

SOUTHEAST OHIO

WINTER | SPRING 2020

INSIDE:

PEOPLE (AND CANINES)
WHO MAKE OUR
WORLD BETTER



BLESSING BOXES OFFER
SUPPORT AND SERVICE

POMEROY STERNWHEEL
REGATTA IS A SEA
SCENE TO SEE

HOCKING HILLS
AIRBnB IS A MODERN
TWIST ON CABIN LIFE

CHILlicoTHE PLUGS IN
TO VIRTUAL REALITY

THE BUSINESS OF
LONGABERGER BASKETS



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LETTER FROM
THE EDITOR

Southeast Ohio is more than just a place, it's a vast collection of close-knit communities with thousands of unique stories. Whether residents live in a former coal town in the green hills, a rural farming community surrounded by fields, or an industrial port city on the Ohio River, they care deeply about their neighbors.

To create this issue, reporters didn't just make phone calls from their cozy homes in Athens. They ventured out and experienced the communities upon which they reported. Our writers and photographers visited a therapy dog who's brightening students' days in Chillicothe, they boarded antique sternwheel ships in Pomeroy and they met people who dedicate their lives to bringing food and support to those who need it most.

This issue centers around the pervasive resilience that keeps the villages, towns and cities of Southeast Ohio alive. We feel inspired, and we hope you do, too.

All the best,

Bennett Leckrone
Editor-in-chief

MISSION STATEMENT

Southeast Ohio strives to spotlight the culture and community within our 21-county region. The student-run magazine aims to inform, entertain and inspire readers with stories that hit close to home.


ON THE COVER

Huntington High School's golden doodle Charlie, with school counselor and trainer, Anita Rogers. PAGE 38.
Photo by Alie Skowronski

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This dog trainer and television host helps others connect dogs in need with people who need them



PRECIOUS CARGO

Hocking Hills AirBnB redefines cabin life

STORY BY MICKEY FATH

PHOTO BY ALIE SKOWRONSKI

Nestled between the towering trees and scenic nature wonderland of Hocking Hills sits the new AirBnB, a place that is far from an average log cabin stay. It's the Box Hop: a home constructed from three intermodal shipping containers with a sleek, modern design.

In 2018, Ohioans Seth and Emily Britt constructed the Box Hop, a vision of Seth's since his time as a college student working for FedEx. With his interest in home renovation and Emily's experience in real estate, the couple ran with Seth's idea and created a getaway space in a place where they both grew up exploring. Located near signature hiking trails and complete with a gas fireplace, "all-glass" garage door, hot tub and more, this 8-person stay has caught the attention of hikers alike, as it is booked months ahead of time.

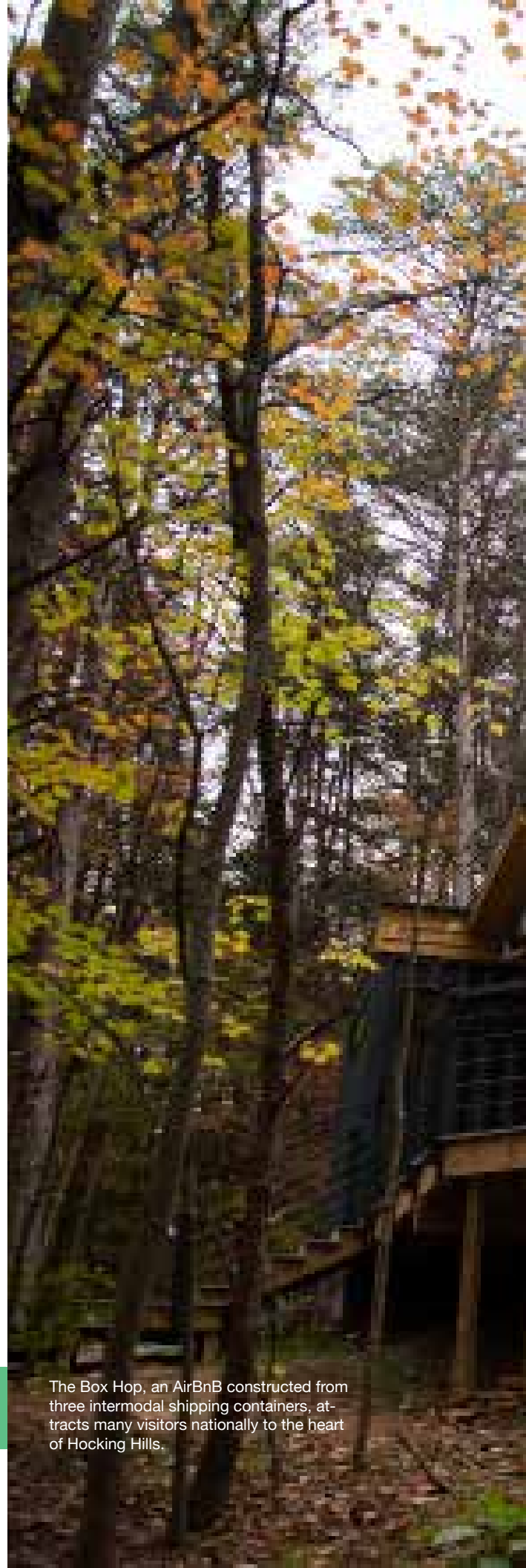
Through the process of constructing the Box Hop, Emily says they aimed to be conscious and considerate of the environment. Portions of the house were made from recycled materials, vendors and contractors remained local and, of course, the shipping containers themselves were given a chance at a second life.

In a region where most bookings for stays are done on paper or by a type of old-school phone booking platform, the couple knew they could reach a younger demographic by hosting with AirBnB, an app for hosts and travelers to book with ease.

"When people talk about their dreams and ambitions, it's hard to just take that step to do it," Emily says. "It doesn't always mean you have all of your ducks in a row, you sort of just go for it. That's what we've done and it's been a blessing."

VISIT THE BOX HOP:

www.theboxhop.com/our-story



The Box Hop, an AirBnB constructed from three intermodal shipping containers, attracts many visitors nationally to the heart of Hocking Hills.





LEFT: A Pane Siciliano loaf sits waiting to get snapped up at the Athens Farmers Market.

LA DOLCE VITA

Molina Family Bakery brings slice of Italy to Athens County

STORY BY **CARLY MCFADDEN** // PHOTOS BY **CONNOR KUREK**

When Gary Molina was a child, he had no idea that the traditional baked goods he was eating every day would make him a living decades later.

Molina Family Bakery was founded in 2011. For the first few years, Gary Molina worked out of his home and sold his Italian breads and sweets at the Athens Farmers Market on East State Street. In 2015, Molina got the opportunity to use the commercial kitchen at Integration Acres in Albany. For the last four years, Molina has been operating out of that kitchen. Today, his baked goods are still sold at the Athens Farmers Market on Saturday mornings, as well as Athens favorite Donkey Coffee. His products include various breads and sweets such as cookies and cinnamon rolls.

Baking runs in Molina's blood. Growing up, Molina was the youngest of five siblings in an Italian-American family. His mother's side was from near Bari, a coastal city in the southeastern region of Italy, while his father's side hailed from Piedmont, a region in the northeastern area of Italy at the foot of the Alps. His father was a baker in the U.S. Army during WWII. He baked bread using large-scale equipment for his fellow comrades as they traveled through England, France, Belgium and Germany during the 1940s.

Molina started his bakery using authentic Italian recipes that his grandmother, who was born in Italy, mother and aunts passed down to his siblings and cousins. He was inspired by the idea of honoring his family members who paved the way for him. "The idea of baking and preparing foods using family recipes gave me a way to not only earn a living, but also to maintain the connection to family," Molina says.

Molina is taking another step to honor his Italian heritage by applying for dual citizenship in Italy. His pride is passed down to his children, who also plan on becoming dual citizens of Italy and the U.S. Molina has always been proud of his heritage, but it has only strengthened since starting the bakery using his family recipes nine years ago. His bakery gives him a chance to share his culture with Athens residents. "I'm always looking at Italian recipes and I always like to have something [Italian] on the table because of that heritage and our future," Molina says. "It's what makes what I'm doing fulfilling beyond just making a living."

Out of all of Molina's breads, his favorite to bake is the Pane Siciliano. The authentic southern Italian bread is made with olive oil, sesame seeds and durum semolina flour. Durum semolina flour is a yellow flour with a coarse texture and nutty, sweet flavor that is also used to make pasta. After

roughly seven hours, the bread is out of the oven and ready to serve at the farmers market. "It is not an easy bread to make because the dough is temperamental," Molina says. "It took a little while to master, but every time it comes out well, I'm happy."

Another popular bread that Molina bakes is the Athens Sourdough. The bread is not one of Molina's family recipes, but it is a hit at the market. As with all sourdoughs, the yeast is naturally fermented, and Molina uses a sourdough starter that is 14 years old. It is fed daily with flour and water in order to maintain. Molina even takes the starter on trips with him to make sure it is fed. The starter has been to Minnesota, Florida and Washington D.C., among other places.

Molina takes a portion of the high-maintenance starter to create each dough. The process for that piece to ferment takes anywhere from 12 to 17 hours. Once it starts fermenting, the bread doubles in size. The entire process takes about 24 hours. "[It's named] Athens Sourdough because it uses all natural yeast that's cultured from the air [in Athens]," Molina says.

Molina likes to use local ingredients whenever he can. All the eggs he uses come from his own chickens. In his popular chocolate raspberry almond bars, Molina uses locally made raspberry jam from Fisher Farm, who is also a vendor at the farmers market.

In the days leading up to the Saturday morning market, Molina starts his days around 3 p.m. and bakes until roughly 5 a.m. He starts by making the sweets on Thursday. Molina bakes his yeast products such as breads and cinnamon rolls on Friday. Then, he gives them ample time to cool and set before packing them up and taking them to the market.

“*The idea of baking and preparing foods using family recipes gave me a way to not only earn a living, but also to maintain the connection to family.*”

– Gary Molina, OWNER

About 90% of Molina's business happens at the market. He has a substantial number of regular customers whom he sees on a weekly basis. Christina Bhat and her daughter, Reiya, are frequent customers of Molina ever since they discovered it in August. The pair likes to indulge in the bakery's tea buns because it reminds them of the time they spent living in India and Australia. "I think that everything is really fresh [at Molina]," Christina says, "and I like to deal with people who are baking and producing locally."

Perhaps one of the most loyal customers is Eloise Clark, a lifelong Athens resident and market attendee who has visited Molina ever since it opened almost a decade ago. "Everything that I have ever eaten from [Molina] has been the very best," Clark says. "He's really a great guy to be able to bake like that."

Molina, who greets everyone with a smile, treasures his mornings at the market. Not only does his business allow him to share his Italian heritage and passion for baking with local residents, but it also allows him to give back to the community with personal, face-to-face interactions.

"I may not know get to know everyone by name, but I know them by what they order every week," Molina says with a laugh.



LEFT: Gary Molina chats with customers at the Athens Farmers Market. He nearly always sells out of his baked goods.

Visit **MOLINA FAMILY BAKERY** at the Athens Farmers Market, Saturdays 9 a.m. – 12 p.m.

FACEBOOK: facebook.com/OldDogAcres/

CONTACT: (740) 591-7263
MolinaFamilyBakery@gmail.com



PHOTO: Clay Haus, a German restaurant, located in the small town of Somerset, Ohio.

FOOD AND SPIRITS

Supernatural stories are on the Clay Haus menu

STORY BY MICKEY FATH // PHOTO BY ALIE SKOWRONSKI

It's impossible to ignore the creaks and cracks of the Clay Haus wooden floors as owner Scott Snider and his employees hustle to prepare for the lunchtime rush. The sounds allude to the brick restaurant's age, but also to the rich history of Somerset that lies inside.

Named after Snider's grandfather, Irwin Clay Priest, the Clay Haus has served guests classic German dishes such as pan-fried chicken liver with apples and onions, and charbroiled bratwurst served with sauerkraut since opening in 1979. Snider, his five siblings and his father renovated the building and Snider's mother, Betty, provided the old German recipes. "I would say we represent stability [in the community]," Snider says. "We're sorta like the pillar that pulls it all together."

The three-story restaurant's interior is brimming with memorabilia from the community: black and white photographs, old posters and antiques — all of which illustrate the Snider family's local links. "A lot of the pictures and things that I have were brought in from regulars," Snider says.

But it may be more than just the classic dishes, distilled beverages and ambiance that lead customers back for more. Different kinds of spirits — the ones that haunt — are known to lurk around the Clay Haus.

Snider reflects on his first few experiences with paranormal activity in the restaurant began decades ago when he would catch glimpses out of the cor-

ner of his eye of things moving or hear noises late at night. But the owner is not the only one who has experienced strange happenings in the Clay Haus.

"When I worked here in high school...I used to sweep the floors on Thursdays when we weren't open," employee Kirstin Abram says. "In the middle of the day I heard all [of] the chairs moving as though we were slammed, like the whole restaurant was filling up. But, there wasn't a single soul there."

After a few more incidents, Snider turned to the professionals. "I've had several teams of ghost hunters in here," Snider says. "I had them go into a room to take pictures and frankly, everything died. The cameras died, nothing worked and that is what they say about spirits, they can suck the energy away."

Such mystery has cemented the Clay Haus' haunted reputation and has even led to a feature in the book, *Ghost Hunter's Guide to Haunted Ohio* (Kestrel Publication). Yet, contrary to what some might think, Snider says the reports of ghosts and spirits in the Clay Haus often drive people into the restaurant, rather than scare them away.

As for how the experiences impact his life, Snider is at peace. "I'm tied to this place," he says. "It doesn't affect me or what I do, but you know, it is now a part of who I am."

FOR MORE INFORMATION

(740) 743-1326 // 123 W Main St, Somerset 43783

FROZEN IN TIME

Tom's Ice Cream Bowl is a delicious Zanesville mainstay

STORY AND PHOTO BY ANTHONY POISAL

Bill Sullivan has heard the same phrase countless times behind the counter at Tom's Ice Cream Bowl since he became the restaurant's owner over three decades ago. "When you think of Zanesville, you think of Tom's."

Sullivan shakes his head and smiles as he repeats the phrase at a desk inside his wooden office buried in the basement of the storied restaurant, which has served as a local hub for families to gather for a fresh meal with options far beyond ice cream since its inception in 1948.

It's a "restaurant" for a reason, and it serves American-style food with a plethora of ice cream selections inside a building that hasn't lost a touch of its 50s-esque features.

Sullivan, 68, says the restaurant has never felt old to him. "Tom's is a part of Zanesville," Sullivan says, as footsteps of customers and employees echo above. "I can't tell you how many times I've heard that here. It's a family atmosphere. We get people in here everyday. I know their life, and they know mine."

While the cheeseburgers, sandwiches, nuts and ice cream add to the restaurant's charm, Sullivan believes it's the people, his customers, who have given the nifty building its widespread reputation.

He's seen couples eat at the restaurant for their first date, and 30 years later, he's served food to their grandkids. "We've survived the test of time," Sullivan says. "We still have those people coming back, and we're known all over the country."

He's also welcomed visitors from all over the world —Australia, Romania, Denmark— who have traveled through Appalachia just to snag a meal.

He also heard a story of a person who randomly met another tourist at the Great Wall of China. Somehow in that conversation, they both learned that they had been to Tom's.

The path to stardom began when it opened as an ice cream shop on Linden Avenue seven decades ago. When business took off in 1950, Tom Mirgon, the original owner, and his cousin Jack Hemmer moved it to a larger property that allowed them to accommodate more people and cook other types of food.

That location, 532 McIntire Avenue, is where the restaurant remains today. And yes, it still makes over 100 gallons of ice cream each day to complement its



ABOVE: A large strawberry and chocolate sundae will surely fill the stomach of any brave foodie looking for an ice cream challenge.

menu items, all made from scratch. The restaurant is almost always busy, too.

On a recent Thursday afternoon, its yellow laminate tables are occupied by families and friends of all ages. It didn't matter that it was a work day or that school was in session — people still wanted to eat at Tom's.

For Sullivan, the hustle never stops. He's always busy managing the restaurant that stays open seven days a week. However, it's just such a reputation that led Mitt Romney to make a campaign stop — Sullivan's favorite memory — at Tom's in 2012.

It's what keeps Mark D'Antonio, Michigan State football coach and Zanesville native, a frequent visitor whenever he comes back home. It's also why Tom's has been featured on Food Network shows and was named one of the top ice cream shops in the country by USA Today in 1998.

But no matter how famous Tom's becomes, it'll always be perceived by Sullivan as his own slice of Zanesville. "What I enjoy about it is dealing with the people that come in here for years and years," he says. "This place is my family."

FOR MORE INFORMATION

www.tomsicecreamowl.com

MODELS OF HEALTH

Calendar shows how the over-60 crowd finds their perfect fit



LEFT: Winners of the contest combine a healthy outlook with personal purpose.

STORY BY ALEXIS MCCURDY // PHOTO PROVIDED

For 12 baby boomers in Southeast Ohio, being a senior citizen is simply a state of mind. Need evidence? Just peruse the first annual Southeast Ohio 60 Strong calendar, a testament to the ability of seniors to live healthy lifestyles after 60.

The 2020 calendar, created by the region's primary care physicians and operating as part of Trusted Senior Care Advantage, features 12 "ambassadors" from ages 60-69 that exemplify a vibrant life.

"All of them are really healthy and living healthy lifestyles, being active," says Patrick Goggin, sponsor of the contest and medical director for Trusted Senior Care Advantage. "Some of them are battling chronic health conditions or they've overcome the death of a spouse." In addition to being a motivational tool to help others stay active, the \$15 calendar provides information about the region's activities, health tips and tools for navigating Medicare.

With different stories to tell and approaches to follow, ambassadors define life after 60 on their own terms. Mary Kitzig is one such example.

After seeing many of her friends run 50k and 100k marathons, Mary Kitzig's decision to run 50 miles on her 50th birthday led her to a renewed health journey where she craves pushing her limits. "So that started me into, 'well if I can do 50, I wonder if I can do 70?', 'If I can do 70, I wonder if I can do 100?'," Kitzig says. "It's sort of this bizarre mindset that if someone did this, well I can do that."

Fitness has always been a large part of Kitzig's life. She ran cross-country in college but injuries led her to start biking. Combining a love for running and biking, she found interest in duathlons. Adding swimming to the mix, she started competing in triathlons.

Now, Kitzig is retired and finds time to stay active with her body in various ways, such as trail running. She recently returned from a two-month trip in Colorado where she hiked five 14,000-foot mountains up and down. She'll continue to run, bike and embody the 60-Strong-mindset she has acquired throughout the years, all while hoping to serve as an inspiration and resource to others.

"You know when you hit 50 or 60, people begin to tell themselves they can't be as strong or healthy," Kitzig says. "And I just don't believe in that. I just believe that you can ... You should have life to years and years to life."

Similarly, if you were to ask Steve Theodosopoulos why he works out, he would ask you why not. He wants to keep his body fit, so in his later years, he can keep doing more of what he wants.

Theodosopoulos previously ran marathons, but today he finds fitness in less punishing activities, including swimming and hiking.

"It's not easy; a lot of days I don't want to do it," Theodosopoulos says, "But as soon as it slacks, I make sure I get back into it and get back on track."

Theodosopoulos says it's all about balance. He delights in beers occasionally, but also is cautious of eating processed foods out of convenience. "Of course you can do things in moderation," Theodosopoulos says. "I'm not always an angel, but I make sure I stay on that healthy mindset and path."

His key to active aging? Just start.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

www.trustedseniorcareadvantage.com/contest/#

HIGHER EDUCATION

Hocking College is first class in the growing industry

STORY BY RYAN MORELAND // PHOTO PROVIDED

Southeast Ohio is a testing ground of sorts for what many believe is progressive change in higher education. To wit, last fall Hocking College enrolled 42 students into its newly formed Cannabis Lab Technician program, which trains students to properly test medical marijuana before it heads to dispensaries.

Many see this as an important milestone for the college and the medical marijuana industry as a whole. But being the first is never an easy road, and Hocking College's groundbreaking program is a testament to perseverance.

The impetus for this coursework started September 8th, 2016 when Ohio's General Assembly passed House Bill 523, which legalized medical marijuana. Part of this bill stated that institutes of higher education were preferred to operate marijuana testing labs, notes Dean of Workforce Development at Hocking College Sean Terrell.

This allowed Hocking College to apply before private sector companies, and it was one of two institutes of higher learning to apply—the other being Central State University in Wilberforce. Seven privately held companies submitted applications. However, this step was just the first hurdle in a lengthy application process.

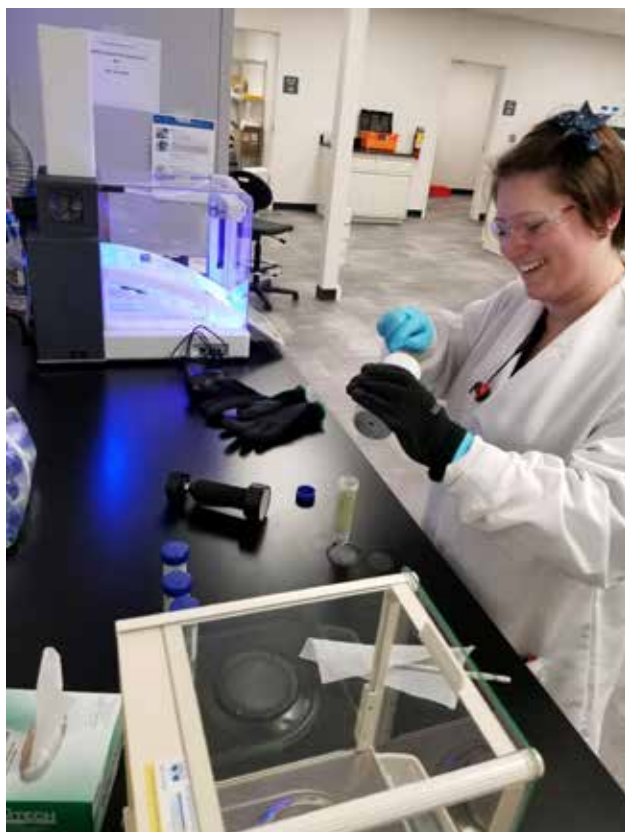
The college was granted a provisional license in July 2018, which meant it could begin building a lab to prepare for an operating license application. To house its testing facility the school purchased the former Starr Machine structure for \$300,000.

The lab opened its doors for a public tour on December 20, 2018, and less than a month later, the school became the second lab to receive its operating license in Ohio, meaning Hocking College could begin testing medical marijuana.

Medical marijuana products can be used by anyone who obtains a Patient & Caregiver Registry card. Applicants must be over the age of 21 and be suffering from any of 21 approved ailments, which include cancer, PTSD, chronic pain, and Parkinson's Disease.

According to Hocking College, the medical marijuana industry is predicted to be worth \$80 billion in Ohio alone. This rapidly growing industry needs a competent workforce, and Hocking College hopes to fill this void with graduates of its Cannabis Lab Technician major, one of the three associate degree of Applied Science in Laboratory Sciences majors.

Hocking College administrators are optimistic that this program will bring more students to their school, and so far, this prediction is coming true. But Terrell believes that such growth can also happen well beyond its walls. "Not just in Ohio, but nationwide as the industry continues to grow, that other institutions will create programs," says Terrell.



LEFT: Majors in Hocking College's Associate of Applied Science in Laboratory Sciences include Chemical Laboratory, Medical Laboratory and Cannabis Laboratory (pictured). Such cannabis labs are designated by the Ohio Department of Commerce with verifying the quality and safety of medical marijuana products.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

www.hocking.edu/laboratory-sciences



LEFT: Anthony Sever, game streamer for DocSparks_216 Gaming, plays Beat Saber.

BELOW: Colin (left) and Sara (right) Rose, stand behind the front desk inside Objective Reality Games.

Real fun

Chillicothe gets a virtual blast

STORY BY **GABE GENOVESI**

PHOTOS BY **CONNOR KUREK**



At the end of 2018, Sara Rose and her husband, Colin Rose, were servers at Olive Garden, and Colin was planning to start law school in the fall. But everything changed for the couple after they visited a Columbus escape room in January 2019.

The escape room's owner mentioned to the couple that he was looking into adding a virtual reality (VR) component to the business, but when the Roses followed up a few months later, they learned the VR idea never materialized.

Sara and Colin saw opportunity, and within two days, they had a licensing agreement with Ubisoft, a French video game company with VR software.

The only hiccup; neither had worked with VR before and the closest place to use Ubisoft's VR escape rooms was in Fort Wayne, Indiana. So, they made the trip, which turned out to be eye-opening.

"I was just astounded at the quality," Sara says. "It's so immersive because it comes with full stereo headphones and the controls vibrate when you touch things," Colin says. "It tricks your brain into thinking that you're really in this virtual space."

Last fall, the Roses opened their new business, Objective Reality Games, in their hometown, Chillicothe. The shop features two VR escape rooms and an arcade that runs 40 VR arcade games that rotate throughout the month.

A driving principle of their business model is branding the company as a sober place for people to spend their time. "Teenagers and young kids who are in this town wanting to hang out with their friends, end up getting caught up in drugs because there's nothing else for them to do, in their minds, to have fun," Sara says.

They want to help with that perception. Colin is a licensed addiction counselor who has also struggled with addiction.

"The idea that we can have a safe environment for people to come and feel like they can have a good time without it being revolved around drinking and everything, that's a big part of our lives personally and we want to make sure people can experience that in our town, too," Colin says.

Local businesspeople say the shop adds new dimensions to local commerce. "It's the first one in the state of Ohio, so we're hoping people from Columbus and all the surrounding counties will come here to enjoy this technology and have a super fun evening out," says Bobbi Kellough, member relations and events manager at the Chillicothe Ross Chamber of Commerce.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:
www.objectiverealitygames.com



FAIR TRADES

Blessing Boxes offer the exchange of security and support

LEFT: Students organize the canned and boxed donations on the four shelves in the blessing box.

STORY BY **ALLY LANASA** // PHOTO BY **CONNOR KUREK**

“Take what you need. Give what you can.” That mantra is emblazoned on most of the 19 active donation boxes in Ross County, known to residents as “blessing boxes.”

The freestanding cupboard-like structures, mostly located near parks, schools and churches, are a community project to provide nonperishable foods and personal hygiene products to those in need.

“We have a lot of working poor here in Ross County,” says Bill Hickel, one of the builders of blessing boxes. “They make too much money to get food assistance, but we know what the reality is: one income just doesn’t do much these days.”

According to a 2018 report by the Ohio Department of Education, more than 2,500 Ross County students applied for a free lunch and nearly 400 students applied for a reduced-price lunch. Data from a 2017 study by Feeding America showed the food insecurity rate in Ross County was 15%.

In response to such community needs, residents like Hickel and Daniel DeGarmo, the leader of the grassroots movement, began constructing the boxes to offer constant access to supplies countywide.

Hickel’s uniform blessing boxes cost about \$300, and they feature a plexiglass window, self-closing doors, sheet metal, 3/4-inch exterior plywood and yellow pine for some of the framework.

“People are starting to love others and realize there are others who aren’t nearly as fortunate as we are,” Hickel says.

Although the project has been organized and managed by adults, Ross County youth groups including local Girl Scout troops and religious organizations help stock the boxes.

For example, after Youth Sunday, the last Sunday service of the month at Bourneville Christian Union Church, the children restock a blessing box in town near Twin Dairy Hut, 11673 U.S. 50.

In 2017, Bishop Flaget School installed a blessing box on campus with the sponsorship of Southern Ohio Survivors (SOS), a local program founded by breast cancer survivor Lynn Bunstine that assists people during and after treatment for life-threatening illnesses. The project teaches children from preschool to eighth grade about sacrifice and almsgiving.

“As a Catholic school, an important part of our state is care of the neighbor, and we work with the kids on the social justice issues and understanding that if we are given much, much is expected of us,” says Bishop Flaget Principal Laura Corcoran. “It’s important to us that when our kids leave Bishop Flaget, they understand that they have a responsibility to care for their fellow man.”

And in this case, the care extends beyond canned food. The students also collect personal hygiene items, gloves, mittens, hats, scarves, raincoats and school supplies. The seventh and eighth graders are responsible for filling the box with items stored in a stock room at the parochial school, says Linda Kerr, the physical education teacher at Bishop Flaget and a board member of SOS.

“When they fill the blessing box in the morning and at the end of the school day it’s empty, that really is a kind of wakeup call for them about the need in the community,” Corcoran says.

As 11,560 people in Ross County suffer from a food shortage that can diminish healthy and active lifestyles, generous residents strive to provide a blessing through nutrient-rich food.

“They can find in the box a source of a meal,” says Hickel. “We’ve had a lot of people tell us ... ‘That really got me through.’”

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

[on Facebook: RossCounty Blessing Boxes](#)



Howard Peller stands in front of a display of his in-demand work. Today he weaves baskets by hand from ingredients grown on his farm near Roseville.

WEAVING WISDOM

The legacy of Longaberger Baskets

STORY BY **BENNETT LECKRONE** // PHOTOS BY **KEVIN PAN**

Howard Peller remembers thousands of workers weaving baskets as one in a huge warehouse. That was in the heyday of the Longaberger Company, a billion-dollar basket maker based in Dresden.

"To see 2,000 people weaving was pretty cool," Peller, who was once the director of design for the company, recalls. "It was like a bee hive."

But those days of mass-producing baskets in the region are long gone: After a steady decline, Longaberger ceased operations in early 2018.

Today, Peller weaves baskets by hand from ingredients he grows on his farm near Roseville. He doesn't know of many other weavers left in the area.

Peller's careful and studious work is a far cry from the huge amount of collectible baskets that Longaberger once churned out. The massive company's legacy can be seen across Muskingum and Licking Counties.

Outside of Frazeytsburg, the company's manufacturing buildings sit empty; in Dresden, the "world's largest basket," a work created by Longaberger weavers, is beginning to rot.

WEAVING DREAMS

Longaberger was founded in 1973 as a little weaving shop in Dresden. Its founder, trailblazer and visionary Dave Longaberger, led the company to massive success.

In 2000, a year after his death, Dave Longaberger's company peaked in value at \$1 billion. At its height, the Longaberger Company provided jobs to nearly 8,000 in the region.

Geoff Snyder still sells the company's baskets. He started selling them as "The Basket Guy" during the recession of 2008 and found that there was still a huge demand for the baskets. "A large majority of my sales are online," Snyder says. "There are collectors all over the country that I sell to."

However, the Longaberger Company as a business was mortally wounded by the economic downturn. Peller says the recession, combined with a change in home decor tastes, led to the company's eventual bankruptcy and collapse.

"I designed a lot of functional work for Longaberger," Peller said. "People collected, and had different fabrics and matched [baskets] up in their homes."

In addition to teaching people new skills and providing employment, Longaberger gave the area something to be proud of, Peller says. "It was a source of pride for people," he says. "They did something successful with their hands. People made a good living, it was good work and had good benefits. When you lose that, it's difficult."

AN OLD TRADITION

Since his time at Longaberger ended, Peller has become an expert on willow. He uses the hearty plant to create living fences and other structures in addition to weaving its sticks into baskets.

Demand for his services are high. He was recently in New York City decorating penthouse with his willow. He previously created a sculpture out of willow in Rockefeller Plaza. "It's a great biodiverse plant," Peller says. "It really has a positive effect on the environment."

Peller uses techniques he learned during two summers living with local artisans near the headwaters of the Amazon River in South America. He's also worked in Haiti over the course of three years.

But Longaberger weren't the first baskets ever produced in southeast Ohio. Peller says farms across the region wove their own baskets, either from willow or wooden splints. It's a tradition that has largely been forgotten, save for Peller's basket farm. "They planted the material and wove with it," Peller says. "Most people don't even remember that."

Southeast Ohio has a rich artisan tradition, Peller says. When he purchased his farm, it was adjacent to two massive pottery producers. While he and his wife still have a pottery studio, that tradition has also struggled to survive.

“*A large majority of my sales are online. There are collectors all over the country that I sell to.*”

– Geoff Snyder, “THE BASKET GUY”

A FUTURE FOR BASKETS

No one weaves for Longaberger anymore, but some are finding new opportunities in Dresden.

The town never gave up on baskets. Snyder is only one of many local retailers who've based their business around Longaberger. While Snyder says he'll always be loyal to Longaberger, he's excited about a new company that is trying to revive the company's legacy.

Dresden and Company is a smaller operation that Longaberger was, only employing about ten weavers, but it has proprietors like Snyder excited. "They've kind of arisen from the ashes," Snyder says. "It would be silly to not support a local company."

Brenton Baker, the director of marketing and communications for Dresden and Company, says there is still a demand for hand-woven baskets across the world. "When Longaberger went out, there were a number of folks who spent a lifetime making baskets that had no way to employ their craft," Baker says. "There were people still across the country that appreciate the baskets that are made in Dresden, Ohio by these talented folks."

Baker says Dresden and Company is also leading an effort to restore the giant basket in the downtown area of Dresden. He calls Dresden the "epicenter" of basket making in America.

And other outside forces seem interested in renewing the region and some of the basket glory, too. In October of 2019, numerous media outlets reported about plans to turn the company's iconic basket-shaped headquarters near Newark into a luxury hotel.

Regardless of its future, Longaberger changed the landscape of Dresden and Muskingum County forever. Weavers like Peller and sellers like Snyder say they're grateful for the opportunities the company provided in its heyday and even, beyond.



POLITICAL PARALYSIS

Southeast Ohio's voice in the Ohio Statehouse can seem inaudible. Here is both the cause and the effect

STORY BY **AVERY KREEMER & BENNETT LECKRONE**

Throughout its history, Ohio has had political power centralized along a three point route that is now traced by Interstate 71. The interstate begins near Cleveland, the fifth largest city in the nation at its peak in the 1920s; it continues on toward Columbus, the state's current population monolith nearing 800,000 residents in the city proper alone; and it makes its last stop in Ohio near Cincinnati, the third most populous city in the state.

In Southeast Ohio, it's not unusual to hear a city or county official reference a lack of funding or attention paid to the region from the Statehouse in Columbus. Meanwhile, the counties that make up the region are the ones that are trying to answer some of Ohio's hardest questions, like how to limit the region's opioid epidemic, or how to reduce the high poverty rates that tend to strike rural areas so deeply.

In a state where the population distribution is so centralized and the burdens of residents are so dependent on what region they live, a population-proportional political system can tend to turn a blind eye to low-density populations like those of Southeast Ohio.

The answer to achieving more political power in this system, of course, is to simply gain more res-

idents in the region. However, Southeast Ohio will never be able to compete with the various other regions throughout the state in this arena.

Another possible solution is home rule, a 1912 amendment to the Ohio Constitution that guarantees municipalities the right to govern themselves, a system that isn't so dependent on a municipality's population.

At its inception, home rule was an effort to take power away from Ohio's prone-to-lobbying General Assembly, which had for years used a political maneuver that enabled it to enact laws on specific municipalities instead of statewide laws, which was forbidden by an amendment in the Ohio Constitution.

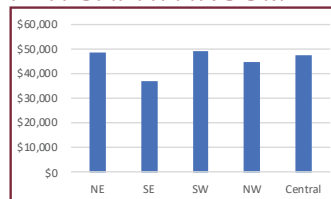
Since then, home rule has been a point of contention, as the amendment isn't so clear on definitions and the case law regarding home rule has been historically inconsistent.

Thus, over the years, there have been many instances of the Legislature passing laws that preempt local laws, chipping away at home rule power. Here are some examples of some of those laws since the turn of the century.

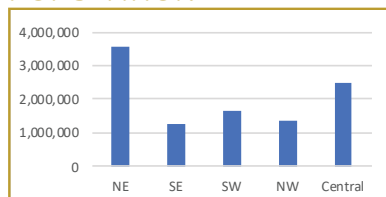
OHIO'S REGIONS BY THE NUMBERS



PER CAPITA INCOME

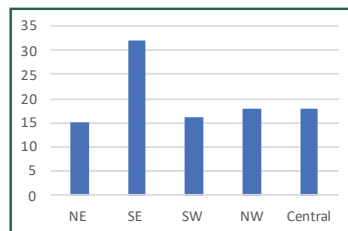


POPULATION



TOTAL: 11,689,442

PERCENT OF STATE'S LAND



TOTAL: 40,948 sq mi

- BRENN A SCHOEN

HOME RULE EXPLAINER

The bill seems innocent enough: Ohio House Bill 242 would prevent municipalities in Ohio from banning plastic bags. For Ashley Brewster, however, the bill comes off as a direct attack on the rights of cities, towns and villages across Ohio.

Brewster, the communications director for the Ohio Municipal League, an alliance of more than 700 municipalities across the state, says the bill is just another example of the state legislature's attacks on "home rule," or the ability of municipalities to make their own laws.

Home rule is a right given to municipalities by the Ohio Constitution.

According to the home rule principle, Ohio municipalities can make their own laws and regulations so long as they don't contradict state or federal laws. That's where the state legislature's interference comes into play, Brewster says.

Under the guise of protecting plastic-producing businesses in Ohio, Brewster says, House Bill 242's barring of cities from banning plastics is an example of a state "preemption." If passed, plastic products would be added to an already lengthy list of items local governments have no power to regulate.

The bill is just one of multiple infringements on home rule that Lancaster Mayor David Scheffler has seen since he was elected two years ago. He cites new municipal income tax rules and wireless communications laws as other examples of preemptions he's seen.

"Home rule is in the constitution, but the legislature keeps chipping away at it piece by piece," Scheffler says.

Brewster also takes issue with state preemptions. She says "when legislators try to pass legislation that is a preemption, the argument is it would benefit the state as a whole," but adds that preemption affects a huge swath of Ohio cities with vastly different needs.

Scheffler says the needs of Lancaster are very different than that of Toledo or Cleveland. "We know our citizens," he says. "We know what makes a difference here."

Even within Southeast Ohio, different areas have vastly different needs. Some villages are challenged by acid mine drainage, or chemicals leaking out of coal mines and polluting rivers and streams. Other local governments are faced with fracking companies buying up land on which to drill. Oil wells dot some of the region's hills, while windmills rise above others.

Yet, local governments have very little power to regulate oil and gas wells in their jurisdictions and have little authority over natural resource extraction in their re-

gion, according to state law. When the state legislature creates sweeping preemptions that involve such matters, Brewster says small villages and cities like those in Southeast Ohio are often left without a voice to defend themselves. "The needs of each municipality are unique," Brewster says. "That's one of the reasons that home rule is such an important part of the economic success of the state."

But municipalities aren't entirely without recourse, Brewster notes. When she sees a bill that challenges home rule, she encourages local leaders to come to Columbus and tell lawmakers about how preemption impacts their cities. Putting a face to an issue can make legislators realize the way their actions impact municipalities, she says.

"Municipalities and other local governments have banded together to fight these things," Scheffler says. "We can go to our local legislator, but he or she is only one vote in the big picture."

OHIO'S HOME RULE BILLS

S.B. 82: Residency Requirements for Municipal Employees

In 2006, Dayton-area state Sen. Jeff Jacobson (R) introduced legislation that disallowed municipalities from requiring its employees to live within the municipality. This took away power from 138 towns and villages in Ohio that had this restriction. The legislation was largely Republican-backed with some Democratic support and was signed into law by Gov. Strickland.

S.B. 117: Cable TV

In 2007, Sen. Jacobson introduced a bill that took away local municipalities' power to regulate which video service providers can operate locally, and instead gave that

power to the state's Director of Commerce. This restricted a municipality's ability to charge for cable licensing or to regulate cable TV rates for its residents. The bill had nearly unanimous support throughout the Legislature and was signed into law by then-Gov. Ted Strickland (D).

S.B. 331: Prohibits Municipal Minimum Wage

In 2016, state Sen. Bob Peterson (R) introduced a catch-all bill — firstly focused on dog breeding mandates — that prohibited municipalities from setting minimum wages above that of the state. The bill was entirely Republican-backed in both the Senate and the House

before then-Gov. John Kasich (R) signed it in December 2016.

H.B. 278 | Fracking

In 2003, Cincinnati-area state Rep. Tom Niehaus (R) introduced a bill that gave the state exclusive authority on regulating oil and gas drilling, taking regulating power away from municipalities, counties and townships. This rendered local government powerless in stopping controversial fracking practices. The bill had predominant Republican support in the House and was passed by the Senate three months later. The eastern side of Ohio is a hotbed for fracking sites, extending down to Southeast Ohio's border with West Virginia.

IN THEIR SHOES

In the words of Theodore Roosevelt, “No one cares how much you know until they know how much you care.”

Here are four stories about local people who have found meaning and purpose through unconventional paths.

A close-up photograph of a tattoo artist's hands as they sketch a design onto a client's arm. The artist is wearing a blue long-sleeved shirt. The client's arm is heavily tattooed with intricate black and grey designs. The background is blurred, showing other people in a tattoo parlor setting.

TATTOOING AWAY THE PAST

Billy White and his staff at Red Rose Tattoo in Zanesville are trying to stop negative rhetorics by covering up hate-filled tattoos for free

STORY BY ELLEN WAGNER

PHOTOS BY ALIE SKOWRONSKI & KEVIN PAN

Billy White never expected he would spend his life trying to solve issues of socio-economic, racism and mental health. He didn't even expect to be a tattoo artist.

White grew up in the village of Crooksville poor and uneducated. His dad was a coal miner, and his mom was a factory worker who didn't graduate high school. He said his parents were furious with him when he dropped out of school to become a tattoo artist. "I lost my parents nine years ago now, and I'd like to think that they would be proud of where it put me," White says.

At 19 years old, he was hired at a store in Zanesville mall that was part skateboard shop and part tattoo parlor. He never intended to learn tattooing, he just thought the dynamic of the store was interesting.

They asked him if he could draw when he applied, and he gave his first tattoo two weeks later. "Now looking back on it, I definitely didn't do anything right by the standards of how I would do it now or how I would teach someone now," White says. "I'm thankful for the way that I was kind of thrown into the mix of it pretty quickly."

Since he started tattooing, White has opened multiple tattoo shops and has been improving his craft. In 2006, he opened Downtown Tattoo with other tattoo artists.

PHOTO: Billy White sketches over a client's hateful tattoo at Red Rose Tattoo.



PHOTO: Today, Red Rose Tattoo has over a hundred people on the waitlist to get their tattoos covered.

“It just is going to hopefully remind them, ‘Hey, I got this thing. I’m able to move on with this part of my life.’”

– Billy White, TATTOO ARTIST

“So this was the first time that we were going to be doing a real tattoo shop that I was really proud of, and I could see where it was all going to go,” he says.

He then opened Yellow Rose Tattoo in Zanesville in 2011. After it closed, he spent a few years commuting from Zanesville to Cleveland to work at Tattoo Faction.

In 2015, he opened Red Rose Tattoo in Zanesville, a space that features shelves lined with White’s collection of figures from Star Wars, Cavaliers bobbleheads and other action figures.

But today, at age 35, White is more widely renowned for his imagination and compassion — due in large part to his response to the 2017 white supremacist rally in Charlottesville, Virginia. White

created a Facebook post offering to cover 10 people’s racist, gang-related, sex trafficking marks and any other hate-based tattoo for free. He anticipated it would take a year to get 10 respondents, but he greatly underestimated. Today, there are over a hundred of people on the waitlist to get their tattoos covered.

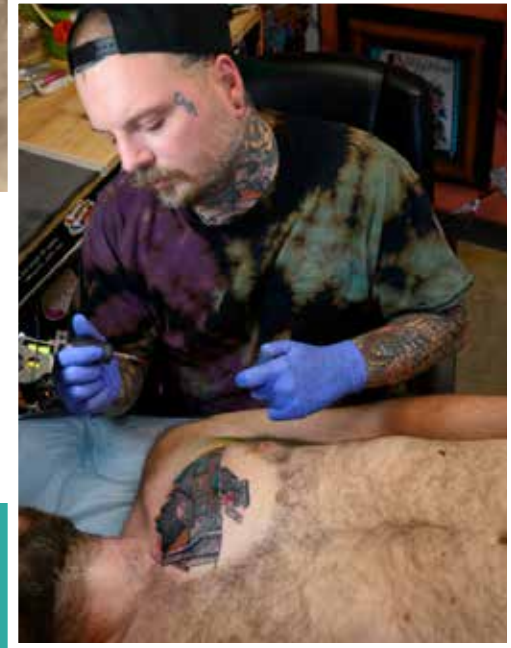
“This is the rhetoric that is I often see, and that I don’t support in any way,” White says. “I figured if I could somehow use my skill set to combat that I would.”

To get a tattoo covered, people submit a photo of the tattoo and explain why they want it covered before booking an appointment. People have come from Ohio, West Virginia, Kentucky, Michigan and Virginia to have their tattoo covered.

White and his staff feel that tattooing is a form



LEFT: White carefully outlines a new tattoo design over his client's previous tattoo.



ABOVE: White makes finishing touches to the tattoo that resembles a homey log cabin.



ABOVE: The final product flaunts nothing but White's adept hand at tattooing.

of spiritual healing and want to aid people in moving forward by providing a judgement-free space.

"We've seen literally every avenue and every race reached out in some way, shape or form and needed us," White says. "I just think it really speaks volumes on the divide and conquer kind of agenda. That's always been the rhetoric, and we think that we can unify people based on treating people the way that they should be treated."

Each design for a tattoo is made by one of the tattoo artists at Red Rose. White says he asks people what they are interested in to make the design, but most people just want the tattoo off their body. If they don't have a specific design in mind, White looks for something that's going to be bold and solid.

"When they see it, it's going to be something that's 10 times nicer looking," White says. "It just

is going to hopefully remind them, 'Hey, I got this thing. But I'm able to move on with this part of my life.'"

When tattooing, White and his staff allow the person getting tattooed take the lead in the conversation, whether they want to talk about their past or not. He said he just tries to find some common ground with people, address the old and move past it.

White says people getting their tattoo covered is only the first step in making a change in their life.

"I'm just a dude who likes tattoos. I never started out to do this to be like a social activist or anything like that," White says. "I've always been convicted about things, cared about humans and see how each one of these stories affects me in different ways."

FEEDING VINTON

Each month the four-person staff at McArthur's St. Francis Outreach helps around 400 Vinton County families feel more food secure

STORY BY **AVERY KREEMER** // PHOTO BY **BRENNA SCHOEN**

Mike Fisher pulls into a gravel parking lot at an unnamed township building in New Plymouth, Ohio. He leaves the truck engine running and unlocks the building's door, stepping inside to set some binders and a makeshift rolodex down on a table.

He has just come from the St. Francis Outreach Center in McArthur, about a 20 minute drive south from New Plymouth. His truck was loaded with boxes of food, packaged earlier that week at the outreach center. Fisher is the longest serving active member of the St. Francis and has been with the mobile unit since the center started this service 20 years ago.

The outreach center in McArthur has helped feed and clothe Vinton County families for over 30 years. Today, an on-site staff of four is responsible for helping feed over 400 families a month. It hosts a food pantry, a clothing center and the mobile unit that delivers food all around Vinton County.

The site's Operations Manager Ashley Riegel says the center provides a 6-day emergency supply of food basics to Vinton County families once a month, with more food given to larger families. A standard box contains peanut butter, meat cans, tomato sauce, vegetables, fruit and more, designed to help families stretch their meals.

Fisher's job is to make accessing food supplements easier for Vinton County residents, so that they don't have to drive all the way to McArthur to pick up food.

He's usually joined on delivery runs by Greg Covey, but on

this afternoon Covey is needed in McArthur to help Riegel and the Staci Rafferty serve over 170 senior citizens scheduled to pick up food supplements provided by Hocking Athens Perry Community Action, which happens every first Tuesday of the month.

For all of Vinton County's expanse, there are fewer than 14,000 permanent residents. The county's small towns and villages are scattered, but Fisher's interactions illustrate a general ease of communication.

After all his time delivering food to New Plymouth, Ratcliffburg, Wilkesville and Zaleski, Fisher knows a lot of Vinton County residents.

"You back again?" he asks with a smile after a woman in a minivan pulled up to the township building. He recognizes the car; he knows the driver.

Fisher and the driver walk into the building so the woman can sign some papers from the binder Fisher placed there earlier, verifying the pick up. She, like anyone else who would stop by within the next couple of hours, is here to get food — one box for her and another for her also-registered cousin.

She and Fisher talk with seamless familiarity. They head back outside, where Fisher moves boxes of food from the back of his truck to the side door. The driver loads up her trunk, says her thanks and waves goodbye.

"See you next month," Fisher says, getting back in the truck to wait for the next person while the AC hits his face.

Another car pulls up, this time

driven by a young woman who recently finished a shift at a nearby fast food restaurant and has a baby waiting at home.

"You back again?" Fisher asks with a smile.

It's routine.

Fisher's knowledge of the people he serves isn't forced, and it isn't limited just to their personal lives. Despite growing up outside the county, he has an intimate understanding of specific patterns and outlooks of Vinton County residents.

He doesn't expect to see too many people on this delivery run. He's in New Plymouth, the smallest community the mobile outreach center serves. It is also the first Tuesday of the month, which — like the third Tuesday of the month — means people will be at home, waiting by their mailboxes, he says. Payday.

"Where we might normally do between 15 and 30 [families], we'll be lucky if we do 10 today," Fisher says. He adds that many Vinton County residents turn to St. Francis Outreach Center before they use government assistance.

"It's funny because a lot of people think that you would come to a food pantry when you ran out of food and your food stamps were gone," Fisher says. "If you talk to most of these people, they come to us before they get their food stamps."

Part of the reason folks in need are willing to turn to St. Francis first is because the on-site staffers are either from Southeast Ohio or have been in a similar position themselves.



LEFT: Ashley Riegel, operations manager at the McArthur outreach center.

“We’re not just handing out clothes or food. We’re sometimes just a listening ear.”

– Ashley Riegel,
ST. FRANCIS OUTREACH

Riegel grew up in Southeast Ohio and was introduced to the center when she and her husband both lost their jobs over 10 years ago. “I was using the pantry myself. Me and my husband were both unemployed at the same time,” Riegel says. “So, we had to reach out and get help from the food pantry out toward Wilkesville — one of the mobile sites.”

Shortly after, Riegel learned about an open position at St. Francis and applied. She started at entry level and worked her way up to operations manager, a post she’s maintained for three years.

Fisher, a central Ohio native, was originally assigned to the location by Vinton County Job & Family Services after he lost a custodial job at a nearby school.

“I went and signed up at human services, and back then you had to work for anything you received, and I was raising three girls on my own,” Fisher says. “And, they stuck me at St. Francis, that’s how I found out [about it].”

Once Fisher finished his Job & Family Services stint at St. Francis, he was hired to work the mobile delivery unit full-time and has been in that position ever since.

Rafferty and Covey, the two newest additions to the staff, both have connections to Southeast Ohio. Rafferty grew up in Vinton County and went to school in Wilkesville, and Covey married a county resident and used St. Francis’ clothing center before he was employed there.

The center, a branch of the Catholic Diocese of Columbus, was originally an effort to promote Catholicism in Protestant-dominated Vinton County, but the center’s roots in advancing the Catholic faith has since evolved.

“Thirty-five or 36 years ago the idea was to come down to build a Catholic church,” Fisher says. “But when they got down here, they realized the need, and they opened up the food pantry and a clothing center.”

Today, young and old familiar

faces and relatable backgrounds have created a sense of ease that has connected the center with the community, which has helped St. Francis also provide an intangible public good.

“We’re not just handing out clothes or food. We’re sometimes just a listening ear,” Riegel says. “It’s sometimes just that, that we’re here and we can hear what they’re saying, and we listen to them and try to help them in any way we can.”

Riegel turns to a letter of appreciation written by a young mother of five who uses St. Francis to help feed her family to highlight the many things the center offers.

The unnamed woman and her husband both hold jobs, but they still need help with supplemental food and clothing. The family visits the food pantry branch of the center the allotted once a month.

In the letter she writes that food from the center allows her to stretch the meals she puts on her dinner table, and ensures that her children won’t have to skip meals.

“There is a sort of shame that people like me can’t help but to carry because we just don’t have the resources to make ends meet, but I’ve never felt looked down upon for being a frequent visitor of St. Francis,” she writes. “I’ve only ever been met with a warm greeting and a genuine smile.”

A large, dark tree trunk dominates the right side of the frame, with a person visible climbing it. The background is a bright, overcast sky. The overall scene is a logging operation in a forest.

A LOGGING LEGACY

Caudill Chipping Company is
master logging at its family finest

STORY BY SARAH PENIX

PHOTOS BY ALIE SKOWRONSKI

Massive machines dance along the hillside as they cut and handle trees. The vehicles balance freshly cut trees in their sharp claws and move them down a steep decline, beginning the process of manufacturing lumber. This is Caudill territory.

Growing up, Corbett Caudill Jr. knew that logging was his destiny. Between watching the men in his family cut lumber from a young age to joining the company after he graduated high school in 2005, Caudill Jr. found the same passion in logging as the men before him. Now as the operating manager of the business, he carries the legacy of his father and grandfather through upholding their values and mission of serving customers.



PHOTO: Corbett R. Caudill Sr., and his son Corbett R. Caudill (pictured) are certified by the Ohio Forestry Association as Master Loggers. The program offers different types of training such as best management practices for water quality and erosion control, chainsaw safety and tree felling techniques.



PHOTO: Corbett R. Caudill Jr. (left) is a third generation logger. His father Corbett R. Caudill Sr. (right) turned 77 last November.

“The thing that always echoes in my head is, Dad would always tell us you can give a little more than you tell a person but you never can do less. And [to] promise what you know you can do, and then try your best to do more.”

– Corbett Caudill Sr., MASTER LOGGER

Caudill Chipping Company was founded in 1973, however, logging has been in the Caudill family for a generation longer. For Corbett R. Caudill Sr., who turned 77 in November, logging is all he has ever known; His father was a logger and his family owned one of the first skidders in Ohio.

Although the landowners they work with and the partners they haul to are obviously connected to the family business, Caudill Chipping’s reach extends farther than that.

“Most of [our trucks] are Kenworth and they’re built right in Chillicothe, the fuel that we buy, it’s all right there in McArthur, the local store that ev-

erybody stops at to get gas and pop and get their breakfast and lunch, you know, and then the parts store when we break down,” Corbett Caudill Jr. says. “I mean, it’s not just us, but the whole logging industry touches a lot more people than you would think.”

Strong connections are one value the company carries. Another is doing their job as mindfully as possible. Caudill Chipping is Master Logger certified, meaning that it follows Ohio Forestry Association standards of timber harvesting and efforts to reduce soil erosion.

There is no professional license for foresters in

Ohio. As a result, The Ohio Forestry Association runs a Master Logger certification program, which offers different types of training such as best management practices for water quality and erosion control, chainsaw safety and tree felling techniques. To maintain Master Logging Company status, re-certification is required every three years. The certification is beneficial because companies must have it to work with state forest lands. "We work closely with all the soil and water [conservation divisions]," Caudill Sr. says.

Eighty-seven percent of Ohio's forests are owned by private woodland owners, according to the ODNR Division of Forestry. Because Caudill Chipping primarily works with private land owners, they are contributing to conservation efforts where it is not mandated because Ohio's best logging practices are voluntary.

"To really influence the force of the state, you know, we've got to talk with and help the private landowners ... make good decisions," says Greg Guess, Division of Forestry deputy chief. "Otherwise, we can manage public land, you know, great, but it's a small percentage [of land]."

Caudill Chipping logs 1,000 to 1,200 acres of

timber per year, depending on the weather. In comparison, family forest owners in Ohio own a total of 5.9 million acres of woodland.

"[Caudill Jr.] does not, would never, cheat anyone. And he has talked to people who have said, 'Well, somebody came in and they said they will pay me this,' and he says 'I think they were cheating you. Because this is what it's worth,' and he will give exactly what he can out of them," says Christina Caudill, Caudill Jr.'s aunt. "And he takes no extra because it's their land. It's their investment, they need to get their investment back."

Integrity extends to the Caudill's business practices. The family business was founded on principles of fairness and hard work. From a lesson on sharing from his father when he was young to walking property lines with land owners and their neighbors at age 77, Caudill Sr. is more than the president of the company. He upholds his father's original vision of values.

"The thing that always echoes in my head is, Dad would always tell us you can give a little more than you tell a person but you never can do less. And [to] promise what you know you can do, and then try your best to do more," Caudill Sr. says.



PHOTO: Skidders are the core of logging operations — the machines pull cut trees out of cutting site and onto an area where the lumber can be further transported.



SONIC BOOM

ABOVE: DeWitt, the first woman completely in charge of sound at Donkey Coffee, gets technical with a microphone before a live act.

Allison DeWitt works behind the scenes as an audio engineer and an event booker to create atmosphere and a solid sound experience

STORY BY **OMRI CURNETTE** // PHOTOS BY **CONNOR KUREK**

On a Thursday night last fall, the back room of Donkey Coffee and Espresso in Athens is set up for Open Stage. The lights are subtle and low and students are all around, studying and doing homework. As 8 p.m. nears, the room slowly fills with musicians.

A woman in her 20s sets up the mic stands and then goes to the back behind the sound booth, calling the musicians' names listed on her sheet. Between sets, she talks to each artist to make sure they're comfortable and everything is adjusted to their liking. As musicians play, the full and relaxing sounds from the instruments emanate through the room. Everyone is quiet and attentive. Even after performers finish their sets, they stay back to watch and support their fellow musicians.

It is a lovely and communal atmosphere, which can be largely attributed to the woman behind the

soundboard, Allison DeWitt.

DeWitt started working as the sound engineer and the booking manager for Donkey Coffee in January 2017. A Toledo native and Athens resident of 10 years, she had been coming to Donkey as a performer for awhile. After talking to Troy Gregorino, the previous open mic booker, she became interested in the position. Chris Pyle, co-owner of Donkey Coffee, hired her and now believes that open mic nights really came into their own under her guidance. "[She] found her feet pretty quickly and people really gravitated to her," he says. "I think a lot of why people keep coming back is because of Allison."

DeWitt's success is also notable for busting the profession's gender norms. There are just not many women involved in the music industry, particularly from a production standpoint. In fact, a 2019 study

“

[A live show] brings people together... Art and music can do that all over the world.”

– Allison DeWitt, AUDIO ENGINEER

by Women’s Audio Mission found that less than 5 percent of producers are women. DeWitt took pride in her position, especially as she encountered people who took notice. “It’s funny, it’s actually usually a lot of older males who come up to me that are like, ‘It’s really cool to see a woman behind the board because it’s really rare,’ and I’m like, ‘Awesome!’”

Although DeWitt was at first concerned about her lack of experience, Pyle told her, “As long as you love and have an ear for music, this is the place to do it.” During her employment, she brought aboard two other women to help backstage and promoted two women to live sound engineers.

Most open mic nights feature a wide variety of talent and creativity, from acoustic folk to singer-songwriter and even low-fi bedroom pop. The performers may be long-time acts or first-timers. Generally, each musician’s set is 15 minutes, or three songs. Sometimes, a set consists of original songs tested for the first time on an audience, but more often cover songs are sprinkled in for fun.

“Most open mics are at bars, so it’s really loud, but here I like to keep it quieter so people are actually heard and have a respectful audience,” DeWitt says. Luckily, the audience has been receptive. In almost three years, DeWitt only had to caution people to keep their voices down four or five times.

The communal aspect of Athens is cultivated at Donkey Coffee as a mainstay of the music scene. “It’s a space where everyone can come and express themselves through art,” says Winter Wilson, a local singer/songwriter who has played acoustic music at open mics since she was in high school. “I think Allison does a good job curating a space that is welcoming ... and providing that open channel of communication and expression, which is really valuable.”

DeWitt has made friends through her role, and her familiarity as a musician helps breed a comfort level amongst her fellow artists. “[A live show] brings people together... Art and music in general can do that all over the world,” DeWitt says. “A few years ago when

I wasn’t involved in music, I felt like there was a part of me that didn’t belong anywhere, and once I found the music community, I felt like I could finally express myself.”

Although DeWitt has relished her time at Donkey, she’s ready to move on in her journey. DeWitt’s final hosting of Open Stage was Dec. 5, and she says she now plans to invest in a new computer to start recording her own compositions. She also hopes to work with film to complement her music.

“Music is so important to me, and it’ll always be my main thing in life no matter what I’m doing. Even if I’m not performing, I’ll be behind the sound booth,” she says.

PHOTO: DeWitt working the Donkey Coffee soundboard like the audio pro she is..



ROLLIN' **THE** DOWN **RIVER**

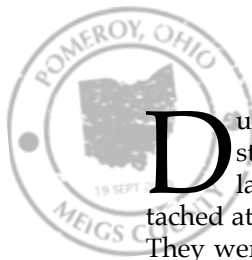
Tie up with patrons of the
Pomeroy Sternwheel Regatta

STORY BY **CONNOR KUREK** // PHOTOS BY **ALIE SKOWRONSKI**





PHOTO: The Levy on Main Street in Pomeroy was a picture-perfect place to be on this late summer Regatta evening.



During mid-September, 12 colorful sternwheelers — riverboats steered by large wooden wheels with paddles attached at the stern— docked in Meigs County. They were the historic backdrops for the 39th annual Pomeroy Sternwheel Regatta.

The three-day event is part of the larger Ohio Sternwheel Festival, which has numerous stops on the Ohio River.

But last Sept. 19, all the boats had arrived in Pomeroy at the Levy on Main Street. For visitors, the event was a free, living outdoor museum. But for boat owners like Lou and Linda Wendell, pictured below with a fellow boater, regatta season provides an annual dose of rest and relaxation; a leisurely way to end summer.

These boats are icons from another era; their narrow design made them crucial to early commerce on the Ohio River because they could fit through the tight, shallow waterways. The sternwheelers in Pomeroy for the event ranged from five to a hundred years old. They all held stories, which some owners told to visitors. One vessel reportedly even lodged infamous gangster Al Capone.





*“This is a part of history that’s slowly vanishing.
People need to come look at this.”*

– Lou Wendell, OWNER OF THE RUFUS B. II



The interior of the Rufus B. II, pictured on the previous page, contains photos from past owners and awards from countless regattas. Its living room retains its '60s redesign: the walls are mahogany, and the ceiling is redwood.

It's within those mahogany walls that American gangster and businessman Al Capone was entertained by the boat's original owner, Attorney Carl Lamback, Lou Wendell says. Lamback defended Capone in court.

During its time in the hands of five different owners, the Rufus B. II has traveled over 30,000 miles of rivers. The Rufus B. II—originally named the Freddie Boy—was the oldest sternwheeler at the festival. It was built in Iowa in 1926. Its current owners, the Wendells, purchased the boat from the Bettler family at an auction in 1991. Lou was a low bidder, but he still got the boat. Linda says it's because Mrs. Bettler had eyes

for Lou. "She liked him!" Linda says with a laugh.

The Wendells, from St. Albans, West Virginia, travel down river from regatta to regatta all September; Linda calls it a vacation. The Wendell's sternwheeler was just one riverboat docked in Pomeroy, and every sternwheeler had a story.

Their neighbors owned the Juanita, built in 1954, which then operated as a cargo towboat. "This is a part of history that's slowly vanishing," Lou Wendell says. "People need to come look at this."

To maintain an old nautical tradition, many of the hulls and wheels are painted bright red. Early sailing ships covered their hulls in copper to protect the wood from barnacles. The copper would gradually turn the original paint red. These days, that color is often picked by choice.

During the weekend, boat owners share meals together, and on the final night the big Captain's



Cookout is just before fireworks. Lou says the comradery is what keeps him coming back to Pomeroy every year.

"If one of the boats breaks down, one of the other captains will stop, and pick 'em up, give 'em assistance to help them get back to shore," Lou says. "It's just a great feeling to be among friends like this."

Many boaters have become lifelong friends because of such regattas. The Wendells often share wine with their neighbors in the evenings. Others, like Jim Kranz and Kris Eads, pictured below on Eads' boat "Miss Sterling," kick back with a beer.

The Aerie 2171 Eagles Club, which hosts the festivities, puts on events all weekend that keep boat owners and families entertained. The weekend kicks off with what organizer John Lehew calls, "the loudest pa-

rade in Ohio," when fire trucks from all over the county follow Meigs Marauder Marching Band down Main Street.

During the next two days visitors can take in dance performances, a kayak race, a duck race with cash prizes, live music, a historic walk through Pomeroy, a raffle and food vendors.

David Lehew, John's son, says the turnout on Saturday, the last day of the most recent event, was the best he's ever seen. Hundreds of visitors came downtown to see and celebrate, but David says he hopes Pomeroy's gathering will grow even bigger in future years.

As for the 40th annual Ohio River Sternwheel Festival, it's scheduled for Sept. 11 to 13, 2020. Get your sea legs ready.

(Story and photos continued on next page.)







FOR MORE INFORMATION:
www.ohioriversternwheelfestival.org

PHOTO: Captain Clifford "Butch" Leport, a director of Gallipolis Boat Club and president of the Point Pleasant River museum, sits at the helm of his sternwheel, the Leport. His boat was built in 2010.

CREATURE COMFORTS

The American Veterinary Medical Association reports 38.4% of all households own a dog, which means our country is home to more than 76 million canines.

Here are three stories about helping (and being helped by) our furry friends.

PHOTO: Huntington High School's golden boy (and golden doodle) Charlie, with school counselor and trainer, Anita Rogers.





PHOTO: Students say Charlie works as a unifying force for the Huntington student body.

CHARLIE, CHILlicothe's SCHOOL THERAPY DOG

Huntington High School Counselor brings the happy to students

STORY BY HALLE WEBER // PHOTOS BY CONNOR KUREK

High school is never easy, but Huntington High School's therapy dog Charlie is there to make it easier. "You can't be sad around Charlie," says senior member of the school's Drug Free Club Megan Shiltz. "He won't let that happen."

Counselor Anita Rogers introduced the friendly, floppy golden doodle to the small Chillicothe school in February 2019.

Rogers knew from personal experience the proverbial healing power of a pet. In November 2017, the son of Rogers' close family friend committed suicide. Three months later, Rogers' father also took his life.

"That whole year was really traumatic and really a blur," Rogers says. There were days that Rogers couldn't bring herself to get off the couch. Her suffering affected her teenage boys, the eldest of which begged her incessantly for a new puppy. Rogers finally gave into his demands, and Charlie joined the family.

Rogers had always wanted to train a therapy dog, but the idea was tucked away in her mind of retirement options. After she saw Charlie's unwavering happy mood and goofy temperament, Rogers decided to take the leap.



"[Charlie] created a lot of happiness in my house after what we had been through," Rogers says. "I wanted to take something terrible that has happened in my life and use Charlie to help me build relationships with students, so maybe they don't go down that same path with depression and anxiety."

Charlie's extensive training involved visiting a grief group at Ohio University Chillicothe twice a week along with an 18-week program with the American Kennel Club.

In the rural, poverty-ridden region of southeastern Ohio, many students struggle with a lack of resources, hindering their ability to get the mental

health care they need. Rogers, who is licensed as both a school counselor and a mental health counselor, does everything within her power to make Huntington High School a "one stop shop" for students struggling with mental health issues.

"Because of our setting, we have to be able to provide those mental health resources within the school. And if it's more than what I can address, we have some agencies built in that come in and work with the kids in the school," Rogers says. "A lot of these kids, their parents are not going to take them in town to get counseling because they just don't have the gas."



LEFT: When Charlie gets a belly rub, everybody wins.

“You can’t be sad around Charlie. He won’t let that happen.”

**– Megan Shiltz,
SENIOR MEMBER OF
HUNTINGTON HIGH SCHOOL’S
DRUG FREE CLUB**

Shiltz says. “I had gone into a panic attack at school. And I sat down in the office and Charlie just laid with me the whole time. And it just really helped to calm me down ... focusing on just petting Charlie.”

Charlie works as a unifying catalyst for the Huntington student body. He makes appearances at club meetings, sporting events and even recruitment week for the Drug Free Club, of which Shiltz is a member.

“Before Charlie came, we were all just here,” Shiltz says. “But now that we have Charlie, it brings us all together. Seniors to freshman.”

Other schools in the surrounding area have followed Huntington’s lead, getting their own therapy dogs. But Huntington students like junior Lincoln Grubb say Charlie goes even beyond his service duties. “He’s not a dog; he’s a friend,” Grubb says.

Rogers is pleased to see Charlie touch so many lives. One of Charlie’s most impactful moments, she recalls, was during a visit with a student who had been having suicidal thoughts. The student had his guard up in previous visits with Rogers, but with Charlie’s non-threatening presence, Rogers was able to ease him into sharing his struggle, so that she could get him the help he needed.

“Charlie helps breaks the ice of conversation between me and that person,” Rogers says.

In fact, Charlie has been key to Rogers exploring just how useful she can be in her position. “He’s really impacted the culture of the school and I know he’s really impacted some individual students,” says Rogers. “It’s helped me a lot knowing that I can do something to help other people.”

Rogers immediately noticed Charlie’s impact on struggling students. Sophomore Madison Almonte needed some motivation, and Charlie was able to provide that. “Last year, before we had Charlie, I was failing every class,” Almonte says. “And then when we got Charlie, it just made me do better.”

Charlie has also helped to forge unlikely friendships between otherwise reserved students like Almonte and extroverts like Shiltz. “Madison’s really come out of her shell,” Rogers says. “I see a lot more of Madison now that Charlie’s around.”

And when Shiltz has down days, it’s Charlie to the rescue. “Last year I had a really hard time,”



PHOTO: Veterinarian Colleen Shockling gives new transfer Jersey a checkup.

GIGI'S SHELTER FOR DOGS

Gigi's Shelter for Dogs offers dog adoption system resources that benefit both rural and urban areas in Ohio

STORY BY **CARLY MCFADDEN** // PHOTOS BY **ALIE SKOWRONSKI**

As Gigi's doors swing open, visitors are greeted by dog barks that echo and bounce off the spotless gray walls, which are adorned only with various portraits of man's best friend.

Since it opened in Canal Winchester in October 2018, Gigi's Shelter for Dogs has benefited the communities of Southeast Ohio and has introduced a resourceful solution to the pet adoption system.

Husband and wife duo George and Tina Skestos founded Gigi's out of a passion for dogs in the region. Fifteen Ohio State students have received veterinary scholarships, funded by the Skestos. Their love of animals is perhaps exemplified most through the work done at Gigi's.

According to the shelter's website, the "intention is to efficiently address dog homelessness by creating a model that can be replicated all over the country."

Gigi's confronts a nationwide problem at the local level. Many animal shelters in rural areas of Southeast Ohio are government-funded and overpopu-

lated with more dogs than they can care for. Some adoption centers in Columbus and Cleveland, which are generally nonprofit organizations and therefore not necessarily receiving government funds, have a greater demand than supply of adoptable dogs.

Gigi's CEO Justin McKinniss is well aware of the problem. "The challenge [that shelters] face is that there aren't enough resources," McKinniss says. Gigi's, a nonprofit, addresses that by acting as an intermediary between those overcrowded shelters and underpopulated adoption centers.

The mission of Gigi's consists of three parts: working to partner with shelters in southern Ohio, transporting shelter dogs to its 15,000-square-foot facility and improving their health. After the dogs are given the proper medical attention and are in good condition, Gigi's then transports the dogs to adoption centers in urban areas, where there is a shortage of adoptable dogs.

The nonprofit corporation utilizes its own fleet of

vehicles and crates to move the dogs at no cost to the shelters or adoption centers. Gigi's receives dogs from five primary shelters: Franklin County Dog Shelter, Gallia County Animal Shelter, Jackson County Dog Pound, Lawrence County Dog Pound and Scioto County Dog Pound. After treating the dogs, Gigi's transports them to one of three Ohio urban adoption centers: Columbus Humane, CHA Animal Shelter and the Cleveland Animal Protective League.

Gigi's has space for 40 dogs at all times and is often near capacity. "On an ideal day, we'll start with 40 [dogs] and will send 10 out for adoption and bring in 10 more," McKinniss says. There are several suites for new arrivals and the dogs are grouped by the county they were transported from to prevent any potential spread of disease or sickness. Each suite has a fully-stocked kitchen with healthy foods and treats.

Perhaps one of the most unique features of the new facility is that everything, from ceilings to floors, is made with epoxy and is seamless. This ensures that no harmful bacteria or germs get stuck in the cracks. The wards can simply be washed down and excess liquid will exit the building through the floor drains.

Health is one of the utmost priorities for the caretakers at Gigi's. There is a hospital fully equipped with X-ray rooms, a dental suite and surgery suites. Upon arrival, all dogs are given a preliminary exam and given standard flea and tick treatments. They are then given the medicine or procedures needed to bring them back to top-tier health. The average turnaround time for Gigi's dogs between the shelter and when they are transported to adoption centers is six to nine days.

Most dogs are relatively healthy upon arrival, with basic ailments such as fleas, ticks and ear infections notwithstanding. Some dogs, however, are

in dire need of more critical care in order to survive. "We did get a dog here named Puddin'," says Gigi's veterinarian Dr. Colleen Shockling. "He came to us with a fractured leg and when we did radiographs, we found that he had been shot. We were able to amputate that leg in order to give him a better life. And he was up and running around the next day and got a home pretty quick after that."

Gigi's next step is providing behavioral progress for dogs. Tentatively scheduled for spring 2020, Gigi's will be opening Gigi's Center for Dog Behavior, a behavioral clinic in a separate building on-site. There will be two imitation apartment rooms that are fully furnished, so that trainers will be able to help dogs learn how to overcome common behavioral issues such as jumping on or damaging furniture. It will have observation rooms for potential adopters and trainers to come in and assess the dogs' behaviors and progress, further ensuring the dogs preparedness for adoption and ultimately taking the burden off new pet owners who might otherwise address those problems on their own.

"[Gigi's is] creating an amazing rural-urban partnership at a time when now there are a lot of challenges in the world," McKinniss says. "And this is a chance for two very different areas to come together to impact the same challenge."

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

www.gigis.org



ABOVE: Puppies from Gallia County wait for their checkups.

ABOVE, RIGHT: The nonprofit uses its own fleet of vehicles to move dogs — at no cost to the shelters or adoption centers.



PARTNER SHELTERS:

Franklin County Dog Shelter
Gallia County Animal Shelter
Jackson County Dog Pound
Lawrence County Dog Pound
Scioto County Dog Pound

PARTNER ADOPTION AGENCIES:

Columbus Humane
CHA Animal Shelter (Columbus)
Cleveland Animal Protective League

BRANDON MCMILLAN, 'LUCKY DOG'

This dog trainer and television host helps others connect dogs in need with people who need them

STORY BY ALEXIS MCCURDY // PHOTOS BY CONNOR KUREK



ABOVE Service puppy-in-training, Anasazi, waits patiently for McMillan to give her a treat during his training session with 4 Paws for Ability on Ohio University's campus.

Brandon McMillan, host of the CBS show *Lucky Dog* and celebrity dog trainer, jokes that his love for animals is ingrained in his DNA. But after hearing McMillan share his story during his visit to Athens Oct. 28 as a Kennedy Lecture Series speaker, this canine connectivity certainly seems plausible.

McMillan's passion can be credited to his early foundations. His dad and uncle, hailing from Northern England, ran away in their youth to Gunther Gable William's circus. In seven years, the two progressed to owning and running their own acts.

McMillan grew up alongside wild animals, learning the art of taming and loving them. In one picture, you can see his mom holding him in one hand, feeding him with a bottle and doing the same with a baby tiger with the other. "They were not just our animals; they were our family," McMillan said at the lecture.

McMillan himself left home when he was almost 16 and lived in Hawaii for the next four years. At the time, McMillan said his life was rapidly spiraling downhill. His uncle eventually contacted him and offered him a job, which McMillan calls a deal of a lifetime.

McMillan's uncle owned a wild animal training company in Los Angeles that focused on training animals for movies and commercials, and at age 19 McMillan moved to Los Angeles to join him.

After enjoying the bright lights of Hollywood for a few years, McMillan experienced a life change. He says this shift began after he read statistics about how many dogs were euthanized in America, which was then around 2 million annually. During that same time, McMillan says he was living next to an animal shelter, and he could often hear barks and howls coming from the animals.

"I can't say I felt great fulfillment working with people who didn't respect me or the animals," McMillan said to the audience.

That switched the day one of McMillan's uncle's movie dogs fell ill and McMillan bet his uncle he could turn a working dog into a movie dog. The new dog, Raven, became phenomenal.

The final turning point came shortly thereafter, when one of McMillan's friends called to tell him about a military friend who had been hit by an improvised explosive device (IED) in Afghanistan. The veteran desperately needed a service dog, but one agency's wait list was five years. The friend asked McMillan if he would train one for him.

McMillan says he was initially cautious about his abilities. But then he then realized that training a dog to fetch beers for a Superbowl commercial actually required some of the same skills that would be useful in helping a person with physical disabilities.

In four months, McMillan had trained his first service dog. The day McMillan delivered the dog to Walter Reid Medical Center, just outside Washington, D.C., he found that word about his training abilities had spread. Soon after they arrived to the facility, McMillan was surrounded by 100 veterans asking him to train service dogs for them, too.

McMillan had found his calling. He stayed and trained dogs, adapting his style to the owner's needs. Three months later, he headed back to L.A. and quit the movie industry. He said it felt like career destruction at the time, but he knew he needed to keep going forward with his new mission.

McMillan started a non-profit service where he trained shelter dogs and connected them to veterans and other families around the

“

There are no untrainable dogs, just untrained humans.”

– Brandon McMillan, HOST OF *LUCKY DOG*

country. "There are no untrainable dogs, just untrained humans," McMillan said to the Oct. 28 crowd.

Another serendipitous twist happened in late 2012, when CBS decided to cut its Saturday morning cartoons and replace them with all-age programming. Representatives approached McMillan, noting that they heard about his work and were interested in turning it into a show. CBS producers watched McMillan in action for several weeks, observing him going to the shelters, assessing the dogs and training them.

Lucky Dog aired in the fall of 2013, and since then McMillan has rescued 156 dogs.

His training principles are based on seven common commands: sit, stay, down, come, off, heel and no. McMillan says. "Tricks are fun, they are always there to impress your friends — but they are not going to keep a dog out of a shelter."

McMillan continues to train dogs for the show and for individuals, but with an increasingly hectic schedule and more demand, he hopes to open a location where he can teach trainers his methods.

"If I can train one dog, that is one dog trained," McMillan says. "But if I can train a group of trainers, that is hundreds of dogs trained."



RIGHT: McMillan shares the story of one of his favorite rescue stories of an amputee dog named Sharla. She found a home with Avery (pictured), a veteran.

PHOTO: Football coach Jeff Ditty plays the long game at Federal Hocking High School.

MEET JEFF DITTY



This football coach loves a challenge — whether or not that means winning every game.

STORY BY RYAN MORELAND // PHOTO BY EMILY BARBUS

Federal Hocking High School sits atop rolling hills just outside Stewart in Athens County. Tucked behind the brick fortress is an unassuming pole barn that belongs to the high school's football team, the Lancer's.

Inside the building, the weight room's sweaty smell permeates the air, and amidst the equipment sits a conference table scattered with playbooks and a white board marked up with drawing of formations and plays. And, more often than not, you will also see the Lancer's head coach Jeff Ditty here.

Prior to the 2019 season, Federal Hocking High School had not won a football game in four consecutive seasons and student participation was reaching an all time low. In response, Federal Hocking hired Ditty to turn things around.

What was it like to enter that culture and try to win games?

It's been the biggest challenge to date, and it still is. What has changed, I think, is the perception of what we are doing. We didn't have a weight room, so we put one together in two weeks.

So, there was a lot of building blocks, and most of what I was focused on was not on the field, it was off the field. I wasn't going to assume that there was a baseline level of commitment ... I didn't assume anything. You just kind of take it one step at a time and fix what you can. And when you identify things you can't immediately address you set a plan in motion.

What was your goal for the first season?

To be accountable. [In previous years] guys showed up to practice when they wanted to. They weren't held to a standard. We have set a zero-tolerance policy. In order to be effective and do your job, you have to show up. That's life, that's here.

Before you started, the team was defeated 42 games in a row. You snapped that streak your first game with a win.

I'm not going to lie, it felt really good. I know it was very emotional for our guys. None of them have had a football victory since they have been at this school. In some regards, I think some people didn't know how to react. But overall it was a very positive experience.

It was a tough game, too, a dog fight for four quarters. So, I think it was very fitting that, not only did we get the first game and the first win, but that it was a fight to get it. It really helped emphasize some of the characteristics that we have adopted with the program—You have to put the work in and you have to fight if you want it.

UPDATE: The Lancers forfeited the final four games of their season due to player injuries and finished the season 1-9. However, this football coach is hardly discouraged. In fact, he is already focused on recruiting players for next season.

Just remember, Jeff Ditty loves a challenge.

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BELOW: Lou Wendell cracks jokes at the helm of his ship, Rufus B. II. See pg. 30 for more photos from the Pomeroy Sternwheel Regatta. Photo by Alie Skowronski.

