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2020 SUMMER
HOME IMPROVEMENTS

GLOUCESTER-MATHEWS

GAZETTE-JOURNAL

Section C

Thursday, July 2, 2020

GET *Inspired!*

New Point Lighthouse is the ultimate renovation project

BY SHERRY HAMILTON

George Avgeros, co-owner of First Class Contracting of Richmond, said he is excited about the project his company was awarded to restore New Point Comfort Lighthouse.

“In our lifetime, this is the last lighthouse that needs restoring,” he said. “I don’t think this job exists anywhere else. They move them, they paint them, but they don’t do all this.”

By “all this,” Avgeros means restoration of the exterior sandstone that makes up the structure, removal of the cupola and replacement of all metal parts, replacement of the door and all the windows, and repairs to the gallery catwalk and lantern room. There will also be foundation repairs, the installation of solar panels and associated electrical work, remediation of asbestos and lead, waterproofing of the whole structure, and finally, installing signage so visitors know the story of the 200-year-old lighthouse.

“This is American history,” said Avgeros. “We’re the youngest country. We’ve learned from everybody else’s mistakes, from every other civilization. It’s fascinating.”

Walking around the lighthouse island last Friday morning, Avgeros pointed out

that President Thomas Jefferson commissioned the building of the lighthouse. It was completed in 1804, during the third year of his presidency.

“It’s the third-oldest surviving lighthouse in the bay, and the 10th oldest in the United States,” he said.

But time and weather take a toll, and Avgeros showed where the sandstone on the southeast side of the lighthouse has become deeply pitted. He said those areas have been so badly damaged by waves crashing against the island’s surrounding wall of riprap during storms that the damaged blocks will have to be ground down and levelled to create an even surface so that four-inch sandstone blocks can be installed. The sandstone will come from Vermont, he said, because a quarry there has the closest match to the original sandstone, which came from the same Northern Virginia quarry that furnished sandstone for the White House and other federal buildings in Washington, D.C.

“Brick, concrete, nothing else would stand that strong,” said Avgeros of the sandstone. “It’s been damaged, but think about how much time it took. This is the best you can use, so you protect it, repair it, and restore it

SHERRY HAMILTON / GAZETTE-JOURNAL

New Point Comfort Lighthouse was built during the term of President Thomas Jefferson. Now owned by Mathews County, it is about to undergo an extensive renovation in hopes of preserving it for future generations.

SEE LIGHTHOUSE RENOVATION, PAGE 2C

Y M C K



A spiral stone staircase leads to the top of the New Point Lighthouse tower.

LIGHTHOUSE RENOVATION: *Project beginning to restore third-oldest lighthouse on Chesapeake Bay*

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(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1C)

when you need to.”

Avgeros said that the structure’s windows will be replaced with brand-new fiberglass windows that will be better able to handle the elements and more difficult to damage by the occasional vandal that visits the lighthouse only to try to destroy it. The last time it was vandalized, said Gary Bunch, marine coordinator for the project, the heavy metal grate covering an equally heavy metal door were both broken into, and the door was removed. Then the vandals kicked out all of the windows.

A request for a design change suggested by Bunch, who is a Mathews resident and owner of Marine Contracting, is now under consideration by architects, engineers and VDOT, said Avgeros. The suggested change involves installation of a “Bilco door” such as the ones installed to provide outside access to basements.

Bunch explained that the material from nests that ospreys build on top of the lighthouse often falls into a drain in front of the door of the lighthouse and causes flooding inside the structure, which can undermine it further. The drain was installed when the small patch of land around the lighthouse was built up and riprap installed to keep the tiny island, which was once nearly three acres,

SEE LIGHTHOUSE RENOVATION, PAGE 3C



SHERRY HAMILTON / GAZETTE-JOURNAL

First Class Contracting of Richmond will be working on the restoration of New Point Comfort Lighthouse. Here, co-owner George Avgeros, left, is shown with two members of his team—Mathews resident Gary Bunch, who is serving as marine coordinator, and First Class human resources manager Chuck Widgeon.

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SHERRY HAMILTON / GAZETTE-JOURNAL

George Avgeros, co-owner of First Class Contracting of Richmond, points out the damage to the sandstone on the exterior wall of New Point Comfort Lighthouse. He said the damaged areas will be grouted to even them out, and four-inch sandstone blocks will be installed.



SHERRY HAMILTON / GAZETTE-JOURNAL

Damaged windows and rubble inside testify to vandalism carried out at the lighthouse.



SHERRY HAMILTON / GAZETTE-JOURNAL

First Class Contracting, the contractor for the New Point Comfort Lighthouse renovation project, has asked for a change to the plans that would involve installing a "Bilco door" on the walls adjacent to the steps leading to the door of the lighthouse in order to keep debris from osprey nests from filling the drain and causing flooding inside the structure. A Bilco door is a double metal door of the type that is often used for exterior access to basements.

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LIGHTHOUSE RENOVATION

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2C)

from being completely eroded away.

Once a decision is made on the design change, said Avgeros, work can begin.

Avgeros said his company has worked on a number of historic structures across Virginia, including the Lyceum Museum in Arlington, Lynnhaven House in Virginia Beach, and Washington Hall at the College of William and Mary. He said a number of the structures, including Washington Hall, have been associated with Thomas Jefferson, to the point that he and his brother and company co-owner, Tim, consider Jefferson "our guy."

"I've made a living following Jefferson's life," he said. "When we found out he commissioned the lighthouse, we said, 'we've gotta get this. He's our guy.'"

Although he didn't think much about history growing up, Avgeros said that it has come to mean a lot more to him as an adult.

"We don't need a lighthouse now," he said. "But think about how many people it kept from drowning, how many sailors used it. It's not the building. It's the memories. We're fortunate to be in Virginia, where we have a lot of history."

Avgeros said he's also excited to be back in Mathews, where his company did a school roofing project a number of years ago.

"This is a beautiful place," he said. "We've been all over, and we're blessed to have found it. There are great people here."

Avgeros said he's hoping to hire local people to do the work on the lighthouse. If he finds qualified people, he said, the company will take them along when the project is completed.

Finding Bunch to work on the project "was God's will," said Avgeros.

"We came together, and the thought process was there," he said. "The team you're

with makes a difference." First Class Contracting has established an office in downtown Mathews. To see about a job interview, call corporate headquarters at 804-322-2010.

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Y M C K



Gloucester-Mathews Habitat for Humanity raises much of its funding from the ReStore located in White Marsh Shopping Center. Its doors had to close in the early weeks of COVID-19 and the organization said it is badly in need of support

Hard times for Habitat for Humanity; public support asked



ReStore is open Tuesday through Saturday.

BY TYLER BASS

COVID-19 caused the world to stand still, and Gloucester was no exception. In March many businesses and organizations closed their doors. Included was the Habitat for Humanity for Gloucester-Mathews.

The nonprofit builds and repairs houses for those in need. It also operates the ReStore—a thrift store that provides a resource to those looking for business supplies, with proceeds directly supporting the nonprofit—located in White Marsh Shopping Center.

Habitat for Humanity closed the ReStore and put all events and projects on hold because of the coronavirus. The full stop they experienced has now put them in dire straits. After reopening on May 15,

the organization is still feeling the effects.

Board member Mike Davis said the store was down \$12,000 in May alone. Each year it needs to make \$60,000 to cover the cost of overhead. “This a plea to the community,” said Davis.

Habitat for Humanity of Gloucester-Mathews is asking for support from the communities that it has been supporting since 1998. For more than 20 years it has helped those who can’t afford to help themselves. Davis said that the look of thanks on the faces of those they help is special and makes the work worth it.

The organization is also suffering from a lack of fundraising. According to Executive Director Teresa Dalton, Habitat had booked every Saturday of the year with a fundraising event before COVID-19 brought things to a halt.

“Our hearts and souls are in this” said Dalton, who’s been with the nonprofit for 22 years. Though part of a larger organization, the Habitat for Humanity of Gloucester-Mathews is a stand-alone nonprofit. It does not receive financial support from a bigger branch.

At present, Habitat for Humanity is using a Payroll Protection Grant to pay its employees, but it’s not enough to make a much-needed dent in the deficit. Davis stated that the organization is doing all it can to hold on until January of next year, but is worried they it may not make it.

Habitat asks that people donate what they can to the ReStore, and buy what they can. People can buy a wide assortment of items from the ReStore, from toys to floor tiles. The nonprofit has also started a GoFundMe campaign that has a set target of \$35,000. A link can be found on the organization’s Facebook page.

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Two dogs sitting in front of a fence.



MELANY SLAUGHTER / GAZETTE-JOURNAL
Bridges Contracting is currently working on a custom home on Baileys Wharf Road in Gloucester. The house is located in a flood zone which required 35’ tall pilings to raise the house.



MELANY SLAUGHTER / GAZETTE-JOURNAL
Tabb Bridges, left, has been in the contracting business for over 40 years and owns Bridges Contracting, Inc., and his son, Chad Bridges, will take over the business when Bridges is ready to retire.

Bridges Contracting builds custom homes locally

BY MELANY SLAUGHTER
Tabb Bridges, owner of Bridges Contracting, Inc., has been in the contracting business for over 40 years and constructs custom homes locally. Bridges is a Gloucester native and builds most of his custom homes in Gloucester. He also has work in Mathews and Middlesex and occasionally in Williamsburg. Currently, Bridges is working on five custom homes. “The virus has not slowed us down a bit,” said Bridges. “We’ve been working every day.”

One home, located on Baileys Wharf Road in Gloucester, is in a flood zone and that has presented its own challenges. Bridges Contracting had to use 35’ tall pilings to raise the house. “I have a lot of good subcontractors that make my job easier,” said Bridges. Bridges also mentioned that he buys the bulk of his material from W.T. Fary Brothers Building Materials in Gloucester and that they have been great people to work with and they have great customer service. Bridges began working for a contractor when he was in college and knew he was

ready to start building. He then began his business with Paul Bauer and were in business together as Bauer and Bridges Contracting for 28 years until Bauer retired several years ago. When Bridges is ready to retire, he said that his son, Chad Bridges, will be able to take over. “I’ve enjoyed being my own boss,” said Bridges about his career. He said that one of the best parts of the job has been the people he has met through building homes. He said that they “have turned into great and long-lasting friendships.”

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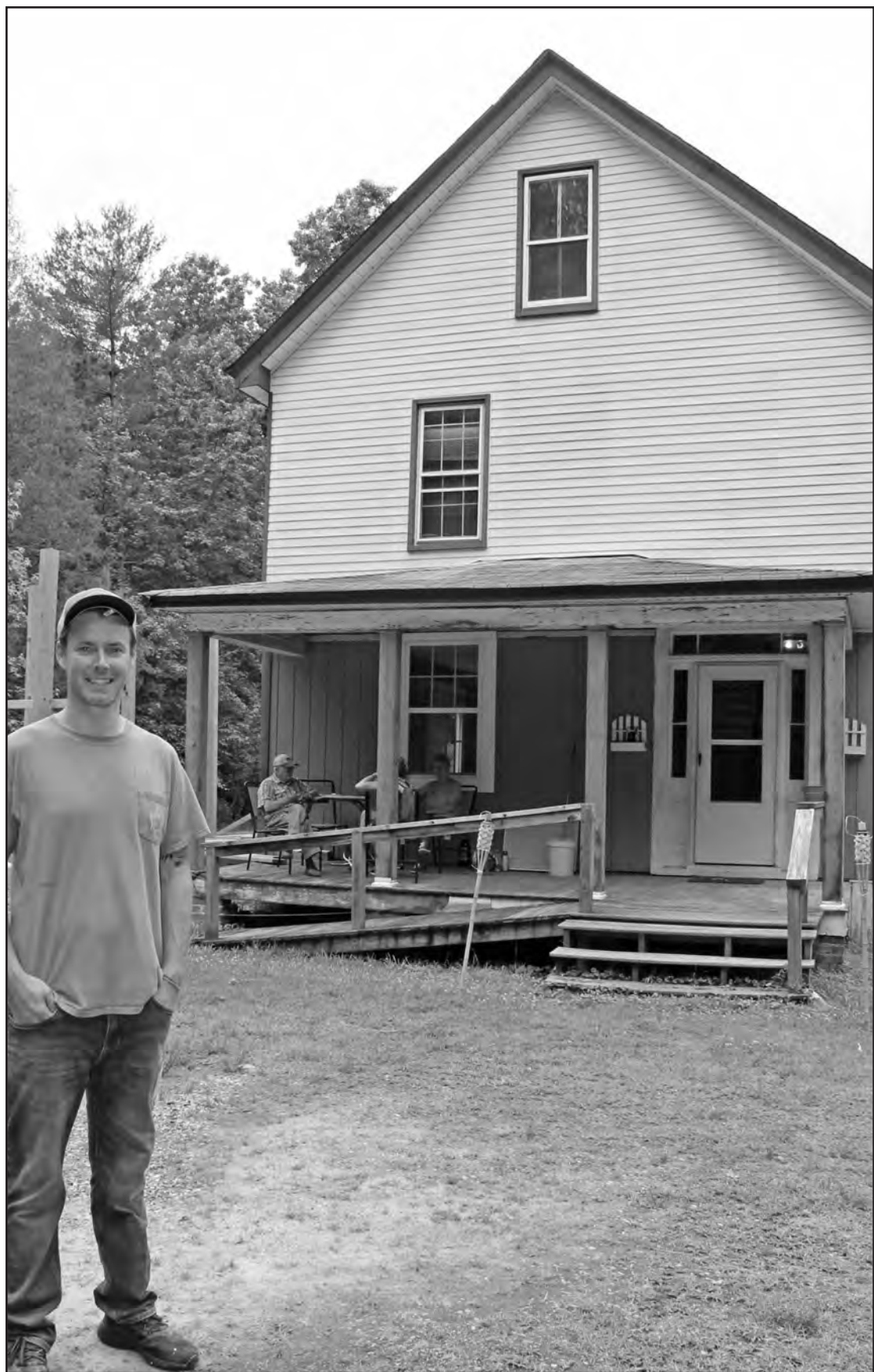
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SHERRY HAMILTON / GAZETTE-JOURNAL

William Matheny of Richmond has spent every weekend over the past year renovating an old home he bought at Hudgins, hoping to make Mathews his full-time home. He often brings family with him, including his six-year-old daughter Olivia. On the porch are his grandparents, Pat and Shelby Jarvis of Colonial Heights, and his girlfriend, Amanda Corbelli.

Old home in Mathews getting a new life

BY SHERRY HAMILTON

The Chesapeake has been calling William Matheny back his whole life. A Powhatan native, he grew up spending weekends and summers on Fishing Bay in Deltaville, where his parents kept their boat, and when he bought his own boat two years ago, he docked it at Morningstar Marinas on Milford Haven. Ever since then, his weekends have belonged to Mathews.

Matheny said it got harder and harder to return to his current home in Richmond after his weekend trips, and he kept noticing an old house near Hudgins for sale and thinking, "If I could just find a place to lay my head down at night..."

On June 19 a year ago, Matheny bought the house, and he's spent every weekend since then making it that place.

It hasn't been an easy process. Most of the work he's done so far has been demolition—tearing out old carpeting and paneling, knocking out walls, and getting rid of old kitchen cabinets. He's become friendly with the crew at the transfer station, who he said have been amazing.

And the house, which he thinks could date to the late 1800s, with a 1970s rear addition, is slowly coming along. Two newly-installed sets

of sliding glass doors have opened up the living room, and a large deck is taking shape outside. There's new drywall in the kitchen as well as in a sweeping third-floor room destined to become a play space for his six-year-old daughter Olivia, and the one bathroom in the house thus far has a new shower and toilet.

But there's still plenty of work to be done. Matheny said he plans to gut a small

parlor off the kitchen, replace a set of sliding glass doors there, and install a woodstove to create a cozy retreat. "This is so dynamic," he said of the space.

The kitchen itself is going to be modernized, with an industrial look, he said. He's going to use the old-fashioned carpentry skills he picked up as a youth working in his grandfather's carpentry shop

SEE NEW LIFE, PAGE 7C

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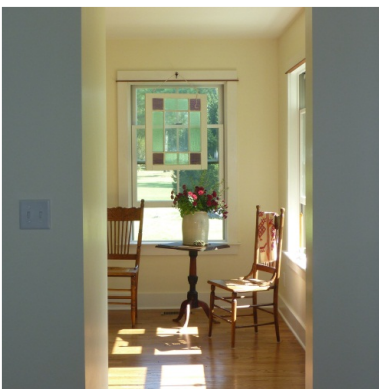
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Dominion Energy said it has several options available to help customers reduce energy consumption and save money as summer heat arrives and many are spending more time at home because of the coronavirus pandemic.

Here are a few ways the energy giant suggests that customers can save money on their bill.

1. Purchase energy-efficient lighting and other products at a discount directly through the Dominion Energy Online Marketplace, a new site that offer energy-efficient products and free shipping on orders over \$35. Upgrading to energy-efficient appliances may earn a discount, Dominion said.

2. Enroll in the Smart Cooling Rewards Program. Earn a \$40 annual bill credit, help the environment, and reduce stress on the energy grid by enrolling in this program. Dominion Energy will install an air-conditioner cycling switch on your outdoor unit free. When demand for energy is high, Dominion Energy may cycle the air conditioner on and off for a defined interval. Customers can get a text message to be notified in advance and can opt-out of a specific date or un-enroll at any time.

3. Turn the thermostat up. The number one way to conserve energy is to be conscious of the thermostat setting during the summer

months. According to the federal Department of Energy, customers can save up to 3 percent on their bill for each degree they turn the thermostat up. Try increasing it to the EPA's recommended 78 degrees, especially when away from home.

In addition, run large appliances later in the evening to reduce the heat and humidity that are added to your home. Close blinds and window coverings to reduce unwanted heat gain from sunlight.

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William Matheny has worked on some aspect of every room of the Mathews home he's renovating. The bathroom, shown in photo at left, has a new toilet and shower, and new laminate flooring is being installed there and throughout the downstairs hallway. Upstairs, the brightly-lit landing at right will be given a going-over, with the original pine flooring refinished and new trimwork installed throughout.



SHERRY HAMILTON / GAZETTE-JOURNAL



SHERRY HAMILTON / GAZETTE-JOURNAL

The kitchen in the Matheny house has been gutted and new drywall installed. Owner William Matheny plans to build cabinets "the old-fashioned way," but wants the kitchen overall to have a modern, industrial look. He hopes to be able to cook Thanksgiving and Christmas dinner there this year.



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SHERRY HAMILTON / GAZETTE-JOURNAL

An old-fashioned free-standing floor mirror illuminates the door in the upstairs master bedroom. Matheny said the bedrooms will need some sprucing up but won't need the extensive renovations he's undertaken downstairs.

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NEW LIFE
(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6C)

and as a teenager working two summers for a contractor to build the cabinets and do all the woodwork.
Although he's installing laminate flooring downstairs, he plans to refinish the origi-

SEE NEW LIFE, PAGE 8C

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NEW LIFE: *For an old Mathews home*

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 7C)

nal pine floors in the upstairs bedrooms and keep much of that area original. But he said late-night trips downstairs to the bathroom are a killer, and he plans to install a bathroom upstairs, as well.

Matheny said he wants eventually to clear a way through the woods to the creek on the back of the 7.7-acre property, and he wants to clean up an old family graveyard where the oldest grave has a 1790 birthdate, the newest 1950. He said his family has long-ago roots in Mathews, as well. Richard E. Jarvis, his great-grandfather many times over, was a member of Kingston Parish in the 1600s.

A director of hospital supply chains in Richmond, the 35-year-old Matheny has started a small business in

Mathews finding markets for local seafood that he hopes to grow into a full-time career. He said he now considers himself a Mathews resident, and his goal is to move here full-time. But to do that, he said, he needs a comfortable place to live.

"I need to be able to cook a meal, watch TV, and relax without feeling I have to work on something," he said. "I want to feel like I'm buying groceries more than stuff from Lowe's."

He's not quite there yet, but he said he expects to be at that place by the end of the summer.

"I would like to spend Thanksgiving and Christmas here," Matheny said. "My dream is for everyone to have a place to enjoy."



SHERRY HAMILTON / GAZETTE-JOURNAL

William Matheny plans to turn the third-floor attic space into a playroom for his daughter. Wall-to-wall cabinets and a window seat will cover the HVAC ductwork.

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TG Home Services' mindset is 'do it right the first time'

BY TYLER BASS

TG Home Services, a home improvement and construction business located in Mathews County, offers an array of services, including architectural design, roof repair, crawl space encapsulation, new construction and window replacement.

Owner Tom Garrett Cook started the business shortly after retiring from the United States Air Force. He said that in the military he learned that when doing something, you do it right the first time. He said he carries this mindset into every job he and eight employees undertake. Cook said he guarantees quality and satisfaction with every job.

TG Home Services gives an estimate to each client. Cook said that he uses the best materials available for each project to help insure the best work. He said that he may not always be the cheapest around, but the quality and attention to detail he provides are always as high as possible.

Cook said if he feels that something needs to be addressed, he and his team will

document and photograph areas of concern so their customers can understand what is being done. He said his job isn't to shortchange anyone or surprise customers with hidden fees.

Cook said he's proud that after four years of operating TG Home Services, he has yet to receive a callback to fix a mistake or issue with his work. He said TG Home Services never leaves a job until the customer is satisfied and happy with the results.

Cook has noticed a trend lately toward more outdoor work being done, and said that thanks to COVID-19 people are staying home and staying outside more often. This has created a trend for building decks and other outdoor projects.

The locally-owned business also does what it can to support other local businesses. Cook said he and his team subcontract and shop locally as much as they can before having to go to the larger chain stores.

To find out more about the services TG Home Services provides, call Tom Cook at 434-233-7771.



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Vanessa West began building her butterfly garden in 2015 with a friend's encouragement. She calls it a sanctuary for butterflies.



A monarch butterfly has landed in West's garden.



One of West's trinkets features an image of Mickey Mouse and reads "Welcome to my little garden."

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Vibrant marigolds line West's garden, deterring unwanted pests.

West installed 50 solar lights in her garden.

Gloucester resident creates butterfly sanctuary in backyard

BY MELANY SLAUGHTER

Vanessa West of Hayes began building her backyard butterfly garden five years ago. Her friend, Kaleela Thompson, encouraged her to build the garden to be a sanctuary for butterflies and to help preserve the monarch butterfly. West has planted pink, yellow and white milkweed for monarch butterflies, parsley for black swallowtails and pawpaw trees for her favorite butterfly, the zebra swallowtail. She grows these specific plants in her garden because they are the respective butterflies' host plants. A butterfly's host plant is the only plant where it will lay its eggs.



The beginning of West's garden.

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A music box disguised as a watering can rests in the butterfly garden.

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BUTTERFLY GARDEN

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 9C)

The plants in her garden are designed to attract only butterflies. There is nothing in her garden that would attract other animals, including hummingbirds and bees.

She has also planted lamb's ear, marigolds and two butterfly bushes—purple and white—to attract butterflies to her garden. West said that her garden is like a buffet specially designed for butterflies.

West has decorated her garden with trinkets that she

has bought from thrift stores over the years and has also installed 50 solar lights in her garden to illuminate it at night. She also likes to play music in her garden.

"Music is good for the soul," said West. "Music is a healer for the world. Everybody loves music. Everybody."

She describes her garden as her "dollhouse outside."

"Butterflies are one of God's sweetest creatures," said West.



MELANY SLAUGHTER / GAZETTE-JOURNAL

The pawpaw tree is the host plant for the zebra swallowtail, West's favorite butterfly. West has 20 pawpaw trees in her garden.

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