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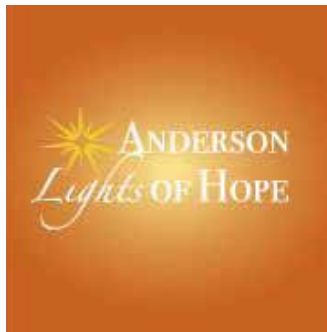
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November 12-25, 2020



Anderson Lights of Hope still shining bright after 28 years



Once again, Ben Phillips and his cast of elves will produce the longest running event in Anderson County, Anderson Lights of Hope. Only this year, it will be lights only. "We tried every which way we could to come up with a safe alternative for Santa to be with the kids", says Phillips. "But in order to maintain the safety of our volunteers and the visitors, Santa will only be there to wave hello and goodbye. Although there are some

restrictions this year, it is still a magical event and we're here to keep the magic alive," says Phillips. Anderson Lights of Hope maintains the goal of helping local charities with revenue from the event. Phillips himself puts in his own money every year to make it happen. "With the colleges being online only and schools are mostly virtual, we are in great need of volunteers this year", he says. "Although the Village will

be closed, there is still a lot of work to be done to get this thing up and running," he says. Charities that will benefit from this year's event are Cancer Association of Anderson, Habitat for Humanity, Family Promise of Anderson, First Presbyterian Youth Program, Sertoma Club of Anderson, Serteens of Wren

SEE LIGHTS ON PAGE 4





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'Helping friends'

John Roberts following family tradition in insurance business

2020 has been an unusual year, to say the least. It's affected people in many ways, and lots of folks are just ready to move forward. So, when you're the owner of a local insurance business known as "Anderson's Agency," how do you feel at this point?

"Believe it or not, these days I'm very thankful," says John Roberts. "I know that may sound surprising, but it's true." The owner of John Roberts Insurance Agency has several reasons for gratitude. "I wake up each day and go to work for the people of my hometown, and I get to help them with products and services they truly need. How can I not be thankful for that?"

Roberts grew up in an insurance family. His father, John W. "Tommy" Roberts, began his insurance career in 1974. He got to see the value of helping local residents at times when they needed it most. And he learned the importance of planning for the unexpected. After graduating from Clemson University in 1999, John joined the family business. In a way, it was like continuing his education under the instruction of his own dad. He quickly gained experience dealing with customers under the watchful eye of an experienced pro.

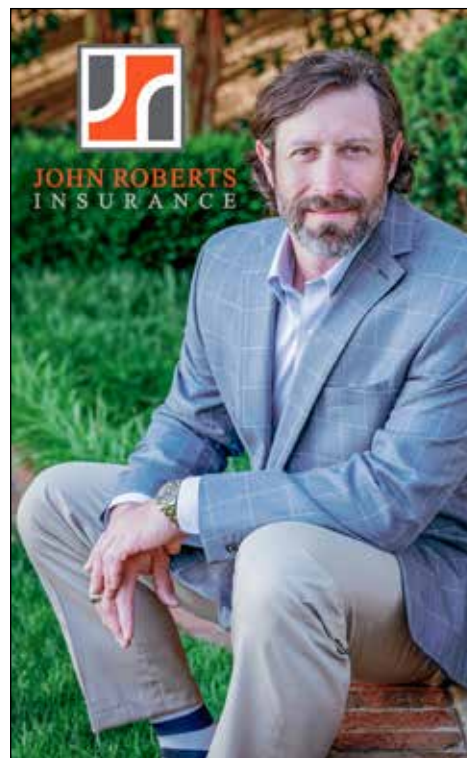
His father's agency offered policies from a single-source insurance provider. John eventually realized the need to expand his clients' options, so he decided to enter the independent agency market. He wanted a team that could offer multiple, competitive rates and policy options, so he founded the John Roberts Insurance Agency in 2002. His team has access to multiple insurance providers, so they can tailor products to each customer's particular needs, rather than stick them with a boiler plate policy that claims that "one size fits all."

Nearly 20 years later, his agency continues to expand its horizons, offering sound coverage for personal and commercial clients in and around Anderson. Many of his customers have been part of the Roberts insurance family since he was a young boy. "I literally have lifelong clients," says John. "You'd better believe I'm thankful for that."

He's also grateful for an excellent team of professionals. "I'm very fortunate to have Ann, Trenia, Selma and Rebecca working in my agency. They have decades of experience handling every kind of personal and business policy you can imagine. They form individual relationships with our clients, so they're not just doing

transactions. It's more like helping friends."

John offers advice for the future. "Plan ahead. Let us help prepare you for the unexpected. We've been doing this for a while, so Anderson's Agency won't steer you wrong." And, he says, "Don't panic. The craziness of



2020 is diminishing. Things are getting better. And I'm thankful for that, too."

You can contact John Roberts Insurance Agency for home, life, business, and property insurance. They're at 408 N Main Street in Anderson. Visit www.JohnRobertsInsurance.com for a quote, or call them at (864) 226-2229.



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Lights

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

High School, Distinguished Young Women of Anderson County and Nami of Anderson, Oconee and Pickens. “Some of these organizations are really struggling this year and we want to do our part,” Phillips says.

The cost of a carload is still just \$10 and that allows each car to go around as many times as they want in one night. On sponsor night, any donation over \$10 per car will go directly to the sponsor of your choice, which in turn will be donated to their particular charity. “The first \$10 will help pay for operations, including the electric bill,” Phillips says. “Anything after that will be given to those charities. None of us get a paycheck here. We all do it because we love doing it,” says Phillips. “This event is sometimes all the Christmas some kids will get,” says Phillips. “We’ve had visitors come here when they were kids and are now returning with their kids. It’s a real



treat to see family traditions lasting for so many years and we get to be a part of it.” Currently, Phillips is looking for volunteers to work on Saturdays from 9:00 to 4:00 PM and Sundays 1:00 to 4:00 PM. Saturday volunteers will be served lunch. Phillips, along with his left hand man Joe Stearns, work months ahead of time to make sure the tradition continues. “I do whatever Ben tells me to do,” says Stearns. “I show up ready for the tasks at hand.” Phillips hopes to see Anderson businesses step up this year to help support the event and the local charities in need. “We have been very lucky in the past to have incredible sponsorship but this year especially, there are great needs that we want to help with and we hope that the local businesses will get involved,” Phillips says. “We have sponsorships starting at \$100 and up so it’s very affordable for just about any business.” Anderson Lights of Hope will be open Thanksgiving Day and will run through Christmas Day from 5:30 until 10:00 PM. For more information visit www.AndersonLightsofHope.com or call Ben Phillips at 864-933-2547.

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**THE BLOOD
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Your Community Blood Center

Jay Bloomer Foundation raises over \$100K to support scholarships At Dobyns- Bennett & T.L. Hanna High

Anderson, SC — One year after the passing of Kingsport native and Anderson, SC resident Jay Bloomer, the official launch of The Jay Bloomer Foundation took place on Oct. 17 in Anderson, SC and virtually on Facebook Live. Jay passed away after a short but courageous battle with a rare form of T-Cell Lymphoma. The Jay Bloomer Foundation was formed to honor Jay's legacy and do what Jay did best: bring people together to help others.

Jay grew up in Kingsport, TN where he was a star basketball player at Dobyns-Bennett High School and proud member of the Tribe. True to form, Jay was voted 'Best All Around' by his classmates. Thereafter, Jay attended the University of Tennessee where his love of all things Vols began, but - most importantly - he met his soulmate, Meg (Kinney). They married shortly after graduation and lived in Columbia, TN, St. Louis, MO, and Orlando, FL before relocating back to Anderson, SC where Meg grew up. Jay spent his career in the healthcare industry providing care to veterans as a Regional Director with HMR Veterans Services of Anderson, S.C. Throughout their journey they made lasting friendships in every community and welcomed three beautiful children (Elle, Brooks, and Miles) who were the apples of Jay's eye.

Over the last year, a charitable initiative led by Jay's wife, Meg Bloomer, established a set of guiding principles to apply strategic direction for the launch of the Foundation. The Jay Bloomer Foundation will provide scholarships, starting in the spring of 2021, to deserving graduates from Dobyns-Bennett and T.L. Hanna High Schools.

The Jay Bloomer Foundation initiated a number of fundraising activities leading up to the formal launch of the Foundation. One fundraising activity leaned on Jay's classmates in the Dobyns-Bennett Class of 1995 to raise \$25,000 in memory of Jay on the anniversary of their 25th reunion. Assistance from D-B classmates proved vital to the overall fundraising efforts as more than \$25,000 was raised. A Silent Auction was orchestrated as part of the launch and led to more than \$15,000 in donations. Jay's former employer, HMR Veteran Services, matched pledges for a period of the evening during the Facebook Live launch that led to more than \$24,000 in charitable donations from a handful of family and friends. Finally, a Board matching pledge drive during the night led to the Jay Bloomer Foundation raising over \$110,000.

"We are simply amazed at the outpouring of support from all the friends Jay made in Kingsport, Anderson, and across the country. We are enthusiastic to further Jay's legacy by supporting young men and women pursuing higher education from Dobyns-Bennett and

T.L. Hanna High Schools," said Meg Bloomer, Chair of The Jay Bloomer Foundation. "The gracious financial support we received this past week will allow us to offer scholarships as early as next spring- something we only dreamed of a few short months ago."

During the Facebook Live launch, the Foundation was overwhelmed to receive financial support from organizations and individuals from across the country. The Foundation was overjoyed to receive four Platinum level donations from HMR Veterans Services of Anderson, SC, Martin Dentistry of Kingsport, TN, the Kinney Family of Anderson, SC, and the Hemphill Family of Nashville, TN. At the Facebook Live event, Jay's friends, former teammates, and musical guests treated virtual attendees to three hours of entertainment and memories of Jay.

You are welcome to learn more about the Jay Bloomer Foundation and information on how you can support his Foundation at: <https://www.jaybloomerfoundation.org/>.



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THE GARDEN SHOP

BEYOND PORCH MUMS



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Coming down the driveway after a week away on vacation, I noticed a patch of something white. There aren't many white flowers in my garden and no large patches of white. When I toured the grounds later, checking out the patch was first on my list. Mums, that should be pink. Not pure white but close to it. I was stumped, never knowing mums to change colors. Just so happened our vacation house had Charleston Magazine in their collection. A short article titled "Three Picks for Fall Gardens" had Ryan's Pink mum (*Chrysanthemum x morifolium* 'Ryan's Pink') first in their suggestion. The author stated blooms could be pink to white. That was news

to me. I prefer my Ryan's Pink to be pink. Sport is a term used in the mum world that is new to me. It seems mums will mutate and make a new type. I've heard of variegated and grafted plants reverting but not mums mutating. I don't know if that's what happened to my patch but will pay attention in the future and pull mutations out if they are not a cool creation.

My garden style is not much for porch mums that show up at garden centers every fall. Each year I look for something different without success. Porch types will usually transplant into the ground and should come back each year. Grocery store mums that are sold in the floral department are usually not hardy. Annual mums are *Chrysanthemum multicaule* should the tag not give a hardy zone. I've read leaves tell if the mum will be hardy. Annuals have strappy leaves that are thin. Leaves on hardy mums are wider and have deep notches. News to me again.

Hardy mums like Ryan's Pink and Peach,



Ryan's Pink

and Emperor of China can grow close to four feet tall if happy. Cambodian Queen, Penelope Pease, and Betty Sheffield can grow half that size. Each of these varieties flop and bounce around. To tidy and tighten them up, pinch or cut them back a couple of times until July 4. Some start out one color and fade to different shades as they age. If these are too much for your garden, *Chrysanthemum weyrichii* varieties grow smaller and look more traditional. Many hardy mum varieties will tolerate some frost too which can extend blooms into early winter.

A special mum, relatively new to my gar-



Pacific mum

den, is blooming for the first time. Pacific mum (*C. pacificum*, also called *Ajania pacifica*) is a late bloomer. Commonly called Silver and Gold, this type has quite different foliage that has white edges. Leaves are wider than most mums and foliage has a slight shine to it. They grow more like a groundcover. Buds start out sort of green in mid fall and open to yellow. They are tolerant of light frosts too. I read there is a pink one called Pink Ice. To find unusual mums will mean ordering from catalogs. Occasionally a lucky gardener might stumble across some options in a nursery. Mums are deer resistance and can be toxic to our pets so beware.

Our kitchen table

BY LINA HARRIS

It's a very old tongue in groove handmade table with sturdy legs and a fabulous drawer that spans the full width of our family kitchen table. The history behind the table is not well known to me. It just was always our table. But, if memory serves me, Mama told me that she and Daddy got it from a man who had built it in the 1920's so this table is now almost 100 years old. And, it served as the gathering spot for my family for at least 3 generations.

Back then, there was no dining room; we had an eat in kitchen that was large enough for the 5 foot long table that also happened to be 40 inches wide. In case measurements mess with your mind, that's a really big table. It could seat all of our family at one time and that was 6 kids along with Mama and Daddy. Whenever Mama's side of the family visited, chairs were pulled up and room was made for everyone at the table. Since Mama was one of 16 children, you can imagine how many people this table has served. There was always a cake or pie ready to be sliced; coffee to be poured and stories to be told.

I remember that my 6th birthday party was celebrated at this table. Can you picture the smile on my face to know that my church and school

friends were there to celebrate with me? It was big; I can tell you that!

It's the same table where I learned that my big brother Ernie had eloped with the love of his life and, oh my goodness, he was only a freshman in college. What a ruckus that created! Yet, true to the story of my family, Mama and I went and helped him move to the married student housing.

This table provided a solid surface for school work and homework of all kinds. All the girls had to take a Home Ec class in the olden days, and one of my assignments was to make a skirt or a dress. I had absolutely no idea how to sew and no idea about material at all. But Mama did and she took me to buy material and then proceeded to reinforce what our teacher had attempted to teach. My brain is not wired in a way to understand all of those sewing terms and somehow I just could not understand it. Mama tried and tried to explain it to me and help me to understand the lessons on sewing. She eventually caved and sewed the skirt for me. Guess what. Just this past weekend, I had the opportunity to talk with my Home Ec teacher and confess to her that it was my mother who had sewed the skirt and made the "A" that she so generously gave me. I wore the skirt one time – the day that we had to wear it to



class to get the grade. By now you have guessed correctly; the skirt was made on our kitchen table.

At our kitchen table was where we, the brats as Daddy fondly called us, learned how to eat with our lips closed; how to not smack those lips as we ate. No elbows were allowed on the table. Sit up straight. Only one person is allowed to speak at a time. Oh, the lessons we learned! But this taught us the respect and courtesy we needed to succeed in life. We learned to listen to each other and support each other.

I learned how to play cards at that table. We always knew where the watermelon knife was, the kitchen scissors, the scotch tape. We wrapped Christmas and birthday presents there. We prepared the care packages to send to my sister and brothers when they moved away from home. We put them into boxes

and wrapped them in the brown grocery bags. Then we wrote their names and addresses on those brown paper bags in pencil, not pen because the ink might run if it got wet and then where would the package go?

We did all of our Christmas baking prep at this table. Fruitcakes and pies and cookies and fudges. Oh, that divinity fudge! I ate half a batch one time and thought that Mama was gonna take the rolling pin to my backside, but she didn't. We just had to fix another batch to mail to the siblings. Not a bad deal, in my book.

Eventually I had a family of my own and mother was ready to let the table move from her house. I jumped to the opportunity to give the table a new home. Years later I decided to remove the green linoleum table top to reveal the beautiful wood beneath. Someone had filled the grooves with a substance that had dried and

cracked. After a fair amount of sanding, I rubbed a wax into the surface to protect it from all sorts of possibilities of havoc wreaked by young ones. To tell the truth, the plan was to use the table for my son's trains. The drawer was perfect to hold the transformer and some of the other items. As happens, time passed and needs changed. Once again, the table became our kitchen table where we gathered for family meals. Needless to say, I did not wax the table often enough and stains developed from heat and condensation. A light stain was applied to help blend the colors, but the table remains a sturdy and majestic family treasure. It's now in my daughter's home where her family also gathers for meals and stories. Since this fabulous heirloom seems to be incredibly solid with no apparent injury to its function, I hope and pray that it will be useful for many generations to come.

When I first read Ginny's article and request for submission, I thought about our special family table that served our family so completely. When I decided to share my thoughts and feelings about just how special this table is to me, the memories flooded back. The images in my brain of where we each sat, of reaching for the bowl for more mashed potatoes, of stretching across the table to break the pulley bone with Jimmy (my brother), and so many more – some have brought tears of sadness and others tears of happiness.

YOUR DENTIST CAN SAVE YOUR LIFE

The body's overlooked defense system

This is something worth considering in the present health environment. Are you aware your skin is a barrier that can help ward off disease? What exactly are the body's defenses? There is the immune system. Stomach acid that is essential to digest food and allow the body to absorb nutrients. There is beneficial gut bacteria.

But let's not forget to include our skin. It is one of the most important defenses we have because it keeps harmful organisms and substances from getting inside our bodies. Our skin weakens as we age requiring more effort to keep it healthy. With infection on everyone's mind, it makes sense to "pamper" our skin to strengthen it.

Here is what you need to know:

- The deepest skin layer is made up of connective tissue and fat providing insulation, energy storage, and shock absorption.
- The next layer contains collagen and elastin, blood vessels, nerves, sweat and oil glands, and hair follicles.
- The top layer is a barrier consisting of

five different layers. This is the skin we can see and a major part of our body's defenses. Taken together, all of it keeps moisture in



Dr. Gabrielle F. Cannick

our body and protects us from toxins, ultraviolet rays, and bacteria. As we age our skin gets thinner and the cells get flatter with a lower water content. Everything becomes less vigorous and strong, particularly in areas of sun exposure. Dry, thin

skin is more porous than plump, healthy skin. It can crack or tear easily, like paper. Any time the skin splits or is excessively dry it becomes an avenue for an organism to get in and cause problems.

How do we fortify our skin defenses? The best thing you can do is lock in moisture. Ladies already know this. Men? You might want to listen to your wives and girl-

friends about their skincare regimen. When you add moisture, the skin gets fatter and more flexible; the trick is keeping it that way.

Here is a checklist:

Use skin creams containing ceramides, a type of fat and a main component of the skin.

Use moisturizing oils, such as mineral oil.

Use products with humectants. These substances help bind water to the skin for absorption.

Ingredients to look for include glycerin, lactic acid, alpha hydroxy acid.

Of course, avoid sun exposure and use sunscreen. Consider a humidifier to add moisture to the air in your home in the fall and winter. As the humidity drops the dry air sucks moisture out of your skin. Note: While drinking water is good hydration for our overall health, it does not directly hydrate the skin.

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Dr. Gabrielle F. Cannick is the owner of Grand Oaks Dental, located at 3905 Liberty Highway in Anderson. A strong believer that dental fear and anxiety should not prevent any patient from receiving the highest quality dental care, Dr. Cannick has received extensive training in Sedation Dentistry and is a certified member of the Dental Organization for Conscious Sedation. She is also a member of the South Carolina Dental Association, the American Dental Association, the Academy of General Dentistry, and the American Academy of Dental Sleep Medicine.

For more information about Grand Oaks Dental and the services provided, please call 864-224-0809, or click to [grandoaksdental.com](https://www.grandoaksdental.com) or visit us on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/GrandOaksDental>.



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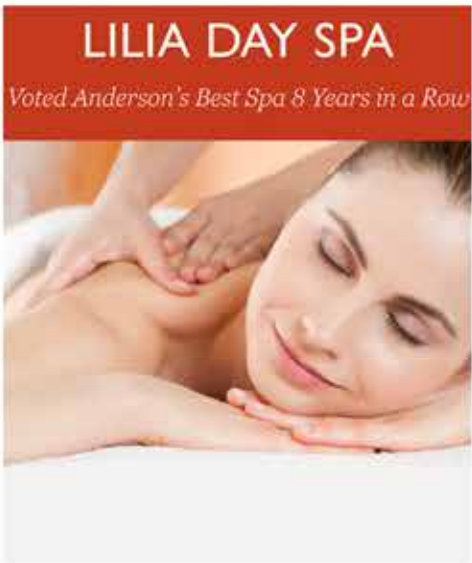
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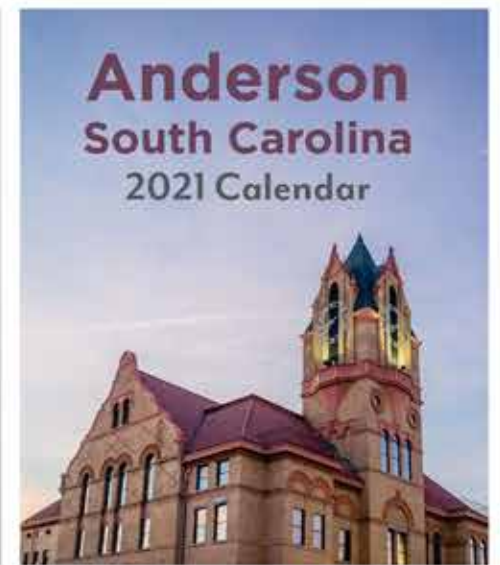
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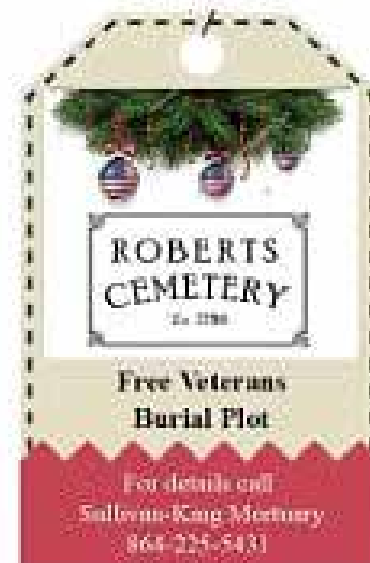
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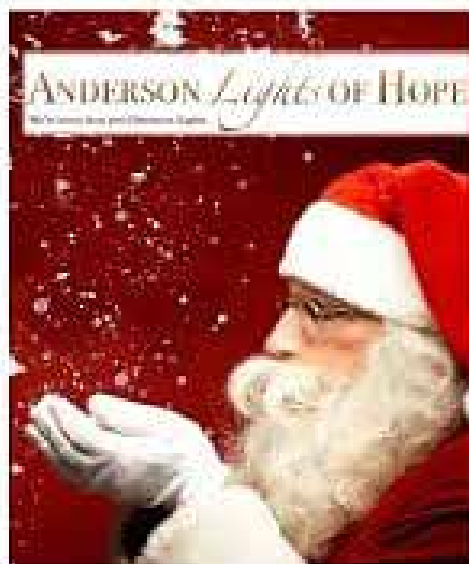
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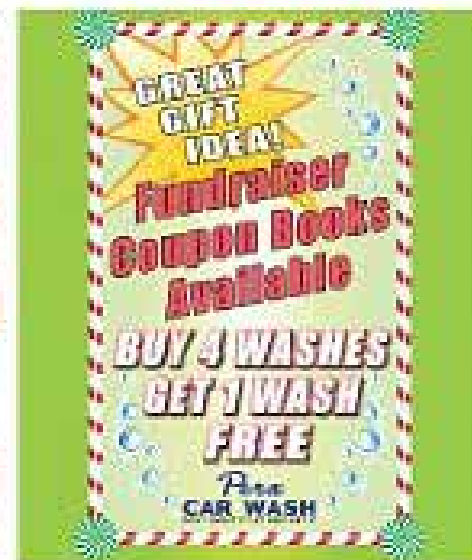
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Salad days? You have GOT to be kidding!

Have you ever heard the term “salad days”? It is attributed to Shakespeare, and it refers to a period of youthful innocence and naiveté. I don’t know about you, readers, but as we approach the end of 2020, I am not feeling young. I am not feeling innocent. I am not feeling naïve. In short, the last eight months or so have not been my salad days.

They have been my pasta days.

You know what I mean. There are times when the world and your place in it can seem so hard that all you want to do is sit down with a big serving of high calorie, high carb, highly delicious comfort food. My husband’s go-to is hamburgers. My mother’s is ice cream. But when I find myself surrounded by contentious politics, pandemic illness, and the end of daylight savings time, I just want a big bowl of noodles. Which is exactly what I treated myself to last week at Vinnie’s Neighborhood Italian Restaurant in Asheville, North Carolina.

If you haven’t had a meal in

Asheville recently, you’re missing out. Once a sleepy mountain town with only a handful of restaurants, it



Kim von Keller

is now home to award-winning chefs offering Appalachian, Spanish, gluten-free, French, Indian, vegetarian, Japanese,

vegan, and even Himalayan cuisine. We visit the city often, and with so many choices, we rarely eat at the same restaurant twice in a year. Our exception to that rule is Vinnie’s.

As soon as you walk through the door, your cares just melt away. Aromas of garlic and tomatoes waft from the open kitchen, and you’re welcomed by the music of Frank Sinatra and Dean Martin. There’s a cozy bar to your right, and to your left, a dining room where tables bear the names of loyal diners.

You’ll often recognize the waitstaff, and, just as often, they’ll recognize you, too, like you’ve just walked into a family reunion. In short, Vinnie’s is a lot like those Italian restaurants in the “Godfather” movies, except that nobody gets murdered.

The menu is standard Italian-American: crispy fried calamari, pasta with slow-cooked Sunday gravy, meaty lasagna, bitter greens, and garlic knots that are the bane of vampires everywhere. Every time we go there, I order a delicious cocktail from bartender Josh, study the entire menu, consider the specials, and order the Linguine with Clams Fra Diavolo. The pasta is toothsome, the clams are tender, and the sauce is spicy. There’s never a weird, surprise addition of raisins or pattypan squash or Tootsie Rolls. When I order Vinnie’s Linguine with Clams Fra Diavolo, I



always know what I am getting. It is the most consistent, reliable plate of food I’ve ever eaten, and it has never failed to make me feel better about whatever I’m not feeling good about. In other words, it is my perfect 2020 meal.

I’m sure that you have your per-

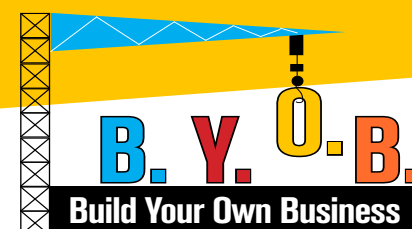
fect 2020 meal too. While literal salad days might make your doctor happy, sometimes, your emotional health calls for a meal that’s a little more substantial and a lot more comforting. And after a difficult spring and summer, restaurants can really use our help right now. Just make sure that, like Vinnie’s, your favorite spot is following all COVID protocols and pay them a visit. Whether you’re in the mood for pasta or pancakes, dine-in or take-out, sitting in a restaurant booth listening to “That’s Amore” or curl-

ing up on the sofa watching “Tiger King,” treat yourself to your favorite comfort meal. God invented the elastic waistband for a reason. Salad days can wait until 2021.

Where do you go for your favorite comfort meal? Share your favorite with me at editkim50@gmail.com.

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IT'S DINNERTIME

For many American families, finding opportunities to spend quality time together can be a real challenge. However, even though hectic schedules seem to dominate most of our productive time, the one place we can all agree to be on time and present each day is at the family dinner table. The evening meal can be an excellent time to put down our phones, take a timeout from homework and daily obligations, and set aside forty-five minutes to relax, recharge, tell stories, laugh and share the highlights of our day with each other.



Katie Laughridge

According to Dr. Fishell, advocate of The Family Dinner Project, over the past 15 years researchers have confirmed what parents have known for a long time- sharing a family meal is good for the spirit, the brain and the health of all family members. Recent studies link regular family dinners with many behaviors that parents pray for their children to adopt, including lower rates of substance abuse, teen pregnancy and depression as well as higher

grade-point averages and self-esteem. Studies also confirm that dinner conversations boost children's vocabulary and help build respectful speaking and listening skills. Additionally, regular family dinners have been shown to decrease obesity and eating disorders in children and adolescents.

Soccer, dance, gymnastics, play practice, piano lessons, karate, and so many extra-curricular activities- although excellent growth activities for our children- can keep families busy and disconnected during the weekdays. The obvious question is, "How can we find time to eat together as a family?" One solution may be to try cooking and freezing several large casseroles on the weekends, or perhaps prepping for meals by buying pre-cut prepared items from the grocery store- such as pre-cut veggies or pizza crusts. You could even brown hamburger meat or cook chicken ahead of time to make dinner preparation quicker and easier. A few of my friends take advantage of Home Chef meals while others buy prepared meals from Facebook groups.

Another great way to promote family connection is to encourage your children to be involved in preparing the evening meal. Young children can assist by performing simple tasks such as sprinkling seasoning, stirring



vegetables, or washing fruit. Elementary aged children can help by setting the table, pouring drinks, and can even assist with simple food preparation. Adolescent aged children can help prepare all aspects of the meal, including planning, shopping, cooking, and cleaning up. The goal is to make the evening meal a fun family

event so that everyone looks forward to it and feels like their part is special and important.

In a world where we are constantly tugged in two different directions, let's all agree to sitting down together as a family...at the dinner table. Together, let's build stronger families, stronger children, and stronger tomorrows.



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NIBBLE & SIP

Meet Josh March, the man behind the bar at Vinnie's

It really is a small world. If you read my column on the importance of comfort food in 2020, you know that my family's favorite cozy place for dinner in Asheville, North Carolina, is Vinnie's Neighborhood Italian Restaurant.



Kim von Keller

We've been going there for years, and Teddy and I wouldn't start an evening there without one of their delicious cocktails, prepared by their bartender whom I only knew as Josh. Recently, though, I learned that not only does he have a last name, March, he also has a connection with the Electric City News: he's married to fashion writer Kristine March.

After getting to know him a bit during our last visit to Vinnie's, I spent some time finding out how he became a bartender, where he gets the inspiration for some of his favorite original cocktails, and what he's shaking behind the bar this fall.

Nibble and Sip: Tell me about your professional background.

Josh March: I have been in the hospitality/restaurant business for well over half my life. I began in fine dining in South Carolina in the mid '90s, and I moved into tending bar in the early 2000s. It has been an exciting and adventurous career that has taken me from mixing boat drinks behind the bar at the historic Lighthouse Inn in Cape Cod, Massachusetts, to shaking and stirring libations at the

renowned Canoe restaurant in Atlanta, Georgia, to raising a family in the magical Blue Ridge Mountains while leading the bar at Vinnie's Neighborhood Italian in Asheville, North Carolina, and everywhere in between. The best parts of all this are all the wonderful lives I have met along the way and the zest for life that traveling has given me

N and S: What is your philosophy when it comes to creating an original cocktail?

JM: I am big on letting the seasons lead, and that is where I find inspiration when creating original cocktails and riffing on the classics. Spring lends itself to fresh, airy cocktails with gin and light botanical enhancers. Summer is all about beach drinks where tequila, rum, and tropical fruit are the high-lights. Fall and winter give way to more robust and full-flavored cocktails, with bourbons, añejo rums and tequilas, and amaros (Italian herbal liqueurs) taking center stage. But don't get me wrong; I enjoy any type of drink, anywhere, anytime.

N and S: Do you have a recipe that you'd like to share with readers of the ECN?

JM: The Apple-lachian Mule is a favorite at Vinnie's this time of year. It combines the best of the North Carolina apple harvest with the warmth of bourbon and the spice of ginger beer. (We make our own ginger beer at Vinnie's, and it is spicy gold!) Cheers!

Apple-lachian Mule
1.5oz Bulleit Bourbon
1 oz local apple cider
.25 oz fresh lemon juice

.25 oz cinnamon syrup (see recipe below)
In a cocktail shaker filled with ice, shake all ingredients, strain into a Collins glass filled with fresh ice, and top with your favorite ginger beer, the spicier the better. Garnish with a thinly sliced apple wedge fanned across side of glass.

Cinnamon Syrup
8 oz. sugar
8 oz. water
4 T. cinnamon chips (JOSH'S NOTE: These are not the cinnamon version of chocolate chips. These are small chunks of cinnamon bark that are not available in supermarkets. Cinnamon chips are better at giving the syrup a pronounced spice and silky mouthfeel than cinnamon sticks. The Herbiary in Asheville has the best, and they are also available on their website, herbiary.com.)

Dissolve sugar into very hot water. When the syrup is clear, stir in the cinnamon chips and cover. (The longer the cinnamon steeps in the syrup, the more pronounced the cinnamon flavor will be.) Strain into a clean container with a tight-fitting lid, and refrigerate.



Josh and Kristine March



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COMFORT IS KEY

We want to look our best for our social gatherings but we also want to feel our best too. Comfort is key when it comes to holiday attire. This year keep in mind that you can go chic but flowy. Instead of a stiff blazer or anything too fitting or confining, try a more relaxed look. A slouchy sweater and a midi skirt with boots. I personally have been loving how Sarah Jessica Parker has been pulling off the look. Google her fashion for 2020. It's so sleek and smart.



Kristine March

Adding colors besides the traditional ones are dashing too. Try a bold pink or magenta instead of fall colors. Instead of red and green go for silver or lime green. It's mod and fresh. Rancher hats are big and a tam is classic and gives you that instant elegance. I say this

every year. You can still wear white. Winter white that is. Cashmere anything in that color is luxe. Even white jeans are sexy with mules and a pashmina. Don't be afraid to pull it off even though our grandmothers said don't wear it past labor day. We are rule breakers y'all!

Vegan leather cropped pants are soft like butter plus they will show off your cute shoes. Satin blouses and slip dresses are soft and cushy too. Wear them in every color of the rainbow. If you have to be extra fancy kick it up with a pleated sequin mock dress. You will be the bell of the living room. Let's face it we're not really going to balls anymore, people. Dress up anyways. It makes us feel good.

Dress to impress even if it's a small social gathering. Be confident. Own the room. Whatever you wear, kindness matters and compliment at least three people a day. Make everybody feel like a somebody. Make the sidewalk your runway and enjoy the holidays.



Downy Woodpecker

Showdown!

BY ANN BAILES

Recently I noticed that our usually busy feeders were completely devoid of birds. Empty, that is, except for the presence of a Cooper's Hawk high in the branches of a crepe myrtle right outside the picture window.

Nothing clears out an area where birds have been congregating like the appearance of a hawk. If a usually busy area is suddenly very quiet, that could likely be the reason. A hawk's strategy is the element of surprise, but the smaller birds have their own methods of defense against the stronger and larger predators. Most of Mr. Cooper's intended prey remained vigilant and stayed away. They had no desire to be breakfast for someone higher on the food chain.

However, a little downy woodpecker didn't get away in time, and was clinging to the near side of the suet feeder. Recognizing the dire situation it was in, the downy remained stock-still on that suet cage. I couldn't believe what I was seeing in this usually very busy bird, now so motionless it could have been a decoy. That downy did not move a single minuscule muscle.

It was a stand-off. A stare-down. Who would blink first?

Downy Woodpeckers are the cute little cousins in the woodpecker world. A downy is smaller than most similar species, and has a tiny little bill shorter than the width of its head. It is black and white checkered, with a white breast, and a white stripe down its back. The male has a small red patch on the back of his head. Downies are much more commonly seen than the larger but otherwise almost identical hairy woodpeckers. And these little birds love to come to suet feeders, which, as the stand-off continued, almost proved to be this downy's downfall.

Neither moved. Five minutes. Ten minutes. Fifteen minutes. I couldn't move away from the window, watching the suspenseful situation. I had to see how this turned out. I was of course rooting for the downy but didn't hold out much hope. Hawks usually win these encounters.

Finally, the Cooper's Hawk blinked. It flew toward the house, landing on a wire right outside the kitchen window. And the downy was gone. The disappearance happened so quickly that I thought the hawk must have gotten the woodpecker, but nothing was in its talons.

Then I realized - at the first motion from the hawk toward the house, the downy instantly scooted to the hidden back side of the tree. It happened so fast I didn't even see it move, and it was now just barely visible to me. And when the hawk finally flew away empty-handed, the downy got brave and attacked the suet to get its own breakfast.

I love rooting for the underdog - or in this case, the underbird. Downy 1, Cooper's Hawk 0. It was a great win.

MUSINGS OF AN OLE BALL COACH

A DEFINING MOMENT

We recently passed the 155th anniversary of one of the defining moments in our history. It was on April 9th, 1865 in the town of Appomattox Court House, VA, in the parlor of Wilmer McLean, that Robert Edward Lee sur-



Jim Fraser

rendered the Army of the C.S.A. to the U.S.A. and Ulysses Simpson Grant. This ended four years of arduous fighting, that cost, both sides upwards of 630,000 casualties. It's also set a nation of enslaved Americans free, and devastated our nation that would take scores of years to overcome.

Five days later another defining moment occurred when a member of the prominent Shakespearean actor's family of Booths assassinated Abraham Lincoln. As the Lincoln's watched "Our American Cousin" starring Laura Keane at Ford's Theatre,

John Wilkes stealthily stole down the hall to Lincoln's box, peered through a hole he had bored that day, and with a single shot from a .32 Derringer put a single lead slug through the President's brain. Booth who thought he would be revered by the South was scorned and censored. Lincoln, who promised "To bind up the Nation's wounds and care for the widow and orphan now could not prevent the South's harsh reconstruction years.

These were defining moments. Sometimes they are on the horns of a dilemma, the determine right and wrong. Success or failure is ever so slight. Maybe Robert Frost had the right answer when he said as he came to the fork in the road, "I took the road less traveled." Harry Truman had that agonizing decision to make when he chose to drop the atomic bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki thus shortening WWII by a year.

Since I started these lines in April (Now October) I have had a defining moment in my life in the breaking and

subsequent rebuilding of a broken hip (I'm 2 for 2 since December 27th).

I'm sad to report the USA has not done as well with COVID XIX., as we look at 300,000 dead Americans by December 1st. With this data of 33,333 dead Americans per month. The Civil War would have killed 1,599,989 of us.

The U.S.A. is the best equipped country in the World to combat this virus, so why are we so inept and pathetic. We're like a pro team with all pros at every position yet were getting drilled by a lesser opponent. Let's not settle for failure in this defining moment.

Jim Fraser was the athletic director and head football coach at T.L. Hanna High School from 1968-1985. He was also a full time member of the faculty who taught U.S. History.



Fear, love or addiction?



MARY-CATHERINE
McCLAIN
RINER

How often do you ask yourself, "What keeps me in this relationship?" or "Should I end my relationship?" Do you often make excuses for your partner's behaviors, or rationalize, defend, and/or lie about your relationship to yourself and others? How often do you endure critical words, arguing, and shaming in the relationship? Do you experience feelings of hurt, sad, jealous, angry, guilt, or anxiety? How strong is the pain in the relationship compared to the joy? Do you feel enmeshed or as if you have lost your identity? To understand your choices and to feel more confident about your decisions, we have to understand definitions.

Love has often been defined by a feeling of peace and comfort, and being in a relationship with kindness, compassion, and love. You enjoy spending time together and have fun while



also being able to share thoughts and feelings easily with your partner. An important part of love is self-love. Fear of intimacy, loneliness, rejection, failure, and/or abandonment may influence decision-making. If you idealize the relationship or put someone on a pedestal, the changes of disappointment are higher. For example, it is not realistic for someone to give you unconditional

praise or take complete care of you. Instead, you may consider shifting your focus to empowerment and taking responsibility for your own health, love, and overall self-soothing.

When it comes to an addiction, consider how much you are dependent on someone, do you crave or need to be with someone 24/7, do you focus solely on the one relationship, is tolerance increasing for a partner's negative behaviors, do you blame yourself for what is wrong in the relationship, and/or do you engage in destructive behaviors to numb unpleasant experiences?

Changing patterns of behavior, altering habits, and choosing self-love can be difficult. It takes practice and risk, and you can learn how to break free from ties that bind you. If you are feeling uncertain and lost in a relationship, I encourage you to seek support and counseling. Take care of yourself as you are worthy and deserving of love.

Mary-Catherine McClain Riner, Ph.D., Ed.S, M.S., is a Licensed Psychologist with Riner Counseling, LLC. Visit www.rinercounseling.com or call 864-608-0446.

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My granddaddy, Clate (Mutt) Sanders, volunteered to be the custodian of the church. After working all week at Orr Mill, he would spend early Saturday morning wax-



Neal Parnell

ing floors, cutting grass, and all the things that prepared the church for Sunday, and I would get to tag along when he let me.

Saturday arrived, and I was up early asking if I could help at the church. Now you're going to need to understand my grandfather's thinking on allowing me to help. I was like Barney's cousin Virgil on The Andy Griffith Show, I just couldn't seem to do anything right. I had just recently caused the church bell to be inoperable, so he was

very reluctant to allow me to touch anything that had a moving part. Being the Christian man he was, coupled with the insistent begging on my part, I got a second chance to prove my worth.

We pulled up to the back of the church, got out, and right away I saw a cardboard box beside the old fifty-gallon trash can. I walked over, and as I got closer I started to hear tiny meows. I opened the box with granddaddy now standing alongside me, and there inside were six new-born kittens, meowing for their mother and food. My granddaddy said, "Those are Baptist kittens boy". I said, "How do you know that?", He said, "Their eyes aren't open".



Once inside, we walked into the sanctuary, where I was assigned to dust the altar and all of the wooden pews. I had a large can of Lemon Pledge, and a dust rag from world war one. I'd spray the long wooden pews and wipe till they gleamed. "Looks good boy, let's go home".

On Sunday mornings at the church, I put all the tithe envelopes in little slots on the backs of the pews and straighten the hymnals; then I got to stand at one of the front doors and hand out the church bulletins as the parishioners arrived. As people were filing in, I noticed that someone had fallen, and then another, and another, and people were



standing and checking their back-sides, and I think I heard a couple of men cursing. Uh, Oh, it seems that I had over-sprayed and forgot to wipe a few rows of pews. Christians were bruised and stained and falling over each other like a scene out of Sodom and Gomorrah. I think my

granddaddy was about to sacrifice me when the Lord spoke to him, and he only whispered, "My cup runneth over". That Sabbath would be spoken of for years as, "Slippery Sunday".

If you're worried about what happened with the Baptist kittens, don't fret, I'll tell that tale soon.



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