

HOLIDAY 2022

STANLY

the magazine

TREE T I M E

HOSPICE OF STANLY COUNTY
TO HOST TWO POPULAR EVENTS

HOLIDAY HOMES

Families find joy
in decorating

POWER OF PETALS

Longtime florist
looks back on
70-plus year career

CHRISTMAS ROOM

provides Christmas
goodies on a budget

From Our Home To Yours



Front row left to right: Ginger Harris, Lillie Cato, Cecila Smith, Aaliyah Grady, Ava Ratliff, Diana Dessellier
Second row: Amber Duncan, Frances Spivey, Mohammed Radwan, Gina Cooper
Back row: Lashica Johnson, Lowell Brown, Ernie Vanhoy, Laura Curcio

Wishing You A Very Merry Christmas! ★



Come Join Our Family!

TAYLOR HOUSE

Quality, Compassionate Care Since 1951

319 Palmer Street, Albemarle, NC
(704) 982-4217 • www.brh.org/taylor-house



JM JOE MAUS

AUTOMOTIVE GROUP

DODGE

CHRYSLER



Jeep



Joe Maus Foundation



Financing on participating makes & models available.
Annual Bonus & Dealer Incentive.
www.JoeMausFoundation.com

 **SHOP ALL OUR BRANDS AT**
JOEMAUSAUTO.COM



MAZDA
6735 E. INDEPENDENCE BLVD
CHARLOTTE, NC 28212

FORD
738 NC-24
ALBEMARLE, NC 28001

CDJR
200 HIGHWAY 740 BYPASS EAST,
ALBEMARLE, NC 28001

CONTENTS



8 *Home for the holidays*



14 *Longtime florist has served community, Washington, D.C.*



12 *Mrs. Claus brings joy to many*

18 *Christmas Room always a popular place*

ALSO: *Holiday recipes, 22*

About STANLY the magazine

STANLY the magazine is a product of The Stanly News & Press, the community newspaper for Stanly County, North Carolina. Call 704-982-2121 for subscription information.

ON THE WEB: thesnaponline.com

GENERAL MANAGER/ EDITOR

B.J. Drye
bj.drye@stanlynewspress.com

EDITORIAL

Charles Curcio
charles.curcio@stanlynewspress.com
Chris Miller
chris.miller@stanlynewspress.com

LAYOUT/DESIGN

Andy Mooney
andy.mooney@stanlynewspress.com

ADVERTISING

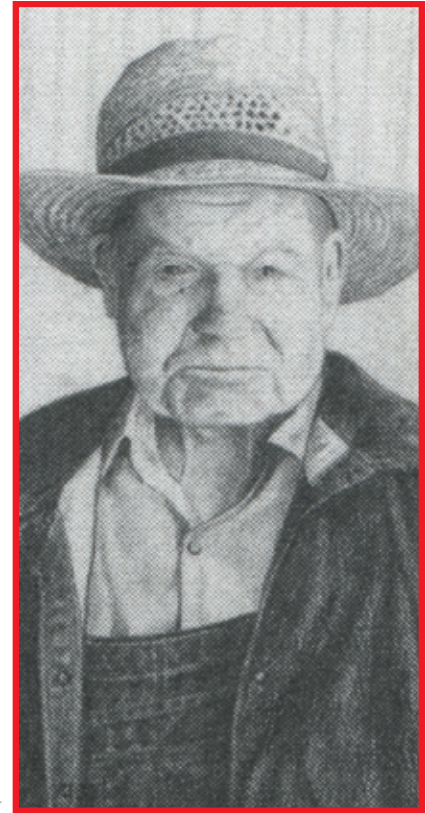
Tom Lowe
tom.lowe@stanlynewspress.com
Susan Wolf
susan.wolf@stanlynewspress.com

CIRCULATION

Debbie Holt
debbie.holt@stanlynewspress.com

CONTRIBUTORS

Jo Grey



As we celebrate our 50th anniversary, this has been a year of reflection for our family. We are full of thankfulness for the customers, vendors and relationships that have been built over the last fifty years.

From our family to yours,

We wish you a happy and healthy Holiday Season!

The Lowder Family

435 Willow Street, Albemarle, NC 28001

www.allowderinc.com

704.982.4456

About the Cover

Hospice of Stanly County will once again host its Angel Tree Lighting ceremony and Festival of Trees this December.

The Angel Tree Lighting ceremony, which will be 4-6 p.m. Dec. 5 at Stanly Commons in Albemarle, honors the memory of friends and loved ones. Hospice volunteers hand-craft a uniquely designed angel to adorn the trees each year.

The Angel Tree Lighting ceremony is a way to share in the Hospice's

mission of caring for patients with an advanced illness while delivering compassionate support.

Purchasing an angel helps provide funds to support Hospice's programs and services.

A special event for the Festival of Trees will be 5-7 p.m. Dec. 8 at Stanly Commons.

Individuals can visit <https://hospiceofstanly.org/angels/> to complete an online form to purchase an angel. Forms may also be printed out and mailed with a check to Hospice of Stanly, 960 N. First St., Albemarle, NC 28001. Angels are available for a \$10 donation.

The trees will be up Dec. 1-Dec. 31 in the Commons.

DEESE
ELECTRIC

HEATING & COOLING

Serving Stanly County & Surrounding Areas Since 1966

ELECTRICAL | RESIDENTIAL | COMMERCIAL

Call Us for All of Your Heating, Cooling & Electrical Needs!

704-982-4276

1928 US-52, Albemarle, NC 28001



Thank you
for voting us Best Electrical
Contractor in Stanly County!



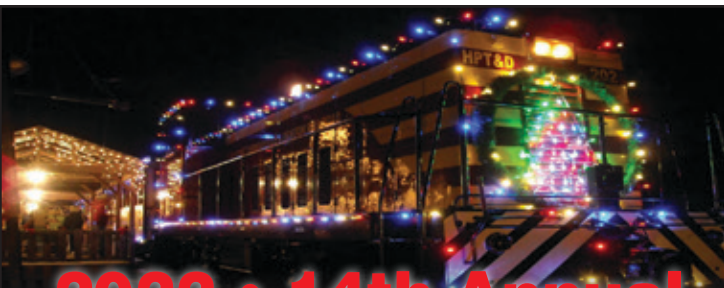


BUILDING A
brighter future

To learn more visit, union-power.com



A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative



2022 • 14th Annual
Country
Christmas
Train

at Denton Farmpark, Denton, NC

November 25-27

December 2-4

December 8-11

December 16-23

December 26-27

Train Rides

See The Lights!

Come See Santa!

Food Available

Check Our Website or

Call for Details

336-859-2755

4259 Handy Rd., Denton NC

www.dentonfarmpark.com

Festival of Trees
@the Stanly Commons



See more
than 50
beautifully
decorated
trees
throughout
December

Visit hospiceofstanly.org or call
704.983.4216





The King family's home is decked out for Christmas.

Decking the halls

Families decorate homes with lots of Christmas cheer

STORY BY CHRIS MILLER | SUBMITTED PHOTOS

Every year, in early October, Austin and Megan King begin decorating for the holiday season. But they are not getting out ghosts and goblins for Halloween; the Kings are preparing for Christmas.

And unlike many people, who often wait until after Thanksgiving and decorate only certain portions of their home, the Kings, whose house on North 3rd Street in Albemarle has been featured on the Holiday Tour of Homes, go all-out.

“Everything’s intentional,” said Austin. “So the wrapping paper will match what’s on the trees. There’s a method to the madness.”

Megan added that she does not buy wrapping paper that will not complement the decor.

There are typically at least two full-sized Christmas trees in the house and most of the family’s pictures and other items on the walls get temporarily replaced with all kinds of Christmas decor. The couple enjoy looking for vintage

items, especially antiques.

Over the years, the couple, who married in 2015, have accumulated lots of holiday decorations, especially on the day after Christmas, when Megan enjoys shopping at Target.

“If we see something, we want to get it and then we want to use it and showcase it,” Megan said.

One of the signature pieces is a large Santa Claus painting created by Eli Williams that was



The Smiths' bedroom and fireplace with Christmas decor.

commissioned by Atrium Health.

Both Megan and Austin come from families that liked to decorate for the holidays, but they took it to another level once they came together. Utilizing weekends to set up both the interior and exterior of the home, the Kings typically have their house fully decorated for the Christmas season by the beginning of November. They like to watch the classic “National Lampoon’s Christmas Vacation” while getting everything set up.

Each of the main rooms are usually color-coordinated (the formal living area, featuring vintage pink tweed furniture, is typically set with silver and gold decor) while the exterior includes multi-colored lights and wreaths along the the windows and old Albemarle street bells.

While their teenage son Khi has largely outgrown wanting to help his parents — Megan jokes that he thinks the family is “ridiculous” — their daughter Ellison, who is 3, still really appreciates the magic of the holiday season.

“She just gets so excited,” Megan said. “She just has so much joy that it’s worth the work that we have to put into it.”



Megan and Austin Smith with their daughter Ellison, and son Khi.



The Smiths' breakfast table, above, and the Kings' den, right, are ready for the holidays.

Having always had an eye for design, the family had an interior design business a few years ago, helping people decorate their homes, especially during the holidays. Between juggling two kids and their own jobs, they could not sustain it though they still find time to decorate a house in the community each year for Christmas.

Both have a passion for interior design and have certain skills that complement the other. Austin, for example, can often visualize what a room will look like before the decorations begin.

"We work tougher well, which makes the process a little easier," Megan said. "It's a team effort."

And despite the notion that interior design is often more associated with women, Austin is just as passionate about getting his home decorated.

"He cares just as much about what things look like as I do," Megan said.

Some of the Kings holiday traditions include hosting Christmas breakfast or lunch with both of their families along with driving around looking at lights and getting Chinese food at night.

Another Albemarle resident who enjoys the holiday is Rose Smith, who regularly bedazzles her home with an assortment of Christmas trees and other items, including a life-size sleigh and numerous Santa figurines (she estimates she has around 25). The outside of her home, which is



The Smiths' gazebo sports a large wreath with lights.

more minimal, tends to include wreaths on the windows, yellow lights and trees beside the door.

In a tradition that began in 2015, Smith invites her friends and family to attend a lavish Christmas open house every other year in early December. With each iteration seemingly getting more festive than the last, Smith finds ways to add more and more decorations. Smith had 17 trees inside her home for last year's event — her most ever.

"I love Christmas and I love decorating," she

said.

Smith had 189 people attend her party in 2019, the most ever, though the number declined to 132 last year.

After spending so much time over the years decorating her home, her sister Debbie suggested she open her home up to the public.

"She said, 'Why don't you do an open house? There's people that would love to see this,'" Rose recalled her sister told her.

During off-years, Smith still enjoys decorating, but, like the Kings, she also enjoys helping others to spruce up their homes.

"I have a lot of people that reach out and ask if I will come and help them, and so my off-year, I'm at other people's homes helping them, which usually is friends and family," including her three daughters, Smith said.

Her passion for Christmas dates back to her childhood years, when she remembers being enamored with silver tinsel trees her family regularly put up. Her father would mount a color wheel on the wall, behind the tree, which appeared to show the tree turning colors.

"As a child I was just fascinated that that tree would turn a different color," Smith said. "The silver tree would turn whatever color it would come to — it would be blue and then it would be green."

Smith also liked when her mother spent hours

meticulously attaching icicles to the trees, which made them look frozen. It was this dedication and thoroughness to the craft of decorating that Smith said she inherited from her parents.

Smith did not go all-out when her children were younger. But now that they are married with kids of their own and she recently retired from a 40-year career as a pharmacist technician, she has ample time to purchase new decorations and ornaments and methodically place them all around her home. She likes to be the only one decorating, because she often changes things a lot.

During the years when she hosts her Christmas party (the next one will be in 2023), every room is decorated with a specific theme in mind. Her trees, which are about seven and a half feet tall, are each different: Last year, for example, she had a snowman tree, a gingerbread man tree and a red, black and white tree, among others.

At her parties, Smith lets people vote for their favorite Christmas tree, which she always enjoys.

“That to me is the most fun of all of it,” she said, adding after people leave, many will reach out, wanting to know which tree received the most votes. “Everybody is very inquisitive about



what tree wins.”

Whenever her trees are lit up and she is at a vantage point where she can sit and enjoy them, the magic sets in, and she said it feels like she has

just entered a department store, such as Macy’s, during the holidays.

“It makes you feel like a child again, and you just hope you can inspire other people.” **S**



THE RESIDENCES AT THE ALBEMARLE HOTEL

The Residences at the Albemarle Hotel features 29 beautifully designed one, two, and three bedroom apartments.

All units equipped with range, refrigerator, microwave, dishwasher, and stackable washer/dryer.

Granite countertops with subway tile backsplash.
Over and under counter lighting in kitchen.

All utilities included: electricity, water & sewer plus basic internet.

Building and apartment accessibility are by keyless locks.

A secured package room for you to pick up your deliveries.

On-site fitness room and onsite bicycle storage included.

Storage lockers available for rent.

Christine’s Wood Fire Restaurant from Scratch Made Hospitality Group will be occupying the lobby area and original dining room.

Contact Stanly4Rent
for more information or application
info@stanly4rent.com
704-983-2149





Mrs. Claus, aka Diane Jordan, and her daughter, Ingrid Wyrick. The wooden book Jordan is holding is a vintage piece that belonged to her grandmother.

Mrs. Claus comes alive

Diane Jordan relishes role as iconic character

STORY BY JO GREY | PHOTO BY CHRIS MILLER

“Christmas comes sooner every year!”

It is a perennial sentiment echoing through the aisles of big box stores from late September on.

By now, Christmas cards made from family beach trip pictures are waiting to be mailed, and children’s wish lists are waiting to be filled. Brown cardboard boxes of in-demand toys, games and gadgets arrive daily on doorsteps all over Stanly County.

One Albemarle resident recently opened a Christmas box before Christmas.

She’s a member of an exclusive club of mostly anonymous women and men who will soon begin popping up at malls, parades, children’s hospitals and tree-lightings wearing head-to-toe garb in various shades of red.

Known around town as Diane Jordan — Nana to her grandkids — she’ll soon don her newly purchased velvet dress complete with white fur trim, and voila! She’ll be somebody else — the beloved Mrs. Claus.

Jordan’s “Mrs. Claus” first appeared in 2013 at The Marketplace Vintage Store because owner Christy Wood called on Jordan to fill the role at

a seasonal event for her customers. As they say, the rest is history.

“She is the most loving and sweet spirited lady I have ever met,” said Wood. “She was a perfect Mrs. Claus for us for many, many years and with more to come.”

For 14 or so years, Jordan and her daughter, Ingrid Wyrick, have managed their vintage booth, Southern Style Clutter, at The Marketplace, and now have a booth at White Owl Antique Mall in Mount Pleasant.

The mother-daughter duo spends a lot of time stocking both locations.

“We travel every direction and collaborate on new ideas to change things up a bit,” said Ingrid. “Mom is my Wonder Woman image. A Christian woman with a heart of gold, and the glue to our family.”

Christmas has always been Diane Jordan’s favorite time of year because of the birth of Jesus. Family traditions still include reading the Christmas story from the Bible on Christmas Eve, a birthday cake for Jesus and lots of Christmas music. She also recalls the classic “Twas the Night Before Christmas” was a favorite of her kids and grandkids.

From the start, this new tradition of being Mrs. Claus has included Ingrid as helper.

“She is truly my best friend,” says Jordan.

Ingrid encourages the children to talk to Mrs. Claus, she greets and chats with parents or takes pictures as needed. Ingrid also watches as children sit in Mrs. Claus’s lap or stand next to her for a picture, noting the compassion and sincerity shown to the children.

“She listens and writes down what they wish for and gives them mini-candy canes to enjoy while walking around the store with their parents.”

Jordan thinks for a moment, then recalls that the children’s lists over the years have included Tonka trucks, dolls, tricycles, bicycles, action figures, Legos, go-carts, pets — even a pony.

“Of course, the children from my church always recognize me,” she says.


The rest of the year, grownups from all over the county may recognize Diane Jordan as a charter member of Stanly County Singing Americans, or as a friendly face in Atrium Health Stanly’s Cheer Shop, where she works several times a month. Even when she’s not with people, she’s cheering others from a distance by sending cards to shut-ins, to people who’ve been sick or just need to know they’re thought of.

“My mom sends more cards than anyone I know,” said Ingrid, “to include family and close friends for every holiday.”

Back before Covid showed up, Atrium Stanly had a Christmas party for medical staff and their families in the hospital’s Magnolia Room where Mrs. Claus again spread her special brand of cheer.

“I’m a people-person,” says Jordan, an obvious fact to everyone she meets.

This year, The Marketplace is again hosting “Milk and Cookies with Mrs. Claus” from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. Dec. 17. In addition, Mrs. Claus will make her first appearance at White Owl for similar events Dec. 10, 11 and 18.

All Christmas-loving grownups and children are invited for refreshments, picture-taking and making Christmas memories with Mrs. Claus. 

THINKING ABOUT SELLING YOUR LAND OR COUNTRY HOME? WE CAN HELP.



CONTACT YOUR LOCAL LAND SPECIALIST TO LEARN MORE ABOUT BUYING AND SELLING HUNTING, FARM, RANCH AND TIMBERLAND.



JIMMY UNDERWOOD

South Central North Carolina Land Specialist

980.734.8065

JIMMY.UNDERWOOD@WHITETAILESTATES.COM



WHITETAILESTATES REAL ESTATE

HUNTING | RANCH | FARM | TIMBER

WHITETAILESTATES.COM

Whitetail Properties Real Estate, LLC (DBA Whitetail Properties, DBA Whitetail Properties Real Estate) is the State of Nebraska & North Dakota (DBA Whitetail Trophy Properties Real Estate) LLC. Licensed in CA, WA, OR, SD, TN & WI. Jeffrey Koenig, Broker, Licensed in FL, GA & MS. Jefferson Kirk Smith, Broker, Licensed in TX & NM. Jimmy Ballentine, Broker, Licensed in TN. Bill Minor, Broker, Licensed in AL, GA, LA & MS. Sybil Stewart, Broker, Licensed in TN. Tim Burnett, Broker, Licensed in TN & MS. Josh Work, Broker, Licensed in AR. Anthony Christy, Broker, Licensed in NC. SC, VA, OH, PA, NY & CT. Chip Curren, Broker, Licensed in IA, NC. Richard T. Evans, Broker, Licensed in MO. Edward Joel Noyes, Broker, Licensed in IL, MD, WV. Duane S. Lane, Broker, Licensed in MI, MN, IA, WI, VA, WV & WV. Aaron Millen, Broker, Licensed in WV. John Myers, Real Estate Broker, Licensed in OK. Owen Anderson, Broker, Licensed in KY. Dana Fisher, Broker, Licensed in OH. Jimmy Schoffer, Principal Broker, Licensed in NE & SD. Jason Schardt, Broker, Licensed in MS. Chipper Gibbs, Broker, Licensed in PA. Jack Brown, Broker.




Bringing locally grown healthy and affordable foods to Stanly County and the greater Charlotte region.

33643 Old Salisbury Rd., Albemarle, NC 28001
(Across from Bethany Woods Nursing Home)

Mon-Wed 8 - 4:30 | Thurs-Fri 8 - 6 | Sat. 9 - 5

(704) 985-6041 | www.springlakefamilyfarms.com 



Claude Harwood Jr. arranges a flower bouquet at Blooms Royale Florist in downtown Albemarle. (Chris Miller photo)

A rosy career

Florist Harwood looks back on 70-plus years, including helping decorate the White House

BY CHRIS MILLER

Most people go their whole lives without stepping foot inside the White House or having any type of connection with a presidential administration. The closest they get to seeing the president or his official residence is watching the news on TV.

Claude Harwood Jr., though, is unlike most people.

Harwood, 90, an Albemarle florist who has worked in the industry for more than 70 years, has amassed a litany of impressive accolades,

including representing the United States in the Interflora World Cup Competition in Australia in 1979.

But the most memorable moments of his career have centered around his many trips to Washington, D.C., where over the years he helped decorate the White House for the Christmas season during the presidencies of Gerald Ford, Jimmy Carter, Ronald Reagan and George H.W. Bush and helped with the floral arrangements as part of the inaugurations of five

presidents, including John F. Kennedy, Lyndon Johnson and Richard Nixon.

“You get to thinking about how privileged you were to be able to do this,” Harwood said.

In honor of all that he’s accomplished and the many customers he has helped over the decades — whether it be for weddings, funerals, anniversaries, proms, birthdays or other occasions — the City of Albemarle honored Harwood with a special recognition during a council meeting in October, including a resolution detailing his

many accomplishments.

“Claude Harwood has been a treasure to our city for decades,” Mayor Ronnie Michael later told The Stanly News & Press. “His skill and artistry have served families for generations in times of sorrow, joy and everything in between. His work decorating the White House was a source of immense pride for our community.”

ESTABLISHING HIMSELF WITHIN THE FLORAL INDUSTRY

In many ways, Harwood was always destined to enter into the floral industry. His maternal grandfather operated a floral shop in Tarboro. In 1942, his father opened Harwood’s Florist in Albemarle, along what is now U.S. Highway 52 South, where he originally sold tomato plants.

“My father always loved garden work,” especially growing gladiolus, Harwood said.

As a young kid, Harwood did not necessarily enjoy working in the garden, but he did help his father with the business, where he delivered flowers and worked in the greenhouse.

After high school, Harwood spent one year at N.C. State University, where he took several courses learning about plants and insects typically found within greenhouses.

Following his short stint in Raleigh, Harwood came back to the family business, where he discovered a love for the art of flower arrangements.

“I just liked to work all the time and the older I got, the more I liked the designing part,” he said.

Harwood soon began taking days-long floral designing programs offered across the country, including in Florida, Georgia and California, where he became a sponge, soaking in as much knowledge as possible about the latest industry techniques such as utilizing styrofoam for artificial flowers, making sure stem placements are parallel to each other (known as parallelism) and high-style arrangements.

Wanting to stay on top of the latest trends within the industry, Harwood attended as many programs, he called them schools, as he could



*To Cathryn and Claude Harwood
With best wishes,*

Rosalynn Carter

A photo with Claude Harwood, left, and wife Cathryn, right, with First Lady Rosalynn Carter. (Submitted photo)

before applying what he learned back at Harwood’s Florist. He estimates he attended more than 100 such programs during his career.

“We introduced a lot of the new products in Stanly County,” he said.

Perhaps more important than what he learned was who Harwood was able to network with. These programs — sponsored by the Florists’ Transworld Delivery (FTD), the country’s first floral wire service — helped Harwood establish long-lasting relationships with florists in the United States and across the world.

“It was beautiful because you got to meet a lot of people,” he said about the programs. “These design schools would have designers from other states and sometimes other countries and that’s where you really learn from...people from other places bringing in their techniques.”

Among the many people he met over the years was the German designer and author Gregor Lersch, one of the giants of the industry, whose grandfather was one of the original founders of Interflora, which later became FTD in the United States. He competed against Lersch during his time in Australia and even spent a few weeks with him at his home.

“They confiscated some of his material for the competition and I gave him some of my ma-

terial, which was unheard of in Europe,” Harwood said.

In his late 20s at the time, Harwood took over the family business along with his mother in 1963, after his father unexpectedly passed away. At that point, Harwood’s Florist, which had numerous greenhouses and six employees, had become a fixture in the community.

“It was overwhelming,” he said about taking over the family business, “but I had been working in the shop long enough that I knew what to do.”

Due to his deep connections within FTD as a result of the many design programs, Harwood gradually became a major player within the industry. Throughout his membership with FTD, he delivered flowers across the country and the world, including to Canada, Germany, Australia and New Zealand.

MR. HARWOOD GOES TO WASHINGTON

His national profile rose even more in late 1960, when FTD contacted him and his wife Cathryn about the opportunity to come to Washington, D.C., to help decorate for the inauguration of John F. Kennedy.

A designer was already in place to coordinate everything; Harwood and the other florists selected and helped arrange the flowers.

“They got it all lined up, what they want done, but they got to have somebody that knows how to do it to put it together,” Harwood said.

He spent about five days in Washington, and when a major winter storm occurred the day before the inauguration, Harwood remembers many of the flowers froze.

Though he never got the chance to meet Kennedy, he did briefly meet the new first lady, Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis, though he doesn’t remember any details of the interaction.

Harwood would make six additional trips to the capital over the years, decorating for the inaugurations of Lyndon B. Johnson, Richard Nixon and Jimmy Carter and, later on, going to the White House to help set up Christmas

decorations. As was the case with his first visit, Harwood never met the presidents, but did meet their wives — Lady Bird Johnson, Pat Nixon, Betty Ford, Rosalynn Carter, Nancy Reagan and Barbara Bush.

FTD also selected Harwood and his wife to travel to the White House, where they, along with other florists from around the country, helped decorate the official indoor Christmas tree, located in the Blue Room. Harwood helped decorate the tree for four presidents, beginning with Ford and ending with George H.W. Bush.

The first indoor Christmas tree was installed in the White House sometime in the 19th century and since 1961 the tree has had a themed motif at the discretion of the First Lady.

“They put a scaffold around the tree and we put up the ornaments,” Harwood said, noting it took several days to decorate the tree each year.

Whenever the president was walking into the Blue Room, which happened on occasion, Harwood and the others would have to clear the

room.

Harwood has several pictures of himself decorating at the White House, including one with Cathryn and First Lady Rosalynn Carter, who wrote: “To Cathryn and Claude Harwood, with best wishes.”

“I was very honored,” he said about being selected multiple times to help decorate for several administrations, spanning about 30 years.

ACHIEVING INTERNATIONAL RECOGNITION

As wonderful and noteworthy as it was spending time in Washington, arguably the biggest moment of Harwood’s professional career came in 1979, when he represented the United States in Melbourne, Australia as part of the World Cup Competition.

The competition, which was sponsored by Interflora, the international arm of FTD, featured 20 nations and included six categories.

“The entries,” Harwood said in an interview

with the SNAP ahead of the competition, “have to be dramatic, different and very showy.”

Harwood became the United States’ representative after he won the national title for floral design, known as Americas Cup, in Atlanta the previous year. Before that, he took first place in the statewide competition.

Following his victory in Atlanta, Harwood, who had been president of the North Carolina Florists and was North Carolina designer of the year in 1970, went on a national tour sponsored by FTD-Interflora, where he created floral arrangements on television and was interviewed by scores of newspapers. He also participated in floral shows in 14 major cities promoting Interflora, according to the SNAP article.

In preparing for the World Cup, Harwood told the SNAP he received inspiration from all kinds of sources including “plants, people, buildings, cars, our environment.”

FTD-Interflora paid for Harwood’s Australian trip and awarded him \$1,000 for winning the

exp REALTY

STG THE ST GERMAIN GROUP

FAMILY OWNED & OPERATED

BUYING? SELLING? INVESTING?

WE HAVE ALL YOUR REAL ESTATE NEEDS COVERED!

GIVE US THE ADDRESS, WE’LL DO THE REST!

704.800.6331
www.thestgermaingroup.net

Albemarle Hearing Center ^a_h_c

Introducing Evolv AI — better hearing just got effortless, thanks to Starkey’s most advanced hearing aid ever.

FREE HEARING CHECK

704-982-8004
1-800-982-7478

Available in rechargeable style!

Starkey 111 Penny St., Albemarle, NC
Mon.-Fri. 9am-12pm & 1pm-5pm
www.albemarlehearing.com

CareCredit
12 Months No Interest and Extended Payment Plans

Linda S. McDaniel
Hearing Instrument Specialist, Owner

AMERICAN OWNED. AMERICAN OPERATED.

Sparger INVESTMENTS

122 E. Main St.
Albemarle, NC 28001
P.O. Box 807
Albemarle, NC 28002

Frank S. Sparger, MBA
Financial Advisor

Securities offered through S.A. Stone Wealth Management Inc.
Member FINRA/SIPC.
Advisory services offered through
SA Stone Investment Advisors Inc.

Direct: 704-550-5135
Fax: 336-285-0331



Claude Harwood has helped decorate the White House for Christmas on several occasions. (Submitted photo)

national competition.

“A lot of good designers never enter the competition,” Harwood said at the time. “It simply takes a lot of time and it is not a money making thing. You have to love it and love competing.”

Harwood did not win the competition (he does not remember exactly how well he did) as a French florist took the top prize. In the roughly 50 years since the World Cup was first created, no American florist has won the competition, according to the FTD World Cup website.

HARWOOD AS AN ARTIST

As an operator of his floral shop, Harwood has been a businessman, but as a florist, he views himself more as an artist, coming up with new and exciting combinations each time he is given an order.

“Floristry is a curious combination,” he said. “It is a business, but then again you need the artistic ability to come up with different designs all the time.”

Most of the time when receiving orders, customers typically tell him what colors they would like to see and Harwood has the freedom to be as creative as possible in the arrangement and decide which flowers would best achieve his vision.

He typically reserves certain flowers for certain occasions. For marriages, for example, he tends to include roses and orchids, while with funerals, common flowers include roses, carnations and gladiolus.

Harwood has also made numerous creations out of artificial flowers, including John Deere tractors, tractor trailer trucks and mailboxes.

Besides being a well-known florist, Harwood is a talented sculptor, as he spent time in the greenhouses creating ceramic snails and ceramic mushrooms, among other creations. His interest with ceramics began as a result of his attraction to masks.

In a 1972 Salisbury Sunday Post article, Harwood estimated he had made about 1,000 mushrooms of different varieties. He started making them about two years earlier.

“I thought it was a good commercial type thing since interior decorators had been using mushroom designs for about three or four years at the time,” he told the Post.

CONTINUING TO WORK

Even though Harwood closed his family’s shop in 2010, he did not retire from his career as a florist. After having worked for a wholesale florist in Thomasville, he has been working at Blooms Royale Florist in downtown Albemarle for the past four years, creating the same type of arrangements that have made him a beloved fixture in the community.

When asked why he still continues to work, Harwood said he likes to stay busy and continue helping people.

“I’ve enjoyed being with the designers here and the people who work here,” he said. “It’s a real pleasure to continue working.”

The most rewarding part of the job for Harwood has always been the relationships he has cultivated with his customers. And there have been many over the years. He estimates he has helped more than 2,000 people during his time in the business.

That was why the honor of being recognized by the city council, in front of many of his customers in the audience, meant so much to Harwood.

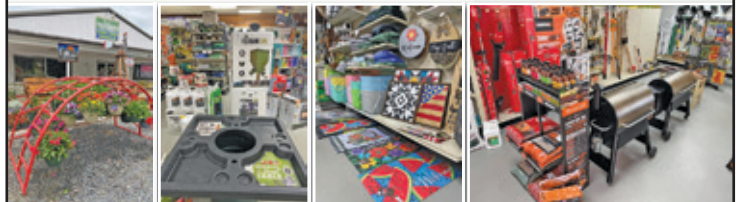
“I am speechless,” Harwood said, holding back tears, as he sat next to Mayor Ronnie Michael. “I appreciate the opportunities that I have had.

“It all boils down to the maker upstairs keeping me here this long to be able to help other people,” he added. **[S]**



A Full Line Hardware Store and Much More!

Lawn & Garden | Landscape Supplies
Feed & Farm Supplies | Pet Supplies



Featuring: Antler-X-Treme Supplement Deer Feed
Banks Outdoors Products • Rutt Hutts Deer Blinds
Tactacam Reveal Cell Cams

201 S. Main St. Richfield, NC 28137
704-850-4161

M-F 7 am - 6 pm; Sat. 7 am - 3 pm; Closed Sunday
www.facebook.com/SouthernOutdoorsNC/



Dianne Williams, Karen Morton and Cynthia Sanders restock a portion of the Christmas room at West Stanly Christian Ministries.

Community staple

West Stanly Christian Ministries' Christmas Room has become a fixture for many

STORY AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY CHRIS MILLER

More than 60 people eagerly waited in line in Stanfield for the thrift store, operated by West Stanly Christian Ministries, to open on the morning of Sept. 24. The excitement in the air was palpable, like the feeling one gets waking up on Christmas morning.

And that was exactly the point, as that day marked the opening of WSCM's well-known

Christmas room, a place people can shop for all sorts of holiday decor from Santa figurines, wreaths and ornaments, to stockings, mugs, plates and stuffed animals.

The opening of the room each year signals the beginning of the holiday season for many in the community.

"People look for it and people start calling us in August, asking when the Christmas room will

be open," said WSCM executive director Robert Britt, noting the line on opening day this year stretched to the parking lot. "The anticipation is incredible."

"When you open it up, the room fills up with people," he added. "It's just crazy how busy it gets."

It makes sense why people are so passionate about the space. The room serves as a lifeline for

customers, eager to get a head start with their Christmas shopping, who might not have the ability to shop at larger retail stores, where items would typically be more expensive.

“I love the Christmas room because you can get anything here,” said Concord resident Jane Downes, who has been coming to the thrift store during the holidays for the past 15 years. “And when you’re on a fixed income, you can get really nice things for a reasonable price.”

During her most recent trip, in late October, Downes discovered a 500-piece Cobble Hill holiday puzzle that would normally cost about \$20, but at this store it was only \$2.

“We have people that shop here because they want a good deal, we have people that shop here that are even resellers, but then there are also those who shop here because this is where, with dignity, they can provide for their own families,” Britt said.

It is both the quality and the diversity of the items — holiday-themed dinner plates, part of the Norman Rockwell Collection, were recently on sale for \$10 — that have kept customers coming back since the Christmas room started in the late 1990s, shortly after WSCM was founded in 1996. The thrift store is at 100 S. Love Chapel Road in Stanfield.

“To my knowledge, the Christmas room has been a part of the ministry since we had a thrift store operation,” said Britt, who has been with WSCM since 2013.

As much as the thrift store is a revenue generator for the organization, it is also a key outreach opportunity to connect with and help local families. And the Christmas room is a big part of that.

“At our core we’re a crisis assistance ministry, that’s what we do, and the thrift store provides about 85 percent of our budget,” Britt said, noting the funds derived from the store, including from the Christmas room, allow the organization to be able to serve the community in numerous ways, including its annual Day of Giving campaign.

“I come in here and I feel like I’m used, I feel like I can meet and greet and it’s just wonderful,” said volunteer Karen Morton.

The large majority of Christmas items donated to the store arrive shortly after the holiday season, during the first few months of the year, though staff and volunteers continually collect



donations as they come in. The items are boxed and left on pallets in the basement until around September, when the room, which is usually a space to sell furniture, transforms again for the holidays.

“Just on the volume, when we started this year, I think we had around 50 pallets of Christmas merchandise,” Britt said, “and as of today, we have 20 pallets worth of merchandise that we still have to work through.”

The most common items collected each year include wreaths, artificial Christmas trees, nativity scenes and holiday clothing, including sweaters and socks.

While WSCM staff members, including Britt,

oversee the Christmas room, there are many volunteers who spend their time each day pricing the inventory and making sure shelves continually get restocked.

“We’re just trying to work through each pallet one at a time,” said volunteer Dianne Williams.

“Our volunteers really do drive the Christmas room,” Britt said, noting a few hundred people help out at some point during the season, though only about 10-12 work each day.

Since the shelves are constantly being restocked, even if people don’t come out during the first 30 days, which is usually the busiest stretch, there are still plenty of items to be purchased throughout the season.

“Because of the way we keep our stuff year-round, there are as much great merchandise going out today as there was opening day,” Britt said. “There’s never a bad time to shop.”

The Christmas room has become an institution during the holidays for many loyal customers, several of whom come from outside Stanly County to find a good deal. A tour bus of 50 senior citizens from Lincolnton, more than an hour away, came to shop at the store a few weeks ago.

Michael and Wanda Allred are among the thrift store’s most dedicated customers. Every Friday for the past three years, the couple make the 60-mile drive from their home in Robbins, in Moore County, to the store. They shop in the morning, have lunch in Locust and come back to the store in the afternoon before heading home.

“We found out about this place through a patient of ours,” said Wanda, who used to work in the dental field. “Her mother lived in Locust and she told me about the thrift shop.”

In addition to purchasing merchandise, Wanda especially enjoys looking for Lennox prod-



ucts, the couple regularly brings in donations, including dinnerware, small trees and wreaths.

“We take a lot of stuff up there because we know that it’s going to such a good cause,” Wanda said.

For the people who work there, the Christmas room represents much more than a shopping haven for customers.

“Sometimes when you get on the other side, it really just helps you remember what Christmas



D.R. REYNOLDS COMPANY, INC.

“PROUDLY SERVING STANLY COUNTY SINCE 1987”

TEL: (910)-428-1360
WWW.DRREYNOLDS.COM

is really all about,” Britt said. “It’s really not all about the decorations, it’s about the people.”

“It’s not the stuff of Christmas, it’s the joy of Christmas,” said Karen Morton.

“There’s just something about being here, being with the customers and finding that special something that somebody is looking for...it just makes me feel good,” said Dianne Williams.

The thrift store, including the Christmas room, is open from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday through Saturday. 



Offering mental health and substance use counseling


Hours: Mon. & Wed. 9-5 • Tues. & Thurs. 9-6 | Closed Friday

1446 E. Main Street, Albemarle, NC 28001 • 704-550-5469

www.Clearermindsconsultingandcounseling.org


Carats for Christmas

Shop the area’s best selection of beautifully cut, quality diamonds set in an array of breathtaking designs.



Diamond Stud Earrings Starting at \$299⁰⁰

Shop Local





STARNES BRAMLETT JEWELERS

Tuesday-Friday
10am-3pm

Saturday
10am-2pm

127 West Main St.,
Albemarle, NC
704-982-1013

www.starnesbramlett.com



SPRING ARBOR

SENIOR LIVING

Assisted Living • Memory Care

Accepting New Residents!

Spring Arbor of Albemarle
315 Park Ridge Road
Albemarle, NC 28001
(704) 982-8205



Call today to save
\$1,000
Limited time offer.

www.springarborliving.com

Recipes

The following recipes were provided through the Stanly County office of North Carolina Cooperative Extension.

CANDIED PECANS

- 2¾ c. pecan halves
- 2 T. butter, softened, divided
- 1 c. sugar
- ½ c. water
- ½ t. salt
- ½ t. ground cinnamon
- 1 t. vanilla extract

Place pecans in a shallow baking pan in a 250° oven for 10 minutes or until warmed. Grease a 15x10x1 inch baking pan with 1 T. butter; set aside

Grease the sides of a heavy saucepan with remaining butter; add sugar, water, salt, and cinnamon. Bring to a boil, stirring constantly to dissolve sugar. Cover; cook 2 minutes to

dissolve any sugar crystals that may form on the sides of pan. Cook without stirring, until a candy thermometer reads 236° (soft ball stage). Remove from the heat; add vanilla. Stir in warm pecans until evenly coated.

Spread onto prepared baking pan. Bake at 250° for 30 minutes, stirring every 10 minutes. Spread on a waxed paper lined baking

sheet to cool.

HOMEMADE CORNBREAD MIX

- 1 c. flour
- ¾ tsp. salt
- ¼ c. sugar
- 2 tsp. baking powder
- ½ tsp. baking soda
- ½ c. dry milk powder
- 1 c. plus 2 Tbsp. cornmeal

In a large bowl, mix all the ingredients. Place the mixture in a clean quart-sized jar. Cover the jar tightly with a lid, decorate it and attach a copy of the recipe card.

CHEDDAR-PECAN CRISPS

- 2 c. unsalted butter, softened
- 4 c. shredded sharp cheddar cheese
- 4½ c. all-purpose flour
- 1 t. salt
- ½ t. garlic powder
- ½ t. cayenne pepper
- 1 c. finely chopped pecans, toasted

In a large bowl, cream butter and cheese until light and fluffy. In another bowl, whisk flour, salt, garlic powder and cayenne; gradually beat into creamed mixture. Stir in pecans. Shape into eight 10-inch long logs. Wrap in plastic. Refrigerate

until dough is firm, 2 hours. Pre-heat oven to 350°. Unwrap and cut dough crosswise into ¼-inch slices. Place 1 inch apart on ungreased baking sheets. Bake until edges are crisp and lightly browned, 12-14 minutes. Cool on pans 1 minute. Remove to wire racks to cool completely. Refrigerate in airtight containers.

FREEZE OPTION: Place wrapped logs in resealable freezer bags; place in freezer. To use, unwrap frozen logs and cut into slices. If necessary, let dough stand 15 minutes at room temperature before cutting. Bake as directed, increasing time by 1-2 minutes.

CRANBERRY-OATMEAL COOKIE MIX

- 1 c. plus 2 Tbsp. flour
- 1 c. rolled oats
- ½ tsp. baking soda
- ½ tsp. salt

- ¼ c. brown sugar
- ¼ c. white sugar
- ½ c. dried cranberries
- ½ c. white chocolate chips

Layer the ingredients in a clean, quart-sized jar. Cover the jar tightly with a lid, decorate it and attach a copy of the recipe card.

FRIENDSHIP SOUP MIX

- ½ c. dry split peas
- 2 Tbsp. beef bouillon granules
- ¼ c. pearl barley
- ½ c. dry lentils
- ¼ c. dry, minced onions
- 2 tsp. Italian seasoning
- ½ c. rice
- ½ c. macaroni noodles

In a clean, quart-sized jar, layer all the ingredients except the macaroni. Place the macaroni in a sandwich bag and place it on top of the other ingredients. Cover the jar tightly with a lid, decorate it and attach a copy of the recipe card. **S**

Private Rehab Rooms Skilled Nursing Care & Assisted Living

TRINITY
PLACE

www.trinityplacealbemarle.net



24724 S. Business 52
Albemarle, NC 28001
704-982-8191

Schedule a tour today!

At Pee Dee Electric, we're proud to power your home for the holidays.

WISHING YOU A HAPPY HOLIDAY SEASON FROM OUR CO-OP FAMILY TO YOURS!

 Pee Dee Electric
A TruSource Energy Cooperative

B.B Oil, Inc.



SERVING STANLY COUNTY FOR 61 YEARS

Year Round Comfort for Your Home Heating & Air Conditioning

- Diesel • Home Heating & AC
- Kerosene • Tires & Batteries
- Auto Accessories and NC State Inspections

128 Hwy 49 North
Richfield, NC 28137
M-F | 7a - 4:30p
www.bboilinc.com



PFEIFFER IS HOME

Pfeiffer University has been preparing students to become servant leaders in Stanly County, North Carolina and the world for over 130 years.

Take your education experience ***Beyond Boundaries*** and become part of the Pfeiffer family. You will quickly find out why we like to say **Pfeiffer IS Home.**

Apply now at pfeiffer.edu/apply



Pfeiffer
UNIVERSITY

CONNECT WITH US |    

pfeiffer.edu





Let's **SUCCEED**

At Stanly Community College, you matter most. Whether your passion lies in computer technology, law enforcement, healthcare or any of our other dozens of programs, our instructors and staff are dedicated to supporting you from registration to career placement and beyond. All our experience, skills and energies are focused on helping you SUCCEED. That's our promise, and our legacy.



stanly.edu | 704.991.0123