

Good News

exchange

JOHN GILBERT

Challenge Everything

A SKYCTC instructor inspires people to challenge what they think they know.

CLASSROOM

LEGACIES

ISSUE 4 2025

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good
look



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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Classroom Legacies

A legacy never dies.

A STUDENT IN our community today will walk the halls of Congress with a pinned American flag on their chest. A student in our community today will pray their knees still hold when their nerves get the best of them as they walk the steps to the stage to accept a Grammy. A student in our community today will one day have sweaty palms as they fly across the world to defend our country. Every kindergarten classroom in our community is full of future firefighters, future parents, future doctors, and future happy humans who didn't want a job to define them. A future president may be walking our halls today.

The kids who laugh on the playground today will one day face hard choices where both paths hurt. They may have a moment where they question themselves, but they'll make the right choice in the end. They'll remember their role model. They'll think, "What would Mr. Jean do?" and remember who they are. They'll race across the field during the Su-

per Bowl, remembering their history teacher — their coach — as they score the winning touchdown. They'll raise kids of their own, repeating the mantras they heard in the 10th grade. Childhood memories will play in their minds when they take the table's order, and their favorite teacher sits with a smile.

Our educators create legacies that carry on for the rest of time. Not because they make good money that way — just because that's who they are. They wake up early, work long days with less pay than they deserve, and come home to take care of their other responsibilities. They bring extra school supplies for the kids who had to do without. They teach our children how to do math and how to read, yes ... but they also teach our kids how to look inward. They teach our kids how to fight for a better world. But most importantly, they teach our kids how to love.

Teachers, we thank you for the legacies you create and the legacies that you are. This issue of Good News is for you. **GN**

Wesley Bryant,
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF



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Weston Robinson

MORE THAN JUST A SPORT

A lifetime of baseball forges connections in the community.

BY SARA HOOK
PHOTOGRAPHY BY ADIN PARKS

THE CRACK of bats hitting balls is music to the ears of baseball fans everywhere, and D-BAT Bowling Green is a symphony in the making with its 13 batting cages and professional instructors who live and breathe the sport. The newest in that lineup is Weston Robinson, and just a few months into his career, he has been making an impact on Bowling Green's baseball players.

Originally from Paducah, Robinson moved to Bowling Green in December for a corporate job. He reached out to D-BAT

as a way to continue his connection to baseball in a new area — he'd coached before for middle school and part of a season with the Paducah Chiefs.

The corporate job didn't work out, but Robinson found his home with D-BAT. He started as a trainer, and it wasn't long before he was promoted to assistant manager of the facility on top of his coaching duties. It's a challenging position, juggling a seven-day-a-week schedule, but Robinson said it doesn't feel like work.

"The most fun part is getting to do stuff related to baseball every single day," Robinson said. "It's fun, competitive, and makes you still feel young."

Baseball has been a part of Robinson's whole life, almost since he could walk. Even now, at an age where he doesn't play as much, he loves watching the game and coaching players — especially at D-BAT, where he said he is able to make a bigger impact on those he works with. Instead of coaching a whole team at once, he gets to work one-on-one with kids or in small groups of three to five.



▲ Weston Robinson works with a student on a fielding drill at the local D-BAT facility in Bowling Green.





“Within the first three weeks of having our coach-pitch class, I mean, I have the kids coming up, giving me hugs, [telling] me they missed me through the week and were looking forward to class,” Robinson said. “It’s getting them out of their shell, getting them used to communicating a little bit better, and maybe since they haven’t [gotten] to play organized baseball before, this is their first taste of it.”

Coaching in Bowling Green has been an awesome experience, Robinson said.

“Born and raised in Paducah, [I] spent my whole life there, and this is a really good change of scenery,” Robinson said. “It’s not too big — it’s not like moving to St. Louis or Chicago. You get a good feel of a bigger area with still a small-town feel. But I have really enjoyed it, and I’m glad I have finally made the move.”

One day, Robinson wants to go back into coaching in the school system, or maybe even at the college level. In the meantime, he said he is focused on making D-BAT more successful and on giving better and better lessons to everyone in the community who wants to step into a batting cage.

“There’s still plenty of space here at D-BAT for the rest of the kids in the community to come. We’re not filled up,” Robinson said. “We want everybody to feel like a family here.”

D-BAT Bowling Green can be found at 542 Three Springs Rd. or online at dbatbowlinggreen.com. **GN**



▲ Weston Robinson teaches students a batting stance during a batting exercise.



DEBORAH HIRSCH

Humble hands and a big impact

In quiet, consistent ways, Deborah Hirsch is transforming Adairville with generosity, heart, and a mission to uplift all.

By Haley Potter
Photography by Adin Parks

IN A small Kentucky town where everyone knows everyone, one woman is making a difference in ways most people will never realize. Deborah Hirsch, founder and president of the Sadie Nauy Charitable Foundation, has dedicated herself to uplifting her community and beyond, giving away more than half a million dollars to charitable causes. But for Hirsch, it's not about the recognition. It's about the impact.

"We give all over," Hirsch explained. "Since we've come to this community, we've given a tremendous amount of money. I don't know the exact amount, but it's in the hundreds of thousands as well."

Her foundation's generosity has reached countless lives, from children receiving books at school to city grants funding essential services.

"We have twice bought every child in the Adairville school system a book from the Scholastic book sale," Hirsch shared. "I remember those sales from when I was a kid, and I know how much they mean."





Deborah Hirsch
and Barbara Mathieson



Barbara Mathieson and Deborah Hirsch inside the Dueling Pistols Restaurant



"We're just here to help. We want this community to grow."

- DEBORAH HIRSCH

Beyond education, the foundation has provided grants for public service equipment, including trucks, snowplows, and improved lighting in the town square.

"We help the police department [and] the fire department — we do a lot of things. And most of what we do, we don't publicize. We don't toot our own horn," Hirsch said humbly. "We give because it's the right thing to do."

But Hirsch and her business partner Barbara Mathieson's impact extends beyond donations. She's also revitalizing Adairville with the opening of the Dueling Pistol Saloon, a gaming hall and restaurant that generates funds for charity.





“The Sadie Nauy Charitable Foundation owns the Dueling Pistol Saloon,” she explained. “We chose the name because Andrew Jackson and Charles Dickinson had a duel here. Jackson won, and Dickinson is buried in the Russellville Cemetery.”

Through this venture, Hirsch ensures that every dollar raised stays local. “The gaming hall is licensed by the Commonwealth for charitable gaming,” she said. “Every penny we receive stays in the surrounding area. We are required by law to give 100% of it away. No one gets paid.”

Her dedication to giving back is deeply rooted in a personal mission to uplift small communities. Originally from Atlantic City, New Jersey, Hirsch never expected to plant roots in Kentucky.

“I came here 20 years ago and opened a restaurant in Russellville. The mayor at the time asked me to help Adairville grow, and eventually, I said ‘yes.’” she recalled. “This little town needs help. We’ve bought quite a few properties, and we intend to develop each one over time.”

Hirsch and her team at the foundation don’t just invest in infrastructure — they take care of the little things that make a big difference. “If someone’s water gets turned off, we go turn it back on,” she said simply. “We support all the little kids’ teams — football, baseball, softball. If the square needs landscaping, we provide the funds.”

Despite her generosity, Hirsch doesn’t seek acknowledgment. “We usually try to do it as anonymously as possible,” she said. “We’re just here to help. We want this community to grow.” GN



ANDREA STRANGE:

Warren County's free books initiative teaches kids about environmental conservation.

Free, kid-friendly books are available at Warren County parks each month.



By Rachael Smith
Photography by Amanda Guy



WARREN COUNTY
Stormwater has
launched a literacy
initiative to teach

children about water conservation and environmental stewardship as part of its commitment to public education and outreach.

Outreach Manager Andrea Strange said the program places Little Free Libraries in county parks, providing children with free books focused on environmental awareness.

The program began in late 2023, inspired by a similar effort in Northern Kentucky.

Initially, Warren County Stormwater distributed books at community outreach events, where children who engaged in activities about pollution prevention were rewarded with a book.

With the success of this effort, the organization decided to expand its reach by installing Little Free Libraries in local parks, making books more accessible to families who might not attend such events.

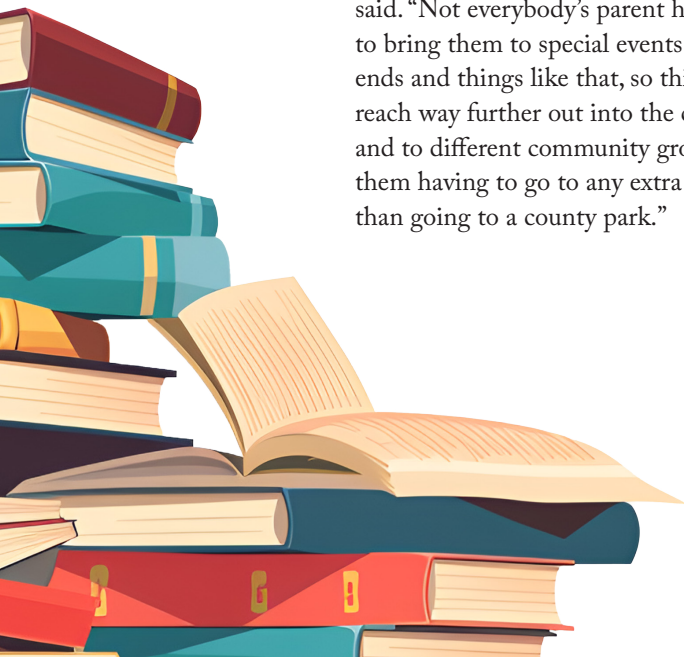
“We decided to put the Little Libraries in the communities where kids are,” Strange said. “Not everybody’s parent has the ability to bring them to special events on the weekends and things like that, so this allows us to reach way further out into the community and to different community groups without them having to go to any extra steps other than going to a county park.”

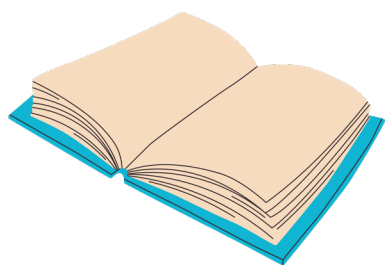


The first libraries were installed in late 2023, starting with two locations. After seeing how well they were received, three more were added earlier this year. The five locations now span the county, including Basil Griffin Park Story Trail, Browning Park Playground, Ephram White Park Playground, Jennings Creek Greenway, and Phil Moore Park Playground.

Every month, Warren County Stormwater stocks the libraries with about 100 books, promoting awareness of stormwater management, pollution prevention, and environmental responsibility.

Many of the books focus on water science, the water cycle, and personal responsibility for environmental care. Titles include “Creek





Critters,” which teaches children about aquatic life and water quality, and “Pout-Pout Fish Cleans Up the Ocean,” which teaches the importance of keeping waterways clean. Other selections include tree identification books and interactive guides that help children engage with their natural surroundings.

Strange said the Jennings Creek location has been especially popular, with residents actively using the library to exchange books with their neighbors.

In addition to the physical libraries, Warren County Stormwater has created an online resource featuring video read-alouds of the books so children without a reading companion at home can still benefit from the program.

Strange has a goal of using the educational books to help kids and parents understand the importance of environmental stewardship beyond just being told to keep water clean.

“Hopefully, with these books, instead of us just saying, ‘Keep our water clean,’ they can see that we keep our water clean for our personal health, and we keep our water clean to protect our environment,” she said.

Strange believes that people need to understand the deeper reasons behind environmental protection in order for the message to truly resonate.

“Until people really see beyond themselves and can start to see the importance of taking care of the community as a whole and protecting our resources as a whole, the message doesn’t hit until you really understand their ‘why.’” GN





Alexis Strange

Chris Stunson: INVESTING IN FUTURE MALE EDUCATORS THROUGH YMLA

A local college leader mentors male students who are studying to become educators.

By Becca Roberts // Photos submitted by Chris Stunson

AN ATHLETE on the men's basketball team at Western Kentucky University notices an advertisement on campus for the Young Male Leadership Academy (YMLA), a program for male students interested in a career in education. The student wavers, wondering if he should check it out. He's always been a leader, and he's thought about teaching before, but he knows there are few male educators at the elementary and middle school levels where he would want to teach. Would he feel alone in this field? He approaches Chris Stunson's office, the director of YMLA, and his concerns fade away; he smiles as he is met with encouragement from a man who has had a successful career in education and athletics.

Stunson is a former high school math teacher, principal, assistant principal, and athletic director. As the director of professional educator services at Western Kentucky University, Stunson oversees "educator recruitment, admissions, field experience, and student teaching and certification." The YMLA program gives him a tangible way to inspire the next generation

of male educators. He is a former athlete and athletic director, which, added to his extensive educational experience, positions him to reach male students seeking an education degree with confidence and knowledge. Stunson's advice to his students is to prioritize academics over athletic achievement.

"During my career as a student-athlete and an athletic administrator, the importance of academics first influenced my mentoring approach," Stunson explained. "Your athletic ability can be taken away at any moment. However, the knowledge that you gain through an academic-centered environment can never be taken from you."

The program Stunson leads challenges expectations about young men in education. "In many cases, males do not experience the role of males in education until their high school years," he said. "The YMLA seeks to expose students to educational careers early, particularly those from diverse backgrounds."

YMLA focuses on leadership development. The program teaches skills such as public speaking, research and presentation design, collaboration, and professional soft skills such as handshakes and dinner etiquette.

Stunson also works through the YMLA to support students when they are struggling in any area of life. "We identify guest speakers or community influencers to speak with our young men to help them through the challenges they may be facing," he explained. The program brings in mental health counselors, public speakers, community business leaders, and educators to support these students.

The YMLA now covers all educational fields and participates in state and national educators' conferences.

Stunson believes in the power of education, community, and mentorship. He hopes this program will encourage some of his students to pursue education as a career. Even if they choose a different path, the skills they get from YMLA are valuable.

"Our goal is to help them be successful in whatever area they choose, with education as a first choice major," Stunson said.

Through Stunson's leadership, the YMLA has become more than just an education recruitment program. It is a community that challenges stereotypes, builds confidence, and creates opportunities for young men to explore a career in education. **GN**





BOCA TACOS & TEQUILA

A NEW MEXICAN RESTAURANT WITH
AN INTERNATIONAL TWIST

BOCA TACOS & Tequila may have only been open for a few months, but this charming and eclectic Mexican restaurant is quickly gaining a cult following — not just for its buy-one-get-one margaritas but also for its authentic Mexican dishes with a creative twist.

The restaurant features hot pink walls, plenty of TVs for catching the game, and ample seating. Kids will feel right at home. As mentioned, margaritas are two-for-one, and if you don't fill up on the warm, house-made chips and flavorful salsas, Boca also serves cheesy queso and fresh guacamole. Orders are placed at the counter, and along with alcoholic drinks, the menu includes a wide variety of both Mexican and American sodas.

We sampled the Taco Trio with a cup of delicious street corn, slathered in a creamy, tangy mixture of mayonnaise, sour cream, and lime juice and covered in cotija cheese. The rice bowl came with marinated chicken, guacamole, plenty of fresh pico de gallo, pinto beans, and sour cream, all served over a bed of flavorful, seasoned rice. The tamales were filled with rich, savory pork infused with red chile sauce and served with black beans and rice. One dish we were eager to try — but just too full to manage — was the BG Fries, topped with cheese, pico de gallo, and your choice of steak or pork al pastor. No worries, though. We will definitely visit Boca again as soon as possible because it has some of the best and most innovative Mexican food in Bowling Green.





There's a kid's menu with chicken fingers and fries and lots of vegetarian options, including mushroom and sweet potato tacos. Boca offers fresh Mexican cuisine with unique flavors that stand out from the typical options in the area. Plus, they offer student discounts, so let all your Western Kentucky University friends know where they can satisfy their taco cravings! **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 Boca Tacos & Tequila.

BOCA TACOS & TEQUILA

2549 Mount Victor Ln. #1
Bowling Green
(270) 495-1164



Challenge Everything

A SKYCTC instructor inspires people to challenge what they think they know.

By Becca Roberts
Photography by Amanda Guy



One of the eye-opening things when you start translating is there is just no one translation or one interpretation.

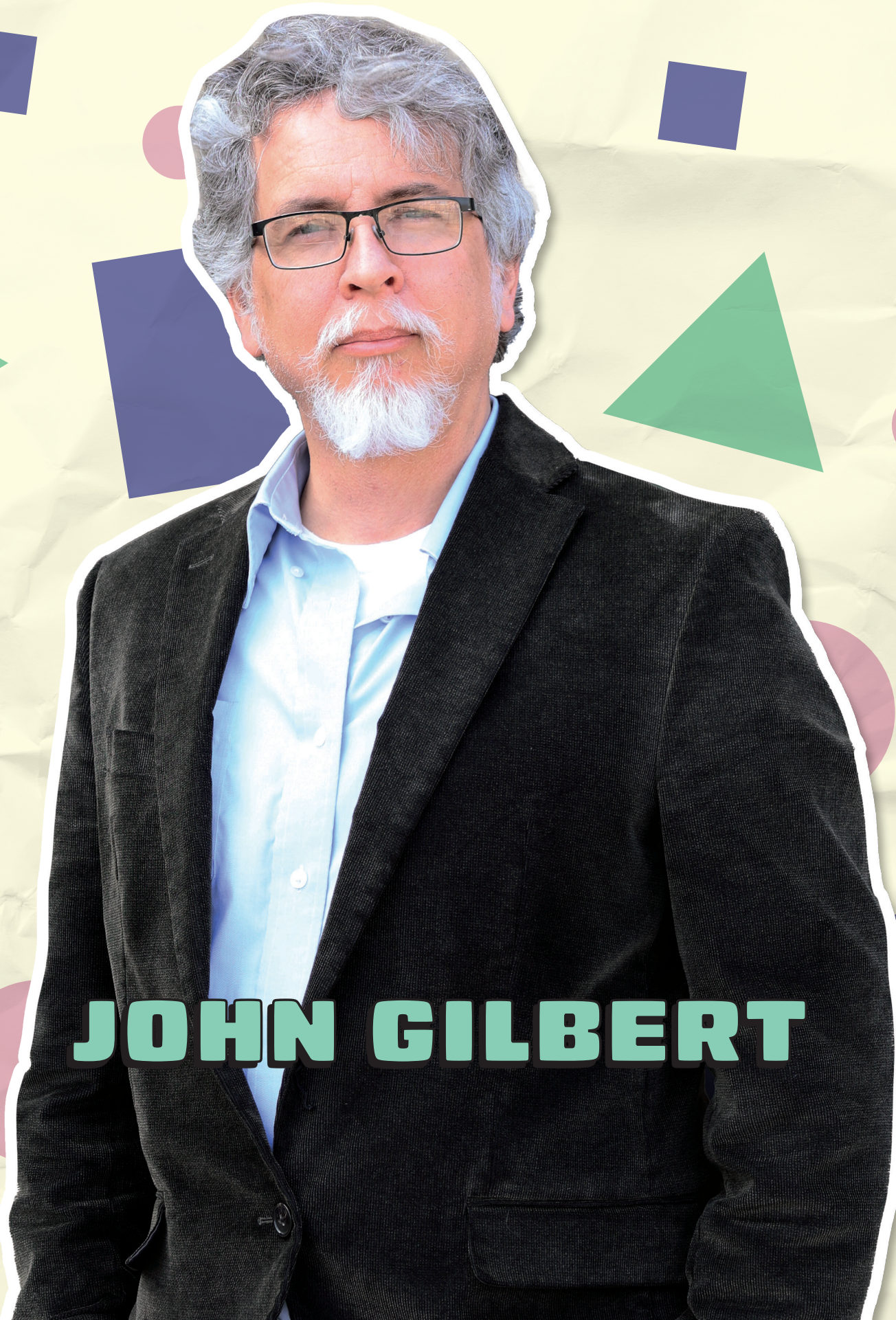
- JOHN GILBERT



AT **SOUTHCENTRAL** Kentucky Community and Technical College, students learn cybersecurity from an instructor whose life is characterized by adventure and intrigue. A former Army sergeant with 21 years of service, Gilbert has been a tanker, cavalry scout, and an Arabic cryptolinguist. His experiences place him at the intersection of modern technology and ancient wisdom.

One of the most exciting classes he teaches is Cyber Attack and Exploits. “Day one, I set down laptops in front of them that were password protected and said, ‘OK, let’s crack them,’ and they did,” Gilbert said. His hands-on approach to teaching computer information systems stems from years of working as a computer network defense analyst for the Department of Defense. He challenges his students to look beyond what they’ve been given and find answers themselves, which is something he does in his own life and writes about in his latest novel.

Gilbert has had four books published. His newest one, “Not as Above, Not as Below: How We Got the Emerald Tablet Wrong,” seeks to challenge the accepted interpretation of an ancient Arabic text known as the Emerald Tablet: a 15-line poem that has captivated



JOHN GILBERT





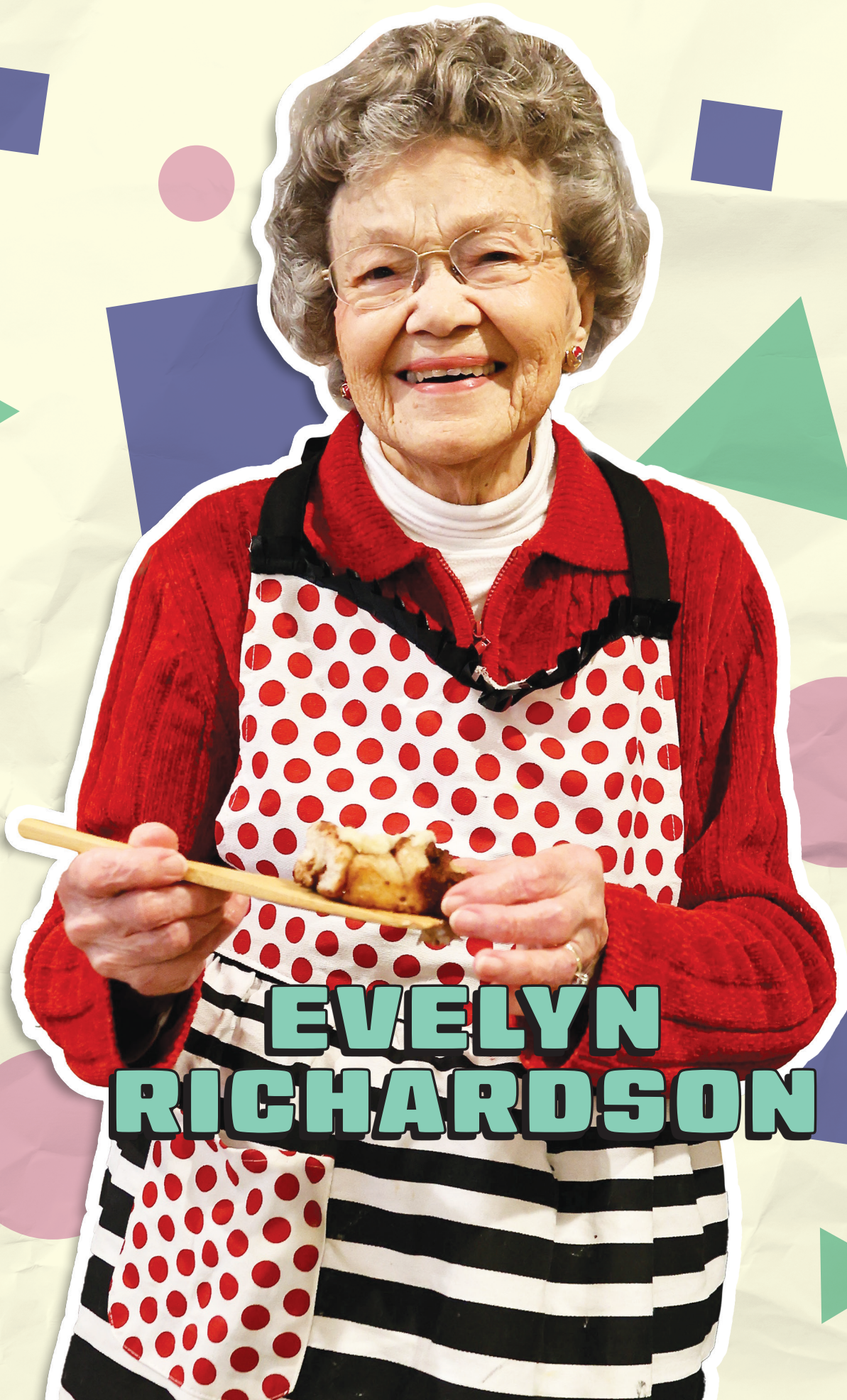
scholars for centuries. Through his military training, Gilbert studied Arabic cryptolinguistics and was vital in interpreting Arabic communications for the government. This knowledge led him to go back to the original text of the tablet, where he discovered discrepancies in the translation. The Emerald Tablet is written in Arabic, but it holds significant Greek philosophy, and this information making its way to Europe may have been a major catalyst of the Renaissance. The discrepancies Gilbert has found could forever change what we know about the Emerald Tablet. Gilbert said that even if he is proved wrong, he looks forward to the conversation and the challenge.

“One of the eye-opening things when you start translating is there is just no one translation or one interpretation,” Gilbert said. His academic research has been recognized as controversial but innovative. He was honored by an order of the Masons who created the Order of the Golden Stone, naming Gilbert as its first recipient for academic excellence.

Despite the complexity of his research, Gilbert remains committed to accessibility, believing it essential to communicate in a way that makes sense to his readers. He takes this approach with his college students as well. This generation of students is already intelligent in computer science but faces interesting challenges.

“A huge amount of my class grew up holding a cell phone, so when they sit in front of a regular PC, they don’t even know where the files go when they download. I get to teach a more industrial side of things,” Gilbert said. “I learn from them, and they learn from me.”

Gilbert’s current ambition is to translate “The Secret of Creation and the Art of Nature,” the larger Arabic manuscript containing the Emerald Tablet. Each page requires hours of careful translation. Gilbert has applied for a National Endowment for the Humanities grant to pursue this dream while continuing to educate the next generation of cyber defenders. **GN**



**EVELYN
RICHARDSON**

Sharing the Recipe for a Good Sourdough and a Good Life

A 93-year-old baker shares sourdough, stories, and the secret to a meaningful life.

By Haley Potter
Photography by Amanda Guy



I worked with public libraries and schools, did workshops, and helped set up new libraries. I'm a firm believer in education."

- EVELYN RICHARDSON



EVELYN RICHARDSON is the kind of woman who walks into a room and immediately fills it with warmth — along with the comforting scent of freshly baked bread, its golden crust crackling as it cools, or the sweet, spiced aroma of cinnamon rolls, their soft, pillowy layers swirled with butter and sugar.

With a lifetime of stories written in the lines of her hands, her bright eyes seem to hold a spark of wisdom. At 93 years old, Richardson has a secret that brings joy to everyone around her: her sourdough starter.

It all began one Sunday when her friend brought her a loaf of bread. "[It was] the best-tasting thing I ever ate," she remembered fondly. That was her introduction to sourdough. "I told her I'd never let the starter die." And true to her word, Richardson hasn't. But the journey to perfecting the bread wasn't without its bumps.

"I made my own starter, but everything flopped," Richardson laughed, recounting her trial-and-error process. Her persistence led her back to her friend, who handed her a new starter. "I promised I'd keep it fed." And she did. As Richardson explained, caring for the starter is like milking cows: it has to be fed at the right times. "If you don't do it, you won't have success," she said.



For Richardson, the bread-making process is much more than baking — it's a reflection of the way she's lived her life. "I've had a great life. I'm very fortunate," she said with a smile, though her voice softened when she talked about her daughter, who died from cancer a few years ago. "She fought for 22 years, and you're never ready to lose them."

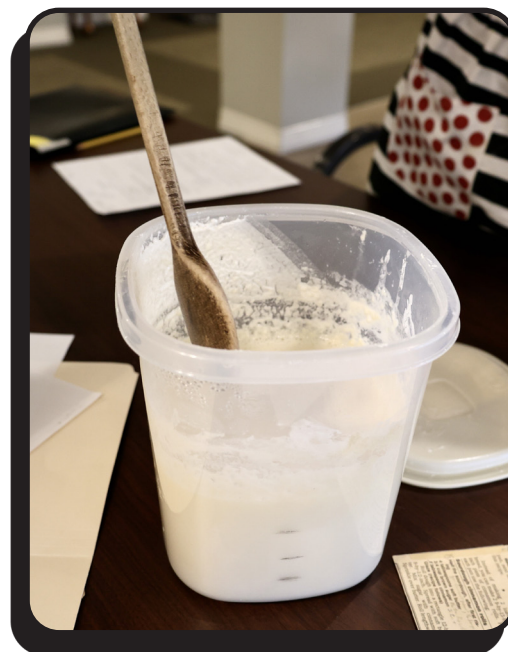
Through her grief, baking became a comfort. "Last fall, I struggled," Richardson admitted. "I forgot things, including which bowl I used for what. But I kept going. I couldn't let the starter die."

Her bread-making isn't just about creating something delicious; it's about teaching others, sharing her knowledge, and connecting with her community at Arcadia Senior Living. "I've been showing people how to make it, and it's so nice to see others pick it up," she said. "One of our residents gave me a newspaper the other night that's all about how farmers are essential to our society. It reminded me of how important it is to teach others and pass on what we know."

Richardson's life has been one of service, too. After working as a regional librarian for over 25 years, she dedicated

herself to helping others connect with books and resources. "I worked with public libraries and schools, did workshops, and helped set up new libraries," she said with pride. "I'm a firm believer in education."

In her retirement, Richardson continues to impart wisdom to her neighbors. The love she has for sourdough is infectious, and she proudly shares it with anyone willing to learn. She's not just baking bread — she's baking memories, teaching generations how to make something from scratch and fill their homes with the aroma of warm, homemade



bread. She even taught us how to make the bread from start to finish.

“No, stir rapidly,” Richardson shouted from across the table. “Open the lid to the starter and measure out 2 cups.”

When she talks about her sourdough, her face lights up. “It’s all about the starter,” Richardson said, her eyes twinkling. “That’s the magic. And once you get it right, the bread ... oh, it’s something special.”

The smell of freshly baked sourdough waves through the air as Richardson pulls out a perfectly golden loaf, its crust crackling under the touch. As the warm bread cools on the counter, Richardson already has ideas of who to give a slice of bread or a gooey cinnamon roll to.

If you ever find yourself in Evelyn Richardson’s presence, you’ll not only be treated to a slice of the most delicious bread but also to a piece of her heart. And as she continues to bake, she reminds us all that, in life, as in bread-making, success comes when you feed what you care about — and when you never let go of what really matters. **GN**