

LITTLE BITS BAKING CO. & PROVISIONS



CAROLYN R. WILSON/FOR THE WASHINGTON COUNTY NEWS

Tonya Fuller (left) and Becca Sarvey, owners of Little Bits Baking Co. & Provisions, have reimaged the Damascus Mercantile store and Downtown D-Town Bakery, both former business ventures of theirs that have merged into their new bakery and retailer. Little Bits was the start-up business winner for this year's Washington County Business Challenge.

Over the next few weeks, the Washington County News will feature a series of stories on the winners of the 2019 Washington County Business Challenge. The fifth in the series is on Little Bits Baking Co. & Provisions, the winner of the Startup Business Award.

Menu Items

- » Coffee
- » Loose-leaf tea
- » Cinnamon rolls
- » Scones
- » Biscotti
- » Biscuits and gravy
- » Quiche
- » Chicken salad sandwiches
- » Soups
- » Salads
- » Wraps

If You Go

- » **What:** Little Bits Baking Co. & Provisions
- » **Where:** 124 E. Laurel Ave., Damascus, Va.
- » **When:** A ribbon-cutting ceremony will take place at 5 p.m. on May 2. Regular business hours will be announced after the ceremony. The shop's baked goods are usually ready by 7 a.m.
- » **Visit:** <https://little-bits-baking-co-provisions.business.site>

Bits & Bobs

Damascus bakery wins business challenge and turns itself into hot spot for locals and hikers

BY CAROLYN R. WILSON
FOR THE WASHINGTON COUNTY NEWS

DAMASCUS, Va. — Two local women hope their small business will be a big hit in a trail town that welcomes hikers and tourists year around.

Tonya Fuller and Becca Sarvey have teamed up to open Little Bits Baking Co. & Provisions, the only business of its kind in Damascus.

Little Bits is a premier bakery, coffee-house and shop specializing in custom, one-of-a-kind pastries, in-house baked goods, a level of coffee brewing unsurpassed in Southwest Virginia and a retail location showcasing local artisans and curated experiences.

The owners recently received first place as a startup business in the 2019 Washington County Business Challenge, an ambitious business plan competition designed to attract entrepreneurs to start and expand business in the county.

The \$5,000 prize money will offset expenses the women have spent getting their new business ready to open last month.

They cooked up the idea to open the Main Street business when Fuller realized she'd outgrown the location for her former Downtown D-Town Bakery just down the street, and Sarvey was also feeling cramped in her Damascus Mercantile store.

When they discovered a newly renovated building was open for rent in town, the friends, both 34, decided to combine both of their businesses under one roof.

They settled on the name Little Bits Baking Co. & Provisions because they

have a little bit of everything, from baked goods to locally made soaps, leather-work, signs, jewelry and organic, sustainably sourced coffee, locally roasted at the Red Rooster Café in Floyd, Virginia.

"We have a little bit of coffee, a little bit of baked goods and a little bit of retail," Fuller said. "We sell blends of coffee, and we have 12 different kinds of loose-leaf teas."

Adding their own decorating touches to the building, the business partners created a vintage decor using refinished furniture, antique doors, an old sink and even a retro record player.

They plan to expand their business next door, allowing them to add the remaining merchandise from the mercantile store, host live acoustic music and events and utilize more space for comfortable seating.

"We have a few extra things we want to add, such as an espresso machine," Fuller said.

Soft opening

During their soft opening, the owners are rolling out a variety of baked goods and healthy breakfast options. Their homemade cinnamon rolls are already famous in town, said Fuller and Sarvey, who report to work as early as 5 a.m. to start baking.

"All baked goods are on display by 7 a.m.," said Fuller.

Their white chocolate cranberry and bacon cheddar jalapeno scones are hard to pass up.

Then, there are biscotti — Italian almond biscuits — along with traditional

chocolate chip and peanut butter cookies.

For traditional breakfast customers, they serve steel-cut oats with fresh fruit and yogurt with granola.

In the coming weeks, the women plan to offer more breakfast items, including biscuits and gravy, quiche and egg bakes. Lunch specials will be chicken salad sandwiches, soups and salads and wraps.

A passion for business

"I think what sets us apart from other local businesses is we're the only in-house bakery. All items are made from scratch, in-house, with fresh ingredients," said Fuller.

She is passionate about using fresh ingredients from an organic garden at her Damascus home. She also plans to sell beef and eggs from her farm.

"I feel like we're going to be a powerhouse with this business. We're going to kill it," said Fuller with a laugh.

The women are looking forward to what they hope will be a busy season, with hikers and bikers in town and upcoming special events like Trail Days on May 18 and 19.

During the winter months, when business becomes more relaxed, they want to offer tea parties and cake-decorating classes for the public.

In addition to managing the new storefront, Little Bits also makes specialty cakes for birthdays and weddings.

"The business challenge was a great opportunity to network with other business people," said Sarvey. "We met

people who challenged us to do great things with our businesses."

A heart for service

Probably the best part of operating a business is meeting the people, they said.

"Our first customer stepped inside Little Bits at 6:30 a.m. on opening day. He was a thru-hiker who was hiking for a purpose after suffering the loss of a friend.

"Now, we follow him on Facebook and Instagram as his journey on the Appalachian Trail continues," said Fuller.

"I think that's what we want more than anything. We want to be a comfortable, inviting atmosphere where you're never too busy to serve someone," Sarvey added.

"We're both from health care careers. Our hearts are for service. That's what we're passionate about here."

The public is invited to attend their ribbon-cutting ceremony sponsored by the Washington County Chamber of Commerce at 5 p.m. on May 2. Little Bits Baking Co. & Provisions is located at 124 E. Laurel Ave.

The owners said they are still growing their business, and regular hours of operation will be announced after the ribbon-cutting ceremony.

Follow the business on Facebook and Instagram for updated information, or visit their website at www.little-bits-baking-co-provisions.business.site.

Carolyn R. Wilson is a freelance writer in Glade Spring, Virginia. Contact her at news@washconews.com.

Council signals change for Main Street sign



Editor's note: "Wandering Around Washington" is a regular, exclusive column from Joe Tennis highlighting the untold stories in the county, direct from the people who live and work here. Watch for him to wander into shops, restaurants and parks to bring you the gab and gossip — only in the Washington County News.

the town's director of outdoor recreation. "Let's open that up as a view spot," Worley said at the April 25 work session of the Abingdon Town Council.

"We can do some things there. There's all kinds of good opportunities to create that as a photo spot, as a tourist draw, as a selfie spot — whatever you want to call it. We have the opportunity to make that a pretty visible spot."

The existing sign has stood for decades, Worley said. "Most people who drive through there don't even look at it."

Worley grinned. "How many times have you drove through there, and do you really look at all the civic signs that are up there?" Worley asked. "Can you name them?"

Worley figures anyone who wants to know what civic clubs exist in Abingdon will not come searching for that sign. In-

stead, he said, they'll be searching the internet.

And anyway, for safety's sake, the sign needs to come down, Worley said.

"It's a safety thing. The posts that are rotten are in the ground."

Worley's staff suggested taking down the sign, though it could possibly be used elsewhere, he said.

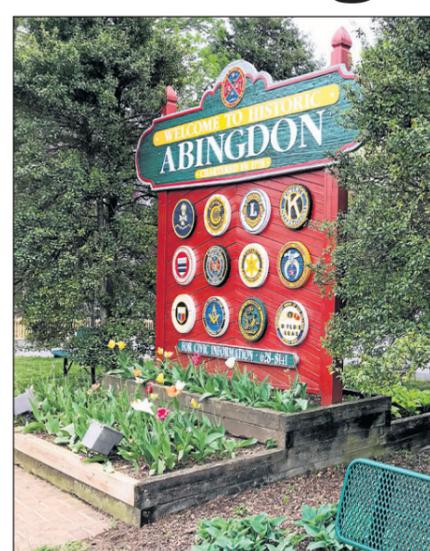
"People will know it's gone, they'll see — right now, especially right now — the beautiful white dogwoods that are behind it," Worley said. "You can't see but two of them. But you'll see all seven of them once you take it down."

Vice Mayor Cindy Patterson suggested putting a "Welcome to Abingdon, Virginia" sign at the spot.

Worley said anything is a possibility. "What we're trying to do is start entertaining some ideas of what we can put there," Worley said. "Again, it's a blank canvas. We have an opportunity to do something and not have to be tied to one thing."



Joe Tennis



JOE TENNIS/WASHINGTON COUNTY NEWS

The Abingdon Town Council this week discussed removing a Main Street sign listing the town's civic clubs in favor of something more open and tourist-friendly.



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Old Mill gets new flair

DAMASCUS, Va. — Saturday is a good time to slip into Damascus.

That's the date for the annual town-wide yard sale, running 7 a.m. to 3 p.m.

While in town, you can also pay a visit to the Damascus Old Mill, which is not only open for meals and lodging but is also looking at an expansion.



Joe Tennis

The mill features a dozen rooms. But, to truly be even more of a destination, says manager Randy Bass, it's going to need more.

So that's what's under construction right now at a century-old house next to the mill.

Bass, 62, expects the building project on those rooms to be ongoing through the rest of the spring.

He also wants to redecorate the walls of the current inn.

Right now, the walls of the halls are quite bare.

"Let's put something on there — some local art," he said.

A former resident of North Carolina, Bass has been a regular visitor to the Damascus Old Mill for about 18 years — long before he took the reins as manager earlier this year.

Among his plans for the century-old house facing the mill is to add four guest rooms "and a state-of-the-art conference room," Bass said as he showed off the construction project at the 19th-century structure.

"It has a lot of character," Bass said.

July is likely to mark the opening date of the rooms at this house, Bass figured.

"And I want it," Bass said. "I need to increase revenue."

Beyond this weekend's flea market and the subsequent Trail Days celebration in Damascus on May 16-19, Bass is looking forward to holding a two-day music festival on June 7-8.

"It's Old Mill Music Fest," he said. "We have the Church Sisters. ... We finish with Russell Moore & IIIrd Tyme Out."



JOE TENNIS/WASHINGTON COUNTY NEWS

Randy Bass is manager at the Damascus Old Mill.



JOE TENNIS/WASHINGTON COUNTY NEWS

A milldam is a scenic attraction at the Damascus Old Mill.

THE STORE @ MENDOTA



CAROLYN R. WILSON/FOR THE WASHINGTON COUNTY NEWS

Dorothy Dye stands in front of a 14-foot wooden table originally used as a meat counter in the old store. The counter was moved to the front of the store where customers can pick up to-go sandwiches.

Mendota memories

Landmark community store reopens with SW Va. native at the helm

BY CAROLYN R. WILSON
FOR THE WASHINGTON COUNTY NEWS

MENDOTA, Va. — Dorothy Dye is proof that you actually can go home.

The retired Southwest Virginia native has moved back home to Mendota, Virginia, to spend her senior years and to revive a piece of history that's never faded from her memories.

CAROLYN R. WILSON/FOR THE WASHINGTON COUNTY NEWS

Tables and chairs provide seating in The Store @ Mendota which serves sandwiches, chips and cookies. The store contains many original pieces, including antique glass showcases, a 14-foot wooden counter, shelving and a tin ceiling.

After a leap of faith and nearly a year of planning, Dye and three of her family business partners have reopened an old-fashioned mercantile that operated in a thriving agricultural community when Dye was a child.

The four women — Dye, along with Katie Harris, Lisa Edwards and Dawn Sims — opened the doors to their new business on Saturday, inviting the community to tour the former Benfield Store — historically referred to as simply "The Store."

Their dreams are coming true as the entrepreneurs write a new chapter in the life of the 1928 building, now operating under the name The Store @ Mendota.

They recently won third place in the 2019 Washington County Business Challenge for new startup businesses. The Business Challenge is an ambitious business plan competition designed to attract entrepreneurs to start and expand business in the county.

The store will feature retail and handmade gift items, along with basic needs for outdoor enthusiasts visiting Mendota. Signs, Mendota T-shirts, books, mugs, hummingbird feeders and cookbooks are just a few of the items they stock.

"The store originally had a kitchen in the back," said Dye. "We plan to have a sandwich shop there. We'll also have local music and crafts."

"We also want to offer Appalachian craft classes for sewing, basket-weaving, painting and gourd-making."

"The more you teach people to do for themselves, the stronger their hopes become," said Dye. "I want to help bring hope back to Mendota."

"We want to bring revitalization to the community. We're not looking to make a lot of money with this venture. It's for the community. It's great

Over the past few weeks, the Washington County News has featured a series of stories on the winners of the 2019 Washington County Business Challenge. The last in the series is on The Store @ Mendota, which won third place in Startup Business Awards.



If You Go

» **Contact** the store owners at 276-669-2401, which, according to Dye, is the same phone number for the store when a phone line was installed in Mendota in 1958.

» **Directions** from Abingdon to Mendota: From West Main Street, take Route 19 North on Porterfield Highway for 7.3 miles. After crossing the North Fork of the Holston River, turn left onto Mendota Road. Travel 14.5 miles. The Community Center is located on the left at 2562 Mendota Road.

to be involved with our little community again and sharing the history with the young people here. That's what I enjoy more than anything," she said.

Dye hopes their business will benefit from being in close proximity to

A Day in Mendota

The 2019 Virginia Highlands Festival will feature a Day in Mendota, when visitors can spend the day learning about the historic town and enjoying the quiet and charming atmosphere of the community.

Activities begin at 9:30 a.m. at the Mendota Community Center, where participants can learn about the history of Mendota and pick up maps and a detailed agenda for the day.

At the community center, visitors can view artifacts Dye has collected from every store that operated in Mendota decades ago. Her collection includes memorabilia from old churches and some of her own belongings when she attended Bible School.

Around noon, the group will eat lunch beside the river and listen to discussions on the Bristol-Mendota Trail and Adventure Mendota. Lunch can be purchased at The Store @ Mendota.

Following lunch, visitors can participate in several activities — a talk on organic farming and a farm tour, a walk on the Bristol-Mendota Trail or kayaking on the river with Adventure Mendota (reservations are required).

CAROLYN R. WILSON/FOR THE WASHINGTON COUNTY NEWS

The Store @ Mendota originally was built by Frazier Shepherd in 1928. The building was later purchased by Harold Benfield, who left the store building to his daughter, Katie Harris. Harris and three other family members have reopened the business in an effort to revitalize the Mendota community.

Adventure Mendota River Outfitters, which offers recreational kayaking on the North Fork of the Holston River. The trailhead of the Mendota Trail also lies in front of the store. The trail is a 12.5-mile hiking and biking recreational corridor between Bristol, Virginia, and Mendota.

"We're centrally located only 30 minutes or 20 miles from Kingsport, Bristol, Abingdon and Gate City," said Harris, Dye's niece, who inherited the store building from her father Harold Benfield.

The original Mendota General Store was a wooden structure built in the 1800s. Frazier Shepherd purchased the store around 1928, tore it down and built the current

Mendota

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brick building. Benfield later purchased the building and renamed it the Benfield Grocery Store.

Memories are easily sparked for the business partners. A cutting of an old-fashioned climbing pink rosebush from their homeplace down the road blooms beside the store. Harris said her grandmother, Lillie, taught her how to sew on an old pedal sewing machine, which she plans to display in the store. "I love this building," said Harris. "It's sat empty since my daddy closed it in the 1980s. We used it as a storage building for years.

"Dotty [Dye] has brought vision to the project, and I'm on the backbone. It's coming back alive."

Preserving the flavor

To help achieve their goals, the women worked with the Community Design Assistance Center (CDAC), an outreach center in the College of Architecture and Urban Studies at Virginia Tech. Through funding from the Environmental Protection Agency's Brownfields Assessment grant, CDAC worked with Mendota community members on several redevelopment projects, including a design for the redevelopment of the Benfield Grocery Store.

Professor Lisa Tucker and students from the interior design program redesigned the interior of the store in an effort to create a community-oriented business and gathering space that supports cultural heritage and outdoor recreation tourism.

The flavor of the building is preserved with many of the original furnishings.

Dye said a 14-foot-long wooden counter that was once a meat counter sits at the front of the store as a check-out station for food. Old glass showcases that once held candy when



CAROLYN R. WILSON/FOR THE WASHINGTON COUNTY NEWS

Among the many flowers planted beside The Store @ Mendota is a pink climbing rose, which was rooted from a cutting from a plant Dye's mother grew nearly 100 years ago.

she was a girl are being used to display new merchandise in the store. Original shelving and the store's tin ceilings are still intact. An antique ice chest in the wall still exists where ice was cut out of the river in the winters and stored for later use.

Antique doors from the Mendota Methodist Church — built about the same time as the store — were hinged to shelving on the wall, creating desks once folded down. Dye said the workspace will be used during craft lessons.

In addition to enlarging the store's bathroom and adding new fixtures, most of their work has involved elbow grease — cleaning and painting the interior and stocking the shelves with merchandise.

"The foundation of the building is very strong," said Dye.

Memories of a thriving town

Dye just seemed to know



CAROLYN R. WILSON/FOR THE WASHINGTON COUNTY NEWS

Standing in a flower bed she created at the side of the store building, Dorothy Dye holds one of the printed signs that will be placed along the highway to mark the way to The Store @ Mendota.

when it was time to return to her roots.

After leaving Mendota in the 1960s, Dye later settled in Florida, where she stayed for 50 years before retiring as a metallurgical engineering technician in 2000.

"When my husband died, I finally realized I could come

back home.

"My family thinks I'm nutty. I sold everything I had in Florida, left my two children and two grandchildren and came back to Mendota. It's where I want to spend my last days.

"I returned three years ago to find that you couldn't even buy a bottle of water in Mendota.

Everything had left Mendota," Dye said.

"It's nothing like what I remember.

"I'm almost 80. I grew up in Mendota when it was a thriving little town. We had about five stores where we could buy anything we needed," she said.

Dye believes the town's failing economy was a direct result of the steady decline of both the rail service and the tobacco industry.

"I'm old enough to remember when the steam engines and the passenger trains came through Mendota. It was a thriving town then. It was a fun, healthy town. People loved and took care of each other," said Dye, who was in the last graduating class at Mendota High School in 1959 before students were moved to John S. Battle High School.

"People were forced to find work other places, and when they did, they bought what they needed elsewhere. That caused the stores to gradually close, and by the mid-1980s, everything was gone."

Dye said the store was always referred to as "The Store."

"When Mama needed something when we were little, she'd say we could go to Mr. Litton's store, Mr. Cross' store or Mr. Nunley's store. Or if she said, 'The Store,' we knew exactly where she meant."

Since moving back home, Dye has dreamed of seeing the town come back to life — one step at a time.

"We started dreaming together that we could reopen the store. It's taken us a year to realize our dream.

"We're on our way to making this a vibrant community again."

The Store @ Mendota is open 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. each weekday, except Wednesdays when it is closed. Sunday hours are noon to 5 p.m.

Carolyn R. Wilson is a freelance writer in Glade Spring, Virginia. Contact her at news@washconews.com.

New artwork on display at Town Square Center



CAROLYN R. WILSON/FOR THE WASHINGTON COUNTY NEWS

Susan Powers, coordinator of educational programs at the Town Square Center for the Arts, talks about the resident artists whose works are currently on display.

BY CAROLYN R. WILSON FOR THE WASHINGTON COUNTY NEWS

GLADE SPRING, Va. — Four new affiliate artists have their work on display at the Town Square Center for the Arts in the Glade Spring town square.

The artwork of Nancy Johnson, Nancy Garretson, Jackie Dolpp and Joyce Samuel is being exhibited in studio space designated for the guest artists. Each is a resident artist at The Arts Depot in Abingdon.

The special display will rotate on a regular basis, frequently showcasing new work from the artists.

"We are very grateful to the artists for letting us exhibit their work to broaden our horizons," said Susan Powers, a potter and stained glass artist at the arts center and coordinator of educational programs.

"We want to expand our art exhibits for people in the community who may not have the opportunity to see it elsewhere."

Each affiliate artist demonstrates unique visions.

Dolpp loves to experiment with collaged florals, landscapes and alcohol ink paintings.

Samuel paints what she loves — the world around her.

Garretson's expertise is fiber arts and weaving.

Johnson depicts ethnic pride and a loving look at black American culture by creating folk paintings.

"These people put their heart and souls into art, and it shows," said Powers.

"You can take one look and know that's a Nancy Johnson painting. The bright colors and folk themes are well-known signatures of Johnson," she said.

"Nancy is so well-known for her fiber arts, but it's nice to see her pen and ink drawings of Appalachian homesteads," Powers said.

"The thing about Joyce is she works in several different media. She's always coming up with



CAROLYN R. WILSON/FOR THE WASHINGTON COUNTY NEWS

"Geraniums," by Joyce Samuel, is one of the pieces on display at the Glade Spring Town Square Center for the Arts. The pieces can be viewed from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Thursday through Saturday. The artwork was all produced by resident artists at The Arts Depot in Abingdon, and the display will rotate artists on a regular basis.

something new. She's so versatile in the media she uses.

"And I love the way Jackie works with textures. Her painting called 'The Path' has colors and textures that are very three-dimensional. They pop off the canvas."

Artwork from the affiliate artists and the art

center's four resident artists can be viewed from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Thursday through Saturday. Visit their website for the Town Square Center for the Arts at www.tscaart.com or follow them on Facebook.

Carolyn R. Wilson is a freelance writer in Glade Spring, Virginia. Contact her at news@washconews.com.



CAROLYN R. WILSON/FOR THE WASHINGTON COUNTY NEWS

The Town Square Center for the Arts will feature a rotating roster of artists.

'Bee-based business'

Beekeeper provides everything customers need to raise their own hives

BY CAROLYN R. WILSON
FOR THE WASHINGTON COUNTY NEWS

ABINGDON, Va. — A Washington County man has traded his farming career for beekeeping, opening what is probably the only bee supply retail store in the county.

He goes by the name "Tater," but most everyone along Walden Road in Abingdon knows David Miller farms honeybees.

A few years ago, the beekeeper — or apiarist — began studying the winged honeybees when he wasn't operating a greenhouse or growing tobacco.

"Once I became a beekeeper, I immediately became fascinated. The learning curve will probably remain vertical. It will never plateau because there's so much to learn about bees," said Miller, standing in a building on his farm where he keeps an abundance of bee woodworking supplies.

"The more I was drawn to bees, the more I realized this could turn into an enterprise," said Miller, who has spent the past few months preparing to open a retail business that will offer customers sweet deals on handmade wooden beehives. Eventually, he will stock other bee supplies, including beekeeping jackets, veils, gloves, hive tools, queen-rearing supplies and more.

"My goal is to establish a bee-based business that sells pretty much everything bee-related, except the honey."

Miller hopes more people will learn about his new business, Beekeepers Woodworking and Apiary Supply, through Highlands Beekeepers Association, of which he is a member.

He plans to open his new business on June 1.

Even though Miller has 20 beehives on his farm, he's discovering that honey production is only part of the rewards of beekeeping.

"We're trying to raise more bees because in 2020 we want to launch a commercial queen-rearing operation."

Miller will sell the queen bees to customers for profit and as a way to help more people become successful beekeepers.

Miller is also using the hives for bee research and as a way to collect data to help improve the health of honeybees.

"I want to help people get their hives started, make the prices of supplies more affordable and offer educational services. We want to become an education center that works closely with the Washington County Extension Service.

"I plan to provide a place where



CAROLYN R. WILSON/FOR THE WASHINGTON COUNTY NEWS

Miller's bee-based business will sell all the supplies necessary for becoming a beekeeper. The wooden hives are handmade by Miller. He plans to open his store on June 1 on Walden Road in Abingdon.

people can get bee equipment and become educated through research-based information."

Miller constructed a 30-by-50-foot metal building for his new business venture.

"This is where the magic happens. We source local, sawmill lumber and process it into finished beekeeping woodenware."

Miller went through the process of building a beehive as he explained each layer and its purpose.

"This is a screened bottom board, which will be the bottom of the beehive, and everything else builds on this," said Miller from a room that will soon be his retail store. "I'm using poplar wood as opposed to pine because it's stronger and more durable, and it makes a classier-looking box.

"Next comes the hive body or brood chamber. These deeper boxes are primarily where they raise their young. The next parts are the frames, which

is what holds a wax foundation, which encourages the bees to build straight comb for better organization," he explained.

"The super sits on top and is used by the bees to store a surplus of honey. A beekeeper can only rob the surplus of honey in the fall because the bees need the remaining honey to survive during the winter.

The inner cover is next, which provides the correct bee space on the top hive body and provides good air ventilation within the hive.

The outer cover functions like a roof on a house, protecting the hive from rain and wind.

Miller examined a honeycomb in his shop, a mass of wax cells built in the shape of hexagons. The cells contain their larvae and also serve as a place for honey and pollen.

"The bees build a wax seal over

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METROCREATIVE

Murders rattle, rally small Mendota community



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MENDOTA, Va. — It should be a happy time these days in the once-incorporated town of Mendota at the base of Clinch Mountain.

A much-praised new store is now serving this isolated Washington County community near the Scott County border. The Store @ Mendota opened to much fanfare, said Washington County Board of Supervisors Chairman Saul Hernandez at the board's May 14 meeting.

"I'd say we had 300 or 400 people there



Joe Tennis

during the course of a day go through there," Hernandez said. "I think the statistic I heard is that there were 300 hot dogs sold. That's saying a lot."

And, yes, you can say a lot about Mendota — with its breathtaking scenery along the North Fork of the Holston River. Unfortunately, the scenery and the store are not all that's making news these days.

Folks are also talking about the river — and the mystery that may lie within it.

On that same night that the Washington County Board of Supervisors met in Abingdon, Washington County Sheriff Fred Newman hosted a community gathering at the Mendota Community Center. In what was once an elementary school auditorium, Newman addressed residents' concerns over who Newman has labeled "a serial killer."

James Michael Wright, 23, of Mendota, has been charged with three counts of capital murder and is currently being held without bond at the Southwest Virginia Regional Jail in Abingdon.

More than 70 residents packed the Mendota auditorium on May 14 to voice concerns, hear updates on the case and pose questions, including how long before the missing body of one victim could turn up in the river.

"If you do see evidence, even a piece of clothing ... we'll be glad to come and check it out," Newman said on May 14.

"Contact our office. Don't tamper with any evidence if it happens to be her



JOE TENNIS/WASHINGTON COUNTY NEWS

More than 70 residents turned out to the old Hamilton Elementary School — now the Mendota Community Center — to hear Sheriff Fred Newman and other law officials speak on May 14.

body," Newman said.

"Certainly, let us know immediately. And that's a very valid point: We're hoping obviously with the attractions here in Mendota, with the river attraction, that there will be a lot of people who will be utilizing the river. That may very well be to our benefit."

That same night, about 24 miles away, Hernandez also addressed the Mendota murders — in Abingdon.

"It's been a tough week for a lot of the residents," said Hernandez, who represents the Mendota community on the Board of Supervisors.

"The folks there care a lot about their community, and they were pretty saddened and shocked. But they're a pretty resilient bunch," Hernandez said, "and they want the world to know that they're more than that."

Hernandez says he has even heard from some Mendota residents who say they want to help the families of the victims who lost their lives.

"So they're going to try to raise some money and do some things — for those families," Hernandez said with an emotional tone. "And I just thought, 'It's so typical for that community.'"



Connie Duncan (left) and Mary Cumbo opened their booth, "Two Sisters," at the Glade Spring Farmers Market on Saturday.

Glade Spring Farmers Market opens season

BY CAROLYN R. WILSON FOR THE WASHINGTON COUNTY NEWS

GLADE SPRING, Va. — The Glade Spring Farmers Market kicked off its regular season last Saturday with spring greens, herbs, flowers, eggs and baked goods.

Fourteen-year-old Madelyn Fore sold out of her homemade blueberry muffins not long after the market opened at 8:30 a.m. She shared a table with her father and long-time vendor Jesse Fore of Fore Family Farms, who brought farm-raised pork and beef.

Market manager Paul Case said the Glade Spring market will feature 11 full-time vendors this season. The farmers market, which operates through October, takes place 8:30 a.m. to noon each Saturday in The Point Pavilion in the town square.

"The rocking chairs are back, so grab a fresh coffee, some baked goods, and sit and visit with neighbors and friends," said Case.

Emory residents David and Ann Ledgerwood, known in the region for their eclectic mix of original music, folk, gospel, Americana and blues, performed on the opening day of the market.

Mary Cumbo, of Emory, and Connie Duncan, of Glade Spring, opened their "Two Sisters" booth with fresh herbs, essential oil products and one of their specialties: preacher cookies.

"We've already sold out of our cut flowers," said Scott Sikes, a new vendor. "During the season, we'll have tomatoes, salad greens, peppers, beans, eggs, lamb and honey."

His wife, Felicia Lowman-Sikes, sold lotion bars on Saturday. "I make apothecary products with fresh herbs that are in season," she said.

"I will have tinctures, liniments, lotion bars, body butters and dried loose teas based on what I harvest and process."

Shirley Arnold, of Meadowview, brought spinach, beet greens and lettuce to sell at the market. "I'll have more vegetables as they come in season."

New vendors Johnny and Teresa White, of Meadowview, plan to sell their homegrown vegetables, baked goods and crafts.



Fourteen-year-old Madelyn Fore sold out of her homemade blueberry muffins at the opening day of the Glade Spring Farmers Market last Saturday. The young vendor plans to bring pies and breads to the market. Madelyn shared a booth with her father, Jesse Fore, who sells farm-raised pork and beef.



Ann and David Ledgerwood provided musical entertainment during the opening day of the Glade Spring Farmers Market.

Market vendors will also include nonprofit organizations, which will visit during the season. Hands-On-Helpers raises money to help school-aged children with clothing, shoes, food and other needs.

The Animal Defense League of Washington County provides pet owners with financial assistance for spaying and neutering animals throughout Southwest

Virginia and Northeast Tennessee.

AirMedCare, America's largest air medical membership network, will come to the market during the season to promote its emergent membership.

Follow the Glade Spring Farmers Market on Facebook.

Carolyn R. Wilson is a freelance writer in Glade Spring, Virginia. Contact her at news@washconews.com.

Bees

From Page B1

the honey to protect it," explained Miller.

"Just for a tidbit of information, generally the cells are built at about a 13-degree angle so the nectar will not run out. The bees figured this out on their own. They are very smart. The cells are hexagon-shaped because it's the most amount of space with the least amount of material.

"This is why bees are so fascinating for me." Miller said he's witnessed people from all walks of life interested in bees.

"I think some folks are motivated by wanting to help boost the bee population, but a lot of people are just interested in bees and the nutrition and medicinal benefits."

He's heard that because local, unprocessed honey contains pollen from the environment, some people eat local honey as a remedy for seasonal allergies.

"Honey is delicious. It's both a food and a medicine, I believe," said Miller.

"For me, raising honeybees and making beekeeper supplies are profitable ways for me to stay on the farm and enjoy the land."

Beekeepers Woodworking and Apiary Supply is located at 25155 Walden Road in Abingdon. For more information, Miller can be contacted at 276-608-6225.

Carolyn R. Wilson is a freelance writer in Glade Spring, Virginia. Contact her at news@washconews.com.



David "Tater" Miller recently traded his farming career for beekeeping. He's turned the family farm into a new business, Beekeepers Woodworking and Apiary Supply, which is probably the only bee supply retail store in Washington County.

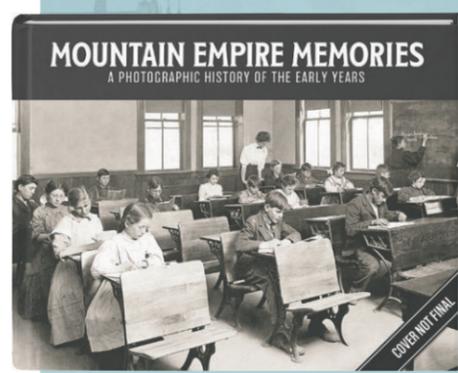


David "Tater" Miller uses a planer to smooth boards that will be used for building beehives.



Using a table saw, Miller cuts poplar wood for another beehive for his store. Miller already has made 200 hives for his retail store.

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