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About STANLY the magazine

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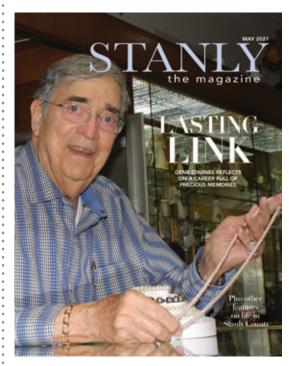
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In May 2021, Gene **Starnes of Starnes** Jewelers was featured on the cover of Stanly the magazine. The article reported on his many years in the business and how it took him all over the world looking for gems. Citing health reasons, in April 2022 Gene closed the business for the last time. It had been in operation for 124 years. The Stanly News & **Press wishes Gene** well in his retirement.

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Growing together

Three young friends follow their passion, open small-scale farm in Norwood

BY CHRIS MILLER

hile many farms in Stanly County tend to focus their efforts on harvesting a few staple crops, such as cotton, corn, wheat and strawberries, a new farm in Norwood is taking a much different approach.

Maggie Young and her fiancé Sean Simpson are focused on small-scale farming, utilizing roughly one acre of land to grow as many types of crops as possible.

Since opening Terra Flora in January, the couple, along with friend Lawton James, have been busy growing and harvesting more than 200 types of crops ranging from peppers, tomatoes, lettuce and broccoli to carrots, potatoes, kale and sunflower shoots, just to name a few.

"We just jam pack as many crops as

we can into our beds with a huge variety strewn about," Simpson said.

And as soon as a certain crop is ready to be harvested, the three-person team works to quickly replace it with something else.

"It's just a very quick and heavy rotation," Young said. "As soon as something is done in a bed, we are putting something else in. The space is never wasted."

ABOUT THE FARM

Simpson and Young signed a three-year ground lease with Nancy and Ron Bryant, who own the land, which is at 5546 Old Thompson Road. Their hope is to eventually sign a 99-year long-term lease, which is typical for many farmers.

All of the vegetables are organic, though the farm has not yet been certified by the USDA.

"Our farming experience comes entirely from farms that successfully implement organic practices, so we are committed to meticulously following organic standards of growing: no GMOs, no synthetic pesticides, no harmful fertilizers or sprays," according to its website.

In addition to the diverse produce, which is the focal point of the farm, each member of the team has separate passions they are cultivating.

Simpson roasts coffee, James has been fermenting kombucha and Young grows edible flowers and enjoys creating cocktails to highlight the seasonal ingredients and flavors.

While Simpson, Young and James have been spending almost all of their time on the farm, where they work up to 12 hours a day, they still have fun. They enjoy cooking and baking in the small house they occupy on the property and make weekend trips to places like Charlotte and Asheville.

For each of them, the farm has provided an intimate space where they can be themselves and do what they love the most.

"I'm of the opinion that peace is attained out there in

the field," James said. "Everything that we do, we do with intention."

HOW THEY GOT TO NORWOOD

While Young, Simpson and James are not from Stanly County and had never owned and operated a farm prior to a few months ago, their considerable experience in the agricultural industry helped prepare them for where they are now.

A native of Shelby, Simpson, 31, has spent much of the past decade working on farms across the country. He first spent time in the research field with NC State University studying small scale farming practices in Eastern North Carolina before accepting an apprenticeship at Stone Barns Center for Food and Agriculture in New York and later working at The Culinary Gardener, a two-acre farm outside of Asheville.

Once the COVID-19 pandemic hit in early 2020, Simpson and Young, whom he met in New Orleans in 2017, took a chance and moved to Harborside, Maine to work at Four Season Farm under Eliot Coleman, considered one of the pioneers of organic farming.

Simpson eventually was elevated to the position of farm manager while Young, 28, became the assistant farm manager.

"Clara (Coleman's daughter and the farm director) wanted to give us the opportunity to run the farm and get the experience of what it would be like to pretty much do everything, but with this incredible safety net of her and Eliot both being there and us being able to ask any questions we had," Young said.

After more than a year working at Four Season, both Young and Simpson wanted to take the chance and start their own farm in North Carolina, which had been their goal for some time.

Utilizing NC FarmLink, a program of NC State Extension that connects farmers,

It's really incredible to start feeding people and starting to hear feedback

— SEAN SIMPSON

landowners and service providers across the state, they discovered the Bryants' farm, which was listed on a database of available farmland. The property was the ideal location for the young couple because it already had existing infrastructure and was close to where their families lived.

"Norwood is two hours from his mom and two hours from where my family lives in Raleigh, so it was equidistant, which was really nice," Young said.

They arrived Norwood in October and began setting up greenhouses and preparing for the beginning of the spring season.

Wanting another trusted confidant by his side, Simpson on a whim reached out to his college friend James, 31, who had been in Southern

Oregon for the past six years learning all about soil science and plant health, and invited him to join them in Norwood.

James quickly jumped at the opportunity to be reunited with his good friends.

"I guess the universe kind of conspired," James said about Simpson contacting him. "I was not in a great situation and I was like, 'You know what, I love these guys and at this point, there's nothing else I'd rather do.'"

Even though he didn't know if the farm would become viable, James knew at the very worst, he would get to have some fun with his friends. Simpson and Young were confident they could open their own farm based on everything they learned while up in Maine.

"We learned at the farm in Maine, it doesn't really matter what your experience is, it's about your attitude and how well you work together and we knew that would be fine," Young said.

Forming relationships with the community To ensure the team can continue to grow and provide high-quality produce for years to come, Terra Flora utilizes what's known as a Community Shared Agriculture model.

Individuals buy shares of the farm's produce at the beginning of each season, allowing the farm to cover costs for things like wages and necessary supplies. The individual investors then receive a weekly box of produce for the duration of the season.

People can pick up the boxes either at the farm or at the Matthews Community Farm-



ers Market. The team also plans to have pick-up locations available in Albemarle.

"It's great for them because they have guaranteed vegetables and it's great for the farm because it means we have guaranteed income, especially the beginning of the season...when usually our belts are the tightest," Simpson said. "It really is community supported agriculture."

On the farm's website, it lists all the kinds of produce that will be offered as part of the CSA shares each season. More than 30 vegetables are included as part of the spring season including arugula, snap peas, potatoes, cauliflower and several kinds of lettuce and kale. There are also a few items people are likely less familiar with such as chervil and tatsoi.

"We're hoping to expose people to vegetables they've never had before," Simpson said.

From left, Maggie Young, Lawton James and Sean Simpson tend to their crops.

Terra Flora has only five CSA investors for the spring season, an intentional decision to start low to ensure enough produce was provided. Even as the team become more familiar with the land and how much they can reasonably expect to grow, they are still aiming to keep membership relatively exclusive.

"I think we're always going to keep it on the lower side just because we're hoping to have a very curated box of the highest quality and make it a limited thing with specialty items that you wouldn't get normally," Simpson said.

And with produce pickups happening each week, it allows the farmers to form more substantive relationships with the

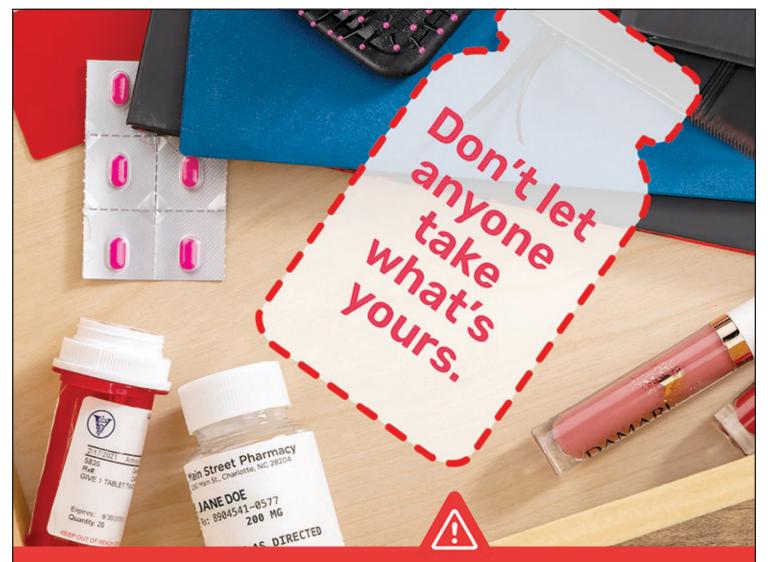
community investors than they otherwise likely would have.

"I think the idea is for us to get to know our market, our customers, and for our customers to get to know us and what we're about with the farm," James said.

The team has also been having initial discussions with local chefs about showcasing their produce in restaurants around the county.

Though still in the early stages of the farm, Young, Simpson and James are excited for people in Stanly County to be introduced to the many flavors they've been cultivating.

"It's really incredible to start feeding people and starting to hear feedback," Simpson said. "For most of our stuff, once somebody tastes it, that's it. They come back and they say, 'That is the best thing I've ever had.'"



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Showroom condition

Albemarle detailer has pride in taking cars to the 'next level'

BY CHRIS MILLER

or the past 13 years, Mark Harrison has worked at Michelin in Norwood, where he's held several roles. He built tires the majority of the time, but he recently switched positions and is a material handler for the retread warehouse.

He enjoys the work, but tries to save as much energy as possible. While other people might relax and enjoy their time off, for Harrison he simply switches gears to focus on his auto

detailing business, Next Level Detailing, which he started last summer.

Harrison typically works on about five cars a week, usually on the weekends. He provides services associated with a detailing shop such as wax and wash, ceramic coating and paint enhancement and correction.

He said many people often mistakenly confuse a basic car wash with the much more in-depth detailing. While a wash is a surface clean meant to keep environmental debris from







harming a car, an auto detailing is a maintenance service that extends the life of most external and some internal components of your car.

And it's that maintenance aspect of "bringing a car back to life," which Harrison, 43, enjoys so much.

"That before and after — that's what drives me," he said. "Because when I get a car and then when the customer comes back and picks it up and they're like, 'Oh, wow, is that my new car?'

It's that right there" that keeps Harrison going.

HOW HE GOT STARTED

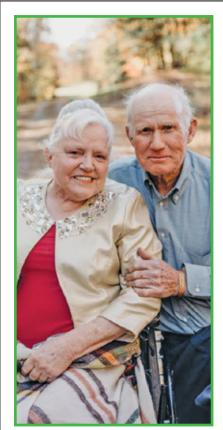
Harrison, who's originally from Norwood and graduated from South Stanly High, never planned to get into the detailing business though he always had a love for cars.

"Every guy, when you're 16 or 17 years old, you think you're doing something when you're out here cleaning your car," he said.

But it wasn't until last year when his wife Chandra came home with some scratches on her black Jeep Compass that he began learning about detailing.

As someone who enjoys working with his hands, Harrison wanted to fix his wife's car himself rather than pay somebody else. So he began teaching himself the same way so many people do nowadays — he started watching videos online.



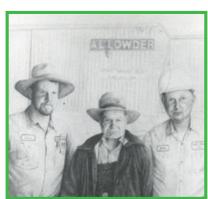












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"I went to YouTube University like everyone does," he said.

Using his wife's car as his first test subject, he successfully polished her car — and was impressed with his efforts.

"It shined better after I polished it than it did when we first bought it," he said.

He posted a picture of his wife's car on Facebook and many of his friends were impressed with the results.

Harrison then enrolled in a four-day detailing training course with Majestic Solutions in Raleigh to receive his certifications.

ABOUT HIS BUSINESS

Once he finished his training, he opened Next Level Detailing, which has the motto, "Keep it Tight! Keep it Right!" Harrison initially worked on his neighbors' cars ,but gradually he became busier as his reputation began spreading through word-of-mouth. Harrison completes all of his work at his home in Albemarle.

"I take my time and put all my energy into every customer," he said.

Harrison offers several pricing plans customers can choose ranging from basic mini detail (\$80) to the in-depth Platinum Package (\$350) along with paint correction (\$800) and several add-ons, including carpet shampoo, headlight restoration and glass coating.

The goal of his business is to "restore and protect the longevity of the vehicle."

Harrison's had customers from all across the county, including Sunbelt Automotive, where he has spent the past few weeks working on several of its cars.

He also receives regular assistance from his 3-year-old son Kyrie, who loves utilizing the water hose whenever his father is outside working. Harrison would love if his son inherited the same passion for working on cars that he has.

"If it's something that he may love doing later on in life, he can learn from his dad and he can take it on," said Harrison, who has four children and two stepchildren.

His hours often fluctuate depending on what shift he's working at Michelin.

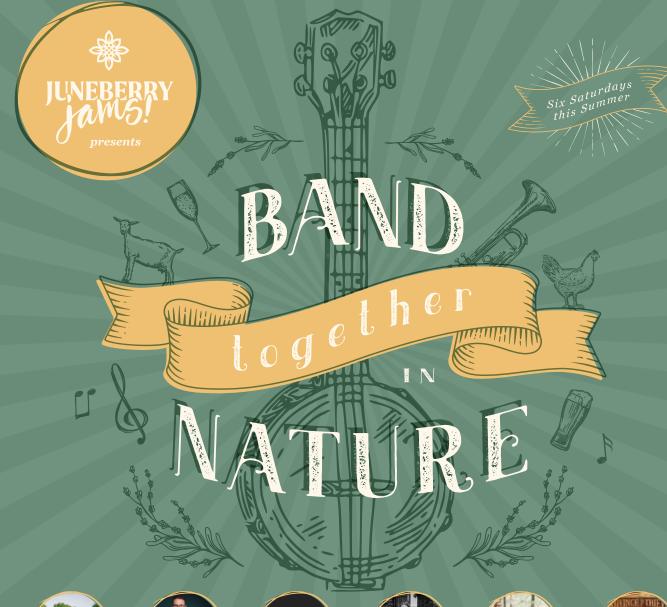
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In the wings

Aviation school offers opportunity to fly high

BY CHARLES CURCIO

eople take to the skies daily at the Stanly County Airport. Some travel in and out for business, while others use the facility to train and earn a pilot's license.

One company at the airport uses new technology and real life efforts to teach the pilots of tomorrow.

Pressley Aviation was formed in 1995 by Leighton and Debbie Pressley to do just that. Leighton Pressley is a certified flight instructor and has a team of pilots teaching lessons.

A downgrade in the grading contractor business for Pressley led him to start the school, having always loved flying.

In his 26 years of teaching at the flight school, Press-





ley said he has seen many changes, including FAA rules and regulations. Many changes came after 9-11.

Pressley Aviation features the area's only full motion flight simulator, the DCMAX Pro.

John Cornell, one of the certified instructors and pilots working for Pressley, said business slowed for just a month and a half during the initial year of the COVID-19 pandemic.

However, business picked up around May and June 2020.

Pressley said many students enter the school wanting to earn a private pilot's license, but the school offers training on more licenses for commercial as well as being an instructor.

Cornell said most students, after getting their private license, "keep flying for fun. Some want to buy their own airplanes."

Few students, he added, go the whole route to become a working airline pilot. Pressley noted his school is FAA certified, so anyone with a license can come in and use a plane to do their own flight instruction.



"The simulator does a lot for us. It helps us a lot when weather is bad," Pressley said. "(The simulator) gets people ahead of the airplane before we actually get in the air."

He said the simulator also saves the school a significant amount of money in insurance rates, aviation fuel and mechanical costs.

Students also can save some cost of their educations by using the simulator.

The local Air National Guard post uses the simulator as well for a great deal of training, Pressley said.

People wanting to learn to fly do not always know where to start, Pressley said.

"The main thing is to come here and we'll point them in the right direction," Pressley said.

Pressley Aviation offers a \$150 Discover Flight, which allows people to go up in the air around Lake Tillery and see if learning to fly is right for them.

The fee is good for two people, one flying and the other riding along with the instructor. $\boxed{\mathbf{S}}$



Disc golf continues to see popularity increase in Stanly

BY CHARLES CURCIO

ith traditional golf courses like Mountain Brook and the Stanly County Country Club no longer in operation, the popularity of disc golf has risen in recent years.

Disc golf involves the same principles as regular golf, but players throw different types of flying discs, similar to Frisbees, into large metal baskets. The sport started around the 1960s and grew a decade later when the inventor of the Frisbee, Ed Headrick, left Wham-O to start the first disc golf company.

The United States has the most disc golf courses in the world (approximately 6,652), and Stanly has five disc courses, four public (Fox Chase, Oakboro District Park, City Lake Park in Albemarle and Richfield's Goose Landing) and one private course, Hardaway Point in Badin.

Albemarle has its own disc golf group, the Albemarle Disc Golf Association (ADGA), which

conducts a league as well as tournaments which draw in competitors from outside the county.

Many of those tournaments, including the Ice Bowl each February, are played on the original, and perhaps the most physically demanding of the courses in Stanly, Fox Chase.

Within the boundaries of Chuck Morehead Park and operated by Albemarle Parks and Recreation, it is a championship-level 18-hole course which requires golfers to walk over various elevation changes.

The walking/running track which winds its way through the woods of Morehead Park has hosted many high school championship cross-country meets and tests the fitness of golfers and runners alike.

The Ice Bowl has challenged disc golfers to play in cold conditions for 13 years.

The two-round, one-day PDGA-sanctioned event has had golfers from amateur to professional levels compete in it.

Fox Chase ranks among the most challenging courses in the state and beyond by several disc

golf websites.

According to Brent Thompson, president of the ADGA, City Lake recently hosted an event which had around 75 golfers.

City Lake was a nine-hole course, but several years ago expanded to an 18-hole course. The course has some open areas and forest holes with elevation changes less severe than Fox Chase.

Oakboro District Park hosts many events by the ADGA and others on an 18-hole course which has less elevation changes and has pine straw down on the fairways of some of the course's holes. The signature 17th hole had line after line of trees with less that two feet between each of them. Each hole from the two sets of tees at Oakboro is a par 3 ending in a long par 4.

Goose Landing at Richfield Park, built in 2013, has multiple natural tees and also features one thing many disc golf course do not: multiple water hazards which players have to play shots over to continue their rounds.

The newest disc golf course is also a rarity in the world of the growing sport: a private course.

Daniel Diorio takes a shot during a round of disc golf. (Photo by Charles Curcio/staff)



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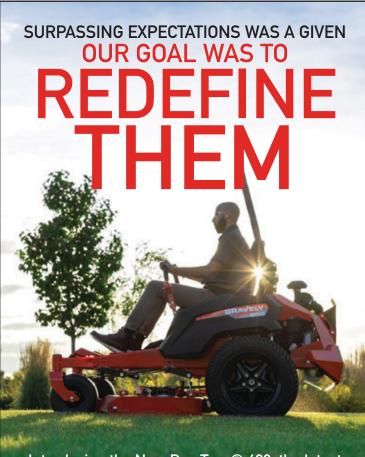
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Frank Rivers takes in a disc golf outing with his grandson, Henry Rivers. (Photo by Charles Curcio/staff)

Hardaway Point Golf Course is built on a portion of the former Stanly County Country Club and Badin Inn Golf Club.

Owners Vanessa Mullinix and Stephanie Owens, who also own the 1913 Badin Inn on the property, opened the course which was designed by Bryon Carter of the Albemarle Disc Golf Association. The course takes advantage of the former course's fairways and elevations to challenge golfers for \$5 per round.

Hardaway Point is open seven days a week, but also features a bar and grill for golfers, which is open Friday, Saturday and Sunday.

Plans for the course and the club include several tournaments as well as adding a game room with a pool table, air hockey, video games and

So why do disc golfers love the game so much? The reasons may be surprising.

Thompson said he discoverd the sport after watching it on YouTube. He then got a starter disc set to try it out.

"I love playing ball golf, but disc golf is something you can do for free and get a workout at the same time. I was physically in better shape but also having fun and enjoyed the challenge of learning how to get better at the game," Thompson said.

He said he soon discovered the ADGA and played league matches "which developed lots of friendships and also entered a competitive side



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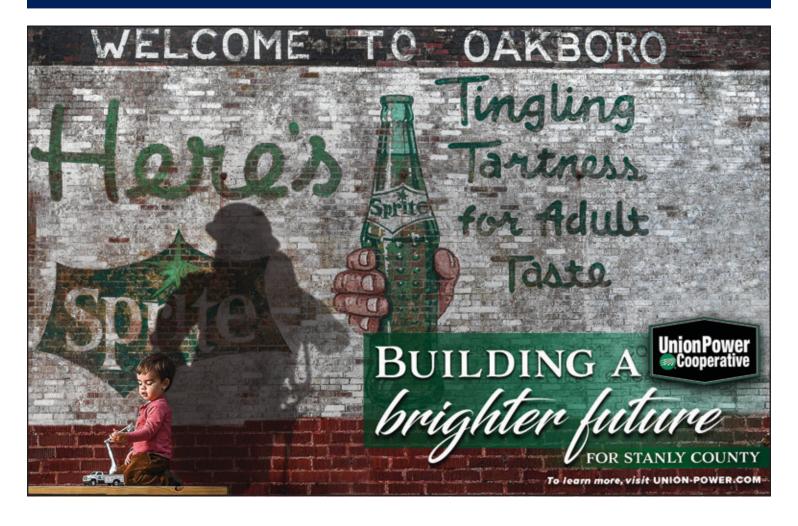
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of the game to me. I soon started playing tournaments and now am a tournament director."

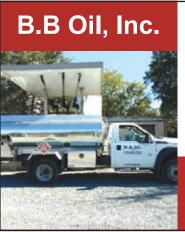
To those thinking about joining the sport, Thompson said disc golf "is a fun sport that is growing rapidly and can be enjoyed at all levels, whether it's kids learning the game, a group of buds hanging out and enjoying a casual round or pros playing for cash. Stanly County has some great courses that are highly rated and a fun time."

ADGA vice president Daniel Diorio said he enjoys the camaraderie of playing the game.

"I've met guys on the course and through the sport that I wouldn't have met otherwise. It's also strengthened existing friendships by giving us a reason to get together for a few hours a week," Diorio said.

Playing disc golf helps fuel his competitive spirit, he said, as he ages out of other activities.

"League play and tournaments raise the stakes of the game, and allow me to test my skills against others. I went from baseball to adult softball and now I use disc golf to exert myself," Diorio said. S



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