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2019

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- Pfeiffer Construction Builds More Than A Campus
- Stanly County Arts Guild



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About the Cover
Kallen Robertson, age 6,
was visiting the attraction
with his grandmother,
Terri Crocker of Albemarle.
Photo by Marty Bowers.

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Introducing the public to the
talented artists in the area.

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challenge



By Rebekah Ayscue
Contributor

Photos By
Marty Bowers



When I heard a new ropes course was coming to town, I was excited - and skeptical. Would it really come? Would it be any good?

I consider my time as a camp counselor my first career. I'm only 30, but I think my counselor days will be the most important days of my life. I'm confident no other job will help me hone such a wide variety of skills. (If you ever need a chef, a nurse, a babysitter, a dishwasher, a crisis manager, a rain plan executor, a motivator, an all-occasion entertainer, a firebuilder, a songtime leader, a bathroom cleaner, an event planner, or a lifeguard, give me a call.) Most importantly, it prepared me to be the judge of rope courses.

After giving Carolina Treetop Challenge (CTC) a few weeks to work out the new-business kinks, I decided to check out the course recently. Luckily it was already more than 80 degrees and close to 100 percent humidity - why I chose this day for the ropes course, we'll never know - so parking was ample.

CTC has lots of great signage and a roped walkway to show exactly how to get to check-in. I popped into the office to sign

my waiver and then I was off. They whisked me into a harness (ladies, I suggest yoga pants) trained me on the safety system, and sent me to the green course.

As I climbed the ladder to access the first element, I already knew I was going to love this course. The course and staff are excellent, but from the moment I began I knew there was going to be a lot of anonymity - in the best sense of the word. At larger, more commercialized courses there are guides everywhere. You hardly get a second to breathe. They are telling you exactly what to do - which I appreciate, but when you are 30 feet in the air the options of what to do next are quite clear. The course was not crowded at that hour, but I'm confident this relaxed, yet responsible vibe is typical.

I breezed through the 11 elements of the first course. This first course is meant to be accessible. It was a perfect time for me to get used to the safety harness system and get comfortable moving across the elements. With little to worry about in terms of challenging obstacles, I got to enjoy the scenery. It sounds sappy, but we do have a beautiful spot

here in Stanly County. The elements had me walking across creeks, from 10 feet up, ziplining right through the trees, and overlooking nothing but green.

Carolina Treetop Challenge did a phenomenal job installing the course. It seems like the land has barely been touched; I really felt like I was travelling through the woods as I crossed the elements. Despite the gruesome humidity, I was deep in the shade and caught all of the breezes. And for that I was grateful.

After completing green, I leveled up to the blue course. This course had nine elements. These weren't significantly harder, but some were much longer from point A to point B. The blue course has an element I deemed the rolling hills. This is definitely the cutest element on the whole CTC course. It looks like a little bridge masquerading as rolling hills suspended 20 feet in the air. I thought there might be a trick to it, but it was as it appeared.





The blue course also featured a nice long zip ride - much like a zipline but my feet had a home. It was humid - have I mentioned that? - so the zip lines were the highlight; they simulated a serious breeze. The blue course followed the green course as the others would too in being a beautiful respite in the trees.

After finishing the blue course, my guide, Tammy, prepped me that the intensity was going to pick up a bit. She was right. It took me at least two tries to get one foot off the ground using the climbing wall, which I needed to ascend to start the course. Once I made it up, the silver course didn't disappoint.

This course boasted lots of fun and technical obstacles, including a barrel crawl. From the silver course, I moved straight to the red course. By then, I was definitely starting to sweat. A ropes course is a lot like roller skating or kayaking. You are having so much fun, you barely notice you are working out until all of the sudden you are drenched in sweat.

Luckily, from 40 feet up, I could easily glimpse the railroad tracks. I shouted down the memories of my favorite summer nannying gig ever to my guide. With a 5-year old boy in tow, all we did was adventure around Albemarle for two months. Our best adventure was following the tracks from Rock Creek Park to "wherever" they led.

Guide Tammy matched me memory for memory of childhood fun at Rock Creek. I'm fairly confident Tammy was a plant to make me fall in love with the course, which worked. There is nothing I love more than tales of childhood outdoor fun.

All the outdoor play talk energized me to finish strong on red, but not without serious effort. These elements were much looser. I thought several times, "I wish I hadn't skipped Pilates this week;" I needed all the core muscles I could access to stay balanced on a few of the red elements.

Last stop was the black course. You know the one. My Facebook newsfeed has been peppered with people ziplining down a rope and catching themselves on a giant cargo net. I know you've seen it, too. That element was fun, but Tammy's warning to "catch the net because it's tricky if you miss it" was ringing in my head. I caught that net and got out of there and on to the next element as quickly as I could. That said, this course was my favorite of all. I was the highest up I had been yet, and these elements were more challenging. I slowed down and took a little more time to look down at the serious beauty of the area.

There were tons of children playing on the playground and families having picnics. I couldn't see all the way to the pool, but I'd wager it was busy, too. I moved through the black course enjoying my views. As I neared the end of the course, I was back to the beginning so more guides joined Tammy below me. I was chatting away about how much I loved the course and couldn't wait to bring friends. I snapped my safety harness on for the last big zipline and jumped, but I went nowhere. The harness worked just like it was supposed to. I forgot to attach my pulley, the mechanism that lets you zip, so I was stuck hanging in mid-air about one foot from the platform where I started my failed ziplining. I probably should have panicked, but I felt so secure that was the last thing on my mind. The guides, who



all just happened to be there, calmly asked if I could make it back to the platform. Tammy headed for the course to climb to me for a rescue. I did make it back to the platform and successfully zipped to my destination. I wasn't really planning to test the safety of the course, but, good news, it's really safe.

All and all, Carolina Treetop Challenge is a fabulous addition to our sweet community.

I recommend bringing your friends, especially the ones that make you laugh. I guarantee you'll get the best abdominal workout of your life. If you're bored at the gym or looking to get re-inspired, CTC is your spot. I could see this as an epic teen birthday party or maybe even a bachelorette weekend activity.

Stanly County has a growing number of awesome and unexpected gems. This is just another on the list. Make your plans to go. Then tell your friends and make sure they tell theirs. I want to see this business and our community succeed, and I hope you do, too. **A**



Above, Kallen Robertson, 6, and his 9-year-old brother Damari, left, make their way through the Carolina Treetops course recently. The two brothers from Lewisville were visiting their grandmother Terri Crocker in Albemarle and took the opportunity to visit the city's newest attraction.

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Laying Foundations

Pfeiffer construction builds more than a campus

By Shannon Beamon
contributing writer

After three years of anticipation, work on Pfeiffer's Health Science Center has begun. The cement slab is poured, the block base is going up. By May 2020, construction should be complete and two new graduate programs begun.

"I think that's a foundation a lot of people are looking to build on," Albemarle's economic development director Mark Donham said.

Along with \$16 million going into the Health

Science Center, the new graduate campus will bring about 200 students, faculty and staff into downtown Albemarle once it's fully established. That represents about an estimated \$136 million in economic impact for the community over the next 10 years, city staff estimates.

"There's been a lot of anticipation around that," Donham said. "And now that (construction) has begun, I think we'll see a lot of other projects move forward, too."



The Albemarle Hotel and Elite Uniforms are two Albemarle businesses counting on the new Pfeiffer Health Science Center to spark an economic revitalization in the downtown area.



In fact, one major project is already doing just that.

Over the next several months, the developers who purchased the Albemarle Hotel back in December 2018 — for about \$320,000— plan to finally break ground as well, Donham detailed.

Starting in early 2020, they will turn the building into 31 apartments and about 1,400 square feet of retail space. Construction is expected to reach completion by the first part of 2021.

“Several downtown property owners have also shown an interest in (creating above-retail apartments), too,” Donham said. “But right now, that’s all still at a planning stage.”

However, while housing development is one of the most readily recognizable impacts of the Pfeiffer construction so far, it certainly isn’t the only one. Already, the city is seeing an impact on other commercial efforts, too.



In fact, of the 16 businesses that have celebrated openings, expansions or relocations through the Stanly County Chamber of Commerce this year, nine were in downtown Albemarle and four were in the surrounding area, said SCCoC director Kathy Almond.

“Year to date... (the SCCoC) has recorded almost as many new members as we did in all 12 months of 2018,” Almond said. “That is a good sign that our local business economy is growing.”

And several of those new or expanded businesses will be directly impacted by Pfeiffer, she added.

For example, a couple of new real estate offices opened downtown this year which will benefit from the Pfeiffer related clients moving into the area. A new restaurant

downtown, SueJay’s, will get customers from the school. Even the recently relocated and expanded Elite Uniforms and Shoes, is anticipating business from the new campus.

“As a health sciences school, (Elite Uniforms) saw an opportunity to provide scrubs and other related needs to the students and staff there,” said Joy Almond, director of the Albemarle Downtown Development Corporation. “It’s one of the big reasons they relocated.”

New business owners Ron Perrine and Charity Barbee agreed that Pfeiffer has influenced them as business owners, too.

Earlier this year, they opened the 1891 Bed and Breakfast about a block from the Pfeiffer construction site, they explained.

SueJays Soul Food opened earlier this year. The local restaurant features soul food and is part of a downtown that is coming alive as a result of Pfeiffer building its Health Science Center a block away at the Five Points intersection.



“We were planning to open up in Albemarle no matter what,” Perrine said, noting that Barbee grew up in the area. “But knowing the campus would be right there definitely influenced exactly where in Albemarle we wanted to be.”

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So far, they haven’t seen much impact from that decision. Most of their boarders have come in for business or special events like weddings or family reunions. But they are anticipating a big impact as the Health Science Center nears completion.

“We’re about the closest place to stay right now,” Perrine said. “I expect we’ll get parents coming in for visits, guest speakers, visiting professors.”

In fact, author Mary Alice Monroe stayed there for a speaking engagement at Pfeiffer’s main campus in Misenheimer, he noted

“It’s things like that we’ll see more of,” Perrine said. “I think it’s promoting a healthy, growing atmosphere overall.”

The City of Albemarle has been pushing several downtown initiatives of its own over the past year, as well.

Some of those were curb appeal items, like planting trees down West Main Street, extending the number of trees with string lights, putting in more benches and repainting crosswalks.

Others were longer term investments, like purchasing land on Pee Dee Avenue that could be turned into parking, and continuing renovations of a former bank building on West South Street to use as a police headquarters.

“But especially, we’ve really been trying to facilitate more things for people to do downtown this year,” said Almond, the ADDC director.

Part of that has been through the Central School Auditorium, she detailed. Managed by the Albemarle Parks and Recreation Department, the new facility has been used to host everything from free movie nights, to performances by local performing arts groups, to hands-on activities in the downtown over the past year.

In addition, a private company — Carolina Treetop Challenge — partnered with the city to open up an aerial park just outside of the downtown this summer, bringing ropes courses and zip-lining to the city’s repertoire of activities.

Later this year, the ADDC hopes to add to that momentum by expanding the already popular Fall Festival, as well.

“We’ll do the regular costumes and trick-or-treating that Thursday, but then we’ve got all sorts of events planned for Friday and Saturday, as well,” Almond said. “Hopefully it’ll be the start of building up other downtown events, as well.”

So, while Pfeiffer may be trying to build up something downtown, it seems they’re not the only ones. Like foundations becoming visible, businesses and city departments seem to be moving new plans into reality, too.

“I think it’s the start of a lot of new opportunities for everybody,” said Almond. “And now we’re just starting to see it.” **A**



Pfeiffer
UNIVERSITY
Beyond Boundaries

How did the Pfeiffer project begin?

About three years ago, Pfeiffer president Dr. Colleen Keith approached the City of Albemarle with the idea of opening a downtown graduate campus. City officials and university staff began looking at a number of properties in the area to see if that would be possible, eventually honing in on a property near Five Points.

At the time, the property housed the Stanly County Museum. So, Albemarle council members worked out a land swap with county commissioners to obtain the property. Albemarle would give the county the former City Annex building on Second Street to house the museum (plus about \$48,000 to fix it up) and the county would give Albemarle the museum property. The swap took place in mid-2016.

Upon obtaining the property, the city granted it to Pfeiffer. The former museum was taken down later that year, and the university originally had plans to begin construction in mid-2018.

However, in the midst of its planning process, Pfeiffer was notified that their project was eligible for a loan from the United States Department of Agriculture. So, in late 2016 and early 2017, Pfeiffer began the application process, pushing back their construction date in order to see if they would receive those funds.

As they waited, the university had architects and engineers

draft plans for the Pfeiffer University Health Science Center. Conceptual drawings and further details were presented over the course of 2017.

Then in September 2018, the USDA officially granted Pfeiffer a \$34.5 million low-interest loan (part for their downtown campus and part for improvements to the main campus in Misenheimer). With plans already in place, the university was ready to begin construction and broke ground Jan. 17, 2019.

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STANLY Arts GUILD

In 1963, three women who gathered regularly to paint decided to form a guild so that other artists could join their “family” and enjoy as they did, the rewards of creating art in the company of others.

Now, 56 years later the Stanly Arts Guild flourishes, providing among other services, a gallery for selected artists to display their work. And for the community, an opportunity to see and purchase from an amazing collection of visual arts from many disciplines. Their Mission Statement clearly articulates the Guild’s scope of work and dedication to the community it serves:

To introduce the public in Stanly County and surrounding regions to the talented artists in the area.

The Stanly Arts Guild exhibition space (previously named Falling Rivers Gallery) is at 330 N. Second St. in Albemarle. The collection on view is from juried artists who represent a wide range of arts and crafts disciplines.

To achieve membership in the Guild, artists’ work is juried by a committee of three members of the board who themselves represent different disciplines. Selected artists join the Guild donating a nominal membership fee and a small percentage of their sales. Many of the gallery members are emerging artists who highly value the unique opportunity for their work to be seen and marketed.

To sponsor educational opportunities for potential artists

The Guild offers workshops to the public on a regular basis taught by experts in various disciplines. These workshops are designed for people of all ages who wish to develop their budding interests.

To nurture beginning artists with developing skills in how to promote, display, and market their work.

Experienced Guild members offer advice and assistance to new members regarding methods of display and suggestions for marketing their work. Social media becomes an important tool for developing markets.

Members of the Guild, in keeping with its bylaws, frequently partner with other non-profit community organizations to encourage individuals to explore the joys and benefits of artistic expression. One such event was a partnership with the Mary and Martha Center for Women and Community Care, an organization that provides counseling, referral and educational services to women and their families in times of crisis and life transition. Guild members worked with clients to create journals that incorporated a visual art component.

As another part of their service to the community, Stanly Arts Guild offers two \$1,000 scholarships annually. The Patricia Blake Hartley Scholarship is funded by her family for a rising college freshman planning to major in art, while a Guild funded scholarship goes to a college student from any year who needs additional funding to meet their college expenses.

The public is invited to participate in annual events including a wine tasting and shopping event called the Liquid Therapy Art Stroll, Welcome to Mystery with a silent auction and the added fun of dressing Steam Punk, and the Summer Arts Explosion and competition.



Brayden Meadors, winner of The Stanly Arts Guild Scholarship, receives the \$1,000 Scholarship from Lorrie Hatley, Stanly Arts Guild president.

Guild members were saddened when the building on Main Street was sold necessitating their relocation. The move was difficult, and the date for opening stretched further and further into the future as members struggled with the extensive repair and renovation of the new location. But like many dark clouds, this one had a silver lining.

Melinda Cooper, a manager at Lowe's Home Improvement heard about the Guild's dilemma and brought Lowe's Heroes to the rescue. This program was developed more than 10 years ago by Lowe's to encourage employees to team together, adopt a volunteer project with a local non-profit organization or public school and make a difference. These Heroes selflessly volunteer thousands of hours to improve their communities each year. The group of 'Heroes' who came to help the Guild laid flooring, finished bathrooms, built shelving, and replaced paneled walls. As a result of Lowe's help, the gallery re-opened Feb. 12, 2019.

At their new location they have "high visibility, easy parking, greatly increased exhibition space, workshop space and office space," states Lorrie Hatley, President of the Guild. "Since we opened in February, sales have tripled. We're very happy with the space."

The move, however, exhausted all funding and they are greatly in need of donations.

The Stanly Arts Guild plays a significant role in preserving and promoting art in the Albemarle community and the surrounding region. The gift of accessibility to see art, to make art, and to support art is beyond price.

Lorrie Hatley shares a poignant story that echoes many people's early experiences with tapping into the creative spirit.



"I was in eighth grade when we were given an assignment to create a brand using our own names. I thought and thought, but I just couldn't come up with anything. I was blank. My teacher said, 'not everybody is an artist.' I think she meant to comfort me, but her remark shut me down. I was in my mid-forties when I overcame my sense that I was not creative."

Once she shed that misperception, the flood gates of her suppressed imagination opened. She refers to herself as an "ADD artist working across many disciplines including polymer, steam punk, paper quilting and acrylic pours. Her work on exhibit in the gallery expands the imagination of the viewer with its unique and wholly original representations.

Her advice to everyone is, "Don't ever count yourself out."

For additional information on the organization, to donate, to join or to find out about all upcoming events, visit their website: www.stanlyartsguild.com. **A**

Artist Spotlight...

Sue Davis: Kaleidoscope Artist

Sue Davis makes kaleidoscopes as her primary art form, but fused glass is rapidly becoming her passion. "I call myself a 'process person' I see or hear about something and give it a try, with a little research and a lot of tenacity. Everything is a learning experience."

Recently Davis has been painting in acrylics and now several of her kaleidoscopes feature original art work. She began working in Fused Glass in 2005. For the most part she is self-taught, but formal study at Warm Glass in Clemmons, N.C. has given her the chance to work with more skilled artisans and well recognized international artists.

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Artist Spotlight...

Michelle Efird: Polymer Clay Artist

Five years ago, Michelle Efird was going through a stressful year. In an effort to relieve some of that stress, she began to crochet hats. One of her friends asked to have beads stitched onto her hat.

"I went online and found some that were polymer, and I was hooked. Polymer's my thing- there's no limit to what you can do with it." Efird crafts jewelry as well as three-dimensional pieces, "The clay is so versatile and there's something about color and creation...It's fun, just fun."

In her studio she points out a pasta maker bolted to a table with a motor attached through which she feeds the clay. Efird says her studio is her favorite room in her house. She spends as much time as she can in pursuit of excellence through study and work with fellow artists. She joined a group in Charlotte who include in their membership, Julie Eakes, a celebrity in polymer art.

Reflecting on her journey, Efird says, "I've realized that the things that we feel like we have to do prevent us from doing what we should be doing."



Artist Spotlight...

Wendy Hillhouse: Multi-Media Artist



Wendy Hillhouse's aunt was a painter who encouraged her interest in art from the time she was a child giving her brushes and paints. Over the years, Hillhouse has branched out into variety of mediums: precious metal clay, mixed media and enameling.

"I set up my studio so that I could move between projects without having to stop and clear a space. My desk is where I do calligraphy; in the back is where I work with metal; and I have areas for enameling and other projects.

She points out her set of hammers, their heads protected in baby socks; Each hammer costs \$75 and up. Her sense of order is explicit in cabinets whose drawers are color coded and neatly labeled. "Over here," she says at another multi-drawer cabinet, I keep objects that interest me and that I know I'll use at some point." Hillhouse finds peace and joy in her studio and her work.

"I love to dabble in making things," she says. "I love taking classes and learning new things."



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