



SLICE OF SUMMER

Learn how to keep cool this season in the latest edition of the Williamsburg Magazine. **Inside**

THE VIRGINIA GAZETTE

WEDNESDAY, MAY 29, 2019

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WHRA collects city's untold stories

Organization seeks to document after Colonial era to the present day

BY SARAROSE MARTIN
Staff writer

WILLIAMSBURG — Locals and visitors of the Williamsburg area are familiar with its significance in the Colonial era and may explore its history at different sites.

But the Williamsburg Historic Records Association, created in 1984, works to collect and preserve the history not available in the tourism pamphlets.

Once a year, the nonprofit publishes a letter requesting local families, organizations and businesses donate records to the Special Collections Research Center in the Earl Gregg Swem Library at the College of William and Mary.

It seeks to document the history of Williamsburg after the colonial era to the present day. And they're the only place that does it.

"Other historical societies in the area, a lot of them have brick-and-mortar places where they will collect," said Jay Gaidmore, WHRA president. "The Williamsburg Historic Records Association, when they were founded, they decided that Swem Library would be its repository, so they would be the organization to solicit materials, promote their history and then when the materials came, they would be donated to us."

The organization only collects rare and unique materials, such as letters and diaries, ledgers, posters, photographs and other documents related to locals whose activities have contributed to the history of the city. Most materials are from the 19th and 20th centuries.

The last letter in April resulted in historical scrapbooks from the Heritage Humane Society, memorabilia from Camp Peary, including base newsletters from World War I, and photographs and yearbooks of the now inoperative Queen's Lake Garden Club.

After last year's letter, Betsy Rossheim, a local retiree and member of Temple Beth El, collected and donated materials and scrapbooks kept by founders of the only synagogue in Williamsburg, now nearly 60 years old.

"From what I could tell, there was very little if any information about the development of a Jewish community in Williamsburg," Rossheim said. "Since the college was very interested in diversity just common sense would say we should be a part of the town we live in."

A woman named Ethel Sternberg and her husband founded Beth El in 1959. The Sternbergs and several other families didn't have anywhere locally to hold service or celebrate Jewish holidays. They wanted somewhere to teach their children Jewish rituals, history, theology and practice Hebrew.

See WHRA, page 5A



SARAROSE MARTIN/STAFF

The Williamsburg Senior Softball League currently has three teams, but hopes to welcome upwards of 56 members to create four teams for the fall season.

Age just a number for senior players

Williamsburg Senior Softball League gives players 55 and older a chance to stay active, build friendships and play ball

BY SARAROSE MARTIN
Staff writer

When Ric Zakour's feet hit first base, he forgets he's in his 60s and retired; the 12-year-old boy in his head takes over.

He knows physical limitations determined by his age don't matter on the field. You just need to have a passion for the game.

Zakour, along with 34 other men who share a love for softball, play twice a week with the Williamsburg Senior Softball League's inaugural season.

They lost a member of their softball family May 18 with the passing of Debbie Robie, who was the league's only woman player.

Zakour, who acts as the league's secretary, first played on a senior team in Northern Virginia.

"We wanted to have something similar here because the only thing we could do was play ball with everybody, and some of us aren't quite ready for that or past that age," he said. "The biggest thing we got to worry about is we're all getting older."

"I put it this way: Sometimes when you're running the bases, the 12-year-old boy in your head takes over and that 12-year-old boy doesn't realize you have a 65-year-old



After moving back to Williamsburg in 2018, Jim Ratkus and a few guys saw a void for people in the community who like to play ball, so they started a league.

Want to know more?

For a \$75 fee all men and women 55 and older can join the Williamsburg Senior Softball League. For the league's schedule, rules and information on how to join, visit wsslva.org.

body."

Jim Ratkus and John Antretter, the league's commissioner and deputy commissioner, first met in Wilmington, N.C., in a senior softball league.

Antretter moved to Williamsburg in 2017 and Ratkus, who originally went to the College of William and Mary and whose wife grew up in Williamsburg, moved back in 2018.

"My financial guy said your wife married you for better or for worse, not for lunch. So I had to find something to do. I played for three years there.

One of my teammates moved up here in 2017, and when we moved here at the end of 2018, he said, 'You know, we need to get something going here,'" Ratkus recalled. "We got together with two guys that live in Ford's Colony, Wayne Glass and Ric Zakour. Six of us became the original board of directors and carried this thing through."

They played their first game April 16 and will end the season in mid-June. Their fall season will start up in September.

See Softball, page 4A



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SUBMITTED BY COMMUNITY CONTRIBUTOR NEVA.LYNDE

James City Lion visits club in England

James City County Satellite Rotarian Elisabeth Reiss recently visited the Rotary Club of Clacton-on-Sea, England. Following Rotary tradition, she presented a JCC Rotary club banner to host club President Colin Parsons, to her right.

Twisted Tri Health and Wellness Festival postponed

By Virginia Gazette Staff

The Twisted Tri Health and Wellness Festival has been postponed. The original date was scheduled for June 29 at the Kingsmill Resort Plantation.

A news release stated a new time and date for the event would be announced in the future.

Vendors and registrants will receive refunds for attendance fees.

Want to learn more?

Contact Bradyn Baty at 221-1265 or bbaty@wm.edu for more information.

Softball

Continued from 1A

Williamsburg Senior Softball League is the only league for older players between Richmond and Norfolk.

It creates a space for older people to play with others of their same age and physical ability, although all backgrounds, levels of skill and experience are welcome, Ratkus said. It also offers the opportunity to meet peers and stay healthy.

The board came up with a set of rules that emphasize safety and camaraderie, and Ben Di Vito, the board's web developer, created a site with information on the league's goals and how to join.

"We're another venue for exercise. There's fellowship. They go out to lunch afterward," Ratkus said.

"It's like playing golf and going to the clubhouse afterward or going bowling and having a drink afterward — it's the same kind of thing. You just get out in the sun and run

around some."

Right now the league consists of three teams: red, silver and blue.

Most players are in their 60s, but the league has players who are almost 80. Mike Allen, a local retiree, is the red team's manager.

"I also play in a rec league at night. You just want to play all the softball you can, you know. I saw it in the paper and like I said, there's a lot of us. (Mathew) Jenkins is a retired police officer, we play in the same team at night. We try to get as much ball as we can and we're the oldest guys in the team," Allen said.

The league operates as a nonprofit organization in partnership with the Williamsburg Parks and Recreation, which gave the league a discount on its field in Kiwanis Park. The Optimal Service Group and Jamestown Professional Park sponsor the league, and it also has received donations from Pickleburg, the local pickleball association.

The board has long-

term goals to form two or three divisions, each with four to six teams, which would enable them to match players with similar age, skill and physical condition in each division.

For the first fall season, members said they have hopes for 56 members and four teams. There are a lot of retirees here, Ratkus said, and once the community finds out WSSL is a viable organization, he thinks there will be more interest.

Now halfway through the first season, the teams have a few players out with injuries. Ratkus said it's just the reality of not playing for a long time. And everyone keeps high spirits.

"We have so many injuries right now," Ratkus said. "But they're all out here. They're picking up a bat and wanting to play and that's the whole idea."

SaraRose Martin, 757-243-3685, sararose.martin@vazagazette.com, @SaraRoseMartin.

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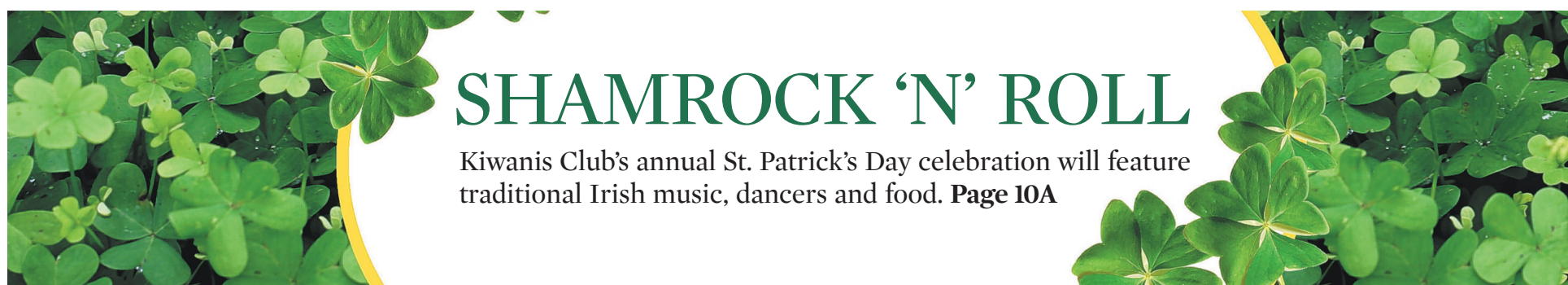
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SHAMROCK 'N' ROLL

Kiwanis Club's annual St. Patrick's Day celebration will feature traditional Irish music, dancers and food. **Page 10A**

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SUNSHINE WEEK

FAA: Pilot could not be stopped from flying

Henry Schwarz changed doctors in attempt to regain medical certificate

BY STEVE ROBERTS JR
Staff writer

WILLIAMSBURG — In the years before the Bristol Commons helicopter crash, an anonymous tipster and neurologist worked to stop the pilot from ever flying again. But the FAA has said none of its regulations could

have prevented him from getting behind the controls in the first place.

Diagnoses of dementia, cognitive decline, tremors and Parkinson's disease did not stop Henry Schwarz from stepping into his Robinson R-44 helicopter and crashing, according to records provided to The Virginia Gazette by the Federal Aviation Administration under the Freedom of Information Act.

At every step before the crash, Schwarz fought the FAA and his doctor in an attempt to regain his medi-

cal certificate, which was revoked in 2016.

At the time of the crash — July 8, 2018 — Schwarz, 85, of Fairfax County, lacked a valid medical certificate — a document that gives licensed pilots the privilege to fly, according to records.

In 2018, Schwarz told the FAA he had fired the Georgetown University Hospital neurologist who diagnosed him with dementia. Schwarz also told them he had stopped taking medicine to treat dementia in June

2017.

Schwarz's new doctor sent a letter to the FAA on Jan. 19, 2018, and told the agency his dementia diagnosis had changed.

"I am Henry Schwarz's neurologist. He no longer has a diagnosis of mild dementia, and now has a diagnosis of mild cognitive impairment, and should be evaluated as per the guidelines of the FAA. Thank you for your consideration," the three-sen-

See *Pilot*, page 6A



SARAROSE MARTIN/STAFF

Portsmouth native Reggie Kirton is a junior captain of one of the seven crews that keep the Jamestown-Scotland Ferry running. He's among the youngest in the operation's history.

New captain plans to be happily in the same boat

Reggie Kirton wants to sail Jamestown Ferry until his retirement

BY SARAROSE MARTIN
Staff writer

WILLIAMSBURG — Reggie Kirton is Jamestown Ferry's newest captain and, at 29, one of the youngest since the operation's first boat sailed across the James River in the 1920s.

The Portsmouth native was 19 when he stumbled into the industry. He was prepared to attend art school in the fall and volunteered as a re-enactor, portraying an 18th-century mariner during the summer.

"We passed the Schooner American Rover and I was like, I'm re-enacting as a sailor, maybe I can get some experience," Kirton said.

Kirton jumped on the boat for a cruise and never left the water.

He worked as a deckhand, raising sails and helping moor the boat, on the American Rover. After

More online

To see a video of Captain Reggie Kirton, visit vagazette.com.

a decade of accumulated time on the water, he can now captain any boat that weighs 1,600 tons or less.

The United States Coast Guard licenses mariners based on boat size. At 21, Kirton received his first 100-ton master license, which means he could captain any vessel that weighed up to 100 tons, the size of a small tour vessel. He used this license to captain the Portsmouth Ferry for three years.

Each threshold of new licensure requires more sea time doing particular jobs on the boat, Kirton said.

"It's not a career to try to jump into and think you're going to end up in the pilot house the next day," he said.

Kirton is a junior captain of one of the seven crews that keep the

Jamestown-Scotland Ferry running, and he's in position to take the wheel full-time when another captain leaves.

Run by the Virginia Department of Transportation, the free ferry service operates 24 hours a day, every day of the year and transports about a million cars across the 2-mile stretch from James City County to Surry County.

"I pretty much would keep looking to do this until I retire, which is 30 years of driving a boat across the same stretch of river," Kirton said.

What the job may lack in variety it makes up for in stability. Most people in the maritime industry don't get to sleep in their own beds at night.

Kirton worked on tugboats with the Norfolk Tug Company, Intra-coastal Marine and Seaward Marine Corporation and would be away from his wife for weeks at a time.

"Did I say enough about my wife? I love her, she's wonderful.

See *Ferry*, page 7A

Supervisors approve new Wawa at Lightfoot

Board unanimously supported special-use permit after revisions

BY JACK JACOBS
Staff writer

The Board of Supervisors gave the green light for a special-use permit that would allow construction of a Wawa at the site of an existing gas station in Lightfoot at its meeting Tuesday.

The decision puts Doswell Ventures, the permit's applicant, closer to its goal of replacing the Exxon that sits on its property at 6446 Richmond Road near the intersection of Lightfoot and Richmond roads with a Wawa convenience store featuring six gasoline pumps.

Doswell Ventures has been interested in sprucing up the property for some time, and a Wawa seems like a good way to revitalize the space, said Tim Trant, an attorney who filed the special-use permit on behalf of the company.

Supervisors voted unanimously to approve the permit application.

Supervisors said the project would be a good way to breathe new life into land that's already developed.

"I think its seen better days," Supervisor Michael Hipple said of the Exxon on the site. "We're not taking new land, we're taking old land and redeveloping it into something better."

While the project isn't expected to bring additional traffic to the area, it's expected the Wawa will attract more pit stops than the existing Exxon. The construction of a Wawa is expected to double the number of trips to the property from about 1,000 to 2,000 daily. For that reason, a vote to recommend the application failed in

See *Wawa*, page 7A

More online

Visit vagazette.com to read other actions taken by the Board of Supervisors at Tuesday's meeting.



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SARAROSE MARTIN/STAFF

Reggie Kirton said he loves to work on a boat because he's outside every day and gets to see the seasons as they change.

Ferry

Continued from 1

Every captain will tell you that he's married to two women: your wife and whatever boat it is you're working on," Kirton said. "She's had to put up with the competition of every boat I've ever worked on and most of them get more of my time than she does."

Although ferry captains return home more often, because the ferry operates every day of the year, the crew is on the water rain or shine.

Dewayne Walls, a Navy veteran and captain of six years, said driving in everything from wind and rain to fog takes a particular skill. "You have to be a really good boat driver, and you're dealing with a lot of conditions," Walls said. "Reggie has always shown promise. It's not for everybody, not a lot of people can do this."

Kirton spends most of his days in the wheelhouse with a front-row seat to the seasons' change. He and his crew of six men — two deckhands, a mate, oiler and engineer — rotate four shifts with the other crews, so someone is always there to get the ferry across.

"Any day that it's really crummy outside and it's raining or it's snowing and you're in your house thinking to yourself how great it is that you're not outside, there is some poor soul, sometimes me, on the ferry," Kirton said. "But we're happy to do it."

His mate Bill Bailey said there's more to the job than parking cars.

They often act as Virginia ambassadors. Bailey, a former firefighter, has even delivered a baby onboard.

"This lady hadn't lived here long and she didn't know how long it was going to take I guess and she ended up having it on this boat," Bailey said. "You never know what you're going to get here. We look like a motley crew, but we can handle quite many emergencies."

Bailey said Kirton has the respect of the crew because he knows how to talk to everyone. The crew's youngest member is 19 and the oldest is 72.

"Reggie is an old soul. He really is, he doesn't act his age and because of that people listen to him," Bailey said. "He's always constructive, he's not one of those people that's going to holler and scream."

And he's one of the better captains, he said. But in the maritime industry, you're only as good as your last docking.

"I really enjoy boat handling, I enjoy what I do," Kirton said. "People would think it's boring but you get different cars, different people. The beautiful days certainly make up for the crummy ones."

Ferry Facility manager Wes Ripley said Kirton is eager to learn and hone his craft. And his crew agrees he couldn't be more deserving of the captain seat.

"Nobody gave him anything, he earned it. It's the truth," Bailey said. "You'll have to put that on the record."

Sara Rose Martin, 757-243-3685, sararose.martin@vagazette.com, @SaraRoseMartin



STAFF FILE

The proposed Wawa would be built on the site of an existing Exxon.

Wawa

Continued from 1A

the Planning Commission in February.

"There was some concern that may cause some backups," commission member Richard Krapf told supervisors.

Since that meeting, the applicant tweaked some of the proposal's characteristics, such as landscaping and canopy elevation. No changes were made to address traffic concerns from the commission.

The project would eliminate an existing entrance on Richmond Road near the intersection and maintain the Richmond Road access farther from the intersection. The Lightfoot Road entrance would be more in line with the entrance of the dealership across the street, Trant said.

One person spoke against the idea during the public hearing that preceded supervisors' vote.

"The traffic is a nightmare," resident Jack Fowler said, noting his concern about increased trips to the property.

The Doswell Ventures property straddles the James City County-York County line, meaning both governments need to weigh the project. The land is zoned general business.

The York Planning Commission voted to approve the special-use permit Jan. 9. The York Board of Supervisors is scheduled to consider the project at its March 19 meeting, York County spokeswoman Gail Whittaker said in an email.

Jack Jacobs, 757-298-6007, jojacobs@vagazette.com, @jjjacobs_

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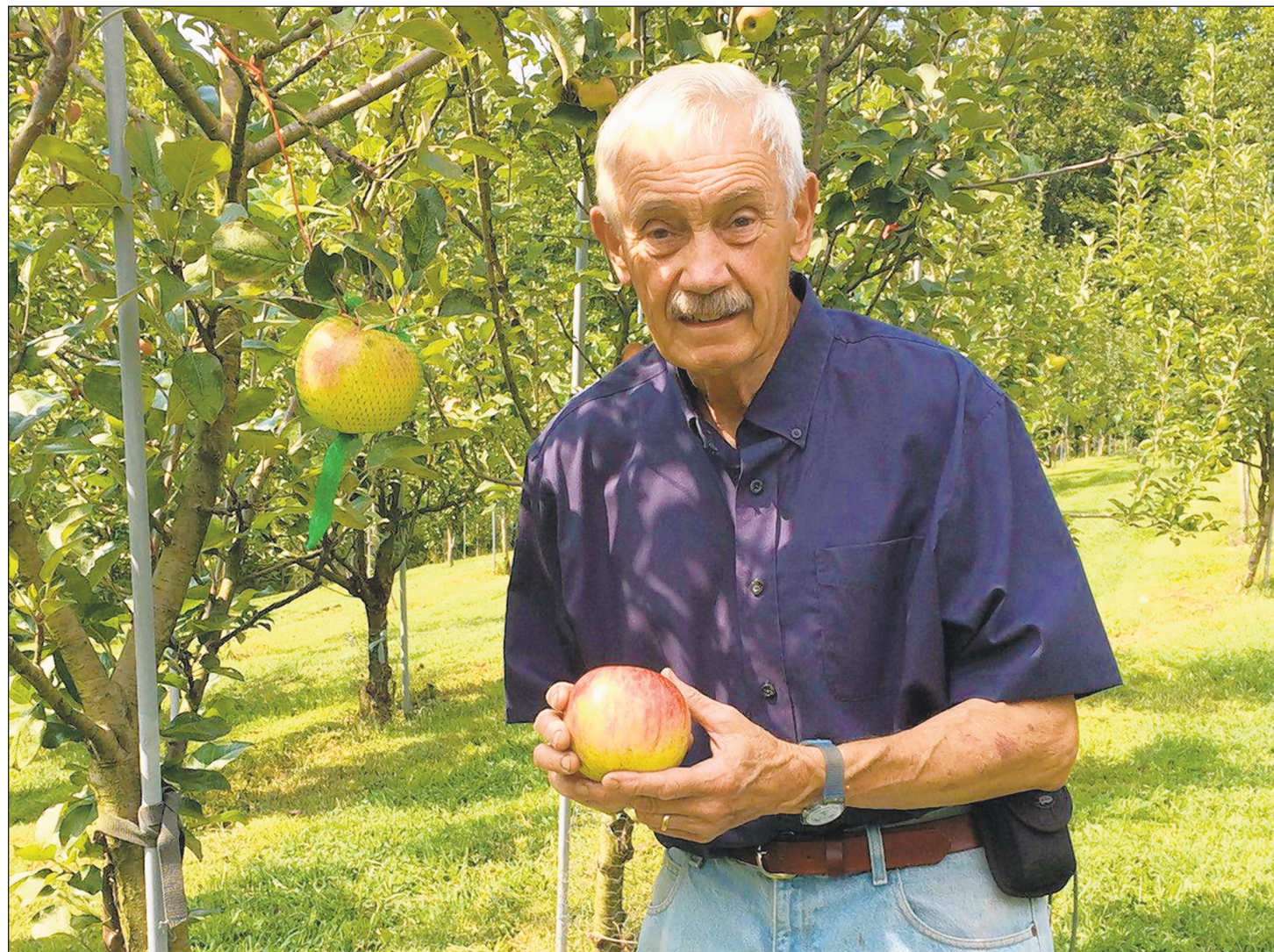
RING IT IN

Rather than finishing the 2010s on your couch, head out to one of the many parties and events around town. **Page 8A**

THE VIRGINIA GAZETTE

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COURTESY OF TOM BROWN

ABOVE: Tom Brown holds a Wolf River apple in his orchard. BELOW: A watercolor of the Taliaferro apple by Susan Walker, a chief magistrate judge in the U.S. District Court of Alabama, who researched it.

JCC kicks off \$1.2M project to rehabilitate 16 houses

BY JACK JACOBS
Staff writer

James City County will leverage \$1 million in federal funds, along with approximately \$200,000 in local money, to make improvements to 16 homes in the county, further chipping away at the county's housing needs by rehabilitating low- and moderate-income families' homes over the course of two years in a project slated to start in January.

The Community Development Block Grant program provides federal money to home rehabilitation projects for low- and moderate-income people. James City County was one of 14 Virginia localities awarded \$13.4 million through the program in August, though the Board of Supervisors didn't actually green light acceptance of the award, as well as the local match, until earlier in December.

The grant gives the county additional resources to tackle home rehabilitation, one prong of its overall effort to improve affordable housing in the community. Many homes in the county need repairs, and the county's housing task force recommended home rehabilitation be made a priority, Social Services Director Rebecca Vinroot said in an email.

"The preservation of the housing stock in the county is the leading policy strategy expressed in the recommendations of the Work Force Housing Taskforce," she said.

The project will benefit 29 people who live in 16 households throughout the county. The grant funding will only improve low- and moderate-income, owner-occupied homes. Twelve of the homes will be repaired, while the remaining four will be totally rebuilt. There will be funding available to assist families with temporary relocation expenses as part of the grant.

The funding also will cover cleanup and removal of debris, unwanted sheds and garages at three of the homes, as well as money

See **Homes**, page 4A

In search of lost apples

Man who has discovered many rare, heritage apple varieties sets his sights on famous specimen with Williamsburg origins: **the Taliaferro**

BY SARAROSE MARTIN
Staff writer

Tom Brown has discovered more than 1,000 lost apple varieties across Appalachia since he began his quest to preserve them more than 20 years ago.

About a decade into his journey, a Williamsburg-area apple variety piqued his interest.

The Taliaferro apple, pronounced "toliver," was Thomas Jefferson's favorite. In an 1814 letter, he describes the apple as the juiciest he had ever known, producing the finest cider.

Brown takes his passion seriously, working to build connections and relationships with apple growers around the region. In 1999, he was working as a research engineer at R. J. Reynolds Tobacco Company when he and his wife visited a farmers market near their home in Clemmons, North Carolina. He stumbled upon a man who sold a variety of apples.

"He mentioned that there were several of the varieties he found himself," Brown said. "I asked him if there were any lost varieties in my area and he said yes, there was a

Harper's Seedling, and so I started looking."

He eventually found the apple in Wilkes County, but along the way, he found more than 800 varieties and their original trees.

Brown isn't the only one looking for the famous Taliaferro apple. Orchardists with a passion for apple hunting have been searching for the variety for years.

Some have claimed varieties such as the Nelson County Crab and Highland County are the lost Taliaferro apple. But none have been confirmed.

Brown said he believes the Red Coat apple from Franklin County is a good candidate for the lost apple. But as he would do to verify any lost variety, he needs to trace it back to its roots.

"The problem is there's not a perfect description of it. I mean, it was a red apple ... Most of the time they made cider out of these real bitter, stringent apples because it has to have properties like that for any of the taste to survive the fermentation process," Brown said. "The

See **Apples**, page 4A



W&M Athletics' goals will make college more 'what it aspires to be'

Strategic plan has been in works for two years, has goals up to 2025

BY SARAROSE MARTIN
Staff writer

The College of William & Mary Athletics released its strategic plan outlining goals and objectives it will strive to accomplish by 2025 back in October. Despite being separate, the timing of its release flows into the college's year of strategic planning, President Katherine Rowe said.

"That staff and faculty, of course, advisors and student-athletes are all part of this year's plan," she said. "These are converging plans. So (it's) the same set of commitments to flourishing for all our students."

A goal of both plans is to define what the college is, what it aspires to be and to create programs that are financially sustainable. The athletics strategic plan outlines how to do that by raising the profile of football and men's and women's basketball.

"I think it will make us more what we aspire to be, it will advance who we think we are. So the way I look at it, we commit to making excellence

"We should look at our students who are athletes and think, how can they achieve excellence in their athletic lives, as well as their academic lives."

— Katherine Rowe, W&M president

possible for all our students. We should do that in every dimension of excellence that they care about," Rowe said. "We should look at our students who are athletes and think, how can they achieve excellence in their athletic lives, as well as their academic lives."

The Colonial Athletic Association conference and Division I athletics

are where the school wants to raise its profile as athletically competitive, Athletics Director Samantha Huge said.

"It truly is the fastest access to NCAA postseason. We feel like we are in a conference that we can be highly competitive in with the right focus,"

See **Athletics**, page 7A



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Apples

Continued from 1A

Taliaferro was a milder apple.”

Its history

At Monticello, Jefferson planted Taliaferro apples in an orchard on the property, according to Peter Hatch, the director of gardens and grounds. Jefferson said the apple was first discovered in the mid-18th century by Major Taliaferro of Williamsburg in his neighbor, Mr. Robertson's, field.

The variety lacked a specific and consistent physical description, leading Hatch to dub the variety “Monticello's mystery apple.” But research released in 2018 revealed a new description based on four unpublished letters in 1816 and 1817 between two members of the Taliaferro family.

The letters describe the apple as medium-sized, wider than it is high, and “a bright straw color, tinged ... with a reddish blush or faint streaks of red, similar to the most delicate red shades in a rainbow.”

The research by Susan Walker, a chief magistrate judge in the U.S. District Court in Alabama, defined what “straw-colored” meant in the 18th century and how a “flat” apple is distinctive. She also created a watercolor of the apple to help people in their search.

Brown is familiar with the apple's description, but he hopes to learn more about the owner of the original tree who, in some literature, is also referred to as Mr. Robinson.

“The gentlemen Taliaferro got the cuttings from this Robertson or Robinson, and then they gave them to Thomas Jefferson and (his) wife and this is assuming that they ever informed the first person whatever happened to his cuttings,” Brown said. “That might not have happened, but at least they kept his name alive. They were giving him some credit. They could have just said it came

from a Mr. Taliaferro originally.”

Because courthouse records were burned during the Civil War and the first two censuses were lost during the War of 1812, Brown is unable to go back to the year the apple was first recorded and look for the names Robertson, Robinson and Taliaferro in the Williamsburg area to trace their descendants.

But through searching current Williamsburg, James City County and York County property records, Brown discovered more than 100 people with names that could have family stories of the lost apple.

He plans to send letters to those people to ask for any information they may have. He knows it's a long shot, but he has crazier stories to tell.

On two separate occasions, two men told Brown about a lost apple variety called Manson Beauty. He searched, but was unable to locate any of the original trees. Five years later, Brown was on a mountain top in Macon County, North Carolina, when he came across an apple tree with red striped apples with red streaks in the flesh that perfectly fit the description of the Manson Beauty.

By the time he found the apples, the two men who had told Brown about it had died, so he had no way to verify their identity.

But when returning from a Roanoke farmers market he and his wife frequented, they decided to drive back through the country in case they passed an apple tree. About 25 miles south of Roanoke, they passed a house with two giant apple trees in the front yard. They stopped, and Brown knocked on the door.

The apples in the yard were not a lost variety. However, the man said he used to have Manson Beauty on his property. So Brown drove back up to Macon County, collected some of the apples he believed to be the Manson Beauty and mailed them to



COURTESY OF TOM BROWN

Tom Brown displays his heritage apple exhibit at the Butler Trade Days festival in Butler, Tennessee.

Have information?

If you have any information about the Taliaferro apple, contact Tom Brown at 336-766-5842 or at heritageapples@gmail.com. To read his annual newsletter on apple discoveries or for more information about his work, visit applesearch.org.

the man. Sure enough, he confirmed the apple and the case of the lost Manson Beauty was closed.

Identification and preservation

Brown keeps a 36-inch-high stack of literature that helps him identify apples, and about half the time the owner of the apple tree knows the name, he said. From the information he has, he can determine if its name reasonably fits the description.

The other half of the time he is able to identify lost apples based on the described texture and color, although there are almost always other apples that could fit that particular description.

“People contact me (almost) every day on the internet. But anyway, I accumulate a large number of apple descriptions and so ... if I find an apple and it fits the description that somebody has told me about, I'll take the apple and show it to them and see,” Brown said.

“(The) more important it is, it's better to have multiple identifications.”

He attends about 15 outdoor festivals in the region every year where he receives leads and new tips, so he's rarely short on information or varieties to pursue.

On his farm, Brown keeps about 750 to 800 heritage apple varieties, the apples of grandparents and great-grandparents. Each year he grows about 60 different varieties on a couple of acres and sells about 500 trees.

“It's not that many, but it's a one-person operation and I graft a bunch for myself,” Brown said.

Virginia Beauty and Wolf River are popular old varieties, but they're not rare, he said. He will offer a discount if he can convince people to take some of the rarer heritage varieties.

In 1905, the U.S. Department of Agriculture recorded about 14,000 apple varieties in the country, according to the Brooklyn Botanic Garden. But many are now extinct. Commercial growers now sell about 90 different kinds.

Although many varieties appreciate cooler temperatures, apples are developed for all different types of cli-

mates and soils. But Virginia has steadily lost orchards in the past 100 years due to urbanization, said Tony Banks, with the Virginia Farm Bureau. And the Williamsburg area is no exception.

Varieties fall out of favor because people's taste change, or maybe some disease or pest comes through and that particular variety happens to be susceptible,” Banks said. “This probably isn't politically correct, but there's a reason some varieties become heritage varieties because, for whatever reason, they dropped out of favor in the marketplace.”

Banks said he doesn't know when or why the Taliaferro apple became less popular, but if it made it to the 20th century, even prohibition could have contributed to its disappearance.

“If it was a cider apple you're not going to raise apples or you're going to be less likely to worry about cider apples if the (retailers) aren't going to let you sell it,” Banks said. “So that could have helped its demise.”

Preserving apple varieties isn't as simple as planting a seed from an apple. They must be recreated by methods of asexual propagation such as grafting, which joins two plant parts from different varieties.

“They're cross-pollinated just like a human child so they have genes from two parents, so they're not like some vegetables and other things that you can just save seeds because the seeds have a mixture of the original plus whatever variety cross-pollinated them,” Brown said.

Brown knows it could take one right person to hear about his search to find the Taliaferro apple.

Regardless of his success, he appreciates the journey.

“It's just fun to do. It's like a detective mystery to solve. You know, it helps keep me excited ... If somebody made you do that, it would be terrible but I'm just happy as a lark,” he said. “Sometimes you luck up.”

Homes

Continued from 1A

needed to make a part-time administrative employee a full-time employee to assist in program activities for the duration of the project.

The households that will benefit from the program were selected from the wait

lists of the county's rehabilitation programs, Vinroot said. She added that many of the homes in question were identified through the county's housing conditions study and then further studied for vulnerability, such as whether the households included disabled, elderly or child residents.

The 2016 housing condi-

tions study found there are 946 homes in the county considered to be in poor condition, and the grant project will help reduce that number. Those homes in poor condition add a further complication to the county's affordable housing problem.

About a third of county households, or about 8,000, were considered cost bur-

dened in 2017. That means those households spend more than 30% of income on the home itself, which leaves less money for other critical expenses like food or medical care, according to a report created by the county's housing task force earlier this year.

The Board of Supervisors gave the program its unanimous approval as part of its

consent calendar at its Dec. 10 meeting. Vinroot said the county has filed all the documents needed to secure the funds.

The plan is to be under contract with the Department of Housing and Community Development and therefore able to kick off the rehabilitation program as soon as January.

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