience for the couple.

As they near 50 years of marriage, the Swanns will tell you that the beauty of life lies in the simple moments. It’s in showing up for one another, day in and day out, through both the storms and the sunshine, and discovering joy in the everyday. Together, they’ve weathered life’s challenges, always finding reasons to celebrate the love, family, and unity that bind them. Their love story is a timeless reminder of what matters most — love, family, and the people who make life beautiful. **GN**



LOVE BUILT TO LAST

John and Jenny turned house flipping into an adventure, revitalizing homes while strengthening their bond.



By Jeriah Brumfield
Photography by Brooke Snyder

THERE'S MAGIC to John and Virginia "Jenny" Smith's story — the kind of charm you only find in a Southern home with a porch swing that's seen many sunsets and family gatherings. For over 30 years, they've shared both a life and purpose and have created a heritage of love, laughter, and strong partnership here in Franklin County.

John was born and raised in Franklin County, the third-born and oldest son in a family of 12 children who grew up in farming and construction. While helping his family build houses, John discovered a love for selling them. This interest led him to pursue real estate classes, ultimately earning his license and becoming a realtor in 1976.

After spending a couple of years working with Jim Matthews, a realtor and auctioneer, John decid-

ed to study auctioneering himself. By 1979, he had become a broker and opened his own firm. Over the years, he has weathered the ups and downs of the real estate market, including multiple recessions, but his love for the profession has kept him going.

As John often says, "If you do something you love, you'll never work a day in your life," and that sentiment has held true for him.

In 1979, John met Jenny when her first husband, a Franklin County native, returned from Texas with plans to buy a home and farm. John sold them a property in Maxwell. Life took its course, and years later, both John and Jenny became widowed. In 1987, John was hospitalized for tests to determine whether he had Crohn's disease.

When he woke up in the recovery room, he was surprised to see his nurse — Jenny Glasner.

LOVE
IS IN THE
AIR



JOHN AND JENNY SMITH

“

We just go with the flow and enjoy what we have. We're blessed as a couple and a family, and we're blessed to do the things that we do together.

- Jenny Smith

He asked her out to eat, to which she replied, "Give me a call when you're not sedated, and we can talk." A few weeks later, on a dreary Sunday afternoon, John knocked on Jenny's back door.

She answered with a warm smile, exclaiming, "John Smith, come in!"

After a year-long courtship, during which they attended the Methodist Church together, they were married at the First United Methodist Church in Winchester by Brother Eugene Barrett, who reminded them their marriage was "to last forever."

They took that message to heart. John joined the church where Jenny and her daughters were already members, and together, they formed a

blended family, much like "The Brady Bunch." The couple mutually adopted their three younger children, while the two oldest were already adults.

"We adopted each other's kids to make sure there were no steps or halves," John said. "They're just our kids, plain and simple."

Their three youngest children were close in age, born in 1978, 1981, and 1982.

"If you see pictures of them, you'd think they were natural siblings," Jenny said. "And they've always acted like it, too."

John and Jenny believe raising a family on a farm taught the children important life skills.

"We've traveled with our children as well as worked on the farm and taught our children needed life skills,"



▲ Jenny and John are just as much in love as they were in the beginning.



▲ *John and Jenny at Fall Creek Falls*

said John. “We’ve done our best to teach them honesty, integrity, and the value of family and friends.”

Now, with their children grown and scattered across the country, Jenny and John cherish the times when everyone comes home. “Holidays are our big gatherings,” Jenny said. “There’s nothing better than having a house full of kids and grandkids.”

When Jenny retired from nursing eight years ago, she wasn’t sure what the next chapter would hold. But John had an idea. He handed her a new career — a house to remodel. Thus, another season of teamwork began, continuing the partnership they had shared since their marriage in 1988.

Situated on the farm they decided to keep after selling Jenny’s family property, the house has

grown and changed along with their family.

The family has remodeled their home three times since their marriage. “We built a sunroom after a mission trip to Puerto Rico in 1991. That trip taught us a new construction method, and when we got back, I knew exactly how to build it.”

After returning from the mission trip, they built a sunroom, which is settled on a bond beam foundation, overlooking their pool, a perfect spot for grandkids to splash during the summer. Beneath it, there’s a covered porch where Jenny and John sip coffee on crisp mornings. Over the years, they’ve added a bedroom, converted part of the basement into a den (now a storage room, as life often demands), and, most recently, replaced their kitchen



countertops — a project three years in the making.

But the house isn’t their only canvas. Since Jenny’s retirement, the couple has flipped 10 houses together.

John shared that Jenny didn’t know much about construction at first, but she learned quickly and became a natural. They’ve since hung up their house-flipping hats, focusing their energy on their own home and helping others.

For Jenny and John, staying busy is the secret to their vitality.

“I worked 50 years in nursing,” Jenny said. “When I retired, I promised myself I’d age gracefully, just like my mama. She worked until the day she went to meet the Good Lord. I think the secret is keeping active and not thinking about your age but what you can do for others.”

Their days are compiled with projects, farming, and community service. John recently helped build a new Masonic Lodge, a labor of love that kept him busy for months.

“We like to help others when we can,” Jenny said. “It’s how we’ve always lived.”

According to the couple, faith and teamwork are the secrets to their prevailing partnership.

“We’ve faced our share of challenges,” said Jenny, “but we’ve always leaned on each other and the Lord.”

John agreed.

“We just go with the flow and enjoy what we have. We’re blessed as a couple and a family, and we’re blessed to do the things that we do together.” **GN**



LOVE AND GRATITUDE TAKE FLIGHT

Ann Solomon helps Vietnam veterans find healing, recognition, and community on a trip of a lifetime.

By Jeriah Brumfield
Photography by Brooke Snyder
and submitted by Ann Solomon

THE VIETNAM veterans returned to a home they hardly recognized — a country overshadowed by protests, riots, and resentment. For many of them, the reception was almost as cold as the battles they had fought abroad.

Ann Solomon grew up hearing stories of service and sacrifice from her father, a World War II veteran, and her grandfather, who served in World War I. While they rarely spoke about the war in detail, their pride in their service left an immeasurable impression on her. Her family's patriotism, compiled with the stories she later heard of veterans returning home to hostility instead of gratitude, compelled Solomon to volunteer for Honor Flight.

"I felt it was something both my father and grandfather would have done if they'd had the opportunity," she shared.

She feels a strong connection to the military and its veterans, and when she first heard about Honor Flight through a local chamber ambassador, her interest lingered. Years later, two friends mentioned volunteering on an upcoming flight, and Solomon knew it was time to act.

Honor Flight Middle Tennessee offers veterans in Southern Middle Tennessee a chance to visit the monuments and memorials built in their honor in Washington, D.C. For many veterans, it's not just a trip but an opportunity for long-overdue healing.

"These veterans deserve to see how their service is remembered," Solomon explained.

A DAY OF REFLECTING AND CONNECTING

For Solomon, one of the most touching moments came at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. Her assigned veteran, a man who had carried his memories quietly for decades, stood silently before the wall. As he searched for the names of his high school best friend and a fellow Seabee who had died in the line of duty, the weight of those losses fell heavily on him, and Solomon felt it as well.

"He was overcome with emotion," Ann recalled. "It was hard for

LOVE IS IN THE AIR



ANN SOLOMON

him, but then we stopped at a statue nearby, and that brief pause seemed to redirect his thoughts. He took a breath, gathered himself, and we moved forward to find the names.”

Later, during the “mail call” — similar to the letters soldiers received during their service — her veteran sat with a pile of letters he hadn’t expected.

“He told me his family wasn’t good at writing letters, so he didn’t think there would be anything for him,” Solomon said.

The bundle of letters included notes from local veterans’ organizations and children and, most surprisingly, heartfelt letters from his wife and sister. Ann said she would never forget the look of astonishment and gratitude on his face.

MOMENTS THAT MATTER

The day carried many moving experiences: the changing of the guard at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, the solemn comradeship among veterans, and the touching tributes from strangers who came up simply to say, “Thank you for your service.”

Each interaction brought the veterans closer to the recognition many of them had been denied for so long.

HEALING TAKES FLIGHT

From the early morning send-off, escorted by the Patriot Guard Riders, to the fire truck salute on the runway in Washington, D.C., every detail of the Honor Flight experience is designed to honor these heroes. Veterans are celebrated with breakfast, greeted by

cheering crowds at the airport, and serenaded by a military band playing their branch’s song.

For many, this trip is their first time openly reflecting on their service. Solomon noticed how her veteran, initially reserved, began sharing more and more as the day went on.

“It was very touching — at first, the conversation was very surface level, learning about his family — and once we visited the wall, the stories began. He started sharing more and more details about the people he visited.”

Honor Flight Middle Tennessee, part of the national Honor Flight Network founded in 2005, has taken thousands of veterans on unforgettable



◀ Veteran John G. Stark, Sr., visits Memorial Statue for the Vietnam Veterans called The Three Servicemen Statue.

“

It is never too late to show gratitude and love. They were shown an enormous amount of love and gratitude that day.

- Ann Solomon

journeys. The organization prioritizes terminally ill veterans, those from earlier wars, and Korean and Vietnam veterans with disabilities.

COMING FULL CIRCLE

The day ends where it began: with gratitude. As the veterans returned home, large crowds greeted them with waving flags, clapping, and cheering.

“When the Vietnam veterans came back from their service, they were not given grand welcomes — they were met by protests and people who were not happy with what they had done. The love and support that the Veterans were given throughout this trip was phenomenal.”

Many veterans, including Solomon’s, fought back tears as the crowd met them with an overwhelming outpouring of love after they landed. These men had given everything — their hearts, souls, and sacrifices — for the country they loved to help future generations live freely. At that moment, it felt like the

gratitude they had waited a lifetime to receive had finally come full circle.

“It has a huge impact on the veterans,” Solomon said. “A lot of these veterans would not go if it weren’t for this program. The Vietnam era veterans get to see that they truly are appreciated for their service. It also gives them time to reflect on their service and see the names of their fellow soldiers on the wall, and it brings back both the good times they shared and the loss of their fellow man.”

Solomon encourages anyone considering volunteering for Honor Flight to take the leap.

“Lead by example — if you see a veteran or know one — give them a simple ‘thank you’ for their service. Most of them proudly wear hats that show what branch and war they served,” she said.

Solomon said once you volunteer, you’ll find yourself wondering why you didn’t do it sooner.

GRATITUDE IN MOTION

Solomon looked back on her Honor Flight experience and the lessons her father and grandfather had taught her — that service, in any form, honors those who came before us and leaves a mark on those who come after us.

Through Honor Flight, Solomon not only honored her family’s sacrifice but also helped ensure that every veteran, especially those who came home to protests instead of parades, felt the gratitude they deserved.

She said, “It is never too late to show gratitude and love. They were shown an enormous amount of love and gratitude that day. It will be a day that they will always remember and hopefully wipe away all the adversity they faced.” GN

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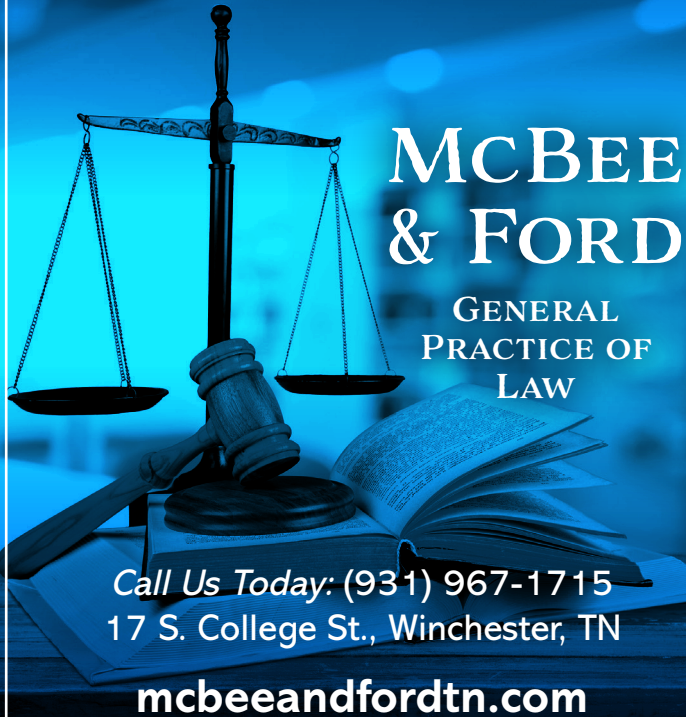


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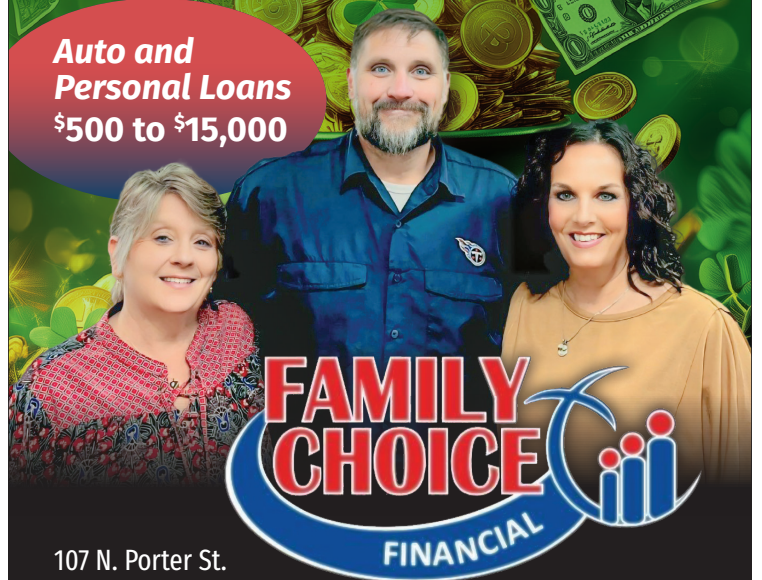
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The Lucky Penny Patch Paint Party - Jan. 18



Photos submitted by The Lucky Penny Patch

The Lucky Penny Patch hosted a paint party on Saturday, Jan. 18, from 5 to 8 p.m. Guided instruction was given, and all attendees went home with a beautifully unique piece of art. Eighteen ladies attended this event.



1. Barbara Brackett 2. Sarah Caldwell, Joyce Caldwell, Tappiann Hopkins, Sonda Lewis, Stacey Duckworth, Claire Hopkins, and Sabra Perry
3. Jennifer Kilgore, Eden Kilgore, and Annoula Wilkerson 4. Emily Huffer 5. Sarah and Joyce Caldwell
6. Sonda Lewis, Claire Hopkins, Stacey Duckworth, and Tappiann Hopkins



7. Bethany, Haley, and Joy Hill 8. Sonda Lewis 9. Claire and Tappiann Hopkins
 10. Emily and Michelle Huffer 11. Erika Williams, Harlee Benefield, and Kelsea Stewart

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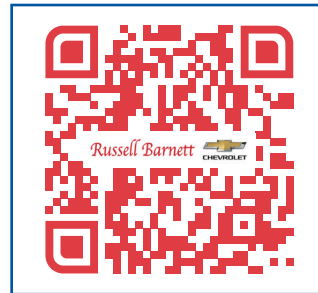


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- Audrey Hepburn



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