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Keeping Close to Nature's Heart

BY LINDSAY MARTELL

One of my favorite memories around Lake Norman isn't even mine.

It belongs to my husband and my daughter; but it feels like a tether between the three of us. A living snapshot I treasure as if it were my own.

On a cloudy morning in late 2020, when the pandemic still clung to us in the most unrelenting way, I had outpatient surgery in Charlotte.

At the time, hospitals maintained a strict no-visitor policy, which meant my husband and daughter couldn't stay. I gathered them into a family hug before they left, and they watched as I was led to pre-op, their faces mostly hidden by masks.

My daughter, then seven, needed a distraction. Big time.

Ramsey Creek is a Lake Norman park that is muggy, buggy, and, on that day, the perfect respite for our daughter. Surrounded by steam coming off the grass, my husband watched as she clung to the handles of the zip line with the ferocity of a determined second grader. She jumped and soared, the cable barely sagging under her little-kid weight. She hopped on again and again and again. It was everything she needed on that day.

When my husband picked me up, she bounced with joy in her booster seat; happy to see me, yes, but also bursting with stories of the fun she had, how warm it was, and the speed at which she flew.

Ramsey Creek is still an escape for us, especially now when outings with no agenda are so rare.

On a recent Sunday, we grabbed sandwiches and loaded potato soup (my daughter's fave) from Jason's Deli, leashed up our dog, Dug, and set out for the kind of picnic you have when your kids are pretty much over it, but still polite enough to know it means something to you.

Spreading out an old tablecloth on an ancient-looking table, we ate and looked out at the shore of Lake Norman, the blue sky mirroring the stillness of the water.

It's a place that doesn't evolve much from season to season. Only in the dead of winter will you find it mostly uninhabited, save for a few bundled-up moms, desperate to give their kids some



Ramsey Creek Park

much-needed outside time.

I avoid it on the summer's hottest days, when the crowds take over, and the mosquitoes are out for blood, and I'm on the cusp of melting into a puddle of bug spray and sunscreen.

The days when it's warm but not scorching, buzzing with life but not packed, are my favorite. I bring a book, or put in my earbuds, and savor the lush green space around me.

Ramsey Creek reminds me that suburban parks can be restorative and healing. It's a sanctuary that always feels like home.

**The title is a derivation of the John Muir quote: "Keep close to Nature's heart... and break clear away, once in a while, and climb a mountain or spend a week in the woods. Wash your spirit clean."*

Milling About is a column about life around Lake Norman, written by Lindsay Martell. The column name is a nod to life around the lake and our town's mill history.

Lindsay Martell lives in Birkdale with her husband, daughter, and a scruffy mini mutt named Dug.



Martell



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Sailing Center Sets New Course

BY JON SHOW

Sitting on a leather sofa on the shores of Lake Norman, in the Larry Vitez Sailing Center, Kasia Fthenos is asked about her most memorable journey over nearly four decades of sailing.

She smiles. The answer comes without hesitation.

At 17, she crewed a voyage on the *Mercury*, a steel-hulled yawl rig that set out from Poland bound for Amsterdam, then pushed through the English Channel and traced the eastern coastline of England. From there, the route turned north around Scotland and into the Shetland Islands.

"It is one of the most dangerous places to sail across—it's basically the Cape Horn of the Northern Hemisphere," she said, describing the Pentland Firth, where currents can run at 15 knots and the sea compresses into unpredictable motion between rocks and whirlpools.

The experience began to shape not only her seamanship but her sense of how to move through changing conditions as wind, water, people and uncertainty all shift at once.

Years later, she finds herself applying that same mindset far from the North Sea, on a much quieter stretch of water on Lake Norman.

Welcome to the lake

As the new head of Lake Norman Community Sailing, Fthenos is now navigating a different kind of course: growing a nonprofit sailing center on the lake and working to bring renewed energy to the sport she loves.

"There is so much energy—amazing energy from the volunteers and the community," she said. "We have some challenges, but people support sailing all across the lake, and it is electrifying."

The center operates on a mission that sounds simple but proves complicated in practice: make sailing accessible. That means instruction for beginners, programs for children, recreational sailing for members and an effort to shift perceptions about who sailing is for—and what it looks like on a lake dominated by powerboats.

But before the organization can grow outward, it first must make itself more visible.

"We're trying to change a lot of things, add more energy, invite the community, open up to the community, let them know about us," she said. "A lot of peo-



Kasia Fthenos, Lake Norman Community Sailing / Jason Benavides photos

ple just don't know that we're here."

Sailing on Lake Norman has long been fragmented—spread across yacht clubs, private docks and small pockets of organized racing. While sailing has deep roots on the lake, observers say visibility and access have never fully caught up with its potential.

Fthenos believes that can change.

Focused on growth

Membership at the center currently sits around 160 individuals or families who pay a few hundred dollars a year to get seven-day-a-week access to any of the 31 sailboats during daylight hours.

Think of it as the original boat club at a much more affordable price point.

Fthenos hopes to double the membership rolls in her first year, but growth is not just about numbers. It is about reshaping what the experience feels like once people arrive.

For years, much of the structured activity focused on racing. That model worked for dedicated sailors but left many newcomers feeling excluded.

"Not everybody is into racing," she said. "Sailing can offer so much more than that."

To address that gap, the organization introduced a weekly "Fun Day on the Water," a more relaxed program designed to lower the barrier to entry. Members can sail casually, practice skills under supervision, or simply spend time on the water without competition.

"It's fun on the water, it's a fantasy being on the water," she said. "We're open for cruising, learning, anything"

That shift reflects a broader strategy:



make sailing less intimidating, more social and more family-oriented.

Youth programs are central to that vision. This summer marks the return of structured sailing camps for the first time since 2019. The camps for children ages 7 to 17 will use Sunfish sailboats, small craft that allow beginners to quickly learn basic handling while still feeling the wind and water in full force.

High school sailors are expected to play an important role as volunteers and mentors.

"The young volunteers are amazing because they are full of energy," she said. "If they have fun, they will tell everybody. They will bring the family over here. They will bring more friends."

That ripple effect, she believes, is key to rebuilding a sailing culture that is a centerpiece of the lake and not something peripheral.

Bigger picture

There is also a longer-term vision taking shape—one that extends far beyond Lake Norman.

She has begun reaching out to other community sailing organizations along the East Coast, including groups in Boston, Miami and Key West, with the idea of building a connected network

where sailors can move between programs, travel for events and learn from different sailing environments.

"How awesome would that be to have some kind of connection among different sailing communities across the United States?" she said.

The idea includes both cruising and racing opportunities, as well as what she described as "field trips" for adults and families—an attempt to break the idea that structured adventure belongs only to youth programs.

"Adults want to do that too," she said. "Especially people with empty nests, still full of energy."

Behind all of it is a marketing and branding overhaul aimed at expanding awareness across Lake Norman's many shoreline communities. A rebrand is underway, including a new logo, as well as outreach efforts and plans for increased visibility in marinas, neighborhoods and waterfront hubs.

Even with those changes, Fthenos is clear that growth will not happen overnight. Infrastructure limitations remain, including dock space and permitting challenges tied to shoreline management. But she sees those obstacles as part of the process rather than barriers to it.

In five years, she imagines a very different scene on the waterfront: more boats, more classes, a larger staff and a steady flow of families moving between docks, classrooms and open water.

"Loaded with kids and families of different ages," she said. "That would be full success."

Eye toward the future

Beyond numbers or facilities, Fthenos returns to something simpler: atmosphere. That energetic feeling and the potential of a resurgence in her life's passion is what fuels her, and she believes the foundation is already laid.

"The amount of energy here is electrifying," she said. "It will grow on Lake Norman. There will be more sailors."

It is the same sense of forward motion she once felt offshore in rough northern waters—only now, instead of navigating whirlpools and shifting currents at sea, she is navigating something closer to home: how to help a community find its way back to the helm.

"I really believe that we can do it," she said. "We're going to grow and bring more people in. That spark that there is here now? It will grow."

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Drought Creates Challenging Boating Conditions

BY JON SHOW

As Lake Norman heads into another busy summer boating season, local officers are urging residents and visitors to slow down and rethink how they navigate a lake transformed by unusually low water levels.

Recent water levels on Lake Norman have been 4 feet below target level and 6 feet below full pond. The last time levels were in that range during the summer months was 2002 and 2007, and the historic summer low of 89.9 feet was recorded in 1970.



Minderlein

“Lake Norman is a completely different lake during these drought conditions,” Minderlein said. “Areas that were previously safe to navigate are no longer safe.”

The Cornelius Police Department



Cornelius Police Department lake patrol / Photo by Jason Benavides

received 24 calls in the first three weeks of May to assist boats that ran aground, particularly near islands and shoal markers where underwater hazards are now much closer to the surface. That compares with an average summer rate of fewer than five calls per month.

Minderlein said boaters should give docks and islands even more room than state law requires. While North Carolina law generally requires operators to stay at least 100 to 150 feet away from certain areas, Minderlein recommends increasing that distance whenever possible.

“If it says 150 feet, make it 250,” he said.

He emphasized caution near islands, especially point-to-point islands that may be navigable during higher water conditions, as well as areas near or between shoal signs.

Minderlein repeatedly said speed is one of the biggest dangers on the water this summer, especially at night or in unfamiliar coves. Running aground at slow speeds may damage a boat, he said, but high-speed incidents can throw passengers into the water or cause serious injuries.

“If you’re going to be out at night and you hit anything going slow, at worst, you’re going to bounce off it,” Minderlein said. “If you hit it fast, that’s when we have catastrophic things happen.”

The low lake levels have also exacerbated concerns about what lies beneath the water. Minderlein said boaters have reported unexpected shallow spots and submerged objects in areas that are normally safe.

“When Lake Norman was flooded, who knows what was left under it?” he said.

The department is also reminding boaters about alcohol laws many people may not realize exist. Beer and wine are generally allowed on boats, but open bottles of liquor are prohibited unless the vessel includes sleeping quarters and kitchen facilities.

“On a regular wake boat, if you had a bottle of vodka, that’s illegal,” Minderlein said.

With thousands of renters and inexperienced boaters expected on the lake this summer, Minderlein encouraged anyone unfamiliar with boating to seek help before heading out.

“If you’re going to rent a boat, at least do your boater safety education online,” he said.

In addition to online education, another resource for boaters is the Joshua Murray Boating, Safety, Education and Awareness Center, which launched two years ago and has become a hub for boating safety education on Lake Norman.

Located in the building near the Blythe Landing boat launch, the facility was created to provide a dedicated space focused on public boating safety in response to increased lake fatalities.

During the summer months, the center distributes free boating safety materials and educational resources aimed at reducing accidents on the lake. Walk-up assistance is also available on weekends or by contacting the Cornelius Police Department in advance.

Officers said the goal is to provide practical instruction for both new and experienced boaters alike.

“Knowledge is power,” Minderlein said. “If you don’t have any knowledge, if you don’t have any training on what you’re doing, and then you’re out here on the water? That’s just a recipe for disaster.”

“People are like, ‘I know Lake Norman.’ Well, you don’t know it like this.”

How is the drought impacting businesses? PAGE 25

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NORMAN KNOWS Lunch on the Lake

BY NORMAN, WHO KNOWS

Summer is here, and that means getting out on the lake to enjoy tie-ups, tubing and lunch on the lake with your out-of-town visitors.

Whether you're looking to dress things up with a glass of prosecco and some upscale appetizers or hoping to get down and dirty in swim gear and flip-flops with a can of beer and some wings, here's a guide on where to grab lunch on the lake this summer.

Lakehouse Wine Bar & Grill

Cornelius

One of the more upscale dining options on the lake. All lunch menu items are under \$18, including a selection of flatbreads and appetizers such as calamari, marinated burrata, wings and pork bao buns. Salads include a Lakehouse chopped salad and seafood tower.

Dock: Slips available on a first-come, first-served basis.

Vibe check: A mellow stop where lunch feels unhurried and slightly elevated, with easy plates and a calm, sunlit covered outdoor space that leans more toward a relaxed break than anything formal or rushed.

Hello, Sailor

Cornelius

Elevated food in a nice environment. Appetizers (\$18-\$22) include blue crab claws, tuna crudo and smoked chicken wings. Salads (\$20-\$30) and sandwiches (\$16-\$25) include blackened shrimp tacos, grouper sandwich and wagyu beef Italian. Entrées (\$20-\$38) include hanger steak and steelhead trout.

Dock: Sixteen boat slips and a gas dock.

Vibe check: A bright, buzzy hangout with a retro Palm Springs feel, where food, cocktails and a steady social hum draw a see-and-be-seen crowd and keep things buzzing in a way that feels fun, social and just a little loud in a good way.

North Harbor Club

Davidson

Appetizers (\$14-\$27) include scallops, seared tuna and lobster mac and cheese. Salads (\$25-\$30). Sandwiches (\$14-\$19) include po' boy, grown-up grilled cheese



Hello, Sailor / Photo by Jason Benavides



North Harbor Club / North Harbor Club Photo

and chicken melt. Entrées (\$26-\$53) include filet mignon, surf and turf, blackened snapper and grilled pork loin.

Dock: Six boat slips.

Vibe check: Refined yet comfortable, with an easy upscale rhythm where well-dressed-but-relaxed crowds and quiet service make it feel like the kind of place people choose when they want the lake without the chaos.

Eddie's on Lake Norman

Mooreville

Massive outdoor seating area with seafood-heavy Italian fare: \$10-\$16 apps like oysters, crab cakes and clams. Fried seafood baskets and raw bar items \$9-\$18. Pastas \$16-\$30 and entrées like pan-seared snapper around \$25.

Dock: No dock. Visitors must anchor and wade in.

Vibe check: A polished-but-still-relaxed staple with big energy, where easygoing crowds, dependable drinks and a steady social buzz make it feel

more like a long, unhurried day on the water than a destination with any pretense.

Toucan's Lakefront

Mooreville

Casual waterfront tiki-style bar and grill. Affordable traditional lake fare like burgers, sandwiches, wings, seafood baskets, fajitas and frozen or tropical-style drinks. Most food is priced \$15-\$25.

Dock: Eight boat slips and a gas dock.

Vibe check: A colorful, easygoing hangout with a playful tropical streak, where frozen drinks, casual bites and a steady hum of boat-day energy set a fun, slightly chaotic, always-summer kind of mood.

The Blue Parrot Grill

Mooreville

Another tiki-style bar with live music, a relaxed party atmosphere, a seafood-focused menu and outdoor

seating. Most menu items (\$20-\$35) include burgers, wings, sandwiches, fried seafood baskets and an entrée called "local grouper."

Dock: 10 boat slips and a gas dock.

Vibe check: A bright, slightly kitschy lakeside crowd-pleaser with casual energy, tropical-leaning vibes and a steady mix of boaters and locals who come for easy drinks, unfussy plates and a laid-back, sun-bleached social scene.

Havana 33

Mooreville

Authentic Caribbean energy meets lakefront dining—ropa vieja, lechón, empanadas, plantains, seafood dishes and strong rum cocktails—plus live music and a festive, colorful interior. Most menu items are \$18-\$30.

Dock: No dock. Visitors must anchor and wade in.

Vibe check: A lively, rum-soaked hangout with colorful energy, upbeat music and a social, slightly chaotic warmth where cocktails and conversation tend to take priority over anything rushed or serious.

Anntony's at the Landing

Sherrills Ford

Site of the original Lake Norman Motel, now a Caribbean-inspired restaurant and bar. Known for \$10-\$20 jerk chicken, oxtails, curry dishes, seafood plates, tropical flavors, rum-forward cocktails and frozen drinks.

Dock: Four boat slips and a gas dock.

Vibe check: A laid-back, slightly divey waterfront hangout with Caribbean flavors, cold drinks and the kind of relaxed lake crowd that cares more about atmosphere than polish.

WaterSide Bar & Grill

Catawba

Laid-back throwback dive bar with a local crowd, cheap drinks, basic bar food, TVs and a casual come-as-you-are vibe focused on hanging out and sports rather than fancy dining or scenery.

Dock: Eight boat slips and a gas dock.

Vibe check: A no-frills, easygoing lake hangout with a steady flow of regulars, cold drinks and a lived-in feel where the draw is comfort, familiarity and watching the day drift by.

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CAIN CENTER FOR THE ARTS | LOST WORLDS BREWING

The Man Behind Lake Norman's Lost and Found

BY JON SHOW

In an online video, Phil Stahala extends his hand in front of an underwater camera, opens it and reveals what he was hired to recover — one of the many valuable items he has pulled from the deep, murky waters of Lake Norman.



Stahala

Is it one of the thousands of pairs of sunglasses he has found? One of the wedding rings he was hired to retrieve? Perhaps one of the hundreds of pricey anchors he has found attached to submerged trees — stuck to trunks that were left behind when the

lake was created in the 1960s? None of the above.

It is a prosthetic eyeball, found nestled among hundreds of freshwater mussel shells discarded by a hungry muskrat. Stahala was hired to retrieve it last summer, the morning after Fourth of July festivities, by a man hoping to avoid the \$700 cost of a replacement eye.

“I thought it was a lost cause because the inside of those shells are white, but I looked around and there it was, looking right back at me,” he said.

Open water

Ten years ago, Stahala, an avid scuba diver, started a Facebook page — Lake Norman Scuba Diving and Recovery



Phil Stahala with over two dozen anchors and a handful of phones found at the bottom of Lake Norman / Photo by Jason Benavides

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Service — to share images and videos from beneath the surface of Lake Norman. People soon began messaging him to recover lost items.

“Word of mouth grew it from there,” he said.

The prosthetic eye video is one of 250 pieces of content he has posted over the years.

He has been paid to recover countless cellphones, including one for a woman who needed her ID and credit card in the attached wallet just hours before boarding a flight. Not only did he find the phone, but it still worked — as they often do.

“I am impressed how they survive a dip in the lake,” he said.

Other common finds include Apple Watch devices, thousands of sunglasses, Yeti cups, boat props, and skinny Yeti koozies — almost always with unopened cans of White Claws.

He has also fished out multiple bottles of Fireball, a flat-screen television and several drones.

The number of anchors he has found is too large to track. His record for a single day is 12, all stuck on a giant tree stump near a popular spot he declined

to identify.

“I thought I could find the stump again, but I haven’t been able to locate it,” he said. “I’m sure it’s loaded up with anchors again.”

Diver for Hire

Rings are the most difficult items to find — they take unpredictable paths once they sink. He said he has only been hired to search for men’s wedding bands, never a woman’s engagement or wedding ring.

Searches are easier when there is a fixed point to establish a grid. In open water, where a woman once lost a \$50,000 bracelet on a Jet Ski, recovery is impossible.

Even in shallower depths, murky water and limited light compound the challenge, and sometimes his flashlight isn’t much help.

“Visibility is always the biggest problem, and so is the silt bottom where items can disappear,” he said. “Usually I can see the outline of a phone, but sometimes I have to feel around for it.”

His fee varies based on travel distance and the difficulty of the retrieval. He returns items he is hired to find, or those with a clear owner — like wallets with IDs — while others remain in storage at

his home.

One returned item was an Apple Watch whose owner showed up on Stahala’s front porch a week after the recovery when, unbeknownst to him, the device’s tracking feature reactivated. “It kind of caught me off guard,” he said.

The lake is 33,000 acres, so if you ever lost something, it is unlikely Stahala found it. Even if he did, there needs to be some form of proof of ownership.

“Someone messaged me and asked if I found their Goodr sunglasses,” he said. “I have so many that who knows?”

Under the surface

Beyond his diving gear, Stahala carries only a GoPro camera, the flashlight, a knife and an occasional metal detector. The detector has turned up plenty of nails. He has encountered fish, turtles and snakes, but nothing threatening.

“Luckily nothing dangerous has happened,” he said. “I do carry a knife in case I need to cut myself out of a situation.”

He said his most unexpected discovery came in about 15 feet of water near the sandbar party area — remnants of an old road that once extended from what is now Bethel Church Road to-



Stahala returns items with a clear owner like wallets with ID / Contributed photo

ward Denver.

Stories persist of barns, homes and other structures left standing during the two years it took to flood the Catawba River basin, but Stahala has never seen any of them.

“I have never found any, but I also don’t go that deep looking for them,” he said.

Stahala works full time as a computer drafter for an engineering firm, making scuba diving a hobby — one he does not envision abandoning anytime soon.

“I don’t see people not losing items in the water,” he said. “As long as they keep dropping things, I’m willing to come find them.”

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Lake Style Beyond the Beach Bag

BY LAURA CINOTTI

When I think about summer style on Lake Norman, the first thing that comes to mind isn't buying a new cover-up. In fact, one of my favorite summer styling tricks is breaking that fashion rule altogether.

I have always loved playing dress-up. My family would probably tell you I never quite grew out of it. At any given moment, you may find me doing just that. Some people meditate; I style outfits and "accidentally" lose three hours.

Then, inevitably, from the far-off distance of one of my sons' bedrooms, I hear the dreaded sentence: "What's for dinner?" And just like that, I'm reminded my children need to eat ... again!

Somewhere between styling outfits and figuring out dinner, I realized lake fashion might actually be the ultimate excuse to keep playing dress-up. I love looking at a bathing suit and asking myself, "What if this wasn't a bathing suit at all?"

Hear me out.

Instead of thinking of your swimsuit as something hidden underneath layers, think of it as part of the outfit. Think of it as a top, a bodysuit or even an accessory that helps build the look. Suddenly, your closet becomes a lot bigger, and your "lake wardrobe" isn't limited to a handful of cover-ups hanging in the back of your closet.

Life around Lake Norman usually doesn't stop at the boat dock. One minute you're heading out on the water; the next, you're grabbing lunch, stopping at the grocery store or running ragged trying to get one child to a sporting event and the other to a playdate. Around here, our outfits need to multitask almost as much as we do.

One of my favorite ways to style a swimsuit is by leaning into its personality. If your suit has a nautical feel, think navy, crisp white, stripes or gold details. Pair it with white linen pants, an oversized button-down, gold jewelry and oversized sunglasses. Suddenly, you

look less like you're headed to sit in a beach chair and more like you're ready to take on the day.

If your suit has bright colors or tropical prints, treat it exactly the way you would a favorite patterned top. Pull a color from the suit and build around it with a cute pair of shorts or a skirt, a woven bag or easy sandals.

Swimsuits in black, white or neutral shades practically do all the work for you. Have a favorite flowy skirt you've been dying to wear? Pair it with a solid swimsuit, throw on a lightweight button-down and tie a knot at the waist. Suddenly, you're ready for both the lake and lunch.

And while we're rethinking fashion rules, let's flip the idea around, too. Sometimes my favorite "cover-ups" don't even involve a swimsuit at all.

That oversized linen button-down you wear over a bathing suit? Pair it with denim shorts and sandals for brunch. A flowy cover-up dress suddenly becomes a casual summer dress with layered jewelry and a woven bag. Even a matching set that started as your "lake outfit"

can become a dinner outfit with a simple shoe swap.

I think we sometimes put pieces into little categories in our closets — beach clothes, dinner clothes, vacation clothes, everyday clothes — but some of the best outfits happen when we stop giving them labels. Some of my favorite styling moments happen when I look at a piece and think, "What else could this be?"

As a stylist, I always tell clients fashion should work for your life, not the other way around.

We are busy people. Our days rarely follow one plan, and our closets shouldn't either.

This summer, think outside the box — or the lake bag. Wear the swimsuit as part of the outfit, wear the cover-up without the swimsuit and don't be afraid to play dress-up a little.

Sometimes the best lake outfit is the one you never intended to wear to the lake at all.



Laura Cinotti is a local stylist. Follow her for more style tips on Instagram @lc_styled.



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Town Board Opposes State Tax Restrictions

The Cornelius Town Board adopted a resolution opposing efforts by the N.C. General Assembly to limit how municipalities set property tax rates.

The action comes as state senators consider House Bill 1089, which would restrict how much towns and counties could raise property taxes without voter approval. Supporters say the proposal would protect taxpayers from large increases, while opponents argue it would weaken local control and limit funding for services.

Cornelius officials said the legislation could impact the town's ability to fund police, fire protection, parks and transportation improvements. The town's legislative agenda asks lawmakers to reject any proposal that removes local taxing authority.

Mayor Denis Bilodeau also sent letters to local legislators urging them to preserve local control over tax decisions.

Rep. Beth Helfrich voted no and said she supports taxpayer protections and referendums but is cautious about state mandates that could make it harder for towns to respond to growth and infrastructure needs.

Huntersville and Davidson have not formally acted on the proposal.

CATS CEO Says Red Line "Will Be Built"

Interim Charlotte Area Transit System CEO Brent Cagle said the long-discussed Red Line commuter rail project is guaranteed under the recently approved regional transit funding plan.

Speaking at a Lake Norman Chamber of Commerce event, Cagle said the 25-mile rail corridor connecting Charlotte with Huntersville, Cornelius and Davidson is "nonnegotiable" under the PAVE Act.

"The red line will be built," he said. "The question is how long before we can ride it?"

The project would include 10 stations operating largely along existing Norfolk Southern tracks. Cagle said the line remains in early engineering and environmental review stages, with completion estimated roughly nine years away.

A decision from Mooresville and Iredell County on whether to fund an extension north of Davidson will be needed soon to finalize the project's terminus.

Cagle also highlighted the success of CATS Micro, the on-demand van transit service that replaced Village Rider routes. The Huntersville-Cornelius-Davidson zone recorded nearly 60,000 rides during its first full year, with strong use among seniors and residents with mobility challenges.

11/11 Bar Opening on Statesville Road

A new establishment called 11/11 Bar is under construction in the former Jay's at the Lake space on Statesville Road.

Owners Brian and Alexandra VanderWesten are renovating the property with plans for a traditional Lake Norman tavern atmosphere featuring pool tables, live music and indoor and outdoor gathering spaces.

Renovations include a new bar, updated seating, flooring, bathrooms and an outdoor stage. The couple said they hope to create a safe, community-focused environment inspired by older neighborhood bars that once dominated the area.

A grand opening is planned for early July.

Ramsey Creek Beach Opening Delayed

The swimming beach at Ramsey Creek Park will remain closed because of drought conditions and unusually low lake levels.

Mecklenburg County said the water at the beach is currently too shallow for safe use. The swim area's waterline has receded beyond established swim boundaries.

The park's boat launch remains open, though only about 15 feet of the ramps remain underwater.

The Catawba-Waterree River Basin entered Stage 2 of the Low Inflow Protocol last month because of significantly below-average rainfall and low streamflow. Cornelius has received nearly 5 inches less rain than average this year, according to RainDrop precipitation tracking data.

Chili Willi's Opens in Cornelius

Tex-Mex restaurant Chili Willi's has opened in the former Waterman and Cowboy space on Bailey Road.

The concept originated in Hunting-

ton, West Virginia, where it operated from 1983 to 2011. Restaurateur Rob Duckworth partnered with original owner and chef Ron Smith to revive the restaurant in Cornelius.

The menu includes wood-fired and scratch-made dishes such as blackened mahi tacos, carnitas tacos, enchiladas, chimichangas and coffee-rubbed hanger steak, along with margaritas, specialty cocktails and a large beer selection.

The redecorated space features bright colors, outdoor seating and firepit areas.

Resident Upgrades Post Office Landscaping

Cornelius resident Dan White independently funded and completed landscaping improvements outside the Cornelius post office after noticing the neglected appearance of the property.

White, an executive with Wealth Enhancement Group, designed and installed new ground cover and landscaping elements on his own time.

He said the effort was intended as a small way to contribute to the community and improve a space regularly used by residents.

Fresh Egg Rebrands as FunkHeizer's Diner

Restaurateur Mel Funk has rebranded Fresh Egg in Cornelius as FunkHeizer's, a diner concept developed with business partner Kelly Heizer.

The restaurant now serves breakfast, burgers, sandwiches and dinner entrees throughout the day. Menu items include eggs Benedict, smash burgers, shrimp and grits, crab cakes and Delmonico ribeye.

Funk said the concept was inspired by traditional diners popular across both northern and southern states. Longtime manager Charlie Marshall remains involved as a managing partner.

Kindred Temporarily Closes After Fire

A small fire at Kindred forced the restaurant to temporarily close for repairs and cleanup.

The fire began in a wastebasket inside an upstairs bathroom and was quickly contained by the building's sprinkler system. No injuries were reported, though water damage from the sprinklers affected the restaurant.

Owners Katy and Joe Kindred said staff immediately began cleanup efforts and plan to reopen after repairs are completed, but did not offer a timeline.



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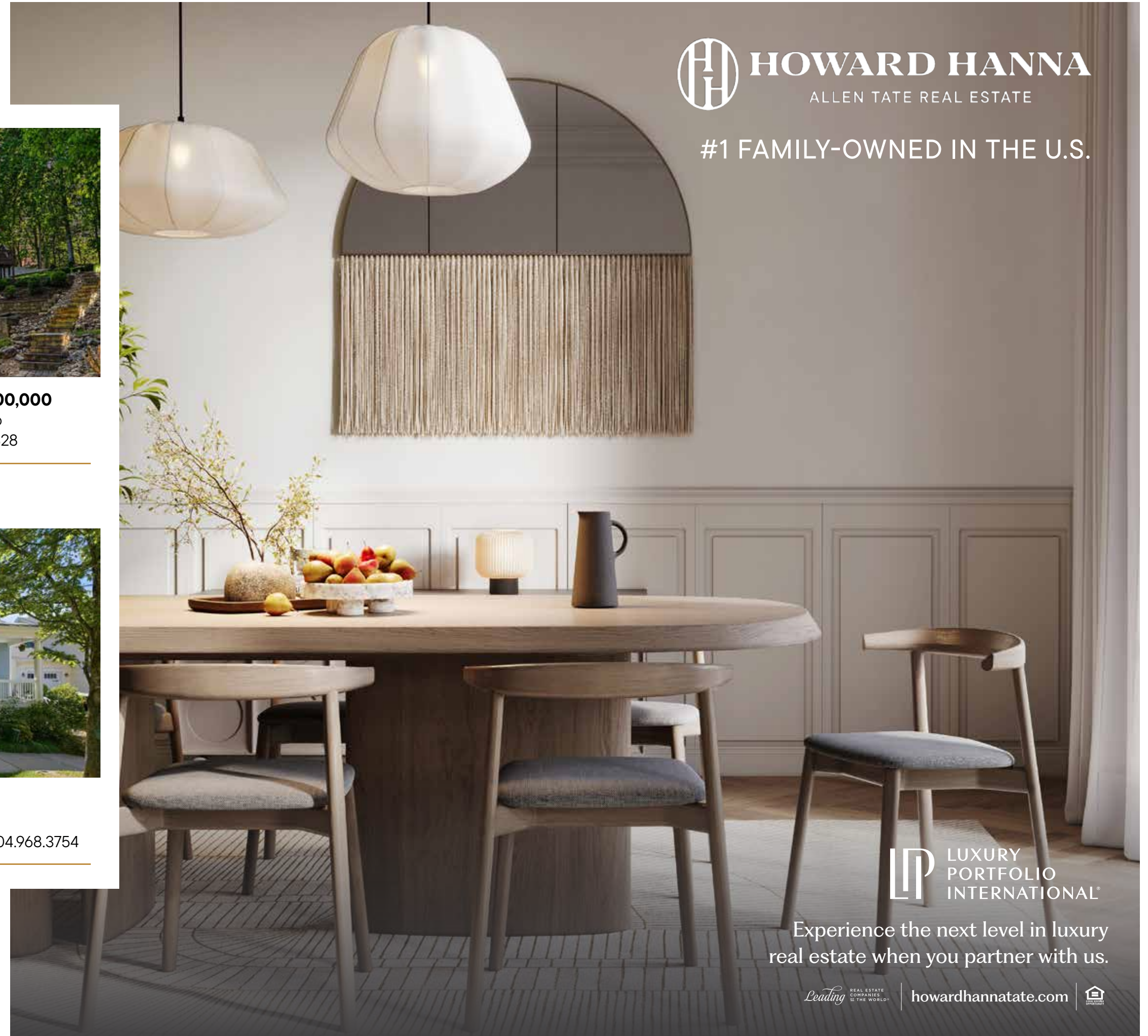
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4/20/26, \$655,000, 20211 Tailwind Ln, 4BR/2BA, Sawyers Landing, 2,230 sq ft, built 2000

4/20/26, \$1,150,000, 22304 John Gamble Rd, 4BR/4BA, Country Club Shores, 3,613 sq ft, built 2016

4/22/26, \$925,000, 21316 Sandy Shore Ln, 5BR/3.5BA, Country Club Shores, 3,538 sq ft, built 1987

4/22/26, \$2,625,000, 19442 Peninsula Shores Dr, 5BR/5BA, The Peninsula, 5,588 sq ft, built 1995

4/23/26, \$339,900, 17624 Delmas Dr, 2BR/2.5BA, Oakhurst, 1,472 sq ft, built 1999

4/23/26, \$1,350,000, 21713 Junco Ct, 4BR/3.5BA, Heron Harbor, 3,400 sq ft, built 1995

4/23/26, \$1,525,000, 19577 Meta Rd, 6BR/4.5BA, Diane Shores, 3,617 sq ft, built 1995

4/24/26, \$1,475,000, 18609 Square Sail Rd, 5BR/3.5BA, The Peninsula, 3,753 sq ft, built 2000

4/27/26, \$375,000, 11635 Truan Ln, 3BR/2.5BA, Heritage Green, 1,364 sq ft, built 2006

4/27/26, \$605,000, 8607 Forest Shadow Cir, 4BR/2.5BA, Stratford Forest, 2,382 sq ft, built 1995

4/27/26, \$3,750,000, 16624 Flying Jib Rd, 5BR/4.5BA, The Peninsula, 6,002 sq ft, built 1998

4/29/26, \$382,500, 18714 Ramsey Cove Dr, 3BR/2.5BA, Harborside, 1,770 sq ft, built 1998

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4/29/26, \$2,200,000, 20732 Eastpoint Dr, 4BR/3.5BA, Island Forest, 3,284 sq ft, built 1972

4/30/26, \$400,000, 18827 Cloverstone Cir, 3BR/2.5BA, Edinburgh Square, 1,616 sq ft, built 2000

4/30/26, \$573,000, 17611 Inver Dr, 3BR/2BA, Baileys Glen, 1,650 sq ft, built 2019



\$2,625,000 | 18019 Whispering Oaks Drive, Cornelius

5/7/26, \$275,000, 19839 Deer Valley Dr, 2BR/2BA, Alexander Chase, 1,244 sq ft, built 2003

5/7/26, \$412,000, 22334 Market St, 3BR/2.5BA, Antiquity, 1,474 sq ft, built 2015

5/8/26, \$575,000, 17747 North Shore Cir, 3BR/2.5BA, Westmoreland, 2,356 sq ft, built 2007

5/11/26, \$1,600,000, 20139 Rainbow Cir, 3BR/2BA, Biscayne, 1,808 sq ft, built 1986

4/30/26, \$2,693,683, 18112 Harbor Light Blvd, 6BR/5.5BA, The Peninsula, 5,950 sq ft, built 1996

5/1/26, \$1,395,000, 7604 Windaliere Dr, 5BR/3.5BA, Sterling Pointe, 3,124 sq ft, built 1997

5/4/26, \$337,500, 18742 Nautical Dr #202, 2BR/2BA, Admirals Quarters, 934 sq ft, built 2007

5/11/26, \$2,275,000, 19329 Watermark Dr #361, 3BR/3.5BA, Watermark, 2,921 sq ft, built 2020

5/1/26, \$550,000, 19436 Coachman's Trace, 3BR/2.5BA, Coachman's Trace, 2,500 sq ft, built 1990

5/1/26, \$2,250,000, 21216 Olde Quarry Ln, 6BR/6.5BA, Shadowcreek, 5,664 sq ft, built 2023

5/4/26, \$920,000, 21428 John Pines Dr, 3BR/2.5BA, Crown Harbor, 3,044 sq ft, built 1997

5/11/26, \$3,425,000, 20517 Queensdale Dr, 5BR/4.5BA, Wrights Emerald Cove, 5,236 sq ft, built 2006

5/1/26, \$1,030,000, 10205 Treetop Ln, 6BR/5BA, Weatherstone Manor, 5,110 sq ft, built 2005

5/3/26, \$350,000, 9216 Ducati Ln, 3BR/2.5BA, Heritage Green, 1,332 sq ft, built 2003

5/6/26, \$2,625,000, 18019 Whispering Oaks Dr, 4BR/4BA, Nantz Shores, 3,637 sq ft, built 1995

5/12/26, \$437,000, 19705 Swiss Stone Ln, 3BR/2BA, Willow Pond, 1,891 sq ft, built 1989



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\$2,352,655 | 18624 Silent Falls Cove, Davidson

5/12/26, \$695,000, 20042 Northport Dr, 4BR/2.5BA, Jetton Cove, 2,680 sq ft, built 2001

5/15/26, \$730,000, 16215 Lakeside Loop Ln, 3BR/3BA, The Courtyards on Lake Norman, 2,547 sq ft, built 2017

5/15/26, \$1,800,000, 19329 Watermark Dr #231, 3BR/3.5BA, Watermark, 2,865 sq ft, built 2021

5/18/26, \$800,000, 19516 Trintella Ln, 4BR/2.5BA, Captains Point, 2,201 sq ft, built 1998

5/14/26, \$267,410, 18605 Ruffner Dr Unit 2F, 2BR/2BA, The Terraces at Oakhurst, 1,046 sq ft, built 2003

5/15/26, \$1,410,000, 21311 Baltic Dr, 4BR/3.5BA, Captains Point, 3,842 sq ft, built 2008

5/15/26, \$2,450,000, 17210 Jetton Rd, 4BR/3.5BA, The Peninsula, 4,331 sq ft, built 1999

5/18/26, \$943,000, 21329 Crown Lake Dr, 5BR/3BA, Crown Harbor, 3,196 sq ft, built 2017

5/14/26, \$280,000, 19960 Oak Leaf Cir, 2BR/2BA, Twin Oaks, 1,125 sq ft, built 1990

5/15/26, \$1,485,000, 17413 Robbins Ridge Rd, 5BR/4.5BA, Robbins Park, 3,795 sq ft, built 2015

5/18/26, \$370,000, 18736 Nautical Dr #102, 2BR/2BA, Admirals Quarters, 1,016 sq ft, built 2007

5/18/26, \$1,299,000, 17335 Players Ridge Dr, 3BR/3.5BA, The Peninsula, 3,732 sq ft, built 2006

5/14/26, \$345,000, 18742 Silver Quay Dr, 2BR/2.5BA, Silver Quay, 1,264 sq ft, built 1994

5/14/26, \$423,500, 16515 Amberside Rd E, 3BR/2BA, Alexander Chase, 1,349 sq ft, built 2007

5/14/26, \$490,000, 18544 Victoria Bay Dr, 4BR/2.5BA, Victoria Bay, 2,078 sq ft, built 2003

5/15/26, \$555,000, 20127 Beard St, 4BR/2.5BA, Victoria Bay, 2,765 sq ft, built 2003

5/15/26, \$630,000, 7822 Village Harbor Dr, 3BR/2BA, Villages at Harbor-side, 1,423 sq ft, built 1999

5/15/26, \$679,000, 19700 Coachman's Trace, 5BR/3.5BA, Coachman's Trace, 3,120 sq ft, built 1996

5/15/26, \$680,000, 11735 Meeting-house Dr, 3BR/3BA, Baileys Glen, 2,943 sq ft, built 2015



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5/18/26, \$2,500,000, 17723 Springwinds Dr, 3BR/2BA, The Peninsula, 2,042 sq ft, built 1994

5/19/26, \$465,000, 9335 Glenashley Dr, 4BR/3BA, Heritage Green, 2,050 sq ft, built 2006

5/19/26, \$490,000, 17909 Caldwell Track Dr, 4BR/2.5BA, Caldwell Station, 2,051 sq ft, built 2006

5/20/26, \$745,000, 1146 South St, 4BR/3BA, Antiquity, 2,314 sq ft, built 2014

Davidson

4/20/26, \$735,000, 136 Spencer St, 4BR/2.5BA, McConnell, 2,036 sq ft, built 1998

4/21/26, \$975,000, 633 Portside Dr, 3BR/2BA, Davidson Landing, 1,357 sq ft, built 1985

4/22/26, \$440,000, 11120 Hat Creek Ln, 4BR/3BA, The Farm At Riverpointe, 2,650 sq ft, built 2015

4/22/26, \$682,514, 520 Annie Lowery Way, 3BR/3.5BA, Parkside Commons, 2,231 sq ft, built 2025

4/23/26, \$210,000, 549 Annie Lowery Way, 3BR/2.5BA, Parkside Commons, 1,849 sq ft, built 2026

4/23/26, \$715,000, 100 Martin St, 4BR/2.5BA, McConnell, 2,327 sq ft, built 1995

4/24/26, \$400,000, 306 Northwest Dr, 2BR/2BA, Edgewater, 864 sq ft, built 1984

4/26/26, \$599,000, 504 Annie Lowery Way, 3BR/3.5BA, Parkside Commons, 2,231 sq ft, built 2025

4/27/26, \$450,000, 9665 Autumn Cir, 3BR/3BA, Autumn Chase, 2,064 sq ft, built 2003

4/27/26, \$664,120, 233 Davidson Gateway Dr, 3BR/3.5BA, Davidson Cottages, 1,830 sq ft, built 2026

4/27/26, \$970,000, 207 Hobbs St, 4BR/2.5BA, Hobbs Hill, 2,772 sq ft, built 1996

5/5/26, \$2,352,655, 18624 Silent Falls Cv, 6BR/7BA, River Run, 6,625 sq ft, built 2007











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 <p>ISLAND FOREST 20919 Island Forest Drive \$2,399,000 Robert Drag 704.309.3232</p>	 <p>POINT LARGO 18032 Nantz Road \$2,199,000 Christy Walker 704.439.5300</p>	 <p>PINNACLE SHORES 153 High Hills Drive \$1,999,999 Christy Walker 704.439.5300</p>
	 <p>THE PENINSULA 18928 Peninsula Point Drive \$1,850,000 Scott Parker 304.380.4632</p>	 <p>WATERMARK 19329 Watermark Drive #342 \$1,800,000 The Petrenko Group 910.916.4305</p>

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Visit CorneliusToday.com for a comprehensive list of all live music and comedy events. Details are subject to change – visit venue websites for up-to-date information.

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 3

Peninsula Prime | 6 p.m. — Daniel Smith (Acoustic) — Free

THURSDAY, JUNE 4

The Serve Pickleball + Kitchen | 6–9 p.m. — John Sullivan (Rock) — Free

760 Craft Works | 7 p.m. — Jared Evans (Acoustic) — Free

FRIDAY, JUNE 5

760 Craft Works | 6:30 p.m. — Kristy Scheirer & Michael (Acoustic) — Free

Lost Worlds Brewing | 7:30 p.m. — Carbon Leaf (Indie Folk) — Paid

Royal Bliss | 7–10 p.m. — Garrett Huffman (Country) — Free

Rudder & Rose | 9 p.m. — Beers 4 Breakfast (Pop) — Free

SATURDAY, JUNE 6

Primal Brewery | 5 p.m. — Nectar: A Picture of Phish (Jam) — Free

Lost Worlds Brewing | 6 p.m. — FlipSide (Classic Rock) — Free

Peninsula Prime | 6 p.m. — Late Night Special Duo (Acoustic) — Free

Royal Bliss | 7–10 p.m. — In By Nine (Classic Rock) — Free

★ **Boatyard LKN** | 8 p.m. — Nashville Nights ('90s Country) — Paid

Rudder & Rose | 10 p.m. — Black Glass (Rock) — Free

SUNDAY, JUNE 7

The Serve Pickleball + Kitchen | 10 a.m.–2 p.m. — Henry Loudermilk (Jazz) — Free

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 10

Peninsula Prime | 6 p.m. — Late Night Special Duo (Acoustic) — Free

THURSDAY, JUNE 11

The Serve Pickleball + Kitchen | 6–9 p.m. — Acoustic Solutions (Jazz) — Free

FRIDAY, JUNE 12

The Serve Pickleball + Kitchen | 10 a.m.–2 p.m. — Acoustic Solutions (Jazz) — Free

760 Craft Works | 6:30 p.m. — Tim Cook Band (Country/Rock) — Free

Primal Brewery | 7 p.m. — Stand Up Comedy Show (Comedy) — Paid

Royal Bliss | 7–10 p.m. — Roger Leonhardt of String Theory (Classic Rock) — Free



Saturday, June 27 | Brooke Lee with Bourbon Sons

Brooke Lee returns with her high-energy stage performance and soulful vocals this time with Bourbon Sons and their southern rock swagger. Boatyard LKN, time TBA.

★ **Boatyard LKN** | 8 p.m. — Unknown Artist (Modern Rock) — Paid

SATURDAY, JUNE 13

Lost Worlds Brewing | 5 p.m. — OOPS Polka Band (Polka) — Free

760 Craft Works | 6:30 p.m. — Joe Middleton (Classic Acoustic) — Free

Royal Bliss | 7–10 p.m. — OldSkool (Classic Rock) — Free

Cain Center | 7:30 p.m. — Magic of Motown (Motown) — Paid

★ **Boatyard LKN** | 8 p.m. — Julio & The Saltines (Party Rock) — Paid

Rudder & Rose | 10 p.m. — Bad Romeo (Rock) — Free

SUNDAY, JUNE 14

The Serve Pickleball + Kitchen | 10 a.m.–2 p.m. — Acoustic Solutions (Jazz) — Free

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 17

Peninsula Prime | 6 p.m. — Ephraim Sommers (Acoustic) — Free

THURSDAY, JUNE 18

The Serve Pickleball + Kitchen | 6–9 p.m. — Keith Wilson (Rock) — Free

760 Craft Works | 7 p.m. — Lisa DeNovo (Acoustic) — Free

FRIDAY, JUNE 19

Primal Brewery | 5 p.m. — Confetti Cannon (Punk Cover Band) — Free

760 Craft Works | 6:30 p.m. — Good Hombres (Spanish Rock) — Free

Royal Bliss | 7–10 p.m. — 2 Lane (Acoustic) — Free

★ **Boatyard LKN** | 8 p.m. — Boom Bap Band (Hip Hop Tribute) — Paid

Rudder & Rose | 9 p.m. — Contagious (Rock) — Free

SATURDAY, JUNE 20

Lost Worlds Brewing | 6 p.m. — RLM Band (Rock) — Free

760 Craft Works | 6:30 p.m. — Heidi Sidelinker (Acoustic) — Free

Royal Bliss | 7–10 p.m. — Evenflow (Rock) — Free

Cain Center | 7:30 p.m. — Yacht Rock Radio (Soft Rock) — Paid

★ **Boatyard LKN** | 8 p.m. — U-Phonik (Alternative Rock) — Paid

Rudder & Rose | 10 p.m. — Badcash (Rock) — Free

SUNDAY, JUNE 21

The Serve Pickleball + Kitchen | 10 a.m.–2 p.m. — Acoustic Solutions (Jazz) — Free

Primal Brewery | 2:30 p.m. — Matt Walsh & The Movers (Blues) — Free

THURSDAY, JUNE 25

The Serve Pickleball + Kitchen | 6–9 p.m. — John Sullivan (Rock) — Free

FRIDAY, JUNE 26

Lost Worlds Brewing | 6 p.m. — 33RPM Band (Pop) — Free

760 Craft Works | 6:30 p.m. — John David Tice (Acoustic) — Free

Primal Brewery | 7 p.m. — Stand Up Comedy Show (Comedy) — Paid

Cain Center | 7:30 p.m. — Adam Pascal & Anthony Rapp (Rock Musical) — Paid

★ **Boatyard LKN** | 8 p.m. — Badfish with Grateful Dub (Sublime Tribute) — Paid

Rudder & Rose | 9 p.m. — The Stormin' Norman Experience (Pop) — Free

SATURDAY, JUNE 27

Lost Worlds Brewing | 1 p.m. — Jarrett Raymond (Country) — Free

Lost Worlds Brewing | 5:30 p.m. — Kristen O'Toole & The Tool Shed (Country) — Free

760 Craft Works | 6:30 p.m. — Brittney Lee & Gary Ward (Acoustic Pop/Rock) — Free

★ **Boatyard LKN** | 8 p.m. — Brooke Lee with Bourbon Sons (Country) — Paid

Rudder & Rose | 10 p.m. — Next 'O Kin (Rock) — Free

SUNDAY, JUNE 28

The Serve Pickleball + Kitchen | 10 a.m.–2 p.m. — Acoustic Solutions (Jazz) — Free

Business Today

How Drought Impacts Local Businesses

BY DAVE VIESER

With the drought stretching into the summer, a logical question is how this unusual weather might impact local businesses around Lake Norman.

Water restrictions can lead to increased operational costs for businesses that rely on water. Restaurants and cafes may face higher bills and limited menu options because of ingredient shortages.

Companies that rely on lake access face additional obstacles.

However, a survey of local business owners suggests many are holding their own so far.

Jim Gordon operates Peninsula Prime restaurant in Jetton Village.

“Restaurants and bars in this area tend to thrive when the weather keeps people off the lake,” Gordon said. “Rainy days, or low lake levels, can significantly boost our business.”

Gordon said sales have actually been up recently.

“I wouldn’t attribute that directly to the drought. However, it does make sense that the inability to enjoy lake ac-



Some private dock owners are facing challenges / Cornelius Today photo

tivities might lead more people to dine out instead,” he said.

How about businesses that depend on lake access for their clientele?

Alex Kuz, owner of The Boat Doctor, specializes in servicing boats from the water. His expertise appeals to customers who do not want the trouble of pulling their boats for service, but with low lake levels, many boats are sitting on dry land and cannot be serviced.

For boats that can be serviced, he is

seeing an estimated 400% increase in calls to fix trim systems and broken props damaged in shallow waters.

“The spring was tough because people were delaying service to wait for water levels to come back up, but that hasn’t happened,” he said. “I’m hoping we get some major rain soon.”

Boat rentals are also a big business on Lake Norman. Despite the low lake levels, Safe Harbor Kings Point and Morningstar Marinas Crown Harbor have not

seen any impact on rentals.

Crown Harbor was fully booked on Memorial Day weekend, and the marina has also added new dry-dock customers in recent weeks as many private dock owners looked for a solution for beached boats.

The warm, dry spring was a boon for some boat detailing businesses, said Kenyon Stanley, owner of Details Matter.

Many of his clients booked annual detailing services earlier than usual before falling lake levels left many boats beached. Still, some customers who contacted him last winter and scheduled service for May are out of luck for now.

“They did everything right, but the weather didn’t play ball,” he said.

Water restrictions have also created challenges, as many cities and towns have limited vehicle washing. Private wells are exempt, and Stanley said he can sometimes use lake water in coves that have not experienced heavy turbidity.

He also uses a waterless compound when water is not available.

“It’s a little more expensive, but it works really well as long as the boat isn’t too far gone,” he said. “If it hasn’t been detailed in a few years, then we have to put water on it.”

For Cornelius-based Decks and Docks, which supplies dock and seawall construction materials to contractors, sales have been comparable to previous years. The company recently had one customer who cited the lower lake levels as the main reason to complete dock repairs now.

Overall, local businesses seem to be handling the 2026 drought in stride. However, most are hoping for a change in the weather — and they may just get their wish.

Trish Palmer, a meteorologist with the National Weather Service, expects the recent uptick in rain to continue into early June.

“It’s possible that the rain could put a serious dent in our ongoing drought conditions,” she said. “Still, best not to count our eggs before they hatch.”

Despite handling the drought in stride, businesses that rely on the lake all share one hope: that rain arrives soon and in droves.

“If your readers can do some rain dances, I know all of us would really appreciate it,” Kuz said.

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Lake Norman entrepreneurs describe taking the plunge

BY MARK WASHBURN

Passion drives entrepreneurship. Three Lake Norman small business owners shared their successes and setbacks at May's Newsmakers Breakfast, organized by Cornelius Today at The Peninsula Club.

Alex Kuz of The Boat Doctor, Bob McIntosh, managing partner of The McIntosh Law Firm in Davidson, and Carla Eustache, founder of Style Perfect Events, all agreed that passion for their work is indispensable.

"People will see through passion that's not genuine," McIntosh said. "Go do the things you're passionate about."

"All our employees have to love boating," Kuz said. Much of his community volunteer work involves the water in some way.

Community connections are vital in small business, Eustache said. The Detroit transplant serves on the Cornelius Parks and Recreation Commission and other boards.

"Relationships are the basis of business," McIntosh said. His firm supports a variety of local nonprofits, from the Lake Norman Chamber of Commerce to Davidson Community Players.

Don't let AI do the talking

Artificial intelligence taught Kuz a lesson. He briefly used it to answer incoming calls to help manage his time.

"Customers absolutely hated it," he said, adding that he returned to human interaction. He said he does benefit from AI in other areas, including finance.

Eustache, who founded her



From left: Bob McIntosh, Carla Eustache and Alex Kuz / Photos by Jason Benavides

event-planning agency in 2009, said the personal nature of her business has largely kept it outside AI use, at least so far.

McIntosh said AI will have powerful applications in the legal profession, particularly in arbitration disputes. Like the law, he said, AI is blind.

"It's dispassionate," McIntosh said. "It makes you quicker and smarter."

Staying tough

Starting a business and sticking with it requires courage, the panelists said. All remember rough patches.

For Eustache, it was covid-19. Event planning collapsed, and she had to cut employees. When the pandemic passed,

she said, she came back strong.

"I jumped back in afterward," she said. "You have to bet on yourself."

McIntosh remembered the early days of his firm, when there were times there was not enough money to pay all the bills.

"You have to walk in the office anyway and do the best you can," he said. "I come in with a humble attitude every day."

Kuz, a former banker who has launched six businesses, said resilience is key. "You're always going to get up and try again," he said.

Challenges await

Two major challenges, the panelists

said, are managing people and growth. "We had to take risks to bring on a team," Eustache said. "You need to keep a big-business mindset."

Kuz said growth can cut both ways. A surge of 20 percent or more is a welcome sign, but can be difficult to manage.

"You're one person, there are only 24 hours in a day," he said. "It takes maturity to recognize you have to hold off."

McIntosh's staff has grown from two to 60 over 30 years. About 85% of his focus is on employees and finding ways to help them succeed.

"Managing people," he said, "is the hardest thing I do."



Marine Commission

New Marine Commission Sets Priorities

BY DAVE VIESER

A year ago, the Lake Norman Marine Commission fell apart when Lincoln County voted to leave the commission, triggering a bylaw stating that if any one county decided to withdraw, the commission would disband.

The commission was composed of representatives from four counties adjoining Lake Norman — Mecklenburg, Iredell, Lincoln and Catawba — and, since 1969, created rules for the lake, issued permits to rental boat companies and maintained the lake's 160 navigational markers.

Lake enthusiasts expressed concerns about the future of lake oversight after the commission disbanded, but the state legislature responded by passing a law outlining a new structure for the Lake Norman Marine Commission.

The new regulations not only maintained the commission's responsibilities but also addressed some issues in the original LNMC charter. For example:

Membership: At least two counties must withdraw from the commission to disband, unlike under the old charter. In addition, membership now consists of nine members — two from each of the four counties and one at-large member. Members are also now required to have a boating background.

Conflict of interest: The new regulations state that no commissioner can have any ownership interest in, or financial relationship with, any business or property dependent on income generated from Lake Norman or that otherwise presents a conflict of interest.

County ordinances: Each participating county must incorporate the text of every regulation adopted by the commission into its local code of ordinances.

The new board members include Gregory Truesdell and Richard Gaskins of Mecklenburg County; Barbara Beatty and Cameron Sloan of Catawba County; Jason Ralston, Jarid Church and Billy Wilson of Iredell County; and Mark Mullen and Timothy Holder of Lincoln County.

Meetings are held on the third Thursday of each month at 7 p.m. and rotate among the counties. The next meeting in Mecklenburg County is July 16 at the Charlotte Water-Duke Treatment Plant in Huntersville.

The board has been actively search-

ing for its first executive director since March.

Jeff Tarte, a former Cornelius mayor and state senator who worked with members of the General Assembly to formulate the regulations for the new LNMC, believes the new format "brings considerably more structure to the important work done on and about the lake by the commission."

"Especially important is the clause that requires each county to include a copy of any LNMC regulation in its own local code of ordinances," Tarte said. Previously, many regulations varied from county to county.

What the LNMC does

Oversight of ATONs (aids to navigation): ATONs are the channel markers, shoal markers, no-wake buoys and informational buoys throughout the lake. Numbered and lighted channel markers for both the main lake and major creeks begin at Cowans Ford Dam on N.C. Highway 73 and continue north to Buffalo Shoals Bridge.

Boating safety courses: Boating safety is a major concern, especially during the busy summer months. The need for greater safety on the lake is magnified this year because of low water levels. The Lake Norman Marine Commission works with agencies around the lake to make boating safety courses available to the public.

Highlighting safety hazards: The commission's website, www.lnmc.org, contains information about safety hazards boaters may encounter while navigating the lake.

The new LNMC cites several accomplishments in its early months, including:

- Restoring many aids to navigation that were previously extinguished or obstructed, including those impacted by osprey nests.
- Approving several projects that will provide additional lake access and create more natural habitats for marine life.
- Establishing the authority to create temporary safety zones on the lake that allow it to restrict boating activity in support of major incidents, such as search-and-rescue operations.
- Adopting a state law mandating boater education. Under the previous charter, renters were excluded from this requirement.

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Sound Off

Stories with the most comments are marked with a fire emoji. Spelling and punctuation errors were corrected.

CATS CEO Addresses Red Line Skepticism

🔥 Nine years?!
—Carey Barefoot
Make it happen. This area is growing.
—Leonard Wilson

You people really will print anything the government tells you to.
—Eric Rowell

Boss Mode: Kris Fountain

Way to go Kris! What an asset to our community.
—Mary Margaret Johnstone

Arts Enter New Era at Cain Center

🔥 This is a wonderful addition to our community and many thanks to all who worked so hard to make this preservation happen!
—Kay Fisher

Proud day for our town!
—Deborah Young

Chili Willi's Set to Open

🔥 Very exciting to have a new place and venue!
—Sarah Reagin
Chili Willi's was my favorite Mexican restaurant in Huntington growing up! Now there's one in Cornelius!
—Jocelynn Blackman

Town Board Hearing on Hotel

Against this hotel.
—Renee Blanchard

Public Hearing on Proposed Tax Hike

Keep raising taxes, that's the answer!
—George Ron

11/11 Bar Replacing Jay's

🔥 Good luck! Opening your own business is quite a passionate but harrowing undertaking. Excited to go!
—Catherine Quigley

Alex Cohen
Director - Investment Strategy

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Father's Day: My First as Just a Dad

BY JON SHOW

It's hard for me to look out at the lake and not think of my dad.

My first memories on the water with him are learning how to fish on a narrow white dock in Minnesota. My later memories are in the early morning light, on a small lake in northern Indiana, as he drank coffee, smoked Benson & Hedges, and pointed out the best places to cast.

Years later, when we moved to the east coast, the two of us took a boating course together to try to understand all the rules that went into navigating the ocean, and later tried to figure out how anyone catches a fish in the ocean, a skill we never developed.

It wasn't always fishing. He taught me to water ski before I started Kindergarten. There was the time he dragged me across a lake in Wisconsin to play pool with his buddies, and returned me to my mom with a nose colored blue from pool chalk.

As an adult, many of our conversations took place on Sundays looking out at the lake.

Most times it was sitting in a rocker, beers in hand, cigar in his. He would ask me about my job or whatever else was going on with my life, as we kept watch over the water.

I think there were only two or three Father's Days in our 50 years together that I didn't spend with my dad. I was always with him on that day, by choice. I sure wish I had the option this year because I know what I'd choose.

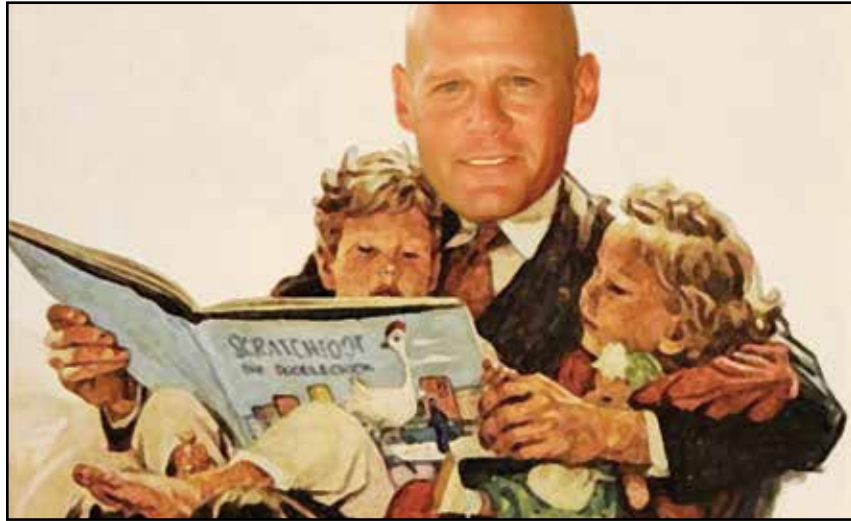
Back porch. Rockers. Cold beers. Northeasterly breeze. Temptations playing on the stereo as the sunset tucked behind the Catawba River, until we were called into dinner.

On to the annual Father's Day advice column that my kids, hopefully, will someday read, and maybe heed.

—
I will always be proud of your accomplishments. I am more proud, endlessly proud, when you are compassionate and have a willingness to help others when they need it most.

A lot of straight-haired people wish they had curly hair. Many curly-haired people wish they had straight hair. Appreciate what you have.

The happiest adults are generally people who went through tough times and dealt with them. They learned how to deal with the struggle. Bad times don't



break you. Not knowing how to cope with them will.

Be a person who can be proud of their accomplishments without having to post every single one of them to Instagram.

If you haven't figured out that your mom and I have no idea what we're doing when it comes to parenting ... well I'll just tell you we have no idea what we're doing but we sure are trying our best.

That said, reflecting on the last 17 plus years of parenting both of you, I am well aware that I made some mistakes. Not sure what to say other than sorry, I meant well.

You might not always agree with the parenting decisions that your mom and I make but based on the young man and young woman you've become I'd say we're doing a pretty good job.

I hate to say this but it's a lesson I've learned the hard way. When you're a helpful person there are certain people who will take advantage of you. I'm not saying don't help others, but when you find one of those people don't ever help them again.

Mistakes don't become your identity unless you allow them to. When you screw up, apologize and be better next time. If you screw up again, re-read the last line.

Furthermore, when you mess something up it's an opportunity to impress someone by your response. Don't mess that up too.

A lack of accountability isn't cute, it's a character flaw. When someone asks you to do something, then do it. If you forget, apologize and then do it, and don't let it happen again.

Your generation is more connected than any in recorded history but has no idea how to communicate. Say thank you multiple times. Write a thank you note the next day. Gratitude will never go out of style. Ever.

Wear the article of clothing that your friends think is weird. It's hard to stand out from the crowd when you're all dressed in the same golf shirt and khaki shorts, or Lululemon tank top and skirt.

Every so often, pause, look around and appreciate the moment or situation. Being present in a moment and being grateful for it is a key to happiness.

Reduce your horizon. If you focus more on what's in front of you and less on what's down the road, it's a way easier path to walk in life.

Be genuinely happy for others' accomplishments. Maybe you worked harder to achieve something they found easy or vice versa. It doesn't matter. Be happy for them.

You might hate being told to do chores or work a job but when you're older you'll understand the importance. Hungry people succeed. Fed people stay in bed waiting for breakfast.

I say it in here every year. Attitude and effort are the most important qualities in life. Wake up. Put two feet on the ground. And go. Go! Every day.

Always remember that the advice you get is only as good as the person who is giving it to you. Yes, I understand the paradox of advising that in an advice column.

I once heard a sports dad tell his kid to "be a goldfish" because they only have ten-second memories and can't dwell on their mistakes. Then the father and son argued about whether it was

from *Finding Nemo* or *Ted Lasso*. Parenting is so rewarding sometimes.

The least interesting part of a person is whether they're rich or poor. Dollars are numbers in a spreadsheet. Experiences and stories are words that weave a tapestry.

I believed this when I was 20 and I didn't know anything, and I believe it even more now. A person who dies with the most stories wins. Live a life that cultivates great stories.

You can't be yourself until you know who you are. And finding out who you are is a lot simpler than people make it. Just be honest with yourself, satisfied with what you discover, and be yourself.

Just because you think you can do a bunch of things at the same time doesn't mean you're doing them well.

You can have a belief system and still respect another person's different belief system. In the end who knows who's right? Just be good to people.

Here's one I recently learned: don't lick a sharp paring knife. You're never too old to learn new things and sometimes you have to do something dumb to reinforce the common sense you were born with.

You can't find peace. You choose it by what you ignore, cast aside, and stop wasting your energy on. That's from Bruce Lee. I'm not explaining who he was. Google him.

Win, lose, or tie, you'll feel good about yourself knowing you gave 110 percent. That's all anybody can ask. Don't ever let anybody say you didn't give it all you had in you.

That last one is from a letter my dad wrote me in high school. It sits in a folder with other notes he wrote me before big games as a kid.

Dads offer good advice. I sure wish mine was still around to give it.

Jon Show lives in Robbins Park with his wife, who he calls "The Mother of Dragons." Their 17-year-old son is "Future Man" and their 14-year-old daughter is

"The Blonde Bomber." Their dog is actually named Lightning.



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