

Vol. 1 2025

lakelife

Lake Gaston



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returns under
new leadership

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sends quilts to
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MARK MATHEWS

The Kennon House Restaurant in Valentines, Virginia

The iconic **Kennon House** returns under new leadership

By Mark Mathews

The nearly four-month wait ended on Jan. 3 when the iconic 7001 Gasburg Road, Valentines, Virginia, Kennon House Restaurant opened for business under the direction of Kerry Huff and Pete Richardson.

The process began in October when Richardson received a phone call from a partner in the previous Kennon House ownership group to see if he was interested in taking on a new endeavor to complement his success-

ful Lake Gaston Pizza and More Restaurant in Littleton.

Richardson and Huff weighed the pros and cons of running the Kennon House, and the scales tilted to the let's do it option. Huff and Richardson assembled a staff for the Kennon House before October ended.

"Once we got our team together we started the process within days," Huff said. "When we first met with the owner, he was surprised we had a crew with us when we walked in the door. We said this is our cook. This is our wait staff. This is our bartender and so on

and so on. We made it work from there.”

In mid-January, Huff and Richardson added another piece to the Kennon House puzzle by bringing Leroy Cooper board as the head cook. Chef Coop is a Lake Gaston area mainstay. The Warren County native worked at The Pointe for more than 11 years before changing careers and traveling between Mississippi and Arkansas to build sawmills.

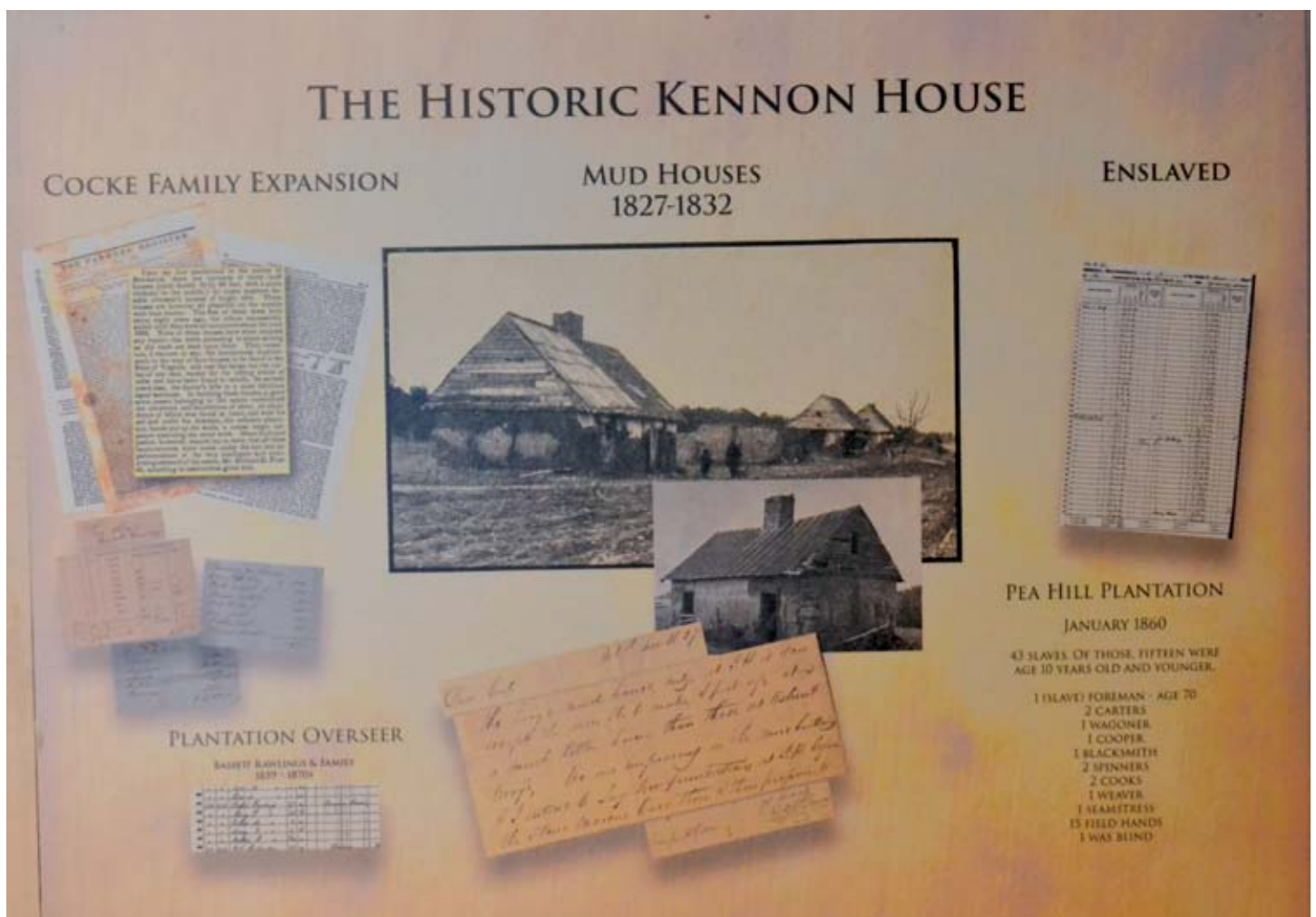
In December, Cooper returned to his Warren County home for Christmas break. His long-time friends Kerry Huff and Pete Richardson were working on their new venture of reopening the Kennon House Restaurant. Huff approached Cooper and asked if he would consider returning to the restaurant scene as a chef at the Kennon House.

“Being on the road all the time is tough,” Cooper said. “Who doesn’t want to be home? I saw it as a great opportunity to get back in the cooking field, and Kerry and me are like family. I’ve know Kerry



MARK MATHEWS

Pete Richardson, left, and Kerry Huff are partners in the Kennon House Restaurant.



MARK MATHEWS

The Kennon House Restaurant Museum reveals a rich history at the site.



MARK MATHEWS

The buffet line fills quickly on a Sunday morning at the Kennon House Restaurant.

a long time, and Pete was a good customer and a good friend, so I thought — what a combination. I'm really excited about the opportunity, and I can promise that I will give it 100% like I do in everything I do."

Huff and Richardson sought to open the Kennon House right after Thanksgiving. However, the inspection and permit process temporarily delayed the original plan.

The Kennon House is a historic building built in 1792 on land granted to William Browne approximately 70 years earlier by the King of England. Mrs. Phillip Cocke deeded the Pea Hill Plantation to Richard Byrd Kennon in the late 1870s. The Kennon family heirs lived at the site until the last one, Loulie Kennon, died in 1965. The restaurant houses a museum highlighting the historic nature of the building.





The Kennon House is a restaurant with its own rich history. The establishment is renowned for its fried chicken and southern-style cooking, which has made the site a favorite of citizens throughout the region. Huff hopes to return the Kennon House Restaurant tradition to its past. The past includes the famous Sunday 11 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. buffet.

"I was born and raised here on Lake Gaston," Huff said. "I've been going to the Kennon House since the 1970s, and its existence is a lot longer than that. As a young man growing up on Lake Gaston, it was nice to go to the Kennon House and be with your family. That's what we want it to be. That's our goal for the Kennon House."

Richardson and Huff are on the same page with their Kennon House goals.

"With this venture with Kerry, I think we are bringing a historical landmark back to life," Richardson said. "The goal for Kerry and I both is to be a member of the community, supporting the community, and bringing back the Kennon House to what it was when we were younger as kids going there."

Huff runs Kennon House's day-to-day operations. His service as general manager at Lake Gaston Pizza and More was vital to the restaurant's success. Huff said the Lake Gaston Pizza and More team is experienced and would continue running without a hitch as he switched gears to



MARK MATHEWS

The Kennon House dessert table is a popular feature at the restaurant.

devote more of his time to the Kennon House.

On Thursday, Jan. 2, Huff worked double-duty, starting the day at Lake Gaston Pizza and More to ensure all the deliveries and orders came through to the establishment. When his work was done

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at the Littleton restaurant, Huff drove northeast to Valentines to get ready for a scheduled soft opening with customers later that evening.

Richardson lost a valuable asset in Huff at Lake Gaston Pizza and More. However, Huff gives him a business partner who is completely confident in their new joint venture.

"It gives Kerry, a young entrepreneur an opportunity that he more than well deserves," Richardson said. "He's worked extremely hard for it, and I look forward to see him blossoming out on his own with me as a mentor trying to lead him in the right direction. He is more than qualified for the job."

Blossoming indeed. The first Sunday buffet under Huff's management on Jan. 5 had the staff scrambling to keep up with the demand. That they did until the food ran out. The raves on Facebook came pouring in.

"The atmosphere, the service, the food - it was all excellent and I can promise that we'll be back

- soon and often," Tracy Clary wrote. "It is so good to see the Kennon House back to what it should be, a really good family eatery with great food and impeccable service."

"My Bride and had supper there tonight and everything was perfect," Al Hartley wrote. "I absolutely loved the fried chicken. That is my barometer of how well things are doing in the kitchen. The green beans were as good as any I have had. We have been eating at the Kennon house for almost 40 years. Anne has been eating there much longer. We are both so happy that Pete and Kerry have taken over the restaurant and I know that everything will only get better. We all have seen how they made Lake Gaston Pizza so much better. Now we will get to see what they do with the Kennon House."

The Kennon House is open from 3 p.m. to 9 p.m. Monday through Thursday, Friday through Saturday, and 11 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Sunday for the famous Kennon House Sunday buffet.



MARK MATHEWS

Patrons gather for Sunday Brunch.



MARK MATHEWS

Sherry Newton, owner of Sherry's Sew What? in Henrico shows a quilt that is headed to Western North Carolina as a part of the Sew Blessed group's effort to assist people impacted by the devastating effects of Hurricane Helene.

Sew Blessed

group sends quilts to Western NC

By Mark Mathews

Sew blessed, a group of 18 quilters, brought a little warmth to citizens of Western North Carolina that were suffering from Hurricane Helene's devastation on Sept. 27. The Sew Blessed members meet every Thursday at Sherry's So What? in Henrico. Store owner Sherry Newton was the brains behind the idea of sending quilts to the region.

"I knew it was going to get cold up there and I knew people needed something to stay warm," Newton said. "They are getting a lot of clothes, blankets, and things like that. We thought a quilt would be a little more lasting and was something they could keep for a long time."

Many people impacted by Helene's devastating effects were still living in tents and campers as temperatures dropped in the Western North Carolina region. The Sew Blessed quilts brought some warmth to the Western North Carolina region.

Sew Blessed sent 68 quilts in its first two deliveries to the region. Gussie Graham, a Sew Blessed member, delivered the first batch of quilts. Parishioners of a Crewe, Virginia Baptist Church delivered the second pile of quilts. Roanoke Rapids businessman Tracy Story delivered a third load of Sew Blessed quilts and toys to the area.

Newton donated the fabric to the Sew Blessed group to make the quilt tops. She quilted and banded them before they were shipped. She said many of the quilts in the first shipment to Western North Carolina were donated by customers.

"Many customers were pulling quilts out of their closets and donating," Newton said. "We call them Gifted Quilts. It's been a really good thing here. People have been very generous and very gracious."

Sew Blessed isn't new to sending quilts to people in need. American Legion Post 308 Auxiliary member Carleen Kohl spearheads an effort to send quilts to the Veterans Administration in Durham. Kohl said Sew

Blessed has sent over 300 quilts to the site through the years.

"This is a very generous, giving group," Kohl said.

In December, the very generous, giving group's impact was felt in Western North Carolina.



MARK MATHEWS

Pictured clockwise from left working on a quilt to be sent to Western North Carolina as a part of the Sew Blessed group initiative for Hurricane Helene relief are Sew Blessed members Jeanne Harris, Donna Jeter, Dawn Dickens.



MARK MATHEWS

Visitors gather for a photo at Pesron's Ordinary.



MARK MATHEWS

Pictured from left at Person's Ordinary are Sylvia Alston, Betty Freuler, Sandy Milner, Don Milner.

Littleton Womans Club prepares for 2025

By Mark Mathews

The Littleton Womans' Club ended 2024 with their monthly meeting at the historic Person's Ordinary building in Littleton, the pre-Revolutionary War structure the group is charged with ensuring its restoration and preservation. The building is believed to be the

last standing pre-revolutionary stagecoach/tavern stop on the East Coast of the U.S. The group also started planning for 2025.

"We've grown from five members to 20 and we are looking for more members who would like to join the fun," Daniels said. "Our main goal hasn't changed. It's still the restoration of Person's Ordinary,

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but we are still very involved in the community.”

The organization is known for its Fall Harvest Luncheon, participation in the Christmas Parade and July 4 Parade, and decorating the Christmas tree for the Littleton Library’s Festival of Trees.

The club had the building’s chimney replaced, and deteriorated wood was removed and replaced right before Thanksgiving. Workers painted the inside of the building in the spring. Daniels said painting the exterior of the building is the next task on the list. The group is also seeking a storage house for club property.

The Littleton Womans’ Club opens Person’s Ordinary four times a year. Daniels would like to see that number increase.

“Our goal is to open Person’s Ordinary once a month if we can get enough members to be here,” Daniels said. “For the community, it would be nice to open from 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. one Sunday a month. We do open for a special request. If somebody wants to come in one of the members will come in and give them a tour.”

The Littleton Womans’ Club participated in the Belk Fall Charity Sale from Nov. 8-11. The bi-annual Belk event was created in 2006 to support 501c3 nonprofit entities.

Littleton Womans' Club members sold \$5 Belk Charity Sale tickets. The ticket price was deducted from the sale of customer's first purchase during the sale.

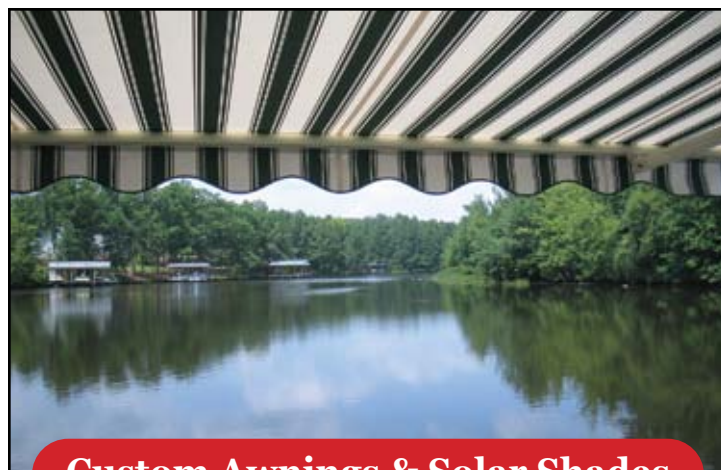
Daniels said the club would continue to participate in the Belk Charity Sales. The 2025 Littleton Womans' Club fundraising plan is evolving, and if the organization adds enough new members, those plans could expand.

"People say it sounds like a lot of work, but we all get along really well together and we enjoy it," Daniels said.



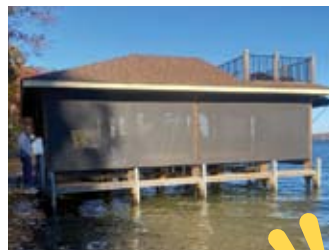
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Littleton Womans' Club President Jo Anne Daniels, left, and Jennifer Allman enjoy a moment before the club meeting.



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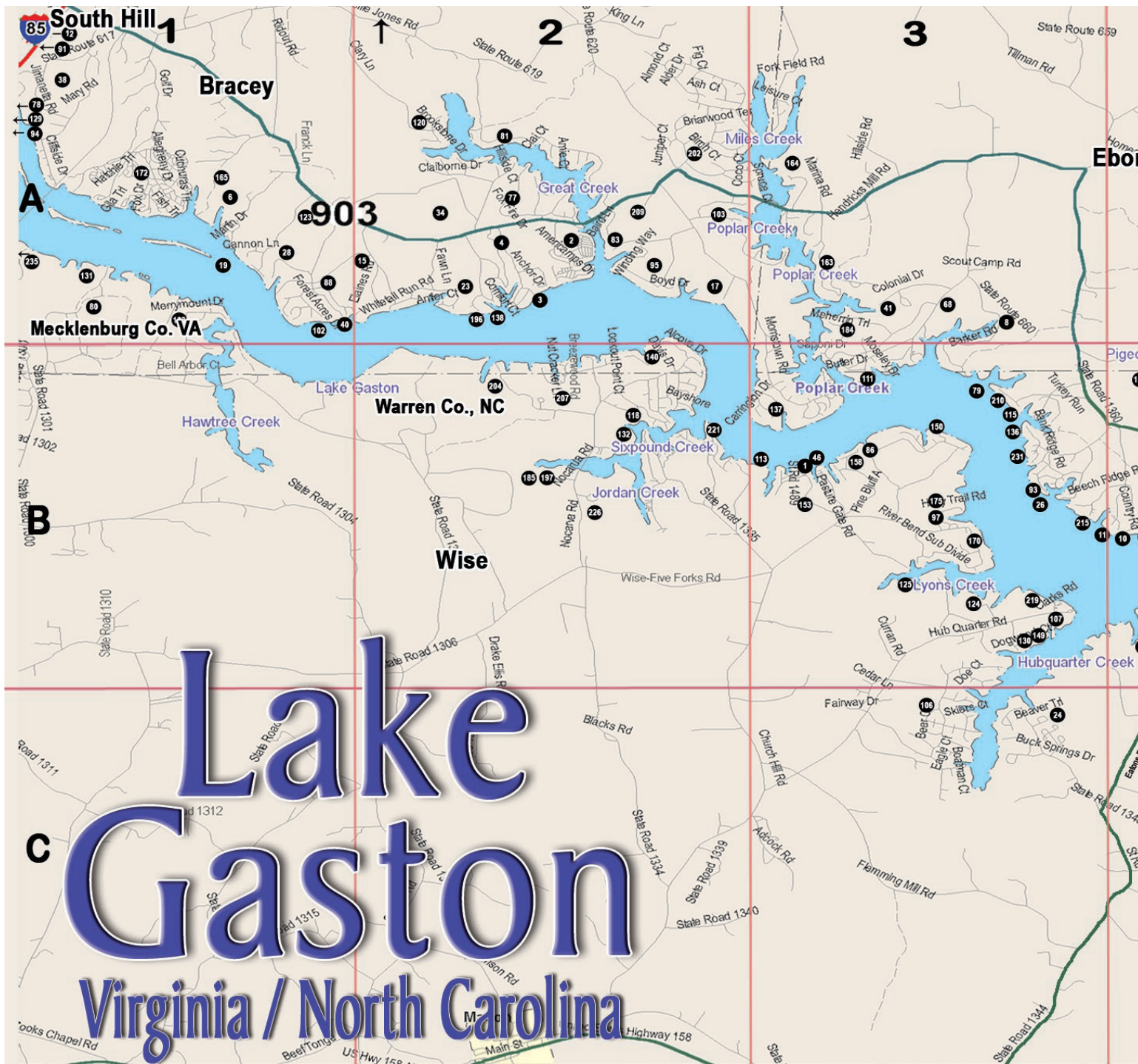
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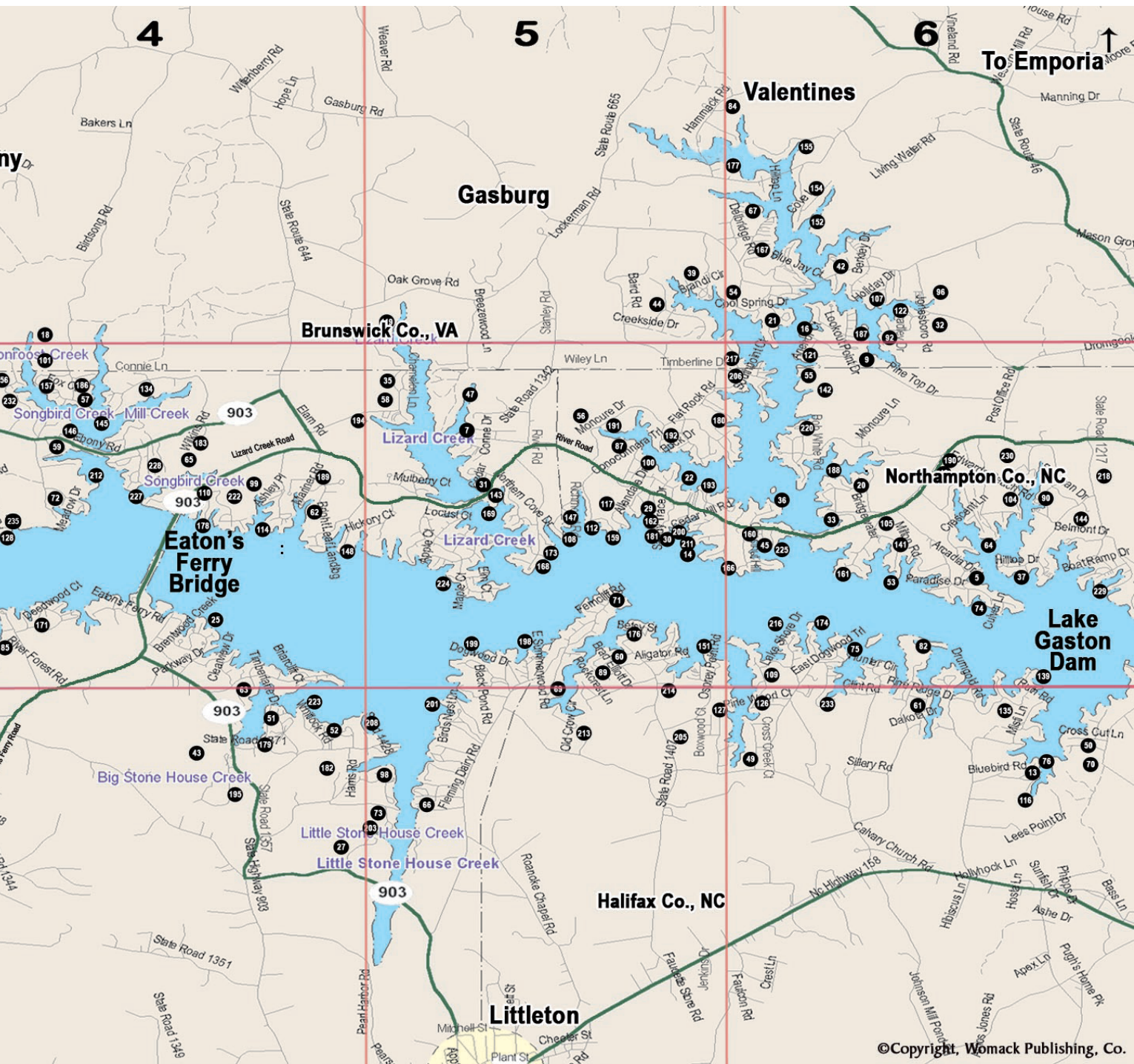
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B-3 Alma Lynch.....1	C-3 Buck Springs.....24	B-3 Coventry.....46	A-3 Eugene Clary.....68	B-6 Heritage Pointe.....90	B-5 Lakeview Estates (old).....111
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THE CROSSING at Lake Gaston

Lake Gaston Regional Chamber of Commerce announces 2025 event schedule

By MARK MATHEWS

The Lake Gaston Regional Chamber of Commerce began 2025 by recognizing the best of 2024 at its Membership Appreciation event on March 13 at Tanglewood Shores Gold & Country Club in Bracey. Business of the Year, Wildwood Nursery & Garden Center, New Business of the Year, Lakeside Dog Boarding, Young Entrepreneur of the Year, Cody Umphlett - Discount De-

tailing, LLC, Community Champion of the Year, C.A.R.E./The John 3:16 Center, and Volunteer of the Year, Lynn Graves, were winners will be recognized at the gathering.

May 3, Bridge & Back for Q.W.A.C.:

The 4th annual Bridge & Back for Q.W.A.C. returns at 8 a.m. on Saturday, May 3, at the Lake Gaston Regional Chamber of Commerce.



BRIDGE & BACK FOR Q.W.A.C.

Q.W.A.C. is the acronym for Quality Water Awareness Campaign. Participants will run, walk, or crawl in a 6.5K from the starting point in the Chamber parking lot to AF Wake and return to where they started the journey.

Aug. 9, The Crossing at Lake Gaston:

The 20th Annual The Crossing at Lake Gaston draws an onslaught of people to Lake Gaston to participate in a one-mile swim or navigate the course in non-motorized watercraft alongside Eatons Ferry Bridge from the grounds of The Pointe to the shoreline of WatersView and The Pointe Realty. Many others walk across the bridge to cheer for those in the water.

The Crossing is a fundraiser for the Chamber and Lake Gaston Foundation. Event proceeds benefit nonprofits and civic groups in the Lake Gaston region.

Oct. 3, Chamber Golf Tournament:

The 22nd Annual Lake Gaston Regional Chamber of Commerce Golf Tournament is headed to Weldon this year for a day of golf at Chockoyotte Country Club. The Captain's Choice format remains in place, with prizes

awarded for top individual feats and winning squads crowned.

Nov. 29, Lake Gaston Holiday Flotilla:

The Lake Gaston Holiday Flotilla had a strong turnout this past year, with more boat captains entering their vessels during the boat parade than had in recent years. Participants decorate their boats in Christmas fash-



LAKE GASTON HOLIDAY FLOTILLA

ion and run a similar route as participants of The Crossing.

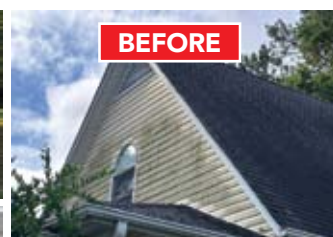
Dec. 4, Lake Gaston Chamber Community Caroling Event:

The first Lake Gaston Chamber Community Caroling Event, held in December 2024, brought people together at the Chamber to share snacks and drink hot cider and hot chocolate. Event patrons then sang Christmas carols around a fire pit surrounded by Christmas lights.

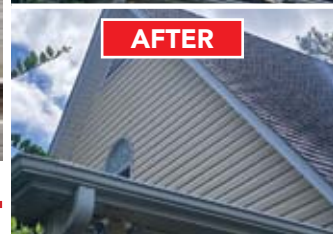
Go online at www.lakegastonchamber.com to learn about the Lake Gaston Regional Chamber of Commerce.



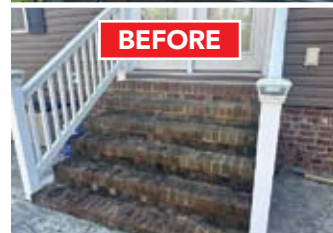
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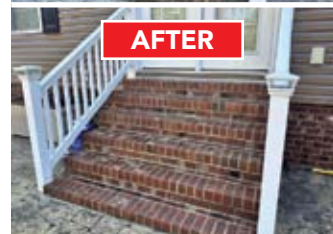
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The Boat Lift Store celebrates 40 years

Doozie Boat Lifts found on waterways throughout the U.S. and beyond

BY MARK MATHEWS

Doozie Boat Lifts are prevalent today on Lake Gaston. For many Lake Gaston residents, it's hard to imagine a time when boathouses with watercraft raised on boat lifts were nonexistent. However, that's how

it was on Lake Gaston in the 1970s. Fields' first business on the lake was not related to boat lifts. He heeded his father's advice and started a dock-building business on Lake Gaston in the 1970s when he got out of college. Boat houses weren't popular on the lake at the time, but as time went on, boat houses slowly started popping up around the lake. Fields opened his Boat Lift Store in Littleton on Oct. 2, 1984, and trademarked the Doozie Boat Lift brand two years later. Today, the Doozie Boat Lifts brand is easily spotted throughout the U.S. and beyond. "We've been very blessed,"

Fields said. "We have dock builders all around the country that buy boat lifts from us."

Fields learned how to weld and added a boat lift service to his dock-building business. In the early 1980s, the boat lift sales increased dramatically.

"We started buying parts to put a boat lift in and pick the boat up,"

Fields said. "Bill would sit there and watch Harry put his boat in the water and pick it back up and stay until dark before going home on Sunday night. Bill couldn't do that because he had to take his boat to the boat landing, take it out and park it in the woods, so he decided he wanted a lift like that too, and the next thing you know, over time, pretty much everybody builds boat houses with covered slips and lifts in them."

The boat lift sales





went well enough for Fields to sell his dock business and shift the focus to building boat lifts. For five months, Fields did everything by himself—all the cutting, welding, and bookkeeping — before hiring a second person to assist him in his new venture.

Fields incorporated The Boat Lift Store in March 1985, and trademarked Doozie boat lifts a year later. In 1986, he added a welder to the staff and purchased a forklift to move his products.

“The first 300-400 boat lifts we made were loaded and unloaded by hand,” he said. “I didn’t think anything of it back then. I don’t know if I could do it now.”

In the 1980s and early 1990s, the Internet wasn’t an option for marketing products. Fields drove to lakes in Florida, Alabama, and other locations in the Southeast to pitch the Doozie Boat Lifts product

to potential customers.

Fields and his wife Marie had another interest in lakes and ponds in the country. They were active competition waterski buffs. It presented connections to other people with like-minded interests. Another avenue to promote the Doozie Boat Lifts product opened when their son Adam developed into a world champion wakeboarder competing internationally. The Doozie brand boat lifts are found in Australia, Europe, and other sites around the globe.

The store sells other products related to boat docks and clothing at the 1557 Hwy. 903 store site, but Lewis said the business model is all about manufacturing and selling boat lifts.

The company sells boat lifts that can safely hold up to 14,000 pounds boats on the beach, and boat lifts for Jet Ski and Sea-Doo personal watercraft.



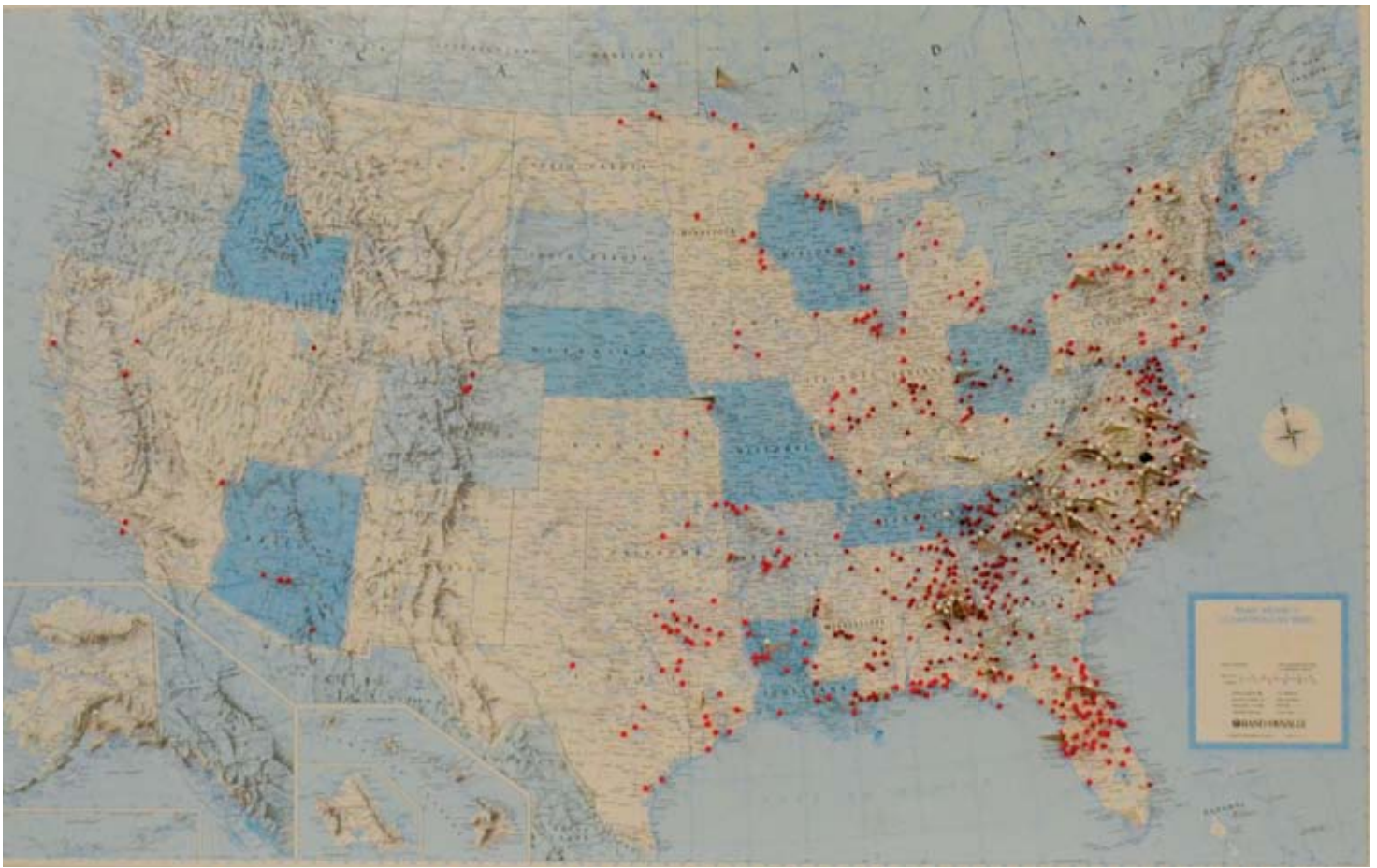
MARK MATHEWS

A tractor-trailer driver waits for a forklift operator to pull a load off the truck.



MARK MATHEWS

Pictured are Amanda Racine, Becca Atkinson, and company owner and founder Lewis Fields.



MARK MATHEWS

The Doozie Boat Lift brand is known globally.

Lewis said he could probably point out 100 pwc lifts built by the company in the late 1980s and early 1990s still remaining on Lake Gaston. He had to adjust when the pwc vessels dramatically increased in size and weight.

The Boat Lift Store has expanded over the years. It has an entire crew of employees to concentrate on specific aspects of the business. The people working for Lewis say the company's business model is working well. Amanda Racine said it's great to get out of bed and not dread going to work.

"Working here is like a second home," Racine said. "I get up ready to go because I'm with family, and that's what this place is. It's just a big family. It's a home away from home and I love it."

Becca Atkinson camped at Lake Gaston on and off for 20 years and decided she wanted a career change. Three and a half years ago, she interviewed for a few jobs and discovered that Lewis was hiring. Atkinson had heard of Lewis and his son Adam, owner of AF Wake. She decided to go with a company with a solid

reputation. Atkinson hasn't regretted her decision.

"You wouldn't think they are famous in their professions with the way they treat people and speak to people," Atkinson said. "I absolutely love it here. I don't think I ever worked at a job for three and a half years where I could say I still love it, so this is incredible. Lewis treats us like family. No matter what issues we have he is understanding. It's been a very nice ride so far."

When one walks into the main store office, they can see a map of the U.S. and Southern Canada with push pins pushed through in sites where Doozie Boat Lifts were sold. Lewis said it was too time-consuming to keep the map updated, but the pins in the map show that The Boat Lift Store Doozie Boat Lifts are popular.

"When you build a good model and treat people right they'll tell others about it," Lewis said. The word of mouth and the product are the pillars of the successful company that has served the people of Lake Gaston and beyond for 40 years — and counting.



MARK MATHEWS

LGLC President Val Ruch addresses members during a monthly meeting.

Lake Gaston Ladies Club is celebrating nearly 50 years

By Mark Mathews

Val Ruch, the Lake Gaston Ladies Club president, has overseen healthy membership growth. Heading into the December LGLC meeting, the club roster stood at 497 members. Two were added at the meeting to make the number just one short of 500. Forty-seven new members were recently added to the rolls before December.

Ruch will finish her second year as LGLC president in June before turning the reigns over to a new leader. She believes she will get to take a step back and enjoy the LGLC experience in a different fashion. Ruch's latest two-year run as club president isn't her first ride as club leader.

"I've done this before so I know what to expect

when I'm done with my two years," Ruch said. "I know it will be a challenge to not say I'll do something and to say no. This is a wonderful organization. I love being in the Lake Gaston Ladies Club."

The LGLC is a social club officially founded in 1978. The organization has evolved into an essential civic-minded group that donates thousands of dollars to local nonprofits, food banks, education, and other worthy causes.

Barb Jones, LGLC programming chair, helped spearhead a silent auction during the December meeting. 69 gift baskets were for sale, and members donated \$1 to classify them for silent auction bid eligibility. The silent auction proceeds will be distributed to five elementary schools in the area.

“We held an auction of baskets that the Activity Groups had assembled for a fundraiser for our Outreach Program,” LGLC member Mary Lou Kellogg said. “This year the project is to purchase books for the local schools. The basket auction was a huge success and raised several thousand dollars for the school project. Pam Soddu, a local teacher, mom and now author brought her new children’s book “The Night of Christmas Miracles,” and sold those – also to benefit the Outreach Program.

We enjoyed another wonderful meal served by David Watson and his staff and as always, the joy and pleasure of spending time with a lovely group of both “long time” and new friends.”

Ruch emphasized the importance of members continuing to ensure the Community Cupboard food pantries remain fully stocked. The yellow boxes with black trim are stocked with canned goods to assist people in need of a free meal for themselves or their families. The writing on the food boxes reads, “Take



MARK MATHEWS

Kathy Pfleger is at her booth seeking to recruit members to assist with the LGLC Memorial Garden.

What You Need, Share as You Can.”

The Community Cupboards are an LGLC and Lake Gaston Lions Club endeavor. LGLC member Marianne West brought the idea to Lake Gaston after hearing about a similar program from a friend. The first cupboard installation happened in late 2020 at Norton’s Flea Market in Henrico.

The LGLC membership meets monthly at Pleasant Hill Christian Church in Gasburg from September to June. However, members keep busy by participating in one or more of the nearly 20 activity groups within the organization, such as the Gastonettes musical group, Bible study, and many gaming groups that meet to play cards, Mah Jongg, or pinochle.

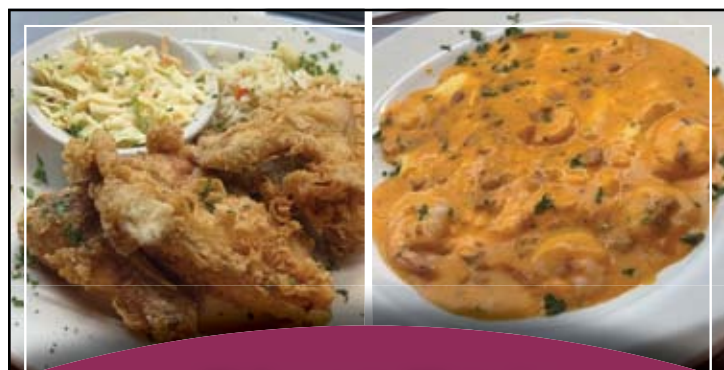
In May, the Red Hot Mamas branch of the club hosts the popular Lillies for the Fillies gathering at Tanglewood Golf Clubhouse in Bracey, Virginia. The group has sponsored the event for two years running.

“It was originally going to be a Kentucky Derby party, but we found out they do a run the day



MARK MATHEWS

Eighty members of the Lake Gaston Ladies Club gather at the Tanglewood Golf Clubhouse in Bracey for the second annual LGLC Kentucky Oaks Lillies for the Fillies fundraiser in May 2024.



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Some LGLC members get creative with the dishes they bring to the Tanglewood Golf Clubhouse for the Lillies for Fillies Kentucky Oaks event.

before with the fillies for breast cancer survivors and breast cancer awareness in general,” Molly Booe said.

At the Tanglewood Golf Clubhouse, LGLC members gathered to watch the Kentucky Oaks Lillies for the Fillies, the signature Friday race at Louisville, Kentucky’s Churchill Downs. The room was adorned with numerous televisions, allowing members to follow the race closely. In addition to the race, the event featured horse betting, raffles, and a silent auction, all contributing to the fundraising efforts for charity.

The LGLC has evolved with minor changes from year to year. Ruch explained that the annual schedule will change in 2025.

“We changed the Celebration of Life Ceremony from April to June so we can celebrate those that we have lost in the previous year, at the end of our year,” Ruch said.

Ladies Club members no longer with us are honored at the LGLC Memory Garden at the Lake Gaston Regional Chamber of Commerce.

The LGLC suffered a downturn during the pandemic in 2020-21. However, the club is back to full speed and growing membership month after month as it moves toward celebrating 50 years as a force in the Lake Gaston region.

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*Nature photos by
Nancy Clayton Moorefield
of Tanglewood Shores*



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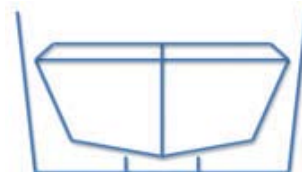
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