

January/February 2021



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Mo Ally:
Gaston Lifestyles
CEO's charmed life

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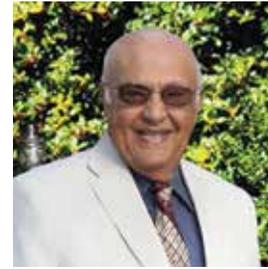
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PRESIDENT/CEO LETTER

Welcome to our 10th year of publication!

Marking a milestone as your community magazine



Mo Ally

Happy new year, and welcome to our 10th year of publication!

We never thought 10 years ago that this day would come, where readers and advertisers constantly tell us that they look forward to the next issue, including the cover profile. Well, lo and behold! In celebration of our milestone, the publisher thought it fitting to feature me and my accomplishments as I celebrate my 80th birthday.

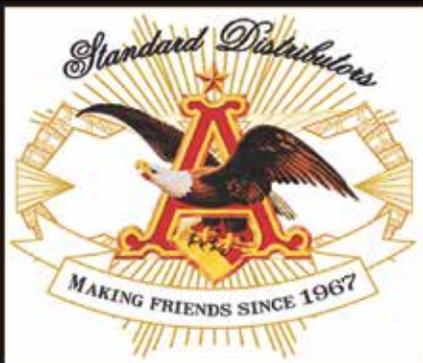
It's one thing to create stories about and on behalf of others. But it's quite another when you have to think about *your own* life. There were so many things I wanted to talk about with Thomas Lark. But we decided to save that for the book and the movie!

During these trying times of living with COVID-19, it was helpful to reminisce about my life, what I've done and how blessed I've been. I'm happy to say it's been a wonderful ride, and I've enjoyed every minute.

If you have not had a chance to take stock of what you've done and what you're grateful for, please do. I assure you the journey will be eye-opening and will help you put both the good and not-so-good things into perspective, with you coming out on the other side thankful that what got you here made you who you are.

I hope you enjoy the story of my journey, and I wish you all the best in 2021! **GL**

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PUBLISHER'S NOTE

Happy new year from *Gaston Lifestyles!*

We ring in 2021 with you



Deborah Ally

Happy new year, and welcome 2021!
Nine years ago, *Gaston Lifestyles* magazine began its journey to showcase the good, caring and wonderful people of Gaston County. The cover profile features our president and CEO (“honey,” to me), Mo Ally, and his journey in life and business that led to the creation of this publication.

Also, take a look at our photo gallery. You’ll see our covers from the beginning to the present.

Each year in the January/February issue, we celebrate Black History Month, and this issue will not disappoint. Mrs. Elizabeth Graves shares two stories: one recognizing the illustrious teaching career of a favorite Bessemer City educator, Ms. Tweety Worthy Stewart, and remembering the impact of Lincoln High on the

Bessemer City community. Plus, be sure to check out our coverage of Gastonia native artist Carmen Neely and Gastonia’s youngest businesswoman, Karsyn Feemster-Jones, in “People on the Move.” And while COVID-19 is still amongst us, and vaccines are coming to town, you won’t want to miss the health-related articles on mental health and nursing by Renée Davis and Kelli Sadler respectively.

In our last issue, Dr. Mark Epstein tickled us with his “Pet Corner” column on house management from a cat’s prospective. In this issue, his doggy perspective is a delightful *treat* (get it?).

College looks different these days. But Gaston College is celebrating two great partnerships. And we celebrate 100 years of Whitesides Insurance; tell you how to stop those annoying robo calls; how to get your Optimum Results; and get a passport to craft beverages. Cheers! **GL**

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Mo Ally

Mo Ally: *Gaston Lifestyles* CEO's CHARMED LIFE

Gastonia businessman has the magic touch

By Thomas Lark

Photographs by Howard Smith and courtesy of Mo & Deborah Ally

You could say Mo Ally is a Renaissance man of the business world.

The chief executive officer of *Gaston Lifestyles* magazine and the husband of its publisher, Deborah Ally, for nearly 30 years, Mr. Ally has worn many hats over the course

of more than five decades as a successful businessman and entrepreneur. Though he turns 80 on Jan. 31, Ally remains very active and shows no signs of slowing down, as we learned when we recently caught up with him.

My father and all my brothers were heavily involved in business, and I learned the principles of business from them. They taught me a lot, including honesty, respect and dignity.

He was born Mahamood Ally (though of course, he's better known as "Mo" to his countless friends and business acquaintances) in what was then British Guiana (now Guyana), located five degrees north of the equator on the northern coast of South America and that continent's only English-speaking nation. It's a colorful and enchanting place, known for calypso music, spicy cuisine and cricket (more on cricket later).

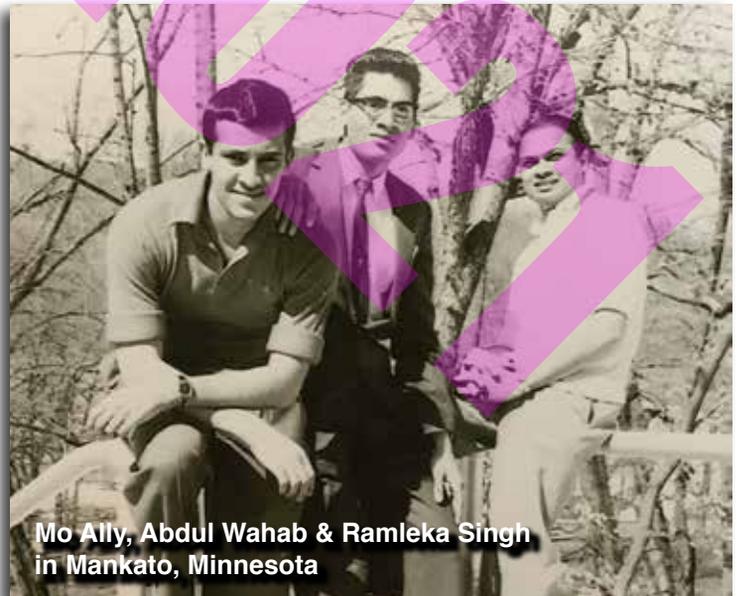
From 1948 onward, his father was a grocer. At just 7 years old, Ally, the youngest of seven children, watched his dad and older brothers working hard in the store. He helped out in the business, too, as disciplined Asian kids have been expected to do for countless generations when serving a family business.

His father soon diversified his working efforts, starting

their county's first trucking company, Ally's Transportation Service. He was soon involved in the distribution of beverages and construction as well, building roads and bridges for the local sugar estates.

"We were *busy!*" Mo Ally recalled with a laugh. "That's the secret of my success: being raised by a business family. My father and all my brothers were heavily involved in business, and I learned the principles of business from them. They taught me a lot, including honesty, respect and dignity. That's what I pursue as my goals and purpose in life. My father taught me that you treat everyone with dignity and respect, regardless of their race and religion."

Ally was the only member of his family to receive a formal education. After graduation with a GCE (general certificate of education) from the University of London, he came to America to further his education in 1961. He earned an undergraduate degree in science at Gustavus Adolphus College in St. Peter, Minn., and he had hopes of pursuing a



Mo Ally, Abdul Wahab & Ramleka Singh
in Mankato, Minnesota

Ally is well known as a dynamic marketing and management executive, with many years of outstanding accomplishments in sales. His business career has been varied and successful.

career in dentistry. But one visit to the Mayo Clinic's wax museum of gum diseases in Rochester, Minn., was enough to dissuade Ally and change his mind. Thus it was that he switched his majors to geography and business.

He fondly recalled weekly letters from his father during these years.

"Dad died three years after I left Guyana for college," he noted sadly.

Returning to Guyana, he taught high school for a year. Then he came back to the States for graduate studies.

It was at this time that his former wife obtained a grant to further her own education at Florida State University in Tallahassee. Soon, the couple had a son. Today, Steve Ally and wife Jenna reside with their twin children, Jasmine and Jasper, in Nelson County, Va.

"Living in Tallahassee, Fla. with low-paying jobs forced me to seek employment in Miami," as Mo Ally recalled. "I drove weekly to work as a food-buyer for Associated Grocers of Miami. This entailed driving a thousand miles a week for a year."

Finally, Ally moved to Miami, where he has resided for

more than 50 years. He and Mrs. Ally maintain homes there and in Gastonia.

An excellent man of business

Ally is well known as a dynamic marketing and management executive, with many years of outstanding accomplishments in sales. His business career has been varied and successful.

Let's take a look back at Ally's earlier professional work. His road to business success all began with his position as the vending manager for Coca-Cola of Miami, 1971-72. He was promoted to that position after a stint as a sales representative. His primary responsibility was acquiring new locations and training and motivating his sales staff. For his hard work, he was recognized as number one in sales for the vending division.

From 1972 to 1995, he established and was the president and principal of Ally Enterprises/Hialeah Vending Company. This business successfully placed and managed some 700 Pepsi machines throughout South Florida. And he's been self-employed ever since.

"This led to the acquisition, development and eventual opening of three discount beverage outlets, a gas station, a Laundromat and vending companies," Ally recalled, "with sales exceeding \$1 million."

Ally was the president of the International Sales and Leasing Corporation, 1975-76. This led the family-owned general contracting and leasing business to its greatest success.

And Ally still speaks fondly of a major project in his native country. From Houston, Texas, he subcontracted housing and heavy equipment to Raymond International



Deborah & Mo Ally at the Barbados Cricket Festival



Mo Ally wearing ICC (International Cricket Council) World Cup Cricket hat worn in India



Mo Ally, cable contractor with Ameritech and GTE in Detroit, Michigan

during the planning and construction of the Canje River Bridge in Corentyne, Berbice, Guyana. As well, he and his late brother, Mustapha Ally, oversaw the development of a professional cricket/sports complex (grounds and stands) in Albion, Guyana, which is currently the National Cricket League's venue.

His business career also includes serving as the president of Pakaraima Fiber Optics, 1997-2003. This business's namesake is a mountain range in Guyana.

He negotiated cable construction contracts with Ameritech, GTE, Media One and Comcast. He procured tools, equipment and vehicles for construction crews and managed 30 crew members in the construction of aerial cable.

Plus, he was an instructor for a 13-week course in aerial cable construction and splicing, and he developed the course's concomitant manual. He conceptualized and implemented the job-training program for inner-city youth at "Tools for Change." This nonprofit program boasted a 90-percent placement rate, and all of its graduates obtained jobs in the cable industry, earning \$12-\$15 an hour.

"I'm not an engineer, but I've learned a lot," he said, adding of teaching these young people, "It was an extremely successful program for six years. It was very good. I guess that's why the State of Florida kept me there for so many years!"

Athletic recognition at state and international levels

Then, of course, there's cricket.

To return to that topic, it must be noted that you can't talk about Mo Ally without mentioning cricket, the

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Well-heeled world-travellers, the Allys have been around the globe many times, travelling to countless countries and enjoying cricket and covering games for *American Cricketer*, which has enjoyed both domestic and international distribution.

Caribbean's most popular sport and indeed Britain's gift to the entire world. A lifelong player and *aficionado*, Ally's prowess at this sport is unrivalled—really good enough to be a professional—and his knowledge of cricket's players, matches and history is positively encyclopedic. His cricket career spans nearly 50 years and includes being a founding member and fundraising chairman for the United States Cricket Association and a former vice president of the South

Florida Cricket Alliance. As well, he is a former captain of the Cavalier Cricket Club of South Florida; a former captain of the Executive Cricket Clubs of South Florida; and a former team manager and captain for the Caribbean Masters of Florida. And some 10 years ago, he was inducted into the Connecticut-based Cricket Hall of Fame, which recognizes the achievements of cricketers across America.

Ally was the president of American Cricket Promotions, 1995-98. He co-founded this company to promote cricket throughout the United States. He conceptualized and developed the first "Legends Weekend," honoring 22 former professional cricketers (test players) who were renowned worldwide. He developed event magazines to promote "Legends Weekend," and he was responsible for event logistics, promotions, the opening reception, the gala finale, cricket matches, a media campaign, merchandise, concessions, travel arrangements and volunteer management.

Indeed, in 1996, it was his passion for cricket that inspired him to create the Miami-based *American Cricketer*, a magazine devoted to the sport and its players' Stateside accomplishments. This evolved from Ally's travelling on cricket tours and creating related booklets about the sport.

"It was a fairly successful magazine," he remarked of *American Cricketer*. "And when Debbie took the position with the United Way (the presidency of the United Way of Gaston County), we moved up here from Florida."

In 2010, he spearheaded the creation of a professional-caliber cricket pitch in Gastonia. The following year, Ally hosted teams from Miami, Capetown, South Africa and Puerto Rico for a charity match benefiting the United Way of Gaston County.

That's when he met Tom Efir, owner of Gastonia-based Standard Distributors and United Oil, and soon, in 2011, *Gaston Lifestyles* was born, a magazine with the purpose of highlighting living, working and playing in Gaston County.

"It was conceptualized over tennis with Tom," Ally revealed, recalling their match at the Gaston Country Club. "He and I became very good friends. He's my tennis buddy, also. The reason *Gaston Lifestyles* is so successful is that I learned about people who have given so much to their community. They do so much for so many, and so we wanted to write about them



Ally's wall of fame

and tell their stories to all of Gaston County.”

Ally's wide world of sports

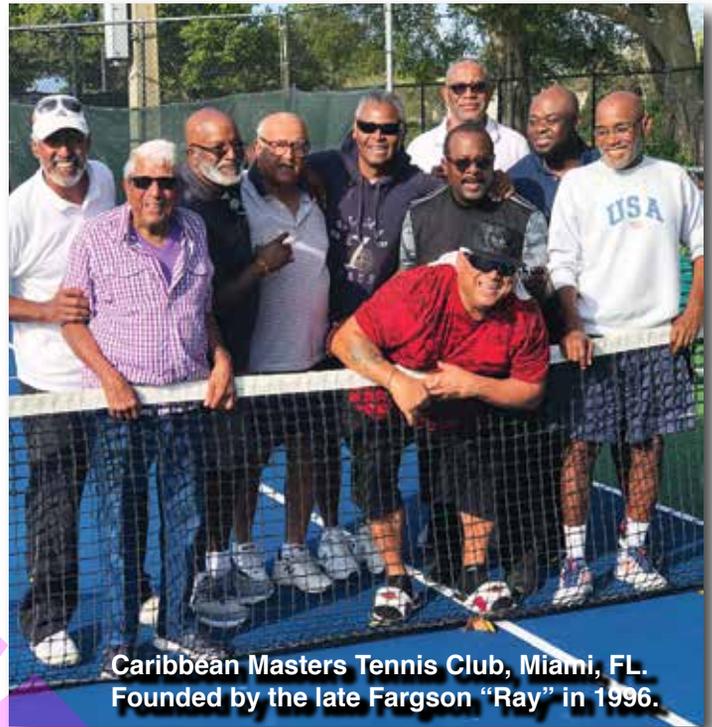
Well-heeled world-travellers, the Allys have been around the globe many times, travelling to countless countries and enjoying cricket and covering games for *American Cricketer*, which has enjoyed both domestic and international distribution. In addition to being an avid cricketer, Mr. Ally is also known for his proficiency at table tennis, snow-skiing and of course, as many Gastonians will attest, golf and tennis. And in Florida in the '70's, Ally enjoyed state ranking in tennis—truly a prestigious honor.

Considering all of Ally's many professional hats, of what accomplishment is he proudest?

“Building my vending machine company from scratch,” he said. “Everything has been so successful, including coming here and starting a magazine, also from scratch.”

To young people wanting to chart their own course in the world of business, Ally's advice is simple and direct.

“Treat everyone,” he said, “with dignity and respect. Courtesy is the greatest asset for any business.” **GL**



Caribbean Masters Tennis Club, Miami, FL.
Founded by the late Ferguson “Ray” in 1996.



Whitesides & Co. Insurance celebrates centenary

One-hundred years of excellence for local insurances aces

By Thomas Lark
Photographs Courtesy of Whitesides & Co. Insurance



Luther Blair

Having a business that's been around for a hundred years is truly something to celebrate.

And at Whitesides & Co. Insurance, that's just what they're doing this year. According to agency president Luther Blair, the Gastonia-based business is marking the big one-hundred in a mighty big way.

Blair is a 50-year veteran of Whitesides & Co. He recently told *Gaston Lifestyles* more about this local independent insurance agency and its remarkable people who strive for excellent service.

Whitesides & Co., he said, is an insurance business "that prides itself on offering the best in personal service to its customers. They shop the insurance marketplace to find the best possible coverage and pricing for their customers."

Blair revealed more details about the agency's history. It was in 1921, he said, that M.V. Whitesides, a local United States Army veteran of World War I, established the business.

"Mr. Whitesides was active in many civic organizations," he said. "He was president of the Gastonia Chamber of Commerce and was awarded the Silver Beaver Award for his work with the Boy Scouts."

As you'd expect, the agency has evolved a lot over the ensuing 10 decades. Blair and vice president John Cloninger are its current co-owners. Following his graduation from the Citadel, the prestigious military academy in Charleston, and, like Whitesides before him, a tour of duty in the U.S. Army, Blair joined the agency in 1970. After a dedicated career of half a century, he plans to retire this month (January). He is a chartered property casualty underwriter and a certified insurance counselor.

Cloninger will become the agency's president upon

Blair's retirement. A graduate of Elon College, Cloninger joined Whitesides & Co. 25 years ago. He is a certified insurance counselor.

Gastonia's own Clay Gibson joined the agency in 2017. A graduate of the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, where he was known for his athletic prowess on the baseball diamond, Gibson is following in his father's footsteps. Mike Gibson is an agent with a nearby State Farm Insurance office.

And corporate secretary and office manager Victoria Whisnant makes sure everything runs smoothly. Blair noted that Whisnant has herself been with the company nearly a quarter-century.

Whitesides & Co. prides itself on offering the best in personal service to its customers

"Whitesides & Co. offers all lines of insurance to its customers," he continued, "including auto, home, life and health, commercial property, fire, general liability and workers' compensation. We have a staff of 10 employees, so the agency is small enough to offer real personal service and large enough to handle any of its customers' needs, both personal and commercial."

He added that the agency, located in the Garrison Professional Park, is a member of the Keystone Insurers Group. This is a consortium of independent insurance agencies operating in eight states, thus giving the agency access to a large number of insurance companies, enabling it to better serve its many clients.

And Blair said the fine folks at Whitesides & Co. are looking forward to their business's future and much more success.

"We've been around for 100 years, and I've been here for half of that time!" he said with a laugh. "And we hope to be here for the next 100 years!" **GL**



Clay Gibson

PEOPLE ON THE MOVE



Scott Attaway

... was hired as Lowell's new town manager, Oct. 17. He was previously its planning director for five years. His past volunteer roles include serving as the Gaston County Planning Board's chairman and as a member of the City of Gastonia Recreation Advisory Committee. His background also includes being a North Carolina-licensed landscape and irrigation contractor. A graduate of Appalachian State University, where he earned bachelor of science degrees in political science and psychology, Attaway and wife Angela reside in Gastonia with their two daughters. 



Julie Ostrowski

... was hired as Gaston College's new director of marketing earlier this year. She has previously worked in marketing and communications roles with K-12 schools, and she was the marketing manager at Eastern Michigan University. Her background includes extensive marketing work in the logistics industry, and she currently volunteers as a guardian *ad litem* for Lincoln County. Ostrowski earned her bachelor's degree in business administration from Wayne State University. She also has a master's degree in organizational development from Eastern Michigan University. 



Marc Jordan

... was recently hired to lead the Montcross Area Chamber of Commerce. He has more than 30 years of experience in consulting and leadership for numerous local, regional and city chambers of commerce. Previously recognized by his peers as Chamber Executive of the Year for both Carolinas, he has also served as president of state chamber associations in North Carolina and Tennessee. "I am honored, appreciative and excited to have been selected to join the leadership team of the Montcross Area Chamber of Commerce as the new president. I was immediately drawn to the dedication and commitment of the volunteer leadership and staff," Jordan says, adding that he's eager to begin work in Gaston County. 



Karsyn Feemster-Jones

... is making quite the name for herself as a budding businesswoman. The 14-year-old recently created "You Flo, Girl," a nonprofit organization of which she is the president and CEO. It seeks to provide menstrual products and "flo" education to some 1,000 girls across the world. "My one-year goal is to expand by opening 'You Flo, Girl' centers around the world," she said. "My company slogan is: 'embracing the power; erasing the stigma.' I desire to create positive conversations around a natural process for girls on our journey into womanhood." Feemster-Jones also hopes to serve some 500 girls at local Title I schools, as well as children's advocacy centers, the Boys and Girls Club of Gaston County and more. 



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Ken Neeld's plan offers Optimum Result

Fitness expert has key to health

By Thomas Lark
Photograph Courtesy of Optimum Result Fitness



Kenneth Neeld

Ken Neeld is a man with a zest for healthy living. And Neeld shares that enthusiasm with others at Optimum Result Fitness in Gastonia. Formerly the site of Armstrong's Gym, the new fitness center is located on Robinwood Road in Gastonia, as Neeld recently told *Gaston Lifestyles*.

The Northern Virginia native and Appalachian State University graduate is a veteran of the U.S. Army Medical Corps. He leveraged that experience into a 30-year career in the medical device industry. Neeld has also worked in leadership for several Fortune 150 companies. He and wife Nicole live with their daughter in Gastonia.

"Gastonia adds a true sense of community that we did not feel while living in Charlotte," Mr. Neeld said of their move of four years ago. "We are excited about the opportunity to give back to the community through enhancing the health and wellness of Gaston County residents."

He spoke further about his lifelong love of physical fitness.

"I was a personal trainer in college, a bodybuilder," he revealed, adding that patient care was his primary responsibility in the army's medical corps. "I have always had

a passion for weightlifting and living a healthy lifestyle, and I'm passionate about helping others achieve their goals. It is this desire to help others and create a healthier community that led to the opening of the Optimum Result."

Are you looking to start a fitness-oriented business? Neeld has some words of wisdom for you.

What we identified as missing, the gap that existed, was a full-service wellness solution center.

"I would tell other fitness entrepreneurs that creating and opening a successful health club is no different from opening any other business," he said. "The key is to identify unmet needs in the market and then create a business model that not only addresses these gaps but also brings exceptional value and delivers the intended results. I believe that it's important to surround yourself with people that share a similar vision, add knowledge and have experience you do not possess."

Optimum Result Fitness features 15,000 square feet of machines, weights, cardio-related equipment and racquetball. It's COVID-safe, with enhanced safety protocols. All its trainers are certified. There are physical and massage therapists, meal preparation, nutrition counseling, heart rate-monitored work-outs and much more, all in a professional atmosphere, as Neeld noted.

"When we assessed the market," he continued, "we concluded that Gastonia did not need another gym, as there are plenty of good options to work out already in the market. What we identified as missing, the gap that existed, was a full-service wellness solution center. At the Optimum Result, we believe that in order to achieve your health and fitness goals, you must address both the physical and mental aspect of wellness. Your typical gym does a good job on the physical aspect of wellness but does little to address the mental aspect of wellness. We address both and ensure that your body and mind are balanced and in the optimum state to achieve your goals." **GL**



A look inside Optimum Result Fitness

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By Michael Applegate, Gaston County Travel and Tourism
Photography by Gaston County Travel and Tourism



Michael Applegate

We're on the trail of some tasty beverages! With the help of our partners at Bandwango, Gaston County Travel and Tourism has created a free game pass to promote the Ridgeline Craft Beverage Trail experience and the eight individual businesses that are part of it in both Gaston and Cleveland counties. The Ridgeline Craft Beverage Trail derives its name from the Ridgeline Trail that connects Crowders Mountain State Park across Gaston and Cleveland counties.

By signing up for the passport and simply visiting the businesses along the trail, users earn prize credits. This opportunity is open to local residents and visitors alike. Pass-holders checking in at six of the eight locations over the course of the year are rewarded with a custom Ridgeline Craft Beverage Trail baseball cap, produced and shipped on demand. Prizes are available while supplies last.

Credit tracking is accomplished using mobile device geo-location services, so there is no recordkeeping needed

from our participating businesses. They can just continue to concentrate on providing the same great food and beverages and welcoming environments that Gaston County residents and visitors have come to enjoy. The overall goals we're after are to help local businesses get more customers and profits and for visitors and local folks alike to explore and experience the best of our destinations.

As part of House Bill 1023 (the Corona Virus Relief Fund/Additions and Revisions), the North Carolina General Assembly created an appropriation to help eligible destination marketing organizations experiencing reduced ability to market their destinations, due to revenue loss. These North Carolina Tourism Promotion Grants were designed to help provide relief to and promote tourism in areas of the state most dependent on travel and tourism. The Economic Development Partnership of North Carolina was tasked with disbursing these funds in consultation with the N.C. Travel Industry Association.

Gaston County Travel and Tourism's Bandwango Passport program was made possible due to a second wave of CARES funding and another tourism promotion grant award. Bandwango has been powering tourism solutions throughout various stages of the pandemic recovery. In just the last nine months, they've launched more than 60 passes to support destinations around the country.

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, many of our area hospitality businesses have been affected. Given that previous rounds of grants went to assisting local holidays attractions in their recovery, we felt it appropriate to dedicate this wave of funding toward the brewers, distillers and vintners that have also been particularly hard-hit over the past nine months.

Go explore

In a place known for an extraordinarily broad array of outdoor recreation choices, there is no better way to wind down after your adventures than relaxing with friends and family on the comfortable patios, decks and landscapes found at our partner locations. Whether situated in one of our vibrant downtowns, along scenic riverbanks or framed by the



You'll enjoy some savory suds on the Ridgeline Craft Beverage Trail.

gorgeous views of mountain peaks and rolling farmlands, you will want to see these perfect post-activity recovery spots for yourself. Several include live music, full menus, food trucks and other events. But at each, you'll enjoy warm smiles and welcoming interactions with staffers and fellow patrons.

From east to west, here are the businesses comprising our trail; all produce beverages right on location—the one qualifier needed to be listed on the Ridgeline Craft Beverage Trail:

- Muddy River Distillery, 1500 River Drive, Ste. 100, Belmont, NC 28012 www.muddyriverdistillery.com;
- Primal Brewery Belmont, 52 Ervin St., Belmont, NC 28012 www.primalbrewery.com;
- Jekyll & Hyde Taphouse and Grill, 10 Catawba St., Belmont, NC 28012 www.hydestaphouse.com;
- Cavendish Brewing, 207 N. Chester St., Ste. 2234, Gastonia, NC 28052 www.cavendishbrewing.com;
- Ole Dallas Brewery, 136 Durkee Lane, Dallas, NC 28034 www.oledallasbrewery.com;
- Veronet Vineyards and Winery, 1549 Ike Brooks Drive, Kings Mountain, NC 28086 www.veronetwine.com;
- Baker Buffalo Creek Vineyard and Winery, 3521

Fallston-Waco Road, Lawndale, NC 28090 www.bakerbuffalocreek.com;

- Newgrass Brewing Company, 213 S. Lafayette St., Shelby, NC 28150 www.newgrassbrewing.com

Get playing

The Bandwango Destination Experience Engine is a groundbreaking destination marketing and commerce platform that redefines the relationship between people and places.

Bandwango's craft beer and taproom passports allow patrons to discover and enjoy the best breweries without the stress of planning or overpaying. Bandwango's wine-tasting passports and vineyard tours deliver the enchantment of the vine directly to travelers and local patrons alike.

With the Ridgeline Craft Beverage Trail, Gaston County and Bandwango have combined the best of both of these passports and then added a distillery to it!

Sign up and/or review additional information about this program at www.explore.gogastonnc.org. 

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Removing the stigma of mental illness

Mental health must be made a priority

By **Renée Davis, Licensed Psychologist**
Brighter Horizons Psychological Services, PLLC



Renée Davis

Mental health matters! This is not just a popular statement. It is an appeal to make mental health a priority. Mental health is just as important as physical health. Such mental illnesses as depression, bipolar disorder, anxiety, schizophrenia and more are health conditions that involve changes in one's emotions, thinking, behavior or a combination of these. These conditions can be situational (short-term) or chronic (long-term). They can affect how we handle stress, treat ourselves, relate to others, make decisions and function every day.

Most of us have experienced—or *will* experience—episodes of sadness or nervousness. However, this does not mean that we necessarily have a mental health condition. In the mental health field, if symptoms persist more than two weeks and adversely affect a person's functioning, then professional assistance is recommended.

The World Health Organization (WHO) has reported that about 20 percent of American adults live with some form of mental illness. These conditions do not discriminate based on race, color, gender, identity or socio-economic status. Anyone can experience mental health challenges.

The good news is that mental health issues are treatable. There are trained professionals who have the necessary education, training, certification and state licensing to

assist those who suffer from mental health issues. These professionals include psychiatrists, psychologists, clinical social workers and professional counselors.

During this time of year—the annual holiday season and immediately after—mental health issues may increase. The holidays do not cause mental health conditions, but they can contribute to stressors that many experience. Those stressors can either trigger or exacerbate such problems as depression and anxiety.

Self-care may include treating yourself like you want others to treat you and taking time for yourself. This means investing in you!

And besides the holidays, the world is currently experiencing an event, unseen in more than a century: the COVID-19 pandemic. It has caused the loss of tens of thousands of lives, sickness for millions, unemployment, underemployment, fear about one's own health and loved ones, worry about the future and an increase in mental health issues. Public health and state mandates of quarantines and social-distancing have resulted in people



feeling powerless, isolated and angry, which has also heightened stress and anxiety levels. For those with existing mental health issues, these conditions may exacerbate their symptoms. Such people are encouraged to continue their treatment and contact their health care providers if new or worsening symptoms arise.

The opposite of mental illness is mental wellness. The WHO defines this as “a state of well-being in which the individual realizes his/her own abilities, can cope with normal stressors of life, can work productively and fruitfully and is able to make a contribution to his/her community.” Mental wellness is a balance of emotional, physical, spiritual and mental health. It is essential to one’s overall well-being and resiliency during difficult times. The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) suggest that taking care of one’s emotional health will help with clear thinking and the ability to react to urgent needs to protect one’s self and family.

To promote mental wellness and manage stress, there are everyday activities one may do that are free or inexpensive—even during a pandemic. They include exercise, engaging in social opportunities and self-care. There are numerous psychological benefits of physical activity, such as decreased symptoms of depression/anxiety, decreased stress, better mood and improved sleep. Examples of social activities include talking with a trusted friend/family member or being involved in such community activities as volunteering.

Volunteering can counteract the effects of stress and anxiety by improving self-esteem and mood, fostering a sense of purpose and providing the opportunity to meet new people. While still practicing safety measures, people can connect with family, friends and others, using Internet-based social media platforms or face-to-face contact on Skype or Zoom or by telephone, e-mail and text-message services.

Self-care may include treating yourself like you want others to treat you and taking time for yourself. This means investing in *you!* Meditation, which is helpful with depression and anxiety, can help increase concentration and focus. Other helpful exercises include writing down your thoughts and feelings in a journal, getting adequate sleep and seeking help when needed. Avoid such unhealthy habits as drugs and alcohol and think positively. And maintaining a balanced, healthy diet is also good for your mental health.

For immediate help in a crisis, call “911” or call:

- the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (1-800-628-TALK [8255]);
- the National Domestic Violence Hotline (1-800-799-7233);
- the National Child Abuse Hotline (1-800-4AChild [1-800-422-4453])
- or the Veterans’ Crisis Line (1-800-273-TALK [8255]). 



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Kelli Sadler: on the frontlines of COVID war

Local nurse oversees nursing efforts at five hospitals

By Thomas Lark



Kelli Sadler

Kelli Sadler is a warrior. A Gastonia native and a noted local nurse, Sadler is among the frontline fighters in the war on the COVID-19 outbreak. She recently spoke with *Gaston Lifestyles* about her nursing career and more.

The older of two children born to Thomasina Lindsay Sadler and the late Dr. Edward D. Sadler, Jr. (a former superintendent of the Gaston County Schools), she is a 1987 graduate of Ashbrook High School. She attended the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill for about two years, and she is a 1995 graduate of the Gaston College Nursing School, where she earned an associate's degree in nursing. She earned a bachelor's degree in nursing at Winston-Salem State University in 2005 and a master's degree in health administration from Pfeiffer University in 2014.

Kelli Sadler is a woman with a real passion for helping and leading people.

"I am also passionate about providing guidance and offering assistance to young people who are trying to find their way and figure out their future plans," she added.

Sadler has lived and worked in Northern Virginia, Maryland and Washington, D.C. She has been employed by Novant Health for 19 years, and she is currently the vice president of nursing and market chief nursing officer for

Novant's greater Charlotte market, which includes Novant Health Presbyterian Medical Center, Novant Health Charlotte Orthopedic Hospital, Novant Health Matthews Medical Center, Novant Health Mint Hill Medical Center and Novant Health Rowan Medical Center.

Sadler elaborated on how COVID has changed the face of health care.

"COVID has certainly introduced a unique set of dynamics into health care and created its own daily challenges," she said. "Many decisions that are made daily revolve around the number of COVID patients and the overall total census. We work daily to ensure we have enough beds, given the level of care required by our patients. We have become quite creative in opening non-traditional spaces. Staffing has been extraordinarily challenging, as nurses have so many options. Many have decided to travel to help the larger hospitals across the nation with the COVID crisis, while yet others have decided to find jobs that allow them to work remotely.

"We are so proud of the nurses who have chosen to remain in acute care, that come to work every day to make a difference in the lives of others," she continued. "Our team is exhausted after managing in our new environment for the last nine months. We universally mask, which means we have lost our smiles. I often encourage the team by saying, 'We have lost our smile, and therefore, we must go the extra mile.' While so much of the focus is on COVID, we have a large number of non-COVID patients who also require our focus and intentionality, as we work to provide safe quality care. We begin each day with a safety call, hosted at each Novant Health acute care facility, to allow leaders to raise any safety concerns over the past 24 hours, as well as look ahead and anticipate any safety concerns for the upcoming 24 hours."

Daily priorities, said Sadler, include safety, quality and patient satisfaction, all whilst ensuring team member engagement.

"We have safety behaviors, much like the airline industry, that we utilize daily," she said. "We practice with a questioning attitude, communicate clearly, utilize patient name and date of birth for every interaction, focus on the task at hand and support each other. We want the public to know



“I would encourage young people to consider becoming nurses, as there are many areas of focus to choose from, including case management, bedside nursing, education, home health and leadership, just to name a few.

that we are prepared to provide safe quality care if they need it. There is a lot of fear about coming to the hospital, and we have seen many patients prolong the care they need. We would offer reassurance that hospitals are equipped to provide safe quality care, as well as a remarkable experience.

“While there are many internal distractions and challenges,” she added, “there are also external distractions and challenges, as health care providers who are also parents strive to ensure their children have the necessary resources and supervision needed to attend school every day and follow up on assignments. We have allowed flexibility with scheduling in an attempt to retain our top-notch talent. We have an accredited nursing residency program that has been very helpful as we work to appropriately staff the nursing units in the midst of a nationwide nursing shortage. These are new graduate nurses, who are working in the clinical space to find a permanent nursing unit. The residency program allows them to rotate to three different areas within the first year and decide which area is the best fit. Even in the midst of challenges related to COVID, our standard work continues. We have active shared governance councils for both nursing team members and, as well, our professional and support-services partners. We welcome input from the frontline team members and create a forum for discussion on a monthly basis. I am very proud of the Novant Health Hope fund that has allowed team members, as well as the public, to donate funds that have been given to team members who are in need of assistance.”

Nursing is a highly challenging profession, and if you have what it takes, Sadler has guidance for you.

“I would encourage young people to consider becoming nurses,” she said, “as there are many areas of focus to choose from, including case management, bedside nursing, education, home health and leadership, just to name a few. Nursing has proven to be such a rewarding experience for me and by far one of the best decisions I have made in my life. Even in the midst of a pandemic, I am grateful for my journey, and I wouldn’t trade it for anything!” **GI**

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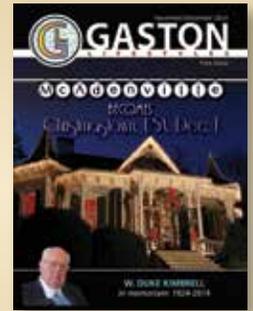
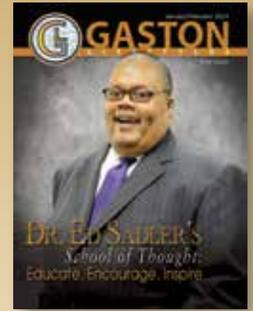
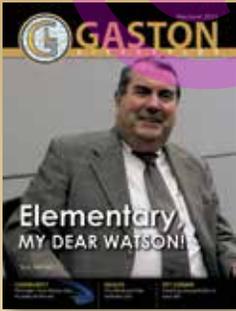
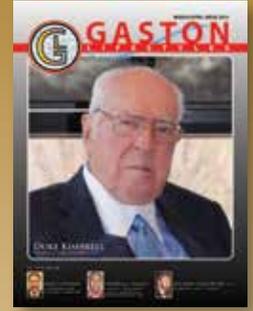
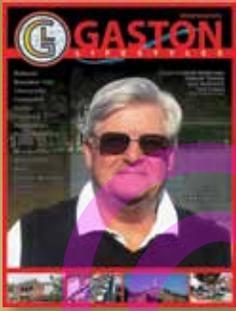
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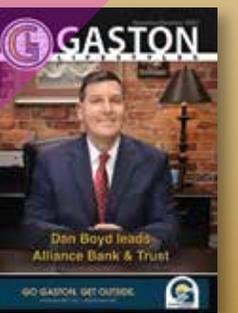
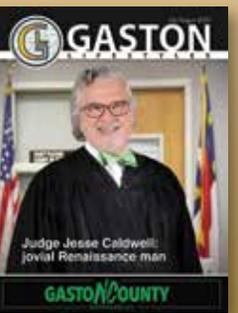
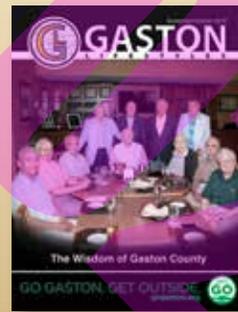
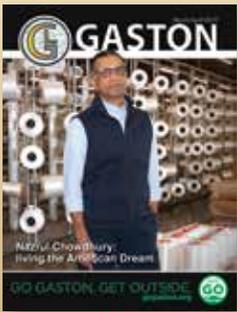
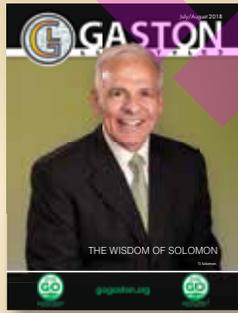
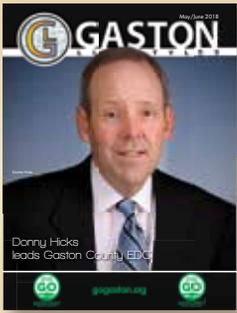
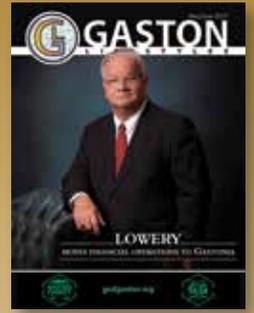
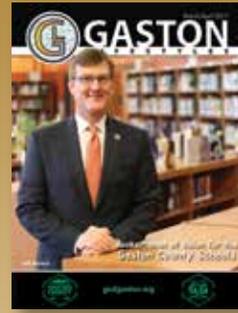
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Year's In Remembrance



Carmen Neely makes it big in the Big Apple and more

Gastonia native is internationally-known artist

By Thomas Lark

Photographs Courtesy of Carmen Neely



Carmen Neely

Gastonia native Carmen Neely is the toast of the art world in New York, Chicago and beyond.

Based in the Windy City, Neely has exhibited her paintings there, in the Big Apple, Raleigh and as far away as Düsseldorf, where the 33-year-old was recently a big hit with German critics.

Neely recently told *Gaston Lifestyles* more about growing up in Gastonia as the daughter of Michael and Veronica Neely.

“My parents are both creative people in their own ways,” she said. “My dad has always been a musician, and I come from an entire extended family of amazingly talented musicians. My mom is retired. But

she worked as an elementary schoolteacher for nearly 33 years, and I grew up helping her paint and cut and paste poster boards, billboards and all kinds of elaborate *décor* for her classroom. They have consistently been supportive of my artistic pursuits, and I have been so fortunate to have their encouragement.”

She also talked about her many artistic influences.

“I was eventually exposed to other black women abstract painters, many who are elders, just now receiving their long-overdue acknowledgement,” she said. “But these questions are still ones I hear my female students of color reckoning with. They’re also not completely erased from my own psyche. However, I’m so thankful for the documented work that such women as Mary



UNTITLED Art Fair, Miami, FL
installation shot: Carmen Neely:
Intellectualized Intimacy, Jane
Lombard Gallery Booth



Lovelace O’Neal, Howardena Pindell, Candida Alvarez and Alma Thomas have done to reject historically limiting representations of who makes abstraction and why.”

And Neely talked about how the COVID outbreak has affected her work.

“With COVID causing so many scheduling complications and delays,” she said, “my 2021 calendar is very up in the air at the moment. But I’m definitely still making a lot of work at the moment in Chicago!”

To young people who aspire to be artists, Neely advised perseverance.

“It can be so difficult to remember and keep in perspective,” she said, “but please remind yourself that you are not alone in your frustrations and fears. The art world is a system which still upholds much gate-keeping and many exclusionary practices. In conjunction with this, our histories are flawed in their largely skewed presentations of perspective. If you are feeling unseen and unheard, don’t doubt or discount these sentiments. Don’t let others convince you that it’s your imagination or that the playing field is even. But don’t let these truths prevent you from making the work you feel led to create. You deserve to make the work you desire to create. You belong in this art world. If there is not a tangible space carved for you yet, collaborate with others to build new structures. Dismantle current structures that aren’t working. I’m not saying it’s going to be easy or that it will happen quickly. But I *am* saying, ‘Keep going.’” 

Setareh Gallery, Düsseldorf, Germany, 2018



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Gaston College partnerships facilitate transfers

Working closely with UNCC, Gardner-Webb

By **Stephanie Michael-Pickett**, Gaston College Marketing and Public Relations



Gaston College

Gaston College recently entered into important partnership agreements with two local four-year institutions.

The college is facilitating transfers to the University of North Carolina at Charlotte and Gardner-Webb University in Boiling Springs with the “49er Next” and “Bulldog-Bound” programs respectively.

UNCC and Gaston College recently signed a joint agreement that will boost transfers and increase academic preparation. The co-admission program, “49er Next,” focuses on increasing the number of Gaston College students with two-year associate degrees who transfer to UNC-Charlotte and earn bachelor’s degrees.

Gaston College President Dr. John Hauser and UNCC Chancellor Dr. Sharon Gaber signed the memorandum of understanding for “49er Next” that is designed to help degree completion and student success by creating a seamless pathway for Gaston College students who want to earn a four-year degree at UNCC. The agreement immediately launches a comprehensive effort to guarantee admissions to all qualifying Gaston College transfer students. Recruitment for the program began recently during the current semester. Right now, 23 students have enrolled into this innovative program, as Gaber informed.



“UNC-Charlotte enrolls the most transfer students of any institution in North Carolina,” she said. “The ‘49er Next’ partnership with Gaston College creates an opportunity for qualified students to easily transition to UNC-Charlotte and ensures that we are actively meeting students’ academic, financial and career-planning needs. This innovative program is designed to produce a greater number of qualified, work force-ready graduates at a significant cost savings to them.”

Hauser concurred.

“Like Gaston College,” he said, “UNC-Charlotte is focused on the academic success of its students. This collaborative partnership reinforces our efforts to work together to help qualified students obtain the resources they need and meet rigorous academic standards. This fall, Gaston College students enrolled into this unique program knowing they did not have to be concerned about losing any credit hours in the transfer process.”

As participants in the “49er Next” program, students are eligible to transfer into 77 undergraduate degree programs with more than 170 majors at UNCC. They are also guaranteed admission into UNCC after completing an eligible associate’s degree with the required GPA. But while completion of the program requirements guarantees admission to UNCC, it does not guarantee admission into more selective degree programs. Some degree programs may have higher GPA and/or other admission requirements to be considered.

Among the participating students are Allie Costner and Terry Dills. Costner is pursuing an associate in arts degree at Gaston College. She plans to transfer to UNCC to pursue a degree in clinical psychology. And Dills, also pursuing a Gaston College associate in arts degree, plans to transfer to UNCC and major in international business, with a concentration in finance and accounting.

Students interested in learning more about “49erNext” should consult the Website at www.gaston.edu/49erNext or email www.gaston.edu/49ernext.

Gaston College recently entered into important partnership agreements with two local four-year institutions.

“Bulldog-Bound”

And the “Bulldog-Bound” program is a \$3,000 annual grant. This money will mean scholarship support to transfer students, available to any Gaston College student who gains admission to the traditional, residential programs at Gardner-Webb. This co-admission transfer agreement, into which the college entered in November, 2019, is stackable with other transfer scholarships available to Gaston College students, allowing currently enrolled Gaston College students to participate in a seamless direct-entry pathway to GWU. Students wishing to participate in “Bulldog-Bound” must satisfy GWU admission and transfer degree requirements,

according to GWU President Dr. William Downs.

“We continue to seek avenues to provide and improve quality opportunities for all students,” said Downs, “and partnerships like this with Gaston College offer added value and benefit for students of both institutions.”

Gaston College has recently updated transfer pathways programs that ease students’ transition from the college to GWU, amongst other four-year institutions. Gaston College students who have earned their A.A.S. two-year degrees in accounting, elementary education, business administration, criminal justice, human services or nursing can easily transfer to GWU to complete their four-year degrees, according to Dr. Dewey Dellinger of Stanley, Gaston College’s vice president of academic affairs.

“Our strong partnership with Gardner-Webb University continues to grow,” said Dellinger, adding that the “program offers our students even more excellent opportunities to continue their education at GWU. I would like to personally thank Gardner-Webb for including Gaston College in this grant.” 



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Tips for dogs living with human families

Ensuring things don't get ruff!

By Mark E. Epstein, DVM, Dipl ABVP (C/F), TotalBond Veterinary Hospitals



Dr. Mark Epstein

If you're a dog, getting your family squared away is a simple matter of drawing boundaries and setting proper expectations.

These guidelines will ensure that this happens as briskly and efficiently and with as much fun as possible.

As a puppy, the best way to train your family is to pee on the floor. When they then take you outside, sniff and maybe romp around a bit, but certainly show zero interest in using the bathroom. When you get back inside, pee on the floor.

A great parlor trick is to eat your poop. *Yum!* Hilarity will ensue. It is possible, however, that your family will eventually grow weary of this trick and start to pick up your poop before you can get to it. We have seen this happen. But if so, do not despair; there are always tootsie rolls in the litter-box. This is equally funny, and as a bonus, it will give you a positive toxoplasmosis titer.

If you are a large dog, then walk away from the water bowl before you have finished swallowing everything. What this will do is spread a slick mixture of saliva and water over a large swath of the kitchen floor. Your pet parents will tell you for the 100th time not to do this. Pretend you don't understand what they're talking about, which, frankly—admit it—you don't.



Even though your collar says "Bailey," respond only to your real name, which is, "Get-Down-Stop-That-How-Many-Times-Have-I-Told-You-and-What-Part-of-No-Don't-You-Understand." Actually, never mind. You don't even need to respond to that, if you don't want.

Under no circumstances allow anyone to walk on your street without fiercely objecting at the window. Say to yourself, "That'll show 'em!" Repeat the next time they walk

See? With careful attention and by following a few basic rules, your life with a human family will be one of the best things that ever happened to you.

by. And the next. And the next. And the...

You don't need to let on that you know what "B-A-T-H" spells. But when you hear it whispered or the shampoo bottle has moved an inch from where it usually is, slink to a distant corner, or if small enough, under the bed.

Paw at your parents' hands to have them scratch you on the chest. When they try to stop, *do not let them*. Paw at their hands again to have them keep scratching you on the chest. When they try to stop, *do not let them*. Paw at their hands again to have them keep scratching you on the chest. When they try to stop, *do not let them*. Paw at their...

At 5 p.m., regardless of what your parents are doing, start acting agitated. Follow them around. Look at the food bowl and then back at them. Keep doing this until they feed you. This is 100-percent effective.

You must develop a forlorn expression to use at strategic times. One of these times is when you have chewed wallpaper off the wall, or the face off of a child's favorite stuffed animal. There will be great wailing and gnashing of teeth. But if you wear the forlorn expression, it will not last long.

Your family will attempt to teach you a number of commands and tricks. It is all rather silly, but go ahead and oblige them. They will be proud of themselves, and you will get food out of it.

When you are told not to get on a certain couch, that secretly means only when your family is not around. Feel free to help yourself to whatever furniture you want, as long as they are not looking.

During dinner, sit beside the table at attention and stare relentlessly at the person eating. Do not budge; flicking your eyes between the dish and the person is OK, however. I promise you that they cannot last the whole meal without tossing you something. If there is a kid at the table, just park yourself; it will be a smorgasbord down there.

Sometimes, you may find that you are the Main Primary Dog in a household, and if so, your name will be Zeus or Vasha. On the other hand you might be the family's Spare Back-up Emergency Dog, in which case your name will be Zippy. If you are Zeus or Vasha, you may look at the person holding a cookie, using your expression to imply: "Zippy says he doesn't want a treat. He says I can have *two*." And think seriously about whether you plan to tell Zippy the truth when he's excited about his trip to the vet to get "tutored."

If you are a fluffy breed and have not been to the groomer for awhile, you don't need to let on which end is which of you.

See? With careful attention and by following a few basic rules, your life with a human family will be one of the best things that ever happened to you.

And truth be told, to them, too. **GL**



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Is your life insurance policy on track?

What you need to know

By **Johnathan S. Lowery**, Lincoln Financial Securities



Johnathan S. Lowery

Few things are as important as ensuring that your heirs will be in good financial shape, should you die unexpectedly.

Life insurance, and the death benefit it pays out, is critical for achieving that financial shape—albeit one that is often avoided, because it elicits undesirable emotions. After all, most of us don't want to think about anything related to the death of a loved one.

Because of the unwelcome emotional component, some people opt to not review their life insurance policy. But it should not be something you merely buy and then forget about. Unfortunately, avoiding the topic can have consequences. In fact, it's advisable to review your life insurance policy every year during your annual financial check-up.

Coverage considerations

How much coverage you need depends on several factors, including your age, number of dependents and the financial resources you have at your disposal. Some financial publications say you need eight times your salary for the death benefit. But general numbers like that can be way off base in individual situations.

Instead, you should sit down with your financial professional and determine individual calculations. It comes down to a simple function: Resources subtracted from need

gives you the amount of coverage you should get. This may sound straightforward, but the calculation should also factor in Social Security benefits, pensions and any other income your heirs may generate.

Depending on whether you have variable, universal or whole life insurance, there are other compelling reasons to review and update your policy frequently.

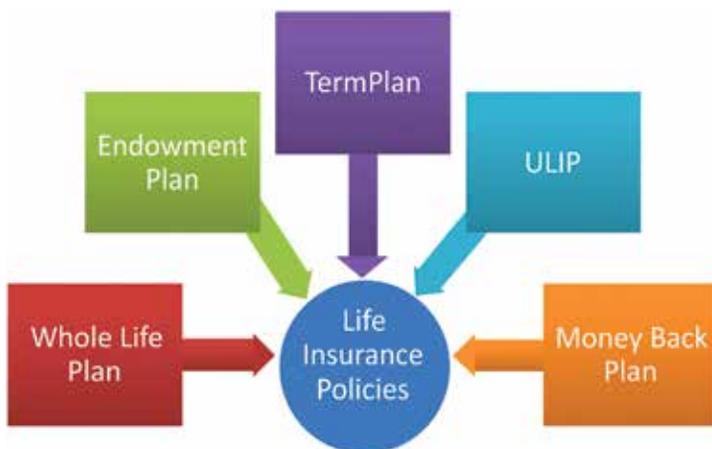
In addition, a number of variables and unknowns can make absolute precision almost impossible. These projections are out 20 to 30 years, and using one inflationary assumption *versus* another, or one assumed return on investment *versus* another, can make a big difference. Just a half-percentage adjustment can cause the needed death benefit to change wildly, which is why it is important to work with an experienced financial professional.

Regular reviews

Frequent insurance policy check-ups are vital. At the very least, you should revisit your policies and death benefits whenever there is a significant life event, such as the birth of a child, the purchase of a new home or business or an inheritance.

of a child may necessitate a boost in your death benefits, because most parents want to ensure that their children will have the resources necessary to attend college and otherwise be taken care of until they reach adulthood. On the flip side, the benefits metric can also change should you come into an unexpected inheritance, which would likely reduce your coverage needs.

Depending on whether you have variable, universal or



whole life insurance, there are other compelling reasons to review and update your policy frequently. For instance, variable insurance enables policyholders to choose from a finite list of sub-accounts. Many of these sub-account investment choices can be in the stock market via a fund-type arrangement and therefore are directly affected by those investment choices. Because of this, variable insurance needs to be maintained like other investments through rebalancing and other methods.

On the other hand, whole and universal policies don't have sub-accounts, so they aren't affected by the performance of the financial markets. They are, however, affected by the interest-rate environment, so you can't just ignore them entirely.

In general, it is best to be conservative when determining how much coverage your family needs. For example, if calculations suggest that your family needs \$900,000 in death benefits, you may want to consider getting \$1 million. After all, heirs aren't

going to complain if they've got too much life insurance, but they'll sure complain if they run out. **GL**

Johnathan S. Lowery is a registered representative of the Lincoln Financial Securities Corporation, a broker/dealer; member SIPC [Lowery Financial Group, 1574-C Union Road, Gastonia, NC 28054 (704) 864-5401], offering insurance through Lincoln affiliates and other fine companies. This information should not be construed as legal or tax advice. You may want to consult a tax adviser regarding this information as it relates to your personal circumstances.



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Stewart celebrates 60 years in education

Big day for beloved Bessemer City native

By Elizabeth Graves, Special Correspondent for *Gaston Lifestyles*
Photograph by Elizabeth Graves



Elizabeth Graves

Sixty years is a mighty long time. And when you've spent six decades as a schoolteacher, that's definitely something to celebrate. That's just what folks in Bessemer City recently did for Tweety Worthy Stewart. The Lincoln High School Alumni Association honored Stewart for her long years of service during a recent event at Centennial Park in her native Bessemer City.

She went to Stewart Elementary and Lincoln Academy schools, and she is a graduate of Lincoln High. Stewart furthered her education at Johnson C. Smith University in Charlotte, where she earned a bachelor of arts degree in education. She also attended the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and Appalachian State University in Boone to earn a master's degree in education.

It was during the days of segregation that Stewart began her career, teaching at an all-black school, Stewart Elementary in Bessemer City. Her next position at West Elementary, also in Bessemer City, came at the beginning of integration. She was the first black teacher and the only one to teach there. While at West Elementary, she was approached by Jackson Parker to move to Lincoln Jr. High School, again in Bessemer City, because he was going to be its principal. She took the assignment and taught school there for about 40 years.

Pastor Chris Wilson, one of Stewart's former students at West Elementary, opened the festivities at Centennial Park with comments and a prayer. Minister Ann Floyd presided over the awards program. One of Floyd's many comments about Stewart was that she was known for bringing energy and excitement to the classroom and the school. While at Stewart Elementary, she held its first beauty pageant and also

had a dance group called the Rockettes (after Broadway's famous troupe of the same name). Students, parents and community members were all excited about the activities she brought to the school, because she was an awesome teacher and a strict disciplinarian. Stewart Elementary's beauty pageant court and the Rockettes took part in the annual Bessemer City Christmas Parade. This was the first time any black students had been in the parade, and it made the news, including in *The Bessemer City Record* newspaper.

Also at the program in the park, introductions were made by Stewart's nieces, Kaitlyn and Brianne Davis. They recalled their aunt's time as a teacher at Stewart Elementary. And Stewart herself recalled how every morning, her class's students would start the day with Pledge of Allegiance and then follow it by singing "My Country 'Tis of Thee." Three more nieces, Heaven, Essie and Brixtan Graves, sang this same song during the program.

Other speakers included former students and their parents.

The Honorable Becky Smith, mayor of Bessemer City, represented the city council and the parents. Smith gave greetings and comments on behalf of the City then spoke as a parent.

"You never had to worry about your children," she said, "because they would be well taught and taken care of. My daughter had a problem talking in front of people. After leaving Mrs. Stewart's (class), she can do public speaking. Mrs. Stewart keeps up with all of her students that she has taught and calls them all her children, even after they are grown. Whenever I see her she will ask, 'How are my girls?'"

Smith presented Stewart a plaque from local parents. Its inscription reads:

"You made a difference in the lives



Tweety Worthy Stewart

“You made a difference in the lives of students that you taught, leading them beyond their imagination and teaching them beyond their dreams.”

of students that you taught, leading them beyond their imagination and teaching them beyond their dreams.”

Bessemer City High Principal Dr. Sheila Wyont, Debra Brown and Mark Bibbs were also speakers and presenters of plaques. Bibbs came all the way from Raleigh. All the speakers credited Stewart for their success in life, all because of her outstanding leadership in education, making sure that all her students worked up to their abilities. She believed in them and set high standards for them. And with all her devotion and dedication, she made a tremendous impact upon their lives.

Local songbird Sandra Sadler sang Stewart a very special solo: “The Wind Beneath My Wings.” Bessemer City High Coach Larry Boone noted how Stewart feeds the sports teams and serves the players in a mentorial role, encouraging them to be their best both academically and athletically.

During her planning time, Stewart was well known for walking the halls, keeping order and talking to students. They all love her. Her motto is encapsulated in this bit of poetry:

*“Good, better, best,
Never let it rest
Until the good gets better,
And better is the best.”*

Stewart made remarks at the program’s conclusion, stating that she enjoys teaching and getting into the heads of students to see what they are thinking.

“This has been the best surprise in my life,” she said. “I will be back in the classroom when this pandemic is over, doing what I love.”

The program’s disc jockey was Kenneth Burch. When Stewart entered the park, Burch began playing the popular song, “Happy,” by Pharrell Williams. To everyone’s delight, Stewart began to dance, dancing the width of the park all the way to the stage and continuing to dance upon the stage until the music stopped.

This was a very positive and uplifting program. Everyone in Bessemer City knows Tweety Stewart, and they all love her. **GL**

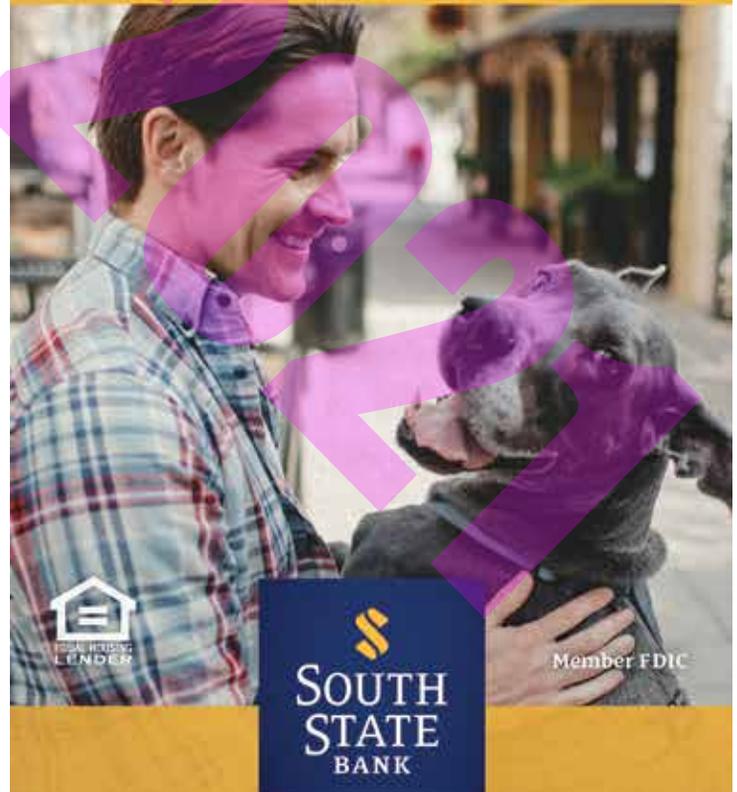
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Robocalls are More Than Just Annoying

Fighting Back With Legislation

Part 2

By **Kimberly Blaker**, freelance lifestyle writer



Kimberly Blaker

Since robocalls affect so many people so frequently, many groups are working to combat the calls through legislation. A few government agencies, including the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) and the Federal Communication Commission (FCC), not only work against robocalls, but they also have information and resources available to the public.

In November 2019, the House and Senate announced their agreement on the Pallone-Thune TRACED Act, merging two bills to stop robocalls. This act gives the FCC more involvement in combating robocalls. It also created a group with representatives from various agencies to work together on evaluating resources and policies to help combat the problem.

The TRACED Act sets guidelines for the FCC to go after and fine scammers more easily. It also allows the FCC to require phone carriers to use technology to verify and authenticate calls at no cost to their customers, evaluate how to prevent scammers from accessing numbers, and assess current approaches to stopping robocalls. The FCC is also

required to give regular updates to Congress.

More lawsuits are also being pursued against companies or businesses using robocalls. In January 2020, a case was brought against three people and a call center that had helped the Grand Bahama Cruise Line, LLC, place millions of illegal robocalls. They settled the FTC complaint and are barred from making robocalls in the future. The FTC will take others involved to court who did not agree to settle.

How to guard against robocalls

There are so many robocalls going out always, it's impossible to prevent all of them forever. But there are steps you can take to reduce the robocalls and to protect yourself and loved ones from falling victim to a phone scam.

Sign your mobile phone numbers up on the National Do Not Call Registry. This is a free service to stop unwanted sales calls from telemarketers and legitimate companies. Unfortunately, scammers don't abide by this list. So it doesn't prevent all the calls or the most precarious ones. Sign up or report unwanted calls at [donotcall.gov](https://www.donotcall.gov), or by calling 1-888-382-1222.

The most basic way to avoid robocalls is to screen all your calls and answer only known numbers. This can be a pain, though, and may result in many voice mails, although most won't leave a message. To reduce aggravation, enter any important numbers into your phone contacts to minimize the chance of screening an important call. Also, be aware that with new 'spoofing' technology, scammers can choose which name or number they want to show up on your screen.

Use technological advances in call-blocking when possible:

- Wireless and landline service



When a callee does respond, they're patched through to a real person who either addresses the legal purpose of the call or completes the illegal sales pitch or scam.

providers have tools and services to prevent robocalls and spam calls. Visit your account online or contact your provider to see how they can help you prevent these calls.

- Phone manufacturers also sometimes include call-blocking or robocall warning technology on their devices. Check your phone's handbook or contact the manufacturer to find out what services are available. You can also block specific numbers on your phone after they've called you. However, some robocallers place calls from many numbers in an effort not to be blocked.
- Many mobile phone apps are available to help with call-blocking, screening calls, blocking likely scam calls, and even to file a complaint through the appropriate channels. Search the app store on your phone to find one that suits your needs. Some are free, while others are paid. So read reviews before downloading.

If you answer a call that you believe is an illegal robocall, don't engage or press any buttons to be taken off a list or to talk to someone. Hang up and report the phone number to the Do Not Call Registry.

Robocalls can be particularly problematic for seniors, who may be more trusting on phone calls or not as familiar with the technology behind them. The AARP offers tips on how to recognize a robocall with key phrases to listen for in some of the common scams targeting seniors, such as health insurance, jury duty, Social Security, and pain center. These calls are generally looking for money or valuable information like your social security number or access to your Medicare account. To learn more, visit <https://www.aarp.org/money/scams-fraud/info-2019/recognize-a-robocall.html>. 

Part 1 debut in the November/December 2020 issue
Robocalls are More Than Just Annoying

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Remembering Lincoln High School, 1955-69

Bessemer City landmark is beloved institution

By Elizabeth Graves, Special Correspondent for *Gaston Lifestyles*



Elizabeth Graves

The Lincoln Academy was a small, two-storey building, constructed to house a boarding school for Negro students.

This school was started by Miss Emily Prudden, a white woman from a farm near New Haven, Conn. The school's first class was supposed to be just 15 girls. But more than that came and were accepted. As time passed, more buildings were constructed, and boys were allowed to attend.

In the 1920's, Negro students from the Bessemer City area were allowed to attend day school, because this was the only Negro high school around in the city. The Gaston County Board of Education paid for the day students to attend Lincoln Academy. And by this time, Miss Prudden had turned the school over to missionaries.

In the 1940's, the missionaries felt it was time to turn the school over to the County, because they were making progress educating the black students. In 1955, Lincoln Academy School closed its doors as a boarding high school for black students. The new Lincoln High School was being completed

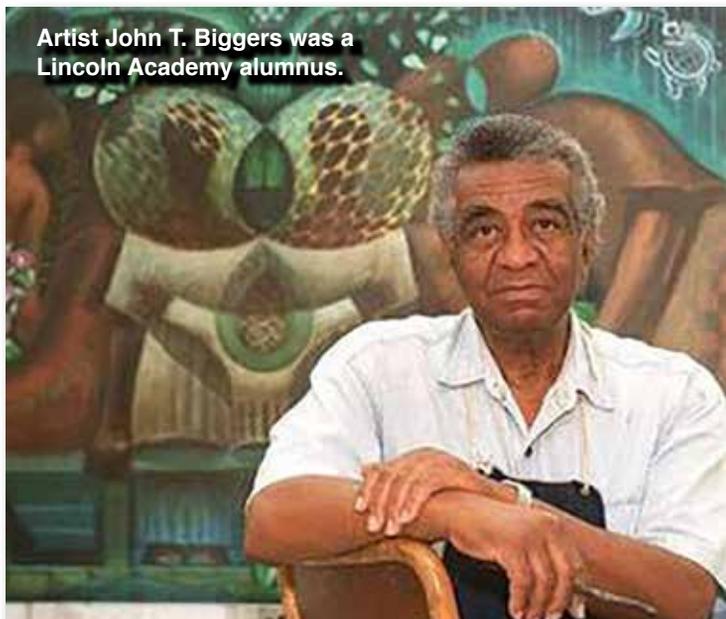
in 1955, and in 1956, Lincoln High opened its doors for the first full year of school.

Lincoln High housed the black students from Bessemer City, Dallas, Stanley, Ranlo, High Shoals, an area of Gastonia and the Gaston County part of Kings Mountain. Its principal was Mr. Edgar D. Wilson, formerly the academy's principal. Wilson would be the high school's first and only principal, 1955-69.

Since the Lincoln Academy had just closed, everything was brought over to the beautiful, new, empty building. The school's mascot was a tiger, and the colors were blue and gold. The school song's title underwent a minor change, from "At the Foot of Crowder's Mountain" to "At the Foot of Whetstone Mountain."

Mr. Wilson was a dynamic and influential man. Many of the teachers followed him to the school. He would only hire teachers with a master's degree or those working toward one. The curriculum included the college preparatory classes designed for those who wished to continue their studies after high school. There were also non-college preparatory courses.

Lincoln High graduates were well prepared for the



Artist John T. Biggers was a Lincoln Academy alumnus.



Actor Ivan Dixon of "Hogan's Heroes" was an alumnus of Lincoln Academy.

Today, parents and former students still consider Lincoln High as being the county's leading high school. The site remains to this day as Bessemer City Middle School: just a name change.

work world or for college. The school had a reputation that attracted other students and parents, even though they were not in the district.

LHS closed its doors as a high school in 1969, because of integration. It then became Lincoln Jr. High School, still under Wilson's leadership. He remained as the principal until he retired in 1973.

Today, parents and former students still consider Lincoln High as being the county's leading high school. The site remains to this day as Bessemer City Middle School: just a name change.

The street leading to Bessemer City Middle has been officially named "E.D. Wilson Road" by the Bessemer City Council. The Lincoln High School Alumni Association has permission to place a sign at the entrance of the school saying,

"Lincoln High School, 1956-1969. Black high school of Bessemer City. Principal, Mr. Edgar D. Wilson. Mascot, tiger. Colors, blue and gold."

We wish to preserve the history of our black school. **GL**



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