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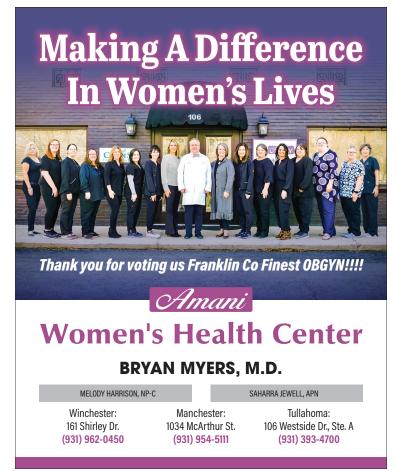




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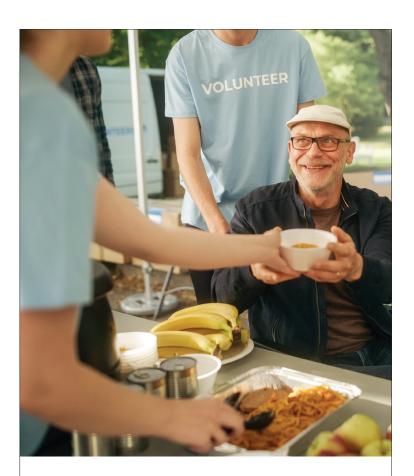
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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Shop Local

Every receipt is a vote for dreams to stay open.

HEN YOU choose a locally owned business over a national chain, you're not just spending your money, you're planting it. And the roots of that investment reach deep. Every dollar counts, and it lifts our neighbors.

According to the Economic Policy Institute, 68 cents of every dollar spent at a local business stays in your community, compared to just 32 cents at a chain. When the community gets to keep the cash flow internal, it doesn't lose revenue to corporations and competitors.

Imagine a little shop tucked between a bakery and a barber. The owner opens the doors each morning with her hands wrapped around a warm mug of coffee. She sweeps the sidewalk and turns on the glowing "open" sign. Years ago, she dreamed of creating a shop that felt like home, where people could find handmade goods, gifts that mean something, and real connection. That dream became her reality not because a corporation backed her, but because her neighbors did.

Wesley Bryant,
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Because people like you stopped by.

Every time someone chose her store, she was able to hire a part-time worker, fix a leaky roof, or sponsor a Little League team. When large companies laid off workers, her steady foot traffic kept her doors open and jobs in place. Because the people in our community are not just people looking for a profit. They're friends. Neighbors.

When our community is full of local businesses, it brings our home to life. It makes the gloomy gray sky look like a bright sunrise after a stormy night. It adds beauty, like a local flower shop with blooming colors. Without each other, those flowers wilt. Without our financial support, our shops close their doors. When the glowing neon sign turns off for good, the storm rolls back in.

Sure, shopping local can sometimes mean paying a couple of extra bucks. But our community and the people in it are worth it. This issue of Good News is about shopping local, and it celebrates the people who keep our community alive. **GN**

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MANCHESTER'S BACKYARD FESTIVAL FOR MUSIC, COMMUNITY, AND SOUL

Bonnaroo turns Manchester into the world's most unforgettable backyard party.

By Jeriah Brumfield // Photography by Ashleigh Newnes

ACH SUMMER, Manchester shakes off its small-town quiet and bursts to life as Bonnaroo rolls in, transforming our backyard into a bright, colorful world all its own. The thick summer air comes alive, and the roads we know all too well —

usually lined with local diners and friendly waves from porch swings — become a lively fusion of food trucks, handmade art stands, and an endless stream of festivalgoers. For a few magical days, our little Southern town becomes the center of something bigger than itself — a montage of music, laughter, and community.

This four-day celebration powers the local economy, fills our streets with new faces, and reminds us just how special our hometown really is. For Manchester folks, Bonnaroo isn't just something that happens to the town — it's something we're a part of.

The festival brings an estimated \$52 million to the local economy, touching just about every corner of town. From packed hotels and busy restaurants to mom-and-pop shops and food trucks, the dynamism sticks around long after the last encore. Local craftsmen, makers, and small businesses set up shop inside the festival gates because this town understands

that "supporting local" doesn't stop at the county line.

Mayor Joey Hobbs reflected on Bonnaroo's lasting influence: "We have been working with and hosting Bonnaroo for 20 years now. There is no doubt that the festival has an incredible economic impact on our city, county, and state. As most people are aware, the festival attendees shop in our local stores, eat in our local restaurants, and stay in area hotels, all of which add to our tax revenue."

He added that event organizers generously support several local nonprofits. Most importantly, he stated, Bonnaroo allows the city of Manchester to welcome folks from all over the world to our town.

He continued, "While the traffic congestion and crowds can create a temporary headache, the positives of the event greatly outweigh the negatives. I just try to remember that the citizens of Pigeon Forge put up with way more than this, and that's all year long. So, I say embrace the event, welcome the attendees, and in the words of the festival itself, 'embrace positivity' for those few days."

Bonnaroo's music is as diverse and lively as the crowd. This year, Tyler, The Creator brings his unmistakable blend of hip-hop and neo-soul to the stage while country's golden boy Luke Combs belts out the kind of songs that make you want to raise your drink and sing along. Pop sensation Olivia Rodrigo, a Gen Z icon, adds her pop edge to the lineup.

Leon Thomas smooths things out with his soulful, layered sound, and Queens of the Stone Age promise to crank up the volume with their unapologetic rock.

And returning fan-favorite
Goose, the jam band sensation who lit up the stage back in
2022, will reunite with loyal fans for another unforgettable set.

For locals, Bonnaroo is an invitation to rediscover the charm of Manchester. Why book a trip when one of the world's biggest music festivals is right in our backyard?

Grab a room at a cozy bed and breakfast, spend the day exploring our shops and eateries, and then head to the farm when the sun goes down. Whether you're dancing to Tyler, the Creator, or swaying to Luke Combs, Bonnaroo turns Manchester into a vacation without the travel.

So, this summer, consider a staycation that offers the excitement of a getaway. Immerse vourself in Bonnaroo's music, art, and welcoming community. Support our local economy, discover new artists, and create unforgettable memories right here in Manchester. Celebrate the fact that, while Bonnaroo may attract global talent, it's Manchester's heart and soul that makes it unforgettable. GN

cot Mother bees, preserving nature's Sweetness

A passionate beekeeper fights to keep hives healthy and local honey pure.

By Jeriah Brumfield // Photography by Ashleigh Newnes and submitted by Scot Smotherman



HE GOLDEN, sticky sweetness drizzles onto warm toast, slightly pooling before you take a bite. The rich, floral taste lingers on your tongue. It's a gift from thousands of tiny workers buzzing industriously in fields of wildflowers.

Bees pollinate nearly 85% of the world's flowering plants, ensuring the growth of fruits, vegetables, and nuts essential to human and animal life. Without them, grocery store shelves would be shockingly bare, and the agricultural impact would be devastating. Besides honey, bees provide royal jelly and pollen, packed with antioxidants and health benefits.

However, these essential pollinators face immense threats. Industrial farming, habitat loss, and climate change push them to the brink. But what can we do to help?

Local beekeeper and business owner Scot Smotherman has a simple answer: support your local beekeepers.

"Buying locally supports beekeepers and helps maintain a healthy population of bee hives in your community," Smotherman explained.

Smotherman, co-owner of the Wellness Emporium in Woodbury, has built his life around natural wellness. He harvests clover, sourwood, and wildflower honey from hives at a 4,000-foot elevation near the North Carolina-Tennessee border, where bees work their magic among diverse mountain flora.



▲ One of many of Smotherman's hives near the end of the season, full of honey!



As temperatures rise, Smotherman prepares his equipment for the busy season ahead — cleaning supers to make room for fresh nectar and new honey.



The honey extraction process involves spinning, filtering, and bottling — transforming nature's work into a sweet, golden gift.

Harvesting honey is both an art and a science. Smotherman begins in late spring when nectar flow peaks. He carefully monitors his hives, ensuring the bees have space in their supers — the frames where honey is stored.

Once the comb is full and capped with wax, he removes and uncaps the frames before spinning the honey in an extractor. The honey is then filtered, gently warmed for smooth bottling, and stored, ensuring each jar contains nothing but raw, golden goodness straight from the hive.

We have bees to thank for our thriving local farms and food businesses, but we can also admire their brilliance and methodical nature.

"It's impossible to overstate the importance of insect pollinators," Smotherman said.

Different plants produce different pollen and nectars, and honeybees instinctively seek out what they need throughout the seasons. The result is a beautifully varied selection of honey, each batch revealing the flowers in bloom.

For Smotherman, beekeeping is a tradition. His second cousin, Dr. Ed Perryman of Bedford County, has been a successful beekeeper for decades. A conversation in 2015 piqued Smotherman's interest, and by the following spring, he and his brother

started their own hives with Perryman's queen bees.

"Like most new beekeepers, we overthought the process at first," Smotherman



admitted. "But you soon learn to let the bees show you what they need."

According to Smotherman, the biggest threat to honeybee populations today is the

varroa mite, a parasitic pest that weakens hives and spreads disease. Treatments exist, but they're expensive, and beekeepers must rotate methods to prevent mites from developing resistance.

Habitat loss is another hurdle.

"Corn and soybeans do not provide nectar for honeybees, and red clover blossoms are often too deep for them to reach," Smotherman explained. "But planting bee-friendly cover crops — like white clover — can make a huge difference."

He believes that beekeeping can thrive with improved bee strains and greater public awareness. More people are opting for local honey over mass-produced alternatives, and if hive health improves, more aspiring beekeepers will stick with it rather than get discouraged.

Supporting pollinators is easier than you might think. Smotherman encourages people to buy local honey, plant bee-friendly flowers, and avoid using pesticides that harm bees.

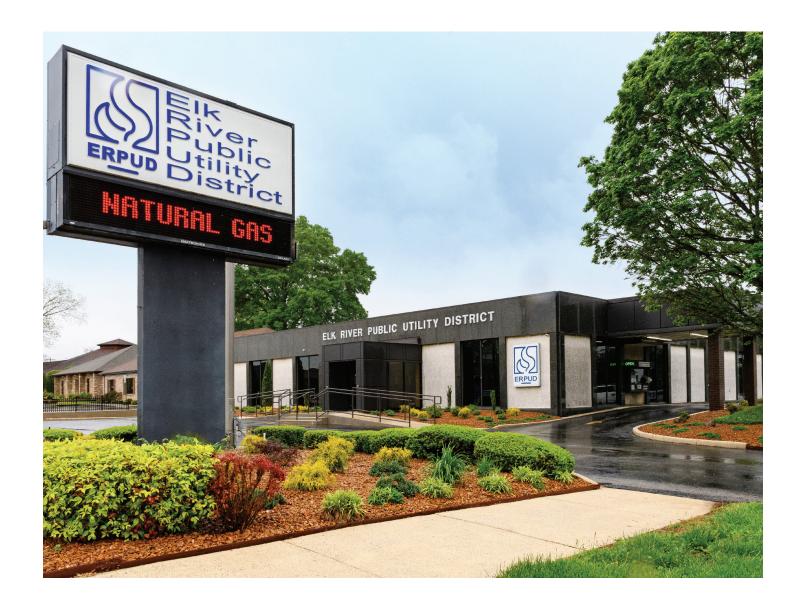
So, the next time you drizzle honey into your tea or onto a warm slice of toast, take a moment to appreciate the tiny creatures that made it possible. In their work, they create something sweet but, more importantly, sustain an entire ecosystem with every flower. **GN**

ERPUD: A smarter, warmer future

Why more families are making the switch to natural gas with ERPUD

By Haley Potter // Photography by James Jordan

A S ENERGY costs rise and outages become more common during Tennessee's colder months, many homeowners are looking for smarter, more reliable options. That's where Elk River Public Utility District (ERPUD) comes in — offering a one-stop shop for all things natural gas, including appliances, expert guidance, and cost-saving incentives. With offices across the region and a dedicated general manager like Matt Hulvey, ERPUD is helping families make the switch to natural gas easier than ever.



"Natural gas is reliable, efficient, and affordable," said Hulvey. "We want people to know that this is a long-term investment in comfort and peace of mind."

Unlike electric heating systems, natural gas doesn't rely on overhead power lines that can fail during storms or freezing temperatures. ERPUD's natural gas pipelines are located underground, which helps prevent service interruptions, even during severe weather events.

"We don't have to turn off our service when the temperatures drop," Hulvey explained. "With natural gas, our customers stay warm — even when the power goes out around them."

That kind of consistency matters to families trying to stay safe and cozy through the winter. With natural gas, homeowners can rest easy knowing they'll still have hot water, heating, and cooking capabilities no matter what the weather brings.

One of ERPUD's most popular offerings is the tankless water heater, which provides an endless supply of hot water without taking up bulky space in your home. These sleek units mount directly to the wall and are both space-saving and energy-efficient.

"They don't rust out like traditional water heaters, and you're not paying to keep a tank full of water hot all the time," Hulvey noted. "It's hot water on-demand, and it lasts longer."

Natural gas also brings energy savings to other household appliances. Gas dryers, for instance, not only dry clothes faster than their electric counterparts, but also do so at a lower cost. And when it comes to cooking, many home chefs prefer the precision of gas cooktops, which offer quick heat-up times and better temperature control.

Switching to natural gas isn't just a smart move for efficiency — it's also easier on the wallet, according to Hulvey, thanks to ERPUD's competitive pricing structures and rebate programs.



A Stefani Edinger, Kimbery Hart, Tristin Sain, Torrie Jernigan, Caitlin Simmons, Destiny Angus, and Melonie Howell

"Customers who use gas year-round — for heating, water heating, cooking, or drying — benefit from a lower monthly rate," he said.

Even homes that use gas primarily for heating are eligible for affordable rate options. On top of that, ERPUD offers generous rebates for both new appliance installations and replacements.

"If your old appliance has gone bad and you're installing a new one, you can still qualify for a rebate," Hulvey said. "We're here to make the transition as affordable as possible."

Hulvey said ERPUD goes beyond just delivering gas.

"We do install most any gas appliance, but mainly sell just logs, tank water heaters, and some space heaters," he said.

ERPUD even offers free natural gas safety inspections, ensuring every home and family is protected and informed.

"We try to take care of it all, whether you're just starting out with natural gas or upgrading your current setup," said Hulvey. "Our goal is to make this as seamless and beneficial as possible."

Franchised in Franklin and Coffee Counties, ERPUD is a local utility with a strong commitment to the communities it serves. Its budget billing options help customers plan their monthly costs without surprises, and ERPUD's experienced staff is always ready to answer questions or help homeowners explore what gas options are right for them.

"We really care about helping our customers find the best fit for their lifestyle," Hulvey emphasized. "Whether you're building a new home, remodeling, or just looking to save money, natural gas could be the solution you didn't know you needed."

As more families choose to make the switch, ERPUD stands ready to guide them every step of the way, with reliable service, high-efficiency products, and real savings that make a difference all year long. **GN**

For more information about ERPUD's services, rebates, or available appliances, visit erpud.com.



A Cozy Gem is Serving Up Homestyle Comfort in Manchester.

REDDIE'S IS a charming Manchester eatery nestled in an A-frame building in the heart of town. It is known far and wide for its homecooked meals and warm hospitality.

Food critics like myself come from all over to visit Freddie's. The savory flavors of the homestyle Southern dishes and the friendly small-town atmosphere make it a place you want to be. As you enter the small, orange, oddly-shaped diner, the warm, friendly atmosphere and the aroma of freshly baked bread are there to greet you. One look at the variety of steaming hot comfort food just like your grandma made, and you can't help but smile.

The menu impressed me with the multitude of options available. From homestyle meatloaf to oysters on the half shell, Freddie's has a little something for everyone. It's a menu that changes with Freddie's inspiration of the day or maybe the weather. You never know what the special will be, only that there will always be one. In addition to the freshly cooked comforts, there are hamburgers, sandwiches, and smoked meats created right there on the premises. Lastly, I can't

forget there is ice-cold beer, if you like, to wash it all down.

After much deliberation, I decided on the house specialty: "Grandma's Secret Recipe Fried Chicken." When the dish arrived, I could feel my taste buds get excited. The golden-brown chicken was crispy on the outside and juicy on the inside, perfectly seasoned with the herbs and spices that must be a well-kept family heirloom. Accompanied by creamy mashed potatoes and buttery corn on the cob, I felt like I was eating dinner at my granny's — it was that nostalgic, old Southern cooking. It will take you down memory lane. In every bite, you can taste the love and care that goes into preparing the food.

It was that nostalgia I was thinking about later after I was home and sat down to write this article — thinking of how Freddie's wins repeat customers through taste buds but also through the hearts of the community. It is more than just a place to eat; it is a place to gather, like going to a friend's house for dinner. It's a "home away from home." Good food and good people make every visit a special occasion. It goes without saying that Freddie's has

the magic combination of keeping repeat customers and winning new ones.

You can read all the nice things his customers have to say on the Freddie's Restaurant Facebook page. You will want to follow it to stay notified of the daily lunch specials and who might be playing live music for the dinner crowd. Go check it out and see if Freddie's doesn't become one of your favorite local spots. **GN**

GOOD NEWS IS COMING TO DINNER!

We will feature a local food critic's thoughts as they dine in Manchester. This month Kimberly Terion Miller visited Freddie's Restaurant.

Freddie's Restaurant

1946 McArthur St. Manchester (931) 728-4103 www.freddiestn.com







Misty Weaver CREATING STRESS-FREE GETAWAYS

With personalized planning, she takes the stress out of travel so clients can focus on making memories.

By Jeriah Brumfield // Photography by Ashleigh Newnes and submitted by Misty Weaver

HE WAVES lap gently at the shore as you sink your toes into the warm, sunkissed sand. A soft ocean breeze carries the smell of salt and coconut sunscreen, blending with the distant, delighted squeals of children building sandcastles nearby. With a chilled drink in hand and the lulling sounds of the surf filling your ears, you lean back into your chair, completely at ease. The worries of daily life have melted away, replaced by the pure bliss of relaxation. This, you think to yourself, is exactly what a vacation should feel like.

The best part is you didn't have to stress over a single detail because Misty Weaver of Vacation Countdown Travel had it all covered. Weaver is a go-to travel advisor in the community who makes dream vacations a reality with her personalized, full-service travel planning. If you're looking to bask in the sun on a Caribbean beach or retreat to a cozy mountain cabin, she ensures every step of the journey is smooth sailing, from booking flights and resorts to handling excursions and transfers.

The professional excursionist's love for travel and experiences using travel advisors led her to learn more about the travel industry. She then earned her certifications and officially launched Vacation Countdown Travel in November 2015.

At first, she ran the business from her kitchen table, but she soon expanded to an



▲ Weaver explores Washington, D.C.

office in Manchester's square and then a location in Powers Plaza. Today, she operates from a home office, which allows her to invest even more time in organizing unforgettable experiences for her clients.

Her knack for education, planning, and logistics shows up in the well-rounded, hassle-free resort experiences she creates.

"I consider myself an all-inclusive resort specialist. That means I've researched all the resorts, and I try to match my clients with the best vacation style for them." The planning and follow-ups don't stop once the trip is booked. Weaver takes care of her clients from departure to return, remaining available 24/7 while they're on vacation.

"I service every reservation, making sure that their confirmations are in place, every aspect of the vacation is logistically taken care of, and that they have all that they need," she shared.

"Tve built relationships with resort sales managers, so I can reach out and arrange special touches like a little surprise for a child's first trip or extra care for a honeymoon couple."

In addition to resort vacations, Weaver has expanded her services to include unique group travel experiences. Weaver is hosting her new Escorted Tour for a Spotlight in Tuscany from April 29 to May 7, 2026.

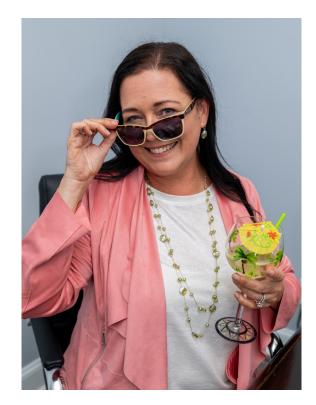
Picture yourself strolling through the cobbled streets of Florence, marveling at the Leaning Tower of Pisa, and soaking in the beauty of Lucca and Siena. With a thoughtfully designed itinerary, a single



▲ A floating taco bar in Cancun, Mexico

"I truly feel that we could be self-sustaining as a community if we only shopped locally."

MISTY WEAVER



Planning vacations is serious business — but Weaver brings the fun, creativity, and personal flair that makes each trip unforgettable.

hotel stay, and exciting day trips, this escorted tour through Tuscany combines adventure with ease.

Recognizing the growing trend of honeymoon registries, Weaver has also launched a new service to make gifting experiences easier for wedding guests.

"My honeymoon clients can have a safe and quick way to share with their wedding guests a personalized link for their honeymoon fund. Their guests can make donations toward their honeymoon, and they'll get a personalized link that's easy and secure."

If you ask Weaver about her favorite destination, she'll answer: "Jamaica. I've been there numerous times, and it's just breathtaking. But honestly, I'm just as happy in the mountains as I am on the beach."

As spring fades into summer, there's no better time to plan that much-needed getaway. Whether it's a beachside escape, a European adventure, or a cozy mountain retreat, Weaver is ready to make it happen. Everyone deserves a vacation where they can sit back, relax, and simply enjoy the moment — just like you are right now. **GN**





Sara Adams PRESERVING HISTORY WITH A MODERN TOUCH

Baker Brothers Drug Co. blends its rich past with contemporary charm, offering both pharmacy essentials and thoughtfully chosen gifts.

By Jeriah Brumfield // Photography by Ashleigh Newnes

T'S LIKE taking a step back into the past — nostalgic, friendly, fun," said Sara Adams, owner and pharmacist of Baker Brothers Drug Co., describing the charming mid-20th-century building with its simple, utilitarian design. Walking up to the shop feels like stepping through a portal in time. Positioned on the historic town square, its classic brick facade and large display windows invite passersby to pause for a moment of reminiscence.

The beautifully curated seasonal window displays hint at something far more impressive than a simple pharmacy. The entrance, joined by a vintage-style awning, leads into a charming and eclectic space

while embracing the modern charm of a trendy local retail store.

Inside, every corner holds traces of the past. The high ceilings remind you of decades and generations gone by. Rows of well-stocked shelves offer everything from essential pharmacy goods to an array of intentionally selected gifts.

The warm lighting and inviting displays are a welcoming reflection of Manchester's remarkable history. Neighbors gather here, traditions endure, and personalized care has touched generations.

Founded in 1928 by the Baker brothers, the pharmacy has long been a trusted staple for locals. One of the brothers, T. Dee Baker, remained at the forefront, serving as a pharmacist and witnessing the town's growth firsthand.

At one time, the community hospital even operated upstairs, making Baker Brothers a foundational part of the town's history. Today, the business continues to honor the past while adapting to the evolving needs of the present.

When Adams purchased the building, the gift shop was already an established part of the space.

"I do feel like the gift shop and our seasonally decorated window displays draw the customer in to discover that we are also a pharmacy," she shared.

This flawless blending of services — health care and hospitality — makes Baker Brothers even more eye-catching.

The pharmacy remains a trusted source for prescriptions and health needs, while the gift shop adds a delightful surprise to the experience. Adams shared that one of their most popular items is the Case knives.

The thoughtfully chosen selection offers something for everyone, whether you're looking for a thoughtful gift or a little something for yourself.

These days, independent pharmacies face mounting challenges, including insurance restrictions that push patients toward chain stores. However, Baker Brothers is a strong advocate for quality customer service and personalized care, which keeps customers coming back.

As Baker Brothers continues to prioritize outstanding customer service, the surrounding square is evolving alongside it.

"I have watched the square become more active and revitalized with the addition of shops and restaurants, all while still preserving the historic feel," Adams noted.

Looking forward, Adams has some exciting ideas for the store's future. While details remain under wraps, one idea seems to resonate with everyone: bringing back the old-fashioned soda fountain.

In addition to being a pharmacy and gift shop, it's also a piece of history, a community touchstone, and a vision for the future.

Next time you stroll through the square, step inside. Whether you're filling a prescription, searching for a gift, or simply soaking in the history, Baker Brothers Drug Co. welcomes you — just as it has for nearly a century. **GN**

Address: 120 E. Main St., Manchester

Phone: (931) 728-3226



▲ The shelves may be full, but it's Adams' heart for the community that truly stocks the store.





Andrew Francis BUILDING A BUSINESS THAT CARES

He built Pro Plumbing Plus Electrical to create a workplace where employees are valued and the community comes first.

By Jeriah Brumfield // Photography by Ashleigh Newnes

OME PEOPLE see a problem and accept it as the way things are. Others see a problem and decide to fix it. Andrew Francis has always been in the second group. From the moment he first picked up a wrench at 16, plumbing just made sense to him. But over the years, Francis realized that what didn't make sense was the way many companies treated their employees. When he couldn't find a business with the kind of culture he needed, he stopped searching and started building.

At 16, Francis' cousin hired him as a helper at his uncle's plumbing business, where he quickly discovered a knack for the trade. More than the work, it was the supportive, family-like atmosphere that impacted him, showing him what a healthy workplace could be.

However, as the years went on, Francis found himself going from company to company, searching for the kind of work environment he had known at his uncle's business, where employees were treated like family. Instead, he found himself in a system that pushed workers to their limits, treating them like numbers instead of people. He would come home exhausted, barely making it to the couch before falling asleep. It wasn't sustainable.

One evening, after an especially grueling day, he told his wife, Kelly Francis "I've got to do something different."

That night, the idea became clear to him. He wasn't

← Francis restocks materials in the company's showroom — a space designed to keep their technicians prepared and efficient. What started as a dream around the kitchen table is now a trusted name in plumbing, rooted in values and driven by community.

going to wait for someone else to build the work environment he needed — he would create it himself. In 2014, Francis started Pro Plumbing Plus Electrical.

In the beginning, Francis knew little about management. He was just a plumber, figuring it out as he went. The first few years were stressful and full of trial and error. But through those growing pains, he learned how to lead, motivate, and build a team that shared the same values.

Francis started small, taking on Lowe's installation jobs to keep the business afloat, but most of his service calls came from Manchester, about 60 miles away from his home in Columbia. However, as the demand for his services grew, Francis and his wife decided in 2015 to make Manchester their permanent home.

"Coffee County is probably one of the nicest places I've lived," he explained. "It's almost like Mayberry. It's a calm, peaceful town where everybody's nice to each other. It was the best move we ever made."

Once they planted their roots in Manchester and bought a building for the business, Pro Plumbing Plus Electrical took off.

Francis and his team believe their primary responsibility is protecting the nation's health. Without proper plumbing, sanitation issues would run rampant, and diseases would spread.

"You can live without electricality," he shared. "You can live without heating and air. But you can't live without clean water and proper sanitation."

Francis encourages customers to keep their plumbing updated. Keeping everything up to date is crucial in avoiding expensive repairs down the road.

Pro Plumbing Plus offers services like water heater installation and repair, drain cleaning and repair, jetting services, sewer inspections, and plumbing for new construction. Francis also offers a few tips to keep septic systems running properly.

"Many people don't know that you should never put coffee grounds down a drain, and if you're on a septic system, don't flush anything other than waste and toilet paper," said Francis.

With a solid foundation in place, Francis has focused on growing his business while staying true to his core values. Success, for him, is building a workplace that resembles the one he had



longed for, where people look out for one another. Even more meaningful, it's about the people who make it all possible. **GN**

Call (931) 928-1428 or visit proplumbingllc.com for more information. Address: 302 S. Spring St., Manchester

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ANDREW FRANCIS

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