

Locust

Community Magazine

Spring 2018

DOING THEIR PART

**Locust citizens
celebrate those
driven by duty**

- » Locust hits grand slam with renovated ballfields
- » Club enters another world through reading
- » Beulah Building has history



A Merry Little Christmas
Locust Police Department
creates holiday magic

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Locust Police officer Brittany Tucker snapped this image of the Locust Veteran Memorial at sunset.

Bottom right:
Locust Police officer enjoys a hug of gratitude from a Shop with a Cop participant.

*Backdrop on Contents: A snowy day in Locust.
Photo by John Huneycutt Photography

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Locust Community Magazine
is a yearly publication of

The Stanly News & Press

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Locust Community Magazine
may be found online at
www.thesnaponline.com



LOCUST, NORTH CAROLINA

Take a stroll, through a city with a soul



B.J. Drye
Editor
The Stanly News & Press

“My kind of town, Chicago is ...”
Well, Locust may not be Chicago, but that’s a good thing.
What is Locust?
It describes itself as a “city with a soul.”
I can vouch for that.

I grew up on Elm Street in an area that was between the city limits of Locust and its neighbor of Stanfield at the time. I have many fond memories of the area. Whether it was heading to the Burger Shack (later Boomer’s) to get a chicken leg and order of potato wedges with Dad, plus an apple turnover, or trekking over to Video Corner with Mom to pick up the latest VHS selection, or stopping in at Jim’s Barber Shop for a haircut (still there, now known as Locust Barber Shop), the city with a soul will always have a special place in my heart.

The city has seen a big transformation since I moved away nearly 15 years ago to the heart of Stanly County. There was barely a fast food chain there 15 years ago, and now they line the highway, along with other chain businesses, a satellite Stanly Community College campus and a campus to Carolinas Healthcare System (now Atrium Health).

The highway changed as well, taking in much of the city’s business life.

But the city reinvented itself, springing forth with many new businesses in a new City Center. Some of these businesses are unique to the city, while others in City Center and elsewhere in the city are branch offices of larger companies elsewhere in Stanly County.

In this magazine devoted to Locust, its residents and neighbors, we talk about life in today’s city, key events throughout the year, the community’s youth and how the city is making national headlines.

The city’s eye for sports and recreation has won it national accolades. On the following pages, we profile the city’s director of parks and recreation, her vision for the future and touch on how the last

director helped leave a lasting impact on the city’s recreational facilities.

The city has always had a rich history, and a feature on the Beulah Building reveals how the structure has remained one of the last remnants of a time long ago, and how it is becoming relevant to the business world and community once again.

At the city’s public school, children have found a new way to love reading in the form of a book club. They even offer suggestions for future readings.

Veterans paid a price for our freedoms and now the city has paid them back in the form of a memorial. It is a tribute to the hundreds of veterans who have called Locust home throughout the years.

In another form of service, the city’s police department has found a way to help children at Christmas. This magazine offers a glimpse into the magic of Shop With A Cop.

There are so many reasons a visit to Locust — or a move to this western Stanly city — may be right for you.

There’s only one way to find out.

Take a trip, to the city with a soul. **L**



Recreation leader wants to add more family events

By Shannon Beamon
Staff Writer

Stanly County native Emily Jones is taking the reins of the city's Parks and Recreation Department.

An "Endy girl" who got her degree in Parks and Recreation Management at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, Jones was named the city's Parks and Recreation director in late 2017.



**Locust Parks & Recreation
Director Emily Jones**

"I don't think I could ask for anything better," Jones said.

Jones fell in love with the Parks and Recreation department in Locust long before taking up her new position there, she noted. Working first as an intern for the department during her college years and then as events coordinator after graduation, she got to know it first-hand over the years.

"It's a very strong department," Jones said. "I hope I can leave it stronger."


And just as her predecessor Tate Osborne left his legacy in ball games, Jones hopes to leave hers in family-oriented events.

"I'm a wife and a mother myself, so I have a good gauge of what families are looking for," Jones said.


As events coordinator, that meant starting a weekly Farmers Market and amping up movie nights at Locust Town Center. In the future, it could mean finding a more permanent location for the Farmers Market or ramping up other smaller events.

"It's such a great community already," Jones said. "I'm looking forward to adding to it in any way I can." **L**

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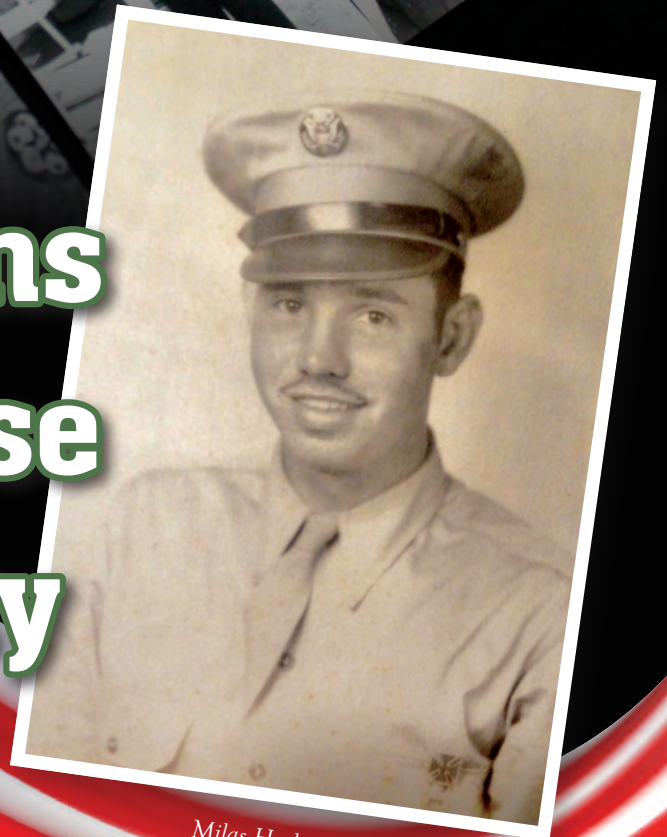
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DOING THEIR PART

By Shannon Beamon
Staff Writer



**Locust citizens
celebrate those
driven by duty**



Milas Hatley

Digging a hole probably never felt so miserable.

As close as he was to Nazi soldiers, Milas Hatley knew it could save his life. But it didn't change the fact that his muscles were sore and his blisters were cracking ~ and it was going to be another cold, cold night.

What was worse, the Army's orders had them digging smack dab in the middle of a farm this time. A quaint little place with rolling hills and tidy rows. Not unlike the farms back home in Oakboro.

As scoop after scoop of rich earth got thrown aside, it was hard not to feel like it was a waste digging foxholes on a farm.

But the morning after Hatley's platoon tore up that farm, the farmer and his wife came out to see the soldiers. Not to survey the damage, but to talk with them, joke with them. Thank them for fighting and serve up cups of hot, fresh coffee.

"He always said it was the best coffee he had in his life," Patty White, Hatley's daughter, said. "And I think it was about more than the coffee."

After a lot of cold hard nights, it was perhaps the first time he felt warm through and through.

That same desire to warm veterans' hearts is what fueled Locust's recently completed Veterans Memorial, as well.

About three years ago, members of a local Veterans of Foreign Wars chapter ~ Hatley among them ~ approached the city about putting a memorial at the town center.

"They wanted to do something that would make other veterans smile," Locust Planning Director Scott Efird said.

A veteran himself whose great uncle lost his life in World War II, Efird understood the sentiment and quickly jumped on board. Soon the veterans had the city council's go-ahead and a couple of volunteers to design a memorial and paint a mock-up of it.

"So many people stepped up ... but really, those (veterans) are the ones that drove it," Efird said. "They never stopped pushing."

And not because they wanted to get recognized themselves, he was quick to note. In fact, Hatley didn't want his name on the memorial at all, his daughter added.

But sometimes veterans find themselves in a hole even on the homefront. And it takes a little kindness to warm them up again.

Hatley experienced the need of a little warmth himself upon coming home.

Shot while helping rig a bridge with explosives, the Army infantryman came home early, but not before the experience dug a hole of a different kind in his soul.

"You've got to realize, they were kids when they went out of there," Patty White said.

In fact, many had never even been out of the county, Efird noted.

But come war time, they found themselves on boats bigger than they'd ever seen, dropped off in a foreign country and



told to shoot at people whose language they didn't even know.

"And they'd been taught you don't shoot, you don't kill," White said. "He told me, 'That was one of the hardest things. But after those first few bullets flew over my head I knew they weren't going home or I wasn't going home.'"

When he did make it back, he did his best to set it behind him. He made a home in a then-secluded area of Locust, took up farming and later worked at Union Carbide.

Patty White remembers he would never watch war movies, never hunt, never touch a gun at all if he could help it.





“It’s not the ‘Locust Veterans Memorial,’
it’s just the ‘Veterans Memorial.’
It’s for all veterans.”

— Scott Efird, Locust Planning Director

But the hole was already dug.

“He would have nightmares,” White said. “All those years later and [it] stayed with him.”

In fact, the last week before he passed away, Hatley struggled with nightmares about being out on the battlefield, she noted.



“He was very proud that he served, but it wasn’t something he wanted to think about,” White said.

But even in that pitfall of duty, there was something that always warmed him.

Whether it was the English couple who kept coming to visit him in the hospital after he got shot, or the people who offered him and other vets a ride to Charlotte whenever they wanted it, it was gestures of kindness that always lifted his spirits.

“Those were the stories he would tell about the war,” White said.

As he got older, people started to secretly pay for his meals. A waitress left a thank you note on his receipt one time. A Desert Storm veteran came over to thank him at a restaurant.

“The first time it happened... he was just beaming,” White said. “He wasn’t going to ask to be recognized, but it meant a lot to him.”

Like that visit from the farmer and his wife all those years ago, it wasn’t the food or the coffee that really mattered, she noted.

“I think it was just that somebody recognized what he did,” White said.

Overall, it took two years to raise enough funds for the Veterans Memorial.

Local businesses and residents across Locust contributed, as well as the city and local VFW posts. Several others contributed labor and equipment for the project.



However, during those two years, about half of the remaining World War II veterans in the city passed away, Hatley among them.

"I wish they could have seen it, I really do," Efird said. "But I think they knew they accomplished what they set out to do."

So far about 260 bricks and memorials have been sponsored there. The names on them recognize people from wartime and peace, and from every part of the country.

"It's not the 'Locust Veterans Memorial,' it's just the 'Veterans Memorial,' " Efird said. "It's for all veterans."

After all, a veteran serves all people, Efird pointed out.

"That, to me, is what is so inspiring," Efird said. "These were ordinary guys, but they felt obligated to serve the whole ... It's like that TV show 'M*A*S*H.' They're a fun group of guys, all grins and antics, but when the time came to buckle down and do something, they did their part."

And whether it is a memorial in front of City Hall, a thank you on the street or a cup of coffee after a cold, cold night, there's always a way to pass on that warmth. **L**



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Take Me Out to the Ballpark

Locust hits grand slam with ballfields

By Shannon Beamon
Staff Writer

There's some stiff competition out there in the world of youth baseball and softball, and it's not just among the kids.

For local communities, league games and travel tournaments represent tens of thousands of dollars to their local economies.

"Just think about it. You've usually got about 10-25 teams a tournament and each of those teams has 10, 15, 16 kids," Tate Osborne, Locust's former Parks and Recreation director, said.

Add that up and it's about 100-375 people coming into town a weekend. Not counting moms and dads and grandmas and grandpas who come to watch their kiddos round the bases.

"Those people are going to eat at your restaurants, pick up stuff from your stores," Osborne said. "It's a big business."

But it's also competitive.

Nestled in the heart of softball country, there are dozens of ballfields and ballparks in Stanly and the surrounding counties, Osborne explained. Leagues and tournaments have their pick of the crop.

"If you want to stay in the game, you have to invest," Osborne said.

Locust got one runner on base in terms of investment years ago. Back when they first built Officer Jeff Shelton Memorial Park, the city put in four fields, making it the third largest ballpark in Stanly and surrounding counties to this day.

Another runner made it to base a few years ago when Osbourne insisted they hire part-time workers to drag the fields between games and tidy up the park over the summer.

"People have always said they love our fields," Parks and Recreation Director Emily Jones said. "We couldn't do it without those workers."



Finally, bases were loaded with the time the city invested in tournaments. Between rain cancellations and unexpected upsets, Osborne explained, games often have to be rearranged or rescheduled. They made a point to work with leagues on that.

But even with all that, there was one area they kept striking out.

“People would always talk about how great our fields were, but the bathrooms were terrible,” Osborne said. “It was a big drag on us.”

Until 2017.

In order to bring the park home, the city decided to invest more than \$800,000 into renovating its current clubhouse and bathrooms, building a new bathroom building and replacing dirt paths throughout the complex with asphalt pathways.

The last part of that was funded with state grant money, but the city decided to take a big swing on the rest.

“It’s definitely paid off,” Jones said.

This past year, not only did they see more tournament requests, but the Officer Jeff Shelton Memorial Park was recognized as a 2017 Outstanding Park by the National Softball Association.

About 10 facilities receive that title across the nation each year, staff said. Locust was the only city in its region (North Carolina, South Carolina, Virginia) to be recognized in 2017.

“It’s an outstanding recognition when you consider our population compared to other places around us,” Councilman Roger Hypes said.

The two other largest ballparks in the area are located in cities that are 10 to 30 times the size of Locust (Salisbury’s Community Park and Concord’s W.W. Flowe Park).

However, while Locust may be smaller by population, it has managed to hit a grand slam, the association insisted. It awarded the park based on all those things it used to load the bases: the recent renovations, staff’s willingness to adapt to the league schedules, the quality of its fields and the growing size of Locust’s operation.

“About 18 months ago, you ... committed an investment,” Locust City Administrator Cesar Correa told city council members when the award was presented. “And it shows.”

While Osborne went on to a new career about a month before the award was officially bestowed, he remains proud of that, too.

“It meant a lot to not just me, but my team, to get that award,” Osborne said, adding that the association notified him before he left. “The guys who worked the weekends and took pride in that facility, they’re amazing ... this represents a lot of dedication from a lot of people, whether that’s the guys who dragged the fields or council who invested the money into it.”

While it’s a different kind of ball game, turns out it still takes a team to take it home. **L**



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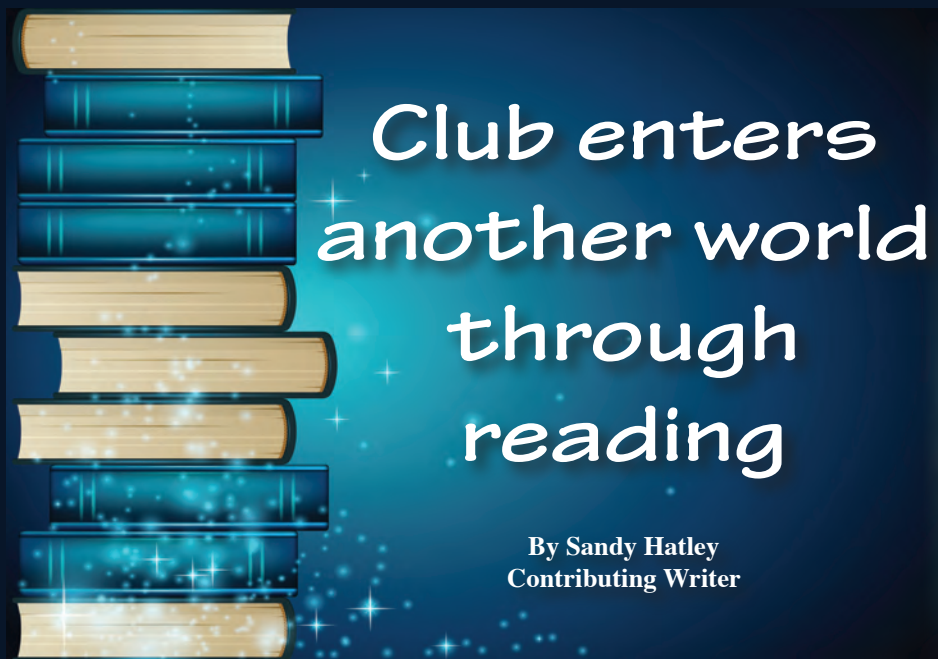
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Why would approximately 50 fourth and fifth graders willingly elect to stay after school for an extra hour one day a week? It's because they have been cast under the spell of the magic of reading.

"Reading aloud with children is known to be the single most important activity for building the knowledge and skills they will eventually require for learning to read," said Marilyn Jager Adams, a visiting scholar at Brown University.

The late Dr. Seuss agreed in rhyme: "You're never too old, too wacky, too wild, to pick up a book and read to a child."

Locust fifth grade teacher Bailey Herring McGuire also recognizes reading's importance. She picks up a book and reads to not one child, but 50 children.

Tapping into these young minds, this teacher has formed a weekly book club. In its second year, Tuesday afternoons have become a favorite with this group of literary hungry youngsters. They settle in with their snacks and gather around to hear oral readings by McGuire.

The room is quiet, respectful and almost anxious as they await to hear "the rest of the story" from their current novel. McGuire is reading from the New York Times best selling story, "WISHTREE," by Katherine Applegate.

The book is on loan to her by fifth grade student Anslee Austin.

"My aunt gave it to me for Christmas. I loved it so much that I gave it to Mrs. McGuire," Austin said. As the teacher read, students were transported into another world.

The book's narrator is Red, an old oak tree, with 216 rings of wisdom and a story to tell, along with a crow named Bongo and a host of animals that seek refuge in Red's hollows. It is a story of kindness, friendship and hope.

"Friendship doesn't have to be hard," the tree says.

The plot focuses on this special tree where once a year people write wishes and hang them on its branches. As it stands between two homes, one young resident scribbles, "I wish I had a friend."

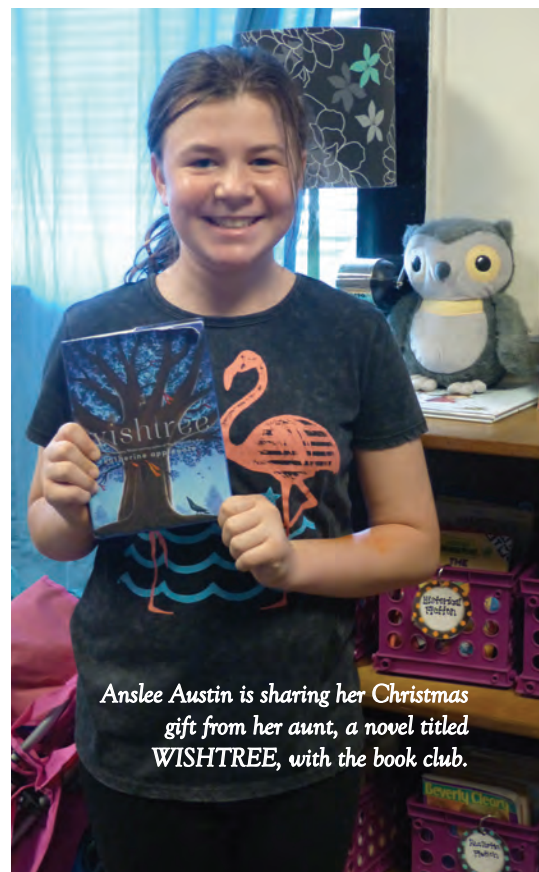
McGuire begins the meeting by recapping the story and identifying the problem: The wish writer's family is Muslim and someone has carved the word "LEAVE" into the tree's trunk. As a result, the police are contacted. "It's like a hate crime," the Locust teacher explained.

The neighboring homes used to associate with one another, but that relationship has ceased.

"They're afraid of differences," one student interjected during the review.

"I like the way you're thinking," the teacher responded. Then McGuire launched into the read aloud, pausing to ask questions or generate student responses.

"The flashlight sliced through the darkness," she read, then added, "I really like that wording."



Anslee Austin is sharing her Christmas gift from her aunt, a novel titled WISHTREE, with the book club.



Bailey McGuire's class is filled with students during her weekly after school book club.

Later, she threw in a grammar review.

"‘Their eyes glowed like little moons.’ That’s a simile."

As the story unfolded, the tree broke the "don't talk to people" rule when the two neighboring children started to walk away.

"STAY!" Red called after them. During a mid-story break, the book club members shared their passion for reading.

Breahana Kennedy, 10, conveyed, "I love to read books and learn more about books."

"I like to read and be read to," added Brandon Howell, a fifth-grader.

Students also discussed their reactions if a tree were to speak.

"I'd be scared," shared fifth grader Caroline White.

Alaina Jones, also in fifth grade, admitted, "That would be cool because I've never heard a tree talk. It might scare me a little, but I would listen because you never know, it might have something important to say."

Apparently, this group of Locust Elementary fourth and fifth graders have a lot to say, hear and learn as they gather each Tuesday in McGuire's room for an hour of magic. **L**





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BEULAH BUILDING

has a

History

By Sandy Hatley
Contributing Writer





Refurbished office space in Beulah Building for Barbee Realty



Kayla and Christy Willis of Carolina Tax Service located adjacent to Barbee Realty on the ground floor of the Beulah Building

If buildings could talk, the Beulah Building on Main Street would certainly have quite the story to tell. Now located at 217 W. Main St., the building has been in three different locations and served as a church, youth center, bridal shop and now a real estate agency and tax office, with plans for more additions.

The need for the building resulted from worship services that began in March 1882, when evangelist W.B. Arrowood traveled from Concord to conduct meetings in Stanly County.

The townspeople gathered inside the old Brattain School House, located two miles east of Locust Level, the western Stanly County city's original name (which was shortened to Locust on May 29, 1894). When attendance exceeded the school's seating capacity, an assembly was held to establish a church. On Oct. 17, 1883, 18 members organized Beulah Church, only the second Presbyterian one in Stanly County. (The first was in Norwood.)

Erected Jan. 1, 1885, the initial structure began as a one-room wood framed church. A few years later, in 1889, members decided to relocate the building to be near Stanly Hall School, which was under construction by the Presbyterian church.

Two acres of land on the Charlotte Highway were purchased; the building was disassembled and moved into the city limits of Locust Level. It is rumored that each piece of lumber was carefully numbered as it was removed and then transported by horse-drawn wagons to its new location. The first recorded meeting in its new site was Oct. 2, 1889.

Beulah's membership continued to grow. Electricity was added to the building in 1935, and at some point, the wood frame building was brick veneered. With continued growth, a building committee was elected on Aug. 25, 1957, to select a site and make plans for a larger facility. The plans were approved by the church on Dec. 8, 1957, and a new building was erected facing N.C. Highway 24-27.

Scott Carpenter, a Locust resident, had multiple generations of family that attended services at the church over the years.

"We have a long lineage at Beulah," he recalled.

Services ceased inside the old Beulah Building. For a while, its framework served as a youth center.

Locust Planning and Zoning Director Scott Efrd shared fond memories of his association with the Beulah Building.

"When I was growing up, the Beulah Building was used for a youth center for Locust Presbyterian Church," Efrd said. "It had a basketball goal in the main part of the building because the ceiling was so high. We always has a great time there as kids. It was like a place of our own to enjoy the fellowship of other kids. Great time. A lot of great memories there."

The facility was eventually neglected and fell into disrepair. With its windows out, it stood neglected and seemingly forgotten. However, in December 1979, the entire building was moved (in one piece) to its third and current location. It was refurbished and took on a new life as a business center. Since then, the building has served as a sales center for various retailers, including The Bride's Choice for 10 years.

The bridal salon's original owner, Kim McIlwaine, reminisced, "When the doors opened to the Beulah Building in 2007, I realized that this would be where we would make our home. What a unique setting for a bridal shop as the young brides would try their dresses on right in the very area

that many couples said their 'I Do's' in years past. Wow, this was very humbling. Many solid marriages were performed in this very sanctuary that became pillars to our community. I am humbled that I had the opportunity to open a bridal shop and continue to help establish and build many solid marriages."

Mcllwaine sold the business in 2015. It closed two years later. Now the Beulah Building serves as offices for Deanna Barbee of Barbee Realty and Carolina Tax Service.

"It's neat to have two mother/daughter businesses in the same building," shared Carolina Tax Service's Christy Willis.

Barbee and her daughter, Britt, manage the realty business while Willis and her daughter, Kayla, run the tax office. Both offices occupy the ground floor, but Barbee has plans for the upper level.

"I wanted to give back to the community. I have a vision to offer a place to support other ministries such as the Esther House, Bridge to Recovery and foster families," Barbee conveyed.

The real estate agent is planning a clothing closet for the second floor space as well.

"I want to offer clothing, bedding, toiletries. New or lightly used things to give someone just starting out. All of us have items in our closets with the tags still on them."

Not open to the general public, the closet will be accessible by referrals only. Barbee will accept donations of new and almost



Submitted photo- Group picture of Barbee Realty employees (L-R) Barbee's daughter - Britt Woodie, Deanna Barbee, Brittany Smith

new items. All donations will receive a tax deductible receipt.

"We hope people will give their very best, not leftovers."

There are plans for a weekly Bible study for women, too. Barbee also hopes to provide space for counseling and support groups and resources such as a little library with self-help books.

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One outreach that she is already partnering with is Jami's Halo, a 501c3 nonprofit organization. Paula Fox of Locust, a registered nurse and licensed grief counselor, is offering assistance to adults, children and families who have suffered losses. The caring mother lost her oldest daughter, Jami, at age 23, in an automobile accident in 2012.

"She had a servant heart, always reaching out to others."

Fox wants to continue her daughter's legacy and assist others with their emotional needs.

"My goal is to follow God's plan," Fox explained. "I ask the public to be patient with us as we figure it out."

Barbee explained, "It will take us about six weeks to get everything up and going."

The upstairs is currently undergoing renovations.

"The owners, Pauline Almond and her

son, Hoyt, have been an absolute blessing. They have gone above and beyond making needed repairs and are so excited to see new life in the building," Barbee stressed.

Almond's late husband, Reece, purchased the building and had it moved to its current site. It was in agreement with his wife who is now in her 90s. Their son, who resides in Winston-Salem, now manages the property.

Former tenant McIlwaine recalled, "Mr. and Mrs. Almond, the owners of the Beulah Building, believed in me and what we wanted to establish. My fondest memories were days when Mr. Almond would frequent our shop and he would always say, 'Pauline, when we get married again, I want you to wear this dress' and he would walk through my shop picking out dresses for her...so precious. I will be forever grateful for all the wisdom Mr. and Mrs. Almond instilled in my life."

A framed record of the building's history hangs in the entrance way of the Beulah Building. The last paragraph reads, "While

it is not expected to render as great a service in the future as in the past, it can still be of much service to this area. It is being dedicated toward that goal."


Barbee is determined to achieve that goal.

"We've been blessed. This is a way to give back and come full circle with the Beulah Building. To do what the church was meant to do, find the needs in the community and meet them," she said.

"We want this to be a place for people who are hurting, struggling, dealing with a loss. We want to listen and be an encourager."


Perhaps the Beulah Building will have more stories to tell as her new mission unfolds. **L**

To make donations and inquire about services, email Barbee at barbeerealty@gmail.com. For Jami's Halo, Fox may be reached by call or text at 704-791-5326.



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A Merry Little Christmas

Locust Police Department creates holiday magic

By Shannon Beamon
Staff writer

The holiday magic began with lights.

Prior to that, the 20 kids selected for the Shop with a Cop program in Locust avoided officers' eyes. They kept their eyes down during breakfast, mumbled softly whenever someone asked them what they wanted for Christmas.

But as they stepped outside, police cars began to flicker, began to flash.

"How's that for some Christmas lights," an officer said as he led them out to the parking lot.

Like the strobes on the cars, the kids' faces lit up. They ran out the door and raced for the nearest blinking vehicle, where they met their assigned officer with a high five or begged to use the car speakers to call out "Merry Christmas" to parents gathered outside.

"Seeing that change come over them, that's what gets me," Locust police officer Kevin O'Connor said.

He and fellow officer Brittany Tucker have been organizing the Shop with a Cop event for three years now. It pairs up officers with children from low-income families in the western Stanly County area to go Christmas shopping.

"We got to help out with one in Badin for a couple of years and it was just amazing," Tucker said. "We wanted to bring it here."

With the help of police departments in Stanfield and Oakboro, they've now loaded up about 100 kids into their flashing cars to go Christmas shopping over the years.

"It's our way of working some holiday magic," O'Connor said.





That magic grew stronger with the presents.

After riding down to the Wal-Mart in Locust in a convoy of whirring police cars, kids flocked into the store, some pulling their officer by the hand, some skipping ahead.

Selected from families facing both tough financial or medical situations, each was given about \$300 to spend on gifts ~ more than any of them had ever spent at one time.

At least half had to be used on clothes, however, not that it phased the kids for long. Whether picking out PJ Masks pajamas, or trying on a new pair of boots, or getting one of the officers to try on sparkly ear muffs, the displays of clothes seemed to have every kid grinning at some point.

“They outgrow everything so quickly at this age,” said Dorrie Webster, grandmother to a few of the kids on the 2017 trip. “You can hardly keep up with it.”

With that in mind, several of the kids picked out clothes for their siblings at home, too. A pony shirt for a little sister here, a jacket for little brother there.

But it couldn’t distract the kids from the second part of their trip for long.

As the halfway point in their funds got closer, the word “toys” came up more and more. Sisters Sandy, Raeanna and Jaelynn Wilson made a contest of getting to the bikes first. Emma Melton chatted with her



officer about Legos. And soon basketballs were bouncing, skateboards rolling.

"I just love when he sees something and he looks at me and I get to tell him, 'Yeah, you can have it,'" Locust Police Officer Rick Crayton said. "It's like he's amazed every time."

As if to seal the day with magic, it was snowing when they left.

"In the end, everything always works out just right," officer Brittany Tucker said as they wrapped up the 2017 event. "Just right."

As the drifting flakes fell, it was a good reminder of all the little things that pile up to make magical moments happen.

How donations from local businesses and individuals across western Stanly made

the magic of the Christmas presents possible. How donations of time from off-duty officers ~ who hailed from Mint Hill, Charlotte, the N.C. Highway Patrol and the Sheriff's Office, as well as Locust, Stanfield and Oakboro ~ made magic happen with lights and sirens.

"We may organize it, but they do the important part," O'Connor said. "We are blessed with such a great community. We couldn't do it without them."

And as snowflakes fell outside, the magic of that seemed hard to deny.

"I love you," Emily Sexton told the officer carrying her gifts.

And all he could do was grin back. **L**



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What's Happening in Locust?



APRIL 10 KINDERGARTEN REGISTRATION NIGHT

Bring children's records and any questions to this registration night with staff and teachers.

When: 6-7 p.m.

Where: Locust Elementary School

APRIL 14 SUMMER CONCERT SERIES (Band: Summer Daze)

For eight years, the community of Locust and surrounding areas have enjoyed the Concert Series in Locust's Town Center. Concert nights feature bands from different genres including country, beach music, bluegrass, folk and today's popular hits.

When: 6 p.m.

Where: City Hall's "Back Yard"



APRIL 14 EXPERIENCE LOCUST



Meant to give people from Locust and the surrounding communities a taste of what Locust is all about,

Experience Locust brings together some of the city's favorite restaurants and businesses. Setting up booths across the Town Center, the day features food, games, music, raffles and more.

When: 6 p.m.

Where: Locust Town Center

APRIL 28 MOVIE NIGHT

Grab a lawn chair and a bag of popcorn for these family-friendly events. Shown on an inflatable screen on the lawn behind City Hall, Locust's summer movie nights are free and open to the public.

When: Sundown

Where: City Hall's "Back Yard"



MAY 12 HANDS ON LOCUST

Hands On Locust is an event that gives kids the opportunity to get their hands on the vehicles of their dreams. Kids will have a chance to climb in, sit on and learn about the variety of services in the Locust area. The event is free and open to the public. Come see dump trucks, tractors and more.

When: 10 a.m. - 12 p.m.

Where: City Hall's "Back Yard"



MAY 12 MOVIE NIGHT

When: Sundown

Where: City Hall's "Back Yard"

MAY 19 SUMMER CONCERT SERIES

(Band: The Rick Strickland Band)

When: Evening

Where: City Hall's "Back Yard"

Thursdays — Farmers Market

From local produce, to plants for the garden, to handmade crafts, the Locust Farmers Market adds local flavor both to home and table.

When: 11 a.m.-4 p.m.

Where: Corner of N.C. Highway 24-27 and Vella Drive



For more details about upcoming events in Locust, contact Locust Parks and Recreation Director Emily Jones at events@locustnc.com, or call City Hall at 704-888-1566.

**JUNE 16
SUMMER CONCERT SERIES**

(Band: Right Turn Clyde)
When: 6 p.m.
Where: City Hall's "Back Yard"

Thursdays — Farmers Market

When: 11 a.m.-4 p.m.
Where: Corner of N.C. Highway 24-27
and Vella Drive

**JULY 21
SUMMER CONCERT SERIES**

(Band: Vahalla)
When: 6 p.m.
Where: City Hall's "Back Yard"



Thursdays — Farmers Market

When: 11 a.m.-4 p.m.
Where: Corner of N.C. Highway 24-27
and Vella Drive

**AUGUST 18
SUMMER CONCERT SERIES**

(Band: Lauren & Lane)
When: 6 p.m.
Where: City Hall's "Back Yard"

Thursdays — Farmers Market

When: 11 a.m.-4 p.m.
Where: Corner of N.C. Highway 24-27
and Vella Drive

**SEPTEMBER 8
MOVIE NIGHT**

When: Sundown
Where: City Hall's "Back Yard"

**SEPTEMBER 15
SUMMER CONCERT SERIES
& FIREWORKS**

(Band: Fantastic Shakers)
When: 6 p.m.
Where: City Hall's "Back Yard"

Thursdays — Farmers Market

When: 11 a.m.-4 p.m.
Where: Corner of N.C. Highway 24-27
and Vella Drive

**OCTOBER 20
MOVIE NIGHT**

When: Sundown
Where: City Hall's "Back Yard"

Thursdays — Farmers Market

When: 11 a.m.-4 p.m.
Where: Corner of N.C. Highway 24-27
and Vella Drive

**DECEMBER 15
BREAKFAST WITH SANTA**

Enjoy a pancake breakfast with the guest
of honor, Santa Claus. Tickets are \$10.
Reservations may be made online or in
advance.
When: Morning
Where: Locust Community Building

TO BE DETERMINED...

BARK IN THE PARK

Bark in the Park is a special event for dogs
and their owners. Participants will have the
opportunity to visit and talk with local pet
vendors and rescues, as well as enter their
furry friends in a variety of contests.
When: 10 a.m.-12 p.m.
Where: Jeff Shelton Memorial Park
(Dog Park)



CHRISTMAS PARADE

From the Grinch to Santa, reindeer to
snowmen, Elsa to the Peanuts, the floats
at the Locust Christmas Parade include all
kinds of holiday traditions. Pair that with
candy and family activities, and it'll make
anyone's eyes twinkle.
When: TBA
Where: Locust Town Center and side streets.



For more details about upcoming events in Locust, contact Locust Parks and Recreation Director Emily Jones
at events@locustnc.com, or call City Hall at 704-888-1566.

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