

NORTH OF THE JAMES[®]

"Truth and facts, no alternatives."

Teddy Taylor

is a gifted artist who already has eight titles in print to his credit, with another one coming out in October, and three others currently in the works. One book of his illustrations was on The New York Times Best Sellers list, another won the prestigious Coretta Scott King/John Steptoe Award for New Talent. He even has the honor of having had one of his books banned in certain libraries—a distinction he shares with the likes of Alice Walker, George Orwell, Maya Angelou, John Steinbeck, Harper Lee, Kurt Vonnegut, and so on.

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NORTH OF THE JAMES

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DIVERSIONS

The Strife Aquatic Seeking Friend with Pool

by FAYERUZ REGAN

THIS PUBLIC PLEA MAY sound shallow (the pun stays), but I am looking for a friend with a pool. I'm being upfront to avoid false pretenses, and I have something to bring to the table: A boat. Willing to negotiate terms.

Our boat was a COVID purchase that I thought would cure my longing for a watering hole; not the booze kind, but a desperate overheated animal on the Savannah kind. That's how Virginia humidity makes me feel. When I complained, I was offered a solution: The Ginter Park Recreation Association Pool. It became an institution, pumping out core memories of Marco Polo and dripping ice cream from the snack bar. Many kids had their first kiss on movie nights, where parents would drink and grill, and let their kids run wild. I was sold.

That is, until I noticed the cost.

Then a friend clued me in on the Philadelphia Quarry. It's a private club in an old granite quarry, where the water is pristine. She and her friends would break in before dawn and skinny-dip. I've always been obsessed with quarries — they're like a secret. Hidden in a historic neighborhood off Douglasdale Road, no one can gain access unless invited by a member of this club. Plotting an inroad, I went to their website only to find that it was password protected. No photos, no members, no "About" section—just a password prompt.

Undeterred, I visited the unmarked entrance while hiking in the hilly, upscale neighborhood. The high gate was padlocked. Perhaps the members, (none of whom were around), could only gain access with a key. I hiked an adjacent bluff and peered through bushes just to catch a glimpse. Granite cliffs encased crystal clear water, with floating wood docks.

When COVID hit and all the pools closed, we bought a boat so we could explore natural waterways. But I have a complicated relation-

ship with murky water. Sometimes you dredge up the muddy bottom with your foot, and if the texture doesn't give you the shivers, the smell will. I've plunged into the Chickahominy River only to have my muscles seize up from the freezing water, which was deceptively warm on the surface.

In between sewage disasters on the James, I found the "Redneck Riviera" — a gathering spot on a shore near Dutch Gap. But revelers eyed us suspiciously when we pulled up. They blasted country music too loud and cursed at their kids. And if that makes me sound uptight, well, they littered too.

I didn't give up. During a heat wave, we visited another local swimming hole. I was prepared to embrace its dilapidated charm, assuming it looked like a vintage postcard on the inside. I appreciate that they filter the lake water that's pump in, but it was still murky. The sand was dotted with cigarette butts. After our group settled into a cabana, staff informed us that there would be an upcharge. We were nearly the only people there.

The rough-textured pool at another area pool gave my son kertolysis ex-

foliativa, a red rash on the bottom of his feet. It apparently happens so often there, that employees carry a protective spray that they blast onto childrens' feet, explaining that it works like an invisible bandage.

We've visited many of the free community pools, such as Hotchkiss and Battery Park. But they are run by the City of Richmond, which means that when we arrive during open hours, it's common to find the doors padlocked. Or pitifully unstaffed in relation to lifeguards. They lack outdoor furniture, so visitors lay towels on sun-scorched concrete. Splash pads require standing and, well, kids, unless you don't mind looking creepy.

All this to say, I've put in my time. I've been open to all aquatic experiences and have seen enough disappointment to warrant a friend with a pool. If you have a great suggestion, please write in to share. And if you have a pool...hello you. 🍷

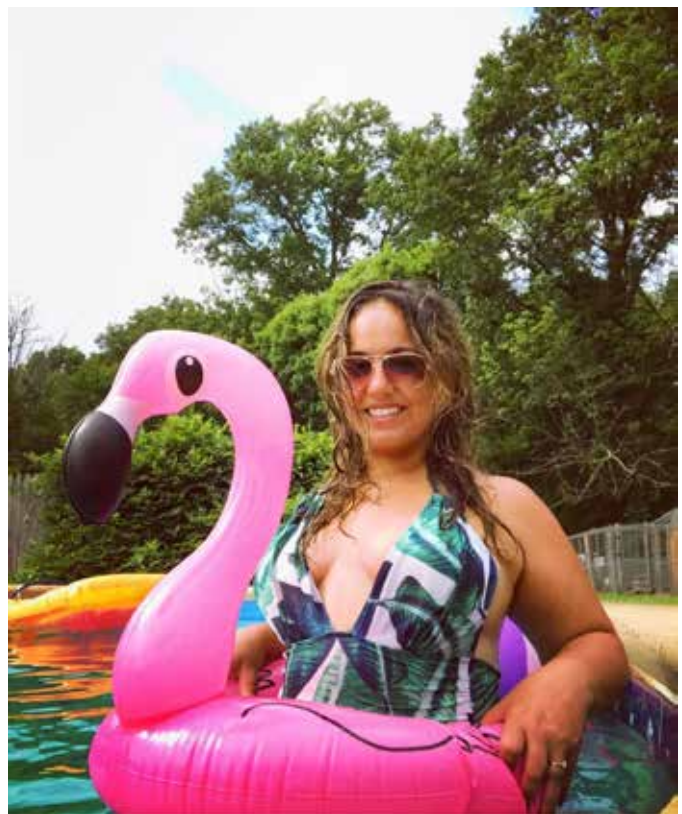


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Lakeside Farmers' Market Celebrates 15th Anniversary

by CHARLES MCGUIGAN

HUNDREDS OF people, over the course of a couple of hours, visited Lakeside Farmers' Market on its 15th anniversary, which was celebrated in mid-May. Ron Moody & The Centaurs—a Lakeside icon since the 1960s—provided the musical entertainment. Among those present were Fairfield District Supervisor Frank Thornton (currently serving his seventh term), and his wife, Betty, who, in a way, was the progenitor of the Lakeside Farmers' Market.



Peter and Sharon Francisco, Northsiders since birth.

Back in 2005, when the space occupied by the Farmers' Market was nothing more than a sea of asphalt, the owners, Peter and Sharon Francisco, hosted a Lakeside Business Association picnic there. Betty Thornton accompanied Sharon to the western edge of the parking lot, and through a haze of tall weeds, they could see spires of cornstalks, tangles of tomato vines. Betty, who worked at the time as an extension agent with Henrico County, looked over at Sharon and said this: "You know what? this would be a wonderful place for a farmers' market."

"So Betty planted the seed in me," Sharon recalls. "And Peter said, 'Once you plant a seed in my wife, there's no turning back.'"

Which turned out to be the case.

Over the next two years, the Franciscos cleared hurdle after hurdle to create what would become Henrico County's first farmers' market. At that time there

were just a handful of farmers' markets in the entire Richmond metro area, including Byrd House and Goochland Farmers' Market, but none of them was in Henrico.

"We were the first, and Henrico had to figure out what to do with it," Sharon remembers. "We had to go through a process and get permits. We had to get a zoning variance and we had to have a plan of development. Everything that was required. And the county was very particular."

Finally, in 2007, Lakeside Farmers' Market opened for business. But in those early years the market was just a section of the parking lot with folding tables, and tents, which, under certain conditions, posed a problem. "We operated with tents and then decided that was unsafe," says Sharon. "They were like box kites when the wind came up. So we wanted to build a more permanent structure, and since we owned the property, we could do that."

In 2011, at a cost of almost half-a-million dollars, the Franciscos had a massive pavilion erected that would become a landmark on the Northside. It's an impressive piece of engineering with a truss frame system that supports the massive seamed roof, and ten-by-ten inch vertical beams that support the entire structure. "We decided in order to



Ron Moody & The Centaurs.

be one of the most successful farmers' markets in the region we needed a sense of permanence," Peter had told me years ago. "Those posts are twenty feet tall and go down into the ground six feet, with a tube of concrete around them. You don't



Lakeside Farmers' Market celebrates 15th anniversary.

get any more permanent than that. This market will be here in a hundred years."

The same year the pavilion was built, the Franciscos opened Lakeside Farmers' Market Too in the building adjacent to the outdoor market. "We decided to make this into an indoor pavilion, and use it year round for our market during the wintertime," says Sharon.

The response to this farmers' market has been overwhelming, almost since the beginning, and the customer base continues to grow. "We're seeing a lot of young people coming to the market who have just moved into the area," Sharon says. "And they're very interested coming to the market and buying fresh produce. And then we have the older people who are used to eating vegetables and cooking vegetables. We have a great variety of produce here, and we have a mixture of age groups that come here to purchase the produce."


Some of the vendors at the market have been there since day one. Sharon mentions Rosa and Lionel Lopez of Lopez Farm over on the Northern Neck, and Britney and Chris Rudolph of Deer Run Farm up in Hanover County.

"We've seen their families grow, and their children grow up," says Sharon. "All of a sudden the children are helping with the set ups, and all those types of things."

Back on that small parcel of land where

Betty Thornton had first seen the potential for a farmers' market, Carl Vanderberg now operates Lakeside's Tiny Acre. Just slightly more than seven hundred footsteps to the market, this farm generates no carbon footprint at all. "And this past winter Carl was growing in his greenhouses, so he had fresh produce all winter long," Sharon tells me. "It's hard to believe we're already celebrating our fifteenth anniversary."

On June 2 the Franciscos celebrated another anniversary. Sharon and Peter, both Northsiders since birth, have been married now for forty-nine years, but had known one another since they were just toddlers.

"I grew up in Bellevue on Avondale Avenue," Sharon Francisco says. "Peter lived in a house on Woodrow Avenue in Lakeside, but his family ended up moving over to Seminary Avenue. We were in the same graduating class at John Marshall. We were high school sweethearts. And the rest is history." 

NATURE

Saving the Environment

One Small Step at a Time

by CHARLES MCGUIGAN



The Glen Stream before its reconstruction.



The Glen Stream after its reconstruction.

SMALL THINGS CAN make a big difference. And a combination of these tiny actions can actually have a dramatic environmental impact, improving, among other things, water quality and increased biodiversity.

Take for instance that little trickle of a creek that runs between two parking lots at Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden. Called the Glen Stream, its course runs about 550 feet before leaving the Garden.

On May 20, under a baking sun, folks from the Garden, along with a few of its partners, celebrated the restoration of Glen Stream with a formal ribbon-cutting ceremony.

Several years back, the Virginia Environmental Endowment awarded a grant of \$315,000 to help the Garden with its restoration project. Additional funding came from National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, Dominion Energy, and an anonymous donor.

Before the restoration project, Glen Stream was subjected, during intense rainstorms, to pollution runoff from neighboring residential properties and paved surfaces such as parking lots and sidewalks. The small stream was also choked with invasive species such as porcelain berry and English ivy, making the quality of life for organisms that inhabited this micro-ecosystem marginal at best.

Through a remarkable engineering feat,

the Glen Stream has been transformed. The project actually altered the geography of the stream, creating a creekbed that meandered, which in turn slowed the flow of water and allowed stormwater run-off to be filtered by plants and soil before moving downstream.

By restructuring the course of the stream itself, erosion has been greatly reduced, water quality downstream has improved, and groundwater recharge has significantly increased.

And just as importantly, this tiny ecosystem has become a much more inhabitable place for a variety of native flora and fauna. As Catherine McGuigan, a gardener at LGBG, noted in a Garden blog last fall: "We will be restoring the stream by removing the overgrown invasive plants and replanting them with native plants. Natives provide better living space and food for pollinators, ranging from birds to bees and more."

Riparian plantings have already begun with a host of native plants, including blazing star, meadow anemone, beardtongue, swamp milkweed and Allegheny monkey flower. Native trees have also been planted on the banks of this stream, everything from American hornbeam to common witch hazel and dogwood.

The results of this project are palpable. There is now a thriving ecosystem that attracts beneficial wildlife, and water that leaves the Garden is much purer than it was when it entered. And that means improved water quality downstream, all the way to our beloved Chesapeake Bay. **NJ**

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The Haitian Revolution

Part I

by JACK R. JOHNSON

IN 1791, THE CEREMONY

that kicked off the Haitian revolution began with a sacrificed black pig and the desecration of the white sky god. Dutty Boukman was no fool.

A well-respected houngan, or Voodoo priest, he led the ceremony that would eventually see the Haitian slave population freed, and force the French whites to flee their own colony, or be murdered where they stood.

Boukman was one of thousands of people from Dahomey, Africa who were enslaved and transported across the Atlantic to islands in the Caribbean. During the French Colonial Period, the economy of Haiti (named Saint-Domingue by the French) was based on slave labor, working on sugar plantations. These West African natives brought the Vodun culture and religion from their homeland to Haiti. Vodun alongside the western enforced Roman Catholicism fused to create what we know today as Haitian Voodoo.

In 1791, the French plantations on the island of Hispaniola offered some of the cruelest conditions African slaves had ever suffered. Compare to the North American plantations the Haitian coffee and sugar plantations required vast amounts of labor. As a result, the slave population outnumbered the French colonialists by what must have seemed a terrifying number. By 1789, on the eve of the French Revolution, the estimated population in Haiti was well over half a million; this included roughly 500,000 African slaves, 32,000 European colonists, and some 24,000 affranchis (free mulattoes or blacks). The slaves endured long, backbreaking workdays and often died from injuries, infections, and tropical diseases. Malnutrition and starvation also were common. Some slaves managed to escape into the mountainous interior. Nicknamed ‘Maroons,’ these rebels fought guerrilla battles against colonial militia. Because of their overwhelming numbers, however, the white colonialists allowed the Africans to retain much of their culture and to establish more



or less independent social systems. This combination proved explosive.

Boukman and another houngan held a meeting with the slaves in the mountains of North Haiti on August 24, 1789. They decried their situation, of course, but the meeting was also a Voodoo ceremony—a religious ritual preserved from their African homeland. Here’s a description from the official “History of Haiti and the Haitian Revolution”:

It was raining and the sky was raging with clouds; the slaves then started confessing their resentment of their condition. A woman started dancing languorously in the crowd, taken by the spirits of the loas. With a knife in her hand, she cut the throat of a black pig and distributed the blood to all the participants of the meeting who swore to kill all the whites on the island.

Egged on by Boukman, over one hundred thousand slaves rose up against the vastly outnumbered and infinitely hated French the following day. Unlike the French Revolution and the American Revolution, the

Haitian revolution was driven largely by the passions of men and women who had been enslaved most if not all of their lives. “They didn’t simply desire liberty, they wanted vengeance.”

Over the next three weeks, the Haitian slaves burned every plantation throughout the fertile regions of Haiti and executed all Frenchmen they could find. The French fled to the seacoast towns and pleaded with France to help them out while the island burned. For a short while, a brilliant and charismatic ex-slave named Francois Dominique Toussaint managed to hold the French at bay by negotiating potential military support for Haiti from the British and the Spanish, but his influence came to an end with the rise of Napoleon Bonaparte. Aside from the fact that Bonaparte did not like sharing power, he was also a deep-seated racist. Napoleon sent General Victor Leclerc with over twenty thousand soldiers to unseat Toussaint, who then waged guerrilla warfare against the French. Toussaint was imprisoned and what followed next was

one of the most horrifying struggles in history. Leclerc brutally decided to execute blacks whenever and wherever he found them. It didn’t matter if they had participated in the revolution or not. According to Richard Hooker, the slaughter that Leclerc perpetrated on non-combatants would not be equaled until the Jewish pogroms and the Holocaust of the World War II era.

Although occurring on the isolated island of Hispaniola in the Carribean, the Haitian revolution would have far-reaching consequences for the slaves of North America as well. According to Alfred Hunt, “No issue having to do with slavery and the role of blacks in American society was discussed at so many different times, in so many different ways, for so many different reasons as the lessons of the Haitian Revolution.”

Reports of the fury vented by the Haitian slaves on their white oppressors reached the United States and caused considerable agitation and fear. One eyewitness described, “Young children transfixed upon the points of bayonets.” Others de-

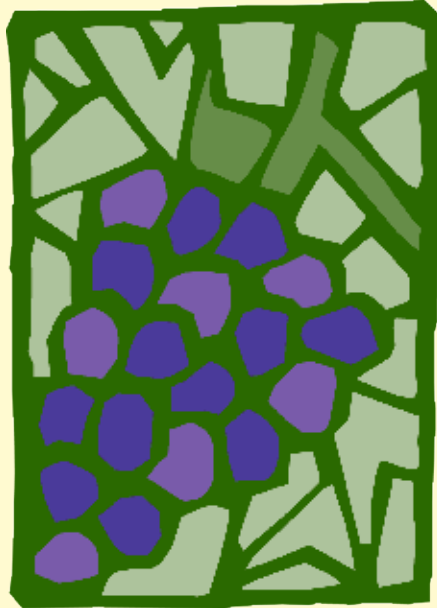
scribed slaves dragging white planters from their homes and tearing off their limbs one by one, or strapping them to wooden racks and sawing them in half.

According to Thomas Otts even prior to the Haitian revolution, "Whites had always been aware of slaves as 'troublesome property,'" but after the revolt the threat became more concrete.

Their fears were not entirely unfounded. In 1822, almost all the slaves in the plantations surrounding Charleston, South Carolina had joined a revolt planned by a slave named Denmark Vesey. His plan was simple. The slave rebels would all station themselves at the doors of plantation owners and, late at night, a group of rebels would start a major fire. When the men ran out of their homes to extinguish the flames, the slave rebels would kill them with axes, picks, or guns. They would then enter the houses and kill all the occupants. They almost succeeded. It was only the day before they began the revolt that a slave, who knew the entire plot, betrayed Vesey. He and his co-leaders were hanged, but only one confessed.

Nat Turner from Virginia had considerably more success in his uprising. He and a group of seven slaves entered the house of his master where, with one hatchet and one broadax between them, they executed all the members, including two teens, with the exception of an infant. They then moved from house to house throughout the night and executed every white plantation owner they could find. They only spared a single white plantation family that did not own slaves. As they traveled that night, they gathered slaves and weapons. Turner was eventually captured and hanged, but the damage was done. Virginians were seized with panic. Hundreds fled the county and many left the state for good. Reacting to the Haitian Revolution, and the various slave revolts, particularly Turner's, Southern slaveholders increased the repression of their own slaves. Southern state legislatures passed laws "to control the movements of Blacks and to prohibit the assembly of free Blacks and slaves." Since Turner was literate, many Southern states also passed laws forbidding the education of slaves. This repression in turn infuriated the Northern abolitionists and galvanized opposition to slavery, inevitably increasing tensions that led directly to the American Civil War.

Next month: *The Haitian Revolution* Part 2. **NJ**



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TEDDY TAYLOR

ILLUSTRATOR

TEDDY TAYLOR, HIS PARTNER, SARAH SCHULTZ,

and their son, Theo, live in an elegantly appointed mid-century bungalow tucked along a quiet street in Lakeside. Sarah and Teddy—artists, both—have decorated their home with their own works, and those created by friends and other artists they admire, along with memorabilia from their own lives. To enter that space is to immerse yourself in the deep creative pool of art, that rare gift that preserves humanity, enlarges its scope and propels us all forward. During the course of the interview, Teddy and I migrate from the dining room to his office and then out to the living room where we join Sarah, and then she shows me her own studio, and her works inspire a future cover story.

Theodore “Teddy” Taylor, III grew up in a middle class neighborhood near Valley View Mall in Roanoke. And even after his family moved out to the county, Teddy continued his studies in the Roanoke Public Schools and graduated from Patrick Henry High. His mother, Leslie, worked as an editor for *The Roanoke Times*, an award-winning daily newspaper that some of the townies referred to as “the liberal rag”. And his dad, Ted Taylor, who passed away while Teddy was still in high school, worked as a manager for Norfolk Southern. But like his son, he also had an artistic streak, and played jazz guitar with *The Reflections*.

Teddy wears a short-sleeved olive drab shirt that’s emblazoned with white images of skulls, small sprigs, daggers and slices of pepperoni pizza. He’s relaxed, and seems at home in the world. We begin of course at the beginning, and his boyhood and teenhood in Big Lick, the Star City of the South.

“I grew up in a middle class neighborhood, and most of my friends were white,” Teddy says, and then grinning broadly, adds with a sonorous laugh, “I remember my grandmother asking why I didn’t have any black friends.” Unlike many other Roanokers of his age, Teddy had no discernible accent, and still doesn’t. It might have had to do with the fact that his father was originally from Washington, D.C. and that his mother was a military brat. Her father served in the US Air Force and their family lived on bases all around the world, from Ja-

pan to Thailand, and stateside.

Not long ago, Teddy and a friend were talking about southern food, and this is what Teddy said: “I guess I’m fake southern because my family’s not technically from the South.”

Yet it was in the South that Teddy first developed his love for the art of illustration. From the time he was in elementary school, Teddy kept a notebook, and he would doodle, and draw *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* and *Sonic the Hedgehog*, emulating past masters of the art, and always perfecting his own techniques.

In an after-school program in elementary school, a counselor, who was also an artist, kept a sketchbook with him at all times. “I think that’s what made me want one of my own,” Teddy tells me. “And then in high school, my art teacher, Fletcher Nichols, who had attended VCU, kind of convinced me to go to VCU, too. In senior year I decided to go.”

Like every other VCU art student, he went through the rigorous AFO (Art Foundation Program), spending countless all-nighters in the studios at the Bowe Street Deck.

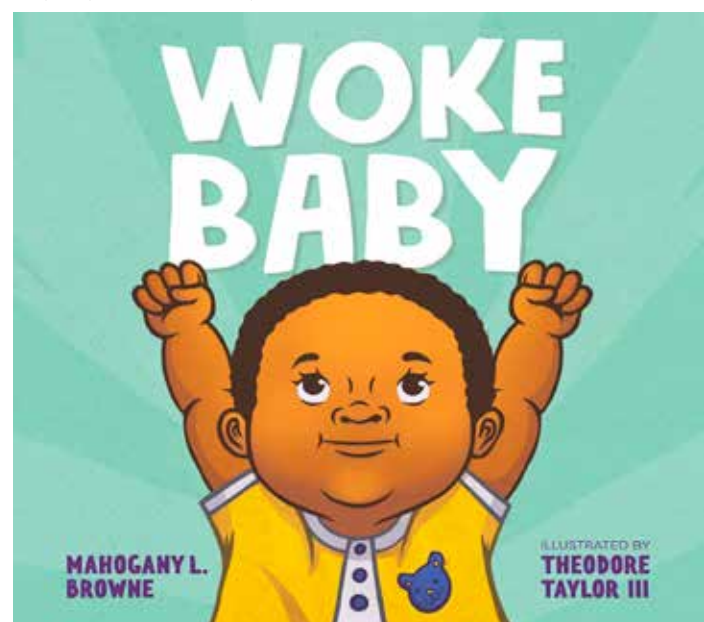
“That’s where me and Sarah met,” he remembers. “We would be in there all night. We really got to know each other in the wood cutting room.” But where Teddy majored in communication arts, Sarah

majored in photography and craft/materials studies. “We both made a lot of friends through VCU, friends that we still have today,” says Teddy.

One of his illustration instructors told the class that few of them would actually become illustrators. “He said that most of us would become designers, and maybe three of us would do illustrations for a living,” Teddy says. “That’s why I went

this day. “I just stayed with them for twelve years,” he says. “I don’t do much web design anymore. I do coding mostly.”

This is a full-time job with *The Brick Factory*, formerly the *Bivings Group*. “It’s nine to six weekdays, but it’s nice to have a regular source of income and insurance,” says Teddy.



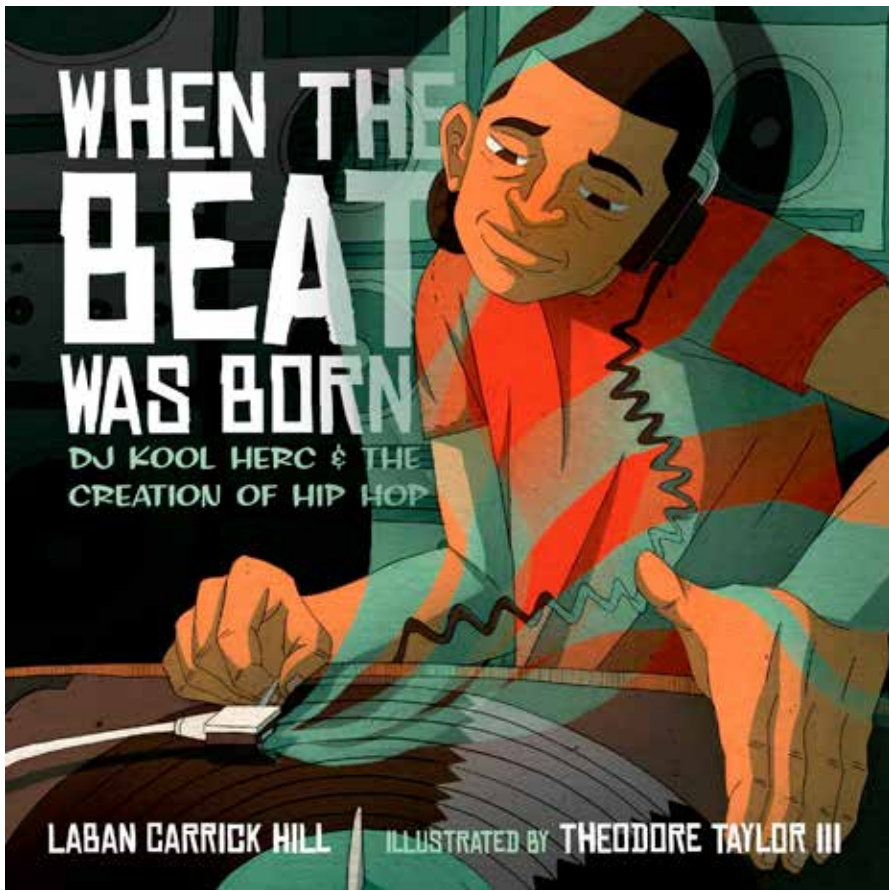
Cover of the children’s book *Woke Baby*.

into web development and web design.”

After graduation, Teddy moved to DC and interned as a web designer for a PR firm. It led to a permanent position there, a job Teddy has to

When Teddy moved to DC, Sarah headed up to Baltimore and lived with her mother. “She would come down on weekends and we finally moved into an apartment together in DC,” Teddy says. “We stayed up

BY CHARLES MCGUIGAN
PHOTOS BY SARAH SCHULTZ



Cover of the children's book *When the Beat Was Born*.

there for eight years and when we had our son we couldn't afford child care, so that's when I started working from home full-time. Sarah had to go back to work, and I worked at my desk with Theo strapped to my

chest."

Eventually the pair decided to return to Richmond. They rented apartments, one in Shockoe Bottom another in Manchester, before

finding their home on the Northside.

In his office, I look through several of the books Teddy has illustrated and study some of the posters and prints on the walls, and then scan the zines and the awards and the books by other artists lined up on the shelves.

When I ask about artists he admires, Teddy says, "I can rattle off artists' names forever, but I just keep thinking about all my friends whose work I am inspired by."

There's Richie Pope, who lives in California, and is a storyboard artist for Cartoon Network's "Craig of the Creek". Richie's partner, Nicole Hamilton, also one of Teddy's friends, worked on "Tuca and Bertie", a Netflix animated sitcom, and is currently working on the latest permutation of "Animaniacs".

He talks at length about his friend Shannon Wright, a Richmonder, who is an illustrator and cartoonist. "Shannon did a graphic novel," says Teddy. "And she does a lot children's book, too. Watching Shannon doing stuff with kids' books is really inspiring."

Teddy's friend, Chris Vision, who

also lives here, has done work for Marvel Comics. "He's done covers for them," Teddy says. "He's also done graphic novels and a few murals around town, too. I'm inspired by him a lot."

Along with his full-time job with The Brick Factory, Teddy has always made time to commit to his artwork. To date, he has illustrated eight books. He illustrated "C is for Country" by Lil Was X, which made it to The New York Times Best Sellers list. The illustration work he did for "When The Beat Was Born: DJ Kool Herc and the Creation of Hip Hop" won him the Coretta Scott King/John Steptoe New Talent Award. This, too: he created the illustrations for Shaquille O'Neal's "Little Shaq" series of children's books.

Teddy has also worked with poet Mahogany Browne on two books—"Woke: A Young Poet's Call to Justice" and "Woke Baby", both of which were published by Macmillan. One of them was banned by some libraries in—you guessed it—the Lone Star State. Having a banned book to your credit is one of the greatest badges of merit any illustrator or writer could ever desire, because if someone want to

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Sonic the Hedgehog was always a big inspiration for Teddy.

ban a book, there is something within it that they don't want you to know about.

There's also a remunerative effect when books are blacklisted and banned. Remember what hap-

pened when the McMinn County School Board in Tennessee decided, in its infinite stupidity, to ban Art Spiegelman's classic graphic novel "Maus" from school libraries? It soared to the top of bestseller lists everywhere, and bookstores could

barely keep the book in stock.

"The ban in Texas actually helped 'Woke Baby' sales," says Teddy. When he opened his royalty check this year from Roaring Brook Press, a subsidiary of Macmillan, Teddy

was more than pleasantly surprised.

Right now, he's working on three projects simultaneously. "One's a graphic novel for young adults," Teddy says. "It's a lot of work. It's kind of like doing five picture books at once."

Another project, a relatively easy one for Teddy, will be part of a young adult novel. "They saw some of my zine work," says Teddy. "I do a lot of zines, and the book's about zines, so they needed some zine pages. That's all in black and white so I don't have to color anything which is great."

He's also working on a sequel to a book he had illustrated on the life of Charles Henry Turner, a Black scientist.

And this October, Macmillan's Roaring Brook Press will release a book both written and illustrated by Theodore Taylor, III. Titled "Off the Wall" the book is about a young girl who moves from a large city to a rural town, and is numbed by a cultural shock that ultimately ignites a creative fire in her soul.

"She's from an urban area inspired by Sao Palo, Brazil," Teddy tells me.

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“And she moves to a small Virginia town, and she feels out of place, and she finds her place through street art and graffiti. I wrote the story and drew the illustrations.”

Though not a practitioner of graffiti and street art himself, Teddy has always admired this form of artistic expression. “It’s very me,” he says. “The book is very me.”

As if passing on the baton to another generation of artists, here’s what author/illustrator Theodore Taylor, III wrote about his upcom-

ing book: “My goal with this book isn’t to push children to tag up their neighborhoods, but to inspire those who feel like outsiders to find their voice within their communities. Find like-minded friends. Find unlike-minded friends. Explore every nook and cranny of your environment and discover where you belong, and what you’re inspired to do. Growing up, I often felt like an oddball but eventually found my way to a loving, inspiring community of artists, creatives, and, yes, geeks. You are never alone.” 

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Richmond Waldorf School

Celebrating 25 Years

by BRIGETTE KELLY

CHILDREN, WEARING yellow raincoats and boots, roam across the lawn in front of Richmond Waldorf School—a Northside icon. Though there's just a drizzle, the kids are prepared for a full on downpour. Parents greet each other with open arms, and many of the children wear crowns crafted of flowers. They're all here to celebrate the school's 25th anniversary.

Today is also Waldorf's annual May Faire celebration, a day when this tight-knit community gets together to celebrate folk traditions.

Before the celebration begins, students sing a song. The third

the "heavenly realm."

"It's beautiful how it came together and how the kids all used their own ideas," Cecilia says, "I love it. They did a great job,"

Once the children finish singing and the parents take their final photos, everyone moves through the front door of the school.

Inside, the air smells strongly of popcorn, evoking memories of elementary school. Hundreds of people wait in line for tickets as children, dressed in fairy-like costumes, race down the hall in a frenzy to get to the tie-dye station. "There are bunnies in there!" an especially eloquent young girl squeals to her father.

She walks down the hall in hopes



Making flower crowns at Richmond Waldorf's May Faire celebration.

graders stand in front of several ceramic murals on the school's front elevation. They shyly sway to the music. Those kids helped create the murals under the guidance of Merinda Cecilia, a Waldorf mother and local artist. The theme of the piece is interconnectedness. Younger students crafted the "underworld", third and fourth graders worked on the "earthly realm", and the middle schoolers created

of holding one, as another group of children make their way to the puppet show.

Dallas Wommack, a teacher at Waldorf and mother of four, wears teased hair that is meticulously woven with leaves and twigs. She raves about the school's community and welcoming environment. "The school is probably the warmest community in Richmond," Dallas says. Her husband nods in



Richmond Waldorf student learns the art of tie-dyeing, by doing.

agreement.

She talks about the school's nature-focused philosophy and its hands-on approach to learning.

"Most things here are hand-made," she says. "Waldorf learning is more about what a person can do, versus what one can acquire."

Even after my brief introduction to the school, it seems evident that Waldorf puts this ideology into practice. Students are given the reins to create at their own pace, while teachers and volunteers provide a nurturing environment for children to thrive in.

Valerie Hogan, an enrollment officer and planner of the event, couldn't be prouder of this year's celebration. Hogan planned the festival to be full of movement, art, and imagination.

"We do all of these traditions to celebrate the bounty of spring," she says as she points to the May Pole.

The May Pole, erected outside the building, is still wrapped in ribbons. To begin the celebration earlier that day, younger students had danced around the pole, and middle schoolers played

their instruments, honoring this time-worn tradition celebrated by people around the world.

Back inside, the older students take to the dance floor in the gymnasium. The DJ blasts music like "What Does the Fox Say", and the "Hannah Montana Theme



Dallas Wommack with her daughter at Richmond Waldorf.

Song" which remind me of my own halcyon days. The energy at Richmond Waldorf is warm and accepting, and as I make my way back to my car I feel embraced by it all. **NB**

Monthly Update With Third District Council- woman Ann-Frances Lambert

by **BRIGETTE KELLY**

VIRGINIA FALL LINE TRAIL

BETWEEN 2019 and 2020, the Virginia Department of Transportation determined a preferred route to connect all seven Richmond localities. Jurisdictions along the Fall Line route have been hard at work planning and building a trail.

The Fall Line will connect rural, suburban, and urban landscapes when complete. Not only will the route produce recreation, but it also has the potential to connect people to jobs, shopping, colleges, and transit along the corridor. The Fall Line would also become part of the East Coast Greenway alignment, which seeks to connect 15 states from Maine to Florida.

ENVIRONMENTAL NEWS

The RVAgreen 2050 Initiative, which will begin with the Climate Equity Action Plan 2030, seeks to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 45% by 2030. The plan also aims to achieve net-zero emissions by 2050 and help the community adapt to Richmond's climate impacts such as severe heat storms and flooding.

The Plan will be finalized over the summer and submitted to City Council for adoption this fall.

After over two years of input from hundreds of residents, community advocates, and technical experts, the plan is ready for public review.



Ann-Frances Lambert


DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS (DPW)

The city is offering amnesty of penalties applies to overdue parking citations. Those who currently owe money for parking tickets prior to May 2 will have their penalties waived as long as the original ticket amount is paid by Sept. 12.

OFFICE OF COMMUNITY WEALTH BUILDING (OCWB)

OCWB Career Stations provide a supportive environment to prepare individuals for their next job or career. The OCWB Career Stations are open to all individuals who are in need of employment services. Certain services may only be available based upon income, location, and funding availability.

RICHMOND POLICE DEPARTMENT (RPD) UPDATE

Since the start of Operation Redball, the program has made 144 felony arrests and has recovered 159 illegal guns. 



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BOOK REVIEW

The Transformative Power of Being in Love

by **FRAN WITHROW**

**“THE YEAR OF
M a g i c a l
Thinking”** by
Joan Didion
is one of the
most powerful
books I’ve ever
read. Didion’s

account of her life after the sudden
death of her husband is extraordi-
nary.

I immediately thought of Didion as
I read Amy Bloom’s book, “In Love.”
Bloom’s memoir also centers around
the death of her husband. Brian
Ameche was diagnosed with Alzhei-
mer’s and decided to die by assisted
suicide at the age of 66. Before he
died, he told Bloom to “write about
this.”

Fortunately, she did.

Bloom first noticed subtle differ-
ences in Ameche in 2016, but it was
much later before they did any test-
ing. Bloom includes an actual “Mi-
ni-Mental State Examination” sam-
ple sheet in her book so you can see
what types of questions are used to
make a mental assessment. At the
time of testing, Ameche’s results al-
ready showed mild dementia.

Wanting to end your life by medical
suicide is anything but easy. Even in
the few states that have Right to Die
laws, there is only a narrow opening
to qualify for assisted suicide. The
person has to be a resident of that
state and needs to have less than six
months left to live. They need to be
mentally capable of expressing their
wish to die and be able to swallow
the medication unassisted. As you
can imagine, few end-stage Alzhei-
mer’s patients are capable of this.

Bloom eventually hears about Digni-
tas, an accompanied suicide organi-
zation in Switzerland. She and her
husband fly to Europe, and Bloom
describes every detail of the process,
from their initial contact to the mo-
ment Ameche takes his final medi-
cation.

The end is very peaceful for Bloom’s

husband.

Moving back and forth between
their last days in Zurich and their
life beforehand, Bloom deftly paints
a loving but honest portrait of her
marriage. This exquisite memoir
is not only a tribute to Ameche,
but also a way of raising awareness
about patient rights at the end of
life. Shouldn’t people with terminal
illness, “painful diminishment, or
just plain exhaustion at one hundred
four” be able to choose their exit
strategy?

Any book about death involves
poignancy and grief, but Bloom’s
chronicle also has plenty of honesty
about the challenges of marriage, as
well as a healthy dose of dark hu-
mor. When Ameche suggests that
Bloom herself give him a lethal dose
of something, she refuses, as that
would be murder and she could
go to jail. “You’d do great in jail,” he
says. “You’re so resourceful; you’re a
leader.”

Like Didion, Bloom writes moving-
ly about the transformative power
of being “in love,” the heartbreak
of letting go, and finding one’s way
forward after the death of a partner.
Both Bloom and Didion have ex-
perienced and written about those
thin places that separate life from
death. They write about searching
for meaning and strength even in
the face of unimaginable loss. And
though their experiences were vastly
different, both women write fear-
lessly and wondrously about a topic
many people shy away from.

I salute their courage with gratitude.

[9]

**“In Love: A Memoir of Love and
Loss”**

By Amy Bloom

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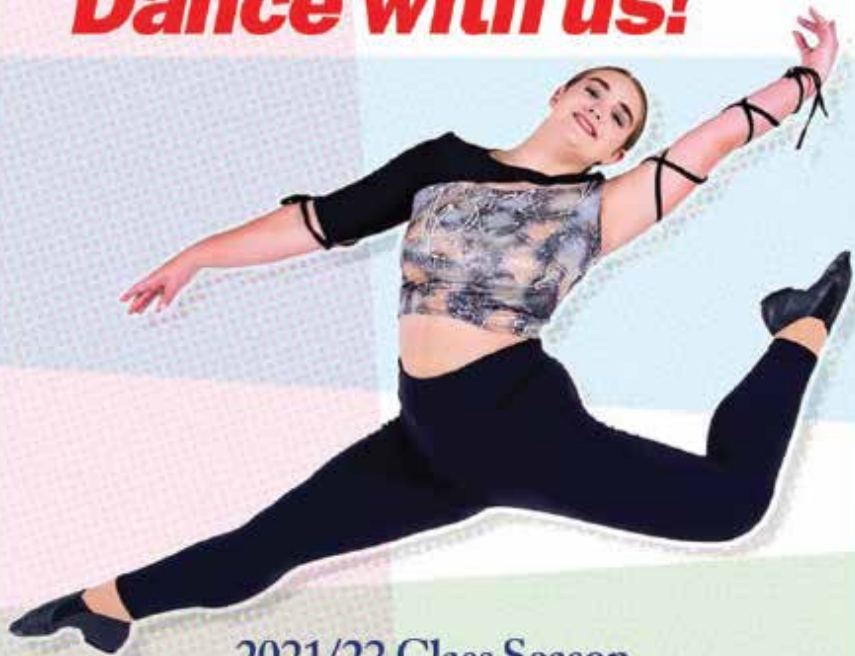
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AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Cool Lane Commons Coming Soon

by CHARLES MCGUIGAN



Artist rendering of Cool Lane Commons.

EARLIER THIS MONTH, Virginia Supportive Housing (VSH) hosted a ceremonial ground-breaking on Cool Lane Commons—a \$23 million affordable housing project that encompasses 86 individual units. The Commons will be housed in a renovated and expanded vacant assisted living facility that sits on the border of Henrico County and the City of Richmond. It will offer units of more than 500 square feet to homeless and low-income people in the metro area. Additionally, this VSH project will provide on-site supportive services. The 100,000 square foot, two-story building will also house office space for VSH staff, and some community partners.

“Cool Lane Commons will end homelessness for eighty-six people in the Richmond region, a significant step towards our goal of ending homelessness for all,” said VSH Executive Director Allison Bogdanovic. “And its design marks another significant step for us: our partnership with neighboring Faith Community Baptist Church is a milestone in more intentionally integrating our properties into the surrounding communities.”

Faith Community Baptist Church and its founding visionary, Dr. Patricia Gould-Champ, were key supporters of this project from the beginning. Cool Lane Commons will provide offices and meeting rooms for the Church’s non-profit community development corporation—Community in Development. This non-profit offers criti-

cal neighborhood services, including food and urban farming programs, workforce development, and HIV/AIDS prevention education.

Among the dignitaries gathered for the ground-breaking was Henrico’s Fairfield District Supervisor Frank J. Thornton. “Cool Lane Commons promises to provide much-needed affordable housing, in addition to key support services, for residents in our region who are most in need,” Frank said. “This exciting project also will reinvest in the local community and boost programs already on the ground. Henrico County is pleased to join Virginia Supportive Housing and



VSH Executive Director Allison Bogdanovic at ground-breaking of Cool Lane Commons.

our partners in this effort to improve the quality of life of our residents.”

Cool Lane Commons will be VSH’s largest development to date, and its third sixty-plus unit development in the Richmond area. Along with housing, VSH properties also offer many supportive services for their clients. And this approach works. Ninety-nine percent of the people VSH serves in the greater Richmond area never return to homelessness. **NS**

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