



Devin Avery, left, and Donnisha Jones, students in the culinary arts program in Isle of Wight County Schools, listen to feedback from Smithfield High Principal Bryan Thrift about a meal they made as part of a friendly competition that asked students to make entrees and appetizers using surprise ingredients in less than an hour. (Nate Delesline III/The Smithfield Times)

From classroom to grill

By Nate Delesline III
Staff Writer

Chefs at Turner & 10 recently put their skills to the test in creating fresh, tasty meals while trying to beat the clock.

A recent menu included spring rolls with orange zest dipping sauce, a classic bruschetta with

balsamic vinaigrette, fried pickles with remoulade, made-from-scratch tomato soup, smoked Gouda grilled cheese and crab fritters. And those were just the appetizers. Entress included beef and lamb burgers and cheeseburgers dressed with fresh fried eggs, that include fresh basil, roasted red pepper, sundried tomatoes and cheese fries.

All of the food was prepared by students in the Isle of Wight County school division’s culinary arts program. The students recently participated in a friendly contest that channeled the popular Food Network TV series “Chopped,” where contestants have to beat the clock and create a meal using surprise ingredients.

The coronavirus pandemic has forced Turner & 10, the school division’s restaurant-classroom, to remain closed to teachers and the public. The contest, which played out in early March, was an opportunity to allow students to put their skills to the test for three judges

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that included Smithfield High Principal Bryan Thrift and other school division leaders.

“We really just wanted to work on teamwork and putting their creative minds together,” said Scott Horne, who leads the program. If you live in Smithfield or have visited recently, Horne’s name might sound familiar. He was the head chef at Taste of Smithfield on Main Street downtown for several years before recently stepping down to lead the high school program full time.

Sophomore Jayden Johnson said the culinary class is his first experience working in a commercial kitchen. The biggest difference, he said, is “moving at a faster pace than when I’m at home cooking by myself. So it felt different, but a good different.”

He and his culinary partner Nia Hill, a junior, made chicken spring rolls and cheeseburgers with bacon and egg.

In addition to being mindful of the clock, Johnson said working around other people in the kitchen was a new experience since “in my kitchen, it’s just me by myself. But here it’s about six other people I’ve got to work around.”

Johnson has a personal family connection to one of the best known food cultures in the U.S. “My family, we’re all from Louisiana. My grandmother and my grandfather, they were both cooks. So I learned most of the stuff I learned from them.” Looking to a possible career in food service, Johnson said he said he’d like to take his Cajun-inspired influences to a community outside Louisiana to share a taste of home.

Horne has about 18 years of professional food service experience — or as he put it, “half my life [since] I’m 37 now.”

The career outlook for skilled culinary arts professionals is strong, Horne said.

“I’ve got some folks that want to own their own restaurant,” Horne said. “Whether they want to own a food truck or a little diner, I’ve got some kids that I think will definitely go on to

continue that career. I think other ones may definitely work in a restaurant during college — maybe it’s not their forever job, but this gives them a great base,” Horne said.

“The neat part about this program is once you take these classes,” he continued, “you’re going to have an OSHA 10-hour culinary certification. It lasts forever. It’s going to give those kids more money when they go to apply for a job.” Students may also earn a ServSafe manager-level certification, a credential that’s sought after in the industry.

“When I worked at Taste of Smithfield, I was the only person in the building that carried that designation. So to come out of high school with that type of title, it means more money,” said Horne, a sentiment Thrift echoed.

“This program is going to provide kids with a skill that can make them money when they get out of here,” Thrift said. “They can have a career, utilizing the skills they learned in this class specifically.” Not only that, Thrift added, but culinary skills are life skills that everyone

benefits from knowing and perfecting, even if you don’t apply them professionally.

Thrift said all the food was “restaurant-style worthy,” a sentiment shared by all the judges, who, in addition to Thrift, included Jeffrey Mordica, the school division’s director of innovation and strategic planning and Kristan Formella, the division’s instructional coordinator for K-12 math and science.

Horne leads about 30 culinary students, including some from Windsor High School. The culinary program is a double-block class, meaning Horne has three hours with students for each class period. In light of the ongoing pandemic, “we obviously have been doing social distancing all the time. Isle of Wight County Schools have done a phenomenal job of putting in precautions where we can actually come to school. I’m proud to be one of the groups of teachers who have been able to do that.”

“What I noticed the most,” Horne added, “is these kids just really want to work together. They’ve been isolated for a year. To be able to get in groups of two

or three and conceptualize — it’s just amazing, and I think they really hit a home run.”

TENNIS ANYONE?

Hilton Tennis Club offers adult leagues April–October for mixed doubles, men doubles, retiree doubles, tennis socials and open play to club members. Hilton Tennis Club, includes 4 lighted clay tennis courts and club house, is located in the Newport News Hilton Village area one mile off the James River Bridge. Contact Greg Ruffin at 869-2151 or Dan Sims at 876-3587 for joining Hilton Tennis Club.



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Madison Goodrich, left, Zachary Fuller and Kaylee Engstrom do their virtual lessons for school on a recent morning at the Luter Family YMCA in Smithfield. The Y, with support from Smithfield Foods and the Isle of Wight County schools, is providing before and after school care along with a structured environment for students to do their virtual learning during the coronavirus pandemic. (Nate Delesline III/The Smithfield Times)

YMCA continuing school programs

By Nate Delesline III
Staff Writer

Smithfield's Luter Family YMCA and Isle of Wight County Schools are working together to help provide an option for working families needing be-

fore and after school care and a structured environment for kids for virtual learning.

When the coronavirus pandemic hit last spring, school and YMCA leaders quickly realized many families had a problem — parents who are es-

sential workers needed to keep working, but school buildings were closed and learning was online only.

That left many parents with tough choices about jobs, schedules and school. Working families usually base their bud-

get on an anticipated amount of before and after school care for their kids. But when the pandemic hit, the level and need for that care changed, on short notice, as did many people's in-

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comes, said Leslie Bryant, who is executive director of Smithfield's Y.

The Y's certified childcare program experts worked with local school and state officials to create local daycare options for the COVID era for parents in essential job roles. In June, the program began offering services for all working families. The Y also provided summer programs and in the fall, when many students didn't return to classrooms, the programs continued into this spring.

Bryant said those programs are also able to continue thanks to financial support from Smithfield Foods.

"Smithfield Foods support has been critical for us being able to offer the assistance for these families to ensure they can be in the program," Bryant said. "If we didn't have them as a partner, it would have greatly impacted the families — part of the funds that they give us helps us provide assistance to working families to be in the program."

With that corporate support, no one is turned away from the program if they're truly in need, Bryant said.

"Smithfield has a long history of supporting local educational initiatives, especially here in our hometown," said Keira Lombardo, chief administrative of-

ficer for Smithfield Foods. "As a partner in youth development for the Luter Family YMCA, we were proud to support essential workers in our community throughout the COVID-19 pandemic."

"From first responders and healthcare workers to our own Smithfield family working to maintain our nation's food supply," Lombardo continued, "Smithfield and the YMCA have come together to provide necessary childcare to assist with our community's response to this crisis."

Smithfield Foods donated \$30,000 to support education programs at the Y in 2020, according to Jonathan Toms, the company's char-

itable initiatives manager. Toms said Smithfield Foods has a longstanding relationship with the Y with the company, having donated at or around that level for many years and that "the partnership in 2020 built on our ongoing contributions of more than 20 years."

Before and after school care is available at Carrollton, Hardy, Westside and Windsor elementary schools, as well as at the Y's facilities. Even as many classrooms have reopened for in-person learning, the program is still going strong, serving about 120 students, Bryant said.

Moore said the partnership between the Y and Isle of Wight schools goes

back 23 years. And recently, with financial support from Smithfield Foods, the program will continue to be available for families who need it.

"I would have never been able to handle my children's online learning without the program at the Y," Danette Green, a local Smithfield Foods employee, said in a recent announcement about the program. "The Y was able to put a checklist together for my kids to stay on track and provided them the opportunity to be active."

Essential workers are also still benefiting from the program, like Morgan Harrup, who works for Sentara in an essential worker

role. "When the Y started to offer this program to essential workers, it was such a relief because my husband and I were contemplating how one of us would quit our job and be able to survive. It has been a godsend. We are so appreciative," Harrup said.

The Y staff have each student's schedule to make sure they're logged in for virtual learning and completing their other virtual work. Students and staff maintain social distancing and mask etiquette while in the program, and regular cleaning protocols are followed.

Students pitch business ideas to local sharks

By **Nate Delesline III**
Staff Writer

Catching waves at the beach is rad. But hauling a surfboard around is no fun.

Jonah Ambrosino has a solution — a valet service for surfboards. With just a text, your board will be ready and waiting for you at the beach to ride the gnarliest waves, leaving you with time and energy to enjoy the beach instead of worrying about safely getting your board from place to place and keeping it in top shape.

“After many years of surfing with my dad, we have felt that the hardest part about surfing isn’t catching waves but transporting your boards, maintenance of your boards and storage for your boards,” Ambrosino said via video chat.

Do you struggle to come up with thoughtful but reasonably priced gifts for people you care about? Mya Lukkes has got you. She’ll craft care packages with about a half-dozen items that almost anyone will appreciate and enjoy like candles, stickers, water bottles and a stress relief ball.

Luke Scrivanich received an enthusiastic and amused response to the marketing he uses for his

vehicle detailing business, Diploma Detailing. Available services range from the \$25 “GED Package” which includes handwashing, tire and trim dressing, Rain-X treatment for the glass and spray wax up to the “Ph.D. Degree Package” for \$125 which will make your vehicle “look and feel better than the day you bought it.”

His business purpose is simple — the car detailing money will help pay for his college degree. For a special occasion or special people, customers can also request the “Rocket Scientist Package” where Scrivanich tops off all his available services with ceramic exterior coating for your vehicle. Scrivanich said an advantage for his business is there’s not much local competition.

These Smithfield High School students, and many others in Diane Fulton’s dual enrollment advanced marketing class, are all likely to see their business ideas come to life and grow through the award of seed money from the Youth Entrepreneurs organization.

Additional student business ideas included local nature photography, a business that sells art prints, customized apparel and jewelry, home decor items and hand sanitizer targeted toward younger

kids.

Students made their pitches — which followed the formula set by the popular TV show “Shark Tank” — in March for their classmates and panels of school and business leaders.

“The whole theme of this program is called problem solving for a profit,” Fulton explained. “And what it does is not just touch on the fact that you want to earn money and how to earn money with your ideas but to find problems that exist in your community or in the world or needs that exist and try to use your business to solve that problem,” Fulton said. “And do it ethically. There’s a big emphasis on ethics.”

Business ethics are a key theme in class, Fulton said.

“Every time I have a class I say ‘Do you think you can be ethical and be successful? Can you be an entrepreneur who’s successful like Elon Musk or somebody else and be successful?’ They almost always say no — you can’t be ethical and run your business. They think you have to step on somebody to get there.”

Fulton said a key takeaway is that businesses and entrepreneurs can prosper through ethical

behavior.

“When we first had to think of a business,” Lukkes said in her pitch, “I wanted to try and do something to please or help somebody. One day on TikTok, a couple weeks later, I saw a mom putting together a care package for her daughter in college. So I just kind of combined those two ideas.”

In early May, the students are expected to recap their spending and profits.

The judges included Smithfield High Principal Bryan Thrift; Assistant Principal Wayne Briggs; Tiffany Truitt, Smithfield High’s instructional coach; Jeff Mordica, the school division’s director of innovation and strategic planning; Lynn Briggs, the division’s director of community and media relations; Reeva Luecke, owner of O’doodleDoo’s Donuts and Cone Slingers; Bill Dempsey of Recycling Perks; Carlyn Menser with Anchor Realty; and Amy Lainhoff of Revutation; a revenue and reputation management company.

A virtual “Market Days” online store — “Packer Pride Products” — will be live soon. To view the products and services produced and offered by the students, visit packer-pride-products.myshopify.com.