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October 2019

The Rant

Monthly



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The Rant *Monthly*

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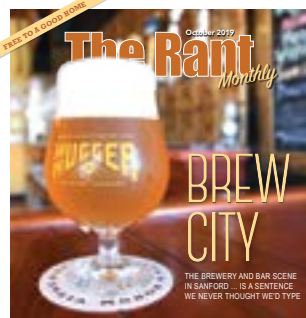
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ABOUT THE COVER

Just look at that delicious, ice-cold beer on the cover. The perfect amount of head — overflowing from its mug and running down the side like a tiny gold waterfall of finely crafted goodness. The beer is courtesy of Hugger Mugger, just one of the businesses featured in our cover story on Sanford's surprising brewery and bar renaissance. A perfect story for the upcoming beer-friendly month of October. Enjoy! *Photo by Billy Liggett*

STORY: PAGE 12

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Many thanks to the Lee County Parks and Recreation Department for their continuing support of our Annual Art Show

This project is supported by a grant from the Lee County Arts Council through the Grassroots Arts Program of the North Carolina Arts Council, an agency funded by the State of North Carolina and the National Endowment for the Arts.

We all love a good ghost story (so send us yours)

About a mile from our homes, down an old dirt driveway that hadn't seen a car in decades, sat this old wooden home with a decaying front porch, peeling white paint and old hay bales acting as furniture in some long-abandoned rooms.

During the day, it was a playhouse for my cousin and me. Great for hide and seek, war games and — later in our adolescence — hiding spots for various, nefarious magazines we smuggled from my uncle's stash.

At night, however, the house took on a new personality. It lost all familiarity and took on an aura of fright and mystery. It was and will forever be, to us anyway, the *Ghost House* (we weren't the most creative with names).

The figures we'd see in the windows. The sounds we'd hear coming from the inside (we didn't dare step in, of course). The light we'd see — a flickering front porch light, as far as we could tell from a distance — that would disappear as we approached. We obsessed over the Ghost House, scared to the



"We obsessed over the Ghost House, scared to the bone and intrigued all at once. Lost in our imaginations."

bone and intrigued all at once. Lost in our imaginations.

Of course, it *was* all in our imaginations. The lights and the figures — you can trick yourself into seeing anything when you can barely see your hand in front of your face. As for the sounds, probably coyotes or other wildlife known to roam the rural backwoods of East Texas after dark. For some reason, we were far less afraid of them.

For us, the Ghost House came along around the time in a young person's life when they go from "sleeps with a nightlight on" to "ready for slasher films." And that's a very sudden turnaround, almost as jarring and inexplicable to a pre-teen as puberty itself.

The arrival of one of my favorite months,

October, usually conjures up memories of our treks into the woods in search of both lost souls and an adrenaline high. These days, I'm chasing that high in the form of scary movies on Netflix and trying to create the best jump scare for my kids, who will probably be traumatized well into their own adulthood.

All these years later, I still don't have a good "real ghost" story. I even once joined a ghost hunting expedition during my days with *The Herald* and followed them on their quest to find "life" in the Temple Theatre on a cold October night. We heard nothing, of course, but that doesn't mean the experience of calling out to spirits in a dark, dead-quiet old theater at midnight wasn't a memorable experience.

The closest I can come to a real experience was the hall light that mysteriously switched on and off late at night during the first month that my wife and I lived in our 80-year-old home in Sanford. Either the spirits that inhabited the house were trying to make their presence felt to two newcomers or we had wiring issues in our historic home. Either way, hardly the stuff of house haunting movies.

That doesn't mean I haven't heard some great ones, and that's where we reach the point of this column. I'm asking you — sweet, clean readers of *The Rant* — to send me your best ghost stories. Comment on Facebook, email me or write to me anonymously in cut-out magazine letters. I want to be scared. The best story wins a spooky Rant hat (otherwise known as a regular Rant hat).



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October is National Breast Cancer Awareness Month.

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Bharat Forge bringing 460 jobs, \$170 million investment

India-based auto parts manufacturer Bharat Forge announced in September that it will locate a manufacturing plant at a site on Colon Road in Sanford, employing 460 people at an average wage of more than \$47,000 in a project worth \$170.9 million.

The announcement was made in a press conference on Sept. 17 at the Governor's Mansion with Gov. Roy Cooper, Sanford Mayor Chet Mann, Lee County Commissioners Chairwoman Amy Dalrymple, and Amit Kalyani, deputy managing director of Bharat Forge parent company the Kalyani Group.

"This announcement is just the culmination of an open for business agenda that our city announced about six years ago," Mann said during the press conference. "We are proud to have brought together our city and our county leaders with our business community and our stakeholders and our citizens to form a great public-private partnership."

Dalrymple called Bharat Forge a "perfect fit" for Lee County and noted that it wouldn't be possible without various partners



Lee County Commissioner Chairman Amy Dalrymple and Sanford Mayor Chet Mann pose with representatives of Bharat Forge at the Governor's Mansion in Raleigh on Sept. 17, for the September announcement that the India-based auto parts manufacturer will locate a new manufacturing plant in Sanford that will employ up to 460 people.

working together.

"Today's announcement exemplifies the very best of North Carolina partnerships at work," she said. "Lee County is fortunate to have great state and local government partners."

Parent company Kalyani Group, established in the mid-1960s, is an Indian multi-national with high technology, engineering and manufacturing capability across sectors such as engineering steel, automotive, industrial,

renewable energy, urban infrastructure and specialty chemicals. With end-to-end capability and a manufacturing footprint across India, Germany, Sweden, France and North America, the group is a \$3 billion conglomerate with 10,000 employees worldwide.

Bharat Forge received an incentive package worth several million dollars from Sanford, Lee County and North Carolina in exchange for its decision to locate in Sanford, including the purchase of the future site on Colon Road.

"Bharat Forge is making its largest overseas investment in Sanford because our quality workers along with our other resources will help drive demand for their products," said Gov. Cooper.

This was the second major announcement about job and tax base growth in a few short weeks. Pfizer announced a half billion dollar expansion to its gene therapy operation in August, a project that is expected to generate 300 jobs without any additional incentive from state and local government.



2 BIG ANNOUNCEMENTS



Pfizer

- Expansion of Gene Therapy Division
- \$500,000,000 investment
- 300 NEW jobs



Bharat Forge

- New facility in Lee County
- \$170,900,000 investment
- 460 NEW jobs

THE RANT

LOCAL MATTERS

Purde Pharma agrees to \$3B settlement in opioid case

Lee County is one of thousands of local and state governments that will benefit from a \$3 billion settlement agreement announced recently by Purdue Pharma, one of several manufacturers and distributors of opioid drugs facing a lawsuit claiming they illegally marketed the drugs as safe and non-addictive.

It's unclear how much Lee County will reap from the settlement, and the lawsuit remains ongoing against multiple other defendants.

Although Lee County's lawsuit is rolled together with other governments across the country, multiple other lawsuits of the same type have been filed, and many of them are beginning to yield positive results for the plaintiffs.

Charah: No plans to bring coal ash to Sanford's Colon site

Charah Solutions told *The Rant* in September that while it has "new awards" for coal ash disposal at sites across the country, the Colon site in Lee County was not among them.

The company, which owns the Colon site, had contracted with Duke Energy to dispose of coal ash at the Colon site, as well as a site in Chatham County, but apparently fulfilled its obligation to Duke without bringing any of the waste to Lee County.

That led to some speculation that Charah could dump coal ash from out of state at the site without being financially responsible to county government. Duke had agreed to pay Lee County as much as \$12 million if Charah disposed of its coal ash at the Colon site.

The speculation was exacerbated by a second quarter financial statement issued by Charah in August. It showed an \$18 million loss, but indicated the company had more than a quarter billion dollars in "new awards" and even more in "verbal awards."

But Charah issued a statement to *The Rant* indicating that the new awards are "for different sites outside of Lee County." The statement did not, however, address the question posed by *The Rant* about what, if any, plans Charah has for the Colon site. Therese Vick, a member of the Blue Ridge Environmental Defense League, has told *The Rant* that Charah remains "fully permitted" to build a coal ash landfill at the Colon site.

Charter school secures Kendale spot

School could be start of large-scale redevelopment of largely dilapidated Kendale business center

The MINA charter school announced Sept. 19 that it had secured a closed portion of the Kendale Shopping Center for use as its campus, which has been announced as opening in 2020.

"This milestone is a dream come true in some ways, but we are reminded that we are only at the very beginning of our journey," said Shawn Williams, chairman of MINA's board of directors. "We have hundreds of students and families in Lee County whose dreams have yet to be realized. We understand the formative role we will play in changing the lives of our students and we are eager to get started on this challenge."

The announcement was made jointly by the school and American Charter Develop-

ment, which provides financing and construction services for charter school facilities.

The 82,300 square foot building is the southernmost third of the largely dilapidated shopping center and formerly was home to a movie theater, a restaurant and a flea market. It has been closed for several years. MINA (pronounced "MEE-na") stands for "more is now achievable," and the school will serve k-5 students with a STREAM (science, technology, reading, engineering, arts, and math) curriculum. Stella Farrow, a longtime educator in Lee County, will serve as the school's administrator.

The school is accepting student applications for the 2020-21 school year at its website. When it opens, it will be the county's second charter school. The other, Ascend Leadership Academy on Harvey Faulk Road, serves students in sixth through ninth grades.

The remainder of Kendale Plaza was sold in July to a Moore County-based developer who has yet to announce plans for the site. The occupied parts of the shopping center

remain open for business but have fallen into disrepair and been the subject of a large number of complaints throughout Sanford and Lee County. Once identified as the longest continuous shopping center in the state, it was a hub for business in Lee County from its construction in the 1960s until the 1980s before losing steam amid the construction of Riverbirch Corner (which now has similar problems of its own), the opening of a Walmart on South Horner Boulevard and, recently, the revitalization of downtown Sanford.

The Rant produced a three part series on Kendale back in December of 2017 which examined the shopping center's history, present and possible futures. At that time, a few local officials expressed hope that the property could be partially or entirely repurposed for use as some type of mixed-use retail/residential project.

A sale of the property to a Texas company that specialized in that type of work fell apart at the last minute in December 2018.



Meet Dex

Joe Medlin (left) and William Sturkie of the Lee County Sheriff's Office pose with Dex, the department's brand new K-9 unit. Dex is a one-and-a-half-year-old Dutch shepherd trained in drug detection and tracking. Obtained from Slovakia, Dex trained locally at Tarheel Canine and responds to commands in the Dutch language. He's been with Medlin, his handler, since early September.



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OPINIONS
A few more historical notes to September story on architect

While waiting for my car at Classic Nissan, I stumbled across your story, “An architect’s signature lives on,” in the September 2019 issue of *The Rant*. I worked closely with Dan Pezzoni, providing him a great deal of my genealogical and historical research. The reference to John B. Masemore erecting the first house ever built in Sanford appeared in *The Sanford Express* on Sept. 19, 1895.

The third and current building for Buffalo Presbyterian Church was first discussed at a congregational meeting held on Feb. 2, 1878. Col. John B. Masemore, contractor and builder of Cameron; J. J. Minor, architect of Fayetteville; and John Benjamin Matthews Sr. and his sons sawed the lumber at his mill (located at the current site of the Fire Tower on Fire Tower Road) for this building and John T. McDonald constructed the steeple. The total cost was \$2,500 (only \$100 paid by non-Buffalo members).

Masemore removed the old church building in November 1878 and built the new church building thereafter. The dedicatory exercises took place on May 16, 1880. According to *The Sanford Express*, July 3, 1908: “Mr. J. B. Masemore died at the home of his son, Mr. John W. Masemore, in Biscoe. The remains were carried to Haywood and interred in the cemetery of the historic Presbyterian Church.”

I know I have seen him also associated with building houses in Cameron in the 1870s and 1880s and Jonesboro. His buildings have certainly stood the test of time and weather.

James Vann Comer

Getting back in the spaceship

The Oort cloud is a theoretical cluster of our solar system’s farthest flung objects, a thing that, if true as postulated, is likely the last thing standing (floating?) between our planetary neighborhood and the rest of space.

Probably not a more appropriate thing, if you’re a guy like me, from which to glean inspiration for your extremely theoretical band’s name.



Since late 2012, Oort Patrol — a name that to me conjures an image of space men making rounds in the darkest expanse — has been not exactly my band, but an outlet at least for some of the things a band does.

I’ve been playing music as a hobby for close to 30 years, and an old band going semi-dormant as the forces of life put four grown men in four different places wasn’t going to stop me from keeping on keeping on. What was I gonna do, not find a way to make up songs?

So even as me and my friends haven’t been able to get together and make noise once a week or so, I’ve made it a point when I have time to sit down and make sure my ideas at least get out of my head. I’ve probably written 40 or 50 songs over the last few years, a humble count for a professional, but an absolute flood of creativity for a part timer like me. Most of them exist in the form of crude demos slowly filling up my laptop’s hard drive, but a small number have been recorded at least semi-professionally and released to the public (read that as “uploaded to the internet where virtually nobody will take notice,” which is absolutely fine).

I actually feel more confident in my ability to write songs now than ever, even if I’m embarrassingly out of practice at the actual performance part of things.

But so anyway, that makes for a segue into the next part of this column. That performance part, if you don’t keep up with it, goes away pretty quickly. I’ve been working with some friends over the past few months to prepare for an inaugural

Oort Patrol performance in November.

For the last three years, I’ve been asked to get a band together for EddieFest, which takes place this November in Carrboro in memory of my old friend Eddie Watkins. Eddie died in 2016, and his ex-wife and kids have staged the event to not only pay tribute to an absolutely awesome guy, but also to raise funds for suicide awareness and prevention.

I’ve never been able to put a group together, but this year I was determined it would be different. And so for the last couple of months now I’ve been “jamming,” as it were, with a group of guys on a set we’ll debut in November.

And let me tell you — never having been what you’d call a great guitar player in the first place — man, this stuff is hard. I flub chord changes, forget lyrics I wrote, sing poorly, and get sore in weird places because I did something as simple as standing up and holding a guitar for an hour. Real rockstar over here.

That’s not to say things aren’t coming together. They are. The songs started to sound as intended after a few tries, and each week is an improvement on the last. There’s no telling if this will be a one off performance or not, because aging has dulled my appetite for lugging heavy equipment all over the state to play for a handful of people and get home after midnight.

There will of course be more writing and recording, because as I said earlier, that’s just something I do.

But the most important thing is how much fun I’m having being back on the horse — or to use a term more in keeping with the origins of Oort Patrol’s name, getting back in the spaceship. Now make it so, Number One.



To quote one of his favorite songwriters, Gordon Anderson has six guitars he can barely play and a questionable singing voice as well. Oort Patrol’s catalog can be downloaded for free at www.oortpatrol.bandcamp.com.

Let's look a gift park in the mouth

The City of Sanford unveiled the new splash pad and inclusive playground at Kiwanis Park last month, and based on the crowd sizes for the first few weeks of its existence, both additions to the city are a hit.

One of the biggest complaints or requests we see from newcomers or families with small children is that the city and Lee County offer little when it comes to free activities for children. Far too many were leaving Sanford for half-hour drives to Apex, Cary or Southern Pines for larger play areas.

The new and improved Kiwanis Park ups the game in a big way. Despite a few hiccups (the water pressure at the splash pad has had some early issues), the additions get a thumbs up from us. That’s not to say it’s perfect. In fact, we feel a few changes can be made to not only better the experience for parents and children, but also improve the very important safety aspect of these play areas.

First and foremost, the playground desperately needs a buffer between the equipment and the parking lot. Currently, there is no fencing or any kind of barrier between the merry-go-rounds and swings and the parking lot where — on a busy day — there are several dozen cars and vans coming in and out at any time. Children are already running and playing freely in a supposed safe zone — it’s not going out on a limb to suggest smaller children may dart out into the parking lot.

This is the biggest complaint we’ve heard from parents at this park. And it’s an important one. The others are mostly about comfort.

The playground offers little in the way of shade for parents, and these complaints came during a fairly mild 80-degree day in early September. A few small saplings have been planted, but perhaps the city can swing a few canopies for shade in the meantime.

And the nearly half-mile loop near the playgrounds are a great addition as well, but the inside of the loop is begging for more. We suggest Sanford look at similar parks in Cary that have climbable sculptures — to add both aesthetics and use to these empty, shaded areas. There’s more (like additional swings), but you get the idea. These are the requests of actual parents who are both grateful for what the city has added, but also a tad perplexed at some of the decisions seemingly made without parental input.

This gift horse has some nice teeth. But they’re not perfect. We hope the city is listening.

READER RESPONSE | CCCC TOP COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Central Carolina Community College has been ranked the state's top community college for 2020 by niche.com. Here are a few of your thoughts from the big news:

I love CCCC. It's the starting point for so many top-notch nurses and health care professionals. None of my nursing instructors are there any more, but they built a legacy and inspired a love of education and helping others. They motivated me to continue to attain my BSN, as well as start my Master's.

Our youth today need not overlook this gem and amazing vocational school right here in our town — especially with their College Promise program. Our son worked toward his criminal justice degree while attending Southern Lee High School, and my husband took their welding program, which led to a great opportunity for him at CAT.

There are so many well-paying vocations right here in our community made possible by CCCC.

Jenny Matthews

I graduated from the nursing program in 2002. I wouldn't be who I am today had it not been for this wonderful institution.

Giulia Mauri

I'm not surprised, we are very fortunate to have Central Carolina Community College in our community.

Mike Sawaya

YOUR RANT

If we're anything, we're pretty good listeners. Each month, we'll reserve this space in our little publication for your opinions on anything and everything (tell us what you think of our brewery story this month!). All we ask is that you keep it clean, don't get personal with your fellow citizens and keep it short. Email us (addresses on Page 3) or send a message to our Facebook page.

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Hugger Mugger Brewing will celebrate two years in Sanford this winter. The Downtown Sanford business was the first craft brewery to set up shop in the city — since then, Camelback Brewing Company opened on Spring Lane, and a second downtown brewery, Wild Dogs Brewing, is expected to open early next year.

COVER STORY

BREW CITY

In just a few short years, Sanford has become a city with a growing (and thriving) brewery and beer scene. These bar owners say what's evolved is more 'community' than competition.

Story by Gordon Anderson | Photography by Billy Liggett

It's hard to fully appreciate how much Sanford has changed in a couple of short years. In March 2017 *The Rant* published a story asking a simple question: "So when the heck are we gonna get a dang brewery?"

The story read: "In the nearly 12 months since the Sanford City Council adopted zoning and regulatory guidelines meant to pave the way for a craft brewery to locate here, rumors have swirled, but little else."

Plenty has swirled since then.

Hugger Mugger opened up on Wicker Street less than a year later, becoming Sanford's first craft brewery. Camelback followed suit on Spring Lane within a few more months. Although they joined other places offering craft beer — among them Local Joe's, the Smoke & Barrel, Libations, even the "craft beer den" at Lowes Foods — many in Sanford wondered if the city was ready to support a craft brewery at all, let alone two.

Consider that question answered. Although both breweries reported their share of ups and downs in the intervening months, they've also both made it through the legendarily-difficult first year in business, and those other places offering craft beer all say their presence has been a boost for everyone.

A third brewery, Wild Dogs, has announced plans to open on North Steele Street in the coming months.

"None of it is competition. I love it. I want more," said Joe Del Vecchio, who has operated Local Joe's Tap and Grill on Steele Street since 1997 — long before there was much talk of revitalization in downtown Sanford. "We had a few



years where some other things were trying to come in and they didn't make it, like the Red Sofa. That hurt my feelings when they closed. But when Jeff (Towson) came in to do the Smoke & Barrel, I knew with his lineage and experience that he was gonna do it the right way. And as far as breweries, it's not even a better late than never situation. We knew they were going to come, we just didn't know when. And now it's not just downtown, because Camelback is (on Spring Lane)."

Jake Wells pours a beer from behind the bar at Local Joe's Tap and Grill, the "veteran" of Sanford's bar scene having been open since 1997. Owner Joe Del Vecchio says he loves the addition of new breweries, bars and craft beer stores in Sanford — "None of it is competition. I love it. I want more."

Tim Emmert, who co-owns Hugger Mugger, said Sanford is full of assets that support the type of business he's engaged in — but they haven't always had the best visibility.

"We enjoy things about Sanford now that I don't know we were aware of when we first set up shop. Both in and out of Sanford — the Temple Theatre, Deep River Sporting Clays, Gross Farms — we have a lot of great small businesses where people can come and have an afternoon of shopping while they're downtown," he said. "I think people don't know how to talk about Sanford just yet, but I get a sense that that's changing. There are a lot of new faces here, a lot of people moving into town."

The North Carolina Brewers Guild says the state is home to more than 300 breweries and brewpubs (that's almost twice the number the guild reported in March 2017), which is the biggest number in the south. So this is obviously more than just a Sanford story. But Emmert said Sanford is nowhere near its peak in this business, something exemplified by Craig Krause setting up shop with Wild Dogs.

"Anybody in the brewing industry will tell you — we're not at peak breweries yet. You may see some shake out, but we're not anywhere close to the total number of craft breweries. They come in all shapes and sizes," Emmert said. "There's a lot of room for growth everywhere. Every time a brewery opens, it attracts a new set of people."

Krause said the camaraderie in the industry is one of the things that drove him to leave the highly competitive tech field. Wild Dogs recently completed the demolition phase of its project and has recently received the go-ahead from the city's Historic Preservation Commission to move forward on construction.

"It's nice to be getting into a business that's less competitive and more community minded," Krause told *The Rant* in August, noting that he's met Emmert and Hugger Mugger head brewer David McComas and looks forward to meeting with Camelback owner Mike Stec.

Stec and Emmert both emphatically state that they're more interested in supporting each other and any other brewer than seeing them as competition.



"Craft beer is really a community. I always say we don't battle, we team up. We're two very different businesses with different models, but we complement each other in a lot of ways, and we talk multiple times a week just to bounce ideas off each other," Stec said.

Tim Emmert co-founded Hugger Mugger Brewing in downtown Sanford in 2018. The brewery and bar has become a hot spot for craft beer lovers, as well as foodies who come for the rotating food trucks that frequent the business every night.

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“Craft beer is really a community. I always say we don't battle, we team up. [Camelback and Hugger Mugger] complement each other in a lot of ways.”

— Mike Stec, owner of Camelback Brewing

But this story is about more than beer. When people visit a brewery, they're obviously likely to try a similar place down the street, whether that's another brewery or just a place that offers a variety of craft beers. But breweries are also a draw to out of towners, folks with an interest in craft beer who might not otherwise have had much reason to visit Sanford. Those folks are just as likely to leave some dollars here when they get a meal, fill up their tank with gas, or stay in a local hotel.

“There's a lot of, I guess I call them beer

geeks, and they travel,” Smoke & Barrel owner Jeff Towson said on *The Rant's* “Friends of *The Rant*” podcast in September. “When a new brewery opens up, people come to towns that they've never been to, just to try the brewery out. When (Hugger Mugger) opened up, I saw an uptick in my business. In a lot of ways, that's why breweries are so desirable. They bring people to the town.”

Emalee McCracken, a member of Sanford's new Tourism Development Authority, agrees.

“We were just at a tourism conference, and the very first presentation they did was

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The brewers pick favorite beers from the 'competition'

Mike Stec of Camelback Brewing Company and David McComas of Hugger Mugger Brewing Company have developed an appreciation for each other's work while running Sanford's two breweries. The took took time to tell The Rant their favorite beer from the "competition," and what they liked most about it.



Mike Stec, Camelback Brewing, on his favorite works by Hugger Mugger.

Pour Favor

Mexican Lager:

I was really enthralled with this beer from its inception. It has all

the style elements one would want in a very clean lager. It's super crushable, and David does a great job with his choice of hop, which gives this brew a subtle note of a fresh lime wedge to complete the profile of this palate pleaser.

Steam Shortage Uncommon

Common: I had to give a shout to one of the very early Hugger brews. I've always loved a great steam beer. It's a style that has a very cool history in our country. I love that David decided to brew this style. The grain bill is just right, and the lager yeast really does the walking for me on this one. A mild bitter backbone provides a nice finish.



David McComas, co-owner of Hugger Mugger Brewing Company, on his favorite Camelback beers:

Lord Proprietor

Imperial Red:

Mike dropped off a crowler, which I took to the beach. It's a perfect way to start a late evening. It's a malt forward brew and soft drinking. There's a little throat warming finish that cleans up each sip for a big beer like that. Well done.

Brick City Amber: The Belgian option is another favorite of mine. I'm a huge fan of Belgian fermentation process and what that lends to an overall flavor profile. I think Mike risked a warmer fermentation with this beer, which brings great reward. The choice of malts does a nice job of balancing pepper and sweetness and makes for a dangerous drinker.



on tourism and breweries. The guy rattled off a bunch of numbers, and they were really staggering," she said.

Emalee and her husband Pat own a property on North Steele Street that they make available as an AirBnB rental, and she said the presence of breweries so close to the house has absolutely been a selling point for her.

"When I'm able to greet my guests, I always tell them about the restaurants and breweries we have so close," she said. "And then when I see my guests out places, it's always at the breweries."

Neither Rosemary DiBartolomeo and John Walsh are from Sanford, but they've

both moved to the city in recent years. The two were enjoying a beer at Hugger Mugger recently when asked about having a variety of breweries and bars means to them socially.

"It's fantastic," said Walsh. "We're big into trivia nights, or we come here and play dominoes or cards. The best thing is just coming here and sharing your thoughts with friends or strangers — everybody just seems really happy."

"You don't have to drink a lot — two or three beers — or you can come and have a water or a soda. It's not even about the beer for us," added DiBartolomeo. "It's just nice to come to a place where you can

Smoke & Barrel owner Jeff Towson describes his business as "Sanford's feel-good neighborhood pub, with a focus on outstanding slow-cooked meat, North Carolina craft beer and bourbon. Truly an all-American, Southern-style gastropub." In addition to a variety of smoked pork and beef brisket meals, Smoke & Barrel features a rotating lineup of a dozen North Carolina craft beers on tap on any given day.

meet people of all ages and all nationalities. You just get along, and it feels like a big community."

It's not crazy to speculate about whether the presence of so many spots for nightlife and weekend fun have played a role in recent economic development deals that are set to bring hundreds of jobs to the area.

"I don't have a specific instance of an industry asking about craft breweries, but we consistently hear from site selection consultants and business owners that quality of life is one of the top considerations in locating a new business," said Bob Joyce, economic development director for the Sanford Area Growth Alliance.

“It's not even about the beer. It's just nice to have a place where you can meet people of all ages and nationalities. It just feels like a big community.”

— Rosemary DiBartolomeo

Joyce said businesses weigh countless factors in making decisions about expansions or relocations, but that in a tight labor market quality of life factors like education, medical care, and amenities can be the difference between success and failure.

“Attracting talented, motivated employees is much more than just good wages and benefits — those advantages are offered across the country,” he said. “Employees who are happy and healthy are more productive, and millennials say they want authenticity, a stimulating entrepreneurial climate and culture. Craft breweries have become one of the hall-




marks of that climate.”

Stec recently hosted Sanford's first beer festival in his parking lot, and noted visitors not only from surrounding areas, but places as far flung as Georgia. Sure, they might have been passing through, but they probably wouldn't have stopped and spent a few bucks had it not been for his event.

Of course, not everyone is thrilled about alcohol's newly-bolstered availability. One now-deleted comment on *The Rant's* Facebook post about the opening of Wild Dogs accused this publication of “promoting drunk driving.” But Sanford Police Chief

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Camelback Brewing Company opened its doors in the Spring Lane shopping center (near Lowes Foods) in July 2018. Camelback brews its own beer, offering a selection of pale ales, brown ales, amber ales and more, in addition to a full menu. Trivia nights and live music are consistent popular draws.

Ronnie Yarborough said the vastly increased number of people in the downtown area on a given night — even if plenty of them are enjoying a few alcoholic beverages - hasn't presented many problems for his department.

“(DWI) has not been an issue for our officers any more than in the past. In fact, I was reading somewhere recently that those are down 30 to 50 percent in some places,” Yarborough said. “The people who go out and know they’re going to have a good time, I just don’t think they drink and drive like people might have used to. People are a lot more conscious of that today, and I think (the business owners) are doing a really good job as well.”

McCracken also pointed out that breweries typically have a different atmosphere than a bar. Even though they’re beer-centered, they tend to be about something else.

“I’ve seen this in other places, but Hugger Mugger in particular is very family friendly,” she said. “You can bring your kids, and you can bring the dog, and it’s just the type of place where you can sit down next to people from every walk of life

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“Sanford has gone from Ground Zero to ahead of a lot of other small towns in terms of sheer volume of breweries. I hope we can support all three of them.”

— Jeff Towson, owner of Smoke & Barrel

and enjoy yourself. I'm seeing that sort of atmosphere more and more all the time.”

Emmert backed that up, saying the element he hopes to attract goes a long way toward staving off any undesirable behavior.

“The first month we were open, a couple of guys came in thinking this was the place this building used to be [a private pool hall]. They look like they're about to have a good time, then they get to the back and they see kids running around on a Saturday afternoon, playing with toys. They looped around immediately and walked right out. I don't think they ever came back,” he said.

“Families are like kryptonite to the bad element. They don't get to do the type of things they do, because families here won't put up with it. That makes me feel pretty good. That's absolutely what we wanted from this place from the beginning.”

That approach to craft beer has already been an underpinning of its rise locally, even as its purveyors have had to figure out the market and adapt. One example is at Libations 139, which began its life as simply Libations in 2016. Two owners later, Gregg Hamm has added small plates and some cocktails to the location's offerings, saying he hoped his approach would “add to bar





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Work on Sanford's third craft brewery has started in two vacant buildings downtown. Wild Dogs Brewing will occupy two buildings at 136 and 138 North Steele St. Work on the brewery is still in the early stages, and Craig Krause (pictured), one of the company's owners, said it'll be early next before the doors are open. "We'll have seven or eight barrels, and our beers will be very German-oriented," he said. "Pilsners and traditional beers, maybe one IPA. We won't be doing very many experimental beers."

experiences for the local residents."

"With the growth of the industry it felt right to add a place in Sanford that would be welcoming to the growing diverse community and extend the culinary talents of my team while supporting the local trends in craft mixology," he said. "I believe Sanford is growing with new demand of entertainment for the next generation. This includes bars not as dark after dawn hide always but now places of community fellowship and networking."

Before either Hugger Muggger or Camelback opened their doors, McComas and Stec were already looking for ways to collaborate. The most obvious opportunity was a collaboration beer, but the duo was thinking bigger.

"When we I first got linked up, one of the things we wanted to do was a campaign called something like 'Drink Sanford Beer.' We're still working on it, but what we wanted and what we want is for Sanford to be a destination town for craft beer," Stec said, describing something that might have seemed pretty pie-in-the-sky 24 months ago.

It doesn't seem so pie-in-the-sky now, with business seemingly booming for everyone, with most everyone involved on the same page, with Krause — who probably won't even open the doors at Wild Dogs until early 2020 - already envisioning teaming up on pub crawls and other events.

"On a Friday night, I drive more toward food," Del Vecchio said. "And Jeff on a lot of those nights has a band. Hugger Muggger does that too, and has their food trucks. There's a line that we all pull together, but that's the point, we're all doing it together. I hope (Hugger Muggger and Camelback) go nationwide, and they keep Sanford as their headquarters. There's a wonderful foundation here."

Towson called the growth of local breweries "quick and amazing" and doesn't have any reason to think that trend won't continue.

"Sanford has gone from ground zero to ahead of a lot of other small towns in terms of sheer volume of breweries. We went from no breweries in 2017 to now, we're gonna have three within about six months," he said. "I hope we can support all three of them."

Additional reporting by Billy Liggett




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Hugger Mugger has become a popular downtown destination for locals and out-of-towners alike. The brewery brought life to its portion of Wicker Street — the building it now occupies was formerly a private pool hall. Co-owner Tim Emmert says he chose Sanford because of its commercial potential. He says the community has welcomed the business with open arms.

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THE RANT

LOCAL MATTERS



Host of popular MTV show 'Catfish' spotted in Sanford

Sanford social media lost its collective mind on Sept. 22, amid reports that Nev Schulman, host of MTV's "Catfish: The TV Show" had been spotted in town, presumably filming an episode of the show which investigates cases of people who pose as someone else online.

La Dolce Vita Pizzeria posted a photo of the host outside its restaurant after a weekend meal, and Schulman himself posted a photo outside downtown's historic Railroad House on Instagram.

A "catfish" is a person who creates fake personal profiles on social media sites using someone else's pictures and false biographical information to pretend to be someone other than themselves. MTV and the Catfish film's producers, Schulman and Joseph, help people who are emotionally entangled with someone they have never met in real life. Each episode is an investigation into whether or not the other participant in the virtual relationship is legitimate or if they are, in fact, a "catfish." Some couples have been communicating for a few months — others, for years.

Speculation online began pretty quickly as to whom Schulman may have been in town to investigate. And because Wikipedia notes that "it is usually the catfish who make the first contact with MTV," it's entirely possible or likely that whoever Schulman was seeking in Sanford already knew about his presence.

Watch for updates to this story as we receive them at rantnc.com.



Photos by Gordon Anderson

NEW-LOOK JETPORT

Sanford's Raleigh Exec moves into sleek new 14,500 square-foot terminal



Sanford's Raleigh Executive Jetport has moved into its new 14,500 square-foot, \$4 million terminal. Raleigh Exec generates more than \$61 million annually in economic activity and has led to the creation of more than 400 jobs. The airport is "home" to more than 160 aircraft, all of which are taxed by city and county government.

By Gordon Anderson

On a recent weekday morning in late September, Bob Heuts and Sarah Staut were still checking off boxes and fixing small details — a piece of wallpaper that hadn't been properly applied here, yet-to-arrive blinds on the conference room windows there — but, for the most part, things were official. After a year-plus of demolition and construction, operations at the Raleigh Executive Jetport off Farrell Road in northern Lee County had finally moved into the facility's new 14,500 square foot, \$4 million terminal.

"We've been operating out of here for a couple of days. There are still some issues to fix, but we're in," said Staut, the airport's office manager. "There wasn't anything wrong with the building we had. We just needed more space."

The average Lee Countian is probably aware

of the airport's existence, although it can be something of an afterthought due to the fact that it doesn't host any commercial service — if you find yourself with reason to visit the facility you're likely either a flight enthusiast or the owner of a private jet. But don't let that fool you. Raleigh Exec is known to many as the front door to Lee County and a key driver of economic development for the entire region.

That's one reason Heuts — who headed up Lee County's economic development efforts in the mid 2000's and early 2010s before coming back to Lee County for the airport director job in 2017 — said the local Airport Authority thought it was so important to do this expansion.

"The board needed more space, and more importantly, the pilots who visit us needed a better space," he said. "Those are our customers. A lot of times a person says 'I need to go to the Raleigh area,' but it's the pilot that makes the decision of where to fly. This keeps us competitive."

A report issued by the state Department of Transportation in January indicated that Raleigh Exec generates more than \$61 million annually in economic activity and has led to the creation of more than 400 jobs. That num-



In addition to new waiting areas and lobbies (pictured above), the new Jetport terminal offers an observation deck where the public can watch planes take off and land.

ber is certainly higher today, as the airport was obviously pivotal in a recent Pfizer expansion which brought 300 new jobs to Sanford, as well as a deal with Indian-based Bharat Forge which will bring another 460. The airport is "home" to more than 160 aircraft, all of which

are taxed by city and county government.

The airport is open to the public, and one of the new amenities is an observation deck where the public can sit or stand to watch traffic. And traffic is plenty; in a few minutes on that deck for this interview, at least three planes — in-

cluding a Challenger 300 business jet.

"We visited a lot of other airports in the region to get a sense of what worked for them before deciding what to do here," Heuts said, explaining that the new facility is not only four times bigger than the previous one, it boasts a spacey pilots lounge, improved restroom facilities, multiple meeting spaces, and even several thousand square feet of currently unfinished space that will likely be leased out to aviation-related industry. "We really like the observation deck because we have had people coming out here from time to time to watch the planes land and take off, particularly people with kids, and this is just a much safer area for that."

Heuts, Staut and the rest of the airport's staff have spent more than a year operating out of a trailer while the old terminal was demolished and the new one built, and are happy to be in a much more spacious environment.

"The trailer was a pretty nice trailer," Heuts laughed. "But it's good to be in here."



Raleigh Executive Jetport will host an open house on Saturday, Oct. 12. For more information, visit www.raleighexec.com.



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Holiday season is the busy season

Halloween, Christmas are on display at Floretta Imports, which thrives on the last three months of the year

By Billy Liggett

It's a Sunday afternoon — the last free Sunday afternoon for Susan Brightbill, owner of Floretta Imports on N.C. 15-501 in northern Lee County — but even on this “free day,” she's at work decorating a fake Christmas tree in September.

Not five feet away from her tree and wall of ornaments and hand-carved, red-scarved foxes is a row of skeletons, graveyard headstones and the torso of a zombie with what appears to be rotting flesh and exposed guts.

The beginning of October officially marks the beginning of holiday season at Floretta Imports, and the next three months will dictate about two-thirds of the business it'll take in for 2019. With rows of Halloween decor and an entire lower level of costumes, fall means more staff and Sunday hours — and all the while, Christmas awaits around the corner.

“I wish there was a break between Oct. 31 and Nov. 1,” says Brightbill, who even has Thanksgiving-themed decorations for the growing number of people who are decorating their house for that, too. “It would give us a small rest and allow us some time to get October out of the way and get Christmas in. I wish we had more room to keep all of it in the store at the same time.”

Looking around in Floretta Imports and its large warehouse stacked to the gills, it's hard to believe there's more that's not making the shelves. In business



It's not just Halloween costumes at Floretta Imports. According to business owner Susan Brightbill, more and more people are decorating their homes in a spooky fashion like they would for Christmas during the month of October. Floretta has a growing stock of in-home Halloween decorations for those people. Photo by Billy Liggett

since 1982, Floretta Imports today is a must-stop during the holiday season. The costume area has everything imaginable for every age out there — you want your kid dressed as a whoopie cushion on Oct. 31 ... they have that. Disney costumes, generic costumes, gory costumes, sexy costumes ... they have those, too. There's also a wall of accessories for those looking to put together their own outfit. And Floretta offers something the online costume stores and Amazon don't — last minute options.

“The last 10 days of the month are crazy for us, because so many people wait to

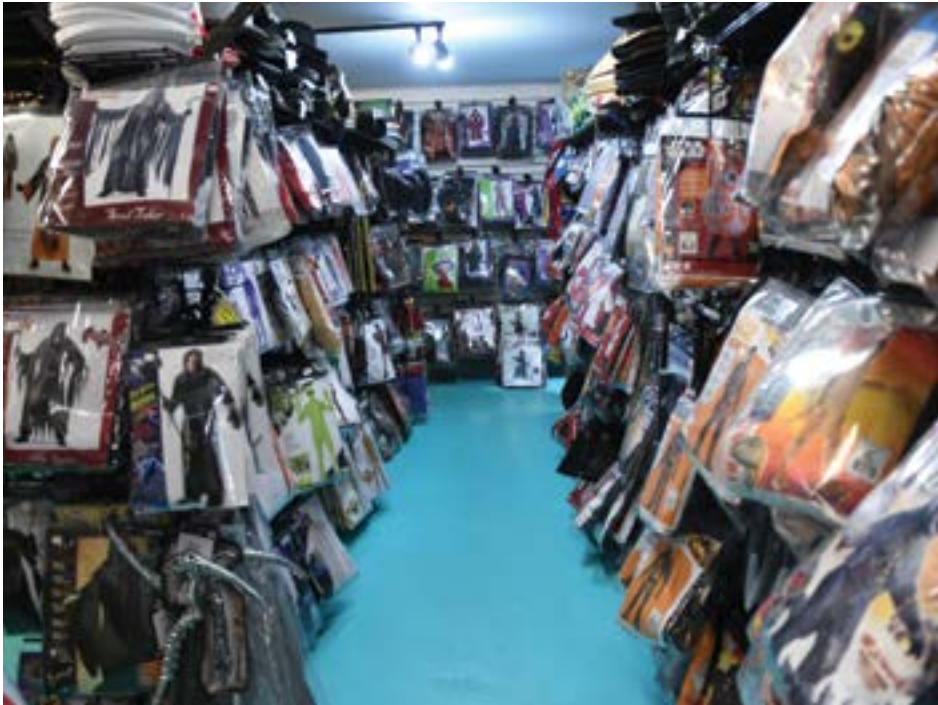
the very last minute for their costume,” Brightbill says. “Especially the men. Thank God for the men. They'll wander in here the morning of with no idea what they're looking for. And we'll help them find something.”

Costumes and ornaments weren't what Brightbill and her family had in mind when Floretta started out as a wholesale craft and floral distributor in the early 1980s. Brightbill got into the business while in college, selling crafts and merchandise at Raleigh flea markets to pay the bills (and her tuition). The floral industry wasn't ideal for her — before

the days of everybody using credit cards, most of her time was spent chasing down florists trying to collect on bills.

The business model changed in 1987 when her family — overflowing with Christmas merchandise that year — decided to open up a month-long Christmas store at Crabtree Valley Mall in Raleigh.

“That store saved our butts that year,” she says. “Not only that, I really enjoyed it. I loved the mall, and I loved the atmosphere. We eventually got out of wholesale and focused a lot on seasonal.”



The lower level of Floretta Imports is packed with costumes, and above, Halloween and Christmas dominate the landscape. Photos by Billy Liggett



Later, they tried to secure a Christmas store at Southpoint in Durham, but that mall wouldn't offer the space unless they also occupied it in October. That's when Brightbill and family decided to dive into Halloween decor and retail costume sales. She liked that even more.

For years, Floretta got by "enough to pay the electricity and keep running" for the first nine months and then made up for it during the holiday season, but Brightbill says today the store does well on its own January through September, and the final three months are the bread and butter. When not in Halloween or



Christmas mode, Floretta sells crafts, birthday decor and more — plus the costumes are there year-round, because there's always a reason to dress up. Brightbill also owns Lyons' General Store in Crabtree Valley Mall, which specializes in the "Southern lifestyle brands you love."



Floretta Imports is open from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. Mondays through Fridays, from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Saturdays and from 1 to 5 p.m. on Sundays in October all the way through Christmas. Learn more about everything they offer at florettaimports.com

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THE JAZZ CHAMELEON

For Durham trumpeter Al Strong, versatility is the only way

By Corbie Hill

The last few years have been pretty heavy, but Al Strong is finally ready to record his second album.

The jazz trumpeter's debut LP *LoveStrong Vol. 1* was released in early 2016. That same year, however, his mother died, and Strong has spent the years since putting her affairs in order. Several things finally came to a close this September, though, which is a huge weight off Strong's shoulders.

Finally he's seeing the light at the end of the tunnel. Finally he's regaining focus and clarity of thought. And though this busy musician gigs constantly, he's spent precious little time in the

AL STRONG

*7 p.m. | Thursday, Oct. 17
Downtown Alive! on Steele Street*

studio since 2016. But now it's time to get back to it. The songs are written. The recording dates are blocked out. The band is ready.

"I think just as a safety measure I'll go ahead and record two records," Strong says with a laugh.

Every joke contains at least a kernel of truth. In this case, the truth is that Strong could record two LPs in one session if he put his mind to it. Strong's influence in Trian-

gle-area jazz is felt in the Art of Cool Festival, which he co-founded (it has since been sold) and the Art of Cool Project, which he remains active in. He's an adjunct trumpet professor at North Carolina Central University and a performing artist with a busy schedule. On the day of our interview, Strong had been up since 5 a.m. and was making a pot of coffee at 6:15 in the evening. By all evidence, Strong doesn't slow down.

On Oct. 17, Strong plays Steele Street for 2019's final *Downtown Alive!* concert, where he'll perform jazz versions of mainstream tunes by the likes of John Lennon and Coldplay, but also renditions of old standards like "Fly me to the Moon." If Strong were to play a traditional jazz gig instead of an outdoor

street concert, however, the set would be wildly different, featuring instead numbers that appeal more directly to dedicated jazz heads. For Strong, who sees no alternative to being a career musician, versatility is key.

"I see myself as sort of a chameleon in a sense," Strong says.

"I've always wanted to be a more versatile musician than my peers in a way, primarily because of my upbringing, having bounced around from shelter to shelter as a kid, things of that nature," he continues. "Once I chose music as a career, it had to work because that family structure wasn't always there. I take everything, all of this stuff really seriously."

Strong was raised in Washington, DC, where

he started trumpet at age 8. Early on, he was immersed in soul, spirituals and global music. Jazz came later, but it wasn't a tough transition for Strong. So many of these musical forms have one thing in common, Strong says: the blues. Even today, he leans on blues elements to keep his music appealing to listeners who may not have a strong jazz background.

Among the many hats Strong wears, one is that of the jazz educator. He's taught at NCCU for a decade, for one. For another, he's active in the Start of Cool program, which teaches jazz elements to Durham schoolchildren. Start of Cool covers a lot of ground, with children learning different song forms and how to improvise.

Through Start of Cool, Strong sees today's children experience what he did three decades ago. Kids don't already have the preconceptions about jazz that many adults do, he points out, so he sees the music connect with them the same way it did with him at that age. "I remember being in similar community-based programs when I was a kid," Strong says. "If I hadn't chosen music as a career I would still be an avid fan and supporter of the music."

Start of Cool and the Art of Cool Project are now separate entities from the larger Art of Cool Festival, though each has led to new

opportunities for jazz players like Strong. He's been featured on PBS shows, he notes, and he's happily seen the North Carolina scene expand. When once there were only two or three jazz clubs in the Triangle, now he has a wealth of options — including, yes, his October show in downtown Sanford. And while he's pleased to see this expansion, he's especially happy that his students can play different rooms for different audiences.

As for Strong, whose life has not always been easy and who is finally, finally seeing the light at the end of the tunnel after the death of his mother, there's an especially important reason this chameleon values welcoming stages and an increasingly vibrant jazz scene.

"[Music] is been what it's always been for me, and that's my sanctuary, my escape from all the ills of the world," he says. "If I'm not playing or not practicing or not dealing with music, I'm not a happy camper most times. I lean on it as much as anyone would."



Corbie Hill is a journalist and editor who lives on three wooded acres in Pittsboro with his wife and daughters. His work has appeared in the News & Observer, No Depression, StarTrek.com, Bandcamp Daily and a host of other outlets.

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ENTERTAINMENT

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ADRIAN + MEREDITH

Oct. 4 | *Hugger Muggler* |
8 p.m. | Free

Adrian + Meredith sway and stomp their way through driving numbers that draw influences from klezmer, mountain music, zydeco and a range of other folk forms.

N.C. REVELERS ORCHESTRA BIG BAND SALUTE

Oct. 4 | *Mann Center* |
7:30 p.m. | \$10-\$15

Big band music was essential to many American troops during World War II. They were young, weary and far from home, but they found escape in Glenn Miller's bombastic, brassy dance numbers. This show honors that era in pop culture, as well as later contributions by crooners like Frank Sinatra. Tickets: manncenternc.org.



American composer Alec Wilder once described Hoagy Carmichael as the "most talented, inventive, sophisticated and jazz-oriented of all the great craftsmen" of pop songs in the first half of the 20th century. Carmichael is best known for composing the music for *Stardust*, *Georgia on My Mind*, *The Nearness of You* and *Heart and Soul*, four of the most-recorded songs of all time.

ROAD TO BROADWAY

Temple hopes premiere of *Stardust Road* paves way to the national stage

By Billy Liggett

Some of Broadway's greatest hits have found their way to Temple Theatre's stage over the years. It's the theatre's hope that this time around, the road to Broadway begins in Sanford.

The Temple's second show of its fall season will be a world premiere pre-Broadway production of Hoagy Carmichael's *Stardust Road*. The original production will be co-produced by Temple Theatre, alongside Hoagy Carmichael's son, Hoagy Bix Carmichael. Director Susan H. Schulman and choreographer Michael Lichtefeld will lead the production, having collaborated previously on Broadway productions of *Little Women*, *The Sound of Music*, *The Secret Garden* and *Sweeney Todd*.

Schulman earned a Tony award nomination in 1989 for *Sweeney Todd*, and the cast

STARDUST ROAD

Oct. 17 through Nov. 3
Temple Theatre in Sanford

of Jordan Barrow, Marckus Blair, Rachel Fairbanks, Jenny Mollett, Brianna Mooney, Jake Wood and Richard Riaz Yoder have performed all over the country, including Broadway (Mollett in *The Color Purple* and Yoder in five productions, including *White Christmas*, *Hello Dolly* and *My Fair Lady*).

In other words, the talent coming to Sanford this month is big. And the show — which opens Oct. 17 and runs through Nov. 3 — is a big, big deal to Temple Theatre and producing artistic director Peggy Taphorn.

"This is a big deal for us," said Taphorn, who wrapped up Temple's season-opening

production of *Oliver!* on Sept. 29. "This is a huge honor and step in our development as a leading regional theatre."

It's not the theatre's first go at launching a national show, according to Taphorn. In 2014, Temple had a development deal with a company in New York City and did the world premiere of *Country Gravy and Other Obsessions*, which went on to a national tour after its run in Sanford. The lead producer of that show unexpectedly passed away, and the relationship between the company and Temple ended. Taphorn said *Stardust Road* gives the theatre another chance at being on the ground floor of developing a show that will ultimately be produced at other theaters — and, her fingers crossed — eventually Broadway.

"The Temple will always be listed as the premiere theatre at which it was produced, so all subsequent productions will know

that it started here in Sanford,” Taphorn said. “That’s really cool. And having a co-producer of Hoagy’s caliber also ups the production values we can afford, as well as the creative team and cast. All of that is reflected in this amazing production.”

“In the theatrical world, this can merit national press,” added Gavan Pamer, Temple’s marketing and development director and regular performer. Having the opportunity to be the first theatre to produce this show is a very exciting time. This process is how some Broadway shows have found their legs to move on to a life in New York.”

Using the iconic music of Hoagy Carmichael — best known for composing the music for *Stardust*, *Georgia on My Mind*, *The Nearness of You* and *Heart and Soul*, four of the most-recorded songs of all time — *Stardust Road* uses seven actors and numerous dance numbers to tell the story of four decades in America: The early years of ragtime, jazz and blues; the romance of New York in the 1930s; the tumultuous and uncertain years of the World War II era; and the post-war Golden Age of Hollywood.

According to Taphorn, *Stardust Road* uses the sophisticated melodies and lyrics that are Hoagy Carmichael’s legacy to weave the story through the four decades and the evolving relationships of the actors on stage. According to the press release, “This is the story of friendship through four decades and of how we all grow up to find our own *Stardust Road*.”

“The show is a lot of fun,” Taphorn said, “but there’s also a lot of emotional impact. You will hear 90 minutes of beautiful Hoagy Carmichael tunes, some very familiar and some new to most of us. There’s a lot of

dancing — featuring some amazing tap dancing — in addition to the beautiful arrangements by Larry Yurman. Lots of the songs have at least a five-part harmony, and there will be a live six-piece band on the stage. So, definitely, this is not one to miss.”

Taphorn’s relationship with Schulman goes way back. The two worked together for several seasons when Taphorn worked at The Starlight Theatre in Kansas City while in college. Schulman hired Taphorn for her stage management team while directing *Little Women* on Broadway, a show Lichfeld choreographed. Taphorn also worked on Broadway in *Urinetown* with Lichfeld’s partner — all of those connections helped Temple land this show.

“Part of it, too, is that Temple is located conveniently from New York City, but far enough off the radar that we can mount the show without too much scrutiny before it opens,” Taphorn said. “Loads of shows have been torpedoed out of town before they even make it to New York City, because of bad press too early in the development process. So, location helped.”

Taphorn said the best feature of the Temple is that it’s a “beautiful historic theatre reminiscent of the smaller Broadway houses, with a great look and feel to mount a show that features music from the 1920s through the 50s.”

“When Hoagy Bicks Carmichael — the co-producer and Hoagy’s son — came to check out the theatre last year, he loved the physical space,” she said. “And he and I ‘clicked,’ which is very important as producing partners.”



Hoagy Carmichael, with sons Randy and Hoagy Bix Carmichael at CBS studios for The Hoagy Carmichael Show in Los Angeles in 1946.

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County community. In this instance, it does so by inviting artists from Sanford's sister city of Atizipán de Zaragoza, Mexico, for a day of food, music and other attractions.

DOWNTOWN ALIVE: AL STRONG

Oct. 17 | Steele Street | 5 p.m. | Free
See Page 26.

HOAGY CARMICHAEL'S STARDUST ROAD

Oct. 17-Nov. 3 | Temple Theatre |
Times vary | \$17-\$29

See Page 28. Tickets can be purchased by calling 919.774.4155 or visiting temple-shows.com.

BAD MOON RISING

Oct. 26 | Mann Center |
7 p.m. | \$10-\$15

This is a classic rock cover band. I mean, the name says it all.



SONNY MILES

Oct. 25 | Hugger Mugger | 8 p.m. | Free

There's more to R&B than just being smooth and soulful. It has rough, funky edges; it blurs into hip-hop; it's vocally demanding; there's a tradition of frankly stellar guitar playing. Got it? Point is, you can trust Sonny Miles with the ins and outs of this varied genre.

THE B-SIDES

Oct. 4 | Smoke & Barrel |
8:30 p.m. | Free

"Mamas, don't let your babies grow up to be B-Sides / Cuz B-Sides love country by Willie and Waylon and Merle."

FESTIVAL LATINO

Oct. 5 | Mann Center |
10 a.m. to 3 p.m. | Free

Festival Latino sponsor El Refugio's mission is to promote cultural exchanges between transitioning immigrants and the Lee

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ARTS-tober in Sanford

In Sanford, October is ARTS-tober, a month to promote the arts locally and celebrate the community as an arts destination.

Three special events make Sanford a destination city for the arts in October:

- The Sanford Brush and Palette Club's weeklong annual art exhibit runs Oct. 19 to 26 at the Hales Center on McIver Street in downtown Sanford and will feature hundreds of pieces — primarily paintings, but other media as well — from local artists. The event is open from 1 to 6 p.m. on Oct. 19 and 20, 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. Oct. 21 through Oct. 24, 11 a.m. to 9 p.m. on Oct. 25, and 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. on Oct. 26.
- Dedication of three “found object” sculptures by Jason Moore in Depot Park on Oct. 14.
- The Hearts and Hands Regional Quilt Show at the Dennis Wicker Civic Center on Oct. 18 and 19.

Additionally, Sanford's 2019 Festival Latino will take place at the Mann Center on Oct. 5. Featuring a delegation (including artists) from Atizapan De Zaragoza, Mexico, Sanford's newest sister city, the festival goes from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Tickets are available at mann-centernc.org.

Irene Smith, the acting director of the Lee County Arts Council, said these events go a long way toward boosting economic activity in Sanford.

“We are working with the Chamber of Commerce and a dozen or more cultural arts organizations in Sanford to increase attendance at these events and all the other cultural arts events taking place in October, and to funnel the thousands of visitors to these events to the shops and restaurants in downtown Sanford,” said Smith.



Learn more about ARTS-tober in Sanford at the Brush & Palette Club's Facebook page: facebook.com/SanfordBrushPaletteClub

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THE RANT

LOCAL MATTERS

YMCA kicks off campaign

The Ingram Family YMCA in Sanford launched its annual campaign in late September with a goal of raising \$195,000 to benefit more than 369 families in Lee County.

100 percent of the money raised goes directly to programs and services for children, teens, adults, and families in Lee County who otherwise wouldn't be able to afford them. These programs and services include mentoring, camping, wellness, after school care, and more. The campaign doesn't pay for general branch overhead or campaign expenses.

The local YMCA branch has run its annu-

al campaign since 1986 and raised more than \$186,000 last year.

To get in touch with the Ingram Family YMCA, call (919) 777-9622 or visitymca-triangle.org/locations/ingram-family-ymca.

Bigfoot Festival coming back to Cumnock

The Deep River Park Association will host its third annual Bigfoot Festival from 1 to 6 p.m. on Saturday, Nov. 2.

The festival, which costs \$5, will be held at the Deep River Park at the Camelback Bridge just across the Lee-Chatham county line.

Participants can compete in several contests (hairiest man, "Bigfoot scream" and, appropriately, biggest foot), eat from on-site food trucks, and shop from vendors.

There will also be lectures from cryptid experts and Sasquatch investigators. Lectures cost \$5. The event is cash only.


For more information, visit facebook.com/deepriverparks.



More gable vents in Cameron


After receiving a tip from reader James Vann Comer, *The Rant* took a roadtrip to nearby Cameron and spotted two more of the telltale bell-shaped gable vents apparently associated with 19th century builder John B. Masemore (Re: "Architect's signature lives on" in September edition). Both are located

on N.C. 27 through the middle of town. One, known as the Muse house, is occupied and maintained in very good condition. The other, known as the Old Greenwood Inn, has seen better days. We weren't able to definitively connect either structure to Masemore, but the gable vents and the timeframe of their construction at the very least make his involvement possible.



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Redistricting proposal not likely to affect Lee's districts

While a redistricting proposal for North Carolina's legislative districts has been passed by both houses of the state legislature and is under review by a judge, changes to the map across the state do not appear to have had any impact on Lee County's districts.

The proposed House District 51 consists of all of Lee and portions of western Harnett County. The proposed Senate District 12 consists of all of Lee and Harnett counties, and some precincts in western Johnston County. They are held by Rep. John Sauls (R-Lee) and Sen. Jim Burgin (R-Harnett), respectively.

Church at GOP HQ operated by former Dem school board chair violates city code

A church operating out of the Lee County Republican Party's downtown Sanford headquarters has been told by city planning officials that it's in violation of an ordinance which forbids storefront churches in the central business district and needs to move elsewhere.

Shawn Williams, a former chairman of the Lee County Board of Education and the lead pastor at God's Promise Church has said in response that he plans to consult with attorneys and challenge the ordinance under the federal Religious Land Use and Institutionalized Persons Act.

God's Promise lists 101 S. Steele St. as a "temporary location" on its website. Prior to its location there, the church had met at the old Chef Paul's location at 610 Main St.

Still, the church sharing space with the GOP is curious, as Williams — who served on the school board as a Democrat until 2012 and ran again in 2014 — has butted heads in public on multiple occasions with several members of the Lee County Republican Party, including Chairman Jim Womack.

NEWS TIPS

Send us your news tips by emailing gordon@rantnc.com or sending us a message at our facebook page, @therant905

TRAMWAY



PROGRESS AT NEW TRAMWAY GAS STATION | While we haven't heard of an opening date, progress is visible on the 5,000 square foot Circle K "mega store" on U.S. 1 in Tramway. Work began in early August.

FRIENDS OF THE RANT | A PODCAST



FRIENDS OF THE RANT PODCAST | The Rant launched its new monthly podcast in September — *Friends of The Rant*, and featured Jeff Towson, owner of Smoke & Barrel in downtown Sanford. Each month, the podcast will feature a new "friend of The Rant," who'll share their story and take part in discussions on local matters and content that appeared in that month's edition of *The Rant Monthly*. Friends of The Rant can be found at our website (rantnc.com), by searching our Facebook page or on Podbean. The podcast will soon be available on Apple Podcasts, iTunes, Amazon streaming and through your various podcast apps on your smart phones.

Raven Rock celebrates 50 years as a state park



Robert Soots, biology professor and head of the Campbell University biology department, was teaching a course on the natural history of invertebrates at Campbell in the mid 1960s when he first became acquainted with what is now Raven Rock State Park. Soots needed a place outside of the classroom to teach the laboratory portion of the class, and the large tract of land just a short drive from the University suited his needs.

Seeking permission to access the area for his classes, Soots got to know some of the landowners. One — he called her “Miss Lizzy” — became a good friend. She lived alone on the several hundred acres she owned along the Cape Fear River, and she often had Soots and his wife, Sharron, over for meals.

When Miss Lizzy considered selling her property for mining, Soots asked her to consider learning what it would take to convert it into a state park. He researched the process at length and visited other nearby landowners, floating the idea and testing the waters. “Without exception,” Soots said, “everybody said they would sell their property for the state park if we could make it happen. I made it clear to them there was no guarantee I could accomplish this, but I’d try.”



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Soots sketched out a plan and took it to the Harnett County Board of Commissioners, showing them slides of the beautiful area and discussing the benefits of having a state park in the county. He went to every town meeting and every garden club, bird club and scout club he could think of to get people on board.

Following months of hard work, in 1969, Raven Rock State Park was created with the passage and adoption of North Carolina Senate Bill 495. Today the park, which covers 4,810 acres along the Cape Fear River's banks, is a popular destination for hikers, campers, anglers and canoeists, drawing thousands of visitors every month.

To celebrate his vision and his work in creating Raven Rock State Park, Soots took

part in an event celebrating Raven Rock's 50th anniversary on Sept. 14. Several speakers were on hand to discuss the park's history, and guests were led on guided tours of the park's many trails — including the one that leads to Raven Rock itself — an immense crystalline structure rising to 150 feet and stretching for more than a mile along the Cape Fear.

Among those who organized the celebration was current Campbell biology associate professor John Bartlett. Of the man whose work helped create a state park and spare hundreds of acres from a potentially much different future, Bartlett was clear.

"I think Bob Soots is a hero," he said. "He's a visionary and he was way out ahead of his time on things."

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THE RANT

SPORTS



Bust dedicated to legendary coach, stadium namesake

A bronze bust of legendary Sanford Central High School football coach and namesake of Lee County High School's football stadium Paul B. Gay was dedicated to the coach at the Yellow Jackets' home game on Sept. 27.

Gay coached the 1968 Class 3A state champion squad that went on to beat Roxboro, 33-0, in the title game. That year also marked the first year of the current stadium, which celebrated its 50th year in 2018. Members of that '68 state champion squad were on hand Friday night for the unveiling of the bust, which will be permanently featured at the stadium.

Gay remained coach when Sanford Central became Lee County High School and finished his career with a 177-75-12 career record before he retired in 1985. He won three Eastern 3A championships from 1966 to 1968, and state titles in 1973 and 74. He was the North Carolina Coach of the Year in 1973 and is today a member of the North Carolina High School Athletic Association Hall of Fame.



Lee County High School's A.J. Boulware is one of the top running backs in the state and a key cog in the Yellow Jackets' undefeated start to the 2019 season. Photo by Billy Liggett

RUNNING TO DAYLIGHT

Star running back shares how football has gotten him through tragedy

Chris DeLambert hosts *From the Cheap Seats on WFJA Radio on Mondays from 9 to 11 a.m.* DeLambert interviewed Lee County Yellow Jacket running back A.J. Boulware, 18, on Sept. 23 to discuss the senior's plans for college ball, his overcoming of adversity off the field, and how he balances the responsibilities of football, school and home. This interview has been edited for length. Listen to it in its entirety on *From the Cheap Seats' Facebook page* — facebook.com/cheapseatsradio.

DeLambert: A.J., you were the top returning 3A back in terms of production last year. I know you and I have talked about Jahmir Smith, kinda being in his shadow your first couple years in the program. What did you

learn from him?

Boulware: I learned a lot from Jahmir. Like, the way he ran the ball, the way he was patient going through a hole, the way he used his body in the motions, and the way he could take on just about every single man. He had no fear. And he just went straight for it.

DeLambert: How would you say that your game is similar to him, and how would you say you're different?

Boulware: The reason how I can say my game is similar is my patience. The way Jahmir ran the ball, like I said, was very patient with the ball and going through the motions with everything. Now the difference from my run game is I'm very patient going through the hole, but as soon as I go through the hole, I take a burst, and I'm going. I make sure that I get a man before I get into the end zone.

And I just feel like, me being the shorter man than him, weight-wise and height-wise, I just feel like I'm making a very big difference in the running.

DeLambert: The first time I saw you this year was at the Jamboree, and it was obvious to me you'd put on a lot of weight. You're almost 30 pounds heavier. It doesn't look like you've lost a step. Do you feel like you're just as fast? Just as quick?

Boulware: Yeah, I really do. I might have improved even more. I feel like I've worked harder than I ever have before. I used to wake up at 3 in the morning, go outside and hit the ladder. I would hit it, I would do squats, I would go jogging. Or whenever it was like, during the wintertime, snowing, I would be out working out. Raining, I'm outside working out. When it's really hot, some people



"I'm gonna make sure I get this education. I'm gonna make sure I can make my family proud. And for whenever the lights come on on Friday, I'm ready to come home."

would not be going outside, I'm working out. I make sure I work my butt off to be successful.

Delambert: That sounds like a lot. Mom, talk about that level of dedication and what you see from him.

Bridget Boulware: He's always been dedicated. Even from [East Lee] middle school, he started in middle school. In sixth grade, he wanted to try out for the football team, but they wouldn't let him. Sixth graders couldn't try out. It was him and Timothy Lett, who also plays for the Jackets. Timothy Lett got ballboy, and he didn't. So it kinda upset him. And he came home and he was like, "Mom, I'm so upset, I'm so mad. But I'm gonna make you a promise. I'm gonna make that team next year." The whole entire summer he got up, 6 in the morning. He worked out nonstop. I didn't know anything about football. He had me outside during the summertime throwing him the football. I've never thrown a football a day in my life. But he was like, "Mom, you have to do this." And during the evenings and nights he's on the computer, looking at plays, looking at different colleges, watching NFL. He eats, breathes and sleeps football ever since sixth grade.

Delambert: People talk to me all the time about the young men in our district that have been offered scholarships. Now you've got several offers out there. The Division I schools

that have offered so far — Eastern Kentucky, Georgia State, Coastal Carolina, North Carolina A&T.

Boulware: Yes.

Delambert: Okay. I have told people for the last couple months, I feel like you're under recruited because you played last year at 170. And that's a little light for a tailback at the D-1 level. Have you seen any traction built with some of the larger programs that are starting to get wind of the fact that you're 193 pounds now?

Boulware: I would say yes, and I would say no. Whenever I started talking to UNC Charlotte last year, they came to visit me. I was weighing 170 pounds the first time they visited me. Alright, they came and visited me during June. Whenever they came back to visit me, I was weighing in at 190. They were like "Wow. I gotta make a call to the running back coach to let him know that you put on some weight. Because we really want to talk to you." He wants them big backs.

Delambert: Absolutely.

Boulware: UNC Charlotte sent me a couple of game invites, and I've been to that camp and everything. But the coach who was recruiting said that if I come to the camp, that they would offer me. So I go to the camp for UNC Charlotte, I showed them what I got. And I still

weighed the same. I was weighing 190 pounds. I texted him and said "Did I do good?" And he said, "Yeah, you performed perfect." And I never got an offer from them

Delambert: Outside of the four Division I schools that have offered, are there any other schools that you feel confident about right now, that you expect to be offered from?

Boulware: I would say Western Carolina, because they just emailed me today about a game invite. So Western Carolina looks like one. And I've been talking to a couple other schools. There's a Division II school down in South Carolina that I've been talking to. I feel very strongly that I can get LSU or Penn State. I'm not sure, because those are some big backs they got up there. Big boys. But the colleges I would think I would be expecting to get an offer from, I still feel like UNC Charlotte strongly, and Colorado State as well. That's probably one of my biggest ones, Colorado State. Also, Old Dominion.

Delambert: I know you've had a little bit of an ankle injury. ... [but] that's not the only adversity you've had to deal with this year. Talk a little bit about everything else that's going on around you as this football season unfolds.

Boulware: This football season has been a very slow start for me. And coming out of the summer has just been, not the best summer. This would have to be the worst year of my entire life, for my family. Because we just lost my aunt five weeks ago. And just having that happen, because I was the one that found her. My mom was up in Chapel Hill with my grandma trying to take care of her, because my grandma is down with constant strokes. So it was not good.

Delambert: So what exactly happened with your aunt?

Boulware: We do not know. One night she was complaining about a toothache, and she didn't know what was wrong with her. My cousin had called me in the hallway, I saw that she was about to collapse. I picked her up, we got her into the car, and we drove to the hospital. And she was doing a little bit better, she was speaking perfectly fine, she could move. She was being her normal self. At about 6, my aunt told us to go to sleep and come back because they were giving her some medicine for her toothache, for the pain. Before we left the hospital, my aunt told us that she loved us. So I went to sleep, stayed at home with my cousin. My sister went to go pick up my aunt from the

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hospital. She came back, as soon as the door opened, I saw my aunt. She walked back into her room and went to sleep. I woke up around about 12:30, and went to go check everybody. I checked my sister, checked my cousin, they were asleep. I went into my aunt's room, and she was laid funny in her bed. She was laid face down on her mattress. And when I went to go touch her, she was cold.

Delambert: Oh, wow.

Boulware: As I turned her over, her lips were purple and there was blood on the mattress, and on the pillows. I didn't know what had happened. I tried doing CPR to bring her back, and at this time I'm screaming for my sister. My cousin, which is my aunt's son, ended up waking up. He even came into the room and saw his mom laid out like that. And he tried to help us bring her back, and she just would not come back.

Delambert: What was your aunt's name?

Boulware: Jocelyn McDougald. She was 38.

Delambert: Wow. That's unreal. And you said while this was going on, your grandmother's in the hospital as well?



"I just gotta separate my mind from the bad to the good. I gotta make sure I stay focused."

Boulware: Yeah, she was. She ended up being admitted to the hospital a couple of days before all of this happened, with a stroke. So my mom was up in Chapel Hill with my grandma. I called my mom and told her, "Hey mom, Jocelyn is not responsive. She's not moving. I'm sitting here trying to wake her up,

calling her name. She's not breathing." And at this time she's like, "OK, you just gotta listen. I'll be down there, I don't know when, I'll try to get down there." I was like, "Mom. We got this. This is just something we have to do." It's life. Everybody goes through something in life that they have to take on alone.

Delambert: How are you as a family? How have you rallied, and how are you coping with

this? This is a lot.

Boulware: The way we're having to cope with it is just take it step by step, and we just gotta make ourselves stronger through this. Knowing that we had lost a lot in so little time, we just felt like, no matter what, push come to shove, we have each other. God has us, has taken us step by step. It's rough. We don't even know how we are able to push ourselves every day. But just to wake up and see each other every day, that's what makes us stronger.

Delambert: So it seems to me like football is probably the release for you right now. How do you compartmentalize and set everything aside so that you can focus on the job that needs to be done when the lights come on? Because that seems like the least important thing going on.

Boulware: I just gotta separate my mind from the bad to the good. I gotta make sure I stay focused. I told my coach, "I don't think I'm gonna be able to come to school today. I just cannot do it." But everything that's been going on in my life, I decided I'm gonna go to school today. I'm gonna make sure I get this education. I'm gonna make sure I can make my family proud. And for whenever the lights come on on Friday, I'm ready to come home.



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Insurance Agent

Chad focuses on sales of Auto, Home, Business and Life Insurance. He serves as a Board Member for the Sanford Area Chamber of Commerce and Lee County Parks and Recreation. At home, he enjoys playing music, being outdoors, and spending time with his family.



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2019 Football Schedules

Wake Forest Demon Deacons

Aug. 30 UTAH STATE (Friday)
Sept. 6 @ RICE (Friday)
Sept. 13 NORTH CAROLINA (Fri.)
Sept. 21 ELON
Sept. 28 @ BOSTON COLLEGE
Oct. 12 LOUISVILLE
Oct. 19 FLORIDA STATE
Nov. 2 NC STATE
Nov. 9 @ VIRGINIA TECH
Nov. 16 @ CLEMSON
Nov. 23 DUKE
Nov. 30 @ SYRACUSE

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Appalachian Mountaineers

Aug. 31 ETSU
Sept. 7 UNC CHARLOTTE
Sept. 21 @ NORTH CAROLINA
Sept. 28 COASTAL CAROLINA
Oct. 9 @ LOUISIANA (Wed.)
Oct. 19 ULM
Oct. 26 @ SOUTH ALABAMA
Oct. 31 GEORGIA SOUL (Th.)
Nov. 9 @ SOUTH CAROLINA
Nov. 16 @ GEORGIA STATE
Nov. 23 TEXAS STATE
Nov. 29 @ TROY

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NC State Wolfpack

Aug. 31 EAST CAROLINA
Sept. 7 WESTERN CAROLINA
Sept. 14 @ WEST VIRGINIA
Sept. 21 BAIL STATE
Sept. 28 @ FLORIDA STATE
Oct. 10 SYRACUSE (Thurs.)
Oct. 19 @ BOSTON COLLEGE
Nov. 2 @ WAKE FOREST
Nov. 9 CLEMSON
Nov. 16 LOUISVILLE
Nov. 21 @ GEORGIA TECH (Thurs.)
Nov. 30 NORTH CAROLINA

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Duke Blue Devils

Aug. 31 ALABAMA (At Atlanta)
Sept. 7 NC A&T
Sept. 14 @ MID. TENN. ST.
Sept. 21 @ VIRGINIA TECH
Oct. 5 PITTSBURGH
Oct. 12 GEORGIA TECH
Oct. 19 @ VIRGINIA
Oct. 26 @ NORTH CAROLINA
Nov. 9 NOTRE DAME
Nov. 16 SYRACUSE
Nov. 23 @ WAKE FOREST
Nov. 30 MIAMI

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UNC Tar Heels

Aug. 31 SOUTH CAROLINA (Charlotte)
Sept. 7 MIAMI
Sept. 13 @ WAKE FOREST (Fri.)
Sept. 21 APPALACHIAN
Sept. 28 CLEMSON
Oct. 5 @ GEORGIA TECH
Oct. 19 @ VIRGINIA TECH
Oct. 26 DUKE
Nov. 2 VIRGINIA
Nov. 14 @ PITTSBURGH (Thurs.)
Nov. 22 MERCER
Nov. 30 @ NC STATE

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East Carolina Pirates

Aug. 31 @ NC STATE
Sept. 7 GARDNER-WEBB
Sept. 14 @ NAVY
Sept. 21 WILLIAM & MARY
Sept. 28 @ OLD DOMINION
Oct. 3 TEMPLE (Thurs.)
Oct. 19 @ UCF
Oct. 26 USF
Nov. 2 CINCINNATI
Nov. 9 @ SMU
Nov. 23 @ CONNECTICUT
Nov. 30 TULSA

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CAROLINA PANTHERS

Sept. 8 LA RAMS
Sept. 12 TAMPA BAY (Thurs.)
Sept. 22 @ CARDINALS
Sept. 29 @ HOUSTON
Oct. 6 JACKSONVILLE
Oct. 13 OPEN DATE
Oct. 27 @ SAN FRANCISCO
Nov. 3 TENNESSEE
Nov. 10 @ GREEN BAY
Nov. 8 @ PITTSBURGH (Th.)
Nov. 17 ATLANTA
Nov. 24 @ NEW ORLEANS
Dec. 1 WASHINGTON
Dec. 8 @ ATLANTA
DEC. 15 SEATTLE
Dec. 22 @ INDIANAPOLIS
Dec. 29 NEW ORLEANS
Jan. 4 PLAYOFFS



Note: Game Dates/Times are subject to change for weeks 5 through 17.

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