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# FOUR OAKS Journal

## *Not Your Typical* **YARD SALE**

- Library mixes reading, fun this summer
- Business Profile: Sloan Communications
- Community Calendar

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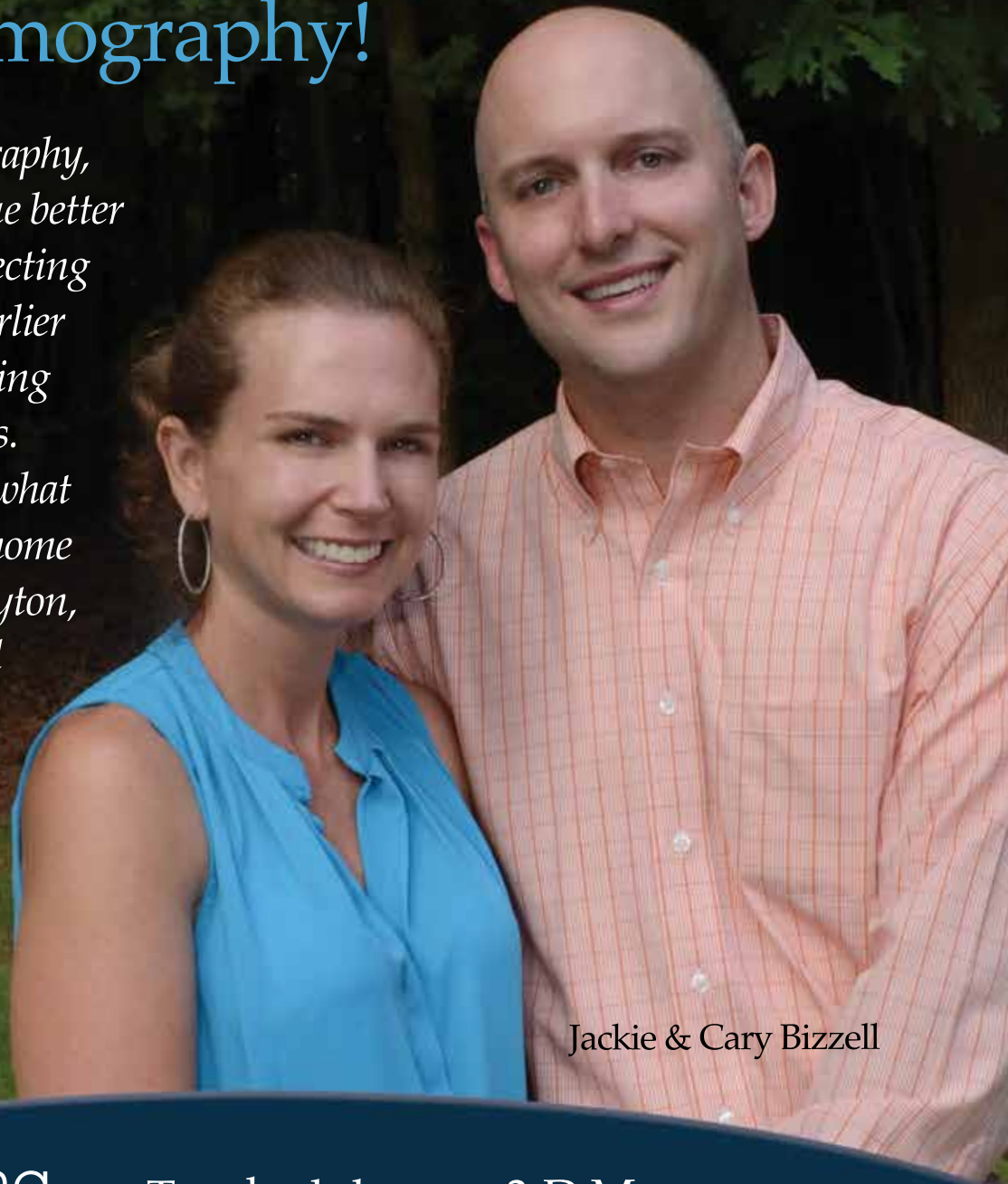
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## FROM THE PUBLISHER

# 'Shop local' is more than just a slogan

When Shanna and I started this magazine a little more than a year ago, we did so with the hope that folks would like it, and we could somehow be successful enough to create a media company that could support us both.

The first part of that vision has definitely come to pass. We continue to be honored and flattered by the outpouring of support from people in the community, and it warms my heart to hear someone say how much they enjoy seeing it arrive in the mailbox each month.

It's a source of pride for Four Oaks residents to be able to say, "we have our own magazine!"

The second part, however, has been a bit more challenging.

It costs money to produce the Journal, and those expenses are offset by advertising. You know, the little (and not-so-little) ads you see scattered around the magazine.

But two things have to happen in order for that model to work. First, I have to convince area business owners to use the Journal to reach potential customers.

But after that, we need readers to patronize those businesses by shopping locally.

Some things in life require a trip to a box store, but for those that don't, please consider spending your money in this community when at all possible.

Your friends and neighbors own and work for these local businesses, and they could use your support.

Keeping your money local helps those businesses, and when they can see a boost in customers based on running an ad in the Journal, they're more inclined to buy another one.

Then, with luck, the cycle starts over again.

Thank you all for your continued support, and remember to shop local!



Randy Capps  
[randy@fouroaksjournal.com](mailto:randy@fouroaksjournal.com)

## COVER STORY

Melissa Eakin stopped by the 301 Endless Yard Sale and you can see the complete story and more photos on page 8.

Photo by Jordan Eakin



## FEATURES



Library mixes reading, fun this summer

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### Volume 2, Number 4

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

**Publisher** - Randy Capps  
**Editorial Consultant** - Mike Bollinger

Interested in advertising? Send email to [randy@fouroaksjournal.com](mailto:randy@fouroaksjournal.com) or call 919-980-5522

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# James Bryan Creech Library mixes reading, fun this summer

Walk into the James Bryan Creech Library on a Wednesday morning during the summer, and there's a good chance you'll see something you've never experienced in a library before.

On one such morning recently, there were hopscotch squares laid out on the floor in masking tape and a room full of children hopping from here to there in search of their rock.

What appears to be chaos is actually part of the summer reading program, designed to keep kids reading — and moving — during their summer vacation.

"Every summer, we have a summer reading program to promote reading for kids while they're out of school," Tonie Collins, director and librarian, said. "Ours tends to be a little different. We don't have the budget to hire magicians and Disney princesses and whatnot to come in and perform for us, so we are very hands-on."

Hence, the hopscotch explosion.

"We have a theme for every summer," she said. "It varies from year to year. This year, it's 'On Your Mark, Get Set, Read,' and I always take it and make my own version of it. This year, we're doing the Reading Olympics to tie in with the Olympics."

While having fun is a priority, the program is also aimed at keeping books open in between school years.

"Right now, on average, weekly we're serving about 70 kids," she said. "We have a lot of fun. We have a reading contest where they can mark off every 15 minutes that they read and, at the end of the page, they can bring it in and grab something out of my prize box. At the end of the summer, we count up who's read the most and we give out prizes."

"We have the fun portion. The part where they come in and we have activities together. I like to think that we're trying to get them to read, but we're trying to get them to do other things too. Summer's about getting up and moving. Playing."

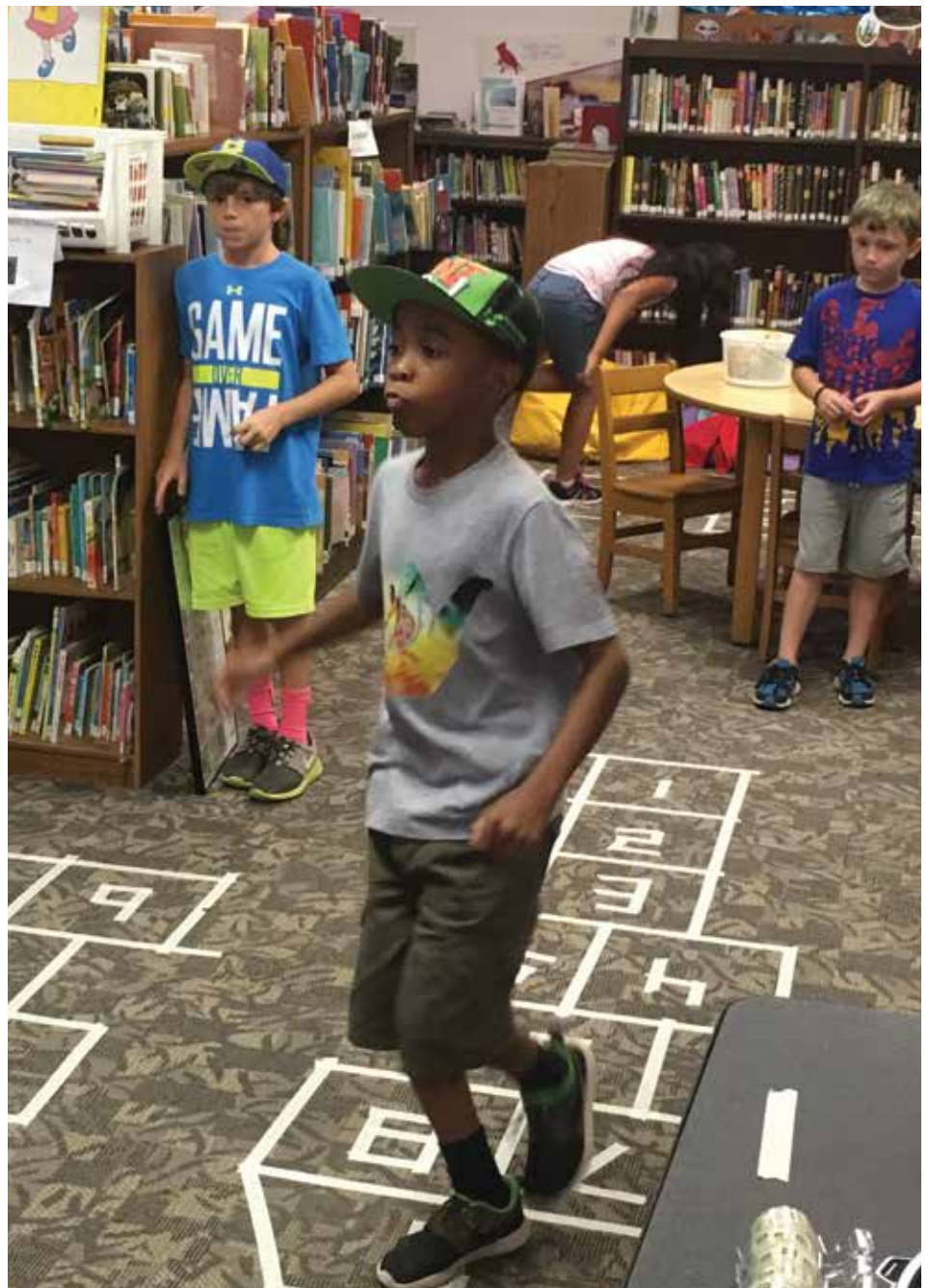
In addition to the summer reading program, Collins is also hoping to help ease another

issue for some area children — hunger. Two large boxes of snacks greet visitors at the front desk, and they're there for a very good reason.

"One of our local churches has gotten together with me, and we have a high number of children that are on reduced or free lunch at school," she said. "There is a good bet that, at any given time, there is a

child that's going hungry tonight. We offer snacks, and everybody can come in and get a snack and it's a way for those children who might be going hungry tonight to have a little something and not be judged for it."

While keeping children active and engaged in reading is the priority, Collins also wants to get their parents reading more as well.



"Every week, I post a new challenge," she said. "Simple things, like read a banned book. I'm not asking for rocket science or anything like that. Even Dr. Seuss has been banned in one library or another. What I'm trying to do is get parents to read, too, and make it fun. Once they read their book, and they can come in and tell me. We'll put their name into a drawing, and at the end of the summer, we're going to give out prizes."

Based on the smiling faces of kids bounding across the carpet, the outside-the-box approach is an effective one for the library.

"It's important to get kids into the library," she said. "There's a lot of things competing (for their attention) out there."

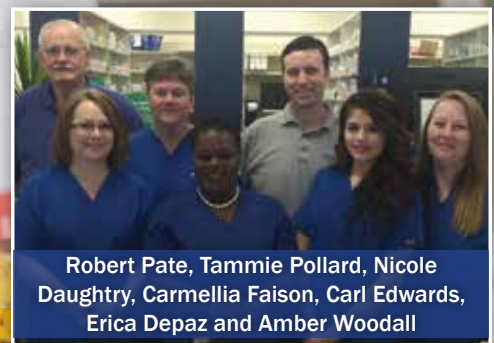
After all, where else can you check out a book and play hopscotch at the same time?



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# Tol Avery named new principal at Four Oaks Middle

New principal contracts for Johnson County officially began on July 1, but on a postcard-worthy Monday afternoon in June, Tol Avery already had plenty to do.

Almost three weeks before his tenure as the principal of Four Oaks Middle School began, a visitor found him rushing back and forth in its halls from the media center to the office and back again.

The fact that he was answering calls for his help or advice on the radio while wearing a green polo shirt from his last job at South Johnston High only added to the irony.

It seems that, after six years as an assistant principal at South and five before that at Clayton High, Avery is eager for the chance to become a principal.

"I am excited," he said. "I've worked with a number of great principals that have instilled a lot of discipline and I was able to hone a lot of skills from them that match my personality and, in terms of student achievement, just doing what's in the best interest of students."

His last year at South Johnston was spent with the Freshman Academy, working with younger students about the importance of completing — and maximizing — their education. That's a message he plans to bring to the slightly younger students at Four Oaks Middle.

"One of things we have to instill is that, to be competitive in the 21st century, some post-secondary education is going to be necessary," he said. "That conversation is going to have to start, if it hasn't already started. And we're going to have to find ways to implement that so the students internalize it."

If the name Tol Avery sounds familiar, maybe you watch college football. Avery started at quarterback for N.C. State from 1980-1982. While that sort of experience likely helps him relate to young people, Avery's connection with his students runs deeper.

"I think it's a culmination of all my experiences," he said. "That's certainly one thing. My Army experience for 20 years certainly helped me relate to the diversification of people and what motivates



them. ... And when they reach those stumbling blocks, the mindset that has to take place to continue to move forward and accomplish (their goals)."

Avery was quick to praise his predecessor, David Cobb, who's transferring to be the principal at South Campus Middle, and the staff that's already in place.

"They have a lot of good things in place, mainly the staff," he said. "It's very productive and outstanding. One of the things I'd like to build on is looking at the schedule in terms of what we're doing with power block for interventions and acceleration. Are we using that the best that we can for student achievement? Not only for achievement, but to grow the student mentally, emotionally and physically."

Avery believes that good programs, quality teachers and caring administrators are only part of the puzzle. Reaching out to the community is a key element as well.

"One of the things I want to emphasize is building relationships," he said. "Whether it's adult to adult, students to adult or adult to students. And then build that relationship to make the parents feel like they're welcome. We want to build relationships with the community, because they're a vital part of the success of our school, or any school."

With that said, Avery was off again, answering the chirping of his radio and looking very much like a man that doesn't need a calendar to tell him when there's work to be done.



## Happy 60th Birthday to Four Oaks Area Chamber!

The Four Oaks Area Chamber of Commerce celebrated its 60th anniversary recently. Anyone got any pictures or mementos from those days? The Chamber would love to see them. Anyone with anything to share should contact:

Jane Austin Lee at 919-963-4004 or [fouroaksareachamber@gmail.com](mailto:fouroaksareachamber@gmail.com).



Participants in the second-annual Johnston County Elder Abuse Awareness Walk pose for a photo. The event, sponsored by Johnston County DSS, was held in mid June and seeks to highlight the more than 350 cases of abuse and neglect in the county last year. For more information, call 919-989-5300.



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# Not Your Typical **YARD SALE**

It's probably the only weekend out of the year when you can people watch in Mrs. Rebecca Thornton's usually tranquil front yard.

From my seat on the porch swing, I watched as couples and families milled around under the pecan trees, inspecting a curious assortment of items displayed on numerous tables.

A blue tent had been erected near the front walkway, shading three tables of items and a querulously excited Chihuahua mix with a pink polka-dot collar. Her leash was tied to one of the tent's poles and she circled it every few seconds to go between an adorable little girl of about two years old and a Styrofoam cooler containing about two weeks' worth of Mountain Dew.

Neither had much of a calming effect on her; I blamed the weirdly smiling clown doll perched on the corner of the nearest table. That

was one item, I thought, they might as well pack back up for the ride home. I felt my brow furrow just looking at it.

It was the weekend of the Endless 301 Yard Sale and in Four Oaks, tables were scattered along both sides of the road from Mrs. Rebecca's bed and breakfast, The Dwelling Place, all the way down to Papa's Pizza and beyond.

I rode along that stretch, seeing everything from four-wheelers to dining sets to fresh vegetables up for sale. An elderly gentleman in a dignified straw



Melissa Eakin



Photos by Jordan and Melissa Eakin

hat presided over a card table crowded with porcelain figurines and I happened by as a handshake was exchanged over a dirt bike on a trailer nearby.

It was just 8:30 in the morning but I still had the feeling of a latecomer to a particularly eclectic party. Some people, I learned, had been up and going since 6 a.m. That's some hardcore yard sale-ing.

The trees in the yard of the Dwelling Place, where I'd chosen to hang out and observe the action, provided welcome shade as I prowled around among the tables. Mrs.

Rebecca and her son, Sam Thornton, had rented spaces in their yard a week or two in advance.

For a small fee people could choose a comfortable place to set up their tables of goods for sale. The location made it a great deal.

Mrs. Rebecca herself was standing behind a card table marked with a neon green hand-written sign that read, "Granny's Old Fashioned Lemonade — Cold and Sweet! \$1.00 large, .50 small."

I had to smile at the name, but having heard

of this famous lemonade, I'd been looking forward to trying some. I paid my dollar and got a large Styrofoam cup full of what did in fact turn out to be the epitome of lemonade. I had to give Mrs. Rebecca a hug after tasting it.

On a table across from the lemonade, I saw something I just had to have. Behind an assortment of antique pottery, cast iron tools and blue Ball jars was a wooden pig, painted white with black hearts, standing on three wheels like a tricycle.

The look I got when I carried it over to my

husband confirmed my unusual taste in knickknacks.

Propped against the pecan trees near two toilets sitting side by side were a pretty mantelpiece and an assortment of antique doors. Some nice old windows sat inharmoniously near an electric stove and I watched as a young couple purchased them and happily carried them to their car. I wished I'd seen them first.

Not far from the blue tent, a talented woman with a French braid and glasses played hymns on an electric piano she had just bought.

"We're going to have to figure out how to get it in the car and back to South Carolina," she said with a smile as we chatted between songs.

Everyone I saw seemed either fully immersed in some serious hunt for yard sale gold or just out for a little socialization. Laughter, dogs barking, children playing and music from the electric piano gave this small-town Saturday morning a festive air.

All that was missing was the smell of hot dogs or popcorn though both, I was sure, could be bought at some point along this stretch of 301. I took a deep breath of gardenia instead.

What a fun way to start my Saturday. I circled the house, finishing my lemonade, and visited the chickens in their coop near the vegetable garden. I like to think they remembered me but were distracted by the yard sale excitement.

From there, I made my way back up to the front porch and the blue tent out front where the dog and the little girl continued to play, a safe distance from the untouched clown doll. I briefly considered it as yet another weird item to mail to my younger brother, but the thought of having it in my car for the ride home was too creepy.

I got a friendly bark from the dog and a wave from the little girl before I headed back to the car with a white grocery bag containing my triumphantly acquired Tricycle Pig.

After depositing it on the back seat, I looked back at a yard full of people clearly enjoying themselves on a lovely summer morning and thought, one more walk through won't hurt.



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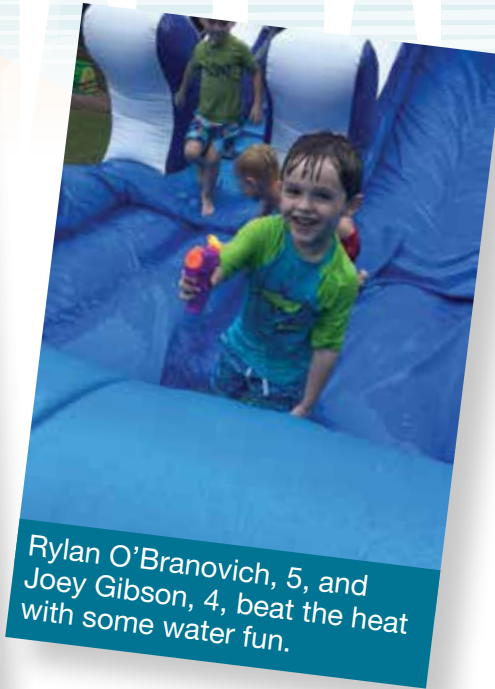
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# SUMMER



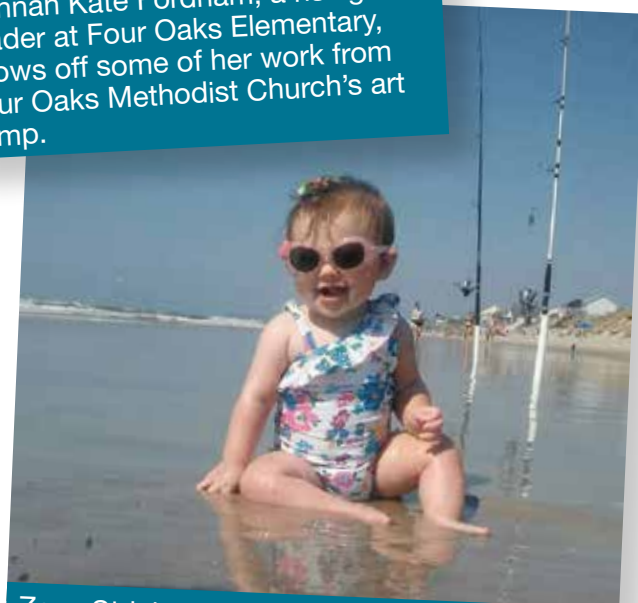
Hannah Kate Fordham, a rising first grader at Four Oaks Elementary, shows off some of her work from Four Oaks Methodist Church's art camp.



Rylan O'Branovich, 5, and Joey Gibson, 4, beat the heat with some water fun.



Jayden Braswell tries his luck on a water slide.



Zoey Strickland plays in the water at Topsail Island.



Samantha Tindall flips into the pool on a warm summer day.

## Full-service advertising agency with a small-town address

Ron Sloan never meant to settle long term in Four Oaks, much less raise three children and start Sloan Communications, a business that has served clients all over the state for 20 years. But that's what happens when a three-year plan turns into one that lasts for nearly four decades.

"I have come to love Four Oaks," he said. "We had planned to be here about three years when we moved here — and that was about 38 years ago."

His wife, the former Susan Surles, wanted to buy a house she had loved since she was a child, across the street from her parents. They purchased it in 1978 and have stayed long enough for their children — Elizabeth, Melissa and Nathan — to grow up in Four Oaks. They have since added three grandchildren, Ryan, Amelia and Jacob, to the Sloan family tree.

But for the first 18 years he lived in Four Oaks, he was driving back and forth to Fayetteville, where he worked for an advertising agency. By 1996, it was time for a change.

"I had been a creative director for an agency that handled national and regional accounts out of Fayetteville," he said. "I left that company, just knowing I needed to part ways, and I began looking for my next job."

"I had a freelance account with the Johnston County Visitors Bureau that I had been working with for several years. So, I decided to continue with that and pick up other freelance until I found a job. I picked up more and more jobs, and more clients, and it turned into a business."

He worked out of his home for the first year, then rented a space on Railroad Street before eventually buying the building where Sloan Communications now sits, on the corner of Main and Wellons.

"I never really had any aspirations of having my own business," he said. "It just happened to work out this way. That's the way the answer to prayers manifested itself, through this little business."

The business may be based in a small-town, but it offers all the services that business owners might find in a larger market, like Raleigh or Charlotte.

"With my previous experience, 22 years as Creative Director at two different firms in Fayetteville, and my associates' skill sets, we're able to provide full-service advertising and graphic design services, here in-house" he said. "We also provide commercial photography, and media planning and placement services as well as public relations."

In other words, Sloan Communications can handle logos and branding, brochures, billboards, print ads, package design, sign design, TV and radio commercials, websites, photography — or just about anything else a business needs to reach potential customers.

Sloan has also designed logos for many national and regional brands and dozens of area businesses, including his first full-time clients, Four Oaks Bank and the Johnston County Visitor's Bureau, as well as others, including Johnston Health, SECU Hospice House, House-Autry Mills, Stanfield's General Store, Carolina Packers, Enoch Winery, the Heritage Center, American Music Jubilee, TAP Construction, Lassiter Livestock, the town of Smithfield, town of Four Oaks, Broadslab Distillery and the Tobacco Farm Life Museum. Many of those became



Front: (left to right) Ron Sloan and Kathie Byrd.  
Back: Susan Smith and Caleb Thornton.

full service accounts.

"Logo design has probably been one of our strongest suits for building business, because it usually gets you in on the ground floor of a business," he said. "You do their logo, naturally follows that you can help them with the advertising and marketing tools, such as brochures, ads and photography to launch and promote their business."

Whether it's designing the first logo for a brand new venture or fashioning the latest in a long line of marketing campaigns, Sloan prefers the team approach.

"I like to position myself as sort of an extension of management for whoever my client is and work as part of their team," he said. "A lot of agencies like to come in and take over and take charge of it, but I like working in a team concept. I think that's the best way to be effective."

"We offer the advantage of a consumer, or an outside, perspective. Sometimes, from their vantage point inside a business, clients don't realize how their product is perceived in the market. It is easy to assume that people are aware of things, just because they seem so obvious to the owners. On the other hand, they know things about the account and the needs of the account that I don't know. So, when we



Samples of packaging and print work show some of the range of capabilities of the firm.



Many of the logos from Sloan's portfolio are recognizable as Johnston County companies.

work together as a team, that's where we're most effective."

He's extended that principle of teamwork to his own business and his staff, which includes two full-time employees. Kathie Byrd, has been with him since his first year, and works from her home in Hope Mills. She handles media services and production traffic.

Caleb Thornton of Four Oaks, joined the team following his internship from his days at Campbell. He has worked with Sloan Communications as a graphic designer for five years. Susan Smith, also of Four Oaks, joined them part-time, in 2016, to handle office management and bookkeeping.

It's a staff capable of providing a wide variety of services, which comes as a surprise to people who may not be expecting that kind of range from a small-town business.

"That has been a challenge, because it does

surprise people," he said. "They don't expect that level of service in a small town and don't come here looking for it. But in this day and time, with communications being what they are, you can work from pretty much anywhere. We have been fortunate to have people find us through referrals and by seeing our work out in the market place."

"Since the time that I started in '96, Johnston County has done a lot of growing. It has allowed me to work closer to home. Initially, I had accounts in Sanford, Lumberton, Fayetteville and Raleigh. I only had one account in Johnston County when I started. And now by far the majority of the business I have is from Johnston County."

It's been an interesting journey for Sloan and his family with an unexpected, but happy, outcome.

"Getting to work here in my home community has been a real blessing," he said.

"I was able to walk down to the school with my son when he was young and go to a lot of the school functions I previously missed. I've been able to actually participate in the community more, and I've gotten to know so many wonderful people and have built great friendships and relationships."

**For more on Sloan Communications, visit [www.sloancommunications.com](http://www.sloancommunications.com) or call 919-963-6000.**

#### Editor's note:

Sloan Communications' owner Ron Sloan has designed ads and produced photography for numerous editions of the Journal. His daughter, Melissa Eakin, has written several articles for us as well.

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## **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](mailto:bkharris1@johnstoncc.edu). The cost is \$70.

**Saturday, July 30, 11 a.m.**

## **Cardinal Que Fundraiser**

Barbour's Grove Park, Four Oaks

Come out and enjoy some delicious Cardinal barbecue! There will be live entertainment and a bounce house for the kids. Proceeds will benefit the Four Oaks Cardinal football program. For more information, call Buck Winbourne at (919) 971-7204.

**Sunday, July 31, 4 p.m.**

## **Musical celebration**

Charity DOC Church, East Church Street, Benson

The church will host a "Voices of Fire" service with numerous male choirs, soloists and other groups with powerful musical selections. For more information, call Evangelist Jacqueline Gathers at (919) 391-8087.

**Wednesday, August 3, 10:30 a.m. and 1 p.m.**

## **The Four Oaks Summer Reading Olympics**

James Bryan Creech Public Library

Don't miss the Ball Toss event at the Four Oaks Summer Reading Olympics. Call (919) 963-6013 for more information.

**Thursday, August 4, 6 p.m. to 8 p.m.**

## **Junior Women's League of Smithfield interest meeting**

Double Barley Brewing, 3174 U.S. Highway 70 West, Smithfield.

A new member interest meeting for the Junior Women's League of Smithfield will be held at Double Barley Brewing on Aug. 4. The JWL is a non-profit organization of women committed to promoting volunteerism, developing the potential of women and improving the community through the effective action of trained volunteers. For more information, call Jessica Davis at 252-814-4909 or email [jwsmithfield@gmail.com](mailto:jwsmithfield@gmail.com).

**Saturday, August 6, 7 a.m. to 1 p.m.**

## **Yard sale**

Burnell Baptist Church, Old School Road

The Women of Mission at Burnell Baptist Church will host a yard sale at the church's Family Life Center. For more information, call Rev. Jessie Brock at (919) 894-1418.

**Tuesday, August 9, 9-11 a.m.**

## **Living with N.C. Snakes**

Howell Woods

Discover the beauty behind our slithering friends and their importance in our ecosystems. Discuss diet, habitat, snake safety and learn how to distinguish between venomous and non-venomous species. You will also journey through the museum of snakes to get a closer look at common North Carolina species. Cost is \$10. For more information, call the Howell Woods Learning Center at 919-938-0115.

**Wednesday, August 10, 10:30 a.m. and 1 p.m.**

## **The Four Oaks Summer Reading Olympics**

James Bryan Creech Public Library

Don't miss the Giant Jenga event at the Four Oaks Summer Reading Olympics. Call (919) 963-6013 for more information.

**Wednesday, August 10, 10 a.m. to noon**

## **Map and Compass Navigation**

Howell Woods

Discover a valuable tool that will increase your confidence in any outdoor exploration activity. Participants will learn to use a map and compass together as tools to navigate through the wilderness. Cost is \$10. For more information, call the Howell Woods Learning Center at 919-938-0115.

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# COMMUNITY CALENDAR

**Thursday, August 11, 10 a.m. to noon**  
**Back to the Basics of Fishing**

Howell Woods

Take advantage of this opportunity to introduce a child to a relaxing, yet exciting, outdoor activity. Join experienced staff as they cover all the basics needed to be a successful fisherman. Learn to tie knots, set up a fishing pole and how to cast and reel in the big one. While you are here check out the 400-gallon aquarium to learn about your catch. Cost is \$10. For more information, call the Howell Woods Learning Center at 919-938-0115.

**Saturday, August 13, 9 a.m.**  
**Poker run**

Wilson County Fairgrounds to Four Oaks

This escorted ride is a transplant fundraiser for Four Oaks resident PJ Smith. There is a 50/50 drawing and lunch will be provided. After arriving in Four Oaks, riders will visit a local die cast toy museum. For more information, call Jim Snell at 252-205-0611.

**Tuesday, August 16, 10 a.m. to noon**  
**Nature Discovery Hike**

Howell Woods

Become a natural resource scientist for the day by joining Howell Woods staff members as they explore the many natural communities on the property. During the hike, you'll search for and discuss wildlife species and habitats and identify many of the unique plants found. Dress appropriately for a hike through the woods. Cost is \$10. For more information, call the Howell Woods Learning Center at 919-938-0115.

**Wednesday, August 17, 10:30 a.m. and 1 p.m.**  
**The Four Oaks Summer Reading Olympics**

James Bryan Creech Public Library

Don't miss the Olympic Craft event at the Four Oaks Summer Reading Olympics. Call (919) 963-6013 for more information.

**Thursday, August 18, 10 a.m. to noon**  
**Basic Tree ID**

Howell Woods

Have you ever stopped to take in the beauty of trees? Trees are unique and provide many ecological benefits. Participants in this program will learn how to identify many of the trees in our area by growth habit, form, bark, and leaf shapes. Cost is \$10. For more information, call the Howell Woods Learning Center at 919-938-0115.

**Tuesday, August 23, 4 to 8 p.m.**

**Explore, Sip & Shop, Downtown Four Oaks**

Take a tour of downtown businesses, enjoy a scavenger hunt and discover what shopping locally in Four Oaks has to offer. For more information, call the Four Oaks Area Chamber of Commerce at (919) 963-4004 or email [info@fouroaksareachamber.com](mailto:info@fouroaksareachamber.com).

**Wednesday, August 24, 10:30 a.m. and 1 p.m.**

**The Four Oaks Summer Reading Olympics**

James Bryan Creech Public Library

Don't miss the Closing Ceremonies at the Four Oaks Summer Reading Olympics. Call (919) 963-6013 for more information.

**Friday, August 26, 11 a.m.**

**Clothing Closet and Food Pantry**

Lighthouse Christian Fellowship, Hwy. 210, Four Oaks  
For details, contact John Jernigan of Lighthouse Christian Fellowship at 919-320-7387.

To add your organization's events to the calendar, email us at [hello@fouroaksjournal.com](mailto:hello@fouroaksjournal.com)

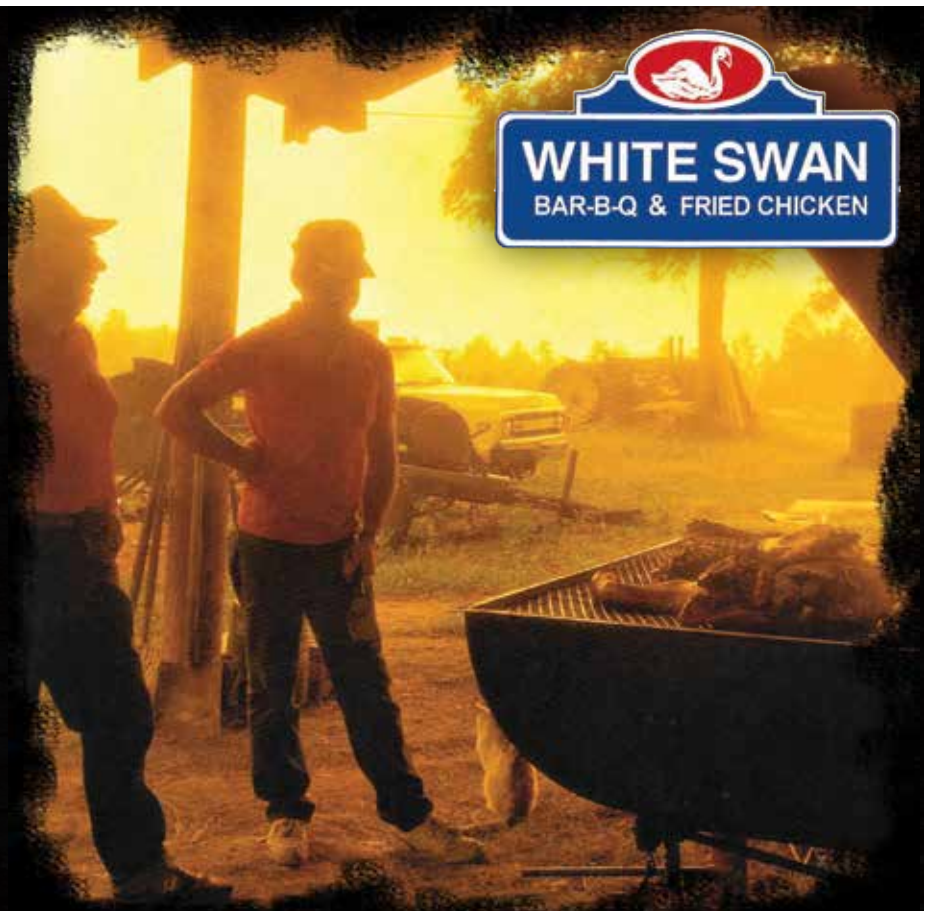
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