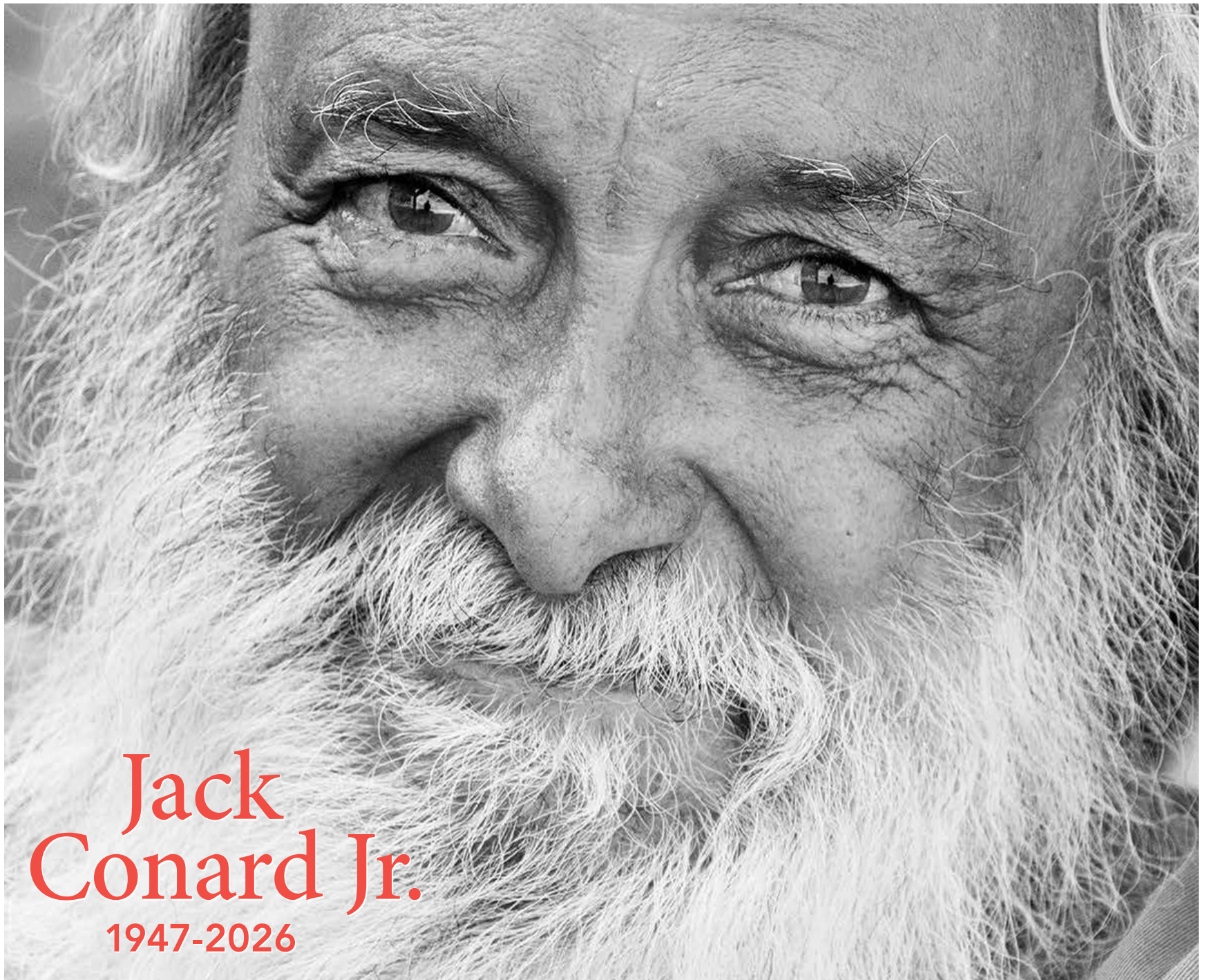




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Page 27

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Denver Farmers Market

Some Like It Hot

BY LINDSAY MARTELL

Confession time: I love heat. Blazing campfires, electric blankets, hefty shakes of Tajin seasoning and even North Carolina on its most inferno-like days. It's not too surprising, as I'm a Sagittarius ruled by Jupiter: fiery, independent, restless and impatient.

Sooo ... do I need things in my life that help temper my inherent heat and quick-flare moments? Yes.

So when I saw a poster at the North County Regional Library for a Coloring and Conversation event, I signed up. Like Silent Book Club and Bad Art Night for adults, C&C allowed me to cool my angsty jets for an hour, surrounded by soothing music, stacks of coloring pages to choose from and an endless supply of colored pencils and inky markers in every shade you could dream of.

According to the Mayo Clinic, coloring is the kind of quiet, pensive activity that slashes stress, calms your brain and helps you relax. The added boost of having like-minded people around you makes the experience even more comforting.

Another escape to tranquility I've grown to love is farmers markets, especially smaller ones in cities I don't often visit. My husband and I strolled through the smattering of vendors at the Denver Farmers Market and found bright purple cauliflower, fresh corn, a hefty prime rib and cookies the size of salad plates.

Everything tasted bright and fresh, a good reminder of how much fun it is to buy from actual growers and bakers, rather than simply sliding things into a broken shopping cart under fluorescent lights.

The same can be said of the joy of making something, which is what led my daughter and me to take a beginning crochet class together. There, as my 13-year-old stitched together perfect

rows like she'd been crocheting for years, I grew hot and panicky as I struggled with every single stitch.

My tablemates chattered away as their creations came together beautifully, while I sipped from my water bottle and "took breaks," which is another way of saying I had no idea what I was doing and was too embarrassed to admit it.

Two hours later, as others showed off their coasters with perfect fringe, my stitches failed to resemble anything more than a wonky Band-Aid. Still, I tried, and I appreciated the camaraderie and intimacy of folks learning a skill together. Lifelong learning is my jam, and challenges are nothing if not the most humbling ways to grow.

As we slide into the most sweltering days of summer, I'm also relishing some indoor, sporty ways to take a break from the UV-saturated afternoons.

We've swum laps at Northern Regional Recreation Center, savoring the rhythm and relative quiet of the serious swimmers around us, all capped and goggled like former Olympians. It's a nice break from getting whacked in the face with inflatables and scrambling to find the best tables in the shade at our neighborhood pool.

As much as I love a good scorcher, fire signs like me need to celebrate all the ways to chill the heck out.

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



PAGE 4

Million Dollar Baby
Art center drops fall schedule



PAGE 12

Hungry Hippos
College baseball and summer fun



What's Delicious
Cloyd eats at a car wash
PAGE 6



This Old House
Tenant home finds new farm
PAGE 8



Catch the Wave
Hit the water with Surf Wake Ski
PAGE 26

NEWS-E PAGE 14
HOME SALES PAGES 18-22
LIVE AT THE LAKE PAGE 24
BUSINESS TODAY PAGE 26
SOUND OFF..... PAGE 28



Cover photo by Deborah Young

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Telephone: 704-953-3381

Cornelius Today is locally owned and operated and proudly based in Cornelius.

Back issues: Payable by VISA and MASTERCARD ONLY. \$5.00 (if available); \$10 to mail.
Reprints: Reprints on high-quality, framable stock are available, starting at \$65.

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Broadway Coming to Cain Center

The Cain Center for the Arts has unveiled its Fall 2026 Performing Arts Season, featuring more than two dozen performances ranging from tribute concerts and comedy acts to theater productions and family entertainment.

The season marks the fourth fall lineup presented by the Cornelius arts venue since opening in 2023.

A centerpiece of the season will be a co-production of the Broadway hit "Million Dollar Quartet" with Davidson Community Players. The musical runs Aug. 8-23 and marks the first collaboration between the two Lake Norman arts organizations.

The production tells the story of the legendary 1956 recording session that brought together Elvis Presley, Johnny Cash, Carl Perkins and Jerry Lee Lewis. Audiences can expect performances of songs including "Blue Suede Shoes," "Walk the Line" and "Great Balls of Fire." The production will be directed by Scott Albert.

Music remains the largest category in the fall lineup.



"Million Dollar Quartet" runs Aug. 8-23 / Cain Center photo

Returning tribute acts include Good Times Bad Times, performing the music of Led Zeppelin; Are You Ready For It?, celebrating Taylor Swift; and the Jazz Legacy Project's tribute to Louis Armstrong.

New tribute shows will honor artists including Elton John, the Eagles, Pink Floyd, ZZ Top, Genesis, Tina Turner,

Johnny Cash and Meat Loaf. The Players, featuring former members of the band Chicago, also will perform during the season.

Country and Americana performances include Chatham Rabbits, Stundom and actor-musician John Schneider, best known as a cast member in the hit 1980s show "The Dukes of Hazzard."

The season also includes several family-focused shows. Highlights include "Clifford the Big Red Dog," "The Amazing Bubble Factory" and illusionist Jeki Yoo.

Comedy programming will feature performances by Bad Momz of Comedy, Jimmie Walker, Tom Cotter, Group Chat Girlies and comedian Jen Kober. Other featured events include "Menopause The Musical," "The Ugly Seasonal Sweater Soiree" and a performance by the Salisbury Symphony Orchestra.

Jazz, blues and soul offerings include appearances by Tuba Skinny, blues guitarist Marty Manous, Spyro Gyra and Masters of Soul.

The variety of performances reflects Cain Center's continuing effort to attract a broad audience from across the Lake Norman region, with programming that ranges from Broadway-style theater and nationally touring tribute acts to comedy, classical music and family entertainment.

The full schedule is available on the Cain Center for the Arts website.

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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 **Halal Food Truck**

I spent much of my life refusing to eat out of food trucks.

During college, I was working in a manufacturing plant, eating lunch out of a food truck that we all called the roach coach. And once I quit that job I vowed never to eat from the back of a truck again.

Well, the older you get, the more you realize there are no absolutes in this life other than, of course, death and taxes, as ol' Benny Frank used to say.

One day a couple years ago my son asked me to meet him for lunch in a parking lot that had a car wash and a food truck, and I was smart enough to know we weren't eating at the car wash. I took a pause. My son was a great

eater who almost always tried anything and I guess it was time for me to oblige.

Halal Food Truck on Catawba Avenue is slinging all the Halal favorites.

Gyros. Chicken over rice. Lamb over rice. My son says they're all great – and raves about their white sauce – but I've never tried any of them.

As I scanned the menu board on the front of the truck, one item in particular stood out to me. One that, I felt, had no place being there, like the shiny black rock at the end of Shawshank.

The kind gentleman behind the cash register asked for my order and I blurted out, "Cheesesteak please."

My son looked at me like I just ordered fried eggs over fried chicken

topped with sausage gravy at a vegan restaurant.

The kind man asked if I wanted peppers and onions, and I said no thanks, because, in the words of Ron Swanson, I was looking to eat lunch, not eat something that my lunch eats.

Now, cheesesteaks are like chili or pizza or anything else that people find deeply personal. Just because I like one doesn't make it good. It just means I like it.

I've come to learn over the years that I like a Mediterranean-style cheesesteak. I like mine stripped down and seasoned with lots of salt and pepper, a hint of garlic salt, and topped with American cheese. Maybe provolone.

As I peeled open that foil wrapper and the aroma smacked me in the nose I knew I was going to love it. And love it I did.

Salty. Peppery. Cheesy. Steak that had been chopped and shredded into morsels so the chopped meat didn't pull out of the bun.

And bread that had just enough structure to hold everything together without being the star of the show.

I've returned again and again and I keep threatening to try something else, but by the time I get to the window it's always, "Cheesesteak, please."

Each time my guy hands me my sandwich I say thanks, and I tell him he makes the best cheesesteak in town.

Do I take it home and eat it? Never. Greasy sandwiches don't travel well.

It must be eaten under the old shade trees as you gaze upon people inching forward in traffic. Your happiness contrasting with their frustration makes it taste better.

I can't promise you'll love it as much as I do. After all, they pay me to spew opinions and not facts around here.

So if you're ever in the area, swing by and try it out, and tell 'em ol' Cloyd sent you.

Summer Reads



Books for the Beach and Beyond

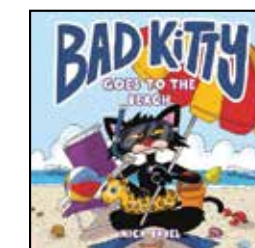
BY LYN MULDROW

Summer is here, and for vacation veterans and road trip referees we have the perfect books for your adventures. Stop by the library and grab a summer-themed read for your next journey, or find something to take you away on an imaginary escape.



"Summers at the Saint"
by Mary Kay Andrews
(Adult romance)

At *The Saint*, you're either a Saint or an Ain't. Where vacations were once determined by which side of the social divide you fell on, widowed hotel owner and former Ain't Traci Eddings takes a chance on redemption and hopes to return *The Saint* to its former glory. A second-chance romance with plenty of intrigue, this is one to keep you engaged on hot summer days.



"Bad Kitty Goes to the Beach"
By Nick Bruel
(Children)

Bad Kitty does not like the beach. She loves her chair and bed



"The Summer I Ate the Rich"
By Maika and Maritza Moulite
(Young adult)

and has no interest in trading them for sand and sun. Find out whether Bad Kitty finds joy at the beach, or at least finds something joyful to eat.

Have you ever heard the term "eat the rich?" In this young adult horror novel, the zombie protagonist does just that. A darker but compelling summer read that explores themes of racial inequity and revenge, this book explores the human condition in a decidedly literal way.



"Slow Burn Summer"
By Josie Silver
(Adult romance)

Publishing and book industry nerds, rejoice. This fake-dating romance follows a pretend romance writer on a book tour and her fake talent agent, whose fabricated story begins to mirror real life. Sweet and full of heart, it's a second-chance romance set in London during the summer.

Spend your summer at the library. In addition to our annual Summer Reading Challenge for school-age children, we offer a wide range of programs for all ages, including baby and toddler storytimes; art and science clubs for children and teens; adult book clubs; crafting and painting workshops; and more.

Lyn Muldrow is a Library Associate at the Charlotte Mecklenburg Library in Cornelius. Visit cmlibrary.org for more information about upcoming programs.

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Comings and Goings at Alexander Farms

BY DAVE VIESER

The tenant house located at the northeast corner of West Catawba Avenue and Westmoreland Road in Cornelius has been moved to a farm in Huntersville.

River Rock coordinated the relocation with Preserve Mecklenburg, a nonprofit organization dedicated to preserving properties of historical and cultural significance throughout Mecklenburg County.

Officials with River Rock Capital Partners, owners of the Alexander Farms site, said the house is being moved to Blackberry Ridge Farm on Beatties Ford Road in Huntersville.

"The new site is home to several similar historic structures," said River Rock spokesperson Lexi Keegan. "In this manner, we can ensure the house will be properly restored, stabilized and preserved by the farm's owners for future generations."

Cornelius Planning Director Rox Burhans said no further action was required by the Cornelius Town Board because the relocation has already been



Tenant house in 2026 (left) and 2022 (right) / Cornelius Today photos

approved administratively.

Meanwhile, Keegan said a display highlighting the site's history will eventually be installed at Alexander Farms.

"As development of the commercial parcels at Alexander Farms progresses and new tenants are introduced, a permanent exhibit and commemorative monument will be installed to celebrate the property's rich history and educate visitors about the farm's legacy and the story of the relocated tenant house," she said.

Alexander Farms update

Construction at the Alexander Farms project has become highly visible, with the first of 142 senior living units at The Manor expected to be occupied by the end of summer 2027.

Preleasing is expected to begin this summer, with occupancy expected in mid-2027, a company official said.

The timing of development for the nearby retail section remains less certain, though River Rock said interest

has increased.

Dan Hughes, co-founder of River Rock Capital Partners, said interest in the retail units "has been strong, and we are actively working with prospective tenants."

"While we cannot yet announce specific retailers or medical tenants, we look forward to sharing more information as agreements are finalized," he said.

Late last month, River Rock submitted renderings for a new medical building that would be constructed as part of the commercial development proposal previously approved by the town.

Renderings submitted to the town's Architecture Review Board show a three-story medical building near the development's main entrance on Westmoreland Road.

As River Rock moves forward with developing the site, it must submit detailed construction and architectural plans to ensure the project complies with the land development code and the terms of the approved rezoning, Burhans said.

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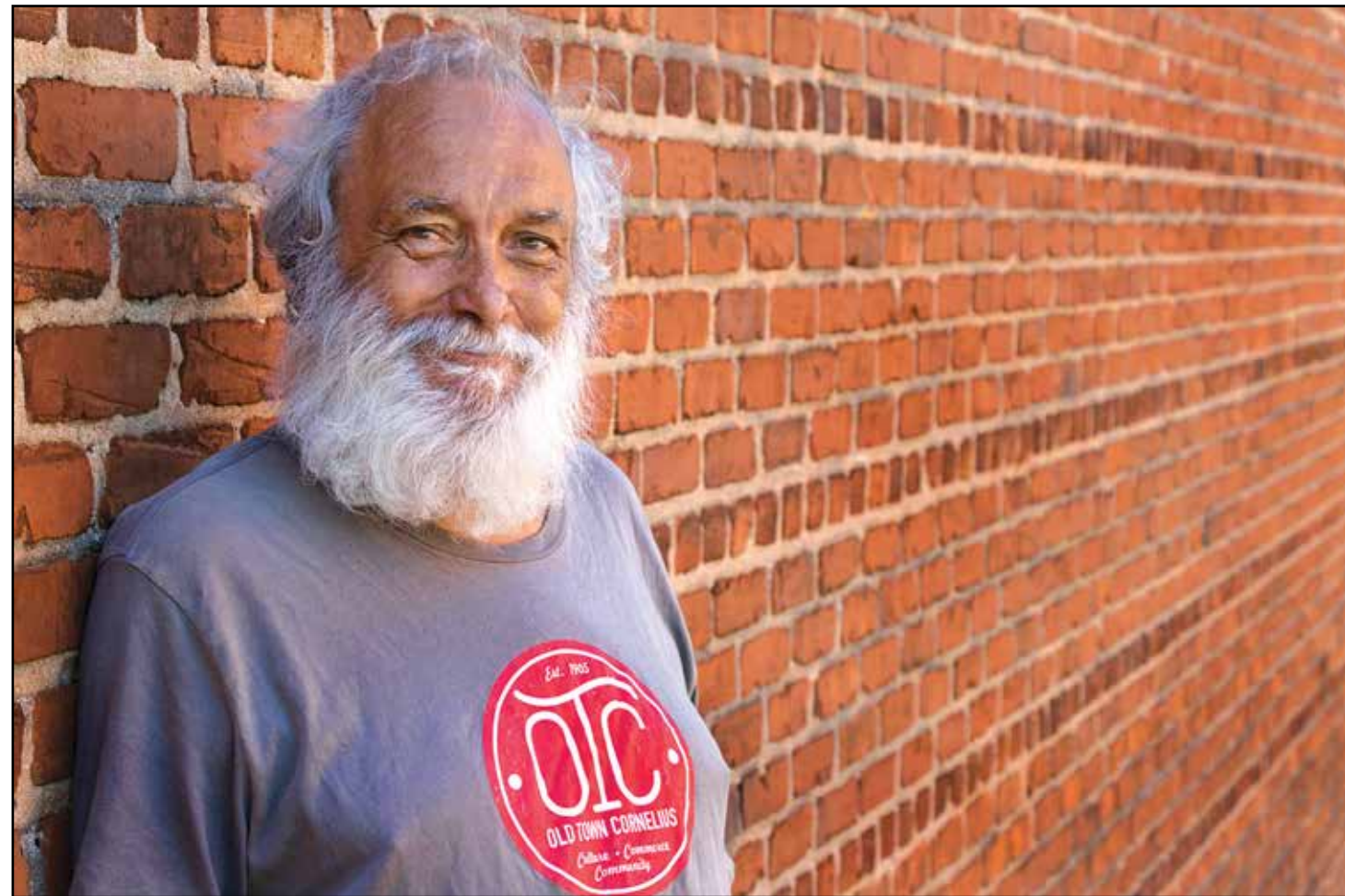
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Deborah Young photo

KIND EYES

— A tribute to Jack —

BY JON SHOW

Jack Conard Jr., whose collections helped preserve Cornelius history for generations, died June 2. He was 78.

Jack was widely known for documenting the town's past through an extensive collection of photographs and artifacts. His work chronicled Cornelius before the creation of Lake Norman and the rapid growth that transformed the community.

The people who knew Jack best often joked his photos were holding up the walls in his home on Main Street. The vastness of his collection is unfathomable: binders upon binders of photographs and notes. The walls of his home are papered with memories, mementos and more.

They are the remnants of a life well lived. The memories left behind by a truly kind soul who found

human connection through his collection of history.

In one binder there is a note dated Jan. 30, 1992. Jack recounted a meeting with a friend and their discussion of town history.

"If someone doesn't start writing this stuff down, it will be lost after the older generation, who lived in the early days, is gone. That someone might as well be me."

The journal entry contains a postscript at the bottom: "The past lives today in the fond memories of those who were there."

In that moment, at the age of 44, a free-spirited Jack found his passion and his purpose in life - preserving the history of the town that he cared so deeply about.

Read more about Jack's life online:
corneliustoday.com/jack-conard



In his final days, Jack's friend and Cornelius resident Paula Wolfe sat at his bedside and asked him some questions as he reflected on a full life.

What are you most proud of?
That I stayed with one thing for a long time. Journaling since 1976 and saving a little of Cornelius history.

What are your happiest, most meaningful memories?
Having my goddaughter Kelly and my relationship with my family.

What are some of the lessons that life taught you?
To never say never.

What advice would you pass along?
To never give advice.

Is there anything that you would like to let go, or make peace with?
No. I would do it all the same way all over again.

What do you hope that people take from your life story?
My memories and stories of the town before the lake and power plant. When it was just the cotton mill and general stores.

By some estimates, Jack amassed hundreds of thousands of photographs over the years. Many depict the history of the town, much of it documenting what has been lost over time. A few even show what Jack was having for lunch on a given day. The images on these pages represent a minuscule sampling of photos he presumably took with his own camera.

Summer Sports

Play a little “Summer Catch”

BY RYAN MOXON

What do you get when you combine the '90s cult classic baseball movie "Summer Catch" with a game-day atmosphere that's more about what's happening outside the lines than inside them?

Welcome to Hippos baseball. The Lake Norman HarborHippos debuted in 2025 as a team in the Old North State League, a summer wood-en-bat league in North Carolina featuring college players from programs across the country. Games are played at Huntersville Athletic Park, branded by the team as "The Harbor."

Similar to minor league baseball, games are built around a rotating slate of theme nights designed to attract families, kids and casual fans. Each game features entertainment, mascot appearances, giveaways and contests.

Game experience

On a warm night in June, the home team's starting lineup ran onto the field with members of a Lake Norman



Lake Norman HarborHippos
Photo by Max Gallagher

Little League all-star team, followed by the national anthem and a well-timed American Airlines jet that provided a free, impromptu flyover.

After the first batter reached first base

and stole second, the announcer informed everyone that they got to "steal a shirt" from a team sponsor.

Later, after a swing sent a foul ball down the left-field line, the announcer reminded fans that kids who return foul balls receive a coupon to a local batting cage.

The mascot, Normie the Hippo, has become the face of the franchise, appearing throughout games for photo opportunities, skits and crowd-participation moments aimed squarely at younger fans. The team will celebrate Normie's birthday during its final regular-season home game July 18.

Building a team

Team owners Mike and Kris Viruso, Huntersville residents, combined Mike's business experience with Kris' role in community engagement, branding and operations to build the team's identity and local presence.

That branding leans heavily into a family-friendly identity, with a game-day atmosphere closer to minor league

entertainment than traditional summer collegiate baseball.

Tickets are affordable and concessions follow a classic ballpark model. Beer and wine are available in designated areas during evening games.

You might even see Kris working the grill on occasion.

"I do so many things," she said. "Last year, to get the park ready, I was cleaning and painting the bathrooms and concessions."

Near and far

The roster includes players primarily from the Carolinas, but it spans 12 states and two countries. HarborHippos pitcher Cullen Barbee of Cornelius attended Langtree Charter, pitcher Ross Pearn of Davidson attended Hough High School, and several other players attended nearby high schools.

HarborHippos players live in the Lake Norman area during the summer, often with host families, and compete in a schedule designed to mirror a condensed professional-style season before returning to their college programs in the fall.

In it to win it

On the field, the HarborHippos' inaugural season established them as a competitive expansion club. The team advanced to the second round of the playoffs last summer.

While wins and losses matter, the HarborHippos' early identity has been defined as much by atmosphere as by results. Their launch reflects a broader shift in collegiate summer baseball toward entertainment-first experiences.

You'll see the players throughout the community all summer, interacting with the team's six nonprofit partners, which are also active on game days.

"We want to create something that's affordable, welcoming and fun for everyone," Mike Viruso said. "But we're also developing young men to be part of a community."

For families looking for an inexpensive night out close to home, the combination of baseball, entertainment and themed programming has quickly become a fixture on the summer calendar.

As the franchise looks to the future, the focus is on expanding that footprint — building attendance, deepening community ties and keeping The Harbor a consistent destination for summer nights.

"We work hard to make this something that even a person who isn't a baseball fan wants to attend," he said. "We have a cool vibe, and it's a lot of fun."



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— Lori Schneider, M.D.



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Downtown Master Plan Nears Vote

The latest revision of Cornelius' Downtown Master Plan was presented to the Town Board last month, with a vote tentatively scheduled for July 20.

Town officials said recent changes address concerns about unclear graphics and narrative language while adding recommendations for tree preservation, protection of existing architecture and traffic management.

Eight residents spoke during the public hearing. One expressed support, while others raised concerns about traffic, eminent domain, taxes and the plan's conceptual nature.

Mayor Denis Bilodeau said the board would carefully consider public feedback before taking action. The master plan was unveiled last fall following an 18-month planning process but faced opposition over issues including traffic flow, road extensions, property acquisition and the proposed relocation of the

police station.

Town officials later paused the approval process and held additional listening sessions before releasing revised versions.

Higgins Returns to Board

Former Commissioner Scott Higgins was unanimously appointed to fill the vacancy created by Commissioner Todd Sansbury's resignation.

Higgins was the top vote-getter in the 2023 election and served as mayor pro tem during his single term. Although he did not seek re-election, he remained active in town affairs and has served on several advisory boards and committees.

The board also recognized Sansbury's nearly five years of service before his departure for a job-related move to Georgia.

History Museum Hosts Open House

The Cornelius History Museum hosted a public open house last month at the historic Ag Building, which will be renovated as the museum's future home.

Visitors had an opportunity to learn about potential exhibits and share

stories and artifacts related to the town's history.

The former school building, constructed in the 1930s, received historic designation from the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Historic Landmarks Commission. The nonprofit museum organization acquired the property in 2024 and received a \$500,000 state grant to support renovations.

Museum leaders expect the facility to open in 2027 following an additional capital campaign.

Popular Multiuse Path Closed

The multiuse path connecting McDowell Creek Greenway and neighborhoods along Westmoreland Road to West Catawba Avenue is closed because of ongoing road construction.

The closure extends from West Catawba Avenue to the main entrance of Alexander Chase. NCDOT officials said the path is expected to reopen once the new roundabout is completed, currently projected around Thanksgiving.

Pedestrians are being routed through Alexander Chase and existing neighborhood pathways while construction continues.

Sunset Cove Proposal Withdrawn

Cornelius businessman and resident Larry Griffin has withdrawn plans for the proposed Sunset Cove event venue.

The project had been scheduled for a public hearing after receiving a recommendation of denial from town planners. Griffin said the development team intends to revise the proposal and submit a new application that better addresses neighborhood concerns while preserving the property's long-term vision.

Town planners and some nearby residents argued the original proposal was inconsistent with the town's land-use plan.

Sheetz Eyes Cornelius Site

Sheetz is exploring construction of a 24-hour gas station and convenience store at the intersection of Westmoreland and Statesville roads.

The proposed 2.6-acre development includes a 6,132-square-foot store and 12 gas pumps. Because the property is located on a corner lot, the project would require conditional rezoning because the gas pumps would be visible from the road.

During an initial review, the town's Pre-Development Review Committee raised concerns about traffic, tree loss, lighting, noise and impacts on nearby neighborhoods. No action was taken, and any formal proposal would require approval through the town's rezoning process.

Tax Increase Approved

The Town Board approved the fiscal year 2027 budget by a 3-2 vote, including a 2-cent increase in the town property tax rate effective July 1.

For a home assessed at \$500,000, the increase will add about \$100 annually to the town portion of the tax bill.

Town officials said the additional revenue will help address compensation gaps for police officers, firefighters and telecommunicators while supporting debt service related to voter-approved park bonds.

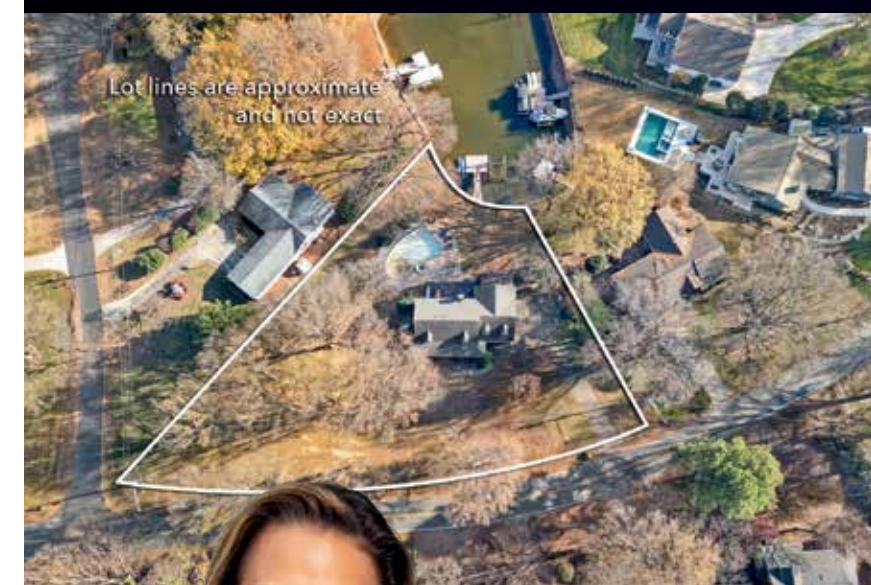
The last tax hike in Cornelius was fiscal year 2024, when it was raised by 1 cent.

By comparison, tax rates in neighboring towns are 22.75 cents in Huntersville and 26.6 cents in Davidson. Two years ago, Huntersville raised its property tax rate by 5.15 cents, from 17.6 cents to 22.75 cents.



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5/26/26, \$799,900, 19810 Schooner Dr, 4BR/2.5BA, Rockridge Shores, 2,504 sq ft, built 1984

5/27/26, \$585,000, 17207 Shadow Bark Dr, 4BR/2.5BA, Stratford Forest, 2,264 sq ft, built 1996

5/27/26, \$740,000, 18003 Northport Dr, 4BR/2.5BA, Jetton Cove, 2,214 sq ft, built 2013

5/28/26, \$595,000, 18679 Vineyard Point Ln, 3BR/2BA, Vineyard Point, 1,217 sq ft, built 1993

5/28/26, \$670,000, 8920 Lake Pines Dr, 4BR/3.5BA, Westmoreland, 2,835 sq ft, built 2011

5/28/26, \$1,175,000, 18525 Vineyard Point Ln, 3BR/3BA, Vineyard Point, 1,886 sq ft, built 1985



\$2,200,000 | 18805 Windy Point Drive, Cornelius

5/28/26, \$589,000, 11528 Dublin Crescent Rd, 3BR/2BA, Baileys Glen, 1,946 sq ft, built 2017

5/28/26, \$330,000, 8665 Edinburgh Square Dr, 3BR/2BA, Edinburgh Square, 1,581 sq ft, built 2007

5/29/26, \$355,000, 9639 Bailey Rd, 3BR/3.5BA, Oakhurst, 1,860 sq ft, built 2000

5/29/26, \$300,000, 10622 Trolley Run Dr, 3BR/2.5BA, Caldwell Station, 1,431 sq ft, built 2007

5/29/26, \$760,000, 21600 Rio Oro Dr #45, 3BR/3BA, Bahia Bay, 2,882 sq ft, built 1977

5/29/26, \$640,000, 18631 Harborside Dr, 3BR/2BA, Harborside, 1,417 sq ft, built 1998

5/29/26, \$315,000, 17610 Delmas Dr, 3BR/2.5BA, Oakhurst, 1,505 sq ft, built 1999

6/1/26, \$1,800,000, 21209 Olde Quarry Ln, 4BR/4.5BA, Shadowcreek, 4,156 sq ft, built 2015

6/1/26, \$849,000, 18812 Avery Park Dr, 4BR/3.5BA, Avery Park, 3,635 sq ft, built 2016

6/1/26, \$535,000, 19334 Beaufain St, 3BR/2.5BA, St Philip Square, 2,033 sq ft, built 1999

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| 6/1/26, \$1,050,000, 20407 Harbor-gate Ct #408, 3BR/2BA, Harborgate, 1,904 sq ft, built 1985 | 6/2/26, \$379,900, 9248 Ducati Ln, 3BR/2.5BA, Heritage Green, 1,344 sq ft, built 2003 | 6/3/26, \$425,000, 21329 Catawba Ave, 1BR/2BA, Cornelius, 1,488 sq ft, built 2000 | 6/4/26, \$380,000, 19311 Courtney Jae Ln, 3BR/2.5BA, Heritage Green, 1,491 sq ft, built 2007 |
| 6/1/26, \$265,000, 16608 Amberside Rd E, 2BR/2BA, Alexander Chase, 1,431 sq ft, built 2007 | 6/3/26, \$580,000, 18721 The Commons Blvd, 4BR/2BA, Westmoreland, 2,496 sq ft, built 2004 | 6/3/26, \$575,000, 7916 Village Harbor Dr, 4BR/3.5BA, Harborside Townhomes, 2,340 sq ft, built 1999 | 6/4/26, \$585,000, 17115 Graves Ct, 4BR/2.5BA, Bordeaux, 2,187 sq ft, built 1992 |
| 6/2/26, \$391,000, 9224 Ducati Ln, 3BR/2.5BA, Heritage Green, 1,751 sq ft, built 2003 | 6/3/26, \$579,000, 8022 Houser St, 3BR/2.5BA, The Retreat at West Catawba, 2,373 sq ft, built 2023 | 6/3/26, \$425,000, 18225 Taffrail Way, 3BR/2.5BA, Villages at Harborside, 1,377 sq ft, built 1999 | 6/5/26, \$407,000, 20353 Harroway Dr, 3BR/2.5BA, Harrogate at the Lake, 2,105 sq ft, built 2006 |

6/5/26, \$845,000, 20200 Floral Ln, 4BR/3BA, Twinbrook, 2,861 sq ft, built 1979

6/5/26, \$730,000, 21277 Summerbrook Dr, 4BR/3BA, Town Heights, 2,635 sq ft, built 2012

6/5/26, \$755,000, 20110 Coachmans Wood Ln, 5BR/3BA, Weatherstone Manor, 3,028 sq ft, built 2003

6/5/26, \$275,000, 19705 S Ferry St, 2BR/2BA, Cornelius, 982 sq ft, built 1916

6/8/26, \$475,000, 7613 Mariner Cove Dr, 2BR/2.5BA, Mariner Villas, 1,788 sq ft, built 1980

6/8/26, \$550,000, 7844 Village Harbor Dr, 3BR/2BA, Villages at Harborside, 1,309 sq ft, built 1999

6/8/26, \$2,200,000, 18805 Windy Point Dr, 5BR/6.5BA, The Peninsula, 6,496 sq ft, built 2006

6/8/26, \$650,000, 18563 Vineyard Point Ln, 3BR/2BA, Vineyard Point, 1,252 sq ft, built 1991

6/8/26, \$620,000, 19302 Ruffner Dr, 4BR/2.5BA, Oakhurst, 2,617 sq ft, built 2000

6/8/26, \$499,500, 11607 Meeting-house Dr, 3BR/2BA, Baileys Glen, 1,493 sq ft, built 2019

6/9/26, \$420,000, 22314 Market St, 3BR/2.5BA, Antiquity, 1,430 sq ft, built 2014



4387334 Bespoke brick craftsmanship and timeless elegance define this stunning custom residence tucked away in the desirable Woodleaf neighborhood. Towering windows flood the grand interior with spectacular natural light, illuminating an expansive floor plan. Outside, the deep landscaped lawn offers the ultimate canvas. **\$1,049,000**



4389381 Live the ultimate waterfront dream in a peaceful setting complete with your own private shoreline deck and deeded boat slip. The stunning veranda overlooks cove waters, offering an idyllic backdrop for morning coffee or twilight cocktails. Inside, soaring vaulted ceilings and premium quartz finishes create a sophisticated sanctuary for lake enthusiasts. **\$969,000**



4393866 Escape to a private oasis featuring a natural gunite pool, a stone spa, and a lush orchard of mature fruit trees. The interior boasts an accessible main-level guest suite and a clever hidden bonus room tucked inside the primary retreat. This modern estate pairs automated solar power and a Tesla battery backup with a jaw-dropping backyard sanctuary. **\$875,000**



4387757 Situated on 1.5 acres of land, this custom home has room to work, grow and play! Culinary enthusiasts will appreciate the high-end kitchen fully integrated with professional-grade Wolf and Subzero appliances. The expansive property accommodates all your hobbies and toys in the multiple garages with workshop space. **\$700,000**



4382368 Experience sophisticated, maintenance-free living in this premium 2023 end-unit townhome positioned just steps from vibrant downtown Davidson. Sunlight pours through extra windows to highlight gleaming hardwood floors and a massive ten-foot culinary island. Step through sliding glass doors to relax on a covered terrace showcasing serene, elevated treetop vistas. **\$625,000**



4385504 Secure a masterfully built new construction residence situated on a deeply wooded lot for unmatched tranquility. Scheduled for completion in mid-2026, the bright layout showcases exceptional woodwork, granite counters, and sun-drenched living spaces. An adaptable multi-purpose room provides the perfect additional footprint for a quiet remote workspace or visiting guests! **\$585,000**



4388004 This immaculate ranch delivers effortless one-level living featuring fresh neutral paint and brand-new flooring throughout. A dramatic floor-to-ceiling stone fireplace serves as the breathtaking focal point of the spacious, light-filled central great room. Buyers will benefit from a highly desirable split-bedroom floor plan located less than thirty minutes from the international airport. **\$489,700**



4392478 Striking curb appeal welcomes you to this pristine corner-lot residence highlighted by a charming, stone-accented rocking-chair front porch. The professionally landscaped backyard serves as an outdoor entertainment hub boasting custom hardscaping and an integrated stone fire pit. Residents also enjoy premier neighborhood perks including a resort-style swimming pool. **\$478,000**



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6/9/26, \$750,000, 18322 Glenealy Dr, 3BR/2BA, Baileys Glen, 2,320 sq ft, built 2014	6/11/26, \$480,000, 9715 Cadman Ct, 4BR/2.5BA, Oakhurst, 2,533 sq ft, built 2002	6/11/26, \$3,350,000, 17429 Staysail Ct, 7BR/7.5BA, The Peninsula, 10,458 sq ft, built 1996	6/18/26, \$377,500, 18310 Taffrail Way, 3BR/2.5BA, Villages at Harborside, 1,477 sq ft, built 1999
6/10/26, \$520,000, 20314 Colony Point Ln, 3BR/2BA, McKenzie Place, 2,008 sq ft, built 2000	6/11/26, \$1,300,000, 18526 Doves Crest Rd, 4BR/3.5BA, Beverly, 3,864 sq ft, built 2021	6/15/26, \$1,575,000, 18509 Doves Crest Rd, 5BR/4.5BA, Beverly, 4,580 sq ft, built 2020	6/18/26, \$755,100, 19914 Scanmar Ln, 5BR/2.5BA, Blue Stone Harbor, 3,035 sq ft, built 1995
6/11/26, \$2,050,000, 18703 Head Sail Ct, 4BR/3.5BA, The Peninsula, 4,088 sq ft, built 1995	6/11/26, \$565,000, 19149 Celestine Ln, 4BR/3.5BA, Heritage Green, 2,581 sq ft, built 2007	6/15/26, \$2,725,000, 21217 Island Forest Dr, 4BR/3.5BA, Island Forest, 3,740 sq ft, built 1996	6/18/26, \$4,400,000, 18103 Harbor Light Blvd, 5BR/7BA, The Peninsula, 7,360 sq ft, built 1997

6/16/26, \$1,250,000, 9141 Robbins Preserve Rd, 4BR/3BA, Robbins Park, 3,074 sq ft, built 2014	6/18/26, \$375,000, 19417 Center St, 3BR/2BA, Cornelius, 1,421 sq ft, built 1968
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Davidson
 5/26/26, \$870,000, 541 Griffith Village Ln, 3BR/3.5BA, The Villages of South Main, 2,840 sq ft, built 2019

6/16/26, \$1,620,000, 18326 Bowsprit Pointe Rd, 5BR/4.5BA, The Peninsula, 5,544 sq ft, built 1998

5/27/26, \$1,789,533, 110 Willow View Loop, 4BR/4.5BA, Davidson Retreat, 4,481 sq ft, built 2026

6/16/26, \$2,775,000, 22026 Satilla Dr, 7BR/5.5BA, Heron Harbor, 7,490 sq ft, built 1999

5/28/26, \$779,000, 2936 Haley Cir, 5BR/4BA, Summers Walk, 3,836 sq ft, built 2021

5/28/26, \$580,000, 13429 Pierre Reverdy Dr, 4BR/2.5BA, Bradford, 3,223 sq ft, built 2013

5/28/26, \$481,000, 10368 Turnplow Dr, 3BR/2BA, Frazier Acres, 2,016 sq ft, built 1994

5/28/26, \$800,000, 11443 Mooresville Rd, 3BR/2BA, Davidson, 1,765 sq ft, built 1989

5/28/26, \$458,000, 3556 Catherine Creek Pl, 4BR/2.5BA, The Farm at Riverview, 2,956 sq ft, built 2012










6/1/26, \$875,000, 735 Emma Claire Ln, 4BR/2.5BA, Carnegie Mews, 2,336 sq ft, built 2016

6/3/26, \$720,000, 303 South St, 3BR/2BA, Davidson, 1,877 sq ft, built 1926

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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.

THURSDAY, JULY 2

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

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

★ **Boatyard LKN** | 8 p.m. — 20 Ride (Zac Brown tribute) — Paid

FRIDAY, JULY 3

Rudder & Rose | 5 p.m. — Rod Fiske (Pop) — Free

Lost Worlds Brewing | 6 p.m. — Old Skool (Rock) — Free

Harp and Crown | 7–10 p.m. — Nickel City Duo (Acoustic) — Free

Royal Bliss | 7–10 p.m. — Real Legendary Music (Rock) — Free

Torrence & Knox | 7–10 p.m. — John Tice (Acoustic) — Free

★ **Boatyard LKN** | 8 p.m. — Brightside ('90s rock) — Paid

SATURDAY, JULY 4

Primal Brewery | 5 p.m. — Chris McGinnis (Singer Songwriter) — Free

★ **Boatyard LKN** | 8 p.m. — Blue Monday ('80s and '90s rock) — Paid

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

SUNDAY, JULY 5

Harp and Crown | 7–10 p.m. — Billy Jones Trio (Soft Rock) — Free

WEDNESDAY, JULY 8

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

Harp and Crown | 7–10 p.m. — John Sullivan (Acoustic) — Free

FRIDAY, JULY 10

Rudder & Rose | 5 p.m. — Scott Johnson (Pop) — Free

760 Craft Works | 6:30 p.m. — Gregg Griffin (Rock/Blues) — Free

Lost Worlds Brewing | 7:30 p.m. — Kruger Brothers (Bluegrass) — Paid

★ **Boatyard LKN** | 8 p.m. — SoulShine (Allman Brothers tribute) — Paid

SATURDAY, JULY 11

Rudder & Rose | 6 p.m. — Ebb & Flow DJ Music Festival (House) — Free

Royal Bliss | 7–10 p.m. — Scott Johnson Band (Classic Rock) — Free



Saturday, July 25 | Cowboy Mouth

The New Orleans-born band uses a blend of rock, blues, punk, funk, country, pop, soul and whatever else feels good to create their unique sound. Boatyard LKN, 8 p.m.

Torrence & Knox | 7–10 p.m. — Tony Naples Band (Acoustic) — Free

Cain Center for the Arts | 7:30 p.m. — Magic of Motown ('50s and '60s) — Paid

★ **Boatyard LKN** | 8 p.m. — The Reflex with New Sensation (Duran Duran / INXS tribute) — Paid

SUNDAY, JULY 12

Cain Center for the Arts | 6 p.m. — Comedy Bingo (Comedy) — Paid

WEDNESDAY, JULY 15

Harp and Crown | 7–10 p.m. — My Better Half (Acoustic) — Free

THURSDAY, JULY 16

760 Craft Works | 7 p.m. — Lukas Delgra (Acoustic) — Free

FRIDAY, JULY 17

Rudder & Rose | 5 p.m. — Scott Johnson (Pop) — Free

Lost Worlds Brewing | 6 p.m. — Jennifer Alvaredo (Country) — Free

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

★ **Boatyard LKN** | 8 p.m. — 24K Magic (Bruno Mars tribute) — Paid

Rudder & Rose | 9 p.m. — Confetti Cannon (Pop) — Free

SATURDAY, JULY 18

Harp and Crown | 7–10 p.m. — John Sullivan (Acoustic) — Free

Royal Bliss | 7–10 p.m. — Off The Record (80's Tribute) — Free

Torrence & Knox | 7–10 p.m. — Isaac & Adele (Acoustic) — Free

Cain Center for the Arts | 7:30 p.m. — Group Chat Girlies (Comedy) — Paid

★ **Boatyard LKN** | 8 p.m. — On the Border (Eagles tribute) — Paid

WEDNESDAY, JULY 22

Peninsula Prime | 6 p.m. — Justin Mintun (Acoustic) — Free

THURSDAY, JULY 23

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

FRIDAY, JULY 24

Rudder & Rose | 5 p.m. — Eddie Kennedy (Pop) — Free

Lost Worlds Brewing | 6 p.m. — Ryan Mullaney (Country/Indie/Pop) — Free

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

Torrence & Knox | 7–10 p.m. — Fred Heinz (Acoustic) — Free

★ **Boatyard LKN** | 8 p.m. — Mamma Mania (Abba tribute) — Paid

SATURDAY, JULY 25

760 Craft Works | 6:30 p.m. — Erin Maynor (Acoustic) — Free

Harp and Crown | 7–10 p.m. — Britney Lee (Country) — Free

★ **Boatyard LKN** | 8 p.m. — Cowboy Mouth (Rock) — Paid

Rudder & Rose | 10 p.m. — Palmetto Drive (Country) — Free

SUNDAY, JULY 26

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

Rudder & Rose | 6 p.m. — String Theory (Pop) — Free

WEDNESDAY, JULY 29

Harp and Crown | 7–10 p.m. — Lisa Denova (Acoustic) — Free

THURSDAY, JULY 30

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

FRIDAY, JULY 31

Lost Worlds Brewing | 6 p.m. — Matt Stratford (Soul/Classic Rock) — Free

Harp and Crown | 6–9 p.m. — Port City Posse (Rock) — Free

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

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

Torrence & Knox | 7–10 p.m. — John Sullivan (Acoustic) — Free

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

★ **Boatyard LKN** | 8 p.m. — Zoso (Led Zeppelin tribute) — Paid

Rudder & Rose | 9 p.m. — Bailey Marie Griggs (Country) — Free

Parks & Rec

Cornelius Parks & Rec Outperforms Peers

The Cornelius Parks & Recreation Department is delivering results that far exceed national benchmarks — spending less per resident, recovering a greater share of operating costs and drawing dramatically higher park attendance while mobilizing volunteers at more than twice the national rate, according to the 2026 National Recreation and Park Association Agency Performance Review.

The report, presented to the Parks & Recreation Commission in June, compares the town's department against thousands of agencies across the United States using data submitted through NRPA's Park Metrics system.

Money talks

On the financial side, Cornelius spent \$88.65 per capita on parks and recreation operations, well below the national median of \$111.73. The department also recovered 34.2 percent of its operating costs through program fees and direct revenues — outpacing the national median of 26 percent.

The department's capital budget also

tells an ambitious story with the new \$20 million bond package approved by voters that begins implementation this year.

Cornelius reported a five-year capital plan of more than \$40.9 million, more than double the national median of \$15 million. Notably, 97 percent of improvement dollars are directed toward new development rather than renovation, compared to the national norm of 37 percent.

The Parks Bond Referendum, approved by 60 percent of voters, targets priorities identified in the town's 2024 Comprehensive Parks and Greenways Master Plan, including parkland acquisition, major park development and improvements, a new recreation center, and strategic greenway connections.

Services offered

Cornelius currently provides 13.6 acres of parkland per 1,000 residents, surpassing the national median of 10.0 acres. The department's 2024 Master Plan sets a goal of 18.0 acres per 1,000 residents — a target that surpasses the

upper quartile benchmark of 17.4 acres.

Parkland acquisition is among the stated priorities of the 2024 bond, positioning the town to make progress toward its goal in the years ahead. The department's facilities punch well above their weight in racquet sports. Cornelius offers 62 percent more dedicated outdoor tennis courts and 69 percent more dedicated outdoor pickleball courts per capita than the national median.

The town also provides significantly more diamond fields and rectangular fields relative to its population than most comparable agencies.

Perhaps the most striking numbers involve community engagement. Total facilities and parks contacts — a measure of how many times residents use parks and programs — came in 455 percent above the national median. Volunteer hours logged were 124 percent above the median, reflecting a strong culture of civic participation.

The strong performance is also notable due to staffing levels. The department employs six full-time equivalents

per 10,000 residents, 34 percent below the national median of 9.2 full-time equivalents.

Look to the future

The department operates under the town's broader vision of Cornelius as a vibrant community on Lake Norman, and a stated goal in the town's overall master plan that Cornelius is "dedicated to promoting the highest quality of life for all residents."

"As Cornelius continues to grow, demand for parks, recreation programs, and outdoor spaces grows right along with it," said Carla Eustache, chair of the parks board of commissioners.

"The parks bond gives us the ability to bridge the gap between today's needs and tomorrow's growth, ensuring our parks system continues to support the highest quality of life our residents expect."



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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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Surf Wake Ski / Contributed photo

New Watersports School Brings Life Lessons to the Lake

BY JON SHOW

A new watersports instruction company is making a splash on Lake Norman, offering residents across the region an opportunity to learn wake surfing, water skiing and wakeboarding — and, in some cases, experience the water for the first time. Surf Wake Ski, founded by friends Tim Hyde and Audrey Pannell, operates out of Holiday Marina near Hello, Sailor with a mission centered on community building and accessible watersports education. The company launched this spring and hopes to fill the void left by the closing of IcyWakes, a local shop that offered instruction and summer camps for children. The school offers four main experiences: private lessons, summer camps for children, evening events and boat-driving lessons. The founders say what sets them apart from other providers is both their range of offerings and their philosophy. "We're the only ones that offer skiing lessons," Pannell said. "A lot of people are like, 'Oh, let's just surf,' and it's hard to find ski lessons. I feel very passionate about it. I've taught a lot of kids to ski, and I feel like it's a really good skill that is dying a little bit." The pair brings nearly a decade of combined experience from Camp Aquatic, a watersports summer camp where they spent years teaching chil-

dren from across the country and around the world. Hyde said it is most gratifying to take someone with no experience and teach them something they will remember forever. "My greatest joy is when a kid gets up for the first time and you see their face because it just lights up," Hyde said. "It's just something they're never going to forget." Pannell echoed that sentiment, recalling a 6-year-old girl she taught to ski years ago. "Her legs were like the size of my pinky," she said. "I can still remember, like it was yesterday, holding her legs straight, being in the water with her, just getting her right so she could pop up on skis." The instructors emphasize patience and attitude over technique, drawing on values instilled during their camp years. They stress gratitude for being on the lake, maintaining a positive attitude and having the courage to try something new. "We're very patient, and I think a lot of people get frustrated," Pannell said. "Being pulled behind a boat, for a lot of people, is scary. Some people are afraid to get in the water. If we need to, we'll get in the water with people and get picked up later when they get up."

Continued on PAGE 27

Tillis Returning to Cornelius, Reflects on Washington

BY JON SHOW

As his political career winds down, U.S. Sen. Thom Tillis, R-N.C., says he plans to spend more time close to home, but don't expect him to disappear from public life entirely. Speaking to a gathering of the Lake Norman Chamber of Commerce, the longtime Cornelius resident reflected on the community that launched his political career and the challenges facing both Cornelius and North Carolina as growth continues across the region.



Tarte

Introduced by former state Sen. Jeff Tarte, a long-time friend whose career followed a similar path, Tillis spent some of the discussion talking about the local issues that first drew him into public service. The two men first met decades ago while coaching youth baseball in Cornelius. Later, both served on local boards, held elected office and eventually rose to leadership positions in Raleigh. Tillis credited his service on the Cornelius Parks and Recreation Board as the unexpected starting point of his political career. "It seemed like, hey, who's against parks and recreation?" Tillis said. "Then you start solving problems, and the next thing you know, you've spent 20 years in elected office."

Continued from PAGE 26

Private lessons are available for all ages starting at \$195 per hour and can be customized by length. Summer camps run Monday through Thursday in three-hour sessions — morning, midday and afternoon — giving children a four-day progression for \$525 per week. "Over four days, they go from not being able to surf to maybe dropping the rope, or learning all three activities, and they have some new friends," Pannell said.



U.S. Sen. Thom Tillis / Jason Benavides photo

Asked what role he might play after leaving the Senate, Tillis said he expects to remain engaged in public policy discussions but hopes to spend more time with family and return to the private sector. "I'll still be here," Tillis said. "What I'd really like to do is have my own little cocoon here that's very private, not talking about politics, and then go do business elsewhere." One area he expects to remain involved in is education, particularly K-12 performance and workforce development. He also plans to work with students through Davidson College's public policy programs. Much of the discussion focused on growth and development in North Car-

Beyond instruction, Surf Wake Ski has launched a series of evening events aimed at adults looking to connect on the water. For \$75, participants can join themed outings, including arts and crafts nights, wellness evenings, Bible studies and game nights. "There are a lot of people in the city who are working all day and they'd love to get on the boat this summer, but they don't know anybody," Pannell said. "Instead of doing it at a table or a coffee shop, you're on the water watching the sunset. It's just something fun and different — and a great way to meet

people." The company also operates a Sponsor a Kid initiative that funds watersports experiences for children who might not otherwise have access. For Hyde and Pannell, the boats, lessons and evening events are ultimately vehicles for something bigger. "We're geared around fun, building community and lake life," Hyde said. "Hopefully you meet somebody, we introduce you to somebody, you connect with somebody, and you just grow this community of people who love life on the water."

The challenge for elected officials, he said, is balancing public concerns with the community's future needs. "You've got to have elected leaders who will actually have some spine and make some tough decisions," he said. Looking ahead, Tillis said Cornelius and North Carolina must continue planning for growth rather than trying to stop it. "Everybody who wants North Carolina to stop growing wants it to start dying," he said. "If you're not growing, you're dying." Instead, he believes local and state leaders should focus on managing growth intelligently through infrastructure investments, transportation planning and economic development. The lighter moments came near the end of the event when he met with media and was asked about the colorful socks peeking out beneath his suit pants. The socks featured photos of his grandchildren. Tillis laughed that he spent most of his business career wearing only dark socks until his wife persuaded him to try more colorful options, including a pair featuring former President George H.W. Bush. "It was kind of a gateway sock," he joked. After nearly two decades in statewide and national office, Tillis appears ready for a different chapter. But if his remarks were any indication, Cornelius — and the issues that first drew him into public service — will continue to occupy much of his attention.



(l-r) Audrey Pannell and Tim Hyde

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Sound Off

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

K-9s Get Protective Vests

Best news I've heard all day!
— Pat Barba

Alexander Farms Taking Shape

Any word on the tenant home before it falls down?
— James Simpson

Editor's note: We always appreciate a nudge from our readers. See our story on PAGE 8.

History Museum Hosts Open House

I'm so looking forward for Cornelius to have a museum to tell all of its stories! The damming of the lake, Smithville, the formation of our town as a central hub for cotton, there's so much to share.
— Sara Radford Thomas

Higgins Back on Town Board

A good man.
— Jim Vogel

Thank you to all! My strength is derived from my dear friends and supporters!
— Scott Higgins, town commissioner

Sheetz Eyes Statesville Rd.

Do we really need another gas station across the road from a gas station, just down the road from two other gas stations?
— Cameron Gough

Beloved Cornelius Historian Dies

You made such impact in this world, Jack — you gave so much to us.
— Robin Lawler

Rest in peace Jack. Thank you for sharing your smile, your stories and your photos.
— Angie Gray Lambert

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Living The Rocky Horror Picture Show

BY JON SHOW

Watching a movie or a television show with the Mother of Dragons is an experience.

A bad one? Definitely not. A perfect one? It's not my place to say. Could it use a suggestion box? It wouldn't hurt. (warning, this is littered with spoilers)

Recently we were watching an episode of "Paradise," a post-apocalyptic show on Hulu. There is a nuclear fallout and people move to a massive cave city in Colorado.

The main character later escapes the cave to search for his wife, but crashes a plane during his escape and finds himself in a forest, where he pops his dislocated kneecap back into position.

At which point my wife yelled, "OW," and then shared this fact.

"You know I've had to do that before, right? I've dislocated my kneecap before."

I did not respond because it was, I'm guessing, the one millionth time she has shared it with me.

Later, the man was rescued by a group of orphans who survived the fallout and were living alone in the forest, at which point I was presented with a number of insights.

"Where are they getting water?"

"They must be so hungry."

"It's so sad they're all by themselves."

"I feel terrible that little girl can't talk."

Per usual I said nothing, and then five minutes later the girl who couldn't talk spoke aloud.

"Ohmygosh she CAN talk!"

At which point I responded as I often eventually do: "You're aware this is a television show and not a documentary, right?"

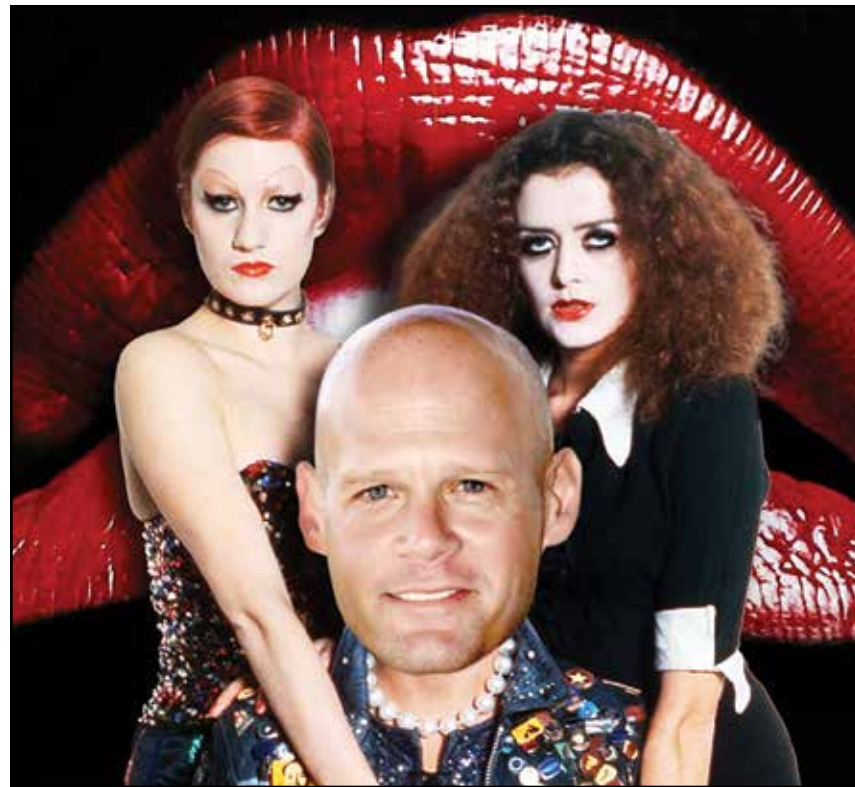
Feelings hurt

It's hard to explain the level of my wife's sympathy and empathy for television characters.

Dislocated kneecap: empathy. Her level of empathy is quite simply boundless. I believe she may actually feel phantom pain for television characters.

Children without clean water: sympathy. I believe if she could drive to a TV set somewhere in America and provide water to these fake orphaned children, she would do it.

Just in day-to-day life I would put her sympathy and empathy levels above the average person. We all feel bad when bad things happen to people but she's on another level.



With apologies to "The Rocky Horror Picture Show"

I'll admit it's an admirable trait. But why she feels either emotion while watching television is uncertain to me. It's TV. Fake. Nothing is even close to reality.

But this is my reality.

Suburban plight

More recently we began watching a new show on Apple TV, in which the guy from Dirty Jobs plays a rich dude who lives in Connecticut and breaks into his friends' houses.

He might just look like the Dirty Jobs guy. I don't pay a lot of attention while I'm watching shows.

At the end of season one, one of the main characters died in dubious fashion but not murder, surrounded by his friends, and the questions began.

"They have to call the police, right? I mean, why wouldn't you call the police? They didn't do anything!"

They did not take her advice, and later in the show they decided to dispose of the body. It did not go as planned, as the dead guy came back to life in the back of an SUV. The driver continued to drive as the undead guy wailed and fought with the others in the back of the vehicle.

"Why isn't he stopping the car? Just stop the car!"

The fight continued, almost as if they couldn't hear her pleas.

"Why isn't he stopping the car?"

The car crashed into a lake with all passengers inside.

"That wouldn't have happened if he stopped the car."

Is she correct? Yes. He should have stopped the car, but per usual, her questions were met with my silence.

Size matters

My wife comes from a large family. Eight brothers and sisters in total. It's so large that I can't tell you how many nieces and nephews I have. I don't even really have a ballpark number — maybe 22?

I attribute her television watching habits to being the product of such a large clan. I've watched movies with all of them before and it's like going to an interactive screening of The Rocky Horror Picture Show.

There are people wrestling in the living room. One person is telling a story that no one is listening to. Someone is on the phone. Someone else is reading recent news headlines aloud.

A door slams in the distance but no one seems to be unaccounted for.

I, on the other hand, come from a family of four. And if so much as a

peep came out of the nearby kitchen, or someone asked a question while my dad was watching television, we were given a glance that led to immediate silence.

That may be why I have no recorded memory of my mom ever watching television when I was a child.

Noise cancellation

I've tolerated noise from our children for years, only recently requesting their silence because it's been almost 18 years of interrupted TV time. I'm 50. I've driven kids to countless places, prepared who knows how many meals. I want to watch TV without background noise.

I have not attempted to silence the Mother of Dragons. We've been married for 21 years. She talks while watching TV and can't cook. I am, I've been told, a lot to deal with. It is what it is.

I've asked her multiple times why she considers watching television and movies to be an interactive experience, but I've never been provided a satisfactory answer. Her retort is usually along the lines of, "Why do you care?"

In response to her comment I've stated too many times to count, "Because it's a TV show. It's not real."

And we silently agree to disagree.

If you're aware of any television shows with plot lines that can't be questioned, or actors that always make the correct decision, please let me know. We just finished Friends and Neighbors and we're on the hunt for a new show.

Or maybe we'll rewatch Game of Thrones, the show that provided her namesake for this column.

I don't know how anyone could question the choices of a woman who raises dragons.

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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