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H A P P Y  N E W  Y E A R !
Publisher’s Point

Finish The Book!

Any resolutions I have made over the years that succeeded were not made on January first. I have been successful in early December or on any random day, just never on the day of resolutions. It’s time to give one a try.

I want to finish my book.

My close friends have known about an upcoming book since I started to collect notes and write down thoughts and discoveries daily. My book is a true story that evolved from a Valentine’s Day Years ago through that year’s end. I became Nancy Drew, desperate to know what was real about my marriage and what was not.

Detective work was so very exciting and invigorating. Stressful, of course, but so necessary. After years of suspicions, most of which proved to be true, I had to have the total picture to keep my sanity.

Friends helped me — following my husband, for instance, to his infatuation’s parents’ home. I even hired a private eye who followed him to the sheets the next morning. No stone was left unturned.

I realized I was fortunate to be able to afford a private eye, and I had my own business and vehicle. Not every woman in a distressed state has access that allows her to seek proof. And proof is essential. I can remember when I first realized that knowing the truth could someday save me from waking up a divorced woman who wonders, “Was I wrong, unfair to him? Did I bring this on myself?”

That was when I made up my mind to write the real story for other women – or men – who have wondered if they are imagining wrongdoing on the part of their spouse, whom they loved, but came to distrust. By telling the whole agonizing process, they can know they are not the only one, it is not so unusual, no matter how extraordinary the reality. We all need to be able to say, “I am not insane.” And then get to the point where we can feel, “I am okay. I can make it.”

Some readers can just say, “Wow, that was exciting!” Others can read while putting themselves in my shoes and come to realize, “I can make it also!”

Ironically, in the year before I began to write this book, my husband said to me, “Your fortune is in writing a book.” I answered, “I don’t write fiction.” I’ve said more than once, “When I finally told him to leave, he left behind a fascinating story.”

In the few years following my divorce, I wrote religiously, with extensive notes, photos, journals, and videos. I had such voluminous material, I sometimes came across startling realizations, when putting time sequences in order.

Ironically, in the year before I began to write this book, my husband said to me, “Your fortune is in writing a book.”

I answered, “I don’t write fiction.” I’ve said more than once, “When I finally told him to leave, he left behind a fascinating story.”

I have written and rewritten, finally having professional help these last two years from my editors, grabbing the opportunities when time permitted me to write. The parts are all here, ready for smooth transitions. One page at a time, throwing away two or three or more rewrites until there is one flowing story in a finished book.

To all those old and new friends, and even strangers, who have been reading my excerpts – some on these printed pages and others online – who have encouraged me, I thank you now. I will write with the intention of making the book a good read that encourages others to recognize self-deception and embrace the determination and sheer courage it takes to face the truth and move forward.
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By Jean Loxley-Barnard

A Calm Manager in a “Service Today Or It’s Free” Business

Scott Skelton did not have a specific career in mind when he graduated from high school. He assumed he would be working in a trade, such as painting. He did not know then how his work ethic and intelligence would finally lead him to become Russell’s Field Operations Manager.

For the past six years, Scott has worked directly with Buddy Smith and his right hand, Marc Sawyer as the HVAC, Plumbing and Electrical company’s number-three man. Before working for Russell’s, Scott worked as a painter with a company that remodeled Buddy Smith’s office at Russell’s previous building. Impressed by Scott’s commitment to doing his job so well, Buddy offered him a position in Russell’s warehouse. In that capacity, Scott began helping out the company’s installation manager. When that manager left, Scott assumed his duties. Six months later, he became the official installation manager for the next several years.

“I don’t see myself finding a better place to work than Russell’s. I don’t think a better place exists.”
—Scott Skelton

Last year the company general manager, Marc Sawyer, needed to enlist some help with managing the day-to-day working of the company so he could focus on running the overall business. Scott volunteered to help. By that point, Russell’s had added plumbing and electrical service to its HVAC business. “That’s how I ended up with everything,” Scott explains.

When asked what he does in his leisure time, Scott doesn’t hesitate: he enjoys family time! And family time was what he remembers most about growing up; particularly family vacations at Lake Gaston. Twenty years ago last June, Scott Skelton married his sweetheart, Susie, who gave him two lovely daughters, now 18-year-old Taylor and 14-year-old Alyssa. They complete his good life, he is quick to point out. And their favorite destination is Disney World!

Having once worked Saturdays, Scott celebrates having that day off now, which pleases Susie. She works a full time job at Johnson Electric in Western Branch. “She’s basically running her entire office, doing all the management” Scott notes proudly. Now they have weekend family time. Russell’s has also sent the couple on two glorious week-long vacations, one to Mexico and the other to Italy.

Although he likes to golf, Scott admits he is not very good, explaining, “My schedule only allows me to do play three or four times a year. I’m not the best because I can’t do it enough,” he smiles. The devoted husband also enjoys helping around the house which gets my mind off work. I like to paint, make repairs – anything that doesn’t take a lot of thought,” he smiles.

Overall, Scott Skelton’s job is a cerebral one. In finding solutions to on-the-job challenges, his calm, reasoned approach makes a big difference. “I like keeping busy,” this field manager explains, but the constant phone ringing every two seconds can be challenging.” He adds in his always calm manner. “I try to keep my patience and remain calm, no matter what’s going on.” The field manager explains, “I can answer any questions, but not technical ones, as my background is management.”

Asked what he enjoys most in his career, Scott does not hesitate. “Dealing with people in the field on a day to day basis and helping them solve problems, that’s the best part.” he smiles noting, “Everybody is easy to get along with.” Ask everybody at Russell’s and they’ll say the feeling is mutual.

Looking toward the future, Scott Skelton is sure of one thing: “I don’t see myself finding a better place to work than Russell’s I don’t think a better place exists.”

See these and other photos at TheShopper.com
**Web Works**

By Terry Young, CEO

**New Decade Webolutions**

**Time to assess your site**

We get many calls from business owners because their website isn’t generating calls or sales. An effective website needs to perform several functions together if it is to produce revenue.

Here is a checklist of things your site has to do to become a lead generating part of your business.

1. **It has to be found.** This is the most important item and the hardest to achieve on a reasonable budget. Your site must compete against literally every one of your local competitors. Most people do not look beyond page one of search results. Being in the first ten is essential for anyone to find your site and become a customer. This is what causes a company a big financial dilemma. When your site cannot be found, the only options are to upgrade your site or pay every month for search engine optimization (SEO) or pay-per-click advertising (PPC). SEO and PPC can both cost thousands of dollars a month and can generate vastly different success.

2. **It has to work for all viewers.** Visitors must be able to see and navigate your site on whatever device they’re using. Tablets show sites differently than a PC or laptop, and mobile phones have even smaller screens that your site must fit on. If it doesn’t, the visitor may get frustrated and leave. Loading times are longer for mobile devices, and the visitor may be paying for cell data. To avoid racking up your visitor’s charges, you should not make large videos play when the page loads.

3. **It has to be navigable.** The visitor must be able to navigate your site with any device they use. A common mistake is that a site menu only relies on mouse movement to show links. However, phones and tablets use finger swipes and taps. If your menu is mouse-based, visitors may not be able to move around your site when viewing on mobile devices.

4. **Navigation has to be simple.** Don’t make visitors work hard to find what they are looking for. Keep links in one menu section, such as at the top of the page or down the left side. Multiple sets of links on a page will be confusing and frustrating.

5. **It has to be attractive.** The visitor must like what they see if they are going to stay. It should also portray your business in a professional manner. Keep in mind, in many cases, your website is the first contact with potential customers. You never get a second chance to make a good first impression.

6. **It has to be basic.** Many people are in a rush online, they do not want to wade through 20 paragraphs of text. Sum up your message in 500 words or less and create links to more information.

7. **It has to be current.** Your site should be updated regularly. Check to make sure copyright dates, staff listings and contact information are up to date. There is nothing worse than trying to contact a company and finding that the number is disconnected or email address has changed. Also, if your ‘latest news’ is from 2011, a visitor will think you’re probably out of business and move on.

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**Christmas With the Buckleys**

A fabulous Christmas party at the Buckleys surrounded with family and friends and special guest Santa! Good food, and plenty of laughter made the festive evening special.

Old friends Jean Lexley-Barnard and Alvene Buckley have had photos together at parties for decades

Hosts Don and Alvene Buckley with football great William Fuller

Cathy Beek with parents Gloria and Don Beek

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Edinburgh Animal Hospital

Honoring the powerful bond between people and their pets

By Cristi Sanchez

For 13 years, Edinburgh Animal Hospital has been providing Chesapeake pet owners and their furry family members with high-quality, personalized, and affordable care. From the day he opened the hospital, Dr. Geoff Campbell has been aware of the financial challenges sometimes associated with pet ownership. He does everything within his power to make the cost of caring for beloved pets less stressful.

“Our goal is to provide the most high-tech, state-of-the-art services and products affordably,” Dr. Campbell says with empathy. “After all, most of us consider our pets to be members of our families. Providing preventative medications, such as heartworm preventative and anti-flea and tick products at competitive pricing, is one way he works to achieve that goal.

“My philosophy has always been that this hospital is here to care for pets and to educate pet owners,” he states candidly. “Making a profit off of preventative care medication isn’t my goal, and I don’t think that’s the goal of any good veterinarian. I’m trying to make preventative medications affordable for the client. Because many of these products are now available online, we closely monitor their pricing on the internet and in pet stores so we can stay at or just below those prices. Often times with rebates and specials offered to veterinarians, we can offer the medications at prices lower than those online.”

The impetus for this competitive pricing isn’t a gimmick. It’s actually tied to Dr. Campbell’s dedication and the quality care he and his staff provide to animals and their pet parents. “I don’t want our clients deciding to purchase preventative off Amazon or, even worse, some sketchy website just for the sake of saving a dollar,” he explains. “That could be dangerous for their pets.” With counterfeit products sold regularly online, Dr. Campbell’s primary concern is the well-being of pets.

“I’ve seen those products, and they look exactly like the real thing,” he continues. “They’re useless at best and at worst, harmful for the pet, and unfortunately I’ve seen that, too. I understand because I do it myself. I’ll go online looking to buy things at the lowest price available. When it comes to pet medications, that’s not a risk worth taking.”

If a client buys a parasite-preventative product from Edinburgh Animal Hospital that fails, Dr. Campbell can contact the company, let them know that their product was ineffective, and have them cover the cost of the pet’s treatment incurred by a defective product. “If that happens with a preventative purchased online, the client has no recourse, and will have to bear the full cost of treatment,” Dr. Campbell explains. “If patients prefer to order online, I’ll gladly give them the prescription, but they won’t have any of the benefits or guarantees offered when purchasing medications and treatments here.”

“A veterinary hospital improves and grows by providing personalized service, high-quality medicine, consistent care, and, most importantly, understanding of and empathy for the human-animal bond.”

—Dr. Geoff Campbell

Dr. Campbell provides clients with other options to help make pet medical treatments and care more affordable. “We try to make dental care and certain surgery costs more competitively priced than other hospitals in the area. We’re not a low-cost facility, but I want clients to know they’re getting high-quality care and a good value for their money,” he states.

Diagnosing and treating some pet illnesses can be costly. Fortunately, Dr. Campbell offers payment options such as CareCredit® and accepts pet insurance through Trupanion™.

“Pet insurance makes it possible for people to pay less out of pocket, which can come in very handy for a surprise illness or surgery. In my opinion, there are too few people with pet insurance. Unfortunately, those without it have to pay out of pocket for illness and for preventative care—all things that could at least be partially covered by insurance,” he reveals. “Trupanion™ is linked to our system to give us immediate reimbursement for treatment, so there’s no wait for filing a claim. It’s super convenient, and most plans have surprisingly low monthly premiums.”

With the growth of national veterinary chains and the rise of low-cost in-store vaccines, Edinburgh Animal Hospital offers something unique that is even more valuable than low costs: personalized service. “With our front desk staff, we constantly emphasize the importance of always providing very personalized care to our clients,” Dr. Campbell shares. “We’re going to know who our clients are when they walk through our front door. The receptionist knows their name and their pet’s name. We know their pet’s history. Here, everyone is a name, not a number. Patients can even request the doctor they’d like to see to maintain consistency of care for their pets. We do all we possibly can to foster a consistent relationship between our staff and the pets entrusted to their care.”

With four veterinarians (three full-time and one part-time vet) on staff and a new veterinarian coming on board in February, Edinburgh Animal Hospital continues to grow and thrive. This dedicated team does its best to accommodate people’s schedules and to see ill pets as soon as possible.

“It’s all part of our personalized service,” Dr. Campbell explains. “We don’t like turning people away. When we noticed how quickly our appointment schedule was being filled, we realized that we needed to bring on another doctor to keep up with the demand. But there is something more important to us than merely keeping up with the demand. We are committed to offering every patient and their caregivers the personalized service we believe they deserve.”

Evidence of that commitment is found in the smiles and warm greetings that Edinburgh’s front desk staff offers to every pet and pet parent walking through the hospital’s front door. “The experience of that personal connection transcends cost and fosters loyal clients, Dr. Campbell concludes. “A veterinary hospital improves and grows by providing personalized service, high-quality medicine, consistent care, and, most importantly, understanding of and empathy for the human-animal bond. That bond is a mighty powerful thing. Only by acknowledging it and honoring it, can you provide the best care possible.”

Dr. Geoff Campbell, owner of Edinburgh Animal Hospital

Some of Edinburgh Animal Hospital’s front desk staff. Standing, from left: Elizabeth McGuire, Jenny Davis and Casey Dee. Seated: Front Office Manager Lisa Wick.
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A vision of youth

Grow Flowers

By Breonna Loxley

Of all the lessons being a dog owner has taught me, the power of positive reinforcement has been one of the most meaningful. My dog has learned how to bow his head in “prayer,” wrap himself up in a blanket, and jump into my arms and up onto my back. He can weave between my legs, “be dead,” cross his paws, and crawl, among other adorable things. Currently, we’re teaching him to hold an object in his mouth and carry it. He already excels at “hold it,” but as soon as you ask him to “bring it,” he drops the toy and prances on his merry way. And when he can’t figure it out, he throws himself on the floor and thumps his tail while I ask him what he’s doing. I try to hide my exasperation that such a smart boy can’t grasp the concept of carrying something on command! Except, it wasn’t that he couldn’t grasp it—it was that I couldn’t grasp how to communicate what I wanted.

Whether you’re teaching a dog fun tricks or real-life skills . . .

Learning to communicate in ways other than using language is more than teaching tricks—it means earning trust and forging bonds. The friendships human beings can form with species other than our own are extraordinary. Whether I’m guiding Riggs in learning a challenging new skill, imploring a terrified dog to trust me, or introducing an unsocialized feline to touch, patience and positive reinforcement always facilitates learning and trust in a way anger or force never can. As Persian poet Rumi wrote, “It is rain that grows flowers, not thunder.” More than anything, working with Riggs has allowed me to see the value in this wisdom.

Breonna Loxley is an animal care technician at an animal shelter. She is an avid artist, writer, and animal-lover. She lives with her parents, a younger brother, two cats, and one dog.

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Copper Bit Boutique Open House
A member of the Shopper team recently attended the grand opening/open house of Copper Bit Boutique in Camden, NC. Owned and operated by US Navy Veteran Michele Barkhurst, the store offers stylish clothes, boots, hats and accessories for horse lovers. Located at 872 NC Highway 343 N in Camden, Copper Bit Boutique is definitely worth checking out.

Some of the accessories offered at Copper Bit Boutique

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To my mind, the best kind of soup is a clean-out-your-refrigerator soup. Homemade soups from leftovers are the kinds you remember long after they are gone and always wish you had a recipe for.

After Thanksgiving, my friend Kate, who works at home with me, beat me to the first wave of leftovers and made a soup with the bits and pieces. She took the butter beans and the lady peas (white acre peas) and put them in a chicken broth with some tomatoes, then added a handful of uncooked rice and a touch of cream.

It made me think of my friend, Deni Seibert, who perfected her leftover soups to an art form. Russ, Deni’s husband, was a well-known garden expert, located at Longwood Gardens in Delaware for years. It was the kind of life where they might be eating with the DuPonts one night and a famous old gardener from England the next.

I envy Deni’s quality of making anyone in her kitchen feel at home. She’s never flustered when the doorbell rings and people drop in. The person at their door might be someone they’d always read about but never met, saying, “I know this is rude, but I’ve wanted to meet you for ever so long.” Deni would bring them into her beautiful home and make them completely at ease, and if they were very lucky, they would get her homemade soup.

As I recall it, she started a new soup fresh each week. It would begin with the Sunday meal leftovers—a ham bone boiled up, or the bone from whatever joint of meat she might have served for Sunday dinner. Each day, Deni would add leftovers to her soup. The best day was Saturday, when it was chock full of surprises—carrots from Wednesday, butter beans from Thursday, a couple of cut up boiled potatoes from Friday. Perhaps it is easy to be gracious if you always know you have a good soup in the fridge.

A broth is the most important part of this, and a combination of bones and meat makes the best broth. The simplest broth, or stock, is just bones and water, cooked together a couple of hours if possible, then strained. The good cook chops up the bones to extract more of the natural gelatin, which makes the soup texture richer and fuller. Lamb has to be thought about twice—it doesn’t always marry well with the rest of the ingredients. As with beef, it’s best to brown lamb bones to give a better flavor. If no meat or bones are left over, then the best alternative is a bouillon cube or canned beef or chicken stock.

I keep a container in my freezer all the time, called my “bits and pieces” jar. I chuck in the ends of onions, a little chopped carrot that didn’t make it into the salad, a parsley stalk, the end of a mushroom that was too dark, a bit of spinach that no one ate, a tablespoon of gravy left from lunch, and the center bone of the ham slice I had for breakfast.

I add to the bones those things that will flavor the soup, and I cook them all together. I taste the broth from time to time, boiling it down if it is too thin, adding water if it is too thick, straining it if necessary before adding other good things.

Once you have a little broth, anything goes. Nothing that has soured, of course, or is of dubious origin. The fresher the better, that few-days-old bowl of stewed tomatoes would be just fine. A little onion could be added, if there was none in anything cooked, and perhaps a bit of garlic, but then perhaps not.

If you think you are treading the line—what you are adding looks and smells good, but you can’t remember how old it is—be sure it is boiled up well and cook through to kill any bacteria.

It is nearly noon, the best time for eating leftover soup, and I cast around for someone to enjoy the soup I made this week. I make a few phone calls and find a friend who is just recovered enough from surgery to come over and relish a bit of soup as her first outing.

With soup in the house, maybe it will be easy for me to be gracious if anyone else drops in.

**Leftover Soup**

1 1/2 cups cooked butter beans, with juices
1 1/2 cups cooked lady peas, with juices
14 1/2-ounce can chicken stock
28-ounce can tomatoes, with juices
1/4 cup uncooked rice
1/2 cup heavy cream
Salt and pepper

Combine all ingredients except cream in heavy saucepan. Boil until rice is done, about 15 minutes. Add the cream. Season to taste with salt and pepper. Serve with cornbread.
Linda J. Byrd Selected 2019 Woman of the Year
by Women’s Division Hampton Roads Chamber of Commerce Chesapeake

By Christine Knapp

L inda J. Byrd has been chosen by Hampton Roads Chamber of Commerce as Chesapeake’s 2019 Outstanding Woman of the Year.

She was nominated by Jennifer Knight, who praised her for “hallmark characteristics such as quiet strength, humility and joy, and her life-long exemplary service to the City of Chesapeake which intricately encompasses her home, community, church, and career.”

A 1966 Great Bridge High School graduate, Linda earned a Bachelor of Science degree in secondary education from ODU in 1970 and a Master of Science in education in 1974. For 16 years, Linda taught in the Chesapeake Public School system before going into administration.

“I’ve known since the fourth grade that I wanted to be a teacher,” Linda says, smiling. “What I loved most was seeing the students finally grasp a difficult concept, since biology and chemistry aren’t the easiest subjects,” she says. “The look on their faces when they understood something for the first time—that is what teaching is all about.”

In 1996, after serving as the assistant principal at Oscar Smith High School and then as principal of Crestwood Middle School, she became the principal, or “Head Hawk,” when Hickory High School first opened its doors.

“We had a lot of work to do, but it was very exciting,” Linda recalls. “We were merging two large schools, and the day before that first day of the school year, those students considered themselves either Great Bridge wildcats or Deep Creek hornets. The faculty and staff did such a great job bringing together all 1,501 students, uniting them as Hickory hawks and facilitating a sense of community, belonging, and togetherness.”

After 41 years in the Chesapeake Public School system, Linda retired. Eighteen months later, she was diagnosed with breast cancer.

“It was a shock, of course,” Linda shares. “We found a wonderful medical team, and we met so many new, amazing people along the way. I knew where I was going if, indeed, I was not meant to stay here. But during my journey, I wanted to be an encouragement to others. I was blessed with amazing children, colleagues, neighbors, friends, and my husband—who never left my side during my battle with cancer.” Linda beat breast cancer and now cherishes every day.

“When you wake up in the morning, you know it’s going to be a good day because each day is a gift,” she says, happily.

Linda’s positive outlook on life, her giving heart, and her selfless attitude translate fully into the work she does with her local church.

The look on their faces when they understood something for the first time—that is what teaching is all about.

—Linda J. Byrd

“My church is a major part of my life,” she testifies. “We have been attending Mt. Pleasant United Methodist Church for 42 years. I currently serve as director of nurture, outreach, and witness, where I help facilitate different activities and outreach efforts within the church.”

Linda’s impact on the community and for those in need is tremendous. She coordinates with various groups in the community to raise money or collect toys, coats, and gifts for those in need. She coordinates blood drives at her church with the American Red Cross. She also serves as a liaison with Burfoot House Shelter for Homeless Women and the Chesapeake Area Shelter Team.

“I believe we’re put here to serve others and that’s what we’re supposed to be doing,” Linda explains. “This brings great joy to our lives. I like to have a tangible effect on our community.”

Linda’s dedication to serving others has earned her a long list of honors, including the 1992 Lifetime Achievement Award. But Linda maintains that her most important honor is the fact that for more than 40 years, she has done so much good for the community.

Alvene Buckley will be honored with the Women’s Division Hampton Roads Chamber of Commerce’s Lifetime Membership Award

Mrs. Alvene Buckley, who has played a significant role in fostering the growth of Chesapeake’s medical system, will also be honored at the Outstanding Woman of the Year Celebration Event on February 8, 2020, at the Chesapeake Conference Center.

Alvene will be this year’s recipient of the Women’s Division Hampton Roads Chamber of Commerce’s Lifetime Membership Award.

“I was so surprised to receive this award,” Alvene says. “I am proud and very appreciative of having served as president of this organization in 2005. It is an honor to be part of an organization that, for more than 40 years, has done so much good for the community.”

Alvene Buckley will be honored with the Women’s Division Hampton Roads Chamber of Commerce’s Lifetime Membership Award

Women’s Division Hampton Roads Chamber of Commerce Chesapeake
Outstanding Women of the Year Celebration
February 8th
To order tickets or for more information, please contact Angie Smith at (757) 439-1615

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Linda J. Byrd, 2019 Woman of the Year
PuzzleQuest

Experience the fun and excitement of executing a great escape

By Candance Moore

A group of friends looking for some good clean fun step into a building in Chesapeake. Moments later, they find themselves escorted to a Western jail for a crime they didn’t commit. The cell is locked, the lights are dimmed, and a door slams in the distance to announce their isolation. No one listens to their protests. No one calls an attorney. The friends are left to their own devices if they want to be free. An hour later, if all goes well, they’ll be free indeed—and this is the good clean fun that they signed up for!

It’s called an escape room experience, and it’s one of America’s fastest-growing forms of entertainment. This highly immersive experience allows players of almost any age or fitness level to get in on the action. Each room has a theme that comes with its own unique mystery to solve. Players must utilize a variety of skills, ranging from math to vocabulary to problem-solving, in order to win. Simple physical tasks and hands-on activities bring the game to life. The time limit is an hour, and many players need every single minute to break free.

Chesapeake’s escape room headquarters is PuzzleQuest in Great Bridge, only two miles from City Hall. It’s a theme park experience in a convenient local setting. Birthdays, team outings, date nights, and family bonding events are perfect occasions for an escape room experience. Although special occasions are typical times for people to play, any group of friends in the mood for safe, clean fun can enjoy playing any time. PuzzleQuest adventures also make fantastic gifts.

“It’s all about having good light-hearted fun,” PuzzleQuest owners Amy and Herb Fisher explain. “These rooms promote teamwork and critical thinking skills. They bring people together. When a family emerges victorious, everyone is smiling.”

Businesses and organizations have started to see the value in escape rooms for team-building exercises. PuzzleQuest has a conference area for business meetings, complete with a presentation screen, and complimentary beverages, that can hold about 24 people. Smaller teams are broken off to play different rooms. This method is also popular for birthday parties, youth groups, academic programs, and book clubs.

Herb and Amy opened PuzzleQuest in 2017. It’s the only escape room center in western Hampton Roads. The Fishers knew they had a great product, some players driving from Richmond and beyond. When the Fishers knew they had a great product, they set out to share it with the general public. Escape rooms can help a beginner succeed and make a skilled player work a bit harder, depending on how much the player contributes.

At first, new customers found PuzzleQuest through word of mouth in the escape player community, with some players driving from Richmond and beyond. When the Fishers knew they had a great product, they set out to share it with the general public. Escape rooms can help a beginner succeed and make a skilled player work a bit harder, depending on how much the staff contributes.

“The are not franchise rooms with cookie-cutter mystery games,” Herb explains. “We work together as a family in the very creation of each room, adding touches and references we pull from real life. Even if you’ve played many escape rooms elsewhere, you haven’t played ours.”

The Fishers are flexible for special requests. They’ve been known to hide an engagement ring as the winning prize in a room, set up a baby gender reveal, and compete with customers in all sorts of secret plots. As long as it’s good clean fun, Herb can probably find a way to make it work.

The quality and customer service at PuzzleQuest have earned an impressive 4.6-star rating on Google reviews. Recently, Brandon’s Great Escapes at the website Break The Miniternet recognized PuzzleQuest for having three of the top 20 escape rooms in Virginia and eastern North Carolina. With five-game options onsite, repeat visits are frequent, and “best score” listings in the lobby up the ante. Herb says he’ll stick with the five rooms at present until plenty of people have had a chance to play them. Rooms get retired to bring in new games as needed.

As soon as people give us a try, they love us,” Herb says. “We’re putting smiles on faces across the region. That’s the fun part for me.”

The staff at PuzzleQuest (from left): Samantha Settle, Kaylene Compton (Manager), Sarah Seville (Key Carrier) and Matthew Klasky.

The Fisher Family (from left): Amy, Herb, Benjamin, Tory, William, Joshua and Tiffany.
Aerial shots open up a whole new view of a house, or circling to show the property from all angles such as slowly revealing the beautiful view behind a house, or circling to show the property from all angles.

Water features work especially well from up high. A nice river or canal, swimming pool, or large pond with fountains can look even more impressive from an aerial perspective.

From the air, you can also get a much better view of a property’s surroundings. For a prospective buyer, aerial photos and video can sum up the type of neighborhood at a glance, showing the views and amenities that they can expect in a single shot. Water features show well from up high. A river or canal, swimming pool, or large pond with fountains can look much more impressive from the air. Aerials can also show proximity to beaches, water access, or other nearby selling features.

Videos can provide more information than stills, such as slowly revealing the beautiful view behind a house, or circling to show the property from all angles.

Terry Young is an FAA licensed drone pilot and professional photographer and videographer. His 30 plus years of experience in pre- and post-production of both still photography and video, coupled with the latest equipment, enable him to create amazing high quality images.

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ON THE FRONT PORCH WITH YOU by Rob Lauer

Put a Little Hygge in it

I’m one of those rare people who love winter. Cold weather doesn’t bother me. You can always put on more clothes, but in the heat, there’s only so much you can take off in public without risking arrest. I feel most alive when there’s a nip in the air. As for snow, bring it on! I spent a decade living in the Rocky Mountain West, where flakes can fall as early as Labor Day and stay on the ground until April.

Many of my friends think I’m nuts. In December, some might dream of a White Christmas, but by January 2, they’re ready for spring. Don’t they realize that they’re only one week into winter at that point? I suppose I share humorist Garrison Keller’s philosophy regarding the season: “Winter is nature’s way of letting you know the world doesn’t revolve around you.”

“Winter is nature’s way of letting you know the world doesn’t revolve around you.”

What I’ve always loved most is how winter’s chill makes one’s home feel cozier by contrast. I love working at my desk on an overcast January day, looking outside and seeing snow on the ground. I enjoy sitting by a fire with a cup of coffee and a book. I love arriving at a friend’s house on a frosty night, removing my coat and scarf, and drinking in the cheery warmth of their home.

Until a few years ago, I never knew how to articulate my feelings for this time of year. But then I stumbled across a Danish word: hygge (pronounced hoo-ga). The word has no English equivalent. “Coziness of the soul,” “cozy togetherness,” or “taking pleasure from the presence of soothing things” come close to conveying its meaning.

Hygge is central to the cultures of Denmark and Norway. These countries have long, cold, cloudy winters, with only six to eight hours of sunlight per day. One might assume that seasonal depression was a national plague. Surprisingly, Denmark and Norway rate as the two happiest nations on earth—and their secret is their love of hygge.

Americans might put electric candles in windows for Christmas, but the Danes and Norwegians burn the real things in their homes throughout the winter. Hot drinks—alcoholic and not—are their equivalent of our cold beers. They find pleasure in donning warm sweaters and wool socks. Gathering around a dinner table and then by the fire with four or five close friends—to talk, laugh or play games—is considered the apex of the good life.

Danish writer Meik Wiking recalls one frigid winter night spent with friends after a day of hiking. Pleasantly drowsy, wrapped in big sweaters, and sipping mulled wine, they sat by the fireplace while a stew bubbled in the kitchen.

“Could this be any more hygge?” Meik asked.

“Yes,” one woman said after a moment. “If there was a storm raging outside.”

Everyone agreed.

Instead of wasting the winter wishing for summer, maybe we’d all enjoy the season more if we put a little hygge in it.

Rob Lauer is an award-winning, nationally-produced and published playwright with over 35 years of experience in the entertainment industry. His national credits include production work for MGA Films, Time/Warner TV, The Learning Channel and The History Channel. Locally, Rob has been producing, directing and hosting three TV series for PCTV (the City of Portsmouth’s official channel) since 2011.

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Up and Away

By Terry Young

Realtors know top quality images are key to success

I have had the pleasure of working with many Realtors in the Hampton Roads area. I have shot both aerial and ground photos and videos to be shown in listings, Realtors’ personal sites, and social media.

As spring approaches, now is the time to plan an impressive campaign for new home listings. Top-quality photos and videos are the keys to all facets of one’s marketing success.

With today’s technology, showcasing listings has become more sophisticated. Top agents have embraced these tools to sell properties. Along with great photos, an impressive video of a property can show much more than a still photo, like the flow of the home’s layout and overall atmosphere.

Aerial shots open up a whole new view of a property and its layout. From the air, I can capture views which show elements in relation to each other, rather than from the ground, where views can be obstructed.

For example, if a property has a deck, a pool, and a fire pit, from the ground, a photographer would probably not be able to encompass all of them in context in a single shot. While it is fine having individual shots of each item, often people want to get a feel of their overall position to each other.

Water features show especially well from up high. A river or canal, swimming pool, or large pond with fountains can look even more impressive from an aerial perspective.

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Exciting December at Quality Music and Dance

Quality Music and Dance had a very exciting December! The first weekend of the month, the Smile Squad, Sparklers and Dazzlers had the honor of performing at King’s Dominion Winterfest and being part of its tree lighting ceremony. The next weekend, the big guy in red stopped in for the QMD annual cookies & photos with Santa event! Santa made sure the children knew what cookies to leave out for him on Christmas Eve! As everyone at Quality welcomes the New Year, plans for Christmas 2020 are already in the works!

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Chesapeake Rotary’s Christmas Party at the Davis’

Friends gathered for a festive holiday party at the home of Roland and Teresa Davis. A business broker for Sajomach Business Services, Roland is also an active member of the Chesapeake Rotary.

Dr. and Mrs. Fred Batemen

The hosts, Roland Davis and his wife, Teresa

Rotary President Grady Palmer, left, with Chesapeake City Councilman Steve Best

Bob and Midge Woods of Woods Financial

Chesapeake Mayor Rick West with The Shopper Publisher Jean Loxley-Barnard

Ray Conner, left, with Larry Zoeller

From left: Teresa Davis, Don Buckley, Roland Davis and Jean Loxley-Barnard with Alvene Buckley (seated)

See these and other photos at TheShopper.com

CALENDAR of events

Visit www.theshopper.com to see upcoming events around Hampton Roads

Girl Scout Cookie Classic Run
January 18th • 9 a.m.
Dismal Swamp Canal Trail Parking Lot, 1200 Dismal Swamp Canal Trail, Chesapeake
Since 2015, the run has been an annual event supporting GSxCCC. Several different race options are offered to make the event suitable for everyone! Enjoy your favorite Girl Scout Cookies as you “cookie crawl” your way through a timed 5K, or check out the other race options by visiting www.gsccc.org or calling 757-547-4405. Register by January 17 to save on this event!

7th Annual Restaurant Week in Smithfield & Isle of Wight County
January 31st - February 9th

Over 12 restaurants and shops in Smithfield and Isle of Wight County will participate in the 7th Annual Restaurant Week, which runs January 31 through February 9 and features $10 or $15 lunches and $20 or $30 dinners. Price includes appetizer, entree and dessert (beverage, taxes and tip not included). Visit your favorite restaurants—or try a new one—to take advantage of special Restaurant Week menus at a great price!

If you have an event you’d like to share, please submit to adcopy@theshopper.com

Januy 2020
The urgent is seldom important, and the important is seldom urgent.

By reflecting upon last year, we can avoid spending all our time and energy oiling the “squeaking wheels of life” and missing what is really important. As President Eisenhower once said, “The urgent is seldom important, and the important is seldom urgent.” Too often, life is controlled by the “tyranny of the urgent.” We put aside higher and more worthy goals to put out fires.

In planning how we will write the pages of our lives, we would do well to remember this statement: “We don’t want to come to the end of our lives and realize that we have lived someone else’s dream.”

What will our legacy be? What is our purpose in life? How can we make the world a better place?

What we would be wise to consider a survey taken of people over 95. They were asked, “If you could live your life over again, what would you do differently?”

The most frequent answers were:

1. I would spend more time in reflection. We need to slow down and have more quiet time.
2. I would take more risks. We need to challenge ourselves for life is about growing and maturing.
3. I would do more things that would live on after I’m dead. This reminds us that are not living just for ourselves. These are not the worst of times nor the best of times. This is our time, and it is up to us to make it the best of times for those who follow us.

Dawson Trotman, the founder and first president of The Navigators, captured the problem most of us have when we begin: “The greatest time wasted is the time getting started.” So, our challenge for the New Year is to reflect, learn, make new commitments, and get started on them. Have a happy, healthy, prosperous, and meaningful New Year.

Tidewater Pastoral Counseling (757) 623-2700

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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.

The New Year has arrived with the thoughts of resolutions and opportunities to make change happen in our lives. For children, those changes are heavily impacted by the adults in their lives. During the first several years, children are totally dependent on parents, relatives, caregivers, medical personnel, and teachers to help them navigate through that amazing period of growth and change that takes place in their lives. Have you thought about a baby’s first year when she continues to grow and suddenly can roll over, sit up, pull up, and take those first jerky steps, she tries to communicate (oh yes, that really is what some of that crying is about), and starts to eat real food? What happened to that tiny baby in less than a year? The next year becomes challenging for parents as the child struggles to learn about the world and how to have some control over it. They use all of their senses to experience everything. They want to see it, touch it, hear it, smell it, taste it, and they are always moving. Parents are often worn out.

“Children First
By Dr. Becky Adams
First 2000 Days
The New Year has arrived with the thoughts of resolutions and opportunities to make change happen in our lives. For children, those changes are heavily impacted by the adults in their lives. During the first several years, children are totally dependent on parents, relatives, caregivers, medical personnel, and teachers to help them navigate through that amazing period of growth and change that takes place in their lives. Have you thought about a baby’s first year when she continues to grow and suddenly can roll over, sit up, pull up, and take those first jerky steps, she tries to communicate (oh yes, that really is what some of that crying is about), and starts to eat real food? What happened to that tiny baby in less than a year? The next year becomes challenging for parents as the child struggles to learn about the world and how to have some control over it. They use all of their senses to experience everything. They want to see it, touch it, hear it, smell it, taste it, and they are always moving. Parents are often worn out.

There is no way to overstate the critical importance of the early years in a child’s life. It is about the physical, emotional, and educational development of the children who ultimately will grow up to run our world. There are a number of groups and nonprofit organizations who are providing support to parents and other caregivers of young children. The Children’s Health Investment Program of South Hampton Roads (also known as CHIP) provides services to children up to age six and expectant mothers. Their website (www.chipshr.org) says very clearly that “the first 2000 days of life lay the foundation for a child’s future health, academic and workplace success.” They provide developmental screenings and other health services. Last year they made over 5,111 home visits to the parents of young children in our communities. During those visits, they were able to work with parents on ways to interact with their children and increase their emotional and educational development.

Literacy development in children starts with language. Parents should be talking with their children and increase their emotional and educational development.

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By reflecting upon last year, we can avoid spending all our time and energy oiling the “squeaking wheels of life” and missing what is really important. As President Eisenhower once said, “The urgent is seldom important, and the important is seldom urgent.” Too often, life is controlled by the “tyranny of the urgent.” We put aside higher and more worthy goals to put out fires.

In planning how we will write the pages of our lives, we would do well to remember this statement: “We don’t want to come to the end of our lives and realize that we have lived someone else’s dream.”

Relationships
The Next Chapter in Our Lives

Chesapeake Sports Club
The monthly Chesapeake Sports Club luncheon was held at the Chesapeake Conference Center. Mike London, head football coach for William and Mary and former Dallas Cowboy football player, was the guest speaker. Matt Hudgins was recognized as the latest Legend of Honor. Four Chesapeake high school student athletes were recognized for their outstanding accomplishments this past season.

The Club also honored the major supporters of the Sports Club Scholarship Program, which has awarded over $150,000 to Chesapeake high school students since 2012.

Matt Hudgins, from Hickory High School, was recognized as the latest Legend of Honor.

London, head football coach for William and Mary and former Dallas Cowboy football player, was the guest speaker. Matt Hudgins was recognized as the latest Legend of Honor. Four Chesapeake high school student athletes were recognized for their outstanding accomplishments this past season.

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STOP Inc.
Addressing the root causes of poverty and making a big impact

By Christine Knapp

STOP Inc. is a designated Community Action Agency with a 54-year history of addressing issues of poverty in communities throughout Hampton Roads. Focused on aiding the low-to-moderate income population, STOP (Supporting Transformational Opportunities for People) is funded by various federal and state sources as well as contributions from private foundations and individual donors. Working in hand with these partners, STOP attacks the root causes of poverty.

“We have four main departments,” says Regina Lawrence, STOP’s President and Chief Executive Officer (CEO). Having been with the organization for 45 years, she has held over a dozen roles ranging from executive assistant to grant writer to public relations manager and now, CEO. “These departments cover health and wellness initiatives, homeless intervention and support, housing and economic development and management, support and special projects,” Regina continues. “We embrace a total family concept—a two-generation approach. We go to every individual in a family to determine the needs of each member. During my entire tenure here, I’ve tried to develop, write, and implement programs that are going to have the greatest impact on the greatest number of people.”

Health and Wellness is a new department focusing on nutritional education and training. It issues referrals for much-needed physical and mental health services, with an emphasis on preventing opioid use and abuse. Led by Vice President Christian Joyner, PA, the Health and Wellness Department provides substance abuse prevention training and educational programs to individuals and families.

The team works with many local partners, including the Wellness Coalition, to host REVIVE training events. At these events, individuals learn how to administer NARCAN, an injectable or nasal spray that will help reverse the effects of an overdose.

The team also presents “Hidden in Plain Sight” demonstrations. These are interactive drug-educational programs for parents. A mock-up of a teenager’s bedroom displays everyday items that can be indicators of drug use or risky behavior.

“Parents feel they need to give their teenagers space and some privacy, but that’s where a lot of things fall through the cracks,” Christian explains. “Parents need to be looking at their kids’ phones. They need to be aware of the signs. These demonstrations provide valuable information to families in local Hampton Roads communities. We’d love to expand the forums into other jurisdictions where we can have the greatest impact.”

Homeless Intervention and Support Vice President Charmitta Waters and her team provide supportive services to veterans and their families. These include a homeless veterans’ reintegration program and housing counseling services. These services are offered to the low-to-moderate income population experiencing a housing crisis due to eviction or other life-altering hardships.

“It’s in those moments when a child tells me what they want to become—and they’re talking about their character, not just a profession—that I realize the impact STOP is having.”

—Regina Lawrence

“We interact with various homeless and housing service providers, as well as income support contributors, to ensure homelessness is rare, brief, and nonrecurring,” Charmitta says. STOP is always seeking additional donations and partners to help create home environments for homeless veterans. They also work with the Homeless Veterans’ Reintegration Program (HVRP) to assist veterans in finding gainful employment. Recently, the two organizations even hosted a hiring event in their Virginia Beach office.

STOP welcomes volunteers, donations, and community support to help with items for the homeless that other funding sources don’t always cover. These items include hygiene essentials such as toothpaste, shampoo, and other toiletries. Discretionary funding to purchase such items for those experiencing homelessness is always needed and appreciated.

“The need is always increasing, and sometimes we can’t keep up with the demand,” Regina explains. STOP also seeks furniture donations to help provide furniture to homeless veterans who are in its program.

“A house is not a home until you put furniture in it and make it individual and unique,” Charmitta says. “Companies like Vets on Track, led by Rick Ecker, work with STOP to make this happen.”

Under its housing initiatives, STOP administers the Weatherization Assistance Program (WAP), which is a federally-funded program. The weatherization program provides free energy-efficient measures to help lower utility bills and increase the efficiency of houses occupied by income-eligible individuals—particularly the elderly, the disabled, and families with children age six and under. Free energy audits are provided to those who meet specific criteria.

STOP offers additional services ranging from childcare financial assistance, employment support services, and employment training to consumer education and workforce preparation/development. During fiscal years 2014-2019, STOP addressed more than 11,500 conditions of poverty and barriers to economic security.

Other STOP programs include a mobile technology bus that provides training and learning opportunities to students from the elementary grades through high school. Stopping in cities throughout Hampton Roads, the bus gives young people access to computer programming, software design and robotics, as well as exposure to technology-related fields.

“We’ve had some of our students say, ‘I finally know who—not what—I want to become,’” Regina smiles. “It’s in those moments when a child tells me who they want to become—and they’re talking about their character, not just a profession—that I realize the impact STOP is having. Once you become of good sound character, you can pick any profession you want. I am so proud of that. And that’s what our youth development team is doing.”
The Chesapeake Sheriff’s Office raised over $25,000 at their Sixth Annual “Dancing with the Athletes”. Like Dancing with the Stars, the competition paired nine Chesapeake Sheriff’s Office deputies, two Chesapeake Police Department officers, and one Virginia Beach Sheriff’s Office corporal with 12 Special Olympic Athletes for freestyle and hip-hop dance routines. The event is a big-hearted fundraiser for Special Olympics Virginia. In a tight competition, CPD Officer Dayna Tucker and Special Olympics athlete Javonte Riddick took home the “Mirrorball Trophy.” CSO Deputy Marissa Walker and Special Olympics Athlete Chad Jackson were close runners-up. Awards were given for best “Freestyle Performance,” “Hip Hop Performance,” “Best Costume,” “Highest Fundraiser,” “Most Determined,” and “Most Spirited.” Special thanks to Unlimited Dance Dynamics for choreographing the routines, Men’s Warehouse for providing the suits, and Virginia Extreme Force Allstar Cheerleading for sponsoring the event.

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Women in Business
Our February issue celebrates successful women

The experience of executing a great escape is enjoyed by Samantha Settle, Kaylene Compton (Manager), Sarah Seville (Key Carrier) and Matthew Klasky.

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