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CATHERINE ROSE

*McQuigan*

embodies the best of what it is to be human. Back in May she received a bachelor of science in environmental studies along with a bachelor of fine arts in illustration. Her passion for, and commitment to, both disciplines is intense. She has woven the arts and the sciences together seamlessly, and, as with many other members of her generation, is intent on saving our planet from the devastating assaults of humankind, to bring it back from the precipice, to revitalize our sacred biosphere, to reverse global climate change with all the means at their disposal. These young people may very well save life as we know it. *continued on page 14*

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COVER PHOTOGRAPH by REBECCA D'ANGELO

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# Skip the Store: Summer's in Season at Lakeside Farmers' Market

by ISABELLA WADE

**S**UMMER IS HERE, AND that means long weekends at the beach, juicy watermelon, backyard barbecues, and warm sunshine. Consider this: you can experience all those things you love about summer without packing up the car and heading to the coast. Just drop by Lakeside Farmers' Market on any Wednesday or Saturday.

Grab some succulent strawberries to concoct a pitcher of delicious lemonade. Visit Kathe Wittig and examine her sea glass jewelry with your eyes and hands, and chances are you'll imagine breathing in the salty air and watching the waves crash on the sandy shore. Or host a cookout, using spice rubs from The Wild Hares. (And don't forget to ask them for a bite of their smoky pulled pork.)

"I don't even buy produce at the grocery store during the summer," says Kerry Ayers, a market regular. "It doesn't taste nearly as good." Kerry is accompanied by her adorable daughter, Adeline, who fabulously wears a pearl necklace every day. "We've got some asparagus and squash, and we'll grill those," Kerry continues. "And then we have some berries that won't make it past a day. We try to come as often as we can."

Peter and Sharon Francisco, the owners of Lakeside Farmers' Market, sit in their lawn chairs and watch as shoppers interact with vendors, sort through produce, and sample products. "There are a lot of younger people moving in, so we're seeing many new faces at the market," Sharon tells me. "It's really nice to see the growth of the neighborhood and the change of the clientele."

The Franciscos started the market twelve years ago in order to attract more people to the Lakeside area, and because they love fresh fruits and vegetables. "I like fresh salads, and it's nice to have the fresh lettuce and vegetables to be able to put into the salads," says Sharon. "And you can have the fresh fruit for dessert. There are a lot of things I like to prepare from the market. In fact, sometimes I look at my plate and say, 'Well, everything on this



Left: Everything here is fresh and local. Right: Adeline Ayers finds the perfect pint of berries.

plate came from the market.' It's really nice to know that."

Sharon tells me what's in season right now. "Things are changing by the day, practically" she says. "The squash are coming in. We've had lettuce and spinach, radishes, broccoli, and other early crops. We also have both a meat and a bread vendor."

The market even has a little farm attached to the property, Lakeside's Tiny Acre, operated by Kyle Anderberg. "He likes to do things that are low impact on the earth," Sharon says. "He tills the crops by hand, and he doesn't use chemicals. He collects rain water in barrels and uses it to water the crops — not exclusively, of course, as we experience dry spells."

Kyle Anderberg's table is composed of three different types of kale (Tuscan, green curly, and purple curly), chard, lettuce mix, beets, kohlrabi, radishes, dill, cilantro, parsley, and mulberries. He is greatly looking forward to tomato season, which typically begins in late June or early July. "I really love cherry tomatoes," he says. "I eat them like candy. I love slices on sandwiches and toast. Some people can them — the ones that aren't as pretty are nice to can."

Kathe Wittig, who grew up in Rhode Island, is a sea glass enthusiast. "I've been collecting for decades," she says.

"I always go to the second tideline, and that's where I find the sea glass." A member of the North American Sea Glass Association, Kathe swears that she will never harm the glass by cutting or tumbling it. "Every winter, I take my sea glass, spread it across a white table cloth, and begin matching pieces for earrings and deciding which ones would be good for necklaces," she says. "As you'll notice, with my earrings, they never, truly match. That's because they're real. I may find one color in New Jersey and another color in the Potomac River."

She has a gorgeous display of seafoam greens, cornflower blues, and everything in between. "I'm very enthusiastic about this topic," says Kathe. "I can't stop talking about it. I love it. I just love it. I build every vacation around beaches." She hopes to visit Seaham Hall Beach in England, where tourists can find unique, oval shaped, multicolored pieces. "There used to be a glass factory there," she explains.

Though Kathe will be spending July on the beaches of New England, she will be at Lakeside Farmers' Market throughout June.

Tom Barlow, co-founder of The Wild Hares, has some tips for anyone wanting to grill this summer. Displayed on his table are various rubs, a crock pot



full of pulled pork, and grilled squash and zucchini. He hands me samples as he describes his rubs and sauces. "We've got a salt-free rub, a sugar-free (rub), and we're developing both a coffee rub and a chili rub," he says. "You can use a couple tablespoons of any rub and be done. We like to make it easier for people to prepare their own food, make it delicious, and enjoy grilling and cooking."

Tom and his partner, Derek Weddle, started The Wild Hares as a passion project — they both work at Ferguson's during the week. "We just play around with the flavors and see what people like." He tells me that they're in the midst of developing new sauces, including a chipotle one. "We thought this year would be the year to launch the sauce and see how it does," he says.

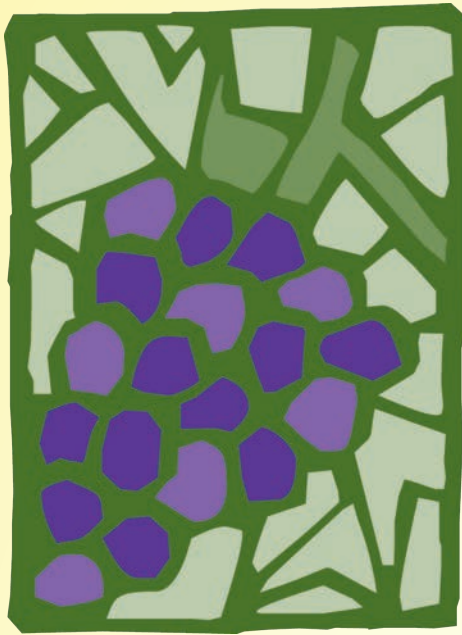
His favorite way to prepare meat? "You can't beat smoked meat," Tom says. "Even if you put vegetables on the smoker, it adds another layer of flavor that's hard to beat. If you don't have a smoker, we have smoked salt, so you'll still get that smoky flavor. The same goes for our sauce. We'll prepare chicken in the crock pot sometimes (with the sauce), and you still get a great tasting meal without special equipment."

"We had been reading about farmers' markets being catalysts for revitaliza-

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*Top: Sampling some of the wares at The Wild Hares.*

*Middle: Peter and Sharon Francisco.*

*Bottom: Kathe Wittig with her sea glass jewelry.*

tion in older shopping districts," says Sharon Francisco, the prime mover behind the Farmers' Market. "We went on and pursued the idea, because Henrico County didn't have any farmers' markets at the time. We were sort of the pioneers. We had to go through quite a bit of procedure to be able to do it. It took us three years, after we thought of it, to be able to have it come to life. We want to support the local food movement. We feel like it's very important for people to know where their food comes from, and we want to support these young farmers who are coming along."

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## BUSINESS PROFILE

# CFI Vacuum

by CHARLES MCGUIGAN

**T**O SAY A PRODUCT sucks, is typically not a ringing endorsement. Unless, of course, that product happens to be a vacuum cleaner.

Here at CFI Vacuum, all the products sold here suck, a fact which owner Mikhail Gitlin is extremely proud of, and he has a well-informed understanding of what makes a superior vacuum cleaner. From 1976 until the time he purchased CFI ten years ago, Mikhail had been a master machinist.

In his native Gomel, Belarus, Mikhail worked as an apprentice machinist. "I can machine anything," he says. "I can mill, lathe, grind. I worked for years as a machinist at Jewett Machine (Manufacturing Company) on Maury Street."

As a machinist, he looks for perfection in all things tooled. And the vacuum cleaners he sells out of his shop, which is located in a strip shopping center on Brook Road near the Wilkinson Road intersection, are perfectly machined, he tells me. "I could never bring myself to sell an inferior product," he says.

Mikhail mentions a number of vacuum cleaners sold at the nearby Big Box store at Brook and Parham. "A vacuum cleaner you buy from them will work sometimes six months, sometimes one year, and then they're dead," he says.

For one thing, those vacuum cleaners are frequently designed with planned obsolescence in mind. Unlike the vacuum cleaners Mikhail sells, those sold at the Big Boxes tend to be non-repairable. What's more, one of the most important elements of a vacuum cleaner is frequently inferior.

"They have low-quality motors," says Mikhail. "They make look the same on the outside, but they are not the same on the inside where it counts."

As we walk through the showroom, Mikhail points out some of the most popular and well-made vacuum cleaners available anywhere in the world. "You will not find any of the products we sell in any other store in Richmond," he says. "These are all exclusive lines."

Among them are Titan, Carpet Pro, Sanitaire, Fuller Burs and Royal. These are the products used by professional cleaners and savvy homeowners alike. "If you buy a good product, it will always be a good product," Mikhail says.



He points to an upright vacuum made of heavy-duty cast aluminum. "Commercial people who work eight hours a day use this machine," he says. "If they ever need a repair, if something goes wrong with the vacuum, they come to me because I have all parts."

Many consumers today have bought into the myth of the bag-less vacuum. "Bag-less is not good, but people not understand this," says Mikhail. "People who own bag-less vacuums are supposed to change filters, and those filters are expensive. In a year you spend about sixty bucks. But a vacuum with bag you pay twenty bucks for one package of twelve bags which will last more than a year."

Of all the makes and models Mikhail sells, one of his favorites is the Sebo canister vacuum cleaner. These vacuums are manufactured and assembled in Germany; nothing is outsourced anywhere else. He stands a very familiar Sebo model that rests on a carpeted podium against one of the walls of the showroom. "It is a universal machine," he says. "This is a really, really good model. It's more expensive, but on the long run it's a good investment. You will never buy another machine."

I can personally attest to this. Twenty years ago, I purchased the same model, which looks pretty much the same as the current model. In that time, I have never had to have it serviced. What's more, it cleans with the same vitality it exhibited the day it was unboxed.

The filtration system of a Sebo is unparalleled. "It is like a hospital filtration," says Mikhail. "Sebo catches ninety-nine point nine percent of all particulate matter."


Sebos are equipped with three filters:

two for intake, and an air belt filter that wraps around the housing of the canister for exhaust. "It's much cleaner than other vacuums," Mikhail says. "Sebo is the clear leader."

But other vacuums are also desirable. "Carpet Pro makes a really good model," says Mikhail. "Commercial customers really like it. It's got strong, nice metal brush. And if you've got pets, it's the particularly if you have carpets. It pick up all hair in one pass."

Throughout the interview customers have come and gone, some to pick up a new vacuum cleaner, others to pick up or drop off a vacuum that needs servicing. One woman was there to pick up her Electrolux. She owns three, one for each floor of her home. When she asks what the charge for the repair is, Mikhail waves his hand. "No charge," he says. "It was just a loose wire."

After the woman leaves the shop, Mikhail says, "When they want a repair, when something goes wrong with the vacuum, they come to me because I have all the parts. You buy from a Big Box, you never find parts there."

Mikhail Gitlin scans the vacuum cleaners throughout the store. "People will buy three vacuums in one year from a Big Box, and then they come to me and buy it from me," he says. "This takes time to understand: If you buy good product, it will always be a good product." 

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## DEATH CLUB

# What's Really in a Name?

by ALANE CAMERON FORD



**LOVE NICKNAMES. I LOVE** coming up with them, using them, having them used on me... well, the friendly ones I do. I was an only child for 13 years and looked forward to great big family gatherings where cousins still knew you from the name you were called as a toddler. Nicknames meant family, affection, being cherished, and also a healthy dose of teasing.

My mother embarrassed me to my core when I was in college by leaving a loving message for me on the shared house answering machine. I came home from work that night to my roommate smugly grinning, "How was your day at work, Booger Brain?"

Everyone in my family has a nickname, or several, and they are said with love. Coming from that perspective I've never had much patience for people who have the emotional energy to get offended when a waitress or other stranger calls them "honey" in a blandly affectionate way. A nickname sends a signal of acceptance, safety and friendliness, and the opposite of a nickname is an epithet. Do you really want to go there?

There is a lifecycle to nicknames. If they are catchy, or funny, and not despised by the person to whom they refer, the name gathers the attention of the group who share it. If it is a truly fitting moniker or flows well off the tongue when a birth name does not, the nickname sticks and the community accepts it as the primary name. Only when outsiders come along

does anyone remark upon the oddity of the nickname. Then at death, nicknames become bittersweet. The tender diminutives or humorous pet names ring out in a different key when the loved one who answered to them answers no more. This is particularly noticeable in the names that reference relationships. When Nanny dies, she is mourned both as herself and as the grandmother. The name will sometimes be buried with the person and later generations of grandmothers choose other nicknames, because there was only one Nanny.

I am a connoisseur of the paid death notice which is known in common parlance as an obituary, even though it isn't one. The obituary is written by reporters. The paid death notice is written by the family or by the deceased. I love them both but prefer the paid death notice because families go with what they know. Often what families know best is a nickname. Although the relationship-based names are sweet, I prefer the nickname that makes you scratch your head and wonder about the mysteries of a person's life.

A well-placed nickname tells a story, a story with little or no explanation needed if the nickname is apt enough. I have an Uncle Lefty and an Aunt Red. Red has had white hair for at least 15 years but still has all the temperament that goes with being a redhead. By continuing to call her Red, the strangers around her are duly warned. One of my children is sometimes known as Judge because by the time he could

speak full paragraphs he was litigious. Another is known as Pearl for her rare graceful beauty, her pleasingly round head, and her preference to hang out in a comfy shell alone.

There are also the hilarious nicknames that point out one attribute by naming the opposite. At nearly six feet tall I have frequently been called Shorty, although now The Judge, who is sneaking up to 6' 3", has earned the right to call me Lil' Mama. My youngest cousin is still affectionately known as Baby Cousin Turner, in spite of the fact that he is over 40, 6'4", and a sheriff's deputy. Obviously, ours is a family that enjoys contrariness. Working with people in hospice I sometimes get to know them well enough for a window to open into the intricacies of nicknames. One of my favorite patients was a quiet, polite man who unfortunately was bedbound by the time I met him. I had visited with him on multiple occasions before a family member addressed him by his nickname in my presence. My quiet, unassuming patient had been known for most of his life as Wolf. He'd earned the title, his son later told me. By his name I was reminded that at the end of life, we are not who we may seem. It was with great pleasure that I saw on his funeral bulletin the service was to honor Wolf and not Herbert, or Aloysius, or whatever name his parents gave him before his true identity was known.

There are those who disagree with me on the subject of nicknames in public space or in obituaries. These people feel that nicknames are undignified, inappropriate or, to use one of my darling grandmother's favorite words, trifling. My guess is that these people might have also been on the receiving end of some less than loving nicknames, which is unfortunate. But I hold that the nickname is just another little way in which we say, "I love you. I know you. We are connected, but hey, don't take yourself or me too seriously." No one should keep us from doing that in life or death. **ND**

*Alane Cameron Ford is a hospice chaplain, grief counselor, writer, and the host of Death Club Radio on WRIR 97.3. She and her husband have three children and live in Northside where they encourage revelry.*

## STAFF



### DEATH CLUB'S ALANE FORD

Alane Ford, who works as a medical chaplain and has served Richmond hospices and hospitals as a chaplain and facilitator for bereavement work, will be writing a monthly column for North of the James magazine. For the past five years she has hosted Death Club Radio on WRIR 97.3, a talk show reflecting on the science, spirit, psychology and weirdness of death and dying. Alane has previously been published in STYLE magazine and Friends Journal. Six years ago, she was featured in a cover story for North of the James magazine where she was dubbed Reverend Death.




### SUMMER INTERN ISABELLA WADE

Isabella Wade, a recent graduate of Radford University, is an aspiring journalist with an interest in telling unique and colorful stories about people. She is serving as an intern this summer with North of the James magazine. Along with her writing duties, she will also be working on the magazine's website. Isabella has a background in advertising, and works as a part-time consultant.



### ACCOUNT EXECUTIVE AREINA-GAIL HENSLEY

Areina-Gail Hensley is North of the James' new account executive. A Richmond native, Areina worked in sales for Harding's Glass as a direct saleswoman, served as the first marketing manager for Enterprise Car Sales, and for the last 25 years she has been in leadership development. For advertising information, contact Areina directly at (804) 241-2937 or email her at [areinaghensley@gmail.com](mailto:areinaghensley@gmail.com) 

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## BOOK REVIEW

# Nanaville: Adventures in Grandparenting

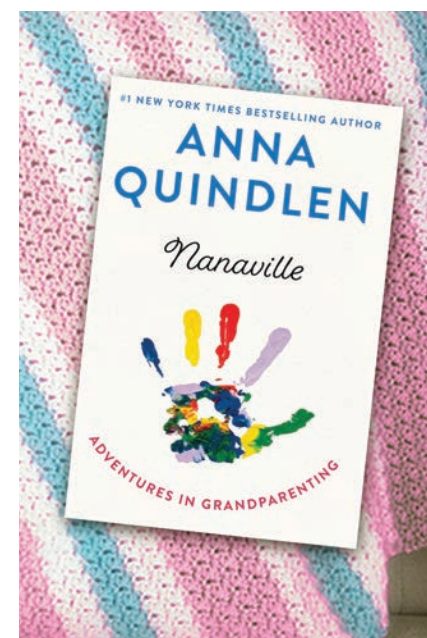
by FRAN WITHROW

**E**VEN IF YOU ARE not a grandparent, I invite you to take a look at Anna Quindlen's "Nanaville: Adventures in Grandparenting." With her characteristic charm, humor, and gentle wit, Quindlen shares her observations about the delightful role she enjoys with her first grandchild, Arthur. Her wise, thoughtful take on this new calling is definitely worth your time.

Having a grandparent, or being a grandparent, is a relatively modern-day luxury. For millennia, most humans did not live long enough to enjoy their children's children. Now that has changed, and currently "there's a higher level of agreement about grandchildren than there is about...chocolate." Every grandparent Quindlen meets agrees that grandchildren are the best. Quindlen is hopelessly in love with her son's child, doting on his "pillowy knuckles" and his unending fascination with the everything around him. There are plenty of disarming descriptions about how much pleasure she gets from being with Arthur, but Quindlen also offers insights into the delicate touch required to be a grandmother.

She notes that the success of grandparenting depends on many factors. The relationship between grandparent, adult child, and the adult child's partner are key components to a successful experience. Just as important is to tread carefully in this new role, ever mindful that Nana is not the one in charge, and should respectfully take a back seat to the parents. Her biggest piece of advice for grandparents? "Hold back." She knows Nana is not the center of Arthur's world: his parents are. Sometimes his desire for "Nana" is just his longing for a piece of elongated yellow fruit.

Fortunately, she has a positive and comfortable connection with her daughter-in-law, who is willing to trust Quindlen and allow her to support their new family. She acknowledges that this is not true for everyone and that everyone's grandparenting experience will be different. Therefore she



is grateful for the sweet relationship she enjoys with her son and his family.

Interspersed throughout the book are "Small Moments:" vignettes of actual interactions between Quindlen and Arthur. These often brought a chuckle to my lips. Her description of Arthur tumbling into the pool, where his diaper "took on the contours of a flotation device" made me laugh out loud.

This is such a lovely book, but the last chapter, "Small Moments, Imagined," in which Quindlen conjures up the far-off future when she is in her eighties and welcoming her great grandchildren, feels unnecessary. I wish she had stopped with the previous chapter where she learns that Arthur is going to be a big brother. Despite this minor objection, you will appreciate a trip to Nanaville. Quindlen reminds us that the tender moments experienced across generations are to be treasured. Grandparenting is a chance to marvel anew at the world with children, to remind oneself of how precious and fragile life is. The joys of this gig make all the challenges of navigating this new road worthwhile. **[B]**

**Nanaville:**  
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By Anna Quindlen  
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Penguin Random House  
\$26.00

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# Catherine Rose McGuigan

## A RENAISSANCE WOMAN

### WE ARRIVE AT ULTIMATE TRUTHS THROUGH THE ARTS

and the sciences. Facts of one sort or other lead us to these truths, and there is no such thing as an “alternative fact”, which is really just another term for a lie. Catherine doesn’t peddle these lies; she trades in the truth, as all good scientists and artists must. For instance, there is no denying that human activity is causing global climate change. By using fossil fuels and clear-cutting forests, human beings, for more than one hundred years now, have exponentially increased the concentration of atmospheric carbon dioxide, upsetting the delicate balance of the greenhouse effect that warms our planet. It is equally true that microplastics are found in the fish we eat and the very air we breathe. Something has to change and change quickly. Catherine is passionate about this, a passion informed and ignited by knowledge, talent and critical thinking.

From the time Catherine Rose McGuigan was old enough to hold a crayon in her hand, she had a compulsion to visually express herself, and from the moment she could walk, she was exploring the world around her, whether it was plucking leaves from trees, or picking up a single ant with tiny fingers, delicate as a Swiss watch movement. As she grew older, Catherine experimented with many different mediums, from modelling clay to watercolors, from blow pens to colored pencils. And she became increasingly fascinated by nature. Many is the time I would find her in the forked bole of the saucer magnolia tree in the front yard, either writing in a journal, reading a book, sketching in a notebook, or stroking the black fur of Sophie, her beloved cat, who would join her in her leafy tower. As time went on, the arts and sciences merged in her creative brain, and a Renaissance Woman was born.

When she was just five years old during her Moving On Ceremony at Westminster Canterbury Child Development Center, she was presented with a bracelet that bore a single charm describing an artist’s palette. It meant a lot to Catherine to be recognized for her art, even then. During the summers, her mother, Joany, and I frequently enrolled Catherine in art classes at the VMFA, Pine Camp, or the Visual Arts Center.

And regardless what form she worked in, Catherine always excelled. Over the years she would win one award after another, recognizing her talent.

Undoubtedly, some of her talent must be genetically encoded. Catherine’s mom is an extremely talented artist, my grandfather painted in oils, my brother Chris is a sculptor, my brother Bruce a painter, my sister Fran an interior designer, and my Aunt Kosh has worked all her life in assorted media.

Catherine sits at the far end of the table in our dining room. The walls throughout our house are covered in artwork, many pieces created by my daughter. Catherine is thinking back to her middle school days when she decided to become an artist. “I remember finding this one artist, Brigid Vaughan, on a website, and I really liked the stuff she made,” Catherine says. “They were drawings of characters in books that I loved reading at the time. Characters from Harry Potter and The Hunger Games.”

It wasn’t until she started in the humanities program at Monacan High School that she became fully im-



BY CHARLES MCGUIGAN  
PHOTOS BY REBECCA D'ANGELO

mersed in art studio classes. “The program focused on art history, connecting it with English and world history,” she says. “I had to go through a bunch of different loopholes to try to get in to the photography class, but I eventually got in. And I think I was just kind of inherently good at it.”

The following year, she was able to skip Art 1 altogether and went directly into Art 2. “And then I took independent study,” she says. “We were learning techniques in different mediums.”

She gestures toward a colored-pencil drawing she made during that period that hangs on the gallery wall above the church pew in our dining room. It features a partial profile of a man who is either nervous or scared, or both. “I really liked using Prisma colored pencils,” Catherine says. “They have a high wax content, so you can mix them and make them look cool.”

During that time she explored other mediums as well. “I also liked playing with watercolors,” she says. “And then my art teacher gave me these oil paint sticks. I just got to use my fingers. I like using things that are really tactile, and I like getting messy.”

Catherine rolls her right hand over, revealing the heel of her palm that is splotted with a broad swath of color. “It’s spray paint from a project we were working on yesterday,” she says. “All my clothes have paint on them.”

The academic rigors in the humanities department at Monacan were on par with those of a college, and Catherine excelled in all her courses of study. She read widely in literature and history, was inducted into the National Honor Society, the Beta Club and the National Latin Society, and appeared on *The Battle of the Brains*. She also ran cross-country and played lacrosse. She tested out of her AP classes, and was awarded 20 college credit hours.

While still in high school, a few of Catherine’s pieces hung in the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts. She received a silver key award from the National Scholastic Art and Writing Program (this same foundation has presented laurels to luminaries from Andy Warhol to Truman Capote) for a self-portrait she had drawn. The following year she would receive two gold key awards from the Scholastic Arts Program. One piece was of a former professor of mine who would also teach Catherine at VCU—Dr. Nick Sharp. The other piece that won a gold key was a pen-and-ink drawing that stuns the viewer and demands closer inspection. There are about fifty people—women, men and children—plodding slowly to some vanishing point, and you can sense there are thousands of others in front of them and thousands more behind them. They are all naked with their backs to us. They are being herded, many of them slumped forward. When you look closely, you see a child, without the benefit of a parent’s hand, holding a stuffed animal, which is the only element of the drawing done in solid black. The piece is called *The Dispossessed* and it does what art is supposed to do; it moves you outside yourself and into another’s experience, and it forces you to consider your own humanity.

“We were studying the Trail of Tears in AP US history,” says Catherine. “I got the name from that audio piece you did called *The Dispossessed*. I liked how encompassing it was. It’s not just applicable to the

Native Americans who were displaced, but it’s also applicable to the people in the Shenandoah region and literally anywhere else, any group of people that have been displaced from their land forcefully.”

Catherine’s first university of choice after high school was the best public art school in the country, and one of the best in the world—VCUarts. She worked tirelessly in the AFO (arts foundation) program that first year, frequently staying through the night in her studio just south of Broad Street.

“It should also be noted that I’ve always struggled with art,” Catherine says. “Always trying to be better, and always doubting myself. To this day, I always doubt myself.”

“But that’s a good thing,” I say.

“Yeah, it is a good thing,” she says.

When she first started classes at VCU, Catherine decided to declare environmental studies as a minor alongside her major in communication arts.

“I have always loved the outdoors,” Catherine says. “I always liked that primal feeling of being outside, kind of how I like getting my hands dirty with art. There’s something nice about tangible things.”

And Joany and I often took Catherine on vacations and outings to our many state and national parks, and we hiked and biked and camped and canoed and reveled in the natural and sublime beauty of our public lands.

“I went into illustration in communication arts because I thought it would be cool to have more classes that got the creative juices flowing,” says Catherine. “And that was the time I decided I was going to do an environmental studies major also. I thought, ‘Well, I’ll have all the knowledge to back it up and I’ll have the art skills to do whatever I want.’”

From her earliest years, Catherine has been a hard worker. She and her lifelong friend, Selena, delivered the Bellevue route for North of the James magazine. Catherine also did a lot of babysitting at her mother’s house. She worked the summer of her senior year in high school as a maintenance ranger at Pocahontas State Park. After that she took a job with Paralyzed Veterans of America, where she worked full-time in the summers, and part-time throughout the year. Although she took a full course load at VCU, she also managed to work thirty hours a week, and during the summer she worked full-time to bank more money. Catherine has lived independently since she first went off to college. For a couple years now she has been part of the Stir Crazy Café family. And I want to say something here: the group of young people who work at Stir Crazy, most of them being millennials, are the hardest working group of people I’ve ever met. What’s more, they not only hold down their jobs as baristas or kitchen workers, they also have other interests and pursuits. These people hustle. The negative nonsense about millennials I’ve heard espoused by some is not true of the millennials I know. They are the most politically engaged and best-informed generation I have ever encountered. Plus: they’re very quick studies.

As Catherine was juggling work and school, she applied for a grant, which she was subsequently awarded. “In January of 2018 I received a grant to make promotional posters of the Virginia State Parks

similar to the ones they made in the thirties with the Works Project Administration for the National Parks, but these were going to be different,” she says. “We were going to do them in our own style. So we got money to screen-print a bunch.” Catherine’s friend and fellow comm art graduate, Madi Hall, is helping with the project.

“So far I’ve done five; Westmoreland, Grayson Highlands, Natural Bridge, Douthat and Shot Tower,” says Catherine. “Madi has done High Bridge Trail, First Landing and Kiptopeke.” Eventually, the pair will produce one poster for each of the 38 holdings in the Virginia State Park system. “In each poster we include different facts about the park, and show off what is unique about each one because they all have something totally different to offer. This is a way to really to draw more attention to our state parks.”

Last summer, Catherine spent a couple months as an intern doing field work in northern Michigan at the University of Michigan’s Biological Station in Pellston, about thirty miles south of Mackinaw Bridge. “I worked under Dr. Chris Gough from VCU and he has a lab that does forest ecology,” Catherine explains. “They had a long-term study going on up there looking at relations between levels of disturbance in a forested ecosystem and how well the forest rebounds and how much carbon is able to be sequestered. I learned volumes there.”

Catherine is currently working on a number of art projects, and along with her work at Stir Crazy, has a job with VCU’s office of sustainability. “VCU started this project called the Urban Forestry Collaborative,” she says. “VCU and a number of organizations around Richmond are all working to benefit the city as far as urban canopy and forestry growth is concerned.”

For a few minutes, she silent, her eyes transfixed on the tattoo that adorns the underside of her left forearm. It was inked by the people at Lucky 13 on Broad Street, but Catherine drew it. It is Belle Isle, one of our favorite haunts on the James River, and clearly shows the rock pool and the water-filled quarry.

“It’s horrible,” says Catherine, reflecting on the state of our planet. “It’s really depressing when you hear the facts about it. And our county, of all the countries in the world, should be leading the way, and we’re doing the complete opposite.” She mentions how the current administration withdrew the United States from the Paris (Climate) Agreement. “We are one of two countries that are not in the Paris Climate Accords,” she says.

Catherine recently returned from a trip to China, where she visited her boyfriend, Tyler, who is studying at Jiangxi University of Finance and Economics in Nanchang. “Even in China, they’re cutting out so many different things,” she says. “They’re part of the Climate Agreement and they have a tax on plastic bags in their grocery stores. And when I was flying out of Shanghai, I could see hundreds of wind turbines in the water, and offshore, and also on the land.”

It’s well past time to take action. “You have reports coming out annually from scientists that show the basic carbon emissions are so much steeper than we previously thought,” Catherine tells me. “It’s not a question of fifty or hundred years from now, it’s a question of fifteen to twenty years from now

when temperatures are going to rise significantly.”

“Everything’s a lot worse than they thought it was going to be, and the people in control aren’t acting on it, and that’s what’s so dangerous,” says Catherine. “They don’t care about the future, or taking precautionary measures.”

Even from an economic standpoint, tackling these problems makes sense. “It’s more cost effective to be a sustainable business because you’re saving on energy costs,” Catherine says. “It takes a little more effort in the beginning stages, but in the long run it saves you money and it’s beneficial for the planet. And they won’t do it. They still just won’t do it. They’re just greedy sons of bitches. I’m really mad about it.”

As she should be, as every member of the human race should be. Catherine then mentions a report by the World Bank. “They looked at how many more jobs solar energy creates as opposed to coal, and coal is a dying industry because it’s a non-renewable resource,” she says. “And we’re literally blowing up mountains right now



Just a small sampling of some of Catherine’s posters.

trying to get the last bits of coal that other countries won’t even buy from us anymore. And instead we could be investing in solar power and wind power and educating people on how to become solar engineers and how to manufacture these products. There’s so much that can be done.”

There’s a deep sadness in her voice, but it is tempered with resolve and challenge. “We shouldn’t be having this conversation because the planet is more important than your god-damned end-of-year profits,” Catherine says. “Who cares about profits, if you don’t have a planet left?

How is that even a discussion? That shouldn’t be a discussion. It should be common sense.”

Then she mentions how Maine has outlawed Styrofoam, how California eliminated single-use plastic bags. “We’re getting there, but there are so

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many backward-thinking people," she says.

Catherine returns to her own art and science. "Scientific information tends to be hard to understand and that's always been an issue," she says. "I would ideally like to take that information, interpret it and visually be able to break it down for people, to be able to graphically represent the information and have it available for people."

"If you don't have facts, what do you have?" Catherine Rose McGuigan asks. "That's what we rely on. Facts."

I look down the length of the table into the green of her eyes that are now tearing up.

"If I don't keep my values, what do I have?" she asks.

"Nothing."

"Absolutely nothing," she says. 



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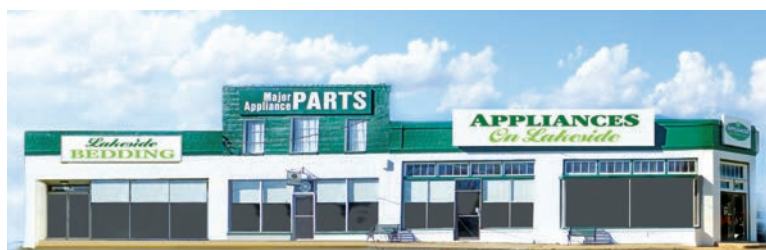


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