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Milling About

Plumicorns and Silent Flight

BY LINDSAY MARTELL
 “Isn't she beautiful?” I asked my daughter, nudging her shoulder. “She’s majestic,” she said, her voice part whisper and part calculated enthusiasm. Majestic has been her favorite word for at least two years, and I love it.

At that moment, we watched an owl take in the scores of faces surrounding her. We were transfixed by her beauty, her sleek lines and steely gaze.

I sat with her and my husband on a splintery bench at Carolina Raptor Center — the avian rehabilitation center tucked inside Latta Nature Preserve. It’s a favorite haunt of ours, and we visit once or twice a year, as giddy as budding ornithologists.

On a cloudy Sunday morning, we peered into the saffron-hued, shadowy eyes of Gertie, a two-year-old great horned owl (the largest owl species in North Carolina) and listened as her handler spilled handfuls of owl facts; their brilliant feather tufts (plumicorns) function as camouflage; their astonishing ability to rotate their heads a whopping 270 degrees to change their gaze; their silent predatory ways.

Gertie, along with her fellow birds of prey, remind me of how powerful, and riveting nature is away from the angsty daily stressors that squeeze my nervous system into a death grip.

Once I became blissfully de-stressed (thanks, Gertie), I braved the crowds of families with strollers and friends huddled at teeny tables at Cocotte — the bright, airy French bakery on the corner of Statesville and Bailey Road.

An Irish cream latte paired with an apple cronut that weighed as much as a hefty river rock smoothed what was left of my edges. Pastries with flaky crusts — all the cinnamon goodness — and deep, earthy coffee will do that.

As will live music, piano especially. I spent a brisk, chilly evening at Davidson College’s Music Department for its spring piano recital — a free event at the Sloan Music Center’s Tyler-Tallman Hall. I had never been before, and I was mesmerized by the venue — warm yet polished — and punctuated by a pair of stately Steinway grand pianos.

It was an enchanting way to soak in the artistry and diversity of the school’s



Owls at the Carolina Raptor Center

music program. I left feeling a little less world-weary. Lighter by the sounds and prettiness of it all.

And perhaps in the most unpretty way, I’m realizing the importance of putting your whole self into something, even if you have zero idea of what you are actually doing.

This was me at a fly dance fitness pop-up class at Eleven Lakes Brewing. It was a thumping hour of heart-pounding moves that are part Zumba, part hip hop, and all me trying not to bump into anyone or kick myself. Oof. I was clumsy, sweaty, and, surprisingly, elated.

I may have felt like I was all elbows and kicks in a sea of coordinated bodies and high-fives, but I was also exhilarated by the effort, by taking that first step.

I remembered Gertie; her regal stature and ability to absorb it all.

We are all quite majestic when we finally take flight.

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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Cover photo by Jason Benavides

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Arts Enter New Era with Cain Center Expansion

A newly renovated ceramics studio at the Cain Center for the Arts is set to open this month, marking a new era and an expansion of hands-on arts opportunities in Cornelius.

The Puckett Pottery House, located along Catawba Avenue in downtown Cornelius, provides a permanent home for the center's growing ceramics program. The project reflects the organization's broader effort to grow its programming and increase community access to the arts.

"Our goal from the beginning was to be stewards of the downtown area and create a vibrant district for the arts," said Executive Director Justin Dionne. "These new buildings and the surrounding courtyards will serve as a new welcome to downtown, and create a vibrant space that brings activity and connectivity with our community as a whole."

The studio is part of the center's Sculpting the Future initiative and was developed through the renovation of the historic Puckett and Goodrum houses. The adaptive reuse project preserves the look and feel of early 20th-century Queen Anne-style homes, while creating new buildings that offer spaces for arts education and community use.

The facility will house pottery spinning wheels, electric kilns and a raku kiln, which is used to produce metallic and cracked glaze effects on materials.

Davidson firm Nicole Perri Architecture and Cornelius-based RJK Construction led the redevelopment effort.

The design features numerous aesthetic elements and reclaimed items from the old homes, including a decorative window that once hung in the Goodrum House and diamond-shaped cedar shakes inspired by the Puckett House gables.

The upgraded facility includes modern ceramics equipment and dedicated areas for classes, workshops and artist collaboration. An outdoor courtyard has also been added to support events, performances and public gatherings. Additional office space was created in the Goodrum House, with room for future expansion.

There is a third adjoining property



The Puckett Pottery House, located in downtown Cornelius / Photos by Jason Benavides



that has also been designed as a courtyard that the center expects to expand into in the future.

The Puckett House is named for former Cornelius Mayor William Lee Puckett and Mary Washam Puckett, who owned the Puckett Grocery Store.

Opening Week Events

Community Dedication Day & Ribbon Cutting

Wednesday, May 6 | 9-11 a.m. | Free

Open House

Thursday, May 7 | 6-8 p.m. | Free

Hands in Clay: Open Studios + Tours

Friday, May 8 | 11 a.m.-6 p.m.

Saturday, May 9 | 11 a.m.-4 p.m.

Open studio access with day passes, drop-in classes, and free guided tours.

Location

Puckett Pottery House, 21212 Catawba Avenue

The Goodrum House is named for Perry Goodrum, an administrator at the Cornelius Cotton Mill.

The home sites were preserved through the efforts of former property owner Elaine Howard, Debbie Monroe at Lake Norman Realty, the Town of

Cornelius and Preservation Mecklenburg Inc.

To mark the opening, the Cain Center will host a series of public events, including a ribbon-cutting ceremony, open houses and interactive ceramics activities.



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Our good friend and food correspondent **Cloyd Burke** is always asking bartenders and servers around town...

WHAT'S DELICIOUS?

This month he'll tell you about **Carrburritos**

I love me some Mexican food. The wife says I like Fresh Mex, but to be honest I don't really know the difference. I like seasoned meats covered with cheese and salsa and peppers on a plate, or wrapped up in a tortilla. If that's Fresh Mex, well, I love that too.

One of my favorite spots around is located just over the town border in Davidson called Carrburritos, an amalgamation of its hometown (Carrboro) and the word burrito.

Have I ever eaten a burrito there? Goodness no. I'd have indigestion for a week.

I have, however, had their tacos, and oh my goodness do they make me happy.

Tacos can be a dime a dozen. There are good and there are bad ones, and I don't think there's much to differentiate the ones in the middle.

But I know a great taco when I try one, and the ones at Carrburritos make my heart sing.

The restaurant is classified as one of those newfangled fast casual spots, meaning you do some of the work, and they do some of the work, and then you eat, clean up after yourself, and go home.

For my money, when I eat out I'm not looking to do any work besides chewing, so when we visit we like to sit at the bar and order like we're at a ... I don't know ... slow casual restaurant?

As always, I have opinions.

To start, their margaritas are delicious. If you like to drink a marg with bottled sour mix that splits a crack in your stomach lining, this ain't your spot.

However, if you like a marg made with fresh ingredients—one where the brand of tequila rides shotgun next to the concoction of goodness poured into the shaker with it—well, this spot is for you.

Sometimes I venture into the specialty margaritas like the Fresco and the Flaming Orange, especially when they're on special, but for my money the house flavor is as good a south-of-the-border drink as these ol' lips have tasted.

Now that you're lubed up a bit, it's time to order. The wife and I start with chips and salsas, which are made in-house.

You can order fried flour or corn tortilla chips, but I'd recommend a mix of both. The flour might be the most unique tortilla chip I've ever had, but if you eat a whole basket of them it makes it tough to finish off the ample portion sizes of the tacos.

My wife goes with the salsa verde because she's never met a salsa verde she didn't like. She's not basic, she just knows what she likes and she sticks with it. No shame in that.

As for me? The chipotle salsa is unlike any other salsa I've ever had. Smoky. Spicy. It's got a depth of flavor that I've never been able to pinpoint and, oh boy, does that put a smile on my face and

some sweat on my brow.

On to the star of the show, the tacos. You can pick from a list of fillings, but I stick with the carne deshebrada. I dream about it. It's a shredded beef filling that is equal parts salty and flavorful and chewy but tender at the same time.

I usually get two of the deshebrada, but sometimes I venture into the carnitas because you can never go wrong with carnitas. The baja shrimp and the fish tacos are tasty too.

The wife swears by the chorizo.

The portion sizes are so big that for a while, when the doc put me on a diet, I would order the kid's meal because it only comes with one taco, which is plenty enough.

But if something is plenty enough for one, then it's plenty enough to get two, know what I mean?

The tacos come with shredded cheese, pico, and lettuce, and I make sure to save a little of that smoky chipotle salsa to pour over the top.

Sublime? No. Divine? No. Divine divinity is more like it. Maybe it's because it's near Davidson College, which was founded by the Presbyterians.

We've tried some of the other menu items like the ceviche and the tostadas, and they are delicious, but we always come back to the tacos. It's hard to look away from someone or something you love.

One of the nice parts about Carrburritos is that it's good for date nights of all ages, but it's also really family-friendly, which is nice when we have the grandkids for the weekend. Doesn't hurt that they have a cheap kid's menu, being on a fixed income and all.

Next time you're craving Mexican food, or Fresh Mex, or whatever it is, and you want to have a fun date night or entertain the grandkids, check it out.

While you're there, make sure to grab some of that chipotle salsa and tell 'em ol' Cloyd sent you.



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Carrburritos carne deshebrada tacos / Photo by Jason Benavides

CMS Outlines Priorities at the State Level

Teacher compensation, calendar flexibility and health screenings are among the top state legislative priorities for Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools in the coming year, according to Charlitta Hatch, CMS board member for the northern district.

Hatch outlined the district's goals during a recent presentation before the Lake Norman Chamber of Commerce.

Among the top priorities is calendar flexibility. Current state law requires traditional public schools to start no earlier than late August, a restriction tied to the tourism industry. CMS wants to move the start of school up a week and end a week earlier in June.



Hatch

District leaders argue the current schedule forces students to return from winter break and immediately take exams, disrupting learning. It also impacts the ability of seniors to graduate early and apply for colleges.

"This isn't about extending the school year," Hatch said. "It's about shifting it in a way that better supports students."

Teacher pay and retention remain a broader concern tied to state policy. North Carolina ranks among the lowest nationally in teacher compensation, and local officials say county-level supplements cannot fully close the gap.

"We can't supplement our way out of base pay," Hatch said, urging community members to support state-level increases.

The school board is also advocating for changes to student health policies, including returning to an "opt-out" model for hearing and vision screenings. Currently, parents must opt in, which district leaders say may leave some students without critical early interventions.

"We don't want students falling behind because of something as simple as not catching a vision issue early," she said.

While the presentation also touched on district initiatives, including construction projects, academic goals and



“If we want to move from good to great we need the flexibility to make decisions locally.”

— Charlitta Hatch, CMS board member for the northern district

workforce development programs, Hatch repeatedly returned to the role of state government in shaping what local districts can accomplish.

Without legislative changes, she said, progress will remain limited.

"If we want to move from good to great," she said, "we need the flexibility to make decisions locally."

Also on the agenda

CMS receives the majority of its funding from the state, and another key issue is how education funding is dictated by leaders in Raleigh. State law mandates in which areas state funds must be spent and doesn't account for the individual needs of districts.

For example, if CMS wanted to hire more certified teachers, it can't reallocate funds earmarked for teacher assistants, even though that need may already be filled.

Hatch said that creates inefficiencies and prevents schools from addressing specific needs.

"We can't move funding where it's

most needed," she said. "Different districts have different challenges, but we're all operating under the same rigid system."

Another goal is to increase the percentage of students who are enrolled in secondary education, enlisted in the military, or employed upon graduation – a campaign dubbed *What's Your E* by CMS.

In terms of employment, CMS is actively focused on promoting the importance and attractiveness of joining the skilled labor workforce.

"CMS has done an excellent job over the past few years recognizing that all pathways after high school are valuable for our students," said Hatch. "Trade careers are not a backup plan. They are a powerful and viable pathway and at CMS we are treating them that way."

Advocating change

Asked specifically what changes she would make if given carte blanche, Hatch said she would let teacher needs and feedback have a more direct impact

on day-to-day decisions related to CMS.

Hatch also encouraged attendees — including business leaders — to advocate for these priorities with state lawmakers, emphasizing the connection between public education and economic growth.

Pat Jackson, a board member with the chamber, noted the importance of a strong public education system when corporations are evaluating potential relocations of their headquarters.

"Everybody wins when we have strong schools," Hatch said.

Teacher of the year

Angie Phillips from Hough High School was selected as the CMS 2026 Teacher of the Year by the Lake Norman Chamber of Commerce.



Phillips

Phillips was presented the award during an annual luncheon celebrating educators in the region. She has spent nearly 30 years in education, most recently working on the AVID school program that helps students learn how to study better, stay organized, and build the skills they need to go to college.

EXTRA! EXTRA! Cardboard Regatta Comes to Cornelius Shores



Prototype designed by the Hough STEM team

BY JON SHOW

Cornelius Today is partnering with students from the Hough High School STEM Club to design, build and race an entry in the annual Cornelius Cardboard Boat Regatta.

Now in its second year, the regatta pits amateur boat builders against one another in races on Lake Norman. Prizes are awarded for Best Decorated, People's Choice, and the Titanic Award for sinking.

Last year's event was won by the Fohr family of Mooresville with their vessel, "Sea Ya." The Titanic Award went to a boat aptly named "Soggy Bottom."

All boats must be made primarily of cardboard and tape, with limits on substances used to seal seams. The competition features timed heats followed by a championship race.

Advance registration is required and capped at 25 teams. The cost is \$25 per team for residents and \$35 for nonresidents. Proceeds benefit Float It Forward, a nonprofit that provides personal flotation devices for docks and promotes water and boating safety.

Anthony Iota, Vincent Hancock, Barry Kaplan and Nash Beshears — all juniors at Hough — spent April designing and building the Cornelius Today vessel.

After reviewing multiple prototypes,

the team settled on a V-hull design similar to a traditional dugout canoe.

"The canoe design allows the boat to maintain a stable path forward without veering off in either direction," said Beshears. "We think the design is best for hydrodynamics, personal capacity, flotation and longevity."

"Also, we watched a couple YouTube videos of other designs that fell apart instantly," he added.

The regatta is scheduled for Saturday, May 2, at Jetton Park from 10 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Admission is free, and a food truck will be on site.

The race is the only event in the parks and recreation summer event series that's held on Lake Norman, and the department is hopeful it develops into a signature annual event.

"Our first regatta was quite the spectacle, so given the success of year one and anticipation of year two, we believe the

race will soon become one of our most anticipated annual events," said Troy Fitzsimmons, director of Cornelius Parks and Recreation.



Fitzsimmons

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Jetton Village Uncorks Proposal

BY DAVE VIESER

Is a new social district coming to Cornelius? It could soon happen if a trio of restaurant owners gets Town Board approval.

"We've watched how well the Lake Norman social district in downtown Cornelius has worked, and our feeling is, why not have it here on the west side of town, too?" said Jim Gordon, owner of Peninsula Prime.

In an interview with Cornelius Today, Gordon was joined by Josh McCracken of H2 Public House and Jimmy Holywell of Penny Lane pub to outline their support for the plan.

"Our business is doing very well, but we believe this idea would keep even more customers on the west side of town near Jetton Village," Gordon said. "That means they wouldn't have to struggle with cross-town traffic."

For example, Gordon said, a diner could have a meal at Peninsula Prime, then stroll to H2 or Penny Lane with an after-dinner beverage in hand.



Restaurant owners propose a social district for Jetton Village

and 10 p.m.

Gordon said a small park with a gazebo near the three establishments could be included in the proposed district. The park is maintained by a local community association, not the town.

Cornelius established its first social district in 2023 in the downtown area, becoming one of the first towns to participate in the program.

Deputy Town Manager Wayne Herron outlined the requirements for businesses to participate:

"Each participant must have a sticker or some type of emblem to show how they are participating. There are three options: serving alcohol, not serving alcohol but allowing people to walk through, or not participating at all."

Businesses must also follow insurance and licensing requirements and use special, state-mandated cups with specific markings.

Herron said he will work with Gordon to navigate the requirements and prepare the proposal for Town Board consideration.

What is a social district?

Social districts began to emerge after a state law adopted in 2021 permitted cities and towns to designate areas where businesses can sell alcoholic beverages in to-go containers. The idea allows patrons to walk within designated areas

while carrying those beverages. It was envisioned as a way to help generate business in areas recovering from COVID-19.

Under town rules adopted in 2023, patrons in Cornelius social districts may consume alcoholic beverages in specially designated cups between noon

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Town Will Hear Hotel Presentation on May 4

The Cornelius Town Board will hear its first presentation on developer Jake Palillo's proposal to build a 45,000-square-foot hotel at the corner of Mayes Road and Highway 73/Sam Furr Road on May 4.

A community meeting on the project April 7 drew 46 attendees, many from Huntersville. "I would say the public did not receive it super well," said David Cole of the Cornelius Planning Department. "Lots of concerns, especially about traffic and safety issues." Residents also raised concerns about impact on adjoining neighborhoods and overgrowth in the rural area.

The site is in the far southeast corner of Cornelius, partially outside town limits, and is currently zoned rural preservation. The Planning Board will likely hold its public hearing in June, followed by a Town Board hearing and

final zoning decision.

NCDOT Taking Steps to Improve Mayes and 115

Relief may be coming to the troubled railroad crossing at Mayes Road and N.C. 115. The raised tracks generated 25 calls for service in the first three months of the year, involving 47 officers for 52 combined hours. Officers have begun ticketing stuck drivers up to \$100 plus court costs. A construction trailer, a tour bus and an 18-wheel McDonald's truck have all become stuck there recently; freeing the McDonald's truck took six hours and closed both roads.

Improving the intersection falls to NCDOT since both roads are state-maintained. The tracks are owned by Charlotte but maintained by Norfolk Southern until the Red Line moves forward.

Following an agency evaluation, NCDOT plans to install new low-clearance and "No Trucks" signs at Sam Furr and Mayes roads, add high-visibility striping to existing warning signs, and restrict trucks on Barnhardt Road. Long term, a Mayes Road realignment project will include grading adjustments at the

crossing. Officials are also working with GPS providers to reroute truck traffic away from Mayes Road.

Novant Urgent Care Approved; ER Denied

Novant Health received half a loaf at the April 20 Town Board meeting. Its request to rezone Westmoreland Road property for an urgent care center was unanimously approved; a separate request for a freestanding emergency department on Holiday Lane was denied 4-1.

Planning staff found the ER inconsistent with the town's 2023 land use plan, which designates the Holiday Lane site for water-oriented uses. Most commissioners said they'd welcome an ER at a different location. Novant expects construction on the urgent care center to begin later in 2026, with a 2027 opening.

Town Staff Recommends Two-Cent Tax Hike

Town Manager Andrew Grant has proposed a 2-cent-per-\$100 tax increase following the annual budget workshop.

Most town revenues are projected to remain flat or decline, and the increase would address police retention, planned parks investments and other items.

The current rate of 17.31 cents per \$100 amounts to about \$865 annually for a \$500,000 home; the proposed increase would add \$100 per year.

The proposed fiscal year 2027 budget is expected to be unveiled at the May 4 town meeting and the board must adopt a budget by June 30.

New Greek, Mexican Restaurants

Rio 150 Mexican Restaurant is open in the former La Victoria space near Exit 25 in Huntersville. The family-owned Mooresville original, known for large portions and what it bills as the largest margaritas in North Carolina, will make Huntersville its fifth Charlotte-area location. Entrees run \$15-\$20; lunch combos are under \$10.

Ilios Crafted Greek will open in Sadler Square on Griffith Street in Davidson — the chain's fifth location and first in North Mecklenburg. The fast-casual

Continued on PAGE 13

Continued from PAGE 12

menu features Greek-style proteins, sandwiches, salads and sides, with most entrees in the mid-teens.

Roundabout Work Begins

Construction on Cornelius roundabouts west of I-77 is underway, divided into six phases. Phase one covers One Norman Boulevard, Knox Road and the Knox/Torrence Chapel roundabout.

Subsequent phases address additional roundabouts along Torrence Chapel Road and at the post office, with phase four unable to start until after January 2027. Phase five widens Liverpool Parkway and adds a slip lane to I-77 south; final paving is phase six, estimated for spring 2028.

Elsewhere: The dual roundabouts near Catawba Avenue are 51% complete, with Holiday Lane expected to reopen in fall 2026. The Potts Street/N.C. 115 roundabout is 48% complete, with both that project and related Davidson work anticipated by summer 2027. The Northcross Drive extension is 51% complete, with a spring 2027 finish expected.



Cornelius estate listed for a record \$18.99 million

Downtown Master Plan Revised Again

Town officials revised the proposed 2050 Downtown Master Plan, softening transportation and infrastructure elements and emphasizing many recommendations remain conceptual pending study and public input.

Updates adjust street alignments, reduce property impacts and refine phasing. Changes affect land use, roads and timelines, including Mulberry Street

revisions, school mapping updates and a possible police substation, with more revisions expected after further public feedback.

Home Listing Sets Cornelius Record

A newly built estate at 20221 Regatta Island Drive has listed for \$18.99 million, a Cornelius record. The six-bedroom, nine-bath home spans more than 12,000 square feet on roughly three acres, with a pool, dock and extensive

Lake Norman shoreline.

Built in 2024, the land last sold in 2021 for \$4.35 million. The previous Cornelius sales record was \$11.5 million. Current high-end listings include two properties at \$14.5 million each and an \$11 million listing on Connor Quay Court.

Cornelius Community Honors Jack Conard Jr.

Residents packed Town Hall during the April 7 town meeting to join commissioners in honoring Jack Conard Jr. with the town's Outstanding Citizen Award.

Conard is the unofficial historian of Cornelius, known for a large collection of photographs and a passion for the town's pre-lake past. He was in hospice and could not attend, but watched via a live feed from his room.

"I love y'all and have a great town meeting," he said. "I can't imagine the town without me being there, but you're all with me all of the time."

"It was a beautiful reminder of what this community is all about," said Mayor Denis Bilodeau, who presents the new award each quarter.

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Hough teams building momentum into postseason

BY RYAN MOXON

Nearing the end of the regular season, the Hough Huskies outdoor track team is trending upward, with gains across sprint events and field disciplines complementing its traditionally strong distance group.

“We’ve improved a lot in the sprints and field events on both boys and girls sides,” said coach Andrew Carrington. “Mid-distance and distance has always been a strength of the program, and we’ve shown that again this year with our depth.”

That balance has positioned Hough as a contender heading into the final stretch of the regular season, particularly on the boys side, where the team is eyeing a conference title and a strong showing at the state meet.

Among the most notable areas of growth has been in the throwing events. Shawn Kennedy has set the school record in discus, while Trace Oakley has done the same in shot put, giving Hough two of the top marks in the state’s 4A classification.

Distance runners have continued to anchor the program. At the Carolina Distance Carnival, Drew Johnson posted a personal record in a fast 800-meter heat, while Aidan Malloy set a school record in the 3,200 meters.

Johnson, a Howard University commit, is one of several standout performers on the boys team, alongside Malloy, who is committed to Catholic University, as well as Grant Collum and Quinn Notte in the middle-distance events.

On the girls side, Aleksa Camodeca, Jenna Beyerle and Addy Bamford



Relay teams playing big role this spring / Photo by Max Gallagher

have contributed across the 400- and 800-meter races, while Juliana Mills Zacapa has added depth in the 800 and 1,600. McKenzie Kamara has provided versatility, competing in sprints and the long jump.

Several athletes have also emerged as unexpected contributors. Oakley’s rise in the shot put has been a highlight for the boys, along with improvements from Kylan Bright in the 200 and 400. For the girls, Luciana Zamudio has progressed in discus, while Maddie Epperson has strengthened the distance group.

As the postseason approaches,

Hough’s relay teams could prove to be a difference-maker.

“We see our relays being very good heading into the postseason,” Carrington said.

Roundup

Girls soccer: Hough is 19-2 overall and 8-0 in conference play, likely eyeing the top seed in the state playoff bracket if it can defeat Myers Park for a second time this season. The team’s only losses came at the hands of Ardrey Kell and Cardinal Gibbons.

Junior forward Olivia Miller is averaging one goal per game, and senior

forward Ava Hauser has added nearly an assist per game. Senior goalkeepers Elizabeth Rupert and Riley Pickels combine to average less than one goal allowed and six saves per game this season.

Boys lacrosse: A season with championship aspirations moves into its final stretch. A key conference matchup against Ardrey Kell on the final day of the regular season will impact playoff seeding. The Huskies were 14-3 at press-time.

Girls lacrosse: The 6-4 Huskies are 1-2 in conference play, led offensively by freshman Lia Hooper and senior Bridget Steen at midfield and attack.

Boys volleyball: Hough’s march toward a return to the state title game continues with a 14-4 record at press time, with the only blemishes against Reagan, T.C. Robertson and West Forsyth.

Baseball: Hough concluded the regular season with a win against Hopewell to finish 15-7. The Huskies finished second heading into the conference tournament.

Softball: The Huskies wrapped up the regular season leading the conference, posting wins against South Mecklenburg, Myers Park and Hopewell in the final week. The Huskies finished 10-0 in conference play and 17-5 overall ahead of the conference tournament.

Fall sports: Hough football will begin the defense of its state championship title on Aug. 29 against Cardinal Gibbons in the marquee matchup of the 2026 Keep Pounding High School Classic. The game will be played at 8 p.m. at Bank of America Stadium in Charlotte.

The Huskies will enter the fall as the top-ranked team in the state after refueling with numerous highly ranked transfers this off-season.

All roundup records and statistics are from MaxPreps.com.



4368740 Fully reimagined and packed with high-end upgrades, this Edgewater Park home delivers a like-new living experience on a private 1.16-acre retreat. A stunning two-story great room, luxe primary suite with sitting area, and flexible spaces make everyday living feel elevated. Outside, a heated pool, spa, and expansive entertaining areas turn every weekend into a staycation. **\$1,050,000**



4363681 Perfectly positioned near Lake Norman Golf Club, this home pairs an unbeatable location with effortless indoor-outdoor living. The main-level primary suite opens directly to a patio and saltwater pool—hello, resort vibes at home. Spacious living areas, generous bedrooms, and no HOA make this one a standout. **\$949,900**



4371358 Set on 1.3 acres in a vibrant, amenity-rich community, this home blends space, function, and lifestyle. A sunlit open layout, main-level primary suite, and oversized bonus spaces offer flexibility for every stage of life. From game nights to pool days and pickleball matches, this one keeps life moving—and entertaining. **\$860,000**



4369256 This Tuscan-inspired retreat feels like a European escape—without ever leaving Huntersville. Thoughtfully redesigned with luxe finishes, exposed beams, and a showstopping chef’s kitchen, every detail tells a story. Set on over an acre with no HOA, it’s equal parts privacy, elegance, and everyday ease. **\$799,000**



4361797 Renovated charm meets modern design in this stylish ranch tucked on a spacious cul-de-sac lot. An open-concept layout, designer kitchen, and curated finishes create a home that’s both functional and on-trend. Outside, a private backyard oasis with deck, pergola, and lush landscaping steals the spotlight. **\$569,000**



4370083 Opportunity knocks with this versatile property just minutes from downtown Davidson. Whether you’re looking to live, invest, or build, the acre lot and flexible layout open the door to endless possibilities. Surrounded by luxury communities and future development, this one is all about smart positioning! **\$475,000**



4370341 Classic Craftsman charm meets modern upgrades in this move-in-ready gem. Bright, open living spaces, a refreshed kitchen, and a spacious primary suite create comfort with style. With a fenced yard and prime location, it’s the kind of home that checks boxes—and then adds a few more. **\$395,000**



4372401 Lake life just got a little more attainable with this charming home near the shores of Lake Norman. Soaring ceilings, a cozy fireplace, and a main-level primary suite create an inviting everyday retreat. Step outside to your private garden escape or stroll to the water—this is lifestyle living done right! **\$382,500**



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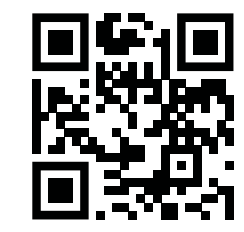
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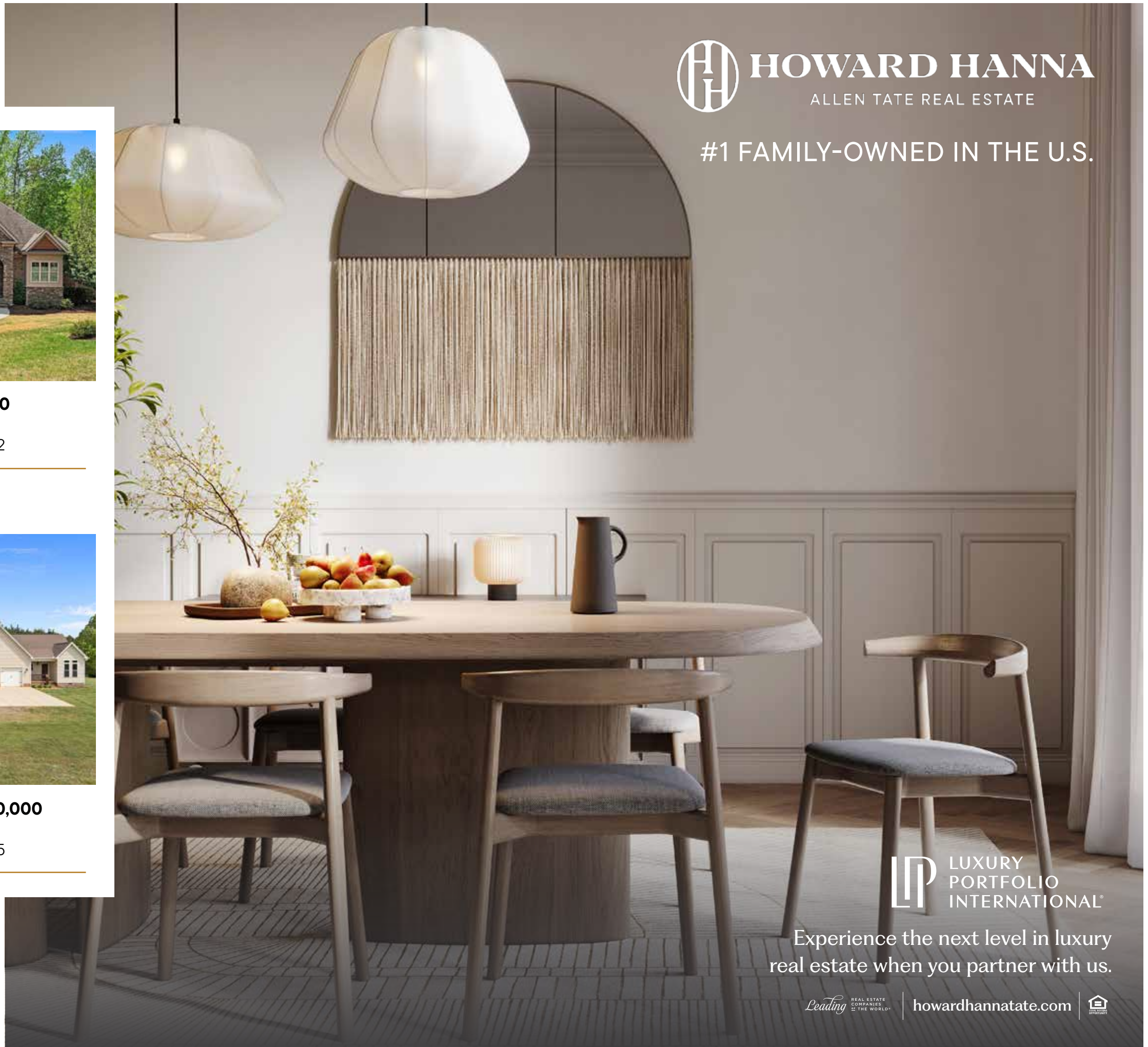
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Cornelius

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3/24/26, \$368,000, 18809 Nautical Dr #203, 2BR/2BA, Admirals Quarters, 1,167 sq ft, built 1987

3/25/26, \$750,000, 18047 Northport Dr, 5BR/2.5BA, Jetton Cove, 3,019 sq ft, built 2007

3/25/26, \$1,645,000, 21037 Norman Shores Dr, 4BR/3BA, Lake Point Shores, 3,534 sq ft, built 1986

3/26/26, \$360,000, 9542 Glenashley Dr, 2BR/2.5BA, Glenridge Townhomes, 1,561 sq ft, built 2004

3/26/26, \$496,500, 17526 Harbor Walk Dr, 4BR/2.5BA, Westmoreland, 1,990 sq ft, built 2007



\$1,286,000 | 18401 Doves Crest Road, Cornelius

3/26/26, \$490,000, 18816 Nautical Dr #3, 3BR/2BA, Admirals Quarters, 1,383 sq ft, built 1999

3/26/26, \$3,400,000, 17005 Belle Isle Dr, 3BR/2.5BA, Cornelius, 1,748 sq ft, built 1975

3/27/26, \$730,000, 14309 Cameryn Elise Dr, 3BR/2BA, Baileys Glen, 2,134 sq ft, built 2023

3/27/26, \$980,000, 21209 Baltic Dr, 4BR/2.5BA, Captains Point, 2,736 sq ft, built 1997

3/30/26, \$677,250, 18318 Glenealy Dr, 3BR/2BA, Baileys Glen, 2,043 sq ft, built 2014

3/30/26, \$715,000, 21012 Molly Harper Dr, 3BR/3BA, Baileys Glen, 2,191 sq ft, built 2021

3/30/26, \$610,000, 17811 Half Moon Ln Unit E, 2BR/2BA, Kings Point, 1,203 sq ft, built 1995

3/31/26, \$1,165,000, 18603 Town Harbour Rd, 4BR/4BA, The Peninsula, 3,894 sq ft, built 1998

3/31/26, \$631,000, 1215 Inn Keepers Way, 2BR/2BA, Antiquity, 1,968 sq ft, built 2011

3/31/26, \$440,000, 18134 Ebenezer Dr, 3BR/2BA, Baileys Glen, 1,437 sq ft, built 2012

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\$1,325,000 | 9121 Robbins Preserve Road, Cornelius

4/1/26, \$350,000, 18754 Silver Quay Dr, 2BR/2.5BA, Silver Quay, 1,162 sq ft, built 1995

4/1/26, \$630,000, 21133 Rio Oro Dr, 3BR/2.5BA, Bahia Bay, 2,046 sq ft, built 1991

4/2/26, \$692,000, 8735 Westmoreland Lake Dr, 4BR/2.5BA, Westmoreland, 2,608 sq ft, built 2004

4/6/26, \$735,000, 18804 Avery Park Dr, 4BR/3BA, Avery Park, 3,165 sq ft, built 2016

4/1/26, \$289,900, 19816 Oak Leaf Cir, 2BR/2BA, Twin Oaks, 1,250 sq ft, built 1995

4/1/26, \$615,000, 8233 Houser St, 3BR/3.5BA, The Retreat At West Catawba, 2,630 sq ft, built 2024

4/2/26, \$969,000, 21308 Araglin Ct, 4BR/3.5BA, Waterford Point, 3,342 sq ft, built 1995

4/7/26, \$398,000, 18721 Silver Quay Dr, 3BR/2.5BA, Silver Quay, 1,448 sq ft, built 1995

4/1/26, \$397,500, 18727 Silver Quay Dr, 3BR/2.5BA, Silver Quay, 1,463 sq ft, built 1995

4/1/26, \$745,000, 17810 Half Moon Ln Unit L, 3BR/2BA, Half Moon Bay, 1,407 sq ft, built 1995

4/2/26, \$260,000, 17151 Doe Valley Ct, 2BR/2BA, Alexander Chase, 1,258 sq ft, built 2005

4/8/26, \$1,879,395, 22527 John Gamble Rd, 3BR/2.5BA, Country Club Shores, 3,079 sq ft, built 1982

4/8/26, \$1,275,000, 18521 Vineyard Point Ln, 3BR/2.5BA, Vineyard Point, 1,898 sq ft, built 1985

4/8/26, \$1,028,000, 17929 Kings Point Dr Unit F, 3BR/3BA, Biscayne, 2,114 sq ft, built 1991

4/9/26, \$960,000, 21939 Riddles Ct, 3BR/3.5BA, Antiquity, 2,743 sq ft, built 2010

4/10/26, \$385,000, 19745 Playwrights Way, 1BR/0.5BA, Antiquity, 1,589 sq ft, built 2014

4/10/26, \$847,000, 12520 Old Westbury Dr, 4BR/3.5BA, Avery Park, 3,671 sq ft, built 2017

4/10/26, \$1,405,000, 17826 Jetton Green Loop, 3BR/3.5BA, Jetton Place, 3,070 sq ft, built 2017

4/10/26, \$1,325,000, 9121 Robbins Preserve Rd, 4BR/3BA, Robbins Park, 3,112 sq ft, built 2014



\$7,223,000 | 15037 June Washam Road, Davidson



\$3,525,000 | 401 Woodland Street, Davidson

4/13/26, \$451,000, 10205 Danesway Ln, 3BR/2.5BA, Wellsley Village, 1,737 sq ft, built 1994

4/16/26, \$562,000, 21556 Old Canal St, 2BR/2.5BA, Antiquity, 1,890 sq ft, built 2009

4/17/26, \$1,470,000, 8618 Preserve Pond Rd, 5BR/4.5BA, Robbins Park, 4,351 sq ft, built 2013

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

4/13/26, \$945,500, 7618 Vistaview Dr, 4BR/2.5BA, 100 Norman Place, 2,802 sq ft, built 1991

4/16/26, \$577,500, 20332 Colony Point Ln, 4BR/2.5BA, Mckenzie Place, 2,140 sq ft, built 2001

4/17/26, \$445,000, 10207 Caldwell Depot Rd, 3BR/2.5BA, Caldwell Station, 1,936 sq ft, built 2005

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

4/13/26, \$595,000, 17811 Half Moon Ln Unit I, 2BR/2BA, Kings Point, 1,099 sq ft, built 1995

4/17/26, \$975,000, 19107 Southport Dr, 4BR/4BA, Jetton Cove, 3,132 sq ft, built 1999

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

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

4/13/26, \$295,000, 19819 Henderson Rd Unit J, 2BR/2BA, Windward, 1,024 sq ft, built 1990

4/13/26, \$775,000, 15012 Courtside Cove Ln, 3BR/3BA, The Courtyards on Lake Norman, 2,748 sq ft, built 2018

4/14/26, \$1,286,000, 18401 Doves Crest Rd, 4BR/3.5BA, Beverly, 3,786 sq ft, built 2020

4/15/26, \$2,300,000, 20338 Christofle Dr, 4BR/3.5BA, Catarina Bay, 3,898 sq ft, built 1990

4/15/26, \$730,000, 18808 Avery Park Dr, 4BR/3BA, Avery Park, 3,036 sq ft, built 2016

4/15/26, \$665,000, 20230 N Main St, 2BR, Cornelius, 3,140 sq ft, built 1950

4/15/26, \$1,700,000, 19329 Watermark Dr #551, 3BR/3.5BA, Watermark, 2,990 sq ft, built 2019



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3/24/26, \$998,500, 18530 Carnegie Overlook Blvd, 3BR/2.5BA, River Run, 2,807 sq ft, built 2008

3/25/26, \$1,100,000, 1016 Concord Rd, 3BR/2.5BA, Davidson, 3,011 sq ft, built 1993

3/26/26, \$3,935,125, 16610 Reinsch Dr, 6BR/6.5BA, River Run, 9,365 sq ft, built 2020

3/27/26, \$7,223,000, 15037 June Washam Rd, 7BR/7.5BA, Davidson, 9,570 sq ft, built 2025

3/30/26, \$572,000, 5891 Vinewood Rd, 3BR/2.5BA, Davidson, 2,344 sq ft, built 2025

3/31/26, \$835,000, 13307 Robert Walker Dr, 4BR/3BA, River Run, 2,834 sq ft, built 2002

4/1/26, \$3,525,000, 401 Woodland St, 5BR/4.5BA, Davidson, 4,707 sq ft, built 1950

4/1/26, \$597,000, 343 Spring St, 3BR/3.5BA, Walnut Grove, 1,962 sq ft, built 2011

4/2/26, \$300,000, 10372 Turnplow Dr, 3BR/2BA, Frazier Acres, 1,560 sq ft, built 2000

4/2/26, \$484,000, 3050 Streamside Dr, 4BR/2.5BA, The Farm At Riverpointe, 2,527 sq ft, built 2023

4/2/26, \$1,350,000, 1916 Davis Rd, 4BR/3.5BA, Davidson, 2,700 sq ft, built 1978

4/8/26, \$767,000, 13446 Scanlan Way, 4BR/2.5BA, Pages Pond, 3,003 sq ft, built 1995

4/9/26, \$3,700,000, 3015 Maple Way Dr, 5BR/4.5BA, Maple Grove, 5,329 sq ft, built 2023

4/9/26, \$1,025,000, 18800 Boundary Oaks Ct, 5BR/3.5BA, River Run, 3,893 sq ft, built 1995

4/9/26, \$860,000, 143 Park Forest St, 3BR/3.5BA, Lake Davidson Park, 2,295 sq ft, built 1999

4/9/26, \$775,000, 11826 Westbranch Pkwy, 5BR/4.5BA, Westbranch, 3,549 sq ft, built 2019

4/10/26, \$1,289,000, 19016 Wildcat Trl, 4BR/3.5BA, River Run, 3,969 sq ft, built 1998

4/10/26, \$317,000, 753 Southwest Dr, 2BR/2BA, Davidson Landing, 996 sq ft, built 1994

4/13/26, \$380,000, 10907 Tailwater St, 3BR/2.5BA, The Farm at Riverpointe, 2,226 sq ft, built 2011

4/14/26, \$540,500, 508 Annie Lowery Way, 4BR/3.5BA, Parkside Commons, 1,976 sq ft, built 2026

4/14/26, \$525,000, 512 Annie Lowery Way, 4BR/3.5BA, Parkside Commons, 1,918 sq ft, built 2026

4/14/26, \$210,000, 545 Annie Lowery Way, 3BR/2.5BA, Parkside Commons, 1,849 sq ft, built 2026

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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.

FRIDAY, MAY 1

760 Craft Works | 6:30 p.m. — Billy Jones Trio (Americana/Blues) — Free

★ **Boatyard Lake Norman** | 8 p.m. — Excitable (Def Leppard Tribute) — Paid

Rudder & Rose Tavern & Tunes | 9 p.m. — Radio Source (Rock) — Free

SATURDAY, MAY 2

Lost Worlds Brewing | 5 p.m. — Major Dudes (Rock) — Free

Cain Center for the Arts | 7:30 p.m. — Leon Etienne (Magic) — Paid

★ **Boatyard Lake Norman** | 8 p.m. — Gump Fiction (90's experience) — Paid

Rudder & Rose Tavern & Tunes | 10 p.m. — HEY LA (Pop) — Free

SUNDAY, MAY 3

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

Primal Brewery Huntersville | 2 p.m. — J Candeed (Folk/Groove) — Free

Cain Center for the Arts | 7 p.m. — AmeriCosmos Experience (Immersive) — Paid

THURSDAY, MAY 7

The Serve Pickleball + Kitchen | 6 p.m. — Mike Rajewski (Rock) — Free

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

FRIDAY, MAY 8

Lost Worlds Brewing | 6 p.m. — Marissa Lundsten (Singer/Songwriter) — Free

Primal Brewery Huntersville | 6 p.m. — Gin N' Sonic (80's Rock/Pop) — Free

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

★ **Boatyard Lake Norman** | 8 p.m. — House of Hair (80's Hair Metal Tribute) — Paid

SATURDAY, MAY 9

Lost Worlds Brewing | 4 p.m. — The Vel-Crows (Rock) — Free

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

★ **Boatyard Lake Norman** | 8 p.m. — Rattle & Hum (U2 Tribute) — Paid

Rudder & Rose Tavern & Tunes | 10 p.m. — Sweet Leaf (Rock) — Free



Friday, May 22 | Kenny & Luke's Country Beach Party

A tribute show that captures the perfect blend of Kenny Chesney's laid-back, island-hopping soul and Luke Bryan's high-octane stadium energy. Boatyard Lake Norman at 8 p.m.

SUNDAY, MAY 10

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

FRIDAY, MAY 15

Lost Worlds Brewing | 6 p.m. — Keith Wilson (Rock) — Free

760 Craft Works | 6:30 p.m. — Lukas Delgra (Acoustic) — Free

H2 Public House | 7 p.m. — Mike Regan's Allstars (Rock) — Free

★ **Boatyard Lake Norman** | 8 p.m. — Pushh with Hipshack — Paid

Rudder & Rose Tavern & Tunes | 9 p.m. — Evenflow (Rock) — Free

SATURDAY, MAY 16

Primal Brewery Huntersville | 5 p.m. — Gin N' Sonic (80's Rock/Pop) — Free

Lost Worlds Brewing | 6 p.m. — Sarah Vieira (Classic Hits/Soul) — Free

★ **Boatyard Lake Norman** | 8 p.m. — Completely Unchained (Van Halen Tribute) — Paid

Rudder & Rose Tavern & Tunes | 10 p.m. — Heartburn (Rock) — Free

THURSDAY, MAY 21

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

760 Craft Works | 7 p.m. — Cameron Moore (Acoustic) — Free

★ **Boatyard Lake Norman** | 7 p.m. — Ada Jenkins Center: Music for Good w/ Blessid Union of Souls — Paid

FRIDAY, MAY 22

760 Craft Works | 6:30 p.m. — Drew Nathan (Country) — Free

H2 Public House | 6:30 p.m. — Jared Evans (Rock) — Free

★ **Boatyard Lake Norman** | 8 p.m. — Kenny & Luke's Country Beach Party — Paid

SATURDAY, MAY 23

Primal Brewery Huntersville | 5 p.m. — Dan Staton Trio (Americana/Jam) — Free

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

760 Craft Works | 6:30 p.m. — Mike Rajewski (Multi-genre acoustic) — Free

★ **Boatyard Lake Norman** | 8 p.m. — Blue Monday — Paid

SUNDAY, MAY 24

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

★ **Boatyard Lake Norman** | 8 p.m. — Dave Matthews Tribute Band — Paid

THURSDAY, MAY 28

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

FRIDAY, MAY 29

Lost Worlds Brewing | 6 p.m. — Steve Brown (Hits) — Free

Cain Center for the Arts | 7:30 p.m. — Pet Sounds (Beach Boys tribute) — Paid

★ **Boatyard Lake Norman** | 8 p.m. — Human Clay (Creed Tribute) — Paid

Rudder & Rose Tavern & Tunes | 9 p.m. — Wrong Way Trio (Rock) — Free

SATURDAY, MAY 30

Primal Brewery Huntersville | 5 p.m. — Crystal Fountains (Bluegrass) — Free

760 Craft Works | 6:30 p.m. — Kyle Murphy Jam Trio (Jam) — Free

★ **Boatyard Lake Norman** | 8 p.m. — Mustache The Band (90's Country Party Band) — Paid

SUNDAY, MAY 31

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

Listings are free of charge. Want to include your venue? Contact us at jon@corneliustoday.com for information.

Downtown Cornelius



North Meck Community Farmers Market returns to Cornelius Town Hall

Shop al fresco on a summer eve

The North Meck Community Farmers Market returns to Cornelius Town Hall on Wednesdays this month and is expanding its nighttime offerings, with the goal of creating a vibe not found at most daytime markets.

The weekly farmers market is a partnership between the Town of Cornelius Parks and Recreation Department and the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Food Policy Council.

The council's mission is to promote local food producers, enhance access to healthy food options, and support farmers and small businesses.

The market launched in 2023 at the Northern Regional Recreation Center but moved to Cornelius Town Hall in 2025 under a new partnership with the town.

While quainter than some larger weekend markets, the North Meck market features a wide variety of offerings, including farm-fresh fruits and vegetables from Austin Kidd Farm, Harvest Roots Farms, and Wild Daisy Farms.

Specialty products such as baked goods, pastries, juice, cheese, and honey are available from local purveyors, including Butter Crust, Blue Goat Dairy, Carthage Fresh, and Savor Well.

Flowers are sold by Purple Sunrise Farms and Bluebird Hill, as well as coffee by Controlled Chaos and vegan baked goods from Sweet Imalda's.

There will also be chef demonstrations by Cheryl Terry of Just Delish and Gilian Howard of Your Cultured Chef.

Live music is still being finalized but will include Papa Greybeard.

Last year, organizers held a few night markets toward the end of the summer that proved popular with attendees and exposed the market to a slightly different crowd than the morning events.

The evening events generally attract more vendors across categories and present a new opportunity for local breweries and food trucks to participate.

The night markets will take place on the last Wednesday of each month—May 27, June 24, July 29, Aug. 26 and Sept. 30—from 5–7 p.m.

The Wednesday morning markets begin May 6 and will run weekly from 9 a.m.-noon.

By supporting local farmers and small businesses, organizers say the market helps ensure a steady supply of produce and other high-quality products while building awareness of healthy eating habits.

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Let's Get Lucky in Cornelius

BY JON SHOW

In a run-of-the-mill strip mall on West Catawba, underneath a nondescript sign that reads "Lucky Box Sports Cards," sits a darkened, narrow storefront that is not trying to entice passersby to pop in and have a gander.

If you're a collector, you already know about it. If you aren't, you've probably driven by hundreds — perhaps thousands — of times and wondered how a "baseball card shop" stays open in 2026.

It's quite simple. This isn't the card store from your childhood. It's not really a card shop at all. It's something much different — dare say better? Stay with me. It's worth it.

Chasing dreams

A regular customer pushes open the door on a warm April morning and bellies up to the counter, the de facto gathering spot in the store. On his visit the prior week he was too amped to sit when he opened boxes, but today he settles onto a stool with designs on opening a pack of a brand new exclusive basketball set.

The curly-haired gentleman, who will remain anonymous, is most definitely a card fanatic. A witness to what's about to unfold might call him a gambler. A dreamer, definitely.

He orders a \$1,100 Bowman Jumbo basketball box from behind the counter and cuts off the wrapper. His dream? A so-called nuke that will fetch seven figures at auction.

He opens the box and begins peeling open the packs inside. Packs one and two proceed slowly. Nothing. Packs three through six go quicker. Zilch.

"I don't know if I'm happy with that box," he says, and mulls over the products behind the counter.

"I don't like losing. Give me another Jumbo."

He cracks a second \$1,100 box but has the same results — nothing that spikes anyone's blood pressure. A store clerk cleans wrappers off the counter.

As he opens a third, less exclusive box costing "only" \$550, a small group huddles around him hoping to witness a last-second half-court winner, like the \$15,000 Cooper Flagg superfractor card the man pulled in the store last year.

Piqued your interest yet? No? Then how about this.

There are 40 more of the Bowman Jumbo boxes on the shelves that will be gone by the end of the day, and that



Chris Bleil, owner of Lucky Box Sports Cards / Photos by Jason Benavides



doesn't account for the run-of-the-mill boxes that are plucked off shelves.

Simple math estimates tens of thousands of dollars in cards will be sold and unboxed between the store hours of 11 a.m. and 4 p.m. on this day. And a slightly scaled back version of this scene will repeat itself the next day, and the day after that.

Growing in popularity

The sports trading card industry

has exploded into a multibillion-dollar business since 2020, driven by a pandemic-era surge that reshaped a longtime hobby into a more formal marketplace.

Lockdowns brought a wave of new and returning collectors, while online platforms and live-streamed sales expanded access. The global sports card market is now valued at roughly \$11 billion.

Prices for top-tier cards have soared,



with rare rookie and autographed cards selling for six and seven figures. Third-party grading companies have helped standardize pricing, making cards easier to buy and sell at scale.

Manufacturers like Topps profit from selling boxes and packs at retail, while the secondary market allows collectors and investors to flip cards for profit.

Demand centers on popular products

Continued on PAGE 27

Continued from PAGE 26

like Topps Chrome, Bowman and Topps Flagship. Those packs hanging on the walls at Target? Trash. Akin to gold prospectors sifting sand on a beach.

Collectors today are chasing rookie cards, limited parallels and autographs found in exclusive boxes released in limited supply to small retailers.

On the fringe of the industry — but at the center of it all in Cornelius — is Lucky Box.

Setting the scene

At Lucky Box, packs and boxes cost anywhere from \$8 to \$6,000 — with the most popular priced \$350 to \$1,000 — and contain varying quantities of cards from a handful to hundreds. But that's not why many people buy them.

Inside the cellophane and bright, foil-covered box isn't just a card. It's a package of dreams — promising a score worth hundreds, thousands or, if you're lucky, tens of thousands of dollars.

Like the \$40,000 Julio Rodríguez superfractor rookie baseball card that a child and his father pulled in the store last month out of a box that cost \$30. Or other recent scores like a \$20,000 Cooper Flagg rookie auto basketball card, or a \$10,000 Mickey Mouse superfractor.

"Sometimes it's hard to keep track of all the hits," said store owner Chris Bleil.

The walls behind the counter are lined with trading card boxes of all kinds — mostly football, basketball and baseball, plus professional wrestling and UFC, with a smattering of Disney and sci-fi movies.

The heartbeat of the store is the counter and the metallic boxes staged behind it, waiting to be summoned by the next dreamer.

The rest of the space is bordered by display cases filled with hundreds of already opened and graded cards, each tagged with stickers showing six- and seven-figure valuations and available for individual purchase.

The most expensive card recently sold was a \$1,300 Kobe Bryant Topps Roundball Royalty basketball card, which sold for \$100 over listing price.

"Why was it worth \$1,300?" I ask the regular, expecting an explanation rooted in brand, year or rarity.

"Uh, 'cause he died?"

Dumb questions are not rewarded with smart answers.

Beantown to Lake Norman

Bleil purchased the store three years ago, realizing his own dream that began at the age of 13 when he received his first Kobe Bryant card.



After spending years as an executive in the beverage industry, the Huntersville resident and Massachusetts native bought it from the original owner as the collectible industry was having, as the kids say, a moment.

On this day he's clad in the jersey of NBA star Victor Wembanyama. Fittingly, the Spurs big man helped set off a new wave in the NBA card market the same year Bleil bought the store.

What kind of wave? One Wemby card is currently for sale on eBay for \$380,000, half a million dollars cheaper than the most expensive one sold publicly.

Starting to understand what's going on here?

Getting hyped

All are welcomed to Lucky Box on this day by Chris, Jason and Colby — an

enthusiastic group that feels more like a hype crew than a retail staff.

Some visitors are quiet, content to crack a box in one of the private seating areas — admiring the details in the cards, enjoying their hits or quietly sweating a cold streak.

For others, the main counter is less a checkout area and more like a craps table in Las Vegas. They've come to open a box or two on the table — and to celebrate a nuke with friends. If they get skunked, they fall back on stories of better times.

Another customer walks in and asks for two \$30 boxes of Topps Chrome — a mid-tier product called a "hanger," named for the way it hangs on retail hooks, unlike the pricier boxes that sit on shelves. It's relatively low cost but still capable of producing valuable hits

like rookie cards, short prints or parallels.

He retreats to a seating area, undisturbed until Jason the store clerk pokes his head around the corner a few minutes later.

"Pull anything?" he asks.

The response is muffled, not meant for the room.

Jason likes what he hears. He turns back to the counter, grins and announces to no one in particular:

"Hangers are bangers, man. I'm telling you. Hangers are bangers."

Good days and bad days

Back at the counter, the well-coiffed man peels open the last pack in his third box but, like the other boxes today, finds nothing that provides the jolt of excitement he is chasing.

"Guess I got some kindling for my fireplace," he says. It's time to move on with his day and others are angling for a seat at the counter.

He exhales — the sigh of an unrealized dream. He asks for two value priced packs of cards for some young, budding collectors he'll see later that day, throws down his credit card, and heads for the door.

Today's damage? \$4,000. But by his ledger, he's still well in the black — and ready to fight another day.

He opens the door, then turns back, flashing a smile and a look of nostalgic optimism.

"See you soon, guys."



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Celebrating its 22nd year, Big Day at the Lake returns to Lake Norman July 18, 2026, creating an unforgettable day on the lake for Bigs and Littles, capped off with a picnic at the Duke Energy Explorium. We are grateful to the businesses and individuals who have already committed as sponsors. Interested in joining them? Contact Dave Yochum, founder of Big Day at the Lake, at nebiztoday@gmail.com

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Sound Off

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

Transit plans shift to the fast track

Whatever they project the cost will be in this fantasy it will be a lie.

—Michael Austin

Another Infill Development Proposed for Washam Potts

It's so beautiful! Leave it alone!

—Karen Asche

Jack's Corner Tap Closing

Thank you Jack's for some wonderful memories and good food!

—Jon Warren

Hotel Proposed for Southeast Cornelius

He is just not going to be happy until he builds SOME sort of hotel off of Sam Furr. Hope it doesn't have a red metal roof.

—Tina Bradley

Bless his heart! He is always up to something!

—Anne Shaw

Change NC law to make developers improve infrastructure as part of the bonding process and I would support this.

—David Wood

We definitely need more cars and traffic!?!?

—Pat Barba

New Traffic Plan Coming for Hough

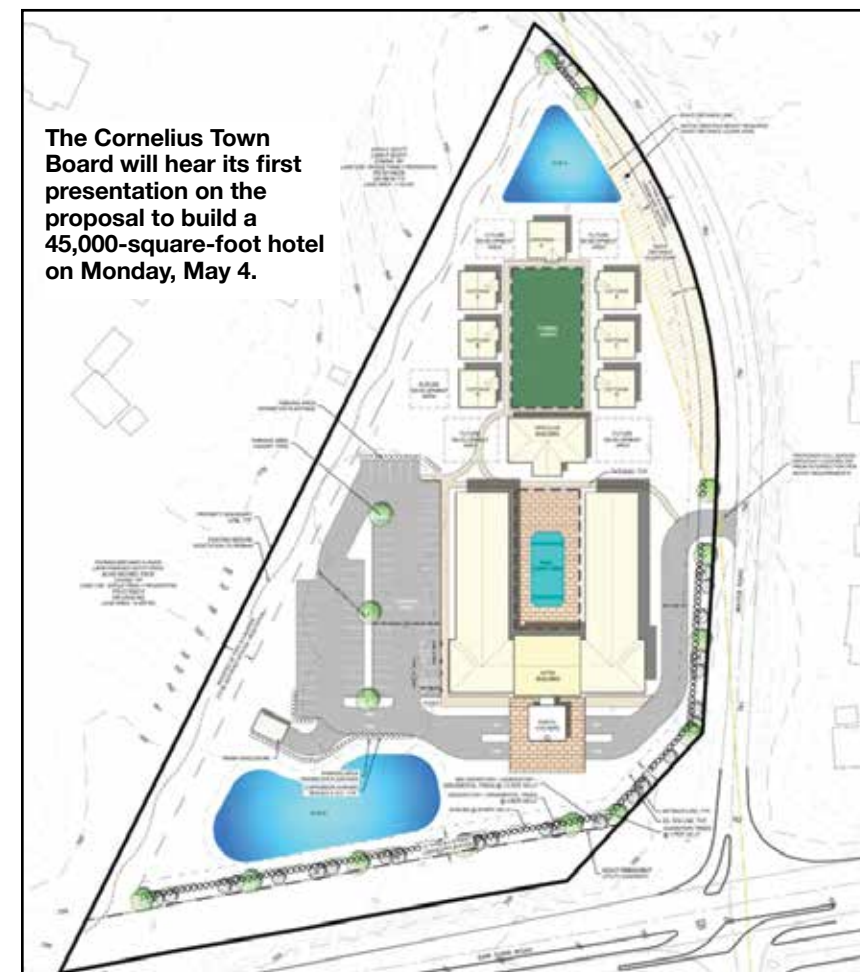
Great! Now can we also work on the middle school congestion? The pickup line blocks the turn into Bailey's Glen and often reaches the high school.

—Lynda Brown

NCDOT Taking Steps to Improve Mayes and 115

This has been happening for years. Clearly the signs are not helping.

—Judy Wegner



The Cornelius Town Board will hear its first presentation on the proposal to build a 45,000-square-foot hotel on Monday, May 4.



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In Defense of a Daytime Siesta

BY JON SHOW

My goodness I love to nap. In all forms.

An hourlong nap on the Fifth of July to counteract the festivities on the Fourth of July? Yes please. A fifteen-minute catnap on a random weekday, or a five-minute car nap on a hot August afternoon? Count me in.

But my favorite nap is one on the Sunday of a major golf championship.

I stood up last month at a Masters watch party (it may have been a kid's birthday party) and announced my intention to return to my home across the street for a brief afternoon slumber.

"Sounds nice," said my neighbor Skunk Hunter, as he tried to negotiate a scooter fight between his toddler and another kid at the party.

At 50, having spent thousands of hours in his position, I grabbed my chair, smirked and said, "I've earned my naps, buddy."

And then I headed home to settle in for a few hours.

While I waited for exhaustion to wash over me, I started a text thread with some friends to numb my mind as I prepared to slumber, and sent the following:

Top Five Naps

Masters Sunday

New Year's Day

Fifth of July

Poolside in the summer

Post-shower after a fishing weekend

Most of the guys confirmed my rankings, though a couple agreed that leaving off Thanksgiving was an absurd oversight. From all accounts they're correct, but I can't include it on my list because we always eat too late to take a nap.

They also added a post-lake-day-drinking nap, but for me, intoxication does not lend itself to a restful nap.

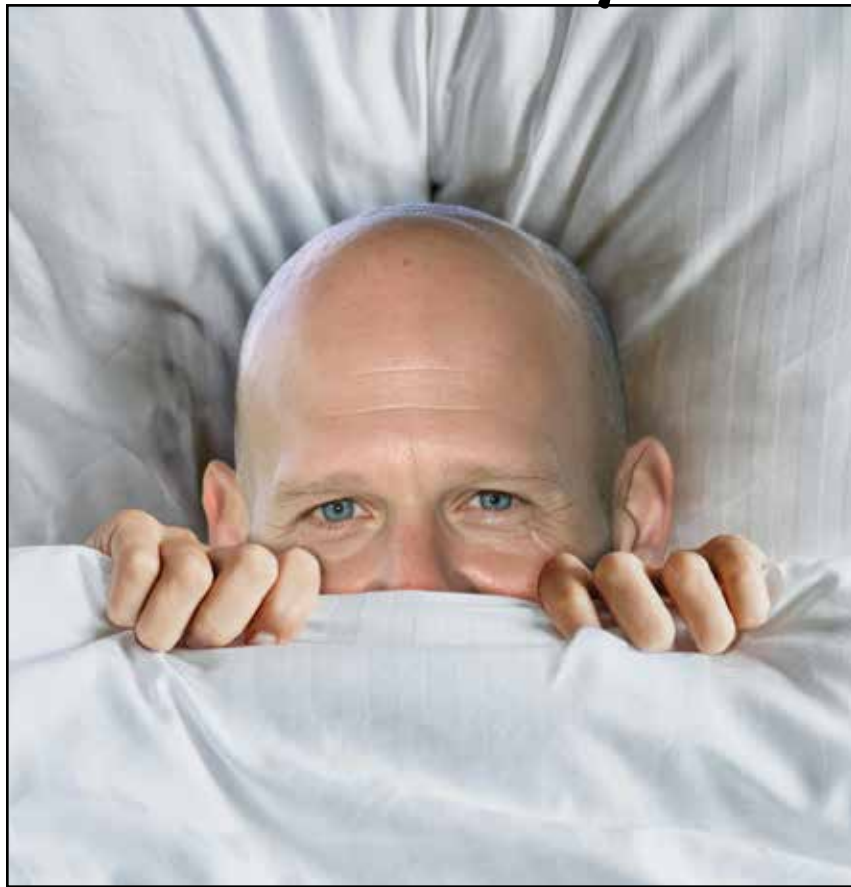
I really have no other requirement for napping other than sobriety.

I don't need to be in bed or on a couch or a comfy chair. I don't even need to be tired. I just need to have a clear mind and I'm out.

As long as I limit my naps to 30-45 minutes I usually awake refreshed. If one stretches to an hour in length I tend to feel groggy.

Yes, your grandma was correct. You can get too much of a good thing.

Napping isn't a new thing for me. In my 20s and early 30s I napped most



Sundays on my parents' couch after spending the morning playing golf with my dad.

The addition of children in my mid-30s put a hiatus on my napping.

One of the last naps I took with young children was when Future Man was nine months old and I came home from an early-morning round of golf on a couples vacation. It was my turn to be a parent, so the Mother of Dragons handed me a colicky baby and went off to do something with her friend.

I napped, I had no choice, and my friend watched both of our kids. I arose feeling guilty and I quit golf a short time later.

If I couldn't nap after a round then what was the point of playing golf?

My early forties were much the same. No time for naps when you're taking kids to the park, a movie, the pool or on the boat all weekend.

But around my late 40s I returned to an occasional Sunday nap. At 50, I average one every other week.

Why not? I'm not sure my teenage kids even live here anymore. The Mother of Dragons packs her weekend with personal errands, only arriving home in

the early evening for our dinner plans.

There's no reason not to nap. So I do.

As it pertains to golf and the Masters, the docile voice of announcer Jim Nantz certainly helps. As does the chirping birds and soothing music of Kenny Loggins.

When I was a golf writer eons ago, I interviewed Nantz for a story. I don't recall most of what he said, though I do remember his response when I told him I'd taken hundreds of naps to the sound of his voice.

"I hear 'Hello friends' and then it's zzzzzzzz," I shared.

"I get that a lot," he said.

Am I narcoleptic? I don't think so but I've noticed that at 50 years of age a nap sometimes jumps up and grabs me when I'm not looking for one.

Recently I walked out of my home office on a slow weekday afternoon when our friend The Glass Blower was working on the house.

He was speaking but I wasn't processing what he was saying and he looked at me and said, "Hey bud, you've got a big red mark on your forehead."

I'd just taken a 10-minute catnap with my forehead on my desk.

While my desk nap certainly wasn't intentional, it's important to note that I can't go looking for a nap, even if I desperately need one. Over the years I've found that I just need to be open to a nap and, usually, one will find me.

That being said, I do need to put myself in a position to nap.

Usually on the couch or the back porch. Never in a bed. Feet always up.

Some form of head support helps but I'm also known to pass out with my neck at a 90-degree angle as if my head is searching for a pillow it just can't find.

I'd like to say when my family stumbles upon me napping they respect my nocturnal state and tip toe around the house, but they do not.

They usually take the moment to fight over a pint of ice cream, unload groceries, or generally continue about the day in the same manner in which they would if I was not passed out on the couch.

I don't complain because I shouldn't. I'm the one who chose to sleep in the main nerve center of the home, but sometimes it would be nice to finish my nap without being jarred awake.

The Mother of Dragons is jealous of only one thing in our relationship and that is my ability to nap. She possesses a total inability to day sleep under any situation except extreme illness.

Often, after I awake from a nap, she will say to no one in particular, "I wish I could nap." But she just can't.

I've tried coaching her over the years. Tried offering suggestions on how she can improve her odds. But all to no avail.

Which is a shame. She's earned her naps too.

Alas, she is the Blondie to my Dagwood, so I guess I'll just have to nap for two.

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 13-year-old daughter is

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



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