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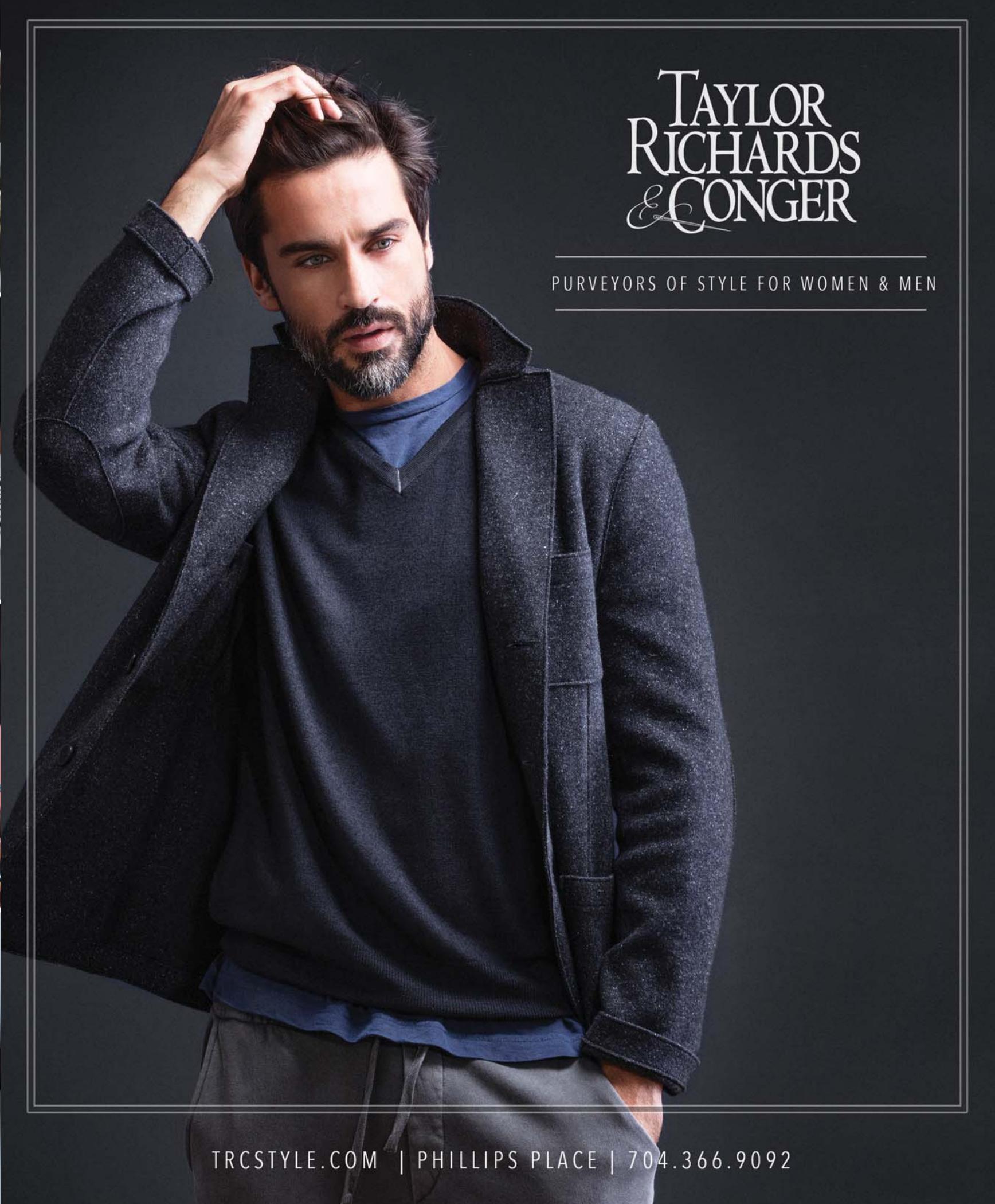
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A man with a beard and dark hair is the central figure. He is wearing a dark grey, textured blazer over a dark blue V-neck sweater. He has his right hand on his head, looking directly at the camera with a serious expression. The background is a dark, solid color.

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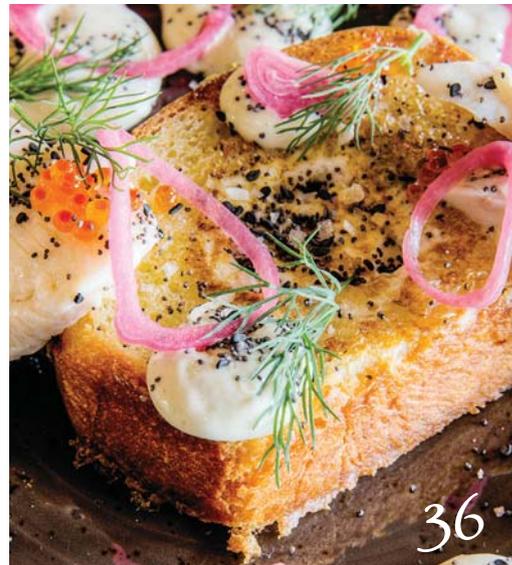


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CHARLOTTE LIVING magazine is published quarterly by Charlotte Living Magazine, LLC, P.O. Box 5352, Charlotte, NC 28299.

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The East Lake Norman Women's Networking Group was created for women in business who live and/or work on the east side of Lake Norman. The group supports the community and is proud to be in partnership with Our Towns Habitat for Humanity in Cornelius for their Mardi Gras Builders Ball on February 16th.

That Wonderful Feeling!



Of all the wonderful feelings that I can recall, there is one I would love to capture in a bottle for pure pleasure. Do you remember that feeling when the bell rang at last, and Christmas vacation had finally begun? After parties and programs it was time to go home and play for two glorious weeks filled with cookies, presents, decorations, more parties and holiday music in the air. Everything was magical when we were young, and the holiday lights were twinkling.

When December rolls around each year, we think about times that we cherish. The holidays connect us with family and friends where traditions are shared moments to remember. It was a huge deal to me when Dad drove through the city on Christmas Eve to see the bright lights and decorations. There were red and white candy canes with bows along Tryon Street, and the window at Belk's on 5th Street where the Blumenthal Performing Arts Center now stands had animated snow scenes loaded with toys. We loved to stand and stare at all the action.

Peppermint Forest Christmas Shop has created a wonderland of trees and festive decorations that have inspired the holiday spirit in Charlotte for 38 years. It is a joy to gaze at the magnificent displays that take me back to childhood. I clearly recall an arrangement made with styrofoam reindeer standing in cotton snow that was proudly displayed above our fireplace. I thought it was so beautiful. After years of dragging down boxes from the attic and putting them back on New Year's Day, our decorations all fell apart except for a few ornaments now in my collection. Home editor Vicki Payne has some great ideas in this issue to update your home with the latest trends in holiday decor.

The best part of this joyful season is giving, and Christmas shopping was always a thrill growing up. Take a look back at Charlotte's oldest shopping center which has been going strong since 1956. Food editor Heidi Billotto spotlights three of the many fabulous restaurants at Park Road Shopping Center where there is something for everyone. The *Nutcracker* ballet and music are holiday traditions for many, and celebrating your faith with meals together make precious memories for the entire family. So why not dress up in your finest and celebrate this season, for we are truly blessed.

We wish you a Merry Christmas, Happy Hanukkah and Happy New Year with love and thanks from *Charlotte Living!*

Kathy Buckley
Kathy Buckley, Editor in Chief



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MICHAEL SMITH is President and CEO of Charlotte Center City Partners, which facilitates and promotes the cultural and economic development of the Charlotte region’s urban core. His background blends corporate and non-profit experience.



DANIEL COSTON is a photographer, writer, videographer, show promoter, history geek, and collector of strange and unique adventures. He is a music historian whose photographs of legendary musicians have recently been featured at Charlotte Museum of History, Spirit Square and in the Fall 2017 issue Charlotte Living. He lives in Charlotte, NC.



MARY STATON’s career has spanned the public and private sectors in marketing, writing and finance. She currently serves as a member of the Board of Visitors at Queens University and boards of Wing Haven Gardens, Symphony Guild of Charlotte and Charlotte-South Rotary Foundation. She has an MBA, an undergraduate degree in journalism and loves to volunteer, garden, and dote on family. Her motto: “Do good, have fun.” Favorite quote: Earth is crammed with heaven – Elizabeth Barrett Browning.



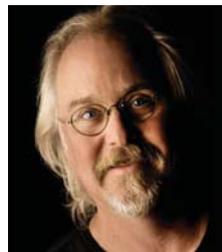
SHERRI K. JOHNSON is a seasoned PR pro, content strategist and self-proclaimed word nerd. Her 25 years of public relations experience combined with a love of writing form the foundation of her business, The Content Shop. In her free time, she enjoys adventure travel which has kick-started her next career as a travel writer. She is a big fan of the em dash and Oxford comma enthusiast.



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REVEREND TONY MARCIANO is the Executive Director of the Charlotte Rescue Mission (CRM). Located in the shadow of Bank of America stadium, CRM provides free Christian residential recovery programs for people struggling with addiction, poverty and hopelessness. He is also available able to speak to your group.



BILLY WILSON After a 30+ year career in the Charlotte advertising community as an art director, creative director, writer, and agency owner, he has emerged as a creative hybrid at Billy Wilson Creative, where he serves a variety of clients looking for fresh ideas and insight.



VICKI PAYNE is a lifestyle designer and author. She manages a Project Management/Concierge service that coordinates large renovation and new construction projects for homeowners and builders. Over the past 25 years, she has hosted and produced some of PBS’s most popular DIY series including For Your Home. She has authored over a dozen books and writes Design Forward, a weekly newspaper column. Vicki is the Home and Garden editor of Charlotte Living magazine.

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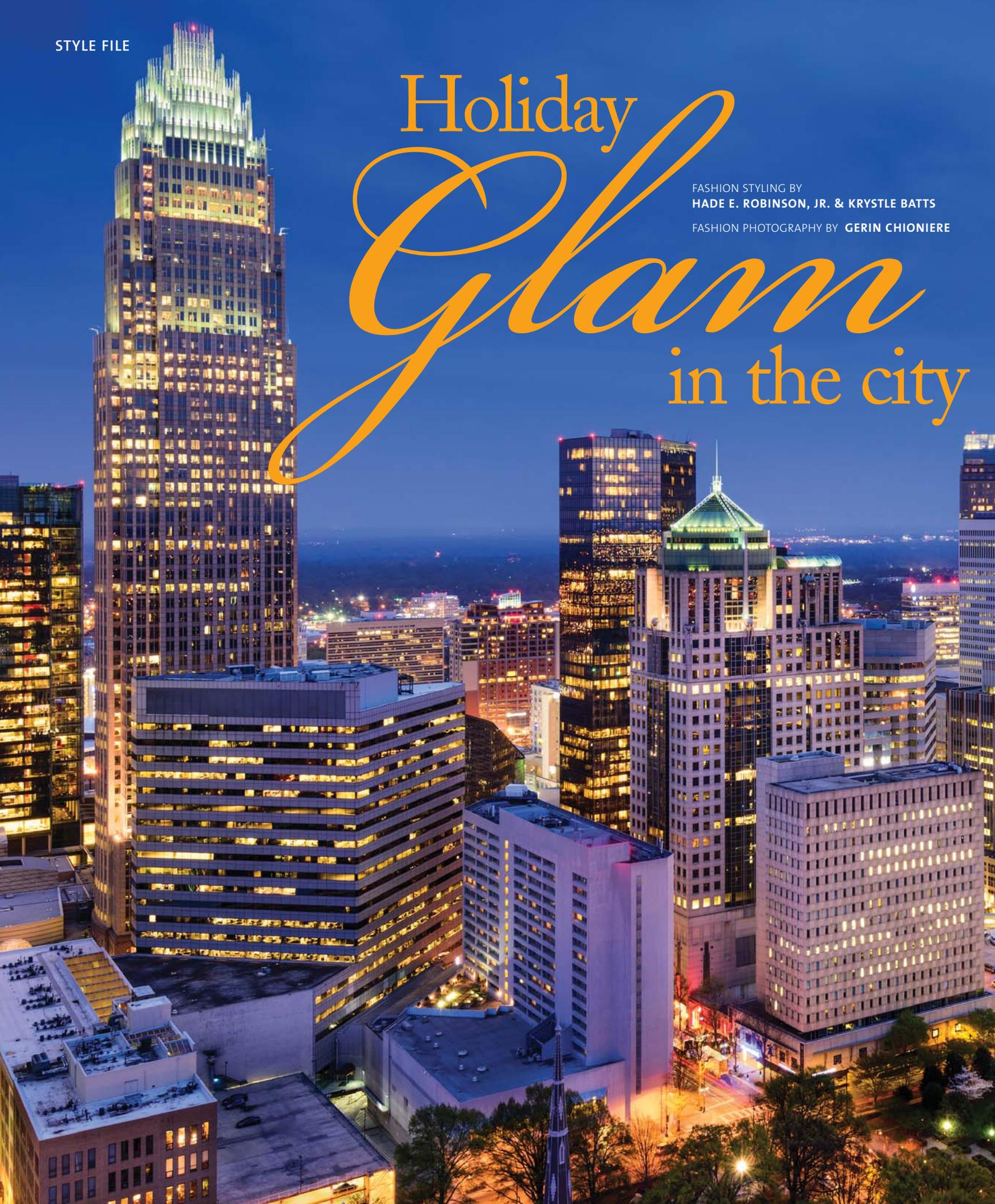
STYLE FILE

Holiday

Glam

in the city

FASHION STYLING BY
HADE E. ROBINSON, JR. & KRISTLE BATTS
FASHION PHOTOGRAPHY BY GERIN CHONIERE







Tadashi Shoji Corded Lace Gown in Cardinal Red/Nude, Jimmy Choo "Emily" Sandal in Champagne.

All gowns, shoes and accessories available at Nordstrom SouthPark.

'TIS THE SEASON OF CELEBRATIONS

all over the city from spectacular galas to fabulous private home dinner parties, and the key to it all is looking GLAMOROUS!

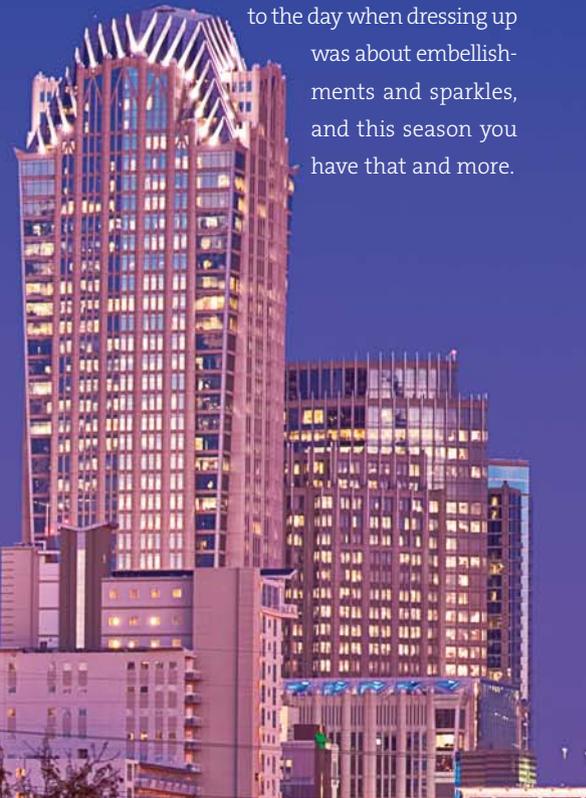
Fashion trends for this holiday take us back

to the day when dressing up

was about embellishments and sparkles,

and this season you

have that and more.



St. John Collection Off-The-Shoulder Knit Sequin Gown in Royal Amethyst. Jimmy Choo "Lang" sandal in tea rose



TRENDS IN EVENING FASHIONS THIS SEASON ARE SIMPLE yet dramatic with the ease of being comfortable. The simple colors of white or black with eye catching detail overlay to jewel tone solid colors accented with accessories that sparkle will set any woman right on trend. Fabric in a jersey knit or a soft velvet lends itself perfect to dance the night away.

Beautifully designed evening gowns with lace, hand beading and sequins, soft fabrics from velvet to flowing jersey knit – all of this topped off with a dazzling shoe and an evening clutch create an ensemble that will be seen as a piece of art.





SPECIAL THANKS

Charlotte Living would like to thank Matthew Paul Brown, Reside Realty, and General Manager John Scharer at the Charlotte City Club for our location; Hade Robinson, Jr. and Krystal Batts, Nordstrom SouthPark, for fashion styling; Rona Perymon for hair styling; Zenia McCants for makeup; Nordstrom for clothing and accessories; Debbie Williams, Professional Consultant Group, for project coordination; and our models Alexa Mangiapane and Brittainy Gardin from Directions USA, and Matthew Paul Brown.

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Directions USA, directionsusa.com, 336.292.2800

Debbie Williams, Professional Consultant Group, Debbie@pcgmeansresults.com, 704.231.4724

All gowns, shoes and accessories available at Nordstrom SouthPark.

Above: La Femme Embellished Column Gown in white with black baroque overlay and Nordstrom Metallic Box Clutch. Tadashi Shoji Sequin Applique Textured Crepe Gown in Black & Gold with Jimmy Choo 'Milla' Glitter clutch on a chain.

Right: St. John Collection Draped Front Velvet Gown in Lazuli with Nordstrom Confetti Glitter Minaudiere. St. John Collection Hand Beaded Mikado Gown in Caviar. Tuxedo by Ted Baker London, the "Josh" Navy Shawl Lapel, bow tie and pocket square stylist's own, shirt by Hugo Boss, formal shoes by Magnanni.



The Legacy Lives On

TEXT BY **BILLY WILSON** PHOTOGRAPHY BY **GERIN CHOINIÈRE**

Since November 1956 Charlotte's first shopping center is still going strong and booming.

It was the best hot dog ever assembled. One of the fat ones... almost charred. It was embellished with homemade chili, mustard, chopped onions and coleslaw. Best of all, it was nestled in a side-sliced bun that had been slathered with butter and placed into a grill press until perfectly golden. I can still taste it over 50 years later. It was my Mom's favorite hot dog. And often, we sat there, at the lunch counter at Eckerd's in Park Road Shopping Center, savoring each precious bite. The lunch counter and the Eckerd's are both long gone, replaced by a Rite Aid. But I swear, every time I enter that store I think I can still smell that chili.

I don't remember a time when there wasn't a Park Road Shopping Center. It opened in November 1956 as the largest open-air shopping center between Atlanta and Washington, D.C. For my family, it was where



we shopped. Groceries came from A&P or the Colonial Store. Clothing was found at JC Penney's unless Dad got his Christmas bonus early. Then we would hit Tate Brown's for Weejuns and alpaca sweaters. Flowers were found at Elfrieda's, and on special occasions, we dined at the S&W Cafeteria. I remember being on hand as they buried a time-capsule at Park Terrace Theatre in 1964. I also remember thinking that when they dig it up in 2014 I'll be an old fogie. It turns out I was right. Unfortunately, when it came out of the ground, it was a sloppy stew of goo. Watertight it wasn't.

In all, there were 32 stores in the center when it opened. And the most amazing thing is, as everything of that era seemed to vanish over time in Charlotte, Park Road Shopping Center continued to flourish decades later. It became part of the fabric of many of our lives. And although tenants have come and gone over the



Photo courtesy of Park Road Shopping Center



years, Park Road Shopping Center has maintained its distinct character of friendliness.

Multiple generations of families have grown to love this combination of mom-and-pop storefronts, restaurants and the like. Many people don't realize that for many years, the "real" Santa Claus set up his photo studio in the Woolworth Store. Both of my grown sons had their pictures taken with Santa yearly as they grew up. Santa's genuine beard, merry personality, and the presence of Mrs. Claus made it easy to answer in the affirmative the age-old question, "Is that the real Santa?"

For over 40 years, Charlotte attorney and philanthropist Porter Byrum owned Park Road Shopping Center. He is credited with much of the success of the center and forged long and meaningful relationships with tenants large and small. In 2011 he donated Park Road Shopping Center to Queens University, Wingate University and Wake Forest, his alma mater. The three universities later sold the center to Edens, a property management company based in Columbia, SC. The proceeds are, as envisioned by Byrum, used for scholarships at the three schools.

Edens has embraced the unique atmosphere of historic Park Road Shopping Center, while at the same time, updating and refurbishing the site. New stores, new restaurants, outdoor seating, fresh new facades, and a full blown "Back Lot" with spots like Rock Salt, Amélie's, Midwood Smokehouse, and a private bar,



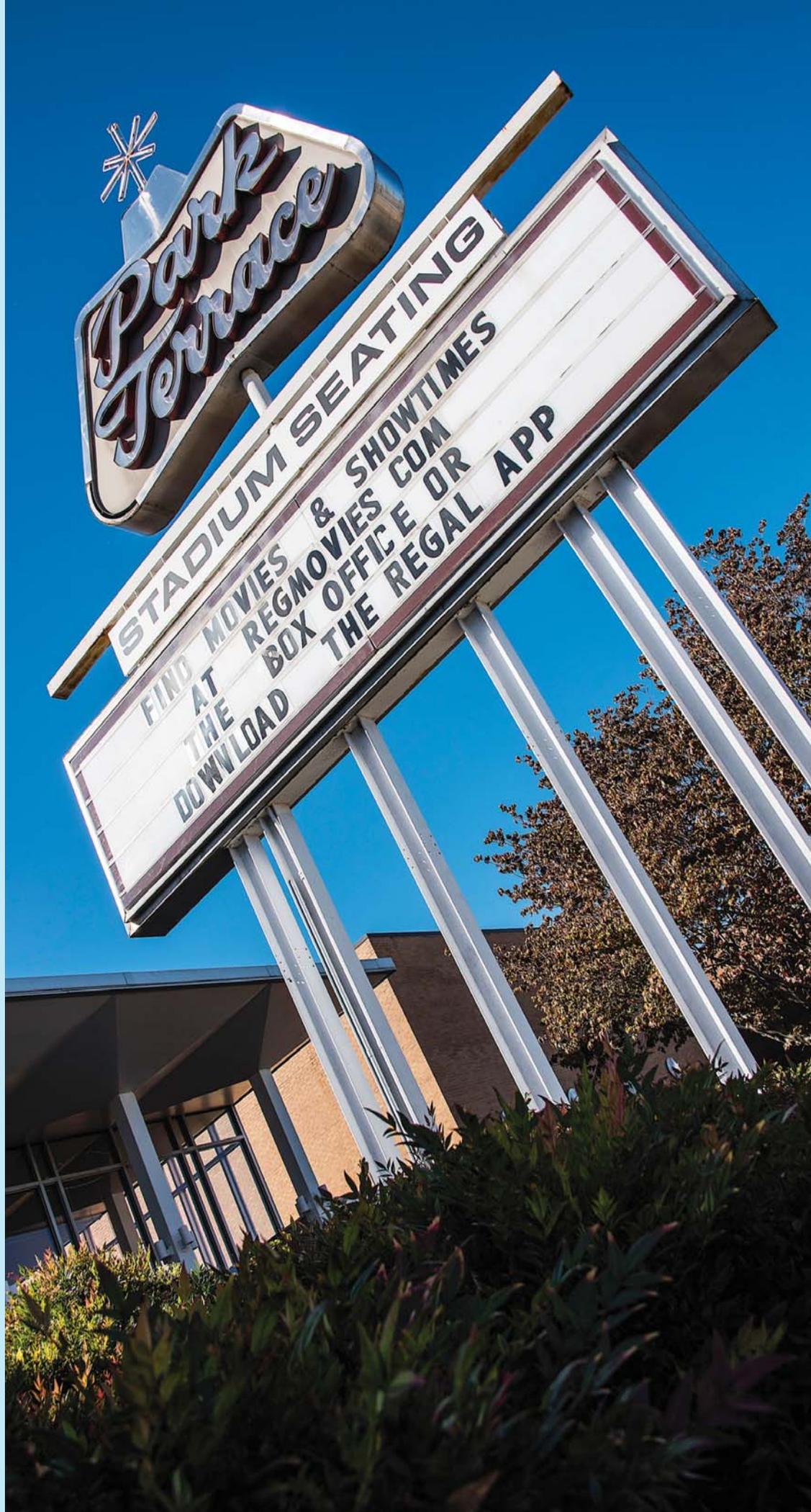
DotDotDot, have created a destination for Charlotte hipsters...and people like me as well.

By the way, you can still find a pretty good hot dog at Park Road Shopping Center. Charlotte Soda Shop's dog is a real winner...If only I could get them to grill their buns, they'd be perfect. ■



Park Road Shopping Center Tenants as of November 2017

Amélie's French Bakery & Cafe
bevello
BikeSource
Blackhawk Garden Center
Blackhawk Hardware
Brownlee Jewelers
Bruegger's Bagel
Burtons Grill & Bar
Cantina 1511
Caribou Coffee
Charlotte Café
Chopt
Classic Attic
CO
Corepower Yoga
Corners
Details Home Boutique
Dolce Lusso Salon & Day Spa
DotDotDot
Firestone
Flourshop
Flying Biscuit Cafe
Fuel Pizza & Wings
GNC Live Well
Great Outdoor Provision Co.
Hallmark
Harris Teeter
Howren Music & Sound
J.Crew Mercantile
Jami Masters School of Dance, Ltd.
Juice Bar
Julie's Boutique
K-la
Kid to Kid
King Tiger Tae Kwon Do
McRanie's Pipes, Tobacco, Cigars
Michael's
Midwood Smokehouse
Omega Sports
Onward Reserve Gifts & Apparel
Park Road ABC Store
Park Road Books
Park Road Key Shop
Park Road Shoe Service
Park Road Soda Shoppe
Regal Entertainment Group
Rite Aid
Rock Salt
Shake Shack
Sir Edmund Halley's Restaurant
Ski Country Sports
Snip-its Kids, Haircuts, Parties
Stella & Contemporary
Suárez Bakery
Subway
SWEAT Cycle Studio
Traditions Interiors & Accessories
Urban Cookhouse
US Post Office
Va da Vie Gelato



FROM HARDWARE TO FABULOUS FARE

Charlotte's Oldest Strip Mall is the Queen City's Newest Dining Destination

TEXT BY HEIDI BILLOTTO

Park Road Shopping Center is a cornerstone in Charlotte's retail community – going on its 61st year, the first open air center of its kind in the Queen City, has always been that neighborhood stop for grocery and retail.

Within the past decade or so, with the onslaught of new restaurants, juice bars, bakeries who now call Park Road home, in addition to being a centrally located stop for the movies at **Regal**, groceries at **Harris Teeter**, craft supplies at **Michaels** and liquor purchases at the free standing **ABC** store, Park Road Shopping Center has slowly become a popular Charlotte dining destination.

From the longstanding **Charlotte Café** and **Suarez Bakery** to newcomers **Amelie's Bakery** and **Burtons Bar & Grill**, there are now nineteen different places to eat and drink everything from bagels to BBQ, pulled pork to pastry, tacos to pad Thai, and coffee to cocktails. And it doesn't stop there – two more restaurants, **Flourshop**, brought to you by the talented team at CustomShop on Elizabeth Avenue and another incarnation of the **Shake Shack** chain are both scheduled to open before the end of 2017.

When space started to fill on the front side on the center, restaurants like **Sir Edmund Halley** and **Midwood Smoke House** started leasing space in the backlot and have made driving round back fashionable.

In my trio of restaurants for this issue, I've selected three of my regular go-to's at the center: the freestanding oyster bar **Rocksalt**, the speakeasy **Dot Dot Dot** and the creative craft salad concept **Chop't**. Each has a slightly different angle and each appeals to a different segment of the community – all very different and yet all popular reasons to go and see what's happening at Park Road Shopping Center.

Believe me, from the popcorn at **Blackhawk Hardware** or at the **Regal Park Terrace** to the pastries at **Amelie's**; from the Gelato at **Va de Vie** to a pint of Guinness at **Sir Edmund Halley's** there is something for everyone to enjoy! ■



Rocksalt



Dot Dot Dot



Chop't



CHARLOTTE'S NEWEST JUICE JOINT IS THE BEE'S KNEES AND THEN SOME

Discover ••• (Dot Dot Dot)
the local speakeasy now open at the back of Park Road Shopping Center

TEXT BY HEIDI BILLOTTO PHOTOGRAPHY BY GERIN CHIONIÈRE

Charlotte's newest hot spot – an upscale 1920s Prohibition-style cocktail bar and dining room, doesn't really have a name, instead only a mark of punctuation.

It's an ellipsis, or a line of three periods "that indicate an omission of words obviously understood", if you ask Webster. The clandestine cocktail lounge concept known as "Dot Dot Dot" is the brainchild of business partners Conrad Hunter and Stefan Huebner, both fixtures in the Charlotte restaurant, bar, food and drink community, who wanted to open a place where the classic cocktail was king and the food followed suit. Done and Done.

Back in the day, when cocktails were forbidden

fruit, you had to know where to go for the goods and the good time that accompanied them. Juice Joints or Speakeasys, a name born from the practice of asking customers to keep the specific location of the hottest joint in town quiet, were only open to those in the know.

Nowadays there is no real reason to keep the word on a great place like this wrapped up, so it is with pleasure that I spill the goods that you, my dear readers, are now in the know.

As they would have said back in the day, get your glad rags on and get set to enjoy.

Hunter and Huebner wanted the concept to be fun, and in the spirit of that 1920s era, they wanted

to create a bit of the same intrigue. You must be a member or a guest of a member to enjoy and evening at ••• Membership is open to anyone 21 years of age or older, and the cost is just \$10 a year.

Keep in mind as you plan your evening out, this is an adult cocktail parlour – know that all of your guests must be 21 years of age or older, as well.

The entrance is around the back of Park Road Shopping Center, and you won't see the name written out anywhere. Look for the large round sign with the restaurant's logo of a modernized ellipses by the unmarked door – walk up the ramp to the door and you'll be asked for your ID to verify membership. Once you are in behind the closed portal, there is a





Conrad Hunter



Stefan Huebner

short walk down a long dark hall to build the anticipation, and then the doors open to all the fun and flavor.

The art deco era décor sets the tone for this from back in the day cocktail parlor and the ... team has left no detail undone. There is seating at booths, tables and of course at the bar, but no standing crowd, if you please.

There are house rules that come with membership, and they include business casual attire, nice jeans are fine but please, no shorts, flip flops, t-shirts or baseball caps; and if you must carry on a lengthy conversation on your cell phone, instead of talking

with the people you came to enjoy the evening with, you are asked to step outside, thank you very much.

There are no reservations, and members are allowed to enter on a first come-first served basis. If you are a member you may bring in three guests, but after that you'll need an additional member, so plan when you make your plans by filling out the membership applications online ahead – the cost of membership is just \$10 a year, and it's easier all the way around, to do the paperwork in advance of your evening out.

Innovative and classic curated cocktails, small batch liquors and hand crafted cuisine are what

await – all of it on point and exceptionally well done.

At the bar Huebner plays homage to the classic cocktail as he puts his own spin on each pour with oversized cubes of ice, correct glassware, cool garnishes for all of your favorites and a list of his own creations you don't want to miss. Drinks are shaken and stirred to order, and if your cocktail calls for a twist, it will be branded with the ... logo, nice touch!

And then there is the food...

Hunter and Heuber brought Chef David Quintana in to join the team shortly after opening, raising the bar on the culinary offerings at ... several notches.

Charlotte Living photographer Gerin Choiniere's





Chef David Quintana



photos of Quintana's work speak for themselves, veritable works of art on a plate.

I am a big fan of Quintana, glad he is back cooking in Charlotte and has landed at a place where he can stretch his creativity and really show his stuff. Take it from me – each dish is as delicious as it looks.

On the menu, a short list of high end, incredibly well executed small plates (perfect for sharing, but you may not want to) each with a delicious element of surprise on the plate. Offerings will change seasonally. Quintana's attention to detail, his well thought out execution and his keen ability to partner flavor and texture is apparent in every bite.

Dot Dot Dot is open Tuesday - Sunday from 5pm - 2am. It is located on the back lot of Park Road Shopping Center at 4237 Unit B Park Road; Charlotte NC 28209. 704.817.3710. For more info and membership applications visit dotdotdotcharlotte.com.

Follow Dot Dot Dot on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter. ■



Lettuce Toss Around the Scoop on Salad

At Chop't Creative Salad Company They're Dressed to Impress

TEXT BY **HEIDI BILLOTTO**
PHOTOGRAPHY BY **GERIN CHIONIÈRE**

What can you say about a place that serves salads as its mainstay?

You can say a lot if that place is Chop't Creative Salad Company.

Chop't, a national chain 16 years young and 50 restaurants strong, landed their first Charlotte location at Park Road Shopping Center, and the crowds have been coming in and coming back ever since.

The chain opened in Charlotte in early 2017 with its Park Road Shopping Center store. Chop't now has three Queen City locations: Park Road Shopping Center, the Arboretum and its newest spot in Blakeney on Rea Road.

What makes this place and these salads so special? Hard to pick just one reason, so here are just a few right off the top of my head...

First of all, the concept is genius – a fast food spin on healthy eating done right with more

delicious options than you can shake your salad fork at!

Dressings are made in-house – if your concept is a fresh salad bar, then the dressings have to rate – these score on every level.

The ingredients are not only fresh, many of them are local, too! In each Chop't location is a black board that sports a list of all that is local, giving a big ole nod to a lot of local area producers and farms.

In Chop't locations across North Carolina, that list includes people I know and have written about on these pages. In Charlotte, local producers like Steve Young of Coddle Creek Farms in Mooresville, NC; Matt Parris of Roots Hummus in Asheville, NC; and Jenny & Jonathan Bonchak of Slingshot Cold Brew in Raleigh, NC as well as the farmers at Hollar & Greene in Boone, NC and Patterson Farm in



China Grove, NC. Lionel Vatinet of La Farm Bakery in Cary, NC supplies the bread to the three Chop't locations in the Triangle. In addition, in Charlotte, Chop't has just finalized a partnership with Lenny Boy Kombucha, serving the tasty carrot spice variety as long as supplies last. I couldn't be more thrilled that this national chain recognizes the benefit in supporting locally grown and produced product.

What's not local to North Carolina are other quality ingredients from around the world – ingredients that the company has sought out, taste-tested and deems to be the best there is on the market.

On the menu are a dozen+ distinctive salad and grain bowl combos offered as options. These are each different ingredient and dressing flavor combinations which work well, with or without the addition of meat, chicken or seafood as you wish. Customers are encouraged to customize.

In addition to the regular menu, there is a trio of “destination salad options” that go above and beyond the ordinary, with a focus on flavors from one particular region of the world.

It's this company's clever way to draw attention to what otherwise might be listed as seasonal or regional options. Instead of calling them specials, these destination salads are like a travel log of flavor. They come to visit for a while, bringing with them the flavors of a certain region of the world, until they rotate off the menu every 60 days, then three new destination salads from another part of the world rotate in the mix on the menu board.

Chop't is no ordinary fast food salad bar, and what makes it different aside from the high quality ingredients and the environmentally-friendly containers and utensils is the level of customer service.

In a nutshell, it's fun to eat at Chop't, and it's the people who make it so. The action on the line is entertaining and, in a way it's interactive, too. Patrons are guided through a cafeteria line of sorts, selecting what they'd like on their own particular salad – follow any one of the delicious combo suggestion on the menu or create your own blend as you go.

Once everything you want in your salad is in your bowl, a member of the Chop't crew, assigned specifically to you and your salad, uses a large rocking mezzaluna (a large rounded chopping knife with two handles) to chop the greens and fixings to your desired size right before your eyes – if you don't want your salad chopped, that's okay too; but the chopping does wonders to blend flavors so that each bite tastes as good as the next. No more eating all the good stuff off the top and being left with naked greens at the bottom of the bowl.

Before your salad is dressed, your salad maker will have a quick discussion on the dressing of your greens and, if you want to taste something before you commit, you can; the dressing is then tossed into your greens (as heavy or as light as you would like) and transferred to your bowl. Add a slice of bread and a serve-yourself beverage – Charlotte's Lenny Boy Kombucha, perhaps – and you are good to go. For Chop't creators, company owners and business partners Colin McCabe and Tony Shure this business is about relationships. Relationships with the farmers and producers the company supports; relationships with guests and relationships with their team of employees. It's just good business all the way around.

This food writer's take on what makes it all work? The incredible attention to detail – not only in terms of ingredients and quality, but in terms of intensive



training and customer service.

Not only do employees all know how to chop a salad with that certain Chop't flair; but they can all also answer nearly every question, they know every flavor profile, and if they don't know the answer to a question they find someone that does without skipping a beat.

All the more reason to visit Chop't Creative Salad Company and enjoy! Don't wait – chop, chop and make a date with a friend, a coworker or just treat

yourself for lunch or dinner today...

In addition to dining in, Chop't Charlotte locations also offer catering services, take out, online ordering and delivery.

For more information and menu details, visit Choptsalad.com, scroll down to the North Carolina section and click on the location nearest to you.

At Park Road Shopping Center, call 980-321-9034; at the Arboretum, call 704-817-8677; and at Blakeney, call 704-755-5565. ■

ROCKSALT:

Here's Where the World is Your Oyster

TEXT BY **HEIDI BILLOTTO**
PHOTOGRAPHY BY **GERIN CHIONIÈRE**

Who would have thunk it?

Years ago when customers were dropping off and picking up starched shirts and folded sweaters from Park Road Quick Cleaners located in the small building that is a cornerstone of the back lot at Park Road Shopping Center, would they ever have imagined that they might be headed in and out of those same doors years later to eat brunch or dinner or enjoy a happy hour with raw oysters on the patio?

I think not, but it's true... and, to be clear, it's not exactly the same doors, but you'll have to agree it makes for a good start to the story.

The year was 2015, and Park Road Shopping Center was in the midst of a resurgence. The dry cleaners relocated, and the building was rebuilt, converted to a restaurant. True people had doubts, as they always do when someone tries something new.



ROCKSALT's Exec Chef Shane Graybeal and proprietress Jessica Opperman



Would an oyster bar really work in a suburban Charlotte neighborhood?

Fast forward just two years later, and the crowds of people who love the fresh seafood and specialty oysters and clams at ROCKSALT have answered with a resounding yes!!

Offering wood-fired grilled specials and an oyster bar, serving up oysters and clams from coastal waters and fresh seafood from the Atlantic, the restaurant has gone on to prove that Charlotte loves its coastal seafood, and we can't get our fill of those fabulous oysters!

ROCKSALT is owned by Travis Croxton. As luck would have it Croxton is also a co-owner in his family's Chesapeake Bay-based Rappahannock Oyster Company. The mission of the Rappahannock Oyster Company is to celebrate good food grown well; and so with their hands full of the freshest of seafood, opening a series of restaurants offering locally harvested clams and oysters just made sense.

In Charlotte ROCKSALT is managed by local favorite Jessica Opperman, and just recently Chef Shane Graybeal has come on board as Executive Chef. Graybeal brings his own take to the menu as the seasons start to turn, changing up the small plates and entrée offerings to suit the season. This month Chef Shane is showcasing a pan fried chicken with cornbread panzanella, spiced honey and a cherry bomb hot sauce; the restaurant's classic Lambs & Clams presented with lamb bacon, Olde Salt clams, harissa broth and cucumber and herbs served with a house naan; and a banging bowl of steamed mussels with spaghetti squash, fredo chilis all in an apple cider broth. In addition ROCKSALT always features fresh oysters and clams served in a myriad of ways.

Local oysters from as close as the coast

They call the coast of the Carolinas and Virginia, from the Carteret County area of North Carolina on up to Virginia's Chesapeake Bay, the "Napa Valley of Oysters", because in recent years this part of the Atlantic coast produces more oysters now than almost anywhere else.

Used to be the oysters were all wild. But as waters were overfished, fishermen took note and began to help create a healthy natural marine environment where oysters could thrive. The team at Rappahannock were front runners in these efforts, and today they have not only rebuilt their family business, but have played a tremendous role in rebuilding the seafood industry on the coasts of Virginia, as well.



Like all responsible modern day fisherman fishing oysters and clams, they learned how to monitor and sustainably seed the waters. This is farmed fishing at its best as the oysters live in their natural environment, and now these briny bivalves are raised by the tens of thousands. Fishermen and oyster men and women like the team at Rappahannock are doing it right, working with nature to develop an aquacultural system that is sustainable, serves the environment, supports the community and produces some of the tastiest oysters and clams from the Atlantic coast.

It's the taste that tells the tale

At ROCKSALT there are usually 3-5 and sometimes as many as 6-8 different varieties of oysters on the menu – generally all from the Virginia or Carolina coast but sometimes from as far north as New England and as far south as the Gulf.

As oysters grow, they filter the water – which makes oyster farming great for the environment. It's the filtering of local waters that gives each set of oysters a different taste as they take on the mineral-ly essence of the region where they are raised. Fishermen call this flavor phenomena *merroir* –



think *terroir* – it's the same idea when wine enthusiasts talk about the flavor of grapes.

Now that you understand a bit of the science behind it all, you know why it's always fun to taste a variety of oysters at ROCKSALT. Oysters take on more of the flavor of their environment than any other seafood we eat, and so depending upon the waters from which they were raised, oysters can be mild, sweet, or very bright and briny. Be sure to try them all remembering it's the nuances of the local waters that affect the flavor of each individual oyster.

The very best way to try the variety of oysters at ROCKSALT is at the restaurant's daily Oyster Happy Hour, when oysters are \$1 each from 3-7pm Monday through Friday and from 11:30am to 4pm on Saturday and Sunday. Start any evening off with the Happy Hour and then plan on staying for dinner to let Chef Shane wow you with all the other offerings, and on Saturdays and Sundays midday incorporate the selection of oysters into your options for brunch and enjoy!

For more information visit RocksaltRestaurants.com or call 704-503-9945 for reservations. Located at 512 Brandywine Road behind Michael's at Park Road Shopping Center, ROCKSALT is open for Dinner weekdays and brunch and dinner on the weekends. Hours: Mon.-Thurs. 3:00pm - 10pm; Fri./Sat. 11:30am - 11pm; and Sun. 11:30am - 10pm ■





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It's About Dignity and Respect

TEXT BY REVEREND TONY MARCIANO, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE CHARLOTTE RESCUE MISSION

Growing up, my mother received requests for used clothing from agencies conducting the clothing drive. She always washed and folded the clothing and put it in a neat paper bag. My job was to put it on the front porch of the house. I learned very early on that you didn't give away the nasty worn out items that should have gone in the garbage. Instead you give gently used items to send a message that the individual receiving them has value and worth.

Fast forward many years later. The Charlotte Rescue Mission is launching its annual Thanksgiving Food box campaign. Our partners hear the same thing I heard from my mother many years ago. It's not about giving people in need the things you wouldn't eat. Rather, it's giving them the things you want on your own Thanksgiving food table.

When I tell the community about this idea, I always say, "Don't go through your food pantry and give them your Brussel sprouts or asparagus spears because you don't want to eat them yourself. Instead, when they open the box, put a smile on their face because they know the contents contain a complete Thanksgiving dinner. What goes into that box?"

It starts with a banker's box or a plastic box. Dimensions are approximately 16" L x 13" W x 12" H. We don't want a cardboard box with no lid. Why? Because the box by itself sends the message that you have value and worth. We took the time to put it in a container you can reuse. Without the lid, it sends a message that you are a family in need. They know that; they don't need to be reminded of it.

We chose the quantities so that it can feed a family of four. We don't want anyone going hungry.

Let me return to my question of "Why?" Why is there such attention to detail? There are a lot of reasons:

- Packing these food boxes allows the partner family to see people in need on level ground as they are.
- Receiving a well packaged Thanksgiving food box avoids the shame a family can feel when receiving help from someone else.
- Sitting around one's own table allows a family to create its own memories that last a lifetime.

The goal is to tell people they have worth and value. We love them, and God also loves them. We just use the food as a vehicle to make that happen. ■

Rev. Tony Marciano is the Executive Director of the Charlotte Rescue Mission. The Charlotte Rescue Mission provides a free long-term Christian recovery program for men and women who are addicted to drugs and alcohol. For more information, visit our website at www.charlotterescuemission.org.

WHAT ARE THE FOOD ITEMS?

1. Green beans (38oz can)
2. Whole kernel corn (29oz can)
3. Cut sweet yams (40oz can)
4. Cranberry sauce (14oz can)
5. Stove Top stuffing (6oz box)
6. Turkey or Brown gravy mix (1 pkg)
7. Spice Cake Mix (1 box)
8. Pumpkin - not pie filling (15oz can)
9. Baking Pan for Cake (9 x 13)
10. One copy each of "Recipe for Pumpkin Cake"
11. Turkey - 12 to 15 lbs.



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Eliminating The Digital Divide

One Laptop At A Time

PHOTO BY E2D STAFF



TEXT BY SHERRI JOHNSON

“Giving a student a laptop who otherwise would not have access to a computer and the internet gives that child a level playing field.”

What's a digital divide? It's a not-so-simple to solve separator – the gap between the haves and the have nots. The divide is wide in our community between those who have a computer and internet access and those who do not. It's certainly not something you imagine to be a problem in Charlotte where smart phones and WIFI access seems abundant. Yet, 70,000 children in Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools (CMS) are academically disadvantaged due to this digital divide.

Acknowledging the gap and taking action began in Franny Millen's backyard when she noticed some classmates without access to the technology that she had to complete homework assignments. What Franny saw in her elementary classroom is commonplace system wide, across all grades. This awareness, along with a little help from her family, launched a pilot program providing laptops at Davidson Elementary that would serve as a scalable model to form the foundation of E2D (Eliminate the Digital Divide), a non-profit founded in 2013.

PHOTO BY E2D STAFF



According to Pat Millen, Franny's father and president of E2D, who left his sports marketing business to lead the mission, the lifeblood of the organization lies with the generosity of corporate partners like Lowe's and Red Ventures. These companies, along with others, donate hundreds of used employees' laptops each year – 500 alone come from Lowe's annually. Also, through a partnership with Sprint, E2D purchases hotspots that come with three years of pre-paid data.

“Giving a student a laptop who otherwise would not have access to a computer and the internet gives that child a level playing field,” says Millen. “There is no limit to what they can accomplish with technology at their fingertips.”

Their operation is run from a small office in Cornelius where rows of laptops are stacked on racks, separated by service issues. It takes about \$150 dollars to prepare each device with like-new functionality, including software licensing and clean hard drives. High school students, many who were E2D recipi-



PHOTO BY BRITTANY CONNOR



PHOTO BY BRITTANY CONNOR



PHOTO BY E2D STAFF

The divide is wide in our community between those who have a computer and internet access and those who do not.

ents, staff the computer lab after school – learning valuable life skills from IT mentors.

“We are on a path to have a lab in all 20 CMS high schools we work with,” says Millen. “There are a dozen students working in three high schools now, and we’ll add a new lab in South Mecklenburg High in January.”

To ensure a sense of ownership, families pay \$50 dollars, and the computer is theirs forever. If a student brings a laptop home, the entire family benefits through digital literacy and access to

things like opening an online bank account and being able to email their child’s teacher.

Sadly, 4,100 students in CMS are homeless, and to that child a laptop is not just about technology, it’s a sense of place, giving them access to mobile technology and an important email address they can carry with them through transitions. Millen explained that there are students who live in shelters who take public transportation, and this laptop enables them to work during what is sometimes a long commute.

“We believe that by 2019 the digital divide can be solved,” says Millen. “We started with just 54 laptops at one elementary school and have gone to 4,000 in 4 years – we just need donations to our general fund to help scale our mission.”

You can help eliminate the digital divide by funding a laptop that can change a student’s life. Visit <http://www.e-2-d.org/donate> and donate on their website or mail your donation to E2D, P.O. Box 1299, Davidson, NC 28036. ■

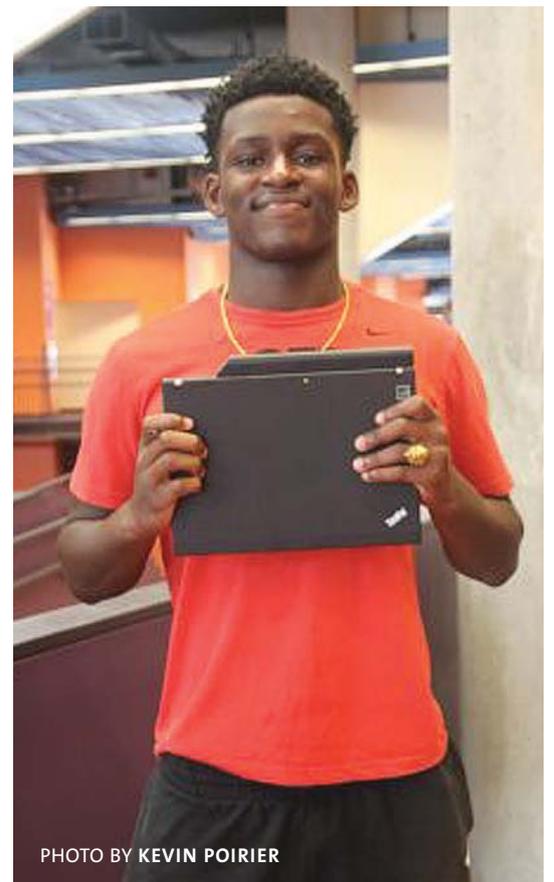


PHOTO BY KEVIN POIRIER

Art & Friendship Shine Light on Homelessness in



Author Ron Hall, Julio Larraz, Renee Zellweger and Anne Neilson celebrate the film at a reception at Anne Neilson Fine Art. *Photograph courtesy of Cameron Faye Photography.*

TEXT BY SANDRA SCOTT

Anchored in a mission to make a difference through art, Anne Neilson Fine Art gallery continues to carefully curate shows that are both intellectually stimulating and emotionally captivating, deeply rooted in purpose to bring light and hope to hearts and homes everywhere. The gallery's latest display of works featured internationally renowned and award-winning Cuban artist, Julio Larraz, as a benefit to various homeless organizations.

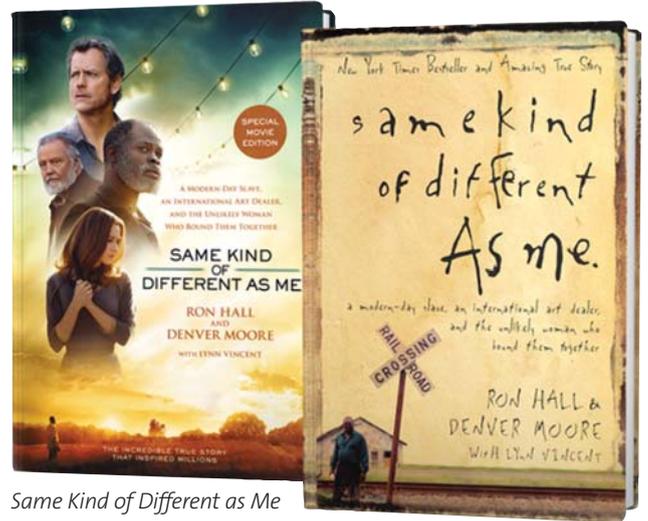
Julio's work hovers between real and imagined,

depicting recognizable figures and places but not necessarily in realistic proportions or proper contexts. He describes his paintings as daydreams and images reflected in his mind, which he seeks to capture on canvas before they disappear. Julio, a natural talent, got his start by drawing political caricatures published in the *New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *Vogue Magazine*, and more. He began painting full time in 1967, leading to many solo exhibitions and prestigious awards. The body of work displayed

at Anne Neilson Fine Art highlighted his masterful technique, brilliant imagination, and alluring humor that can only be fully appreciated in person.

Alongside Julio's work was a private collection of works by Denver Moore; a former homeless man turned *New York Times* bestselling author, artist, and philanthropist, due to a divine meeting with Ron Hall, an international art dealer, and his wife Debbie. The unlikely friendship and miraculous events that unfolded were told in their co-authored book, *Same*

SAME KIND OF DIFFERENT AS ME



Same Kind of Different as Me premiered on October 20, 2017



Paintings by Julio Larraz were on display at Anne Neilson Fine Art Gallery.



"From the Deep Recesses of the Mind", 60x72, Oil on Canvas



Denver Moore paintings on display at Anne Neilson Fine Art through early December 2017

Kind of Different As Me. Their inspiring story spent three years on the NYT bestsellers list and was produced into a motion picture, released this past October, featuring an academy award winning cast with Jon Voight, Greg Kinnear, Renee Zellweger, and Djimon Hounsou. This emotional film unpacks the gritty realities of life, the power of forgiveness, and the lasting impact of kindness and love; a positive message for all ages and walks of life.

Denver, who passed in 2012, began painting later in life and used art to convey his unique life experiences and strong beliefs. His primitive approach provided a unique contrast to Julio's and speaks to the artist inside us all. The exclusive opportunity to view Denver's work in person, alongside Julio's (who is also depicted in the film), was a touching and impactful experience at Anne Neilson Fine Art.

Anne Neilson, gallery owner, accomplished artist, author, and philanthropist, also has a painting featured in the film and a deep connection with the authors and their mission to help others. In fact, it was Ron who encouraged Anne to keep painting and open the gallery over three years ago. Since its opening in 2014, the gallery has relocated to SouthPark and represents more than 50 emerging and established artists worldwide.

With her eyes set on making a lasting impact on the Charlotte community, Anne continues to paint and give back a portion of all sales from the gallery and her line of home luxury products (stemming from her ethereal *Angel* series called Anne Neilson Home), to various organizations in our city and beyond. Visit the gallery at 532 Governor Morrison Street or anneneilsonfineart.com. ■



Anne Neilson at 2009 fundraiser with homelessness activists and bestselling authors of *Same Kind of Different as Me*, Denver Moore and Ron Hall.



Charlotte Living's Home & Garden Editor Vicki Payne and husband Jerry Donatelli attended the film's opening in Los Angeles. Vicki is Ron Hall's first cousin and enjoyed seeing her family's home depicted in the movie.



Denver Moore's artwork was on display at a private dinner held at Anne Neilson Fine Art for Ron Hall, Julio Larraz and Renee Zellweger. Photograph courtesy of Cameron Faye Photography.



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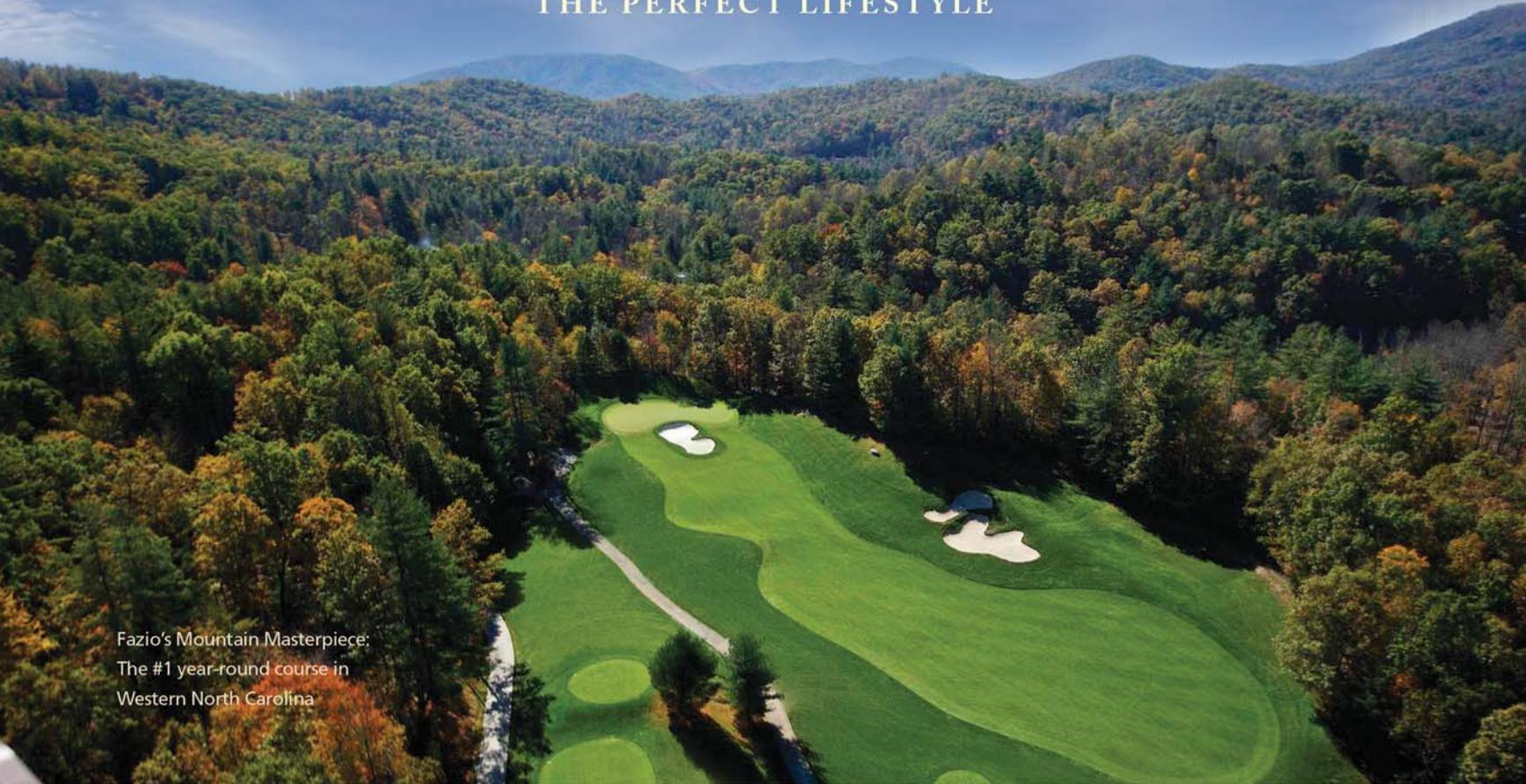


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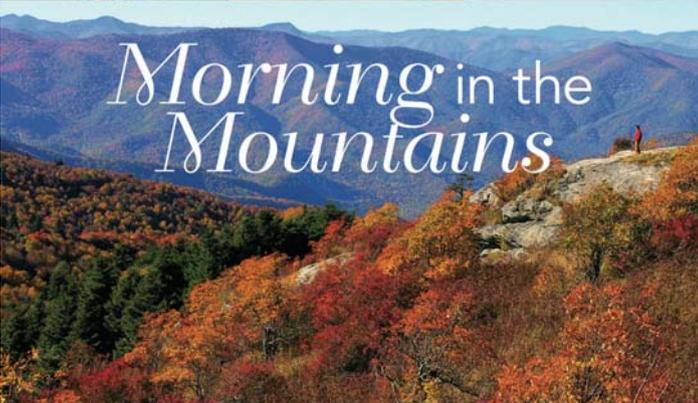
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Peppermint Forest Christmas Shop

Sparkle & Joy!

PHOTOGRAPHY BY GERIN CHOINIERE



Charlotte's Holiday Wonderland for 38 Years

Each year in October a magical transformation takes place in south Charlotte. The busy elves at locally owned Oasis Pools Plus put away their extraordinary inventory of outdoor furnishings to create a Christmas wonderland you do not want to miss.

The glorious showroom at Peppermint Forest Christmas Shop sparkles with thousands of bright lights and shiny ornaments covering hundreds of lifelike trees. The atmosphere is festive and sure to evoke sweet memories of holidays gone by.

Angels, snowflakes, birds and ballerinas adorn the trees at Peppermint Forest, alongside colorful displays of Santas and Christmas collectibles. The vast selection of wreaths, ornaments, greenery and decorative accents is like no other in the city.



HOLIDAY TRADITION



**Don't miss the Peppermint Forest
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**Shop more than 50 themed
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Celebrate the magic of the season at Peppermint Forest Christmas Shop!

Peppermint Forest Christmas Shop is the sister company of Oasis Pools Plus which was founded in 1979 and opened in the Oakhurst neighborhood on Monroe Road. The company outgrew their original space and later relocated to a 37,000 square foot storefront in Pineville, NC at Carolina Place Mall. This stellar local business continues to bring the best in customer service, helping loyal customers create their backyard oasis or deck their halls in twinkling lights and decorations for the holidays.

The popular retailer of quality pool supplies, outdoor furniture and accessories thrives in the warm Carolina climate; but when the holidays roll around, their amazing transition to the Peppermint Forest Christmas Shop marks the beginning of the joyous season for many Charlotteans. Peppermint Forest celebrated its 38th season at the grand opening on October 14





May your home be merry and bright this holiday season.

and will be bustling with excitement through the end of the December.

To make the most of the season and energize your holiday spirit, visit Peppermint Forest Christmas Shop, 11729 Carolina Place Parkway, Pineville, NC. For more information call 704.542.5300 or order online at peppermintforest.com. ■



Young Star Shines Light on Holiday Classic

CONTRIBUTED BY MARY STATON

Charlotte Ballet's Nutcracker

"Every role I dance is so different. So I really try to be very realistic and as authentic as possible when approaching each role. I never want different roles to look the same. I strive for versatility."

"People are always amazed at the athleticism ballet dancers have. I mix daily ballet lessons with other forms of exercise, like yoga and working out at a gym. It's hard, but I focus on my clarity and precision. I want to dance professionally until I'm 40, and then be a teacher and ballet-master until I die!"

—Juwan Alston, gifted young ballet dancer with the world-renown Charlotte Ballet



PHOTO BY TODD ROSENBERG

Wise words from Juwan Alston, a young ballet stand-out who played Cavalier (the lead male role) with the Charlotte Ballet's stunning and reimagined production of this perennial holiday classic in 2016. He joined the troupe in 2015 when he was 19. Now only 21, he's achieved so much to have begun dancing seriously only six years ago.

He grew up in Texas, playing football (he was in Texas after all) and running track and field. In fact, he competed in Junior Olympics track and field events for several years before getting involved in musical theatre in high school. There he learned to act, sing and dance. While playing the role of Cavalier in the *Nutcracker* at 15, he realized that he wanted to focus on becoming a professional dancer.

As for his versatility, he was awarded the Senior Hip-Hop Scholarship at the Texas Association of Teachers Dancing, Inc. convention in 2012. The next year he was grateful to attend American Ballet Theatre's Summer Intensive program on scholar-

ship, and in 2014 was accepted at the University of North Carolina School of the Arts. There he performed ballets by Sir Frederick Ashton, George Balanchine, Susan Jaffe and Ethan Stiefel.

Since joining the Charlotte Ballet in 2015, he's danced ballets by headliners Jean-Pierre Bonnefoux, Javier De Frutos, Mark Diamond, Mark Godden, David Ingram, Sasha James, Alonzo King and Ohad Naharin. Bonnefoux choreographed the reimagined *Nutcracker* last

Nutcracker continues its magic through these special performances; details at charlotteballet.org:

- Sensory-friendly Nutcracker, Wednesday, December 20 at 1 p.m., lobby opens at 11:30. Children, families and adults with sensory challenges and other specific needs can enjoy ballet in this comfortable and inviting environment.
- Senior Dress Rehearsal, Friday, December 8 at 1:30 p.m. – Senior adults may enjoy a fully-costumed working dress rehearsal at a discounted ticket price.
- Educational Theater Performance, Wednesday, December 13 and Friday, December 15 at 10 a.m. Take a field trip to a live professional performance tailored to students.

Dates: Matinees and evenings from Saturday, December 9 – Saturday, December 23, 2017

Location: Belk Theater, Blumenthal Performing Arts Center

Tickets: \$25 - \$125, available at CarolinaTix (carolinatix.org)

Ages: All ages



year; all costumes and sets were stunningly re-imagined as well!

The holiday season is a time heavily steeped in ritual and tradition. Experiencing the Nutcracker is certainly one that is celebrated all over the world. But right here in Charlotte, we have Jean-Pierre Bonnefoux's newly updated world-class version. And the amazing talent of its dancers, musicians and crew to view.

Don't miss it, whether it's your first or 40th. The memories you create with loved ones will last a lifetime. ■



PHOTO BY CHRISTOPHER RECORD



PHOTO BY PETER ZAY

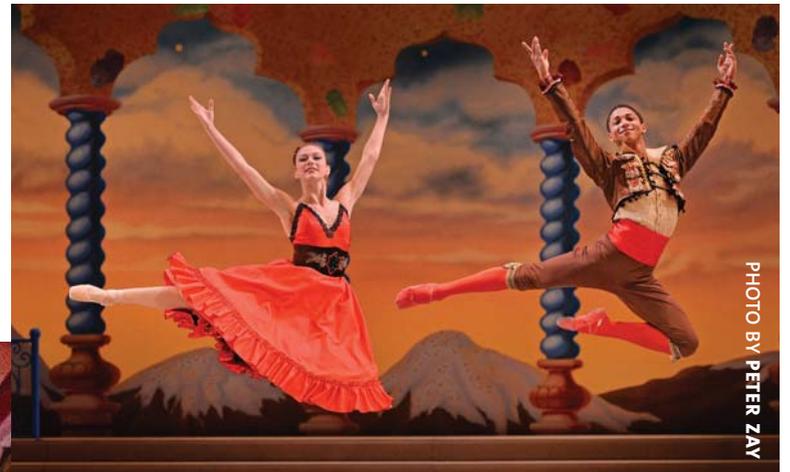


PHOTO BY PETER ZAY



PHOTO BY PETER ZAY

"This ballet is very relatable for whatever stage in life you're at. Three to four year olds can walk in and be amazed by the elaborate costumes, resplendent staging, and enchanting music – by Tchaikovsky and exquisitely performed by members of the Charlotte Symphony – all wrapped up in a happy-ending holiday story. This is not just a dance recital – it's an elegant and exciting professional production that features talented dancers from the very young to those young at heart. Everyone attending gets pulled in!"

–Juwan Alston, age 21, who performed as Cavalier, the lead male role in *Nutcracker*, for the Charlotte Ballet's stunning and reimagined *Nutcracker* in 2016

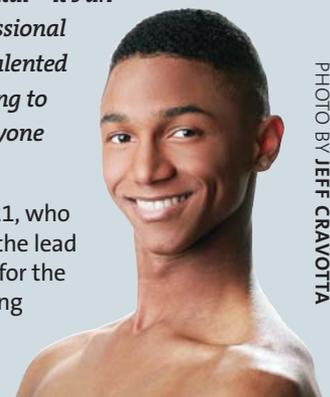


PHOTO BY JEFF CRAVOTTA

The Feast of The Seven Fishes

Bring Italian American Traditions To Your Holiday Table

TEXT BY HEIDI BILLOTTO PHOTOGRAPHY BY GERIN CHIONIERE



Traditions are strong 'round holiday time, particularly food traditions. While we food-centric folk like to read new recipes; truth is, what we want to actually eat is what

we had as a kid. We want that memory of what our grandmother served on her holiday table – we want the holidays to bring us back home, at least emotionally vis a vis our taste buds, if we can't physically go back.

It's often nice, though, to try on someone else's traditions for size every once in a while... deep fry your turkey instead of roasting it, try a new recipe for your Thanksgiving stuffing, add Potato Latkes to your Christmas table instead of the classic mashed options or skip the turkey, ham or standing rib roast all together and opt to celebrate this year with the Feast of the Seven Fishes.

The Feast of the Seven Fishes was born as an Italian-American tradition and finds its roots in the Italian tradition of a meatless meal to celebrate Christmas Eve.

The number of courses for this holiday feast originated from church doctrines, but the actual number seems to vary depending on who you ask and how their family celebrated – seven courses for the seven sacraments; ten courses for each station of the cross; or sometimes even 12-13 courses, symbolic of the 12 apostles plus one additional course to represent Jesus.

Your choice of doctrine aside, to me, one of the lovely things about this Christmas holiday feast is that, other than the no meat stipulation, there are no hard and fast rules as to which dishes to serve as menus vary from family to family or region to region – this is a tradition you can take on and make it your own.



Vivace's Fritto Misto with shrimp, skate and lemons

The common denominator is seafood as the driving focus of each course, in theory making it a lighter than the usual meal – a fast (of sorts) so that one might concentrate on the real reason for the Christmas Eve celebration.

With time though, this feast has turned into just that – a feast of seven fabulous courses, generally served on Christmas Eve or sometimes prior to December 25. Without meat as an option, chefs turn to seafood and reimagine it in each of seven different courses of the meal, be it the appetizers, antipasto-style plates, soups, pasta dishes, entrées or often a buffet of desserts.

Several Charlotte restaurants offer Feast of the Seven Fishes menus – among them three of my favorite places: Luca Modern Italian Kitchen on Elizabeth Avenue; Aria Tuscan Grill in

Uptown in the lower level of Founders' Hall and Vivace at the Metropolitan in Midtown.

Uptown Aria Tuscan Grill will be running their

FOR MORE INFO:

Aria Tuscan Grill, 100 N. Tryon St., Charlotte, NC 28202. Call for reservations and details at 704-376-8880 or visit ariacharlotte.com

Luca Modern Italian Kitchen, 1523 Elizabeth Ave, Charlotte, NC 28204. Call for reservations and details at 704-910-3161 or visit LucaItalianKitchen.com

Vivace Charlotte, 1100 Metropolitan Ave #100, Charlotte, NC 28204. Call for reservations and details at 704-370-7755 or visit VivaceCharlotte.com

special Feast of the Seven Fishes menu the week of December 18-23, 2017. Some examples of what will be coming from the kitchen of Chef Chris Bateman and team include: Ahi tuna crudo with olives, celery, basil, orange salt and blood orange olive oil; grilled salmon with Wild Hope Farms tomato braised greens, parsnip purée and lemon tomato vinaigrette; and fettuccine carbonara with lobster, pancetta and a soft boiled egg.

On Elizabeth Avenue, Jessica and Luca Annunziata will also be celebrating with a Feast of the Seven Fishes menu as a single night, special occasion dinner for Christmas Eve. The menu is still in the works but will feature the anticipated seven courses and will include such favorites as a stuffed calamari and a house pasta frutti di mare.

And at Vivace in Charlotte, Chef John Caputo and team will also be feasting with a special menu December 21-24, 2017, in addition to the regular seasonal fare. To give you a taste of what your holiday evening of feasting might look like, we've captured several of the offerings at Vivace in these photos.

For all the specifics, call each restaurant for the exact days and times for each Feast of the Seven Fishes celebration and be sure to make advance reservations. ■



**Octopus
Bolognese
with fusilli**



**Sautéed Branzino Filet
with truffled celeriac
puree, tuscan kalea
and lobster butter**

Shingled, Lapped,

TEXT BY SHERRY AUGUSTINE PHOTOGRAPHY BY GERIN CHOINIERE



White House Style at Lake Norman

Crisp white coastal style homes dot the Lake Norman shoreline like gleaming white pearls. These time-honored shingle and clapboard style homes, built by Patrick Joseph Distinctive Homes (PJDH), radiate relaxed informality and a slower pace of living.

In 2007, a team from Patrick Joseph Distinctive Homes toured the most iconic towns of New England featuring Cape Cod shingle style architecture: Mystic, Connecticut; Newport, Rhode Island; and Martha's Vineyard, Massachusetts, to name a few. These professionals were on a quest for capturing the architectural

essence of this enduring and endearing style, and bringing that spirit back to Lake Norman.

Today, if you drive through the neighborhoods on the shores of Lake Norman, you will see a series of perennial classic white homes that make up the PJDH White House Collection. These shingled, lapped, and batted homes are the manifestation of that New England architecture expedition, and Patrick Joseph's passion for building heirloom luxury homes.

"These homes are a piece of Americana," says Mike Shalvoy, founder of Patrick Joseph Distinctive Homes, gesturing toward one of their proudest creations. This house is an inventive collection of details that make a nostalgic and timeless style,

reminiscent of the Hamptons.

Wisps of plumed sea grasses surrounding a lamppost wave a greeting at the beginning of the herringbone cobbled semi-circle driveway approaching the waterfront home.

"It has presence without being ostentatious," commented Jim Shalvoy, Mike's brother, and a Patrick Joseph executive. It exudes grace and charm, from the top of the copper bell shaped cupola surrounded by a widow's walk, to the bottom of the saltwater pool.

How does a builder create this feel-good factor of coziness and warmth within a 10,000 square-foot house? "One element is the red brick on the carriage house garage that was reclaimed from a

and Battered



The spacious, luxurious kitchen flows easily into the dining and living areas, which are flanked by fireplaces. “The porches are an integral part of the house, with fireplaces and all the amenities for year round lakeside living,” added Jim.

While this casual white house style may evoke feelings of a comfortable white house of your past, this is not your grandparents’ white house. With a wood paneled elevator, a wine vault, and a hot yoga studio on the fourth floor, 3 laundry rooms and 12 bathrooms, this is a whole new context for the classic “white house.”

Esteemed designer Charles Earnes said, “details are not the details, they make the design.” It is this collaboration of details that gives a Patrick Joseph home its style. The details are in the drink rails instead of chair rails in the recreation areas, the patina on the brick wall and backsplash in the kitchen, and weathered granite countertops in the basement level kitchen.

“We like to see the tail lights go on when people drive by a Patrick Joseph Home” Mike exclaims. And taillights did blaze as we drove through another part of this Lake Norman community where a distinctively Patrick Joseph white house stood, comfortable in its surroundings by the lake. It was a symphony of white lap, shake shingle, fish scale shingle, and board and batten,



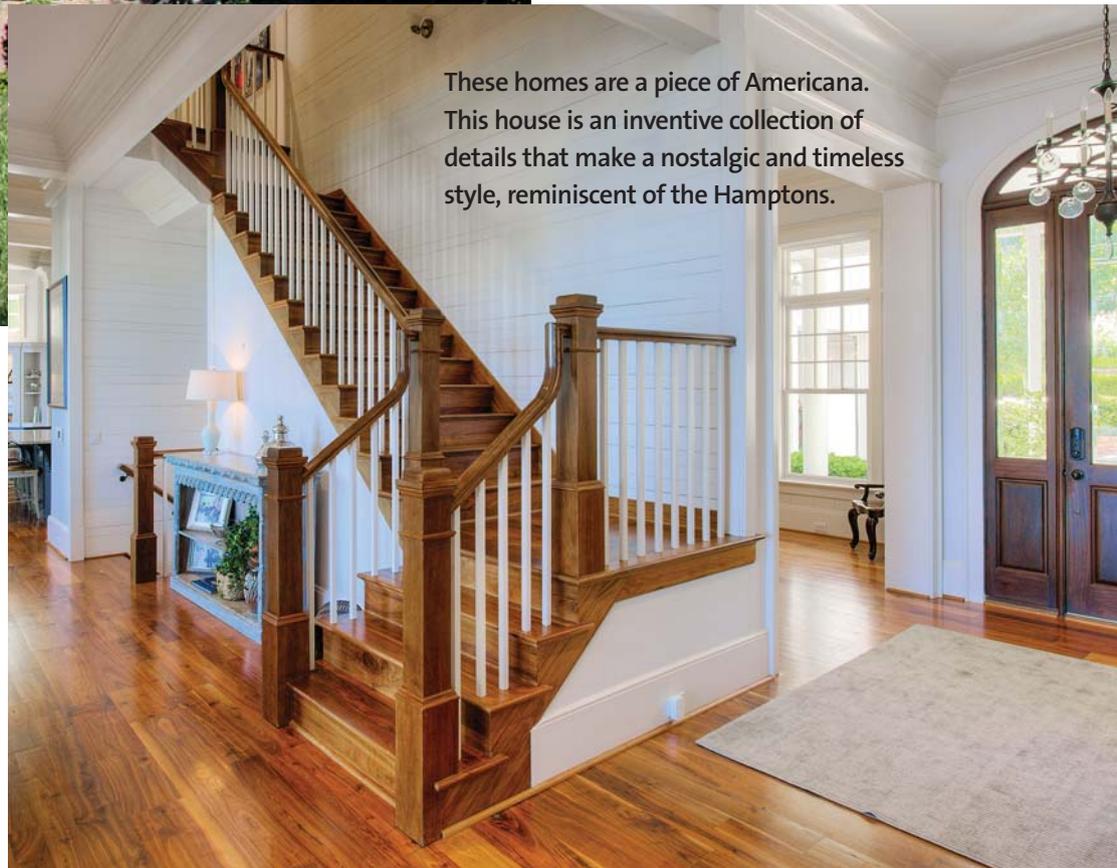
mill in South Carolina,” says Mike.

The charm continues with the main house and opposite garage finished in hand cut 4-inch lap siding, painted classic white – and the roof? “It had to be cedar shake,” says Jim Shalvoy.

Once you pass through the graceful mahogany front door, natural light drenches the retreat worthy rooms through vast windows with divided light transoms. The walls feature three quarter height wainscot paneling in random width shiplap, and the floors are finished in alternating width walnut.

According to Mike, they loved shiplap paneling before shiplap was cool.

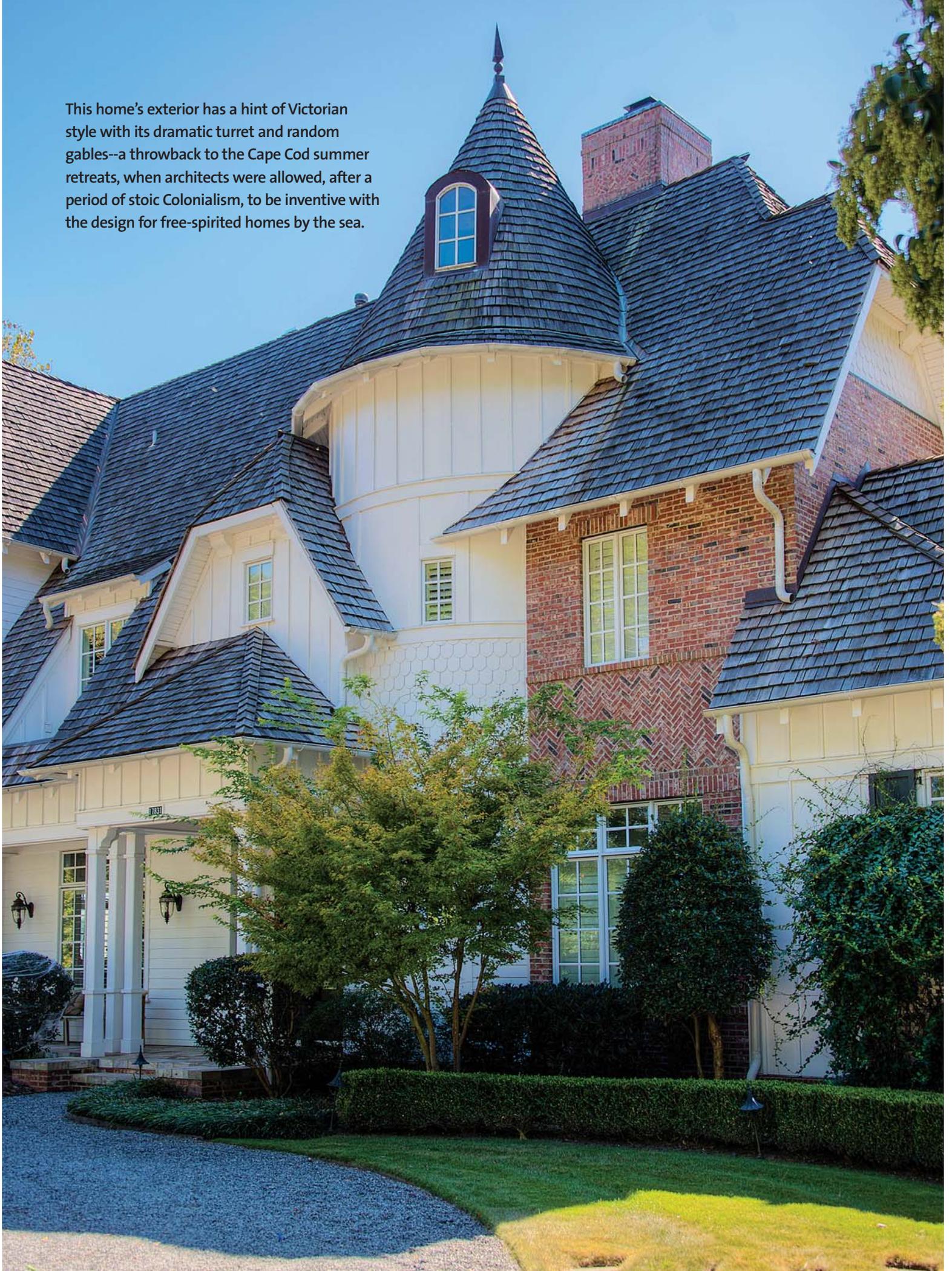
The hearth-warmed kitchen was the heart of early Cape Cod cottages. This home nods to that past.



These homes are a piece of Americana. This house is an inventive collection of details that make a nostalgic and timeless style, reminiscent of the Hamptons.



This home's exterior has a hint of Victorian style with its dramatic turret and random gables--a throwback to the Cape Cod summer retreats, when architects were allowed, after a period of stoic Colonialism, to be inventive with the design for free-spirited homes by the sea.





The last on our tour this day is one of the most memorable houses in this waterfront community. At the end of the street, it is a profusion of unique dormers, widows walk, cupolas, trellises, all done in classic white with black shutters held by shutter dogs.





punctuated by red brick with an ornamental herringbone pattern on an exterior alcove and chimney.

This home's exterior has a hint of Victorian style with its dramatic turret and random gables--a throwback to the Cape Cod summer retreats, when architects were allowed, after a period of stoic Colonialism, to be inventive with the design for free-spirited homes by the sea. Steep, multi gabled roofs, asymmetry, and patterned and multi textured walls, makes this home distinctive, just the way Patrick Joseph Distinctive Homes likes it. Jim explains, "Our home design partner, JJ Barja, owner of Elite Design Group, has a keen understanding of the copious details that result in the authenticity our customers appreciate."

It was a complete overhaul remodel that morphed a non-descript stucco home of the early 90s into a stunner that is one of the most admired homes in the neighborhood.

"This white house style is on fire," says Mike Shalvoy, owner of Patrick Joseph Distinctive Homes. "This is very different from a trend; rather than mimic the style of the moment, we build homes that will endure based on the principles of classic architecture." ■



Entertain in Style for the Holidays

HOW TO PREPARE YOUR PERFECT BAR CART

BY VICKI PAYNE

Cocktails have never been more popular. Start preparing your perfect bar now, and you'll be ready to kick back and enjoy entertaining during the holidays. The best way to corral all your mixes, liquors and bar accessories is on a decorative bar car.

Not since the 1940s have we seen such a swell in the popularity of the bar cart. It's impossible to flip through a shelter magazine or read a blog without discovering a charming cart. One reason for their popularity is the availability of a variety of styles.

Top off your tray with a decorative touch such as fresh flowers, a framed print, statue, crystal decanter or a stack of vintage cocktail books. Update your display to match the season.

When it's party time prep your bar. Move the cart to a location that can be easily accessed by your guests. Keep it simple by offering a special cocktail based around one type of alcohol. For

If you think you don't have room for a cart consider replacing a potted plant or that old chair that occupy a side wall or corner in your living room or dining room. Carts come in all sizes. Measure the space you've designated for this important décor accessory.

When choosing a cart, find a style that fits your décor. Midcentury, industrial, chic and rustic in both new and vintage offering are available. Select a cart that has multiple shelves to maximize the storage space. Check the space between shelves. While three shelves may provide extra space, if they are too close together you won't have necessary versatility when arranging liquor bottles, decanters, cocktail shakers and glassware.

Most bar carts come with glass shelves because ice buckets drip, bottles drip, and sticky garnishes can wreck hard to clean surfaces such as wood and marble. Trays are an alternative solution if you end up selecting a cart with high maintenance shelves. Carts with wheels allow you to relocate the cart around your house and even outdoors during parties. Make sure you can lock the wheels in place to avoid accidents.

Decking out your cart can be very creative. There are two looks. The first is one that is stylized for everyday use. You don't have to have all your liquor on the bar cart. Display only your best bottles and keep the rest in the party. Display a small sampling of glasses.



CRATE & BARREL'S RENEE BAR CART



CRATE & BARREL'S LIBATIONS BAR CART

example, bourbon and whiskey are perfect for fall cocktails. Invest in a good bottle of whiskey, sweet vermouth, bitters and basics like sugar, cherries and sour mix so your guests can concoct their own Manhattan, old-fashioned or whiskey sour. Don't forget a bucket of ice and cocktail shaker.

Basic liquors for a well stocked bar include vodka, gin, tequila, whisky, bourbon and rum. Round out your inventory with mixers such as club soda, tonic water, and sparkling water.

Keep things organized by using trays to divide the surfaces into zones. Upgrade your bar tools. Select ones that are beautiful as well as functional. Have on hand bottle openers, shakers, small cutting board, ice bucket, stirrers, strainer and carafes. Keep out just the specific supplies that you need for the occasion and store the others in a nearby cabinet or in decorative boxes. Always, always, keep your shelves and glassware shiny and spotless. ■



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The Midas Touch

BY VICKI PAYNE

Pulling out boxes of Christmas decorations of years gone by can be nostalgic, but for most, you might as well put us on auto-drive. We have hung the same wreath on our front door for decades. From time to time we might replace the faded bow with a new one, but chances are it will be the same color as the last.



This holiday season all that glitters is gold. I couldn't be more excited to embrace a new trend. After decorating my home and offices for more years than I want to count, I truly need some new inspiration.

Gold has replaced silver in fashion, jewelry, home décor and holiday decorations. All shades of gold; shiny, bright, sparkling gold, soft, flat, mate gold and rosy, warm gold. For the past two years, touches of gold have been mixed with silver as we eased into this final phase of acceptance.

Take advantage of this trend and shake up your home's holiday décor. Not everyone's home looks lovely draped in red and green. Take the opportunity to pick a color that coordinates with your décor and mix it with gold. Adding a third color makes it more interesting. This time of the year I prefer using white.

Green is a neutral so use it abundantly for greenery, trees and wreaths.

Open your decoration boxes and only take out the items that are from your new colorways. If red isn't on the list, the red Santa must stay in the box, but the white and gold angel, she's perfect. It takes discipline to stick close to your new color plan, but I promise the process is fun and the results outstanding.

Don't limit yourself to just the holiday box. Look around the house and collect all the gold, white and signature color accessories. Sometimes all you need is a pair of white ceramic or gold candle sticks placed next to a white platter with a gold band filled with fresh magnolia leaves and a handful of gold ornaments. It makes a beautiful, stylish display for your dining table.

String lights are so easy to use. They bring sparkle and illumination to areas

too difficult to electrify, making them perfect for coffee tables, fireplace mantels and wreaths. Candles can be difficult to monitor, and who hasn't scraped melted wax off their table tops and rugs? This year switch to string lights.

Make a list and head out to the stores to fill in any of the gaps in your decorating supplies. Perhaps a couple of boxes of gold ornaments in assorted sizes, gold ribbon, fresh candles. Don't forget those string lights and batteries.

If you're planning a party don't forget to update your barware. Invest in a beautiful gold tray, perhaps a cocktail shaker and bar tools. An awesome way to give your holiday bash the Midas touch.

Back home, shop your yard for fresh greenery, magnolia leaves, curly willow branches and pinecones. Replace bows on wreaths with sparkly gold ones. Fill large white or clear jugs and planters with fresh greenery accented with branches spray painted gold. Add glitter for that extra sparkle.

The Christmas tree is the epicenter of the home during the holidays. I don't know about your house but my kid's lost interest in helping with the tree around age 12. Since it is my job to decorate it, I make it fun and a reflection of my style.

I put on a movie, preferably a classic romantic comedy, pour a glass of champagne and launch into decorating with the golden touch. The secret is staying true to this year's color palate. No need to use everything. Keeping it coordinated makes the tree appear fuller. More lights are always better than more ornaments.

Approaching the holidays with refreshing ideas and creative juices flowing can turn even the simplest rituals into a delight. A little champagne doesn't hurt! ■



Eating Local for the Holidays

STORIES AND PHOTOS BY HEIDI BILLOTTO

In a continuing series of articles featured on these pages in each issue, our own Heidi Bilotto brings you her take on how easy it is Eat Local. This edition of the series features five wonderful brands from both of sides of the Carolina state line.

If you are cooking or baking for the upcoming holiday season consider them all perfect additions to all of your favorite holiday recipes – or use each of them in your favorite recipes all year round. If you are in gift giving mode, order early and know these each will make the very best of holiday gifts or stocking stuffers for your

favorite gourmet or gourmand – and be sure to order enough to stock your pantry or freezer as well!

If you are looking for recipes or need an idea of how and where to begin, check out the October “Easy to Eat Local” blog post at HeidiBilottoFood.com or refer to any of these product websites.

Read on. You’ll see how it’s oh, so easy to eat “Got To Be NC” or “Certified South Carolina” Local, just by opening a package, bottle, jar or box!

POSTRE SEA SALT CARAMELS FROM ASHEVILLE, NC

Let’s kick things off on a sweet note. With Postre Sea Salt Caramel Sauce, the sweet satisfaction you crave is just a squeeze away! It’s always about the way a product tastes, but often it’s the packaging that attracts the eye, and we just love that this locally made sauce conveniently comes in a tube.

Made in small batches with high-quality, organic ingredients, and NO preservatives it’s a brilliant, simply brilliant, and delicious idea that hails from Asheville NC. This family run business is all about the sea salt caramel – Jamie Sastra is in charge of caramel production while hubby Joe Scott handles the operations of the company. In addition to the tubes of the sweet succulent sauce, they also produce caramel candies in a variety of flavors and even make lollipops for the kids in us all.

The recipe for Postre’s unbelievably delicious sea salt caramel sauce was originally developed as a topping for a rich chocolate dessert served in a restaurant, but it was just so good that when Jamie and Joe moved to Asheville, they decided to give up restaurant careers and build a company around the sensational sauce.

In Charlotte, Postre caramel sauce is available at Orrman’s Cheese Shop. Outside of Charlotte, you’ll find Postre caramels in the local section of many

Ingles stores, specialty shops in and around Asheville or you may order online directly from the Postre website. Buy several tubes – you’ll want them for gifts and stocking stuffers and to keep on hand at home to top desserts, add to coffee and, when the mood hits, eat by the spoonful right out of the tube.

For more info and more local retail outlets follow Postre Caramels on Facebook, Instagram and on twitter at @PostreCaramels or visit the website at PostreCaramels.com.



SMILING HARA HEMPEH FROM ASHEVILLE, NC

If you enjoy a plant based diet, or just occasionally like to take a break from eating meat, then you'll definitely be interested in this next local product made entirely from beans or legumes with the addition of added hemp protein.

Smiling Hara is a family run company out of Asheville, NC. They have taken the standard recipe for tempeh, most commonly made with soy, and has recreated it to offer a variety of both soy-full and soy-free offerings; all fortified with hemp protein to make Hempeh, a high protein, gluten free, plant based protein you are going to love.

Smiling Hara does make classic tempeh for food service sales and the public can also buy tempeh from them online; but for the retail market Smiling Hara Hempeh comes packaged and marinated in a trio of delicious variations: Asian Miso Ginger

(which is packaged pre-sliced), Raspberry Habanero BBQ and Smoked Salt & Pepper Steak.

Made from only the highest quality ingredients, grown without GMOs and sourced as locally as possible, this hempeh may be enjoyed right out of the

package but is probably at its best steamed or sautéed before serving.

Simply cut the block of hempeh into slices or cubes and sauté in a bit of high quality olive oil until lightly browned to use on sandwiches or hoagies; in stir-frys and grain bowls, or as with a cube of cheese and a bit of arugula lined up on skewer and served as a appetizer.



Check out a host of other terrific recipes on the Smiling Hara Website.

In and around Charlotte, Smiling Hara products are available in the refrigerator case at EarthFare, Whole Foods, Earl's Grocery and Common Market; and just outside of Charlotte at most Ingles Markets.

For more info follow Smiling Hara on Facebook and twitter at @SmilingHara; on Instagram at @eathempeh or visit SmilingHaraTempeh.com.



BRADFORD WATERMELON WATERMELON RIND PICKLES AND MOLASSES FROM SUMTER, SC

In the last issue of *Charlotte Living* magazine, you may have read my article on the famous Bradford Watermelon. It's a true story of what growing local product and preserving heritage seeds and breeds means to each and every region of the country. We are lucky in Charlotte, NC that South Carolina product, produce and proteins are just as local as North Carolina product is, and so we can absolutely embrace the Bradford Watermelon Company line of products in our own Eat Local portfolios. With the farm in Sumter, South Carolina, Nat and Bette Bradford continue their family's 200+ year tradition of growing their



world-renowned late harvest melons. After the watermelon season has come and gone, Nat continues to plant and harvest other heirloom and heritage breed veggies, and in his spare time has found a way to extend the taste of the popular Bradford melons all year long.

The beauty of the Bradford melon (besides being absolutely delicious) is that it is thin skinned and thick rind making it perfect for pickling – so there is no waste. Nat and Bette use the awesome rind (which in it's raw state tastes much like a sweet cucumber) to make their famous sweet Watermelon pickles and they boil down pulp to make the most incredible watermelon molasses you will ever taste. While Nat is looking for Charlotte area retail locations, so stay tuned, but until then you may purchase the pickles and the molasses directly from the Bradford Watermelon website and in Charlotte at any of Heidi Billotto's "At Home with Heidi" or "On the Farm" cooking classes.

For more info and more local retail outlets follow Bradford Watermelon Company at @Bradford watermelons on Facebook and Instagram and on twitter at @Bwatermelons or visit Bradford Watermelon.com.

CACKALACKY SAUCES AND SNAX FROM PITTSBORO, NC

The original Cackalacky sauce – a longtime favorite local condiment of this food writer is deliciously spicy and rich with flavor. I love it as a marinade, and a condiment and you will too. When the original sauce made its debut a dozen or so years ago, the company embraced the concept of eating local as the sauce itself is made from local North Carolina sweet potatoes.

As people started asking for a slightly sweeter version of the spectacular sauce, owner and creator Page Skelton partnered with another iconic North Carolina brand, Cheerwine. Together they produced what could possibly be the general public's favorite sauce in the Cackalacky line, the Cheerwine-Cackalacky Sweet Sauce. In the fall of 2017 Cackalacky added on a third member of the family with their new Vinegar based version of the classic Cackalacky sauce.– it's a keeper for sure.

Which one will you love? You'll just have to try all three and then let me know – there's not a bad choice in the bunch and my prediction is you will love them all!



But as man (and woman) cannot live by sauce alone, there are Cackalacky Snax to compliment your choice of sauce – two versions of just-can't-stop-eating-them peanuts, one slightly sweeter than the other but both made with NC peanuts keeping the line as local as can be!

Cackalacky products are available in and around Charlotte in Harris Teeter, Publix, Food Lion, Whole Foods and Fresh Market stores and across the Carolinas in all the Mast General Stores and locations of Cracker Barrel. You can buy the large family-sized of the Cheerwine Cackalacky sauce at area Costco stores; and you can taste the Cheerwine Cackalacky sauce at any location of Biscuitville – it's on the Cackalacky Chop Sandwich!

You may shop for all the products (as well as some snazzy swag) at the online store on the company website.

For more info and more local retail outlets follow Cackalacky on Facebook, Instagram and on twitter at @Cackalacky or visit the website at Cackalacky.com.



SHE'S PESTO FROM WEDDINGTON, NC

Classic pesto is made with high quality olive oil, pine nuts, garlic and fresh basil. But if you are like me, my kitchen garden crop of basil has gone to seed as the seasons have changed – what's a pesto lover to do?

Enter the fabulous She's Pesto – a locally made frozen product from master gardener Ellen Stevens in Weddington.

It all started as a hobby for Ellen, who first ventured into the retail and wholesale market selling microgreens she raised in her own greenhouse. After a huge sale of fresh basil to a local restaurant fell through, she decided to make pesto, so as not to waste the delicious crop. This gave her an opportunity to preserve the harvest and keep it in the freezer to sell and use as needed.

With the addition of some easy open freezer safe packaging and a bit of marketing, She's Pesto was born! This delicious homemade herbal blend is produced in small batches using locally sourced basil and other high quality ingredients. It's divided into portions, packed and frozen to make it easy as

pie for you to take home and use in all of everyday recipes. She's Pesto is not a smooth and creamy base, but instead a hand ground chunky version of the same with bits of pine nut, garlic and basil you can see as well as taste in the mix.

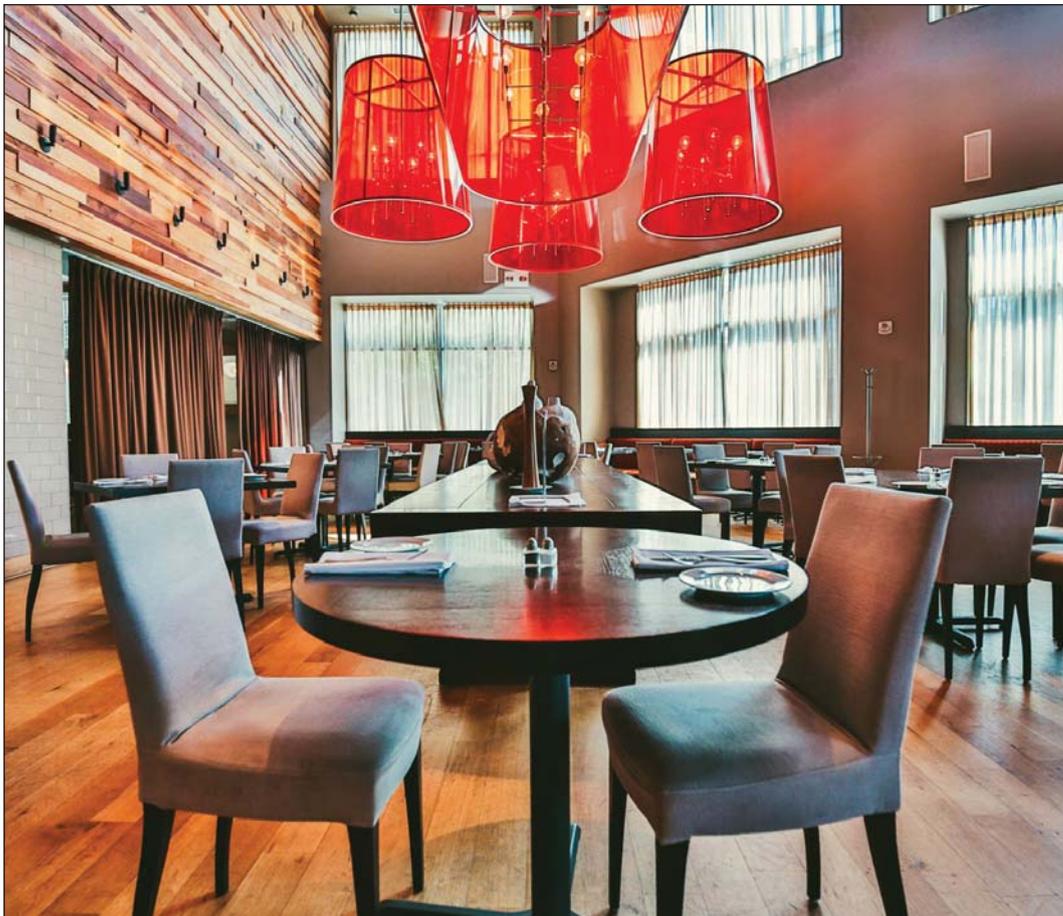
Just toss over hot pasta, and it melts into the perfect sauce. And, its equally as good blended into hot roasted or mashed potatoes or as a condiment to baked chicken or fish. During the holiday season, use She's Pesto as a condiment on a sandwich made from leftover turkey or pork or top a stack of hot and ready to eat Potato Latkes. For a salad dressing to serve alongside dark greens and slices of the holiday bird, simply melt the pesto nugget by allowing it to come to room temperature and then blend with a couple of tablespoons of your favorite red wine vinegar.

Purchase She's Pesto at Vin Masters in South Charlotte; Provisions on South Main Street in Waxhaw, or at Renfrow Hardware in Matthews, NC.

For more info follow She's Pesto on Facebook and Instagram at @ShesPesto and on twitter at @StevensHarvest or visit the website at shespesto.com



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Allegro Foundation Ambassador's Ball

9th Annual Black Tie Event Will Be Held on January 6, 2018 at Quail Hollow Club.



Dr. László Szabó, Ambassador of Hungary



Allegro Foundation Founder and President Pat Farmer toasts guests at the 2017 Ambassador's Ball.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY DANIEL COSTON



On January 6, 2018, the halls of Quail Hollow Club will echo with the cheer and excitement from 300 guests adorned in their finest black tie attire and couture gowns. They will be welcoming the arrival of Dr. László Szabó, Ambassador of Hungary to the United States, as they all celebrate an evening of festivities to benefit the Allegro Foundation... a Champion for Children with Disabilities.

Allegro Foundation is a nonprofit organization that combines movement instruction with medical and educational expertise, creating new techniques to teach children with disabilities and enhance their quality of life. Annually, Allegro teaches over 700 children with intellectual disabilities, Down syn-

drome, orthopedic challenges (wheelchairs and walkers), spina bifida, autism, cerebral palsy, learning disabilities, muscular dystrophy, visual and hearing impairments, children at-risk, and children with cancer in FREE classes every week.

Allegro Foundation does not discriminate against any type of disability.

The Board of Directors of Allegro Foundation are honored to welcome Ambassador Szabó to Charlotte. The Ambassador truly believes in the work Allegro is doing throughout our community. As a country, Hungary is very advanced in how they view and work with those living with disabilities. The Ambassador is a renowned physician and

surgeon that has helped countless children living with disabilities throughout his medical career. He has stated that he is looking forward to learning more about Allegro Foundation's work while in Charlotte. Ambassador Szabó is also looking forward to making strong connections with Charlotte business and community leaders, as he has asserted many times that Hungary must make itself relevant to the United States.





As a renowned leader in teaching children living with disabilities, Allegro Foundation will be hosting its 9th Annual Ambassador's Ball, to kick off 2018 with a social event to set the precedent for all those following.

Celebrating its 9th year, the annual Ambassador's Ball is an evening of glamour and excitement. The event begins with each guest ascending the Quail Hollow main entrance stairway to be welcomed to a cocktail reception including top shelf liquors, beers, and wines. A silent auction awaits the guests throughout the many rooms adjacent to the elegant Ballroom. The white-linen covered auction tables includes everything from packages for your pets, spa retreats, diamond jewelry, to once in a lifetime trips to a number of exotic destinations, including the Signature Trip to the country being honored at the Ambassador's Ball. This year's guests will have the pleasure of bidding on the Signature Trip to Budapest during the Live Auction segment of the evening.

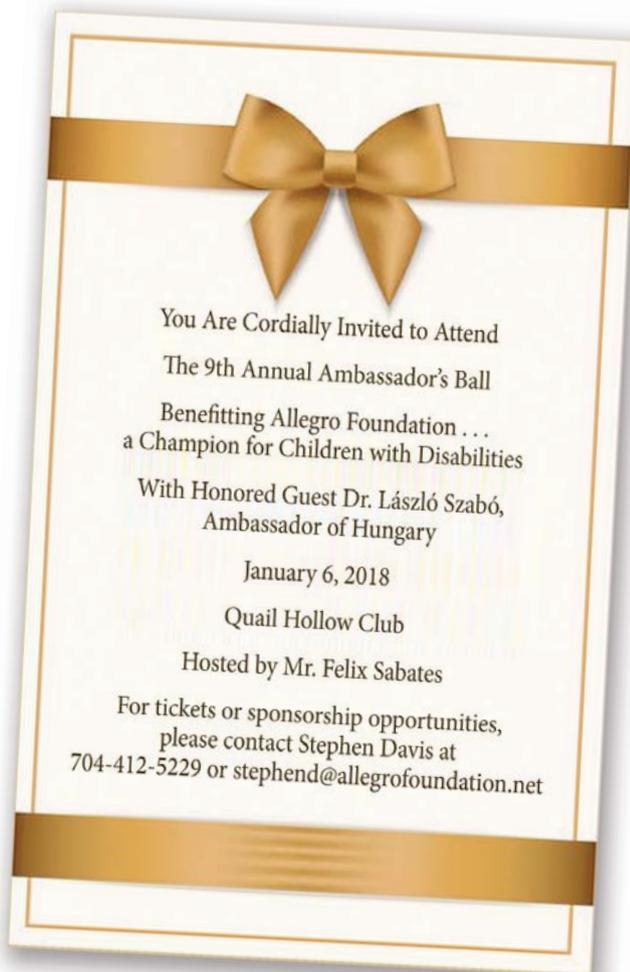
As the night continues, attendees of the Allegro Foundation Ambassador's Ball will be served a three course meal. After His Excellency, Ambassador Szabó speaks to the guests and

thanks each of them for taking part in the event to benefit the work Allegro does for children living with disabilities, a presentation from a few of the Children of Allegro will take place. Many guests consider this the highlight of the event. It truly shows everyone the reason they are at the event.



Once the presentations and the dinner conclude, the live band will take the stage for the guests to enjoy the remaining portion of the Ambassador's Ball, as they continue to celebrate the work Allegro Foundation provides children living with disabilities throughout Charlotte and the surrounding areas.

For more information about Allegro Foundation, visit allegrofoundation.net or call 704-412-5229. ■



ANIMALS, ART AND THE LOVE OF PEANUT

In 2015, I was 15 years old. My family and I had just adopted “Peanut” from Chapman’s Dachshund Rescue in York, SC. Though Chapman’s does an outstanding job of caring for and placing hundreds of dachshunds per year, I noticed that they had a very real need for funds. I wanted to help, but I didn’t know how.

A few months later, I had the idea of combining art and animals, my two passions, to help the animals in need in our community. I knew that if Chapman’s needed money, there were surely other hard-working charities in the area that needed financial help to continue working on the front lines of animal rescue. Why not have an art sale where everything is donated and all of the money goes to help animals?

Annual Art Sale Benefits Area Animal Welfare

Fast forward three years, and that is exactly what ART Unleashed has done. With the help of talented artists from Charlotte and around the country who have donated their beautiful pieces, a very dedicated board comprised of Cary Bernstein, Billie Richardson, Jacqui Wheeler, Ashley Bacon, Brett Blumenthal, Drew Shull, Bill Evans, Olivia Cohen, Leigh Levine, Dr. Elizabeth Rostan and Dr. Michelle Rivera, scores of volunteers, DJ Dizzy Thrillz, Chef Chris Wriggle, three donation dogs, a team of dancers and our emcee for each event, Morgan Fogarty of WCCB, ART Unleashed has raised over \$60,000 to help area animals in need.

It has been truly amazing to see all of the love that so many people have for animals and how much they are willing to help. I am so proud to live in a city where so many people are so willing to help animals and so willing to trust even a 15 year old!

We have happily and proudly given the money we have raised to seven animal welfare charities, including Spay Neuter Charlotte, Chapman’s Dachshund Rescue, Furbabies Animal Rescue, Dog Days of Charlotte, Raintree Jacks, Halfway There Rescue and Catering To Cats and Dogs so that they can continue their amazing work in creating a better life for our animals and work toward our goal of ending pet homelessness.

To learn more about ART Unleashed, please visit www.artunleashedcharlotte.org. ■

TEXT BY MIA KOSAREK PHOTOGRAPHY BY DANIEL COSTON & COURTESY OF ART UNLEASHED

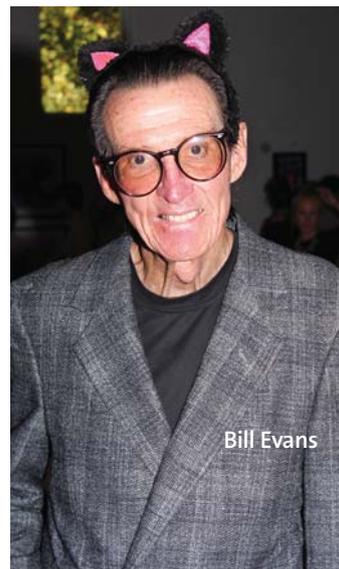


Mia & Peanut

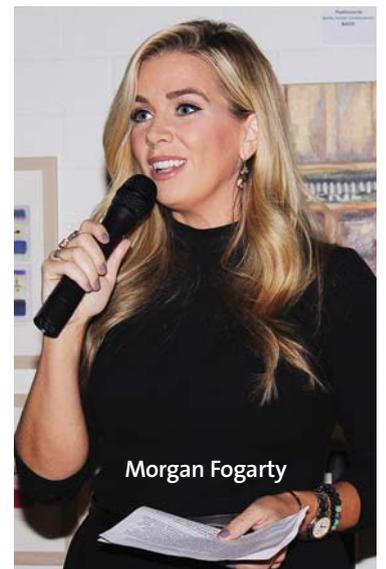


Dr. Michelle Rivera and Mia Kosarek

ART Unleashed was founded in 2015 by 15 year old Mia Kosarek and has raised over \$60,000 for area animal rescue and welfare organizations.



Bill Evans



Morgan Fogarty

Back row, left to right:

- Troy Haywood of the VIZN Project,
- Michelle Rivera,
- Olivia Cohen,
- Faith Penney,
- Lindsey Rae Brown,
- Jacqui Wheeler,
- Cary Bernstein

Front row:

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Everything's Waiting For You

Trends bring new wave of retail growth to Uptown and South End

TEXT BY MICHAEL SMITH,
PRESIDENT AND CEO OF CHARLOTTE CENTER CITY PARTNERS
PHOTOGRAPHY COURTESY OF CHARLOTTE CENTER CITY PARTNERS

Center City Charlotte is growing rapidly with new restaurant and retail spaces coming online regularly. At the same time, the nature of shopping is changing across the country. Many of today's shoppers want to shop in unique and locally-owned businesses where they can engage with their brands and where the shopping environment is created with entertainment in mind.

Leading the way for these changes has been the growing influence of online retailers like Amazon Prime and Google Shopping Express. These businesses have come into the market offering low prices, large selections and next day service to consumers and have disrupted the traditional retail market.

Despite these advantages of online shopping, approximately two-thirds of American shoppers still go into stores for the majority of their shopping needs. Despite the large numbers of those shopping in person, today's shoppers are



anything but traditional. Many of those individuals are also frequent online shoppers who are looking for 'in person' shopping options that offer local, one-of-a-kind and authentic goods. These customers view shopping as an entertainment experience, and are looking for places where they can interact with the products and their makers.

Retailers across the country understand these trends and are responding to these challenges by offering a sense of intimacy and a level of engagement with their consumers that online purveyors cannot match. Center City Charlotte is well-suited to take advantage of these trends because of the preponderance of independent, small business owners who represent more than 80% of all retailers in Uptown and South End.

As many shopping destinations are dealing with the transition to this new model, Center City Charlotte shoppers can find a growing list of locally-owned



businesses poised to take advantage of these new trends by offering unique gifts in an atmosphere not found anywhere else in the region. These savvy retailers, when paired with Charlotte's premiere cultural venues, sports entertainment options and the best fine dining options have set the conditions for a new wave of retail growth in the area.

Augmenting existing storefront retailers, Charlotte Center City Partners has seeded pop-up shopping events throughout the year in Uptown and South End. Events like South End Small Business Saturday on November 25, Poptopia Holidays at the Foundation for the Carolinas Sonia & Isaac Luski Gallery from November 28 to December 2, the 7th Street Public Market's Sip and Shop event on December 7, and the Christmas Village from November 23 to December 24 at Romare Bearden Park. Not only do these events increase the number of retail goods available here, they also help incubate small businesses from online and truck-based stores, to brick and mortar businesses. Further, these pop-ups demonstrate consumer demand in the city's urban neighborhoods. This has helped attract established brands and retailers looking to open businesses in authentic and unique spaces in the heart of Charlotte's employment districts.

So during this holiday season as Charlotte-area shoppers search for one-of-a-kind gifts and unique retail experiences, they should consider Center City Charlotte for a combination of amenities, entertainment and convenience that make shopping local more convenient and more fun than ever. ■





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