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Holiday Spirit in Occoquan

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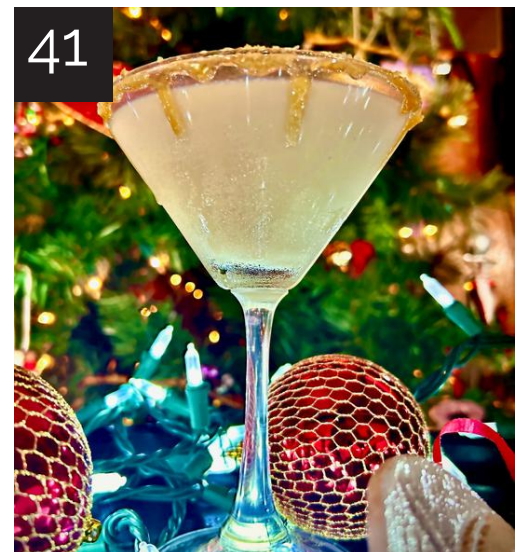
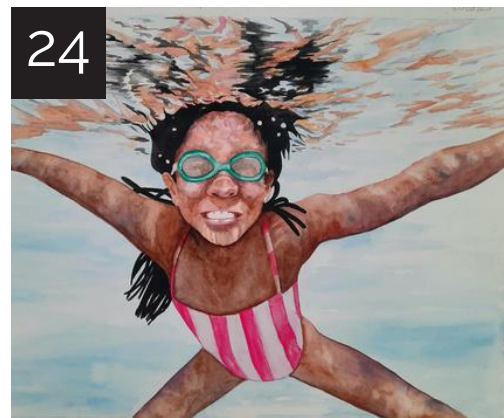
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ON THE COVER - The lobby of the Jefferson Hotel in Richmond is stunning no matter what the Season. The sweeping staircase in the Rotunda is rumored to have been the inspiration for the climatic scene in the famous movie, "Gone With the Wind" in 1940.

Publisher's Note

Dear Readers,

As Boulevard Magazine closes out its fifth year, we want to express our deepest gratitude to each of you for embracing and supporting us. What began as a bold vision to capture the vibrant heart of Tidewater has grown into the region's largest-circulation magazine, thanks to your loyalty, enthusiasm, and shared love for this extraordinary community we call home.

Over the past five years, Boulevard has evolved with you, our readers, at its core. From highlighting local artists, entrepreneurs, and change-makers to showcasing the rich history, culture, and natural beauty of the Tidewater area, our mission has been to bring to life the stories that make this region unique. You've welcomed us into your homes, shared our stories with friends, and celebrated the incredible talent that defines Tidewater, from the waterfront to the city streets.

As we look ahead, we're excited to continue growing with you, bringing fresh voices, more in-depth features, and an unwavering commitment to quality. We're more than a magazine; we're a reflection of Tidewater's spirit, its diversity, and its resilience. Thank you for being a part of this journey with us, for trusting us to tell your stories, and for making Boulevard a part of your life.

Here's to many more years of discovery, connection, and community. Together, we'll keep shining a spotlight on everything that makes Tidewater a truly special place.

With heartfelt thanks,

Berry and Susie Brunk

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Special Feature

The Virginia Opera Turns 50



The Harrison Opera House: A Cultural Landmark

Nestled in the heart of Norfolk, Virginia, the Harrison Opera House stands as a testament to the city's rich cultural heritage and vibrant performing arts scene. Since its inception, this historic venue has played a crucial role in shaping the artistic landscape of the region, fostering a deep appreciation for the performing arts among generations of residents and visitors alike.



Early Beginnings

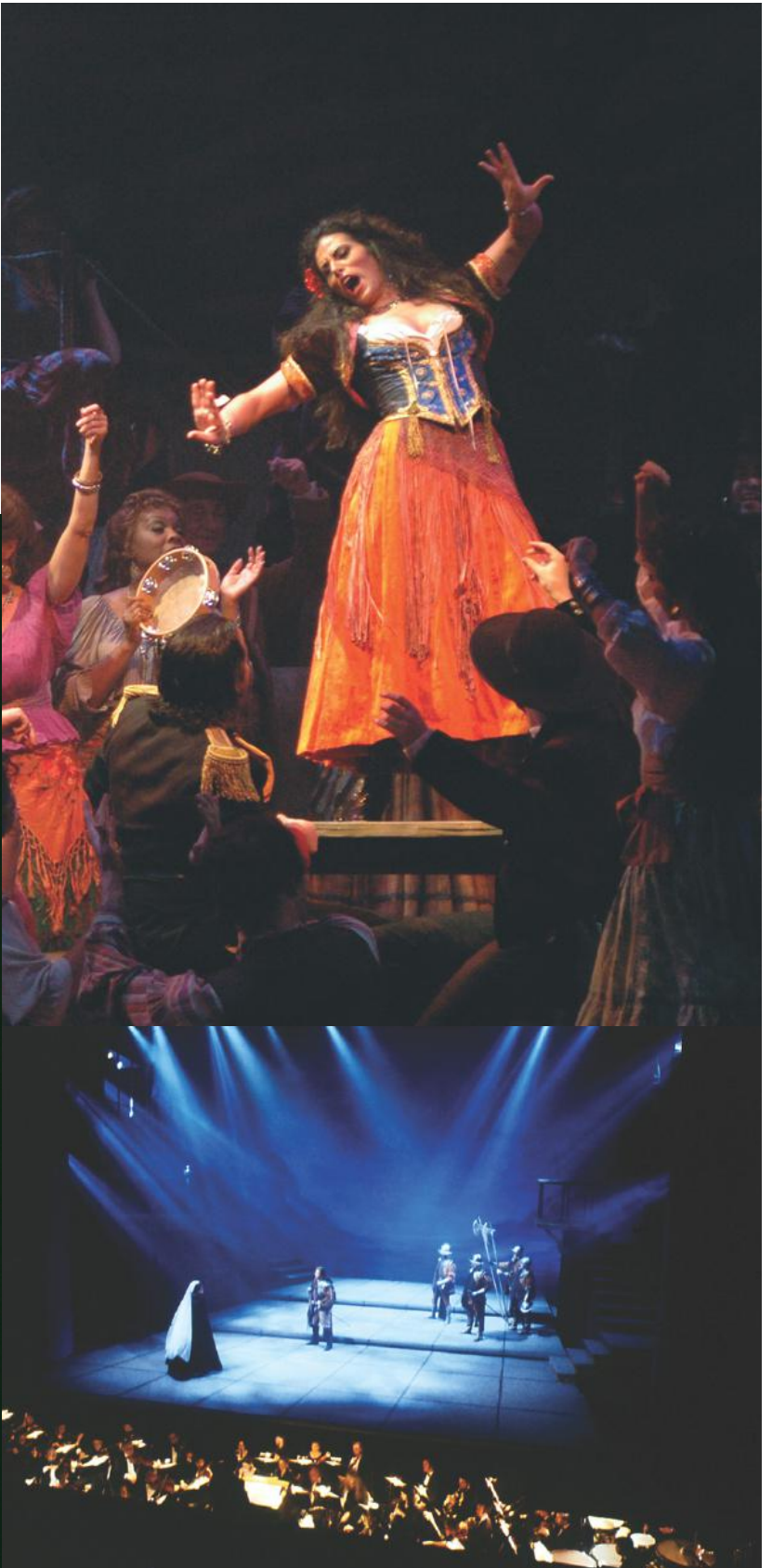
The Harrison Opera House was originally constructed in 1879 as the Academy of Music, a theater that showcased a range of performances from vaudeville to opera. Designed by the architect George H. Thomas, the venue reflected the architectural style of the time, featuring ornate decorations and a grand stage that could accommodate large productions. In 1913, the Academy underwent significant renovations and was renamed the Harrison Opera House in honor of local philanthropist and businessman, Charles F. Harrison. Harrison's contributions to the arts in Norfolk were immense, and his vision was to create a premier venue that could host world-class performances. Under his guidance, the Opera House became a cultural hub for the city, attracting not only local talent but also national and international artists.



A Center for Performing Arts

Throughout the 20th century, the Harrison Opera House flourished as a center for various performing arts. It became the home of the Virginia Opera, which was established in 1974. This partnership solidified the venue's reputation as a premier location for opera in the region, allowing it to host a diverse repertoire from classic operas to contemporary works.

The Harrison Opera House also embraced other forms of performance. Concerts, dance productions, and theatrical plays filled its schedule, making it a versatile venue for a wide array of artistic expressions. Local community theater groups frequently took to its stage, providing a platform for emerging artists and enriching the cultural fabric of Norfolk.



Architectural Evolution

The architectural significance of the Harrison Opera House cannot be overstated. The building's design has evolved over the years, with renovations aimed at preserving its historic charm while modernizing its facilities. In the late 20th century, extensive renovations were undertaken to enhance the acoustics and seating arrangements, ensuring that the venue could meet the demands of contemporary performances.

The Opera House features a distinctive façade, characterized by its grand entrance and intricate detailing. Inside, the auditorium boasts a warm, intimate atmosphere, with plush seating and exceptional sightlines that enhance the audience's experience. The combination of historic elements and modern amenities makes the Harrison Opera House a unique venue that honors its past while looking to the future.

Community Engagement and Education

One of the defining characteristics of the Harrison Opera House is its commitment to community engagement and arts education. The Virginia Opera, along with other local arts organizations, has developed outreach programs aimed at making the arts accessible to all. School programs, workshops, and community performances provide opportunities for individuals of all ages to experience the magic of live theater.

These initiatives have not only cultivated a new generation of artists but have also fostered a love for the performing arts within the Norfolk community.

The Opera House serves as a gathering place where families can come together to enjoy the arts, share experiences, and create lasting memories.

Challenges and Resilience

Like many cultural institutions, the Harrison Opera House has faced its share of challenges. Economic downturns, changes in audience preferences, and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic threatened the viability of the venue. However, the resilience of the Norfolk arts community shone through as the Opera House adapted to these challenges.

During the pandemic, the Harrison Opera House transitioned to virtual performances, allowing audiences to experience the arts from the comfort of their homes. This pivot not only kept the spirit of the venue alive but also expanded its reach, drawing in viewers from outside the immediate community.

A Bright Future

As the Harrison Opera House moves forward, it continues to honor its legacy while embracing innovation. Plans for future seasons promise a diverse lineup of performances, including operas, concerts, and community events that celebrate local talent. The venue's dedication to inclusivity and accessibility remains at the forefront of its mission, ensuring that everyone has the opportunity to engage with the arts.

Moreover, the Opera House is exploring collaborations with other local organizations, further enriching the cultural landscape of Norfolk. These partnerships not only enhance the offerings at the Opera House but also contribute to the broader artistic ecosystem of the region.

The Harrison Opera House is more than just a building; it is a vibrant cultural institution that has woven itself into the fabric of Norfolk's identity. Its rich history, architectural beauty, and commitment to the arts



have made it a beloved venue for generations. As it stands today, the Opera House looks toward the future, ready to inspire and captivate audiences for years to come. Whether you are a lifelong supporter of the arts or a newcomer eager to explore, the Harrison Opera House invites you to partake in the magic of live performance—a tradition that continues to thrive in the heart of Norfolk, Virginia.

Celebrating 50 Years of the Virginia Opera: A Journey Through Music and Community

The Virginia Opera, established in 1974, has become a cornerstone of the performing arts landscape in Virginia and beyond. Over the past five decades, this esteemed company has not only brought world-class opera to audiences but has also enriched the cultural fabric of the communities it serves. As we celebrate its 50th anniversary, it's an opportune moment to reflect on the journey of the Virginia Opera, its impact on the arts, and its commitment to fostering a love for opera among diverse audiences.

The Birth of a Cultural Institution

The Virginia Opera was founded by a group of passionate individuals, including its first artistic director, Peter Mark. Inspired by the desire to bring professional opera to Virginia, this coalition of musicians, educators, and arts enthusiasts laid the groundwork for what would become a significant cultural institution. The inaugural production of "Madama Butterfly" in 1974 set the tone for the company's commitment to artistic excellence and accessibility.

From its humble beginnings, the Virginia Opera aimed to break down barriers associated with classical music. Mark's vision was to create a company that not only showcased grand operatic works but also engaged local communities through education and outreach. This focus on accessibility has remained a guiding principle throughout the opera's history.

Artistic Evolution

As the Virginia Opera grew, so did its repertoire. Over the years, the company has produced a wide range of operas, from timeless classics like "Carmen" and "La Traviata" to contemporary pieces that resonate with today's audiences. This commitment to diversity in programming has not only attracted dedicated opera lovers but also newcomers eager to explore the art form.

The Virginia Opera has been known for its innovative productions, which often incorporate modern elements while staying true to the original works. Collaborations with renowned directors, designers, and musicians have resulted in fresh interpretations that challenge traditional norms. This creative approach has garnered critical acclaim and solidified the company's reputation in the national opera community.

Community Engagement and Education

One of the hallmarks of the Virginia Opera is its commitment to community engagement and education. Recognizing that opera can sometimes seem distant or intimidating, the company has made significant efforts to demystify the art form. Through i



nitiatives like the "Opera Goes to School" program, the Virginia Opera introduces students to the world of opera, providing interactive experiences that spark their imagination and foster a lifelong love for the arts.

These outreach programs have reached thousands of students across the state, ensuring that opera is not confined to the theater but is accessible to everyone. The Virginia Opera also partners with local schools and community organizations to provide workshops, masterclasses, and performances, further embedding itself into the cultural fabric of Virginia.



Navigating Challenges

Like many arts organizations, the Virginia Opera has faced its share of challenges over the years. Economic downturns, changing audience preferences, and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic posed significant hurdles. However, the company's resilience and adaptability have been commendable.

During the pandemic, the Virginia Opera pivoted to virtual performances, allowing audiences to enjoy opera from the safety of their homes. This adaptation not only maintained the company's connection with its audience but also opened new avenues for engagement. The opera's foray into digital content has laid the groundwork for innovative hybrid performances that may continue even as in-person events resume.



A Vision for the Future

As the Virginia Opera celebrates its 50th anniversary, it looks toward a bright future. The company remains committed to its mission of artistic excellence and community engagement, continually seeking new ways to connect with audiences. Plans for upcoming seasons promise an exciting blend of classic operas, contemporary works, and unique collaborations that reflect the diverse voices of today's society.

Moreover, the Virginia Opera is dedicated to fostering diversity within its ranks, striving to ensure that the stories told on stage reflect the rich tapestry of the communities it serves. This commitment to inclusivity is crucial in a world where representation matters more than ever.

The Virginia Opera has come a long way since its inception in 1974, evolving into a vibrant cultural institution that resonates deeply with audiences. Its 50-year journey is marked by artistic innovation, community engagement, and a steadfast commitment to making opera accessible to all. As it celebrates this milestone, the Virginia Opera stands poised to continue its mission, inspiring future generations with the magic of opera. In every note sung and every story told, the Virginia Opera reaffirms its belief that music has the power to connect us all, transcending barriers and uniting hearts through the timeless art of opera.



Legends of Ghosts at the Harrison Opera House

The Harrison Opera House in Norfolk, Virginia, is not only a celebrated venue for the performing arts but also a site steeped in ghostly legends and tales of the supernatural. As one of the oldest and most historically significant theaters in the region, the Opera House has attracted its fair share of ghost stories, many of which add to its allure and mystique.

Ghostly Residents

One of the most famous legends surrounding the Harrison Opera House is that of a ghostly presence believed to be linked to the venue's vibrant past. Patrons and staff alike have reported encounters with an enigmatic female spirit, often described as wearing a vintage gown reminiscent of the early 20th century. This apparition has been seen wandering the hallways and backstage areas, sparking curiosity and unease among those who encounter her.

Unexplained Phenomena

Staff and visitors have reported various unexplained phenomena that add to the theater's haunted reputation. Unusual sounds, such as footsteps echoing in empty corridors, doors opening and closing without explanation, and sudden changes in temperature, have all been noted. Some performers even claim to feel a sense of being watched while on stage, attributing this sensation to the lingering presence of the Opera House's past inhabitants.

The building's architecture, with its labyrinthine backstage areas and dimly lit corners, contributes to the eerie atmosphere. Shadows flicker in the wings, and the creaking of old wood adds to the overall sense of mystery, making it easy for one's imagination to run wild.

Ghost Tours and Community Engagement

In recent years, the fascination with the Harrison Opera House's ghostly legends has led to organized ghost tours and events. These tours invite visitors to explore the haunted history of the venue while learning about its artistic significance. Local historians and paranormal enthusiasts often guide these tours, sharing stories and personal experiences that highlight the theater's rich past. Such events not only engage the community but also cultivate a deeper appreciation for the arts and the history of the Harrison Opera House. By blending the realms of performing arts and the supernatural, these tours create a unique cultural experience that resonates with both locals and tourists.

The legends of ghosts in the Harrison Opera House are as much a part of its history as the performances that grace its stage. Whether it's the mysterious female apparition or the unexplained phenomena that occur within its walls, these ghostly tales enhance the Opera House's reputation as a cultural landmark. As audiences continue to gather for performances, they do so with the knowledge that they share the space with spirits of the past, forever echoing the magic and passion that the arts inspire.

Special Feature by Berry Brunk

Adam Turner

Visionary Artistic Director of the Virginia Opera

By Rick Polston

Adam Turner has emerged as a dynamic force in the world of opera, serving as the Artistic Director of the Virginia Opera since 2017. Known for his innovative programming and commitment to accessibility, Turner has reinigorated the company's mission to engage audiences while showcasing a diverse repertoire.

Early Life and Education

Born and raised in the vibrant arts community of New York City, Turner was immersed in music from a young age. His passion for opera was sparked during his childhood, leading him to pursue formal training in voice and conducting. He attended the University of North Texas, where he earned his Bachelor of Music in Vocal Performance. Turner further honed his skills at the prestigious University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music, obtaining a Master of Music in Conducting.

Turner's academic background laid the foundation for a multifaceted career, where he



seamlessly blends performance, direction, and leadership. His deep understanding of the operatic form allows him to bring a unique perspective to his role as Artistic Director.

Before joining the Virginia Opera, Turner amassed a wealth of experience in various opera companies across the United States. He served as the Associate Conductor for the Santa Fe Opera, where he contributed to numerous productions and developed a reputation for his insightful interpretations. Turner also held positions with the Indianapolis Opera and the Lake George Opera, among others, showcasing his versatility and dedication to the art form.

His work has spanned a wide array of operatic repertoire, from classic masterpieces to contemporary works. This breadth of experience has enabled him to curate a season that appeals to both seasoned opera lovers and newcomers alike.





Impact at the Virginia Opera

Since taking the helm at the Virginia Opera, Turner has prioritized artistic excellence while focusing on community engagement. He has implemented initiatives to make opera more accessible, believing that the arts should be a shared experience for everyone. Under his leadership, the company has launched outreach programs aimed at introducing opera to diverse audiences, particularly in underrepresented communities.

Turner's vision for the Virginia Opera is evident in the selection of productions that emphasize inclusivity and innovation. He has championed works by contemporary composers, alongside beloved classics, creating a balanced season that resonates with a wide range of audience members. His commitment to diversity is not only reflected in the repertoire but also in the casting choices, ensuring that the company represents the rich tapestry of today's society.

Looking Ahead

As he continues to lead the Virginia Opera, Adam Turner remains focused on fostering a culture of collaboration and creativity. He envisions the Opera House as a vibrant hub for the arts, encouraging local talent while attracting renowned artists from around the globe. His plans for future seasons promise an exciting blend of traditional and modern works, ensuring that the Virginia Opera remains relevant and engaging.

Turner's dedication to the craft extends beyond the stage; he actively participates in discussions about the future of opera, advocating for its evolution in a changing cultural landscape. His belief in the transformative power of music drives his mission to inspire audiences and cultivate a love for the performing arts.

Adam Turner stands at the forefront of the Virginia Opera, shaping its future with passion, innovation, and a deep commitment to community. As Artistic Director, he not only honors the rich legacy of opera but also embraces the challenges of the contemporary arts world, ensuring that the Virginia Opera continues to thrive for generations to come.



What's Biting?

November - January 2024
by Billy Sugg

Fall is here and winter is quickly approaching, but don't think the fishing is over just because summer has slipped away. In fact, some fish species bite better in the winter months and prefer the cooler water temperatures. Those anglers willing to bundle up and get out on the water during these winter months may find the discomfort well worth their while! The key is dressing in layers which can be removed easily when the sun pops out, or piled back on when the wind is trying to blow through you. Wet clothes can be deadly when exposed to the elements so getting too hot and sweating can ruin your trip just as easily as falling overboard. Protecting your core body temperature is very important to avoid both hyperthermia and hypothermia, so make sure you're prepared. For those who decide to sit this winter out and wait for spring, don't forget to winterize your boats so it will be good to go once you are. Check with your owner's manuals to make sure you are protecting your vessel while it's taking a break. As for those still itching to get out on the water, let's check out what's biting this winter!!!

Deep dropping action has continued to thrill anglers with great hauls of meat fish for the cooler and lots of hard pulling action. Sea Bass, Tautog, flounder, triggerfish, Atlantic pufferfish and eels have been the main action on offshore wrecks and other bottom structure along the continental shelf, with blueline tile, golden tile, black belly rosefish and grouper providing lots of action on the deeper drops. The windmills, towers and rock piles within 50 miles of the coast are seeing good flounder, sea bass, tautog and bluefish action as more fish leave the inland coast and bay area to winter offshore. Look for action to improve through November and into December. Jigging artificial lures such as bucktails



what's biting

During November, December and January you'll typically reel in these catches:

NOVEMBER

Offshore

White marlin, bigeye tuna, mahi-mahi, yellowfin tuna, blackfin tuna, bluefin tuna, swordfish, black sea bass, tilefish, flounder, black drum, triggerfish, wahoo, snowy grouper, bluefish, tautog

Chesapeake Bay

Bluefish, red drum, flounder, Spanish mackerel, spadefish, cobia, sheepshead, ribbon fish, striped bass, tautog, sheepshead

Tidal Rivers

Bluefish, flounder, speckled trout, spot, croaker, puppy drum, ribbon fish, striped bass

DECEMBER

Offshore

Swordfish, bluefin tuna, bigeye tuna, black sea bass, tilefish, bluefish, triggerfish, sheepshead, flounder

Chesapeake Bay

Bluefish, striped bass, flounder, tautog

Tidal Rivers

Speckled trout, striped bass

JANUARY

Offshore

Tilefish, sea bass, flounder, grouper, tuna, tautog

Chesapeake Bay

Striped bass, tautog

Tidal Rivers

Speckled trout, puppy drum, striped bass



What have you reeled in?

We would like to publish your photos, information, prize catches and catches of note in our What's Biting segment. Send us your favorite amateur photos with a description and the photographer's name.

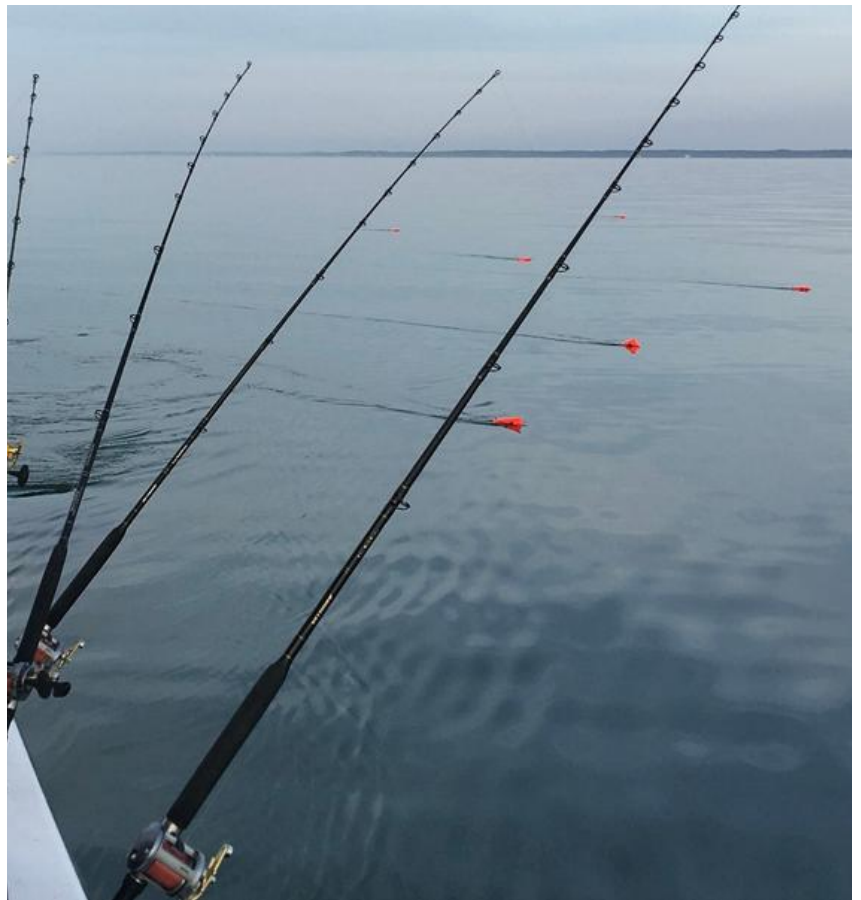
and jigs tipped with gulp tails or cutbait such as squid, crab, clam and menhaden dropped on multi hooked rigs should get you noticed if you are on the fish. Offshore sportfishing has been outstanding with lots of yellow and Bluefin tuna catching rides back to the docks. Last winter we had great numbers of giant Bluefin tuna which graced us with their presence all winter and they came right into the mouth of the Chesapeake Bay. Look for this to happen again this winter. While some were caught pulling traditional offshore tackle, more fish were hooked on bulked up tackle normally used for large striped bass. Artificial paddle tail shad body swimbaits pulled deep on mojos and parachute rigs produced a lot of large tuna along with large Nomad deep diver lures. Remember a permit is required to keep a giant tuna and a slot limit is in place, so make sure you are up on the current regulations. This method is also excellent for the winter run of huge striped bass which should take place starting in November as the big girls make their way offshore to winter. Last year many anglers reported banner days with many stripers exceeding 50 pounds being landed near the Chesapeake Light Tower. Remember this is a catch and release only fishery so no gaffs are allowed to land these big girls and please be gentle when handling them. Swordfish action has been on the rise in recent months and this will continue for those knowledgeable anglers who know where to find them over the continental shelf.



WHAT'S BITING

The Chesapeake Bay area is still producing lots of action for bull red drum, sheepshead, flounder, spot, croaker, sea bass, tautog, large bluefish and ribbonfish, with stripers, speckled trout and a few grey trout available. Other than the stripers and specks, this should slow as these species move offshore to wrecks, south to warmer waters or into tidal rivers and inlets to winter. Coastal pier and surf action has been on fire with lots of bull reds, blues, spot and sea mullet topping the list. Kiptopeake area off Cape Charles and the mouth of the York and Rappahannock Rivers are producing large stripers that are preparing to winter. Most of these fish are over slot size and must be released. Smaller, slot sized rock will be closer inland along the CBBT, HRBT and tide rips near jetties and inland bridges. Casting bucktails with twister tails or pork rind as a trailer will produce great numbers of strikes if the fish are feeding. Also, trolling artificial diving lures like Mann's stretch 25's, Rapala super shads, Mirrolures, large Yozuri baits or spoons in open water or along structure can produce good numbers of stripers throughout the winter until the water temperature dips into the 30's. The big target species now locally is speckled trout, as they are showing in huge numbers throughout the lower bay area and tidal rivers where many will winter. They will feed aggressively to bulk up and slow down when the water temperatures drop, but they can still be caught all winter on warm sunny days or by slowing your lure presentation down considerably. Night fishing in bridge and dock lights can be very rewarding and many kayak fishermen will excel as the fish will move shallow to warm in the sun, casting topwater Paul Brown's and similar lures. Trolling paddle tail grubs on small jig heads in a variety of colors can help find feeding fish of multiple species. You can expect the puppy drum, stripers and white perch to be available as well. Look for the baitfish and you will find the gamefish.

Freshwater action has been great with many anglers indulging in good catches of speckled, white and yellow perch, bream, largemouth and smallmouth bass, chain pickerel, walleye and landlocked striped bass. Look for pan fish suspended near bridge pilings and creek channels during the winter, especially near deep stump fields or rocky points which will hold shad on sunny winter days. Your presentation will be slow but the bite can be very fast. Look for channels in deep water that have sunken logs and brush piles for protection and foraging opportunity. These areas will also be ideal for large catfish and gar, along with drop offs in the mouths of large coves. Walleye, yellow and white perch will generally be near channels close to shallow flats which warm up and attract shad on sunny days. They can move easily between the two locations. Musky in the upper James River can be very challenging but extremely rewarding. Trolling large plugs or casting big in-line spinner baits or swim baits can be just the ticket for finicky musky who actively hunt the river all winter. Stripers in the Suffolk lakes and Little Creek Reservoir become very aggressive and can be caught on some of the snottiest of cold, windy and rainy days. If they are feeding in saltwater, they are feeding in freshwater too. Many big stripers are caught between Thanksgiving and New years, with the week of Christmas being prime time. Trolling live shiners or shad on bucktails under corks or fishing cut shad on the bottom can be the perfect recipe for catching your PB! And January is your best chance at catching a giant chain pickerel with minimum effort.





WHAT'S BITING



A live shiner under a cork in the Suffolk lakes in about 5 feet of water will have you in the action. Look for shorelines that are protected from the wind and get lots of sun. This issue I am featuring the method of trolling live eels for large striped bass. Having good electronics can help you eliminate unproductive waters and allow you to stay on feeding fish. Large "cow" stripers will winter in the mouth of the Rappahannock and York rivers and in the deep north channel off Cape Charles and up near Tangier Island. Finding the bait is key to finding the feeding fish. I owe most of what I know about fishing to my late father, but I have to give credit to Dr. Steven Lang and Capt. Max King for teaching me how to troll live eels on plainer boards, which has produced the largest stripers I have caught. The rig itself is fairly simple, but the success relies heavily on the art of presentation. This is where boat handling, navigational skill, preparation and teamwork all come together to determine if you are fishing...or just boat riding. These two gentlemen are masters of their craft and I am blessed to call them my friends. The rig has variations but basically consists of a 5/0 to 8/0 Gamakatsu octopus hook snelled to a clear 30lb. mono or fluorocarbon leader about 4ft long. This is tied to a small barrel swivel. On the main line from the reel, you slide a ½ - 1 ½ oz. egg weight on with a plastic bead under it and then tie the end to the other end of the barrel swivel. Hook the live eel through the chin and out through the eye socket. Be careful not to go through the eye or the brain. Clip a plainer board at the desired depth above the swivel and weight. Make sure you use port and starboard plainer boards on the correct side of the boat to avoid tangles. You can stagger the depths or keep everything at the same depth if you prefer, but make sure you know how deep each one is so you can replicate that if one starts catching fish over the others.

Speed will vary depending on the current, wind and direction of travel, as in traveling with the tide versus against it. 1-2 mph should put you in line for starters and adjust as needed. Boats using electric trolling motors also have great success this way. Put the furthest lines out first, then next furthest and so on until you have staggered plainer boards making a large wing on both sides of the boat, forming a V shape with your full spread. You can also pull the closest baits straight back on corks, but clear them first in the event of a hook up. No erratic movement with the boat and all turns must be slow and sweeping or all baits should be cranked in to turn around. When the fish hits it will naturally move straight back behind the boat. You can then determine what other rods need to be cranked in to avoid tangles. Slow is smooth, smooth is fast, so don't horse these fish and be gentle when handling them. Pay attention to other boats around you and avoid pinching in on someone else or getting squeezed between spreads. This method is not easy so only run the amount of baits you are comfortable with. I can honestly say I have seen more 50lb plus stripers caught using this method than any other I have used. Doc and Max have landed several over 60lbs. It's not for everyone, but it's an amazing fishing technique with results that are undeniable. If you do happen to land one small enough to keep, try this recipe; Place a boneless, skinless filet on a broiler rack. Sprinkle salt, pepper, paprika, lemon juice and sliced onion rings or pureed onions over the top. Place several slices of butter on the top and place in a preheated oven at 350 degrees for approximately 40 minutes or until meat is cooked thoroughly and flaky white. Serve with your favorite sides and send me some pictures of your catch!!! Tight lines friends.

SOAPS
BODY BUTTERS
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LOTION BARS
BATH TRUFFLES
BATH SALTS
DEODORANTS
LIP BALMS
SALVES
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and body
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Arts

Chesapeake Bay Art Association

By Val Parnell

The CBAA was created by a small group of artists on August 8, 1961 as a 501(c)3 non-profit organization. Our mission has always been to raise funds for John B. Tenney Memorial Scholarship Fund for Senior High School students to pursue art in college. We also provide monthly art education with our meetings to artists of all ages as well as provide several shows a year to exhibit members' art.

This year our annual Art Crawl will be Saturday June 8th and Sunday June 9th from 10AM-5:00 PM. This event started in 2020 with Covid event. The Galleries and stores were shutting down and to help our artists continue their business of art we came up with this walkable event outside and in artists' studios. The response was great, we had over 50 artists in the Tidewater area open their studios and homes for 2 days. We have google maps and printed maps to follow on your self-guided art tour, what a great way to spend the weekend!

WE are excited to have our 4th annual ART CRAWL directed by Ellen Sinclair, CBAA chairwoman, and a renown local artist. You will see paintings with oil, acrylics, mix media, watercolors as well as woodwork and jewelry. Come join the fun and relaxing adventure with the arts!

Val Parnell
CBAA President
Chesapeake Bay Art Association



Art By Shelia Nash



Chesapeake Bay Art Association



Closing the doors versus selling your business

By Rich Chinappi

If you are thinking of closing your business, stop! ... until you speak with an expert. During a recent meeting with a client, I discovered his intent was not to exit, but to liquidate his business, and he was looking to me to support his decisions. The business was a landmark company that had been in existence for more than 40 years. The business had been passed along to the client by his father. Like many older businesses, it had struggled through changing economy, the computer age, and the buying methods and patterns of many large companies that his company was supplying. It lived through the days of a shrinking market, centralizing purchasing, computer ordering and customers' switch to the big box companies to provide inexpensive products shipped to their door. The company exemplified the true meaning of "Hug Your Customers" by continuing to make door-to-door deliveries and taking orders by phone.

COMPANY ADAPTS AND SURVIVES

In spite of all the industry changes the company survived, and in fact, provided a comfortable living for the owner who was now the second generation operating the business. The business went through a number of changes, including elimination of products they weren't able to sell as well as items they could not compete with for pricing in the large box stores. Through all the change, the owner modified and adjusted to stay in business until his health began to affect his commitment to the hours necessary for continued success.

LACK OF STRONG LEADERSHIP

I was most heartened to see there was hope; however, I had yet to discover the company was sorely lacking strong leadership which trickled down into loss of motivation in employees. There was no active selling – employees were not interested in seeking new business as they felt the same as the owner –

that they were a dying breed in the industry, assuming the company would eventually close its doors. Everyone was working to make the owner's prediction come true, who was in turn determined to make his expectations come to fruition rapidly.

The stress of continuing to adjust to the changing market environment and the pressure of an uncertain future were added factors toward the desire of the owner to liquidate. A young man with a young family decided he needed to depart a dying industry and venture into a new field. He saw no value in this business his father started and was on the verge of closing the doors of the company when he placed his call to me.

After reviewing the company's financial data and after speaking with the owner in detail, I was surprised the business was very profitable, and in fact, had higher than the industry standard net income.

Even better, after recasting the financials, it was evident the profit margins had a huge growth opportunity.





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After reviewing the financials and recommending immediate and major changes to improve the business, I discovered the owner had no interest in implementing my suggestions; therefore, the next step was implementation of Plan B, which was to sell the company. This idea was met with great resistance and dismay, with the owner asking how he could sell a company that was about to close its doors.

I explained that, although not evident to him, there were valuable assets to someone who would clearly see the potential of the business and the opportunity to grow the business.

As incredulous as the idea seemed to him, he agreed to let me confidentially market the business.

After recasting the financials, we determined a viable selling price. After a marketing profile was developed, we identified key competitors in the market that would fit with his business and we searched for companies in the industry that were in the acquisition mode.

We confidentially reached out to those companies' executives and, bingo, the game was on.

VALUE QUICKLY REALIZED

As I suspected, almost immediately the astute potential buyers saw the value and recognized the growth opportunity in this small business. The owner was astonished and predicted we would never receive an offer. He was bewildered by what happened next. We received a full price offer, and, even more surprising to the seller, we breezed through due diligence and closed on the transaction quickly. It is often difficult to recognize the real value of your business when you are trying to push the boulder up the mountain everyday; feeling defeated by competition and the changing market environment; and working extended hours.

If you find yourself in this position, stop and take time to call an expert who will look at your business objectively. You, too, might be surprised.

Rich Chinappi started in the restaurant industry at the age of 16. In 1961, his career took off with a new 15 cent hamburger chain called Gino's. After Marriott bought Gino's, he became a restaurant entrepreneur, and also started consulting with struggling restaurant groups. Today, he focuses on mergers & acquisitions and commercial real estate.

Love Baseball and Root Beer?

Studly Brewing in Chesapeake is Your Place

By Joel Rubin

I first encountered Studly Brewing on a sign at a little league complex in southern Chesapeake, inviting players to come in for a "root beer." A "root beer brewery"?

Further investigation revealed that Studly also sells real beer, in fact a starting lineup of nine varieties including Cheap Seats, Play Ball!!!, Pitcher's Big Butt (a heavy stout), and Rockford Peach (a Sour). The owner must be a baseball guy I figured. And there's a scoreboard inside the Battlefield Boulevard attraction featuring the line score from a real MLB game. On the Thursday evening I visited, it was of a 1993 no-hitter thrown by one-armed Yankee pitcher Jim Abbott. There was also a Studly sponsored wiffle ball league game underway on an adjacent field and a ton of kids and parents inside, many in baseball gear, eating pizza and wings and whatever. "We are a very family friendly brewery," says owner Blake Edmonds. Indeed.



The Hickory High grad never made it to the Bigs as a player, but as a sports marketing guy, he did so in college, working for Wake Forest and then his alma mater, SEC giant the University of South Carolina. "It was my major at USC and then my first career," he says. But he got into home brewing while in Columbia and fancied himself making and serving the suds back home in Chesapeake.



"I got some training from a really great mentor, and in 2021, we built out a former restaurant space, and Studly Brewing was born." Named for a tight knit group of friends from Blake's childhood, the space screams the national pastime, all the way down to the fermenting tanks dubbed the "minors" because in the next room, the IPA's and ales are reaching full flavor (the "majors").

Does Blake miss being on college campuses for ACC or SEC football and basketball games? "Sometime, but I love what I'm doing now." He is home and serving up fun, nightly at Studly Brewing (www.studlybrewing.com), recently voted "Coolest Taproom in America" by a national trade association. In this business, that's a grand slam.







VIEWPOINT

Are We Losing True Understanding?

boulevard | Nov '24 - Jan '25 31

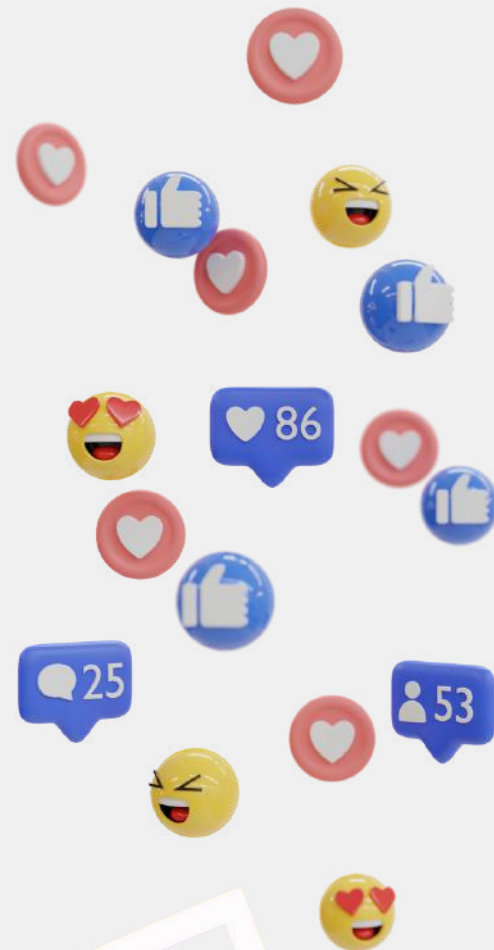
Death by a Thousand Posts: Nibbling on Information All Day is Filling, but is it Nourishing?

by James D. Ivory

It is a common human failing to devalue what is not scarce. Consider water. Even in times of soaring costs for housing, groceries, fuel, and power, no small amount of research shows that the cost and quality of water supplies receive relatively little attention from individuals or policymakers so long as the taps flow. As a sizable chunk of the United States sips its way toward a catastrophic water crisis, the voices expressing concern are few and rarely heeded.

So it is, perhaps, with information and knowledge. While there is some debate regarding the extent to which the widespread introduction of the mechanized printing press in the 15th Century led to a dramatic increase in literacy, the technology certainly changed the nature of literacy, and knowledge with it. The transition from written manuscripts to printed reproductions facilitated distribution of works and uniform standards in spelling and language that accelerated exchange and interpretation of information, ideas, and art among those who were already literate. Societal impacts included not only the Reformation, but also the Scientific Revolution and the Renaissance. Even among those already knowledgeable, then, more rapid and consistent access to the products of knowledge work has long been blood in the veins of innovation and progress.

In our own nation's history, we can see the value placed on access to information and knowledge by those who have been deprived of it. In 1790, American women were twice as likely as American men to be illiterate. Less than a century later, girls were outpacing boys in American public schools, and within another century women were earning bachelor's degrees in the United States at higher rates than men. For some two decades, the same has been the case with doctoral degrees. As the close of the American Civil War, newly-freed slaves flocked to schools created by Northern missionaries and teachers. While some 80 percent of the Black Americans were illiterate in 1870, the illiteracy rate among Black Americans dropped immediately, was halved within 40 years, and continued to decline decade after decade until Black and White literacy rates in the United States became comparable.



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VIEWPOINT

Today, our mobile phones and devices allow us immediate access to more information than has ever been previously available to humankind, and much information not freely available can be obtained at a cost of a few dollars or a few minutes setting up a digital library account. Even when we don't pursue information, it pursues us through push notifications of news, social media posts, and email messages. If you ask me a question of fact and I don't know the answer, I can save myself the same way Tolkien protagonist Bilbo Baggins did during his high-stakes riddle game in *The Hobbit*: by reaching into my pockets. I don't even have to track down a source because a search engine will cough sources up for me or a generative artificial intelligence assistant will distill them into an explanation.

It may be that therein lies the problem. It may be that our abundance of information has fomented a dearth of knowledge. The two are not synonymous: information can be described as organized data, while knowledge is the interpretation and understanding of it.

In 1985, media scholar Neil Postman's book *Amusing Ourselves to Death* famously lamented television replacing the printed word as our primary vehicle for cultural dialogue. According to Postman, changing the media formats we use "changes the structure of discourse; it does so by encouraging certain uses of the intellect, by favoring certain definitions of intelligence and wisdom, and by demanding a certain kind of content." Postman had a lot of grievances against television and more recent media technologies such as personal computers and the Internet, but his animus toward the telegraph may be most relevant to our current digital media landscape. According to Postman, the telegraph reduced information to isolated bits devoid of the context provided by full printed works, engendering an era where "intelligence meant knowing of lots of things, not knowing about them."

Postman died in 2003, so he never saw Twitter, Facebook, TikTok, or ChatGPT. Like the telegram, though, many of the platforms that we use to stay informed do so in small doses where context is deemphasized—if made available at all. As a result, we can keep up to date on nearly everything without understanding much of anything. Read a book about the sociopolitical history of Ukraine? We're ahead of the crowd if we check to see if a video on social media is actual footage from the conflict and not recorded from a video game. The result is a societal conversation where nuance and complexity are anathema to a good post and oversimplification outruns understanding. Make no mistake: there is great value in the digital tools and platforms that provide us with nearly inexhaustible information, and these resources can be used to individual and societal advantage. But to understand our complex world and our place in it, and more importantly to share this world and build its future, we must take care that our media diet includes full meals, not just snacks.

Augustine of Hippo, one of the earliest influences on Western philosophy and theology, described ignorance ("ignorantia") as one of the two main causes of sin (the other being fragility, "infirmity"). That sentiment was mirrored by clerical thinkers from Pope Gregory to Bernard of Clairvaux, but is not unique to an era, faith, or creed: Socrates espoused virtue itself as a type of knowledge. I'm not calling anyone a sinner, and I'm not telling you to uninstall your social media. If you see something interesting while you're scrolling, though, we all might be better off if you make time to read more than 280 characters about it—paywall or no paywall.

James D. Ivory (Ph.D., Mass Communication, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill) is a professor in the Scientific and Technical Communication Program in the Department of English at Virginia Tech.



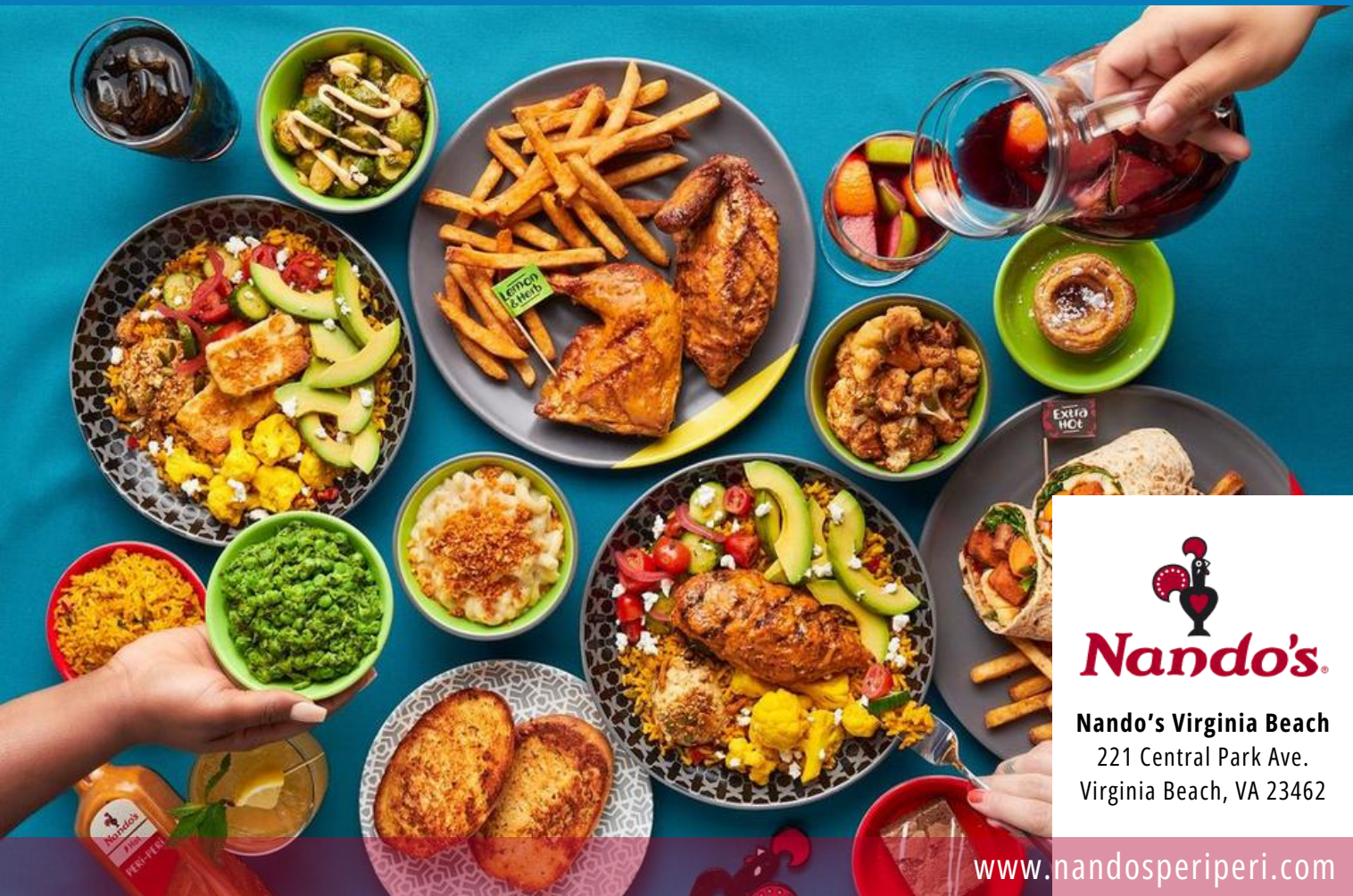
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Rising from the Shadows: Aaron Rouse's Journey in Virginia

In the picturesque landscapes of Virginia, where rolling hills meet historic towns, Aaron Rouse's story is one of resilience, transformation, and hope. A local hero to some and an inspirational figure to many, Rouse's journey from adversity to community leadership is a testament to the power of determination and vision.

Early Life Challenges

Born and raised in Norfolk, Virginia, Rouse's childhood was far from idyllic. Growing up in a neighborhood marked by socioeconomic challenges, he faced the dual obstacles of poverty and limited access to educational resources. His family, though loving and supportive, struggled to make

ends meet, often forcing Aaron to confront the harsh realities of life at a young age.

As a teenager, Rouse found solace in sports, particularly football. The gridiron became his refuge, offering not only an escape from his daily struggles but also a sense of belonging. It was through football that Rouse learned the values of teamwork, discipline, and perseverance—qualities that would later shape his approach to life and leadership.

Despite the challenges, Rouse excelled in school and sports, earning a scholarship to Virginia Tech. His time there marked a pivotal chapter in his life, where he

not only developed his athletic skills but also matured as an individual.

College Football at Virginia Tech

At Virginia Tech, Rouse was a standout player, known for his speed, agility, and determination. Playing as a safety, he quickly made a name for himself, earning accolades and recognition as a leader on and off the field. Rouse's commitment to the game was evident; he was a key player in helping the Hokies reach significant milestones, including bowl games and conference championships. His college experience wasn't solely about football. Rouse embraced the academic opportunities that came

with being a student-athlete, focusing on his studies in communication and the importance of community service. Balancing the rigors of football with academics, he learned valuable lessons in time management and responsibility. Rouse's stellar performance at Virginia Tech caught the attention of NFL scouts, and in 2007, he was drafted by the Green Bay Packers. This was a dream come true, not only for Rouse but for his entire family, who had watched him overcome numerous obstacles to reach this point.

Professional Football Career

Aaron Rouse's time in the NFL was marked by determination and growth. After joining the Packers, he quickly adapted to the demands of professional football. Playing primarily as a safety, he contributed to the team's defense and was part of the squad that won Super Bowl XLV in 2011. His journey through the NFL included stints with the New York Jets and the Pittsburgh Steelers. While his professional career was relatively brief, the experiences he gained during this time were invaluable. Rouse learned about teamwork, discipline, and the importance of resilience in the face of challenges, lessons that would serve him well in his future endeavors.

However, after several seasons in the NFL, Rouse made the difficult decision to retire from professional football. It was a moment of reflection; while the field had been his sanctuary, he recognized that his true calling lay beyond the gridiron. He was determined to make a positive impact in his community.

A Call to Action: Community Leadership

After retiring from football, Rouse returned to Norfolk, where he immediately began working to uplift his community. Inspired by his own

experiences and motivated by the desire to prevent others from facing the struggles he once did, he founded a nonprofit organization dedicated to empowering youth through education and mentorship.

His programs focused on providing resources, guidance, and opportunities to underprivileged children, aiming to break the cycle of poverty and violence that had affected so many families in the area. Rouse's charisma and unwavering commitment drew attention from local leaders and community members alike. He organized workshops, mentorship programs, and community events that not only educated but also united people from diverse backgrounds.

In 2018, Rouse's community involvement led to his appointment to the Norfolk City Council, where he became one of the youngest members to hold such a position. His presence in local government marked a new chapter in his journey, allowing him to advocate for systemic change on a broader scale.



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Addressing Systemic Issues

As a city council member, Rouse focused on addressing the root causes of violence and inequality in Norfolk. He championed policies aimed at increasing funding for education, improving public safety, and creating job opportunities for residents. He understood that meaningful change required not just immediate solutions but also long-term commitments to investing in the community.

Rouse's initiatives included advocating for youth programs, improving access to mental health resources, and promoting economic development in underserved neighborhoods. He recognized that many challenges faced by residents were interconnected, and his holistic approach aimed to create a more equitable society.

Despite the progress he made, Rouse faced challenges in the political arena. Navigating the complexities of local government, he encountered resistance from those resistant to change. However, he remained steadfast in his convictions, continually engaging with constituents to understand their needs and priorities.

Building Bridges

One of Rouse's key initiatives was to build bridges between law enforcement and the community. Understanding that trust had been eroded in many neighborhoods, he facilitated town hall meetings that encouraged open dialogue between residents and police officers. These gatherings served as safe spaces for people to voice their concerns and for officers to share their perspectives.

Through these efforts, Rouse sought to humanize the issues surrounding policing and violence. He recognized that both the community and law enforcement had a stake in fostering a safer environment. By creating opportunities for understanding and collaboration, Rouse aimed to rebuild trust and promote a sense of shared responsibility.

Rise to the Senate

Rouse's dedication to public service and his growing influence in Norfolk eventually led him to a new challenge: a run for the Virginia State Senate. In this role, he aimed to address broader issues affecting the state, focusing on education, healthcare, and social justice. His

During his campaign, Rouse emphasized the importance of listening to constituents and addressing their concerns. He sought to create policies that reflected the diverse needs of the community while promoting economic growth and sustainability. His message resonated with many voters, and in 2022, he was elected to the Virginia State Senate, marking a significant milestone in his political career.

Personal Growth and Reflection

As he navigated his growing role as a leader, Rouse also took time for personal reflection. He understood that the journey was not just about external change but also about inner growth. Through mentorship and support from those around him, he learned to balance the weight of his responsibilities with self-care. Rouse often emphasized the importance of mental health, particularly in communities that had historically stigmatized such discussions. He openly shared his own struggles with anxiety and the pressures of leadership, encouraging others to prioritize their well-being and seek help when needed.



Looking to the Future

As Rouse continues his work in the Virginia State Senate, he remains hopeful about the future. His vision for the state encompasses a vibrant community where every individual has access to opportunities, education, and the resources needed to thrive. He believes that change is possible through collective action and a commitment to uplifting one another.

In recent years, Rouse has expanded his focus to include environmental issues, recognizing that social and environmental justice are intertwined. He advocates for sustainable practices and initiatives that benefit both the community and the planet. His commitment to a holistic approach to community well-being has made him a voice for progressive change in Virginia.



Conclusion

Aaron Rouse's story is not just one of personal triumph; it is a narrative of collective resilience and hope. From a challenging childhood to a successful career in football and now a prominent role in the Virginia State Senate, Rouse exemplifies the impact of community, advocacy, and the unwavering belief that change is possible.

As he continues to inspire others in Virginia and beyond, Rouse remains grounded in his mission to create a better world for future generations. His legacy is a reminder that, regardless of the circumstances, it is possible to rise from the shadows and light the way for others. In a world that often feels divided, Rouse stands as a beacon of hope, proving that through determination, empathy, and action, transformation is within reach.

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CHALK TALK/SOCIAL

DETAILS

Date: Friday, Feb. 23rd

Registration: 4:30 PM

Clinic: 5:00 PM - 7:00 PM

Social: 7:00 PM - 10:00 PM

LOCATION

Clinic: Norfolk Waterside Marriott Hotel

Social: Grain Rooftop Beer Garden

SPECIAL GUEST

Aaron Rouse | Former Virginia Tech DB & current Virginia State Senator

Accountability Communication Competition Details Mentality

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Notable Potables



Salty Caramel Martini

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Hibiscus Amaretto Sour

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*- Jonathan Kitts,
Beverage Manager*



Grasshopper

0.5 oz. VSOP or XO Cognac
0.75 oz. green creme de menthe
0.75 oz. white creme de cacao
0.15 oz. (1 teaspoon) Fernet
Branca, optional
1 oz. cream

Add all ingredients to a cocktail shaker, add ice, and shake hard for 10 to 12 seconds. Strain up into a coupe or cocktail glass, and garnish with shaved dark chocolate or, if you have one, a lightly grated mint chocolate cookie.

Rattlesnake

2 oz. rye whiskey
0.75 oz. Lemon Juice
0.75 oz. Simple Syrup
1 tsp. (about 1/6 oz.) Absinthe
1 egg white

Add all ingredients to a cocktail shaker and shake briefly without ice to whip the egg.

Add ice and shake good and hard for 10 to 12 seconds.

Strain up into a sour glass or big coupe and garnish with drops of Angostura Bitters and/or a lemon peel.





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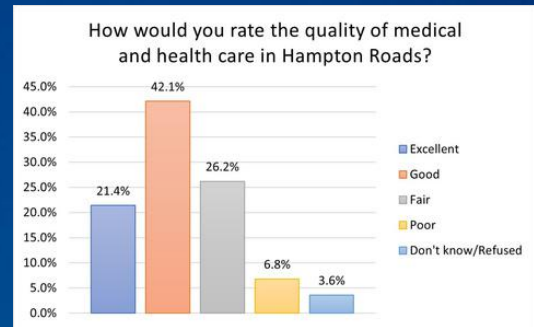
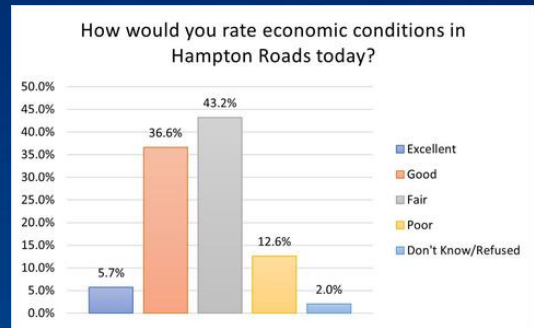
Life in Hampton Roads

An ODU Research Project

Jessie Richman

The Social Science Research Center (SSRC) at Old Dominion University (ODU) is pleased to present the results from the 14th annual Life in Hampton Roads (LIHR) survey. The purpose of the survey was to gain insight into residents' perceptions of the quality of life in Hampton Roads. Surveys this year were completed over the telephone as they were last year and prior to 2020.

Less than two-thirds of respondents rated the quality of life in the region as excellent or good (62.3%). This is lower than last year (69.3%) and is lower than most previous non-COVID years (ranging from 68% to 71% between 2017-2019). Less than a third rated Hampton Roads' quality of life as fair (31.4%) and 5.5% rated it as poor. Consistent with previous years, respondents rated the quality of life in their city and their neighborhood higher than they did for the region as a whole. About two-thirds rated the quality of life in their city as good or excellent (66.5%) and 28% rated their city as fair. Only 5% rated their city's quality of life as poor. Neighborhood ratings of quality of life remain the highest, with 81.7% rating their neighborhood as excellent or good. Only 15.3% rated their neighborhood quality of life as fair and 2.9% rated it as poor.

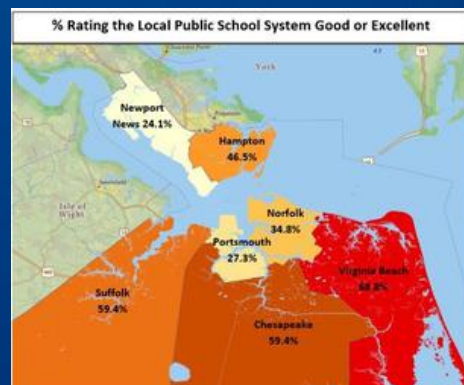
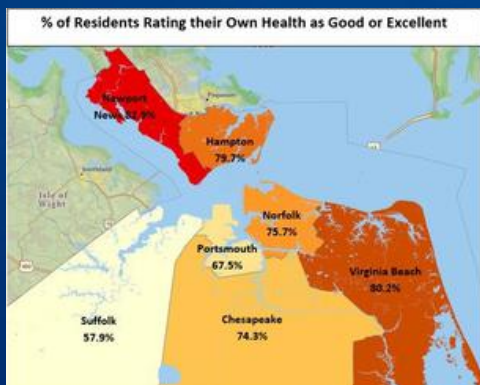


Hampton Roads residents had mixed perceptions of the economy but showed some optimism about their own financial situation. Less than half (42.3%) of those surveyed rated the economic conditions in Hampton Roads as excellent (5.7%) or good (36.6%). A similar percentage (43.2%) rated economic conditions as fair and 12.6% rated them as poor. These ratings of the economy are very similar to last year with 42.4% rating the local economy as excellent or good.

When asked if they and their family were better or worse off financially compared to a year ago, 28.6% of respondents reported that they were better off and 46.9% reported that they were about the same. Another 23.8% indicated that they and their family were worse off. These numbers show a slightly more positive view of residents' financial standing compared to 2022 (27.8% thought they were better off, 44.9% thought they were about the same, and 26.5% thought they were worse off).

The outlook for home purchasing and inflation, however, may be less optimistic, with 64.1% of respondents saying now is a bad time to buy a house and only 12.1% responding that it is a good time to buy. Only 17.8% think that it is neither a good nor bad time. This is a major decline from 2021 but is consistent with last year's statistics.

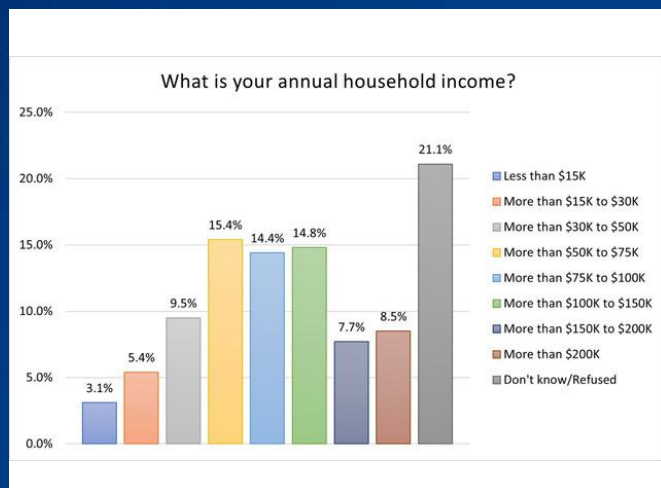
Respondents were asked to rate their level of work burnout on a scale of 0 to 10, with "0" meaning "not feeling burned out at all" and "10" meaning "feeling completely burned out." The average rate given for work burnout was 5.6 which is slightly higher than last year (4.8). The most common ratings of work burnout reported were 0 (14.6%), 7 (14.6%), and 8 (10.1%).



This year's survey also included questions about the affordability of various essentials in Hampton Roads and related personal financial issues. More than 70% of respondents strongly agreed or agreed that affordable childcare is a problem in Hampton Roads (71%) and that there is not enough affordable housing available in Hampton Roads (77.7%). More than one in five respondents (22.6%) agreed that they had been concerned they would not be able to pay their rent/mortgage in the past 12 months. The majority of respondents (80.3%) agreed or strongly agreed that they have access to affordable healthcare.

Respondents were also asked to rate the quality of medical and healthcare in Hampton Roads. Just under two-thirds (63.5%) rated the quality as excellent (21.4%) or good (42.1%). This is much lower than last year when 73.6% of respondents rated the quality of care as excellent or good.

This year's survey included items about how well local public schools prepare students to enter the workforce and for college. Respondents were slightly more likely to agree or strongly agree that Hampton Roads' high schools do a good job of preparing students for college (54%) compared to preparing them to enter the workforce (46.9%). About 20% responded "don't know" (18%) or "refused" (2%) to each item.



About three-quarters (75.5%) of respondents indicated that they were either very (24.4%) or somewhat (51.1%) satisfied with the local police. Trust in the police was slightly higher than satisfaction with 77.1% of respondents trusting the police either a great deal (32.3%) or somewhat (44.8%).

Given the recent U.S. Supreme Court ruling in *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization*, this year's survey included items about the importance of abortion as an issue for voters in 2023. When asked "How important is the issue of abortion to your decision" for the (then upcoming) November election, more than half of respondents (54.3%) indicated that it was "very important," and more than a quarter indicated that it was somewhat important (27.6%). Overall, 81.9% of respondents indicated that abortion would be at least "somewhat important" for their decision.

The Social Science Research Center (SSRC) at Old Dominion University (ODU) recently completed data collection for the 14th annual Life in Hampton Roads (LIHR) survey. The purpose of this survey is to gain insight into residents' perceptions of the quality of life in Hampton Roads as well as other topics of local interest such as perceptions of police, politics, the economy, education, and health. A total of 610 telephone surveys were completed between June 6 and Aug. 25, 2023. Surveys this year were completed over the telephone as they were last year and prior to 2020. In 2020, due to COVID-19, surveys were completed via on-line web panels. In 2021, a mixture of online web panels and telephone surveys were utilized. This year, a mixture of listed and random-digit dial (RDD) cell phone and landline telephone numbers were used.

From 2012 to 2019, RDD landline and cell phone samples were used. This change limits, to some degree, the ability to compare this year's results with those from previous years or to confidently generalize the results to the Hampton Roads population as a whole. However, as with previous years, this year's survey data was weighted to match a city's population distribution on several variables including race, Hispanic ethnicity, age and gender, along with telephone type (cell only versus landline). Funding for the 2023 survey was provided by the Social Science Research Center. The SSRC would like to thank the College of Arts and Letters and the ODU Office of Research for their continued support of the survey.

Survey Demographics

While most of the data reported here is weighted as described above, demographic data described below is unweighted to provide a description of the demographic coverage achieved by the survey. Of the 610 citizens interviewed, 62% were white, 23% were Black or African American, and 11.9% considered themselves to be another race/ethnicity. This includes 0.3% identifying as American Indian or Alaskan Native, 0.3% Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, 1.6% Asian and 6.7% multiracial. In a separate question, 4.6% of respondents indicated that they were of Hispanic/Latino origin.

More than 40% of respondents were male (43.8%) and 54.9% were female and the average age was 52. More than one in three (39.8%) of the respondents received a high school diploma or GED, completed trade or professional school, or attended some college. An additional 44.2% of respondents completed an undergraduate or graduate degree. About half of respondents were married (49.3%) and 19.9% were divorced, separated or widowed. Less than one-quarter of those surveyed were single and not living with a partner (23%) while a small portion of single people reported living with a partner (5.9%).

Compiled by Randy Gainey, Jesse Richman, Tancy Vandecar-Burdin, and Wendi Wilson-John with MacKenzie Kibler, Nana Boateng and Caylin Smith



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Feature Story

The Visionary Behind Mermaid Winery, Jennie Doumar: Crafting a Community Oasis of Wine and Connection

In a cozy corner of Norfolk, Virginia, something magical is happening. Mermaid Winery, the brainchild of Jennie Doumar, has become a beloved retreat for locals and visitors alike who seek an intimate, vibrant setting to enjoy fine wines, unique food, and a bit of escape from the daily grind. Under Jennie's visionary leadership, Mermaid Winery has grown from a small passion project into a dynamic social hub where people from all walks of life come together to celebrate community, connection, and the simple pleasures of great wine.

Jennie Doumar is not the typical winery owner. Her path to creating the first urban winery in Virginia was anything but conventional. With no rolling vineyards in sight, Mermaid Winery defies expectations. "I wanted to create something that felt accessible to everyone," Jennie says. "Wine shouldn't be intimidating. It should be enjoyed, shared, and cherished as a part of life." Jennie's refreshing approach and community-focused mindset have set her apart in an industry often perceived as exclusive and highbrow.



Mermaid Winery's story began with Jennie's passion for wine and her dream to build a place that would bring people together. A Norfolk native, Jennie grew up in a family with deep roots in the area and a legacy of entrepreneurship. Her great-grandfather was the founder of Doumar's, the iconic drive-in diner known for its famous ice cream cones and classic American fare. Although her family's business was in a different sector, Jennie was inspired by her heritage of hard work, community spirit, and creating memorable experiences for guests.

In her twenties, Jennie traveled extensively, immersing herself in the wine cultures of France, Italy, and California, which only strengthened her resolve to open her own winery. She was captivated by the artistry behind wine-making, as well as the warmth and camaraderie of the tasting rooms and vineyards she visited. Yet, she also noticed that the wine world often seemed daunting to newcomers. "I wanted to break down those barriers," Jennie explains. "Wine is about enjoyment, not exclusivity."





Returning to Virginia, Jennie's dream of opening an urban winery began to take shape. In 2012, she opened Mermaid Winery in a Norfolk neighborhood with an accessible location and a cozy, inviting ambiance that immediately drew people in. As an urban winery, Mermaid Winery sources grapes from vineyards around Virginia and beyond, blending them in-house to create unique wines that reflect the terroir and character of each region.

From day one, Jennie's hands-on approach to crafting wines and curating the tasting experience helped build Mermaid Winery's reputation. She worked tirelessly to ensure that every bottle told a story and that every guest felt welcome, regardless of their wine expertise. "Our guests should feel like they're walking into a friend's home," Jennie says. "I want them to feel comfortable, to ask questions, and to try something new."



Jennie's emphasis on creating a welcoming space has paid off. Mermaid Winery has become a destination for everyone from young professionals to longtime locals, with regular events like live music nights, wine education classes, and themed tastings that encourage guests to expand their palates. The winery also features a chef-driven menu, offering dishes designed to pair perfectly with the wines on offer. The menu, which changes seasonally, includes everything from cheese boards and charcuterie to creative entrées made with local ingredients.

One of the things that set Jennie's winery apart is her commitment to sustainability and supporting Virginia's local agriculture. Mermaid Winery prioritizes sourcing its ingredients from regional farms and vineyards, helping to foster a sense of community pride in every glass and dish served. Jennie is especially passionate about showcasing Virginia wines, which she believes deserve more recognition. "We have such an incredible wine scene here in Virginia," Jennie says, "and I love being able to highlight local vineyards and give people a taste of what our region has to offer."





As Mermaid Winery continued to thrive, Jennie expanded her vision. In 2018, she opened a second location in Virginia Beach, taking the Mermaid Winery experience to a broader audience. The Virginia Beach location combines the same welcoming spirit and elegant, coastal-inspired design, making it a natural extension of the Norfolk original



Day Trip



HOLIDAYS IN OCCOQUAN

Nestled along the banks of the Occoquan River, the charming town of Occoquan, Virginia, offers a delightful escape from the hustle and bustle of modern life. With its rich history, vibrant arts scene, and a plethora of outdoor activities, this quaint town has something for everyone. Whether you're a history buff, an art enthusiast, or simply seeking a peaceful retreat, Occoquan invites you to experience its unique charm. Visiting Occoquan during the Christmas season is like stepping into a holiday postcard.

This charming riverside town in Virginia transforms into a winter wonderland, offering visitors a delightful blend of festive cheer, community spirit, and unique shopping experiences. As you arrive in Occoquan, the first thing you'll notice is the enchanting holiday decor that adorns the streets. Twinkling lights, wreaths, and garlands create a cozy ambiance that invites you to explore. The centerpiece of the festivities is the annual "Christmas in Occoquan" celebration, a much-anticipated event that brings the community together and welcomes visitors from near and far.

EXPERIENCING CHRISTMAS IN OCCOQUAN:

A Magical Holiday Escape

Walk Through History

Occoquan's history dates back to the early 1700s when it was founded as a trading post. The town's name, derived from the Algonquian word meaning "at the end of the water," reflects its strategic location as a port. As you stroll down Mill Street, you'll be greeted by beautifully preserved historic buildings that house eclectic shops, galleries, and restaurants. Many of these structures date back to the 19th century, and their architecture tells a story of resilience and transformation.

One must-see landmark is the Occoquan Historic District, which is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Here, you can explore the Old Town Hall and the charmingly restored St. Paul's Episcopal Church, both of which provide a glimpse into the town's past. The streets are lined with plaques that detail significant events and notable figures, allowing visitors to immerse themselves in Occoquan's storied heritage.



The Art Scene

Occoquan is also known for its thriving arts community. The town hosts various art galleries, studios, and craft shops that showcase the work of local artists. At the Occoquan Arts and Crafts Festival, held biannually in September and May, visitors can admire and purchase handmade goods, from pottery to jewelry to paintings. One of the highlights of the art scene is the Workhouse Arts Center, located just a short drive away in Lorton. Housed in the historic Lorton Reformatory, the center is home to artist studios, galleries, and performance spaces. Throughout the year, it hosts exhibitions, workshops, and events that celebrate creativity in all its forms. A visit to the Workhouse provides an excellent opportunity to meet local artists, watch them at work, and perhaps even participate in a class.





Outdoor Adventures

For nature lovers, Occoquan is a paradise. The town is surrounded by scenic landscapes that beckon adventurers to explore. The Occoquan Regional Park offers a wealth of recreational opportunities, including hiking trails, picnic areas, and a fishing pier. The park is perfect for a leisurely stroll or a family outing, and the views of the river are simply breathtaking. Kayaking and canoeing on the Occoquan River is a popular activity, especially during the warmer months. Rental services are available for those who want to paddle through the serene waters while enjoying the picturesque scenery. Wildlife enthusiasts will also be delighted to spot various birds and other wildlife along the riverbanks.

A Warm Community

What truly sets Occoquan apart is its sense of community. The town is home to friendly residents who take pride in their history and culture. The Occoquan Business Community hosts regular events, fostering connections between locals and visitors alike. This warm atmosphere makes it easy to strike up a conversation with shop owners, artists, and fellow travelers, ensuring that you feel welcome and at home during your visit.



Planning Your Visit

Getting to Occoquan is easy, as it is conveniently located just a short drive from Tidewater. Whether you choose to stay in one of the town's cozy bed-and-breakfasts or opt for a nearby hotel, you'll find plenty of options to suit your preferences.

Kick off your visit with the "Occoquan Christmas Parade", which features local marching bands, festive floats, and, of course, a special appearance by Santa Claus. The parade winds through the heart of the town, filling the air with joyful music and laughter. Following the parade, gather with locals at the "tree lighting ceremony" in Occoquan's historic town square, where the sparkling tree becomes a symbol of community unity and holiday spirit.

The "Holiday Market" is another highlight, featuring local artisans and vendors showcasing handmade crafts, ornaments, and delicious treats. It's the perfect opportunity to find unique gifts for your loved ones while supporting local businesses. From handcrafted jewelry to gourmet snacks, you'll discover treasures that capture the essence of the season.



Shopping and Dining

After enjoying the festivities, take a leisurely stroll along "Mill Street", where charming shops and boutiques beckon with their holiday displays. You'll find everything from vintage decor to artisanal goods. Stop by "The Coffee House" for a warm cup of cocoa or coffee, and indulge in a freshly baked pastry as you soak in the festive atmosphere.

For a hearty meal, head to "Madigan's Waterfront", where you can enjoy seasonal dishes with beautiful views of the Occoquan River. The cozy ambiance and delicious menu make it an ideal spot to warm up after a day of exploring. Be sure to try their holiday specials, which often feature locally sourced ingredients. If you're feeling adventurous, consider renting a kayak for a unique perspective of the river, even in the cooler months. The serene waters and picturesque surroundings provide a peaceful escape, allowing you to connect with nature during this bustling season.



What truly makes Christmas in Occoquan special is the town's warm and welcoming spirit. Locals come together to create an inviting atmosphere that encourages connection and celebration. Whether you're chatting with a shop owner or joining in the festivities, you'll feel a sense of belonging in this close-knit community.

Occoquan, Virginia, is a treasure waiting to be discovered. With its blend of history, art, outdoor activities, and community spirit, the town offers an experience that captivates the heart and ignites the imagination. A visit to Occoquan during the Christmas season is a magical experience that combines festive activities, unique shopping, and heartwarming community spirit. With its charming streets adorned in holiday splendor, Occoquan invites you to create lasting memories in this delightful town. So bundle up, embrace the holiday cheer, and immerse yourself in the joy of Christmas in Occoquan.

boulevard's last call

Photo Contest: Enter to Win



DO YOU HAVE ANY IDEA WHERE THIS PHOTO WAS TAKEN?

"LAST CALL" Highlights a location or an artifact in the Tidewater region every issue. Send us your guess via email or on the website as to where you think the photo was taken and identify what it is. Those who send correct guesses will have their names placed into a hat with the winner randomly chosen.

Please provide your email address / contact information with your submission incase you're the lucky one .

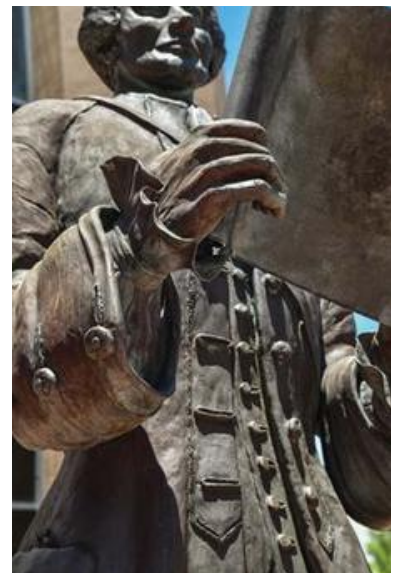
We will award a prize each issue. for this contest we will provide a \$150 gift certificate at one of The Boulevard Team's favorite restaurants. Of course, we'll name the winner in the next issue and on social media so you can take advantage of all the appropriate bragging rights with your friends and family. Good Luck Everyone!

Last issue's winner:

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