



TIMES STAFF PHOTO/ROBIN EARL

Tommy, Pat and Todd Middleton (second, third and fourth from left) presented representatives of the Fauquier Livestock Exchange with a photo of their father, John Middleton, and a donation. At left is Mark Seitz, president of the board of the livestock exchange; at right is Butter Strother, secretary and treasurer of the board; livestock exchange manager Stan Stevents is second from the right.

## More than half a century ago, a Fauquier cattle broker helped introduce the world to Virginia

**Coy Ferrell**

TIMES STAFF WRITER

A pivotal figure in the little-known efforts to export cattle from Virginia to Europe in the 1960s, the late John P. Middleton Jr., of The Plains, was honored at a brief ceremony at the Marshall Livestock Exchange in January. Middleton died in 2011 at the age of 89.

John Middleton's son, Todd Middleton, of Nokesville, still speaks with considerable emotion about his father and the memories of growing up on a small farm outside The Plains. "He was the guy who could walk in a room, and there wouldn't be a stranger when he left," Todd Middleton said of his father. "He would always ask about the other person, he never liked to talk about himself."

The Middleton family owned a large cattle farm outside The Plains until the Great Depression, when everything fell apart. John Middleton and his brother, Jack, went off to fight in the war. By the time they returned, all but a small corner of the farm had been lost to foreclosure, Todd Middleton said; his father started over, building a cattle brokerage business over the next decade. He eventually partnered with a Delaplane resident, Dennis McCarty III, to form M&M Cattle Company.

John Middleton traveled all over Virginia and sometimes to surrounding states to facilitate cattle sales, his son remembered. "Back then it was very labor intensive, to go and either buy or sell cattle. It was very time consuming." The whole system re-



John Middleton and Dennis Ownby step off a plane at Dulles Airport in January 1966 after returning from Italy. Middleton is holding up a signed contract for a large shipment of dairy cattle.

lied on brokers like his father – trust in the person facilitating the deal was vital. "You were only as good as your last deal and your reputation for being fair and being honest," he said.

### Cattle connects two worlds

As the 1960s dawned, Fauquier County was still isolated from the rest of the world in a way that is practically unimaginable today. Only about three in five homes in the county had a telephone, the U.S. Census Bureau found; about two-thirds had a television. Construction of Interstate 66 was completed in 1961. Just 24,000 people lived in the county, about the same as at the beginning of the 20th century and only about 6,000 more

than in 1790. (The county has more than 70,000 residents now.)

But the world was changing and becoming more interconnected. Free trade agreements among countries within the United States' sphere of influence meant that the protectionism that defined the pre-war years was largely a thing of the past. Despite the destruction of World War II, the world was experiencing an economic boom.

Italy, for instance, had been devastated by two decades of a Fascist dictatorship and then by a brutal conflict between Nazi and Allied armed forces on the peninsula – which was in turn accompanied by a ruthless civil war behind the front lines.

But only a few years after the end of the second world war, Italy's economy was growing at a breakneck pace, fueled by an influx of capital – about \$14 billion in 2020 dollars -- under the Marshall Plan. And in 1957, Italy was one of the founding members of the European Economic Community (the multilateral trade agreement that would later become the European Union) opening up new markets and sparking an era of unprecedented prosperity.

This all meant that more Italians could afford luxuries, like beef and cow's milk, especially in the wealthier industrial regions most buoyed by American financial aid. "The growing demand for beef is evident in many countries," a U.S. Department of Agriculture said in a 1964 press release at the time. "Consequently, it becomes evident that there is a large market to be filled with cattle." The old standard of European beef cattle

was leaner than consumers now demanded, the press release explained, giving American producers an opportunity to market cattle overseas.

In the early 1960s, the Virginia Department of Agriculture initiated an aggressive marketing campaign in Europe to promote trans-Atlantic cattle sales. "[I]t is apparent that Virginia cattlemen are gearing themselves to operate successfully and competitively in this rapidly developing outlet for their livestock," a department representative said in the same press release.

### Virginia cattle brokers lead the way

John Middleton and McCarty were two of these enterprising cattle brokers. Another was Larry Sykes, of Bundy and Sykes Cattle Company in Lebanon, Virginia. In 1964, Sykes arranged the export of 800 feeder cattle (these are beef cattle not yet at a sufficient weight to be slaughtered) to Italy, the first shipment of live cattle to Europe since 1891.

A year later, Middleton, McCarty and the Richmond-based auctioneer -- longtime friend of Middleton -- Dennis Ownby of Ownby Auction and Realty Company prepared a shipment of 350 dairy cattle for Italy; the cattle were purchased by an Italian dairy farmers' association to breed. "I feel that this market opens the door to the profitable raising and marketing of another commodity besides milk for our dairymen," Middleton was quoted as saying at the time.

See MIDDLETON, page 15

# Fauquier cattle broker helped introduce the world to Virginia

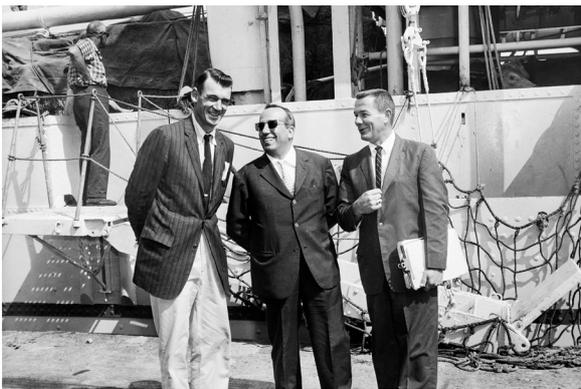
MIDDLETON, from page 14

Middleton, McCarty and Sykes facilitated the shipment of 1,200 feeder cattle to Italy later in 1965, some of which were purchased at the Fauquier Livestock Exchange in Marshall. "It's taken a lot of work and a few headaches to bring about this shipment," Middleton told the Fauquier Democrat at the time. An accompanying photograph shows Middleton, McCarty and Italian importer Emilio Gaddini with broad smiles on a Norfolk, Virginia pier on the day shipment left Virginia.

One of those headaches was a last-minute breakdown of a deal with unionized longshoremen at the Richmond port. Middleton and his business partners had negotiated a deal for the workers to load the cattle at a fee of 60 cents per head, newspapers reported at the time. "So, the day has come; it's all come together; trucks coming from all over; boat is waiting," Todd Middleton explained, "and just about the time they're ready to start loading, the union guy comes up and says, '\$1.80 head or else we won't do it.'"

John Middleton called his twin brother, Jack Middleton, also of The Plains, an influential figure in the state Republican Party, to negotiate the crisis. "It didn't look like anything was going to happen, but at the last minute Jack was able to get the union down to 90 cents a head," Todd Middleton said. "He had the political influence and had them change their minds." The crisis was averted, and the cattle made it onto the ship.

John Middleton would subsequently make several trips to Europe on behalf of the Virginia Department of Agriculture and trade organizations to promote American cattle. Todd Middleton recalled some of his father's stories about the trips, which sometimes resulted in comedic cul-



VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE  
Dennis McCarty III (left), of Delaplane, Italian shipowner and importer Emilio Gaddini and John Middleton, of The Plains, pose on a pier in Norfolk, in August 1965 after reaching a deal to export 1,200 feeder cattle to Italy. The photograph appeared in the *Fauquier Democrat* at the time.

turing misunderstandings.

On one trip, Todd Middleton said, his father arrived in Spain in August, when most Spaniards take a vacation. "They closed down pretty much the whole country to go on vacation ... so my dad and Dennis [Ownby] get over there ... and they couldn't get anything done; nothing was open," he laughed. "So, they just had to make the best of it."

On another occasion – Todd Middleton remembered it as occurring in Italy – his father and Ownby were offered a local delicacy (something to do with baby birds and sauce, he recalled) and made a heroic effort not to be rude to their dinner hosts. Ownby ended up ruining a suit jacket by hiding the foul-smelling morsels in his pocket after he mimed eating them.

Their efforts paid off. A photograph especially dear to Todd Middleton shows a triumphant John

Middleton and Ownby stepping off a plane at Dulles Airport (which had opened just four years earlier) in January 1966. Middleton is holding up a signed contract for a large shipment of dairy cattle.

"That's what kind of opened the floodgates," Todd Middleton recalled. By March 1966, more than 10,000 head of live cattle had been shipped from the United States to Italy, the *Free Lance Star* reported. John Middleton stayed involved in the overseas cattle trade, but gradually stepped back from a front-line role as more American cattle brokers and producers got involved.

The "floodgates" had opened; by 1973, the United States cattle export market had grown more than fourfold compared to 1964. Countries all over the world – even those within the Soviet sphere of influence -- imported American beef and dairy cattle for their herds.

Todd Middleton recalled his father was offered a lucrative position with the state agriculture department to continue his work promoting exports, but he turned it down. "My father had a very unconventional job," his son said. "[He] never worked for anybody up until he passed."

John's wife, Virginia Middleton, was an "awesome stay-at-home mom" with a degree in accounting, Todd Middleton said. Like her husband, she lived well into her 80s. After the couple's six children left home, she worked as a part-time accountant and was always involved with the local garden club and with charitable programs at Grace Episcopal Church in the Plains.

Both of Todd Middleton's parents lived to the end of their lives on a small corner of the once-vast farm where John Middleton had grown up before and during the Great Depression. "My father never really retired," Todd Middleton said. "We had a great set of parents."

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**SPORTS**  
Baseball, softball and girls soccer previews. Pages 19, 20, 21, 24

## For many working in Fauquier County, living here isn't an option; solutions are elusive



TIMES STAFF PHOTO/COY FERRELL

The nearly completed Warrenton Knoll development on Warrenton's Winchester Street is already sold out, according to the developer. The single-family homes were priced starting at the county's median selling price for March, which was about \$500,000.

By Coy Ferrell  
TIMES STAFF WRITER

There is broad consensus that there is a significant lack of housing in Fauquier County that is affordable to households making less than \$100,000 per year -- the county's median household income. For the thousands of households making less than six figures, finding a place to live can be difficult. And there's no one solution to the problem.

Advocacy groups, including the local chapters of Habitat for Humanity and the NAACP, are trying to start a community discussion about housing that is affordable to those making less than the area's median income. They have tried to jumpstart the conversation through statements made during the public-comment process for the Warrenton comprehensive plan -- approved in its final form this month -- and through a proposed addendum to

**"A community who wants to invest in affordable housing has to find the mechanism to do so. ... It will never materialize without the work."**

DARRYL NEHER  
Executive Director,  
Fauquier Habitat for Humanity

the county's comprehensive plan.

For the families trying to scrape by on far less than the county's median income -- a full time job paying \$15 an hour equates to \$31,000 per year -- finding a place to live can be practically impossible; it has forced families into sub-standard housing, into overcrowded living situations or into cheaper homes far away from their jobs.

See **HOUSING**, page 8

### School division's Summer Academy will focus on learning loss

Two 4-week sessions aim to provide enrichment for children most impacted by the pandemic

By Robin Earl  
TIMES STAFF WRITER

Invitations should be going out May 3 to parents of students eligible for the Fauquier County School Division's Summer Academy. Funded through the federal CARES Act, the eight-week, in-person program is intended to help students who have fallen behind academically during the pandemic. It will be divided into two four-week sessions.

A total of \$2,970,667 in CARES Act funding has been earmarked for the Summer Academy.

See **SUMMER**, page 4

### Two charged in April 22 fatal shooting of 'Trip' Bopp

By Robin Earl  
TIMES STAFF WRITER

Charles William "Trip" Bopp, III, 24, was killed Thursday, April 22 at his home near Remington after apparently interrupting a burglary, according to the sheriff's office. One suspect was arrested Saturday in Prince William County. A second suspect fled to Texas and was arrested Monday by federal and local officers.

"Bopp interrupted a daytime burglary in progress at his residence, and was subsequently shot and killed next to his vehicle upon his arrival. There is no indication that Bopp was targeted," a sheriff's office representative said. Deputies responded to the home on Freemans Ford Road about 5:30 p.m. April 22.

Jury Beatrice Guerra, 28, of Woodbridge,



Twenty-four-year old Charles "Trip" Bopp, III, of Remington was fatally shot April 22. He was a dedicated dairy farmer.

was apprehended Saturday by Prince William police and is currently being held without bond in the Fauquier County jail. She is charged with second-degree murder and entering a dwelling with intent to commit a felony.

See **SHOOTING**, page 14



Wineries on the lookout for invasive species. See page 10.



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# For many working in Fauquier County, living here isn't an option; solutions are elusive

HOUSING, from page 1

These and other findings from the December 2020 Rappahannock-Regional Regional Commission's Regional Housing Study, a detailed report about housing availability, income levels and other economic trends in Fauquier, Culpeper, Rappahannock, Madison and Orange counties, throw into sharp relief the shortage of affordable housing in the area.

## Many employed in Fauquier can't afford to live nearby

Because there is a dearth of housing on the lower end of the cost spectrum, many people are competing for a small number of affordable places to live – which drives rents and selling prices even higher, said Darryl Neher, the executive director of Fauquier Habitat for Humanity.

And, the RRRC report says, the county's median income is skewed by county residents who commute to Northern Virginia to high-paying, white-collar jobs. For those living and working within the county, the median income is about \$11,000 less than what it takes to afford a median-priced home.

The trends aren't promising, either, Neher said. "If we do nothing, our town (Warrenton) and county will become increasingly less affordable," he said, emphasizing that the problem is a regional and national issue – not just a Fauquier County issue.

The RRRC report found that of the 10 fastest-growing job sectors in the region, eight have average yearly salaries of less than \$75,000, Neher pointed out. (Four of those job categories have average yearly earnings of less than \$40,000.) Plus, the long-term trends in the real estate market favor building larger, more expensive homes, Neher said.

And that's if new homes are built at all; new home construction locally crawled almost to a stop during and after the Great Recession and has only slowly rebounded. Fast-forward a decade, and the pandemic caused demand to be bottled up for much of 2020, leading to what a recent Virginia REALTORS® report calls a "hyperactive" housing market that shows few signs of slowing down. There are far fewer homes on the market than prospective buyers, the report says, driving prices higher



PHOTO BY ALISA BOOZE TROETSCH/ONE BOAT MEDIA

Darryl Neher, executive director of Fauquier Habitat for Humanity

and higher.

Those realities mean that many families, even those with two full-time wage earners, are forced to live in sub-standard housing or relocate farther and farther away from their jobs, said Fauquier Habitat's Elizabeth Rose. "They're either moving out [of the area] or commuting," she said. "What kind of quality of life is that, where you can't live and work in your community?"

The situation she most often sees in her outreach work is overcrowding, where many members of an extended family live in often-cramped living arrangements. For single parents, for people without family in the area or for those trying to scrape by on disability insurance payments or social security, the situation can be even worse.

## A real estate agent's perspective

"With this crazy market we're in, it's harder and harder – not only for first-time home buyers, but also for seniors," said Anne Hall, a Long & Foster Realtor who has worked as a real estate agent in Fauquier County

for 46 years.

Hall told the story of a recent client, a retired couple from California, which she said is indicative of many trying to find a place to live in the area.

The couple lost their home and all their possessions -- "except the clothes on their back and the dog" -- to a wildfire and wanted to buy a home close to their daughter, who lives near Washington, D.C. They looked at first for a home in Northern Virginia, but quickly discovered their \$200,000 price ceiling shut them out of that market.

A real estate agent in Northern Virginia referred them to Hall, hoping the couple could find a more affordable place to live farther from the city. But, Hall, said, "You can't find it in Fauquier County. It's not there," referring to the \$200,000 price point. Despite searching extensively, she couldn't find anything on the market in their price range, even expanding the search to Culpeper and Rappahannock counties.

Hall turned to the Shenandoah Valley, looking for available homes from Woodstock to Winchester. She eventually found an "adorable" condominium in Winchester for about \$190,000. "I called the agent and she said, 'Forget it. We've got four offers already,'" Hall said, a common experience in the current market.

Hall then widened her search even further, eventually finding a small, well-constructed house in Page County for \$185,000. Hall advised them to offer \$15,000 more than the asking price, knowing there would be several other offers. "I said, 'that's all we can do.'" It turned out to be good advice, and the owners accepted the couple's offer over several others, all made within a day or two.

That story had a happy ending, but Hall said market conditions in Fauquier County and the region aren't likely to change much soon. There are two major factors, she said. One is proximity to D.C., which keeps demand for housing high. The other is the scarcity – and subsequent high price – of land locally.

One-acre lots in the area, for instance, "are as scarce as hens' teeth," Hall mused. Half-acre lots are practically non-existent. That's mainly due to local zoning laws, she said which prioritize open space and lack of density.

Hall was careful not to criticize the approach – "I think they are trying to preserve what is the beauty of this county" – but said simple economics mean land scarcity will drive land prices up, which in turn makes housing more expensive. "Everything is getting scarce," she said.

There is a bright spot, Hall said; for those who are able to purchase a home, even if it's far down on the housing ladder, that real estate is likely to gain value steadily, which builds equity and helps families move up the housing ladder. And, she said, there are programs like Federal Housing Administration loan insurance to help those with lower incomes enter the housing market, and other programs that specifically help military veterans buy their first home.

## Addressing the problem

The Fauquier NAACP's housing committee was formed last year amid the development of Warrenton's comprehensive plan. Committee co-leader Miggy Strano said consolidating information about housing assistance programs, like the ones Hall mentioned, would be a good place to start in addressing the problem.

Many different non-profits, churches and government organizations do "wonderful work" and can help people find and afford housing, Strano said. "But there's really no hub [for information] because we don't have a housing authority," she said. "It's very confusing as far as trying to understand who's doing what."

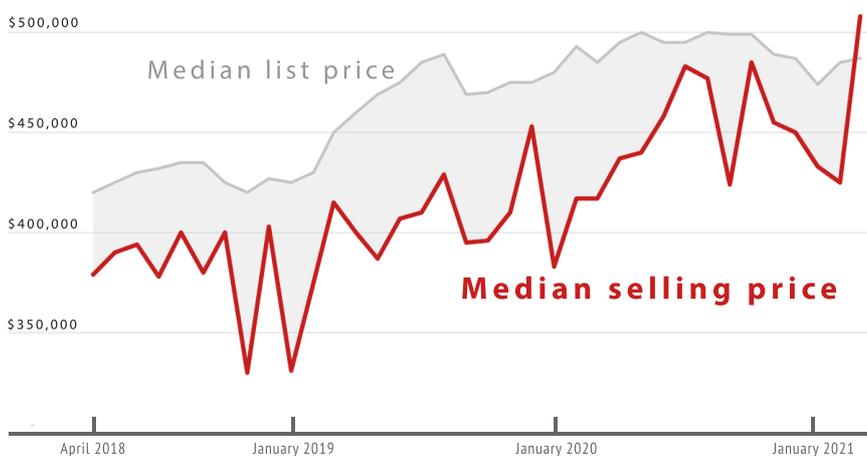
This is an area where local governments could step in, she suggested, to help consolidate and disseminate information about housing programs that people might not know exist. She pointed to the Northern Virginia Affordable Housing Alliance, a broad coalition of government entities, nonprofits and businesses in Northern Virginia, as an example of what's working.

To Ellsworth Weaver, Fauquier NAACP's president, the problem is just as much about jobs and education as it is about housing itself. "When we talk about affordable housing, we have to go back one step and talk about income," he said, adding that attracting businesses with good jobs to the area and giving residents access to the education to be qualified for those jobs is just as much a part of the equation as the cost of housing alone.

See HOUSING, page 10

## Median list and selling prices, Fauquier County

RESIDENTIAL UNITS



DATA SOURCE: NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF REALTORS

## For many working in Fauquier County, living here isn't an option; solutions are elusive

HOUSING, from page 8

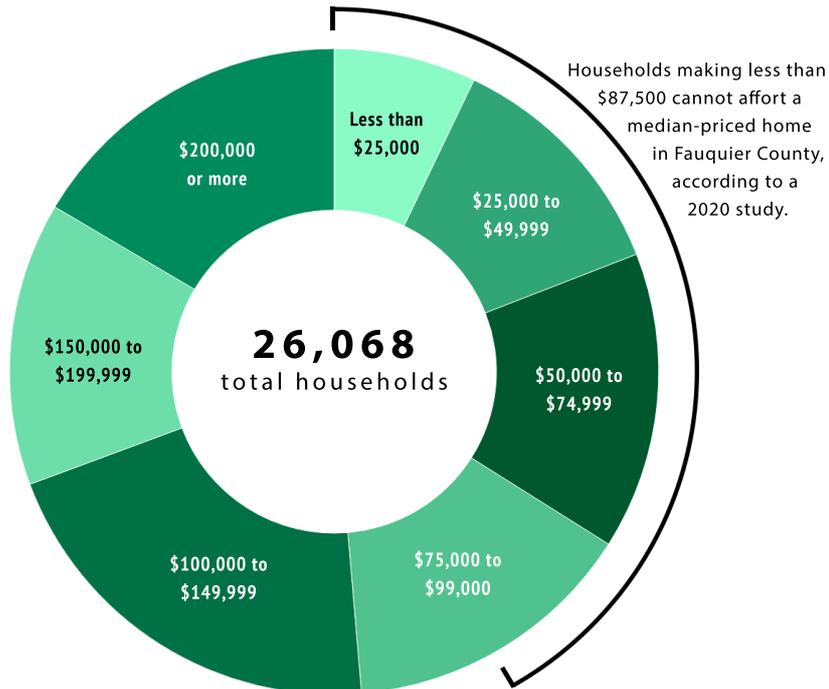
A former educator, Weaver said he is frustrated by what he sees as the lack of educational resources devoted to job training in fields unrelated to internet technology. He mentioned the programs available to him when he was growing up, with training in trades like brick laying and farming: "Something that you could do with your hands." What he characterized as a focus on computer-based education has left some people behind, he said, making it harder for them to find a job that pays well enough to live in the area.

"Education is about equality and inclusiveness," he said. "To give people the means to keep up." Along the same lines, he'd like to see more resources devoted to adult education programs to help people develop new skills to compete for well-paying jobs.

On the other side of that equation, Ike and Julie Broaddus, owners of Old Bust Head Brewing Company and a property management business, said a lack of what they called "right-sized housing" in the area makes it harder to recruit employees. They employ about 50 people – about 25 full-time – many of whom are 20-somethings just starting out on their own.

"The pool of talent who is willing to take these jobs is smaller" because of the lack of small units like apartments in Fauquier County, said Ike Broaddus. "I don't want Fauquier County overrun with apartment complexes, but I think we can do it better." Maintaining the status quo, he said, "means there is a limit to the

### Share of Fauquier County households by income



DATA SOURCE: RAPPAHANNOCK-RAPIDAN REGIONAL COMMISSION

kind of workforce we have available." In turn, that makes the area less attractive to prospective employers.

Broaddus pointed to the structure of zoning laws that regulate the number of units per acre. "One of the key problems, in my mind, is it encourages builders to build the biggest, most expensive units they can," he said. "What the market really wants right now ... are small units for one to two people," adding there is little economic incentive for developers to build that type of housing.

He said zoning should instead focus on square footage allowed in a particular area, not on the number of units. This, he said, would encour-

age building more small units that are within the price range of young adults or retirees.

The Broadduses pointed to the Vint Hill Lofts projects, the recently approved proposal to restore the former barracks in Vint Hill to house about 180 apartments, as an example of a success story. (The apartments will start about \$1,000 per month, according to the developer.) The Vint Hill community will be "healthier," as they put it, having the moderately priced apartments, the high-priced Brookside development and a mix of industrial, hospitality and retail businesses all in the same area, they said.

Another way to incentivize building more, small units is what the Warrenton comprehensive plan characterizes as "density bonuses." Essentially, builders could construct more units per acre if some of those units meet the town's as-yet-uncodified definition of "affordable" or offer other public benefits.

Those bonuses are "critical," said Habitat's Neher, because of the way zoning law works. "You can't say: 'You are required to do X.' You can say: 'We will give you X if you do Y.'"

Land trusts, whereby a nonprofit purchases land and leases it for the purposes of providing affordable housing, is another idea, said Neher. (The Warrenton comprehensive plan alludes to the prospect of a developer donating land for this purpose to receive "density bonuses.") But to make a real dent in solving the affordability problem, the scale of coordination would need to be much greater than it is now – much to Strano's point.

Zoning law can be messy and tedious. "The difficult sausage-making is in that ordinance development," as Neher put it, referring specifically to the coming review of Warrenton's zoning laws in the wake of the comprehensive plan's approval. But, he said, it's necessary to work toward making sure people can afford to live here.

"A community who wants to invest in affordable housing has to find the mechanism to do so," said Neher. "It will never materialize without the work."

Reach Coy Ferrell at [cferrell@fauquier.com](mailto:cferrell@fauquier.com)

## Local vineyards on the alert for invasive species spotted lanternfly

By Liam Bowman

PIEDMONT JOURNALISM FOUNDATION

For a quarter century, Chris Pearmund's eponymous vineyard in the foothills of eastern Fauquier County has survived a feared invasion of stinkbugs, record-breaking rainfall and unseasonable hailstorms. Now, like other vineyard owners in the area, he's preparing for what could be another threat to his livelihood and the burgeoning wine industry in Northern Virginia: the spotted lanternfly.

The inch-long insect, an invasive pest with a particular fondness for apple trees and grapevines, has been steadily spreading across Northern Virginia for the past three years. Although it has not appeared in any Virginia vineyards yet, knowing the lanternfly's potential for destruction, agricultural experts are imposing quarantines and taking preventative measures. Pearmund said it may be only a matter of time before the pest arrives in Fauquier. "Hopefully we'll have something to control it," he said.

In an effort to curb the spread of spotted lanternfly, the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services has imposed a quarantine-zone on all areas where the pest has become established. The quarantine-zone, originally limited to the Winchester area, was expanded in mid-March to include neighboring Clarke and Warren counties. According to the new regulations, businesses in affected areas are required to complete special training and take steps to ensure their shipments are free of spotted lanternflies.

"It's a strange pest," said David Gianino, program manager for the department's Office of Plant Industry Services, referencing the lanternfly's tendency to hitchhike on human transport. "It can be on stone, on pallets or on a truck, so it's a challenge to get all these different businesses engaged."

Indigenous to southern Asia, the spotted lanternfly was accidentally introduced to the U.S. through trade. In 2014, the pest was first detected in Berks County, Pennsylvania. Infestations quickly spread throughout the region. By 2018, the first spotted lanternflies were found in Winchester and have since become an increasingly common sight in the area.

The pest primarily seeks out tree-of-heaven, another invasive species native to Asia, to lay its eggs. In southeast Pennsylvania, where infestations remain the most severe, lanternflies have destroyed entire sections of vineyards and cost local growers \$13.1 million, according to a Pennsylvania State University report.

In swarms numbering in the thousands, lanternflies drain large amounts of sap from grapevines and other plant species, excreting a sugary substance called honeydew. "Vines are either killed outright or weakened so they don't survive the winter," said Doug Pfeiffer, a fruit entomologist at Virginia Tech. The excreted honeydew, said Pfeiffer, breeds a fungus called sooty mold, which covers the feeding area with a black sticky substance.

See LANTERNFLY, page 12



COURTESY PHOTO

The spotted lanternfly can travel from one community to another on stone, on pallets or on a truck.



Plea agreement reached in Levi Norwood murder case. See page 8.

## Former drama teacher indicted for child sex abuse

### Another alleged victim identified

By Liam Bowman

PIEDMONT JOURNALISM FOUNDATION

Kevin Mettinger, a former Fauquier High School drama teacher arrested earlier this year on child sex abuse charges, was indicted at a Nov. 22 grand jury hearing on multiple felony counts. The indictments include three new felony charges involving incidents with another alleged victim between 2004 and 2005.



Kevin Mettinger

Mettinger, 51, of Warrenton was charged this summer after allegedly sexually abusing an adolescent child on four separate occasions. He now faces three felony counts of indecent liberties with a child while in supervisory role, two felony counts of carnal knowledge of a child and one felony count of forcible sodomy.

See **METTINGER**, page 9

## Fauquier Habitat for Humanity hands the keys to new homeowners

By Robin Earl

FAUQUIER TIMES STAFF WRITER

Eva Walker Park in Warrenton was the backdrop as a set of keys was passed from one Fauquier Habitat for Humanity volunteer to another, each wishing new Haiti Street homeowners Ivett and Ernesto Mejita Bustos well with a few well-chosen words. “Love,” “A wonderful future” and so on down the line, until Elizabeth Rose, director of Habitat’s partner programming, shouted “laughter,” and handed the keys to a smiling Ivett Mejia Bustos.

When she, her husband and 5-year-old daughter Emma at last opened the door to their new home, the delicious smells of a celebratory feast welcomed them inside.

The Nov. 20 celebration was the culmination of four years of work. Ivett, 25, and Ernesto Mejita Bustos, 36, each contributed 250 hours of “sweat equity.” Habitat volunteers supported them by providing education on everything from mortgages to home maintenance and of course, helping to build their four-bedroom home.



FAUQUIER TIMES STAFF PHOTO/ROBIN EARL  
Ivett and Ernesto Mejita Bustos and their daughter Emma get ready to enter their new home on Haiti Street in Warrenton.

## Violin makers continue their life’s work in Fauquier

By Coy Ferrell

FAUQUIER TIMES STAFF WRITER

Peter and Wendy Moes are two of a handful of people in the world who have intimate knowledge — and strong opinions — about timber harvesting in 18th-century Alpine Italy. “It’s a very exact thing; you have to wait for exactly the right moment” to cut down a tree, said Wendy Moes.

Alpine homebuilders for hundreds of years picked the moment in late winter when spruce trees had the least sap to cut timber. It’s very stable wood, the Moeses said, that is resistant to warping and even to burning. That wood, some of it preserved for hundreds of years in the mountain air, now resonates from Moes-made instruments in orchestral halls around the globe.



FAUQUIER TIMES STAFF PHOTOS/COY FERRELL  
Wendy Moes



Peter Moes

See **MOES**, page 10

**THANKS DIANA:**  
Fauquier volleyball coach talks about her career-changing move.  
SPORTS, pages 33-37



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FAUQUIER TIMES STAFF PHOTOS/COY FERRELL

A nearly complete violin

## Violin makers continue their life's work in Fauquier

MOES, from page 1

Their obsessions don't stop with centuries-old timber, of course. Every part of their instruments — and even the well-worn hand tools that fill their workshop — are the result of endless tinkering and refinement. “We experiment a lot,” said Peter Moes — an understated way of describing days upon days spent at a workbench meticulously perfecting each aspect of an instrument.

Now in their 70s, the couple moved to New Baltimore early this year to be closer to their daughters. Their work making world-class violins, cellos and violas has taken them from Germany, to California, to London, to New York, back to Germany and now to Fauquier County. Peter Moes was born in Bavaria, Wendy Moes in Boston.

They met in the Alpine German city of Mittenwald when they both attended the violin-making school there in the 1970s and founded Moes & Moes Violin Makers in New York in 1981. They plan to carry on their life's work in their home workshop “as long as people still want us.”

Yo-Yo Ma purchased one of their cellos in the 1990s and still uses it on tour. Hilary Hahn, winner of three Grammy awards, owns one of their violins. Most of the instruments they've made over the years are still with their original owners, they said. “It's important to have a good relationship with a musician and have them give you a

straight opinion,” said Peter Moes. Like any good artists, the Moeses are never quite satisfied — an instrument can always be improved here, tinkered there.

Some version of the word “fascinated” comes up often as the Moeses talk about their work. They spend weeks or months on a single instrument; they've never made more than six in a single year.

“We've always followed the route of something that interests us, that fascinates us,” said Peter Moes. “It's our driving force.” His first fascination was repairing instruments seemingly beyond repair — situations where, as he put it, “it's impossible, but doable,” quoting the 1999 Sean Connery film “Entrapment.”

Repairing instruments is still a big part of what they do — from restoring violins to renting to local families to bringing professionals' instruments back to life. “He gets really interested if something's broken,” added Wendy Moes. “I'm really interested in the sound.”

“Every part of these instruments affects everything else and is affected by everything else,” she said. She emphasized that “there is a huge range of sound that is considered ‘excellent,’” explaining that they try to build and restore instruments to meet the preferences of their clients.

“Nowadays, makers are just copying antique makers' work,” she said. “But there's room in there for lots of different fine sounds.” She contin-



FAUQUIER TIMES STAFF PHOTO/COY FERRELL  
Wendy Moes displays a child-sized violin available to rent.

### Moes & Moes rental program

In addition to building and restoring instruments for professionals, the Moeses also have violins and violas in a range of sizes for students to rent; cellos are available on special request. The couple's faces light up as they show off their collection of small violins made for young children.

“We select instruments that we can modify if need be to get a very good sound and easy response,” explains their website. “Every instrument gets a professional set-up from us personally. That means doing the fingerboard and nut, cutting a bridge and adjusting the sound post.”

Students can trade up to a larger-sized instrument as they grow.

Call 540-340-4275, email moes@moesandmoes.com or visit moesandmoes.com for more information.

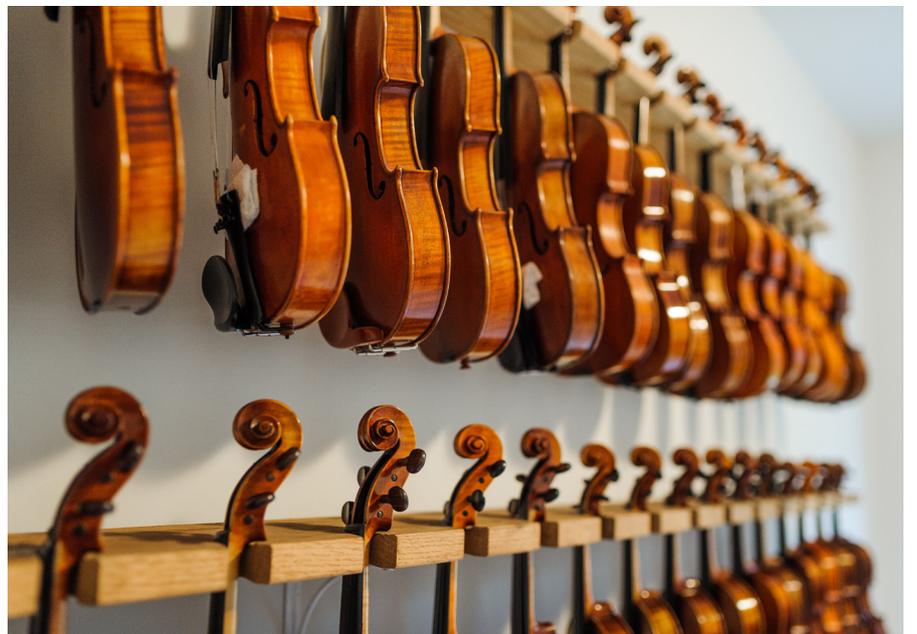
ued, “It's nice to know you can make something that makes someone happy ... make them get to where they want to be.”

The couple takes special pride in making each instrument unique based on their own incessant tinkering and refinement; great instruments, they insisted, should never be a mere copy. “They teach you in school how to make something that looks like an instrument,” said Wendy Moes. Creating world-class instruments is something different, she continued: “You have to figure that out on your own.”

Their website puts it bluntly: “Copies of instruments, or anything else, never have and never will have any lasting intrinsic value.”

There are “zillions” of instrument makers now, Peter Moes said, especially in Europe, where trade schools have multiplied in the decades since the Moeses started out. Setting themselves apart, he said, takes a high degree of creativity — more art than assembly line. “We are the kind of people who don't like to follow directions or copy other people's work,” he said.

Reach Coy Ferrell at cferrell@fauquier.com



In addition to making instruments, like this cello in progress (left), for professional musicians, Peter and Wendy Moes maintain a collection of violins and violas (right) to rent to local students.