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FOUR OAKS Journal

Your voice
MATTERS

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- Four Oaks family waits for liver transplant
 - Make Easter a new beginning
 - Four Oaks fire chief takes on new role
-

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FROM THE PUBLISHER

Oh... the madness of March

Despite not being from Tobacco Road, I very much enjoy March Madness. As a child, I would ask for permission to stay home on the Friday during the ACC Tournament to watch those games, and then smuggle a radio into class to catch those early afternoon NCAA Tournament games.

I was never much of a basketball player. Even in my athletic days, I was an all-defense, no-shoot and no-handle guard. But, fortunately for me, my skill with a pen kept me close to the action.

My media career took me to press row at Cameron Indoor Stadium (very cool, but not for the claustrophobic) and to the Smith Center, when I saw Tyler Hansbrough's nose broken by Gerald Henderson from the auxiliary press section (which was about as high in that place as one can safely go).

My wife and son have occasionally seen me on TV, guarding my laptop from loose balls and poring over stat sheets. It's always a lot of fun covering the sport.

I never thought I'd be running a magazine that had a March edition that didn't entirely focus on basketball. And, for that matter, an April one for baseball and maybe a September one for football.

Things didn't turn out that way, but I'm still excited about this edition.

There's a story about how faith can help one deal with heavy burdens, and some lighter fare about Four Oaks' new interim public works director.

There's a nod to Easter, which comes a bit early this year.

And, because I just couldn't help it, there's a little basketball, too.

Thanks for reading, and may your brackets remain unbroken.



Randy Capps
randy@fouroaksjournal.com

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General Manager - Shanna Capps
Creative Consultant - Ethan Capps
Creative Director - Frank Spurlock

Publisher - Randy Capps
Editorial Consultant - Mike Bollinger

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Don't forget to vote!

It's presidential election season, and that means that we get a March primary in which to vote.

The North Carolina Primary is set for Tuesday, March 15, and here's what you need to know:

- The new voter ID laws will be in effect, meaning that you will need a photo ID in order to cast your vote. Some acceptable forms of ID include a N.C. Driver's License, N.C. ID card, U.S. Passport or a Military or Veterans ID card. In addition, voters over the age of 70 may present any acceptable photo ID that has been expired for any length of time, as long as the ID was valid on their 70th birthday.
- Registered Republicans will vote in the Republican Primary. Registered Democrats will vote in the Democratic Primary. If you are registered as unaffiliated, you get to choose the primary in which you'd like to vote. Libertarian and Non-partisan ballots are also available.
- To vote on the day of the primary, you must have registered to vote earlier than Feb. 19. If you are not registered, you can visit a One-Stop Voting location on March 3-5 and March 7-12 and register and vote on the same day. The nearest locations are First Baptist Church in Smithfield and the American Legion Building in Benson.
- On partisan ballots, you'll see choices for President, U.S. Senate, U.S. House, Governor, Attorney General and several other state offices. There will also be candidates for Johnston County Commissioners Dist. 4 and 6, State House Dist. 28, and a few folks will get to vote in the State Senate Dist. 12 race.
- All ballots will include candidates for the Johnston County School Board and the Connect NC Bond Referendum.
- For more, including polling places and sample ballots, visit www.johnstonnc.com/joconcelections.



Johnston Health Clayton Chapel named in honor of Ayden and Betty Lee

Submitted by Four Oaks Bank

The Naming Ceremony for the Johnston Health Clayton Chapel was held recently, in honor of Ayden R. Lee, Jr. and Betty J. Lee.

Four Oaks Bank & Trust Company, for whom Ayden Lee served as President and Chief Executive Officer for 35 years, secured the naming rights for the Chapel at Johnston Health's Clayton facility to honor Mr. and Mrs. Lee.

Going forward, Johnston Health Clayton's Chapel will be known as the Ayden R. and Betty Lee Chapel.



Attending the Naming Ceremony for the Chapel at Johnston Health in Clayton were, left to right, Four Oaks Bank President and CEO David Rupp, Four Oaks Bank Chief Banking Officer Jeff Pope, Four Oaks Bank Board of Directors Chairman Ayden Lee, Betty Lee, Johnston Health President and CEO Chuck Elliott and Johnston Health Services Corporation Board of Directors Chairman Bobby Parker.

To quote a portion of the plaque displayed at the Chapel entrance: "During his tenure as CEO, president and chairman, he instilled within the bank a deep appreciation for its 'real' assets, which he has defined as the customers, and the staff and managers who serve them."

It also reads, "Through the years, he and his wife, Betty, have faithfully supported the communities the bank serves. Following the couple's lead, the bank has contributed to causes and participated in events, civic clubs and fundraisers. By their example, the couple has helped shape Four Oaks Bank & Trust into a company that invests in communities, believes in the potential of people, and embraces the business model of banking on relationships."

The naming of the Chapel at the Johnston Health Clayton facility will serve to commemorate Ayden Lee's 35 years of steadfast leadership and profound dedication to Four Oaks Bank & Trust, and also to honor these lifelong Clayton residents for their many years of service, commitment and support of the Town of Clayton and the surrounding communities.

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Since we're well into college basketball's "March Madness," we decided to highlight the Four Oaks Middle School teams.



Bottom row, left to right, Jeremiah Mclean, Nolan Blackmon, Thomas Dees, Sam Webster, Jacob Bradshaw, Holden McLeod and Cole Winborne. Second row, Keyshawn Sanders, Jonathan Watts, Josh Jernigan, Samir Mitchell, Jaequan Wells and Austin Denning. Top row, Coach Winters, Tony Alston, Trey Penny, CJ Ray and Coach Nettles.



Bottom row, left to right, Jasmine Diaz, Mattie Wheeless, Lanie Norris, Katie Mitchell, Melissa Villalon and Janay McDonald. Second row, Katon Blackmon, Kyndal Woodard, Omaria Sellers, Erica Stanley and Jenna Roberts. Top row, managers Rachel Hughes, Pricila Garcia-Amezquita, Arianna Billups, Kylie Lee, Carlye Durham and Coach Jernigan.



Flashback: Four Oaks School

Linda Barefoot let us use this picture, taken in 1941 at the Four Oaks School. Recognize anyone?

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Holding on to hope

A Four Oaks family waits for a life-saving transplant



If you happened to pass by it on a quiet road near Four Oaks, the home of Patrick (PJ) Smith, his wife Ellen Ennis-Smith and her son Geoffrey Ennis would look much like any other.

There are dogs running around in a fenced-in back yard, and a tiny sign restricting a parking place to “Carolina Fans Only” near the front porch.

Walk inside, though, and it doesn’t take long to learn that this isn’t your average household.

PJ, once a C130 pilot in the Air Force, lounges on a leather couch and greets a visitor with ‘welcome to my man cave,’ without moving.

In April 2013, he contracted a case of pneumonia. That led to a hospital visit, then a month-long coma during which several of his organs tried to shut down and a rehab period — when he and his wife would learn that his liver didn’t make the same recovery.

PJ has hepatic encephalopathy, which is defined by the U.S. National Library of Medicine as “the loss of brain function that occurs when the liver is unable to remove toxins from the blood.”

It’s a rare disorder, but one that affects virtually every aspect of his life.

“One thing about this disease is the forgetfulness,” PJ said. “You forget what you just said.”

“Some liver patients never have it,” Ellen said. “Others have it for a short time as it progresses. He, unfortunately, has had it for three years. Some days, he seems like old PJ. Some days, he doesn’t know me. He doesn’t know where he lives. He sleeps a lot. He gets confused a lot. And it’s taken away a lot from him.”

It’s also a disease that will kill him, unless he receives a liver

transplant. He’s No. 2 on the waiting list, and he’s three months into what was expected to be a six- to eight-month wait.

Ellen, a science teacher at Smithfield-Selma High School, is the only one working — a daunting prospect when faced with a never-ending barrage of medical bills.

“The surgery is a million to a million-and-a-half,” she said. “We’re blessed that we have insurance. But when you start looking at 20 percent of that amount — we don’t know what we’re in for.”

Aside from the initial stay, PJ has been in the hospital 27 times. And that figure doesn’t include trips to the emergency room.

“We average about once a month,” Ennis-Smith said of the family’s trips to the ER. “This has been a horrible disease. Not only has he lost his health, I’ve lost him mentally quite a bit.”

PJ spends most of his time at home these days, which is a frustrating existence for a man used to running his concession business, riding with the Patriot Guard or conducting prison ministries and soup kitchens.

We have dealt with encephalopathy for three years,” she said. “I know he doesn’t want to live like this. He hates being stuck in the house. He can’t drive. He was a very active, constantly going person. I would love to get a nurse, but that is not in our wheel house right now.”

About that time, an oven timer goes off. Ellen excuses herself and heads off to the kitchen to help Geoffrey with a casserole.

Geoffrey, 28, is a friendly young man who wears a constant smile on



Randy Capps
randy@fouroaksjournal.com

his face. He's also coping with cerebral palsy, which means that his care falls on Ellen.

"It's been tough, because I have to work if we're going to keep a roof over our head. I'm the only one working now. I have a special young man there," she said, looking at her son. "He's trying hard to be independent, but he requires my care. But PJ requires a lot more right now.

"Having a husband and a son like that, it's been tough. But, the majority of the time, I've lost my best friend — the one you talk to when you've had those rough days. (He) is my best friend, and when he doesn't know you or he can't communicate with you, that's tough."

Ellen credits friends and family for helping her deal with the strain.

"We're members at Beulah Hill," she said. "I've got friends, family and the wonderful people I work with. Triple S is my family. They bring meals. They're there for a shoulder. Same thing with the church."

Sometimes, the stress gets to her, though.

"There are times I get frustrated," she said. "I reach a point where I have to find a corner and I cry. I have to lean on some very dear friends and family. But I guess because I went through that..."

She stops for a minute, then begins to tell Geoffrey's story.

"We were involved in an accident with an 18-wheeler," she said. "I was pregnant. I broke my neck and many other things, and I was



PJ and Ellen pose for a photo.



A shot from their wedding day.

full-term pregnant with him. And he got caught between my seat belt and pelvis and it crushed his skull. That's how he ended up with cerebral palsy.

"I questioned my faith a lot after that. I actually left the church for a couple of years. I was so angry with God. But I worked through it, and now I'd say the faith is stronger. I'd been taking care of Geoffrey so long, I guess all of those years doing that prepared me for what I had to do here."

In what would have to be considered a dark time for her spiritually, there was still a bit of divine influence at play.

"The Lord works in mysterious ways," she said. "A pastor that I was raised with, he was like a second father, was transferred. And he questioned why he was transferred to this little bitty town. I was married to a state trooper at the time, and we were transferred to the (same) little bitty town. We weren't there probably eight to 10 weeks when we had the accident.

"He came and saw me at Duke. We were there a long time — many, many months. And I was very angry with God. He came to me every couple days and just sat and talked to me. He said, 'I understand. I sat on a railroad track and argued with God, and here I was a pastor.' He never pushed me, but it slowly brought me back. ... I was like, 'Lord, you put him right there when I needed him.'"

A glimmer of hope for PJ makes things easier, too. Should he receive a transplant, his prognosis is good.

"If he has a successful transplant, they said he will be back," she said. "Duke put us with some mentors, Sonny and Dawn Holcomb, from Kitty Hawk, he had a transplant several years ago and they're helping us work through it. Also spoke with Bridget and Danny Johnson, from Four Oaks. I call her sometimes and we just talk.

"It's a tough surgery. They're going to cut him from one end to the

other. But once the liver starts working, and depending on the level of toxins in the body, he'll wake up in a day or two and say, 'wow. The fog is gone.'"

It's that bit of light at the end of the tunnel, and a faith forged through adversity, that keeps Ellen going.

"I get angry now, sometimes," she said. "People say, 'the Lord will never put more on you than you can handle.' That's not in the Bible. It says he won't leave you, but it doesn't say (that). I do get frustrated. I wish he didn't trust me so much. And then, you'll get through that day or that evening and you'll say, 'yeah, I can do this again.'"

As a visitor gets ready to leave, Ellen rouses PJ to let him know.

"Thank you for coming," he said, stretching out his hand. "Sorry I slept so much."

"Hang in there," the man said in reply. It was a rare ordinary moment in a home that is anything but.

Randy Capps can be reached at randy@fouroaksjournal.com or 919-980-5522.



PJ performs during a church service.



Bingo fundraiser for PJ Smith

Saturday, March 12, 6 p.m.

**Beulah Hill Christian Church
1701 Keen Road, Four Oaks**

Hot dog dinner served at 6:00PM, bingo starts at 7:00PM. Cost is \$15 for a meal and two bingo cards or \$10 for a meal and one bingo card. There will also be 50/50 drawing and a silent auction.

**For more information, call
Monica at 919-820-7354.**

PJ giving a young man a ride on his motorcycle.



Embrace the new beginnings of Spring

Submitted by Pastor John Norman, First Baptist Church Four Oaks

For me, the fall season has become my favorite — when the sweltering heat of summer gives way to cooler temperatures and the countryside is transformed with the hustle and bustle of ingathering. Everyone, even those who do not farm for a living, feels the urgency of preparing for the bleakness of winter.

Most of all, the colors of fall stand out in my mind, as the fields around Four Oaks transform into the hues of harvest; white puffs of cotton, golden ears of corn, orange orbs of pumpkins and amber stalks of grain. But my attention is chiefly captured by the beautiful trees, which appear to be ablaze with fire.

One of my favorites is located on Main Street in front of my family's home. It stands in our yard during summer, somewhat unnoticed, but then announces the arrival of fall as its leaves play a colorful medley beginning with green, then yellow, onto orange and finishing with umber. Throughout its kaleidoscopic transformation, neighbors stop to take pictures or to simply enjoy sitting underneath its expansive canopy.

Through it all, there seems to be a sense of satisfaction as the flora that surrounds us completes its journey of purpose through various seasons and circumstances. The plants and trees have finished their tasks, in fulfillment of the preacher's proclamation — *For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven* (Ecclesiastes 3:1).

In truth, however, the seasons do not stand alone. In order for us to enjoy the harvest and colors of fall, there has to be a season of maturation. And, before there is a season of growth and nourishment, there has to be a season of planting or new growth. Each season has its own unique importance, yet each relies on the other. Though fall is my favorite, it would not be possible without spring.

Spring is symbolic of new beginnings, and rightly so. For it is in this season we begin to see hints of new life as blossoms burst and grass and leaves emerge. Spring is for starting, renewing and creating. So, perhaps it is no accident we remember the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus at this time.

Easter (and the Lenten days which proceed it) becomes a holy springtime celebration of death giving way to life. Something wonderful happened as the suffering of Jesus to the point of death was transformed into new creation. In spring, the evidence of new life is all “around” us — but is the reality of new life “in” us?

At some point in our lives, we will all face the realities of death and chaos. Even if we want to avoid this season of life, it will come. We do not have the ability to obtain everlasting life, fulfilled life, abundant life, new life on our own.

Most of us long for the seasons of our lives to be productive and peaceful and to know they are part of a larger purpose. Yet, we are unable on our own to bring complete peace and purpose.

The mysteries of God are made fully known to us in the person of Jesus of Nazareth. Life and purpose are discovered and understood in following him. Yet Jesus is more than a model to pattern our lives after, he is the presence which empowers our lives now and hereafter.

For the Apostle Paul speaks to our springtime hope when he writes: *So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new!* (2 Corinthians 5:17).

Volunteer fire chief takes on added role with the Town of Four Oaks



Barry Stanley is a familiar face around Four Oaks, serving as chief of the town's volunteer fire department since 2007. And in January, he took on a new role which will have him out and about even more often.

Stanley was named interim public works director for the town in January after the retirement of Charles Hardee, and town officials are excited about Stanley's new role.

"We were looking for somebody that could be with us a long time," Four Oaks mayor Linwood Parker said. "Barry's a local boy that's done a good job with the fire department, and his background with water systems, fire hydrants and all that work with the fire department gave us the opinion that he'd be a good mix with our water and sewer departments."

Stanley has no plans to leave the fire department and believes that the two job titles can co-exist.

"It's definitely going to take some time management," he said. "Once we get things on a good schedule, it will make it a lot easier. And that's on the fire department side and the public works side."

The two jobs mesh together quite well, it seems.

"They definitely tie together, which is going to be a plus for both the public works and the fire department," Stanley said. "We know, on the fire department side when there's an issue (with water pressure, hydrants or the like) and now we can resolve it more fluidly. In the past, the fire department has worked with the public works staff when there was a hydrant that needed replacing."

"It works both ways, too. We've got two employees on the public works side that are firemen. So, during the day, if there's something major — a structure fire or a bad wreck — they'll come help with that. It's better for the town, too. We do the same job with less employees."

Hardee, and the rest of the staff, have helped make his transition a smooth one.

"(Charles is there for) anything we need," Stanley said. "He's there to answer questions and guide us. Chris Barbour, the assistant, has been here for years. He knows what's going on, too."

One of his first goals in the position is to establish a consistent trash pickup schedule in Four Oaks.

"If the people know it's on Wednesday — and this is just for bulk stuff, not the everyday household trash — then people will have it out at that time, and not having it sit around town the rest of the week."

In his first week on the job, he was supervising a bucket truck cutting limbs away from a power line not far from the fire department. A man drove past, and asked him if we was excited about the new job.

"Yeah," he said with a smile. "I like a challenge, and it's certainly been that. Everybody on the town side, the commissioners, they've been great. They all see it as a win-win, and I do, too."

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SAVE THE DATE

COMMUNITY CALENDAR

Every Wednesday, 10:30 a.m.

Story Time

James Bryan Creech Library, Four Oaks - Come out for story time at the library each Wednesday morning. For more information, call 919-963-6013.

Every Wednesday, 10 a.m. to noon

Smithfield Tadpoles

Smithfield Recreation and Aquatics Center - Bring your little "tadpoles" to SRAC Splash Park. The cost is \$3 for adult Smithfield residents, and \$2 for residents ages 3-12. The non-resident fee is \$5.50 for adults, and \$4 per child. Each additional child is \$3. For more information, call Tiffany Pearson at 919-934-2148, ext 107.

Every Wednesday, 5:30 p.m.

N.C. Pesticide License Certification Preparation

Johnston Community College Arboretum - This series of classes is intended for landscaping professionals seeking pesticide licensing in North Carolina. Upon completion of this series, participants will be prepared to register for the N.C. Pesticide License Exam. Instruction will focus on the Core Exam and Ornamental and Turf classifications. To register, call Brenda Harris at 919-209-2522 or email bkharris1@johnstoncc.edu. The cost is \$70.

Thursday, March 10, 7 p.m.

Johnston County Walk to End Alzheimer's planning meeting

Holt Lake BBQ Volunteers are needed for the Johnston County Walk to End Alzheimer's, set for Four Oaks in October. A planning meeting will be held, and anyone interested in helping out is welcome to attend. For more information, call Dale O'Neill at 919-706-6122.

Saturday, March 12, 6 p.m.

Bingo fundraiser

Beulah Hill Christian Church, 1701 Keen Road, Four Oaks - This event is a fundraiser for PJ Smith's liver transplant. A hot dog dinner will be served at 6, and bingo starts at 7. Cost is \$15 for a meal and two bingo cards or \$10 for a meal and one bingo card. There will also be 50/50 drawing and a silent auction. For more information, call Monica at 919-820-7354.

Friday, March 18, 5 to 8 p.m.

St. Patty's Day Pool Party

Smithfield Recreation and Aquatics Center - Don't be green with envy, come out and bring a friend to the party. Have fun hunting leprechauns. Those pesky magical creatures can be found all over and who knows...maybe you will find their pot of gold!!!! SRAC will be charging half off day passes. Members can swim for free, and day passes will be available for half-price. For more information, call 919-934-1408.

Saturday, March 19

Easter Egg Hunt (Four Oaks)

James Bryan Creech Public Library - Preschoolers will start at 11 a.m. K-3 will start at 1 p.m. Donations of candy and prizes are needed for the Easter Egg Hunt and Summer Reading Program. For more information, call the library at 919-963-6013 or email librarian@fouroakslibrary.org.

Sunday, March 20, 3 p.m.

Easter Egg Hunt (ages 2-7; Smithfield)

Smithfield Community Park - The Easter Bunny is coming! Bring out the kids to collect Easter Eggs and meet the Easter Bunny. Prizes will be awarded to the first, second, and third place egg collector. Everyone will receive a small gift from the Easter Bunny. Please be sure to bring your Easter basket.

Saturday, March 26, 9 to 11 a.m.

No Water off a Duck's Back

Howell Woods - The impacts of environmental pollution often are difficult to see. A major oil spill however, provides dramatic evidence of potential impacts to wildlife. Following a brief discussion on how oil spills have a negative impact on birds and the possible negative consequences to wildlife, people and the environment from human-caused pollutants, there's an activity involving experiments for a hands-on view into what birds face during an oil spill. To register, email Meredith Massengill at mamassengill@johnstoncc.edu or call the Learning Center at 919-938-0115. Cost is \$15 per participant.

To add your organization's events to the calendar,
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PAPA'S PIZZA

Expires 3/31/16. Must present coupon. FOJ

Two Large 2-Topping Pizzas

\$20.99

PAPA'S PIZZA

Expires 3/31/16. Must present coupon. FOJ

Two X-Large 2-Topping Pizzas

\$22.99

PAPA'S PIZZA

Expires 3/31/16. Must present coupon. FOJ

GLUTEN-FREE PIZZA

NOW AVAILABLE

PAPA'S PIZZA

TRY OUR NEW MENU ITEMS!

DESSERTS:

CANNOLI - \$3.99

TIRAMISU - \$4.99

NEW SPECIALTY PIZZAS:

MEDIUM LARGE X-LARGE

\$15.99 \$17.99 \$19.99

BUFFALO CHICKEN

THE DYNAMITE

(SPICY CHEESEBURGER, W/ SAUTEED ONIONS + TOMATOES)

BBQ CHICKEN

PAPA'S PIZZA

20 BBQ or Hot Wings & Garlic Knots

\$19.99

PAPA'S PIZZA

Expires 3/31/16. Must present coupon. FOJ

One Large 1-Topping Pizza & 10 Wings

\$20.99

PAPA'S PIZZA

Expires 3/31/16. Must present coupon. FOJ

One Large 1-Topping Pizza, 1 Reg. Cheese Stix & 10 Wings

\$25.99

PAPA'S PIZZA

Expires 3/31/16. Must present coupon. FOJ

One Medium 2-Topping Pizza & 5 Wings

\$17.99

PAPA'S PIZZA

Expires 3/31/16. Must present coupon. FOJ

One Large 2-Topping Pizza & 5 Wings

\$19.99

PAPA'S PIZZA

Expires 3/31/16. Must present coupon. FOJ

One X-Large 2-Topping Pizza & 5 Wings

\$22.99

PAPA'S PIZZA

Expires 3/31/16. Must present coupon. FOJ

6" Sub with French Fries or Chips & 16-oz drink for only \$5.99

or 12" Sub with French Fries or Chips & 16-oz drink for just \$8.99

PAPA'S PIZZA

Expires 3/31/16. Must present coupon. Pick up only. FOJ

2 Calzones or Strombolis & 12 Garlic Knots

\$20.99

PAPA'S PIZZA

Expires 3/31/16. Must present coupon. FOJ

One X-Large 2-Topping Pizza & Regular Cheese Stix

\$22.99

PAPA'S PIZZA

Expires 3/31/16. Must present coupon. FOJ

WE DON'T JUST COMPETE.
WE LIGHT THE WAY.
CALL TODAY!
919.963.9999

TOP 10 REASONS TO CHOOSE PAPA'S PIZZA

1. OUR DOUGH IS MADE FRESH DAILY
2. ALL VEGETABLES ARE CUT FRESH DAILY
3. OUR SAUCE IS MADE FRESH DAILY – NO PRESERVATIVES
4. FRIENDLY ATMOSPHERE
5. WE TRUST OUR CLIENTS
6. NEIGHBORHOOD PIZZA PLACE FOR OVER 15 YEARS
7. MORE THAN 40 YEARS COOKING EXPERIENCE
8. GRADE A FOR MORE THAN 15 YEARS
9. CHECK OUR SANITATION GRADE ON WRAL.COM
10. NO. 1 IN CUSTOMER SERVICE