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General Manager
Amanda R. Mosley
pressads2@lowcountry.com

Managing Editor
Dana Erickson
editor@lowcountry.com

Advertising Sales
Rebecca Yon
rebeccayon@lowcountry.com

Advertising Sales
Melissa Amick
melissaamick@lowcountry.com



Editorial/Feature Writer
Scott Grooms
sgrooms@lowcountry.com

Accounting
Tammy Hiott
accounting@lowcountry.com

Production & Obituaries
Amanda R. Mosley
pressads2@lowcountry.com

Classified & Legal
Amanda R. Mosley
pressclass@lowcountry.com

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RICHARD WESTBURY

By Dana Erickson

Mr. Richard Westbury was behind his desk flanked by two computer monitors on one side, a desk full of papers in front of him, and shelving that is technically a bookcase as it is piled high and deep with books. This is probably where he spends a lot of his time as he is running one of the longest-standing businesses in Walterboro. It's not just a business either; it is a family business. Mr. Westbury's great grandfather opened the first store in 1910 in Harleyville. His grandfather, Wilson Westbury, took over in 1940. Then his father, Ernest Westbury, took over. When it was Richard's turn at the helm, he moved the family business to Walterboro in 2002.

He grew up in and around the stores. At one point when he was five Richard was in the store with his dad. Westbury told his dad he wanted to work. So, his dad put him to work. He told Richard to take 100 rice steamers upstairs. Richard finished his assigned task and promptly asked his dad what he can do next. "Bring them back downstairs and put them over here," was the answer. He also tried negotiating for pay for his hard work, but he couldn't quite remember how that worked out for him. Looking back, he realizes at five he was probably more of a hindrance than a help, and his dad was just trying to keep him busy, but the rice steamers were moved, and a career was born. He also worked at the store throughout his teenage years and began to realize that yes, this was what he wanted to do. He wanted to work in the family business. After high school Richard attended Charleston Southern University and graduated with

a degree in business. Once he received his college diploma he began working in the Harleyville store, then moved to the Holly Hill store, and in 2002 he opened the location in Walterboro and there he has remained.

Also on the walls of his office are Clemson posters, calendars, and other memorabilia. He's obviously a fan. He recalled a funny story about college football and how dedicated some fans can be. If he had a product featuring Clemson, he also sold the same thing in Carolina. When he first opened, he was selling Clemson and Carolina flags and said he needed one of each on display. The next day Richard overheard a customer saying he was a Clemson fan, and he might have to stop shopping there if there was Carolina merchandise. Being the shrewd businessman he is, (one doesn't keep a family business that has been around for more than 100 years open by making poor decisions) Richard announced, "Take them both down!"

A family man, Richard and his wife have four children. It looks like generation number five may be stepping up to learn the trade as one of his children is coming to work for him in a couple of months.

It does take a lot of time and effort to keep a legacy family business running like clockwork. If that time and money were absolutely no object, Richard reveals he would travel; travel anywhere and everywhere and see whatever he could.

As for now, we are grateful that Richard Westbury is staying right here in Colleton County, and we wish him, his family, and his business continued success.

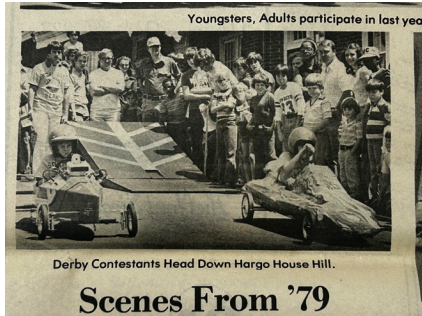


RICE FESTIVAL



Rice Planters

Rice Planters at Festival Parade 1979



Scenes From '79

1979 Soapbox Derby



Rice Festival Pageant 1981

By Scott Grooms

The Colleton County Rice Festival is an annual event featuring arts and crafts, food, fireworks, music and entertainment. The festival was held for the first time in 1976 and was part of the National Bicentennial Celebration. Wallace McCord was the first Chairman of the Rice Festival and held the position into the second year. The first year was fairly eventful with rain and a tornado that came near the festival just before the start of the parade.

Rice was chosen as the theme of the festival to honor the contribution rice made to the economy and history of Colleton County. Since it first arrived in 1685, rice helped create enormous wealth for the Lowcountry, and Colleton County was perfect for growing it. During the annual Rice Festival we celebrate the heritage of rice in this community and how it has shaped our people and the land that we call home.

The festival has run continuously for 49 years with the exception of a 1-year break for Covid. Originally on Washington Street with performances at the old Walterboro High School Stadium, events at the festival have included concerts by major acts, including Minnie Pearl, Jerry Clower, Chubby Checker, the Navy Band, and Maurice Williams & the Zodiacs in the early years. Recent acts such as Swingin' Medallions (who also appeared in the early years), The Mighty Kicks, Elvis impersonators, Blues Brothers Tribute artists

and local performers. The festival includes a run that, in the past, has taken runners through the streets of historic downtown Walterboro, and today takes the runners through the Great Swamp Sanctuary. Past festivals included bike races, a tennis tournament, a Soap Box Derby, a motorcycle poker run, a rodeo, and car shows. The Rice Festival Parade originally used the Hampton Street Parade Route but was switched to the current route in 1980 to avoid congestion.

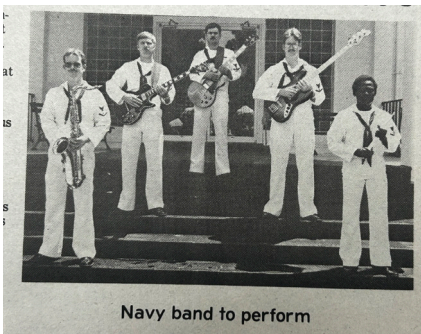
Other events that are part of the festival include the Mrs. Rice Festival Contest, the Taste of Walterboro, the popular cornhole tournament, and the Biggest Pot of Rice presented by the Civitans each year.

The festival was originally on Washington Street with arts and crafts placed around the Courthouse grounds. This was changed in the early 2000s, placing the festival on Hampton Street. This was at the request of downtown merchants.

In past years, the festival included a boat show, a river run, and a film festival. The 1980 festival had a Magic Show performed by Ronald McDonald and a donut eating contest.

Each year the festival is capped off by a large fireworks display that can be viewed from various locations around town.

The Rice Festival will be celebrating its 50th year in Colleton County next year and is gearing up for 50 more. This year's Rice Festival will take place on April 26 and 27.



Navy band to perform

Navy Band at Rice Festival 1984



1981 Rice Festival Parade

Rice Festival Parade 1981



Original Swingin' Medallions 1981

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BIG HEAD ED'S FOOD SHED

By Jessica O'Connor

Walterboro native and owner of Big Head Ed's Food Shed, Eddie Rumpfelt, has burgers in his blood. Many of his childhood memories involve trips to the town's first McDonald's, which was opened by his grandfather around 1969, by his recollection. As a child, he had no idea that those memories of a time when customers were mostly met with friendly, familiar faces at the drive-through window under the golden arches would eventually play a part in shaping the development of his own food service business.

Rumpfelt worked for local restaurants such as Buck's Pizza and Checkers during high school, and shared aspirations of opening a restaurant with a classmate that never quite came to fruition. He explored careers in other industries such as construction before making the leap into entrepreneurship in 2023. These jobs provided him with a number of skills that would prove to be crucial in the development and successful implementation of Big Head Ed's Food Shed.

Sadly, losing the friend who shared his dream of owning a restaurant was part of what set the wheels in motion to create Rumpfelt's business.

"That was when I thought to myself that I had wasted enough time," Eddie recalled. "It was time to get something rolling here, whether it was a food truck or a restaurant. Something to just finally take that step and do what we talked about for a long time."

With that sentiment in mind, Eddie began work on what would become the Big Head Ed's Food Shed food truck. Armed with his own knowledge gleaned from working in commercial and residential construction and a little help from YouTube, his dream came together piece by piece by his own two hands.

"I built it from scratch," Rumpfelt said proudly. "It was just a regular, empty enclosed trailer, and I put everything together myself. I started buying little pieces here and there, and it took me about two years to piece everything together. It was a lot of work. I wanted to give up quite a few times, but I was too far in it. I couldn't just stop doing it. I had to finish it."

The decision to move forward with the food truck was also hastened by an unexpected job loss.

"That threw me for a loop," he said. "I don't ever want to be in that position again where someone can flip me upside down on my head with no notice. I wanted to work for myself."

Rumpfelt saw his dream realized when Big Head Ed's Food Shed opened for business in April 2023. The food truck specializes in "smash burgers," which differ from the usual hand-pattied burger in size and cooking time, but don't lack in flavor.

"With a smash burger, as soon as you smash it down it sears the meat and keeps the juices in," Eddie explained. "It caramelizes and sears all at the same time, so it gives a different flavor than a regular grilled burger. A lot of people think this dries the meat out, but if you eat one you'll see that's not the case. It just sears the seasonings and the juice in there, and cooks within three minutes whereas a thick burger can take 45 minutes."

Rumpfelt prides himself on deviating from the traditional lettuce and tomato burger, instead thinking outside the box and experimenting with unique flavor combinations to create a product that is new and fresh to the Walterboro area.

"We try to be creative and offer something different than what everybody else offers," he said. "I like to incorporate specialty toppings, and we do the burger of the month every month to keep people trying new things. I just throw things together. There have been a couple burgers of the month that I didn't even try before I offered them, but I felt they would taste good-and everybody loved them."

In fact, the people of Walterboro love Eddie's inimitable smash burgers so much that he has surpassed selling over 5000 burgers in his first year of business. Big Head Ed's Food Shed was also voted Best Food Truck and Best Burger for The Press and Standard's annual Best of the Best awards.

Great food is only one component of the experience Rumpfelt hopes to provide his customers with when they step up to his window.

Drawing on his memories of the sense of community and familiarity he felt as a child when visiting his grandfather's McDonald's, Eddie, his fiance Jackie, and his 13 year old son Liam, strive to treat each and every patron like they're part of the family.

Eddie is particularly proud of how young Liam has stepped up in helping run the food truck, noting proudly, "He's a good worker, and keeps me straight. He knows it inside and out, other than cooking on the grill. He could almost run that business without me now."

The mobile nature of the food truck business has both positive and negative aspects, but Rumpfelt tries to give back to the community by creating mutually beneficial relationships with the businesses who allow him to set up shop on their property.

"Most of the places we set up at have reached out to me and asked me to come help support their business," he said. "I do a lot of Facebook marketing and all that, so we just kind of scratch each other's backs in that way. It's a small town, so we've got to keep putting the word out there for everybody. I support all the small businesses that help us out too."

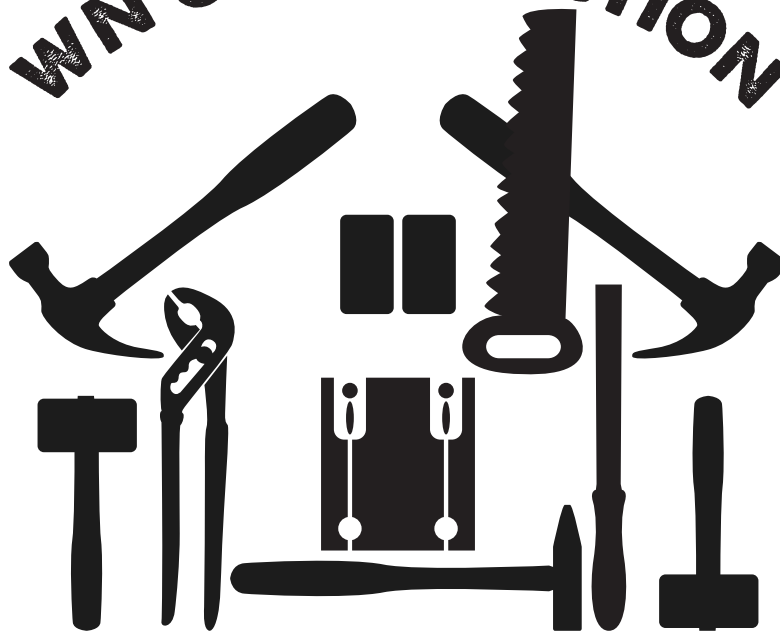
Looking toward the future, Eddie has aspirations of creating additional food trucks with fare that isn't limited to simply smash burgers. He's also toyed with the idea of creating a food truck park, citing the fact that the food truck business model has somewhat exploded, especially during/after the pandemic. Though there will always be a place for traditional brick and mortar restaurants in Colleton County, Eddie feels the popularity and number of food trucks will continue to grow.

If you're interested in trying a new breed of burger, you can find out where Big Head Ed's Food Shed will be located each week via updates on their Facebook page. You can even order ahead at <http://bigheadedfoodshed.square.site/> or see the food truck come to life on TikTok under the username bigheadedds.

Eddie says the "Classic" and the "White Rabbit" are popular choices, but don't be afraid to try something new!



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JAQUANTAE JOHNSON

By Dana Erickson

When you think of an entrepreneur, an image of an established adult who has been in the work force for a while striking out on their own with a good bit of knowledge under their belt maybe comes to mind. Jaquantae Johnson has not let age or his limited time in the work force after high school dictate his success.

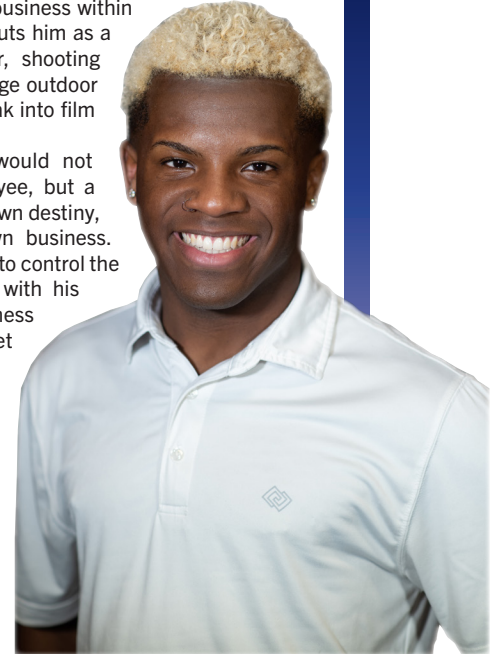
Hailing from Walterboro, Jaquantae came up through the Colleton County School District. From elementary, to middle school, high school, and through school closings and mergers, he came out with a desire to succeed and the drive to make it happen.

After graduating in 2020, Jaquantae found himself working at Cookout. One day, he took a man's order in the drive-thru. Impressed with the level of customer service and enthusiasm he received, the man, a sales manager, encouraged Jaquantae to consider going into sales with his company. A few weeks later, he accepted the offer, left college, and relocated. At one point he thought, "I didn't quite think this through." He ended up leaving the job, but the skills he took with him, such as business, communication, and promotion, would serve him well later. Even then, however, the thought of starting his own photography/video business was on his mind. Utilizing his income from his sales work, he left the sales world, invested in himself, and focused 100% on photography and video work. He did start out in this industry modeling, and one day he did a photo shoot with a friend who had her own photography company. He ended up directing the whole shoot himself. Then Jaquantae shadowed a professional photographer, and it cemented his motivation. Through modeling he learned how to take the professional photos of himself, and that led to him taking them for other people. He helped his local church with a fundraiser they were doing for an organization with photos and his business blew up, and it just did not stop. Jaquantae has done high-end weddings for different ethnicities and cultures, engagement

photos for local couples, and has even traveled to the mountains of North Carolina for an elopement photo opportunity.

Not one to rest on early success, Jaquantae is always looking toward the future. He has secured a brick-and-mortar location in Walterboro and is in the process of setting that up. He also is planning to add the new generation of technology by utilizing AI for the videography side of his business within the next year. His five-year plan puts him as a traveling elopement photographer, shooting destination weddings and other large outdoor events. His ultimate goal is to break into film and television.

The self-awareness that he would not necessarily make the best employee, but a much better boss in control of his own destiny, led to Jaquantae starting his own business. During his time in sales, he learned to control the controllable, and that, combined with his faith, positive attitude, and willingness to do whatever it takes, has set Jaquantae on the path to success. Still only in his very early twenties, he has achieved more than many people decades into their adulthood or even in their lives. So, do not be surprised years down the road when Jaquantae Johnson is giving an interview, and he tells the story of his success and how it started in Walterboro, a little town in Colleton County, South Carolina.



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MOVIE THEATRE MEMORIES

By Scott Grooms

Back before Netflix, streaming or even television, to see a movie you needed to go to the local theatre. People were able to go have a snack, see a newsreel of current events and even a cartoon before the feature film was presented on the silver screen. Going to a film was special, it was a night out to dress in your finest clothes and visit with friends.

The first theater was opened in Walterboro on Moore Street. Later the theatre moved to Washington Street on November 11, 1937. Henry Belk Cook opened the Ritz Theatre in the Breland Chevrolet Building which was located between the Winn-Dixie store and The Rexall Drug Store. The Ritz building is owned by the Cook family and is now home to Choice Collectibles. Winn-Dixie is now the Post Office, and the Rexall Building is still recognizable by the blue and orange tile exterior. Little evidence is still present that the building once housed the theatre but the stage area around the screen is still visible in the back of the store. The theatre operated along with the newly built Cook Theatre for a number of years and eventually closed as the Cook took over as the new theatre in town.

The Cook Theatre was located on North Lucas St. where the loading entrance for the Post office is located today. The Cook was built and opened in 1948. The building had a glass block entrance with a large neon marquee and a ticket booth on the right. On the left side of the building was a very small jewelry store. After purchasing your tickets, which at one time cost 40 cents for an adult, you went inside and the concession stand was ready with candy, Pepsi and the freshly popped popcorn. The theatre would start the day with ten 33-gallon bags of popcorn to be ready for the influx of movie goers. Additional popcorn would be popped later in the day to accommodate the night movie. The Cook had around 500 seats and included a balcony. The movies were run off large reels that the projectionist had to switch at the appropriate time to keep the movie running uninterrupted. One of the great additions to the theatre is that it had air conditioning.

The Cook Theatre ran its last movie in 1982. The Cook and the Ritz are a big part of history here in Walterboro. There have been thousands of hours of movies watched, tens of thousands of buckets of popcorn eaten. The many employees that got their start working as soda jerks, projectionists and ticket takers. I had the privilege to see movies at the Cook as a child, I would go by and get the delicious popcorn for a snack even if I was not seeing a movie. My mother worked at the Ritz as a ticket taker, and my uncle was a projectionist as well. The days of the Cook and Ritz are now a past memory, but what great memories they hold.



Ritz Theatre 1937



Cook Theatre tickets 1960



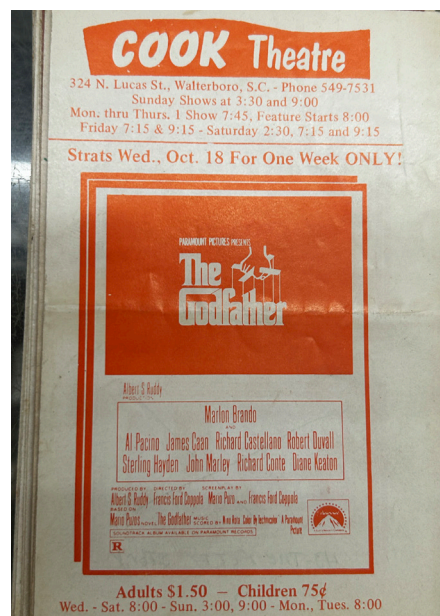
Cook Theatre 1972

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Thur.-Fri. June 30-July 1 The Big Cat Peggy Ann Garner Lon McCallister In Technicolor News, Comedy and Cartoon	Thur.-Fri. June 30-July 1 You Can't Take It With You Jean Arthur-James Stewart Comedy
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Saturday Late Show She Randolph Scott Helen Cahagan	—RITZ THEATRE ONLY— Children under 12 years of age accompanied by their par- ents admitted free except on Saturday. Saturday Regular admission.

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1972 movie promo program



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AMANDA HERNDON

By Scott Grooms

Amanda Herndon is the Executive Director for In His Name—Colleton, a charitable organization that supports our communities by offering tangible items and other programs to those who need it.

Herndon was born and raised in Colleton County, attended Colleton County High School and graduated from North Walterboro Christian Academy. Since graduating college, she has been a pharmacy tech, teacher, and a stay-at-home mom.

She is married and has three children ages nine, eight and one. When not at work, Herndon is on the road supporting her children, who are heavily involved with travel ball. She says, “We are on the road every weekend. We’re at the ball field every night except for during Christmas break.” Along with travel ball and her husband, Jonathan, being self-employed as the owner of a heating and air business, they have very little free time.

When asked what they do in the little spare time available she says, “My girls are very busy. They do not sit in front of the TV or electronics. They are outside. They like to ride four wheelers, explore.” And when their youngest son is a little older, they plan to start camping again.

Herndon likes her quiet time, “I’m on

my phone. I just scroll to catch up. I do read. I try to find some Bible studies to read. That’s what I really do at nighttime.”

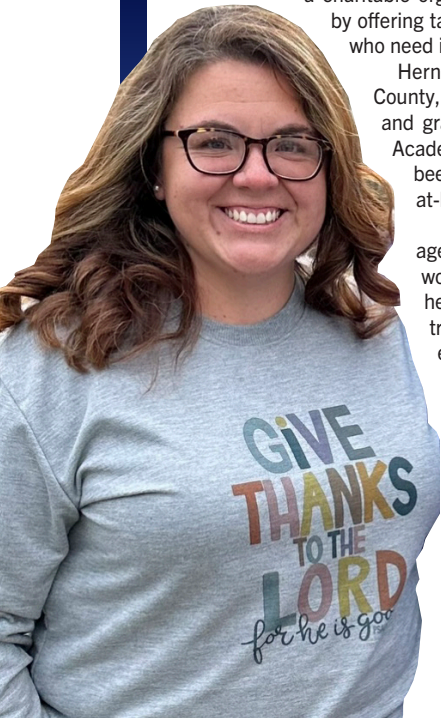
When speaking about In His Name—Colleton we spoke about her family volunteering with the program. “I wanted the girls to be involved in the community,” Herndon says. “We were looking for a soup kitchen or somewhere for the girls to experience serving others, and that’s how we found out about In His Name, so my girls have been involved every step of the way.”

We spoke about why she became executive director of In His Name, and Herndon said, “I’m definitely gonna have to say that it was a God thing, because I definitely feel that what I’m doing is through God. I would have never seen myself doing this. It takes a lot to put others first. I’ve always been a giver and a people person. I just saw the need in the community, and there’s such a gap that’s not being met, so many resources that aren’t being shared, and that would probably be the driving force behind In His Name—Colleton.”

Herndon says, “In His Name does so much more than just feed people, and it’s not just for homeless people. There’s a lot of misconception of what we do. You never know when your last meal might be or being able to afford the basic needs that we’re blessed with. We never know when it could be us. And that’s what I try to relate, especially with my girls. Be grateful for what we have because there’s kids that don’t have this. They don’t have a mom and a dad. They don’t have a bed. They don’t have jackets.”

When asked if she could do anything and money was no object Herndon says,

“Oh, my goodness. If I had all the money in the world, what would I do? I would buy a big building for In His Name, community outreach. And then once all of that was done and it was up and running, I would go on a 30-day vacation with no cell phone to England, maybe Italy? I like pasta. So, I want to get somewhere there’s pasta.”



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FIRE CHIEF PAUL SEIGLER

By Scott Grooms

Paul Seigler, the Fire Chief for the City of Walterboro, was born and raised in Walterboro. When he graduated high school, he tried plumbing for a year and was a machinist for another year. When he left the machine shop, Seigler went to work at C and S Auto Parts, an auto parts store owned by Ashton Syfrett.

Seigler met Syfrett, who was to become the Fire Chief, in church. "He gave me the job at C and S, and I worked there for several years and became interested in the fire service and joined here as a volunteer in 1989." Seigler was a volunteer for a number of years and in 1999, became a full-time firefighter.

Originally, Station One was underneath City Hall and was volunteer. The city was divided up into four zones, and they had this big siren on top of City Hall. They would get a phone call, then they blew the siren however many times to indicate what zone the fire was located. The firefighters looked for the smoke on the way to the zone, and that's how they found the fire.

Seigler has been Fire Chief for 34 Years. Some of the larger fires happened before Seigler's time, like First Baptist Church in 1963, the Stripe Store on Washington Street, and the Hargo House/Hayne Hotel Fire in the mid 1970s. The Hargo House fire brought in trucks from as far away as Charleston and even used SCE&G bucket trucks to fight the fire. Seigler was a firefighter on the Columbus Seafood Fire and the Old Hospital fire on Webb Street.

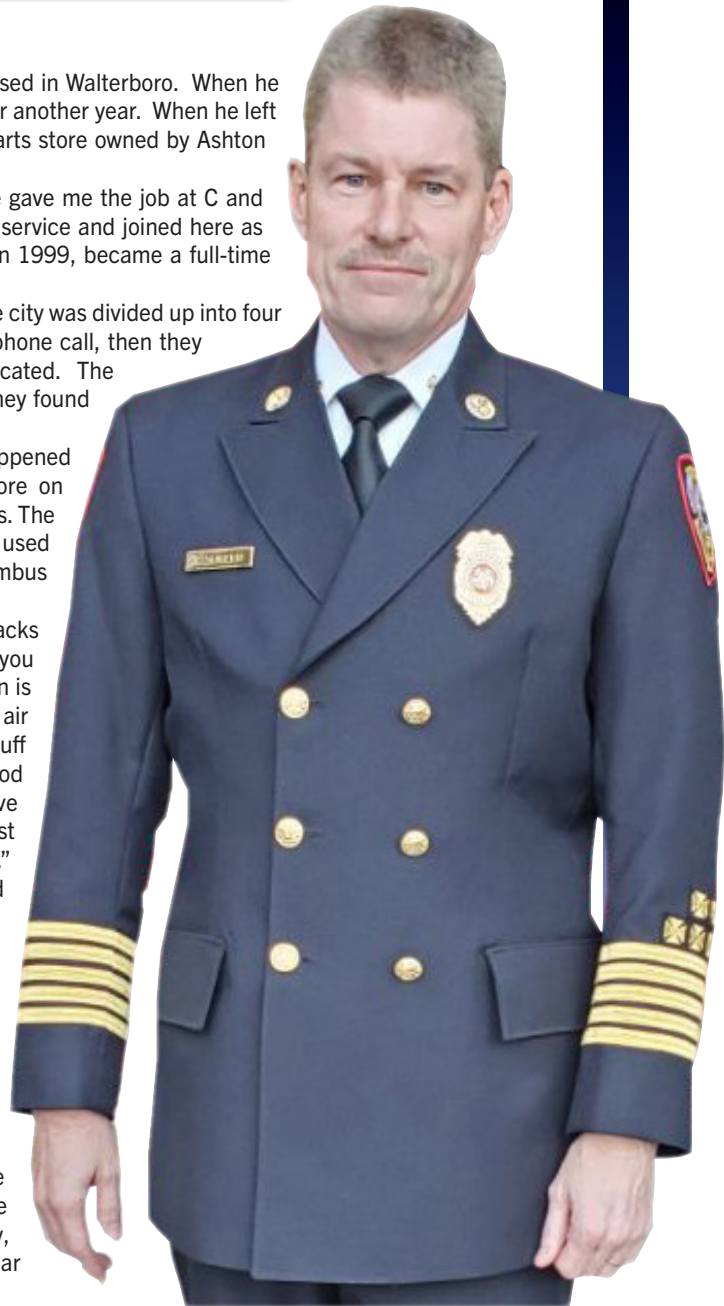
Seigler has seen a number of changes over the years, he says, "Air packs have been introduced. The new packs keep pressure in that mask, so you always have air sitting there waiting. Some of the best changes we've seen is ventilation, positive pressure ventilation we've been using to actually push air into the house and build up pressure inside the house so that the bad stuff escapes. The battery-powered equipment just coming out now is really good because we now have battery-powered extrication tools. So, you don't have to hook it up to a generator, you don't have to hook it up to a pump, you just come off a truck with a tool and go to work and get that person out of the car."

Walterboro now has three fire stations. There is the main station behind City Hall and two outlying stations to cover the city.

Seigler likes to go fishing in his spare time and loves to travel with his wife of 32 years. He adds, "I don't get to do as much as I'd like to because I need to stay close in case something happens. You never really get to take a break."

Seigler also has played drums since the fifth grade and was in the Band of Blue under Bill Young.

Chief Seigler adds, "When we hire people. We like to hire local people as much as we can because they care about Walterboro and Colleton County. They don't come here for money, but the camaraderie is a good thing, and that's what we try to build here at the Walterboro Fire Department. That's why we like local people, residents of the community, because they really care about it. If they didn't, they'd be chasing the dollar and going somewhere else."



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JOHN & ANGIE AVANT

By Dana Erickson

Faith and family are beyond important when you start out with a little of nothing. The story of how John and Angie Avant built Avant's Auto and Customs into the 1st Place winner (5 years in a row) in the Repair/Service category in The Press and Standard's Best of the Best involves a lot of both.

If one goes back to the very beginning, the year would be 1953. John's grandfather, Ralph Avant, started out at a service station at the corner of Carn Street and Highway 15. He purchased the building, took it over, and ran it. In the early 1970s, John's dad, Ellis Avant, came into the picture. After Ellis finished trade school, he and Ralph worked together where they built a big shop that is still there to this day. About this time, the shop became Avant Automotive. It was originally Avant's Atlantic and Avant's Mobile. They built transmissions, engines, and things like that. Then John's mother, Kaye, joined the business. In the 1980s, John's grandparents, Ralph and Nan, worked at the service station, Ellis and Kaye worked the big shop, and the family business was born.

John Avant also came into the picture in the 1970s. Apparently, automotive was already in his blood because his hands were in the grease bucket almost from day one. His dad tried to discourage him from the business, encouraging John to find a nice desk job or to go into computers, but that was not John's style. Angie did not make an appearance until 1995 when she and John started dating, but she was always at the shop watching how it all worked.

In 1999, Ellis sold the business, and he and John went to work for Gerald's. John worked for Gerald's for almost 20 years. He started doing side work about a year before he left Gerald's and ultimately opened his own shop, officially starting Avant's Auto and Customs October 8, 2019. It was not easy. Starting a new business is not especially easy when mechanic work is one of the most expensive jobs

one could ever have. Quality tools are not cheap. Lifts, racks, refrigeration equipment, and scan tools are expensive. When John and Angie started out, they had almost none of these things. John had just left Gerald's where he worked for 20 years, and they had just bought a truck for \$1,000 a month, and they had \$1,000 to their name. This is where the faith part comes in. They started praying, and people started coming. People came in, word of mouth started to spread, Jason the Snap-On man left them several tools and even a scan tool to use until they could afford one. John and Angie were able to buy the rack they needed, and people kept coming. They now have the equipment for adding freon, they have a programmer to program vehicle modules, and a top-of-the-line scan tool for diagnostics. They work on all makes and models and base their work on their integrity. If one brings a vehicle in and it is not worth fixing, they will tell them. What do they get out of that? Nothing. They lost the job and get nothing back because they do not sell cars, so it is a net zero gain. However, that honesty will probably get the customer back in Avant's for anything wrong with the vehicle they end up purchasing.

Angie helps out in the shop as well. She has been known to get her hands dirty too. Angie also does the programming work and some of the AC work. With 25-30 cars coming in and out weekly, it is truly a group effort.

Outside of work, John and Angie enjoy camping with family. They love Gatlinburg and Pigeon Forge in East Tennessee.

They also like beaches like Myrtle Beach, and there is a resort in Savannah they like to frequent as well.

The Avants have been together for 29 years and married 24 years this year. For the last 4-5 years, they've been side by side 24/7. They face the challenges of owning their own business quite literally together. We wish them well and look forward to Avant's Auto and Customs continued success.



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STRICKLAND'S CLEANERS

By Scott Grooms

Downtown Walterboro has had many businesses over the years, and for 60 years Strickland's Dixie Cleaners was a fixture on Hampton Street. Located at the foot of the City Water Tower, the dry cleaners was originally owned by the Beach brothers and purchased by Glen Strickland in 1958 who was working at Ideal Laundry at the time. The cleaners was renamed Strickland's Dixie Cleaners.

The cleaners was originally located in the small building at the front of the property with an auto repair shop located in a larger structure behind the cleaners. When the auto shop closed in the early 1970s, the cleaners expanded into that space as well. Business thrived and at one point they had five delivery trucks running the whole county from Smoaks to Islandton, Lodge to Green Pond. At that time, they were open six days a week, 12 hours a day, from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. In the early days, drying times and other functions were not as automated as today.

Mr. Strickland always tried to stay up to date on the technology. The cleaners had one of the first wash to dry machines in the area. This allowed the clothes to be run without changing machines. Automation was a big part of the cleaners, from moving clothes racks to the conveyer belts running from the back of the building where the pressers put the clothes, to the bagging area where clothes were checked and bagged for pickup.

The staff at Strickland's were a big part of the operation. Glen's wife, Dean, worked in the business with him, and family members including nieces, nephews, cousins, and friends all worked in the cleaners. They employed a countless number of people over the years and instilled an excellent work ethic in younger family members on how to treat customers. Strickland's was able to hire disabled individuals through a program with vocational rehabilitation. One of them was Riddick Fields, who was deaf/mute, and he worked his entire life at Strickland's. He was able to run the machines, spot and clean clothes,

and know what chemicals to use by smell. He was just like family. If he needed anything, Glen would take care of it. He would ride all over town on his bicycle. Even though he was deaf, you could hear him coming on that bicycle. He went to the bicycle shop and wanted to buy a radio. The shop called Glen and asked about it. Glen bought it for him, and he rode all over town with that radio turned up full blast.

One of the trademark services of Strickland's customer service was the curbside service. The car barely stopped when they drove up in front of the building. A door runner met the car when they stopped and got the clothes from the customer or met the customer with clean clothes.

Glen normally beat the door runners to the car. Glen always believed in helping the community when he could. He could be buying someone a meal if they were hungry to donating clothes to someone who had experienced a fire. At one time, there was an old house next door to the cleaners and a little walkway was built to access the building, using it as additional storage for clothes and equipment. When the First Baptist Church burned, Glen offered the 10-room house to use as long as needed for Sunday School rooms. There was also a three-bay building that somebody had planned on putting an automotive shop into, but it fell through. Glen bought the building. At the time, Colleton County had a volunteer fire department. The Fire Chief came to Mr. Strickland and said they were trying to put together an all-volunteer fire department. They had trucks coming and nowhere to put them. Glen gave him the key. Told him to use it as long as needed. They never gave it back, used it for probably 15 years, and they never received a bill. Glenn eventually gave them the deed.

Some of the cleaning jobs were special and band uniforms were a big deal. If the band performed on Friday night and had a contest on Saturday, the cleaners would run the uniforms overnight to have them fresh for the contests. When the movie Radio was in Walterboro, they would drop off the costumes at the end of the day. They would be



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cleaned and returned for the next production day.

Strickland's had an in-house seamstress most of the time and was always committed to looking out for the law enforcement, firefighters and churches. The churches never were charged for choir robes, and they only charged a small fee for law enforcement uniforms to be cleaned and pressed.

The cleaners was later purchased by Micky Strickland and eventually Charles Strickland until it closed in 2018. Today the water tower is seen at the back of a green lawn next to the fire station on Hampton Street. This is where the cleaners sat. 60 years of history with thousands of customers, countless pieces of clothes, employees and family working and some great memories.

This story is personal to me, I worked there on Saturday mornings as a child. My mother worked there, and all my family worked there. It was a great way to grow up. I want to thank Charles Strickland for working with me on this story. We had a great time talking about old times sitting around the table at Hiott's Pharmacy. What a great way to grow up.



Strickland Cleaners from the 1940s



Dean & Glen Strickland in mid 1980s

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STEWART MCADOO

By Jessica O'Connor

Colleton County Chamber of Commerce President, Stewart McAdoo, is proof positive that a county's most enthusiastic allies in regard to future growth and prosperity don't always wear the title of "native."

Originally hailing from the Charleston area, Stewart found his way to Colleton County seven years ago and made it his priority to become involved in the community as much as possible.

"I'm a firm believer in being active in the community," he stated. "If you want to watch it grow, you should have a hand in it."

Director of Technical Operations for an IT consulting group that helps businesses ensure the systems driving their operations are working effectively and securely, he joined the Chamber in 2022 for the same reasons most others join: for networking opportunities and to hopefully grow and improve the business he worked for.

"Ultimately, I'm in the operations game," Stewart said of his full-time job. "That's actually exactly what the Chamber is. I started on the Board of Directors, then saw a need to focus on the internal operations of the Chamber and ended up moving into the position of Executive Director in October of 2022. I was then voted to become President of the Chamber in June of 2023."

Entering these positions within the Colleton County Chamber of Commerce on the heels of the Covid-19 pandemic, Stewart was faced with numerous challenges presented by the changed landscape of how business was conducted during that period. Social distancing, quarantine, and other aspects of pandemic life stifled not only many businesses' growth and bottom line, but the various networking and community-building events that the Chamber had previously conducted or taken part in.

"One of the things that I focused on when I took over was making sure we were meeting people and communicating with people effectively," he said. "I think one of the challenges prior to me coming on board was finding ways to connect with people, connect with businesses, and spotlight their various organizations. The challenges of Covid, quarantining, and just a general sense of distancing from a cultural perspective had become a norm. I've had to focus on reversing that, and try to encourage businesses to come back out and be a part of the community, to be able to network with others."

Stewart also made it a priority to ensure that the Chamber was positioned as a team player within the community. During his first six months as president he focused on building relationships, helping local businesses understand the direction the Chamber was going in and how it could help them, and bringing awareness to/participating in community events in the area. This involvement goes a long way in furthering one of his ultimate goals of helping others see the positives the area has to offer, in hopes of new businesses continuing to enter the local economy.

"Five to 15 years out, my focus is on spreading positivity and trying to get businesses to see the benefit and value of this community, because we have good, hardworking folks," he stated.

Stewart noted that driving new businesses into the community, along with helping existing businesses thrive, would bring a myriad of benefits to Walterboro and Colleton County. Better quality, higher paying jobs would help keep the workforce in the area instead of commuting to places like Charleston or Beaufort to work. Higher salaries would allow residents to have more expendable income, which could then be diffused among area merchants. Though it's a long game and all of the problems can't be solved in a year (or in some cases even five or ten), he's hopeful that Colleton County can stay the course.

"One of the reasons why I'm focused from a civic standpoint is because I do realize that effective change takes time," he explained. "That's why I'm involved with the Chamber. If I'm involved in this community and I'm here to stay, I'm going to make it a better place for my kids to grow up and have opportunities."

As for the future of the Chamber, Stewart and his team are committed to providing consistent support, practical solutions, and innovative exposure and networking opportunities for its members. Events such as Business After Hours and the new Coffee With

Colleagues will continue to allow business owners to collaborate and network face-to-face in an intimate setting. The organization also plans to roll out a series of workshops for informational and educational purposes, and is planning a job fair that will be held in spring of 2024. Members are also encouraged to reach out with any and all questions pertaining to the operation of their business.

Though there is a vast list of benefits associated with Chamber membership, Stewart feels that the level of exposure members experience is one of the strongest selling points. The organization takes a multifaceted approach for bringing awareness to member businesses and community events, utilizing their own website, the Chamber's Facebook page, and their monthly page in The Press and Standard to get as many eyes on the material as possible.

"We have a wide demographic," he explained. "Some people focus on the newspaper, some on social media, some like to read newsletters, things like that. We have such diversity in our demographic. New businesses entering into our community need to have a way to be able to communicate with the public."

He continued, "One way we can provide benefit for some of our members is to be that 'marketing arm' for them. If they have something they want to share with the community, we're able to do that. If they want to host job fairs and hire people, we can put them in front of the right people or organize the event. If they need to communicate with people at the city or the county level, we help bridge that particular gap. So we're a strong resource for businesses and entities in Colleton County, especially around that exposure piece. Marketing, connecting the dots, tying the pieces together."

It's a labor of love for Stewart, who works for the Chamber on an entirely volunteer basis. However, he emphatically cited, "I wouldn't be where I'm at without the support of my board and our Business and Communication Engagement Specialist, Ginny Bishop. Every single one of them is a team player."

That team intends to continue working toward the good of Colleton County, its businesses, and its residents, providing a piece of positivity and hope in a world that sometimes tends to focus on the negative.

To learn more about the Colleton County Chamber of Commerce, visit colletonchamber.org on the web. Also, be sure to follow them @ [walterborocolletonchamber](https://www.facebook.com/walterborocolletonchamber) on Facebook for all the latest news and upcoming events.



Daughters Brinley and Oakley with Father Stewart McAdoo

CHEF LASHAWN WILLIAMS

By Dana Erickson

For Chef Lashawn Williams, the culinary arts are his passion, and he shares that passion with the students at Thunderbolt Career and Technology Center.

Chef Williams was born and raised in Walterboro and was educated in the Colleton County School District. Chef was formally educated at Le Cordon Bleu College of Culinary Arts in Atlanta, Georgia. He is also an honor graduate from the Culinary Institute of Charleston and the University of South Carolina. Williams then achieved his graduate courses online at Strayer University. The titles and affiliations he holds are impressive. He is a Certified Executive Chef, a Certified Executive Pastry Chef, and a Working Pastry Chef. He is also a member of the American Culinary Federation and Retail Bakers of America.

Williams was driven even at a young age. He never opened his own KFC franchise, but he did open his own bakery in 2015 called Atol Bakery right here in Walterboro.

After spending time in the larger cities working in the food service industry, working very late and coming in very early, working weekends, holidays and the summers, he decided that he wanted to be able to enjoy a 9-5. This segued into his teaching career at TCTC. His predecessor showed him the ropes, laid out the program and his responsibilities, and the rest, as they say, is history.

Chef Williams cares about his kids. He not only gives them the tools to go into the food service industry should they choose to, he also speaks to them about things outside school. Chef's program has kids from all over the spectrum of society and he mentors them all, welcoming them into his program and giving them all the knowledge he can. He enjoys teaching his students, watching them progress, and watching them mature over the course of four years.

Chef provides the students with opportunities outside the classroom as well. He knows that what they learn in the classroom is important, but the hands-on experience is essential to seeing how the whole process works. They have participated in Empty Bowls, they will be catering an event at

the Walterboro Wildlife Center, and they will also be at the Taste of Walterboro. They have participated in a chili cookoff at the State Fair, and later this year Chef Williams and his students will cater a wedding in Miami, Florida. Also, in addition to teaching at TCTC, he also is an online adjunct instructor at Technical College of the Lowcountry, imparting his knowledge to an even larger classroom.

When not in the classroom, Chef Williams participates in a St. Jude's charity named Ice and Smiles. The participating chefs will receive a call to action regarding a child who has a terminal illness and the chefs fulfill that child's cake or pastry wish. There are no big projects or small projects, it's about what the child wants. They deliver the treat to the children and families at home or at the hospital and celebrate the birthday with them.

When asked about his signature dishes, Chef Williams laughs and thinks for just a moment. As for his favorite sweet dish, it is his cakes and consequently what others seem to enjoy the most. For his signature savory dish, he loves pasta and its versatility. Whether it be an Italian Bolognese or a nice Alfredo dish it's his "go to."

Colleton County is very fortunate to have such a consummate professional teaching at TCTC. It is made just that much better by being a native to the area who can relate to his students on every level. Colleton County thanks you, Chef Williams, for all you contribute to the community.



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WHEELER STEEDLEY

By Dana Erickson

When you are part of a family that quite literally everyone in town knows, it can be a blessing and sometimes a curse. However, Wheeler Steedley takes it all in stride as he navigates a business that is inexorably intertwined with his personal life, and he's doing it all very well.

Born and raised in Walterboro, Wheeler experienced both sides of the school experience. He went to Colleton Preparatory Academy through 9th grade and appreciates his time at CPA. Where he really began to develop the social skills that would serve him later in life was at Colleton County High School. He enjoyed the different personalities and people he met while there and credits his experience at the high school for "coming out of his shell" and becoming the talkative person he admits to being today. When asked if coming out of his shell meant being a little mischievous, Wheeler smiles and refers to his parents for the answer to that question.

After high school, Wheeler attended Greenville Tech for mechanical engineering for a while, but became dissatisfied. One day he called his dad and said he was coming home and wanted to be a part of the monument industry, and now one can find him most days at 288 Mt. Carmel Road, Walterboro, S.C.

Steedley Monument Works is truly a family business. Started in 1968 by his great-grandfather, Wheeler Steedley, and his grandfather, Terry Steedley, it is now in the hands of Wheeler's father, David Steedley. Now that he is back home, Wheeler and his younger brother, Dawson, are the fourth generation to work in the family business. He also has another brother, Daniel, who runs Lowcountry Fence, which is another business that has been a part of the Steedley family for some time. Lowcountry Fence and Steedley Monument Works sit side by side, so the family is tight knit at work and home. They are there for one another, but as siblings often do, they can drive one another to distraction, but at the end of the day, they are family.

When asked how old he is (he's 26) he immediately talks about his wife, Kalee Steedley. They married young, when Wheeler was 19, and she is his

high school sweetheart. He is very grateful that he has a partner that is driven just like he is. Mrs. Steedley just graduated from nursing school and is now an RN. Together they want to push to succeed personally as well as professionally. It's obvious Wheeler cares deeply about his wife, because the night of this interview, he was taking Kalee to a Professional Bull Riding event because she loves horses.

His only regret about joining the business is that he did not get involved sooner. He feels it would have served him better if he had started earlier, but acknowledges that at 15 or 16 one isn't necessarily thinking about that far ahead in the future. His fondest memory is being able to work alongside his grandfather and he would not trade that for anything. Those memories are dear to Wheeler. His grandfather warned him though that he was "gonna get paid less and treated worse than everyone here." Wheeler admits part of that is a bit true. He comments he has probably quit three times and been fired twice, but he always ended up right back at the job the same day.

When not at Steedley Monument Works, Wheeler is a car guy. His dream car is a '70-'71 Rally Sport Camaro, and he and his dad sometimes work on building hot rods together, although it's been a little while since they have worked on one. He also enjoys weightlifting and is a member of the Free Masons.

Colleton County is fortunate to have Wheeler Steedley as one of its native sons, and we look forward to what he accomplishes in his future.



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THE TUSKEGEE AIRMEN

By Dana Erickson

During a time in the United States during which segregation was very much present in society and the armed forces, the Tuskegee Airmen rose above the obstacles to become one of the most notable air squadrons in history.

For young black men who wanted to become pilots, they were met with what probably felt like insurmountable obstacles. There was the belief black soldiers were inferior to white soldiers, black soldiers performed poorly in combat, and also that black people were not intelligent enough to learn how to operate aircraft. With World War II on the horizon, Franklin D. Roosevelt expanded the civilian pilot training program in the United States. Lobbying by black newspapers like the Chicago Defender and the Pittsburgh Courier, working in conjunction with NAACP, the Army Air Corp (AAC) civilian program would include black Americans.

Training was done at the Tuskegee Army Air Field in Tuskegee, Alabama. It was also home to the Tuskegee Institute founded by Booker T. Washington. From mid-1944 to late 1945 some of the trainees received additional combat training at Walterboro Army Airfield. The Army Air Forces Fourth Service Command conducted aircrew training here and the Tuskegee Airmen were part of this training. They were based close to Tuskegee Circle, which is now the location of Colleton County Middle School. From Walterboro, pilots and aircrews went straight into combat in numerous areas around the world. Despite an uncertain beginning when the Airmen arrived in Italy in February of 1944 as a part of the 332nd Fighter Group (made up of the 100th, 301st, and 302nd, and the 99th [the Tuskegee Airmen] squadrons), these men proved themselves unequivocally in the air. Instead of the second-hand planes they were initially given to fly, the Tuskegee Airmen started flying P-51 Mustangs to escort the bombers on raids behind enemy lines. During this time, they became known by American Bomber crews as the Red Tails or the Red Tail Angels because of their excellent reputation in the air. Out of fear and respect, the Germans named them Schwartze Vogelmenschen or Black Bird Men. As part of the 332nd, the Tuskegee Airmen flew more than

15,000 missions, eradicated or disabled 36 German planes in the air and 237 on the ground. They also damaged or destroyed approximately 1,000 rail cars, transport vehicles, and a German destroyer. Sadly 66 Tuskegee Airmen died in combat and 32 were taken as POWs.

The Tuskegee Airmen still maintain a solid presence in Colleton County. The road that runs from Thunderbolt Drive and Jefferies Boulevard in front of Colleton County Middle School bears their name. Formerly known as Bulldog Avenue, it is now Tuskegee Airmen Drive. Colleton County School District's Thunderbolt Career and Technology Center owes its name to the Tuskegee Airmen as well. Originally named the Colleton Area Vocational Center, the school now bears the name in honor of the Tuskegee Airmen. The name comes from the planes they were given to fly in June and July of 1944; the Republic P-47 Thunderbolt. Active in the community is the Hiram E. Mann Chapter of the Tuskegee Airmen, Inc. The goals and objectives of the chapter are: "to preserve the legacy of the Tuskegee Airmen and continue to share the story and experience of this part of American history; forge community and corporate partnerships that support youth development in character and academics; and to provide scholarships to deserving applicants pursuing flight training and/or education in aerospace disciplines." The Hiram E. Mann chapter of The Tuskegee Airmen was established in 1998 and is headquartered in Walterboro. Lieutenant Colonel Hiram E. Mann was trained at the Walterboro Army Airfield in 1944. Mann helped in initial efforts to establish this local chapter by enlisting the help of other Tuskegee Airmen who served and trained in Walterboro during World War II. He also aided in work to have a monument in the Tuskegee Airmen's honor. That second generation of the monument stands on the grounds of the Lowcountry Regional Airport in honor of these brave pilots.

The Tuskegee Airmen have indelibly left their mark not only on the world, but right here in the small corner of the Lowcountry named Colleton County. We thank these brave men who overcame every obstacle to serve during a time when not everyone wanted them to serve. They represent all the traits of heroes: bravery, sacrifice, strength, conviction, perseverance, and resilience.



Tuskegee Airmen - Circa May 1942 to Aug 1943. (U.S. Air Force Photo)

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ST. JUDE'S CHURCH

By Scott Grooms

St. Jude's Church is the oldest church in Colleton County. The origins of St. Jude date back to St. Bartholomew's Parish by the Colonial Assembly in 1706. The first chapel in the Parish, Pon Pon Chapel, was established in 1725 in Jacksonboro. In 1822 a chapel was built in the planters' retreat of Walterboro. This was the same year the Colleton County Courthouse was completed. The chapel was used in the summer months for planters to avoid the humid and mosquito inhabited rice plantations. St. Jude's acquired the land that the church sits on today in 1850. A gothic church building designed by architect Edward B White, who also designed the French Huguenot Church in Charleston, was built on the property and St. Jude's Church was consecrated in 1852 and became an independent parish in 1855.

A tornado destroyed the original St. Jude's church in Walterboro in 1879. The present St. Jude's sanctuary on the corner of Wichman and Fishburne Streets was built and consecrated by Bishop Howe in 1882. A major expansion to the parish took place in 1996 and a Pipe-and-Digital Wicks organ was installed in 1996. The church sits across the street from the Walterboro Little Library and the Bedon-Lucas House both of which are on the National Register of Historic Places along with St. Jude's Church as part of the Walterboro Historic District.

Today, St. Jude's Church, along with 49 other churches, is a member of the Anglican Diocese of South Carolina under the leadership of Bishop Chip Edgar.

Services are held each Sunday at 8am and 10am.

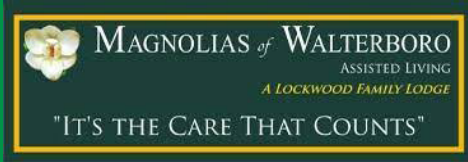


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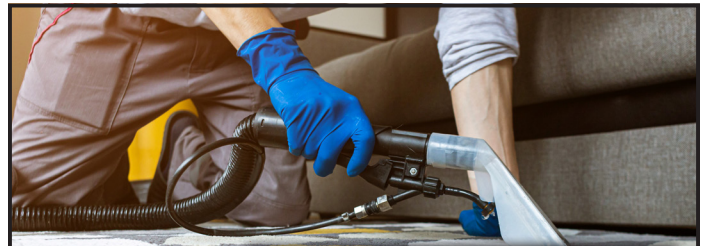
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WAYNE BROTHERS CONSTRUCTION

By Scott Grooms

The Colleton County Venture Park is welcoming a new business this year. Next door to the former JP Stevens factory, Wayne Construction is building their lowcountry operations center.

Wayne Brothers started in 1985 working primarily with concrete construction. They continued to grow and now do heavy commercial construction and concrete work. That includes on-site civil infrastructure work and deep foundations by their Geo structural group. Wayne also has an industrial group that sets equipment in plants with process pipes or industrial concrete that goes into existing facilities. They also have Southern Engineering, which is an in-house engineering group.

Wayne is constructing two buildings on the site; they have an operations center and an office building. This will allow management to have a base of operations as well as a building and area to layout projects to pre-construct before transporting them to the job site. The 33-acre site in the Colleton Venture Park will have construction management, recruitment, and human resources. There will be a construction equipment maintenance shop and a construction trade skills training center. Preferred Construction Supply Inc. will co-locate on the site with a distribution center to fulfill the needs of Wayne

Brothers and other construction-related contractors across the region.

Charlie Martin, the Regional Operations Manager for Wayne Brothers Construction, explains, "This will be our lowcountry group and will work primarily on the I-95 corridor with the primary territory running from just south of Myrtle Beach to just across the Florida line. However, our main focus as we grow will be the lowcountry region between Charleston and Savannah."

Wayne Brothers home office is located in Davidson, North Carolina and Eagleville, Tennessee. Colleton County gives great access to South Carolina and Georgia. Martin says, "It's a great location right off the interstate between the two major cities with access to two ports. Savannah is the second fastest growing port on the East Coast, and Charleston is very busy as well. We're seeing a lot of manufacturing, and these manufacturers want to get closer to the ports."

Wayne Brothers will be hiring locally and hopes to add about 75 jobs to the workforce. Martin says, "Right now, the hiring we're doing across the board is for people onsite work and carpenter apprentices, those guys will travel from site to site. Once we get this operations building open, we will be hiring facilities people, managers, technicians, service technicians, welders, and there'll be a lot more opportunities on this campus once we get the buildings complete."



Rendering of the Wayne Brothers Colleton County Campus



Concrete slab weighing 4,000 lbs lifted by heavy duty crane



Charlie Martin, Regional Operations Manager Wayne Brothers Companies



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JALEEL GADSON ABRAHAM

By Jessica O'Connor

Jaleel Gadson Abraham, a freshman at Claflin University, aspires to follow two separate career paths that couldn't be more stark in contrast.

His chosen course of study at Claflin is early childhood education, and the bubbly Branchville native has post-graduation aspirations of first teaching kindergarten or first grade, then opening a daycare.

"I was very indecisive when I was picking my major," he recalled. "My freshman year of high school I told myself I was going to be an anesthesiologist. Then as I went along and started experiencing more things, they put me in a classroom and I realized that this is what I wanted to do."

Participating in the teacher cadet program wasn't the only mode of vocational exploration Jaleel utilized at Branchville High School. In fact, it was through the school's job shadowing program that he discovered his passion for a secondary career that by outward appearances is the polar opposite of shaping the minds of young children. Inspired in part by his brother Jonathan Gadson, who is a five year employee at the business, Jaleel spent two days learning more about the funeral service industry with Dr. Ephriam D. Stephens and his team at Stephens Funeral Home in Walterboro.

After those two days, Jaleel realized that he'd like to dive more deeply into what working at the funeral home entailed. In June of 2023 he became an intern at Stephens and has been exploring the many different aspects of end-of-life care ever since.

Although he never felt any sort of fear surrounding working with those who have passed and had been informed by his brother of what to expect, Jaleel did have to sort through feelings that are only natural for individuals to have when being introduced to the funeral industry.

"It was a lot to get used to, and it was hard to understand some things about death," he explained. "There was a lot of business coming

in that summer, but as I kept going I became more accustomed to it. I feel like everyone might feel this way starting in funeral service. It was really sad to see people grieve, but I started taking joy in knowing that during that time of bereavement I could help by comforting families and things like that alongside my boss."

Jaleel quickly learned that the everyday operations at a funeral home are a conglomeration of many moving parts. Dr. Stephens and the staff at Stephens Funeral Home allowed him to become immersed in the day-to-day workings of the business through observation of tasks he could not yet take on without a license, as well as participation in those that he could.

"Some of what I do is observing," Jaleel said. "I get to see makeup application and feature builds. I help with flower set-up and making sure the presentation is right. We fold obituaries and we make graphics. We file papers and make sure the building is tidy. It's a lot to do! We just make sure everything looks really nice for people."

Jaleel's internship has also taught him that the work of a good funeral home does not end when the family leaves the graveside. The team at Stephens is committed to building lasting, personal relationships not only with the families they care for but the community as a whole.

"You have to be a community advocate," he explained. "We even participated in the trunk or treat in Colleton County. But you've got to reach out to people, and check on your families after the fact. People will be there that week; the week of the death, people will be there. Who's going to be there when those people walk away from the family? So we check on people, make sure everyone's okay, and provide quality Stephens service."

Interning at Stephens Funeral Home has also provided Jaleel with another avenue of support as he navigates life as a college student. He enjoys the family-like environment that he's experienced thus far, both at Stephens and Claflin.

"I love a good family environment, and that's another reason why

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INGREDIENTS
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I chose Claflin University," he said. "It's a small campus with so much love, and that's what you're looking for. I'm always looking for love and at Stephens and Claflin University, there is love present."

Jaleel went on to offer sage advice for anyone who aspires to tackle the pursuit of higher education, saying, "Working and going to college, there's such a high level of support you need. Getting that support from the funeral home and at my home always makes things so much better. I recommend you have some strong, stable support to help get through some days, because some are challenging in college. I know I can call on my mom or my brothers and they can get me through."

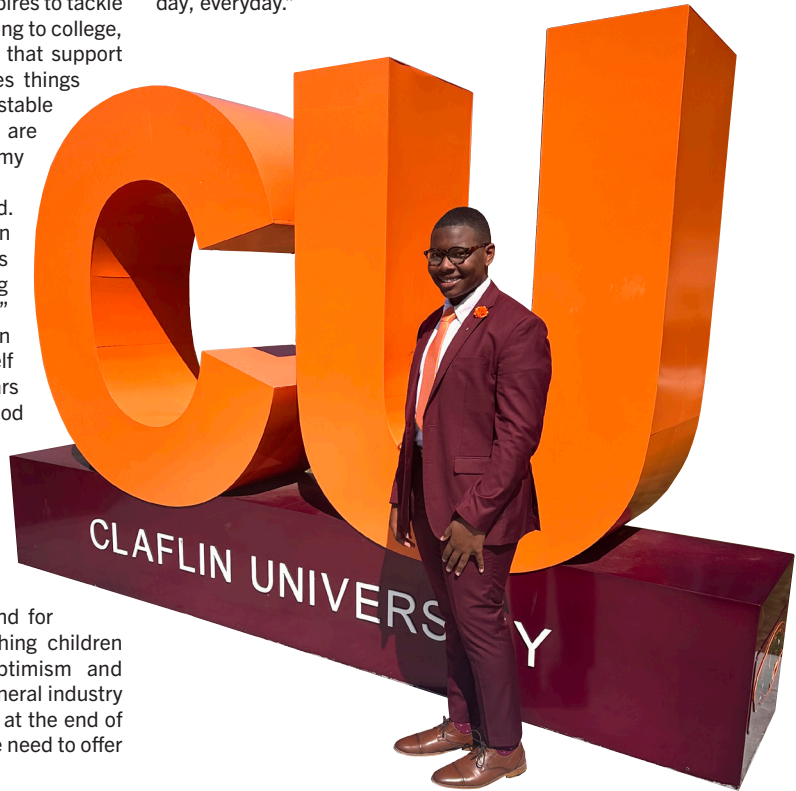
He added, "The Bible says it all. Everything you need. It says weeping can endure for a night, but joy is coming in the morning. I know I don't have to wait too long. There's going to be a brighter day somewhere. So I keep telling myself that as long as I have the support I need, I'm okay."

Jaleel, who laughingly says that he hopes to be known as "the teaching mortician," can easily still see himself as part of the team at Stephens Funeral Home 30 years from now. His plan is to finish his degree in early childhood education and work as a kindergarten or first grade teacher while he's in mortuary school, during which his goal is to become a licensed embalmer and funeral director. At that point, he aspires to continue bringing an open, caring mind to the funeral service industry while helping to lighten the load of both Dr. Stephens and some of the older members of the staff.

At first glance the places Jaleel thinks he has found for himself in the world seem like polar opposites. Teaching children entering the education system is marked with optimism and excitement for the future, whereas on the surface the funeral industry seems almost permeated by sorrow and grief. However, at the end of the day they both share a very large common theme - the need to offer

love and care.

"That's really why I wanted to become involved in teaching and funeral service," Jaleel concluded. "You really are making someone's day, everyday."



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MATTHEW & ROBIN LUTTON

By Dana Erickson

Oscar Wilde said, "Life imitates art far more than art imitates life." When life and work are both one's passions, then it can be said that life and art are one and the same. That is the case for Matthew and Robin Lutton, the extremely dedicated Future Farmers of America (FFA) instructors at Thunderbolt Career and Technology Center.

FFA is so much more than throwing a couple of seeds in the ground and maybe raising a goat or a sheep. Matthew and Robin Lutton are well educated in their field and have the practical experience to make the entire program work.

Robin started college to be a wildlife biologist. Then at Clemson she changed to studying to be a game warden. In her sophomore year, she switched from wildlife and fisheries to agriculture education. Initially, Robin was looking to work at the new Clemson Extension but ended up on a teaching track instead. After completing her student teaching, she worked in a couple of places and it took her several years to make her way to TCTC, where she has been for the last 12 years.

Matthew also went to Clemson under agricultural aid and had always intended to study mechanical or animal science. Matthew took many animal science classes through Clemson for the local farms. He received a job offer and questioned whether or not to take it because he was just three or four courses short of having a dual bachelor's degree. He finally decided to take the job offer. Matthew did work at a plantation and also an equestrian center. It took him a few years to get to TCTC as well, but in the end here he is, and there they are.

Students can begin to participate in FFA in Colleton County in 9th grade. There is so much in the program in which they can participate. They do have wild animals in the FFA area of TCTC, some of which are raised from birth, and some animals they get and rehome. One year they had a bearded dragon, its name was Nacho. Eventually, with permission, a student took him home (with a note from Mom and Dad). Currently they have guinea pigs, three rabbits (one of which is expecting), ducks, chickens, a chinchilla, and some fish. They are also looking to construct a pen and get some goats. The students will be responsible for building the pen. They will do the measuring, assess costs, and build the pen. This translates into course work as these are skills that are needed to operate a farm, be it crops, animals, or both. This is not simply collecting animals to collect them. Robin teaches Small Animal Care and Intro to Veterinary Science and the animals provide a practical learning experience in care. It's very hands-on. The students take care of the animals during school. Last year, they implemented a Work Based Learning Program, and the students and Robin go to the Colleton County Animal Shelter. They assist with everything from intake, cleaning, feeding, exercising the dogs, and whatever the employees at the shelter need help with. In the future they will be able to observe surgeries performed on the animals. When it comes to larger animals such as horses, Robin will bring in her horses so the students can meet large animal veterinarians and watch as the horses get their annual shots and checkups. Robin noted this is a good thing for the students to observe as there is a shortage of veterinarians nationwide, particularly large animal vets.

Looking around the classroom there are many pieces of farm

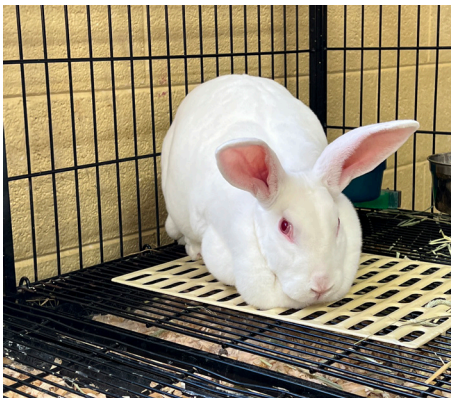
equipment in various stages of repair. Here is where Matthew brings his expertise to the table in teaching agricultural mechanics and agricultural science. He teaches the students how to take care of farm equipment of various ages, makes, and models. They learn engines, carpentry, plumbing, electrical, and any projects Matthew can find for them to work on in this subject matter. Matthew also receives donated equipment for the students to work on. He delves into Forestry where the students go out in the field and learn about trees and some of the basics of the forestry industry. In Wildlife they learn the basics about wildlife and managing resources in Environmental Natural Resources. They also have a Greenhouse class. This class involves the Introduction to Horticulture (which Robin teaches). They have an actual functioning greenhouse, which the students helped to build, and here they grow the plants for their yearly greenhouse plant sale. The students essentially do every part of this project. They help cover the greenhouse with plastic, choose some of the plants that will be sold, and tend to the plants. There is already a good variety of plants out there and will be a lot more to come. This sale is an absolute extravaganza with people lining up as early as an hour to an hour and a half with their wagons for a sale that starts at 8:00 a.m.

Robin's favorite part of what she does is that no two days are the same whether it be the lessons, the kids, the animals, or the work they do. The variety is what she likes. Matthew's favorite part is the students learning things they didn't think about and figuring out they can do this type of work on their own, and they don't have to pay someone else to do it for them; self-sufficiency.

It is not all classroom work either. This past October, Robin and Matthew took a group of students to the Sunbelt Ag Expo in Moultrie, Georgia which is the largest farm show in the southeast. The students see all these companies that deal with agriculture and see anything that has to do with farming/agriculture. On the years they don't go to the Sunbelt Ag Expo they are planning to take students to see Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College in Georgia which is a good agricultural school. They also take a trip to the National FFA Convention in Indianapolis. There the students can see schools that offer anything to do with agriculture. There are booths set up for them to browse, they can network, and also make connections and relationships with other kids all over the country that share the same interest as them.

As for their spare time, it looks similar to what they do with work. Robin has always been involved with growing crops and farming (corn, cotton, soybeans, and wheat). She has always ridden horses and locally works with Brice Herndon Carriage Company. When she isn't doing that, she likes to go camping, but the horses have to come too. Matthew enjoys "fiddling" with things. He is a tinkerer. He likes finding out what makes things work. He also enjoys learning new things, especially anything he can learn that keeps him from having to pay someone else to do it.

With their dedication to the FFA program and students, we hope Robin and Matthew Lutton continue to educate the students of Colleton County in this course of study. Thank you for all that you do for the school district and the students.





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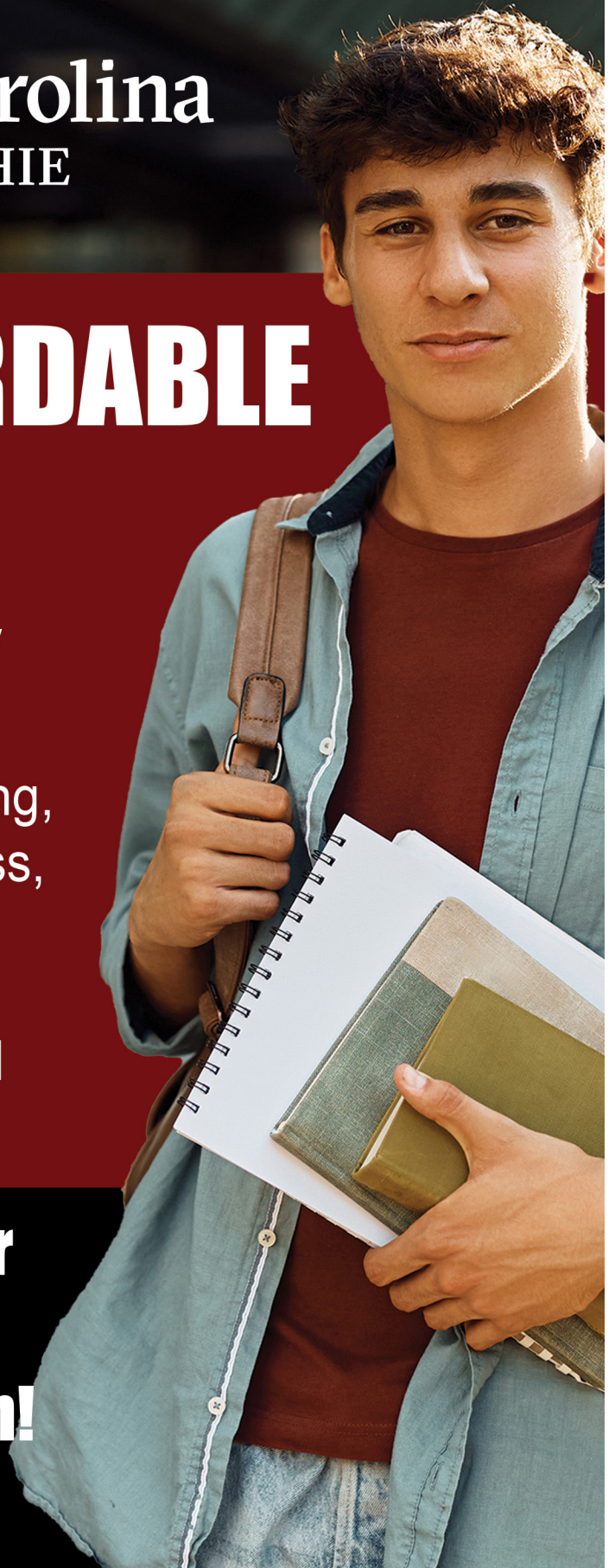
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JESSICA WILLIAMS

By Dana Erickson

Longevity is a staple of the South, whether it be generations of family or commitments to the community. Jessica Williams embodies this ideal in Colleton County.

A native of Walterboro, she grew up on Colleton Loop. From Hampton Street Elementary, to Colleton Middle School (Campus A and B), and Walterboro High School, the Colleton County School District shaped Mrs. Williams personally, educationally and professionally. In turn, she chose to commit herself to serving her community.

In fourth grade, Williams decided she wanted to be a nurse, because she always wanted to help people. She was inspired by her mother, who she saw continuously helping others. She particularly remembers one lady in her neighborhood her mother helped. The older lady was an amputee and had no family nearby who could help her. Williams' mother would cook dinner for the lady when she cooked her family dinner. Then they would take the meal to their neighbor and check on her to make sure she was doing okay. Williams' mother would make sure she had what she needed. Her mother would also do the same for the elderly people in the church they attended, and this sparked Williams' desire to help others as a nurse. Life, however, intervened. While still in fourth grade, Williams had to have an appendectomy, and her experience while in the hospital changed her mind about a nursing career. She did not want to be the one to administer shots and other not so pleasant things patients have to go through

while in hospital. So, with the ease that young children have, Williams changed her mind. However, her inspiration for a new career was not far away. She simply looked to her mother again. Williams' mother was also a special education teacher. Williams helped her in her classroom after school, in summer camps, in their church and youth Bible studies. She would do the music for these events and it eventually evolved into "oh, so this is my passion." Now the path was clear to her even at a young age: she wanted to teach and specifically teach music.

It wasn't the biggest leap for Williams to turn her focus to teaching music. She already was inspired to teach by her mother, but music had also been in her life from an early age. Williams took piano lessons during her childhood years. Her first piano teacher was Mrs. Francis Wright, and she then took lessons from Charity Peters when Mrs. Wright left Walterboro. Her passion for music continued into high school when she became a member of The Band of Blue under the direction of then Band Director Bill Young. She was also a bandmate of current Band Director Tom Finigan. Williams played flute and piccolo and also served as Band Captain. She credits the lessons of responsibility, perseverance, accountability, and discipline as a part of the cornerstones on which she has based her career. Williams spoke at the 50th Anniversary of The Band of Blue on these lessons she learned. She shared even though you might not fully realize how these lessons stay with you as a child, as an adult you see how they shaped you and affect your life personally and

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professionally. She gives Mr. Bill Young credit for instilling those life lessons as well as her parents.

After high school, Williams attended college at Winthrop University, where she obtained her degree in music education. In keeping with her desire to contribute to her community, she began her teaching career in the Colleton County School District at Forest Hills Elementary where she taught music for 19 years. She also taught at other elementary schools in the district, because at the time the special area/related arts teachers served more than one school. During her teaching career, she also taught music at Black Street Elementary (k/n/a Black Street Early Childhood Center) and Edisto Beach Elementary.

After teaching music for 19 years, Williams wanted to branch out and do something that could reach even more people in the community. Continuing her education, she went to The Citadel and obtained her Master of Educational Leadership and is now serving as the Interim Superintendent of the Colleton County School District, where her desire to help and serve her community has an even more far-reaching effect. She is also a member of various community organizations such as the Colleton Medical Center Board of Directors, Colleton County Chamber of Commerce, Community Innovations, and her church affiliations. She also is a member of the Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority Incorporated.

Outside her career, Williams still proclaims music her first love. She is the church musician for two churches. She has been married to her husband, Tony, for 41 years this year and comments that he is her biggest cheerleader. She is the proud mother of three children and beams with

love and pride at the mention of her five grandchildren, as most all grandparents do. She absolutely loves spending her time with her family. Her earliest and biggest influence, her mother, is still with her at 93. Her loving husband, children, and grandchildren also give her great joy in her life.

Williams' faith and her family are what give her the strength and support to do the things that she does to continually serve her community. She is committed to her community and wants to help it grow stronger, promote unity, and help it thrive by being the authentic person she is and drawing on her love of people. We thank you, Jessica Williams, for all you have given to Colleton County.



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The image shows the interior of a jewelry store. In the foreground, a large, ornate diamond ring with a central pear-shaped diamond and several smaller round diamonds is prominently displayed. The background features a well-lit store with light blue display cases, a central wooden door, and large arched windows. The ceiling has a decorative pattern of brown dots. The text 'Infinger's JEWELRY' is overlaid in a serif font, with 'JEWELRY' in a larger, bold font. Below it, the text 'CELEBRATING 70 YEARS OF SERVING THE LOWCOUNTRY' is written in a smaller, bold, sans-serif font. In the bottom left, there is a call to action: 'COME SHOP WITH US AT OUR NEW LOCATION!'. At the bottom center, the address and phone number are listed: '229 E. WASHINGTON STREET, WALTERBORO, SC (843) 549-5616'. The page number '40' is in the bottom left corner, and 'LOWCOUNTRY ROCKS 2024' is in the bottom right corner.

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