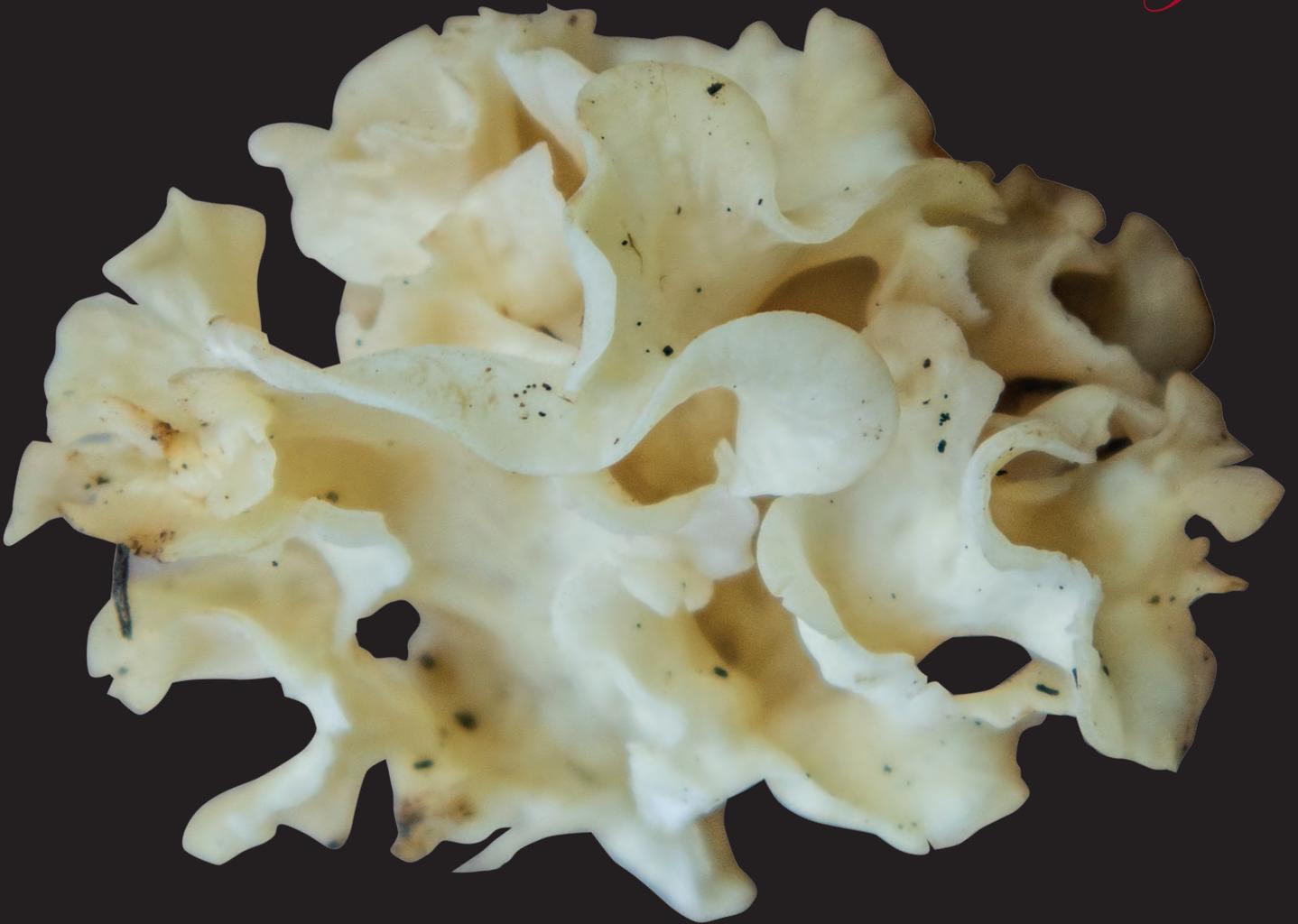


SUFFOLK

suffolklivingmag.com

Living



Mushrooms

FUNKY FUNGI AND
GOBLIN' GOATS

november/december 2021 • vol. 12, no. 6

For the love of spores, 'don't munch on a hunch'

Sleepy Hole Park
alive with mushrooms

Story by Jimmy LaRoue
Photos by Troy Cooper

Mushrooms abound and liven up the ground at Sleepy Hole Park. And after an avid mushroomer such as Theresa Augustin shows off more than a dozen different types, they suddenly seem like they're sprouting all over.

Augustin, the director of environmental engagement and outreach at Norfolk Botanical Garden, is a self-avowed mushroom expert and enthusiast. Her curiosity about mushrooms piqued when she was studying at Old Dominion University and she took a class on them. Since then, she's expanded her knowledge of them and has been taking people on mushroom walks in the gardens for about 20 years.

"The more I learn, the more I share," she said.

But that doesn't mean she'll eat any mushroom she finds.

For starters, she won't eat any mushroom that isn't cooked.

More importantly, she has to find out if the mushroom she picks up is even edible. Some edible types can look very similar to ones that are toxic.

"I don't ever assume something until I've ID'd it and I actually look for certain physical features on it," Augustin said to a group of mushroom enthusiasts during a fall mushroom presentation at the park. "And that's what I encourage you guys to do. Never take a picture of this and then go out into the woods and be like, 'but that was on her table. That's what that is.' You have to educate yourself, read the books, understand what you're looking for when it comes to an edible mushroom, or just mushrooms in general."

That's a good enough reason to take a spore print of any mushroom found in the field, but that requires patience, as it can take anywhere from 40 minutes to several hours, or even days in some instances, before discerning whether it's toxic or tasty.

In other words?

Don't munch on a hunch.





Theresa Augustin, the director of environmental engagement and outreach at Norfolk Botanical Garden, talked about the different kinds of mushrooms that can be found in Sleepy Hole Park and the region during a fall workshop, which drew enthusiasts from Suffolk, Hampton and North Carolina.

MUSHROOMS continued from page 13

It's a phrase she would repeat over the course of about two hours during her presentation and subsequent hike through the park.

"Every mushroom is edible — once," Augustin quips.

The color of a spore print is unique to that mushroom, she says. She used a honey mushroom as an example — a normal one has a white spore print, while the deadly lookalike's print color is brown.

"Sometimes when you have those identical twins and you want to just double-check, doing a spore print can be a lifesaver and super helpful in ID'ing," Augustin says before explaining how to do it this way: "Pop the cap off, sit it on a piece of white paper — you want to use white paper because you can get the true color of the spore. If you use colored paper, it might influence it a little bit."

Some people will use glass so they can put it under a microscope for closer inspection. She advises doing the spore print outside or in a garage due to the "little creatures" that like to live in the mushrooms.

"You may find out how squiggly and wiggly they all are," Augustin said.

The American composer John Cage had a fascination with mycology and all things mushrooms, and had a brush with how dangerous misidentifying them could be. In 1954, while at the Stony Point artists' colony in upstate New York, he became sick after eating hellebore, a poisonous mushroom he thought was skunk cabbage.

Though Cage liked to eat mushrooms, even after his poisoning, he shared the common challenge about mushrooms that Augustin and others on the walk run into — being less

than sure of what they're seeing.

"The more you know, the less sure you feel about identifying them," Cage once said about them. "Each one is itself. Each mushroom is what it is — its own center. It's useless to pretend to know mushrooms. They escape your erudition."

Augustin brought paper bags filled with different types of mushrooms foraged in Suffolk. But the walk through the park's woods was illuminating for the multitude of types of them on trees and in the ground. And participants, including one wearing a mushroom-themed T-shirt, shared her enthusiasm for them.

"Mushrooms are super cool," Augustin said. "They are actually the fruiting body ... of a fungus that lives underground. This is the structure that comes up solely to release the spore so the next generation can start."

See MUSHROOMS page 15



MUSHROOMS continued from page 14

Mushrooms tend to grow in the ground and on trees, and fall is usually the best time to forage them. And better yet, you can pick as many mushrooms as you want and not destroy the fungus.

And once the group got to exploring the park, they found plenty.

There's nothing sleepy about mushrooms here, especially in their peak season of fall, but they do keep secrets in the underground world in which they grow. The mushrooms we see above ground are just a hint at the secrets that lie beneath.

But we do have evidence of what helps that underground world thrive for them: copious amounts of rain.

Even someone who was dropped into the park and didn't know what the weather had been like would have been able to discern that it had rained plenty over the previous few weeks.

"Mushrooms pop up from environmental conditions," Augustin says. "It's a certain temperature in the air, a certain temperature in the soil, its pH, it's the amount of moisture — moisture is probably the primary thing."

"No rain, no mushrooms."

See MUSHROOMS page 16



At left, Theresa Augustin, the director of environmental engagement and outreach at Norfolk Botanical Garden, shows off some mushrooms found in Sleepy Hole Park with some of the people who came from Suffolk and the surrounding region for the workshop.

MUSHROOMS continued from page 15

They also have something in common with something much easier to eat when picked.

“Mushrooms are like apples on an apple tree, right? The apple is produced as the reproductive structure to get the seeds disseminated out,” she says. “Same with the mushroom, right? So you can pick apples all day long and the tree is fine. There’s no damage to it (and) it continues to thrive.

“Same with the mushroom. The fungus underground is doing its thing and will not be impacted by you pulling up a mushroom.”

She didn’t dive too deep into the types of mushrooms; rather, she wants people to appreciate and understand them, and provide people with a base layer of understanding if they want to go deeper into identifying mushrooms.

Cage connected his two loves — music and mushrooms — though he joked the only thing the two had in common was their proximity in the dictionary. Though it’s unclear whether anyone in the group during Augustin’s presentation felt like Cage about the fungi, they were clear in their enthusiasm for finding myriad mushrooms all over the lively Sleepy Hole Park ground.

“Often I go into the woods thinking, after all these years, I ought finally to be bored with fungi,” Cage wrote in a diary of his. “But coming upon just any mushroom in good condition, I lose my mind all over again.”



More than two dozen people turned out for a mushroom workshop at Sleepy Hole Park with Theresa Augustin, the director of environmental engagement and outreach at Norfolk Botanical Garden. She talked about the different types of mushrooms that grow in Suffolk and throughout the region and the challenges in identifying them.



How do you see Suffolk?

Submit your photos to Through the Lens
news@suffolklivingmag.com

SUFFOLK

suffoklivingmag.com

Living



Sugar

PLUS SWEET TREATS
AND A CENTURY
OF SERVICE

september/october 2021 • vol. 12, no. 5



'Like Blood on Paper'

Sugar's life hasn't always been so sweet, but she's using her story to help others on and off the court

Story by Jimmy LaRoue
Submitted Photos

Her story didn't start in therapy, but it was a catalyst to get it out. And Sugar Rodgers is using it in a transformative way to help others, especially young people who may be growing up in similarly difficult situations, by offering a compelling message of perseverance through her book, "They Better Call Me Sugar: My Journey from the Hood to the Hardwood."

The Suffolk native who grew up in the Williamstown neighborhood — attending school at Elephant's Fork Elementary, King's Fork Middle and King's Fork High — manifested her dreams of being a standout basketball player and, with the wisdom of therapy and life experience, grew to understand that the sport was an escape from her difficult circumstances despite seemingly long odds given her upbringing.

Rodgers lived in the midst of violence, drugs and poverty, and, at 14, on July 14, 2005, lost her mother to lupus — 14 has been her jersey number ever since. She bounced around several homes in the city and in Portsmouth until getting to college at Georgetown, where she received encouragement to seek counseling and share her experiences. It began a truly therapeutic rise that has allowed her to gain a sense of equilibrium and perspective.

"Therapy is very taboo in the African American community, and we're taught to compartmentalize everything that we have from birth," Rodgers said. "You can't tell people what's going on inside your household or you would get in trouble. You can't go outside and gossip to people about things that are happening to you.

"And when I got to college, one of my coaches recommended it. Me being so ignorant to the fact, I'm like, 'I'm not going to talk to a white man about my problems and/or white woman,' you know, 'cause that's just how I viewed it. I was like, 'I'm not.' But he was like, "If you go, you'll find yourself in a better place mentally."

SUGAR continued from page 17

Starting out playing basketball for the Suffolk Blazers, Rodgers would go on to play at King's Fork High School, for Boo Williams' AAU team, and then for his sister, Terri Williams-Flournoy, at Georgetown in Washington, D.C., before becoming, yes, the 14th overall pick in the WNBA draft when she was selected by the Minnesota Lynx.

Though not a starter with the Lynx in 2013, she was part of their WNBA championship team before she was traded to the New York Liberty, where she emerged professionally over the course of the next five seasons, including a 2016 season in which she averaged 14.6 points per game and then being named an All-Star and Sixth Woman of the Year in 2017. For four of those seasons, she played under coach Bill Laimbeer, and she reunited with him for the last two seasons of her playing career with the Las Vegas Aces.

She is still with the Aces as an assistant coach to Laimbeer, and she recently was named an assistant coach at Georgetown. Laimbeer has referred to Rodgers as a "student of the game."

But Rodgers is as much a student of life, and despite how arduous it has been, she has, indeed, come up Aces.

"I used basketball as a vehicle, to a degree," Rodgers said. "When I was younger, I didn't see basketball like that. I didn't play basketball because I loved it. I played basketball because it saved me. I played sports because it saved me from my situation. That was the only way I was able to get some peace and not have to worry about reality."

She would be at different parks playing, spending time with her friends, playing AAU, whatever: "Reality didn't set in," Rodgers said, "until I left the basketball court."

Though she has set records, won a championship and has been an All-Star on the court, Rodgers is much more than the sum of her basketball career. She turned herself from an indifferent scholar to one with a bachelor's degree in English — "I was able to be the first generation in my family to graduate college" — and a master's in sports industry management, and she uses her life and playing experience to her advantage now that she's coaching.

"Those things for me have been the hugest accomplishments in my life, because when I went to school, in high school, I really didn't



Sugar Rodgers, right, smiles with Las Vegas Aces teammate A'ja Wilson after a game.

take it serious, but I take education very serious, being very knowledgeable of certain things, now. And that's just me and how I look at it. Knowledge is power."

That was something she picked up from Georgetown's legendary coach, John Thompson Jr., during numerous conversations the two had while she was playing for the Hoyas, and it's been something that has resonated with her ever since.

The first time she went to therapy, she was still a reluctant participant. She was ready enough to go, but not ready to speak. But she recognized that she needed help, and learned about how therapy could help.

She credits her therapist with getting her to open up, but instead of speaking to him, she began, with his encouragement, to write down her story.

"When I wrote this story down, it was almost like blood on paper," Rodgers said. "I'm like, 'man, I went through all of this. I didn't have (much). Then my mom died, and I became homeless. I didn't have time to really hone in on all these problems, and I didn't know that they were creating more problems for me in the future."

She wants her story to reach young girls

and boys in similar situations, to show that no matter the situation, they can accomplish something great in life, that they aren't alone.

"Some people feel like they're alone, but they don't have the support," Rodgers said. "It's more so saying 'look, you're not alone. I went through that. You can get through it.'"

And her advice to those young people? "Keep pushing, keep going forward," Rodgers said. "The things that happen, they're temporary, and somebody's going to hear you, somebody's going to feed you, somebody's going to help you. Don't be afraid to ask for help, especially when you need it."

Rodgers said her guarded nature didn't allow her to build relationships, as she didn't know who she could talk to, who she could trust and who really cared about her. She wants to be able to build relationships with people on the job, with colleagues and be the best person she can be for the day when she starts a family.

"I want to be able to do certain things that I felt like my childhood trauma always hindered me from," Rodgers said. "I was just like, I went to therapy and it was all she wrote."

Or rather, all Sugar wrote.



Above, Sugar Rodgers drives against two defenders. At left, Rodgers, on the left, now an assistant coach with the Las Vegas Aces, talks with Dearica Hamby during a game.

"They Better Call Me Sugar: My Journey from the Hood to the Hardwood," by Sugar Rodgers, is available to purchase online at Amazon, Barnes & Noble, Walmart.com and other retailers. Copies to check out are also available at each branch of the Suffolk Public Library.

Can't refuse the refuse

Story by Jimmy LaRoue
Photos by Jimmy LaRoue & Submitted

If you see Bubba in his truck, give him a wave, a wide berth and enough space between your trash cans, please.

From the time Alfred “Bubba” Copeland picks up his refuse truck at 6 a.m. until the time he finishes his route at least 10 hours later, he will have collected trash from more than 1,200 Suffolk homes and made at least two trips to the regional landfill off of U.S. Route 58.

But that 10 hours can be a best guess on some days, too, since there’s no refusing the refuse if he’s not finished in that time span.

If traffic’s heavy, or there’s extra trash to be collected, or another truck on another route breaks down, it’s all got to get in the truck and to the landfill before the end of his shift.

And with the specific maneuvering he has to do, there’s no time for looking back. Literally.

Though Copeland sees everything behind him, he doesn’t turn and look back at them, instead, he relies primarily on the multiple side mirrors he has, and occasionally, the video monitor which shows a camera view behind him.

It’s one thing while driving to occasionally turn one’s head to check a blind spot before passing someone on the highway.

But imagine having to do that thousands of times per day along his route. If Copeland did that, he would have to keep a ready supply of ibuprofen in his truck for the sore neck he would have.

“I always learned on my mirror,” Copeland said. “If I’ve got to turn my head the whole day, it’s going to hurt my neck.”

On a pleasant spring morning, Copeland was collecting trash in the posh neighborhood The Riverfront at Harbour View in North Suffolk.

While the job is very much routine and can be monotonous, Copeland has to account for a number of things throughout the day — chief among them keeping an eye for children in the neighborhoods he drives through and aligning his truck’s forks with the cans so it can grab and lift them to the top of the truck and dump the trash in it.

By 11 a.m., Copeland has already filled up his truck, emptied it at the Southeastern Public Service Authority’s regional landfill — which is at least an hour-long process coming from the northern reaches of the city — and, after cleaning out his truck, is back for a second round.

That load was among the more than 13,000 tons of Suffolk trash taken there and to the John C. Holland landfill in the first four months of this year.

If he doesn’t clean it out, trash will build up around the blade and affect how well he can

See REFUSE page 14



REFUSE continued from page 12

compact it. If there is too much buildup, Copeland has to get inside the truck to clean it, something he would prefer not to do.

He answers this question before it's asked: No, he has never had a dead body in his truck. He has seen dead animals, though, and he and his truck appeared briefly in a locally-filmed movie.

As he stops at each home, he explains how he has to position the truck around potential obstacles that can make the trash collection more difficult.

In one instance, Copeland, whose driver's seat is on the right side of the truck, had just a few feet between his truck and a vehicle parked in front of a home. In a few other instances, he had cans that were too close to one another. Cans are supposed to be positioned a socially-distanced six feet apart; some, though, will be as close as six inches. While not impossible to grab the cans automatically, it leaves little margin

for error.

"If they've got something in the way, I've got to put the truck in a position in which I can get the can," Copeland said. "I can't just pull up at a certain spot, because each can is different. Each customer has a certain way to set it out."

Factoring in all of these things, Copeland is in no hurry.

"You have to keep in mind that you have to be safe," Copeland said. "You don't want to get to the point where you're trying to rush through. I'd rather than be slower, and safe, than to be fast."

Copeland, a Suffolk High School graduate, says he is thankful for his job, having come from a series of retail and warehousing jobs. He had not intended on becoming a driver, but when afforded the opportunity, he decided to get his commercial driver's license.

He's driven in many trucks over the years, but his current one is special. In it is a plaque that reads, "This Unit Ordered for

Alfred 'Bubba' Copeland by Carlos Ward Sr." It's something that motivates Copeland.

Ward, like Copeland, graduated from Suffolk High School and worked with him in the city's Public Works Department. Ward served in many capacities over his 31 years, eventually becoming assistant director in 2019 before he died late last year.

"I got choked up because Carlos had died," Copeland said. "But they thought enough of me to get together and come up with this little gesture right here."

One piece of advice Copeland got early on in his career has resonated and stuck with him: Always approach the job like it's your first day.

It took him about two weeks to learn how to drive the truck. Now more than 20 years into it, Copeland still finds it challenging amidst the routine, but it's a profession Copeland finds honor in.

"It's a job that people look down on because it's trash," Copeland said, "but can you imagine this not getting collected?"



where am I?

In each edition the Suffolk Living staff provides a challenge of sorts, testing how much of Suffolk you really know. We photograph some location in Suffolk that is readily accessible and open to the public, and see if you can tell us where it is.

If you know where this photo was taken, submit your answer, along with your name and contact information to news@suffolklivingmag.com. If you're right, you will be entered for a chance to win a \$25 gift card.

So, if you know where this is, let us know. If you're right, you could be a winner.

Go out and enjoy Suffolk!

