

a Slice of Smithfield

Fall 2023



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Tours of six historic properties dressed up for the season. Ticketed event. Proceeds go to the 1750 Isle of Wight Courthouse. Details at ChristmasInSmithfield.com.

Christmas in Smithfield Antiques Show
Sat., Dec. 2, 10 a.m. - 5 p.m. & Sun., Dec. 3, 12 - 5 p.m., Smithfield Center.

Downtown Smithfield Christmas Parade
Saturday, December 9 beginning at 10:30 a.m. along Main and Grace Streets

Elves Night Out
Thursday, December 14 from 5 - 7:30 p.m. at participating shops & restaurants
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ART SHOP DINE VisitSmithfield.com

a Slice of Smithfield

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a Slice of Smithfield

Cheers, y'all

Alcohol wasn't an intentional theme of this issue. My teetotaling mother, who turns 87 in November, wouldn't stand for it.

We'll just call it a happy coincidence that homegrown versions of two adult beverages are featured on the pages that follow.

Summerwind Vineyard's fifth anniversary party was the victim of dreadful weather a couple of weeks back, but the winery's successful beginning is no less inspiring. Contributing writer Brandy Centolanza tells the story of Pennsylvania transplants Al and Kim Pugh. As daughter Meagan notes, "we are more successful than we anticipated, and that makes us all so happy."

One of Better Half's and my favorite hangouts, Wharf Hill Brewing Co., also is featured for its really cool approach to creating a logo for its signature Isle of Wheat beer: Put a talented young artist to work on it and reward her with a college scholarship. Elizabeth DeFluri really outdid herself, as staff writer Stephen Faleski explains.

If alcohol's not your thing, check out this month's cover story for contributing writer Phyllis Speidell's inspiring account of some young Smithfield gymnasts who've sprung to national prominence under the tutelage of a veteran coach. Barry Keeley, himself a former gymnast, is 80 years young, and his Field of Dreams squad equally spry.

Cheers, by the way, to our favorite time of year in Smithfield. We love fall weather, of course, but the upcoming events calendar also puts a pep in our step. By the time you read this, the Times and Slice will be hosting our annual Halloween Costume Contest as part of downtown's Safe Trick or Treating festivities. Up next is Smithfield VA Events' Bacon & Bourbon Music Fest at Windsor Castle Park, then Mistletoe Market on Main Street, then the town's annual Christmas Parade, all before the calendar officially marks winter.

We hope to see you out and about this fall. We deeply appreciate your continued support of Slice.

Steve Stewart



Nationally competitive gymnastics in Smithfield were once just a dream, but Coach Barry Keeley and 45 young athletes are now living that dream.



Art of brewing

Wharf Hill Brewing Co. has a new logo for its signature Isle of Wheat brew, courtesy of a Smithfield High School grad.



Sweet success

Smithfield's Summerwind Vineyard, which is thriving on its fifth anniversary, is a family affair.



In History

Join us for a photographic trip down Memory Lane.

Where Am I?

Can you identify the location of our "Where Am I" photo challenge? If you're right, you'll be entered to win a \$25 gift card.

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Overleaf, Wharf Hill co-owner Pam Brock, at left, presents a ceremonial \$1,000 check on Aug. 9 to Elizabeth DeFluri, who is the inaugural winner of the brewery's branding scholarship. Left, Recent Smithfield High graduate Elizabeth DeFluri received a \$1,000 scholarship after creating a new logo for Wharf Hill Brewing Co.'s flagship Isle of Wheat beer. (Submitted photos)

Carter said Wharf Hill is looking forward to working with students in the future to create artwork for the brewery's other flagship beers.

By the time DeFluri was offered the job, she'd already completed most of her high school graduation requirements, giving her plenty of time to devote to the project, which itself proved to be a learning experience.

"Discussing the project with Wharf Hill staff gave me valuable insight into the microbrewery industry, especially in regard to connecting with consumers through graphic design," DeFluri said.

DeFluri, who's a few years shy of being legally allowed to sample Isle of Wheat herself, also learned standard label dimensions for different-sized beer cans and to leave a certain portion of the label blank for brewery information and government-required statements such as the surgeon general's warning against drinking while driving or pregnant.

Wharf Hill's menu describes Isle of Wheat as a Hefeweizen-style beer using malted, toasted and flaked wheat to give it a cloudy, pale golden color. It was the first beer created when Wharf Hill opened in 2015. The name was chosen as part of a community naming contest when Lee Duncan owned the business. Wharf Hill's current owners – Pam Brock, Dave Walker and Tom Owen – have continued the tradition of beer names themed around county history.

There's a red "Old Brick Church" ale named for St. Luke's Historic Church & Museum and an "Old Courthouse" Porter named for the 1750 courthouse on Main Street.

Wharf Hill's current owners are also looking to continue Duncan's tradition of involving the community in its marketing.

"Now that we are canning beer we wanted to get labels designed for our cans and also give back to the county along with helping bring attention to talented high school seniors," said Pam's husband, Guy Brock. "We chose the Isle of Wheat as our first beer for a beer can label due to it being our most popular and our first beer developed. When Isle of Wight County Schools got us in touch with Elizabeth and we talked about what we wanted to do and where we wanted to get with a yearly art competition for a scholarship, her input and feedback was so much more than we could have hoped for."

The Brocks hope to open the scholarship to public, private and homeschooled high school seniors in Isle of Wight County.

This isn't the first time DeFluri's artwork has reached beyond the walls of Smithfield High School. Earlier in her senior year at Smithfield High, her former Spanish teacher, Jill Vargas, connected her with Kris Warshefski, lead developer of the internationally-used foreign language teaching website Voces Digital. Voces ended up commissioning DeFluri to create

graphics for Voces' "Trivia Knight" game.

DeFluri, using the digital illustration program "Procreate," drew three different-sized piles of treasure, a knight's helmet and two dragon heads, one breathing fire, for "Trivia Knight," which Warshefski described as a game where students take on the role of a knight to gather treasure from trivia-obsessed dragons. DeFluri used the same program to draw the final version of the Isle of Wheat logo.

DeFluri, in a prior interview with The Smithfield Times, said she's always been captivated by art but began to pursue it seriously at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic.

When the pandemic shuttered Virginia's schools during the middle of her freshman year, drawing and specifically graphic design became her creative outlet for dealing with the isolation.

"The pandemic really opens my eyes to the significance art has in the world and I developed a reverence for the designs and concepts people take for granted daily," DeFluri said.

DeFluri produced videos, graphics and press releases for Isle of Wight County Schools during her internship with Elliott, and has also produced documentary-style videos for the Smithfield Lion's Club.

She plans to attend Virginia Commonwealth University this fall, where she will be majoring in communication arts.

She is the daughter of Susan and Paul DeFluri of Smithfield.

The art of brewing

Student draws label for Wharf Hill flagship beer

Story by Stephen Faleski
Submitted Photos

Wharf Hill Brewing Co. didn't have to look far for an artist to design a label for its flagship "Isle of Wheat" beer.

The brewery approached David Elliott, coordinator of educational technologies and communications for Isle of Wight County Schools, this spring about the possibility of a senior art student doing the

work.

Recent Smithfield High School graduate Elizabeth DeFluri, who'd previously interned with Elliott, got the job and spent the next three months creating a colorful logo that features the shoe-shaped outline of Isle of Wight County, the beer's name-sake. For her efforts, DeFluri became the


inaugural recipient of the brewery's \$1,000 branding scholarship.

"Elizabeth has put so much time and energy into creating this logo and helping us create a scholarship program, all while still preparing for her high school graduation and for college," said Dawn Carter, Wharf Hill's social media marketer.

Last edition's Where Am I?

The Where Am I? challenge in the Summer 2023 edition took readers on a stroll through Smithfield's Historic District. Christy Archer was among eight readers who correctly identified the brick sidewalk running up Wharf Hill across from Boothe Cleaners. She wins a \$25 gift certificate from the Christmas Store. Check out Page 20 for this issue's challenge.





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Working the balance beams are Field of Dreams gymnasts, from left, Sienna Miller, Aurora Giordano, Amelia Jennings and Averi Bowe as Coach Barry Keeley provides instruction.

Fearless in a Field of Dreams

Smithfield gymnasts vault to national prominence under veteran coach

Story by Phyllis Speidell
Photos by John H. Sheally II

Behind the purple door of an unassuming building in the Isle of Wight Industrial Park lies a true field of dreams. Here young gymnasts flip, swing, balance and vault with fearless focus and endless energy. The Field of Dreams gymnastics training center is a world of movement, athletic skills and confidence-building. The center is also part of a continuing dream for Coach Barry Keeley

who has excelled in gymnastics, as a gymnast and as a coach, for the last 66 years.

With Keeley's training and under his watchful eye, the young gymnasts learn how to tumble, flip through the air on the high bar, swing through maneuvers on the parallel bars, vault through the air and land with a forward roll. They learn how to move, walk, jump and do hand-

stands on a 4-inch-wide balance beam and do it all with grace.

Recently some of the young gymnasts volunteered to show us how they train.

At the practice sessions, the girls help set up the room, moving thick protective floor mats to the proper configurations. Then as they practice on the bars or the beams or flying off their running vaults, Keeley's voice echoes, "Form, girls, form!"



Field of Dreams gymnasts, with Coach Barry Keeley, are, front from left, Mackenzie Hess, Averi Bowe, Sienna Miller, Amelia Jennings and Aurora Giordano; back row, Emma Guardia, Jocelyn Beckman and Kayleigh Wilson.

or “The camera likes pointed toes,” among other admonitions.

Safety is critical and Keeley is next to each gymnast until he knows they have mastered how to fall if they need to and how to land safely.

Jocelynn Beckman, 12 and a rising seventh grader at Smithfield Middle School, has been in Field of Dreams for eight months.

“I like Coach Barry, he’s like a grumpy grandfather,” she said. “If we don’t do our exercises, he gets frustrated – he expects the best from us.”

Her blue eyes light up when she talks about competing with the Field of Dreams team in meets in North Carolina and in the AAU Age Group Nationals in Orlando, Florida. In May, five team members placed in the top ten in the All Around for their respective divisions at that event.

“I love the vault – it’s the easiest for me,” she said. “I scored a 9.8 on my vault in Orlando – and there were a lot of people there!”

Barry is justifiably proud of the youngsters, the confidence and skill they have developed. A few of the girls climb to the top of the power tower, a scaffold-looking piece of equipment 12 feet high. As they poise to jump, two of the parents wait and watch from a small room open to the gym. Each of the girls takes her turn, confidently jumping off the tower and landing feet first on a mat below to finish with a forward roll.

Are the parents ever unnerved watching?

Natasha Miller, watching her 8-year-old daughter, Siena, said, “I enjoy watching the girls in action, and although heights scare me, we trust him, learn to let him do what

he does, and we see absolute progress.”

Anthony Bowe, an Air Force pilot, watched his daughter Averi, also 8-years-old, and said “I’ve got zero experience in gymnastics and it’s scary watching them bounce around.”

But now, he added, after about a year of classes, he can see confidence growing in the girls – and his own mind – as he watches them flip and how fast they can fly in the air and, he said, “I trust Barry’s process,”

That trust speaks to the years of experience Keeley brings to his passion for gymnastics.

Born in Hinsdale, a Chicago suburb, Keeley was one of 12 children. To support the family, his father worked three jobs, including playing clarinet and sax with big bands. Keeley was 14 and a freshman in high school, when his uncle, also a musi-

cian, gave him a basic clarinet. Keeley, who had never had a music lesson, wanted to play in the high school orchestra.

The music director, swayed by Keeley’s resolve, agreed to weekly lessons, a place to practice every day at the school, and a position as 24th clarinet in the orchestra. At the end of the semester, the director held challenges for all the clarinet players and Keeley moved up to 2nd clarinet.

That same year, a student teacher launched a gymnastics club for boys that grew into a school sponsored sport. Keeley, a former baseball player and natural athlete, joined the club and lettered in gymnastics for four years.

As a senior Keeley played a 13-minute clarinet concerto, from memory, to win a full music scholarship to the University of Iowa.

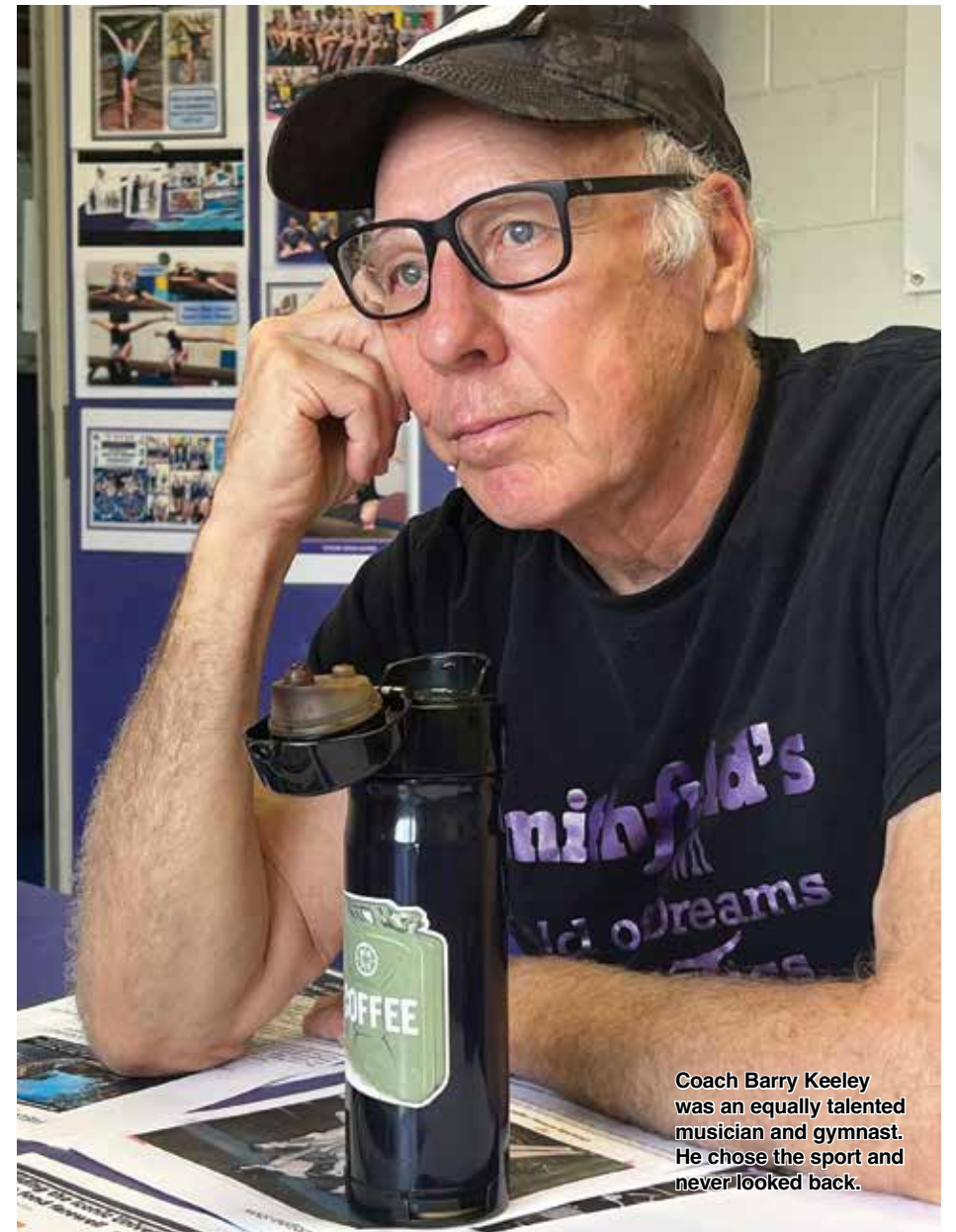
The university music curriculum was challenging. To relax he dropped by the gym to watch the school’s renowned men’s gymnastics team practice. The assistant coach, Bill Buck, a 1958 national champion and one of Keeley’s heroes, saw him and asked if he did gymnastics.

“Yes,” said Keeley, “But not on the same level as those here.”

But Buck invited Keeley in, and he soon became part of the varsity squad. The pressure, however, of keeping up with music and gymnastics, both demanding, forced a decision at the end of his sophomore year. Forfeiting his music scholarship to major in physical education, he excelled on the team and still played in the university symphony orchestra.

Loss of his scholarship meant living in a closet for a semester and borrowing, not buying, textbooks. It meant failing every exam because he lacked study materials, but he graduated in 1965 with a 2.19 grade point average, a minor in music, a major in physical education and a lifelong love of gymnastics.

In following years Keeley taught and coached boys’ gymnastic teams at several high schools in Michigan and Illinois. At Wheaton Central High in Wheaton, Illinois, he was assigned a student assistant, John Belushi, a short but muscular wrestler and football player capable of subduing any rowdy students in Keeley’s physical



Coach Barry Keeley was an equally talented musician and gymnast. He chose the sport and never looked back.

education classes.

“Belushi was funny even then,” Keeley said of his assistant who later became a Hollywood star.

During one class, however, Belushi’s method of dealing with an obstinate, profane student was, after several tries at reasoning, a quick forearm to the head which left the difficult student unconscious for a few minutes and Keeley out of a job.

After that incident, Keeley started Gymnastics Unlimited, the first private club, he said, in a five-state area.

“I coached 5000 kids between 1967 and 1980 in two centers,” he said, “I had 13 national champions and one Olympic team member.”

But with a wife and two children, Keeley knew he couldn’t continue sleeping in the gym with his German Shepherd Salto.

“So, I sold the gym but kept Salto, went into finance and investments and made a lot of money over 31 years,” he said.

In 2010 he was hired as an assistant boys’ gymnastics coach at Twistars, USA, a large gymnastics organization that trained some top-level gymnasts. He also coached girls at the Twistar USA Summer Camps for seven years where he developed a strength building program.

Traditionally, Keeley said, male gymnasts were trained in strength as well as gymnastic skills - female gymnasts were

not. Keeley promotes strength training for girls as well and is proud to say that his girls are as strong as boy gymnasts.

Keeley's gymnastic career, performing and coaching, required physical and mental strength and a willingness to take a well-calculated risk, all of which led to the current Field of Dreams.

Six years ago, with his own four children grown and his wife living in South Carolina, Keeley joined his son in Virginia Beach. Unable to stay away from coaching, he took a position as program director and head coach at Windsor Gymnastics. In 2019, however, Marshall Green, a Navy medical officer with a farm on Field of Dreams Road, offered to redo his barn so that his two daughters and other talented gymnasts could train there with Keeley.

During a three-month renovation, the cows were moved out, the barn disinfected, the floor painted, lighting and HVAC installed as well as thousands of dollars of gymnastic equipment to supplement the equipment that Keeley brought to the barn. Field of Dreams gymnastics started in 2020 with 13 boys and girls and Keeley making just enough money to cover his commute from Virginia Beach.

Soon, however, COVID-19 struck, and Green left the Navy and moved his family to Lynchburg. Undeterred, Keeley opened in another location in 2012, but that proved to be temporary as well. Finally, with the help of some of his gymnasts' parents including Nick and Julie Hess, he opened Field of Dreams in its current location in February 2023.

Now, with his 45 young gymnasts, including 8 boys, he plans another dream - an open-to-the-public show in the 3,500-square-foot gym that he will temporarily convert into a sound stage, complete with backdrop, lighting, sound equipment and spotlights.

"This isn't my first rodeo," he said. "I've been a performer on various platforms and will do my best to create a wonderful setting for performers and audience alike."

His inspiration springs from the renowned University of Iowa shows at its huge indoor pool. Gymnasts and synchronized swimmers performed together with



Coach Barry Keeley gives instructions to, from left, Aurora Giordano, Amelia Jennings, Averi Bowe, Sienna Miller and Jocelyn Beckman.

gymnasts dropping from a trapdoor 40 feet overhead. He performed as a catcher for the trapeze act 35 feet above the water. As the tallest gymnast performing, his long arms were a popular target for flyers in the act.

Recently, when asked if he, at 80, still has any of his gymnastic moves, Keeley walked to the rings. The girls practicing in the gym stopped to watch.

"Watch this, it's only going to happen

once," he warned as he curled his 5-foot, 11-inch frame into an upright handstand on the rings.

To a chorus of cheers, he swung down, but checking a photo of the move, decided to do better. Grabbing the rings, he swung back up and smiled as he performed an even straighter handstand.

"It doesn't just happen - It's a God thing," he said - not just the handstand, but his whole life and career.

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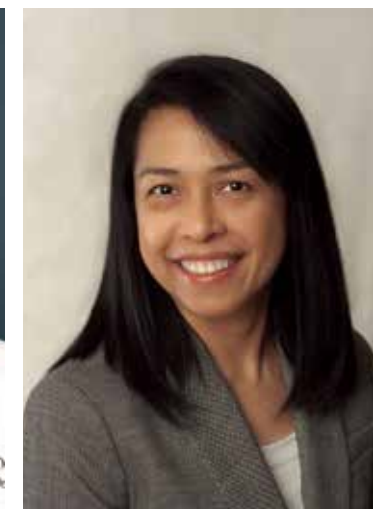
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Kim Pugh and her daughter Meagan have reason to smile as Smithfield's Summerwind Vineyard marks its fifth anniversary.

Sweet taste of success

Summerwind Vineyard thriving after five years

Story by Brandy Centolanza

This fall marks five years for the tasting room at Summerwind Vineyard. When it first opened to the public, the vineyard had five wines to savor; now it is up to 12. Its latest wine, a Viognier, first became available for consumption this summer.

Summerwind Vineyard, located at 71 Eagle Nest Lane north of Smithfield, is owned and operated by Allen “Al” and Kim Pugh and their daughter Meagan, who has been instrumental in helping run the establishment as the tasting room manager.

“It’s hard to believe it’s been five years,” Meagan said. “We are lucky to be a family-owned business and that we are thriving. We are more successful than we anticipated and that makes us all so happy.”

She credits the vineyard’s dedicated staff as well as its flavorful wines for the success.

“We wanted to make sure first that our product was good,” she said. “If you have a good product and you have a good staff, those are things that keep people coming

back.”

Kim agrees.

“Our employees are great,” she said. “We get a lot of compliments about our staff and how they interact with our customers, how they are very friendly. We have a lot of hard workers.”

Summerwind Vineyard has roughly 11 employees, with additional workers hired seasonally during the summer.

Though the tasting room itself is celebrating five years, Kim and Al have been experimenting with growing grapes and making wine since 2005 after they moved to the area from Pennsylvania.

“I wanted to try growing grapes since we liked drinking wine,” Kim said. “Wine has always been my drink of choice.”

The couple soon started growing grapes commercially. For 10 years, they sold grapes to other wineries across Virginia, including Smithfield Winery, Williamsburg Winery, Holly Grove Winery and Tarara Winery. In 2017, they started producing

their own wine for Summerwind. The tasting room opened in October 2018 to great fanfare. The tasting room is run out of an old house on property adjacent to where the Pughs live.

“We’ve had such great support from the local community,” Kim said. “We have a big local following.”

Locals and tourists alike can enjoy their glasses of wine as well as various charcuterie dishes inside or outside on the grounds overlooking the water. The vineyard has an enclosed porch as well as a patio with fire pits for cooler temperatures.

“We were very fortunate during COVID because of our large outdoor space,” Kim said. “That saved us and continues to be popular.”

Among their top selling wines is The Warwick Squeak, a dry sparkling wine with some sweetness from strawberry and watermelon rind.

“People just love it, especially during the summer,” Kim said. “They also like

The Pagan as well as The James, which is our sweetest. We started making it at the request of some folks who prefer the sweet wines.”

One of Kim’s favorites is the Cabernet Franc.

“It’s our lightest red and extremely versatile,” she said. “It is easy to drink in the summer but is also great to drink during the holidays. I also like the Merlot.”

Another popular drink at Summerwind is the sangria, which Meagan prepares fresh weekly for the taproom in various seasonal flavors.

“It’s a new flavor every week, and we always sell out of it,” Kim said.

Eventually, the Pughs would like to add on to their tasting room, as well as continue to expand their vineyards. Currently, there are about nine acres of vines. They recently planted a new grape varietal, a Chardonel, which is similar to Chardonnay and Seyval Blanc.

“I like talking to people about wine and the process of growing the grapes,” Kim said. “I also enjoy being out in the vines, planting them, watching them grow, and



Outdoor events are a big part of Summerwind's success.

seeing what they turn into.”

Summerwind Vineyard also offers a variety of entertainment for guests. There is live music as well as trivia nights, bingo and yoga. The vineyard sees a lot of customers from Richmond down to Virginia

Beach.

The vineyard and tasting room are open Thursdays, 3 p.m. to 8 p.m.; Fridays, noon to 9:30 p.m., Saturdays, noon to 8 p.m., and Sundays noon to 6 p.m. For information, visit www.swwsmithfield.com.


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Where am I?

In each edition, the Slice staff provides a challenge of sorts, testing how much of Isle of Wight and Surry counties you really know. We photograph some location that is readily accessible and open to the public, and see if you can tell us where it is. If you know where this photo was taken, submit your answer, along with your name and contact information, to news@smithfieldtimes.com. If you're right, you will be entered for a chance to win a \$25 gift card. So, if you know where this is, let us know. If you're right, you could be a winner. Go out and enjoy!



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In History



Smithfield Times Publisher Emeritus John Edwards took this photo in the mid-1970s of the Pagan waterfront looking east. The building was a hardware store that sat beside the end of Main Street and was razed soon after the photo was taken. In the small world of things, the spot is now occupied by a townhome owned by current Times and Slice Publisher Steve Stewart.

Holy Cow!

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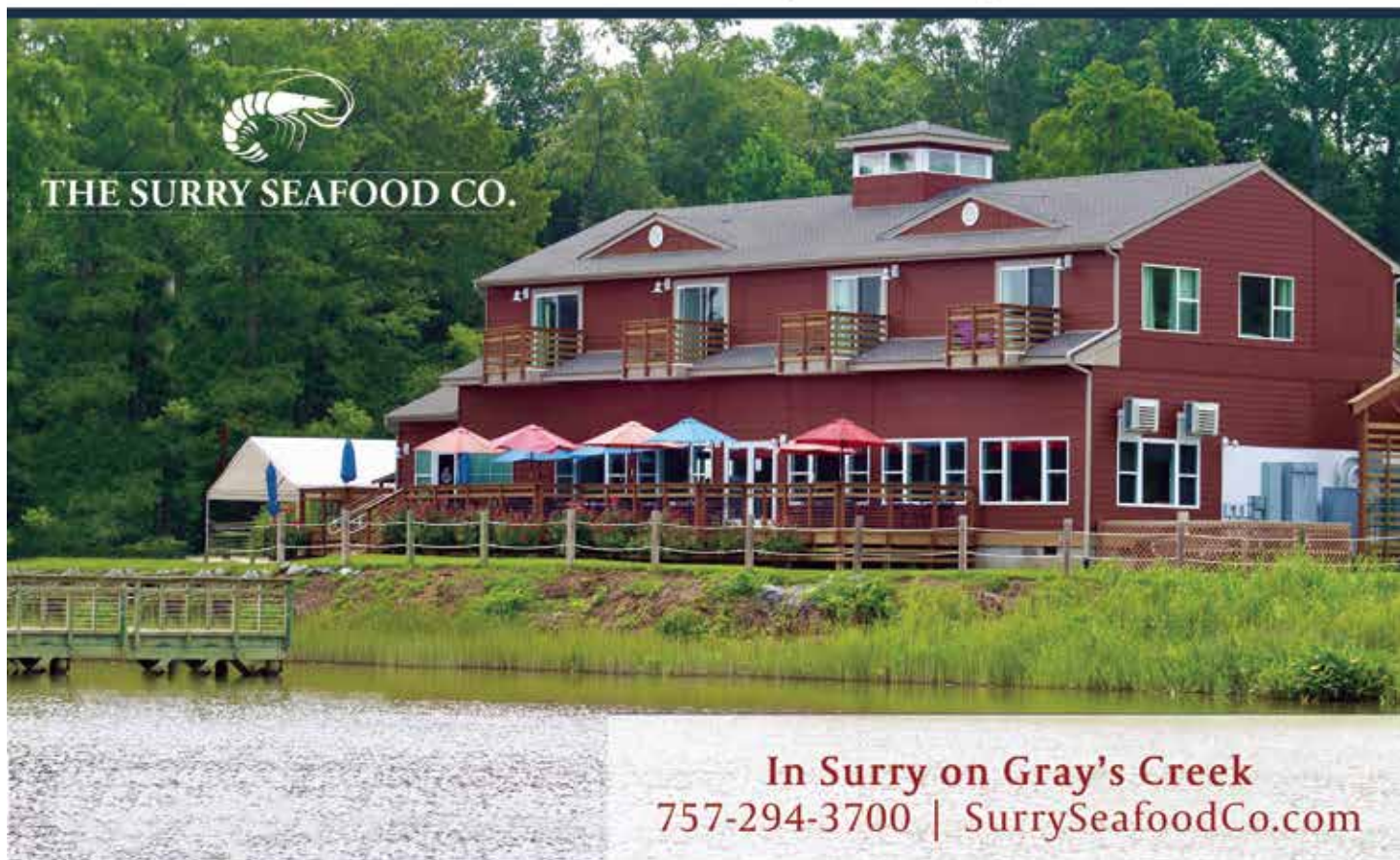
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