



# SOUTHERN BUSINESS DIGEST

July 2023

Volume: 1  
Issue: 1

FREE



## Leonard Daniels & The King's Sauce

By Jack Wysong  
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Born and raised in the town of Walterboro, Leonard Daniels gained an appreciation for culinary arts at a young age. As far back as he can remember, food has been the center of every family meal, holiday, and celebration that he has been a part of. Although Leonard owes his appreciation for quality food to his family, he has always felt that seafood has a special place in the homes and on the tables of people in the South.

The story of The King's Sauce began when Leonard was working as a commercial crabber in the local waterways and needed to find a way to

utilize the unsold or leftover crabs from his catch. With a lifetime of experience and a background in cooking seafood, he decided to start selling them as meals around the area. Unknown to him at the time, his food would soon gain traction as a fan favorite and quickly grew in popularity around Walterboro. After realizing the potential to make a career out of selling his seafood, Leonard decided to relocate to Orlando, Florida to seek more experience and hone his cooking skills. He spent two years in Orlando strengthening his resume as a seafood chef, but the demand for his sauce's savory and unique flavor profile soon began to outpace the demand for

(Continued on page 3)

## Barnwell Business Woman Breathes New Life into Tired Furniture —

### Hello Gorgeous LLC.

By Jessica O'Connor  
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"Amy, that wasn't in the original picture," Virginia sign painter Calvin Davis Jr. ("Sparky") kindly observed as he peered over his daughter's shoulder at a paint-by-numbers project she was tackling with gusto.

"I know," replied a young Amy Davis. "There's a shadow, Daddy. Remember, when the sun hits it right there, there's a shadow there."

Amy, owner of Hello Gorgeous LLC in Barnwell, South Carolina, has been painting her entire life. What began as a little girl putting her own twist on the paint-by-number kits her father brought home to her eventually manifested into a successful career in nail art and later, the desire to dive

headfirst into the art of custom furniture refurbishing. She has been providing custom refinishing and refurbishing services to clients and selling select pieces to the public for approximately four years now.

Greatly influenced by her father's work, Amy learned about adding shadows to sign lettering, working with gold leaf, and the in's and out's of creating and using stencils with a projector from an early age as she tagged along with Mr. Davis on the job. The knowledge she gleaned from simply spending time with her father as he worked would later prove to be invaluable when employing different techniques while refurbishing furniture.

"I like to take an old piece that's sitting on the side of the road (but doesn't really have anything wrong with it) and

give it a whole new life," she said enthusiastically. "Then someone can reuse it again and it's not going to the trash. I hate throwing away something

like that."

Amy keeps a handpicked selection of refurbished pieces nestled just inside the door of

her quaint storefront on Wall Street in downtown Barnwell (which also serves as her nail

(Continued on page 3)



Photo Credit: Southern Sound Photography

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### A Note from the Publisher

I'm very excited to commemorate my 6-month "work-iversary" with this announcement.

The Colletonian Business Journal has rebranded!

Throughout my last 6 months as publisher I have explored, learned, and grown with The Colletonian Business Journal. Our team has faced the normal growing pains and overcome them by working together and building each other up. We have since committed to the mission of working with and building up the communities in the southern region.

As a publication, we have been given the opportunity to:

- ◆ spotlight amazing businesses
- ◆ create special feature pieces
- ◆ promote wonderful events
- ◆ partner with community festivals
- ◆ design appealing ads

But most importantly, we have generated wonderful friendships and business connections.

It is because of YOU that our connections are strong and our reach is growing! The support we have received from our readers is immense and we are so grateful for the faith that the community has in our publication.

If you haven't felt the passion and excitement that we have for our publication, you are surely missing out!

Fear not, there is always an opportunity to be a part of something great! We're excited to release our July special edition under our new name, Southern Business Digest.

Please continue to show your support in the following ways:

- ◆ Like, follow, and share our Facebook page:  
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- ◆ Check out our new website:  
[www.southernbusinessdigest.net](http://www.southernbusinessdigest.net)

*Samantha Gerke*  
Publisher



(King's Sauce—Continued from page 1)

the food itself. It was not long before more and more of his customers started to ask if they could purchase his sauce as a standalone product.

Recognizing that he could provide a quality product to a market that would value the local flavor of his sauce, Leonard returned to Walterboro to pursue his entrepreneurial interests. However, after returning home to launch his new product, he encountered several obstacles on his way to commercial success, the first and most prominent

of these being the supply and distribution chain that he would have to establish to get his product on the shelves of local grocery and convenience stores.

Through perseverance and an unwavering resolve to make his product a success, Leonard was able to make contacts in the grocery store community who were willing to give his product a chance to prove its worth. Once he was able to get his product on the shelves of some local grocery stores, the popularity of The King's Sauce grew to become more widespread in the years

following its introduction. Today, The King's Sauce can be found in over 300 stores across the eastern United States and the Midwest.

Despite the commercial success that The King's Sauce has enjoyed, there have been significant challenges that Leonard has had to overcome while bringing a product to market over the past two years. Unsteady economic conditions coupled with times of international strife such as the COVID-19 pandemic made it difficult for his business to gain an initial foothold. However, with the sup-

port of his wife, Brandy, and the wholehearted support of the business community, The King's Sauce was successfully launched.

Leonard attributes his success as a cook and businessman to his childhood mentor, Jack Crosby, who he identifies as being the role model in his life that stoked his passion for cooking. He also feels that much of his success is due to the people of Colleton County, saying "Colleton County has been my biggest supporter. All people across all nationalities have supported me in this

community. Without them there would be no King's Sauce."

For Leonard Daniels, the ability to sell his sauce was never solely about the pursuit of profit. Instead, it was an opportunity to combine his passion for cooking with his love for his community, and he has always felt that "it's a product that brings the community together."



(Hello Gorgeous - Continued from page 1)

salon) for customers to peruse. She also carries a myriad of paints, stains, primers, finishes, and brushes for those who like to DIY. Standing in front of the wall that showcases an array of colors and products is likely a source of inspiration for some, but may be decidedly overwhelming for others. Amy never leaves her customers to make the decisions alone, though.

"You have to ask questions to see what they're dealing with beforehand," Amy explained. "If they don't have a clue, I ask questions about what they're painting, what color it is now, and what they're cleaning it with."

She continued with a laugh, "Sometimes I ask too many questions and they just get that look that says 'I don't know.' That's when I tell them to remember that the process goes clean, prime, paint, topcoat. That's all you've got to do." By that point, customers are either able to better explain what their end goal is to Amy so that she can help them choose the appropriate products, or they may ask her to complete the task for them herself.

Amy's approach to working on commissioned furniture projects is highly personalized for each client. She begins by viewing photos of the client's home, then proceeds to ask a series of questions regarding what room the piece will grace, what colors they are most drawn to and have used in their decor, and what their vision is for the overall style of their living space (ie: farmhouse, boho, contemporary, etc.). The artist also discusses what the client's current cabinets and furniture look like and whether they like the appearance of wood grain, stain, or paint before the transfor-

mation begins.

"When you picture it (the piece of furniture) in your head, what does it look like?" she asks her clients. "That's what I want to know. I want to know what vision you have in your head of the finished product so we can see how to make that happen."

After the initial consultation, the work begins in earnest. Amy examines the piece for any minor repairs that need to be done and any hardware that needs to be cleaned, replaced, or given a facelift. She then begins breathing new life into the tired fixture

through the refurbishing process. For some pieces, this simply entails a new paint or stain with a few fresh accents or embellishments, such as decoupage, ornamental molding, or gold leaf. Others may be making a more drastic change, such as the addition of paint to a piece that was formerly wood grain. In these cases, Amy seals the wood before painting the piece so that the original appearance can be later recovered if the client decides paint may not be what they were looking for after all.

Still others allow Amy to fully embrace her artistic abil-

ities. Some of her favorite projects have included painting a lush ocean scene on a buffet and taking an armoire from ordinary to extraordinary with the addition of a hand-painted horse.

Hello Gorgeous LLC provides clients the opportunity to update their space no matter what their budget may be. For many, refurbishing furniture that already resides in their home is a cost effective way to make things feel fresh and new again.

"You might love a piece but it's sat in the sun and got sun damage on half of it, be-

cause you don't move furniture around a lot," Amy explained. "It just needs to be freshened back up again, given some new life. Maybe you've changed the decor in your house-well, you can update some of your furniture pieces that you love. Instead of spending \$10,000 on a new living room suit because you want a new coffee table and new end tables, lamps, and everything else-guess what? We can update all of that stuff."

Currently the Treasurer of the Barnwell Development Association and Vice-President of the Sundial Festival Committee as well, Amy is committed to serving the people and businesses (both large and small) of Barnwell in a number of ways. Her involvement keeps her busy, but thankfully she can turn to her art for respite.

"When I can sit down by myself and get started painting on something, I really lose track of time," she said. "I can sit and focus for a long period of time, and before I know it I try to get up and my body is stiff from sitting there so long!"

If you're interested in seeing how Amy can turn your own furniture item into a unique conversation piece that will bring a smile to your face each time you enter the room, feel free to contact her by phone at (803) 571-1949, via her website at [www.hellogorgeousre.com](http://www.hellogorgeousre.com), or in person at Hello Gorgeous Salon and Boutique, located across from the courthouse at 20 Wall Street in Barnwell.

Her infectious smile, bubbly personality, and ability to make you feel like an old friend from the first point of contact will no doubt inspire you to discover how Hello Gorgeous can make your decor dreams come true.



Photo Credit: Southern Sound Photography



# Herd It Here Farm

## A Charming Agritourism Destination

By Andy Ann

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If you are looking for a unique and memorable agritourism experience, Herd It Here Farm in Cottageville, South Carolina, is the perfect destination. Spread across 13 beautiful acres, the farm is owned and operated by Bill Power and Sheryl Rudy, who are passionate about sharing their love for farm life with visitors of all ages.

Bill and Sheryl began the process of creating Herd It Here in January 2019, and after two years of hard work, they officially opened in April 2021. Currently, the farm is only available for tours on weekends with prior arrangements. They believe that their farm is a special place, and they want to share it with as many people as possible.

One of the highlights of Herd It Here Farm is the chance to learn about and interact with a variety of animals, including alpacas, chickens, goats, and horses. The farm's star attraction is undoubtedly the alpacas and their luxurious fleece, which visitors can see up close and even purchase as artisan items in various forms. Additionally, guests can meet Bert (the friendly llama) and Gidget (the playful alpaca ambassador), as well as enjoy the company of ornamental chickens, a mini-donkey, a pony, a rescue horse, and a miniature HighPark cow named Maggie Moo.

Whether you are a seasoned agriculture enthusiast or simply curious about life on the farm, Herd It Here has something for everyone. Visitors can take a guided tour of the property to learn more about the animals and their care while spending time with the delightful pygmy and fainting goats. There is also a designated picnic area for those who want to relax and enjoy the beautiful surroundings.

In addition to their many activities, Herd It Here Farm also offers a range of local artisan items made from alpaca fleece, including scarves, gloves, and toys. These unique products make perfect souvenirs for your visit and are a great way to support local artisans.

Bill and Sheryl's love for animals is contagious. As soon as visitors step onto their farm, they are greeted by friendly and curious alpacas, who are always eager to meet new people. The couple takes pride in sharing their knowledge about these fascinating animals and educating

others about them.

In addition to alpacas, the farm is home to a variety of other animals, including chickens, goats, and horses. Sheryl enjoys teaching children about the different animals and their unique characteristics. She believes that it is important for children to learn about where their food comes from and to appreciate the hard work that goes into farming.

Through an organization called Harvest Hosts, Bill and Sheryl welcome RV guests to stay on their farm for free in exchange for support in the form of donations or purchases from the farm store. The couple has been overwhelmed by the positive response from RV-ers, with over 600 visitors since August 2021. Guests explore the property, meet the animals, and learn about the farming lifestyle.

Looking toward the future, the Powers hope to collaborate with another organization that specializes in therapy. This partnership will allow them to provide animal therapy to veterans and individuals suffering from PTSD. The team firmly believes in the healing power of animals and is excited at the prospect of being able to make a positive impact on the lives of those in need.

In conclusion, Bill and Sheryl's farm is more than just a place to see alpacas. It is a place to learn, connect with nature, and appreciate the hard work that goes into farming. Their passion for their animals and their property is evident, and visitors leave feeling inspired and enriched.

Due to the hot weather in the southern region, tours at the farm are primarily booked online and are available from fall to late spring when the temperature is most comfortable for the animals and visitors. During the tours, guests can interact



Bill Power and Sheryl Rudy, owners of Herd It Here Farm. (Pictures provided for Herd It Here Farm by Heather Whitten of Andy Ann Photography.)



Well hello, from the alpacas and llama at Herd It Here Farm. (Pictures provided by Heather Whitten of Andy Ann Photography.)



Owner Sheryl Rudy feeding the ornamental chickens. (Pictures provided by Heather Whitten of Andy Ann Photography.)

with and feed the sociable animals. The couple encourages visitors to ask questions and to learn about the animals and their unique characteristics.

Admission to the farm is \$10 for ages 10 and above, \$5 for ages 3-9, and free for ages 2 and under. The farm also offers private tours for families upon request at the time of booking. These tours are a great way for families to bond and learn about the animals in a more intimate setting.

Whether you are visiting Herd It Here Farm for an afternoon or an entire weekend, you are sure to leave with a deeper appreciation for farm life and the animals that make it so special. So why not come and discover the charm of this one-of-a-kind agritourism destination for yourself?



Market goods from the Country Store. (Pictures provided by Heather Whitten of Andy Ann Photography.)



Rescue horse named Cherokee in front of the red barn. (Pictures provided by Heather Whitten of Andy Ann Photography.)

## For More Information

call (703) 597-4839,  
email

[Info@HerdItHereFarm.com](mailto:Info@HerdItHereFarm.com),

or visit

<https://www.herditherefarm.com>.

You can also visit their Facebook page on social media.

## Herd It Here Farm

is located at

**541 Sullivans Ferry Road  
Cottageville, South Carolina.**



# Boundless Beauty, **Butterflies**, and Other Natural Wonders

By Andy Ann

© 2023 Southern Business Digest

The Monarch Ranch Butterfly Conservatory, LLC, owned by Sean and Katey Reid, is a great spot for nature lovers located in Bamberg, SC. This ranch is devoted to preserving and protecting all native butterflies and pollinators. Guests can observe the butterflies in their natural environment and become informed about their life cycle and actions. The ranch offers a range of activities for people of all ages.

Monarch Ranch boasts a mesmerizing pollinator garden sanctuary. Sean is a specialist in landscaping services, which encourages and produces biodiversity in the conservatory's garden. Sean and Katey both have a passion for caring for butterflies and other pollinators, which includes planting native species within the gardens and on the grounds.

Sean has an immense enthusiasm for nature and its essential place in our world. He has a special bond with plants and animals that they react to, and they flourish from his ten-

der care. Katey has a special fondness for farm life too, which is obvious in the beautiful photographs that she takes as a photographer under her business, Mykie Jean Photography. She especially enjoys using special lighting near sunset to take blue hour-style photos. Together they also raise chickens, pigs, sheep, and cows on the ranch.

The Reids have created a unique place in Monarch Ranch, a destination where people can come and explore a connection with nature. They were inspired to do so after a visit to a nursery that gifted them a greenhouse with monarch chrysalis. The emergence of their first butterfly was so special that it ignited a passion to continue raising them and to create a sanctuary for animals, fruits, vegetables, and other elements of nature.

Visiting the butterfly conservatory is an amazing experience for anyone, as this place provides a natural environment for a variety of butterfly species and pollinators, such as honey bees. People can observe them closely and study their life cycle, from egg to

caterpillar, to chrysalis, to adult.

This bio-diversified garden may also provide educational opportunities, where visitors can learn about the plants and flowers that attract butterflies and their behavior. Additionally, they can take in the many hues and patterns of

these insects as they fly around, sip nectar, and interact with each other. Butterfly conservatories are an excellent way for people of all ages to gain knowledge about and appreciate nature. At Monarch Ranch Butterfly Conservatory, guests can observe and enjoy these captivating creatures in a safe setting.

In the future, Sean hopes to have a nursery where he can grow and sell his own plants, as well as set up a garden stand to share his passion. He commented, "I want to spread what I love. It is very important to me and it makes me happy to do what I'm meant to do." He has noticed a huge difference in biodiversity since he first started managing the ranch, as this is one of his main goals. He finds it incredibly rewarding, stating, "The more biodiversity you have, the healthier your environment is and the more it can offer you. I just love it; there is so much science to it."

Katey expressed her enthusiasm for Monarch Ranch, declaring, "Be a kid again!" Sean agreed, his words of encouragement to everyone being, "Just go back in time and find something that you're passionate about, and then start doing it and having fun with it.

It won't feel like work at all!" He pointed out that certain sights, sounds, and smells can help us to remember happier times and be inspired. He concluded that in spite of what life throws at us, we should always hold onto that inspiration.

The Monarch Ranch Butterfly Conservatory is an incredible experience and a great chance to learn more about the natural world. It is an extraordinary sight and absolutely worth the visit. You can book a private or educational tour in advance. In addition to this, sections of the ranch can be rented out for photography sessions, as well as for various events such as tea parties, weddings, and community gatherings featuring various artists and vendors.

On Saturday, July 22, 2023, Monarch Ranch will be hosting a grand opening celebration from 10 AM-1 PM, that is free to all. Attendees will have the opportunity to enjoy an array of activities, from coffee and cocktails to massages and yoga. Additionally, there will be a variety of vendors selling handmade jewelry, hair accessories, soaps, and cosmetics. Come discover the unique beauty and enchantment that can only be found at the ranch!



Sean & Katey Reid, owners of Monarch Ranch.  
(Pictures provided for Monarch Ranch by Katey Reid of Mykie Jean Photography.)



Butterfly house at Monarch Ranch 2023.  
(Pictures provided for Monarch Ranch by Katey Reid of Mykie Jean Photography.)

**For more information  
Call (803) 758-3275  
or email [monarchranchsc@gmail.com](mailto:monarchranchsc@gmail.com).**

**Monarch Ranch is located at  
80 Embree Road in Bamberg, SC.**

**Be sure to look them up on Facebook  
for the latest news.**



# Elite Welding and Fabrication Services for a Tailored Product Experience

By Samantha Gerke

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JS Designs Welding and Fabrication, based in Walterboro, SC was established in 2019 by owner, Justin Scott. Justin Scott moved from New Jersey to South Carolina over five years ago with the intent to experience a better quality of life.

Prior to relocating South Carolina, Justin explored a variety of careers ranging from underwater welding, chief nuclear maintenance technician, heavy rigging and lifting, and mechanic. His extensive skill set and knowledge has afforded him the opportunity to explore a variety of career opportunities in South Carolina.

Justin Scott, shared that his personal hobbies in creating custom products fueled his desire to launch JS Designs Welding and Fabrication.

"I am always brainstorming and envisioning how to create a unique product or improve upon something that might already exist. In my free time, I would build something that would serve a purpose outside of work. My projects can vary greatly in size, time and complexity. I have taken on year-long projects like completely dismantling a diesel truck and rebuilding it as a custom vehicle." Justin elaborated on his past projects and shared that his projects have become statement pieces in and around his home. These pieces are great conversation pieces with friends and family.

Conversing with people is an integral part of his process. It is typically through this process that he finetunes his projects to ensure that it is functional, polished and meets his expectations. It has been said by his family and customers that his expectations far exceed the standard and therefore assures his customers that they will be satisfied with the results.

"I especially enjoy consulting and working on projects that allow me to be creative and challenge me to think critically. When my customers share their vision

and I make it a reality, I like to see the happiness it brings them."

His customers have remarked on his professionalism, commitment to customer satisfaction, and superior craftsmanship.

Courtney Araneo and Mandy McLaine, co-owners of Two Pour Girls Bartending, sought out JS Designs Welding and Fabrication for their mobile bartending business. They had a horse trailer from the mid 1980s in its original condition. Courtney and Mandy provided Justin with a brief vision and gave him creative freedom to create a serving station that would be available for weddings and events. The results of the project were transformational.

Courtney complimented their experience in working with JS Designs Welding and Fabrication, "When we first started the project, we gave Justin an idea of what we wanted to accomplish with the trailer and let him run with it. Throughout the project, we would share some ideas and see if he could incorporate it into our vision. I was not worried about the project because I knew Justin was the perfect one for the job because he is meticulous and would make our vision come true."

Justin credits his success to Carlton Scott, his father, who encouraged creativity and independence from an early age, Mason Scott, his son, who motivates him and always greets his dad at the end of the work day by asking how his day went, and James Brady, his first employer, who guided him and instilled the work ethic in him.

In the short span of time since he established his business, he was able to expand his mobile welding business by opening a shop to offer more services, such as: line boring, on board scale systems for heavy duty trucks, and more demanding custom fabrication projects. With the level of skill and knowledge that Justin possesses in his line of work, it is beneficial to both Justin and to the customer to reach out to JS Designs Welding and Fabrication to inquire about a service or custom project.



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Rachel Araneo Photography

**JS Designs  
Welding and Fabrication**  
201 Mill St. Walterboro, SC 29488

For more information, contact

**Justin Scott**  
via phone at  
**(843) 782-0091**  
or via email at

[jsdesignswelding@gmail.com](mailto:jsdesignswelding@gmail.com)

## Note to our readers:

With the rebrand, our dedicated staff has put together a wonderful edition featuring businesses, festivals, individuals, nonprofit organizations, and more!

In order to maintain this high quality paper, we will be offering yearly subscriptions for home delivery as well as discounted rates for businesses.

Businesses may opt to purchase bundles of our publication to share with their customers or resell within their stores.

Contact us at [help@southernbusinessdigest.net](mailto:help@southernbusinessdigest.net) for clarification.

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# From Casual to Classy, It's *Simply Yours Interiors*

By Andy Ann

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Roxane "Rocki" Hovenga is the owner and operator of Simply Yours Interiors, a local business that specializes in custom upholstery, embroidery, monogramming, leatherwork, window treatments, pillows, bedding, and alterations. Hovenga's passion for fabrics began over two decades ago when she started creating curtains and other sewing projects for others. Her mother, who owned a dry cleaning service, taught her the basics of sewing and alterations when she was a young girl.

After her son graduated from high school and joined the military, Hovenga went to college and earned a degree in accounting and bookkeeping. She worked full-time as a bookkeeper for the government but was laid off due to the 9/11 attacks. In order to make ends meet, she relied on her sewing skills to create custom draperies and pillows in her spare time, while also working at Boeing Industries.

Hovenga was determined to turn her passion for sewing into a successful business, so she went back to school to study interior design. Today, Simply Yours Interiors is a thriving business that offers a wide range of custom services to its clients.

Simply Yours Interiors is a successful business that owes its success to the passion and

expertise of its owner, who gained her knowledge by enrolling in design classes at Trident Technical College in North Charleston. Although she had no prior background in design and was working in accounting at Boeing, Hovenga was determined to pursue her dreams and received her certifications in design.

After facing a layoff for the second time, she decided to start her business with only a single-car garage to work out of. As her customer base grew, she gradually expanded her business and moved to different locations. With hard work and dedication, she finally realized her dreams in 2019 when she invested in her business and took her goals to the next level. Her passion for fabrics and sewing has been a key part of the success of Simply Yours Interiors, and her experience in bookkeeping has helped her successfully manage and grow her business.

Simply Yours boasts a 4,000-square-foot showroom, workshop, and instructional space all in one place. The showroom is full of beautifully designed and high-quality fabrics suitable for any occasion, from casual to classy. Whether you need fabric for upholstery or to buy for other projects, this store has all the materials you need, including a variety of sewing notions. They also offer custom embroidery, monogramming, and upholstery services with the latest model Melco Bravo machine

that can embroider a variety of items, including tea towels, hats, shirts, baby blankets, decorative trim on draperies, and more.

Their upholstery services are also top-notch, and Hovenga uses high-quality vinyl (such as marine grade vinyl) which is perfect for outdoor projects, such as small removable seats for ATV's and motorcycle seats. If you're looking for the perfect finish for your project, Hovenga and her team offer a range of vinyl options to choose from. They also specialize in working with leather, which is ideal for furniture such as chairs, benches, and barstools. Leather furniture offers both comfort and a classic appearance.

Simply Yours can bring old vintage furniture back to life by repairing and recovering it with high-quality fabrics, resulting in a completely transformed look and feel. In addition to custom-made window treatments, they can also assist with interior design and staging, including color selection and furniture replacement. They can even help with challenging areas such as bay windows, ensuring all angles are taken into account.

Local artists and crafters have also contributed a variety of home decor items to the showroom to add a touch of style to any room. These items include area rugs (which provide warmth and comfort, as well as aesthetic enhance-

ment), vases, wall hangings, and mirrors, among other accessories. A variety of artwork is also available for purchase as the perfect gift or finishing touch to each room, including paintings, drawings, and photographs. Whether vintage or brand new, there's something for every style and budget.

In conclusion, Hovenga said, "I love getting creative. I

love to use my creative juices, especially when clients come in and they don't have an idea of what they want or they don't know how to make it happen. So we work together with clients, with their space, with their window sizes, their color themes, what they think they want-and I love to be creative with them through the process."



Kathy Hiers (left) & Rocki Hovenga, owner of Simply Yours Interiors (right). (Pictures provided by Heather Whitten of Andy Ann Photography.)



Owner Rocki Hovenga (left) & Kathy Hiers (right) working.



Wide selection of fabrics.



Front of the showroom.



Workroom.

Pictures provided for Simply Yours Interiors by Heather Whitten of Andy Ann Photography

## *Simply Yours Interiors*

is located at  
1260 Bells Hwy,  
Walterboro, S.C. 29488.

For more information call (843) 408-2412,  
visit [www.SimplyYoursInteriors.com](http://www.SimplyYoursInteriors.com),  
or email [SimplyYoursInteriors@outlook.com](mailto:SimplyYoursInteriors@outlook.com).

You can also visit their Facebook or  
Instagram pages on social media.





By Jack Wysong  
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Coming from two vastly different and unique professional backgrounds, Van Bottomly and Adaiiah Toothaker have combined their collective forty years of industrial safety experience to launch their new company, O1030. Their mission is to provide workplace safety classes and certification to companies so that they can become compliant with the OSHA 10 and OSHA 30 regulations.

These two lifelong friends share a mutual passion for occupational safety and an appreciation for the benefits that quality instruction can provide to the business community. As such, they reported that their approach to teaching proper health and safety practices has been “to make sure that everyone is confident that they will get home safely at the end of the day.”

Originally born into a military family, Van Bottomly began his career in the occupational safety industry after working as a prepared food specialist for Publix Super Markets. He then worked his way up to becoming an in-house instructor of proper handling and safety procedures in the prepared foods department. He stated that his time with Publix was where he acquired his appreciation for safety regulations, but also more importantly what he calls “safety culture.”

Van defines the safety culture of a company by the practices and procedures of their day-to-day operations that promote the health and wellbeing of their employees, and adds, “If you want to know how a company treats their employees, look at their safety culture.”

It was during his time as an instructor that Van realized he had a passion for teaching as well, and knew that was the

direction his career would take him.

Despite the partners’ shared passion for teaching in the occupational safety field, Adaiiah Toothaker has a much different background in the profession. Adaiiah’s career in industrial safety began when he started his career in the nuclear energy business at the age of eighteen. From that point forward he would spend his career progressing his way through the ranks to become a safety and materials handling specialist for General Electric and Duke Energy while serv-

ing in a plethora of different roles.

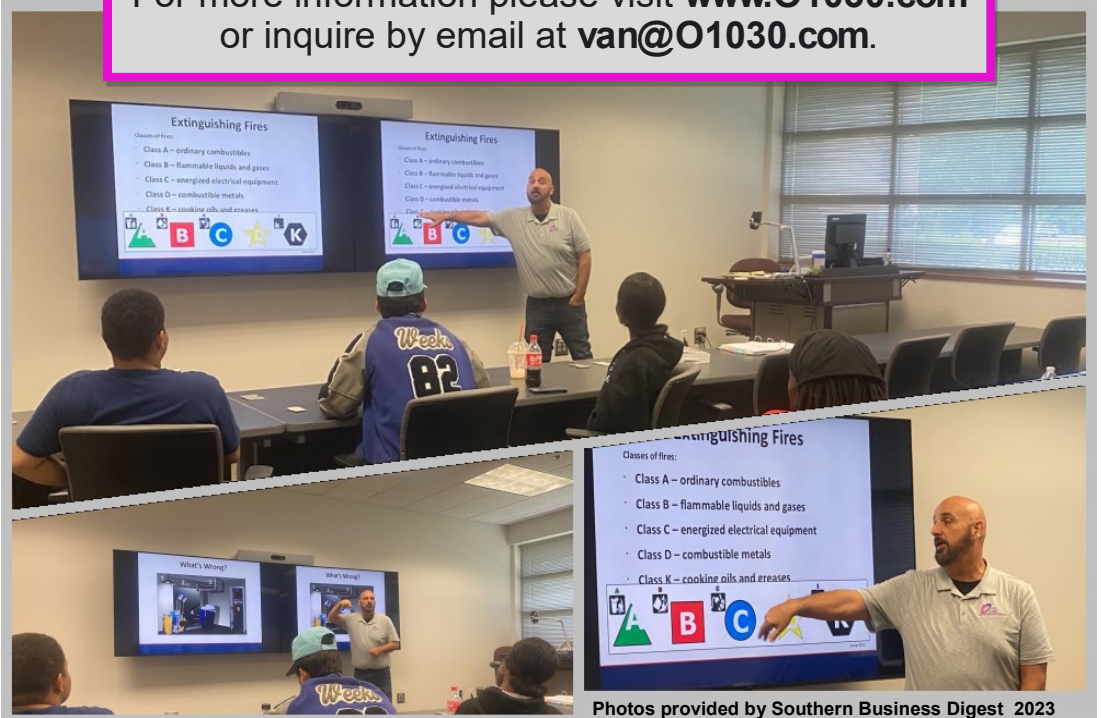
Since its inception, the mission of O1030 has been to provide the companies they contract for a thorough education in safety and OSHA regulation. However, the aspect of their company that sets them apart from other consulting firms is their dedication to the overall improvement of workplace safety culture across all workplaces and industries.

O1030 participates in the Hero’s Project at Savannah Technical College by providing OSHA safety credentials to veterans of the Armed

Forces. They have also implemented a program at Augusta Technical College to teach core classes to young adults who are struggling to gain traction within their careers so that they may be more marketable to potential employers.

Although O1030 has been in operation for a short time, they are already beginning to look at future expansion by bringing on a larger staff of OSHA certified instructors. This would enable them to better service their target geographical region of South Carolina, North Carolina, and Georgia.

For more information please visit [www.O1030.com](http://www.O1030.com) or inquire by email at [van@O1030.com](mailto:van@O1030.com).



Photos provided by Southern Business Digest 2023

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## Waller Southern Farms and Real Savanna Goats

By Jack Wysong

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As an active-duty member of the United States Air Force, Chad Waller is no stranger to living a life defined by hard work and dedication to his career. With his wife Kristen also serving on active duty in the Air Force as well, many may wonder how this family could successfully operate a blossoming purebred goat farm. Based just outside the town of Cottageville, South Carolina, Waller Southern Farms functions as one of the few strictly purebred goat breeders in the area, with their specialty being a breed of goat known as the Savanna breed.



The Savanna goat is characterized by their snow-white coat, curly gray horns, their even-keeled temperament, and geographic origins that trace back to the African Savanna. Despite the humble beginnings of Waller Farms, through dedi-

cation, an unrelenting work ethic, and a desire to produce a product unrivaled in quality, the Wallers have built a nationally recognized and licensed specialty goat farming business.

Starting with a plot of land that had previously been utilized for hog farming, Chad and Kristen realized that they could leverage their backgrounds in agriculture and animal farming to repurpose their land as a sanctuary for their Savanna goats. Like many success stories, the story of Waller Southern Farms starts with a vision. Their vision was to build a farm from the ground up that was not only above professional standards but would also be recognized by the governing bodies of their industry such as Pedigree International.

When asked what it is like to manage his career in the military while simultaneously building a farm, Chad says, "Many people have the misconception that farming is a 9-to-5 job, when in reality it is a 24/7 job." Chad also highlights the importance of having strong family and community ties when running a business

such as his. He and his wife are both thankful to be part of the Savanna goat raising community, as well as the Cottageville community.

Not only can they rely on their family members to help make their vision an achievable reality, but they know that in the Cottageville area there are plenty of people who are more than willing to watch their back. Chad says, "I know whenever I need it, my community is there for me. Whether it be simple advice on how to run the farm more efficiently (or in some cases having one of the neighbors pick up my kids from school), I know they will be there. It's just like a big family out here."

Waller Southern Farms officially stepped into the Savanna goat breeding business when Chad and Kristen took a trip to an auction in Shawnee, Oklahoma, where they first discovered the breed. They bid on their first billy at that show, and they also won another Savanna goat through a raffle contest. From that point forward the Waller family felt that they had found their calling.

However, the success did not come easy for Waller Farms. The apparent triumph of their business should not undermine the hard work and



dedication required to build a business like theirs from the ground up.

Chad explains that there are hardships associated with pursuing the two very labor intensive and hands-on jobs of being in the military and raising goats, in addition to raising a family that includes three children of their own. To many this balancing act would appear impossible, but Waller's claim that their "secret ingredient" is family and "sweat equity".

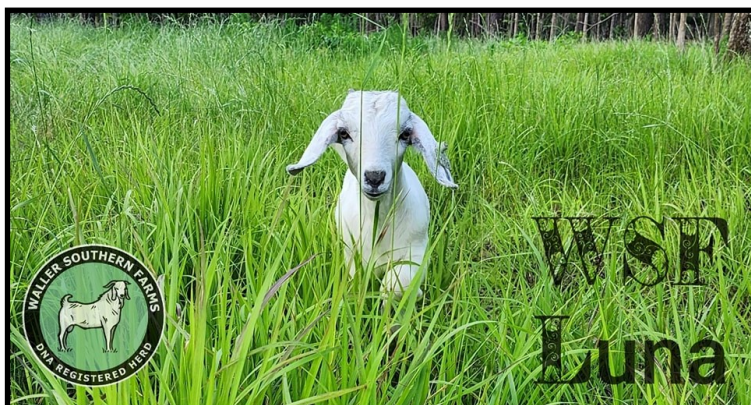
Although Waller Southern Farms specializes in purebred Savanna goats, they have since been able to branch out and produce a more expansive palette of products. One of the

most prominent of these products is the honey they produce through their on-site beehives,



but the farm has begun to explore the wide range of products that are derived from honeybees.

For many people, the typical workday concludes at five o'clock, or whenever their shift ends. However, Chad and Kristen have been putting in overtime over the past several years to achieve their vision of running a successful business while serving in the military. The story of Waller Southern Farms should go to show that with the right mentality, mentorship, and proper planning, nearly anyone can achieve commercial success.



### FOR MORE INFORMATION

contact Chad Waller via their website,  
[realsavannagoats.com](http://realsavannagoats.com),  
 or by email at  
[chadwaller@realsavannagoats.com](mailto:chadwaller@realsavannagoats.com).





## CMC<sup>3</sup> | Coffee, Conversation, Connect to Care

### HEALTHY EATING

**Wednesday, July 26 | 9:30 am**

PRIVATE DINING ROOM | COLLETON MEDICAL CENTER  
501 Robertson Blvd, Walterboro, SC 29488

As part of the CMC3 - Coffee, Conversation, Connect to Care series we invite you to connect with Colleton Medical Center's Executive Chef, Claire Womack, and Clinical Nutrition Manager, Donna Brown, for coffee and conversation on eating a healthy sustainable diet.

Topics of discussion will include maintaining a healthy diet to help manage blood pressure, cholesterol, and type 2 diabetes, as well as ways to use healthier ingredients without losing flavor.

Registration is appreciated: [ColletonMedical.com/Events](https://ColletonMedical.com/Events)

**Colleton**  
Medical Center



# Take a **LAST STAND DEFENSE** against Menacing Encounters

By Andy Ann

© 2023 Southern Business Digest

Last Stand Defense was set up in 2007 by former military veteran and prior law enforcement officer Mark Cobb and his wife Pamela, who are both certified instructors. The Cobbs understand the importance of having practical training for both individuals and businesses in our ever-evolving world.

Mark and Pamela relocated to Colleton County in 2016. At that time, Mark ended his law enforcement career and self-defense guidance became his main occupation. Ruffin is where Last Stand Defense has based its training ground for the last seven years.

Initially, Cobb provided basic firearm training and has since expanded to include higher-level firearm training, women's self-defense sessions, urgent medical courses, security assessments, and even classes in safety fundamentals for youth.

This organization offers comprehensive services to a wide range of interested parties, such as businesses, government agencies, educational

institutions, medical facilities, places of worship, and individuals. The security and risk management training they provide involves educating and assessing participants on various topics, as well as granting certifications. To ensure everyone receives individualized attention, classes are often held in small groups.

The organization provides multiple youth programs, one of which is a basic firearms safety course that is offered twice a year (at no cost) to all ages. Additionally, they have a youth introduction to firearms and safety program that is designed for youngsters aged 13 and older. It gives participants a comprehensive look at gun safety, emphasizing the need to adopt the correct practices and develop good habits that will last a lifetime. Participants can practice with both handguns and .22 caliber rifles, growing their knowledge of safe firearm management.

Their women's classes, led by Pamela, are some of their most well-attended. Over the past five years, the organization has found women to be engaged and excited to learn, and the courses cover a variety of topics. Hand-to-hand training, firearms training, self-

defense instruction, and situational awareness training are all included. This includes knowledge of how to be mindful of one's environment to avoid being targeted by traffickers or abductors. Additionally, proper attire when out in public is emphasized, as wearing the wrong clothing can limit movement and make it easier for an attacker to hurt someone.

The Cobbs have been actively involved in helping to ensure the security of area businesses, churches, schools, hospitals, and law enforcement agencies. This includes consultations to identify security issues, create or update policies, find weak points, train staff in active shooter scenarios, set up responses, and assess the risks. They have also been helping to establish security teams in churches and train teachers and staff in schools. Mark believes that teachers are the first line of defense, and it is important to equip them with the right skills so that they can help train the other members of the staff.

Training students to be prepared for potential emergencies is also essential for keeping classrooms safe. The

(Continued on page 12)



Mark & Pamela Cobb, Owners of Last Stand Defense.  
(Picture provided by Mark Cobb)



Mark Cobb giving individualized instruction to a student in youth course on the range.  
(Picture provided by Mark Cobb)



Women's course in firearms training on the range. ((Picture provided by Mark Cobb)



(Continued from page 11)

Cobbs want to help by increasing people's knowledge and providing training to help secure schools. There are a few simple steps that require only a little expertise that can be taken to save lives, such as using items in the classroom to secure the area and familiarizing students with these items. Examples of these are covering windows, setting up door wedges, having extra cables and clamps, and having a First Aid kit, bottled water, snacks, blankets, and a ladder in the classroom. With these items, people can take action and be ready for a situation that could last for an extended period of time.

The Cobbs have made it their mission to provide training to teachers and realtors who have not received any safety-related instruction from their schools or businesses. Specifically, they offer a class to realtors that teaches them how to stay safe when they meet strangers in unfamiliar places, such as abandoned houses. Mark explained that this course is designed to combine the two worlds of real estate and security, allowing realtors to remain safe while still performing their duties. Furthermore, the Cobbs can customize their courses to meet the individual needs of their clients, whether it be yearly certifications, specialized training, or an evaluation of existing safety protocols. They will provide a free initial assessment and help you book a suitable course if you are interested.

Everyone has the right to bear arms, but they must be aware of the laws in order to use them lawfully and safely for self-defense. Depending on

the type of training, some sessions need to take place on-site at their firing range, while other exercises can be conducted off-site. Last Stand provides private lessons as well as group sessions for larger entities. Additionally, there are certified medical experts and other experienced adjunct instructors who offer different kinds of training for some of the other courses offered. Instructing people on the fundamentals of tourniquet use, chest seal application, and pressure bandaging can be mastered by anyone, with the potential to save lives.



Active shooter scenario training with law enforcement on location in the stairwell. ((Picture provided by Mark Cobb)



Pamela Cobb giving individualized instruction to a female student on the range. ((Picture provided by Mark Cobb)



Firearms training on the range in a small group. (Picture provided by Mark Cobb)



For more information on  
**LAST STAND DEFENSE**

call (843) 592-0515,  
email [laststanddefense@gmail.com](mailto:laststanddefense@gmail.com),  
or visit [www.laststanddefense.com](http://www.laststanddefense.com).

They are located at  
**447 Scuffletown Road in Ruffin, SC.**  
You can also find them on Facebook.





# 29<sup>th</sup> Annual

# Shrimp Festival

## SEPTEMBER 15-16, 2023

The Town of Yemassee will be hosting their 29th Annual Shrimp Festival on Friday and Saturday, September 15th and 16th!

Inspired by Jackie Moore, Lori Poston, and community leaders of Yemassee, the idea of the Shrimp Festival was presented by Jackie Moore. Jackie presented the idea to First African Church and Pilgrim Ford, amongst many other local churches in the town. Shortly after Jackie Moore was elected as Mayor, JL Goodwin led a meeting at Fennell Elementary to put together the first festival which took place in 1994! Come enjoy a fun-filled weekend of family activities as we continue this wonderful tradition.

This annual event, featuring arts and crafts, food, rides, music and other entertainment, will be an unforgettable experience. The Shrimp Festival Committee and its sponsors have made this festival possible with events and activities for everyone to enjoy! The Shrimp Festival will host a beauty pageant and softball tournament in the weeks leading up to the kickoff. The festival will be complete with parades, carnival, entertainment, and vendors providing food, crafts, and retail items. Read on and check out what we will be offering at this upcoming festival.

Information about the Yemassee Shrimp Festival can be accessed at [www.townofyemassee.com](http://www.townofyemassee.com), on Facebook, or through the coordinator, Lori Mixson at (843) 589-2565, Ext 2.

For information regarding sponsorship opportunities: Contact [Southern Business Digest](http://SouthernBusinessDigest.com) at [help@southernbusinessdigest.net](mailto:help@southernbusinessdigest.net).

## Festival Information:

### Kids Carnival

Friday, September 15, 2023  
Saturday, September 16, 2023

Yemassee Municipal Complex  
101 Town Circle, Yemassee, SC  
Lot behind Yemassee Municipal Complex

You asked, and we answered! We've arranged for the kids carnival to return to Yemassee's Shrimp Festival this year. Bring the children to enjoy fun rides. There will be rides available for all ages. Ride tickets and all-day wristbands options will be for sale.

### Food and Craft Vendors

Friday, September 15, 2023 from 12:00 PM to 11:00 PM  
Saturday, September 16, 2023 from 10:00 AM to 11:00 PM

Yemassee Municipal Complex  
101 Town Circle, Yemassee, SC

Vendor Information: Food vendors will be given access to vendor space on September 14 after 4:00 PM. Craft vendors will be given access to vendor space on Friday, September 15 from 7:00 AM to 10:00 AM. Check in with a Shrimp Festival Committee Member to get your packet with your vendor location and important information upon arrival.

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and reap the benefits of advertising!

29<sup>th</sup> Annual

Shrimp Festival





# Shrimp Festival Community Events

## Yemassee's Shrimp Festival Beauty Pageant

Saturday, August 19, 2023 at 1:00 PM

Fennell Elementary School  
131 Yemassee Hwy, Yemassee, SC

There will be no pageant entry at the door.  
Participants can register online by August 5th at  
<https://form.jotform.com/230855560023046> or  
[www.townofyemassee.org](http://www.townofyemassee.org)

Outfit of Choice Theme: Back to School!

Day of Registration:  
Division 1 - 9:00 AM  
Division 2 - 12:00 PM

For more information, contact Melissa B  
at (803) 300-8299

Admission to event will be \$10 per person. Children ages 5 and under are free.  
Concessions will be available. Cash only.



*She believed  
she could,  
so she did!*



## Yemassee's Shrimp Festival Softball Tournament

Friday, August 25, 2023 at 7:00 PM  
Saturday, August 26, 2023 at 8:00 AM

Harold Peoples Ballfield  
29240 Pocatigo Road, Yemassee, SC

Team Registration - \$300 due at the time of application. CO-ED teams  
welcome. Winning team will receive a trophy and t-shirts!

Applications are available at 101 Town Circle, Yemassee, SC or  
online at [www.townofyemassee.org](http://www.townofyemassee.org).

Deadline for sign ups is August 18, 2023 by 5:00 PM.

Free admission! Concessions will be available. Cash only.

Colin J Moore  
Mayor  
Peggy Bing-O'Banner  
Mayor Pro Tempore  
Matthew Gaines  
Town Clerk

Council Members  
Michelle Hagan  
Charlie Simmons  
Alfred Washington

2023 Yemassee Shrimp Festival  
Softball Tournament Registration Form  
August 25<sup>th</sup> & 26<sup>th</sup> 2023  
Harold Peoples Athletic Park | 29240 Pocatigo Rd,  
Yemassee, SC

Team Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Captains Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Captains Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP: \_\_\_\_\_

E-Mail Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**Payment & Registration**

- Team Registration is \$300 and due at time of application submission
- SPACE IS LIMITED. Registrations will only be accepted with payment (Cash, Certified Check or Money Order) on a First Come, First Served Basis

Yemassee Municipal Complex  
101 Town Circle P.O. Box 377 Yemassee, SC 29945-0577  
Telephone (843) 589-2565 Fax (843) 589-4305  
[www.townofyemassee.org](http://www.townofyemassee.org)

## Volunteer Opportunities Available!

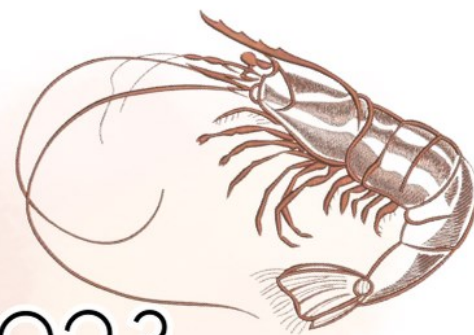
High School students can earn  
volunteer hours for their resume and  
higher education applications!



Contact Lori Mixson at  
(843) 589-2565, Ext 2  
for more information!



# Festival Kickoff



## FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 15, 2023

### Kiddie Parade

Friday, September 15, 2023 at 5:30 PM

Line Up begins at 5:15 PM

The KIDDIE Parade will line up in front of the Methodist Church off of Old Salkehatchie Road. The children in the procession will travel to the 2nd stop sign in front of the town hall. The Shrimp Festival crew will greet the participants with popsicles and prizes at the stage!

Each parade entry should be decorated in either Shrimp theme or Community Service Worker theme (ex: Police Officer, Fire/EMS, Healthcare Worker, Mayor, Baker, Restaurant Worker, Construction, etc.)

Stick around for the KICKOFF Event!

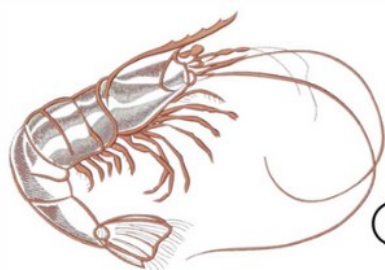


### Shrimp Festival KICKOFF

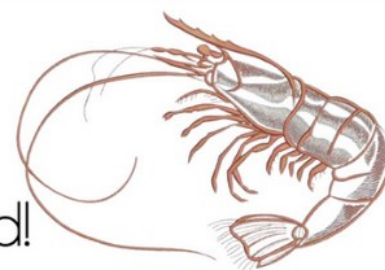
Friday, September 15, 2023 at 6:00 PM

Yemassee Municipal Complex  
101 Town Circle, Yemassee, SC

The KICKOFF Event will begin with an Opening Ceremony at 6:00 PM. The Shrimp Festival crew will share announcements and give out special recognition awards. From 7:00 PM-11:00 PM, Fresh Vibe will provide live entertainment for everyone. Come dance the night away!



Visualize YOUR logo here!  
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# Main Events



## SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 16, 2023

### 29th Yemassee Shrimp Festival Parade

Saturday, September 16, 2023 at 10:00 AM

Line Up begins at 9:00 AM

Parade Route: Begins at the corner of Church St. and Old Salkehatchie (in front of the Methodist Church) and continues through the caution light, over the tracks in front of the train station and proceeds right onto Yemassee Highway. The procession will make a left onto Church St. and finish at the end of Church St.

Parade Unit Information: Parade units will arrive to the line up location by turning on Hill Road (Road across from Family Dollar). At the end of Hill Road, turn left on Old Salkehatchie Road, Shrimp Festival Committee Members will be at the end of Hill Road and Salkehatchie Road with line up for submitted parade entries. If you do not submit an entry, your unit will fall in place at the end of the parade route in front of the horse procession. **NO ATVS ALLOWED.** You must adhere to the line up route. Promotional items and candy may be thrown or distributed in procession.

Theme: Honoring Community Service Workers (ex: Police Officer, Fire/EMS, Healthcare Worker, Mayor, Baker, Restaurant Worker, Construction, etc.)

Prize trophies for the following categories: Most Spirited, Best Car Group, Best Motorcycle Group, Best Band, Best Horse Group, and Overall Best.

### Grand Slam: Concert in the Park

Saturday, September 16, 2023

Gates Open at 3:00 PM

Harold Peeples Ballfield  
29240 Pocatoligo Road, Yemassee, SC

Jason Lee Cook will be performing from 5:30 PM-7:30 PM. Cody Webb will rock the ballfield from 8:00 PM to 11:30 PM. Tickets can be purchased in advanced for \$20 at 101 Town Circle, Yemassee, SC for \$20 or online at [www.townofyemassee.org](http://www.townofyemassee.org). Tickets may be purchased at the gate for \$25. Bring your chair or blanket to sit on in the infield or pull up and sit on your tailgate. Concessions will be available and Trolley pick up and drop off will be provided. **NO PETS ALLOWED.**

Live Entertainment!



Come for the Music...  
Stay for the Memories

Dance the  
night away!



Opportunities for August  
2023

Take advantage of the 29th Annual  
Yemassee Shrimp Festival Sponsorship Package



# FROM AXES TO PIZZAS, RED BRICK CAPTIVATES PATRONS

By Andy Ann  
© 2023 Southern Business Digest

Red Brick Pizza & Cypress Patio is a beloved eatery in Cottageville, SC that has been delighting customers since 2020. This spot is renowned for its Italian pizzas and wings, made from fresh ingredients and crafted to perfection. The inviting environment makes it the perfect place to gather with family and friends.

The owners of Red Brick are a husband and wife team, Dave and Heike Stanfield. Dave served in the U.S. Army, followed by the Army National Guard. He has a long career in the food industry and was planning to open a different restaurant before the pandemic struck. Nevertheless, they settled in Cottageville, and it has been a great fit for them. To honor Heike's roots, they incorporated a German theme for the restaurant. There is also a cypress patio as an outdoor seating area, known as the Biergarten, which is the ideal spot to sit back and take in the atmosphere.

Red Brick Pizza & Cypress Patio has quickly become a local favorite due to the hard work and dedication of the owners. The restaurant's delicious food and welcoming atmosphere have also been appreciated by visitors to the area. The Stanfields are proud of their success and are thankful for the support of the Cottageville community.

The restaurant offers a unique dining experience, with classic Italian stone-cooked pizza and other dishes such as wings, salads, burgers, and pasta. For those looking for something more adventurous, there are also options like buffalo chicken and the BEAST pizza. The Brickhouse Burger is a signature dish made with two all-beef patties with caramelized sweet banana peppers and onions, served on a toasted bun with mayo, tomato, and lettuce. Dave's famous sweet and spicy spaghetti is also a crowd-pleaser.

The Cypress Patio provides an exclusive experience for its customers. There is a special themed buffet that changes nightly, with offerings such as hibachi on Wednesdays and endless wings on Thursdays available. Fridays offer an additional choice of a t-bone or ribeye steak as an

add-on for a nominal charge. The country buffet includes sides such as baked and mashed potatoes, corn, squash, green beans, and sweet potatoes, as well as a salad and dessert bar. Furthermore, the restaurant is the only one in the area that serves German Hefeweizen and Doppelbock Beer, as well as domestic beer and wine. Dave mentioned some patrons come just for the German beer.

To top it off, Red Brick has live entertainment with the best local artists and bands. On Wednesdays and Thursdays, there is karaoke from 6-9:30 p.m., and Fridays feature a recurring Elvis Presley, Johnny Cash, and Willie Nelson Tribute Show in costume. The restaurant is open Wednesdays through Saturdays from 11 a.m. - 9:30 p.m. and Sundays from 11 a.m. - 8 p.m. The restaurant is closed on Mondays and Tuesdays.

Red Brick Pizza & Cypress Patio is the ideal place to spend time with friends and family. The venue has something for everyone, such as pizza, pool, foosball, darts, and axe-throwing. If you're looking to throw a birthday party, the game room can be booked for your special needs. The owner noted that it is a fun and popular spot, with returning customers every week.

Axe-throwing is an exclusive activity at Red Brick Pizza & Cypress Patio. You can rent a lane for 30 minutes or one hour, with a starting cost of \$20 for the first half hour and \$30 for the full 60 minutes. The staff is courteous and friendly, making sure that all visitors have a great time. Plus, Dave is an entertainer who enjoys impersonating Elvis Presley and Johnny Cash.

At Red Brick Pizza & Cypress Patio, Dave and his staff have made it their mission to ensure the atmosphere is fun and inviting for all. The restaurant is perfect for any occasion, whether it be a quick bite or a more relaxed dinner. To make it even easier, they also offer delivery services through DoorDash. In the near future, Red Brick also plans to host a jazz and blues night each month, so make sure to pop in soon and have a great time!

Pictures provided by  
Heather Whitten of  
Andy Ann Photography



Dave Stanfield, owner of Red Brick Pizza.



Brick House Burger plate & stone cooked pizza.



Bullseye!



Rings & Wings.



Axe thrower at Red Brick Pizza.

For more information  
call (843) 835-2690  
or visit  
[www.dothebrick.com](http://www.dothebrick.com).  
Red Brick Pizza &  
Cypress Patio is located at  
**10467 Cottageville  
Highway  
Cottageville, SC.**  
You can also visit  
them on Facebook.



# SUNIL TADAMATLA – EAT STREET MIXED CUISINE

By Jack Wysong

© 2023 Southern Business Digest

After immigrating from India to Columbia, South Carolina (and eventually to Barnwell, South Carolina) Sunil Tadamatla's career took an interesting and unexpected turn. Having worked for Dell Inc. as an IT specialist in corporate America for over a decade, one might expect to remain in that profession for the rest of their career. However, once his wife began working as a schoolteacher in the area, he decided to start his own restaurant that specialized in a unique blend of Mexican, American, and Indian cuisine. Sunil explains that he has never once regretted his decision to open a restaurant because he feels that it is his calling to be able to provide his community with a dining experience that consists of more than just a meal. He says "Everyone is selling food. We are selling experience."

The story of Eat Street began just over two years ago when Sunil accepted the challenge of opening a restaurant during a trying time for many restaurants and businesses, many of whom had to contend with the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic. Although Sunil did have some prior experience with cooking for community functions when he lived in India, it was

through perseverance and a concerted effort from he and his family that has allowed Eat Street to become one of the most prominent restaurants in Barnwell. He admits one of the most important characteristics you must possess if you are to successfully own a restaurant is hard work, saying "I don't know anything in the restaurant industry other than hard work."

Although his restaurant has become a favorite among many of the members of the Barnwell community, he explains that his dream of owning a restaurant has only been made possible because of the mentors that have continuously guided him and the unwavering support that he has received from his community. Despite the many mentors he has received guidance from during his time in the restaurant industry, Sunil feels that the success that he has enjoyed has been made possible through the support of his business partner and former employer, Mahesh Patel.

Mahesh has been a very prominent mentor in Sunil's career and has given him guidance as he knows what it is like to work from entry-level to the top of a business. Mahesh also started working in Barnwell as a hotel manager and has since acquired multiple hotels as the owner. He also served as the Regional Director for the Asian-

American Hotel Owners Association (AHOA), and now serves as the Government Affairs Community Chairman for the AHOA. After working with him for several years, Sunil explains that the most impactful thing that was instilled in him by his former employer was the ability to think beyond himself and create a vision for his business and his community.

For this reason, Eat Street prioritizes customer service as well as the development of its employees even beyond their time working in the restaurant. As a cognizant businessman, he takes the time to seek out quality candidates for employment and actively oversees their personal growth and development. Sunil always pushes his employees to have a greater vision, just as he does, and encourages them to better themselves by striving for higher opportunities or seeking further education. The current staff of Eat Street is comprised of Barnwell residents, which is something that Sunil takes great pride in because of the positive effects hiring locally has on the community.

He does this because he feels that the most influential thing you can do as an employer is "to have a vision and invest in your community by



investing in those that work for you." Sunil has always felt a strong connection with his customers and employees, but when he suffered a traumatic personal injury, his community banded together to support him and his business while he was making a recovery.

The long-term vision of Eat Street does not conclude with the successful operation of one location. In tandem with the Barnwell Chamber of Commerce's Business Propel Lab, Sunil has implemented a plan to branch out by utilizing food trucks. In the future he hopes to continue to expand by operating a small fleet of food trucks that would be able to use the Barnwell restaurant as a base of operations while traveling to neighboring cities. Not only would this enable his restaurant to expand while remaining rooted in the Barnwell community, but it would also create more job opportunities for the residents of Barnwell as well.

In just a few short years Sunil Tadamatla has redirected his career from working in IT to pursue his newfound passion for being a successful restaurateur, and through dedication to his passion he has been able to achieve this goal. He sought out those who could teach him how to efficiently operate a commercial kitchen by working at the Augusta National Clubhouse, he worked his way from being a front desk manager of a hotel to a business partnership with his former employer, and through the support of his community made a full recovery from a career-ending injury.

When asked what he thinks of the Barnwell community, he is more than happy to say, "The people of Barnwell welcomed me with open arms, and I have never once felt like an outsider. And when I think of America, truly it is a land of opportunity because this would not be possible anywhere else."



## FOR MORE INFORMATION

please contact  
**SUNIL TADAMATLA**

by phone at  
**803-621-2017**

or by email at

**wintoninnsuites@gmail.com.**





# UNITED in SERVICE and UNITED in EFFORTS

By Samantha Gerke, Publisher  
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The local VFW and Elks Lodge, Walterboro #1988, are highly regarded for their benevolence and community involvement throughout Colleton County.

The Elks Lodge of Walterboro, SC is an organization in which people may participate in charitable and social activities upon becoming a member. Elks Lodge # 1988 is well known for the food and service that members get to enjoy when gathered at the establishment.

One of the cooking crews that often volunteer their time at the lodge is fondly referred to as the "Back Porch Crew". The crew and volunteer servers are made up of the following Elks Lodge members: Moultrie Plowden, Mark McRoy, Robert Baggett, Paul Pye, Fran Pye, Becky Mellander, Jennifer Tiegs, Frank Eversole, Kenny Rowe, Butch Robbins, Michael Drew and Stewart Goodwin.

Lodge member and VFW adjunct coordinator, Bob Tiegs, and Back Porch Crew member Stewart

Goodwin and Robert Baggett discussed potential community outreach opportunities. The pair collaborated on the various opportunities for volunteers to show their support and appreciation for the sacrifices made by our nation's veterans.

On June 6th, the Back Porch Crew and volunteers spent the afternoon with the residents and staff of the Veterans' Victory House. It was a collaborative effort among the community members to donate food, time, and culinary skills. They were able to provide hamburgers, hot dogs, chips, and drinks. This event is a way for the members of the Elk's Lodge and the VFW to show their appreciation for those who have served our country, and it is a great example of how communities can come together to support veterans.

This partnership demonstrates a shared commitment to supporting and honoring the men and women who have served our country. As a result, veterans and staff members at the Veterans' Victory House were able to enjoy a delicious meal and connect with members in the community.



For more information on how to support the veterans that reside at the Veterans' Victory House, please visit their website at <https://veteransvictoryhouse.com/>, or contact their office at (843) 538-3000.

For more information on how to support the local VFW, contact Bob Tiegs at (843) 549-1097.

For more information on how to become a member of the Elks Lodge and participate in community events like this one, please visit your local Elks Lodge during operating hours.

The Walterboro location, **Elks Lodge #1988**, is located at **236 Milestone Lane, Walterboro, SC 29488**.





# In His Name Ministries

By Jack Wysong

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Having first opened as a soup kitchen in 2013, In His Name - Colleton has been serving the city of Walterboro ever since. As a ministry dedicated to serving the needs of the people in Walterboro, In His Name's mission has since evolved into much more than providing meals to those in need. In His Name - Colleton now sets its sight on a new mission, and that is to address the physical and spiritual needs of the homeless, displaced individuals and families, people suffering from a lack of food, clothing, and shelter, and those who are experiencing unemployment in Colleton and its neighboring areas.

In addition to these services, In His Name also provides the people of Colleton with numerous other services including men's transitional housing, an emergency food and hygiene supply pantry, feminine hygiene kits for schools, job application services and free laundry services. They also offer resources for victims of domestic violence and sexual assault, mental health, drug addiction.

In His Name - Colleton has been working tirelessly to achieve its mission statement of overcoming homelessness in our community. Homelessness has become one of the most pervasive afflictions in our country, and without the services of organizations such as In His Name, those in our community suffering from homelessness would continue to go unserved. In many cases, addressing the problem of homelessness itself is simply inadequate since the most proximate cause of homelessness is poverty. When poverty is coupled with an affordable housing crisis at a national level, many members of our community are left with no options for shelter. This is why

In His Name provides a list of comprehensive services that enable people to get back on their feet and secure an income source that can help them overcome homelessness in perpetuity. With a base of operations located in downtown Walterboro, In His Name - Colleton is poised to continue taking on this challenge in our community with grace and tenacity.

The many services that In His Name provides to our area would be impossible to offer without a lineup of volunteers who are dedicated to the In His Name mission. The volunteer staff at In His Name - Colleton come from all walks of life and give to the community in many ways. For a volunteer, no two days are the same. In 2022 alone, In His Name - Colleton had 91 volunteers that worked a total of 4,734 hours. They were able to serve 497 clients and 3,000 meals, as well as provide 6,514 pounds of food to our community.

One volunteer remarks that some days there may be five clients, and some days there may be as many as 20 clients that come into their office at any given time. Each client has a unique set of needs that must be addressed. In a single visit a client can receive access to a shower, a fresh change of clothes, laundry assistance, and transportation if available. It's important to note that In His Name - Colleton does not provide overnight emergency shelter services, but does refer clients to nearby shelters for lodging.

Although In His Name - Colleton has already done so much for our community, there are even higher aims to spread its mission throughout the City of Walterboro and Colleton County. In His Name currently operates in a 1,600 square foot facility in the downtown area, but to sustain its regular functions and facilitate growth to its full potential,

they are currently looking to eventually expand to a 5,000 square foot facility within the city limits. This would not only allow In His Name to provide services to a larger clientele in the area, but also allow them to broaden the scope of the services that they can provide.

Executive Director Amanda Herndon said in conclusion,

"It is important for our community and supporters of In His Name-Colleton to know that we want to raise awareness of the homelessness in our community. We are looking for support from our community to fulfill this mission. Our goal is to offer a hand up, not a hand out, in a variety of ways by using the resources God has provided to our community. We are not one church affiliated-we seek support from all churches, businesses, organizations, families, and individuals."

If you are interested in volunteering your time, donating items needed or monetarily, or if you are in need of assistance, please stop by our office Monday, Wednesday, or Friday from 9 -12 or email [ihncolleton@gmail.com](mailto:ihncolleton@gmail.com).



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# Upcoming **First Thursday** Invites Young Entrepreneurs to Participate in August

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Inspired by Kennedy Smalls



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 Under the "Young Entrepreneur" Tab

**GREAT OPPORTUNITY TO:**

- Create Products
- Practice Money Skills
- Build Inventory
- Interact with Customers

By Samantha Gerke

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First Thursday is a great local event that takes place in Downtown Walterboro. This event offers local businesses and vendors an opportunity to showcase their products and services. But now, First Thursday is taking things one step further by hosting a unique vendor event that encourages kids to participate.

This innovative event was inspired by Kennedy Smalls, daughter of Evette and Kevin Smalls. She became the youngest vendor to ever par-

ticipate in the event on Main Street, thus inspiring the organizers to encourage kids of Colleton County to take part in future.

This event will provide young entrepreneurs with the chance to be their own merchants and build important skills that will help them in their future endeavors. Kids will be given the opportunity to showcase their business ideas and develop their business skills.

Youth are encouraged to participate and learn the fundamentals of business while also having a blast. By participating in this event, children can gain valuable experience in the

world of commerce and learn important life skills like budgeting, salesmanship, and customer service. They will have the chance to interact with their peers, customers, and the general public, building their confidence and social skills.

Being a young entrepreneur also means having the freedom to create and express oneself. Kids can showcase their unique talents, hobbies, and passions in a way that is meaningful and profitable. The sense of accomplishment that comes from selling a product or service that they have created themselves is invaluable.

Whether your child wants to sell

handmade crafts, jewelry, baked goods, or any other item, they can do so in the month of August.

Mark your calendars to support or participate on August 3rd! For the public, please note that this youth entrepreneur event will be cash only.

Sign your child up to participate online. To do so, visit [www.southernbusinessdigest.net](http://www.southernbusinessdigest.net) and complete the form under the "Young Entrepreneur" tab.

Organizer, Rilee Anne Westbury, will email the listed contacts a week prior to the event for all important information for the First Thursday event to occur on August 3, 2023.



# Jonathan Vickery and the The People-Sentinel

SINCE 1852

By Jack Wysong

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With a love of journalism that stems all the way back to his first high school journalism class, Jonathan Vickery knew that he would one day become a journalist and reporter.

When he returned to Barnwell after graduating from Anderson University in December 2009, Vickery started his career in 2010 as a staff writer for The People-Sentinel and later moved to managing editor in 2014. He had no idea at the time that he would one day become the owner and publisher of the newspaper, but upon eventually stepping into the roles, Vickery saw the opportunity to fulfill his dream of serving his community by providing news media resources to the area. As a Barnwell native, he was more than adequately equipped to take on the challenge of providing a media outlet that is locally

owned, free from corporate restraints, and features the local flavor that is so characteristic of the Barnwell County area.

“Since 1852, this newspaper has informed the community. Though technology and many other things have changed over the years, our commitment to local news has not. We still strive to provide reporting that is factual and unbiased,” said Vickery.

Under his ownership and guidance, The People-Sentinel has blossomed over the past decade. The newspaper had dwindled down to 10 weekly pages and a staff of just three before Vickery purchased the newspaper from Gannett Media in July 2021. Since that time, it has evolved into a publication that has more than doubled in size, with an office that now employs an eight-person staff. Not only has the quality of reporting and the amount of content increased

over the past several years, but the ability to utilize a full team that includes full-time reporters has allowed The People-Sentinel to broaden the scope of its focus to include articles and stories on local government, new developments in the local education system, and information regarding healthcare in the area.

“It is refreshing to see how far we have come, even in just less than two years’ time,” said Vickery of the progress. “By investing in local news, we have seen advertising and subscriptions – both print and digital – grow. We’ve also been able to invest in our community by providing jobs and giving back to local charities and organizations.”

Despite his passion for writing and journalism, Vickery’s main priority has always been to provide a quality product to the people of Barnwell County. He believes this is the most important aspect of running a newspaper. This is why The People-Sentinel has invested in staff, including a full-time reporter in 2022, so the newspaper can grow its coverage to better serve the community.

“Our reporter, Alexandra Whitbeck, has been a positive addition to our team. Though I love writing and reporting, I

*Local News. Local People. Locally Owned.*



could only cover so much myself. While it’s still impossible to cover everything with two people, we have drastically improved our local news coverage, especially investigative and government accountability stories. We are big believers that newspapers should be a watchdog for their communities,” said Vickery.

One of his mottos is: “The mission of a newspaper is to comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable.” This references how newspapers should watch over the actions of public officials while watching out for people who are in need.

However, the goal of covering the entirety of Barnwell County is not the only vision that Vickery has for The People-Sentinel’s future. He hopes to continue to expand the geography that he and his staff can cover by tackling the challenge of covering a second county – Allendale County. Allendale County has not had

its own newspaper for close to a decade, leaving all 8,000 residents uncovered by any sort of media. This absence of a news outlet within the county has created a void for the people of Allendale County that only The People-Sentinel has attempted to fill. For instance, The People-Sentinel was the only news source that covered the story of Allendale County’s oldest resident, who recently celebrated her 106th birthday in March.

“In 2022, we started a regular Allendale County News page to highlight some of their stories. We knew there was a need to do more, but we lacked the resources,” said Vickery.

That’s why he applied to Report for America in the fall of 2022 to seek funding for a reporter to focus on Allendale County. With hundreds of news organizations applying, his application was one of

*(Continued on page 26)*





# LUNCH with MICHAEL M. DEWITT JR.



By Jack Wysong

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As a native and lifelong resident of Hampton County, journalist and author Michael DeWitt Jr. has kept his finger on the pulse of Hampton County for the entirety of his career in news media. His career, which has spanned over several decades, has included a myriad of award-winning works and contributions to publications such as South Carolina Wildlife magazine, Sporting Classics magazine, and Hampton's own local newspaper, The Hampton County Guardian.

In addition to his written works, he has appeared on numerous nationally televised news programs including Dateline NBC and has been featured on several Netflix documentaries about the crimes committed by the Murdaugh family.

The foundation of Michael's passion for writing was laid at a young age, but the inspiration for his writing style was sparked when he and his brother submitted essays to a writing contest held by their middle school. The piece that Michael submitted was a humorous writing that earned him a place-winning finish at the conclusion of the competition. However, despite his love of the craft, he did not pursue his dream until much later in his career.

Michael explains, "Writing was something that I was always passionate about. It was my lifelong dream to become a writer. But I put it

off for a long time, until one day I made the decision to go after it. I worked as a farmer and at the local Piggly Wiggly before I took up writing. At that point in my life, I had a week-old baby and decided to change my career path entirely. I left a good paying job to pursue this new opportunity. There were some hard times, but it really paid off in the long run."

A few years after deciding to make the transition from his previous profession to working as a writer for The Hampton County Guardian, his career began to gain positive traction. He worked his way up to become an editor for the paper and began writing for South Carolina Wildlife magazine. His career would lead him to publish his first book, *Hampton County (Images of America)*, which would become one of his first commercial successes. Aside from his contributions to magazines, much of his writing success came from the humorous articles and columns that were published on a national scale.

He says, "I never wanted to become a true-crime writer. My goal was always to continue writing in the humorous style that I was. I wanted to continue to write for South Carolina Wildlife magazine and Sporting Classics. I wrote things that made people feel good because that's what I had a passion for."

However, as the well-known Murdaugh family began its fall from grace, Mi-



# Rebecca Hill Behind the Doors of Justice

By Jack Wysong

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Dutifully serving the people of Colleton County as the Clerk of Court, Rebecca Hill possesses a wealth of experience and knowledge regarding the courts and judicial system in Colleton. Many people would describe Colleton as a quaint Southern town, but after the illicit activities and murders committed by Alex Murdaugh rapidly rose to national prominence, the regularity and status quo of the legal and justice system began to undergo significant scrutiny.

In her book, *Behind the Doors of Justice*, Rebecca will expose her readers to a firsthand account of what happened from the perspective of someone who was working as part of the court system, sat in a front-row seat of the trial, and effectively worked behind the doors of justice.

Unlike the perspective given from a large news media corporation, she lends her readers the opportunity to view the story through the eyes of someone who was instrumental in the process that administered justice to Alex Murdaugh during his trial.

A native of Walterboro and Colleton County, Becky has had a lifetime of experience from the perspective of both a resident and an elected official working within the judicial system in Colleton. Prior to the Murdaugh tragedy, Becky discovered through investigative research into the justice system that her family had shared history with the Murdaugh family, including co-conspiracy in a moonshining ring that took place in Colleton in the 1950's.

This conspiracy, involving her grandfather and Randolph Murdaugh Jr., that led to the arrest of several of her family members is just one example of the insight that

Becky provides to her readers. Many investigators and news media outlets provide the perspective of an outsider looking in on the events that have taken place over the past two years, but Becky, a lifelong member of the community, provides the perspective of someone who has been on the inside looking out.

After overcoming numerous challenges to compile this account of what happened from inside the courtroom during the murder trial of Alex Murdaugh, she has been able to produce a record based on her personal experiences as the Clerk of Court of Colleton County.

She includes vivid descriptions and details of what took place inside the courtroom during the trial, details about the members of the jury that largely went unseen

by viewers who saw the televised trial, and even aspects about the defendant that were seldom seen by anyone other than those who were physically in the courthouse while the trial was taking place.

Additionally, she grants her readers the ability to experience what she experienced during her visit to the Murdaugh estate, Moselle, and put themselves in her position as she recounts the eerie details of that day. The bustle from the law enforcement officers, the bizarre weather patterns, the heaviness of the air, and just the overall gravity of the scene at the site of the Murdaugh estate are all things Becky explores in her books.

Her book will be released on August 1, and she will be holding a book signing August 3, at First Thursday in Walterboro.

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**Rebecca R. Hill**  
at [rhil@colletoncounty.org](mailto:rhil@colletoncounty.org).

chael was one of the few people who remained steadfast in his mission to tell the true and unadulterated record of the Murdaugh Family history. His unique and candid approach to storytelling is presented through a historical account

that compiles over a century of shared history between the Murdaughs and Hampton County in his books *Wicked Hampton County* and *Fall of the House of Murdaugh*.

Through the course of

these two books, Michael guides his reader and takes them on a journey through the history of Hampton County, and how it came to be the way that it is today. This attempt at

(Continued on page 26)



# Matt Garnes – Town Clerk for the Town of Yemassee



By Jack Wysong  
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Matt Garnes started his career in public service as an EMT in 2013. Since then he has always aimed his career in a direction that would allow him to continue to serve the public.

After he relocated to South Carolina and became a firefighter in Bluffton, Matt quickly found himself “at home” when he began working for the Town of Yemassee in 2017. Originally answering the call to step up from working as an administrator for the town to serving as interim town clerk, he found he was more than capable of accepting the roles and responsibilities of serving as the Town Clerk of Yemassee on a full-time basis.

His experience working as an administrator for towns and municipalities began in Bluffton when he served as a social media coordinator and liaison, where he was able to successfully launch the social media pages for the Bluffton Police Department and the Bluffton Fire Department as well. While working for the Town of Yemassee, he has achieved the successful implementation of online permitting systems, emergency response phone calls and text messages for natural disaster preparedness, several online pay-

ment portals, and numerous other administrative amenities that have drastically modernized the functionality of the town.

Under his tenure as the clerk, the Town of Yemassee has been able to undergo numerous dramatic changes that have positively impacted the state of the town. The geographic location of Yemassee sits at the intersection of three different counties, which has historically made planning and zoning difficult for the town to manage. However, over the past five years he has overseen and secured the annexation of thousands of acres of land for the town of Yemassee. Many of these sites were previously used as plantations and historical land that can now be incorporated into the township of Yemassee.

In addition to his work on finalizing annexations for the town, he has been the main administrator in charge of procuring grant funding for the town’s projects. One of the more prominent of these projects is the Yemassee Demolition Project. This project centers around the demolition of buildings throughout the town that have become condemned, dilapidated, or are in a state of blight. Doing so allows owners to repurpose the

sites as clean land without being encumbered by the cost of demolition and cleanup of the buildings. The town has focused on thirteen buildings that were identified as needing to be demolished, and has completed work on ten of them.

On the surface it may appear that Matt functions as just the Town Clerk. However, he also dutifully fulfills the responsibilities of being the planning and zoning administrator for the Town of Yemassee, while also sitting as a representative on the Beaufort and Jasper Housing Trust, a program that will ensure the development and construction of affordable housing communities in each of the municipalities that are a part of it.

Matt’s work to further develop and better the Town of Yemassee does not end here, as he has also helped oversee the organization of a capital projects program that will ensure new business, buildings, and public amenities are provided to the people of Yemassee. This capital projects program will also provide the funds for construction of a sidewalk extension in Beaufort. This will help keep its residents safe by clearing the roadways of pedestrians, but will also, as Matt puts it, “serve as a welcoming gateway for the town of Yemassee.”

**For more information**  
please contact  
**Matt Garnes**  
at **843-589-2565 Ext. 3**  
or visit the  
Town of Yemassee  
website at  
**www.townofyemassee.org.**



## PROVIDES FREE TOOLS AND RESOURCES TO HELP YOU EXPAND YOUR NETWORK

As a business owner, you understand how important it is to get your name out into the market.

You have an effective website, post regularly to your social media accounts, joined local chambers of commerce and attend various networking functions, as your time allows. All are very important tools to your business. Networking and running a business can be a balancing act.

Wouldn’t it be nice to have the ability to network and gather information based on your availability? Better yet, what if it is free and confidential. Let me introduce you to SCORE.

SCORE, the nation’s largest network of volunteer, expert business mentors, is dedicated to helping small businesses plan, launch, manage and grow. SCORE is a nonprofit organization, and resource partner of the SBA that has over 220 chapters nationwide and 10,000 volunteers.

SCORE provides free and confidential business mentoring and workshops to business owners at all stages of their life. SCORE SC Lowcountry is the local chapter which covers Beaufort, Jasper, Hampton and Colleton County in South Carolina and has over 50 volunteers. Volunteers come from all industries and backgrounds including marketing, finance, accounting, engineering, human resources and others. What tools and resources does SCORE provide to help you network?

Having a SCORE business mentor provides you access to our network of 10,000 volunteers. The SCORE network becomes your network to

provide you the answers you need. Locally the SCORE chapter provides introductions to other clients & professionals that can help your business. This article shows one example of networking benefits SCORE provides. The website, SCORE.org has a suite of business tools, workshops and information at your fingertips. SCORE

SC Lowcountry provides online workshops on various business topics – QuickBooks, Social Media, Intellectual Property, Nonprofits, Starting a Business and others and in many cases, access to the expert presenter to get answers to your specific questions.

A SCORE mentor provides not only access to multiple networking options but having a mentor who is impartial and keeps you moving forward is invaluable. A recent survey by UPS found that 70 percent of small businesses that received mentoring survived more than five years – double the survival rate of non-mentored businesses. The same survey found that 88 percent of business owners with a mentor said that having one was invaluable.

To find a mentor is as simple as going to our website, <https://www.score.org/find-mentor>, and input your zip code, provide your contact information and questions. One of our many talented mentors will reach out to you and start connecting you to the right people.







# The Colleton County School District Announces 2023-2024 Employees of the Year

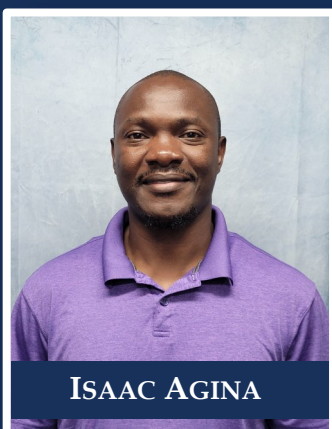
The District would like to extend a heartfelt congratulations to our 2023-2024 Teachers of the Year, Rookie Teachers of the Year, and Support Employees of the Year.

We thank you for your endless dedication to the students, parents, and staff of this great organization!

Your tireless efforts, exceptional skills, and unwavering commitment have not only made you an invaluable member of our team, but also a role model for the students of Colleton County Schools.

All recipients were announced at the regular board meeting on March 21, 2023. The top three (3) candidates for District Teacher of the Year were announced at the regular board meeting in May. A formal banquet will be held in July to officially recognize and award all of our recipients. During this banquet, the district will announce the 2023-2024 Support Employee of the Year and the 2023-2024 District Teacher of the Year.

## District Teacher of the Year Candidates



### TEACHERS OF THE YEAR

**Isaac Agina\***

Colleton County High School

Amy Cook

Bells Elementary School

Chasity Frazier

Hendersonville Elementary School

**Heather Frye\***

Cottageville Elementary School

Julie Hiott

Black Street Early Childhood Center

Robin Lutton

Thunderbolt Career and Technology Center

Kevin Wiggins

Colleton County Middle School

Katrina Withers

Northside Elementary School

**Kimberly Wood\***

Forest Hills Elementary School

*\*Top three Teacher of the Year Candidates*

### ROOKIE TEACHERS OF THE YEAR

Katherine Barnette

Colleton County Middle School

Megan Gowins

Black Street Early Childhood Center

Erica Grant

Forest Hills Elementary School

Brian Wilson

Thunderbolt Career and Technology Center

### SUPPORT STAFF OF THE YEAR

Rosalyn Buckner

Bus Monitor, Transportation

LaQuinta Campbell

Cottageville Elementary School

Angela Crosby

Northside Elementary School

Elizabeth Glaze

Hendersonville Elementary School

Carlos Hamlin

IT, District Office

Ricky Haynes

Colleton County Middle School

Denise Johnson

Thunderbolt Career and Technology Center

Michael Justice

Bus Driver, Transportation

Deborah Lawton

Colleton County High School

Jean Nettles

Human Resources, District Office

Nathan Simpson

Forest Hills Elementary School

Mallarie Smalls

Bells Elementary School

Laurie Smith

Black Street Early Childhood Center

Emily Williams

Office of Student Services, District Office



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(Continued from page 23)

rationalizing the present with evidence from the past is an approach that no other journalist or author has attempted to take in covering the story of the Murdaugh family. This is not because no one else can tell the story of Hampton County, but no one can tell it quite as well as the people of Hampton can.

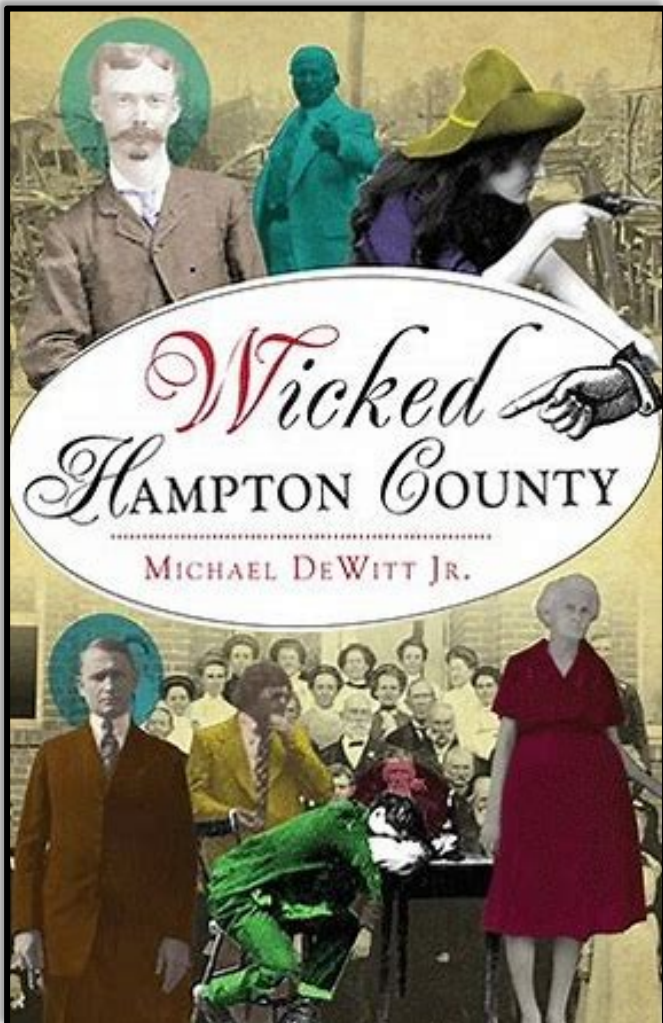
The reason for this approach in covering the story is due to Michael's unique writing style, in which he opts to show and tell a story rather than just display facts. He stands by his assertion that, "Naturally I am not an investigative reporter because I don't really have the inquisitive mindset for investigative journalism. But I have always been a natural storyteller, and I think that's the best way to tell the story and get the audience to fully understand what happened."

Many believe that the story of Hampton County is adequately represented by the series of criminal activities committed by the Murdaughs and choose to view the area through the distorted lens of investigative media. Michael, however, tenders the story of Hampton by focusing on

the entire history of the area, rather than a single chain of events.

Michael also provides the exact historical context for the events he describes in his books from primary sources that only someone like himself would be able to draw from. One such example was the train accident that resulted in the death of Randolph Murdaugh Sr. that was originally reported on by The Hampton County Guardian in 1940. Using the original article from 1940 as a reference, he produced a new article that he titled "Trouble with Trains" which became a part of a series of articles of his that were featured as historical flashbacks.

"I always try to tell the whole story, including the good and the bad, especially when it comes to the Murdaughs. Mainly because that's the only way you can really get to the truth. That's also why I decided to cover this case, because too many outside sources who had never even been to Hampton County were attempting to tell the story from the perspective of a local, and I wanted to make sure that our story was being told the right way because no one can tell it like us," Michael concludes.



**Michael will be co-hosting  
The Wicked South Podcast  
with Matt Harris and Seton Tucker.**

**He will also be holding a book signing on  
August 3<sup>rd</sup> during First Thursday in Walterboro.**

**For more information please visit  
[www.hamptoncountygardian.com](http://www.hamptoncountygardian.com)  
or call (803)943-4645.**

(The People Sentinel Continued from page 22)

around 60 to be chosen in 2023 by the national service organization that aims to place journalists in underserved areas.

"We are grateful to Report for America for selecting us to receive a rural communities beat reporter. We have hired Elijah de Castro, a recent college graduate, to join our team in July. He will primarily focus on Allendale County so we can grow coverage there. We hope to launch a standalone paper just for Allendale County in the future," Vickery said.

By setting its sights on Allendale County, the newspaper will be fulfilling its mission of serving the underserved by covering previously uncovered areas. Vickery feels this aspect of reporting is just as important because, as he likes to say, "When areas are not represented in the news,

democracy dies in the dark."

Without the continued and tireless efforts of Vickery and his staff at The People-Sentinel, many of the stories that make Barnwell and Allendale counties unique would simply go untold – and that is why he and his team work diligently to be the sentinel of the people in these two areas.

"It takes a team to publish a newspaper, including finance, reporting, advertising, customer service, graphic design, and delivery. On behalf of our dedicated team, we thank the community for supporting us as we strive to better serve them. The newspaper business requires long hours, as the news never sleeps, but we are committed to telling the stories of Barnwell and Allendale counties so we can keep everyone informed. We hope our reporting not only informs, but also brings about positive change in the community," Vickery said.

For more information on  
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or (803) 259-3501.  
Also, visit their website at  
[www.thepeoplesentinel.com](http://www.thepeoplesentinel.com) or  
like them on Facebook at  
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# Meet Jessica Williams

## Colleton County School District Interim Superintendent

By Samantha Gerke

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Jessica Williams is a product of the Colleton County School District, having grown up in the area and attended schools within the district. She has had a lifelong passion for education, inspired by her mother, Redell Fields. Having spent nearly four decades committed to education, Fields instilled in Williams the importance of education and family values.

Jessica fondly recalled the impact her mother had on her throughout her life by sharing memories of her mother working with children, engaging in thoughtful conversations, and impressing the importance of education on the community.

It was through observing and participating in these endeavors that she found that she wanted to have a similar impact on society. Williams explained, "I wanted to be a part of something greater, and I knew a career in education would allow me to be compassionate while instilling core values in children."

Williams' passion for education led her to attend Winthrop University and earn a bachelor's degree in music education. After graduation, she returned home to Colleton County and began her professional career as a music teacher.

Williams taught music in the Colleton County School District for an impressive 19 years. In addition to her teaching duties, she shared her musical passions as a church musician. The educator and musician is deeply rooted in the local community.

After nearly two decades of teaching, Williams felt an overwhelming desire to have a broader reach and touch more people, which led her to further her education at the Citadel and earn her master's degree in educational leadership.

Williams has since worked in a variety of roles within the district. She served as an assistant principal at Northside Elementary for 3 years, and then as Principal of Hendersonville Elementary for 6 years. In addition to her principalship roles, she has served as Director of Elementary Education, Director of Curriculum and Instruction, and Assistant Su-

perintendent of Curriculum and Instruction.

She hopes to continue to broaden her impact beyond just students, and also include parents, teachers, and the community as a whole. Her previous roles have given her a unique perspective on leadership, teamwork, and problem-solving.

Williams' commitment to continuing education is also evident in her pursuit of a doctorate degree, Ed.D in educational leadership, from Walden University. Her dedication to professional growth and development will serve her well in her new role as interim superintendent. She credits her husband, Tony Williams, her three children, and four grandchildren for the support and inspiration to fulfill her aspirations in education and life.

Overall, Williams' personal, education, and professional experience have given her the tools and skills she needs to perform her duties as the interim superintendent at Colleton County School District. She is committed to using her experience to make a positive impact on the district and its students.

Williams aims to work with community members, educational organizations, and stakeholders to provide resources to teachers, parents, and students. It is her objective to help instill a strong work ethic in every student. She believes that these values are the key to unlocking the doorway to a successful future as solid citizens.

By promoting these values, Williams aims to equip Colleton County School District with the tools and opportunities for students to build the skills and mindset to succeed in any field they choose.

"The community and rural life is very vibrant and rich in Colleton County," she said. "Its students and families are deserving of a strong educational foundation and more exposure to the opportunities that education has the ability to afford them."

Furthermore, Williams wants to provide Colleton County students with exposure to more than what the rural area may have to offer. She recognizes that access to technology and extracurricular programs can play a critical

role in a student's growth and development. As a result, she plans to work with the faculty and staff to identify opportunities for students to explore these areas and build their skills and confidence.

Jessica Williams left us with this final message: "Let's take this opportunity to unify our community and work towards a common goal of providing our students with the best possible education. By coming together and working together, we can make a difference and create positive change for generations to come. It is all about the kids. So let's roll up our sleeves and get to work - the time is now."



Greetings, Colleton County Community:

I am truly humbled and grateful for the opportunity to serve my community as Interim Superintendent of the Colleton County School District. This is an assignment of service of which I take very seriously and will proceed into with integrity.

As we move forward, we must unify ourselves for one purpose: to provide the best education and stability for our children. When the people of this community come together, the benefits are tremendous. Not only for our children, but for Colleton County.

Children are precious jewels and it is our responsibility to provide them with the tools to build their success. Working together, we can make this a continuous reality!

The mission of the Colleton County School District is to prepare every student to graduate with a twenty-first century education to be globally competitive for their chosen college and/or career path.

As the interim superintendent, my top priority for this community is to put the children first. As committed professionals and citizens of our great county, we can cement this by ensuring that we do the following:

1. Listen and build strong relationships of trust and respect between all stakeholders: school board of trustees, staff, students, parents, and community members
2. Promote channels for collaborative communication for all stakeholders
3. Ensure a smooth opening of the 2023-2024 school year
4. Recruit and retain highly qualified teachers

Implement and maintain robust instructional programs for all of our students

As we work together to bring these priorities to fruition, we will move forward in a fiscally responsible manner and manage our resources with care.

The time is now! How can you act?

- ◇ Consider investing your time, energy, and resources in our future leaders
- ◇ Consider volunteering in our schools
- ◇ Consider mentoring a student in need
- ◇ Consider doing something nice for a teacher or staff member
- ◇ Consider being a Reading Buddy or Math Mentor

Learn about the awesome things that are going on in our school district and become a part of the movement to make our school community the best that it can be. Colleton County residents and children deserve our commitment. As Christine Gregoire once said, "Education is the foundation in which we build a strong future." Let's come together and provide the building blocks for our children.

The time is now, and it starts with us.

Yours in Education,

*Jessica Williams*

Interim Superintendent

Assistant Superintendent, Office of Curriculum and Instruction



# TEACHING SKILLS THAT SAVE LIVES



## FUN FINS SWIM PROGRAM

A large percentage of children drown within 6-10 feet of safety. Most of these drownings happen, because of a lack of basic water safety knowledge and skills. If children possess even the most basic swimming skills, their risks of drownings decrease substantially. Learning the basic skills, in our lessons plans, builds a sense of accomplishments in children and helps prevent drowning. This program is designed for children who have had little to no swimming experience.



REGISTER:

[www.summervilleyymca.org](http://www.summervilleyymca.org)  
or by scanning the QR code above

- SUMMERVILLE FAMILY YMCA
- DORCHESTER COUNTY PARKS & RECREATION
- COLLETON COUNTY PARKS & RECREATION
- SUMMERVILLE MEDICAL CENTER
- COLLETON MEDICAL CENTER
- COLLETON COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT
- DORCHESTER SCHOOL DISTRICT 4



### COLLETON COUNTY

WHEN: July 10 – 21

TIME: 5, 30-minute sessions are available at 9:00am, 9:35am, 10:10am, 10:45am, 11:20am, 11:55am

FEE: \$5 per child

LOCATION: 280 Recreation Lane, Walterboro, SC 29488

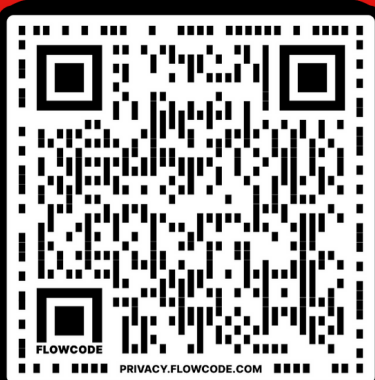
### DORCHESTER COUNTY

WHEN: July 31 – August 11

TIME: 5, 30-minute sessions are available at 9:00am, 9:35am, 10:10am, 10:45am, 11:20am, 11:55am

FEE: \$5 per child

LOCATION: 60 Minus Street, St. George, SC 29477



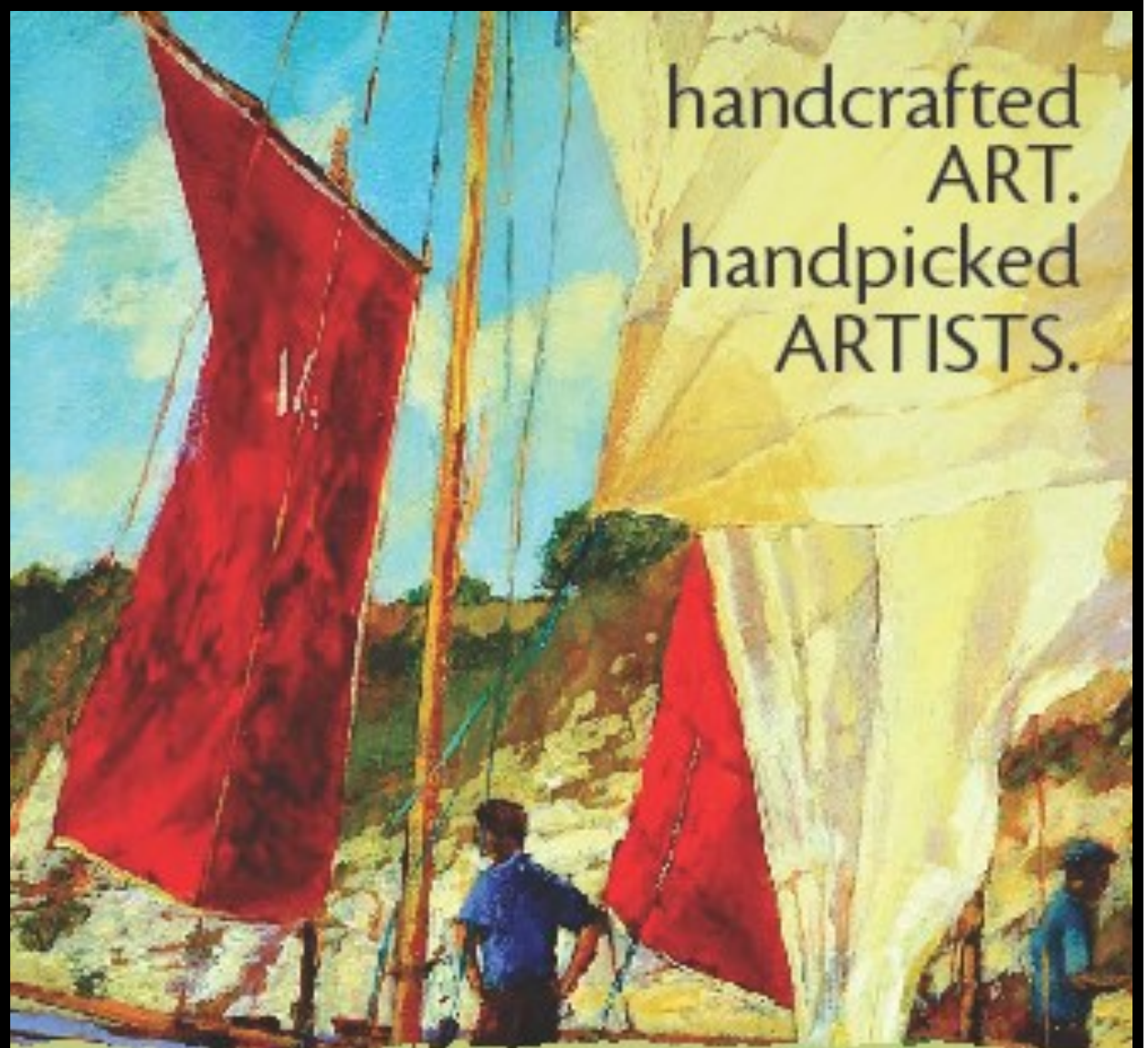
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