



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.

Rodeo bucks off restrictions and comes to Reedy Creek Road

So, here we go, rodeo! The "Rodeo in the Valley" finally arrives this weekend with Friday and Saturday night events off Reedy Creek Road.

Oh, what a short, strange trip it's been!

Normally, folks in agricultural communities like Washington County — heck, all of Southwest Virginia — would just stage a rodeo and start trick-roping.

Yeah, but rewind the calendar to the last weekend of May.

That's when rodeo producer Brad Nelms was all lined up to hold a rodeo but could not get a special-exception permit approved by county officials.

In the end, Nelms got that permit — after having to relocate his first planned rodeo to Russell County.

Problem was, back in May, there was opposition from several nearby residents. They spoke their minds at meetings — in Abingdon — on traffic, noise and animal cruelty.

Mike Pinson, who lives near the rodeo site, grew up in Kentucky and served in the U.S. Marines during the Vietnam War era.

"The folks wanting a rodeo did a lot of work. They lined up sponsors. They scheduled the events on the internet," Pinson said at the May 25 meeting of the Washington County Board of Supervisors.

But Pinson said the producer should have learned more about how to get a special-exception permit and inform neighbors before all that planning.

After that, Pinson asked whether a "bear baiting" competition could be allowed.

"Bear baiting was very popular in the Middle Ages," he said.

With this, bears would be chained up, and dogs would attack them. If the bear proved particularly active in fighting the dogs, they would just have more dogs attack, Pinson said.

"I don't think you would approve," Pinson said.

In turn, Pinson criticized rodeos as being cruel to animals.

"The sport of rodeo is headed towards the trash heap of history because there are changing views about that activity," Pinson said. "It may not be widespread in Washington County, but it is across the country."

"Rodeo in the Valley" is sanctioned by the International Pro Rodeo Association, which requires its rodeos to keep veterinarians on-site in case of animal injury and enforce rules to protect animals inside and outside the ring. No bear baiting shows up in the roster of events, but the rodeo will include bull riding, barrel racing and calf roping, to name a few.



Joe Tennis

DREAMLAND PRODUCE



CAROLYN R. WILSON/FOR THE WASHINGTON COUNTY NEWS

Melissa McLeish, 32, has shifted from working at a local hospital to raising her own fruits and vegetables at Dreamland Produce, an offshoot of her parents' alpaca farm in Meadowview, Virginia.

New life on the farm

Local woman makes career move to growing her own produce

BY CAROLYN R. WILSON
FOR THE WASHINGTON COUNTY NEWS

MEADOWVIEW, Va. — Since the pandemic, some Americans are leaving behind the 9-to-5 job scene to pursue their passions.

Melissa McLeish, 32, is one of them who is trading the four walls of an office for the open spaces of a garden, searching for a way to make a living off the land.

The single mom of two young children recently left the security of an office job at a local hospital to grow and sell fruits and vegetables to local consumers.

From that idea grew a business called Dreamland Produce, a Meadowview business that operates in conjunction with Dreamland Alpacas, run by her parents, David and Debbie McLeish.

"I've always been interested in farm life," said Melissa, who, along with her family, moved from Massachusetts to Southwest Virginia in 2002 so that she could enter the equine studies program at Virginia Intermont. When she graduated in 2011, a shaky economy discouraged her from pursuing a career with horses.

Now, instead of investing in equine, she is investing in hoop houses to grow plants.

This spring has been a good growing season, she said. The vendor at Abingdon Farmers Market will bring some of her garden's first cucumbers and zucchinis to sell on Saturday.

In addition, she will sell radishes, rainbow Swiss chard and giant red mustard leaves, all of which grow inside a hoop house on the Meadowview farm.

Other things growing in the hoop house include cucumbers, squash, rainbow carrots, red and gold beets, peppers and loads of tomatoes.

While much of the produce stays in the hoop house to protect them from insects and other pests, some of the vegetables are transferred to a 5,000-square-foot open air garden to continue growing. Another 5,000-square-foot space is designated for growing white and sweet potatoes.

"You know what they say. Go big or go home," she said with a laugh. Turning her garden into a sustain-



CAROLYN R. WILSON/FOR THE WASHINGTON COUNTY NEWS

"If I can't sell it fresh, I will preserve it and sell it as a canned good," says Melissa McLeish. She will also experiment with dehydrating, pickling and jamming the food to sell to customers.

able business has been a learning experience for the young farmer.

"I've been very fortunate on my learning curve," said Melissa. "I have several farmers who are just a phone call away when I have questions."

Preserving freshness

Few things go to waste in her garden. "If I can't sell it fresh, I will preserve it and sell it as a canned good," she said.

The young farmer used an abundance of zucchini from her garden last summer to experiment with making healthy snacks for customers at the farmers market.

She dehydrated sliced zucchinis and added a touch of seasoning — Italian and chipotle — to make zucchini chips.

"It's super healthy and keto-friendly. It was one of my bestsellers at the farmers market last summer."

Another favorite is her pickled green beans called dilly beans. Her banana jam is made from bananas and orange juice — a kid favorite at her house. She hopes her business will continue

to grow. By next year, she wants to become a certified natural grower, using no synthetic herbicides, pesticides, fertilizers or genetically modified organisms.

She plans to add berries to the farm next summer, in particular yellow raspberries.

"Yellow raspberries are sweeter and less seedy than the red variety. They are wonderful."

In the coming months, the grower will harvest Carmen peppers known for their high yield, large size and beautiful color. She'll also bring onions, tomatoes, carrots, beets and potatoes to the market.

The produce vendor participates in the Abingdon Farmers Market from 3 to 6 p.m. on Tuesdays and 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Saturdays.

Follow Dreamland Produce and Abingdon Farmers Market on Facebook.

For more information about the farmers market, call 276-698-1434.

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



WANDERING AROUND WASHINGTON

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.

Rezoning would bring corner lot in line with other businesses

A prominent piece of commercial property could soon be rezoned in Abingdon, Virginia. The property sits at the corner of Russell Road and Porterfield Highway.

"The owner has requested to have it rezoned. The rezoning would allow some sort of retail establishment," said Abingdon Mayor Derek Webb.

In recent years, the property has been used for car lots, tobacco warehouses and flea markets.

"A decade or so ago, when it was a flea market, there was a lot of traffic going in and out of there," Webb said.

A request has been made to move the property from limited industrial to general business, said Myana Rice, the town's director of community development, when speaking at the Oct. 21 Abingdon Town Council meeting. Placing the lot under "general business" would give it "a much wider range," Rice said, and the move would also be more in compliance with the town's zoning in that area, Rice said.

"Staff continues to support this request," Rice said.

"I think there is some desire that that parcel may ultimately be a travel center," Rice said.

Concept plans have been presented to the town's planning commission, said Abingdon Town Manager Jimmy Morani.

At a meeting in September, the town's planning commission voted to rezone the property, Rice said.

Still, the three parcels of property have yet to be officially rezoned by the Town Council.



Joe Tennis

Ballad Health, ETSU partner to create nursing center

WASHINGTON COUNTY NEWS

JOHNSON CITY, Tenn. — Ballad Health has invested \$10 million to create the Appalachian Highlands Center for Nursing Advancement at East Tennessee State University, the health system announced Monday.

As the pandemic continues to exacerbate the national nurse shortage, the partnership seeks to provide a long-term solution to bolster the nursing supply and support, according to a Ballad news release.

The center will develop partnerships with other colleges and universities, such as Emory & Henry College, Northeast State Community College and the University of Virginia's College at Wise, among others, to advance the clinical practice of nursing, enhance interprofessional collaboration, contribute to knowledge about nursing workflow and generate nursing scholarship, according to the release.

The center will focus on data and research, collaboration with key stakeholders across the region and advocacy to promote the nursing profession.

POETRY TO PASTRY



Willie Bordwine stirs a pot of creamy tomato soup at Harvest Table Restaurant made by another chef at the restaurant. The pastry chef said he specializes in homemade ice cream, pies, cakes, and breads.

CAROLYN R. WILSON/FOR THE WASHINGTON COUNTY NEWS

Way with herbs

Harvest Table chef earns reputation for desserts, breads

BY CAROLYN R. WILSON
FOR THE WASHINGTON COUNTY NEWS

MEADOWVIEW, Va. — Pastry chef Willie Bordwine has a passion for a lot of things in life.

He's hiked the White Mountains in New Hampshire, the Green Mountains in Vermont, Haleakala Crater, a Hawaiian island of Maui, and many more places.

He's also a poet, even writing a few poems about the relationships between the kitchen and the soul.

"Successes and failures in the kitchen and on paper are very much alike," Bordwine said.

But the pastry chef has always felt a calling in the kitchen.

"Baking is a nice balance for me as a type A person. It's calming, and it helps me to focus on things that are pleasurable," he said.

Nowadays, the Hayter's Gap native is getting quite the reputation for his farm-to-table desserts and breads at the Harvest Table Restaurant in Meadowview.

The baker, whose chocolate tortes and apple pies are winners among customers at the restaurant, learned the art of baking while, oddly enough, earning an undergraduate degree in creative writing and the classics and a Master of Fine Arts degree in English, specializing in writing poetry.

Bordwine's journey started when he went to Emory University in Atlanta, Georgia, for his studies. During the summers, the college student worked for Hamilton's Stores, concessioners in Yellowstone National Park, where he did everything from slinging burgers to selling souvenirs to tourists.

He later made his way to Amherst, Massachusetts, where he attended the University of Massachusetts for his graduate degree during the day and fried donuts at night at Atkin's Farms County Market in town.

It's there he learned about making breads, even some specialty breads such as paczki, which are doughnuts found in the Polish cuisine.

Now that he's back home, Bordwine is sharing his passion as a pastry chef, preparing many classics from Appalachian culture.

Bordwine worked at the Wildflour Bakery in Abingdon until it closed



CAROLYN R. WILSON/FOR THE WASHINGTON COUNTY NEWS

A small herb and produce garden behind the Harvest Table Restaurant allows baker Willie Bordwine and other chefs at the restaurant to use fresh ingredients.

in 2016. He said his greatest mentor was Donna McIntyre, the owner of the bakery shop. "She took time and a chance on me. She's an excellent baker to learn from and emulate. She taught me to make croissants like the French do."

He later joined the kitchen crew at Harvest Table Restaurant a year ago.

It's a restaurant that works with seasonal produce and meats from local sources, he said.

"If it's in season, we try to feature it to make a totally unpredictable menu," said Bordwine.

"I prepare a chocolate torte that's flourless. It contains such a small amount of ingredients — eggs, sugar and chocolate — but it punches you in the mouth with chocolate."

One of his delicacies is homemade ice cream using products from local dairies, including Duchess Dairy Products in Rural Retreat, Virginia, and Goshen Homestead in Elk Garden, Virginia.

Just last week, he drove to Roan Mountain, Tennessee, where he picked Winesap apples that he will use to make apple pies, apples cakes and maybe a batch of homemade apple butter.

He makes quiches with locally sourced ingredients, such as cheeses from Ashe County, North Carolina, spinach from Creative Seeds Farm in Glade Spring and Flaccavento Farms in Abingdon and freshly picked broccoli from the Emory & Henry College Organic Garden.

The ready-to-bake Broccoli, Bacon and Pepper Jack Quiche and Spinach, Bacon, Mushrooms and Swiss Quiche also are available at Blue Hills Market in Abingdon and Laurel Springs Farm in Marion.

Bordwine brings a touch of his Appalachian roots to the restaurant with his homemade biscuits, using a recipe that originates from his grandmother.

"I used to make the biscuits without measuring. Now I measure for a more consistent product," Bordwine said.

All it takes is buttermilk and real butter to make the biscuits, said Bordwine, who spilled the secret to making excellent biscuits.

"Freeze the butter before using it. You want the butter to be really cold. It makes fluffy and airy biscuits every time."

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



The rewards are amazing with our
PLATINUM REWARDS CREDIT CARD

Fuel discounts, merchandise, cash back, and more.

• Contactless Tap and Go • No Annual Fee • Details on our website

BANKOFMARIONVA.COM • Subject to credit approval. Some restrictions may apply.



Branches of The Bank of Marion



WANDERING AROUND WASHINGTON

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.

Historical Society asks to repurpose and preserve Confederate memorial

Abingdon's Town Manager Jimmy Morani may be saying "no" to moving Confederate memorials from the Washington County Courthouse onto town property.

But the president of the Historical Society of Washington County, Virginia, maintains his stance.

Move the Confederate generals monument to the Unknown Confederate Dead section of the Sinking Spring Cemetery, Historical Society President Walter Jenny said at the Nov. 18 Town Council meeting.

And move the Confederate soldier statue — and its base — to the Veterans Memorial Park, Jenny said.

Now, before I tell you any more, let me go back to Morani: He says the town just may not be able to do either one. And while he is interested in hearing from the public, he has no plan to put this on a Town Council agenda.

Reason for the move: County officials need to move these monuments for the expansion of the Washington County Courthouse.

Now, listen to what Jenny says.

Confederates are veterans, for one. And when the soldier statue was erected in 1907, it simply represented veterans. "There was only the Civil War," Jenny said.

Since 1907, the United States has fought World War I and World War II and dealt with conflicts in Korea, Vietnam and Iraq.

That soldier does not have to stand as simply for the Confederacy anymore, Jenny suggested.

"Take that statue and let us stand and repurpose it," Jenny said. "And let it be a statue for veteran of all wars."

The statue can be more than what meets the eye, Jenny suggested. "It's about the people from this country or this community who took up arms because they were asked to."



Joe Tennis

CHRISTMAS TREES



Tom Foltz installed banners last week in Damascus, announcing a Christmas tree sale open at noon daily starting on Nov. 27 at Laurel Creek Park next to the Damascus Old Mill Inn. CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS

A new tree-dition

Damascus promises to cut and wrap your Christmas tree for you

BY CAROLYN R. WILSON
FOR THE WASHINGTON COUNTY NEWS

DAMASCUS, Va. — The message from Damascus residents Tom and Donna Foltz is to "buy local" this Christmas season.

The couple, who organized a revival of the town's farmers market this summer, is extending the market experience with the sale of top-of-the-line Fraser fir trees.

Thirty trees that come in multiple sizes were purchased at wholesale prices by the Town of Damascus from Wolverton Mountain Fraser Fir. Profits from the tree sales will go back into an account for purchasing Christmas trees for next year's market, said Donna Foltz.

The tree sales open at noon daily beginning Nov. 27 at Laurel Creek Park on Imboden Street next to the Damascus Old Mill Inn. Additional festive attractions include the sale of Christmas cookies from Kate's Jumbo Cookies and handmade wreaths created by Blue Ridge Confections.

Santa Claus will greet children from 2 to 5 p.m. on Saturday, Nov. 27, at the market.

Christmas tree sales will follow a method that is hands-free for customers from the time they get out of their cars until they drive off the lot. Community volunteers will play a large role in making sales run smoothly.

"Damascus is looking forward to starting a new tradition," said Donna Foltz.

When customers arrive at the market, they will be greeted by volunteers who will offer them free cups of hot apple cider before escorting them to the tree sizes they prefer.



All trees will be unwrapped for easy viewing.

Once a tree is selected, a volunteer will carry the tree to a station, where a saw will be used to manure the base and trim the branches as needed.

The tree is then sent to another station, where it is wrapped for transportation before being carried and secured to the customer's vehicle.

"Customers can drive away without even touching the tree," said Tom.

While the trees make their way through the stations, customers can shop at the park and listen to Christmas music.

Organizers of the tree sales will deliver the trees to the homes of customers who do not have vehicles.

"Our hopes are high that people will want to come back to Damascus year after year to buy their trees," said Tom.

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



Preferred Benefits Checking

ROADSIDE ASSISTANCE

Just one of the benefits!

Roadside Assistance, Cell Phone Protection, Identity Theft Resolution, Shopping, Travel & Entertainment Discounts, Great Checking, and more! **Just 6.95/Month**

BANKOFMARIONVA.COM



THE BANK OF ABINGDON
THE BANK OF DAMASCUS
THE BANK OF GLADE SPRING
Branches of The Bank of Marion