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COVER PHOTOGRAPH by REBECCA D'ANGELO

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Paralyzed Veterans of America

Serving Those Who Served



Catfish weighing in the bass.

IT'S KIND OF DISTURBING that the people who send young American men and young women into war zones have, for the most part, never served in the U.S. Armed Forces. Nor have their children or grandchildren. Veterans today make up just twenty percent of the Senate, and under eighteen percent of the House of Representatives. Our sitting president evaded the draft on at least five occasions during the Vietnam War. And none of his children ever served a single day for their country, probably never will either—they're too busy making money. And pissing it away on worthless crap. I've often thought that a law should require members of Congress and the executive branch who vote in

favor of war to first enlist themselves, and then offer up their family members to serve in the looming conflict. If they fail to do either of these things, they should not be able to vote, nor, in the case of the president, send troops into battle without an official declaration of war. There would be far fewer wars, and many less casualties.

This is what I'm thinking as I pull into the parking lot at Osborne Landing, tires crunching through the gravel. It's not yet eleven in the morning, but with the sun hammering the earth like an anvil, the temperature is already above ninety. Humidity so thick you gulp air like a fish.

There are a number of men, and a few women, fishing from the pier, and

bass boats race up and down the wide, mud-brown water, sprouting rooster tails. This is the third day of the Old Dominion Brawl, part of the Paralyzed Veterans Bass Tour, which each year wends its way through eight states between October and June.

Dan Watkins is on the pier, watching the taut monofilament lines of two anglers whose rods are slightly bowed, dipping toward the murky water of the James River where anything might lurk beneath the surface.

"I belong to the mid-Atlantic Paralyzed Veterans of America (PVA), and I've been a member since the eighties," Dan tells me. "I'm retired from the VA."

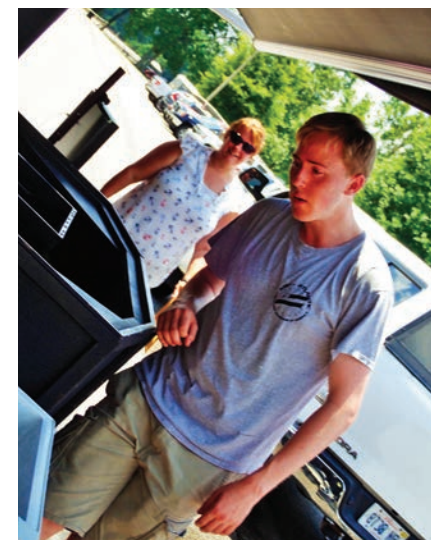
When the tip of one of the rods flicks several times, Dan yells, "You got one." All three men are in wheelchairs. The lucky angler reels in his catch. It's just a blue gill—palm-sized—but still they keep it because this part of the competition is for weight and numbers caught.

Dan served in the U.S. Coast Guard during the Vietnam War. He commanded an explosive loading team whose mission was to pick up bombs and other ammunition from Yorktown on the East Coast, and Alameda on the West Coast, and haul that explosive cargo over to Southeast Asia where it was carefully unloaded. During his service years, a Jeep rolled over on him and crushed his spinal column, paralyzing him from the waist down. That was many years ago, a lifetime back.

After that injury, Dan began rehab at McGuire VA Medical Center here in Richmond, and returned to school at Virginia Commonwealth University. With a business degree in hand and his safety background from the USCG, he landed a job as safety manager with McGuire, a position he held for nine years before returning to his native North Carolina where he went to work at the Fayetteville VA Medical Center. He stayed there until retirement.

It was not long after his injury that Dan joined the PVA.

"The first time I got involved with them was a deer hunt and the confidence it gave me, and the ability to do more and more things, was greater than any of my rehab," says Dan. "You



Tyler Barnes assists Jennifer Purser (seen in the background). Together they make up the staff of the Paralyzed Veterans of America mid-Atlantic.

recognize that you can go places, do things. You may have to do them differently, but you can accomplish the same types of things, and enjoy your passion for the outdoors."

The PVA was formed in 1947, and the mid-Atlantic chapter based in Richmond was one of the six original chapters of the organization.

"The first events were wheelchair races, and then they branched off from that to other sporting activities," Dan says. "I think the first bass tournaments were in Florida in the early nineties."

Jennifer Purser, executive director of the PVA's mid-Atlantic chapter, is running constantly between the pier and a refrigerated trailer and a canopy that makes shade over rows of tables and folding chairs. She's coordinating things, checking the time, making sure the barbeque is ready to be served, and getting cold water to the more than fifty parched anglers participating in this year's event. There are some twenty-five volunteers who help her out, along with her assistant, Tyler Barnes, who is a blur of activity.

"When you're one full-time employee, and you have only one part-time employee, which is Tyler," says Jennifer. "Well, we do everything that a team of ten people would do. We cover all of Virginia and most of North Carolina. And we're housed in that little office out in Midlothian. We have five VA medical centers that we watch over—

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AMERICAN HEROES



Top: Vets fishing from the pier at Osborne Landing.

Above left: Preparing their catch for the scales.

Above right: Vietnam War vet and advocate Dan Watkins helping the bass boats come in.

Hampton Roads, Roanoke, Fayetteville, Durham and Richmond.”

It was less than a decade ago that Jennifer began heading up the PVA, and the work has been non-stop ever since. “We spent the last seven years knocking down doors and creating great partnerships,” she says. “We work with Home Depot several times a year. They do typically three to four adaptations on a home for us every year. Nothing where they have to move walls, but they’ll go in doing flooring and painting and make sure thresholds are okay. Build a ramp, if needed. We’re putting an elevator in

for a veteran because he lives in a house where he can’t get upstairs.”

And the professional rewards from the job are innumerable. “I get to make a difference in somebody’s life almost every day,” Jennifer says. “We get to do great sporting events like the Old Dominion Brawl. But we’re also adapting homes, we’re paying mortgages, so I get to see a lot of people live healthy and productive lives. If we have someone who needs a widening of a bathroom door, or a ramp put on, we partner with several people and get the job done.”

Last night, during the awards ceremony


for the first day of the tournament, as Jennifer stood at a podium, her mouth trained on a mic, tears filled her eyes and streamed down her face, and her throat thickened as she spoke. “I was thinking about our first tournament four years ago,” she tells me. “We had one sponsor, and that was Bojangles, and they still give us money and they give us food. That first year we had to put on the tournament for twelve thousand dollars. This year we have twenty-seven sponsors, and it cost twenty-eight thousand dollars to put it on.”

It’s close to two in the afternoon now, and when we leave the partial shade of the canopy a wave of heat slaps us like the exhalation of a blast furnace. The boats are arriving steadily now. They’d left before sun up at quarter to five that morning. Trucks pull up from the ramp toting trailers with their boats fresh out of the drink, dripping river water. A man named Catfish—a stalwart advocate for the PVA, who may or may not have a last name—begins weighing the catches, five bass per boat. A number of the fish exceed four pounds, and they are all alive and well, and will be released later by Department of Game and Inland Fisheries volunteers who immediately drop the fish into holding tanks.

“I’ll tell you what’s great about all this,” says Jennifer. “We have a lot of people fishing who haven’t done it before, and so they get to see people with like disabilities who experience fishing, and it keeps them motivated to fish.”

She mentions the winner of the boat competition during yesterday’s tournament. “She was one of our lady veterans and she’s fished it on the bank but hadn’t gone out on a boat before, and she just killed it yesterday and won,” Jennifer says. “She had a bass that was almost five pounds, and then she had almost fourteen pounds of fish, total weight. Here name’s Kathy Tilbury and she goes to wheelchair games, she hunts with these guys. It was nice to see it happen, just the joy on her face.”

Joy spreads across Jennifer Purser’s face. “It’s all about the understanding,” she says. “You have to see it. Even if it’s not the bass fishing tournament, see our car show, talk to a veteran about the wheelchair games. And it’s not just about sports. Come see a wheelchair ramp being built, and that veteran crying because you’ve made their life so much easier. That’s what it’s about.

Interested in donating time, money, services, or materials? Contact Jennifer or Tyler at (804)378-0017 or visit www.pvamidatlantic.org 




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Stir Crazy Café Re-Made in Seven Days

by CHARLES MCGUIGAN

WHILE MOST of Richmond celebrated Independence Day with fireworks and cookouts, the staff of Stir Crazy Café, including its managing partners, Claire McGowan and Franklin Massie, worked almost round-the-clock to completely redo this favorite haunt of Northsiders, and kindred spirits from other sections of town. They finished this daunting re-creation in exactly the same amount of time it took God to make the universe. But it didn't start in a void, in nothingness.

It began with a deep-cleaning.

From the Friday before the Fourth, after the shop closed for the day, the employees returned nightly to start the process of renovation. "Each night we were cleaning and had everybody come in for a pizza party, which was fun," says Franklin, who became a managing partner with Claire earlier this year. "We were still open, Friday, Saturday and Sunday, but after closing, we were all busy."

Busy as a hive of bees, and just as well-organized.

Then, on Sunday night, after Stir Crazy finally closed for the holiday, craftsman Mike Dunigan, who owns Pleasantly Plumb, began working his carpentry magic on the cabinetry, which includes a seamless expansion of the counter, allowing for an uninterrupted flow from where orders are placed to where they are picked up, and then plied with sweeteners and other ingredients at the creamer bar.

"Basically, what we've done is get rid of the pastry cases," Franklin says. "What we wanted to do is create a nice flow through the café, and to do that we had Mike (Dunigan) come in and build the new counters to match the pre-existing counters for a fluid motion across it."

The counters are faced with the clean lines of bead board, and the counter-tops are the creation of Emily Hake, Franklin's fiancée (the couple are to be married in November), who works as the scenic designer for Virginia Rep. Emily, who studied fine arts in college, faux-marbleized the counter top and sealed it all with a thick, clear Epoxy resin. The result is truly spectacular; the new surface looks for all the world like polished stone, and seems to be



Claire McGowan and Stephanie Yarber put on finishing touches.

just as durable, and, I'm guessing, a helluva lot cheaper than granite.

Along with the countertops and cabinetry, the Stir Crazy team painted all walls and woodwork throughout the café. "The walls are painted a white

with a slight grayish tint," says Franklin. "The trim work is in a color called Nor'easter, a bluish-ray."

In combination, the colors seem to visually enlarge and brighten the space. What's more, everything pops with

Stir Crazy's new look.



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LOCAL BUSINESS



Ian McQuary and Catherine McGuigan behind the new counter.

these hues, including the narrative murals of Ed Trask, and the whimsical chalk art of Ted Sanderson.

Both the ceiling and the floor will remain unchanged, the last two interior design vestiges of the original Stir Crazy which was opened thirteen years ago by Jerry Bistline.

As Claire and Franklin considered the makeover they decided to refurnish the cafe. Gone are some of the larger chairs and several of the tables. “We added some farm tables,” Claire says. “One five-foot farm table in the front right window. And in the back where the murals are there is a seven-foot farm table. They help create a more communal aspect.” And there are a few more pieces to come.

For weeks, the managing partners scoured the aisles of Class and Trash in Scott’s Addition, and circa in Charlottesville. “We found exactly what we needed,” says Claire. “We’ve also added a few beautiful rugs.”

The night before the official reopening, Claire and Franklin were burning post-midnight oil by the gallon. Stephen Bloe stuck it out till midnight, and when the morning staff arrived, they found the owners still working away. Franklin and Claire finally left at eight that morning for some well-earned rest.

Four years ago this past April when she purchased Stir Crazy, Claire made a lot of changes. She refined the existing cafe and created an inviting space that drew customers in with the promise of coffee, conversation, food and comfort—a place where they could linger.

These new changes further that vision. “The vibe has always been that this space is an extension of our customers’ living rooms,” Claire says. “We want everyone to feel comfortable when they

walk in. Comfort is the biggest thing. We want everyone to feel at home here.”

And they do, and they keep coming back.

One of the primary keys to Stir Crazy’s success is its staff. I’ve noticed this often, and I’m a regular. For one thing, it’s consistent. Some of the employees—seventeen of them in all—have been part of the café for years. They work together as a unit, seem to be able to read one another’s minds as they take and prepare orders, and each one of them is accommodating with the customers. “One of the biggest reasons this place feels so comfortable is because of the staff,” says Franklin.

“They are definitely a big part of that,” Claire says.

In addition to the décor changes, Stir Crazy will also be tweaking its menu items. “We want to redo a lot of recipes so it’s going to take a lot of time experimenting,” says Franklin. “We want to see what sandwiches are the best-selling, and how we make it more

Mike Dunigan measures twice.



efficient for people trying to get their food and to get what they want.” To that end, Stir Crazy may well introduce a build-your-own sandwich item on the menu.

“We will always keep popular sandwiches like the Nottoway and the Greycourt and the tuna melt,” Claire says. “We’re just going to improve it, and add some more seasonal things.”

“We also want to boost our smoothies,” Franklin adds.

In the not-too-distant future, Stir Crazy will also be marketing and packaging its own product line to be called Stir, which will offer unique flavorings for tea that will use all natural ingredients.

“And our catering business under Stephaine (Yarber) continues to grow,” says Claire.

A couple years back, Claire McGowan said this of Stir Crazy Café: “I love it that people can walk in the door, and we can start making their coffees even before they get to the register. I like that people can come here with their kids. Last week we had some mothers—four or five of them—meet with



Franklin Massie before the re-opening.

their newborn babies. I really like the family aspect of Stir Crazy, and it’s eclectic. We have a mix of every kind of person here, and that’s something that’s hard to find in Richmond, or anywhere else. We have all cultures. We definitely want to keep it that way. Stir Crazy’s for everyone.”

It still is. **📍**

Stir Crazy Café
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EVENTS

National Night Out

On MacArthur Avenue

MACARTHUR AVENUE'S

National Night Out will be held rain or shine from 6-8 pm on Tuesday, August 1 in the 4000 block of MacArthur Avenue. One of the largest events of its kind in the Richmond metro area, this annual event draws hundreds of people to Bellevue's central commercial strip. Sponsored by the Bellevue Merchants Association and the Richmond Police Department, it is an evening of fun activities—including the ever-popular misting tents.


The merchants of MacArthur offer wide range of taste treats for kids and adults alike—root beer floats compliments of Once Upon a Vine and Rich's Stitches; misting tents and snow cones at Decatur's Garage; iced tea and cookies from Stir Crazy; something sumptuous and special from Demi's Mediterranean Kitchen, the mill on MacArthur and Dot's Back Inn; garlic knots from Zorba's; chips and dip from Mi Jalisco; and much, much more.

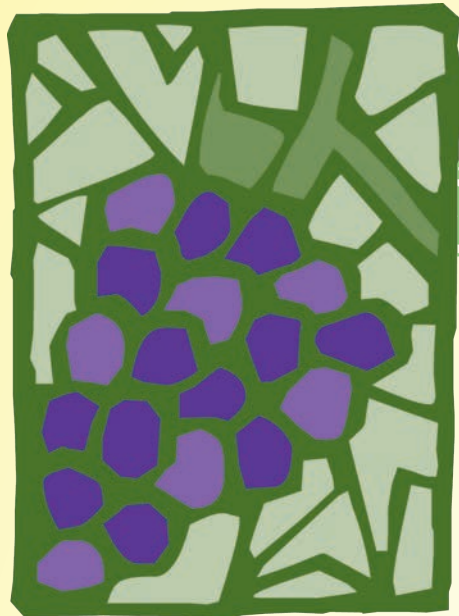
The Northside's own Jonathan the Juggler will be on hand working his magic, along with the Northside YMCA and All Dog Adventures. It's all family oriented and kid-friendly.

Filipino Festival at Our Lady of Lourdes





Now in its 12th year, the Filipino Festival draws thousands of guests to the outdoor venue located in Northside at Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic Church on Woodman Road. Virginia's largest Filipino Festival is known for its warm and friendly atmosphere, along with delicious dishes such as lumpia, lechon, empanada, pancit, and adobo, and nearly non-stop entertainment that includes traditional and contemporary performances, live bands, and plenty of line-dancing. There are also crafts and games for the children, plenty of vendors, and a 5K fun run-walk for muscular dystrophy.

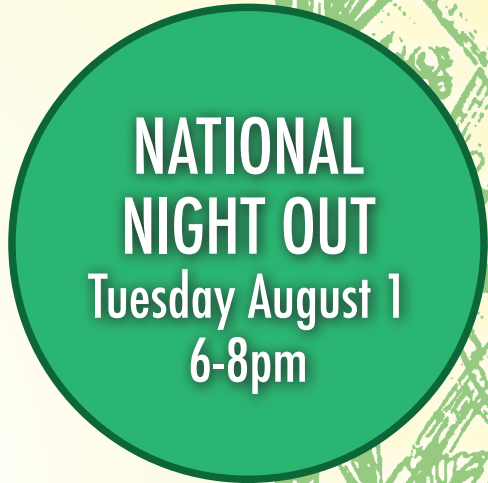
The Festival is the church's largest fundraising event of the year and proceeds benefit a number of charities. The Festival is from 5-10 pm, August 11, and 10am-10pm, August 12, and admission is free. For more information and full menu items, go to filipinofestival.org or phone (804) 262-7315.

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Amy Harr

AMY BUCKHOUSE HARR WAS BORN, IT SEEMS, to become a teacher. It was not something she particularly wanted to do; it was something she had to do. It was almost as if she were genetically engineered to become a teacher. Her mother Dora Moore taught her entire professional career in school districts in California, Utah and in Oregon, where Amy grew up. Her father, John Buckhouse, was also a teacher—a professor at Oregon State, a land-grant college. His specialty was range land resources. And a generation before that, Amy’s grandfather was principal at an elementary school. So this desire to help shape young minds runs deep through her veins.

We’re sitting in low chairs before a low table in the media center at Linwood Holton Elementary School. Principal David Hudson spent an hour with me singing this woman’s praises. In his own words, “She is extraordinary. She has no limits.”

Amy has reddish-blond hair and a vast, substantial smile, and she laughs freely and regularly, as frequently as most people breathe. There’s nothing feigned about it either; it’s genuine. She may well be the most positive person I’ve ever met in my life.

Amy grew up in Corvallis, Oregon, nestled in the Willamette Valley, just south of Portland. It was an idyllic place to spend her youth, surrounded by all the beauty and wonder of the natural world, which she freely explored. And being a college town attitudes there were progressive and liberal, a perfect place to engender curiosity and critical thinking.

“Every conflict could be solved over a cup of coffee,” Amy says. “And people loved to hear other people’s stories. People would say, ‘You think differently than me, tell me more about that,’ rather than being at odds and trying to fight. It was very much a town of children of college professors.”

And in Corvallis public education was perhaps the most valued of all government services. “Learning had such a premium in my hometown that we would constantly pass tax increases so we could spend more on education,” says Amy. “I had an incredible experience as a student, and I went to public school all the way through.”

And Oregonians have a deep belief in the value of an individual’s contribution and his or her intrinsic value, perhaps a remnant of the pioneer spirit. “The culture where I was brought up is that people really think that one person makes a difference,” Amy tells me. “So, of course, you’re going to recycle, and, of course, you’re going to compost. It’s not, ‘But I’m just one little drop in the ocean.’ Instead, it’s, ‘My drop counts.’ And so there’s something about being raised in a place where you are inspired that every little thing that you do ripples through the world and makes a big difference, and that you’re connected to

this great big picture that empowers you to then act with purpose in the choices that you make.”

She remembers how her father worked with three disparate factions who ultimately all had the same goal. “He worked really closely as the science voice to bring together the cattlemen and the Bureau of Land Management and the environmentalists,” Amy says. “And those are three groups that love and care about our ecosystems because they all value them in very different ways, so my father would come in and he would help with the diplomacy using science as the medium to be able to get everybody to say, ‘Look, we actually have more in common than we have differences, so let’s work together.’”

She applies this same kind of diplomacy in her career as a teacher. “I can see this playing into how I live my life and it relates directly to my teaching,” says Amy. “We have so many stakeholders in education. So instead of looking at all the differences, and being pulled in so many different directions, there really is a way for us to all look at being stakeholders. We all have a gift here, and we should work together and collaborate and say, ‘Here’s our knowledge.’ Let’s honor that knowledge, and move forward with that.”

As Amy was preparing to graduate high school, moving forward in her own life, her parents were certain that she would walk in their academic footsteps. “They told me I was born to be a teacher, that I had every quality of a teacher, but I wasn’t planning to be a teacher,” Amy says. “I wanted to find my own way.” So the following fall she attended University of Oregon, ultimately earning a bachelor’s degree in rhetoric.

Her first job out of college was in supportive employment. “I worked with adults with disabilities, and helped them launch their careers,” says Amy. For five years she served as regional manager for Hired Hands and Associates in Oregon, and then in Virginia.

And what brought her to Virginia was a son of Richmond who, as a young man, was discovering the wonders of the Pacific Northwest. Amy had just returned from Europe as part of a senior year exchange program in Avignon, France. “I was hanging out with my best friend from high school in Corvallis and she started playing matchmaker,” Amy says. “That’s how I met Bob Harr. He fell in love with Oregon, and then he fell in love with me.”

A year after they met, the pair came to Richmond and settled in a Northside carriage house owned by Bob’s mom. They were later married, and bought their own home in Bellevue, then, in short order, began a family. Ultimately, they would have three children—Camille, Augie, and Rosalie—all of whom would attend Holton.

Their eldest, Camille, was born in 1999, and Amy became a stay-at-home mom. And this agreed with her, but then the subtle and not-so-subtle nudges began that told Amy she needed to be a teacher because that was her calling. Her children attended the pre-school program at St. Thomas, and June Hardy Dorsey, who headed it up program there and now serves as an assistant rector at the church, gave Amy what would become one of many gentle prods that eventually lead Amy to her vocation.

Amy remembers June approaching her one day and telling her about an opening for a youth minister at the church for middle and high schoolers. “I think this would be great for you,” June said. “Just think about it.”

So she thought about it. An inner voice said, “You know what, that might actually be amazing,” and so she took the position and began to understand that this was a nudge, a Divine one, perhaps. Who knows? But she would continue to receive these gentle pushes by unseen hands for years to come.

“In the house I grew up in there was always creativity there was also always the lesson,” Amy tells me, and she’s talking very fast now. “We didn’t do anything without identifying what the lesson learned was. So it might be an experience. Or, it could be a curiosity that we had to use our encyclopedias to understand. Whether it was a joyful experience or a miserable experience, whether it was a success or a failure, there was always this reflective moment that we practiced in my family where we talked about what we might have done differently. The highs and lows of those experiences. Or even that curiosity piece, you know, looking at nature and having questions or hearing some new information and how do we synthesize

BY CHARLES MCGUIGAN
PHOTOS BY REBECCA D’ANGELO

A TEACHER'S TEACHER



that into what we already know and how does it change our perspective.”

And this inquisitive environment enlightened Amy in her deepest core. “I’ve been very in tune with listening for the lessons and the guidance that I see in my everyday life,” she says. “That plays directly into my faith. My faith guides me in that way. My prayers are often gratitude prayers, and guidance prayers.”

One of those nudges—more like a fairly forceful push, really—came while Amy’s first-born, Camille, was attending Holton Elementary. “She had a diagnosis of dyslexia, and was reading on a pre-primer level in the third grade,” says Amy. “And with that diagnosis we had a special education teacher who was certified in the Wilson Reading System, which was based off the Orton-Gillingham, which was the original approach for teaching dyslexics to read.” Using this method, Camille, within a year’s time, was reading on a second grade level. That was up from pre-primer in just nine months.

“I was so astounded by that process, wanting to help my child, not knowing how the brain worked for a child who struggles to read, and then doing all kinds of research to learn what it was she needed and then seeing it here in play at Holton,” Amy says.

Her synapses began firing like black powder charges. “I started thinking, ‘We can do even better,’” says Amy. “There were talented teachers working with our daughter and she’s a smart, intelligent girl. She has parents who were super involved in doing the research and empowering her and she was still in third grade before she learned to read. So let’s find a way to do this intervention earlier, before a child fails, let’s try to come up with a way to catch them before they fall.”

Amy wasted no time. Almost immediately she became certified in the Wilson Reading System. She knew she’d need this arsenal of special tools later.

That’s when Nicki Peasley, who was running the Howard Street program at Fox, told Amy there was an opening there for a reading tutor.

“And so I wrote a proposal and their PTA approved it,” says Amy. “We were able to go in and provide the reading instruction to their kindergarten through second grade children.”

After her first year at Fox, Amy would often take long walks with her friend Nicki through Ginter Park and Bellevue. And as they moved along the sidewalks, they talked, and their words were inspired.

“So Nicki would reflect back to me—as she would call it—my enthusiasm and my light and my vision, and it was one of those effervescent things,” Amy says, smiling broadly and unable to contain laughter. “Together we were unstoppable. We would change the world. And she helped me write a bigger proposal where I could touch more students’ lives. I think it was about seventy students a year that were in my reading intervention program that I coordinated at Fox.”

Holton and Mary Mumford also wanted the program Amy had developed. Because the results were frankly amazing. On the average children were rising two grade levels with every year of instruction, which was double what would ordinarily occur.

“I had just found my calling in the world,” says Amy. “I was meant to be a teacher.”

She pursued her master’s degree in special education at VCU, with David Hudson, principal at Holton, cheerleading her on, nudging her along.

Long before Amy went to work at Holton, she had a long relationship with the school. “I was very involved with the PTA even before my daughter started there,” she says. “I had a place on the board that first year, and then that next year I took on the After School Enrichment Program. It had been a really small program with a lottery drawing and I wanted to expand it so every child who wanted to could participate.”

And that’s exactly what she did. In the early years were just a handful of enrichment programs at Holton; today there are more than one hundred. Amy coordinated those programs for about five years.

Things accelerated. While she was working on her master’s, with her three children in three different schools, her husband Bob opened his enormously successful dinner truck, Ginter Parked, permanently located in the parking lot at Once Upon A Vine on MacArthur Avenue in Bellevue, and known city wide for its extraordinary food and an ever-changing menu. “Life was really busy, and a bit overwhelming that first year,” Amy says.

Even before she received her master’s, David Hudson came a-calling. “He gave me a call a year before and said he had an opening,” says Amy. “And he has since shared this numerous times with folks that

I’m the only teacher he’s ever called and said, ‘I want you here. And, of course, when he called me I was jumping up and down. I’m like yes, this is so exciting, bring me home. Now I loved Fox and the people there, but Holton is home. And it was super exciting to be offered a special education position there, to be in that place with Mr. Hudson’s leadership.’”

For a few moments, Amy pauses, and then she lays her hands palms-down on the table. “My teaching philosophy is really looking at every student and realizing that each one of them has a beautiful gift to offer and incredible strengths,” she says.

While working toward her master’s an administrator from Henrico County addressed a class Amy was taking. And that administrator had this to say: “The number one reason that students drop out is because they don’t cares.”

As Amy tells me this she swallows a sob. “I thought I can do something about that because I care,” she says. “And if all a kid needs is that somebody cares, then I might be able to change the world because I can do that.”

But the kids have to know that the teacher really means it; they can read through b*****t better than an adult. “They need evidence,” says Amy. “And so I light up when I see my students, it’s a natural thing. Just like you were saying earlier, I smile a lot. And it comes to me naturally. It comes to me naturally that when I see my students I see the Divine being within them, you might say. And it feeds me.”

And having her daughter Camille has also helped Amy in her approach to teaching. “Having this beautiful perspective of being a parent of a child with a disability informs the way that I teach children who have barriers to overcome, and we all have something that we have to overcome,” she says. “And if you have a child who’s made every effort like my child did—she tried so hard, she worked so hard—and she would still fail and she still couldn’t read. And it wasn’t until she discovered she learned differently and that she needed to approach her learning differently that she started having success. She is going to the University of Mary Washington this fall, and she’s earned awards and merit scholarships and lots of accolades.”

Amy shares with me another secret of her success as a teacher. “I really know my students,” she says. “And so I create a learning environment where they can recognize more about how they learn, who they are, what their strengths are.”

She describes her classroom, and all of Holton for that matter, as a community of empathy. And in her classroom there is but one rule: Be kind.

Amy remembers one of her students who was just ten-years old at the time. He’d already given up on himself. He would become frustrated, then angry,

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and then the outbursts would come. One day he said to Amy, "Mrs. Harr I'm just not a good person."

To which Amy, addressing the boy by his name, said, "That's not who I see."

"And then I was very specific in showing him the moments I had seen that he was kind and how he had handled frustration with grace," says Amy. "Remember that strategy where you took that deep breath and then you let go of that frustration and you tried again? That's resilience. And here's evidence of what a good person you are for learning how to manage those things so that they don't become destructive to you. And I saw him light up and it was amazing to him that he didn't have to be a bad kid. And all I was doing was reflecting back to him what I saw in him."

Amy considers her colleagues at Holton, each one of them as passionate about teaching as herself. So much of it is about the way the teachers themselves view their charges. "It's not, 'This kid will never get this. This kid isn't doing this. This kid's driving me crazy,'" she says. "That's the wrong attitude for a teacher. It should be, 'I haven't found a way yet to support this



Amy and Bob Harr at Ginter Parked.

child or reach this child. I have not yet figured out what makes them tick and what motivates them."

When I mention the immense national tragedy of the current secretary of education, Betsy DeVos, Amy sighs, and exhales slowly. "DeVos was so ignorant on what education is all about," she says. "She didn't understand anything about the debate over proficiency and growth."

And then she tells me about the grim day after the presidential election, how it affected students at Holton. "We had a lot of children who were literally in

tears," Amy recalls. "I had one child who started having a little panic attack. Ten-year old children and they feel the weight and the fear after the election, and we had some really sincere conversations about it."

The kids were naturally responding to a man who mocked the disabled, belittled women, attacked an entire religion, and sowed hatred, ignorance, and division everywhere he went.

"Do you know that here we see you for who you are, and we value you for who you are?" Amy asked these understandably frightened children.

And to me Amy Harr says words that are just as reassuring and hopeful: "So to combat that fear we use love. When I look at so many of the wrong things that are happening, I think, 'So, what can I do about it?' You know obviously there are some things I can do along the lines of communicating with my representatives and attending rallies and meetings, but I think where even more of my power to make a change comes from is using my gift. And I think my gift is in recognizing the strengths in others and helping them see it by reflecting it back to them. By being the best teacher I can be." **NJ**

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HIDDEN HISTORIES

The Choctaw Indian Gift To the Irish and the World

by JACK R JOHNSON



THERE'S A CERTAIN level of irony in the Choctaw Indian tribe being classified as one of the 'Five Civilized Tribes' of North America because of their willingness

to adopt various European customs, among them Christianity, centralized governments, and market participation. Not that they don't deserve accolades for their civilized behavior, but perhaps more accurately what makes the Choctaw truly civilized is their willingness to reject the economic determinism of its colonizer, the United States, and to lend a helping hand to a distant neighbor suffering the same colonizing neglect, Ireland, during the terrible potato famine of 1847.

By the time of Ireland's famine, the Choctaw had first hand experience of both deception by a stronger colonizing power, and starvation. During the infamous "Trail of Tears", the so called five civilized tribes were forced off their land east of the Mississippi to reservations further west into 'Indian Territory', a strip of land that would eventually become known as Oklahoma. Andrew Jackson precipitated the tribes forced march with the passage of the Indian Removal Act of 1830 which authorized the government to extinguish Indian title to lands in the Southeast. The Choctaws lost their traditional homelands in Alabama, Mississippi and Florida and were forced to march off the land. Historian Edward O'Donnell wrote, "Of the 21,000 Choctaws who started the journey, more than half perished from exposure, malnutrition,

and disease. This despite the fact that during the War of 1812 the Choctaws had been allies of then-General Jackson in his campaign against the British in New Orleans." The winter the Choctaws spent on the Trail of Tears was one of the coldest on record.

Alexis de Tocqueville, the French philosopher, witnessed the Choctaw removals while in Memphis, Tennessee in November, 1831. He wrote the following account:

In the whole scene there was an air of ruin and destruction, something which betrayed a final and irrevocable adieu; one couldn't watch without feeling one's heart wrung. The Indians were tranquil, but sombre and taciturn. There was one who could speak English and of whom I asked why the Choctaws [Choctaws] were leaving their country. "To be free," he answered, could never get any other reason out of him. We ... watch the expulsion ... of one of the most celebrated and ancient American peoples.

Seventeen years later, a group of Choctaw people gathered in Scullyville, Oklahoma, their new home in 'Indian Territory.' Remembering the terrible hunger during their own Trail of Tears, they vowed to collect funds for the starving people of Ireland, then suffering under the oppressive economic strategies of Great Britain. On March 23, 1847 they passed the money they collected on to a U.S. famine relief organization. According to Jane Walsh writing in IrishCentral.com, "They raised \$170 to send to the Irish people and ease their suffering. This figure is

equivalent to tens of thousands of dollars in today's currency."

"It was the most extraordinary gift of all to famine relief in Ireland. The Choctaws sent the money at the height of the Famine, "Black 47," when close to a million Irish were starving to death."

Walsh also noted another irony in the Choctaw/Irish story: the man who forced them off their lands was Andrew Jackson, himself the son of Irish immigrants.

The memory of this gift, and the bond between the two people has survived the intervening years.

According to Ireland-Calling, in 1990, leaders of the Choctaw tribe visited Ireland to retrace the steps of the first annual Famine Walk in County Mayo, where, in 1849, Irish peasants were force-walked to the hunting lodge of their landlord to be inspected to see if they were worthy of so called 'poor relief.' When the starving people eventually arrived, they were told that the guardians could not be disturbed while they were taking their lunch. They were sent away empty-handed. Later, people found corpses by the side of the road with grass in their mouths that they had been eating for want of food.

Two years later, members of an Irish commemoration group walked from Oklahoma to Mississippi to follow in the footsteps of the Choctaw tribe that walked the Trail of Tears. They raised more than \$700,000 which they donated to charities working to end poverty in Africa.

And, on June 18th of this year, representatives of the Choctaw Indian tribe and Ireland met in Middleton, County Cork, Ireland for a dedication of Alex Pentek's Kindred Spirits sculpture, consisting of nine giant, stainless steel eagle feathers in homage of the Choctaw gift during the Black 47.

Cork County Council official Joe McCarthy said, "They [the Choctaws] bestowed a blessing not only on the starving Irish men, women and children, but also on humanity as a whole, causing a shift in human consciousness.... The gift of the Choctaw was a demonstration of love and I hope that their monument will encourage us to act as they did." **NJ**



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Libbie Market's Wildflowers: God's Own Garden

by CHARLES MCGUIGAN



Tim McCaffrey and David Taylor flanking the sign created by Daniel Seale of Bellevue.

LIBBIE MARKET IS unquestionably one of the finest independently owned grocery stores in the Richmond metro area, and four years ago it got even better thanks to The Cottage Gardener and a suggestion by its owner, Tim McCaffrey. The result is a lush wildflower garden along the entire southern façade of the grocery store.

Seven and a half years ago, when Ukrop's sold its stores to a corporate chain, which quickly diminished what it had taken generations to perfect, two of Ukrop's long-time employees purchased one of the last remnants of that local grocery family's legacy—

Joe's Market on Libbie Avenue. "I left Ukrop's on a Friday in February of 2010," says David Taylor. "And Buster Wright and I opened here as Libbie Market the following Monday."

They created an upscale grocery store that continues many of the customer-service traditions embraced by Ukrop's. Their seafood, poultry, produce, meats and baked products are impeccable. They even have a full line of organic food products.

A few years after they purchased the store, they hired Tim McCaffrey to perform seasonal landscape maintenance around the building. There was a trouble spot around the transformer on the

side of the building, and Tim recommended planting wildflowers around the site: That was the seed that grew into a full-fledged wildflower garden.

"We had another stretch of weeds and grass that Tim had to maintain and so I talked to Tim, and I said: 'Why don't we expand the wildflower garden all the way up this whole side of store?'" says David. Tim had been entertaining the same idea. So Tim's crew tilled the narrow strip and spread a couple bags of wildflower seed, and the seeds burst open almost overnight, like magic beans, and the plants grew full and lush and colorful.

I follow Tim and David out of the store to the south elevation of the building. It overwhelms the eyes, this burst of shapes and color. There are gaillardia, several varieties of coreopsis, bachelor buttons, cosmos, daisies, small coneflowers, black-eyed Susans, and several stands of sunflowers looking skyward toward their ruler bright as a gold coin in the blue sky.

"What I like is that we're not having to run a lawnmower or burn gas," says David. "And the bees love it."

So too do market shoppers, and other nearby residents, who flock to the wildflower garden. They are encouraged to pick the flowers, because the more flowers plucked, the more flowers an individual plant will produce. "It's become a real attraction," David says. "Our customers love it."

Anne Blackwell Thompson, noted

artist and plantswoman, frequently plucks specimens she later uses in her world-acclaimed artwork. "The customers love it," says Tim. "It puts them in a good mood, a happy mood."

Once established, wildflower gardens produce year after year. "I still seed it every year," Tim says. "And though I'm probably at the point where I don't have to seed it, I do it anyway to make sure we're covered."

The benefits of wildflower gardens are numerous. For one thing they are beautiful and very low-maintenance. Simply spew the seeds, water, and wait. They never really need the attention of man; nature tends to it all.

And unlike certain touchy perennials, native wildflowers will take root in even the most inhospitable soil, making cultivation a breeze.

This, too: wildflowers help the struggling environment and our damaged ecosystems. Cultivating wildflowers, attracts a variety of insects that improve soil quality. Bees and butterflies—the great pollinators—thrive in wildflower gardens. And wildflower gardens, by discouraging water runoff, help clean our Chesapeake Bay watershed, which is under continuous assault from clear-cutting and other environmentally irresponsible methods used by some developers. What's more, wildflowers require neither fertilizer, nor the application of hazardous chemical pesticides and herbicides.

"They're almost bullet proof," says Tim McCaffrey as he surveys the wildflower garden. "They're drought resistant, they're not susceptible to disease, and we don't have to fertilize them."

David Taylor nods along with Tim's words. He mentions the seeds, the rain, the sunshine, and the good earth, then considers the real gardener of this narrow strip in the West End that had once been infertile. "That's one of the beautiful things about this," he says. "The real gardener is God." **NJ**

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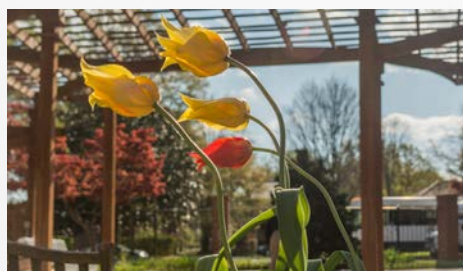
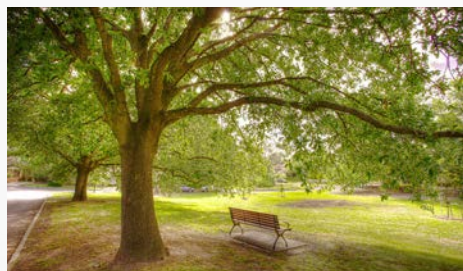
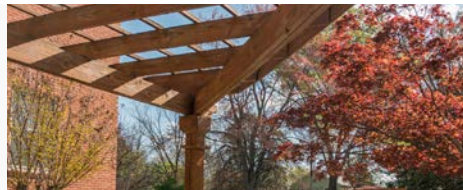


ON SATURDAY, AUGUST 5 at 8 pm The Taters are celebrating their 20th anniversary. That's 20 years of musical virtuosity, perfect harmonies, tight instrumentation, cosmic song juxtaposition, and outright joyful silliness. Craig Evans and Brad Tucker started it all, adding old friend Greg Marrs and Chris Mendez along the way and perfecting a sound that's unmistakably Tater-fied and consistently surprising. Elizabeth Cotten to Led Zeppelin to Leadbelly to Dean Martin all in one set. It goes to show you never can tell.



ON FRIDAY, AUGUST 11 at 8 pm, Bill Kirchen returns with his all-star Texas band, Rick Richards on drums and David Carroll on bass. Guitar Player Magazine dubbed Kirchen the "Titan of the Telecaster." Rolling Stone said he's "an American treasure" and "one of our best." No matter what you call him, Kirchen is a founding father of the Americana movement, now at the peak of his impressive career. He's only in Richmond about once a year these days, so don't miss your chance to see what all the fun is about. 

TATERS PHOTO by DAN EWERT



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RAINBOW MINUTES

by BRIAN BURNS and JUDD PROCTOR

Daring Painter, Paul Cadmus



PAUL CADMUS WAS A famous painter in the social realism movement, which began in the 1930s. At the time, he was perhaps the only mainstream realist incorporating the element of homosexual desire. His work often centered on the male physique, with burly men in skin-tight attire and in suggestive poses. One of his signature pieces was titled, "YMCA Locker Room."

Some of his paintings weren't just controversial, they were actually censored, such as "The Fleet's In!"

The problem wasn't that his paintings were even remotely pornographic, it was that they simply suggested homosexuality during the repressive 1930s.

Cadmus' later works crossed another line, depicting the domestic life of gay couples. Those paintings served as a window into his life with his companion of 35 years, Jon Anderson.

The Man in the Red Tie

Paintings by social realist Paul Cadmus often sparked controversy. His famous painting titled "The Fleet's In!" was commissioned by the U.S. government in 1934. It depicted sailors in skin-tight uniforms making advances toward curvaceous women, possibly prostitutes. It also suggested homosexual seduction with a sailor's glance and the offer of a cigarette to a well-groomed civilian wearing a red tie. At the time, a red tie was code for gay.

The painting was displayed at the Corcoran Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C. But since many found it obscene, the Secretary of the Navy ordered it removed. This was arguably one of the first examples of government censorship of art.

Ironically, the painting was restored by the Navy in 1981, and put on display at the Navy Art Gallery in Washington D. C.

Starving Artist, Beauford Delaney

Beauford Delaney, a premier African-American painter, was under-appreciated during his life because of racism and homophobia.

Born in 1901 in Tennessee, his mother was born into slavery. With an early interest in art, Delaney learned the essentials of classical technique in Boston.

He moved to New York City in 1929, at the height of the Harlem Renaissance. Although he became part of

a black gay circle of friends, he was deeply introverted.

Delaney's pastel portraits showed his fascination with the play of light, and a love for the color yellow. With exhibits in Harlem, he worked as a bellhop to scrape by. At times, he lacked food and shelter.

Today, his portrayals of Marian Anderson, Duke Ellington and James Baldwin are considered classics.

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BOOK REVIEW

Liquid Sunshine And The Radium Girls

by FRAN WITHROW

IN THE EARLY 1900S, RADIUM was seen as a “wonder element.” Touted as a healthful cure-all, it was a go-to remedy for colds and cancer. Manufacturers hinted that it would make women more beautiful. One could drink it! And it glittered. What a versatile substance.

“Liquid sunshine” would also glow in the dark, so it was used to illuminate dials for clocks. There was a big demand from 1917 on for “dial-painters,” women who were taught to lip-point their brushes so they could paint those tiny numbers. They put the brush to their lips, then into the radium, then painted the dials. Lip, dip, paint. These women swallowed radium every day, and the physical effects didn’t take long to appear. It took a while for doctors to figure out what was going on, and when they did, these victims of radium poisoning asked for financial help from their employers. They were quickly turned down. Manufacturers were not worried. What could a few young women do to them?

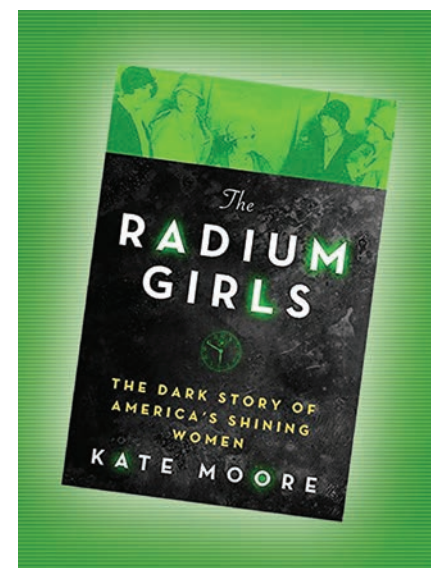
As it turns out, a few young women can do a lot.

The effects of radium exposure can be brutal. Some workers showed symptoms quickly: their teeth fell out, their jawbones disintegrated, they became anemic and died. Others survived longer, but developed huge sarcomas and fragile bones that fractured far too easily. They suffered constant, debilitating, intense pain.

Kate Moore’s well-written account of these radium girls—their health struggles as well as their fight for compensation—is an account of immense courage. Once these workers realized their employers would not support them, they fought back. Some of them were desperately sick at the time, and many of them had little in the way of education. But that didn’t stop them.

The women described here were no wimps.

Nor were they women of means. Most were working-class girls, some as young as fourteen. Moore has done an incredible amount of research to tease out the stories of individual women:



who they were, how radium affected them, and how their struggle for justice impacted environmental safety in the workplace.

With the help of a few courageous attorneys, two groups of women in two different cities (Ottawa, Illinois and Newark, New Jersey) fought and finally won compensation. Their court cases led to the creation of the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), which works across the country to ensure worker safety.

The women died hemorrhaging from their jaws. They left small children behind. They amputated cancerous limbs. But they did not back down. If that isn’t bravery, I don’t know what is.

As you read this gripping story, you may, like me, repeatedly refer to the grainy photographs of Katherine, Grace, and Edna. You may study Mollie’s misshapen jawbone, and stare at Catherine lying on her couch, too weak to rise but still determined to fight.

You may think, as I do, that courage in the face of adversity sometimes defies comprehension. These tough and determined women changed not just their own lives, but the lives of workers everywhere.

It’s about time their story was told. **NJ**

The Radium Girls: The Dark Story of America's Shining Women

by Kate Moore
Sourcebooks, Inc.
496 pages



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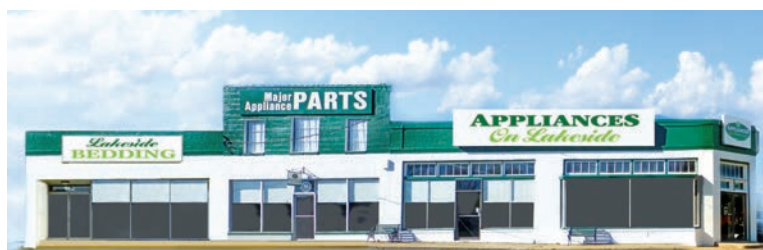


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