TFC Recycling

From humble beginnings, this Chesapeake-based, family-owned business is now the largest recycler in Virginia

Michael “Recycle” Benedetto, President and Owner of TFC Recycling
Spotlight on the 2023/2024 VHSL Realignment

Most people know that high school athletics in Virginia are sanctioned by the Virginia High School League (VHSL). What is not well-known is how schools are grouped and that every three to four years, the VHSL realigns schools, thus changing regional and state level opponents in the Commonwealth’s high schools. The next realignment is set to take place in the 2023-2024 athletic season, running through the 2027 season. The Alignment Committee’s recently-submitted proposal will impact several of our local schools, and it can get complicated, but we have you covered with all you need to know!

First, it is important to understand how schools are sectioned. There are districts, regions, and classes. Districts—the smallest of the entities—are given names along with common opponents that comprise a school’s district schedule. Examples of local districts in our area are the Southeastern District (Great Bridge, Grassfield, Hickory, etc.), the Beach District (Kellam, Ocean Lakes, Princess Anne, etc.), and the Eastern District (Churchland, Lake Taylor, Maury, etc.).

Next are the regions, which contain schools from all districts but are still geographically ordered. Regions are assigned by letter, either A, B, C, or D. Our local schools are Region A.

Lastly, and most importantly, there are classes, which are numbered 1 through 6. Classes group schools based on Average Daily Membership (ADM), aka enrollment. The theory behind grouping based on enrollment is that schools with large student bodies have more student-athletes to pull from, thus increasing their chances of having better athletes. This prevents a school like Lake Taylor, which has an ADM of 788, from having to go through schools like Grassfield (ADM of 1,700) for a regional or state title. My opinion is that classes are vital to ensuring competitive fairness at the regional and state levels of post-season play.

The current proposal on the table would impact six of our local schools: Kellam, Ocean Lakes, Deep Creek, Great Bridge, Hickory, and King’s Fork.

Below are two charts: one with the current class based on the 2018 realignment with ADM and one with the proposed class after realignment and the current ADM.

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Send all nominations for local athletes to spotlighttosportswithbj@gmail.com

A 2007 Great Bridge High School graduate, Brandon Johnson is a freelance writer and podcaster, a baseball and basketball coach, and works at Centerville Insurance Agency.
According to the Declaration of Independence, governments “derive their just powers from the consent of the governed.” This means if people don’t like their government, they have the right to change it. Here in the U.S.A., the vehicle of that change is the vote. Though change often comes too slowly for many, it wouldn’t come at all if every adult U.S. citizen didn’t have—and exercise—this foundational right.

National Voter Registration Day, on September 20th, is an all-out effort to convince all American citizens of voting age to exercise that right and, if they haven’t yet registered to vote, to do so. Volunteers and organizations nationwide collaborate by setting up registration tables, knocking on doors, or producing social and mass media awareness campaigns on the importance of registering to vote. Imagine over 10,000 volunteers working together one full day to educate Americans on one of our most precious rights.

National Voter Registration Day 2016, over 750,00 American citizens registered to exercise a fundamental right that is denied to millions of people in other nations.

National Voter Registration Day is also a reminder of what is required to vote. You must be at least 18 years old, a U.S. citizen, and a current resident of your state. When you see a National Voter Registration Day table or volunteer, you can do more than just register. You can also confirm your polling place, update your registration details, or get more information on upcoming elections.

~ Rob Lauer
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4 free tickets to Parade of Boats/Fish Fry;
three months logo exposure

BRONZE: $1000.00
2 free gala tickets;
2 free tickets to Parade of Boats/Fish Fry;
one month logo exposure

TotalCare For Women
Gwendolyn Riddick, DO
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EVMS
Richard Homan, M.D.
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Dr. Britt
 kilograms page 9

Dr. Montero
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Dr. Walshe
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Dr. Vinik
 kilograms page 12

Hampton Roads Doctors with Global Reach
See inside!
I am a Storyteller!

I have been a storyteller for as long as I can remember. And it fits into what I do with our magazines. Actually, if we stop to ponder what kind of information we want to impart, there are many choices.

“Just the facts” is one objective in communication. “The Truth and nothing but the Truth” reaches for more information. Then, my desire for “color” fits in at length.

I always want to share the “color.” For instance, when we write stories about our clients and neighbors, my goal is to leave our readers with as pertinent a description as possible. Here is as good an example as comes to my mind: Jon Pittman is the owner of the Moyock Farm Market. I could communicate just that to you very quickly. But I think your picture of who this man is becomes more full when I write that Jon is following in his grandfather’s footsteps. Even more of the picture develops when I add that Jon is a part-time deputy sheriff married to a beautiful soul, Jamie, and they have a son and daughter.

Knowing who someone is, and not just what they do, gives us more information about whom we trust in our business dealings, our homes, and even our lives.

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There is even more to consider than good business dealings. Sometimes, even often, we form friendships with those who appear in our lives. Doctor Barry Hobbs entered my life in 1989 and became a man I admired. Midgette Family Dentistry in Western Branch is one practice I have always been proud to share with our readers. The Edinburgh Dentistry group I go to on this eastern side of Chesapeake also projects a long-time, friendly feeling.

I want my magazines to be personal enough to give readers a true and accurate picture of who our clients are. By now, Barry Hobbs of Addition Associates is someone I have been proud to introduce to our readers for twenty-five years. Barry is a true gentleman and calls me “Dear Heart.” I have always loved that compliment. One of his happy clients told me years ago, “We were so sorry when his men finished our kitchen job! We missed them coming every morning!” WOW!

I always want to share the “color.” For instance, when we write stories about our clients and neighbors, my goal is to leave our readers with as pertinent a description as possible. Here is as good an example as comes to my mind: Jon Pittman is the owner of the Moyock Farm Market. I could communicate just that to you very quickly. But I think your picture of who this man is becomes more full when I write that Jon is following in his grandfather’s footsteps. Even more of the picture develops when I add that Jon is a part-time deputy sheriff married to a beautiful soul, Jamie, and they have a son and daughter.

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Lori Granger has returned to The Shopper. After living in Rhode Island, Lori has returned to Southside Hampton Roads and The Shopper.

Lori is an outstanding Account Executive who truly loves working with Entrepreneurs to promote their businesses. And they are delighted to have her back!

Friends can welcome Lori back to The Shopper where she can be contacted at: 757-547-0520 or receive email at lorigranger@gmail.com.

The Shopper is a monthly, direct-mail, magazine serving six community editions in Chesapeake, Portsmouth, Suffolk, Smithfield, Carrollton, in Virginia and communities in northeastern North Carolina. The Shopper has a circulation of at least 10,000 printed and distributed in each zone. Additional issues are placed in our advertisers’ stores and in professional offices in our circulation area. Opinions expressed by contributors are not necessarily the opinion of this publication. ©2022.
Choosing a Family Doctor
Dr. Samir Abdelshaheed

Family doctors are doctors who care for the whole family. They care for the physical, mental and emotional health of both the patient and their families. Family doctors know the most current treatments and technologies. They normally train for at least three years in a real practice setting, treating patients in the office, the hospital and possibly at home. They also recertify more than any other medical specialty. Family doctors continue to educate themselves as part of their recertification. This allow them to apply the latest medical breakthroughs.

Family doctors are specially trained in preventative medicine. They believe that preventing a health problem is better than having to overcome one. If you are looking for a family doctor, try talking with your friends and family. Once you have the names of a few doctors, call their office to get more information:

- Do they accept your insurance?
- What are the office hours?
- What hospital does the doctor use?
- How many doctors are in the practice?

Once you find a doctor who meets your needs, schedule an appointment so that you can meet and talk to the doctor.

During the appointment be sure that:

- You’re comfortable talking to the doctor
- The doctor answers all your questions
- The doctor explains things so that you understand
- You had enough time to ask all your questions

Remember, it takes time to build a relationship with your doctor. For an effective visit, be sure to tell your doctor about any current and past health care issues:

- Any symptoms you are having
- Your health history
- Personal information including whether you are stressed or if your life is changing
- Any medicines you are currently taking. Bring them with you or create a list of all your medicines. Include information about what and how often you take the medicine. You should also write down the strength of the medicine.
- Any side effects you have from your medicine
- Vitamin supplements you take
- X-rays, test results, or medical records you have can be brought to the appointment.

Don’t be afraid to speak up. It’s important for you to let your doctor know if you don’t understand something.
For many Americans, the fall season begins the week after Labor Day. Kids head back to school, Friday night football kicks off, and Halloween candy, decorations and costumes grace store aisles everywhere. The weather may still be hot and humid here in Hampton Roads, but everyone begins bracing for lower temperatures, shorter days, and longer nights.

Of course, the week after Labor Day is the unofficial beginning of fall. The official first day of fall is... when exactly? The date moves around from year to year, with many of us asking, sometime later in September, “Was today the first day of fall, or was it yesterday? Or is it tomorrow?” Sometime in late March, we usually face the same confusion regarding the first day of spring.

So when is the official first day of fall in 2022? And why is the date different every year? To answer those questions, we have to consult the heavens—in particular, the sun and the Earth’s yearly journey around it.

The name for the first day of fall is the Fall Equinox. The word “equinox” comes from two Latin terms: *aequus*, which means equal, and *nox*, which means night. So equinox literally means “equal night.”

According to the National Weather Service, an equinox occurs two times each year when the number of daylight hours and nighttime hours in a single day is equal. This happens because the Earth’s axis is tilted neither toward nor away from the sun. Because the sun is over the equator on those two days, the amount of daylight and darkness is the same across the entire Earth.

The Spring Equinox usually takes place between March 20th and 21st. The Fall Equinox usually takes place between September 22nd and 23rd.

This year (2022), fall begins officially on Thursday, September 22nd. If one wants to get even more precise, in our region of the eastern seaboard, fall begins that evening at 9:02 p.m.

~ Rob Lauer
Children First
Who Are the Teachers of Our Children?

Anyone who goes shopping in a big box store or any other business selling school supplies in August has been overwhelmed by families jamming the aisles of notebooks, pencils, lunch boxes, backpacks, hand sanitizer, and tissues. That doesn’t even include the back-to-school clothing aisles, with parents trying to weigh their children’s ideas of appropriate attire against what they fear might warrant a phone call from the principal on the first day of school.

September brings out the big yellow buses and the beginning of a new school year. While so many people make this possible, teachers will be the focus of this month’s column. There is a crisis in education today, and we are all affected by it. It doesn’t matter whether you currently have children in school. Schools form the bedrock of our democracy. A well-educated citizenry requires committed, well-trained teachers to open the minds of their students and prepare them to take up the mantle of leadership in a world filled with challenges. Why are we facing a shortage of such teachers? A number of factors have led to this situation over the last fifteen years.

Serving as a Principal during those early years, I watched the number of new teachers entering the field for interviews dwindle each year. Then I saw a critical shortage in our communities. It is the responsibility of all citizens that shaped his life. He spoke of the importance of education often. It is the responsibility of all citizens to support the teachers in our schools.

As we begin a new school year, let’s make a commitment to encourage our leaders to solve this critical shortage in our communities.

A career educator, Dr. Rebecca Adams has served as a teacher in grades two through graduate school, reading specialist, principal, and an educational foundation administrator. She was selected as Chesapeake’s First Citizen 2016 for her community service.

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Dennis’s Spaghetti & Steak House
3356 Western Branch Blvd, Chesapeake

By Dr. Becky Adams

years of undergraduate and graduate school education. Others had seen how hard their teachers had to work and then still had to write lesson plans and grade papers when they went home at night. I have often heard people say, “but teachers have the summers off.” It is true, but that is the time they have to recharge themselves and often take courses to continue to grow in their field (if they aren’t teaching summer school). Teaching is not a simple process, as many parents found during the recent pandemic when their children needed help at home with online courses.

In this column, I’ve previously written that children have many adults in the community who serve as teachers in their lives. It is certainly true, however, that a significant percentage of children’s early education comes from their classroom teachers. One of my favorite quotes comes from Nelson Mandela: “There can be no keener revelation of a society’s soul than the way in which it treats its children.”

I had the privilege of visiting South Africa with a group of educators in 2013, just two months before Mandela’s death. We traveled to many of the areas that shaped his life. He spoke of the importance of education often. It is the responsibility of all citizens to support the teachers in our schools.

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Don’t Wear White After Labor Day!...Who Says? By Rob Lauer

Labor Day is now behind us, and so is the summer. Though fall doesn’t officially begin until September 22, and although Hampton Roads temperatures are likely to remain in the 70s well into October, in the minds of most, Labor Day marks the end of summer. It’s time to bid a fond farewell to vacations, summer sports, cookouts, and pool parties. And, of course, everyone must stop wearing all white clothing until after Memorial Day 2023.

Really? Who says? For over a century, the one “Fashion Rule” that nearly everyone knew was “Don’t wear white after Labor Day.” Where in the world did this idea come from, and do modern-day clothing designers and fashionistas agree with it?

The tradition of wearing white during the summer dates back to the late 1800s, before the advent of air-conditioning, ceiling fans, and electricity. It was also an age of modesty: floor-length dresses for women, along with high collars and long sleeves for everyone, male and female. It was a more formal time when everyone always dressed in layers regardless of the season. Men typically wore some sort of tie around their necks, along with vests and jackets whether they were members of established affluent families or “new money,” they dressed formally to travel, not out of necessity but for fun, giving birth to something that most Americans now enjoy—vacations.

During the summer, wealthy Americans left their homes in the nation’s crowded, overheated urban centers or the sweltering Deep South for resort communities along New England’s beaches and the Upper Midwest’s Great Lakes. Here they could relax on beaches, enjoy boating, and play tennis or croquet. Styles at the time dictated outfits for each of these activities—layers of white, lightweight cottony fabrics that were fitted enough to look fashionable but loose enough to move freely in. And thus, informal sportswear was born. Though casual by the standards of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, those clothes were still extremely formal by today’s standards. Since these were the outfits that the rich wore to sweat on the streets of a city. And so, a tradition was born among the well-to-do: “Don’t wear white before Memorial Day or after Labor Day.”

Snobs of all classes gradually got wind of the tradition, and whether they were members of established affluent families or “new money,” they began enforcing it as a hard-and-fast rule. “It was the insiders trying to keep other people out,” according to Valerie Steele, director of the Museum at the Fashion Institute of Technology, “and outsiders trying to climb in by proving they know the rules.”

By the 1950s, the rule became universal among Americans of all classes—whether they bought their clothes on Fifth Avenue or through the Sears catalog. At the same time, the rule’s origin faded from memory.

There were some holdouts to the rule—most notably, the world-famous 20th-century fashion designer Coco Chanel, who proudly wore white any time of the year she wished.

Does the rule still apply in 2022?

The answer from today’s leading fashion designers and style gurus is a resounding, “No!” Whether it’s a white pair of pants or a skirt, a shirt or blouse, jacket, vest, hat, boots or shoes—if you like it and think you look good in it, wear it regardless of the season.
Michael Benedetto has fond memories of spending summers in Virginia Beach as a teenager during the late 1970s and early 1980s. “I’m originally from New York,” he explains. “But as soon as school ended each year, my parents, three siblings, and I came down to a small condo in Virginia Beach, and we didn’t head back to New York until school started in early September.”

When Michael recalls those summers, one doesn’t hear about sand, surf, and lazy afternoons spent sunbathing or catching a wave. Instead, Michael and his siblings spent those summers working outside at the materials recovery facility for their family’s business, TFC Recycling, located in Chesapeake.

Founded in 1973, Tidewater Fibre Corp (now referred to as TFC Recycling) is now Virginia’s largest residential curbside recycler. Through partnerships and agreements with local and municipal governments and public service authorities, the company provides recycling services for over 600,000 households in six of Virginia’s largest cities and more than 4,000 commercial customers in Virginia and North Carolina. Headquartered in Chesapeake, TFC employs over 350 people and operates more than 180 collection and transfer vehicles.

“We’re a local, family-owned company that’s been doing the right thing for our employees, our community, and the environment for generations,” Michael says with a proud smile.

Despite being Virginia’s largest residential curbside recycler, TFC Recycling had humble beginnings. “In the early years, we were operating the business out of a single-wide trailer,” Michael recalls. Before the technological advances of the 1980s, ’90s, and beyond, the business of recycling was a hands-on, laborious, time-consuming endeavor. Michael’s parents, Joseph and Susann Benedetto, required him to do the toughest, dirtiest jobs, learning the business from the ground up. But this family-owned business’s humble roots go back generations.

“My great-grandfather, Dominic Benedetto, came from Italy through Ellis Island and settled in Brooklyn in the late 1800s,” Michael explains. “At that time, bias against Italian immigrants limited his job opportunities. There’s an old saying: ‘One man’s trash is another man’s treasure.’ My great-grandfather took that to heart. He began collecting old clothes, scraps, and other items, and in 1897, he turned it into a business—one of the first buy-back centers and recycling companies in the U.S. My grandfather, Joseph Benedetto, Sr., born in 1900, continued the recycling business. He began a partnership with a papermill, supplying it with any materials that could be broken down and converted into paper. By the 1950s, he had grown the business into one of the largest recycling operations in the U.S.”

“In the early 1970s, my dad wanted to grow and modernize the company,” Michael continues, “but my grandfather, who had lived through the Great Depression and didn’t want to borrow money, wasn’t interested. So, my dad struck out on his own. Banks in Virginia were more friendly than those in New York, so my dad was able to get a $50,000 loan. In 1973, he opened his own business, Tidewater Fibre Corp., here in Chesapeake, and the loan allowed him to build a 20,000-square-foot building with a baling and conveyor belt. To this day, that building is still part of TFC’s operations.”

“We’re a local, family-owned company that’s been doing the right thing for our employees, our community, and the environment for generations.”

—Michael Benedetto

With TFC Recycling firmly established, the family moved permanently from New York to Hampton Roads. In the late 1970s, methods used to collect and sort recyclable material were still primitive by today’s standards. But the family was determined that TFC be at the forefront of progress and change.

“In the early 1980s, we purchased our first roll-off truck, like the ones now used at building sites to collect debris,” Michael recalls. “We rented these containers to area department stores, and they’d throw their cardboard into them. The roll-off trucks allowed us to place recycling containers at churches and non-profits for fund-raising.”

In the 1980s, American attitudes toward recycling changed for the better thanks to one major newsworthy event.

New York City had reached its landfill capacity and agreed to ship its garbage via a barge—the Mobro 4000—to a landfill in Morehead City, North Carolina. When rumors spread that the barge’s entire shipment had been contaminated by debris from a New York City hospital, Carolina’s environmental watchdogs demanded that the city certify the trash contained no toxic wastes or harmful materials. Unsatisfied with New York’s response, North Carolina officials obtained a court order prohibiting the Mobro from unloading anywhere in their state. States along the eastern seaboard followed suit, as did Mexico. Months later, the barge was finally allowed to anchor in New Jersey, and its cargo was incinerated. The incident—cited by environmentalists and the media as evidence of a landfill shortage—triggered...
“Recycling is good, and a city-wide curbside collection is the most efficient and effective way to do it.”

—Michael Benedetto

Step by step, TFC made the process of collecting recyclables more efficient.

“A shift began toward using trucks with only two compartments instead of six—one for paper, one for bottles and cans,” Michael explains. “Some trucks even came with dividers that could be moved to accommodate seasonal variations. Soon after, compaction was introduced, and the process became even more efficient.”

Another advance was the move to using larger collection carts in the 1990s. Michael is particularly proud of the partnership that TFC established at that time with the City of Virginia Beach.

“Virginia Beach was a leader in recycling,” Michael says. “By partnering with them, we became the first company in the U.S. to collect and process recyclable materials, all mixed together, from 95-gallon carts with wheels and lids. Collection trucks with arms could pick up and empty these carts. We made a costly, inefficient recycling service more efficient by using technology from other industries to separate materials. Placing all recyclable materials together in a cart made it easier for residents to transport recyclables to the curb; it provided more capacity for more material to be recycled and a lid to keep material dry and from littering the neighborhood. It also limited the number of trucks and drivers because a household could be serviced in less than a minute, versus spending five-to-ten minutes per household. Recyclables could be sorted in our Materials Recovery Facility rather than by the drivers on the street.”

The program that TFC developed was so efficient that the company’s partnership with Virginia Beach served as a model for partnerships now used in over 250 cities nationwide. “We, along with the City of Virginia Beach, take some credit for inventing and perfecting the current single stream collection and separation process,” Michael smiles. 

TFC’s role as a leading innovator in recycling technology continued into the 21st century.

“In 2006, we installed the most expensive, automated recycling recovery system at that time in Chesapeake,” Michael says. “Recyclables were dumped from a truck onto a conveyor belt and loaded onto a conveyor belt. Materials traveled to a mechanical screen that sorted paper from glass, metal, and plastic bottles and cans by size and shape. Seven optical sorting units—actual cameras over conveyor belts that used infrared technology to sort by size, shape, and composition—were installed. This was the most state-of-the-art materials recovery system anywhere in the world. The optical sorting units assisted the mechanical screens in separating materials for recycling. Additionally, magnetic separators were installed to remove steel and aluminum cans. After materials were separated, they were baled for shipment to mills worldwide. From 1996 to today, hundreds of visitors from small to multinational companies and dozens of countries have come to see what we are doing and how we are doing it. Additionally, we offer tours to residents and businesses to show that materials are being captured and recycled. We taught the world the most efficient and effective way to collect and process recyclable waste—a technology and system used efficiently today.”

In 2011, TFC started “Recycling Perks,” an incentive program that promotes participation in curbside recycling and environmental stewardship. As residents recycle, they are awarded points that allow them to claim free rewards from local businesses participating in the program. “We really want to get people to recycle more material more often,” Michael says. It’s a great win-win-win-win program: businesses get free advertising and door traffic; residents get free products and services; cities collect less waste, and TFC collects more recyclables.

In 2013, TFC became the first company in Virginia to install a compressed natural gas filling station. “There’s so much debate nationally about not supporting hostile foreign countries by continuing to buy fossil fuel from them,” Michael notes. “Compressed natural gas (CNG) is not a fossil fuel. It’s cleaner, doesn’t contribute to climate change, is produced in the U.S., and delivered by Virginia Natural Gas. It was refreshing to see cities and other companies following our lead and changing over to compressed natural gas.”

Concerned about the pace of climate change and how it will affect our children, Michael is nevertheless optimistic about steps that can be taken now and in the future.

“Instead of cutting down a tree to make paper, we use recycled cardboard and paper to make new boxes,” he says. “We can mine aluminum, which pollutes the atmosphere and uses so much energy, or, on the other hand, we can simply recycle existing aluminum cans. Recycling is good, and a city-wide curbside collection is the most efficient and effective way to do it.”

“In our day and age, there are people who recognize climate change and rising sea levels and realize what is happening to our planet,” Michael continues. “School kids and teenagers are teaching their parents about recycling. What drove my generation when it came to our homes—turning off lights, turning off the water faucets while brushing teeth or shaving, adjusting the thermostat up and down to save energy—we need to have that same conservationist mindset when it comes to the environment.”

To those who say recycling will not make a difference, Michael offers a story:

“A father and a son are walking along a beach covered with stranded starfish. When the son throws a starfish back into the ocean to save it, the father says, ‘Son, there are so many starfish that you can’t make a difference.’ And the son, continuing to throw starfish back into the water, responds: ‘I made a difference to that starfish.’”

“When you recycle, the benefits are so much greater than what we can do because we know it’s important and necessary. Every bit makes a difference,” Michael concludes with a smile. “We can go into cities and say, recycling is one of the most used services for providing jobs, generating tax revenue, and saving the environment. Just like the starfish, every piece of paper, bottle, and can we recycle gives it a new life. Together, we can make a difference.”
Almighty Meals
Healthy, nutritional meals is an easy fix for busy lifestyles

Meghan Walker had no plans to start a restaurant. For almost 25 years, she worked as an RDA dental assistant; but Meg operates on faith, and because of that, she knew her belief in something greater would guide her. Meg would soon become the creator of an extraordinary business she named Almighty Meals.

When her up-close vision started to change, Meg began to feel her time in dentistry was ending. So she picked up her guitar and went on the road with her band. For two years, this former RDA, mother of two, and career Navy spouse found fulfillment touring the eastern states, writing and recording music, and playing festivals, youth camps, and conferences. When the music season slowed, she prayed to be “led” to what she should be doing next. What followed was an introduction to the restaurant business.

One of Meg’s friends needed help prepping and cooking for a food truck he had just started. Bob Roberts, the founder of Redwood Smoke Shack, began tutoring Meg in all things restaurant related. Meg describes his BBQ as the best BBQ ever. Bob’s mentorship and standards of excellence planted the seed for her new career in food.

Further affirming Meg’s new calling was her friend Amy Harris’s plea for nutritional help as she was returning to teaching after the birth of her first child. “She asked me to help her eat more consistently and to help her with her nutritional goals. She always loved my cooking, and since I prepped my own meals for the week, she asked if I would meal prep for her too.”

As her friend Amy began to bring Meg’s meals to school, other teachers there began to ask Meg if she would help them, too. Another of the teachers at the school who joined Meg’s meal prep project was her friend Lindsay Kight, who was paramount in helping perfect some of Meg’s key ingredients and plating.

“I’ve never been too proud to accept critiques and suggestions,” Meg says. “Lindsay’s feedback was the key to making dishes better. I’ve always said, ‘You don’t know what you don’t know.’ As silly as that might sound, I believe it’s the foundation for my staying receptive and humble.”

With her new identity as a chef securely unfolding, Meg began the next leg of her food journey: opening her own restaurant. Many of her friends rallied behind her—including Chef Nic Hagan, who helped her with the design and some of the heavy lifting during the early stages.

During a particularly trying time when Meg was having doubts, her husband, James, encouraged her with something he had learned from the Navy. “My husband said the most inspiring thing to me when I was feeling defeated. He said, ‘No plans survive first contact with the enemy.’ He went on to explain that you train, run drills, and strategize, but when actually meeting the adversary, it is always a scenario that your preparations could not account for 100 percent. “His encouragement pulled me through,” Meg says gratefully. And so Almighty Meals was born. This Halloween will mark their third anniversary.

When entering the Almighty Meals Kitchen, one of the first things guests notice is that the door proudly states the business is “Veteran Family Owned.”

“Every repair our bodies make for every single cell that comprises us, comes directly from what we eat...’If we are what we eat, then I only want to eat the good stuff.’”

—Meghan Walker
meals and other healthy lean and balanced/low-fat meal options. All are scratch-made from nutritious, whole food and, when available, organic. Ninety-eight percent of the meals are gluten-free, and all of them are sugar-free.

In fact, Meg makes a chocolate chip muffin that some customers found to be the most delicious muffin ever—and that was before finding out there is not one grain of sugar in the Almighty Meals kitchen. "People embracing a low-carb, sugar-free lifestyle need sweetness too," Meg explains. "The secret to our sugarless success is golden monk fruit. It tastes like and behaves like loose brown sugar. It's delicious!"

Ever the philosopher, Meg points out, "Every repair our bodies make, on every single cell that comprises us, comes directly from what we eat. As they say in "Ratatouille"—a movie I love: 'If we are what we eat, then I only want to eat the good stuff.'"

With that mantra, and the enlightening quotes lovingly written on each meal prep box, Meg and the Almighty Meals team are creating a new standard of food that nourishes both the body and soul.

"People can feel there is something different about this place... It’s filled with a happy energy!"
—Meghan Walker

As for orders via the website, Almighty Meals is cooking and assembling, on average, 150 to 200 meals every Monday. Meg and her team take the time to handwrite positive quotes or scriptural passages on each and every pre-ordered box. In fact, Meg believes so strongly in the benefits of positive reinforcement and scripture that it is even written on the restaurant’s subfloor.

"People can feel there is something different about this place,” she says with a smile. “It’s filled with a happy energy.” And it sure seems to recharge this very busy woman.

"People embracing a low-carb, sugar-free lifestyle need sweetness too. The secret to our sugarless success is golden monk fruit...It’s delicious!"
—Meghan Walker

In Almighty Meals’ infancy, Meg was working out of her home. “I was saving a lot because I didn’t have the overhead of a restaurant,” she recalls. But the business grew to stand on its own, and she has never looked back. Her joyful spirit and delightful dishes have been contagious in this friendly shopping center.

“We help each other,” Meg proudly says, “this plaza is a family of sorts.” Her culinary creativity is undoubtedly a factor, along with her deep sense of peace, goodness, and community. Every business, from the Hair Group and Pale Horse Coffee to Nails & Tan and Kapers and the almost-open Studly Brewing, is friendly and involved with each other’s success. “It’s amazing here,” Meg says. “Just come and see!”

Almighty Meals is known for its gourmet, low-carb meals and other healthy lean and balanced/low-fat meal options. All are scratch-made from nutritious, whole food and, when available, organic. Ninety-eight percent of the meals are gluten-free, and all of them are sugar-free.

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There is a Grab ‘n Go option for the ultimate convenience

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www.almighty-meals.com
American Business Women’s Day

Kansas City businessman Hilary Bufton Jr. believed that American women, having gained tremendous business knowledge during the war, deserved equal business opportunities with men. In 1949, he sat down in a local coffee shop with Shirley Cupp, Irma Beisel, and Frances Stuckey to discuss founding an organization to support business women.

That meeting resulted in the founding of the American Business Women’s Association on September 22, 1949—the mission of which is “to bring together businesswomen of diverse occupations and to provide opportunities for them to help themselves and others grow personally and professionally through leadership; education, networking support and national recognition.”

That mission statement can also be applied to American Business Women’s Day, celebrated annually on the anniversary of the association’s founding. The holiday was officially recognized in 1983 and 1986 by Congressional resolution and a proclamation issued by President Ronald Reagan. Today women are essential to the U.S. economy, with 68 million in the workforce and 7.7 million owning businesses.

Being a woman-owned business, The Shopper salutes working women everywhere. To read the stories of local businesswomen, as well as businessmen, we encourage you to read each issue in print and online at www.theshopper.com.

By Rob Lauer

Congratulations!

Congratulations to the winning students of the Bivins Orthodontics first Annual $1,000 Scholarship Essay Contest.

Bivins Orthodontics

Mehak

Zoe

Taylor

Jennifer

Aubrey

Eli

Nabeel

See these and other gatherings at TheShopper.com

Rob Lauer is an award-winning, nationally-produced and published playwright.

On the Front Porch with You

Two Mindsets

Recently, I’ve become addicted to the Home and Garden Channel. It’s a harmless addiction but not one of which I’m particularly proud. When winding down at night, reading a good book or watching some highly-acclaimed dramatic series seems like a better use of time. But lately, I can’t get enough of TV series featuring ordinary people either looking for “the house of their dreams” or having their current abode made over into said dreamhouse. The make-over shows appeal to my creative side, but I’m also intrigued by the home-buyers featured on series like “House Hunters.”

For those who don’t share my addiction, each episode of “House Hunters” features a couple searching for a new home in a particular city or town. Usually, they’re moving there because they’re starting a new job or retiring from an old one. The couple is paired with a real estate agent to whom they reveal the type of house they’re looking for and how much they’re willing to spend for it.

What some of these people think they can get for the money they’re willing to spend is the stuff of great comedy—or tragedy, take your pick. I mean, who actually believes that for $1,200 a month, they can get a three-bedroom/two-bath rental with a balcony within walking distance of the trendiest restaurants and shops in a major U.S. urban center? Before I became an addict, I would have said no one over the age of 12. But since my addiction, I’ve learned that such expectations are fairly common among Americans of all ages.

And speaking of Americans of all ages, what has fascinated me is how often these potential home buyers exhibit two particular mindsets.

Those with the first mindset, while wanting privacy when they close their front door, also want to walk out that door and be immersed in community. If they decide not to cook dinner, they want to stroll down the street to a local restaurant. When walking the dog, they want to pass other dog-walkers, window-shop, or grab a cup of coffee. They like living in the heart of the action.

The second mindset is the exact opposite. Give these folks a McMansion on 40,000 acres in some unchartered wilderness. If they can’t have that, they’ll take a house in the suburbs as long as they can’t see or be seen by neighbors. Their ideal backyard wouldn’t face another yard; it would overlook a swath of forest that might bring to mind a magnificent National Park…or the abode of a serial killer from a slasher film.

If one mindset craves the adrenaline rush of constant social connection, the other craves life in a fortress of solitude. I wonder if these mindsets in the extreme have something to do with the divisiveness currently wracking our nation.

Of course, millions of us are somewhere between these two mindsets. We love feeling connected to others while valuing the necessity of time alone. In the end, it’s all about finding the proper balance.
**Relationships**

### Limiting Beliefs

For years I believed that I had barely graduated from high school because my grades were so poor. I honestly thought that my worst grades had been in Chemistry. This belief impacted how I saw myself. I put limitations on myself because of it. I even put off working on my doctorate degree for a long time because I believed it would be too much for me. Then, some time ago, I had a huge surprise.

Karen and I were going through old papers when she found my high school report card from my senior year. She brought it to me and said, “I thought you said you didn’t make good grades in high school.”

“I didn’t,” I replied.

“Well, look at this report card,” Karen continued. “It is all A’s and B’s. Even your Chemistry grade is good.”

I was amazed! How in the world did I get this wrong belief about myself? For most of my life, I have struggled with it and put limitations on myself because of it. How did that happen? The question for me now was: would this new information change how I view myself? Would I now discard those limitations I placed on myself?

What if you found out that you have been believing a lie about yourself and your capabilities? What changes would you make? Or would you continue as you are?

The question for all of us is: “What lies are we living with?” Because of these limiting beliefs, we fail to take advantage of the opportunities that could be ours. Let us challenge one of the beliefs that limit many of us: “Everyone should like me.” When we operate with the belief that everyone should like us, we are minimized if a person is upset with us or criticizes us. We think the problem is with us, not them.

**What if you found out that you have been believing a lie about yourself and your capabilities?**

**What changes would you make?**

In her book “Celtic Daily Prayer,” Mary Lyon pointed out: “Nine-tenths of our suffering is caused by others not thinking as much of us as we think they ought.” It seems the more we seek another’s approval, the worse we feel about ourselves.

It would be healthy for us to ask ourselves: “Why do I keep trying to impress other people? Each time I do it, I feel worse about myself. I know it doesn’t work, but I keep doing it.”

Perhaps we’re driven by the belief that another person’s approval will change what we believe about ourselves. But even if someone does praise us, we will not accept the compliment unless we believe it to be true.

Constantly seeking approval from others does not work because we are giving someone else the power to decide how we should feel about ourselves. That power and authority should be with us.

Next month we will continue looking at these limiting beliefs and ways to handle them.


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—Voted against major residential rezoning that would burden our schools and roads

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Popular Home Improvements

When it comes to ‘sprucing up the place’ for oneself or the real estate market, these improvements top the list

By Rob Lauer

There are times in the lives of all homeowners when they take a good hard look around and realize they are hungry for some major changes. Maybe the realization is triggered while thumbing through a popular home and gardens magazine or watching one of the countless home-improvement programs on TV. Perhaps they’ve begun comparing their home to those of friends and family members. Or maybe they’re contemplating the possibility of selling their home in the next few years and are thinking of making improvements now that could potentially increase its value.

Regardless of the reason, more Americans than ever are making home improvements. According to a study done by Harvard, the home improvement industry has grown by three percent over the last two years. In 2021 alone, Americans spent $538 billion on home improvement, with projected sales expected to reach $625 in 2025.

Home improvements range from inexpensive do-it-yourself projects to pricey undertakings that require professional contractors. What follows are the most popular areas on which Americans currently are spending their time, energy and money.

Landscaping

Curb appeal says a lot about a home. After all, it alone is responsible for everyone’s first impression of a home. While the house’s outward appearance is obviously an important factor, one shouldn’t underestimate the role of landscape in creating a positive first impression. Investing in new landscaping can help make any house look fresh and appealing.

Every view in landscaping should have a focal point. For the front yard, the focal point should always be the front door, so be sure not to hide it. When considering major plantings such as trees, think about how they will frame the front door as people approach the house.

When planting trees in front of a house, remember that they are considered a permanent fixture in the landscape, so think ahead 12 to 15 years. How tall will the species of tree being planted grow? How far out from the trunk will its branches and root system extend? Make sure that trees are not too close to the house. This will decrease the potential of falling branches or limbs damaging the roof or windows in the future, as well as root systems causing issues with the house’s foundation.

Bushes planted around the house should be trimmed so that they do not grow in front of windows. Flowering plants in beds are always a plus, but if one doesn’t have a green thumb or enjoy gardening, consider planting a low-maintenance ground covering.

Add a collection of plants on either side of the front doorway to better tie in the landscaping with the house itself. For a big impact, opt for plants and planters of differing heights, which create a sense of depth in the area. Pick bold colored flowers and verdant greens, or focus on seasonal flowers that can be changed out frequently for a quick refresh.

The Front Door

A new front door is a quick and simple home improvement project that can make a big difference in its appearance and attract buyers when it is put on the market. According to real estate experts, the return on this investment is usually 90 percent.

If a new door isn’t an option, a fresh coat of paint can go a long way in improving a door’s appearance. As long as there are no structural issues (like cracks, chipping paint, or dents), making a front door look new is as easy as a stroll down the paint aisle of a local retailer.

Door knobs, hinges, door knockers, and house numbers can look worse for the wear after years of exposure to the elements. Removing old hardware and replacing it with upgraded new pieces can change a door’s entire appearance. Consider replacing a traditional turn-style knob with a digital keyless entry model or swapping a numerical house number for one that spells the number out in an elegant script.

The Garage Door

As with the front door, homes with front-facing garage can benefit from a garage door replacement. Besides enhancing a home’s overall appearance, an updated garage door can also differentiate the house from all the others in the neighborhood. Because old garage doors can be an eyesore when trying to sell a home, relations estimate the return on this investment usually exceeds the amount spent.

If a home’s driveway is a straight line from the street to the garage door, planting a curved flower bed where the drive meets the front corner of the yard will create a pleasing sweeping effect that enhances the garage’s overall appearance.

Windows

It may come as a surprise, but new windows can significantly improve a home’s appearance, function and value. As windows age, they do a poorer job of insulating a house from the elements. Old windows often mean more allergens in the home, poor insulation, and higher energy bills. Consider replacing them with new, energy-efficient windows. The return on investment for window replacement is generally high, and prospective buyers will appreciate the upgrade when the home is put on the market.

Flooring

Probably no single element of a home’s interior can impact its overall appearance more than new flooring.

In choosing flooring, keep in mind that different board widths create specific effects. Narrow strips (less than three inches wide) are the traditional choice and create the illusion of more space. Wider planks (more than three inches wide) give a room a more rustic appearance, while parquet floors, with their distinctive geometric design, suit formal spaces.

Hardwoods run the gamut from blond to black, depending on species and finish. Consider floors that complement a home’s furniture and accessories when selecting colors and patterns. Hardwoods also vary in durability. Oak, maple, and cherry are used more often due to their hardness. Exotic woods like mahogany and Brazilian cherry aren’t as durable but are prized for their striking appearance.

Hardwoods, such as red oak, will withstand wear and tear for busy households with pets and kids, while softer woods, such as pine, tend to show scratches. The choice between engineered and solid hardwood will most likely be determined by the location, subfloor, and preferred installation.
method. Keep in mind that choosing solid hardwood means scratches from a puppy’s claws or dings from a toddler’s toy can be sanded out and refinished over and over. Preventive care and proper maintenance can keep floors looking good for years.

By some estimates, new flooring can yield an average of upwards of 300 percent return on the investment when the home is sold.

The Kitchen

They say the kitchen is the heart of the home. It’s where a family cooks, eats, socializes with guests, and spends quality time together. So, it makes sense to make this space as welcoming as possible. If appliances look a little dated or the layout is no longer practical, perhaps it’s time to start from scratch with a brand-new look.

Replacing old appliances, including major ones like fridges and stoves, will make a kitchen more attractive and efficient and command a higher price when the home is sold. Recent surveys show that having to replace old and outdated appliances tops the list of turn-offs for potential home buyers.

Drawer pulls and cabinet handles made of metals that were trendy decades ago can make any kitchen look old. Popular metals used in modern kitchen design include matte aluminum, stainless steel, brushed gold, and copper. Installing new pulls and handles on existing cabinetry is a relatively inexpensive upgrade that can make a huge visual impact.

Countertops are a large portion of any kitchen’s landscape. While outdated kitchens may have tile-and-grout or cheap vinyl covering the workspace, the variety of countertop surface options now available is impressive. From solid surfacing varieties that consist of resin and polymers to natural stone varieties such as marble and granite, there’s an option for everyone’s style and budget. Over the last few years, designers have become increasingly creative and are using heavy-duty structural materials for countertops, such as brick, tile, soapstone and quartz.

Because the kitchen is typically the busiest area in a home and the place where people are most likely to congregate, adding an island, countertop, or breakfast bar with seating brings new life to the space. From families with children doing homework to parents entertaining friends while cooking, kitchen seating has become essential to the modern home.

Kitchen lighting, while often an afterthought, is essential for safety and ambiance. If a kitchen contains only one overhead ambient lighting fixture, consider installing recessed lighting with a dimmer switch for versatility while entertaining, cooking, or just relaxing for a midnight snack.

Under-cabinet lighting to illuminate countertops and pendant lighting over a kitchen island are practical additions that also create a feeling of elegance.

The Bathroom

Over the past decade, homeowners and home-buyers have embraced the idea of the bathroom as a spa-like retreat from the world. But one needn’t do an entire bathroom overhaul to help achieve that aesthetic.

Replacing outdated faucets, lighting, and bathroom accessories is a great way to refresh the space while tailoring it to one’s personal style.

Does one’s bathroom need more storage? Are family members tired of sharing one sink? Replacing the vanity is an excellent solution that improves a bathroom’s functionality while enhancing its visual appeal.

Changing a bathroom’s flooring or updating tiles can help create a customized look that will attract buyers when the time comes to sell a home.

A Fresh Coat of Paint

Sometimes a fresh coat of paint is all it takes to bring a room back to life. It’s also a great do-it-yourself project that won’t cost an arm and a leg. Painting a room in neutral colors such as whites, grays, or creams creates the feeling of a larger and cleaner space.

Kitchens, in particular, can take on a dramatically new look by simply painting the existing cabinets. From white to blue to two-tone looks, color options are nearly limitless. Bring home samples and examine them in the light throughout the day. How does it look in natural and artificial light? Find a color that looks great in both and compliments current fixtures, appliances, and countertops. Painting cabinet boxes, doors, and drawer faces can be time-consuming (experts recommend setting aside three days for the task), but it is also one of the most noticeable and rewarding updates any homeowner can do.
“Catching the Wave of Change”

At a recent Retail Alliance Breakfast Cumb event, Harold Lloyd spoke to local business professionals about the importance of “Catching the Wave of Change”—how to spot, embrace and manage change within a business.

By Betsy Patterson
Master Graphoanalyst

(Making Wise Choices

(Par I of 5

Would you marry this person?

Are you kidding me? I wouldn’t even try to meet this person in broad daylight at Grand Central Station surrounded by the entire New York City Police SWAT team.

The above writing specimen has the following danger signs that indicate hostility:

Aggressiveness: (upstroke that departs obliquely from a downstroke)

Argumentative: (seen in the buckle lead-in stroke to the small letter p)

Defiance: (buckle of the small letter k inflated out of proportion to the rest of lower case letters)

The writer feels defiance when he senses that others are exercising unfair rule and restraint of this freedom. The writer may not display anger openly; he may find quiet, well-mannered ways of defying.

Domineering: (light or heavy t-bar slanted forward and downward, like a dagger)

Wanting to control, the writer shows frustration in his sarcasm. If the t-bar is light, the writer will try to order others with light sarcasm. If the bar is heavy, the commands can be brutal. The writer feels a need to be demanding in order to get other people to do things for him.

Irritability: a mild hostility trait, telling others to keep their distance.

(i-dots made with jabs or irregular short dashes)

The writer is provoked by trifles. Can appear in writing temporarily, as when a person comes home from work with the day’s tensions.

Resentment: always shows hostility to some degree (straight initial upstroke that begins at or below the baseline). The writer has felt imposition in the past, and is “on guard” against it happening again. Long resentment stroke indicates that the resentment comes from a time well in the past.

Stubbornness: (a wedge usually seen in t- or d-stems) Definitely ego-protective, stubbornness is about “saving face.”

Temper: the writer with flying t-bars, or very heavy jabbed i- or j-dots, has a readiness to lose his temper when frustrated.

When you correspond with unknowns from the internet or personal ads, what you see may not be what you get. Proceed with great caution!
October will feature some local election candidates

The Southern Great Bridge/Hickory/Moyock, NC Shopper

If you’re running for office in the upcoming local elections, then you obviously care about your city and have exciting ideas on how to improve life there for everyone. Why not introduce yourself to your fellow citizens and share your vision with them through a story in the upcoming October 2022 issue of The Shopper? For 42 years, readers across the Southside have been turning to our pages to read positive, uplifting and enlightening stories about local candidates. Contact us now to be a part of this special "Local Elections" issue!

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Career Opportunities

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- Competitive Compensation, Signing and Retention Bonuses
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- Full and Part-Time Schedules
- PAID Vacation & Company Holidays
- PAID Extensive training and opportunities for continual learning and development for staff
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- Teachers have clear expectations, necessary resources, and support to meet children’s needs

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From left: Jaci Ivey, Lily Donnell, Meg Walker, Allison Walker