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IN THIS ISSUE

- | | | | |
|-----------|---|-----------|--|
| 1 | Tobacco Barns are a rare glimpse into our Southern history | 13 | The don'ts of starting your garden |
| 5 | Judgment-free zone encourages writers to delve into their craft | 17 | Alive's Photographer Showcase |
| 9 | Down Home Cooking Recipes | 20 | Historic Courthouses of Henry County |
| 12 | How Southern are you? | 25 | Camp Kids Club: Fun (shhh...while learning!) |
| | | 31 | GriefShare: the journey from mourning to joy |

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TOBACCO BARN

are a rare glimpse into our Southern history

written by: **Teresa Jones**

Growing up in the South, one might be familiar with the distinct smell of tobacco lingering in the air coming from local barns. The beautiful billows of smoke rising through the air and the familiar smell unlike any other smell is a recognizable indication that fall is near. Tobacco harvest begins in late July and early August each year. In the 1990's, tobacco was the most valued cash crop in Tennessee. Due to modern bulk curing systems, health problems, legal issues as well as government regulations that have changed, tobacco crops are declining. Therefore, tobacco barns are becoming extinct.

Since the early 1600's, tobacco has been growing in America. Ameri-

can Indians used tobacco in religious practices, medicine to cure pain and to cover wounds. John Rolfe was the first Jamestown settler to successfully grow the crop for commercial use. In it's beginning it was referred to as "brown gold". Tobacco was so important in the 1600's, it was often used as currency. Tobacco was grown in demand, by the end of that century, due to cigarettes being mass produced.

There are two different ways to cure tobacco. Fire or "flue" cured tobacco is hung in the rafters of large barns. A fire box outside the barn is fed pine logs to generate smoke. The smoke is fed into the barn via a chimney and the smoke is distributed through criss

crossed duct-work on the floor of the barn. The low smolder of smoke is kept burning continuously from 3 days to 10 weeks. The smoke gives the tobacco leaves a rich flavor. It is low in sugar and high in nicotine. Fire cured tobacco is used to make snuff, pipe and chewing tobacco. Burley tobacco on the other hand is air cured. It is hung in barns that are well ventilated and air dry for about 4 to 8 weeks. This tobacco is sweeter and is primarily used for cigarette production. About 70 percent of burley tobacco is produced in Kentucky.

Many farmers that still produce tobacco crops are doing so on the same land using the same sticks and barns of their ancestors. These tools and



barns have likely been around for hundreds of years. Now a crop that once created many jobs and millions of dollars in revenues are on the decline. Many farmers are now turning to the new crop; Hemp. Although the crop is new to farmers, it can still be dried in the same barns tobacco was once used for. Other farmers are staying true to the tobacco crop. Compared to corn or soybeans, tobacco is still one of the highest money yielding crops.

In order to have their barns freshly painted, advertisements such as "Mail Pouch Tobacco" ads were painted on barns. The farmers were paid \$1 or \$2 a year for letting companies advertise on their barns. In today's money that equals around \$20 to \$30 a year. Approximately 20,000 barns with Mail Pouch Tobacco ads were painted by Harley Warrick of Belmont County, Ohio. It took

him about 6 hours to paint the ad. He always painted the letter "E" in the word "Chew" first. Each barn he painted is signed either near the roof or on the blue border. Mail Pouch suspended barn painting in 1992 when Warrick retired. These barns are now considered historic landmarks. Barn painting was at it's peak between



1900 and 1940. Beechnut tobacco and local feed store ads were the most consistent and widely spread advertisements. The "See Rock City" barns are also among the favorites to see. In 1965, the Highway Beautification Act was introduced by President Johnson. With limits on billboard painting and other forms of outdoor advertisements, barn painting all but ceased to exist.

With the decline in tobacco production as well as barn painting, seeing an old tobacco barn is now a real treat. If you do spot one smoking do not be alarmed. If you see flames, call 911. They are still out there, just harder to find. Many websites are available to locate these barns. If you are new to the area, asking friends or neighbors where they are is also recommended. If you do spot one, take time to enjoy the view as they may not be there much longer.

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written by: **Bonnie Lill**

George Mauldin is a man on a mission.

Missions come naturally to George, a retired army officer with service leading troops in Vietnam, among many other things.

But perhaps one of his more unusual – and very successful - missions came fairly recently, when he organized the Writers’ Roundtable in Dover.

The Roundtable is a place where budding authors as well as folks who just like to write are enfolded into a judgment-free zone that allows them to flourish, whatever the end goal of their writing may be.

Ambiance = Inspiration

“Everyone is so positive here,” said Sharon Barnes, who has been coming to the Writers’ Roundtable for about six months. “They’re not nitpicky.”

Barnes, who is working on three manuscripts for publication (all are at different stages of completion), said she loves networking and variety, and the Roundtable provides that.

Her thoughts are echoed by Betty Visconi, who, with her husband Frank, has been attending since the group’s inception in mid-2018.



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“What started as a group of people who enjoy writing and reading has turned into so much more,” Betty said. “We have become friends. We have laughed and cried together and at times have bared part of our souls. I love that this is a ‘judgment-free zone.’ We came together as strangers but truly have formed a wonderful bond.”

Lest anyone think that the group spends their time slapping each other on the back and pumping their ego while inwardly rolling their eyes, members of the group listen with critical ears and make meaningful suggestions.

“We help each other in supportive, constructive ways,” remarked Betty.

Stacey Weiss (also owner of Misfit Animal Ranch in Dover) is one of the already-published authors in the group (“The Diary” will be followed this March by “The Mirror”), and she is also the youngest.

“I was nervous at first,” admitted Stacey. “I thought it would be a younger crowd, like teachers, and I found I was the youngest. But I went home on Cloud 9 after that first meeting.”

“I feel like part of an elite group – and they let me in!” she continued. “Everyone is so helpful. They critique in a nice way, and they are honest with me. I am humbled to be with so much knowledge and experience.”

Best of all, she said they are now all friends.

Beginnings = Unexpected Interest

George said he got the idea for the group at a writers’ conference he attended in Clarksville, TN two years ago in June of 2018.

“Another aspiring author told me she would prefer a smaller group, so I followed up on it,” he detailed. “My wife Kathy came up with the “Roundtable.”

The group began to meet in Dover in August of 2018 and just kept picking up an eclectic mix of members that now numbers about 10 people.

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Some of the group poses for the camera at a recent Writers' Roundtable. Pictured from left are, seated, Frank Visconi, Stacey Weiss, Betty Visconi, standing, Becky Hayslip, Bonnie Lill, Sharon Barnes and Dorothy Leugers.

"It has turned out to be very rewarding, not only for me but for others," said the understated George.

He explained they are able to bounce ideas off of others and listen to critique that ultimately helps everyone.

George admitted that while writers' conferences are very helpful, not everyone can take the time to go, and it can be costly.

"I benefited immensely from the writers' conferences in Clarksville," he said.

And he has brought back much of that information to share with the group in Dover.

Goals = Perseverance

Everyone in the group has goals with regard to their writing, and not all of them involve publication. Sometimes those goals change during the process, too.

Becky Hayslip was encouraged to come about a year ago because she enjoyed writing poetry, essays and journal entries. It did not matter that she had no thought of publishing her work; her love of expressing herself through writing was enough. She just wanted to do



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it better. She surprised herself recently when she was inspired to write something very different than her usual pieces, something that may turn into a larger work.

Everyone in the group was mesmerized by the narrative, so different from her earlier work, and all agreed that they wanted to hear more.

“It will be interesting to see how it goes,” she said. “If the Lord allows it, I am open to it.”

She said the group has become a family, which gives everyone to impetus to produce their best.

Frank Visconi has clear goals, and he has not wavered since the beginning of the Roundtable.

“Several years ago, I became inspired to write a book about my life experiences,” he said. “At first, I was going to write a biography, but then I thought, ‘Who would want to know anything about someone that is an unknown?’ I then thought of a biographical novel.

“I joined this class to receive tips on how to get published. Because we are tasked with writing a short story on a regular basis, I now have determined that all of these short stories can eventually come together as an interesting story.

“I hope one day to compile all of my writings into one easy to read book based on my life but one that the reader will be unable to know it is me, an unknown,” he concluded.

George already has one book to his credit, “Charlie Hunter: Your Sons – My Soldiers – Our War.”

He said it took him over 30 years to write, “But I was determined to finish.”

And he also has two other finished manuscripts that have not been published yet.

“I’m going to persevere,” he said, “I will continue to edit and proofread.”

Future = Unbounded Possibilities

The Writers’ Roundtable faces a future of unbounded opportunities.

“I see us continuing in the future to provide support for each other,” said George.

He hopes to periodically have lecturers on subjects like literary agency, mastering the composition of a query letter, publishing, writing, etc.

“Publishing changes every day,” said George, so it is something the group needs to keep on top of.

Betty added, “The good news is – there’s always room for more writers! We meet every three weeks at the Stewart County Public Library at 6 p.m. You will be glad you came!”

For more information on Writers’ Roundtable, including the schedule, call or text George Mauldin at 931-305-8317.

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Sirloin Tips & Mushrooms

3 tablespoons olive oil • 3 cloves garlic, minced • 1 1/2 pounds beef sirloin • 1 (16 ounce) can mushrooms, with liquid • 1 (8 ounce) can tomato sauce • salt to taste • freshly ground pepper, to taste • 3/4 cup red wine

Cut beef into cubes. In a large skillet over medium/high heat, heat the olive oil and brown beef cubes with the garlic. Add mushrooms with liquid, tomato sauce, salt, pepper and red wine. Cook for 30 minutes or until beef cubes are tender. Add a little more wine while cooking if desired.

Lemon Icebox Pie

1 (9 inch) prepared graham cracker crust • 2 (8 ounce) packages cream cheese, softened • 1 (14 ounce) can sweetened condensed milk • 2 lemons, juiced • 1 teaspoon lemon zest

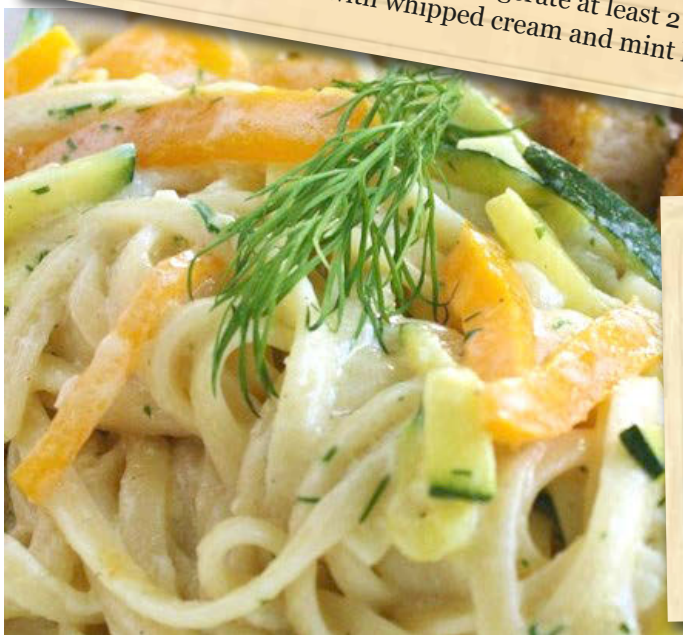
In a medium mixing bowl, beat cream cheese until fluffy. Add condensed milk, lemon juice, and lemon rind. Mix until smooth. Pour mixture into crust. Refrigerate at least 2 hours before serving. Garnish with whipped cream and mint leaves if desired.



Springtime Spaghetti

8 ounces spaghetti • 2 tablespoons butter • 1 large zucchini, julienned • 3 large carrots, julienned • 2 teaspoons minced garlic • 3/4 cup heavy cream • 3/4 cup grated Parmesan cheese • 1 tablespoon chopped fresh dill

Bring a large pot of lightly salted water to a boil, cook spaghetti for 8 to 10 minutes, until al dente, and drain. Melt the butter in a skillet over medium heat, and saute the zucchini, carrots, and garlic until tender. Stir in the heavy cream, Parmesan cheese, and dill. Cook and stir until thickened. Mix with the cooked spaghetti to serve.





Old-Fashioned Strawberry Pretzel Salad

3/4 cup butter, softened • 3 tablespoons brown sugar • 2 1/2 cups crushed pretzels • 1 (6 ounce) package strawberry flavored Jell-O® • 2 cups boiling water • 3 cups strawberries, chilled • 1 (8 ounce) package cream cheese • 1 cup white sugar • 1 (8 ounce) container frozen whipped topping, thawed

Preheat oven to 350 degrees F. Cream butter or margarine with the brown sugar. Mix in the pretzels and pat mixture into the bottom of one 9x13 inch baking pan. Bake at 350 degrees F (175 degrees C) for 10 to 12 minutes. Set aside to cool. In a medium bowl, dissolve the gelatin in the boiling water and stir in the strawberries. Chill until partially thickened. In a small bowl beat the cream cheese and white sugar together until smooth. Fold in the whipped cream. Spread mixture over the top of the cooled crust, making sure to seal the edges. Chill then pour the gelatin mixture over the cream cheese layer. Chill until firm.



Lemon Herb Chicken

2 skinless, boneless chicken breast halves • 1 lemon • salt and pepper to taste • 1 tablespoon olive oil • 1 pinch dried oregano • 2 sprigs fresh parsley, for garnish

Cut lemon in half, and squeeze juice from 1/2 lemon on chicken. Season with salt to taste. Let sit while you heat oil in a small skillet over medium low heat. When oil is hot, put chicken in skillet. As you saute chicken, add juice from other 1/2 lemon, pepper to taste, and oregano. Saute for 5 to 10 minutes each side, or until juices run clear. Serve with parsley for garnish.



Almond Mandarin Salad

1/2 pound bacon • 2 tablespoons white wine vinegar • 3 tablespoons honey • 1/2 teaspoon dry hot mustard • 1/2 teaspoon celery salt • 1/2 teaspoon ground paprika • 1/4 cup olive oil • 1 head red leaf lettuce, torn into bite-size pieces • 1 (15 ounce) can mandarin oranges, drained • 1 bunch green onion, diced • 3/4 cup slivered almonds

In a medium skillet over medium-high heat, cook bacon until evenly brown. Drain, cool, and crumble. To make the dressing, thoroughly blend the vinegar, honey, dry mustard, celery salt, paprika, and olive oil. Place lettuce, oranges, green onion, bacon, and almonds in a serving bowl. Toss with dressing and serve.

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What's your **score**?

1-5

Might be a
Yankee

6-10

How's your
mom 'n em?

11-15

Born
& Breaded

16+

Good
Ol' Boy

THE'Don'ts' OF starting your garden

written by: Alsey Gwinn Wheatley • photographs courtesy of: Alsey Gwinn Wheatley

As the first days of spring approach, it is tempting to break out the trowles and sift through seed packets. Beginning and experienced gardeners alike feel the urge to pull on their rubber boots and dig their hands

into freshly tilled earth. Before you start planting this year's garden, take a moment to ensure you're not falling victim to these seed starting mistakes.

The biggest mistake gardeners make is one of the simplest; they start their seeds too early. The last frost date in our area is roughly April 14th, but in practice many home gardeners may wish to wait till early May to ensure their plants aren't washed out by the relentless April rains. This means that even in the best indoor conditions it simply doesn't make sense to start most plants before mid-March. Any earlier, and plants that will eventually be put in the garden will create a messy jungle in the house.

In addition, a major mistake well meaning gardeners make is starting their seeds indoors. There is no point in starting seeds indoors if there is not enough space or light for them to do well. If plants are too crowded or in lack-luster light conditions then the seedlings will grow leggy and die off. It may sound counter-productive, but without the proper equipment for indoor gardening it's better to wait until the weather warms and direct sow seeds; harvest may theoretically be delayed for a few weeks,

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but there will still be plenty to gather off of almost all kinds of plants.

Even with the space available for indoor seed starting, there may not be enough light for them to grow. Seedlings need four to six hours of direct sun to grow healthily. Even in the brightest window they may die off; sunlight filtered through a window is not the same as direct sunlight. Herbs, vegetables, and many flowers will not be able to properly photosynthesize in only the light from a window, even if it's bright enough for house plants. For indoor seed starting it is wise to invest in a grow light. The ideal grow light will provide roughly five thousand lumens of energy and will be a blue spectrum light that sits roughly five to six inches above the plants.

A very easy mistake to make is starting seeds in too small of a container. It's tempting to fill a tray of seventy five cells, but at most a plant will hold out for roughly four weeks before suffering damage. For a gardener that doesn't know the signs of a stressed rootbound plant or isn't familiar with the rate of growth expected, it is much easier to start in an oversized container. Three inch square pots are ideal, as they will still fit neatly under a grow light while housing a seedling for up to two months before it would need to be up-potted or set out into the garden.



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The last big mistake gardeners make is worrying about growing zones. Growing zones have nothing to do with which seeds should be started or when they should be started at all. They solely refer to areas where a plant can last through the coldest days of winter. In other words, growing zones are only applicable to perennial plants. They have no bearing on the annual vegetables, herbs, or flowers that gardeners plant every year. All that matters for those plants are the days to maturity, which dictate how soon before the first frost date they should be started in order to be fully grown and harvested.

These five mistakes are easy to make, but also easy to prevent with the right knowledge of how to get started. Explaining these major pitfalls of seed starting will hopefully keep gardeners from tripping into them. Watching seedlings come up and caring for them is one of the best parts of spring gardening. Having them survive to thrive in the yard is another, and with these tips to give them a good start it should be easier than ever to get them there.



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LEFT TOP: Killdeer eggs in Waverly

LEFT BOTTOM: Huntingdon, TN courthouse

MIDDLE: Rose in Summer of 2019

RIGHT TOP: Tree - taken at Nathan

RIGHT BOTTOM: Ice on a window in



Aug

ographer Showcase

, TN with female killdeer on the nest
rthouse, July 2018, morning

Bedford State Park
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Historic Courthouses of Henry County

written by: **Larry Ray**

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States in 1818. This region was called the “Jackson Purchase” in honor of President Andrew Jackson, who negotiated the agreement.

1823 Courthouse

The first courthouse was built in 1823 on the Will Clement farm in the Clifty community of Henry

County, south of Paris. The structure was built with poplar logs in a dogtrot configuration with a breezeway between the two rooms. The Court of Pleas and Quarter Sessions was held in the north room while a member of the chamber of commerce sold pies and liquor in the south room.

1825 Courthouse

In 1825, some two years after Paris was established as the county seat and the planned city had been laid off with streets and blocks, a small two-story brick courthouse was the first courthouse built in the current location in the center



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of downtown. John Burke and Francis McConnell built this structure at a cost of \$143. The legendary Davy Crockett made campaign speeches from the courthouse steps. This building stood until 1850.

1852 Courthouse

The third and possibly most historic courthouse was designed by John Ora and built by Calvin Sweeney at a cost of \$42,000 and completed in 1852. Calvin Sweeney made the bricks at his factory that was located where Barton Field is now.

It was considered an outstanding building for its time. Made of red brick, it had two stories and included a central hall and dome. It was rectangular, the two longer facades facing north and south, and had a cross-gabled roof. A public well was located on the west side of the courthouse lawn.

This courthouse witnessed the organizations on its lawn of the Fifth Tennessee Infantry and the Forty-Sixth Tennessee Infantry of the Confederate States Army.

The Battle of Paris ensued west of the city on March 11, 1862 and is said to have ended with Federals retreating eastward by the courthouse with Confederates in pursuit.



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Company F, Fifth Iowa Calvary soon established the courthouse and the public square as their headquarters and began an uneasy military occupation of Paris. The city remained under martial law during much of the Civil War and little or no

court business transpired in the courthouse. Union soldiers were not kind to the courthouse. They occupied the building, led their horses up the stairs to the second floor, and wrote their names in court ledger books.

The citizens of Paris were constantly in fear throughout the war. Union and Confederate troops marched into the city numerous times and on occasion set up encampments nearby or in the courthouse.

1896 Courthouse

In 1895, due to resulting age and the damage during the Civil War,



the county court voted to tear the building down and replace it. The resulting replacement is the beautiful courthouse that stands today.

The present Courthouse is the centerpiece of one of the most beautiful and historic downtowns in Tennessee. It is one of the oldest courthouses in Tennessee and the oldest one in West Tennessee that is still in use. The cornerstone was laid in 1896 and the courthouse was first occupied on October 2 of that year. Upon completion, the building contained three courtrooms, twelve offices, five fire-proof vaults, electric light-

ing, low-pressure steam heating and a complete plumbing and draining system. The clock tower with four dials is 113 feet tall. Renovations include the addition of an elevator, air conditioning and several other modernizations. Much of

the original interior woodwork survives. It was designed by Ruben Harrison Hunt of Chattanooga, who also designed the Grove Tower,

Portraits hanging in the central hallway depict the three Tennessee governors who made their home in Paris: Isham Green Harris, James Davis Porter and Thomas Clarke Rye. There is also a portrait of Patrick Henry, the county's namesake,

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CAMP KIDS CLUB: Fun (shhh...while learning!)

written by: **Bonnie Lill**

"Howdy, Pardner!"

As you can see in Westerns, "pardners" are like partners on steroids; they are linked not merely as business partners, but by companionship and a shared sense of purpose.

And Dover kids and their teachers may just have found their closest "pardner" yet in Debby Moore, founder of the Camp Kids Club. Camp Kids Club is an after-school

and summer enrichment program built on the premise that kids have a whole heck of a lot more potential than grownups give them credit for, and given half a chance, they can understand and learn in ways that even modern experts think impossible. And the kids will enjoy it, too.

THE CAMPSITE

The centerpiece of Kids Camp Club is the mind-boggling campsite, which stretches across one end of the largest room in the former Jehovah Witness building on Buckner Road in Dover, across Donelson Parkway and a little west of Dover Elementary School.

It contains a cabin, fishing dock, campfire, lots of trees, a picnic table, tent, and lots of critters, among other things. Debby crafted it all. Each element of the campsite means something, such as the atTENTive listening tent and the comprehension cabin.

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Students will be using writing, painting and Reader's Theater as they navigate the camp. It's all a part of theme-based learning, and it has been shown to work.

The campsite is not a playground but a place of privilege; students understand that what they get to do is up to them. When they learn to manage themselves and their supplies, they get more privileges. Various ways, such as tickets that are earned, are cashed in for time in the campsite.

THE CAMP KIDS CLUB CHARACTERS

Integral to the Club are the characters that have developed

over time. Each one is based on a need that Debby found, and they are modeled on real people. Debby drew each one, and each one is there for a purpose. For example, Buddy Bear (central to the campsite) represents friendship, and Daring Dana (a pilot in real life and in character) models perspective. Canoe Kathy represents diversity and making good choices, and Clipboard Cole models taking notes. This listing just scratches the surface of the characters.

SO WHERE'S THE FUN?

The fun is set to begin, tentatively, in the spring for an interim program after parent-teacher conferences. Two sessions are planned, a Monday and Wednesday session and

a Tuesday and Thursday session, from 3-5:30 p.m.

Summer sessions are also planned, and then the school-year program will commence.

There will be a nominal charge, but Debby wants it to be affordable.

"We don't want to make any money on this – we just want to keep the lights and water going and pay for materials," she said.

Along with more academically-oriented activities, students will also learn skills like managing disappointment, negotiation, problem-solving, innovation, discernment, etc.

It is a shift from literal to figurative thinking and has been shown

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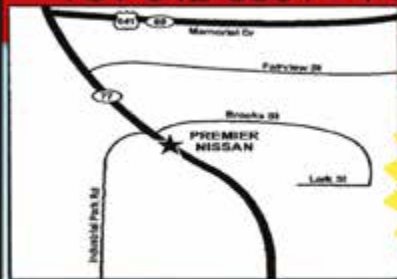
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to increase emotional intelligence as well. If this sounds dry and academic, it's not.

"If you can activate and captivate a child's soul and spirit that then becomes the glue in which everything meaningful sticks and stays," she wrote in her book.

THE BEGINNINGS

Debby and her husband Dana, who is originally from this area, came back here to live about three or four years ago, seeking a better quality of life. Her route to Camp Kids Club was circuitous, however, and it began far earlier than their return to Dover.

Debby had a less than stellar learning experience in the first and second grades due to an attention deficit issue that simply was not accommodated back then.

She went into elementary education in college because she loved children, and she felt that perhaps she could use her creativity to work with the many learning styles exhibited by a class full of primary students. She did not want them to have the kind of negative experience she had.

Debby taught first grade for three years and then went back to painting professionally for over 20 years to have more time to devote to her family. She eventually went back to teaching first grade, and she spent 14 years in Williamson County schools.

The Camp Kids developed as part of her classroom lessons, and not as something that happened after school. She said they made use of every second in the classroom and simply incorporated it.

Debby tapped into the innate abilities of her students, allowing them to have a say in what they are learning as well as setting their goals. The students would brainstorm about what they wanted to learn, they'd set it down in writing, and conference at the middle of the year to evaluate them-



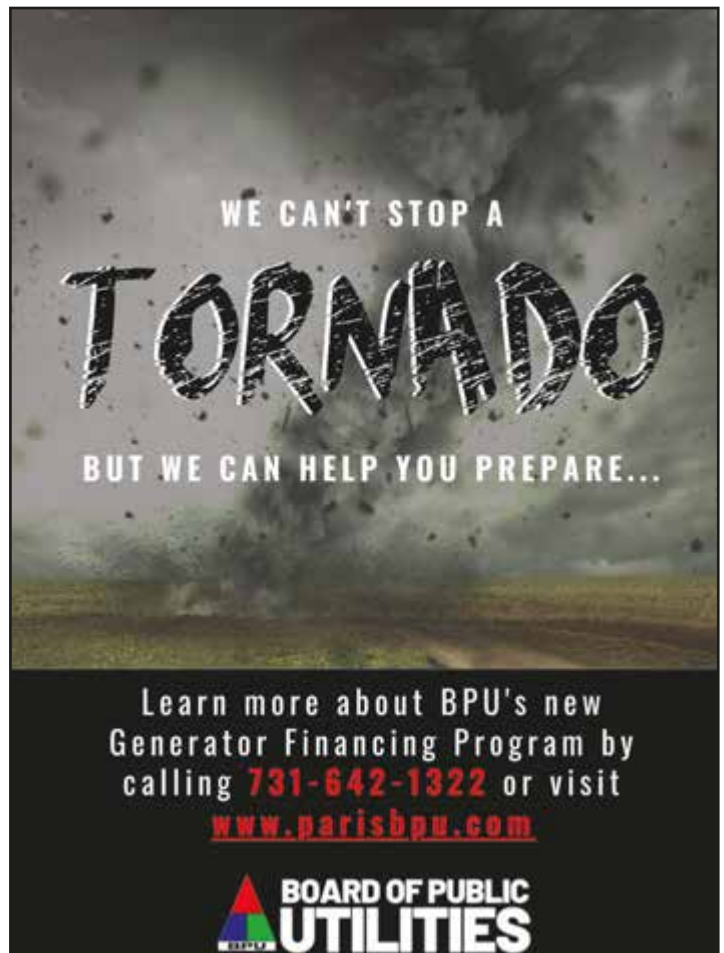
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selves. Their progress was charted so they could see and understand where things were going. Eventually, they would produce a product they could be proud of and could display. And it worked.

The granddaughter of Dr. Julia Link Roberts, Executive Director of The Center for Gifted Studies at Western Kentucky University was in her class, and Dr. Julia thoroughly endorses the system.

Fast forward to Dover, and Debby is looking forward to the publica-

tion of her book, *Elevating Expectations*, a hands-on manual for Camp Kids, that teachers can adapt for use in their own classrooms.

The forward was written by none other than Dr. Julia.

THE FUTURE

She also looks forward to once again putting her ideas into action at the Camp Kids Club. She and Dana purchased the building for just that purpose,

and it is almost ready for students. And Debby is looking forward to partnering with Stewart County teachers.

"I am not here to replace them," said Debby. "I am just a partner, and I look forward to working with them."

She said that she wants to give students a different educational experience in a fun setting after school and in the summer.

The program is geared toward first-graders, and it may be extended based on interest and enrollment.

For more information on Camp Kids Club or her book, you can call Debby at 615-428-9762.



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GRIEF SHARE

the journey from mourning to joy

written by: **Bonnie Lill** • photographs courtesy of: **Bonnie Lill**

The pain in the room was palpable as author Rhonda Madge detailed her tragic story of loss, from the murder of her father to two failed marriages, with other losses in between. But the joy was even more in evidence as she told the 16 ladies assembled in Dover about working through her losses and arriving at a place of peace.

About half of those at Madge's presentation early this year, sponsored by Stewart County's GriefShare, were experiencing that same type of journey from mourning to joy, although admittedly, they are working to make the trip much shorter than Madge's 30-year painful sojourn. Thanks to GriefShare, they say they are succeeding.

WHAT IS GRIEF SHARE?

GriefShare is a 13-week program of videos and workbook and, most importantly, discussion. But to the participants, it is much more. It's a lifeline bridging the gap from one's former life to the "new normal" that inevitably follows the loss of a loved one. This session lasts from Feb. 23 – May 24

and meets at 4 p.m. on Sundays (except Easter) at the Nazarene Church on West Donelson Parkway (US 79) in Dover. Sessions are held as need arises. While it is helpful to attend all 13 meetings, it is okay to start late or miss some.

GriefShare, although used nationwide, is so quintessentially Southern that those who have participated in Stewart County and those who continue to participate form close bonds. While sharing one's pain can be hard, in the South there is always a listening ear and a compassionate heart, and it is those elements that make the program so successful. Everything said in GriefShare is confidential, and everything used in this article that involves a participant is used with permission. Men and women are equally welcome, and it is not limited to those who have lost a spouse; it can be any kind of loss.

WHAT HAPPENS AT A MEETING?

Each meeting begins with a short video presentation and then moves to the workbook and discussion. At the meetings, which last from 1-2 hours, participants are free to open up about what they are feeling and experiencing, and there is no judgment.

"I had suddenly lost the love of my life, and after 43 years, I was lost," said one participant. "I knew I needed help. My (grown) children were so helpful and supportive – but they were dealing with a loss, too, and their grief was different than mine. Friends steered me toward GriefShare."

She went on to say that she did not know what to expect and at first was uncomfortable about crying in front of others, so she barely said a word in the first two meetings she attended. But it did not

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take long to relax and realize she did not always have to be the one who was talking.

"I had always been a rather effervescent, happy person, and I just didn't know how to 'be' any more. The pain of loss was so great," she said. "At GriefShare, it was okay just to listen and learn what we all had in common – and sometimes what we didn't."

Eventually she found she could cry in front of the group without being embarrassed – and she found that there was actually more laughter than tears in those meetings.

SIDE BENEFITS OF PARTICIPATION

While the program is Christian-faith based, it is not limited to those with Christian leanings. Any-

one suffering from a loss can find some benefit, especially since almost 50 grief recovery experts who themselves have experienced loss are featured in the videos.

One Stewart County participant was new to the area, and three months after moving here, she lost her husband of 51 years. She called Anglin Funeral Home to see if there was any grief counseling available locally, and they directed her to Phyllis Mann, who is currently the facilitator of GriefShare. That newcomer participated in GriefShare and made a boatload of new friends in the process. She no longer feels like a fish out of water in her new home. Phyllis, who had lost her husband, had attended GriefShare, and when the former facilitator relocated almost three years ago, she was





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asked to step into that role. At first she resisted because she felt she couldn't do a good enough job, but when she looked around and saw how many people needed the help she had received through the program, she accepted the task.



Funeral Home memorial service and invited folks to attend.

She realizes that if she does her "job" right, she is not in this alone,

and she is fond of telling a story that affirms the efficacy of her mission.

The Anglin family sponsors GriefShare, and they provide the videos and workbooks at no charge to participants. The Dover Nazarene Church provides the meeting facility. And Phyllis provides the heart that keeps the program going.

Despite a hectic business and family schedule, Phyllis always finds the time to meet, call folks she thinks might benefit from coming, coordinate birthday celebrations (an unofficial job that grew out of the camaraderie), arrange a guest speaker, and anything else that may come up. This year, she spoke about GriefShare at the annual Anglin

"Several of us had gone to a restaurant after GriefShare for a bite of supper, and after awhile I said I really needed to get home," she recounted. "As we were going to our cars, I saw two of the ladies who were attending for a second time talking to a new participant. There were hugs and tears and encouragement. I couldn't do anything but just watch them and grin. Finally, one of them looked at me and said, 'Didn't you have to get home?' I just couldn't leave. It blessed me so to see them passing it on."

GRIEFSHARE FRIENDS

There is no pressure on any of the participants to "hang out" with any of the other participants outside of the sessions, but it just keeps happening. "I don't know what I would have done without my GriefShare friends," said one participant who recently had surgery and then complications that required further hospitalizations. "They helped get me to the hospital and they came and visited me."

And they also gave her what-for when she was hitting rock bottom emotionally. She laughs heartily every time she tells this story. "I was in the hospital the second time, feeling really down, and a couple of the gals came in to see me," she said. "I said I just wished I was with my (late) husband, and one of the girls forcefully said, 'He wouldn't want you like this! Your hair is a mess, you haven't showered, and you stink!'"

After a few seconds of stunned silence, the friends all erupted in laughter, which everyone knows is the best medicine.



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“After they left, one of the nurses said, ‘Was that your friend?’ She thought I would be offended. But I wasn’t – my friend was right! I just needed to quit having a pity party and focus on getting well.”

And she did. Not only that, but she has been contacting folks she knows who have suffered a loss, and she has been inviting them to the new session of GriefShare. A number of “alumni” are attending as well.

“I know how much it helped me to have people who had already gone through the program there, and I want to pass that on,” said one participant who is attending for the third time.

Another three-timer said she filled out the workbook in a different color of ink each time so she could look back and see the progress she had made.

A BETTER WAY FORWARD

There was no GriefShare program when author Rhonda Madge suffered her losses; at that time, many years ago, people were told to just forget about their grief and not think about it. In her powerful book “Hindsight: Seeing Clearly Through the Veil of Deception,” she details how not dealing with grief adversely affected her life and relationships for many years – but it is a story of hope as well. Things can get better. With the help of God, therapy and unconditional love, her life has come full circle.

People do rebound from grief, and participation in GriefShare can help make the inevitable process go a little faster and perhaps a little easier. It may provide some new friends, and it definitely gives someone who has suffered a loss a group of folks who understand and may have some helpful insights.

One participant writes poetry, and GriefShare can perhaps best be summarized by a stanza of her poem “Solace:”

**"NONE OF US GRIEVE OUR LOSS THE SAME
AND WE LEARN IT IS OKAY AT OUR OWN SPEED.
THE MOST IMPORTANT FOR US TO REMEMBER
EACH PERSON IS READY TO HELP THOSE IN NEED."**

For more information on GriefShare, call Anglin Funeral Home at 931-232-5454.

Rhonda Madge’s book “Hindsight” may be purchased online at Amazon and Barnes and Noble.

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