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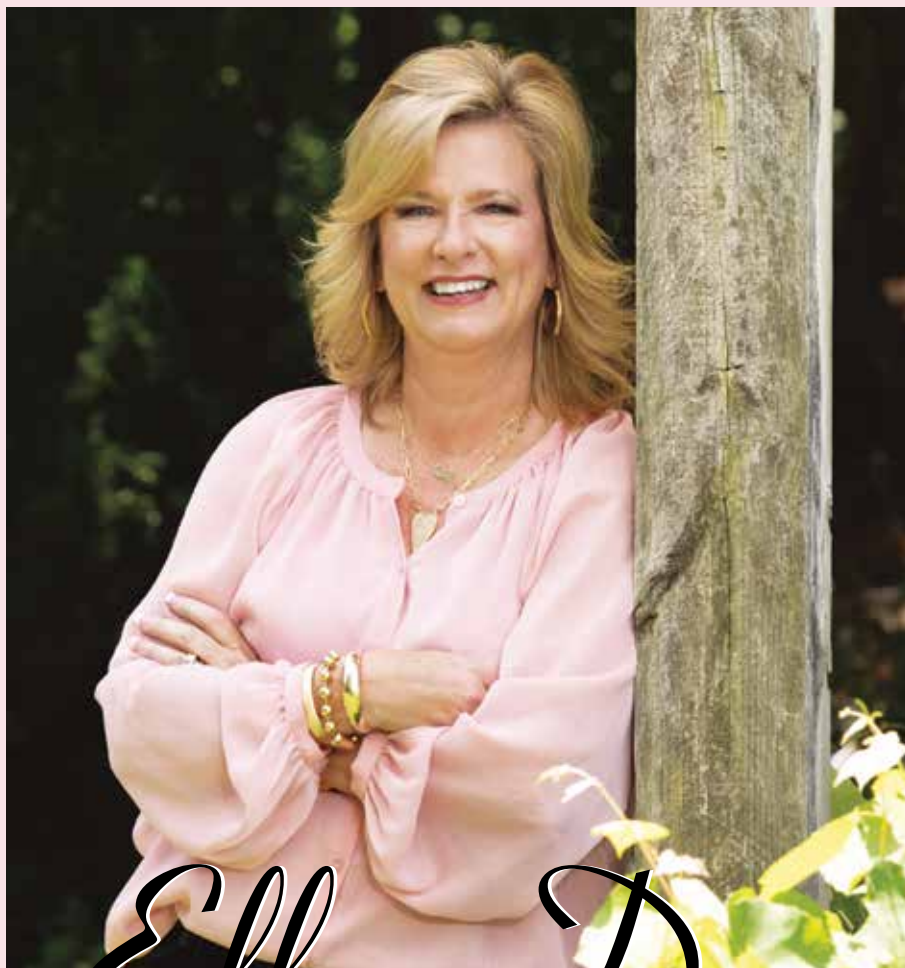
Living

Remembering John H. Sheally II

january/february 2024 • vol. 15, no. 1

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Remembering the Life of Suffolk Living contributor John H. Sheally II



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In the News

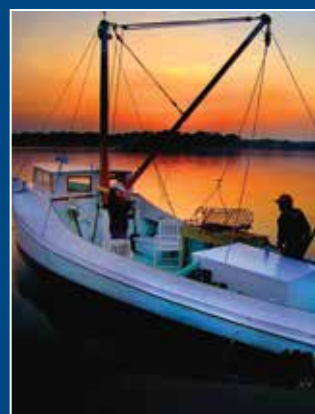
Women's Impact Fund wraps up the year with Grant presentation

SUFFOLK

Living



ON THE COVER



On Vacay

From the beach to Europe, see where Suffolk Living traveled to

Photo by
John Sheally

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editor's note

EDITORIAL

Jen Jaqua
Photographer

James Robinson
Writer

Phyllis Speidell
Contributing Writer

John H. Sheally II
Contributing Photographer

news@suffolklivingmag.com

ADVERTISING

Lindsay Richardson
Director of Advertising

Taylor McMickle
Marketing Consultant

sales@suffolklivingmag.com

PRODUCTION

Troy Cooper
Designer

ADMINISTRATION

Betty J. Ramsey
Publisher

Ed Pugh
Editor

Hope Rose
Production

In Memory of...

"A great man is one who leaves others at a loss after he is gone." - Paul Valéry.

When longtime contributor and esteemed photojournalist John H. Sheally II died at 80 on Dec. 2, 2023, he left a void in the lives of his immediate family and this publication.

John spent countless hours alongside his partner, Phyllis Speidell, telling the stories of some of Suffolk's unique residents. He was a renowned photojournalist not only in Hampton Roads but also throughout the state of Virginia.

We dedicate this edition to John, and on Page 12, we look at his life and the impact he had on the many people he came in contact with over the years. He will be missed. We continue to send our heartfelt thoughts and prayers to John's family and closest friends.

We sincerely appreciate the many advertisers and readers whose support makes this 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 are excited to see what the new year brings to these pages.

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 ed.pugh@suffolknewsherald.com



Ed Pugh, Editor

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what to do

Send us your news

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simply email it to: news@suffolklivingmag.com

JANUARY 26

The Suffolk Public Library is hosting an Adult Gaming After Hours that will take place from 6 p.m. until 8 p.m. From Mario Party to Street Fighter, from Crash Team Racing to Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles, come meet up with other adults playing different types of newer and retro video games.

WEDNESDAY JANUARY 17

Suffolk Center for Cultural Arts will present Portrait of Aretha at 7 p.m. at 110 Finney Ave. Tickets are \$45, \$40, and \$35. Learn more about Paul D. Camp Community College Programs and Services at 11 a.m. at the Suffolk Workforce Development Center, 157 N. Main St. Second Floor Suite D.

The National Active and Retired Federal Employees Association (NARFE) will

meet at the Holiday Inn Express, 1018 Centerbrooke Lane, Suffolk. Our Chapter 1743 will meet at 9 a.m. Cost is \$10 and covers the meeting room and the 8:45 a.m. breakfast. Speakers will be Sarah Taylor, Critical Care Clinical Nurse Specialist with Sentara Obici Hospital and Chaplain Kathy Pickett also with Sentara Obici. They will speak on the need for Living Wills and where available. Not a member? Visit, and join today! For more information call 757-651-8665.

FRIDAY JANUARY 19

The Providential Community Gospel Concert will begin at 7 p.m. at The Smithfield Center, 220 N. Church St., Smithfield. Tickets include dinner and are \$25 for adults, \$15 for ages 13 to 18 and \$10 for 12 and under.

"The Country Ravens Band" will perform from 7:30 to 9:30 p.m. featuring "Christmas and Gospel" at the Bethlehem Ruritan Club House, 140 Manning Road. Donations

what to do

are encouraged. Donations encouraged. Concessions and two-pound containers of Hardison's BBQ will be for sale. Call 757-617-5955.

A job search and applying workshop will take place at 11 a.m. at the Suffolk Workforce Development Center, 157 N. Main St. Second Floor Suite D.

MONDAY JANUARY 22

Ace Warehouse will have a hiring event from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the Suffolk Workforce Development Center, 157 N. Main St. Second Floor Suite D.

TUESDAY JANUARY 23

Bronco Federal Credit Union will have a hiring event from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the Suffolk Workforce Development Center, 157 N. Main St. Second Floor Suite D.

THURSDAY JANUARY 25

Safety for Seniors will take place at 10 a.m. at the Suffolk Workforce Development Center, 157 N. Main St. Second Floor Suite D.

SATURDAY JANUARY 27

Suffolk Alumnae Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority Inc. will host a college and career fair from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. at Kings Fork High School. Register at tinyurl.com/2024CareerCollegeFair.

TUESDAY FEBRUARY 13

From Minty to Harriet: Tubman's Journey to Freedom will take place at 10:30 a.m. at Suffolk Center for Cultural Arts.

FRIDAY FEBRUARY 23

The Hoppers, a Southern Gospel Group, will perform at 7 p.m. at Southside Baptist Church, 917 Carolina Road. A love offering will be received.

The Suffolk Public Library is hosting an Adult Gaming After Hours that will take place from 6 p.m. until 8 p.m. From Mario Party to Street Fighter, from Crash Team Racing to Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles, come meet up with other adults playing different types of newer and retro video games.

SATURDAY MARCH 16

Matilda Jr. The Musical will be performing at 2 p.m. at the Suffolk Center for Cultural Arts. Tickets are \$30 for adults and \$18 for under 15.

SATURDAY APRIL 13

"My God, Your God" will take the stage at 7 p.m. at Suffolk Center for Cultural Arts, 110 Finney Ave. Tickets are \$40, \$35 and \$30.

Mountain Highway will perform at 6 p.m. at Southside Baptist Church, 917 Carolina Road. A love offering will be received.

TUESDAY APRIL 16

CIVIL RIGHTS: Finding Your Voice will take place at 10:30 a.m. at the Suffolk Center for Cultural Arts, 110 Finney Ave.

SATURDAY APRIL 27

Artrageous will perform at 2 p.m. at Suffolk Center for Cultural Arts, 110 Finney Ave.

SATURDAY MAY 18

The Hit Men of Country will perform at 8 p.m. at Suffolk Center for Cultural Arts, 110 Finney Ave.

ONGOING

The Bon Secours Care-A-Van will offer free medical services that provide general medical care to uninsured adults and children with appointment times beginning at 8:30 a.m. on the first Wednesday of every month at the East Suffolk Recreation Center located at 138 S. 6th St.

Kingsboro Civic League meetings will take place at 6:30 p.m. every third Tuesday at the Constantia House, 509 W. Washington St.

Suffolk Lions Club Meeting will have its monthly meeting at 6:30 p.m. every third Tuesday of the month at Lee Jordan Clubhouse, 1709 Pitchkettle Road.

Local Veterans Services Officer, Joe Grocki, is available at Smithfield American Legion Post 49 from 9 to 11 a.m. on Mondays at 818 S. Church St. in Smithfield. He is available to assist any military veteran or family member who has questions

about their benefits, issues with discharge paperwork, or need assistance filing claims with Veterans Affairs. Appointments are not required but can be made by calling 757-357-9239.

Suffolk Workforce Development Center will have a Spanish Class for English and Spanish learners at 1 p.m. every Tuesday at 157 N. Main St. 2nd floor.

The Suffolk Workforce Development Center will have a basic literacy class at noon every Wednesday at 157 N. Main St. 2nd floor.

Every third Saturday, Wall Street Cafe will host a pop-up shop for locals to showcase their products and services.

Suffolk Christian Fellowship Center will now host evening hours for those working families who need a little help each month from 5 to 6:30 p.m. every first Tuesday of the month at 211 E. Washington Street.

CAPS is open from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Mondays, Wednesdays and Thursdays by appointment only. Call 757-935-5497 for more information.

The Saratoga Philadelphia Civic League will return to their meetings at 5 p.m. the first Tuesday of the month at Lakeview Missionary Baptist Church.

The Suffolk Lions Club will meet at 6:30 p.m. every third Tuesday at the Lee Jordan Clubhouse, 1709 Pitchkettle Road. suffolklionsclub9308@gmail.com.

The Bethlehem Christian Church Food Pantry is open from 6 to 7 p.m. on the first Tuesday night of each month and from 10 to 11 a.m. on the second and third Tuesday of the month at 1549 Holland Road.

The Suffolk Farmers' Market held under the open-air pavilion at 524 N. Main St. will be open Saturdays from 9 a.m. until 1 p.m. For more information, call 757-514-4130, or visit suffolrvafarmersmarket.com.

Lake Kennedy Civic League meets the third Thursday of each month at 6:30 p.m. at 138 S. Sixth St.

what to do

A chronic illness and pain support group will meet monthly on the second Wednesday, from noon to 1 p.m. at Westminster Reformed Presbyterian Church, 3488 Godwin Blvd. The group is open to anyone of any age. Call Janice Bostic at 651-9444.

CHKD North Suffolk Circle meets on the third Tuesday of every month at 6 p.m. at Berea Christian Church, 4109 Driver Lane. Call Deborah Jett at 745-7208.

Acts Community Church, 130 Commerce St., will feed the homeless from 6 to 7 p.m. every Wednesday.

Take Off Pounds Sensibly meets at 6:15 p.m. every Tuesday at Benn's United Methodist Church in Smithfield, 14571 Benns Church Blvd. TOPS is a non-profit, weight-loss support and wellness organization for men and women ranging from preteens to adults. The first meeting is free. Call 537-5788 or visit tops.org for more information.

Kingdom Building Outreach Ministries will have a clothing pantry open every other Tuesday from 5:30 to 6:30 p.m. It is open every other Monday to receive clothing and canned food donations from 5:30 to 6:30 p.m.

Volunteers are needed for tutoring math and science every first and third Saturday in the Nursing CAP Inc. program. Visit nursingcap.org or email rmckinneyrna@gmail.com for more information.

The Curtis R. Milteer, Sr. Recreation Center now offers drop-in child care from 9 a.m. to 7 p.m. Mondays through Fridays while the parent is working out. Space is available on a first-come, first-served basis at no additional charge. Call 514-7105 for more information.

Lunch will be served at the Curtis R. Milteer, Sr. Recreation Center every Monday, Wednesday and Friday at noon. Meals are for ages 60 and up with a requested \$2 donation. Those younger may purchase the meals for \$8 per person.

Registration is required prior to the meal service. Call 514-7100.

Western Tidewater Free Clinic is in need of volunteers, particularly nurses. Nurses are needed to do triage, patient histories, labs, discharge, follow-up and more. To learn more or apply, visit www.wtfreeclinic.org.

The Kingsboro Civic League meetings will be held from 6:30 to 7:30 p.m. on the third Tuesday each month during the winter at the Constantia House, behind R.W. Baker Funeral Home at 509 W. Washington St.

Healthy Suffolk sponsors a Wednesday Walks program on Wednesdays at 12:15 p.m. Meet for a 30-minute walk at a different location every week. First Wednesday — Visitor Center Pavilion, 524 N. Main St.; second Wednesday — St. Paul's Episcopal Church, 213 N. Main St.; third Wednesday, Health and Human Services Building, 135 Hall Ave.; fourth Wednesday, North Suffolk Library, 2000 Bennetts Creek Park Road. Meet in the parking lot of each location.

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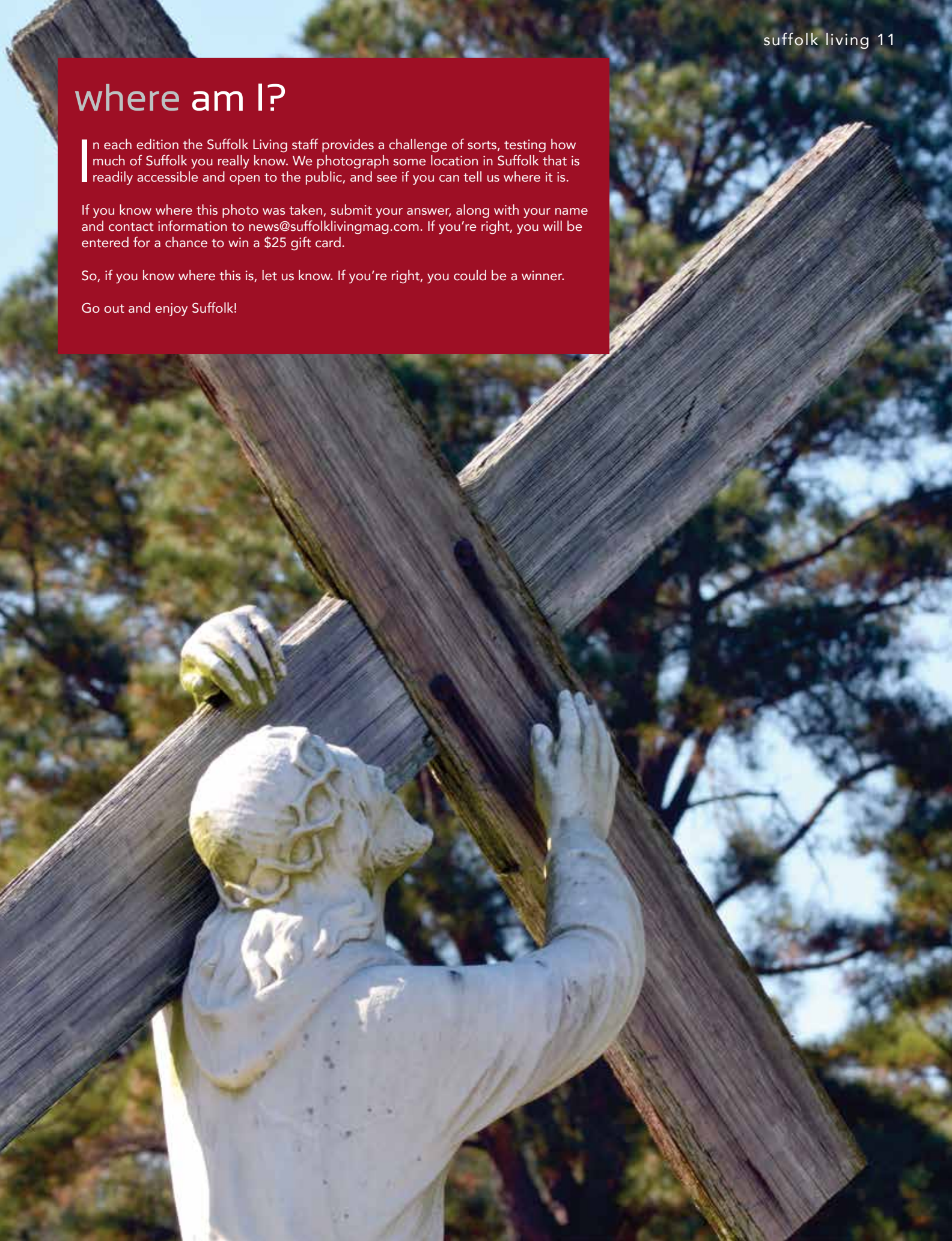
where am I?

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!





Farewell to John Sheally:

photojournalist, car enthusiast, family man.

Story by James W. Robinson
Submitted photos

Suffolk Living is saying farewell to an esteemed photojournalist and a much-beloved friend. Photojournalist John H. Sheally II passed away at the age of 80 on Saturday, Dec. 2. A longtime contributor to Suffolk Living, the magazine was just the tip of the iceberg of the achievements that Sheally received during his life.

Born in Manchester, New Hampshire, Sheally received the gift of a Brownie camera at just eight years old, setting him on a lifetime path of capturing the world around him. A graduate of Hopewell High School where he took photos for the school's newspaper, he served as an aerial photographer

during his five-year enlistment in the U.S. Navy. Following his service, Sheally saw a photojournalism career with the Progress-Index in Petersburg covering local news as well as political news in Richmond. This soon led to a career with the Virginian-Pilot, where he and his lens captured memories in both the southeastern Virginia and North Carolina areas. Likewise, along with various feature stories for the Virginian-Pilot, Sheally shot for at least 20 regional and national magazines, including the National Geographic. Some of the profiles that Sheally shot photos for include John A. Walker, the U.S. Naval Officer convicted of espionage, Author James McBride,

"We're a lot alike in a lot of ways, we both love cars, we both love English cars, we both love racing and anything competitive, and I just can't remember a time that we weren't the closest of friends," says longtime friend Tim Hund who shared Sheally's passion for Morgan sports cars and racing.





“He Shoots, She Writes, They Produce” – Following their 25+ years of work at the *Virginian-Pilot*, John Sheally II and Phyllis Speidell went on to a successful business partnership that created many books, magazine contributions and commercial and promotional projects.

Portsmouth Artist J. Robert Burnell as well as NASCAR Hall of Famers Wendell Scott and Junior Johnson and Former Virginia Governor Bob McDonnell, among many others. Alongside his photography work, Sheally was an avid car enthusiast, a husband to his wife Donna Shelton for 52 years, and a father.

Fellow colleagues, lifelong friends and Sheally’s daughter shared their memories of the photojournalist and how he impacted each of their lives. Journalist and Writer Phyllis Speidell reflected on her 30-year business partnership and friendship with Sheally after meeting him at the *Virginian-Pilot* in the early 1990s. Reminiscing about his smile, cowboy boots and southern drawl, Speidell talked about how natural it was working with Sheally due to their “similar personalities” and “similar views on ethics.”

“We both had this wonderful sense of curiosity, and we would go out to do a job and come back with three more story ideas, and everything just clicked and I think when you’re lucky enough to find someone like that and you can work together so beautifully and the results are so good, it’s just really,

really fortunate,” Speidell said. “He still shot for a lot of the other writers in the office and I occasionally used a different photographer, but every chance we had, we worked together because we knew it was just going to go well.”

Following 25+ years of working at the *Virginian-Pilot*, both Sheally and Speidell continued their business partnership in a variety of projects, including magazine contributions (*Suffolk Living*, *Richmond Magazine*, *Virginia Living*), both commercial and promotional projects, and books for both private clients and non-profits.

Graphic Designer Chad Casey talked about working with Sheally for over 10 years on their various book projects.

“John and Phyllis would go out on their adventures and capture photographs and interviews of people who were related to the book they were setting out to create. They would form a narrative and a relationship with the organization or people they were trying to memorialize in book form,” Casey said. “Once they were ready, they would let myself and one of two editors we worked with over the years, Pamela Koch and Phil Bristol, know the

materials were ready.”

While noting that his photography was “always on point,” Casey reflected on the man behind the lens.

“John had a huge personality with lots of stories that I enjoyed hearing. You’d think some of these can’t be true, but sure enough, he had the photos of all of his stories to back it up. From racing cars to his adventures taking shots of musicians, he was larger than life to me,” Casey said. “I don’t think I’ll ever meet a person who had such a huge amount of experience and cool stories again. Those people like him don’t come around often and I’ll truly miss being around him.”

Known for his love for Morgan sports cars, Sheally was a frequent participant in racing and auto-cross competitions. Sheally was his own mechanic and kept his collection of Morgan cars in top condition. Tim Hund, a longtime friend of Sheally and fellow car enthusiast, says that they met in the early 1970s while Hund was a college student at Christopher Newport University. An owner of a Triumph TR4 sports car, Hund found out about a man who was autocrossing, a timed

racing competition where racers individually drive through traffic cone-made courses for the quickest time.

"I said 'Man, that'd be kind of neat to find this out' and turns out John was autocrossing in an event out in Virginia Beach. [I] went out there and John was autocrossing. He was a very, very avid autocrosser and he was autocrossing a Triumph just like I was driving. When his time was finished, I went over to introduce myself and we're like best friends instantly from then on," Hund said. "We're a lot alike in a lot of ways, we both love cars, we both love English cars, we both love racing and anything competitive, and I just can't remember a time that we weren't the closest of friends."

Noting both their competitive natures, Hund says that as early friends they decided to stay in their lanes and not compete against each other in any major competitions.

"We made a gentleman's agreement never to do it. That's what kept our relationship very healthy I'm sure," Hund said.

Along with his love for cars, Sheally enjoyed different music genres (big band, country, rock and roll, classical) and had a love for animals, with his photojournalism skills helping abandoned dogs to find new homes. However, his biggest love was the love for his family. Kate Smellie, Sheally's daughter shared memories of her father, humorously reflecting that growing up with her father "was always exciting and an adventure."

"My dad was always very fun, always



Taken by Sheally, this photo of a wolf was captured at an animal rescue facility. Journalist Phyllis Speidell notes that despite being warned that the wolf was "not completely tame," the wolf came up to Sheally cautiously as he photographed the animal, affectionately licking Sheally's face.

laughing, always smiling. Such an extroverted people person. Everywhere I went from a little girl until I got older and even married, if I'd go off with him anywhere, there wasn't somebody that he didn't know," Smellie said.

Smellie says she would travel to different places with her father as he went out to race his cars.

"A couple days before his races, he's out there working on the car in the driveway and revving the cars up at like midnight and the neighbors are getting upset," she said with a laugh. "Other than that, he was a very big family man. ... He worked at the Virginian-Pilot in Norfolk for the majority of my life, that I remember and sometimes he had to travel for the newspaper, but other than that, he was home every night. Just lots of fun memories, he always likes to joke around and make you laugh. His smile and what I remember the most. His smile and his laugh. He liked to have fun."

Smellie says that Sheally was a "very strong, determined man" regardless of his work as a photojournalist, his passion for cars, or his love for his family. What Smellie hopes people will remember about her father is his love of life and how much he loved people.

"There wasn't a person that he met that he did not care for. He saw the good in everybody," she said. "And one of his famous things that I always remember, [if you] did something, his famous words were 'You did good.' He would say that to us, he would say that to other people and he was always just trying to encourage people. When he did, his words were very short and sweet and to the point trying to lift somebody up, and he was very positive."

Sheally was laid to rest with military honors at Albert G. Horton, Jr. Veterans Cemetery on Friday, Dec. 15.



Taken by Sheally, this photo of a dog attached to a "For Sale" sign was on North Landing Rd, as noted by Phyllis Speidell. Unable to get a response after ringing the doorbell, Sheally took the photo and got it into the following day's Virginian-Pilot issue. The dog was soon adopted and given a home on the Outer Banks.



Members of the Women's Impact Fund come together to celebrate the 2023 Grant Ceremony on Saturday, Dec. 9. Featured from left to right: Ellen Saunders, WIF Immediate Past Chair Jackie Overton, WIF Chair Dr. Sharon Raghubar, WIF Past Chair Mary Haddad (first row), Bettie Swain, Caroline Martin, WIF Past Chair Margie Wiley (second row), WIF Elected Vice Chair Mary Hensley, Urvi Nanavaty, Lillian Taylor, WIF Past Chair Kim Waller and Annie Overton (last row).

Women's Impact Fund ends year with grant presentations

Story and photos by James W. Robinson

Suffolk continued to see the spirit of giving with the Suffolk Foundation Women's Impact Fund. Led by a group of philanthropic-minded women, the organization wrapped up the year by continuing its philanthropic efforts with its annual Grant Awards Presentation held on Saturday, Dec. 9. Hosted by Suffolk Foundation Women's Impact Fund Chair Dr. Sharon Raghubar, the organization provided

new grant opportunities for selected organizations towards their efforts in supporting women and children.

"This year's focus was on grassroots organizations that concentrate on navigating life skills that positively enhance the future of women and children in Suffolk. 10 grassroots organizations were invited to apply. Five applied and three qualified," Raghubar said.

Three programs were selected for the grants: The Nansemond River Preservation Alliance's 2024 Young Leaders Environmental Internship Program received \$1,500 towards funding two internships for female STEM education. Likewise, the College and Career Academy at Pruden received grants for two programs: The academy's Style Your Future with CCAP Cosmetology Program received



Suffolk Foundation Women's Impact Fund Chair Dr. Sharon Raghubar hosts the Women's Impact Fund Grant Awards Presentation on Saturday, Dec. 9, to give back to qualifying grassroots nonprofit organizations.

\$1,500 covering one module and its Certified Nursing Assistant Program received a \$4,300 grant.

As the ceremony wrapped up, NRPA President Beth Cross, CCAP Principal Connie Burgess, CCAP Adult Education Coordinator Robin Rose and CCAP CNA Student Barbara Whitley shared their thoughts on how positive it was to be recipients and see women united to make a positive difference.

"I think just watching the group of women come together is something that not all of our recipients will be able to see, and so seeing women build up other women is something that you want to be a part of, and you feel really honored that you get to pass it along to somebody," Cross said.

Rose followed up, noting how heartwarming the ceremony continued to be.

"We were recipients for the past four years, and it gets better every year, and this year we're just super excited to actually bring a student from the program..." Rose said. "So, [it's] just really heartwarming to know that there's a group that's out here doing important work for women."

Burgess also shared how "moved" she was by WIF's continued support.

"We've been able to assist a number of students who are now assisting with vary-

"This year's focus was on grassroots organizations that concentrate on navigating life skills that positively enhance the future of women and children in Suffolk. 10 grassroots organizations were invited to apply."

– Dr. Sharon Raghubar
Suffolk Foundation
Women's Impact Fund Chair

ing nursing facilities in our area, building a future not only for their families but for the entire City of Suffolk," Burgess said. "So to empower a women really empowers an entire community."

Being a CNA student impacted by the grant, Whitley expressed how "honored" she was to be a part of the ceremony.

"...I can't wait to help people," Whitley said. "I love being around people and I can't wait to be a licensed CNA and it was a very special opportunity to be given this grant, and it really meant a lot to me."

WIF Founding Member Caroline Martin and fellow WIF Member Ellen Saunders expressed the importance of WIF continu-

ing to make a difference in the community, with Saunders reflecting on the ceremony's recipients.

"Just being here today and meeting the representatives... It's very exciting because these are recipients who want to have an important career and make a difference for their families, and the community," Saunders said. "We need healthcare workers desperately. So it's exciting to see someone who's so enthusiastic about her field receive the support that she needs."

Martin talked about how WIF's focus on women and children makes them unique, alongside giving women other ways to make a difference.

"I think what's unique about the Suffolk Women's Impact Fund is it gives women, who can afford to, an opportunity to make a philanthropic contribution and then they can be as involved as their lives allow them to be, many of them being professional working mothers, raising families themselves," Martin said. "However, then as they progress, there is more time and more opportunity and perhaps the wisdom of the years and having some leadership capabilities to offer as well. I think if you look around at this gathering in this beautiful setting, you see women of substance."

Former Warrior finishes NCAA career, sets sights on NFL

College football bowl season is upon us, and for former Nansemond River Warrior Pheldarius Payne, it was a bittersweet moment as he suited up for the final time as a Virginia Tech Hokie Wednesday. Payne and the Hokies defeated the Tulane Green Wave 41-20 in a rain-drenched Military Bowl in Annapolis, Maryland.

Payne made several critical tackles to help the Hokies finish the season above .500, including a strip-sack deep inside Hokie territory, stalling a Green Wave drive that may have changed the course of the game.

“[It’s] bittersweet,” the redshirt senior said. “It was a good journey, but everything comes to an end.”

With it being his final game and his sights set on a shot at the NFL, Payne said he considered opting out of the bowl game to begin training for a potential next step.

“I definitely did [think about opting out] at times,” Payne said. “But, I just love the guys. There is no point in me opting out. We’ve already been through a whole season. Let’s finish it. Go out with a bang.”

The journey for Payne started at Lackawanna College, where Payne said he feels like that is where he received the most development and credits his dad for helping him in his younger years.

“I met a lot of good coaches [at Lackawanna]. I feel like that’s where I really got developed,” he said. “Growing up through high school, my dad used to develop me a lot, like almost every Saturday we used to wake up around 4 a.m., go to Mount Trashmore, and run up and down the mountain, around the mountain. My dad did everything good possible, even when I wanted to chase my basketball dreams. He helped me shape my basketball dreams.”

Payne helped Lackawanna to a 21-1 record in his two seasons, including a 21-game winning streak. He recorded 30 tackles for the Falcons in 2019, including 12 tackles for loss and four sacks. He also had one pass breakup, a



Former Nansemond River Warrior and Virginia Tech Hokie Pheldarius Payne (0) pressures Florida State quarterback Jordan Travis (13) during the Oct. 7 game in Tallahassee, Florida. *Photo courtesy of Virginia Tech Athletics*

fumble recovery, and five quarterback hurries. In the junior college national championship game, Payne made seven stops with 2.5 TFLs and one fumble recovery for a touchdown. As a freshman at Lackawanna, Payne recorded 23 tackles with 6.5 tackles for loss, including five sacks.

Looking back on the beginning of his journey at the junior college level, Payne says he wishes he had performed better in the classroom while at Nansemond.

“Me personally, school, I always struggled in, I just put it off,” Payne recalls. “I would just say to the kids overall, make sure you take care of their schoolwork. Grades are bigger than football. Without [good] grades, you can’t do anything because they can find another player like you, even better than you with better grades.”

During the 2019 JUCO National Championship, Payne was committed to playing at NC State the following year, but after visiting

Nebraska, Payne decided to join then head coach Scott Frost’s Husker team.

His arrival to campus was stalled a bit when the COVID-19 pandemic sent everyone into isolation, but Payne was able to join team meetings via Zoom until he arrived on campus in June 2020.

After losing about 20 pounds, Payne said he was moved to outside linebacker/Defensive end, which challenged him to learn a new position at the highest level of Division 1 football.

“I lost about 15 to 20 pounds,” he said. “I got moved to outside linebacker/D-end. So, coming through that, it was something totally different. So I [had to] learn something totally new. But I had one of the best coaches, coach [Mike] Dawson.”

In his first season with the Huskers, Payne saw action every game, finishing the season with 21 tackles, two tackles for loss, one sack, and a pair of pass breakups. Payne made his

Husker debut at outside linebacker, recording two tackles at No. 5 Ohio State.

In 2021, Payne played in the first 10 games of the season before an injury sidelined him for the team's final two games.

During the 2021 season, Payne says his playing time was reduced to a level that caused him to seek another transfer opportunity, this time back home in Virginia with the Virginia Tech Hokies.

"But throughout the season, I was only getting like 10 to 15 plays," Payne said. "If I was making plays, I feel like I should play a little bit more ... So towards the end of the season, I never thought about hitting the [transfer] portal until the end of the season ... I looked at what I did the first game and why I wasn't playing throughout the season. So I decided to hit the portal."

After removing his name from the portal and giving Nebraska another shot during the spring, Payne felt he was in for more of the

same, so he re-entered the transfer portal and ended up at Virginia Tech.

"I ended up at Virginia Tech because I was close to home," Payne said. "I really like coach Pry. I talked to him during my recruiting process at Penn State. I felt like I should end up playing for him eventually. He has one of the best defensive schemes in college football."

During his fourth workout, Payne injured his Achilles and had to sit out the entire 2022 season. Although it was a massive blow in his fifth college football season, Payne credits his dad for keeping him focused and finishing what he started.

"I'm like, why me," Payne recalls. "But, I had to stick with this. My dad always said you got to finish what you start, so I'm going to at least finish my football career."

After arriving at Virginia Tech, Payne was excited about playing in Virginia, but the injury made it challenging, especially when the Hokies traveled to Norfolk to take on Old

Dominion.

"Of course, when I committed here, I never played in Virginia," Payne said. "I wanted to play in the 757 so bad. I was like, I can't even play in front of my crowd, my people, where I'm from."

The opportunity to play Old Dominion came this season when the Monarchs traveled to Blacksburg to open the 2023 season, but Payne got hit with a targeting penalty, sending him to the locker room early.

"It was probably my fourth or fifth play, I got a targeted call," Payne said. "I just got, I waited a whole entire year to play my first game for it to be a targeting."

Payne finished his final regular season with 29 total tackles, nine tackles for loss, and four sacks and hopes to make a lasting impression in his last game at the collegiate level.

On Jan. 1, Payne announced he is entering the 2024 NFL Draft. The draft will take place April 25-27 in Detroit, Michigan.



correction

from *Diving into a new friendship: The Swimmers of Suffolk YMCA*
Nov-Dec 2023 issue of *Suffolk Living*

Photo Submitted by: Ralph "Bud" Swiger

From left to right: Ken Williams, Julie Irby, Ralph "Bud" Swiger and Debbie Farrell.

on vacation



Dick and Susan Talton and Mike and Kay Gambardella enjoyed hot beach days and sightseeing on the island of Aruba in November with our Suffolk Living Magazine.

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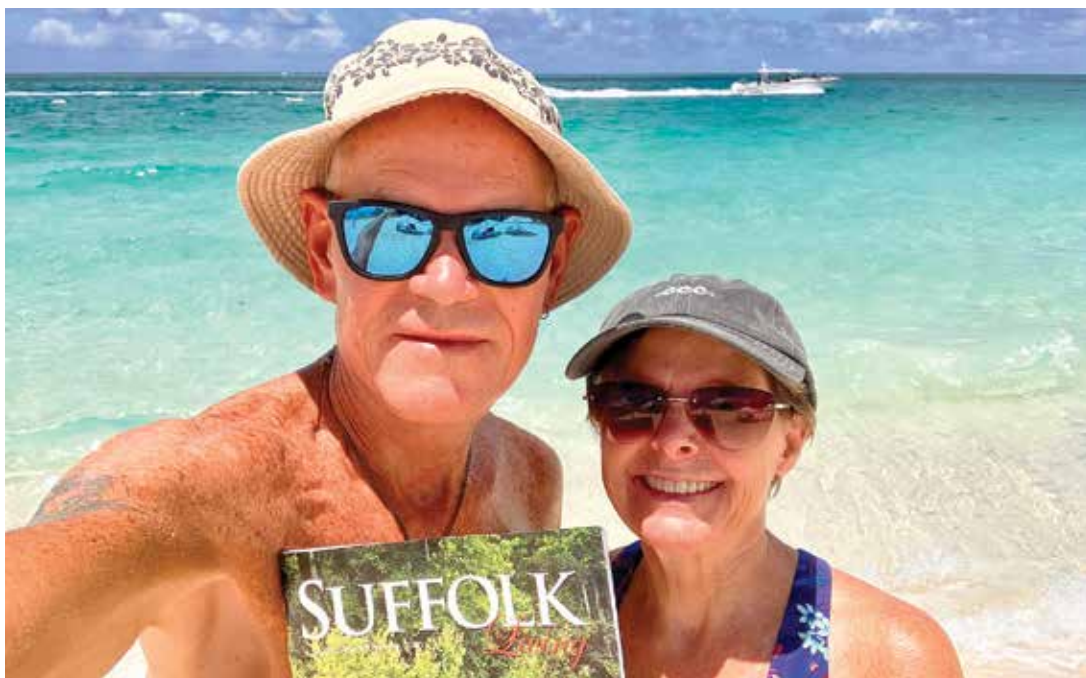
Nansemond-Suffolk Academy admits qualified students without regard to race, color, ethnic background, national origin, sexual orientation, gender identity, handicapped status or religion.



An Alaskan trip to visit with family was taken by Suffolk resident, Linda R. Morton and her mother, Margaret Riddick from North Carolina. Pictured here with grandchildren Emory, Judson and Abram.



Suffolk Living magazine recently traveled with a delegation from the sister cities commission to our sister city Oderzo, Italy. Pictured here from left to right is Suffolk City Council member John Rector, Paolo e Federica, and Palmer Sims. The Mr. Peanut cake was made by Paolo Forner who also hosted the Sims in his home.



Betty, and Robert Rhodes took Suffolk Living magazine on vacation when we visited Turks and Caicos for her birthday last month. It's a beautiful island, with amazing beaches and people!

Last edition's Where Am I?

There was no correct answer for the Where Am I in Nov/Dec edition. The cute little play house is on the playground at Pughsville park. Find this month's challenge on page 11.



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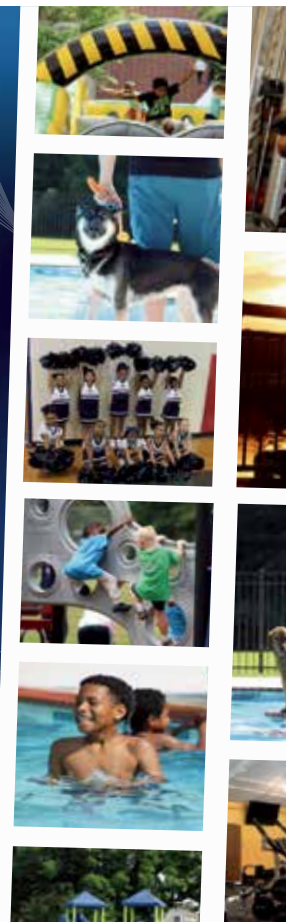
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HOSPITAL: St. Andrews Hospital was built on Clay Street in 1911 by Dr. Frank J. Morrison and Dr. E. R. Hart (who had sold his share in Lakeview.) In 1917 it was reorganized as the Virginia Hospital. It always operated as a small, private downtown hospital, and it closed when Obici opened in 1951. The building was demolished in the 1960s.

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