

Spring HOME



Building roots: Growing your forever home

BY ABBY JOHNSON

The house has always been a keystone of the American Dream. Regardless of origin, class, or creed, our homes have a tremendous influence on our lives. It comes as no surprise, then, that some aspiring homeowners aren't content to pick from the existing houses made for someone else.

Unable to resist the allure of building their dreams from the ground up, some resolve to construct their home brick by brick. To others, the prospect is daunting. Wading through a sea of ordinances reaching for permits all to turn an empty lot into a launch pad for... what? A ranch? Split level? Do you want granite countertops or marble floors? Where do you start? How long will it take?

Is it worth the trouble?

Martha McCartney, for her part, seems to think so. "It was marvelous! I had a really good experience," she says of her time building her home in Mathews, even in the midst of the pandemic when supply chains ground to a snail's pace.

It all started with the interstate. When the highway went in near her previous home near Williamsburg, the community began to outgrow her. The community she lived in since she married was at once bigger and smaller. There were more people, sure, but the arrival of gated communities made this influx of newcomers too insulated to retain the hometown feel McCartney had so valued.

After some discussion with her husband, they decided it was time to move to

Mathews County full-time, building on a lot she had purchased years ago as an investment. Once committed, McCartney wasted no time in gathering newspaper clips, magazine cutouts, and several pieces of inspiration to solidify her own home design.

Don't be afraid to be picky when it comes to your house. It's all part of the fun for your contractor and at the end of the day, they want you to be happy with their work. McCartney knew what she wanted and how to ask for it. "I started asking about good builders and Jim Miller's name came up," she explained.

Miller is a Class A building contractor who's been in the game since 1976. "He didn't think I was a crazy old lady when I gave him a picture and gave him my sketch." Contrary to her concerns, Miller appreciated her preparation. He explained that the physical construction of a house can take around "six to eight months, depending on the house and how much the homeowner has planned. Mrs. Aschman (McCartney) for example was quite easy to work with and very decisive," he said.

Miller reiterated that one of the biggest barriers to construction is a lack of direction.

Thankfully, that process is much more manageable than it first appears, even if you don't have a vacant lot in your back pocket. It all starts with looking for the right property. While it's possible to have a complete house design in hand before signing on your lot, it's a bit

risky to bank on it without knowing what your land is capable of supporting.

In both Mathews and Gloucester counties, the

well and septic capabilities of your property are major factors to consider when buying a lot. Fortunately, the ubiquity of these re-

quirements means there's a good chance that the seller has already looked into it.

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FOREVER HOME: *Finding the right property*

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2C)

“No one’s going to buy a home without a cert,” said Martin Bridges of Hogge Real Estate. “Your land is worth nothing if you can’t put a septic tank on it unless you have city sewage and there’s very little of that in Gloucester.”

The extra expense of getting the land evaluated for construction can have an impact on both your budget and your timeline. There’s a study period of anywhere from 30 to 60 days, depend-

ing on the complexity of the property. Still, having your heart set on a piece of land that doesn’t have the necessary clearances is an obstacle you can overcome by heading to the building office. There’s information available to you online at each county’s Planning and Zoning websites, both of which feature the building ordinances with the required information and permit applications.

If all of the legal jargon is still a bit too tangled for you, the building offices are

a great resource. “We’re here to help the citizens of Mathews County. If you have any questions please feel free to get in touch with us by calling us or emailing us or just stopping in,” assured Bobby Andrade, Director of Planning and Zoning in Mathews.

In spite of what one might expect from a government office, Planning and Zoning tries to get their permits out as quickly as possible. Your

wait time may vary depending on the complexity of the project, but some simpler plans can get approved in days. Still, people should be prepared to wait up to 60 days for their plans to be approved.

Once their permits are in hand, new homeowners seldom build alone; there are contractors ready and willing to provide you with the information, and helping hands, for what you need.

New technology has made house design more accessible than ever, providing a much clearer picture of what the house will look like at the end of the process.

“There’s a lot of great designers that will be able to take your home, put it on paper, see it digitally, see it 3D. That’s the benefit we have today; you can put this house on there and it will

SEE FOREVER HOME, PAGE 4C

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FOREVER HOME:

Creating a design plan

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3C)

look 99 percent like what it's going to when it's done," explained Kenny Harris, project manager over at Zandler Development.

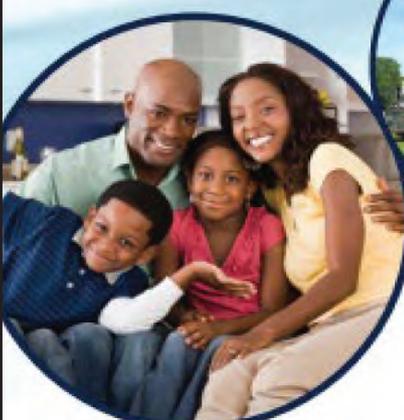
All that said, technology is something of a double-edged sword to contractors. "The new age of Pinterest and Wayfair has given people



ABBY JOHNSON / GAZETTE-JOURNAL

SEE FOREVER HOME, PAGE 5C

Martin Bridges, Richard Hicks and Linda Collier provide tips on how to create your dream home, from start to finish.




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FOREVER HOME: *Clear communication is key*

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4C)

endless opportunities so getting decisions made is sometimes difficult," Miller said when asked about the challenges he faces at work.

Above all, a clear design plan is a homeowner's greatest asset when starting construction, as most issues arise when the building doesn't look the way clients thought, or if they've put off making crucial decisions about materials and appliances.

McCartney took full advantage of the control she had over her floor plan. During the planning process, she made sure to account for the possibility of a wheelchair as her husband's arthritis worsens. She also made sure her new office had a supply closet large enough to accommodate the materials for her research work. This was an exciting change from her home in upper York County, where her previous storage space lacked the insulation needed to keep out the summer heat and the winter chill, both of which she had to brave frequently as her work demanded.

Across the board, a common theme among advice

given to the aspiring homeowner was to be as clear as possible when communicating your preferences and requests. To that end, don't be afraid to take your time when looking through options. You have all the time you want to consider what you want before signing contracts, so take full advantage of it.

Including permits, design, and construction, homeowners should pencil out at least 12 to 18 months for the completion of their house, as well as make allowances for delays. In a post-COVID world, supply lines haven't fully recovered and some building materials can arrive late to their destination or not at all.

Despite the frustrations surrounding building materials and the ongoing crisis, there's some optimism surrounding the housing market. Contractors are confident that people young and old are just as capable of building a home today than they were in the past; it's a matter of settling in to the new normal.

Building a house of your own is at once a gratifying and daunting task that requires both flexibility and meticulous planning. Above

all, it's an undertaking that requires extensive consideration, patience and determination before execution.

Even if building a home is a long-term goal for you, years if not decades ahead, it's never too early to start

thinking about it.

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Inn at Tabbs Creek undergoing extensive facelift

BY SHERRY HAMILTON

The Inn at Tabbs Creek changed hands in December and is now undergoing an extensive facelift in preparation for a grand reopening in May, just in time for the annual Tour de Chesapeake on May 17.

Located at Port Haywood, the inn sits on Tabbs Creek, with a view out to the East River and handy access to the Mobjack Bay.

New owners Sherry and Ridge Crewss and inn manager Sara Goode have been “in total restoration mode” for months as they upgrade the kitchen with all-new appliances, a new water filtration system, and refurbished cabinetry; install remote-controlled electric fireplaces in every room; and modernize the bathrooms with bright, natural tones, walk-in showers, and heated floors.

“A lot of stuff is happening right now behind the scenes,” said Sherry Crewss. “It’s changing every day.”

The addition of a new whole-house generator will ensure that guests are always comfortable, said Crewss, and upgraded Wi-Fi with “exponentially higher capability” will keep everyone connected at the same fast speed. As an added touch, the swimming pool will be heated, with a pergola installed over part of it to give it a hot-springs feel. “You’ll be submerged in warm water,” she said,

“but the weather will be cool around you.” When guests return from the pool to the main house, they’ll be able to shower off in the cabana bath just inside the entry.

Crewss said the idea is to make The Inn at Tabbs Creek more of a destination, with amenities that allow people to come in the typical off-season months, “to make it a warm, cozy place.”

To that end, the former library will now be a morning room, said Crewss, still with



SHERRY HAMILTON / GAZETTE-JOURNAL

The Inn at Tabbs Creek is undergoing an extensive facelift after its sale in December. Shown, from left, are inn manager Sara Goode and new owners Ridge and Sherry Crewss, who purchased the property from Greg and Lori Dusenberry.

SEE **TABBS CREEK**, PAGE 7C

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TABBS CREEK: *Renovations begin*

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6C)

books for guests to browse, but more open feeling, and the gathering room, with its large gas fireplace and huge center island for buffets and coffee service, will now include a wine fridge, treat freezer, and microwave/convection oven for late-night ramblings.

A back porch off the former Pub Room, now renamed the Cigar Room, will be enclosed to make it a “three-season room” where smoking will be allowed and oak barrels will hold complimentary bourbon and whiskey, said Crewss. The bright dining room, with windows lining two walls, will still have its large dining table, designed to seat anyone who stays for breakfast.

The guest rooms in the main house will all have neutral colors that make them very similar to each other, said Crewss, but they will be individualized with different colored accents. The garden suites, located across the lawn from the

main house, will be redecorated in botanical colors to make them look more serene and spa-like, and the exterior is going to get all-new siding, shutters, and lighting.

Among the things that won't change, said Crewss, are the original hardwood floors, doors, and hardware; a butler's pantry with its original shelves and glass doors; and the historical feel of the c. 1830 structure. She said she's been going through storage and finding older pieces that had been removed and pulling some

of them in for reuse.

“It's a mess right now,” she said, “but we're working seven days a week because we're under time constraints and want to make our guests happy.”

Most of the people who already had reservations before the sale of the inn were accommodated in spite of the renovations, said Crewss, and most of the remaining ones are being rescheduled.

“They've all been super sweet about it,” she said.

SEE TABBS CREEK, PAGE 8C



SHERRY HAMILTON / GAZETTE-JOURNAL

Ridge Crewss installs stone tiles to the fireplace wall in the newly-designated Morning Room of the inn.

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SHERRY HAMILTON / GAZETTE-JOURNAL

Sara Goode (left) and Sherry Crews examine several different curtain rods purchased as samples to determine which will go best with the inn's new décor.

TABBS CREEK:

Changes on the horizon

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 7C)

Manager Sara Goode is a longtime employee of The Inn at Tabbs Creek, with a cumulative 10 years there that includes a stint as a

housekeeper. A Mathews resident for many years, she now lives in Urbanna. She said she loves working at the inn.

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TABBS CREEK: *Life in Port Haywood*

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 8C)

“It’s pretty special out here,” she said. “It’s a gorgeous piece of property.”

Crewss said she and her husband were longtime

Florida residents who inherited a boutique hotel in Hollywood, Calif., that was 125 steps from the ocean and operated it for almost 15 years. It kept getting flooded, so they decided to retire and

move to Georgia.

“But we were bored out of our minds,” she said.

They decided to go back to working in the hospitality

SEE **TABBS CREEK**, PAGE 10C



SHERRY HAMILTON / GAZETTE-JOURNAL

Sherry Crewss shows a piece of aged décor she found in storage that she’s thinking of restoring for use in the inn.

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All of the bathrooms in the main house of the Inn at Tabbs Creek are being upgraded to have heated floors and modern walk-in showers.

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SHERRY HAMILTON / GAZETTE-JOURNAL

The large center island in the inn's central gathering space is being used as the depository for newly-purchased items, samples, tools, paint cans, and anything else while renovations are underway. The island itself will be outfitted with under-counter wine and treat refrigerators for guests looking for a little something extra.



SHERRY HAMILTON / GAZETTE-JOURNAL

The large fireplace in the inn's gathering room has been outfitted with gas logs, as have all of the other downstairs fireplaces. It will provide cozy warmth during chilly nights.

TABBS CREEK: Hospitality experts

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 9C)

industry and started looking at bed and breakfasts across the country, visiting seven or eight of them along the East Coast and out farther

west.

"We saw this for sale and stayed here twice without saying we were interested in buying it," said Crewss. "We kept looking, but this is the one we kept coming

back to. We fell in love with it, and now we're no longer retired—or bored."

Crewss said her husband Ridge was concerned about

SEE TABBS CREEK, PAGE 11C

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TABBS CREEK:

Excited to welcome guests

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 10C)

the possibility of flooding and snow in Mathews, but she assured him it hadn't flooded or snowed in years.

"Then five days later, it snowed," she said, laughing. "It's been one of Virginia's coldest winters. But it's made us love it even more to wake up with the river covered in a sheet of ice and a bald eagle walking on the ice."

Crewss said plans for the inn continue to evolve

as they hear from people who've been guests.

"We want people to feel they can stay here," she said. "They can read, eat, paddle, swim, fish, kayak, but we're adding Mobi Mats to the kayak launch for easier accessibility, and we're buying fishing kayaks that hold gear and that you can steer with your feet or your hands. Because that's what guests asked for, and we want to make our guests happy."



PHOTO BY SARA GOODE

The inn's swimming pool is receiving a facelift, as well, and will transition to a heated pool partially covered by a pergola to create a hot-springs feel.

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Keeping history alive for a quarter of a century

BY ABBY JOHNSON

The past often feels out of reach due to the sheer volume of unknowns involved in the study of history.

It can seem, to the skeptic, like a Sisyphean task, looking for knowledge that will never be truly complete, facts impossible to verify with absolute certainty.

For the Fairfield Foundation, there's more to the field of archaeology than the pursuit of information. A strong sense of community has grown from the remains

of old houses and their buried bricks. Gloucester and Mathews are steeped in histories big and small, and as the Fairfield Foundation approaches its 25th anniversary,

it's high time to take a look at how the project has evolved and grown over the years.

SEE FAIRFIELD, PAGE 14C



ABBY JOHNSON / GAZETTE-JOURNAL

The Fairfield crew of professional archaeologists, interns, and volunteers gather in front of the CAPE building for a group photo. The Center for Archaeology, Preservation and Education has served as a hub for the foundation's administration and research since its restoration, which began in 2010 and ended in 2018. Shown here are, from left, Anna Rhodes, Nancy Rubin, Dave Brown, Jackson Stubbs, Evan Cabral, Thane Harpole and, in back, Nathaniel Glasgow.

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FAIRFIELD: *Local history*

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 13C)

The first of its kind in the state of Virginia, Fairfield Archaeology Park stands as the site the foundation was built on. Thane Harpole and Dave Brown developed an interest in the ruins of Fairfield plantation during previous trips exploring the county. Shortly after they graduated, they came into contact with Harry Wason, who wanted to create a program centered around the Gloucester community on its 350th anniversary.

While not completely unknown to the archaeology

community, Fairfield remained largely untouched since the 1960s, making the property an ideal candidate for a brand-new initiative. The house became the focal point of their excavation efforts and public outreach for years, but the foundation's work has now extended to several other properties.

Today the Fairfield Foundation can be found in a revived gas station on the corner of Main Street and John Clayton Memorial Highway. After years of disrepair, Edge Hill Service Station

SEE FAIRFIELD, PAGE 15C



ABBY JOHNSON / GAZETTE-JOURNAL

The Fairfield Foundation's Lab Nights allow volunteers to sift their hands through artifacts and uncover bits of history such as glass, nails, and ceramic shards. Too fragile for cleaning agents, volunteers clean with only a toothbrush and water. Nancy Rubin, Mason Patrick and Nathaniel Glasgow, from left, take part in a recent Lab Night program at the Center for Archaeology, Preservation and Education (CAPE) in Gloucester.



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FAIRFIELD:

Preserving the past

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 14C)

had become something of an eyesore to the people of Gloucester, many of whom wanted to tear it down in hopes of a cleaner Main Street. Knowing the historic value of the property, the foundation was asked to find a purpose for the building that would allow it to stand in a semblance of its original form while also serving the

community.

Working out of the Rosewell Visitor Center at the time, it became clear after some deliberation that the station would make a fine headquarters for the growing foundation. By 2018, the Center for Archaeology, Preservation and Education was a hub for various outreach efforts, such as their

SEE FAIRFIELD, PAGE 16C



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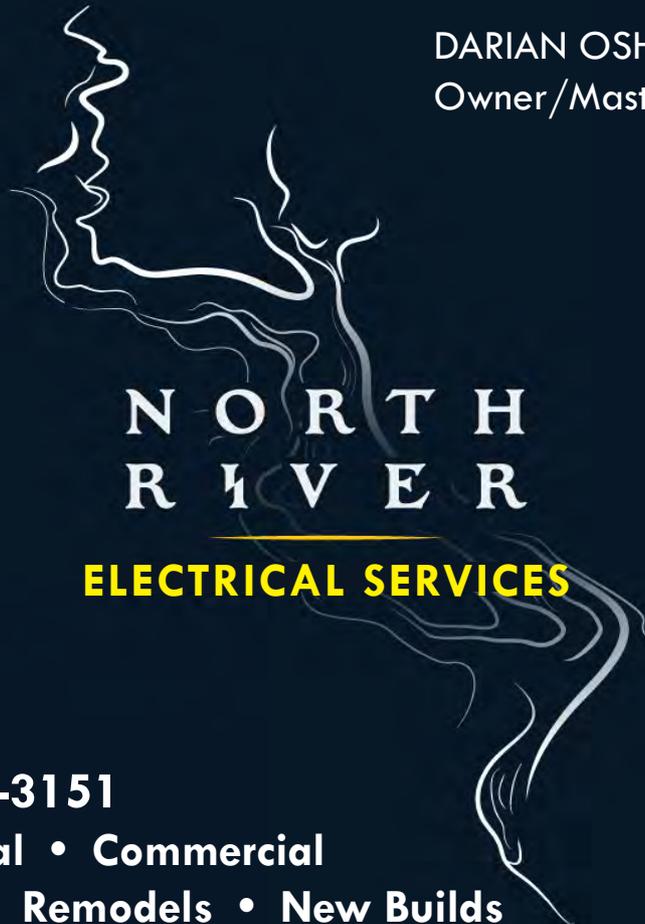
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FAIRFIELD: *Volunteers key to operation*

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 15C)

Volunteer Lab Nights and Artifact Wash Days, both of which can be found on their events page.

Shortly after moving into their new headquarters, Fairfield took up the Timberneck house in Machicomoco State Park. Built in the 1790s, the property was passed down in the Catlett

family and came into the hands of the foundation in 2019. "It started off with a little bit of grant money and a whole lot of sweat equity by a lot of really great volunteers," said Lori Jackson Black, project manager for Timberneck in addition to being a board member of the foundation. While not quite as large as some of the other properties in the foundation,

the house stands out among them by still standing.

As the only plantation house in its portfolio that hasn't burned down, Timberneck now serves as a venue for community events of all kinds. Another distinction the site has is the volunteer work geared not only for preservation but restoration as well. The foundation hopes to take advantage

of the intact nature of the house by creating a place for guests to stay the night, with one of the rooms currently being modified to serve as a wheelchair accessible suite.

Timberneck also stands as a demonstration of the volunteers' dedication to accuracy. Work on the house adheres as close to the original construction methods as possible. From paint match-

ing to sealing the floors with wax on their hands and knees, no effort is spared in bringing this house back to its original glory. Readers can hope with extreme caution that work might be completed sometime around 2026.

Over the years, the Fairfield Foundation has inher-

SEE FAIRFIELD, PAGE 17C



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FAIRFIELD: *Walter Reed's Birthplace holds historical significance*

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 16C)

ited some responsibilities from previous historical societies and organizations, most notably the Association for the Preservation of Virginia Antiquities (now Preservation Virginia), which was involved with Walter Reed's Birthplace before signing the corresponding responsibilities over to Fairfield. At first glance, the little house down in Belroi may strike onlookers as unassuming, though not without its charms. Walter Reed's Birthplace consists of three little rooms and a garden.

It's not the building itself,

but Reed's revolutionary contributions to the medical

field (a U.S. Army physician who led the team that con-

firmed that yellow fever is spread by a particular mos-

SEE FAIRFIELD, PAGE 19C



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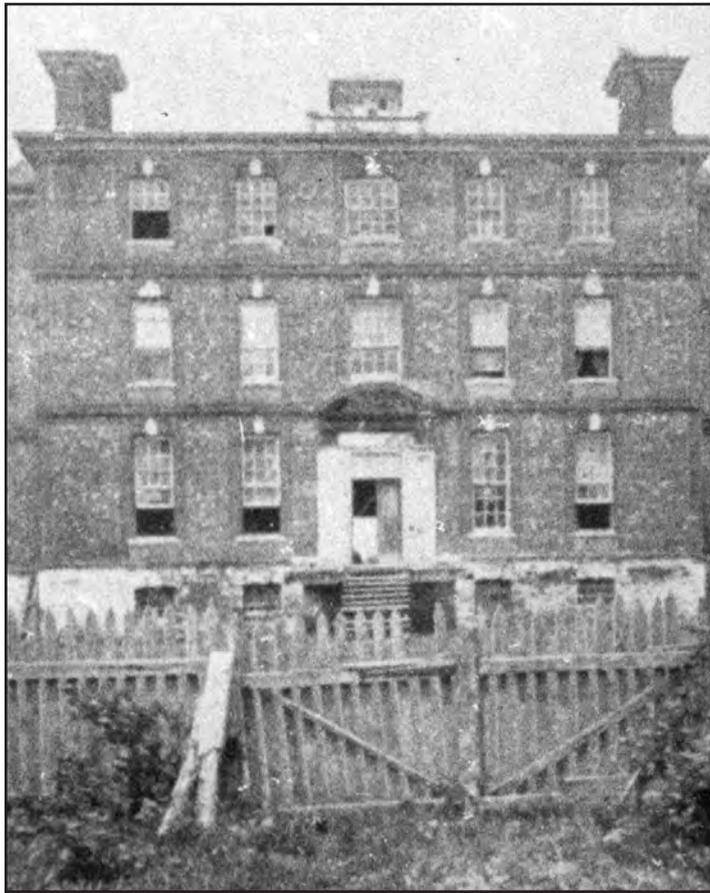
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Rosewell before the 1916 fire that ruined the Page family's colonial home, rendering it unliveable.

FAIRFIELD: *Rosewell* *Ruins among sites*

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 17C)

quito species rather than direct contact) that make his childhood home a site of historical significance. The property stands as a testament to the community's dedication to preserving their heritage and the land around it.

Fairfield Foundation had worked on the site since 2004 in cooperation with the Gloucester Preservation Foundation, though Fairfield was later named a successor organization in 2020. The site's value in the community became clear when the town came together to

purchase the land around the house, preventing the surrounding lots from being developed. The conservation easement ensures that the site and its surroundings will remain as close to its original landscape as possible.

The ruins of Rosewell are the latest addition to the foundation, though indirectly. While the ownership still falls to the Gloucester Historical Society, Fairfield manages site operations. The foundation was already familiar with the property,

SEE FAIRFIELD, PAGE 20C

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Tom Karow adds a wall to one of the downstairs rooms at Timberneck. These modifications will result in a suite capable of hosting wheelchair users, including a bathroom large enough to fit mobility aids comfortably.

FAIRFIELD: *Rosewell site transition*

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 19C)

having performed archaeology work on the site long before. The Visitor Center once served as the fledgling

foundation's headquarters, with artifacts they collected being examined and processed in one of the side rooms. Now, management of the property falls under

Fairfield's purview.

The Rosewell Foundation consulted the foundation post-pandemic on transi-

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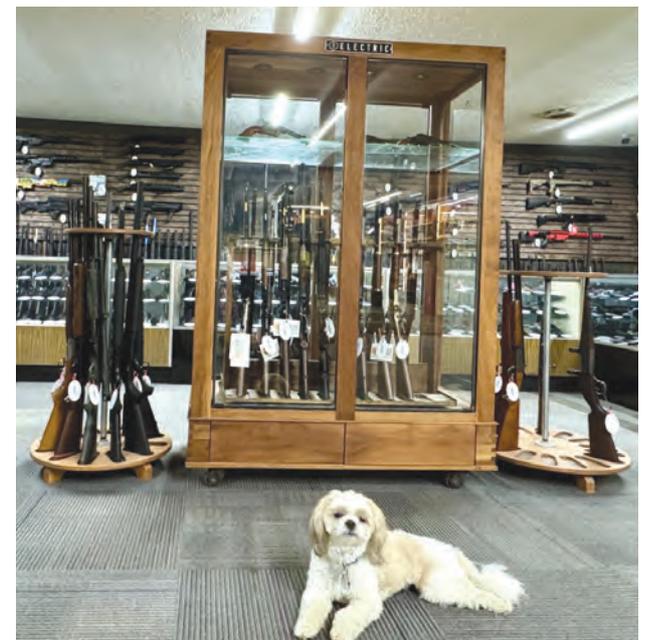
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FAIRFIELD: *Excavating excitement*

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 20C)
tioning its preservation efforts into a modern approach. “If you have a great thing but you don’t have the people in there sometimes

you taper off,” said Tom Karow. Because Rosewell was inherited by the Fairfield Foundation long after its preservation efforts went underway, there are a few

more amenities available for guests, including an exhibit and gift shop.

The foundation’s reach extends beyond properties in their name. A testament to its growth, the foundation now serves as a resource for other historical organizations in both excavation and exhibition work. Both the Abingdon Episcopal Church and King William Courthouse have hosted volunteers for dig sites. Abingdon is one of the oldest colonial churches in Virginia and the second (rumored third) structure built on the property.

The Fairfield Foundation has been searching for details about the first church built on the land after a fallen tree revealed old brickwork. The foundation’s latest excavations have been examining the land around King William Courthouse, many of the recovered artifacts showing signs of the fire.

While their research remains fixed on the past, their methods are evolving with the modern age. The Fairfield Foundation’s website includes many online exhibits where visitors can browse through photos, 3D models, and descriptions of the many artifacts found in their excavations. Using today’s technology to create online exhibits that people can participate from anywhere in the world is just one way Fairfield connects with the public.

A more hands-on opportunity for participation exists in bi-monthly Lab Nights,



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Jackson Stubbs, Oliver Mueller-Huebach and Olivia McGaerity of the Timberneck crew, from left, work to excavate the surrounding land before adding new amenities. A crucial step to adding modern comforts to historical sites is making sure all artifacts are found and removed while they're still accessible.

FAIRFIELD:

Connecting with the public

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 23C)

which allows volunteers to clean and categorize the artifacts found during their Dig Days.

"I love the fact that you're holding something that may not have been held by a person for a few hundred years or more," said Nancy Rubin as she scrubbed decades of grime off artifacts before sorting them by category.

"I think it's really cool you sit there and think, you wonder what that person's life was like, you wonder what they were doing, how they lived it," she added. Volunteers deserve special praise for their cleaning earlier

this year, as the water they used for washing got very cold very quickly.

Brown and Harpole set out to create a connection between archaeology and the public, and their efforts have paid off. In the 25 years since its founding, Fairfield has built a strong community of passionate volunteers whose collective efforts have spread far and wide. From field trips to internships, the Fairfield Foundation has grown far beyond its original mission and remains dedicated to fostering an interest in archaeology in all ages.

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Wayne Nelson of Gloucester is shown in photo at left with "Food Fixes" delivered by the Rural Housing Partnership employees Irene Albert and Babs Zuhowski, from left in photo at right.

Making repairs to allow seniors to continue to age in their homes

BY SHERRY HAMILTON

Rural Housing Partnership, a Gloucester-based organization, has made numerous home repairs for eligible clients over the years, beginning in 1992 as Gloucester Housing Partnership, an offshoot of the Samaritan Group.

The all-volunteer group began by building ramps for people using wheelchairs or walkers, said Babs Zuhowski, executive director of operations. It then went on to tackle small repairs

to make a home safe as the need arose, including patching roofs, repairing HVAC systems, fixing floors and windows, and making bathrooms accessible, in addition to installing ramps.

Now, to fulfill its mission to help homeowners aged 62 and older live sustainably and safely in their own homes, RHP not only changed its name in 2022, but it has also changed its approach to a "one and

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PAGE 32C

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RURAL HOUSING PARTNERSHIP: *Safety comes first*

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 31C)

done” model, seeking to address any and all issues in a home at the same time rather than “doing a patch here and there,” said Zuhowski.

“If people are safe in their home and can age gracefully, they won’t be homeless, and their house won’t be dilapidated,” she said.

In order to provide more extensive repairs, RHP now seeks grants from the USDA Rural Development 504 Program, said Zuhowski. This program provides up to \$10,000 in grant funding for income-restricted seniors. It also offers low-interest loans up to \$40,000 for income-restricted people of any age. The organization is getting ready to close out its first loan for a client who needed a whole new septic system, new windows, and a new handicapped-accessible bathroom, she said.

Zuhowski said the process begins with a call from someone in need of help or a referral from Social Services or a community organization. The person then has a screening appointment to make sure they’re eligible for services, including that they’re at 100 percent of the federal poverty level or lower and they own their own home. If the person is not listed on the deed to the home, RHP can’t help them, she said, but if the deed needs correcting, the organization will assist up to one client per year with that task.

Zuhowski said that, in addition to the deed, there are other documents that applicants must provide in order to determine their eligibil-

ity, including proof of income, checking and savings account statements, property tax records, etc. All applicants are screened at one location on one day every other month. They’re asked to think about how they’ll navigate doorways, steps, the shower, and other parts of their home.

“We address all health and safety issues,” said Zuhowski, “heat, air conditioning, whether they’ll be able to continue heating with oil or perhaps need a mini split system. We work to try to do it all at once and be done, including installing one free smoke detector to keep our clients safe.”

When the client is “good to go,” said Zuhowski, there’s a courtesy home safety inspection by a licensed contractor to see if there are any additional safety needs that were missed during the initial screening appointment. Then, finally, construction can begin. The whole process can take up to a year, she said.

“We’re not an urgent-needs organization,” said Zuhowski. “We don’t have the infrastructure or the funding, but we try to respond as quickly as we can.”

If someone has a leaky faucet or gutters that need cleaning or some other small job that needs to be done relatively quickly, Zuhowski said she calls on one of RHP’s church partners—Bethany United Methodist, Apostles Lutheran, Susannah Wesley or St. Therese. She said the organization is actively looking for more church partners and hopes to have 10 church partners by the end of the year.

Rural Housing Partnership no longer provides repairs for mobile homes unless they were built in the last 10 years, they’re on property owned by the homeowner, and they’re on a whole-house slab made of cement or macadam, said

Zuhowski. The same goes for modular homes, except that they can be on a regular foundation. She explained that such homes often have problems with moisture from the ground that “eats away at the underneath.”

Zuhowski had some advice

for homeowners.

“If you have a water leak, don’t wait until the floors are spongy,” she said. “If there’s an active roof leak, you already have a problem. Try

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"SHOULD I LIST NOW OR WAIT FOR A STRONGER MARKET?"

Buyers are adapting to the new normal by adjusting their expectations. Some still aim to make over-asking offers on overpriced homes in anticipation of multiple offers, while others hesitate to engage in bidding wars. While multiple offers can be thrilling, they also introduce stress for both buyers and sellers. It's important to concentrate on securing one strong offer that aligns with your selling goals

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RURAL HOUSING PARTNERSHIP:

Providing for clients

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 32C)

to get a tarp up immediately. It's causing damage, possibly in the attic, the studs, the insulation, the beams."

Steps instead of ramps

Zuhowski said that a ramp isn't a good fit for every client, so RHP is now offering "graduated steps" in some instances. While a ramp provides one smooth surface, she said, graduated steps are those that are no higher than two inches and are deep enough to accommodate a rollator (a walker with a seat) or a wheelchair.

Partnership with Bread for Life

Zuhowski said she recalled one client who needed home repairs but was concerned that their grant wouldn't be approved so they weren't buying food in case they had to pay for the repairs. That person wouldn't go to a food pantry because they were "afraid of being seen," she said.

After that incident, Zuhowski approached the RHP board about helping clients with food insecurity. Thus was born a partnership with the Bread for Life Food Pantry. RHP committed to delivering a Thanksgiving turkey to all 20 people who had received services during the year, she said, and Bread for Life supplemented the deliveries with canned and boxed food. Now the board has committed to quarterly

deliveries to all clients who "may be prideful or not have transportation or can't navigate bags of food into their kitchen." The first delivery, given the moniker Food Fix-ins "because we fix things," said Zuhowski, was on Valentine's Day, with Bread for Life providing the deliveries.

"It's like taking the food pantry and saying, 'Let's do more,'" she said. "We're partnering to help people in a different way. It's not our mission, but the greater good is to help more people and do the best we can."

By the numbers

In 2024, Rural Housing Partnership made 16 home safety inspections, with complimentary smoke detectors installed; completed 13 home safety repair projects; completed three USDA Rural Development 504 applications; and made 82 referrals to connect people who don't fit RHP's mission with services to assist them.

RHP's 25 volunteers also made 20 turkey-bag deliveries to active clients in November, loaned two metal ramps for short-term needs, and purchased a new volunteer trailer to help get jobs done. They also helped people in three counties—Gloucester, King and Queen, and Mathews.

For more information about Rural Housing Partnership, visit ruralhousing-partnership.org or call 804-792-5079.



One of Rural Housing Partnership's projects over the past year was to replace a set of wooden steps, shown at left, with accessible graduated steps.



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"It's like taking the food pantry and saying, 'Let's do more,'" she said. "We're partnering to help people in a different way. It's not our mission, but the greater good is to help more people and do the best we can."

By the numbers

In 2024, Rural Housing Partnership made 16 home safety inspections, with complimentary smoke detectors installed; completed 13 home safety repair projects; completed three USDA Rural Development 504 applications; and made 82 referrals to connect people who don't fit RHP's mission with services to assist them.

RHP's 25 volunteers also made 20 turkey-bag deliveries to active clients in November, loaned two metal ramps for short-term needs, and purchased a new volunteer trailer to help get jobs done. They also helped people in three counties—Gloucester, King and Queen, and Mathews.

For more information about Rural Housing Partnership, visit ruralhousing-partnership.org or call 804-792-5079.



One of Rural Housing Partnership's projects over the past year was to replace a set of wooden steps, shown at left, with accessible graduated steps.



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Model homes; then and now

BY ABBY JOHNSON

Building a home from the ground up offers more agency at the cost of time and often a higher price tag than their catalogue counterparts.

While everyone needs a home, not all are excited by the prospect of designing it themselves. Due to circumstance or simple preference, some homeowners want the job done as quickly and efficiently as possible.

For those who find the creative process more stress than it's worth, a modular home may suit their needs better. Customers select their chosen floor plan from a catalogue and expect to receive all of the materials required to build it on their property. These homes have the advantage of convenience; their ready-made nature makes them a quicker build, which in turn leads to lower prices.

Those interested in these

quick and easy homes have a few more custom options at their disposal. That said, potential buyers of a modular home should look carefully at the materials provided in the kit they're purchasing. While there are some companies willing to ship and assemble houses top-to-bottom, there are many more that work in providing "frame homes" which include the basic structure of the house but not the inner workings. These alterna-

tives require the customer to purchase their own wiring, plumbing and HVAC systems. Each home is built to attend to different needs, so it's essential to clarify what services are being paid for before signing that check.

An old concept

The concept of mail-order homes isn't new; the Sears, Roebuck & Co. kit home in particular is gathering quite the following online. While Sears discontinued its kit home service long ago, their

products still stand, and have become the interest of many. Facebook groups, blogs, and databases have been created to help track down some of these homes across the country.

Though their heyday has long since past, many still look on these homes with fascination. Fortunately, many of the old catalogues have been uploaded and can be accessed online. Early ad

SEE MODEL HOMES, PAGE 36C

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Keep your pets safe while moving

BY MELANY SLAUGHTER

Your things are packed, the moving truck is stuffed

to the brim with boxes and you are ready to start over in a new home. Though this can be an exciting time, re-

member that any pets you have could feel anxious while moving and may even get lost during the process.

"I always recommend microchips," said Gloucester-Matthews Humane Society Assistant Manager Jasmine Jutras.

If a pet does go missing and is brought to a shelter or a veterinarian's office, staff members can check for a microchip and scan it for the pet owner's name, contact information and home address.

"You don't know," said Jutras about pets going missing. "Things happen."

Pets, especially cats, should be acclimated to a new home in a small space

SEE PET SAFETY, PAGE 37C

MODEL HOMES:

Changes over the years

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 35C)

campaigns from the Sears days focused on the financial aspect of the product, the homes being framed primarily as a better alternative to renting with similar prices. Today their appeal is novelty. The prospect of their homes coming from a vintage kit has sent many peeking in corners, looking through basements, and counting their windows to find a match. The possibility of historic value helps maintain interest in older homes instead of jumping to newer models.

"We're keeping things out of the landfill by reusing what we already have; we're not having to cut down any more trees. We're not going to have to throw away hazardous materials that we didn't know were hazardous a hundred years ago," said Lori Jackson Black of the Fairfield Foundation regarding her own interest in old homes and their preservation.

Homeowners would do well to approach the possibility of their homes coming from a kit with extreme caution. In the excitement, many have falsely described

their houses as a Sears home.

Occasionally, it's a kit from a different company; often it's simply a case of erroneous information having been attached to the house at some point in its life, and then passed on through the ages. Or, it's simply a Craftsman design house, and people think that means it's a Sears house," said Judith E. Cabot, a member of the research team at SearsHouses.com. The confusion comes from an abundance of look-alike houses that were built to match the trends of the time. The authenticity of a home can come down to the most minute of details, from window size to a roof's angle. Even if a house was built from a kit, that's no guarantee that it's a Sears product. There were a few different companies that dealt in kit homes in that time period, including Aladdin and Wardway.

Even without the kit companies of old, there are plenty of options left for those who find these products appealing, in a process made even easier with the rise of the internet and advancements in phone technology.



MELANY SLAUGHTER / GAZETTE-JOURNAL

Pet owners should take steps to properly acclimate their animals when moving to a new home. Gloucester-Matthews Humane Society Assistant Manager Jasmine Jutras, shown with Velvet, provides tips on acclimation and finding missing pets.

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PET SAFETY: *Tips to find lost pets after a move*

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 36C)

for at least a week so they can get used to the new sounds and scents they are experiencing.

“Like a bedroom or a bathroom,” said Jutras.

For cats who are outdoor only, also known as “backyard buddies,” owners need to start the acclimation process like they just adopted the cat.

“It’s right back to the beginning,” said GMHS Operations Manager Chevy Carper.

The recommendation is to set up a large dog crate outdoors for the cat with food, water and a litter box so the cat can process that the new area is their home now.

“They’re learning this is their safe place,” she said.

For dogs who go in and out of the home, owners need to make sure they acclimate them properly as well. Dogs should not be left unattended outdoors, even for a short while. Owners should walk their dog around the new neighborhood so they can become accustomed to the news smells and make sure their fencing is secured.

“I would take it slow still,” said Jutras.

Pet owners should also tell their neighbors about their pets in case they go missing.

“Tell them about your animals,” said Carper.

If an indoor or outdoor cat does go missing, there are steps owners can take to help their furry friend find their way home, like leaving their litter box outside.

“They can smell that better than they can smell our clothes,” said Carper.

Cat owners should place the litter box outside without cleaning it first because the pungent smell will help attract the cat back. Owners should place the box under a covered area, like a porch, to protect it from the weather.

“It’s kind of like a beacon,” said Carper, “a homing signal for them to come back.”

For dogs and cats that go missing, owners should visit nearby homes and ask if their pets have been seen.

“Check in with your neighbors,” said Jutras.

Pets could also be hiding somewhere nearby their new home.

“Something can spook them,” she said.

Owners should check bushes, trees and small spaces in their home where the animal could possibly fit. Pet owners could also try to draw their animal out with a pungent odor.

“Try a smelly food,” said Jutras, like tuna. “Sometimes that can help guide them out too.”

Those who receive a new animal visitor, especially cats, should report that animal to their local animal shelter.

“Please report it to your shelter,” said Carper. “Don’t assume it has no owner.”

When moving, owners should update the information on their pet’s microchip by calling the company. Once an animal is adopted, the shelter can no longer update the information for adopters. Physical tags the animal wears should also be updated.

If an animal goes missing, owners can contact GMHS to post a picture of their pet

on the GMHS Stray Listings Facebook page.

“I started it last year,” said Jutras. “We started see-

ing higher return-to-owner rates.”

Owners of missing pets can also provide their ani-

mal’s information to Petco Love Lost, a database where people can report and search through lost and found pets.

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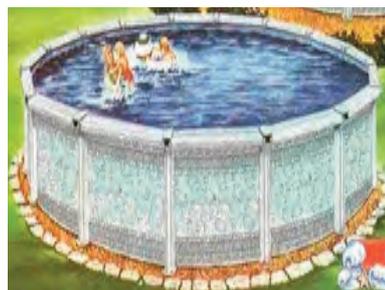


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Virginia-grown produce is sprouting up this spring

Farmers are beginning to harvest their spring produce, and consumers can get their first tastes of fresh asparagus, herbs and leafy greens.

Dana Boyle at Garner's Produce in Richmond County said customers can't wait to purchase the first of her spring crops.

"Our customers appreciate fresh veggies throughout the winter—squash, sweet potatoes and Brussels sprouts—but when the seasons change, they want change too," said Boyle, a member of the Virginia Farm Bureau Federation Specialty Crops Advisory Committee.

She said the spring growing season has been "pretty good so far," and she's currently harvesting asparagus, scallions, spinach, kale, collards and Swiss chard. While temperatures have warmed recently, she noted that the season's first asparagus—typically harvested early April through May—is "coming in a little slow because the ground is still cool."

"But it's a start, and we're excited about it," she said.

Boyle's farmstand opened on April 2, just in time for the first wave of spring vegetables.

The warming weather also allowed her to start planting broccoli, cauliflower and sugar snap peas, "and it won't be long before they're ready." Another springtime favorite—locally grown strawberries—are on the horizon.

"Everyone is ready for asparagus and strawberries," Boyle said. "Those are the two that scream springtime."

In Surry County, LaSonya White of Sycamore Springs Farm is planting beets, cabbage, herbs, lettuce, spinach,

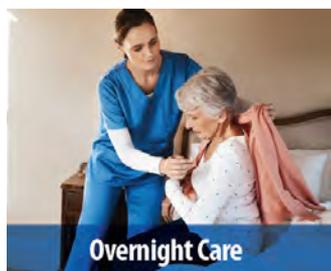
Swiss chard and other vegetables.

"We've had a couple hot days recently, and I was concerned about the spinach," she said. Last year, the heat caused her spinach to prematurely flower (called bolting) and go to seed. But "everything is growing very well this year," she said.

Like Boyle, White said people are eagerly awaiting her fresh produce. She staggers her plantings and harvests throughout the season, ensuring a rotating variety is available for customers who stop by her stand at Portsmouth Olde Town Farmers' Market and Chesapeake Farmers' Market.



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