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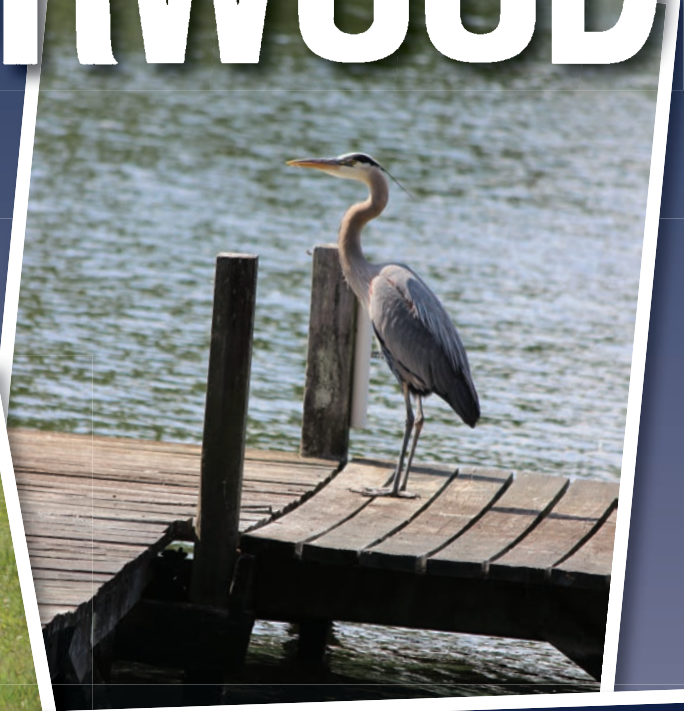
NORWOOD

COMMUNITY MAGAZINE

In this issue...

- **Lake Tillery Equestrian Center Trots Into Lessons, Therapy**
- **Family Treehouse Climbs A New Height - Unique Getaway**

In NORWOOD & Around



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About the Cover

Jazlynn Gardner, daughter of

Danny Gardner and Kristy Cauble

dances in the gazebo at

Darrell Almond Park.



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Cemetery markers beget tales of town history

By Sandy Hatley

The first settlements in the Norwood area of Stanly County began in the 1740s with settlers from Delaware and other middle Atlantic colonies following Indian trails and rivers. These early settlements were established along the local river valleys. One family, the Colsons, chose to settle near the confluence of the Rocky and Pee Dee rivers. (This area is known as The Fork, named for the fork of the two rivers.) Nearby, the town of Norwood was incorporated in 1881.

“One of the first things the town did was establish a town cemetery,” said local historian Les Young.

“In 1922, the Methodist Church moved bodies to be interred in the town’s cemetery. At about that same time the Presbyterian Church also removed theirs. This was told to my mother by Otto Mabry, the Methodist sexton and longtime

chief usher, who was a veteran from WWI. Mother was involved in historic preservation. For me, researching history is a hobby.”

Young’s family moved to Norwood in 1939. Les was born the following year. The 77-year-old gleaned information about his southern Stanly County community by listening to verbal accounts from others.

“As a small boy, I would sit on the floor and listen to older ladies in the neighborhood call names and give accounts of things that happened in Norwood.”

A look at the tombstones in the town’s oldest cemetery is like opening the pages of a history book on the town of Norwood. Many of the town’s governmental leaders, war veterans and prominent citizens from the 19th century are laid to rest there.

The first appointed mayor, Capt. David N Bennett, and the first elected mayor, M.E. Blalock, are entombed in the town’s first graveyard. Bennett moved from Chesterfield, South Carolina, to southern Stanly County after the Civil War. He bought a significant amount of land in the area and went into the real estate business. The businessman was instrumental in getting the town of Norwood incorporated. He was appointed as Norwood’s first mayor in 1881. Blalock was later elected as the second mayor of the town.

Thomas Colson, a merchant and a farmer, was another citizen who was instrumental in the town’s establishment and growth. As was Marshall Barnhardt, who served as one of the town’s mayors and operated Rocky River Grist Mill.

Also entombed is Dr. Waddell, a Civil War surgeon. Waddell Town, a neighborhood in

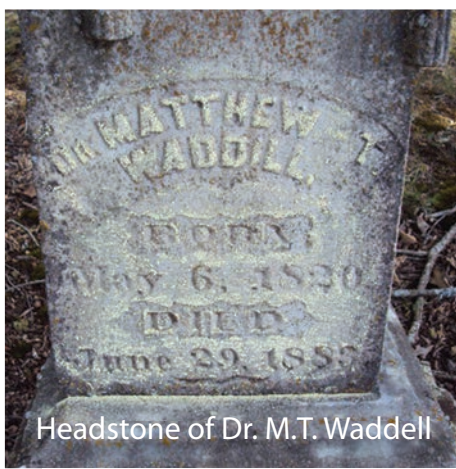
town, is named after the man. (Another Norwood community, Bennettsville, is named for Bennett.)

“Upon returning from war, Dr. M.T. Waddell, fearing that the Union might confiscate his properties, he having been a Civil War officer, placed his holdings in his wife’s name and divorced her. Mrs. Atkins and Dr. Waddell continued living together as husband and wife for the balance of their lives,” explained Young.

Eli Shankle, a Civil War soldier, has his remains in the historic cemetery. He walked all the way home to Norwood from Charleston, where he arrived by boat from captivity in the north. It was Shankle’s land that was purchased by the Cottonville AME Zion Church.

Another Civil War veteran resting there is Henry Clay Turner. He was one of the merchants in town and owned a large store. He died in 1893.

Dr. Thomas Hathcock was a World War I surgeon who volunteered and spent time serving his country in France later in life. Dr. Hathcock practiced medicine in Norwood from the late 19th century until the early 1940s.



Headstone of Dr. M.T. Waddell

Then there’s Walter G. Snuggs, who was a former Norwood chief of police who was killed in service to his town. Kirk Furr, while digging a water line ditch with a pick and shovel, got into an argument with Snuggs and shot the police chief.

According to Young, “Snuggs was alive when he was placed on a train to Wadesboro (to receive medical aide), but he did not survive his wounds. Furr departed Norwood, hiding on that same train, and fled to Georgia. He was captured, tried, and

sentenced. While detailed to a railroad right-of way work gang, Furr darted across the tracks ahead of an oncoming train and vanished, never to be found. Some say Furr may have gone to England.”

If you have a chance, stroll through the Norwood Cemetery located just a few blocks off U.S. Highway 52 on North Kendall Street. It will be like stepping back into the past and browsing the town’s history.

“My parents are buried in the town cemetery. As I go over to take flowers, I sometimes take time to look at some of the markers and the dates. I will probably be buried there,” Young thoughtfully reflected.

“A committee, Friends of Norwood Cemetery, has been established for the restoration and continued improvement of the cemetery. Plans and fund raising will be announced when all official paperwork and authorizations have been completed.”



Headstone of Captain David Bennett and his wife, Mary



Headstone of Walter G. Snuggs

LAKE TILLERY

EQUESTRIAN CENTER

TROTS INTO LESSONS, THERAPY

By Toby Thorpe

At one time Hannah Stroupe drove her daughter, Hailey, an hour each way to Charlotte for equine therapy. But that was before she heard about Lake Tillery Equestrian Center, located just south of Norwood, about a year ago.

"We were excited to find a place close to home," said Hannah, who lives in Cottonville. "Hailey loves her weekly session, and she definitely brings it to our attention if we have to miss a week."

Jennifer and Barry Hutchens own and operate the center, located at 9610 Lisenby Road in Norwood, and in addition to conventional riding and horsemanship instruction, offer therapeutic lessons.

"I grew up around horses," says Jennifer, a Norwood native and the head riding instructor for the facility. "I worked for DSS (Department of Social Services) at one time, but this is something I had always been interested in doing."



Hailey Stroupe and Barry Hutchens

And as a result, she and husband Barry opened the facility four years ago. Since then they have built a client base centered mainly in Stanly County, but with customers coming in from Montgomery and Anson counties as well.

"We teach riders from beginning through advanced, whether they are a regular rider or therapeutic," she said. "We focus on teaching a skill for the therapeutic riders – it's more than just a pony ride ~ they are learning all aspects of horsemanship regardless of skill levels."

"We have 20 to 25 students a week, and we also sponsor the Trotters 4-H Club and take part in local competitions," added Jennifer, who is certified by PATH International (Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship), and CHA (Certified Horsemanship Association) as a riding instructor.

In addition, the facility is recognized as a "Certified Safe Farm" by the North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service.

The farm is home to eight horses.



Hailey and Ozzie

"Actually seven and a half," quipped Jennifer, who noted that Ozzie, their miniature therapy horse, "isn't big enough to count as a full one."

Ozzie's smaller size and gentle nature have made him a favorite to youngsters at the center, and as a therapy horse, he is a regular visitor to libraries, schools and assisted living facilities in the area.

"Visiting with Ozzie is a community outreach service that we offer to the public, and we work on donations only," she said, adding that groups interested in having him visit should contact the center.

Barry, who grew up in Hillsville, Virginia, serves as the trainer and farm manager, and recently completed an advanced training program through Gable Horsemanship, having served as manager and trainer at several facilities before moving to Norwood.

"We would like to expand the Therapeutic Riding program," he said, "but the expense



involved has held us back from going to the next level with our certification," noting that the cost of some requirements, such as purchasing a hydraulic lift for disabled riders, is significant.

"We have a 501(c)(3) application pending," he said, "and once we get that, it will qualify us to apply for grants from organizations such as the Christopher Reeve Foundation. But for now, we are doing all we can do."

Both Jennifer and Barry noted that they could use volunteers at the facility during lessons and instruction.

"Volunteers would need to go through



Aliye Mabry and Legend

some basic training," said Barry, "but it's nothing really complicated."

Laura Mabry and daughter Aliye, age 10, arrived at the center and were next in line for Aliye's Saturday morning session, and watched as Hailey Stroupe's preceding lesson concluded.

"Aliye tried different therapies," said Laura, "play therapy, pediatric therapy and so forth, but they weren't working. But we live on a farm, and Aliye relates to animals better than some people. Since beginning therapy here a couple years ago, Aliye has experienced stress relief, and had fewer seizures."

As Hailey rode her final lap around the arena, accompanied by Jennifer and Barry, Hannah spoke about the progress she has made since beginning therapy.

"We had heard that it (equine therapy) would help special needs youngsters with muscle tone and motor skills," she said. "Hailey started out on the horse just doing a slow walk. Over time, she has moved up to a trot. She has learned balance and improved her coordination, and is learning how to steer the horse and navigate."

And Hailey's enjoyment of her time on horseback was evident when Jennifer asked her if she was ready to get down.

"Nope," said Hailey. 

LAKE TILLERY EQUESTRIAN CENTER

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Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/carolinaequineenterprisesllc/>

Services: Lessons by Appointment. The facility also offers birthday parties, riding camps, mounted archery clinics, horse shows, horses for sale/lease, consignment services, horse hauling and transport, and facility/arena rental.

NEW LIFE breathed into old building

Norwood Elementary School

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**“Norwood
Elementary
is a place where
friendships are
formed, learning is
lasting and school
is an extension
of family.”**

By Sandy Hatley

Last summer, Norwood Elementary School underwent major renovations in the K-2 building. Originally constructed in 1970, the structure featured an open floor plan with the media center located centrally in the core of the building.

Todd Bowers, director of maintenance for Stanly County Schools, outlined the details of the construction project.

“We installed permanent classroom walls where we had partitions,” he said. “We enclosed the media center with walls so there would be less disturbance both in the media center and surrounding classrooms when instruction was taking place there.

“The bathrooms were totally renovated. In the old bathrooms, the sinks were along a wall outside of the bathrooms. These served both girls and boys. The duct work and controls for the HVAC system was totally renovated. The building was initially set up for the open classroom configuration which did not allow us to control individual room temperature. We had zones for certain areas of the building with a temp sensor to control each zone. So whichever room the temp sensor was in when it was satisfied, the other rooms would also lose conditioned air whether they were at setpoint or not. We also updated the building management system — the system that controls heat and air.”

The renovation project cost, spanning the 2016-17 and 2017-18 school years, totaled more than \$1.1 million for design and construction, according to Nancy Hatley, Stanly County Schools chief financial officer.

Cathy Holland, Norwood School secretary, expressed her appreciation for the improvements.

"I would like to express our gratitude to the Stanly County and Town of Norwood community," she said. "We would not be here today without the tremendous support of our parent and town community members, including the citizens, board members and local officials.

"I would like to especially thank (former) Superintendent of Schools Mr. Josey, for his leadership and unwavering support throughout the project. I would also like to recognize and thank Todd Bowers, director of maintenance facilities, and his team for his leadership in the project, and the Department of Public Facilities for their support in ensuring that the project was a success from start to finish.

"Norwood Elementary is a place where friendships are formed, learning is lasting and school is an extension of family," Holland continued. "For these things, the Norwood School community and I would like to say thank you for making the extraordinary and ordinary happen in our beautiful school building. The renovations to our schools makes a difference for our students' learning every day. As a team, we have brought our new learning environment to life through community, creativity, innovation and project based learning."

There are plans for more renovations in future.

"We had hoped to replace the air handler and DX unit for the building, but did not have funds to accomplish this. Fortunately, that is something we can come back and do at a later time and it will not affect anything that was done during the renovation," Bowers said. 🐾



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A man in a yellow polo shirt and blue cap is captured in the middle of a golf putt on a green. He is wearing white golf shoes and a blue cap with 'PING' written on it. The background shows a lush green golf course with trees.

Piney Point's roots grow a course of fiscal survival

By Ritchie Starnes

In the wake of an economical downturn and recovery, Piney Point Golf Club scrambled to save par.

A decade ago golf courses across the country were still reeling from the ripple effects of the Great Recession. Many golf courses subsequently collapsed under the financial strain, especially those built to promote swanky housing developments. Add other variables associated with keeping a business afloat during a perilous economy and operating a golf course is as difficult as a lob shot.

Piney Point was not immune to the ill effects of the recession. Membership at the semi-private club fell. And while golf memberships remain way down from its heyday of about 460 members in 1998, total memberships, golf and classified, have bounced back to within 100 of the club's peak.

"Things got tight between 2006 and 2015," said Dave VanDeventer, Piney Point's club manager and golf professional. "The economy, housing crunch, stock market — people had less disposable income."

Instead of retreating and waiting for better days, Piney Point took a different route.

"We went with the aggressive approach," VanDeventer said. "That's when we came up with the all-inclusive packages."

Piney Point began offering packages to encourage membership. At \$150 per month, members and their household families can enjoy unlimited golf privileges that include a cart.

"We strive to keep the game affordable," said Scott Kennedy, club president.

There's also the Junior Executive membership that caters to those up to age 30. At \$85, they enjoy the same amenities.

Piney Point has also invested in its course.

In 1998, Piney Point revamped its greens and bunkers to Professional Golf Association specifications.

Fast forward to 2016, at a cost of about \$80,000 the club converted its greens from bentgrass to a Bermuda hybrid, called Champion. It's the type of grass found at many upscale courses like Quail Hollow, host to the PGA's annual Wells Fargo Championship.

Trees were pruned to allow more sunlight on the greens, a necessity for healthy growth.

New sand was added to the bunkers.

Plans are afoot to convert the fairways to a new type of grass, a Bermuda hybrid. The cold-tolerant turf allows for longer playing seasons.

Another appeal at Piney Point is its player-friendly course. While players like a challenge, they also expect a course to be fair. And a player-friendly course hastens the pace of the game.

As for the game's downside, golf tends to be too time-consuming and too expensive, Kennedy said.

Piney Point plans to stave off both pitfalls.

"We want to keep the game fun," Kennedy said.

They also want to ensure the game remains popular for the next generation.

"After the baby boomers age out, we worry about the golf industry," VanDeventer said.

To keep youngsters interested in the game, Piney Point is home to two PGA Junior League teams aimed at kids 13 years old and younger.

In Stanly, all of the middle schools, with the exception of Albemarle Middle, field a golf team.

Today's game, however, still depends on adults and remains a steady pastime for those middle-aged and retired. With the average age of Piney Point members at 50-plus, VanDeventer recognizes the club's bread and butter player. In fact, he thinks Norwood and Piney Point could benefit more from the retirement sector.

"It's the perfect community for retirees," he said. "I wish we had a retirement community in Stanly County."

VanDeventer also recognizes what works today won't necessarily work long term.

Piney Point has also been the beneficiary of closures.

Once the Badin Inn and Country Club shuttered its operation, many of its regular golfers turned to Piney Point. Many of the tournaments that once called Badin home have since allowed Norwood to host the events.

While Red Bridge Golf & Country Club, of Locust, is partially located in Stanly County, it's more of a high-end course with a focus on Charlotte's market. Like many contemporary golf clubs, Red Bridge is designed to promote a housing development.

Incidentally, VanDeventer said studies show it takes a population of about 50,000 to sustain a single golf course. Stanly County is home to approximately 60,000 residents.

"A poor man's country club," said VanDeventer, recalling someone's description of Piney Point's operational blueprint.





"I didn't especially like what he said, but..."

Nestled two miles south of Norwood along rolling hills sloping toward Lake Tillery, Piney Point's mature golf course ranks among Stanly's hidden gems. It's also among the county's few recreational spots that has learned to blend a storied history with today's expectations.

Piney Point provides the amenities of a country club at working-class rates.

"We try to offer services like a country club through out programs," VanDeventer said.

In fact, Piney Point could neither survive solely as a private club nor as a public course. It's semi-private model is ideal for survival.

"We have to have the public pay. We can't survive without it," VanDeventer added.

The relationship appears to be a fruitful partnership that not only works, but enjoys

a promising future.

Piney Point averages about 70 golfers during weekdays and 100 duffers per day on weekends. It averages 25,000 rounds of golf annually, still down about 1,000 rounds from its peak.

However, there's no goal to completely return to its previous pinnacle. Such crowded play might disrupt its preferred momentum.

More traffic at Piney Point translates into increased revenue besides golf. The club's snack bar has become a community staple with neighbors frequently stopping by for lunch without any intention of playing golf.

"The snack bar revenue has increased 43 percent over the past year due to increased traffic with golf, swimming pool and added customers that do not play golf," VanDeventer said.

Over that same span golf revenue grew by

26 percent, with the pro shop and driving range realizing a 20 percent spike as well.

One of the club's summer amenities that experienced the sharpest rise is the swimming pool, which contributes to the extra traffic at the snack bar. Pool revenue increased by 174 percent in 2017 due to an increase in new members, which generated more traffic, VanDeventer said.

Piney Point's pool, which is open Memorial Day to Labor Day, has become an appealing draw by itself at a family membership rate of \$200. Pool interests jumped after the closure of a swimming pool that served nearby Anson County, VanDeventer said.

Efforts are underway to link pool and golf privileges.

"We are currently trying to create something that would be tailored more for summer that would include the pool and golf," VanDeventer said. "Currently, we have a social classification that is year-round

that includes the pool, one round of golf for an adult per month and unlimited golf for children. But, the dues are \$60 per month year-round and we don't have many in this class."

A number of programs and events are specifically tailored for Piney Point members.

"Members here love tournaments," VanDeventer said. "That may change as they get older. And a younger generation might not be as competitive."

The club is presently enjoying a healthy membership with room for modest growth and a careful eye on the future.

"Our club is like no other. It's operated by its members," Kennedy said. "We have the right people in the right place. We just give 'em some guidelines and stay out of the way."

About Piney Point Golf Club

Piney Point has evolved into exactly what it was intended — a course for everyday folks.

Back in 1962, Congress allowed the Farmers Home Administration to issue loans to rural communities with populations less than 2,500 to convert farmland into recreational ventures as a way to stimulate local economies.

Norwood qualified for the conditions as Kermit L. Young and Robert L. Isenhour launched efforts to secure a loan for a golf course.

As the first in the nation to apply for such the special FHA loan, the process

took numerous meetings before the men landed the loan for \$260,000.

However, there was one condition to the loan — raise another \$40,000 to qualify.

Charter memberships were then sold to raise the match, with more than 200 area residents each paying \$200 for a membership. Along with \$40,000, the \$260,000 loan with a 40-year term was obtained.

A newly formed board of directors purchased 165 acres from Jack Lee amid plans to start construction.

After J. Porter Gibson was contracted to design and build the golf course, construction began in 1964, with the course opening later that same year.

Before construction could be completed on the final nine holes, a rainstorm led to flooding that resulted in property damages. As a result, the board of directors negotiated a second loan from the FHA in the amount of \$38,600 to cover damages.

By the mid 1980s, Piney Point paid off its FHA loans in about half the time of the original terms.

Every year the Isenhour family holds an annual tournament at Piney Point in honor of Robert Isenhour, called Bob's Bash. About 200 golfers participate in the two full shotgun rounds, making it one of the largest tournaments at the club he helped start.

Not only was Isenhour instrumental in building the course, he also recruited

players of all levels to golf at Piney Point. "He was big in giving back to the community," said son Robbie Isenhour. "We hold the tournament to keep his name and legacy going by helping the community."

The 13th annual tournament in 2018 raised \$10,000 for a fund at First United Methodist Church in Norwood, designated to aid those experiencing financial hardship. 🕊

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A nurse's compassionate duty nets spiritual reward

By Sandy Hatley



When you mention the name Sarah Lee, visions of sweets might be conjured up in your brain. If you live in Norwood, you still think sweet, but you visualize a hard working, dedicated and compassionate lady named Sarah Lee.

Lee serves as Norwood's First United Methodist Church's parish nurse as part of the Faith Community Health Ministry of Atrium Health (formerly Carolinas HealthCare System). Serving as a volunteer, she works to bridge faith and medicine to promote health and wholeness of mind, body and spirit for individuals, her congregation and her southern Stanly County community.

"I like this more than anything that I've ever done," explained the retired South Piedmont Community College nursing instructor.

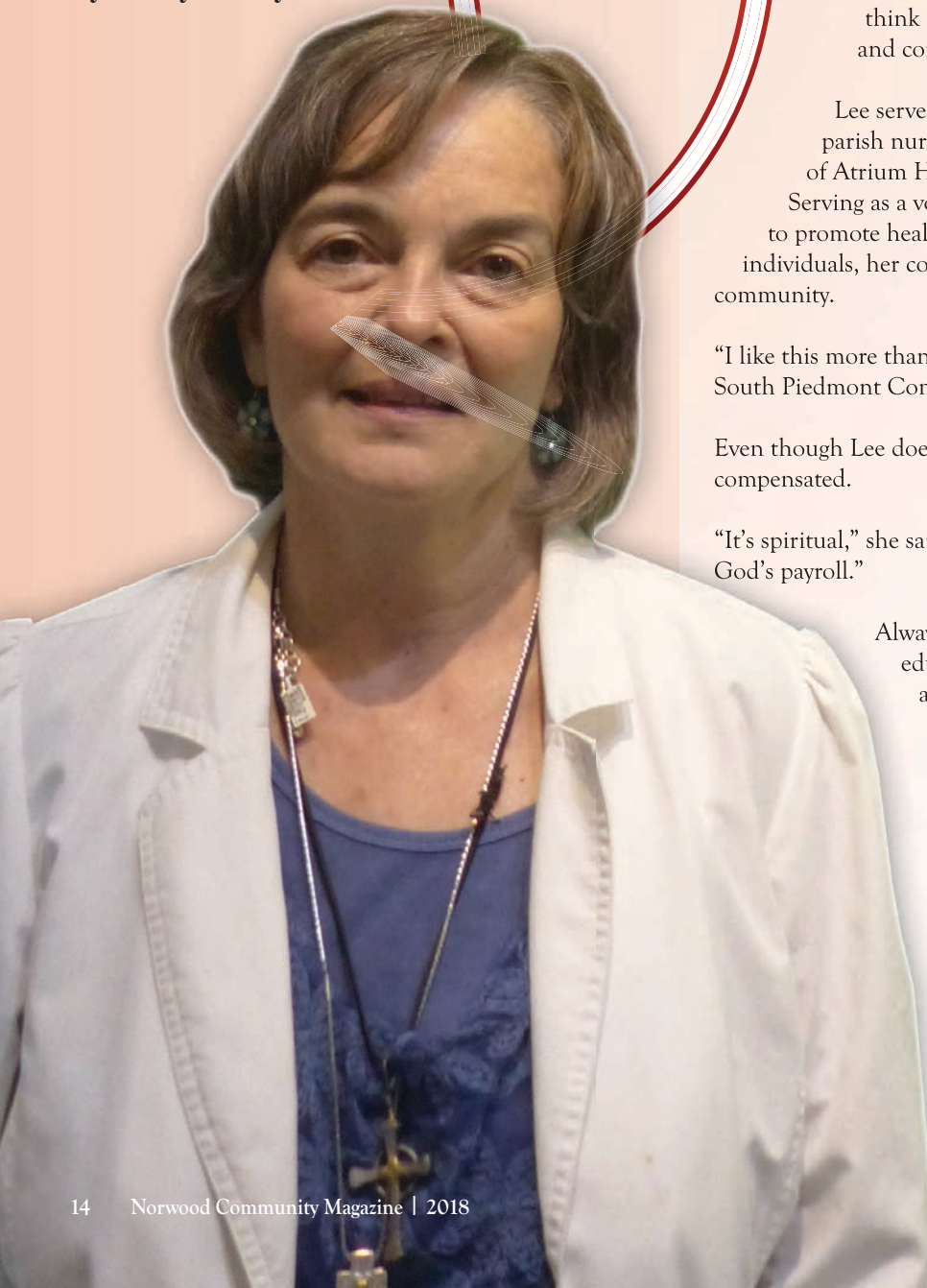
Even though Lee does not hold a salaried position, she feels compensated.

"It's spiritual," she said. "There are rewards other than money. I'm on God's payroll."

Always a teacher at heart, she added, "I get the education piece by promoting wellness. I get to do it all, the whole life span from birth to death."

As a faith community nurse, Lee was required to complete an approved basic preparatory training to support holistic health and provide spiritual care in a faith community. She took her training, a 500-hour course, in November 2014. Benefits of affiliation as a faith community health nurse include strong leadership structure, ongoing education, regional access to Atrium resources and support of clergy.

First UMC Pastor Bill Roberts praised his parish nurse. He envisions his mission is to serve his congregation spiritually, while Lee serves their parishioners medically.



“*I like this more than anything that I’ve ever done.*” ~ Sarah Lee

“Sarah is without a doubt one of the most caring persons that I know. She is a blessing,” he said.

“She looks out for our members and their health with exercise, educational programs, medical needs and fundraising events. She goes above and beyond. Sarah has a heart for people and a heart for Christ.”

In the three and half years Lee has served as parish nurse, she has orchestrated many events within her church and community. In February 2015, she held a Young at Heart Banquet for people over the age of 70. First UMC Youth presented a program for entertainment.

Also, during her first year, the parish nurse gave every senior church member (70 years and older) a cupcake on their birthday.

“I gave over 50 cupcakes. I only did that one year, it almost killed me,” she mused as she reflected on the never-ending task.

In April 2015, she held a program, Donate Life, to promote organ donations. Two church members had received transplants, one got a kidney, another a liver.

Other programs Lee arranged include a breast cancer workshop where attendees learned to administer self exams and worked with a model. She also coordinated a Pink Sunday to recognize all breast cancer survivors. Honorees all wore pink and released balloons at the close of the service.

“It was like they were releasing their cancer,” recalled the Norwood native.

Lee invited Hospice in to explain advanced directives and living wills.

In June, the married mother and grandmother hosted an annual National Cancer Survivor Sunday. Candles, with

colors to represent various cancers, are lit in honor of loved ones who have survived and in remembrance of those lost.

During the holidays, there’s a Blue Christmas Service for loved ones lost throughout the year. Family members receive a butterfly ornament from the parish nurse to help remember their loved ones who have gone on. She also arranges Grief Share, a 13-week program for those grieving.

Other activities Lee has masterminded include blood pressure checks, CPR training and a program for youth on awareness of teen dating. The latter was conducted by the director of the Esther House and Norwood’s police chief.

She also established a heart health workshop along with CHS-Stanly titled “At the Heart of it All” that included menus prepared by the hospital chef and a skin cancer screening event with three surgeons from CHS Stanly that conducted skin cancer screenings.

“I have a great health cabinet, lots of medical personnel: a dentist, nurse, pharmacist, therapists, lab personnel, etc. They help me provide the best health care that I can give,” Lee shared.

Then there’s her Sweating with Jesus exercise classes. The low-impact routines focus on walking and balance. Lee acquired a program for the preschool that teaches the ABCs using fruits and vegetables. For school-aged children, she sponsors a Back to School Bash and provides health and safety booths as well as giving away free school supplies when students are preparing to return to classes each fall. She also oversees a prayer shawl ministry and a casserole ministry for those who are sick or returning home from a hospital stay. The volunteer makes it a point to visit members

within five days of their hospital release.


Church member Ann Lowder praised her parish nurse.

“What an inspiration Sarah is to First United Methodist Church Norwood,” she said. “She spends countless hours volunteering to visit and take care of health needs of members of our church.”

Lee finds time for it all. A graduate of South Stanly High School, she earned her BSN from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro and received her masters at Appalachian State University. Married to Frank Lee for 42 years, the couple has three children and three grandchildren. She retired after 30 years of service in 2007 from South Piedmont as Department Chair for Health Technology.

“I’ve got to visit a lady who just had surgery,” Lee made a mental note at the conclusion of the magazine interview.

Yep, that’s Sarah Lee — sweet to all she meets. 🍷



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Norwood Community Service League

finds many ways to give back

By Sandy Hatley



Organized in 1978, the Norwood Community Service League was formed to provide emergency assistance to neighbors in times of need.

Originally, the service club purchased gift cards for groceries or gas or paid power bills for those in crisis. More recently, the nonprofit donated to Stanly Community Christian Ministry.

Meeting on the fourth Monday of each month, often for lunch, an ensemble of ladies from southern Stanly County gather in the Skidmore House at Darrell Almond Park. Currently, the group has 15 active members.

Frances Russell has served as the organization's president for the past three years. Retired from accounting, she also worked in the personnel office at Wiscasset Mills.

"Most of our members are retired," Russell explained.

Even though these ladies have retired from public work, service to their beloved community continues.

The NCSL has many projects. It offers an annual Edith Norwood Scholarship, named for a former teacher in town — with \$1,500 awarded to a South Stanly High School senior to be used to further their education. The number of scholarships, one, two or

three, is based on the amount of money raised through the League's fundraisers. Any senior can apply and selection is made by a NCSL Scholarship Committee.

The service club also gives a \$100 donation annually to four area school's Exceptional Children's programs. Schools receiving the monetary gift are Norwood Elementary, Aquadale Elementary, South Stanly Middle School and South Stanly High School.

At Christmas, the NCSL sponsors a child in need in the Norwood area. Christian Ministry provides the ladies with the name of a child. The ladies then purchase toys and clothes for the individual during the holidays.

Each year, the club also makes a monetary donation to Stanly Community Christian Ministry and NCSL purchased two benches for the town's park. The benches bear small plaques listing the donor.

Liz Nichols, a member who served on this year's scholarship committee, reflected, "I joined the NCSL because of the wonderful

things I saw them do for the community. There was a time when families in dire financial need for their power bill to be paid could get help directly from the NCSL. Now we work through the DSS. We support our police department. We have worked during the Christmas parades to provide refreshments. We have highlighted homes in the community through Tour of Homes. Many people are not aware of our organization and what it does for the community, because we do what we do in service to our community."

Throughout the year, the club hosts several fundraisers to generate funds for their projects. Their largest event is a midday meal followed by table games such as canasta, bridge or bunco. Though held in Norwood at either the Methodist or Presbyterian church, individuals from all across Stanly County come to participate.

The club has plans to host a spring home tour in 2019.

Adelaide McNeill, a member for 15 years, shared, "It's been a delight to work along

*The meaning of life
is to find your gift.*

*The purpose of life
is to give it away.*

- Pablo Picasso -

with women of southern Stanly County (Aquadale and Norwood) to promote our community and its people. We are proud of its citizens and the place where we live."

"We are always looking for new members," Russell concluded.

Anyone interested in joining the Norwood Community Service League should email Russell at frussell@carolina.rr.com.



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Family TREEHOUSE climbs a new height - *UNIQUE GETAWAY*



When Angie and Barry McSwain decided that a treehouse on their land adjacent to the Rocky River would be a nice place to take a break from the day-to-day operation of their farm, their original thoughts upon building it were that it would be a place just for family and friends.

“We built it for us,” said Angie.

But news of something new and original tends to spread, and spread it did. So, in less than a year, the Rocky River Cotton Treehouse, located about three miles south of Cottonville off Plank Road, opened to the public for rentals.

The house was several years in the making, however, says Angie.

“We’ve had a shelter at this spot on the river for the last 10 years,” she said, “and we used it for camping and fishing. One afternoon, a friend mentioned that her daughter had visited Treehouse Vineyards in Union County, and suggested that we ought to build one (a treehouse) here, so that led to the idea.”

Before deciding whether to build a treehouse of their own, the McSwains visited one in Mooresville to get some ideas.

“The owner told us his was built by a contractor,” said Angie, “and that it was expensive.”



Taking the basic concept, she and Barry sketched out a floor plan and decided that building it would be a good opportunity for their son, Evans, a student at Gray Stone Day School, to take on as a summer project. The decision was made that Evans would work with and under the supervision of long time family friend and construction whiz Rick Mabry.

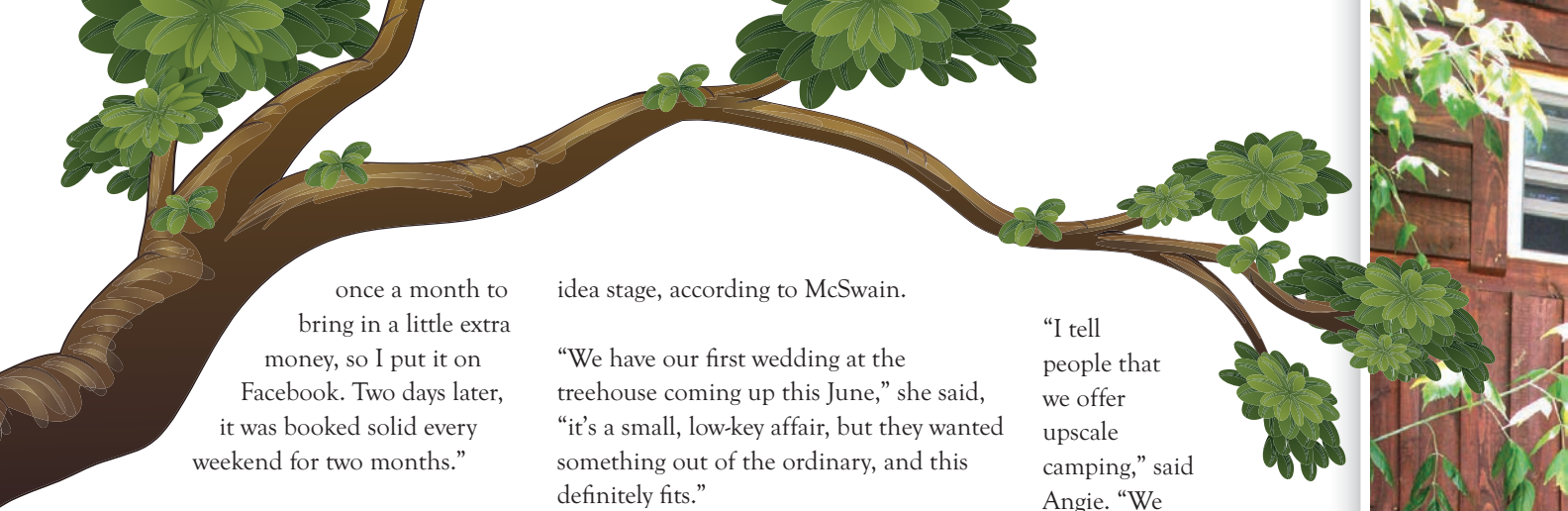
“Rick is our version of MacGyver,” said Angie, “so we knew he could build it.”

So, Rick and Evans, with help from Angie and Barry, built the treehouse over a period of 35 days in the early summer of 2016, and began using it for family get-togethers and an occasional overnight stay by friends and relatives.

Before long, the treehouse was no longer a McSwain family secret, and Angie described how the decision was made to open the house for rentals.

“By March 2017, Barry and I started discussing renting it out





once a month to bring in a little extra money, so I put it on Facebook. Two days later, it was booked solid every weekend for two months.”

And the bookings have continued steadily, especially since Angie began listing the treehouse on Airbnb.

“Since then, it has pretty much been booked every weekend for three months out,” she said. “The rentals eased up some during the winter, but it was still rented regularly even during cold weather.”

And who has made up the clientele?

“Our guests have been mostly locals, but we have had some rentals from as far away as Michigan and Massachusetts,” said Angie, “and we get a lot of military families from the Fort Bragg area who come up for anniversaries and weekend getaways.”

And as the popularity of the treehouse grows, some new twists are already in the

idea stage, according to McSwain.

“We have our first wedding at the treehouse coming up this June,” she said, “it’s a small, low-key affair, but they wanted something out of the ordinary, and this definitely fits.”

Other activities, such as birthday parties, bachelorette parties, and girl’s nights out, have also been held there, with more scheduled in the future.

“I guess if our farming business doesn’t work out, we could always become event planners,” she said.

Plus, there is also the potential for future expansion.

“I’d like to add a barn-type events center, or possibly some additional treehouses or tiny houses on piers,” she said, noting that the facility’s generator could supply up to five similar-sized dwellings.

But for now, business is booming at Cottonville’s only commercial treehouse.

“I tell people that we offer upscale camping,” said Angie. “We supply a shelter, bed and water, and the rest is on you.”

But “upscale camping” may be an understatement, based on the interior appearance of the quarters. Built entirely from pine and cedar reclaimed from a Gaston County cotton mill, the walls are accented with frames, cabinets, mirrors and a stair-ladder to the loft, all built by Angie’s dad.

The structure contains a queen-size loft bed and a queen size futon, making the sleeping capacity four to six, depending upon the number of adults and children.

“Larger families sometimes have adults sleep in the treehouse and youngsters camp in tents at the shelter below,” said Angie.

Despite the out-of-the-way location and rustic setting, the abode provides a surprising number of homestyle comforts for its guests.

“Since we have a generator, we are able to provide satellite TV and wi-fi. There is a shower inside, and running water is supplied from a 100-gallon tank we refill weekly. Plus, the house contains an incinerating toilet.”





Likely the most attractive feature of the treehouse is its deck, which overlooks a small rapid in the Rocky River, with the constant, relaxing sound of the rippling stream below. When the water is clear, it is easy to see large catfish swimming in the pools backed up behind the rapids. And for those who enjoy canoeing and kayaking, rental of the treehouse includes use

of a kayak stored there. The boat can be launched easily just below the treehouse, and there are two launches/landings downstream along the Rocky River Blueway, part of the Carolina Thread Trail.

"I love it when families come to stay here," said Angie, "especially those who don't get to see nature up close like this. It's nice to get to share our little piece of heaven with others." 🍷



ROCKY RIVER COTTON TREEHOUSE

Owners: Angie and Barry McSwain

Address: 1775 Plank Road, Norwood NC 28128

Phone: 704-984-2644

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