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ON THE COVER



Cover image designed by Jen Jaqua

publisher's note

The record keepers

Your community newspaper, the Suffolk News-Herald (which also produces Suffolk Living Magazine), has been serving the people of Suffolk for 150 years. This month's cover story highlights some of the history of the paper and is written by our very own Jen Jaqua. Wearing many hats within our organization, Jaqua is a multitalented author, photographer and award-winning graphic artist. As she points out, newspapers are tasked to be the record keepers of the people, government, events and happenings of the area. I couldn't agree more. When thinking about the history of a place, its people and events, it's no surprise organizations and individuals turn to newspapers to search the records – find the facts. Historians and historical societies use newspapers as reliable resources, and we are honored to be known as the record keepers. Turn to Page 12 for more of the story.



Get ready to dive into another great read on Page 18. By now, we all know the health benefits of regular exercise and that swimming is a great way to stay in shape when joints are, well, let's just say, perhaps not as young and supple as they used to be. Our neighborhood Suffolk YMCA pool has a few stories to tell and James Robinson talked with "The Four Musketeers." These fast friends share some of their history and how the group came to be. After reading, you might just find yourself ready to take a dive at the

Y, creating your own health benefits and new friendships. Of course, there are more stories within these pages and we hope you enjoy reading this issue as much as we enjoyed putting it together. As always, we are deeply appreciative of the many advertisers and readers whose support makes Suffolk Living magazine possible.

Suffolk Living Magazine strives to tell the story of our community. We are blessed and grateful to be a part of this community and are thankful that there are so many great stories to share. This is a magazine about and for you. We welcome your ideas and invite you to share with us what you would like to hear more about by sending us a note at P.O. Box 1220, Suffolk, VA, 23439, giving us a call at (757) 539-3437 or sending me an email at Betty.Ramsey@SuffolkLiving.com.

Betty Ramsey, Publisher

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what to do

NOVEMBER 17

Start the holiday season at 6 p.m. with the Suffolk Grand Illumination in front of the Suffolk Seaboard Station Railroad. Watch the 32-foot tree light up when the switch is flipped to illuminate Suffolk for the holiday season. Be there as Santa arrives in style, enjoy seasonal music, and enjoy a horse-drawn carriage ride. Youngsters will be able to participate in various holiday-themed craft activities in heated tents. Be sure to bring along your camera to capture your children's smiling faces as they whisper their Christmas wishes to Santa Claus.

NOVEMBER 18, DECEMBER 16

Join the Historic Suffolk Narrated Bus Tour to see Suffolk through the eyes of years gone by! Suffolk's rich heritage dates back to the early 17th century when Captain John Smith first encountered the Nansemond Indians on the Nansemond River. Guided by a Suffolk historian, you meet the people and places that made Suffolk the city it is today. Highlights of this windshield tour include Cedar Hill Cemetery, Riddick's Folly House Museum, Constant's Wharf, College Court and Suffolk's Historic Lakeside neighborhood. Transportation via Suffolk Tourism's bus, which boards at 1:55 p.m. Masks must be worn while on the bus.

NOVEMBER 24 TO DECEMBER 31

Welcome in the holidays with the 4th Annual Suffolk Festival of Lights at Sleepy Hole Park. This free drive-through holiday light display is sure to put you in the festive spirit.

NOVEMBER 25

Happy Hour Glass Works will host a Maker's Market from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. in Driver Village. Come support your local artists and shop for the holidays with food and crafts and fun for all.

NOVEMBER 25

American Girl Program, featuring the 2023 Girl of the Year Kavi Sharma, is back at 10 a.m. and at 11:30 a.m. at Riddick's Folly House Museum. Hear about how Kavi learns to balance her love of dance with her schoolwork. Reservations are limited to 20 girls per session and each will receive a doll.

NOVEMBER 25

Shop local at Downtown Suffolk Small

Business Saturday. This one-of-a-kind shopping event offers hard-to-find handcrafted creations and eclectic gifts for you and those special people in your life. Join merchants throughout Suffolk's historic downtown district offering artisan-quality crafts, jewelry, fine art, woodcrafts, crocheted items, pottery, handbags, holiday ornaments, home décor and more. Discounts and holiday specials from other downtown established retailers and restaurants will be offered as well. This event is open to the public from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., with ample and free parking throughout the downtown area. Event guests can also enjoy live entertainment and meet Santa.

DECEMBER 1

The 3rd Annual AIDS Walk will start at 10 a.m. at Suffolk Health & Human Services. Free HIV/STI testing will be available following the walk inside the Suffolk Health Department with food and giveaways. Tickets are \$10 on EventBrite.

DECEMBER 1

Bennett's Creek Recreation Center will host Frosty's Funland. Bring the whole family to celebrate the holiday season with hot cocoa, cookies, crafts and letters to the North Pole.

DECEMBER 1

Morgan Memorial Library will have a Festival of Flags: Celebrating the Afro-Diaspora starting at 6:30 p.m. at the library. This is a festival dedicated to celebrating the many countries in the Afro-Diaspora. Share your story at the open mic, show off your knowledge at trivia, create buttons to represent your flag, and more. Food, drink and merchandise will be available for purchase.

DECEMBER 2

The Annual Artisan Gift Fair at the Pavilion will take place from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the Suffolk Visitor Center Pavilion. Join Suffolk Tourism for the annual outdoor holiday market in conjunction with the Suffolk Farmers' Market, featuring over 30 vendors offering artisan-quality crafts, jewelry, soaps, fine art, candles, woodcrafts, crocheted items, jams and jellies, holiday decorations, wreaths, baked goods, seasonal produce, meats, and more.

DECEMBER 2

Come to the Jingle Mingle families will get to enjoy hot cocoa or coffee, fun holiday-themed games and arts and crafts, as we await the arrival of Mr. Saint Nick at the Curtis Milteer Recreation Center. Children can participate in the event with a donation of a new, unwrapped toy to be donated to a local charity.

DECEMBER 2

Booker T. Washington Recreation Center will host a Winter Wonderland from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. with crafts, karaoke, a photobooth, games, food, and much more! Children can participate in the event with a donation of a new, unwrapped toy to be donated to a local charity.

DECEMBER 2

For the fans of Bridgerton, you are cordially invited to an evening at Queen Charlotte's Court. Enjoy an evening of frivolity with courtly dancing, good company, and light canapé hors d'oeuvres. Will you be the diamond of the season? Come dressed to impress a queen or to be royalty yourself! For adults.

DECEMBER 2

A Wildlife Night Hike will begin with a one-mile hike around a trail that borders the wildlife refuge area in Driver. Flashlights will be provided. This event is open to the public, but requires registration. Youth must be accompanied by an adult; Scout Troops are welcome.

DECEMBER 3

Great Dismal Swamp's Underground Railroad Pavilion Tour will depart at 10 a.m. from the Suffolk Visitor Center. The Great Dismal Swamp has long been known for its impenetrability, as a place where travelers could easily lose their way. Yet in the early centuries of American history, many of the people who vanished into the swamp were lost by their own choice. The swamp was a sanctuary for thousands of fugitive African-American slaves.

DECEMBER 8 TO JANUARY 26

The Suffolk Art Gallery will have its Winter Exhibit: Stories in Stitches on display with an opening reception from 5 to 7 p.m. on Dec. 8, at the Suffolk Art Gallery. This display of work is from members of the 54-40 African American Quilters Guild of Virginia. Founded in March 1993, the

what to do

Send us your news

To submit your calendar or news item, simply email it to: news@suffolklivingmag.com

NOVEMBER 10

The Suffolk Center for Cultural Arts will host an open mic night with Dasan Ahanu. Ahanu is a public speaker, organizer, curator, educator, poet, spoken word artist, educator, songwriter, emcee and loyal Hip Hop head. He is co-founder and managing director of Black Poetry Theatre, a Durham-based theatre company that creates and produces original poetry and spoken word-based productions. Tickets are \$15 each.

NOVEMBER 5, DECEMBER 17

The Great Dismal Swamp Guided Nature Walk will include a biologist-led nature walk as you learn about the flora, fauna, wildlife and history that abound in the 112,000-acre wilderness. Participants will meet at the Washington Ditch Boardwalk Parking Lot for the 90-minute tour. Call the Suffolk Visitor's Center to make a reservation.

NOVEMBER 13

The North Suffolk Library will celebrate

Diwali with Diwali Lights: Lamps, Bollywood Dance and Indian Cuisine. From 6 to 7 p.m. design colorful lanterns, try Indian cuisine from a local restaurant, and learn a Bollywood dance routine.

NOVEMBER 17 TO 18

Refined Relics on Carolina Road will host a Christmas Open House and Artisan Gift Market. Come for a small-town feel with homemade goods, gift artisans, and vintage items.

NOVEMBER 4, 8, 18, DECEMBER 6, 16, 20, 30

Join the Great Dismal Swamp Safari and see that the swamp is anything but dismal. The narrated Swamp Safari is a four-hour tour led by a biologist specializing in the unique habitat of the swamp. Learn about the history, lore, vegetation and wildlife with this adventure that includes a brief walk to Lake Drummond. Wear comfortable clothes and closed-toed shoes and explore the Great Dismal Swamp.

what to do

group is the only African-American guild in Virginia.

DECEMBER 8

The Grinch is coming to East Suffolk Recreation Center! The festivities for the evening will include arts and crafts, a hot cocoa bar, bounce house, giveaways, and a photo opportunity with the Grinch. Families are encouraged to participate in this event by donating a new, unwrapped toy that will be donated to a local charity.

DECEMBER 9

Decoys Seafood presents the 1st annual Candy Cane Carnival Blind Duck Tiki Bar with a FREE photo opportunity with Santa. There will be local holiday vendors, Christmas raffles, games, coloring and kid activities, live Christmas caroling by local high schools, hot cocoa, apple cider, and adult Holiday beverages, visits from your favorite Holiday characters and more. Wear your ugliest Christmas sweater for a chance to win a prize.

DECEMBER 9

Join Suffolk Tourism, in partnership with the Suffolk Center for Cultural Arts, as they proudly present the blockbuster animated film, Encanto. Admission is \$1 and the movie will begin at 2 p.m. All children must be accompanied by an adult.

DECEMBER 9

View the sights and sounds of the 2023 Suffolk Holiday Parade at 7 p.m. Find the best spot to watch the floats, equestrian units, marching bands, and festive vehicles as they make their way down West Washington Street and turn up North Main Street, with the parade route ending at Finney Avenue. The Grandstand will be in front of the old SunTrust Building in the 100 block of North Main Street. This year's theme is Winter Wonderland.

DECEMBER 15

Virginia Symphony Orchestra: Holiday Spectacular will be at the Suffolk Center for Cultural Arts for the must-see holiday tradition of the season. There's no better way to lift your spirits than with seasonal songs and traditional carols delivered in

full sound and spectacle by the Virginia Symphony Orchestra's Holiday Brass.

DECEMBER 16

Bring the kiddos to meet jolly ol' St. Nick. Bring your cameras for photos with Santa, at the Suffolk Visitor Center, from 1 to 4 p.m. Holiday décor makes this the ideal place to snap a photo with Santa.

DECEMBER 29

North Suffolk Library will have a Noon Year's Eve at Morgan Memorial Library from 11 a.m. to noon to celebrate the new year. Celebrate the New Year a little early with a countdown, balloon drop, crafts, snacks, dancing, and more.

JANUARY 14

Join Suffolk Tourism, in partnership with the Suffolk Center for Cultural Arts, as they proudly present the Winter Family Movie Series at the Center, three blockbuster family movies that enchanted worldwide audiences. The series kicks off with The Super Mario Bros. Movie at 2 p.m. with admission \$2 per person.



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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!



150 Years of News

Story by Jen Jaqua
 Photos courtesy of Nansemond Suffolk Historical Society

Suffolk looked a lot different in 1873. Roads were narrow and muddy, buildings were made mostly of wood, and information was obtained via word-of-mouth or local newspapers.

In 1873, Dr. Thomas E. Cropper started a newsletter-style newspaper to distribute the news of his Methodist church. The paper was called the Suffolk Herald. It was published weekly and ran out of a small office on Washington Square. This small church newspaper would grow with the city of Suffolk to be the main newspaper and later the only newspaper

to cover Suffolk news.

On March 23, 1923, the Suffolk News began publishing for the first time as the first modern-day daily newspaper in Suffolk. The paper was published every afternoon except Sunday.

A few years later, in 1927, the News bought out the Herald, and the Suffolk News-Herald was the result.

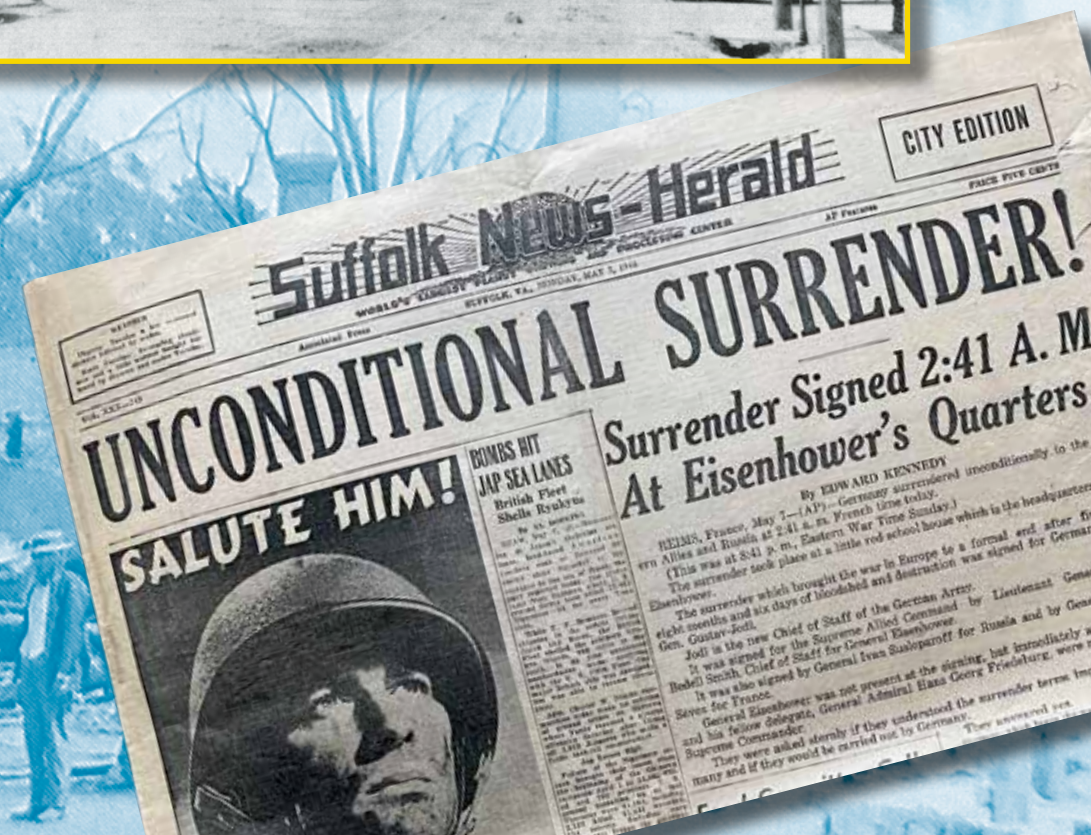
The News-Herald has provided Suffolk accurate, timely community news for 150 years. The city is different, much bigger and busier. The process of getting, publishing, and reading

the news has also changed greatly.

The archives of the Suffolk News-Herald tell the story of Suffolk.

“For a century and a half, the Suffolk-News Herald and its predecessors have kept Suffolk citizens informed of events of interest and importance to our community,” said Kermit Hobbs, Suffolk historian. “Looking back through the archives of past issues, we can see what life was like for the people who made our city what it is today.”

The News-Herald has been an advocate for the community from the start.





In late December 1934, the country was in the middle of the Great Depression, and food was in short supply nationwide. In Suffolk, things were no better. Upon hearing about the inability of churches and other local charities to meet the demand of hungry children in the city at Christmastime, the News-Herald ran a front-page editorial in the Dec. 18 edition.

It was an urgent call for the citizens of Suffolk to help. By the next day, a committee was formed, and money had started to flow into what was originally called the Empty Stocking Fund. The name Cheer Fund was coined that second day. By Christmas Eve, 1934, \$501 had been raised, and the Cheer Fund was created. These days, this fund created by the News-Herald is its own nonprofit and each year, it collects roughly \$40,000 to buy toys for children in need.

In a December 1934 editorial, the News-Herald expressed the dire need to make sure no family in Suffolk went hungry on Christmas.

“It would be nothing short of a disgrace to

have it said there were hungry homes in Suffolk on this festal day,” the editorial said. “We will not believe that Suffolk, wealthy, kindly and generous, will permit such a state of affairs to exist once they know the facts as herein set forth. This is an opportunity for real service to the underprivileged citizens of the city. The responsibility rests upon all in proportion to the ability of each donor to subscribe. Donations to the empty stocking fund will be acknowledged daily through these columns. In the name of the Christ child, this appeal is made to a public that will close neither its heart nor its purse in the face of this emergency.”

As in the past, today, the Suffolk News-Herald continues its mission to provide the community of Suffolk with the most accurate and up-to-date information possible.

Boone Newsmedia president and former News-Herald publisher Steve Stewart explains, “In a time when misinformation on social media is rampant, newspapers and their web-

sites are more important than ever as a source of factual information about the community, especially the actions of elected and appointed leadership. Studies have shown that communities with active newspapers doing their job as the Fourth Estate have better, more efficient, more transparent governance.”

As a hyperlocal community newspaper, the Suffolk News-Herald focuses solely on the happenings of Suffolk.

At the heart of the newspaper is the community of Suffolk. News is published with the purpose of keeping the community informed and engaged in the happenings in all corners of the city.

“The Suffolk News-Herald provides an invaluable service to our citizens,” Mayor Mike Duman said. “The paper is a great resource for residents who want to become more active in the community and learn more about community events. The Suffolk News-Herald assists our citizens in making informed decisions regarding local government by providing accurate, trustworthy information and dispel-

ling misinformation. The newspaper also benefits our local businesses. Small business owners can connect with Suffolk residents by providing affordable and effective advertising space. The ability to promote their businesses will create jobs and strengthen our local economy.”

One example of fast, accurate news found in the history of the News-Herald occurred in a time when news of world events traveled much slower.

On June 6, 1944, D-Day had arrived. The Suffolk News-Herald editor was among the first to get news of the invasion. According to an account published in the paper, “The News-Herald editor, Lyman G. Barrett, was the first in Suffolk and Nansemond County to receive the news of the liberation landings in France this morning. The Associated Press in Richmond called him at about 3:45 a.m., and within a few minutes, he had reached the newspaper office, had turned on the teletype machines and was watching the developments. The official communication from General

Dwight D. Eisenhower had reached America at 3:32 a.m. So the News-Herald knew of the momentous event within 13 minutes of the original news flash.” That was lightning speed for 1944.

The future of community newspapers is sure to look different from it does today, just as today’s newspapers look much different from what they did 150 years ago. What won’t change is the need for accurate, trustworthy local news.

“Excellent journalism will always be the cornerstone of our service to the community. We expect the printed newspaper to continue for many years, even as digital delivery of the news grows in importance,” Stewart said. “We cannot change the way people prefer to consume news. Many in our community still want to hold the paper in their hands. Others want to receive it digitally, whether on a smartphone, tablet or computer. We have an obligation to both.”

That obligation and the quality news that the Suffolk News-Herald has provided for a

century and a half will continue for as long as Suffolk has a community invested in knowing what is happening.

“The Suffolk News-Herald serves as a reliable news source, connecting neighbors and keeping them informed about important issues, local events and community updates. Reading the Suffolk News-Herald not only fosters a sense of community but also supports a long-standing small business that has been a pillar of the local community for 150 years,” said Ed Pugh, Suffolk News-Herald editor. “By subscribing to and reading the paper, residents not only stay connected with their town but also contribute to the sustainability of this small business, ensuring that it continues to serve the community for years to come. The News-Herald is the community’s paper. If something is happening in your neighborhood, church or school, let us know. If there are topics you, as a Suffolkian, want to read about, send us an email at news@suffolknews-herald.com.”



Kimberly Martin celebrates the new historical marker for Florence Bowser Elementary School on Friday, Sept. 22.

Education trailblazer honored with new Historical Marker

Story and photos by James W. Robinson

It was a moment to honor an education activist as the family of Florence Bowser, alongside city and school officials, came together to unveil a new historical marker at Florence Bowser Elementary School on Friday, Sept. 22.

During the new FBES school's construction in 2018, the previous roadside historical marker was removed. However, thanks to Bowser's great-granddaughter Bonita Landy Gilchrist coordinating with the Virginia Department of Historic Resources, she ensured to have the marker replaced. The ceremony saw atten-

dance by Suffolk Public Schools Superintendent Dr. John B. Gordon III, School Board Vice Chair Heather Howell of the Sleepy Hole borough, School Board Members Dr. Judith Brooks-Buck of the Nansemond borough, and Karen Jenkins of the Cypress borough, Suffolk City Council Member Leroy Bennett of the Cypress borough and both Former Del. Nadarius Clark and Del. Clinton Jenkins.

Born in Norfolk, Florence Brickhouse Bowser attended Virginia Normal and Collegiate Institute, now known as Virginia State

University, where she graduated in 1892. Bowser's passion for education led her and the Sleepy Hole District School Improvement League to work with the Rosenwald Rural School Building Program. Through this partnership, Bowser ran various fundraisers to raise money and build Florence Graded School in 1920, which also served as the first Virginia-based Rosewald School built for African Americans in Suffolk. Bowser's great-granddaughter and KLM Scholarship Foundation Founder Kimberly Martin spoke about

her great-grandmother's work and influence.

"She started a school for African American children over 100 years ago. She started this school when there were no schools for the children to attend. So she was a trailblazer, she was a pioneer, but most of all, she was a visionary," Martin said. "It's just amazing how her legacy has survived all these years, and I'm so grateful to be part of the event today because I want to participate every chance I get to keep her name in the public's eye because she did a good thing for African American kids, but not only African American kids. Today, she's touching all races."

Martin continued noting her partnership with Jewish Philanthropist Julius Rosenwald and Booker T. Washington while expressing how the marker outlines her impactful work.

"Now imagine an African-American woman over 100 years ago with no internet, no phone. Imagine the obstacles and the challenges that she faced, and she overcame them all as a God-fearing woman, as a mother, as a spouse, a wife, and being a pillar in her community," she said. "That's why it's

so important today to recognize that work and basically let people know if she could do it back then, they can do great things today."

Opening the ceremony, Brooks-Buck expressed the importance of Bowser's work to ensure education for Suffolk's children. "There is nothing in our history that makes us prouder of anyone than we are of her for what she did," Brooks-Buck said. "Julius Rosenwald and several other people in this community put their resources together to help to educate the children in this community and we're just excited about that."

During the ceremony, Gilchrist reflected lovingly on her great-grandmother's work.

"When I think of my ancestor Florence Bowser, my heart is filled with love and admiration," Gilchrist said. "I'm grateful for her courage, resilience and all that she faced in racial diversity ... We all have people in our families, in our lives, that have influenced our journey. I encourage you to honor and lift these people up also because the struggle is real and constant and in our lives. And we are our ancestors."

During his speech, Gordon expressed "This school is such a special place," Gordon said. "Dr. Taylor already has ambition of this school becoming a blue ribbon school, and I honestly believe it's going to happen. From the outstanding support that we have from the KLM Foundation, from the bright and creative students, and this world-class facility. To me, that really surrounds everything that Suffolk Public Schools is all about, everything that Florence Bowser is all about."

Lastly, Florence Bowser Elementary School Principal Dr. Shalise Taylor talked about how FBES continues to be committed to Bowser's vision.

"I'm pleased to report that at the end of last school year, we increased that morale by 20%, retained over 90% of our staff, had 250 volunteers that supported our school and we are fully accredited," she said with the applause of attendees. "I know this would not be possible without all of you. With your support, we will strive to make you all proud and to continue the mission and legacy of Florence Bowser."

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Diving into a new friendship: The Swimmers of Suffolk YMCA

Story by James W. Robinson
Photos by John H. Sheally II

The Suffolk YMCA continues to unite and empower the community through health and wellness. As part of the larger 501(c) (3) non-profit organization across the country, Suffolk YMCA aims to be a destination for families and friends to form connections.

Ralph “Bud” Swiger, Debbie Farrell, Ken Williams and Julie Irby each have found a connection with each other over their love for swimming. Despite their various levels, the four visited the Suffolk YMCA for swimming activities and became fast friends, referring to themselves as “The Three Musketeers and D’Artagnan.” Williams reflected on how they connected after the YMCA’s reopening following COVID.

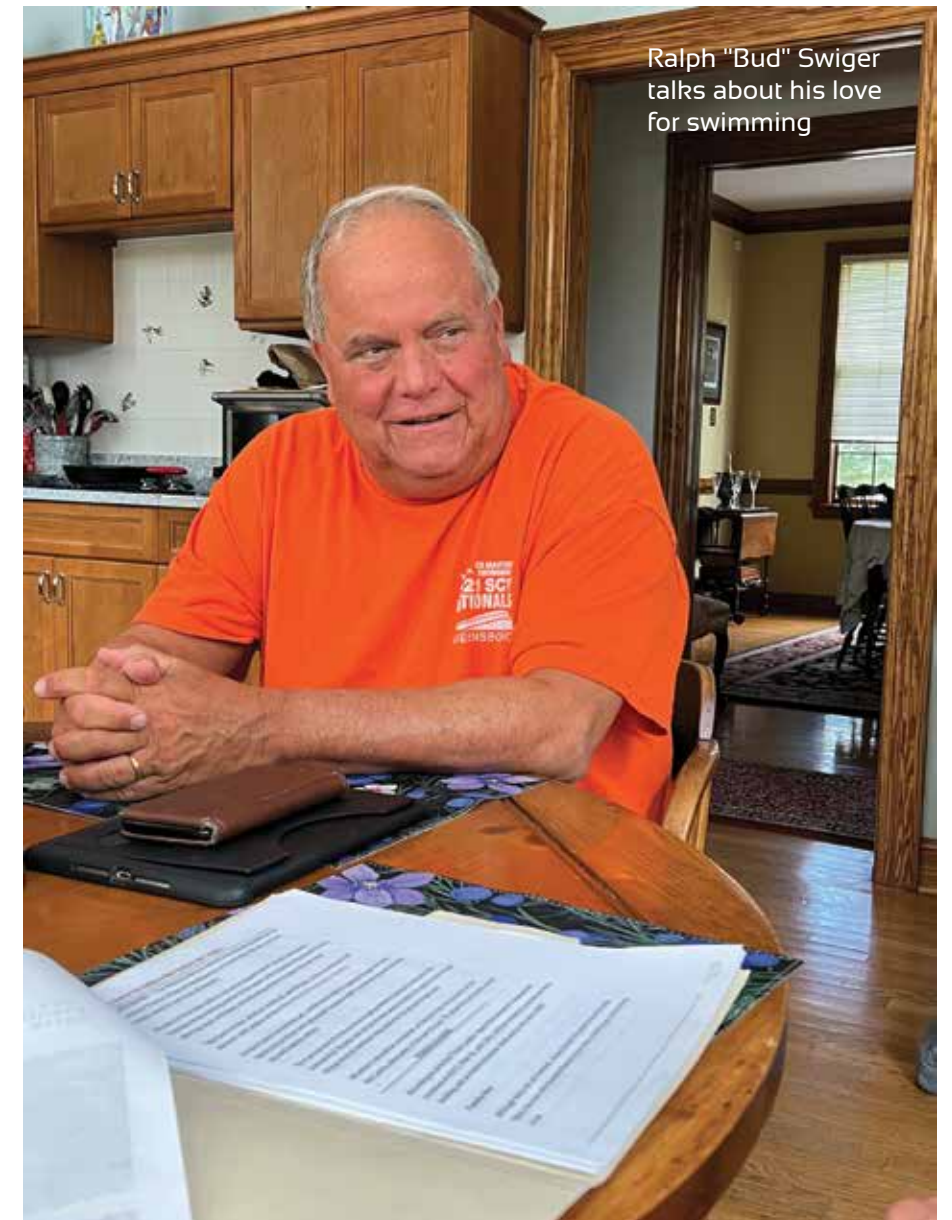
“When COVID hit and shut the Y down, the lap swimmers were actually the people who first reopened the Y, and we would go in the morning, and it didn’t matter if it was rain or shine, or how warm or cold it was. We were the ones that ended up helping reopen the Y,” he said. “Debbie started swimming about that time, at least when I first got to know her. Right after Bud came here, I met him actually on Labor Day. I was the first one in the pool, he was the second one in and we got them talking, and just a friendship developed from that. Just a common interest in swimming and staying active.”

A 78-year-old Suffolk native, Williams says he learned to swim as a teenager.

“We had an outdoor pool in Suffolk, and I took swimming lessons there. I spent a lot during the summers at that pool,” Williams said.

Later in his life, Williams got into various exercise methods, including walking, running and swimming. He noted becoming distant from swimming while focusing on walking. Eventually, Williams started having problems with his shoulder.

“I guess 20 years ago now, I started having a shoulder issue on my right shoulder. I went to the doctor, and he asked me what I was doing for exercise, and I told him he said, ‘Well, that’s not gonna help your shoulder any.’ . . . I said, ‘Well, I used to swim a lot.’ He said, ‘That would be great.’ At that point, I got back into swimming. Ended up joining the fitness center that was run by Chesapeake General Hospital over at Taylor Bend, and I’ve been swimming ever since,” Williams said.



Ralph “Bud” Swiger
talks about his love
for swimming

Irby shares a similar story with Williams. She grew up in a small town near Niagara Falls and Buffalo, New York, and recalls learning to swim in Lake Ontario as a child with her grandfather.

“I had a wonderful, not great, but a wonderful grandfather who decided he would start water skiing and ride the boat and did all that kind of stuff, so he entertained all the children with that and got us in the water,” Irby said.

Irby stressed that she never swam competitively while growing up, noting her town did not have a swim team. As an adult, swimming continued to play a part in her life. She reflected on moving to Suffolk in 1984 and how she made it a core focus in her life.

“When we moved to Suffolk, to be honest, we were building our house in Suffolk, and we didn’t have our water hooked up yet. So we joined the Y so we can take a shower,” she said with a laugh. “And then I just started swimming and made it a practice to swim a mile a day and did that through having my children, for years, really.”

She recounted swimming three days a week before going to work. Expressing having bad knees and having knee replacements, she noted how swimming has proven beneficial in the long run.

“I feel like swimming helped me prolong longevity for my knees,” she said. “It’s just a good exercise if you’ve got back problems or leg problems or balance problems. Swimming

is something that anybody can do.”

Despite preferring to relax while swimming, her friendship with Swiger led her to participate in the Keystone Pennsylvania State Games, landing a win in her division.

“It was a given. I was the only one in my age group. Nobody could beat me,” she humorously said. “It was done for fun for me... I’m really not used to pushing myself like that, but I’ll probably do it again for next year.”

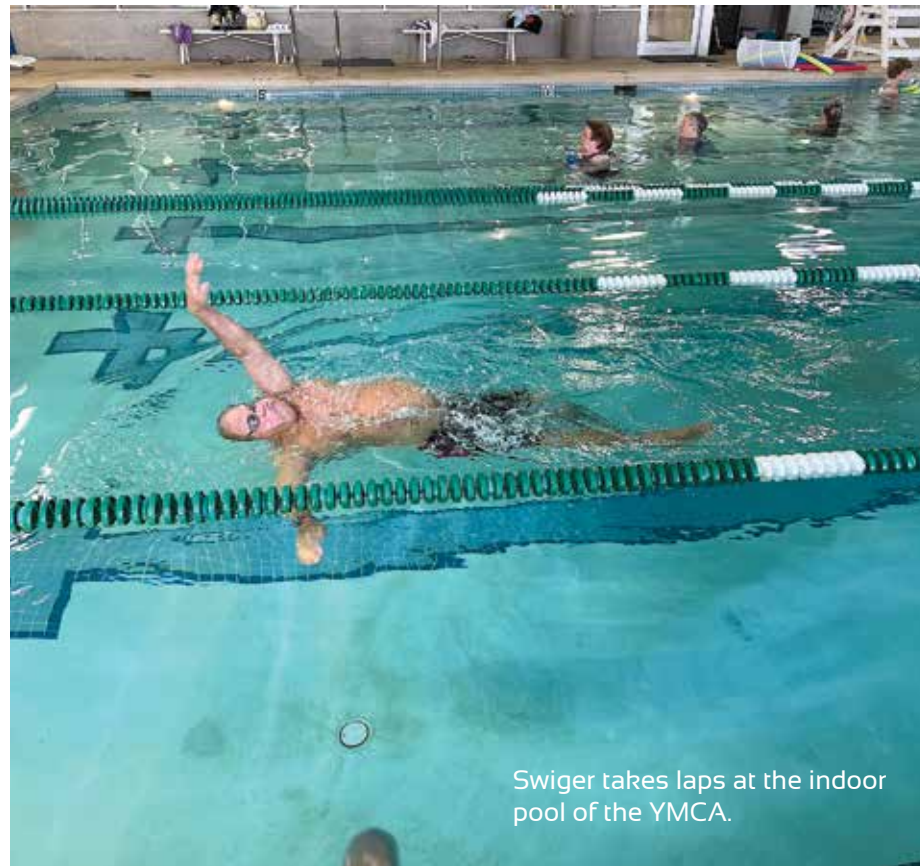
For Swiger and Farrell, swimming competitively has been a huge part of their lives. A native of Clarksburg in West Virginia and a retired dental surgeon, Swiger calls himself a self-proclaimed “water bug” as he learned how to swim at Clarksburg YMCA in their babies program. This would soon see Swiger swimming through his youth and taking part as a summer league swimmer. During his years at Woodberry Forest School, he got into distance running.

“So I was a distance runner in all three areas and ran for Woodbury for 11 of the 12 seasons. And I thrived and had a wonderful experience with running. At this time, I did not swim a lap,” he said. “I went to the University of Virginia, where I also made the varsity team and ran cross country and track there.”

However, at age 42, Swiger got back into swimming due to developing acute asthma issues. Not being able to breathe while running, he also noted that he had parts of his body become numb from hypoxia due to the asthma as well.

“So I had to stop running, which broke my heart, but I had been watching my two girls swim competitively, of which they reached very high levels of competitive swimming, as they were growing up regionally and sometimes nationally. I decided since I’m going to all these swim meets watching them, why don’t I get back in the water and see if that helps my asthma and join the club as they say. So that’s what I did,” he said. “I found out that the moist air above the pool helped my asthma tremendously, opened my lungs and basically rejuvenated me so I could do something... I basically say that swimming has saved my life from asthma.”

This rediscovery saw Swiger take part in open water swims in lakes, rivers and oceans from 1 to 3 miles. At age 45, he returned to



Swiger takes laps at the indoor pool of the YMCA.

pool swimming while joining the Leesburg’s Virginia Masters Swim team. Likewise, Swiger took part in statewide pool and open water competitions as well as various championships such as the YMCA Masters, USA Masters, Pan American Masters, and even competing in the Canadian National Master in Alberta, Canada. Swiger also swam across the Chesapeake Bay during the Great Chesapeake Bay Swim in a 4.4 mile swim. Noting that he swam with “Olympians of his age” and older as well as “some of the nicest people of all walks of life,” one swim he remembers fondly was a race 15 years ago in Sarasota, Florida with Burwell “Bumpy” Jones, gold winner of the Pan American Games in 1951.

“Very gentlemanly, like he was 15 or 14 years older than me. I was in my early 50s and I was spry and fast and I thought of myself as being a good swimmer. First mistake. He was next to me. And he did look his age, but he was such a gentleman, and he was a doctor, like me,” he said.

On their swim, Swiger recounted being ahead of him after the butterfly and a little ahead during the backstroke. They both made

it to the 50 freestyle.

“I did not even consider him to be near me enough to do anything. So I sprint[ed] at the last 50, and I remember touching with 25 yards to go, and he’d gotten to around my feet and the lady next to me. I went, ‘Wow, he’s caught up to me a little bit. So I’ll just sprint the last lap, and I can jokingly say that I beat an Olympian,” Swiger said. “Well, I sprinted the last lap, and I’ll always remember coming in and touching the wall, looking back and not seeing him. And he was already leaning up against the pool with his goggles off with his hand outstretched and said ‘Good race, Ralph.’ and I was huffing and puffing and he was not breathing at all. Hard.”

Farrell, a native of New Jersey and the youngest of four, learned to swim from her mother and recalls having to always keep up with her siblings, especially her big brother. Along with swimming at a tennis swim club, Farrell swam at the Summit YMCA with instructors that went on to become Olympic coaches, to which she called a “great experience.”

“I had great coaches growing up. [I] joined

the Montclair YMCA team when I was the last kid at home and I cannot say enough what my YMCA family was like,” Farrell said. “I still keep in touch with my coach, the girls on our team, we just had such a wonderful experience together. We were the top Y in the country at the Y nationals, and it was just fun.”

After graduating from Columbia High School in 1972, Farrell went to Monmouth University. Her graduation was also around when Title IX of Educational Amendments of 1972 was passed, prohibiting discrimination and exclusion of persons in education programs and activity on the basis of sex. Farrell reflected on her experience competing during her college years.

“The girls were just beginning to be accepted as a swim team. Title IX was in ‘72 which made it possible for girls and women to continue their athletic prowess in their collegiate years. And so, it was a wonderful experience with Coach Steadman,” she said. “He found a way to get us to be able to go to Nationals, which at that time was run by the AIAW (Association for Intercollegiate Athlet-

ics for Women), which was then taken over by the NCAA (National Collegiate Athletic Association). There were [no] divisions for college, so we swam against the Stanfords and the UVAs and Texas. I had qualified first in the 50 [freestyle] at the Nationals of Penn State in ‘74 and my mom drove eight hours to watch me swim for 24 seconds.”

Farrell won and set the National Collegiate record that year. Her team as a whole was seventh in the country despite Monmouth University being a very small college. Farrell went on to become a biology teacher, but also served as a swim coach at New Jersey’s Warren Hills Regional High School for 25 years. After moving to Virginia to be close to family, she started swimming at the Suffolk YMCA where she met Swiger, Irby and Williams. She reflected on that time meeting them.

“We fell into this friendship. The three of them had met before me and called themselves ‘The Three Musketeers.’ And I said, ‘Wow, thank you for including me and I guess I am D’Artagnan: the historic fourth musketeer,” she said humorously.

Each expressed how important swimming is while speaking highly of the Suffolk YMCA for those who want to learn. Swiger noted that as long as one knows how “to float and move their arms and legs,” a person can learn to swim. Noting those who are afraid, Farrell gave positive remarks on Suffolk YMCA Aquatics Director Christie White providing help for clients. Likewise, she emphasized how important the skill is.

“I just think it is a very important skill and lifelong skill to learn and I know they do a wonderful job at our Y with the water aerobics which I would think would help people to sort of just get over their fear of being in the water,” Farrell said.

Irby also emphasized how Suffolk YMCA supports the community while also noting how important it is for young people to learn swimming skills, especially for safety.

“For kids, it’s a safety pin for life to be able to swim. The Y offers private lessons and just get comfortable in the water, get your face in the water and there’s so many good things,” Irby said.

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I just returned from a 10 day trip to Egypt and would love to share a few photos. Five of us ladies met in New York and began our trip from JFK Airport to Saudi Arabia and then on to Cairo, Egypt. The travel company, Exoticca, met us and 18 others at the airport at different arrival times to begin our travels. We began with 3 nights on Riverboat cruise down the Nile River visiting several Temples, Valley of the Kings, Luxor, and most of all, the Great Pyramids. The various stops along the Nile also provided an opportunity to enjoy the local natives as shown in one of the photos. Thanks for this opportunity to share a few photos! I am a Suffolk native, retired, and living in Suffolk.

Gladys Wiggins

suffolk scenes

Halloween Clean Up



Both Paralegal Jennifer Goodwin and "The Hulk," a.k.a. Litigation Specialist Patrick Carroll of the Suffolk Public Defender's Office, work to keep the trash away.



Both Matthew Sutton and his daughter Camdyn Sutton team up to keep Suffolk clean.



Suffolk Public Works Litter Control Coordinator Daniel McDonald embraces his inner Jack Skellington.



Wayne Utley helps keep the cigarettes away from Suffolk.

suffolk scenes

Locals' Choice Winners Party



Debbie Flythe, Becky Daniels, Dena Alnatour, John Lassiter of Mike Duman Mitsubishi



Wayne Raisor, Jodi Raisor, Brianna French, Gavin French



Sharon Creekmore, Carole Matt, Frances Richards of GFWC Junto Women's Club



Chris Asbell and Emily Asbell of Schadel Sheet Metal Works



Ali Coffey and Amber Carr of Suffolk Animal Hospital



Dawn Baker, Tony Baker, Austin Baker and Autumn Baker of Bak3r's Contracting

suffolk scenes

Suffolk Mutt Strut



President of the Suffolk Humane Society Margie Wiley and her dog Audey have a good time.



Lauryn Robinson, Wess Hilaire, and their dog Bleu come out to enjoy the fun.



Morgan Jesmer of Pet Paradise, Lindsey Makonis, and Makonis' dog Afton smile in between shopping sessions.



Featured L to R: Master Police Officer Shane Sukowaski and his K-9 dog Salvo, Commonwealth Attorney Narendra Pleas, Susan Walten, Hunter Johnson and Mila (Susan's adopted puppy)



Stephen Jones said it's "wonderful" to be at the Mutt Strut with his dog Sheva.



Featured L to R: Master Police Officer Shane Sukowaski and his K-9 dog Salvo, Commonwealth Attorney Narendra Pleas, Susan Walten, Hunter Johnson and Mila (Susan's adopted puppy)

Last edition's Where Am I?

The answer for the Where Am I in May/June edition came from Michael Owen. He was the only person to correctly pinpoint the little box of books included in the May/June Where Am I challenge. This little library can be found in Patriots Walk by the Seaboard trail.



The answer for the Where am I in July/Aug edition was a light sconce that can be found on North Main Street. Joseph Verdirame was the only person to correctly identify the light.

Sept/Oct Where Am I, The angel statue in this photo can be found at New First Baptist Church off Hosier road. There were no correct guesses. Find this month's challenge on page 11.

scrapbook



RAILROAD: The Norfolk and Western Railroad first came through Suffolk in 1857. The first depot was at the south end of Main Street, and a new depot was built around 1910 near the end of Pinner Street in the heyday of passenger travel. Union Station, as it was called, served passengers for the Norfolk and Western, the Atlantic and Danville, and the old Norfolk and Southern lines. In 1928, 34 passenger trains a day ran on the 6 rail lines that came through Suffolk.

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