

ALBEMARLE

Community Magazine

2018

ALBEMARLE PARKS SYSTEM REAPS THE FRUIT OF FIRM ROOTS

Inside:

- Reasons to #bedowntown
- Public House revives five points dining
- Hurdles no obstacle for state track champion



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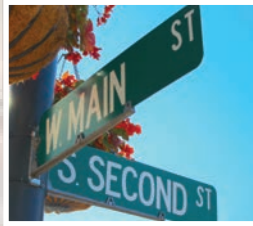
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Brian Hinson and family enjoy the
peacefulness of a visit to the lake.



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Downtown
ALBEMARLE
a part of it.



By Joy Almond
Photos by Shannon Beamon

Reasons to **#bedowntown**

Anyone who knows me knows how fond I am of downtown Albemarle. Read on for some reasons that you should love it, too!

We dig our history...

The Stanly County History Center has settled in to its new location across from City Hall. This is a great reuse of an empty space (formerly the city hall annex) that benefits the community. A branch of the Stanly County Public Library, the history center is also staffed with volunteers, and hosts a variety of programming for all ages.

The original train depot for Albemarle is still in use as an event facility at Market Station, and is a gateway to downtown. A campaign in the



The Stanly County History Center

late 1990s by the ADDC resulted in the depot being moved and revitalized as a gathering space for the community.



Albemarle Sweet Shop

We're sweet...

Albemarle Sweet Shop, a long-standing staple of downtown, is tucked away on King Avenue. Among the many delightful cakes, pies and fruit bars, the cheerful clown cookie is the Sweet Shop's icon.

GloryBeans CoffeeHouse is another place to grab a sweet treat, with desserts and a variety of lattes, frappes or a plain cup a' joe depending on preference. But perhaps the sweetest thing about Glorybeans is the way you are welcomed by owner Connie Blalock, who affectionately addresses all of her customers as "Sunshine."

We're active...

There are many health benefits to being downtown. The Stanly County Farmers Market is housed downtown at Market Station, and offers a variety of fresh locally grown produce and hand-made items.

The many opportunities for physical fitness include Albemarle Jazzercise, the Yoga Pilates Barre, Albemarle Crossfit and the Stanly County Family YMCA.

Vac & Dash is home to the Uwharrie Running Club, and hosts a variety of 5Ks and other running and cycling events, many of which take place downtown. A few doors down is Health Nutz, which sells health foods and supplements.

We give back...

Several organizations that help our community are housed downtown. Stanly County United Way campaigns to give financial support to other groups in need, and hosts a fun Ladies Fall Crawl downtown each year. Will's Place serves the community as a recovery resource center, offering assistance to individuals and families in their journey to recovery from substance abuse.

Monarch and GHA Autism Supports assist those with developmental disabilities to help them be an active and productive part of our community. GHA Autism Supports operates Second Street Sundries, a restaurant/coffee shop that employs the autistic.

The Albemarle Downtown Development Corporation works with a great pool of volunteers who donate their time to assist with special events and projects that help enhance the look of downtown to make it an inviting place.



The Stanly County Farmers Market



Starnes Jewelers



Second Street Sundries Employees



We support local businesses...

Downtown is home to many locally and family owned businesses; from the 111-year-old legacy of Starnes Jewelers to the recently opened Hilltop Seafood, a fish market owned by the Thepthongsan family. When you shop downtown, you're supporting your local economy.

Downtown is also home to organizations that assist with local business development. The Stanly County Chamber of Commerce offers great networking opportunities to help our local businesses flourish throughout Stanly County.

The Stanly Community College Small Business Center provides a wealth of information for those interested in opening a small business, from counseling to free seminars and workshops.

We're on the move...

Downtown Albemarle is on the cusp of a renaissance. Soon, groundbreaking will begin on the site of the downtown campus of Pfeiffer University, and with it will come graduate students that will need places to dine, live and play. The Albemarle Hotel is set to undergo a revitalization that will bring apartments to downtown. A building that once housed Home Savings Bank will be given a new use, as it becomes home to the Albemarle Police Department. These developments have brought a renewed interest in other downtown properties, as some of our vacant buildings are in the process of being purchased by those wanting to breathe life back into these beautiful spaces.

I could go on and on, but I dare say that one magazine column couldn't offer enough space to print all of the things I love about downtown. I invite you to visit and see for yourself; visit www.albemardedowntown.com to learn more.

Thanks for reading, and I hope you stop by and see what we're all about!

Sincerely,

Joy Almond

Main Street Manager and Director, Albemarle Downtown Development Corporation



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Public house revives five points dining

By Toby Thorpe
contributing writer

After opening in October 2017 in the former Pontiac Pointe space on East Main Street, business at Five Points Public House has continued at a “steady pace,” according to Chad Shumate.

Shumate, who opened the restaurant along with partners Chuck Craig, Dusty Mason and Josh Amick, serves as the restaurant manager as well. He brings 20 years of experience to Five Points, as he, along with Craig, has operated two similar restaurants in his native Gaston County over that period.

“We are glad to be here and we hope to build on the success we’ve had to this point,” he said.

The restaurant employs 40 people, with the work force split approximately half and half between full-time and part-time staff.

Even so, Shumate says staffing continues to be the eatery’s greatest challenge.

“This is a people business, so we are constantly on the lookout for quality people,” he said, noting that “we have a really good staff now that provides good service to our customers.”

And, as an Albemarle and Stanly County based business, Shumate believes it is important for the restaurant to support local citizens,

industries and organizations whenever possible.

“We are part of the community here,” he said. “Our owners are local, our employees are local, we bank locally, and we are not part of a restaurant chain. Because of this, we strive to stay local with our business dealings.”

In addition, Five Points does its best to be a good community partner.

“We are doing our best to support local events and charities,” Shumate said, noting the business has contributed to local schools and serves as a sponsor for various downtown events.

And in return, he noted that the area’s citizens and businesses have been welcoming as well.

“The community has been very supportive of us. Albemarle is a small town with really nice people,” he said. “And the ADDC (Albemarle Downtown Development Corporation) as well as the city government have been great to deal with.”

The restaurant’s upstairs dining area, which is available for rentals, is a feature for which Shumate is working to increase public awareness.





"It has been used recently for private parties and wedding rehearsal dinners," he said, "and we encourage anyone planning an event to come talk with us."

For now, however, the restaurant benefits from a stream of repeat customers, and the positive word of mouth from these satisfied diners continues to bring new customers in as well. The result has been a strong business performance and positive customer reviews.

"We've had really good feedback on our menu," Shumate said, "and our goal is to continue providing great food, consistent quality and excellent service." **A**

Five Points Public House is at 304 East Main Street, Albemarle. Visit 5pointspublichouse.com or call 704-550-9647.





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New campus promises downtown *sizzle*



When Pfeiffer University announced plans to build a graduate campus in downtown Albemarle, it was a bit like a volcano breaking the ocean surface.

Where before business floated by in quiet, familiar patterns — like the steady passing of waves — suddenly the whole downtown bubbled with talk, spewed out energy.

“It was a game changer,” Albemarle Economic Development Director Mark Donham said. “People were talking about how it could make a really big difference... they started looking at buildings down there as real investments.”

And not without reason.

Pfeiffer’s future campus represents a \$27.3 million investment in the downtown over the next 10 years.

Once at capacity, the satellite campus should also bring about 200 students and 17-30 full-time employees into the city on a regular basis, which could spur an estimated \$15.5 million in residential development.

“It’s that first domino we needed to push down to get things going,” Donham said.

But like most volcanoes that break surface,

the magma that sizzles over the waves is only a piece of the picture. A mountain moves up the ocean floor for years before anyone sees it. And when it finally does, there’s still a long way to go.

“What we’re seeing in the downtown now began years back,” Mayor Ronnie Michael said. “And hopefully, it’ll keep going for a long time yet.”

BELOW THE SURFACE

Perhaps the first rumblings of that recent downtown surge bubbled up back in 2013.

At that time, the city council commissioned a task force to analyze Albemarle’s economic weak points, particularly in the downtown.

“One of the biggest suggestions they came up with was to hire an economic development director to handle those initiatives throughout the year,” Michael said.

So about a year later the city hired Donham. And like a fault line splitting open, soon hot spots were welling up around the decision.

One of the first was at the Albemarle Hotel — an abandoned, historic building down the street from City Hall.

With Donham’s help, the city teamed up with Uwharrie Bank and Albemarle Downtown Development Corporation to perform a feasibility study on the building. The study revealed that the building could be profitably turned into apartments using historic tax credits.

At about that same time, they also partnered with the Stanly Convention and Visitors Bureau to determine the potential of a former Wiscasset textile mill at the edge of the downtown. That work also yielded positive results, suggesting the park could be profitably turned into a youth ball park.

“It wasn’t anything people could see physically, but it got the ball rolling,” Michael said.

To keep it rolling, the city decided to address another aspect of the downtown: it’s atmosphere.

“If you want life in your downtown, people have to feel at home there,” Michael said.

Largely, that seemed to fall into two categories: aesthetics and events.

In 2015, they contracted specialists to help with the former. The group interviewed



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hundreds of residents, business owners and visitors to create a 10- to 15-year streetscape plan for upfitting the downtown.

To help with the later, the city adopted the ADDC – which organizes most of the public events downtown – as a city department. With access to more resources, the organization could focus less on funding and more on activities.

Even decades before that, ideas were pushing up through the crust as well. Back in the 90s, the ADDC created several new public spaces, like Courthouse Square Park, Liberty Gardens and Market Station to improve the downtown atmosphere.

“There was so much going on,” Donham said. “It was aggressive work on a lot of fronts.”

So by the time the newly appointed Pfeiffer president Colleen Keith approached the mayor about a downtown campus in 2016, there was already a hotbed of effort accumulated there. In fact, that was a big reason why it was so appealing, Keith noted not long after their announcement.

“They have something vested in this, too,” Keith said.

NEW FLAMES

But like the first fiery traces of a volcanic island, there isn’t too much to see at first.

The potential development and property purchases surrounding Pfeiffer’s announcement are still mostly just faint rumblings for now, Donham said, waiting for Pfeiffer’s construction

before they bring their own plans to the surface.

But even in the seeming quiet, fiery developments are seeping up through the cracks more and more often now.

Since mid-2017, a new sit-down restaurant – Five Points Public House – has opened in the historic Pontiac building, just across the street from the future Pfeiffer campus.

In addition, private developers have purchased the Albemarle Hotel – the historic building that had a feasibility study co-sponsored by the city. It could be turned into 18-30 apartments – a potential \$5.5 million investment.

Pfeiffer is lined up to receive a \$23 million loan from the USDA. And once the financing is finalized, the university plans to move forward with construction.

“There are a lot of smaller projects that are waiting for that,” Michael said. “Once Pfeiffer starts they will, too.”

FIRE TO FERTILITY

But the real potential of these first eruptions is more in the environment they create, Donham noted.

In the same way that volcanic ash eventually makes for rich soil, those first developments are enriching the areas around them.

“I think the biggest thing is that it proves we can do market rate housing downtown,”





Pfeiffer president Colleen Keith

Donham said.

Over the past couple of decades, there have only been two housing projects in the downtown – one set of apartments at the former Lillian Mills textile plant, another at the Old Central School. Both had to use historic

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Right:
Albemarle Hotel

Far Right:
Five Points
Public House



tax credits to make their projects financially feasible.

"But that's not an easy process," Donham said.

Even if a building is considered historic, it is nearly impossible for the average Joe to qualify for tax credits, he explained. But the stronger the downtown market is, the less those credits will be needed.

"If people know they can get a return on their investment, they'll do it with or without credits," Donham said. "That's the environment this will create."

And not just for housing.

In mid-2018, a recreational business called Carolina Treetop Challenge, LLC decided to put an aerial park — comprised of ropes courses and ziplines — in an area just outside downtown Albemarle.

"It's a growing area and we think we can add to it," Ken White of Carolina Treetop said.

Once the business is up and running, it could see

as many as 30,000 visitors a year, studies estimate.

Moreover, one educational program could provide fertile ground for more, officials said.

While Pfeiffer currently plans to have two graduate programs at its new campus — occupational therapy and physicians assistant sciences — they are already considering others there as well, like genetic counseling and/or social work.

"There are some other educational possibilities that are floating around right now, too," Michael said. "If this goes well, it could open up the area to more programs of that kind."

So while it may all be sizzle and sparks to start out with, one day the downtown could be something else entirely. Not just a new possibility, but the heart of a rich new field. **A**

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Albemarle Business Center

Plans for Growth

By Shannon Beamon
staff writer

Downtown Albemarle isn't the only place new developments are surfacing. Out on the edge of the city, a commercial opportunity is cresting the waves as well.

Known as the Albemarle Business Center, the 282-acre site along U.S. Highway 52 Business South went under development this past year. Once complete, it could house up to 12 industrial sites.

"Which is something we're realizing we need more and more out here," Albemarle Economic Development Director Mark Donham said. "Right now, there's really no place (in Albemarle) available for industry to locate to."

While there is plenty of undeveloped properties and small commercial buildings in Albemarle, he detailed, there are only a couple move-in ready sites that can house a large industrial or commercial business. And without those kind of move-in ready sites, getting such businesses to locate to Albemarle could be tough.

"In today's competitive environment, it's rare for a (large) company to locate on an undeveloped property," said Brenda Daniels, who handles economic development for regional utility provider Electricities N.C. "New and expanding companies expect existing buildings or a prepared, shovel-ready site to shorten the amount of time needed for construction."

In fact, nearby cities such as Concord and Kannapolis have seen significant commercial development gravitate toward "spec" buildings — shell buildings built to general specifications so such businesses can move-in more quickly.

After hearing about that trend, Albemarle officials decided to create a move-in ready site of their own back in 2015. By the end of the following year, they had identified several potential sites for commercial development. By 2017 they took out a loan to purchase the \$1.8 million property on U.S. Highway 52 Business.

Since then, the site has received a \$750,000 grant from the N.C. Rural Infrastructure Authority to put in roads. It also qualified as an Electricities Smart Site, which guarantees water, sewer, electric, natural gas and broadband fiber services to any business that locates there.

"The mayor and City Council saw the need to take control of Albemarle's economic future to provide jobs to sustain our community and residents," City Manager Michael Ferris said. "Providing shovel-ready sites is significant step toward that goal."

Overall, the site will take another \$6 million to \$8 million to be fully developed. But if completed, it could bring in far much more to the city than it takes out. According to economic development studies, the site could attract \$82 million to \$100 million in private investment and employ anywhere from 2,000-4,000 people once fully occupied.

Highlights...

- 282 acre site
- Class "A" Corporate Center design
- Zoned Heavy Industrial
- Air attainment status
- Electricity provided by City of Albemarle
- Water and sewer provided by City of Albemarle
- Natural gas provided by Piedmont Natural Gas
- Telecommunications provided by Spectrum and Windstream
- Aggressive local incentives
- City owned business park
- Flexible lot sizes
- \$19,000 per acre
- 300,000 Labor Force within 30 Miles Radius

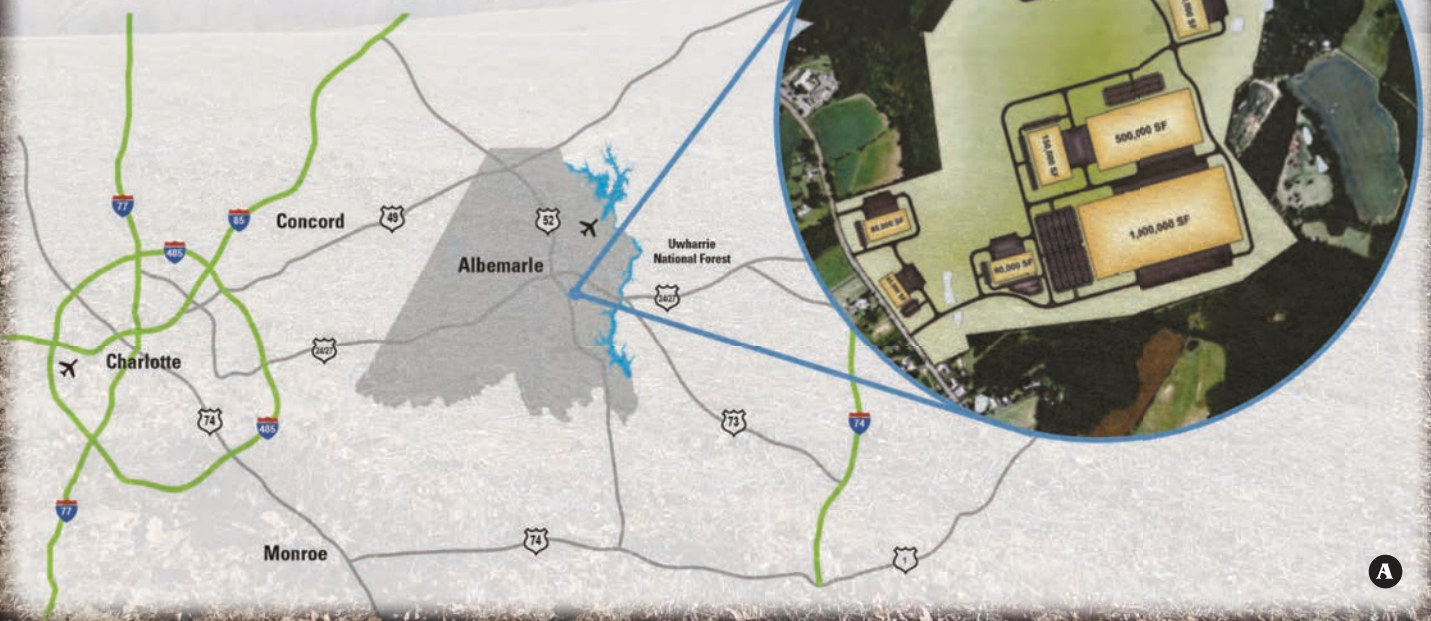
"We have a lot to offer out here, excess water, sewer, highly rated electric systems... we can be extremely flexible to an industry's needs," Donham said.

Paired with the city's location — less than an hour from an international airport and three hours from an international seaport — Donham has already heard some inquiries from businesses.

"Basically this gives us a space to market ourselves," he said.

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ALBEMARLE PARKS & RECREATION

Rock Creek Park

City Lake Park

ALBEMARLE PARKS SYSTEM REAPS THE FRUIT OF FIRM ROOTS

By Charles Curcio
sports editor

Albemarle's Parks and Recreation department employs 16 full-time people and up to 40 seasonal employees.

The history of recreation in Albemarle dates to 1963 and has evolved over time to include nine parks and community properties and two miles of greenways.

AP&R "has strived since 1963 to provide facilities and programs that improve the quality of life for everyone," said Lisa Kiser, director of Albemarle Parks and Recreation. "We invite you to experience and enjoy the options available through our department."

In addition to the parks listed below, AP&R has also renovated the Central School Auditorium, which is available for rental. Kiser called the new auditorium "state of the art" and invites the public to see a performance there.

"Albemarle Parks & Recreation has something to offer everyone," Kiser said.

ALBEMARLE SOCCER COMPLEX

One of the newest additions to the parks and recreation scene in Albemarle is the soccer complex located in front of Stanly Community College.

A partnership with SCC and funding from the North Carolina Parks and Recreation Trust Fund (PARTF), the complex on College Drive has three full size soccer fields, a concession stand and restroom facilities.



Albemarle Soccer Complex

The AP&R youth soccer program plays on these fields which can be reduced in size for youth games, along with clinics and camps.

The fields are also available for reservation and rental by groups and various soccer organizations.

CITY LAKE PARK

The youngest of the family, City Lake Park has a number of features sitting on Long Creek, the water supply for Albemarle for a number of years.

Anglers can fish from the banks of the lake and others can launch boats from the two boat docks at the park.

A number of walking and mountain biking trails wind their way through City Lake Park while three picnic shelters afford families a break from the midday sun.

City Lake also was the second Albemarle park to install a disc-golf course. Originally nine holes, the course has been expanded to a full 18 holes.

A covered amphitheatre with room for fans of music and other events also sits near the shores of the lake in the park. The amphitheatre and the shelters are available for rental.



HEARNE PARK

One of the more little-known parks in the AP&R system is sandwiched between where South First and Second streets diverge in Albemarle.

Part of the city's greenway, Hearne Park does not have facilities but is the home of Boy Scout Troop 82 and has a number of "memory trees" planted to honor distinguished members of the community.



DON MONTGOMERY PARK / OPTIMIST PARK

A pair of baseball fields off U.S. Highway 52 house a number of baseball teams during the seasons.

The long-time home of several local baseball teams, Don Montgomery Park is named in honor of an Albemarle native. Don Montgomery was a former Major League Baseball player and was inducted into the Stanly County Sports Hall of Fame.

Albemarle High School plays its games at Don Montgomery Park along with the Stanly County American Legion Post 76 squad. Don Montgomery also houses the Albemarle Babe Ruth Baseball teams.

On the other side of the parking lot behind the right field fence of the DMP is Optimist Park. The Albemarle Dixie Youth Baseball teams play on this field.

Both baseball fields have lights, while between the two parks are a picnic shelter, playground and restroom facilities.



CHUCK MOREHEAD PARK

Originally named Northwoods Park and renamed for AP&R's second director, Chuck Morehead Park stays busy year round.

The six lighted tennis courts at the back of the park are home to the Albemarle High School tennis teams and have hosted a number of conference tournaments over the years.

Also, basketball and sand volleyball players can both play under the lights at Chuck Morehead Park. A playground and picnic facilities sit next to both courts.

One of the region's premier and most challenging disc golf courses resides at the park, the 18-hole Fox Chase Course. The course winds its way through the various walking tracks located in the park.

Two different soccer fields house recreational games as well as annual high school cross-country meets.

A popular destination during the hot summer months is the large swimming pool, complete with a large shallow end as well as a 12-foot end to accommodate swimmers coming off the diving board.

Kiser also invited the public to “take your fur baby, aka puppy, to enjoy the brand new dog park” at Chuck Morehead.

JESSE F. NIVEN COMMUNITY CENTER

Another of AP&R’s recent changes was moving its headquarters from a small office at Rock Creek Park to the new Niven Center.

Located in the former Army Reserve center, the facility also houses the maintenance department for Albemarle Parks and Recreation.

The Stanly County Senior Center also operates its nutrition program from the Niven Center.

Homes of Hope, a nonprofit organization which looks to assist the homeless to become self-sufficient, also uses the facility.



Rock Creek Park



ROCK CREEK PARK

The granddaddy of all the parks in the Albemarle family, Rock Creek was originally constructed in the 1930s.

A Works Progress Administration project, Rock Creek had three features when it opened which it still has: a pool, an athletic field and a picnic area.

That picnic area now includes a covered picnic shelter between the pool and the softball field. Rock Creek’s softball field has lights as well, another addition to the park.

The park has gradually expanded to include a one-mile walking trail, one of the original “rails to trails” projects in the state.

Rock Creek also has an obstacle course as part of AP&R’s Summer Challenge program, offering kids the chance to enjoy outdoor recreation.

Located just off U.S. Highway 52 Business, the park is a stone’s throw south of the intersections of N.C. Highway 24-27 and U.S. Highway 52.



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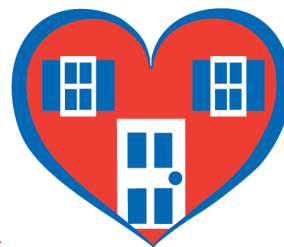
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E.E WADDELL CENTER

One of the busiest facilities in the AP&R system is the E.E. Waddell Center on Wall Street just off the N.C. Highway 24-27 Bypass.

Built in the former Kingville High School building, recent renovations have transformed the center into a place to host indoor events.

Director Billy McRae said the facility has to be booked six months to a year in advance of events because of the number of groups wanting to use it.

With the addition of central air and heat, the banquet room can host up to 278 people for wedding receptions, family reunions, birthday parties and baby showers. The room also has hosted legislative breakfasts, a Valentine's Day Ball and more.

Recent renovations through a partnership with the Albemarle Optimist Club have also transformed the outside of the Waddell Center. The former football field behind the gym now is a multi-use facility, with sand brought in to have T-ball games. Flag football games are also played on the field, while the field now has a .2-mile paved walking track, two butterfly gardens, along with benches and bleachers for sporting events.

The Waddell gym has also seen a number of recent repairs. All of its windows were repaired and the walls painted, while a new rubber basketball floor was installed.

Classroom space is available at the E.E. Waddell Center, as well as a playground, covered patio, weight room and library. **A**



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PILATES BARRE



FOCUSES ON FAMILY AND FITNESS

By Marina Shankle
contributing writer

For 10 years, The Yoga Pilates Barre in Albemarle has offered a place to find fitness, relaxation and strength.

According to owner and instructor Cindy Purser, yoga and Pilates can benefit anyone and everyone.

"Pilates and yoga are great complements to each other, and I strongly suggest integrating both into any fitness routine and healthy lifestyle," Purser said.

"Pilates is great to create a strong core and posture for overall health with functional exercises that improve quality of life. It also helps enhance focus and concentration because it is very detail-oriented, and self-awareness is key.

"Yoga is first and foremost a mindfulness practice where we set intentions for what we will choose to think of during our time on the mat. The physical care and challenges of the yoga poses were designed to help us learn to keep a calm mind and love and accept ourselves whether the poses feel easy or difficult to us. We stress the balance of effort and ease, finding your edge and learning to surrender."

Purser's background in dance and dance instruction led her to appreciate yoga and Pilates. She has been teaching children's dance since 1989, Pilates since 1999 and yoga since 2005 and earned Bachelor's of Creative Arts in



Dance from the University of North Carolina at Charlotte.

While teaching dance, Purser explored Pilates as a way to both prevent and heal injuries.

"It helped me to feel powerful and graceful and healthy," she said. "When I began teaching Pilates in yoga studios, I naturally found myself taking classes and falling in love with yoga because of all it does for my mind and soul along with the countless physical benefits."

Around 13 years ago, while attending a yoga class in a large Charlotte studio, Purser started thinking about returning to her roots in her hometown of Albemarle.

After returning to the area, Purser opened her own yoga and Pilates studio.

"I opened as Albemarle Pilates and Yoga on March 31, 2008. In September of 2016, I rebranded and changed the logo and the name to The Yoga Pilates Barre," she said.

Purser's studio has grown and changed in the 10 years since its first opening.

"We now have three to four classes a day, lots of special events and workshops, mobile classes at nursing homes and Pfeiffer University, and I have a heavy schedule of private clients," she said. "About six years ago we started adding Barre Fitness classes, which I love because I get to share my dance training, too."

The most important change, Purser said, is the studio's increasing focus on family and development into a family business.

"This was always my dream, and watching it morph into something that my husband and two sons all participate in and help with has been the most rewarding part of all," she said.

"My husband, Kelly Purser, discovered a love of yoga when we started dating, and he is very active in creating, planning and organizing events with me. He is always thinking of ways to grow and improve the business, both with building improvements and improving customer service. He cares about our business and is just as grateful for our students as I am."

Cindy Purser's two sons, Josh Megson, 17, and Lucas Megson, 14, also participate in the family business. They began as students in Purser's first Kids Yoga classes and now help out

with summer camps and anything that needs to be done around the studio.

"Josh has taken on a much bigger role as the manager of Yogi's Closet and he is currently working on his 200 Hour RYT [Registered Yoga Teacher]," Purser said.

"This summer, he is taking classes every chance he gets, and he's working the front desk as well. Both boys are athletes and have seen firsthand how yoga helps them in sports while preventing injuries and aids in healing."

Yogi's Closet is one of the many recent additions to The Yoga Pilates Barre and is a place where those interested in yoga and Pilates can purchase fitness apparel at discounted prices.

Purser is also adding more classes for children and families.

In the fall of 2018, the studio will grow its Kids Yoga program, with morning preschool individual classes and Mommy/Daddy/Caregiver and Me classes, along with Baby and Me classes.

"On Monday through Thursday afternoons, we are going to offer our elementary-age classes so the kids of our community can learn to take care of their physical and mental health through yoga," Purser said. "I have always wanted to bring more focus to kids because that is where my love of teaching began, and I think now is a great time to watch our seeds grow."

Purser also recently obtained her Broga (men's yoga) certification in order to help male participants, particularly athletes.

"I learned so much about the differences between teaching men and women and I've been able to apply that knowledge to all of my classes," she said.

Purser is looking forward

to earning her Yoga Therapy License for utilizing yoga to treating individuals with a variety of physical and psychological conditions.

"This work will be done one on one for things like chronic pain, autoimmune diseases, as well as depression, anxiety and addiction," she said.

"My work seemed to be organically moving in that direction, and I'm very excited about this education so I can broaden my scope on how to be of help to this community."

According to Purser, yoga and Pilates have a lot to offer the community, and she is excited about being able to share these fitness practices with her family and with others.

"I love watching people get stronger and more flexible, but most of all I love seeing people relaxing and treating their bodies with love and respect," Purser said. **A**

For more information about The Yoga Pilates Barre, call 704-986-3951 or visit theyogapilatesbarre.com. The Yoga Pilates Barre is at 239 North First Street in Albemarle.





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By Charles Curcio
sports editor



Hurdles no obstacle for state track champion

Albemarle High School has had its share of state champions over the years in high school athletics.

Whether the football teams of the mid-1950s and 2000s, to track athletes, the Bulldogs have been successful at the highest levels.

Fitting into that athletic tradition is rising junior Taniqua Knight, a standout on the Albemarle women's track team.

Two years ago, she claimed the 1A state title in the 300-meter hurdles as a freshman, which put her on the scene in track circles.

Fast forward to this past season, where Knight again won the same title for Albemarle in that event, finishing with a time of 46.47 seconds. Her finish named her to the MileSplit US second team as she won the event by .14 seconds.

Knight said her freshman year win added some pressure for her sophomore campaign, but she met those expectations.

"I had more competition; my head was boosted," Knight said regarding her win as a freshman. "I wasn't really trying my hardest; (winning) gave me a push."

Knight said the 300-meter hurdles fits her, saying, "I'm just hyper. I have a lot of energy, but I'm lazy."

The format of the hurdles, with more time in between each, gives her more time to sprint, which is an advantage in the race, she explained.

"I love the curve," Knight said of the part

of the race when it goes around the ends of the track. "It fits me; I just catch the wind."

She also competed in three other state meet events, taking seventh in the 100-meter hurdles in 17.31 seconds. Knight earned a silver medal as a member of the 4x100-meter relay team for the Bulldogs, and placed fourth in the 4x200.

Head coach Carla Ross said Knight is all about the curve, saying she and the Albemarle men's runner, Timothy Ridenhour, "have a different lean about themselves when they come into that curve. You can see them pull away from other kids. Once in the straightaway, it's a done deal."

An addition to Knight's training, as well as her teammates, came from new men's track coach Bernard Henry, who worked with both teams.

"(Coach Henry) bettered my form, helped me a lot with the drills we did," Knight said, adding Henry and Ross pushed she and her teammates harder this season.

Ross said she believed in Knight's potential as a freshman and continues to believe she can improve even more.

"I knew the potential she had; I know the potential she still has to get greater at the 300. When we go to meets, you could hear kids say, 'That's the one who won the 300 hurdles,'" Ross said.

The Albemarle's women's track coach said a number of college coaches have asked to see film

on her athletes, including Knight.

"They are raw material that can be converted into great runners, great sprinters," Ross said.

More work in mastering the event, even after two state title wins, is in order for Knight in the coming years, Ross said.

"You have to master one event, like the 300-meter hurdles (for Knight)," Ross said. "If I can get rid of her laziness...there is no telling what she'll be able to do."

Knight said she felt like she can be a role model for other students with her efforts on the track. However, she quickly added: "I don't think they realize you have to be serious about it. It's not, 'I want to jump hurdles because it looks like fun.' You have to take the time (to practice); you can't fool around."

Ross added she had more female athletes coming to her saying next year they wanted to run track instead of playing other sports.

"That's great; that's what I need. If I could get four more to put in what those eight did, we'd be in first place next year," Ross said.

The only way to get better, Knight said, is to practice a lot, which the track teams did, four to five days a week.

Ross estimated Knight and Ridenhour put in on average around 10 hours per week on just the hurdles, not counting practicing other events.

Within the team, Albemarle's male and female athletes competed against each other in practice, according to Ross, who said it motivates

both teams.

"It pushes the girls, but it also pushes the guys, because sometimes the guys take them as a joke...they see the girls can really run. They are very competitive with each other."

"I like racing with Tim at practice. He makes my time way faster. If I ran with someone else, I might feel like I didn't have to try as hard," Knight explained.

Henry said he and Tim, who everyone calls Bean, have a great partnership in practice, saying it started Knight's freshman year.

"He took her under his wing. They do something no one else did: the hurdles. It's difficult. There is a true difference between sprinters and hurdlers," Henry said.

"For those two and the other hurdlers, they have to be in top shape. They have a special bond."

Running against the Albemarle male athletes, Henry said, shows how much she loves to compete, which makes her a true athlete.

"She does not like to lose at all, especially to the boys in practice. They joke with her but she stays with them."

Even with the times she has posted in the 300, Knight said she can have faster times in front of her.

"Her best time is 46 (seconds) but I know at the speed that she can run, she could run a 44 or 45 easily. It's just going to take a little more effort, little more practice, and a whole lot more of this," Ross said, pointing to her heart.

Albemarle's coach added she wants Knight to feel like the 300 is her race and "nobody is going to beat me."

Knight said that perspective toward the event is something on which she needs to work.

"I'll be sitting in class and I'll look up times (of other runners)...it pushes me (to be better)," Knight said.

Because of the information and technology of this age, being able to keep up with other runners' times in events becomes a new kind of "king of the mountain" challenge, Ross said.

Knight said she does not have any aspirations to compete in the Olympics, saying: "I don't want to go to school for running. I love running." However, she added her feelings

toward it "may change over the next two years."

Knowing she is being recruited by college coaches, Knight said, "I still don't know what I want to do. I know it's a big thing for them to be asking me, but I don't know what I want to pursue in college."

Ross said one coach in particular said if Knight had been a senior their school would have offered her a full scholarship.

"Even if she doesn't want to go to school to be (an Olympic runner), that doesn't upset me as long as she gives me 110 percent now while I have her," Ross said.

Adding how excited she is to be coaching Knight, Ross said: "I knew what she could do and can still accomplish."

Ross said Knight is the first one to admit she can be lazy, "but as she matures, she'll outgrow that. Right now, everyone is scared to run against her because she's a two-time state champ."

Regarding the possibility of becoming a four-time state champion, Knight said it's a goal for her, to win those four rings. Beyond the hurdles,

however, Knight added she wants to add a state title in the relays with her teammates.

"We can get one next year," Knight said.

In relays, she and her teammates motivate and push each other, Ross said, adding they will come up to her during meets to change the order in which they run in the relay.

"As long as we win the race, I don't care how you do it," Ross said.

Henry said next season bodes big things for Knight, saying she "can break some records for our school, conference and state...she is a very hard working girl and determined in being the best at what she does."

"Albemarle sports are coming back," he added. "People better watch out."

Knight said her hope is to get more girls to run track for Albemarle this upcoming season. For those who never ran before, she offered the following advice.

"There is a first time for everything; you never know until you try. We will get better at it." **A**



The Albemarle track team had a strong season, with the men finishing second in the state while the women's team had a state champion in Taniqua Knight in the 300-meter hurdles. From left, front row: Austin Efird, Somajhe Porter, Taniqua Knight, Timothy Ridenhour, Armani Baldwin, Kaleah Gaddy, Jylukus Hyatt and Daelen Turner; middle row: Armanie Sellers, Zycoria Tillman, Julius Smith, Noble Washington, Logan McDonald, Jadan Chambers, Ayanna Ridenhour and Kadajah Little; back row: Josh Smith, Antonio Burns, Zachary Bryant, Isaiah McCall, Shyheim Little, Da'Sean Horne, Deja Polk, A.J. Pinto, Micah Edwards, Will Little and Josh Megson.

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