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CHARLOTTESVILLE’S

MOROCCAN FOOD & ENTERTAINMENT
Curio, a magazine highlighting Harrisonburg and its surrounding communities, is published each spring by students in the Media Arts & Design program at James Madison University. Curio is a non-profit organization supported by the College of Arts and Letters and the School of Media Arts & Design. Subscriptions are not available.

Curious about Harrisonburg's Al Hamraa serves authentic Moroccan dishes to Valley residents.
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DEAR READERS,

For 35 years, Curio has sought to highlight the people, places and culture of the Shenandoah Valley. This year, we were inspired by the benevolent spirit of Valley residents. We captured the compassion of Valley volunteers, who gave local girls in Harrisonburg a place where they can share their ambitions, and others who helped at-risk women create their own jewelry business in Uganda.

We also bring you local people who, in unique ways, have built innovative and inspirational careers, such as the artist who overcame a disability and the radio host who has sparked a conversation in the Valley.

This issue also features James Madison University alumni: Christopher Boyer who has acted under the direction of Steven Spielberg; Jason McIntyre who turned an email thread into a USA Today sports blog; and Casey Templeton who developed his freelance business along with his photographs.

We want to thank our dynamic staff, whose hard work was invaluable, and Dr. David Wendelken, who offered guidance and support throughout the production process. We hope you enjoy this snapshot of our community and find new reasons to love the Valley.

Camille Corum Julia Cramer

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9.2% of Harrisonburg residents are foreign born. citydata.com

"Belly dancing" is truly an art form. It should be on the same level as ballet or modern.
JOY RAYMAN, BELLY DANCER

"Grey's Anatomy," "Criminal Minds," "L.A. Heat" and "Private Practice" are just some of the television shows JMU alumnus Christopher Boyer guest-starred in before portraying Robert E. Lee in "Lincoln."

"You're gems, and you're precious to us, and you should be precious to yourself.
CELESTE THOMAS, PRECIOUS GEMS ACADEMY CO-FOUNDER

Every 26 SECONDS a child is forced into the sex industry. In Gulu, Uganda, girls as young as 13 are selling their bodies.

1919 The State Normal and Industrial School for Women, now JMU, eliminated school uniforms.

"I think people who listen to WMRA ... do that because it ties them to their place.
MARTHA WOODROOF, HOST OF "THE SPARK"
Bruce Dellinger spends hours creating the intricate details and shading on each of his drawings, paying careful attention to the smallest lines that he must create by holding a pencil in his mouth.

A native of the Shenandoah Valley, Bruce Dellinger's drawings are inspired by his time spent in nature and his old-fashioned country lifestyle. Dellinger converted the second bedroom in his downtown apartment into a makeshift studio where he spends hundreds of hours working on his drawings. Teeth marks on Dellinger's pencils show the signs of wear and tear from his constant mouth drawing. Top right Dellinger shows off one of his drawings called "Ridge Runner," with his personal attendant, Emily Hottinger.
A fall left Bruce Dellinger without the use of his hands and legs, but with a little creativity he is now a professional artist.

Everything in Bruce Dellinger's house has been chewed up. There are bite marks on the telephone cord, gnawed strings hanging from each doorknob and every single pencil in Dellinger's downtown apartment has been chomped to the core.

Dellinger invites me into his cozy studio apartment, then slowly rolls himself into his art studio in his power chair. The room is dark and filled to the brim with books.

"There's an old baseball cap somewhere under that table," he says, pointing to a long table hidden under piles of papers against the back wall of the studio. "Could you hand it to me? I'm having a bad hair day."

With his small, bandaged hands, he carefully places the cap on his head, covering his messy ginger locks. He reaches for one of the chewed pencils; the jarring sound of the pencil sharpener breaks the quiet atmosphere in the room. Dellinger places the pencil in his mouth, clamping down with his teeth, and sets to work creating his latest work of art.

Timberville, Va. native and James Madison University alumnus Bruce Dellinger is a professional artist. For 25 years he has been creating beautifully intricate drawings using a pencil and his mouth.

"I primarily got started with the mouth drawings because of boredom and depression after I had an accident," he says.

On July 11, 1981, when he was just 14 years old, Dellinger was involved in a freak farming accident that changed his life forever. He was working with his family baling hay for a friend when he took a break and straightened out some of the bales lofted in their barn.

"When I straightened the third bale out I accidentally knocked over a yellow jacket nest," Dellinger says. "When that happened, 'fight or flight' kicked in."

Dellinger tripped and fell 25 feet from the barn loft onto the concrete floor, breaking his fifth and sixth vertebrae and forever losing the use of his...
"We're all just one step, fall or trip away from having a disability," he says.

After his accident, Dellinger was determined to find a way to lead a productive life. His aunt introduced him to art during his sophomore year of high school. It started as a hobby, but it became a passion and a way for him to contribute to his community.

Dellinger went through several artistic mediums before he discovered his talents with pencil drawings. "I started out with oil paintings, eventually oil paintings led to pastels, pastels led to charcoal, but then I got tired of having black lips, black nose, black eyebrows, and so I eventually settled on pencil," he says.

Dellinger’s drawings are inspired by nature and life in the Shenandoah Valley. Each piece represents a different aspect of folk culture, what Dellinger refers to as "country boy life."

Dellinger recalls the story that inspired his drawing of a wren. "I was hunting with my father one day. I came home and decided to draw a wren because I had seen him out in the woods foraging for food," he says.

Right now, Dellinger is working on another drawing inspired by hunting life. He slowly guides the pencil along the page, filling in the shadows on the leaves of a tree. Hidden in the tree is a hunter with a bow and arrow, ready to strike. However, Dellinger isn’t particularly happy with the way this drawing is turning out.

"It's not an uncommon thing for me to be almost finished with a drawing and decide to scrap it simply because I don't like it," he says.

Drawing by mouth is a slow process — each piece he creates can take anywhere from 40 to 180 hours to complete. For Dellinger, drawing is nearly as automatic breathing. It's become a habit that he finds both relaxing and therapeutic.

"When I'm drawing I try to think about how I can make this stand out more, or make this part look three-dimensional," he says. "Sometimes I'm humming along to music."

He says his ultimate goal is to make a drawing that looks so realistic that it jumps off the page, while evoking a strong emotional response.

"Art has to be peaceful or convey an emotion," he says. "One of the greatest things any artist can hear is when someone says they find your artwork emotionally pleasing."

Dellinger's drawings are highly sought after and he makes appearances at about 15 art shows each year. While prints of his drawings sell from $15 to $50, his original drawings have sold for as much as $2,000.

Dellinger has gained celebrity status in the art world both locally and internationally. Some buyers come from as far as Switzerland and Germany.

His most cherished and, coincidentally, his most popular drawing is one called "Old Bow Stand." The drawing depicts a buck and a doe standing under a bow stand — a platform bow hunters build in trees for hunting deer.

"Sure enough, the buck is under the stand that the hunter is not in. I think this piece is so popular because there's something almost spiritual about it, a deeper meaning," he says.

His modern downtown studio apartment, which he shares with his girlfriend, is decorated with an eclectic mix of taxidermy, deer antlers and his own drawings next to those of his favorite artist, inspiration and personal friend, Ken Schuler.

Schuler and Dellinger have been friends for a long time. They each list the
A frequent hunter, Bruce Dellinger has adapted to shoot a few different guns from his wheelchair. He uses a leather strap around his chest that holds his gun in place, which rests on a specialized mount on his wheelchair.

Along with a great sense of humor, Dellinger also has a generous spirit. He frequently uses his artistic talent to give back to his local community. Some of his artwork has helped raise money for nonprofit organizations.

"I belong to one, Virginia Wheelin’ Sportsmen. They help people with disabilities get out into the great outdoors," Dellinger says. He is set to become the next president of the organization.

With a confident smile on his face and a youthful glimmer in his eyes, Dellinger has no trouble making friends, and he is well known in the Harrisonburg community. He takes me outside to show off his "hot rod," a large blue moving van that has been customized to fit his specific needs. He smiles as he demonstrates the automatic power ramp that lowers from the van with the push of a button located on the armrest of his power chair, then with the push of another button lifts him into the van like an astronaut getting into a spaceship. The best part, he says, is his photo and website banner printed on the back of the truck.

"When I drive by everyone knows it’s me because my name is on the car," he says. “The next day I’ll see someone and they’ll say, 'Hey I saw you driving downtown the other day!'"

Even though Dellinger’s art spawned from tragedy and disability, it has become a positive reinforcement in his life. His drawings are his main source of income. "He’s a testament to human ingenuity," Schuler says. "Humans can overcome a lot of things. He’s living proof of that."

Now Dellinger has to overcome the business side of his artwork, gaining more influence and making more sales.

"There’s a lot more involved in art than just art. You have to be an entrepreneur and promoter as well," Dellinger says.

Dellinger is striving to make a name for himself in the art world. While he certainly has gained fame in the local community, he hopes one day to have his name associated with other well-known artists like P. Buckley Moss and Ken Schuler.

"The thing about most artists is they’re usually dead before they’re well-known," he says jokingly.

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**UPCOMING ART SHOWS**

**AUGUST 9-11, FRI 3 P.M.-SUN 5 P.M.**  
Virginia Outdoor Sportsmen Show, Richmond Speedway, Richmond, Va.

**SEPT. 14, 9 A.M.-3 P.M.**  
Autumn Days, Broadway, Va.

**SEPT. 20-22**  
Edinburg Ole Time Days, Edinburg, Va.

**OCT. 12-13**  
Apple Harvest Days, Mt. Jackson, Va.

**OCT. 19, 9 A.M.-3 P.M.**  
Broadway Fall Festival, Broadway, Va.

**DEC. 7, 9 A.M.-3 P.M.**  
& **DEC. 8, 10 A.M.-4 P.M.**  
Christmas Arts and Crafts Show, Rockingham Co. Fairgrounds, Harrisonburg, Va.

For more information visit his website: www.brucedellinger.com.
Ugandan women work together at Zion Project. They created the Imani jewelry line so they can earn fair trade wages in war-torn regions where some women resort to the sex trade for money.
In war-torn regions of Uganda and the Congo, sexually exploited women and girls find new hope through Sarita Hartz Hendricksen’s faith and compassion.

In a town on the other side of the world, 17 Ugandan girls are being loved as family in a home they weren’t originally born into. They’ve been rescued from injustices such as sexual abuse and forced prostitution, and they are learning about God’s love.

Gulu, Uganda is ravaged by war and tragedy, but in the midst of it all, Zion Project strives to bring light, life and hope.

The story begins with one woman.

In 2002, Sarita Hartz Hendricksen graduated from James Madison University with degrees in English and psychology. She knew she was interested in social justice and women’s studies, but didn’t know where that interest would take her.

She began working as a counselor at a domestic violence and rape crisis center through AmeriCorps, and soon realized she was in a field she wanted to be in for the rest of her life.

“I felt a strong calling from God to go to Africa and ended up in Uganda,” said Hendricksen. She was inspired after watching a documentary about the sex slavery of young girls there.

In 2008, she took 11 girls that were former child soldiers, and 13 babies into the first rescue home and began her journey, which led her to start Zion Project. Today, the small nonprofit has a staff of seven Ugandan and three American volunteers, as well as other volunteer support in the U.S.

One of those Americans is another JMU alumna, Brittany Dunay, who graduated in 2012 as a psychology major.

Bill Evans, her professor at JMU, showed a video about Zion Project during her senior year.

“Once I saw that video, my heart was clenched by the Holy Spirit, and it was undeniable that the Lord was calling my attention there,” said Dunay.

Now, the two JMU alumnae are teaming up to fight for justice as they seek to spread God’s love.

Zion Project’s mission boils down to just that — love.

“I see our role as bringing love to the darkest places on earth and bringing the love of Father God, and a counseling curriculum that can help transform lives that have been devastated by war and sexual violence and exploitation,” Hendricksen said. “Our vision is ultimately redemption.”

Their children’s rescue home currently houses 17 young girls.

“We send them to school, pour the love of Jesus into them and have them go through counseling to help with healing from their past,” Dunay said.

Her role in the home is to facilitate logistics and playtime, as well as to carefully discipline the girls if necessary.

While the rescue home is the heart of Zion Project’s work, it doesn’t stop there. The
The beads used to make the Imani jewelry are handcrafted from 100% recycled paper, varnished and hung up to dry before being made into bracelets and necklaces of various styles. Justina, a Congolese woman, rolls beads for the Zion Project’s Imani jewelry line. Jolly, In-Country Director Brittany Dunay, and Lucy wear local attire, a skirt called a “chitenge.”

The staff offers seminars to the greater community to teach about God and provide counseling opportunities for those in need. Topics of these seminars include marriage counseling and lessons on how women and children should be treated in society.

“Every Wednesday, we do outreach programs,” Hendricksen said. “When we’re doing that, we’re going into the community, we’re praying for people, sometimes we’re giving medical help, we’re giving food and resources.”

Seminars and community programs are advertised through posters in local churches and around the slums, but information is usually spread through word-of-mouth.

Zion Project doesn’t want their aid to have a damaging effect on the community.

“There is a real negative impact that aid can have on communities, which is why when we were designing things, we were trying to come up with programs that would help people to be self-sufficient and have dignity,” Hendricksen said. “All our programs were developed alongside the Ugandan and Congolese women and girls we’ve been helping. So everything had input from them in terms of what was going to be most helpful, what was going to serve them, what they could put into the program so they could have ownership of it.”

Opportunities for women who have gone through the rescue home can be tangible as well. Eight women who were formerly in the sex trade, but were rescued and helped through Zion Project, are now the creators of a jewelry line called Imani.

“This line gives these women a way to earn an income in a healthy and safe way. To help the organization grow, Hendricksen spreads awareness in the U.S. about the Zion Project.

“As the founder, it’s part of my job to spread the vision of Zion Project so we can continue to grow and reach more women, children and war-affected communities,” Hendricksen said.

Their work of justice is a daunting task. They focus on what is best for the people and the community in the long-term.

“There’s always more work than there are people to do it,” Hendricksen said. “But the reward is that when you look at...
a life, and you see how it has been transformed through love, through pouring your life into their life, through God’s power, it makes it all worth it."

The girls will leave the Project after they complete their secondary schooling. Plans are in the works to help set the girls up with opportunities for further education or internships to ensure their continued success.

At Zion Project, girls are more than just numbers, statistics or snapshots of poverty and tragedy in a developing country. They are more than just names and students in a classroom. They become family.

“My relationship with each one of the girls is different from the rest,” Dunay said. “I love that I know how each girl longs to be loved. For example, I know that Jolly loves just messing around with a little bit of rough play and lightly pinching my arms, and Gloria loves to play outside, while Jacky is content with me letting her ‘make my hair.’ It’s all about how to make them feel loved and how to connect with them.”

Zion Project is a family, and Dunay led them as such as it grew.

“The best way I can describe my relationship with the girls at Zion Project is that of a little sister,” Dunay said. “They welcomed me with open arms the first day I went to their home, and our relationship has grown in love tremendously ever since. There are times when I need to be more disciplining than playful, but that is all a part of them growing up. They call me Aunty Britt and my heart smiles each time I hear it.”

As the girls grow older, they too have modeled this love and motherly role to those younger than them in the house.

“Every family member holds a very important role, and ours is no different,” Dunay said. “I have been able to see certain older girls step up into leadership roles of the family and care for the younger ones very well.”

The motivation behind Zion Project builds on their love for people. As a Christian organization, they want people to know
God's love for them regardless of whether they are a part of Zion Project or not.

Eighty percent of Uganda is Christian, and Zion Project hasn't encountered any negativity from the local community about their faith-based work and teachings.

Neither Hendricksen nor Dunay graduated from JMU knowing they would be living their lives in Gulu, Uganda, a world far from Harrisonburg.

"Sometimes we can get into this work with a rosy picture in our mind, but the real work requires sacrifice, commitment, and love," said Hendricksen.

"There is trash everywhere, dirt roads with terrible potholes, and no street lights," said Dunay. "The main way of transportation [is] bodas, [something between a motorcycle and a dirt bike] instead of cars. Instead of Giant, Target or Walmart, we have Uchumi—the main convenience store in town—and markets built out of big sticks and tin coverings."

The air is full of pollution and smoke from burning trash. It's rare that the power stays on all day.

Coming from Ashburn, Va., life in Gulu shocked Dunay.

"The beauty of it all makes up for it. The greenery is immaculate, the skies give Harrisonburg's sunsets and sunrises a run for [their] money, and the sound of laughter, chickens and palm trees in the wind sing to you," Dunay said.

The women bring their traditional music and dance with them when they come to work. Dance and music therapy have come to be a part of Zion Project.

"We feel a person's culture is very important ... Part of loving the whole person is accepting different aspects of their culture," Hendricksen said.

They're working to teach the women a new way of thinking to counter the harmful aspects of the region: child abuse, rape, gender violence and suppression of women in society.

Dunay still has several months before she leaves Uganda. "What keeps me going? People. That's what this is all about," she said.

Whether in Uganda, in the girls' home, or spreading the word about their organization in the U.S., the sacrifices fade away in light of the love and life these women have found in the work of Zion Project.

"Honestly, I was just a girl with a dream, and a belief that God could use me if I said yes and I wasn't afraid to sacrifice and give up a life that most 'normal' people wanted," Hendricksen said. "In choosing the less traveled path, I've found so much beauty in losing my life, and I've truly found it."

WANT TO HELP? Zion Project often needs interns and volunteers. For more information visit www.zionproject.org.

TO BUY JEWELRY: www.imanilove.com.
Dinner at a Movie

STORY BY SARA CUMMINGS
PHOTOS BY ART PEKUN

LEFT While Alamo moviegoers wait for "Oz the Great and Powerful" to start, they enjoy food and drinks as they watch the custom previews. FAR RIGHT Alamo theatergoers dine in the lobby before and after the movies.
The Alamo Drafthouse Cinema brings a unique film experience from Austin, Texas to Winchester, Va.

As the lights go down and the movie is about to begin, a quick video reminds patrons to turn cell phones off.

Then former Gov. of Texas Ann Richards warns moviegoers they can be kicked out of the theater for being a distraction: "Don't text during the movie, or Ann Richards will throw you out!"

This isn't something you would expect to view moments before a movie is about to begin. But then again, you wouldn't expect most of the things that happen at the Alamo Drafthouse Cinema.

The Alamo sits prominently near Exit 310 off of Interstate 81 about an hour north of Harrisonburg, Va. From the outside, it appears to be a typical movie theater: big building, big parking lot and a lot of advertised movies. But inside, it's anything but the norm.

Instead of an ordinary snack bar full of buttery popcorn and overpriced candy, there is a full bar offering wine, mixed drinks and up to thirty draft beer options. There is a full-course menu, from appetizers to the kids menu. The Alamo offers all types of food — burgers, pizza, salad and even the classic bowl of popcorn.

Walk into the theater and you'll see a thin counter between typical rows of seats, with half sheets of white paper and small golf pencils waiting for moviegoers. Once a patron writes down an order, the paper is placed behind a metal bar so a waiter can quickly grab it without distracting others. Each row has a waiter and runners who take orders, deliver food and drinks from the kitchen, and pass along the check — a typical system for any restaurant, but at the Alamo it all happens during the movie.

Once orders reach the kitchen, it's usually time to sit back, relax and enjoy the previews. But like everything else, these aren't typical movie theater previews. The Alamo doesn't show any advertisements because they believe that viewers have already paid to see the movie.

A creative team makes a custom pre-show with original content that usually relates to the movie it precedes. There might be an ABBA music video from the '80s or a video of men singing the lyrics, “I'm too hot to handle,” before a movie starring Bradley Cooper, People magazine's 2011 sexiest man alive.

"It's important because we encourage people to get there early. That is a long time to be watching nonsense," said Stephen Nerangis, co-owner of the Winchester Alamo. "We want people to be entertained."

The Alamo is designed to be a unique experience.

“We wanted each part of the experience to stand on its own: movie, food and drinks,” said Nerangis.

The Alamo also offers many events. There was a 22-hour Harry Potter movie marathon with butterbeer and miniature Quidditch games, an eat-along during “The Princess Bride” and even sing-along events — the list goes on.

The Alamo even hired a live jazz band to accompany “The General,” an old silent film. The jazz trio from Austin composed the entire score and then played it live during the movie.

There also are opportunities to meet actors and producers of films. One man
from Germany planned his vacation around a showing of “To Kill a Mockingbird” because the actress who played Scout, Mary Badham, came to the theater to talk with the moviegoers. Efren Ramirez, also known as Pedro from “Napoleon Dynamite,” has been to the Alamo a few times to sign autographs and answer questions after the movie.

“It is very innovative,” said Haley Lambert, from Strasburg, Va. “No wonder they have a lucrative business.”

Lambert is a regular at the Alamo, and she has high expectations for her movie-theater experiences.

In particular, she doesn’t like the prices at normal theaters.

“At the Alamo, you can get discounts for almost everything: children, student, senior and military,” said Lambert.

The Alamo started in 2009 when the Nerangis family purchased 31 acres of farmland to build a hotel in Winchester, Va. With more property to develop, the family decided to build something that the city desperately needed: a movie theater.

They took a trip to Austin, Texas, home of the only brand in the country that does franchising for theaters: Alamo Drafthouse Cinema. Tim League and his wife Karrie founded their theater in 1997. After the first theater they started in California was a bust, they packed up everything and headed to Austin to open the Alamo. League said on their website that he didn’t have any qualifications for opening a movie theater, “other than really liking movies, which I guess is the most important part.”

Twelve years later, Nick Nerangis, Sr. and his three kids who loved the franchise brought the Alamo Drafthouse Cinema from Austin, Texas to Winchester, Va.

“It’s an interesting story. It’s not something you’d expect to find in Winchester,” said Nerangis.

The Alamo is currently the only movie theater in Winchester, but a new theater is being built in the nearby mall.

“I’ll check out the new one, but it would have to really impress me to go there more,” said Lambert.

“[The other theater] is going to be in

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**REELING THROUGH THE AGES**

**JUNE 5, 1905**

*“Nickelodeons,” prised at only a nickel, were invented in Pittsburgh, Pa. by Harry Davis and John P. Harris.*

**1913**

*The first movie palace was the Regent Theater in New York, N.Y.*

**1920**

**1927**

*Chinese Theater, Hollywood, CA is the longest-lived movie palace in America.*

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**1880 - 1920**

*Vaudeville was the main source of entertainment in America, featuring performances by comedians, singers, plate-spinners, ventriloquists, dancers, musicians, acrobats and animal trainers.*

**JULY 12, 1912**

*Movie Premieres: “Queen Elizabeth” was the first feature-length film shown in a Broadway environment, creating the platform for modern movie premieres.*

**JULY 1927**

*Chinese Theater, Hollywood, CA is the longest-lived movie palace in America.*

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**1880 - 1930**

*In 1913, the Chinese Theater in Hollywood was the first movie palace in America.*

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*In 1927, the Chinese Theater in Hollywood was the longest-lived movie palace in America.*
A full theater of customers sit and indulge in popcorn and drinks while waiting for the lights to dim. Beer is offered by the glass, bottle, pitcher or the bucket.

In the lobby of the Alamo Drafthouse Cinema, customers sip on drinks at the bar, replacing the snack bar of the typical movie theater.

“trouble,” said Clint Miller from Charleston, W. Va. He enjoys the luxury of having everything at your seat at the Alamo, and drinks that he can’t even find at a liquor store.

On the other hand, a few ladies waiting to see a movie for a friend’s birthday said that they are really looking forward to the new theater.

Nerangis thinks customers who want a standard movie experience will go to the new theater. He explained that the Alamo works because people who like the experience will drive past the new theater to get there — like Craig Morris, from Harrisonburg, Va.

“It’s worth the hour of driving and not paying $4 for a box of candy,” said Morris. He said he also enjoys the mature atmosphere at the Alamo — unaccompanied minors aren’t permitted. He and his wife Hayley drive 45 minutes to Winchester about once every two months to see a movie at the Alamo.

“It’s a good date spot,” Morris said. “It’s like going out for drinks and going out for a movie combined in one experience!”

The Alamo Drafthouse Cinema is unlike any other theater, combining food and film to give patrons a “night out” experience.

ADDRESS: 181 Kernstown Commons Blvd.
Winchester, VA 22602
DIRECTIONS: From Harrisonburg, Va., take 81-N 64 miles to exit 310
PHONE: (540) 313-4060
CALENDAR: Alamo movie movies and times can be found online:
http://drafthouse.com/calendar/winchester
PRICES: Child: $6, General admission: $9.50
Military/Senior/Student: $7

1933
The First
Drive-in opened in Camden, N.J.

1940
The First
World War II saw movie theaters used as propaganda for war.

1950s
Television becomes a staple in American households as movies fought to stay alive.

1960
Drive-Ins all over the country symbolized suburban entertainment.

1970
Theaters Expanding: Drive-ins close to make way for larger theaters.

1980s
The Mall: Movie theaters find a new home in America’s up-and-coming malls.

CURIO 2013 | 17
Skyline SCHOLARS

STORY AND PHOTOS BY JENNY TOLEP
Oh's and “ah’s” echo across the classroom.

The sounds come from a diverse group of adults learning to pronounce words in English. In Harrisonburg, Va., Skyline Literacy provides adult learning programs to improve English-speaking skills. Many of the students are immigrants who came to the U.S. knowing little or no English.

Skyline Literacy is a nonprofit community-based organization that offers personalized services to fit each student’s needs. Some want to get a job, others want to pass the U.S. citizenship test and many just want to communicate with their peers.

“It’s all really about empowering people, helping people be independent, helping people meet personal goals,” says Elizabeth Girvan, executive director. “[It’s] all really tied to improving their lives.”

The administration at Skyline Literacy works with each individual to set up a learning schedule that best fits his or her learning needs. Students can sign up for one-on-one tutor sessions, computer-based learning or a class.

The registration fee for services is $25, but Skyline Literacy will not turn away those who cannot afford it.

According to Girvan, roughly 65 to 70 percent of the adult learners at Skyline Literacy are parents, which can make scheduling more challenging.

“We have a lot of flexibility as far as really customizing services to help folks just access what they need,” says Girvan.

Skyline Literacy currently has about 70 volunteers, ranging from college students to professionals to retired adults. The nonprofit asks college volunteers to make a semester-long commitment and all other volunteers to make a year-long commitment.
Skip Klaburner has been tutoring adult learners for six years. He has worked one-on-one with a total of five adults.

"Almost each lesson has taught me something," says Klaburner. "I've learned more from my students than I've taught them.

Most of all, he has learned to be patient. Communicating with an individual who doesn't speak English takes time. Speaking slowly and using hand motions is helpful during interactions.

For Klaburner, the best part of tutoring immigrants is when he sees his students start to understand and progress in their learning.

"There's this light that turns on in their minds, and as you're teaching you can see it in their eyes — they are picking it up," says Klaburner.

Recently, the Iraqi husband passed the U.S. citizenship test. He took his wife, Klaburner and Klaburner's wife out for Lebanese food.

Recently, the wife also passed her citizenship test. She will be taking their "Oath of Allegiance" to citizenship status in May.

"I plan on discontinuing my lessons with them, but after three or four years I can't discontinue my friendship with them," says Klaburner.

Klaburner believes he has given his students the tools to learn and progress in America while keeping their Iraqi roots.

"I'm here to teach a second language, not replace a first language," says Klaburner.

Harrisonburg's appreciation for diversity makes it easy to embrace new cultures and languages.

Volunteer Coordinator Barbie Spitz's
classes. It is more important to learn through repetition, muscle memory, speech and listening techniques.

Spitz incorporates activities into her lessons to reinforce what students have learned. She encourages a teaching method called "total physical response." This method pairs a lesson with a physical activity. It often resonates with learners and helps them to remember the lessons.

Teachers at Skyline also use workbooks, but Spitz says it is more important to focus on speaking and listening when first learning a language. After getting used to the language, reading and writing become the next step to mastery.

Skyline's mission is to help adults attain success. Many immigrants who come to the U.S. have goals and aspirations they want to see through to fruition. Adult learner Catalina Castro is currently enrolled in...
Madison Fashion

STORY BY GINELLE GROSS & SARA CUMMINGS

PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY ART PEKUN
& COURTESY OF THE BLUESTONE & JMU SPECIAL COLLECTIONS
Every generation has its own aesthetic," says Pam Johnson, professor of theater costume design at James Madison University. Pam Johnson has watched fashion evolve for 40 years at James Madison University as a professor of theater who specializes in costume.

Her office is laden with cascades of fabric and a clutter of design drawings — a tribute to her dedication to fashion.

Johnson became involved with the theater department in the mid-70s when JMU was still Madison College.

Now a professor and the director of costuming for JMU productions, Johnson spends most of her day talking about and looking at clothes.

Her book, "Dressing for Education the First Fifty Years: Highlights of the JMU Historic Clothing Collection 1908-1959," illustrates the fashion represented at the university from its founding through the late 1950s, revealing how the styles have changed over half a century.

In 1908 when JMU — then called The State Normal and Industrial School for Women — first opened its doors, women were subject to a strict uniform code on campus.

Until 1919, the typical uniform consisted of "a long white dress for the warmer months, or a combination of a white blouse or a dark middy with an ankle-length white or dark skirt," according to Johnson. However, the '20s and '30s ushered in a new awareness of fashion outside of the school and a wider variety of outfits.

Students kept up with trends through movies, magazines and catalogues. In Vogue and Harper's Magazine, girls could find examples of popular '20s styles like the "bob" haircut, fur-collared coats and an assortment of patterns and prints. Despite the uniforms, women's clothing styles were free and flexible.

Harrisonburg was once the premier shopping destination in the Shenandoah Valley. Shops in the bustling downtown carried the latest fashions that were ordered from New York.

One of the largest and most popular department stores downtown was B. Ney and Sons. The Ney family owned and operated up to five shops downtown, at times catering to students. B. Ney and Sons advertised in 1923: "Normal Students — Visit our Ladies' Ready-to-Wear Department"
and receive a percent discount.”

The Madison faculty and staff were the most frequent customers of the downtown shops, but students would head down Main Street on weekends as well.

“Saturday was so busy, you would have trouble walking up and down the street,” says Bill Ney, who surveyed the scene downtown from his family’s shops in the 1940s.

If students couldn’t afford the latest dresses downtown, they recreated them as best they could. With home economics still a popular course at Madison, most girls had the sewing skills and tools to mimic the high fashion pieces they liked.

“They didn’t look any different than girls in the cities,” Johnson says.

Even though there wasn’t a specific uniform after 1919, a dress code was still vigilantly enforced through the early 1950s. The faculty and staff strictly monitored proper appearance, which included an acceptable hem length of skirts and the prohibition of trousers.

According to the student handbook from 1931-1932, the Standards Committee on campus “exercise[d] censorship over the appearance and conduct of the students at all times.” In the 1930s, girls wished for more occasions to dress up in their formal evening gowns, which had richer and more luxurious materials. These occasions could include afternoon tea or a ballroom dance.

Madison students were expected to be dressed appropriately on and off campus. Bill and Eddie Ney remember when the faculty at Madison would request phone calls about how their students were acting downtown.

“One girl came in inappropriate clothing. I think she was wearing jeans or something,” Eddie Ney says. The store clerk made a phone call to a faculty member to report her, knowing that Madison expected students to be very ladylike.

Though jeans were referred to as inappropriate, slacks were eventually accepted on campus starting in the ’40s, along with scarves, suits and oversized sweaters that were common styles on campus. Fashion continued to evolve at Madison College, especially once men were welcomed as full-time students in 1946.

Although clichés of the ’50s include poodle skirts, leather jackets and cigarettes, this was not the norm on Madison’s campus. Flared and pencil skirts paired with blouses were more common. Bermuda shorts and various hats gained popularity as well.

It wasn’t until the ’60s that the strict, formalized dress expected of both women and men at Madison College relaxed. The counterculture that swept the nation had a profound influence on campus. While just a few years before students were not allowed to wear pants barring certain days and activities, they now were free to express their personal tastes. But even though students had more of a say in what they wore, it didn’t exactly mean more variety.
“The fashion relaxed in the mid-60s,” Johnson says. “But everyone relaxed to the same look.”

Since the ’60s, the trend of recurring fashion styles has been easily demonstrated in old and new photographs and designs. One does not have to look far to find clothing that is based on an old style or trend. A current example is Boho fashion: maxi-skirts and fringed shirts, which evolved from the popular hippie style.

“Fashion is always reinventing itself with the same deck of cards,” Johnson says. “It’s a process of constructing a new look drawing on the basics of other generations, and it’s done in trends.”

“Trends [in the 1960s] changed each season,” says Bill Ney. “It’s not like it used to be.”

Now trends change more frequently than in previous decades due to the growth of social media. The Internet has changed the method of accessing fashion trends. Now, “fashionistas” track the latest pictures and designs online on a daily basis through fashion blogs and magazine sites. Information about fashion is accessible to more people at an even faster pace.

“Fashion is how we identify ourselves,” Johnson says. “It is who we want people to think we are.” Identity still sits as the crux of what fashion means to most students. Styles and trends have changed, but clothing remains a means of expression.

“Fashion is like a costume. It can identify you or disguise you,” says Johnson.

Maggie Roth, a current JMU student, agrees that she and her classmates use fashion as an identity.

“You can tell if someone is in a sorority or an art student,” Roth says. “And I can identify more with people who dress like me.”

Roth helps run a campus fashion blog for the fashion website College Fashionista. She often tracks the popular trends at JMU. There are more stores available where students can buy clothing online. Some of the more popular stores are Urban Outfitters, Forever 21 and Topshop. Brands have become more important, says Roth. With the advent of logos appearing on clothes, it’s no longer just the style but the logo that identifies oneself from others.

“It’s all about how different can I be,” Roth says.

Johnson, who is in charge of JMU’s Historic Clothing Collection, opens the door to the temperature-controlled area which stores a collection of items of clothing dating back to the 1830s that represent the evolution of fashion. Johnson created the collection when she started setting aside donated costumes too delicate or fragile to be used on stage. Now she stores them for educational purposes. The clothes donated by people trying to de-clutter their closets are now treasured memories.

“It’s an opportunity to appreciate the history of clothing,” Johnson says. “It helps us understand the characters and the experience of that time.”
TOP The timing of the movements, how all eyes can be seen at the very same time, the mood and color strike Templeton the most about this photo. BOTTOM LEFT These personal belongings were captured for an editorial shoot in Virginia Living on Virginia-based dairy farmers. BOTTOM RIGHT This photo was taken for a major tobacco company, one of Templeton's first clients. He merges his style with the company's brand. FAR RIGHT Two of Templeton's close friends pose for their engagement photo.
Casey Templeton has never known the luxury of a full-time job. For him, inconsistency and risk are just part of his work as a freelance photographer.

“You know, everybody says it's so risky to work for yourself and to have your own business, but I think it's more risky that another human being has control over whether you have a job at the end of the day. It's very scary,” Templeton says.

This fear has been a motivation for Templeton since he began photographing at 16 years old for Lifetouch, a photography company. Then, while attending James Madison University, along with working for student publications like Curio, he started doing freelance photography for publication companies like USA Today, the New York Times and the Associated Press.

“Those were all kind of like cheap thrills at first, but then it's like that kind of wore off ... I just kind of got more into the commercial side of it,” Templeton says.

His passion for photography helped him discover his true calling: business.

“I love business, so I would consider myself a businessman who happens to be a photographer,” Templeton says.

Since then, he has blended both of his
Templeton felt Gleason’s Gym in Brooklyn was not really a beautiful place to shoot, but was giving a friend a lighting lesson and challenged himself to come up with a series of photos. He ended up loving them.
passions. One of his biggest influences during college was Tommy Thompson, a photojournalism professor who helped him refine his photography skills.

"Casey portrays a magnetism that just attracts ... he has that attraction to want to work with him," Thompson says.

Shortly after graduating from JMU, Templeton worked for National Geographic as an intern. Then he moved to Richmond, Va. and landed his first commercial-work freelance job doing a couple of advertisement campaigns for Wal-Mart. From there, he branched out.

"It seems like every day, it changes — what I’m working on. But most of the time it’s just focusing on how I can better fulfill my client’s needs," he says. "That's the only constant thing every day."

Even those who have worked with Templeton as associates rather than clients recognize his focus.

"In my capacity, it is a wonderful experience as he understands the collaborative process and also how to have fun," says Suzanne Sease, a creative consultant for commercial and consumer photographers and long-time business associate of Templeton. "Casey is good at that fine line between having fun and being professional."

Along with doing work for corporations such as Altria Group, Bon Secours, General Electric Co. and numerous pharmaceutical companies, Templeton began to expand the kinds of work he does as well.

"I really love the corporate side of it all, like working with businesses and helping them come up with a brand, like a visual brand, and helping them create image libraries of their photo work," he says. "That's the work I really want to be doing."

Templeton started a couple of small side businesses along the way, including one in investment real estate and, most recently, a small business called Shift Change that specializes in video.

Templeton is in the process of branding Shift Change with his video partner.

"We'll kind of run our major video work through that company. It's all in the vein of coming across bigger than you really are," he says.

Creating illusions like this is one of
TOP A few years ago, Templeton took his wife on a trip around Europe. He captured this moment, one that he loves, of two lovers on top of the Eiffel Tower.
BOTTOM This photo of a VCU art student showcases all that Templeton loves about color, framing and mood.
Templeton captures the playful spirit of a family whose home was built by one of Templeton’s clients.

Templeton’s main focuses when he is photographing as well.

“I never like to accept what I see as the best that I can get,” he says. “So I always try to make scenes look completely different than if someone were to be standing beside me and see what I saw.”

In the business world, he prefers to use this technique with his favorite type of photography: lifestyle.

“I try to bring a lifestyle feel to a corporate environment, so I do a lot of natural-light work,” says Templeton. He then edits the light in the photo by adjusting the exposure to change how the image appears.

However, no matter what style of photography he does, he always thinks about aspects such as balance, backgrounds, clean edges, space, and text treatment.

“But really my biggest thing is just making people feel comfortable when I’m photographing,” he says. “If they’re not comfortable, it shows.”

Templeton himself has learned to become comfortable with certain things in his professional life. He has learned that if he gets out of his own way and focuses on his passion for photography, the business side will take care of itself. However, part of the job is to keep marketing yourself.

“A big lesson for me is that no matter what kind of work you do, you’re always in sales,” he says. “If you can’t sell yourself to other people, then no one is going to do that job for you, so that’s a huge focus.”

And focus is exactly what Templeton has had to do for the past several years.

“It’s just been one thing after another. As long as I can keep my focus on my clients, it ends up paying off for me,” he says. So far, Templeton has found what he calls the “sweet spot” in the world of freelancing.

“The biggest perk of my job is the flexibility I have to spend time with my family,” he says. “I travel a decent amount, but whenever I have a chance to break away from the office, I always just try to come home ... It’s a blast.”

However, he feels the best is yet to come.

“If I sat around and just kept reminiscing [about] the best work I’ve ever done, and ... thought that it was all work I had already done, then that’d be a pretty depressing outlook,” he says.

In the past year, Templeton frequently worked in Europe, and his international presence is about to expand. He is planning three trips to Southeast Asia over the next few months to take photographs in Thailand, Indonesia and Vietnam for General Electric Co.

“I often think my best work is ahead.”
An African proverb says that it takes a village to raise a child. That's the philosophy at Ruby Slippers Academy.

Deanna Reed, co-founder of the program which is now known as Precious Gems Academy, says she was inspired by her upbringing.

"I'm from here, and when I was growing up a lot of people had their hand on me. It wasn't just my mom and my grandmother and my aunts; it was my grandmother's friends, women at my church, my schoolteacher, the only African-American teacher at Harrisonburg High School," says Reed. "They all had their hand on me to make sure that I did right, got through school, and got to college."

She wanted to bring that approach to the current Harrisonburg community, so she helped start Ruby Slippers Academy.

Every day after school, 52 Harrisonburg girls between the ages of 5 and 17 years get the "village" experience that Reed did.

It all started almost four years ago.

"2009 was kind of a rough year for Harrisonburg. There were a couple of shootings that went on in the area, and so there was a town hall meeting," says Reed. "A group of us women came, and they kept asking us, 'We need to do something, what are we going to do?' And so we came together and said, 'Let's start with our girls.'"

"We started with a conversation and now we're an academy," says Celeste Thomas, another founder.

The academy is an after-school program that mentors young girls in the community, many of whom are at-risk.

"They tend to be students who are..."
having some kind of struggle, whether that be a struggle with getting along with peers, whether that’s a struggle getting along with teachers, whether it be that they know there’s some type of issue in the family system,” says Reed.

The program strives to help young girls become positive leaders and role models in the community. Its goal is to provide each girl with the opportunities she needs to grow personally, socially and academically.

“One of the most powerful aspects of Ruby Slippers is the mentor aspect. They’re building really meaningful positive relationships with [the girls]. And just having that kind of consistent role model in their lives ... I think it’s really powerful and important,” says Brent Holsinger, director of after-school programs for Harrisonburg City schools.

Lala Sampson is a fourth-grader at Smithland Elementary School. She was one of two students who received the Rotary Award for outstanding ethics and behavior. It’s fitting for Lala — she wants to be a lawyer.

“I want to help other people with their behavior and teach them like the teachers teach me, like Miss Deanna and Miss Celeste,” says Lala.

Reed, Thomas and volunteers help the girls with homework and guidance.

“Teachers have seen improvements in test scores, and they really attribute it to Ruby Slippers,” says Jyl Gamble, guidance counselor at Smithland Elementary School.

The academy brings in volunteers from colleges in the Harrisonburg community. Most of the volunteers are women from James Madison University, Bridgewater College and Eastern Mennonite University. The volunteers work with the girls as role models and homework helpers.

The girls aren’t the only ones who benefit from the program.

“It just makes me happy. It makes my day. I could be having the most stressful, long day, have no time in my schedule, but I’m going to make time for these girls, because they depend on you to come. You just feel good about yourself and the difference you’re making,” says Angelina Sobel, a junior at James Madison University.

Sobel has volunteered with the program since the fall of 2011.

“I love the relationship with the girls, because a lot of them don’t have a positive influence in their lives,” says Sobel. “They might come from broken households, so they look forward to [coming]. And when they come in they’re so happy to see you, and they just really look up to you.”

Thomas sees a mutual benefit between the volunteers and the girls as well.

“Some of [the volunteers] are there because they need to have some type of volunteer hours, but I think it’s also a personal investment for them as well. It’s not just coming and putting in hours and leaving. They get to have a connection with someone who, for the most part, is very different from them,” says Thomas.

The program is open and free to any girl who wants to join.

“Our students are mainly low SES, [socioeconomic status], and so we didn’t want money to be in the way ... [or] the girls feeling like their success is predicated upon how much money their parents have,” says Thomas.

“The girls in the program are diverse, so they’re kind of breaking down barriers... We want these girls to know ... that you’re gems, and you’re precious to us, and you should be precious to yourself.”

CELESTE THOMAS, CO-FOUNDER OF PRECIOUS GEMS ACADEMY
and finding commonalities and building positive peer relationships with each other, which they might not have otherwise,” says Holsinger.

“It’s like sisterhood. You make friends and talk about your experiences together, and it’s nice to have people you can relate to,” says Julexis Cappell, a 10th-grader at Harrisonburg High School.

Reed and Thomas founded the program with middle school girls in mind, but found the need to be greater than they expected.

“We started in middle school and then those young ladies went to high school, and we didn’t want to lose the momentum that we had with them, and just say, ‘OK, we taught you some things, figure the rest out on your own,’” says Thomas.

That’s when they decided to expand into the elementary and high schools. When Ruby Slippers expanded from Thomas Harrison Middle School to Smithland Elementary and Skyline Middle School, it became Precious Gems Academy.

The academy is divided into three parts: girls who are 5 to 7 years old are called “Precious Pearls;” the 8- to 13-year-olds are “Regal Rubies;” and the 14- to 17-year-olds are “DIVAs,” which stands for Dreams Inspire Visionary Action. The DIVAs program works with Harrisonburg High School students.

“A lot of times when you come from the wrong side of the track, however you define that, you don’t feel precious. You don’t feel like you’re a gem, and you don’t feel like you have much to offer, because life can be very dark for you. So we want these girls to know that there is a light, and to go towards the light, and that you are gems, and you’re precious to us, and you should be precious to yourself,” says Thomas.

The academy goes beyond helping the girls with academics.

“I’ve realized what I really want to do in life, and what I need to do to get there, and not letting anything hold me back from what I want to do. It makes me feel good about myself,” says Nala Barber, a 10th-grader at Harrisonburg High School.

“[Ruby Slippers] helps us know we’re beautiful just the way we are,” says Lala.

Starting in April, there will be a program for boys called “Titanium.”

The program hopes to benefit boys in the community just as it has benefited the girls.

“For me the biggest thing is developing that community of boys who feed off of each other in really positive ways, as they’re going through a shared experience together that is focused on their future and what they want to achieve. It’s just so much more powerful to do that in a community, and to have those positive peer relationships,” says Holsinger.

The academy is also working to become a nonprofit organization.

“That would help with many things, like programming financial support [and] being able to afford them opportunities that financially their families aren’t able to,” says Thomas.

The girls travel to all three area colleges for events and tours of the campuses. Thomas says she wants them to become familiar with the idea of college, since many of their parents haven’t been there.

“We want that to be second nature to them, it’s like you go to high school, you go to college. And if you’ve already been on three campuses, guess what? There are people who look like you on college campuses, and there are people that don’t look like you. Everyone’s there together for the common purpose of trying to get an education,” Thomas says.

The program strives to provide opportunities for children who may not have many chances by themselves.

“You have to have a vision. ... Some of these girls and boys, they don’t know that they can get out of Harrisonburg,” says Reed. “Because they don’t see it. It’s kind of that you live up to the bar that has been set, and you may not know that the bar can be raised,” adds Thomas.

“A lot of their parents have not gone to college or anything of that nature. When you’re the first generation to do something, it’s always really scary. And it takes that village to help you navigate the system.”

Precious Gems Academy isn’t just about helping develop girls who want to go to college. It’s about creating positive relationships for the girls with each other and with the community.
At Cross Keys Equine Therapy, two women use their faith and horses to help unlock the path to Inner Peace.

Our session began in the Hope Ring, a small outdoor arena where two ponies stood near each other, content and relaxed in the quiet afternoon breeze. It was a chilly day, but the sun shone on the crisp, brown-green grass and the horses grazed down in the field.

Alicia Burns, executive director of Cross Keys Equine Therapy (CKET), and Leigh Michelle Thomas, the farm's licensed professional counselor, walked ahead of me and opened the gate to the Hope Ring. The ponies in the arena didn't pay much attention to us.

"The first part of the session is based on equine assisted psychotherapy techniques," Leigh told me. Equine assisted psychotherapy (EAP) is a form of counseling unique to CKET and other equine therapy facilities. Therapists use horses to help clients heal troubled relationships. EAP techniques focus on the client's belief system and how clients perceive negativity in themselves and the world. Clients confront faulty beliefs and then work to establish truth-based thinking.

Leigh and Alicia also provide Equine Assisted Learning programs with groups, which involve team building activities.

I asked the ladies what inspired them to start CKET.

"Both of us had an interest in working with adolescent girls, especially who had been victims of domestic violence," Alicia said. Although this was their initial expected client base, they saw that their work was effective for everyone.

"A lot of times the sessions go in a way we can't predict, which has been a challenge but it's also been a really cool thing, because that's where people experience growth," Leigh said.

Leigh asked me to greet each pony in whichever way I felt most comfortable. I walked toward the pony nearest to me. She was the taller of the two ponies. I could see just above her withers — the point at which the horse's neck and shoulder meet. I stood just to the left of her head, looked into her eye and patted her bay winter fur.

"Hey there, girl," I said.

I didn't feel an immediate connection with her, which troubled me, but I knew the challenge of building accord with each horse was part of the counseling process. I gave her another pat on the neck and then crossed the
arena toward the smaller dun pony. He turned to watch me approach with his ears pricked upright. I scratched his chin and gave him a little tug on the mane behind the ears. To me, this is the best way to test how comfortable a horse feels around you, especially during the first encounter. Horses are extremely sensitive to human emotion and physical touch. Because I grew up competing in horse shows, I knew what signs to look for when dealing with horses. I felt his friendly energy and playfulness.

“Ready for your first task?” Leigh asked. I searched through my mind — which was clouded with assignments, meetings, due dates — for a spark of inspiration. One object at a time, I built a mock magazine cover on the ground in the center of the arena. The dun pony, Snap, watched me move back and forth from the barrel to the arena center. Eventually, he stood right in the middle of my magazine cover and nudged the wooden pickets with his whiskery nose.

Curious about the whereabouts of the bay pony, Tia, I found her with her back to me, looking over the fence toward another horse in a separate paddock. She was neither aware nor interested in me or the noise I made moving the objects.

Alicia asked me to describe my creation.

Our conversation focused on my feelings and emotions while working with the objects and how my chosen design reflected my current psychological state. Leigh asked me to discuss how I felt around each horse and how each horse responded to my body movements. Both Leigh and Alicia encouraged me to open up about the people that negatively affected my well-being, but also about the people who brought me joy and acceptance. I realized the way I responded to each horse reflected the way I interact with people on a daily basis.

“Horses have a unique way of living in the moment,” Alicia said. “They are genuine, honest and do not allow manipulation.” Horses are able to sense when people are scared, tense, angry or, on the opposite end, full of happiness.

I nodded, feeling eager to get into motion.

She prompted me to model a project I was currently working on in my life, using any objects in the Hope Ring.

“Keep in mind what the horses are doing and how it makes you feel,” Leigh told me. A tall, dusty barrel of random objects laid in the corner of the ring behind me. In it I saw Styrofoam noodles and wood pickets from a fence. On the ground beside the barrel were red and yellow plastic balls about the size of a baseball, a jump rope and a white bucket.

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“Clients realize that it was about how they approached the horse, not about what the horse thought of them,” Leigh said. Clients who want to do more talking and processing usually begin to open up after working with the horses.

“They will come to us and we’ll end up talking for a while,” Leigh said with a chuckle. Other clients want to spend more time with the horses.

Alicia said it was time to move on to the second part of the consultation. We
walked up from the Hope Ring, past the indoor arena, and into a little stone paddock where they groomed and tacked up the horses. “Tacking up” is the term for putting the riding equipment on the horse — saddle, girth and bridle.

“This is your ride, Indi,” Alicia said. She gave the dark bay horse a slow, loving pat on the neck. Both Leigh and Alicia explained that the next type of counseling is Equi-Rhythm, which combines music with regulated breathing techniques and awareness to teach clients how to self-regulate personal stress. Within the arena, clients are given opportunities to overcome fear and unhealthy ways of relating. Ultimately, the Equi-Rhythm program helps people of all ages develop confidence, constructive and positive ways of communicating, and peacefulness in body and mind.

“As a counselor, I am able to see a difference in how people work with the horses,” Leigh said. Some people hide behind them and some people open up with them.” Working with horses gives Leigh and Alicia a way to work through each client’s concerns individually.

I put my helmet on and walked beside Indi while Leigh led him into the outdoor riding arena.

“Indi is the perfect horse for riding exercises because he’s extremely sensitive to a rider’s emotions and movements,” Alicia said. Although most horses have this ability, Indi has a special way of mirroring human behavior. Before I mounted Indi, Leigh instructed me to close my eyes, breath in and out five times slowly and achieve a relaxed state. Then I mounted the horse and slipped my feet into the stirrups.

From a variety of music choices, I settled on riding to the Dixie Chicks. Leigh played their cover of “Landslide.” I listened intently to their pure, bold voices accompanied by the beautiful acoustic melody. I squeezed my calves against Indi’s side, signaling him to walk at full pace. He quickened his speed. We walked together in a large circle around Leigh and Alicia.

After about 10 minutes of communicating with Indi through my seat, legs, hands and voice, Leigh said, “I’m going to change the song. I’d like you to try and ride Indi to the beat.” She put on a song with an upbeat melody that was fast and loud. I clicked my heels into Indi’s side a bit harder and clucked. He picked up a trot, but under me his shoulders and barrel became stiff. After a few steps, I felt my body become tense and off balance. He’s responding to and mirroring my body language, I realized.

The ladies began CKET with only Equine Assisted Psychotherapy and equine assisted learning programs.

“We expected the counseling to be done on the ground and we weren’t going to do a riding component,” Alicia said. But over time working with different individuals and families, Leigh and Alicia found that getting on a horse was what people needed.

“We will develop more programs along the way, too,” she said.

Riding Indi and discussing my physical and emotional responses to the program’s exercises made me realize why Alicia and Leigh created the Equi-Rhythm component. Being able to get on the horse’s back and work through their concerns is pow-
ADOPT-A-HORSE DONATION

All of the farm's horses are healthy and well cared for. Some horses have special needs, though, and require a bit more personal care. You can help by adopting a horse. These horses may need a particular feed and nutrition, special tack, or additional funding for annual vaccines or other vet care. To learn more about the horses, visit the website: http://www.crosskeysequinetherapy.org.

Leigh Michelle Thomas, licensed professional counselor and Alicia Burns, executive director encourage their clients to learn healthy patterns of relating to others and strategies for coping with distress.

Our faith is the foundation of our services. We want our clients to experience the kind of relationships with us that are genuine, honest, and loving as we walk together in growth and healing.

LEIGH MICHELLE THOMAS, CROSS KEYS EQUINE THERAPY COUNSELOR

erful for clients. Riding is especially helpful for kids with autism, who may not be able to talk about how they're feeling. But it won't work for every client.

Alicia and Leigh see clients weekly, bi-monthly or once a month, and most are from the Rockingham and Augusta County areas. CKET has served clients from 3 to 68 years old.

“We have even had clients come up to three times per week for more intensive work,” Leigh said.

A typical workweek for the horses mixes exercise time, rest time and session time. “The horses do arena work, are taken on trail rides and are engaged mentally by groundwork,” Alicia said. It is important to keep the horses fit both physically and mentally, so Alicia and Leigh give them as much "herd" time as possible, too.

At the end of the riding session, I dismounted Indi and walked him back to the stone paddock. It was mid-afternoon and the sun rested high in the sky. Most of the clouds had cleared, and the crisp winter sun warmed me as I began to unwind and meditate on the powerful ways these horses had affected me. Deep inside myself, I felt healthier and happier. The horses, coupled with Leigh's and Alicia's guiding questions, helped me to engage in open and honest communication.

“We believe that most of our heartache arises from pain we have experienced in relationships with others,” Leigh said. People who have experienced emotional pain and distress may adapt a distorted belief system about life and relationships. CKET’s main focus of therapy is to replace unhealthy coping mechanisms with healthier ways of relating to people. Leigh and Alicia also conduct their lives and therapy programs around a strong set of beliefs and faith.

“Our faith is the foundation of our services,” Leigh said. "We want our clients to experience the kind of relationships with us that are genuine, honest and loving as we walk together in growth and healing."

As I collected my things to leave the farm, Leigh mentioned that she also does intensive in-home counseling with families. “With my love for horses, every day I would go into the homes and think, ‘If only I had a horse with me.'”

Please call for pricing and to make an appointment.

ADDRESS: 6711 Stoney Lick Road
Mt. Crawford, VA 22841
PHONE: (540) 607-6910
EMAIL: info@crosskeysequinetherapy.org
Martha's SPARK

STORY BY JULIA CRAMER | PHOTOS BY ART PEKUN

CURIO 2013 | 41
On her weekly radio show, Martha Woodroof passes her microphone over to passionate locals.

There was a time in the late ’80s when Paul Newman wasn’t doing interviews. He wasn’t talking to anyone. He was taking a break from acting and focusing on his second career in auto racing. Reporters hit the racetracks at Lime Rock Park in Lakeville, Conn., anyway, hoping the recent Academy Award winner for his performance in “The Color of Money” would answer a few questions.

On that summer day, he did invite one reporter to speak with him. Newman stepped out of his trailer and waved over Martha Woodroof, an NPR freelance reporter who had just started a career in radio. The USA TODAY reporter talking to her was stunned.

“Oh my God, she’s getting an interview,” he said with disbelief.

TRUE MARTHA FASHION

Today, Martha hosts a weekly hour-long radio program, WMRA-FM’s “The Spark,” where she has the opportunity to interview creative characters in the region. Her guests aren’t as famous as Paul Newman, but she still finds them the same way.

To get the coveted interview with Newman, Martha fearlessly set her sights on him, oblivious to anything obstructing her path, and began chatting. She started with the woman who answered the phone at the office of Newman’s racing partnership. After Martha had developed a relationship with her, she talked to his racing partner. And when she arrived at the tracks, Martha set her sights on Newman’s pit crew. They were the ones who convinced Newman to talk to Martha, and her story was broadcast nationally on NPR’s “Morning Edition.”

“I didn’t have it nailed,” Martha remembers years later in her office at the WMRA studio in Harrisonburg, Va. “But I had a good solid connection with people in his racing organization. I mean, chatty phone stuff. I believe in having fun on the phone.”

In 1999, Martha set her sights on a radio job at WMRA. She was working as the director of co-curricular programs at Sweet Briar College, a position created for her.

“Your guess as to what that means is as good as mine,” she says with a laugh.

So while other applicants handed in resumes and cover letters, Martha called Matt Bingay, the assistant general manager at WMRA, to chat. While other applicants waited for Bingay to call them for a job interview, Martha showed up at his office door and told him the story of the nearly impossible interview with Newman.

“People stand out for different reasons,” Bingay says. “Martha stood out because she was tenacious; she was personable — she left an impression immediately. There aren’t many people you will meet that you can’t forget,” he says with a chuckle. “But Martha is one of them.”

He saw Martha’s persistence, her infec-
tious personality and her natural ability to cultivate lasting connections with people, assets that are invaluable to both the station and its widespread listening community.

“It’s a cliché, but she thinks outside the box. I don’t think she knows there is a box,” says Bingay.

Martha was hired. Then she formally turned in an application.

“You can’t do that anymore,” she says. “I was just ahead of the curve of getting away with stuff you, sadly, can no longer get away with.”

**MARTHA’S MANY HATS**

Martha had many careers before she started in radio: newspaper columnist, actress, restaurant owner, local morning talk show host, college administrator and novelist. Still, she gets restless.

Even at WMRA, Martha’s job description has changed often. She has handled many different types of shows, interviews, series, specials on authors and the Festival of the Book. Some stories were three-and-a-half minutes long, like the once-a-month series, “One Person’s Voice.” Others were hour-long specials. As she tried different things, she learned the technical side of radio. Martha had her written pieces published in the Washington Post and the New York Times Magazine, and her broadcast stories aired nationally on NPR.

“My life’s ambition has been to work big market and live small market. I enjoy going to New York, working and coming home again,” says Martha.

She enjoys the challenge of working with the best in New York, but you can find her at home putting around the house and gardening on weekends.

In addition to her on-air productions, she has spent a lot of time developing relationships with the community. She has organized promotional events for the station, developed the station’s online presence in social media, kept a daily blog and started a civic soapbox series so listeners can share their comments on anything with the community. Her work culminated in an hour-long weekly program, “The Spark.”

**“THE SPARK”**

The show was Martha’s idea. That restless feeling was back, and Martha is a fearless pitcher. So one afternoon, she ambitiously approached Bingay with an idea.

“Well, why don’t you let me start a weekly show where I just talk to people who are interesting to talk to?” asked Martha.

The time slot on Fridays at noon was occupied with repeats of “Fresh Air,” so they decided to try the show there. It took six weeks for Martha to develop a pilot and then the first show aired on Sept. 2, 2011.

At the time, it was called “The Not Yet Named New Show.” It stayed that way for a month while listeners suggested and voted on potential names online. Lydia Wilson of Scottsville, Va., suggested “The Spark.” But the show’s premise was a little harder to nail down.

“The over-arching theme is creativity. But this creativity goes beyond tradition-
al artistic expression. Her guests’ resumes are more varied than her own. She has interviewed a cobbler, restaurant-owners, cavers, musicians, business owners, comedians, authors, composers, instrument makers, historians, beekeepers, mechanics, motorcyclists, sound engineers and mathematicians. All are different, but their spark is what ties them together.

“It’s really her opportunity to talk to people about things they’re passionate about. So you get a chance to, in a way, sit with someone and find out why they’re on this planet,” says Bingay.

Martha’s spark is finding yours.

“I listen for that sort of quickening of interest in the person I’m interviewing [that happens] when they get really interested in what they’re saying. I listen for that and that’s where my interview is,” says Martha. She can find that spark in anyone.

“If you’re really passionate about something, you’re going to think about it in creative ways,” explains Tom DuVal, the station’s general manager. Martha says she isn’t interested in interviewing celebrities. She has experience with those interviews, but it’s hard to get past the persona celebrities create to keep journalists at bay.

“I’m interested in having a real conversation,” Martha says.

MAKING THE MICROPHONE DISAPPEAR

Martha’s warm personality disarms her guests the minute they meet her. Call her Martha, sit back, relax and ignore the microphone in your face. You’re here to talk to her.

She’s loud — the loudest person on staff — and so friendly you open up to her before you realize the interview has started. It’s not really an interview, just a conversation with Martha that she edits later and shares with her friends.

“Martha is a terrific interviewer,” says Larry Stopper, a former WMRA disc jockey for “Acoustic Café,” an avid “Spark” listener and recent guest on the show. “She is able to put her interviewee at ease immediately and ask very incisive questions.”

Martha laughs quickly, loudly and often, and her laugh is contagious.

“She’s really just pretty fearless about sitting down with someone and opening up enough of herself to be able to encourage them to open up themselves,” says DuVal.

Or as Martha says, she’s nosey.

“[I ask] what I call warm-up questions. Everybody has to get used to talking into a microphone. Everybody has to do that long enough until the microphone disappears and they’re just talking to me,” says Martha.

She’ll ask for your life story and before you know it you’re having a real conversation. Then she’ll get to work editing.

“She is a master editor. She knows how to put a show together. You sound even better, once Martha has edited you, than you did when you were speaking with her in the interview,” says Stopper.

She has to edit her show down to the second and it’s not unusual to find her still at the station on Thursday evening, scrambling to make it perfect.

“Rather than editing for demographics or for some group, I’m editing for all these people that I’ve met who listen, and for whom this station is a real part of their lives,” says Martha.

Martha spends a lot of time bookending her show with carefully constructed introductions to her guests.

“I love words. I love the specificity of language,” says Martha. “You have to think exactly. That’s what good writing

ALTERNATIVE NAMES FOR “THE SPARK”

Before “The Spark,” Martha called her show “The Not Yet Named New Show.” Audience members submitted ideas online — here are some of their suggestions.

- IMAGINE THAT!
- OUTSIDE THE BOX
- UNDER THE RADAR
- THINK OF THAT
- MARTHA’S VINEYARD
- CREATIVELY PASSIONATE
- UP ON THE ROOF WITH MARTHA
requires: you to think very precisely and specifically. The thinking’s the hard part if you have a decent vocabulary and you just pick the words that say what you think."

SPARKING A COMMUNITY CONVERSATION

Martha’s audience extends as far north as Winchester, south to Lexington, east to Charlottesville, and includes a few scattered listeners in West Virginia and even some listeners in Farmville, Va., southeast of Charlottesville. They are in many places, but they listen to “The Spark” because they’re curious.

“They don’t just want to be told what to think. They want to discover and they want to think for themselves,” says Bingay.

Martha’s curious too — that’s what makes her interviews good.

“[She’s] not satisfied with the first answer necessarily ... and she’s not afraid to ask a stupid question or to go somewhere that may be the wrong track,” says DuVal.

Martha’s listeners are her partners.

“Reading and radio, words on a page and words coming out of a box, I think, require the listener, your partner in this adventure, ... to participate, not just to sit there. And I love that,” she says.

Through her show, Martha is still building a community. She ends each show by asking her listeners to suggest guests. Nothing makes her happier than when she gets to say on air that her guest is a listener’s suggestion.

“It’s great to give ... the local people exposure on local radio. It’s very difficult for those individuals to find ways of promoting themselves and what they do. And Martha is able to give them an opportunity to speak about their work to a broader audience,” says Stopper.

By sharing local stories she creates a feeling of community.

Some listeners approach her in line at the grocery store, recognizing her by her laugh, distinctive voice or even her mannerisms that they can’t see on the radio. Knowing Martha is being a part of her community.

“I think making people aware of the richness of where they live is not a bad thing to do with your life,” says Martha.

So she’ll keep sparking stories.

“Everybody who walks this green earth has an interesting story — one that I can learn from and profit from, and expand my own universe by listening to,” says Martha.

“We all can’t do everything, but when we bump up against people who seem unusual to us, or their background or stories are different than ours, I think the best thing that we can do for ourselves is listen to those stories.”

HOURS: “The Spark” airs Fridays at 12 noon and Saturdays at 3 p.m.

STATIONS: 103.5 FM Charlottesville, 91.3 FM Farmville, 90.7 FM Harrisonburg and the Shenandoah Valley, 89.9 FM Lexington, 94.5 FM Winchester

I think making people aware of the richness of where they live is not a bad thing to do with your life.

MARTHA WOODROOF, HOST OF “THE SPARK”
ABOVE Steve Jamme, Amy Predmore and Tara Conklin sample a taste of Morocco at Charlottesville's Al Hamraa restaurant. The menu features dishes inspired from a blend of eastern and western Mediterranean traditions. RIGHT On a Friday evening at 7 p.m. local dancers, Joy Rayman and Barbara Frost, complete the Moroccan ambiance with authentic belly dancing. Rayman is a founder of Fire in the Belly Dance Company of which and Frost is also a member.
Since 2009, Karim Sellam has served authentic Moroccan cuisine in Charlottesville, Virginia.

Take just one step inside Al Hamraa and you're no longer in Charlottesville.

Oriental rugs mask the concrete floors and traditional lights with goat-skin lampshades hang from ceiling lined with exposed pipes. Aside from these modern details, Al Hamraa is a replica of a Moroccan dining room and hails back to its Moorish inheritance.

The intimate ambiance offers diners a unique cultural experience. Tucked away in a small strip of other restaurants and shops, Al Hamraa is a hidden gem of Moroccan culture. The name derives from Alhambra, a Moorish palace built in the 14th century. Alhambra translates to "the red one," and it's no mystery why the name was chosen.

Hues of reds and maroons permeate the room. The crimson colors are incorporated into the decor, the mats lining the floor and even the cushions on the wooden benches. The walls are painted dark gold and red to highlight the multiple relics brought from Morocco.

"It's easy to replicate ... the culture, because I know it," says Karim Sellam. Standing over 6-feet tall, the reserved owner was born and raised in Beni Mellal, Morocco, before he moved to the United States in 2001.

Before Charlottesville, Sellam lived for 10 years in Venice, Italy. His other restaurant next door, Italian Ristorante Al Dente, pays homage to his love for Italian culture. Sellam makes an effort to keep both restaurants as culturally authentic as possible, so his diners can appreciate a different cultural experience.

"If you know about the cultures, it attracts customers,"
With 25 years of experience, Joy Rayman is well-known throughout the Shenandoah Valley for her belly-dancing performances. Born in Baltimore, Md., Rayman is now a longtime member of “Fire in the Belly,” having joined the belly dancing troupe in 2000. She has performed in Washington, D.C., New York City and even in Ukraine.

“I am always learning, because the dance is constantly evolving,” Rayman says.

Although belly dancing isn’t particular to Morocco, the dance derives its background from Arabic influences. Belly dancing has become more widespread throughout the United States over the past few decades, but it is still considered an uncommon dance genre.

Joy admits that the Internet has made it easier for the dance to gain momentum in the United States. In addition, more classes are available and several TV shows feature belly dancing. Yet it still is not taken as seriously as some other genres of dance.

“It truly is an art form,” she says. “It should be on the same level as ballet or modern.”

Rayman has been spreading her passion throughout the Shenandoah Valley through her numerous performances at different venues as well as the practices and workshops she teaches for upcoming students. But she always comes back to Al Hamraa for her regular performance.

For more information about lessons or performances, contact Joy Rayman at jrayman@gmail.com.
Not only does Sellam run two restaurants, but he also is the head chef for both. Both Al Hamraa and Ristorante Al Dente share a large kitchen in the back of the building. Sellam is in charge of preparing two separate menus.

"Karim is married to the restaurant," says close friend Joy Rayman. "Or rather, both restaurants."

He attended culinary classes for a few months during his time in Italy, but the food enthusiast discovered that they weren’t for him. Instead, Sellam developed most of his cooking skills through experience.

"The two cultures share a long history — the Mediterranean history — and diet," he says. This makes it easier in the kitchen because the restaurants share ingredients and styles of food.


You have to be unique to the different countries. If you know about the cultures, it attracts customers.

KARIM SELLAM, AL HAMRAA OWNER

At Al Hamraa, diners are seated in long benches that cling to the walls. They place their dishes on the low wooden tables in front of them or on their laps. The atmosphere is open and casual, almost as if everyone is sharing their meals together. There are leather stools arranged haphazardly across from the tables and benches, creating a "sit as you please" arrangement. Soft Moroccan music plays as customers chat and take in the decor through the low lighting.

But more important is the menu. "Customers come for the food," Sellam says. "If you don’t have good food, ultimately they won’t come."

The server leaves behind a pencil so customers can check off choices on the paper menus, a helpful gesture for those who don’t speak Arabic.

The genuine Moroccan menu includes meals such as kefta briwat (seasoned ground beef pastry), balah elbahr (a mussels and clam dish), and mekouda (potato and cilantro cakes). Other menu highlights include traditional couscous and the highly recommended harira, the national soup of Morocco. Each dish is based off of traditional Moroccan food. Sellam personally taught the other chefs how to cook and prepare the dishes.

The food is served to share. Families and groups sit clustered together, often sharing plates with their neighbors, determined to try everything.

"The food was wonderful," says Ian Cville, who brought his mother for dinner. "We tried a bit of everything."

Not only is the food authentic, it is also reasonably priced. The dishes on the menu are listed according to cost, which ranges from $2.90 to $15.90.

A small bar is situated at the front of the restaurant, providing visitors a range of cocktails, martinis and beers. Al Hamraa offers a variety of Moroccan wines served with dinner, that can be ordered by the bottle.

On Friday evenings, around 7 p.m., Middle Eastern chimes replace the light dinner music. People look up from their meals to see a small woman gracefully step onto the open floor, swaying her hips to the song. For her performances, each lasting about 10 minutes, Joy Rayman belly dances for diners at Al Hamraa. She moves around the restaurant, giving everyone a clear view of the performance.

"The belly dancing is great," Cville says, "She was amazing, really, very good."

Rayman moves confidently around the room, her small black slippers tapping across the floor. A longtime friend of Sellam, Rayman has performed at Al Hamraa since it opened. The two have been friends for more than 12 years.
Moroccan people are naturally very social ... Karim likes to talk to everyone. Everyone knows him.

JOY RAYMAN, AL HAMRAA BELLY DANCER

“He’s like a brother,” Rayman says. In 2003, Sellam invited her to stay with him and his family in Morocco.

Al Hamraa offers belly dancing performances almost every Friday night, starting at 7 p.m.

“We have more people performing here now than any time before,” says Rayman.

While Rayman is the resident belly dancer at Al Hamraa on Fridays, she invites other guest belly dancers to perform with her.

The diners clap when the performance ends, returning to their meals and conversations. Sellam comes out from the kitchen to talk with a few of the customers, shaking their hands. At one point he bounces a toddler on his lap while he chats with her parents.

“Moroccan people are naturally very social,” Rayman says. “Karim likes to talk to everyone. Everyone knows him.”

Sellam’s open nature is reflected in his restaurant, which offers customers a relaxed, open dining experience. Al Hamraa gives the Valley a Moroccan oasis in Charlottesville.

HOURS: 5 p.m. to late, Tuesday through Sunday
ADDRESS: 929 2nd Street SE.
Charlottesville, VA 22902
PHONE: (434) 972-9907
WEBSITE: www.alhamraa.net
It began as a hobby — a friendly, after-work email exchange between college friends over sports. It was February 2006, and neither Jason McIntyre nor fellow James Madison University alumnus David Lessa could predict that in seven short years, a three million views-per-month website would thrive from their thread.

STORY BY ALEXA JOHNSON | PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY ART PEKUN & COURTESY OF JASON MCINTYRE
In a large leather chair in front of a white wooden bookshelf, Jason McIntyre, 36, reads, writes and updates his nationally recognized sports blog, Big Lead Sports. Since it was purchased by USA Today last year, it's clear that the Fairfax Station, Va. native has created a job from his favorite pastime.

Wearing a heather-grey long-sleeved T-shirt, he divides his attention between his computer and the hit television show 90210. Underneath his beard it's easy to see his wide-set smile. His demeanor is confident, upbeat; something you'd expect from a man interviewing numerous sports media stars each week.

Big Lead Sports covers nearly every sport from NFL to NASCAR. Using blunt headlines and short, humorous posts, McIntyre and his team of eight writers (six full-time, three part-time) conduct interviews with sports figures and update readers on athletes' personal lives.

While there are thousands of sports blogs floating around the web, it was the careful balance between researched content and opinion pieces that captured enough readers' attentions to get Big Lead Sports, then known as The Big Lead, nationally ranked. It also caught the attention of Clay Walker, USA Today's vice president.

"I was attracted to the site because it didn't seem like any other blog I had run across," Walker says. "In an era where so many decisions are made based on computer analytics, Jason has an uncanny ability to program the content on The Big Lead, constantly delivering the type of stories that consumers crave, yet being able to break news at the same time."

In 2007, Walker left the NFL Players Association to start up Fantasy Sports Ventures (FSV), an assembly of more than 100 sports fantasy sites, with business partner Chris Russo. When the company decided to expand past fantasy sports, Walker came across The Big Lead.

FSV's belief in The Big Lead's potential was so strong that in 2010 the company acquired it and changed its name from Fantasy Sports Ventures to Big Lead Sports. Two years later, USA Today, a longtime investor in FSV, obtained the remaining outstanding shares of the company and with it, The Big Lead. The Big Lead had just received its big break. The merger became Big Lead Sports.

Before his blog hit it big, Jason McIntyre studied journalism at James Madison University. He graduated in 2000 before moving to New Jersey to be a sports reporter. There he wrote for the Herald News, Bergen Record, Star and Us Weekly. He also freelanced for numerous sites and papers, such as ESPN the Magazine, ESPN.com's Page 3, The Boston Globe and Metro. Currently, he resides in Bucks County, Pa. with his wife and two children.

McIntyre began The Big Lead anonymously and for fun. He could devote time to post only before and after work. Co-founder David Lessa worked on the technical side until 2009, when the site needed to switch to a bigger server.

"I remember receiving my first paycheck after quitting and thinking, 'I can pay my cell phone bill!"' McIntyre says, recalling when he left his job at Us Weekly to work full-time on his site. Though the ability to watch boxed sets of The Office with his then-fiancée all day made up for the pay cut.

So what exactly does a full-time blogger do all day? McIntyre starts his mornings at 7 a.m. by reading, reading and ... reading. He updates the site 10 to 15 times throughout the day, publishing six to eight self-written posts. He'll take a breakfast break around 9 a.m. and by 9:30, he's back to the grind.

He takes a lunch and workout break around 2 p.m. ("... so my mind doesn't turn to dust from staring at the computer") and then he's back on the site until 6 p.m. After one more break for dinner and family time until 9 p.m., he ends the day with television and poking around the Web for the next day's story ideas.

"I try not to be a slave to traffic, so I don't look [at how many views the site gets] every day," McIntyre says.

The highly interactive nature of the site is another draw for readers. By commenting anonymously on posts, site users are able to communicate with each other and get their voices heard on the Web. Some Big Lead posts can get as many as 400 comments.

One reader, who comments under the username "KC Resident," has been commenting on The Big Lead since its beginning — seven years to be exact. "The Big Lead's commenting community is tight-knit," he says. "Everyone might not get along on each topic, but we have fun and respect each other for the most part."

It's that broad sense of community interaction that KC Resident blames for his commenting habit.

"Fifteen years ago, people played Minesweeper and nobody was ever able to see how brilliant I was," he says. "Now we have blogs and commenting sections and people can tell me how dumb I am. This is much better."

Another frequent reader, Ty Duffy, a 2006 graduate of the University of Michigan, went a step further when he responded to an internship call by Big Lead Sports in 2008. Today, Duffy is a staff writer for the site. "I like being able to express myself, take on challenging topics and having the freedom to take risks," he says of writing for the blog.

He also notes the negative side of the Internet's vastness.

"The Web has given more people a voice,
but at the same time is drastically reducing the value of having one,” says Duffy.

Due to the less formal nature of blogging, the line between site commenter and site writer seems a little blurry. Most blogs do not have a written code of ethics like corporate news sources do. Other than the obvious reasons of a paycheck and extra research, what differentiates a commenter from a writer?

“You just have to be good,” says David Dorey, co-founder of the fantasy sports blog The Huddle.

Dorey and Whitney Walters started The Huddle back in 1997 after playing in a fantasy sports league and realizing there were almost no Internet resources out there for fantasy fanatics. Five years in a row after its start, The Huddle won first place for fantasy football website in the Annual Internet Sports Awards. Fantasy Sports Ventures, and then USA Today, acquired The Huddle in 2007.

“Unlike days past, you do not have to have a specific degree [to] get hired by a TV or newspaper company or gain the favor of some editor,” says Dorey.

To keep Big Lead Sports in the blogosphere, McIntyre believes in keeping the content edgy, young and loose — the difference between blogs and hard news.

“USA Today has been great so far,” he says of his overall experience. “We’ve been able to keep the site’s identity intact despite being part of a corporation.”

As for Big Lead Sports’s future plans, readers can expect more investigative reporting and a continuation of the podcast series that began on March 1. Celebs like Golden State Warriors NBA player Stephen Curry and CBS sports columnist Dan Wetzel can already be heard on “The Jason McIntyre Show.”

“We’re going to be ribald. We’re going to ruffle feathers,” McIntyre says of the direction he’s headed. As he prepares for more emails, conference calls and meetings in New York, there will always one perk of the job for McIntyre.

“I get to work from home, though, so no complaints from me.”

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**THE BIG LEAD’S TOP 5 HITS**

1. **Johnny Manziel’s Girlfriend, Sarah Savage, is a Model**
2. **The Timothy Bradley-Manny Pacquiao Rematch Poster Was Already Made Two Weeks Ago**
3. **Fast Girl Running Back Absolutely Owns This Boys’ Youth League [Video]**
4. **Kevin Ware Suffered a Broken Leg Against Duke, and Warning, It’s Painful to Watch**
5. **Tom Coughlin Got In Greg Schiano’s Face After the Giants – Buccaneers Game**
Christopher Boyer was a James Madison Duke before he was the man to deliver the South’s surrender in Spielberg’s “Lincoln.”

STORY BY KASSIE HOFFMEISTER | PHOTOS COURTESY OF CHRISTOPHER BOYER & WALT DISNEY STUDIOS

How did you land the role of Confederate General Robert E. Lee?

I just sent a picture off to the casting person in Virginia and then rented a Confederate general’s uniform from a prop house out here in Hollywood. I took some video in that, just a 30-second clip, and sent it along to them so they could see what I looked like in a uniform. Then they wanted to know if I could ride a horse. And I said yes, of course—I’ve been riding since I was like 12 and I’m an accredited farrier. But they needed to see me on a horse. They just didn’t believe me, apparently actors lie on their resumes, who knew? [laughs] So I had to rent a f—-ing horse ... And after all of that, they finally said, “Yes, come to Richmond. You’re our Lee.”

Did you do anything specific to prepare to portray Lee?

I grew up in Hagerstown, Md., which is just three miles away from Sharpsburg, [Md.] where the Battle of Antietam took place. So I grew up as a kid playing on the Antietam battlefield and my father was kind of a Civil War buff ... Then as I grew a little older and got a horse, I used to ride my horse all over the battlefield and imagine charging the Union cannon. So I’ve been a Civil War buff my whole life and gone to Gettysburg, probably half a dozen times every summer for years ... At Madison, I was an English and history major, and Lee was always one of my favorite American figures. So I knew quite a lot about Robert E. Lee going in. But I did pick up a couple biographies and re-read them.

What was it like working with the director, Steven Spielberg?

As an actor, you always want to work with the best. You aspire to work with these great directors and it’s so rare you even get the chance. So it was really marvelous to be directed by him. We met a couple times to discuss what he wanted me to do and what we were going to do with the horse. But when you’re on set, Spielberg comes up to you and just talks to you like a peer. It makes you feel like you’re the most important person on the planet. You’re in the Spielberg aura.

How was working with the rest of the cast?

There was this general sense of reverence and respect for the material and the project.
that almost bordered on somber. On a lot of movie sets there is a lot of kidding around and joking — for this it was all business. Partly because Daniel Day Lewis’ process is so intense and immersive that the stories I got were that you couldn’t even speak to him unless you were speaking to him in character as Mr. President. No one referred to him as Daniel Day Lewis, or Mr. Lewis, it was always Mr. President. And that includes Spielberg.

Any funny or memorable stories from on set?

One fun thing was, they were using a lot of re-enactors as background, so all of my Confederate guys were these locals who are used to re-enactments. They were kind of eyeing me like, “Who is this guy playing General Lee?” But they would saddle up next to me, look me up and down, nod and say, “General, I just want you to know that if you decide not to surrender here today, we’re with ya.” I found that happening more than once. The Southern sensibility was certainly prevalent among those re-enactors.

And what did you think of the final movie?

Oh, it was magnificent. Spielberg’s made a lot of movies. Some of them I really like and some of them were OK. But this was really something. I really thought this was special in the way they broached the subject. The very intimate way they looked at these last 34 days of Lincoln’s life was really remarkable. And of course, Daniel Day Lewis’ performance just makes the film ... There were a lot of great performances — but without the anchor, the ship drifts, and Daniel was certainly the anchor for that picture.

Now that you’re done with “Lincoln,” what’s next?

It’s pilot season out here so I’m auditioning for pilots. I just shot a commercial last week for Adobe ... But the life of an actor is one of constant search of employment. Unless you’re lucky enough to be on a series and have a regular job like that, you’re constantly auditioning, trying to get the next job.
Her dedication and passion for horses encourages Mimi Paixao to pursue a dream of owning and operating a stable.

A picture-perfect green landscape is dotted with grape-bearing vines as horses whinny and walk along the dusty path, led by Mimi Paixao. Looking like a postcard from another time, the Vineyard Trail takes visitors on an outdoor adventure.

Rebel’s Run is about 45 minutes from Harrisonburg, Va., situated at the base of Afton Mountain. It was founded three years ago by Paixao. Inspired by her passion for horses and the outdoors at a young age, Paixao decided to create a stable as a place to live out her dreams.

She began Rebel’s Run after purchasing a horse, Rebel, from a farm in Bedford, Va. Staying true to his name, Rebel broke out of his pasture less than 24 hours after coming to Afton, Va. Two days of looking nonstop yielded no results, so a search-and-rescue team was enlisted to help find Rebel.

“They suggested Rebel might be headed to his old home in Bedford since horses are migratory animals,” said Paixao. “I didn’t think it was possible since home for Rebel was 90 miles away.”

The next day, the search team found Rebel along the Blue Ridge Parkway running through the grassy median headed toward his old home. Rebel had made it more than 35 miles back.

Dedicated to her horses, Paixao wanted to make Rebel’s Run her own.

“It was important to me that my horses did not look like your typical trail horses you see on vacation. Run down, old, lazy, not well-cared for,” Paixao explained.

Starting her day at 5:30 a.m. and ending well into the evening, she works hard to make the trails a place others will want to come and enjoy the outdoors. The Vineyard Trail, along with two others, the Summit Ride and the Valley Ride, form Rebel’s Run.

The Vineyard Trail is a relaxing and beautiful trek through the mountain landscape leading to the Afton Mountain Vineyards. Once there, guests can take a trip down to the tasting room to try a variety of wines or enjoy local fare and gorgeous views down by the lake. Both the Vineyard Trail and the Valley Ride were cre-
After a day spent on the trail, Mimi Paixao relaxes with her horse Rebel. All of Paixao’s horses take Rebel’s lead on the trails.

Rebel’s Run is actually a large dog wagging his tail.

Part Bull Mastiff and part Great Dane, Jaxson is Paixao’s dog and right-hand man around Rebel’s Run. After being rescued from the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animal’s death row for bully breeds, Jaxson — Jax for short — came to be an essential part of Paixao’s life.

Jax and the horses enjoy a love-hate relationship with each other. He sometimes barks to assert himself and the horses playfully nip in return. Full of both energy and excitement, Jax is never far from Paixao, choosing to follow her along every trail ride.

“I couldn’t ask for a better barn dog, barn assistant and trail assistant. He accompanies me everywhere,” Paixao said. “He doesn’t need to be on a leash. He’s devoted like no other. I feel safer and I know the horses like having him accompany us as well while on the trail.”

Rebel’s Run showcases the Blue Ridge Mountains, which often are looked at from afar but not always appreciated. A quick drive away from the traffic lights and asphalt of the city, Paixao’s paradise brings back the simplicity of the outdoors that can be shared with a few beautiful horses.

**HOURS:** 8 a.m.–8 p.m. Monday through Sunday

**ADDRESS:** 374 Mountain Rd., Afton, VA

**PHONE:** (703) 623-5243

**DESCRIPTION:** English and Western lessons, trail rides and summer camps.

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