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exchange

Susan Shaw

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ISSUE 3 2025

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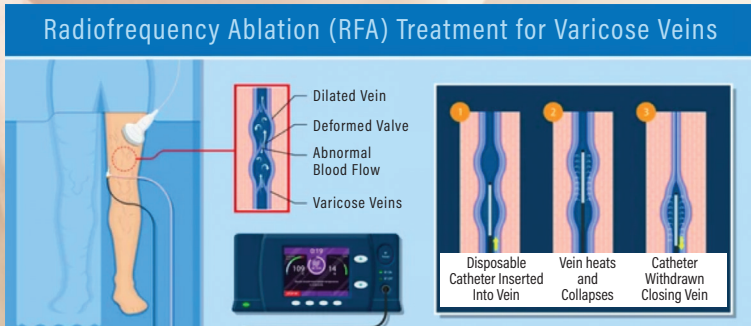


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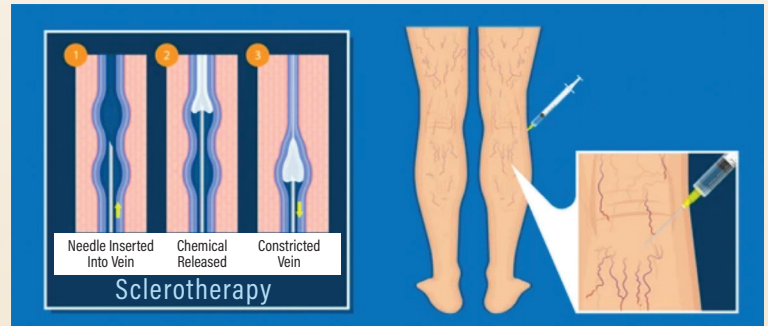
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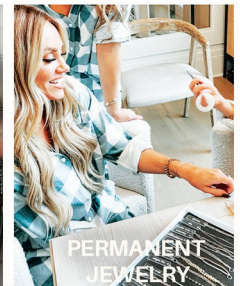
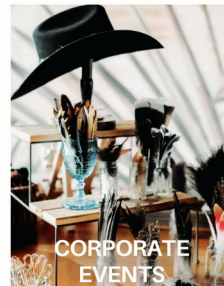
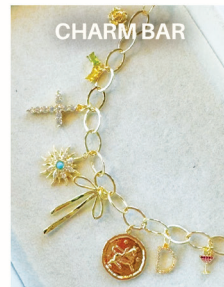


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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Empathy in Motion

A walk in different shoes

THE SOUNDS of the self-checkout registers *beep* through the entire store. The short lines of people with baskets and carts move across the reflective tile like a conveyor belt and out the door. *Uh, oh.* A man at the checkout stood frozen. The total amount due on the screen was higher than he knew was on his card. He had to decide what to put back: something he needed or something for his grandkid. His hand hovered over the items, trying to decide quickly so the people behind didn't notice. Luckily, the woman behind him *did* notice. Before he could speak, the woman behind him quietly passed him a few dollars. No hesitation, no grand speech — just a simple nod and a kind smile that said, "I've been there too."


Moments like this don't make headlines, but they are what makes a strong community. Empathy isn't just about understanding someone's struggle — it's about moving toward them. It's choosing to help, even in small ways. It's listening when it would be easier to roll your eyes, huff, and walk away.

Empathy in motion is the teacher who stays after school to help a struggling student. The small business owner who donates meals after a storm. The neighbor who checks in just to say, "How are you doing?" These aren't grand gestures, but they are the moments that build something lasting — connection, trust, and the kind of community where people show up for each other.

That's what this issue is about: people who don't just talk about kindness but live it. Their stories remind us that empathy is not passive — it's an action, a decision, and a way of life.

And in a world that often feels divided, empathy is what keeps us together. It reminds us that our stories are connected, that we belong to each other, and that none of us are truly alone.

As you turn these pages, may you be inspired to move — to listen, to step forward, to choose compassion. Because when we walk in each other's shoes, we walk forward together. And that is what makes a community. **GN**


Wesley Bryant,
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

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EDITOR-IN-CHIEF Wesley Bryant

REGIONAL PUBLISHER Jack Owens

LEAD LAYOUT ARTIST Brianna Brubaker

SENIOR LAYOUT ARTIST Melissa Davis

LAYOUT ARTIST Ben Adams

LEAD PRINT AD DESIGNER Todd Pitts

LEAD PHOTOGRAPHER Ashleigh Newnes

PHOTOGRAPHER Brooke Snyder

FREELANCE PHOTOGRAPHERS Adin Parks, Robin Fast, Steve Zak,

Chris Morris, Larry McCormack

LEAD WRITER Tina Neeley

FREELANCE WRITERS Jeriah Brumfield, Amanda West, Sara Hook,
Kali Bradford, Gabriel Huff, Richard Klin, Dave Lenehan, Rachael Smith

FOOD CRITIC Christina Midgett

STORY COORDINATOR Haley Potter

PROOFREADER Michelle Harwell

JR. PROOFREADER Kaitlin Rettig

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT Faith Cashion, Tony Glenn,

Kevin Maples, Janet Mullins, Sissy Smith, Sandra Thomas, Jay Hutt

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to safe spaces,
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BY SARA HOOK // PHOTOGRAPHY BY ROBIN HOLCOMB



Francis Garcia:

BUILDING HOPE FOR

Lebanon's Youth

MENTAL HEALTH is an issue for people all across the United States, especially for children — but Lebanon has a champion fighting back. Francis Garcia has lived in Middle Tennessee for over 21 years and in Lebanon for five, and his work changes lives across the state.

Garcia began his professional career in children's health care, working as an interpreter and translator at Meharry Medical College in Nashville. That work shaped him, Garcia said, and drove him to pursue an education in public health — but he was shaped even more by the work of his god-mother, Precious Bradshaw Colebrook. As a correctional officer, she dealt with mental health daily, and she was pivotal in helping him navigate tough times as a child.

"She was a powerhouse in our community in terms of serving and making sure that children were protected, especially a child like myself that was what was categorized an 'at-risk youth,'" Garcia said. "Those things are important to me because of that reason and many others that helped shepherd a young man like me, and I know how pivotal those people were in my life, so that's my way of living my life of service."

For a time Garcia worked for the Tennessee Department of Health, creating access and providing education for minority populations across the state. This past May, he also received his master's degree in public health.

"I think public health provides a platform for you to really dive into how to help communities from the perspective of not just a job but also a Christ-like living type of life,"

Garcia said. "Having my master's in public health, I can go in any different direction, and I've selected mental health because I see how vulnerable our children are."

Currently, Garcia works for TN Voices, an organization founded in the early '90s to ensure those vulnerable children are protected. As a part of TN Voices, Garcia does mental health workshops in schools, as well as a lot of partnering with nonprofits and city or county governments. In Lebanon, Garcia has championed several community initiatives like the mental health fair. Perhaps one of the biggest projects he has, however, is bringing the Boys and Girls Club to Wilson County.

Garcia realized the community needed the club after a program he put on along with Coach Stokes from Walter J. Baird Middle School. Through that program he brought in members of the community to tell their stories and to listen to the young men, providing a way for them to advocate for themselves.

Some of the needs identified were food insecurity, mentorship, access to additional education, and access to friendly and safe spaces. Garcia and a few other community members visited

//
Having my master's in public health, I can go in any different direction, and I've selected mental health because I see how vulnerable our children are.

- FRANCIS GARCIA

the Rutherford County club, saw the impact that organization was having on the community, and resolved to bring the club to Wilson County. They brought the idea back to the students and had a dinner to discuss the opportunity.

“We invited several key different individuals, but more importantly, what I invited was the kids to come and tell the adults what they needed,” Garcia said. “They talked about why this project specifically was important to them, and when I say that — a lot of us in the room were teary-eyed, to say the least.”

The Lebanon community has come around the project. Garcia said the district attorney is a part of it, and Cumberland University is at the table, alongside support from the county mayor, city mayor, and quite a few nonprofits.

“For the first time I’ve been able to reflect on what it really looks like when you have a real pivotal issue and you get everybody to play together,” Garcia said. “I’m getting to witness that this time around, and you don’t see any divide or conflict.”

While the club is not ready to open yet, it has formed all of the committees necessary to function, as well as the advisory board. They will begin fundraising soon, Garcia said, and they are currently looking for a building.

“We’re looking at a timeline of being operational by the start of this next school year — that is the goal,” Garcia said.

As the Boys and Girls Club gets underway in Lebanon, it is important to remember that it isn’t a one-person job. A system

that can provide after-school programs, child care, and additional education, Garcia said, needs the community to run. While Garcia is championing the care and mental health of Lebanon’s children, Lebanon itself will be stepping up the fight.

“It’s going to take a community to get behind this and support it both advocating for it and also donating to it,” Garcia said. “My hope is that a few years from now, we will all be looking back, and the impact that this will have [on] our kids is something that we can celebrate.” GN



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By Sara Hook
Photography by Robin Holcomb
and submitted by Matthew Black



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CONSTRUCTION CAN be a sweaty, dirty job, and shed manufacturing is no different. But Matthew Black of Blacks Buildings isn't afraid to get his hands dirty for his business or for the community. As a modular certified home builder, Blacks Buildings constructs sheds, outbuildings, barns, and other portable structures. The company's long history of generosity includes other construction projects as well.

"We try to do a lot of things for our community, just individually as our leadership team, and then things that we do kind of out in public," Black said. "A couple [of] weeks ago, my sales manager came to me, and he was like, 'Hey, Matt, we've got this situation — this man's on a limited budget, his daughter is in a wheelchair, they need something to get by.'"

The family had enough money for a building but not for a wheelchair ramp.

Making such a ramp compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act is not a simple job, and it needed to be almost 60 feet long. Together, Black and his sales manager went out and built that ramp. They did that, Black said, because it gives a different value to the work.

"It's so easy to write a check for things when you see people in need," Black said. "It's a different grind to get there and actually solve the need."

When Hurricane Helene hit East Tennessee and North Carolina, Blacks Buildings got together with others in the community to send supplies to the affected areas. The effort was spearheaded by one of Black's employees, Gene Atkinson, and they managed to send multiple large U-Hauls soon after the hurricane struck.

"There's a time of a week or two after incidents like this where it's just so hard for

"It's so easy to write a check for things when you see people in need. It's a different grind to get there and actually solve the need."

- MATTHEW BLACK

people because people are trying to organize stuff — but maybe that doesn't happen for three [or] four weeks," Black said. "We tried to hit it as quickly as we could and got some goods out there, and I know it blessed a lot of people."

Black loves every type of giving, whether it is done personally or as a community effort. Any time there is a spirit of giving, Black said, he wants to be involved. Often, Black's entire family is a part of it. For the past three years, Blacks Buildings has done a big Christmas event, giving gifts to kids in the community — Black's whole family is at the giveaway handing out presents. For Black, each event is a tremendous blessing — the joy of giving is much greater than the joy of receiving, Black said. For his kids, however, each event is a teaching moment, as it is important to Black and his wife, Ashlee, that his children are able to give back.

"My kids are extremely blessed, but they are also very well grounded," Black said. "They assist in picking out the toys and handing them out. Not every kid likes the same stuff, and they help to make sure that each kid gets something that they like."

Blacks Buildings does a lot in the community, but Black said it isn't that the business does the work but that the business supports the work he, his family, and his co-workers do. Their generosity with their time and labor, as well as their money, is an inspiration — especially to those who don't have money to give. After all, there is more than one way to be generous.

"To me, the time is really where it's at," Black said. "You want the real joy? Put your boots on the ground and go out there and do it yourself." **GN**

Matthew ►
Black
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Accelerate Expo:

Reviving Business Connections in Wilson County

Courtesy of Kimberly Thomas - MJ Lifestyle

AFTER YEARS without a major business expo, the Lebanon Wilson County Chamber of Commerce is bringing a fresh and exciting event to the local community: the Accelerate Expo. Spearheaded by James Danella and a dedicated subcommittee of the chamber's Economic Development Committee, this initiative aims to unify and empower businesses across Wilson County.

Danella, chair of the Economic Development Committee, proposed the idea last year, motivated by a desire to break down the silos that often separate businesses. "We're attempting to bring the businesses of Wilson County together to better communicate and collaborate," Danella explained. "Our goal is to improve commerce in the county by giving all businesses — not just the usual suspects — the opportunity to be seen and heard."

The Accelerate Expo is designed to meet a crucial need for the chamber: creating a profit-generating event that aligns with its mission and supports its members. Danella emphasizes that this project is entirely volunteer-driven. "Our subcommittee's only vested interest is to support the chamber and provide value to its members," he noted.

Ian Isbell, the chamber's new board president, is equally enthusiastic about the expo. "Ian is a great guy with innovative ideas," said Danella. "He's fully committed to making this event a success and

steering the chamber toward new opportunities." Isbell's leadership is expected to bring fresh energy and vision to the chamber's initiatives.

Far from being just another business-to-business event, Accelerate Expo promises a professional and engaging experience. One of its standout features is a workshop held six weeks prior to the expo, designed to help booth vendors and sponsors maximize their event experience. During the expo itself, attendees can participate in industry-specific breakout sessions led by seasoned professionals offering valuable advice and education for business owners.

The event also includes thoughtful touches like a breakfast for vendors and sponsors to start the day and a cocktail party afterward to foster networking and camaraderie. "It's all about creating connections and adding value," Danella said.

The Accelerate Expo marks a significant step forward for the Lebanon Wilson County Chamber of Commerce. It's not just an event; it's a movement to strengthen the local business community, build lasting relationships, and drive economic growth. Whether you're a small business owner or a seasoned entrepreneur, this is an opportunity to be part of something transformative for Wilson County. **GN**

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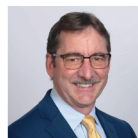
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BRING YOUR MESS

By Gabriel Grant Huff // Photography by Robin Holcomb

LAURA
DILEONARDI

LAURA DILEONARDI CREATES A NATIONAL COMMUNITY FOR DISTRESSED MOTHERS WITH THE AGAPE MOMS GROUP.

LAURA DILEONARDI'S life felt like a cluttered room of chaos with no doors. In 2012, she became pregnant for the first time. With the new reality came anxiety, exhaustion, and loneliness. She struggled to make connections in her community. Mother support networks failed to ease the pressure. Thoughts of defeat took hold and lingered like the flu.

Then came the compulsion to aid other mothers.

The now-Lebanon resident never dreamed that national growth would take root from such a burden.

Agape Moms is a family network of mama tribes navigating motherhood together as they seek Jesus. Women come with anxiety, depression, pain, chaos, and more. No matter how small or large the problem, the group refuses to treat anxieties as just your "typical mom struggle" or mental health issue, believing these problems can belie spiritual issues.



▲ Agape Moms Bible study group

The organization exists to equip mothers to make disciples of Christ, providing a purpose and a community for those struggling. Women feel encouraged, empowered, and embraced. Members profess that the motherhood differs from one's average mom group.

Living their mantra, this group wants mothers to bring their kids and “bring their mess.”

Their founder, Laura DiLeonardi, means it.

Born and raised in the Chicago suburbs, Laura and her husband, Matt DiLeonardi, graduated from the Moody Bible Institute in the city and began their careers in ministry soon after. This led them to the Tampa Bay area in Florida,

where Laura first became pregnant. Two more children would follow soon after.

“My first year as a mom, I tried to mom alone, and it didn't go very well,” Laura confessed. “When you don't have community in your life, it can lead to things like depression, anxiety, loneliness, and really just feeling isolated in some of the common problems and struggles every mom faces.”

Laura began joining different maternity clubs in the Tampa Bay area, but certain club requirements — like completing Bible homework and rigid dress codes — hampered her growth, so she tried something else.

In 2016, Laura recalled, she gathered six other moms in a park to form the first

Agape Moms tribe, a gospel-centered group despite only half of them believing in Christ.

A defining moment came when Laura fell on her stomach in an accident while pregnant with her third child, sending her to the hospital. Her long absence tanked the momentum of Agape Moms as they became a group of two when Laura recovered enough to return.

“I feel that God was testing me and asking me, ‘Are you willing to show up, Laura, for one mom?’ and I said, ‘You know what? I am. I'm willing to show up for just one mom.’”

That one mom, Jessica Hundley, went from not knowing God to believing and inviting others to join their group. Eventually, a regrowth occurred. Laura later moved away after Matt received a promotion, leaving an equipped Hundley to become the new Tampa director, which she still leads as of 2025.

After living in various places, Laura found herself in Middle Tennessee in 2021. She found a home in Lebanon's Journey Church, where she became the director of women's discipleship and planted her third Agape Moms group. The group consisted of seven Tiny Tribes, each with two Tiny Tribe leaders and a mentor mom, who all organize weekly meetings in which moms bring their kids. They openly discuss emotional issues, share their “mess,” offer Biblical advice, and learn how to study Scripture.

Once a month, the women participate in “Brunch and Play,” where members go out into the community to invite other moms to their group. The event includes a biannual clothing swap outreach where they give away their possessions like the early church did.



▲ Agape Moms event

Also, do not let the name fool you. Laura stresses that Agape Moms open their arms to all women, not just moms.

Like wildfires, Agape Moms spread from Florida, branching out into Washington, Tennessee, Texas, Massachusetts, Wisconsin, Oregon, Indiana, Ohio, and Iowa and even reaching Australia.

It only takes a willing mother to launch a new Agape Moms group in her community to create space for moms to grow together. The online training for Agape Moms walks them through the process of creating their own tribe.

Laura's love for God and her three children — Jack, Selah, and Lucy — continues to drive her work in the Agape Moms group.

“This started with me just having a burden for moms who know Jesus to have community and also a huge burden for mothers who don't know Christ to come to know him through the brokenness and the hardships of motherhood.” GN

Those wishing to get involved with Agape Moms or have questions can email Agape-Moms.BringYourMess@gmail.com. People can learn more about the motherhood at agapemomsnetwork.com.



▲ Laura DiLeonardi

ISLAND BREEZE BISTRO

**A ROTATING MENU AND TROPICAL VIBES BRING
A TASTE OF THE ISLANDS TO LEBANON.**

ARE YOU tired of the same routine? We all have our go-to restaurants where we order the same thing every time. But if you're looking to change it up, have I got the place for you! Island Breeze Bistro takes you straight to the Caribbean with its flavorful dishes and warm, inviting atmosphere.

The rotating menu means you can't order the same thing every day, making each visit feel like a new adventure. I went on a Wednesday and ordered the Island Baked Chicken with cabbage and red beans and rice. Normally, I skip the skin — I'm just not a fan — but the spices on this chicken were so unique, and it was baked so perfectly that I had to eat it all. The cabbage was light but flavorful, and the red beans and rice had that perfect balance of creamy and savory.

I went back on a Saturday and ordered the Oxtail Stew. Honestly, I never would have chosen oxtail if it weren't one of the three entree options that day. It was one of the most tender, flavorful dishes I've ever had.

The whole place has that laid-back, tropical island feel — like a little escape in the middle of Lebanon. The food is big, bold, and comforting, just like the best home-cooked Caribbean meals. With dishes like jerk chicken, curry goat, and stewed oxtail, you never know what you'll get, but you know it'll be good.

Don't forget to grab a "mocha lagoon" coffee — a mix of mocha, caramel, and espresso that's smooth, rich, and just sweet enough.

Whether dining in or catering for a crowd, Island Breeze Bistro brings the islands to you. Open Wednesday through Saturday, it's just enough time to escape — no passport required. **GN**



GOOD NEWS IS COMING TO DINNER!

We will feature a local food critic's thoughts as they dine in Lebanon. This month Krys Midgett visited Island Breeze Bistro.

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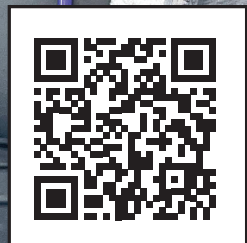
- Camryn



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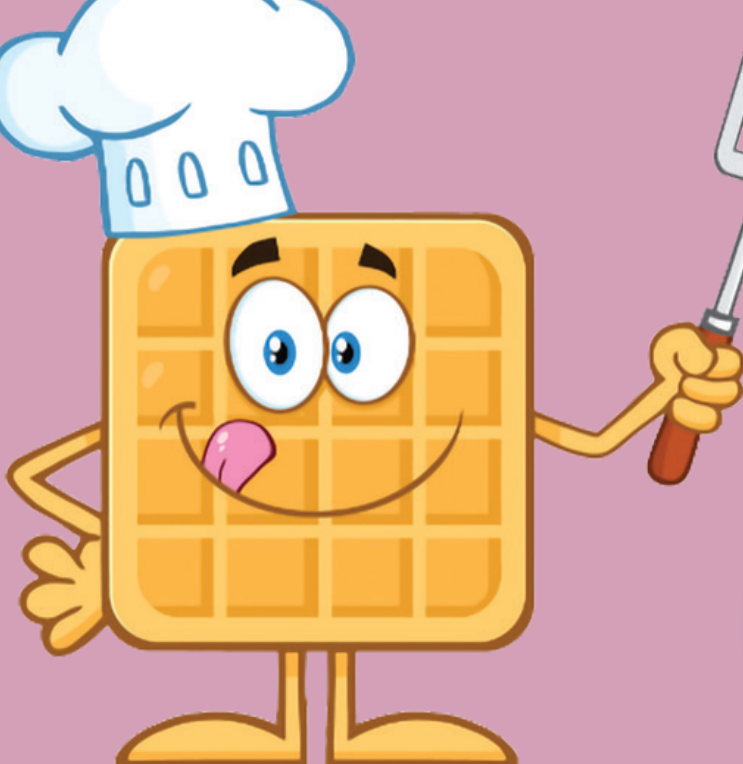
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Susan Shaw

***ABOVE
AND BEYOND***

TWO LIFELINES WEAVE HOPE INTO WILSON COUNTY'S STORY.

BY RICHARD J. KLIN // PHOTOGRAPHY BY ROBIN HOLCOMB
AND SUBMITTED BY SUSAN SHAW

SUSAN SHAW is the project administrator for Wilson County Mayor Randall Hutto. “My skills,” she said, “are project management and bringing people together.” This is an apt — and modest — summation of her work with two outreach programs: DrugFree WilCo and Wilson Rides. The scope of these two entities is very different. What they have in common, though, is an effort to make the Lebanon area a more livable, humane place.

DrugFree WilCo started when a woman entered Hutto’s office in 2018. Her 32-year-old son had died from a drug overdose. She made the strong case that Wilson County didn’t have enough resources to address the opioid crisis.

“The mayor arranged a meeting with 20 to 25 people,” Shaw recalled. Out of that meeting, a grassroots coalition emerged to combat opioid misuse and overdose to educate people about the issues and find resources. That coalition became the nonprofit DrugFree Wilco, which has now been in existence for five years.

The opioid epidemic is exactly that: a nationwide epidemic that, sadly enough, has not spared Wilson County. First and foremost, according to Shaw, there must be an effort to destigmatize who makes up the opioid crisis. Opioid

addiction — like all addictions — is “hiding an emotional hurt,” and often, the user sees drugs as a solution or as a means of self-medication. There is also the crucial factor that “opioids were overprescribed for such a long time, which is part of the big problem. Once you get addicted to the opioids and your doctor actually stops prescribing them,” the need doesn’t disappear. And then the user will turn to the streets — with the potential to unwittingly consume fatal, fentanyl-laced substances.

One of the things DrugFree WilCo has done over the years during its monthly meetings is to include a testimonial from somebody who’s been



Part of the mission of Wilson Rides, besides providing an affordable, safe transportation service, is providing a social connection.

– Susan Shaw



impacted — whether they were addicted, in recovery, or have a family member who's been affected. For a person to tell their story for five to 10 minutes adds a lot in the way of understanding and compassion. If you understand, you can help direct people to resources and provide solutions. Those with an opioid dependency could be a relative, a neighbor, or a co-worker.

Shaw is a great admirer of drug court, which is another assistance program that has been in existence for a while and is geared toward those who are incarcerated. The judge gives them an opportunity to receive help, but they have to do the work. This year, five people graduated. "Five people doesn't sound like a lot," Shaw said. But those are five salvaged lives and five chances at a future.

There is also a focus on stopping the problem before it begins, which includes outreach to kids as young as grade school. One offshoot of DrugFree WilCo is the Youth Prevention Coalition (YPC), which was actually started by a teenager who came to DrugFree WilCo meetings and said, "We need this in the schools." There's nothing as valuable as peer-to-peer interaction, and YPC "has taken off, and it's in many of our schools. It's really good. It's made an impact."

Wilson Rides also originated with Hutto. It had been noticed that more and more older adults were being admitted to emergency rooms and hospitals.

They weren't, as it turned out, going for regular doctors appointments or medical appointments that were scheduled because they couldn't drive themselves. Some had nobody to turn to for help; others simply didn't want to be a burden.

Wilson County, by and large, lacks public transportation, and cab service can be prohibitively expensive. Wilson Rides is a volunteer ride service where the drivers are volunteers who drive their own cars. People over 55 can call and make an appointment. If they need a ride, they can have up to three destinations in one trip. The drivers get to know the riders, and they become friends. "Part of the mission of Wilson Rides," Shaw said, "besides providing an affordable, safe transportation service, is providing a social connection. If you're at home by yourself for a long time, everything starts to go downhill."

DrugFree WilCo and Wilson Rides have very different constituencies. But both are dedicated efforts to make the area a better place. "I am touched by all of this," Shaw concluded. "And I love being part of it, where I can see the results of it." And those results are many and expanding outward. **GN**







Fred Burton

A LIFETIME OF SERVICE TO LEBANON



A RADIO LEGEND AND COMMUNITY ADVOCATE, BURTON HAS SPENT DECADES SHAPING LIVES AND SOUNDTRACKS.

BY HALEY POTTER

FOR 40 YEARS, Fred Burton has been the steady voice on Lebanon's airwaves, spinning records and shaping the soundtrack of Saturday nights. But his contributions to the community extend far beyond the radio booth. From military service to public office and business ownership to cultural advocacy, Burton's life has been full of dedication, perseverance, and heart.

Born and raised in Lebanon, his love for music started early. "I played in the high school band for eight years," he recalled. "And I always loved music, always played little record hops at school. Music was just a part of me."

That passion followed him even when he was drafted into the U.S. Army in 1962 and stationed in Korea. "I had a buddy who was a disc jockey over there," he said. "One day, I went up to the studio with him, and the program director said, 'I like your voice; let me give you a voice test.'"

That moment set the stage for a lifetime in radio. "He said, 'I love your voice. I'm putting you on the radio,'" Burton remembered with a large grin on his face. "So in 1963, I started playing soul music over there."

When he returned stateside in 1964, Nashville became his next stage. "I started at WVOL radio [station] doing Sunday evenings, and I was also working at a station here in Lebanon. Two stations at once — it was busy," he said with a laugh.

But radio was just one track of Burton's life. In 1986, he turned up the volume on his commitment to the community by running for Lebanon City Council. "When I ran, we didn't have a representative in our ward. It was an African American ward, and we had no voice," he explained. "So they added two more council seats, and I was one of them. That was in 1986, and I stayed for 30 years."



... I always loved music, always played little record hops at school. Music was just a part of me.

- Fred Burton

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PAGE B1

'Fantastic Fred' shares the BLUES

Ask Ken Beck

Ken Beck

McCarthy loves keeping Mike & Molly characters real

Dear Ken: Please share some information on Melissa McCarthy, the star of "Mike & Molly."

McCarthy, 41, was born in Plainfield, Ill., and grew up on a farm in a large, Irish-Catholic family. Before her current role, which was her on *Friday* Award last year, she played Sophie St. James on "Gilmore Girls" and was in the movies "Blackboard," "State of the Union," "The Nine" and "The Back-up Plan." She and her husband, actor Ben Falcone, have two daughters, ages 4 and 1. She will star this year in the film "This Is 40," and is slated to make two more movies, "ID Theft" and "Lemon." The actress, who plays a schoolteacher on the show, says she often hears from fans about how the show seems to be about real people. "I get a lot of comments that they love that you know, that 'I'm a teacher' or 'I have a sister that is a teacher.' You know, like a teacher. You know, like a teacher. I've always had a thing where I hate where somebody is talking about, 'I can't say the word.' I'm like, 'You have a \$3,000 handbag.' We try to just stay real to the characters. They do such a great job writing this kind of great little story and luckily we get to stay

the good music to the junk music. The music today doesn't have any longevity to it like the old-school songs that you can identify with. A lot of music today is all computer

don't care for rap, saying anything. It's noise."

Burton has been in front of the com

'Fantastic Fred' Burton began spinning records on Lebanon's WCOR radio station in 1970. Every Saturday from 7 p.m. to midnight, he continues that tradition playing the best in R&B, soul and rock 'n' roll on WANT-FM 91.3 and WCOR-AM 1490. **KEN BECK/The Wilson Post**



'Fantastic Fred' at home on radio

After 10-year hiatus, Burton is back and spinning 14 hit songs

By TANYA N. BALLARD

LEBANON — Tune in to 98.9 (WANT) in Lebanon from 6 to 10 p.m. on Saturday and you'll hear his deep, charismatic voice slide between Luther Vandross and Anita Baker melodies.

"This is one for the ladies," **'Fantastic Fred'** Anthony says, laying his rap on the Wilson County listeners. But his radio mapping is limited to Saturday nights.

During the week, "Fantastic Fred Anthony" becomes Fred A. Burton Sr., a lawyer and purchasing agent for Toshiba and fourth-term Lebanon city councillor.

Burton, 56, has a 17-year history in the radio business, a love born in the late '50s when he was a teenager growing up in Lebanon.

Six weeks ago, after a 10-year hiatus from the radio business, Burton returned to the DJ booth, playing best to a four-hour spot in which he plays oldies from the '60s, '70s and '80s, featuring artists like Isaac Hayes, Barry White and Aretha Franklin.

"You had more of a love song during those years," Burton says. "I think people can always identify with that."

Unlike at other radio stations, Burton isn't locked into a play list. Instead, he takes requests and plays music at random. He also shares information about community events.

"I do a lot of public service announcements, keeping people up to snuff on what's going on in this area," he says.

Returning to radio was like coming home for Burton. When given the chance to do the Saturday night spot, he couldn't resist the pull of his first love.

"I used to do record hops when I was in high school," the fantastic DJ says, memories of that time bringing a smile to his face.

Record hops were how Burton and other aspiring young, black radio disc jockeys could make money and build their reputations. People would invite them to come and spin records and the crowd would pay \$2 or \$3 to hop to the music.

While spending his free time at WVOL.

Later, Burton got a job as a local on-air person.

"He just captured that there in Lebanon," Kilcrease says. "Black people were coming up there at that

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Burton lays out several past newspaper articles and awards celebrating his accomplishments in local radio and local government.

Thirty years of service. Thirty years of advocacy. Thirty years of ensuring that every voice in Lebanon had a chance to be heard. "It was a lot of work," he admitted. "They worked me to death!"

Through it all, music remained a constant in his life. His influence reached beyond the airwaves, connecting him with legendary artists like James Brown. "James Brown was my friend," Burton said with pride. "Every time he came to Nashville for a show, he always called me. We always had a party after the show."

His entrepreneurial spirit also played a strong note in his life.

"After high school, I went to barber school in Memphis for six months," he said. "Came back, met a buddy, and we opened a barbershop." For 12 years, Burton cut hair by day and commanded the airwaves by night. "Then, in 1970, I said, 'That's enough.'"

Despite juggling radio, politics, and business, family remained his grounding force. "My wife, Billie, and I have a son who's a senior engineer and a grandson who's in the Air Force, going through fighter training in Little Rock," he shared. "We've always stayed close."

Over the years, Burton has received numerous awards recognizing his service and dedication. But when asked how it feels to be honored, he simply said, "Enough is enough," with a chuckle. "It's been a beautiful life."

That life wasn't without hardship. "My mother passed away when I was only 17. I was a senior in high school," he said. "My dad fell in love with a woman in Detroit and moved there. He wanted me to come, but I said, 'No way. It's too cold. I'm staying in the South.'"

Burton reflects on his past through old newspaper clippings from the early days in his radio DJ career.

And stay he did, dedicating his life to the town that shaped him. Though he officially retired from the city council in 2023, stepping away from public service hasn't dimmed his light. "Thirty years was enough," he said. "The mayor asked me if I'd run again, and I said, 'No way — I'm running out that back door!'"

Now, at 83, Burton continues to be a voice of the community. His radio show still runs strong, proving that some tunes never fade. "Music has always been my thing," he said. "And I'm not done yet."

Fred Burton's legacy is like a timeless song and certainly one that Lebanon will keep singing for generations to come. **GN**



Music has always been my thing, and I'm not done yet.

– Fred Burton



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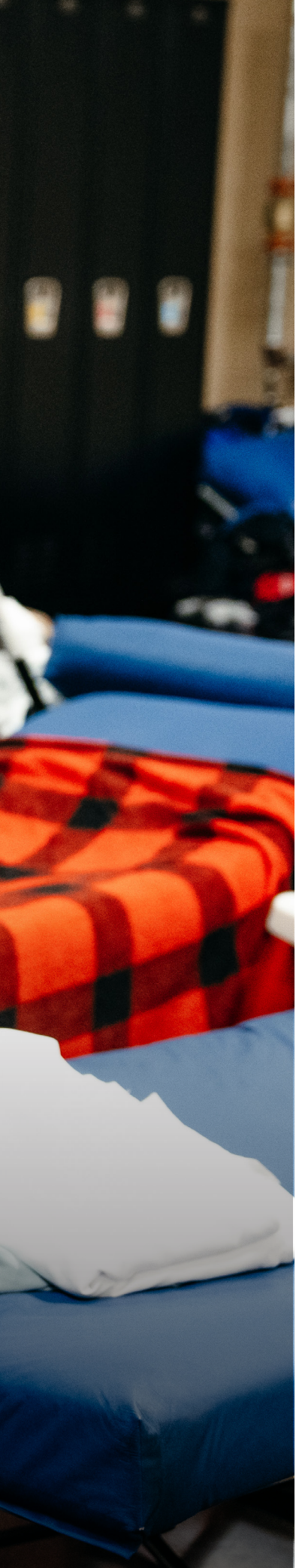
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What's Anthony Really Like?



John Grant

**LEADING A
COMPASSIONATE
MISSION**



COMPASSIONATE HANDS PROVIDES SHELTER, SERVICES, AND HOPE IN WILSON COUNTY.

BY RICHARD J. KLIN // PHOTOGRAPHY BY ROBIN HOLCOMB

JOHAN GRANT was one of the founders of Compassionate Hands, a homeless ministry that began in 2013. While no longer executive director, he is still a vital force behind this outreach.

Since the beginning, the mandate of Compassionate Hands has been that “nobody freezes to death in Wilson County.” That means providing day shelter during the summer months — serving lunch, enabling people to wash their clothes. In wintertime, the need is for overnight shelter.

“Over the course of the recent winters,” Grant related, “we’ve served about 250 individuals who have spent at least one night with us. The men stay in our ministry center, and the women stay at a church.”

The problems of rural poverty are just starting to come to public attention. Much of the thrust of Compassionate Hands is assistance with those facing suburban poverty — a new, alarming development. Suburban poverty, Grant explained, “has been even less studied and recognized” than rural poverty. There are studies that show that the rate of poverty is higher in the suburbs than in the major cities.

Suburban poverty has its unique challenges and hardships.

“Suburbs are built for commuting,” Grant explained.

The assumption is that everyone in suburbia has access to a car, which is simply not true. Wilson County, Grant pointed out, lacks a Social Security office — you have to drive a significant distance to the nearest office in Gallatin. The other assumption is that social services are not needed for suburban residents. And, of course, there is a strong stigma or outright disbelief that poverty does not exist in the suburbs.

There are three ways, Grant explained, how people become homeless. One, sadly, is addiction to alcohol and harder substances. The second



Over the course of the recent winters, we’ve served about 250 individuals who have spent at least one night with us.

– John Grant

John leads Bible study at the shelter.

Tenacity
THE QUALITY OF BEING
DETERMINED TO
ACHIEVE SOMETHING
WHICH IS DIFFICULT TO
OBTAIN.

Determination
CONVINCING YOURSELF
AND OTHERS IN YOUR
MIND TO DO
SOMETHING.

Grit
THE QUALITY OF
PERSEVERANCE AND
PATIENCE IN
Pursuing a
long-term goal or
mission through
adversity and
setbacks.

Integrity
THE QUALITY OF
BEING TRUTHFUL
AND HONEST IN
YOUR WORDS AND
DEEDS.

Resilience
THE QUALITY OF
BOUNCING BACK
AFTER SETBACKS
AND RECOVERING
FROM DIFFICULT
CIRCUMSTANCES.

Leadership
THE QUALITY OF
GUIDING OTHERS
TOWARD A COMMON
GOAL AND
INSPIRING THEM
TO FOLLOW.

Success
THE QUALITY OF
ACHIEVING
YOUR GOALS AND
DREAMS.

Persistence
THE QUALITY OF
CONTINUING TO
Pursue a goal
despite
difficulties and
obstacles.

Execute
THE QUALITY OF
COMPLETING
A TASK OR
MISSION.

EXIT

FIRE





one is untreated mental illness. The third is plain bad luck — the loss of a job or an expensive medical issue. When one lives paycheck-to-paycheck, even one of those factors can lead to a catastrophic outcome where a person or family ends up living in their car. And these are common suburban issues.

This last category — bad luck — is easier than others for Compassionate Hands to help. It's a more stable sector of the population, with some means of support, and not usually afflicted by addiction or mental instability.

“We want to get them into housing.”

Other clients are given aid to travel out of state and back to their homes, where a family or job awaits. And others are placed in rehab programs. About 10% of Compassionate Hands' guests need access to living arrangements for older adults.

“If we can get them Medicare, they can usually get into that program.”

Grant and Compassionate Hands are waging an uphill battle.

“The obstacles are so high, and the individual resources are so low.”

People have suffered a mental health crisis, have lost their housing, have been ousted from their families — the cases are wrenching.

“It's hard work,” he conceded, “with very few wins.”

About half of the shelter guests grew up in Wilson County. Compassionate Hands, among other things, is an effort to aid friends, neighbors, and ex-schoolmates. This keeps Grant and his staff going, all of it undergirded by a strong faith that combats falling into despair or succumbing to a sense of futility.

Suburban poverty — and so much of poverty in general — is hidden or shaded from view. Grant and Compassionate Hands have taken on an enormous task, but a task that's badly needed.

“One reason Compassionate Hands has succeeded,” he concluded, “is that our shelter has a really sweet spirit, even though the work is really hard. The guests will say, ‘You guys really care.’”

And that, in essence, is what it's all about. **GN**



One reason
Compassionate Hands
has succeeded is that
our shelter has a really
sweet spirit, even though
the work is really hard.

– John Grant

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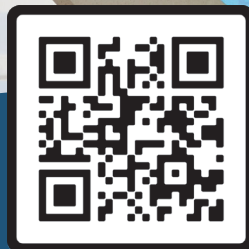


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