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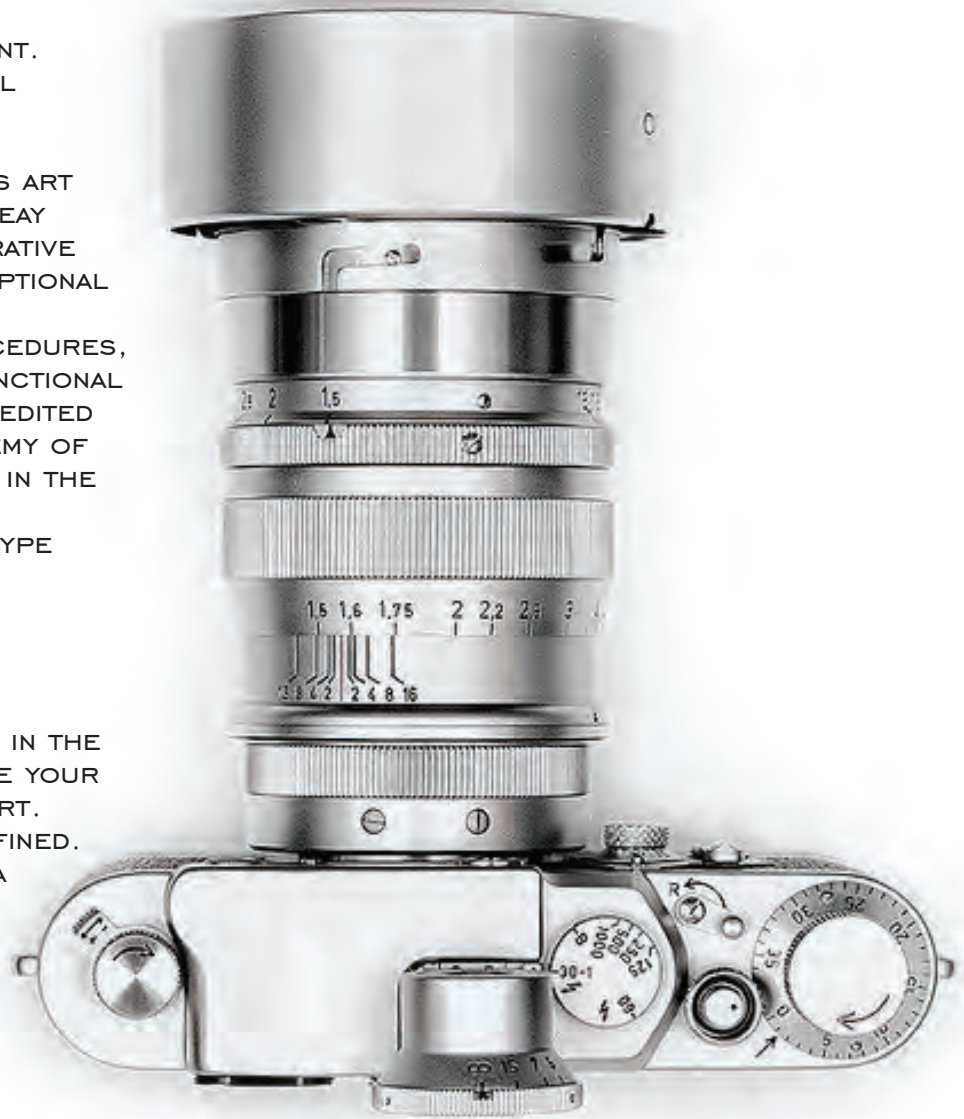
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## Publisher's Note

**T**HIS IS THE LARGEST ISSUE OF MOUNT PLEASANT Magazine ever, and it's also our Best Of 2015 edition. There's so much in this edition of our magazine, but, since I'm writing this while I'm in Florida at a wedding, I have weddings on my mind.

I'm enjoying family and friends in Merritt Island, which is near Cocoa Beach, along the Sunshine State's Space Coast, where my nephew, Kip, and his bride, Jessica, had a wonderful wedding. Weddings have changed over the years, reflecting the lifestyles and personalities of the bride and groom.

I've been to two weddings in the last couple of months. One was at The Woolfe Street Playhouse in downtown Charleston. The reception was catered by Crave, a well-known Mount Pleasant restaurant. The food was great, and the playhouse provided a unique setting, since "Macbeth" was in production. The bride and groom could have easily been a queen and king of that era. The wedding definitely reflected the personality of the wedding party.

Kip and Jessica's wedding also reflected their personalities. Because it was held on my sister Toni's riverfront estate, there was plenty of opportunity to be creative, and Kip and his eight groomsmen certainly took advantage of that opportunity. Adorned in sunglasses, they arrived by boat and strutted down the dock to the altar to AC/DC's "Thunderstruck." It was a sight to behold. As the preacher said, "All the men here are living through you vicariously. The fact that you were allowed to put AC/DC in your wedding gives us all hope." It was a very special sunset wedding, with family and friends gathering on the green grass that lines the bank of the Intracoastal Waterway.

We've all heard how Charleston is a great place for a wedding. Here at Mount Pleasant Magazine, we felt it was time for Mount Pleasant to take a walk down the aisle to see just how many people get married in East Cooper and the financial impact all these weddings have on our community.

Mount Pleasant has always been a special place to make a lifelong commitment. Blake Lively and Ryan Reynolds could have picked anywhere in the world to tie the knot, and they chose Mount Pleasant. Inside this issue, our team of writers and photographers, led by Managing Editor Denise K. James, have provided some wonderful ideas for your wedding. You can read more at [www.MountPleasantBrides.com](http://www.MountPleasantBrides.com).

Did I mention that this is the largest issue ever of Mount Pleasant Magazine? We owe it all to the relationships we've developed with our readers and the local businesses that support our magazine. And we look forward to growing even larger, which will give us the privilege of informing even more people about why East Cooper is such a wonderful place to live, work and play.

Thank you Mount Pleasant. The staff and I feel your love. 🍷

Until next issue,



— BILL MACCHIO  
Publisher



Kip, Uncle Bill and Jessica.

# MOUNT PLEASANT

MAGAZINE

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## From the Managing Editor

**W**HEN I MOVED BACK TO MOUNT PLEASANT LAST SPRING AFTER LIVING ON James Island for seven years, I couldn't believe how much was new to me about the town and her surrounding islands. Yes, I had lived in Mount Pleasant before (during graduate school; shout outs to Heidi Stepzinski and Alice Anthony), but things were markedly different. I had no clue just how many shops, restaurants and opportunities were waiting for me to check them out – but, as I write this, I'm working my way through the list, little by little.

Readers, consider our 2015 Best of Mount Pleasant issue your personal “list” to all that is good about Mount Pleasant and East Cooper. The businesses and people that placed were chosen by you and your neighbors – so you can rest assured that they are worth the effort. Of course, there's absolutely no way we could include everything that makes East Cooper the best place to be – but you can start with page 113 and get inspired.

Speaking of inspired, our cover crew, photographed by the talented Jenn Cady at the Charleston Harbor Resort and Marina, is made up of the stellar individuals who help direct some of the Lowcountry's biggest events. Left to right: Gillian Zettler of the Charleston Wine + Food Festival; Bob Moran of the Family Circle Cup; Jimmy Huggins of the Southeastern Wildlife Exposition; and Julian Smith of the Cooper River Bridge Run. My appreciation goes out to each of you, as well as to East Cooper Sporting Goods and Bottles Beverage Superstore for supplying our props.

I could go on about how much good stuff is in this issue besides the 2015 Best of Mount Pleasant and our cover feature on the top Lowcountry events – from a gorgeous bridal spread, complete with tips from the experts around town to instructions on hosting your own oyster roast – but I'll let you read the issue for yourselves.

As always, I'm grateful to have all of you as readers and supporters. 2015 is going to be a great year. 🍷

Yours,  
DENISE K. JAMES  
Managing Editor



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# Our Contributors



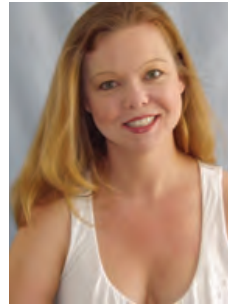
A freelancer for more than two decades, **Patra Taylor's** articles have appeared in a number of local magazines. The Charleston Mercury is home to her regular column, "Gray Matters," which chronicles her fight against aging. Her first book, "What's a Nice Girl Like Me Doing in a Gene

Pool Like This?" was released in 2013.

**Stephen and Cassandra Richerson** are a husband and wife photography team that recently relocated to the Mount Pleasant area. As a former contractor, Stephen has extensive knowledge of home design and realtor needs, while Cassandra has years of experience with portraiture. Bringing their skills together, they are focusing on



providing quality professional portraits and head shots, editorial features for restaurants and local businesses, as well as real estate and architectural photography in the Lowcountry.



**Julie Thigpen** has been a chef for over 20 years. She plied her trade for two years in Japan and two years in Ireland before returning home to South Carolina, where she worked for several high-end restaurants in downtown Charleston. Now retired from full-time cooking, Julie has settled into freelance writing about food and the culinary world, private cooking lessons and blogging about food, wine and her extensive travel.

Interested in contributing to *Mount Pleasant Magazine*? Email your contact information (name, phone, mailing address) and one sample of work you have created (or a link to your work online) with the subject "**Aspiring MPM Contributor**" to [Editor@MountPleasantMagazine.com](mailto:Editor@MountPleasantMagazine.com).



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# Notes from Friends

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I enjoy your magazine! Liked the story about our waste management people. ... hard job but needs to be done. Had to laugh at the comment about the mother who told them not to be late on pickup day because her son won't get ready for school on time until they come.

**-Kim Little**

via [Facebook.com/MountPleasantMagazine](https://www.facebook.com/MountPleasantMagazine)

I enjoyed the article on The Boulevard. Does anyone know if Jon Livak is single and available? Happy holidays!

**-Kathryn Martin**

via Email

Thank you, Mount Pleasant Magazine, for the tickets to Wine Under the Oaks. Denise, if I was not the most enthusiastic person that day it was because I had recently been diagnosed with breast cancer. God must have nudged you my way so my friend and I could have a day of fun before surgeries started. We enjoyed the day and thank you again.

**-Tamara Starnes**

via [Facebook.com/MountPleasantMagazine](https://www.facebook.com/MountPleasantMagazine)

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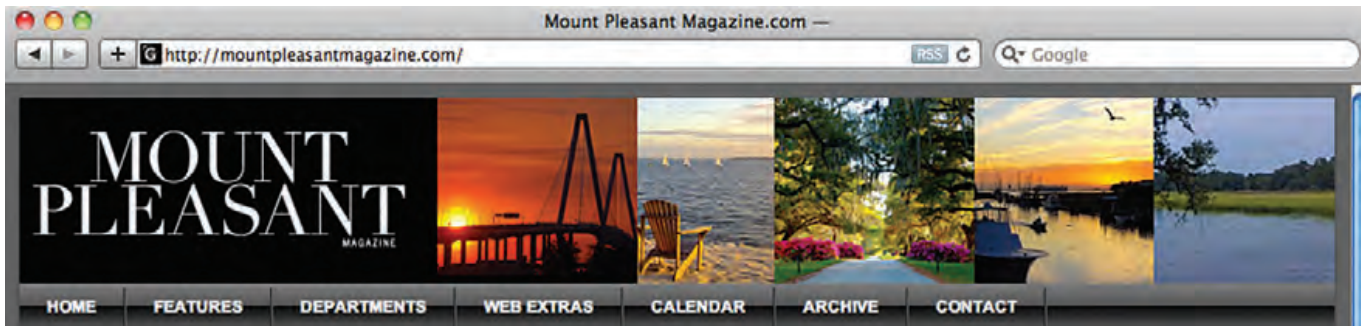
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Here at Mount Pleasant Magazine, we are always curious about our readers. That said, we'd like to request your entries for our inaugural "I Love Living East of the Cooper" essay contest at [MountPleasantMagazine.com/essaycontest](http://MountPleasantMagazine.com/essaycontest), as well as our popular **Favorite Moms and Dads** contest at [MountPleasantMagazine.com/momanddad](http://MountPleasantMagazine.com/momanddad). Complete rules and deadlines are available online.



Do you have a friend out of town who wants to read the **2015 Best of Mount Pleasant** results but missed the opportunity to grab a print copy? Steer him or her in the direction of [BestofMountPleasant.com](http://BestofMountPleasant.com). You'll find the results from previous years as well as this year – and you can share them with everyone on social media.

We'd also like to invite the brides who feel inspired after thumbing through this issue to take a gander around the newest website in our family: [CharlestonBrides.com](http://CharlestonBrides.com). It's brimming with fun resources and ideas to help you get ready for the big day. 🍷

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# PARTY OF FIVE

THE BIG EVENTS OF 2015  
AND HOW THEY IMPACT  
EAST COOPER

*Story by Patra Taylor!*



*When Spoleto Festival USA trumpets in its 39th season in May, the focus of the art world, both nationally and internationally, will fall directly on Charleston. From its humble beginnings to becoming what many consider the premier event in the top-ranked tourist city in America – and number two in the world – is a breathtaking rags-to-riches transformation.*



Photo courtesy of Spoleto Festival USA.

*Almost four decades after its birth, Spoleto Festival USA is internationally recognized as America's premier performing arts festival.*

## **SPOLETO FESTIVAL USA**

“In the early days of the festival, Charleston was not as burnished as it is now,” said Nigel Redden, general director of Spoleto Festival USA. “One of the things that attracted Gian Carlo Menotti, who founded the Festival in Spoleto, Italy, was that the Festival could be an economic engine here, just as it was for Spoleto, Italy. The idea of going to a relatively poor town in the South made an enormous amount of sense just in terms of replicating the Italian Festival in America.”

Redden pointed out that the beauty

of the city and the fact that it had good theaters made Charleston the perfect place to grow an arts festival. Visitors, as well as many Spoleto performers, soon discovered the area’s beaches, making their way to Sullivan’s Island and the Isle of Palms to spend their downtime enjoying the sun and sand.

Almost four decades after its birth, Spoleto Festival USA is internationally recognized as America’s premier performing arts festival. For 17 days and nights each spring, it fills Charleston’s historic theaters, churches and outdoor spaces with performances by renowned art-

### **BY THE NUMBERS**

- Inaugural year: 1977
- Number of years in Existence: 38
- First year attendance: Not available
- Attendance in 2014: 65,000
- Local economic impact in 2014: \$85 million (last studied in 2008)
- Date(s) of 2015 event: May 22-June 7
- Length of event: 17 days
- Website: [spoletousa.org](http://spoletousa.org)



The vision for the first Cooper River Bridge Run was to promote health and wellness in the Lowcountry. It now does the same internationally.

ists, as well as emerging performers in dance, music, opera and theater. Its sister festival, Piccolo Spoleto, runs simultaneously with Spoleto Festival USA, offering jazz, dance, films, theater, choral music, classical music, poetry readings and exhibits that feature artists from across the Southeast.

“Spoleto Festival USA is not a festival driven necessarily by big names, but by repertory. ... by a very interesting mix of programs,” Redden said. “There’s something enormously exciting about the juxtaposition of a work that is a thousand years old with something that’s brand new. That sets us apart from any other art festival in the world.”

### COOPER RIVER BRIDGE RUN

Less than a year after Spoleto

Festival USA made its debut, a small group of local health enthusiasts devised a plan to get people off their couches.

#### BY THE NUMBERS

- Inaugural year: 1978
- Number of years in existence: 37
- First year attendance: 6,000
- Attendance in 2014: 40,000
- Local economic impact in 2014: \$30 million
- Date(s) of 2015 event: March 28
- Length of event: 1 day
- Website: [bridgerun.com](http://bridgerun.com)

“The vision for the first Cooper River Bridge Run was to promote health and wellness locally,” said race director Julian Smith. “Now we’re promoting health and wellness nationally and internationally. I think

that’s pretty cool.”

Mount Pleasant, which had long served as a gateway to the island beaches, was suddenly ground zero for an event that would eventually be counted among the most important 10K runs in the nation.

“One of the major things that put us on the map was when Runner’s World magazine did a big spread on the race in the early 1990s,” Smith explained. “It had a major impact on us because it really got us out there nationally. Then in 1994, Oprah Winfrey ran the race, which also got us a lot of national attention. Those two things, along with the addition of corporate sponsorships, helped make the Bridge Run what it is today.”

Although this event, which takes place in late March or early April,



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Photo courtesy of the Southeastern Wildlife Exposition.

SEWE is a three-day showcase of everything there is to love about wildlife and nature.

includes close to 40,000 amateur runners and walkers from all 50 states and around the world, it is truly a professional sports event where world-class competitive runners take home prize money. Smith noted that about 40 percent of event participants are from out-of-town.

“Prior to race day, we also hold a race directors’ conference in the Cooper River Room at Memorial Waterfront Park,” noted Smith. “Race directors from the big races from all over the country come here to get a behind-the-scenes look at the Bridge Run.”

Pre-race events include a two-day health and wellness expo featuring nearly 200 exhibitors at the North Charleston Convention Center; a Kids Run and Wonderfest at Hampton Park in Charleston; and Taste of the Bridge Run, held in three separate locations simultaneously, including one at Cinebarre in Mount Pleasant.

“Our goal has always been to promote health and wellness. As one of the largest 10K races in the country,

we’re able to do that on a larger scale now,” Smith said.

### SOUTHEASTERN WILDLIFE EXPOSITION

Like Spoleto, the Southeastern Wildlife Exposition focuses its events in downtown Charleston. SEWE is a three-day showcase of everything there is to love about wildlife and nature.

“It brings together people of all ages, men and women, sportsmen and conservationists, artists and artisans,

#### BY THE NUMBERS

- Inaugural year: 1983
- Number of years in existence: 32
- First year attendance: 4,500
- Attendance in 2014: 40,000
- Local economic impact in 2014: \$50 million
- Date(s) of 2015 Event: Feb. 13-15
- Length of event: Three days
- Website: [sewe.com](http://sewe.com)

fans and families,” said Jimmy Huggins, president and chief executive officer of the Expo. “Through an incredible lineup of events – from fine art

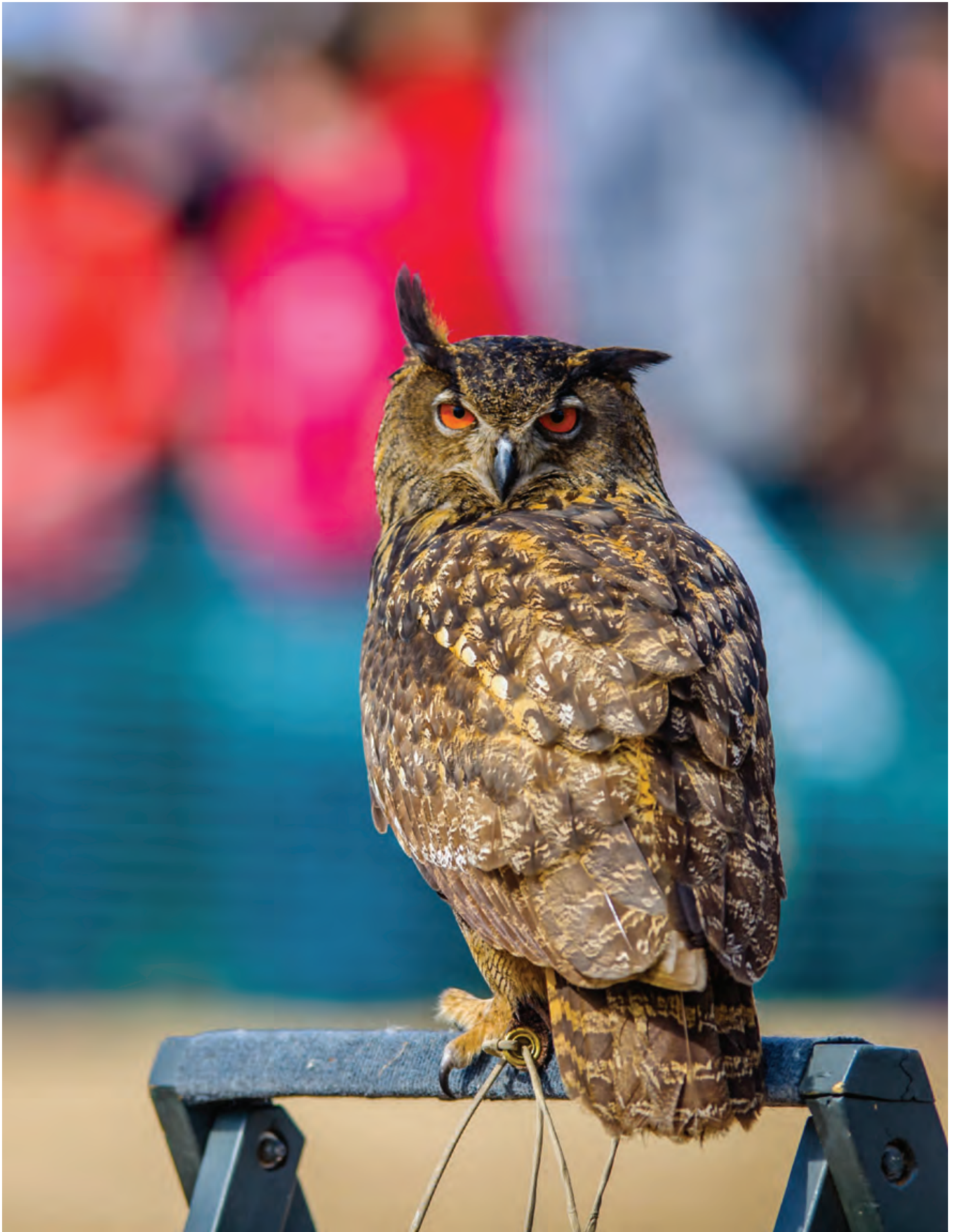


Photo courtesy of the Southeastern Wildlife Exposition.

*One of the guests at last year's Southeastern Wildlife Expo was a resident of the Center for Birds of Prey.*

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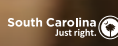
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exhibits, conservation education, sporting demonstrations and parties – we offer something for art lovers, wildlife and outdoor enthusiasts and fun seekers of all ages.”

SEWE, held in February, has the distinction of being the first major event in the area to take place during the “off season.” With the construction of Charleston Place Hotel and its thousands of square feet of exhibition space, the original organizers of SEWE saw an opportunity to create an event that complemented a major aspect of Southern culture. According to Huggins, “Our local hunters are our conservationists. They are the ones who give the dollars to support organizations like Ducks Unlimited and the South Carolina Waterfowl Association.”

With the support of the city of Charleston and the Charleston Convention and Visitors Bureau, SEWE got a foothold in the conservation world and made a name for itself as the largest show of its kind in the country.

“We expanded the scope of our art exhibits from cute dogs and ducks to fine art that depicts nature and animals,” Huggins said. “We also expanded the scope of our exhibitors.”

“While our local hunters and conservationists will always be part of this event, SEWE draws a cross-section of people to the Lowcountry,” Huggins continued.

“Many of those who attend are fairly affluent people from out of town. They not only spend money at the Expo, they also fill hotel rooms, eat at restaurants and shop at retail stores in February, which has typically been a slow time for tourism.”

Huggins said general admission tickets are available to the public on Friday, Saturday and Sunday, but VIP programs and activities begin on Wednesday before the official kickoff of the event.

“The South Carolina Waterfowl Association holds a major state event in Mount Pleasant during SEWE weekend,” he noted.

### FAMILY CIRCLE CUP

In 2001, the Family Circle Cup made a bold move that would secure its continued success. After 28 years in Hilton Head, the tournament moved to its new

### BY THE NUMBERS

- Inaugural year: 2001 (in Charleston) \*\*
- Number of years in existence: 14 (in Charleston)
- First year attendance: Not available
- Attendance in 2014: Not available
- Local economic impact in 2014: \$40 million
- Date(s) of 2015 event: April 4-12
- Length of event: Nine days
- Website: [familycirclecup.com](http://familycirclecup.com)

\*\*The Family Circle Cup began in Hilton Head, South Carolina in 1973.



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Melanie Oudin was among the competitors at the 2014 Family Circle Cup.

Photo courtesy of the Family Circle Cup.

Like SEWE, the event has helped blur the lines between the tourist season and the off-season.

The Festival celebrates the renowned food culture of the Charleston area during five event-packed days. It infuses homegrown flavors with award-winning chefs, winemakers, authors, storytellers and food enthusiasts.

“I think people yearn for intimate, interesting experiences when they go to events like the Wine + Food Festival,” said Gillian Zettler, the event’s executive director. “Because there are food and wine events cropping up all over the country, the pressure is on to make sure ours is unique, that this little snapshot visitors get of our home is the best bite we can give them.”

This year, the full Festival experience includes a day in the re-imaged Culinary Village, grand parties such as the Opening Night Gala or Toasted: The Festival Finale, and intimate events like signature dinners, workshops and excursions.

According to Zettler, the first Festival in 2006 was contained in Marion Square in downtown Charleston, but, as the Festival grew, it spilled over into a number of venues across the Charleston peninsula. This year, several major events will take place East of the Cooper.

“We are holding our first event ever on Sullivan’s Island,” stated Zettler. “Poe’s Tavern is hosting a twilight burger bonanza featuring

home on Daniel Island, the Family Circle Tennis Center.

According to Bob Moran, general manager of the Family Circle Cup, the tournament, held in April, has been making history in the world of tennis since its inception in 1973.

“We’re the largest women’s event, by far, in the world,” said Moran. “When you look at other events that are like us, their draws are 32 players. Our draw is 64, which means we have more players, more activities and more matches. We’re giving young players an opportunity to qualify.”

“We’re the longest-running tennis event in the country,” Moran added, “and it’s important to us for

our legacy to continue. Therefore, one of our major focuses is how people are consuming our media. By 2017, our goal is have all 55 singles matches played here broadcast for public consumption. In fact, we plan to broadcast every singles match on the WTA that year, which is more than 2,000 matches. We’re going to make it possible for fans to follow their favorites on their television, cell phones and computers.”

### **CHARLESTON WINE + FOOD FESTIVAL**

It hardly seems possible that the Charleston Wine + Food Festival will celebrate its 10th year in early March.

#### **BY THE NUMBERS**

- Inaugural year: 2006
- Number of years in existence: 9
- First year attendance: 6,000
- Attendance in 2014: 23,000
- Local economic impact in 2014: \$10 million
- Date(s) of 2015 event: March 4-8
- Length of event: Five days
- Website: [charlestonwineandfood.com](http://charlestonwineandfood.com)

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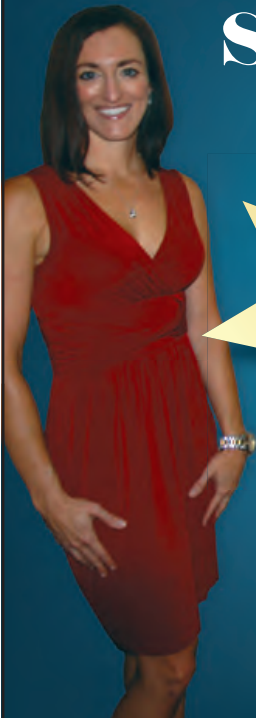
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Photo courtesy of the Charleston Wine + Food Festival.

Originally confined to Marion Square in downtown Charleston, the Charleston Wine + Food Festival has spilled over into a number of venues, several of them East of the Cooper.

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legendary New Orleans chef and host of the Travel Channel's American Grilled, David Guas, along with James Beard Award-winning chef Linton Hopkins of Holeman and Finch in Atlanta, who is famous for his incredible burgers. They will work with Poe's own chefs to create one-night-only burger creations especially for the event. There will also be live music, great local beers and fun cocktails."

Other events being held East of the Cooper include Pole-to-Plate: A Chef's Fishing Tour of Charleston at the Isle of Palms Marina; the Chef's Golf Classic, at Patriots Point Links; and Toasted: The Festival Finale, at Harborside East.

\*\*\*

While many factors have played into the phenomenal growth and prosperity of the region, these five-star events help drive the local economy throughout the year.

"The Charleston area is lucky to have these five major events," Huggins concluded. "The events are all different. They don't compete with each other, and they support each other." 🍷

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# Let the Healing Begin



Kate Darby and Chris Staubes hope to bring stability and civility to the Charleston County School Board.

## **NEW MEMBERS HOPE TO CHANGE SCHOOL BOARD'S CULTURE**

*Story and Photos by Brian Sherman.*

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**F**OR AS LONG AS MOST PEOPLE can remember, the Charleston County School Board has been featured on the front page of local newspapers for all the wrong reasons. Its meetings have been punctuated by petty arguments, meaningless, meandering discussions, vicious vendettas and unfounded accusations. In October, less than a week before a new board was to be elected, the old board forced the district's longest-serving superintendent to resign, despite the district's academic success during her tenure.

The two newest members of the school board representing East Cooper want to change all that. Kate Darby and Chris Staubes, both entering the political arena for the first time, were elected to four-year terms to the board on Nov. 4 and were sworn in six days later.

"We want the front page news concerning the school district to be about academic achievement and awards our students win, not about fighting among school board mem-

bers," said Darby, the director of administration at J. Henry Stuhr funeral home. "The most important focus should be on student achievement. That should be our goal."

"The infighting was a distraction," Staubes, an attorney, added. "We want to bring stability to the school board."

Though neither Darby nor Staubes has run for elected office in the past, both have a vested interest in and previous connections to the county school system. Darby's two sons are graduates of Wando High School, and she has chaired the School Improvement Council at Mount Pleasant Academy, Moultrie Middle and Wando. She also was president of the PTA at Mount Pleasant Academy and served on a committee tasked with coming up with ways to solve the problem of overcrowded East Cooper schools.

Staubes was the real estate attorney for the school district for a decade, resigning from that position so he could run for a seat on the board. He has three children in the system: a 15-year-old at Academic Magnet High School,

a 13-year-old at Cario Middle School and a 9-year-old at Pinckney Elementary School.

Darby and Staubes agree that the job description for a school board member should not include managing the day-to-day operations of the district. That responsibility belongs to the superintendent, or, in the case of Charleston County, the interim superintendent.

"The job of the board is to set policy and supervise the superintendent. It isn't to micromanage," Staubes said.

"The board is a liaison between the public and the superintendent," he added, pointing out that he is already fielding phone calls from various groups that want to provide board members with information about their positions on issues related to education.

"Our role is to hold the superintendent accountable and have oversight over the budget," Darby stated. "We're not there to micromanage."

Much of the work of the board's nine members will be done in the Policy, Strategic Education and Audit and Finance committees. Darby is a member of the Policy Committee,

while both Darby and Staubes serve on the Strategic Education Committee.

Staubes also was elected by his fellow board members to be vice chair. He meets with the chair, Cindy Bohn Coats, and the superintendent to set the agenda for each board meeting. He also will be responsible for handling what in the past was one of the most contentious parts of school board sessions: when the general public gets to voice their opinion to their elected officials.

Staubes pointed out that the Charleston County School District has many pressing needs, but the most important are choosing a new superintendent and deciding which schools will be built or expanded to serve the needs of a sprawling district with 48,000 students. He and Darby agreed that a nationwide search for a new leader is appropriate, but neither ruled out the possibility of offering the job to someone who is already in the Lowcountry, such as Interim Superintendent Michael Bobby, Chief Academic Officer Lisa Herring or even McGinley.

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**"The job of the board is to set policy and supervise the superintendent."**

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“I don’t know what was in the agreement Dr. McGinley made with the previous board,” Darby explained. “But I was looking forward to working with her, and I would be open to a discussion about her returning.”

Staubes, who indicated that a new superintendent would be in place sometime in 2015, said “no doors are shut” concerning McGinley’s future with the Charleston County School District.

What criteria will the new board use to choose a new leader for the district? Staubes and Darby both said the next superintendent should be a strong leader; a team builder; have an education background but be business-minded; know how to delegate; be a strong communicator; and be a visionary who understands what’s unique about the Charleston area. They are confident that a person

with these qualities exists, either in the Lowcountry or somewhere else around the United States.

Meanwhile, Staubes, Darby and seven other school board members are working on providing more room to serve the educational needs of a district that is growing by approximately 1,500 students a year. Staubes is concerned that some students must eat lunch as early as 10:30 a.m., while others are attending class in temporary trailers. Plans are already underway to build a new East Cooper high school at the site of the old Wando High School. Serious work can’t begin, however, until Laing Middle and Jennie Moore Elementary students move out of the old Wando building and into their new, permanent home when the school year begins in August 2015.

In addition, a new elementary

school will be built in Carolina Park in north Mount Pleasant.

A permanent superintendent and new schools are the board’s top priorities, but re-establishing the public’s trust in the board also is vitally important, according to the two new representatives from East of the Cooper.

“What we hear is distrust of the school district,” Darby said. “The board needs to communicate better with parents, the community and teachers. For example, some people don’t know how to apply to a magnet school. We need to make it easy and accessible to do that.”

“I’m not going to agree on everything with everyone on the board,” she went on to say. “But we will hear each other out and be civil.”

“We need to start the healing process,” Staubes concluded. 🌱



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# Luring the Locals

## Lowcountry Fly Shop

**A**LTHOUGH I HANG OUT WITH a few people who enjoy the sport of fishing, I can't say I had a proper education on the matter until I crossed paths with Scott Davis, owner of the Lowcountry Fly Shop. A local stop for fishing enthusiasts for the last four years, Lowcountry Fly Shop is settling into a spacious new location at Moultrie Plaza on Coleman Boulevard, and Davis is looking forward to the opportunities that come with the expanded business.

BY DENISE K. JAMES

"The basis of our business is making your own flies, and we needed more space," Davis commented.

Fly fishing, which has gained popularity in the Lowcountry over the last several years, consists of using lightweight "flies" – usually handmade out of natural materials such as hair, feathers and fur – to bait a fishing line. According to Davis, the movement of the lightweight fly is what lures the fish. The benefits of fly fishing include being able to do it year-round and the satisfaction that comes with making flies with your own two hands. As for Davis, he got addicted to the sport during college while working at local tackle shops.

"I naturally fell into the guiding aspect of it," he said. "The industry has grown, and Charleston seems to be in the spotlight. We're a unique fishery with a 6-foot tide range – and the tourism aspect of it doesn't hurt."

A range of products is available at the Lowcountry Fly Shop, which offers one of the largest fly-tying departments in the Southeast. Most of Davis' clientele enjoy making their own flies, but they can also purchase the ready-made

variety. Even those who are interested in freshwater fishing can find what they are looking for at Lowcountry Fly Shop.

"It's not all saltwater. We cater to everyone," Davis assured me.

If you've never fashioned your own fly, a visit to Lowcountry Fly Shop is the perfect occasion to learn. Davis and his staff offer several casting and fly tying classes throughout the year, including a popular class on building fishing rods out of bamboo. Private and group casting lessons are offered, and the group classes are free. In fact, one of the reasons Davis is enthusiastic about his new space is the abundance of classes he plans to offer



The personal touch offered by Lowcountry Fly Shop is the reason customers come back again and again.

in 2015. He feels that the personal touch offered by Lowcountry Fly Shop is why his customers come back again and again.

"We offer knowledge, service and the chance to get to know everyone who works here," he pointed out.

Next, Davis gave me a tour of the new store, and I was amazed at the number of interesting flies available and at the work space. Even though I've only fished once in my life – beginner's luck brought me one small bass – I'm thinking of trying it out again. Davis' enthusiasm was

infectious as he talked about the number of cool fishermen and fisherwomen he's met.

"We just tied some flies for a man going to Guyana," he said. "There's always a place in the world where the fish are biting." 🦿

Contact Lowcountry Fly Shop by calling (843) 388-5337. You can also stop by the new location at 626 Coleman Blvd. and visit [LowcountryFlyShop.com](http://LowcountryFlyShop.com) for information on upcoming events and classes.



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# Secrets of the Experts

Tips for Your  
Perfect Wedding

*Story by Barbara Millen Patrick.*

*Photos by Jenn Cady Design Photography.*

*Hair and makeup by Kim Coleman and Jodi Lemmon of Vanity Salon.*

*Modeling by Farrah Osment and Abby Edwards.*



*You're planning your wedding and you couldn't be more excited. But you've seen so many great reception ideas on Pinterest, the guest list is getting longer, you still need to find The Dress and, OMG, the budget is bursting at the seams. It's time to call in the experts!*

### CHOOSING THE RING

The wedding rings signify your commitment to the world. Most brides receive an engagement ring, according to Jason Harn of Loy Harn Jewelers, a tradition that began in 1477 when Archduke Maximilian of Austria proposed to Mary of Burgundy. Today the rule of thumb or, to be more precise, the ring finger, is to budget about 10 percent of the bridegroom's annual salary.

The classic scenario involves a bridegroom kneeling for the proposal and presenting a ring to seal the deal, but many modern couples opt to shop together for the ring. Often the bridegroom will pre-select three or four possible rings in advance, then let the bride choose the perfect ring from among these options.

*Loy Harn Jewelers suggests: Purchase your rings from a repu-*

*table jeweler, remember to clean your fine jewelry often, have your ring inspected regularly to make sure the prongs that hold your diamonds remain secure and make sure to keep your appraisals up to date.*

### SAY YES TO JEAN'S BRIDAL

Your wedding dress should fit like a glove and reflect your personality. But how do you choose from the hundreds of options that are available to today's brides?

According to Michelle Wellmon Waterbury, a stylist at Jean's Bridal, research is the key.

"The best way to start is with online research. It's easy now with Pinterest boards," Michelle explained. "Brides should visit the shop at least six months in advance of the big day – nine months is better. The minimum is four months to order the dress and allow for alterations. The





same is true for the bridesmaids' dresses."

Today's brides are asking for more coverage, such as sleeves or high backs, and the trend is toward more classic styles such as ball gowns. Michelle said the mothers of the bride and bridegroom should also take the time to find the perfect dress.

"We have a large selection of dresses for the mothers," she said. "They want to look great, too."

*Michelle's best advice: Have fun and relax and enjoy the process of finding the perfect dress.*

### IT'S ALL ABOUT THE GARDEN AT ASHLEY POINT

"It all started in a garden," said Nancy Goding, "and we think that's why so many brides want to get married in a garden setting."

The beauty of the Lowcountry is the star attraction at The Garden at Ashley Point. Designed by landscape architect Tom Goding to delight the eye, the garden is filled with the flowers of the South, the cool blue of

old-fashioned hydrangeas and red camellias that brighten our winters. A Juliet balcony overlooks the dock and the marsh. Two secret gardens provide excellent settings for "first-look" photos.

Nestled in this garden is the carriage house, with a spacious ground floor for receptions and a romantic honeymoon suite on the second floor for the newly married couple to spend the night.

At night, the garden is alight with spotlights on the trees and the lighted fountain in the lake.

*Nancy's most important tip: "The bride should see the location in advance at the time the ceremony is planned. If the wedding is in the evening, it's important to see the venue in the evening."*

### THE COMPLETE PACKAGE

Ellen Harrington, wedding specialist for the Charleston Harbor Resort and Marina, directed her first wedding at age 18. Her attention to detail helps take the stress out







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of planning the perfect wedding for brides, who tend to book up to a year ahead. She said about "75 percent are destination weddings," adding that the trend has been toward smaller affairs of about 100 people. Since most of the venues are outdoors, Ellen said,

"it adds an extra layer of planning and I always have a plan B."

Shannon Hartmann, director of sales, said that "weddings are one of life's biggest expenses," but the focus should be on the commitment of the couple.



*Ellen's tip is to leave the details to the planner so the couple can "enjoy every moment. Happiness is contagious."*

**DON'T SWEAT THE SMALL STUFF**

The professionals at Holy City Hospitality can hardly catch their breath during wedding season, which is now nearly all year.

"We do about two or three weddings a weekend," said Jenna DeSavino, venue and catering sales manager for the group, which includes several downtown restaurants as well as one of Charleston's best venues, the Historic Rice Mill in the Charleston City Marina. "We'll have a wedding here (at the Rice Mill) and we'll have two at other locations throughout the area."

Jenna estimated that about 85 percent of their business is destination weddings.

"Brides plan ahead. They let their family and friends know well in advance so they can plan for time off to vacation in Charleston for a week. There is so much to do, and they attend the wedding while they are here," she said, adding that many weddings take place during the week rather than on Saturdays.

*Jenna's tip for brides: Take a close look at the details. Many brides choose a lower-cost venue, only to discover that literally everything else – tables, chairs, plates, silverware, tablecloths – is an additional expense. A higher priced venue may include the extras.*

**MARRIAGE COUNTRY STYLE**

For the bride who would like to get away from the downtown crowds, the Pavilion at Pepper Plantation could be the perfect choice. Just inside Pepper Plantation off Highway 17 North, the Pavilion is a modern barn



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style with exposed beams, large porches and doors that bring the outside in.

Site Manager Rachel Kuhl said that the space “is designed to be open air, allowing the breeze to flow through. In colder months, the large inside/outside fireplace is a big draw, as is the fire pit just outside on the patio.”

Adirondack chairs invite guests to relax and enjoy the lake view, and the lawn is often the site for games such as bocce or cornhole. The dock and gazebo are both excellent spots for a smaller ceremony. A separate cottage is on the property and is available for a small additional fee. The Pavilion does feature a prep area for caterers, but everything else – tables, chairs, decorations – must be arranged separately.

*Rachel's tip: Relax! If you don't have a wedding planner, hire a day-of coordinator or ask a non-family member to oversee things.*

### RENT ANYTHING! ANYTHING AT ALL!

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Located in a large warehouse, Ooh! Events offers an amazing selection of dinnerware, lighting fixtures, furnishings and florals – anything you can imagine in a style that fits your personality, whether your tastes are modern, vintage or somewhere in between. In addition to this treasure trove of lovely things, retail shops in Mount Pleasant’s Old Village include Out of the Garden, for beautiful bridal floral arrangements and bouquets.

Ooh! Events is owned by Lisa Thomas, who is a pro at creating dream weddings. Each wedding has a coordinator and team leader on site to make sure everything is properly set up and to attend to every detail.

*Events coordinator Megan Chandler’s tip: The bride needs a planner, someone lobbying for her. Brides sometimes think that’s an unnecessary expense, but it’s really more cost-effective.*

### SAVOR THE RECEPTION

Anja Stief loves to see people enjoy themselves at the reception and, as owner of Dish and Design, she makes it happen at venues all around town.

Alhambra Hall is a favorite – it is well-equipped where others are more challenging – but Dish and Design is familiar with just about every local venue. Anja advised booking the caterer as early as possible to discuss the options. For brides who are trying to keep to a budget, Anja suggested that “plated dinners can be more affordable.” Choosing a midweek day (venues often cost much more on Saturdays) or brunch reception can also cut costs while maintaining high quality. For outdoor weddings, be sure to have a backup plan.

*Anja’s advice: Good communication. We need to know the venue, the time the cake will be cut, the person who is in charge – all the details.*

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### CUTTING THE CAKE!

The wedding cake is the centerpiece of the reception, and it's important to choose the baker carefully. Gail Holdcraft and John Olson are professionals who have been using quality ingredients to bake wedding cakes and other delectable treats for more than 20 years. Plan to meet with the bakers well in advance to discuss the details of your cake. Gail advised bringing pictures of cakes you like, adding that Pinterest boards offer almost limitless ideas.

*Gail's tip: Choose a universally liked flavor such as vanilla for the main cake layer to be served to the guests. Use the bride and bridegroom's favorite flavors, such as chocolate or peanut butter, for the top layer.*

Your wedding will be one of the biggest days of your life, and it is important to enjoy the moment instead of obsessing about every detail.

Put on that gorgeous dress. And relax! ✍️

A woman with long brown hair is wearing a white lace bra and a pink skirt, standing on a balcony with a black wrought-iron railing. The background is a dimly lit interior with a staircase and a wall sconce. The logo for Bits of Lace Fine Lingerie is in the top right corner.

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# Wedding Resources

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Boone Hall Plantation  
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Mount Pleasant, S.C. 29464  
[www.BooneHallPlantation.com](http://www.BooneHallPlantation.com)  
843-884-4371

The Garden at Ashley Point  
1311 Fifteen Mile Landing Road  
Awendaw, S.C. 29429  
[www.TheGardenAtAshleyPoint.com](http://www.TheGardenAtAshleyPoint.com)  
864-325-8408

The Historic Rice Mill  
17 Lockwood Drive  
Charleston, S.C. 29401  
[www.HolyCityHospitality.com/Historic-Rice-Mill](http://www.HolyCityHospitality.com/Historic-Rice-Mill)  
843-723-7952

The Pavilion at Pepper Plantation  
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Awendaw, S.C. 29429  
[www.PepperPavilion.com](http://www.PepperPavilion.com)  
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The Old Village Post House  
101 Pitt St.  
Mount Pleasant, S.C. 29464  
[www.MaverickSouthernKitchen.com/OldVillagePostHouse](http://www.MaverickSouthernKitchen.com/OldVillagePostHouse)  
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## **PLANNING, PHOTOGRAPHY AND SERVICES**

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Vanity Salon and Spa  
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Dish and Design Catering  
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## **FLORAL**

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The Flower Gallery at Harris Teeter  
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<http://locations.harristeeter.com/SC/MOUNT-PLEASANT/385/>  
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## **ATTIRE**

Jean's Bridal  
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Bits of Lace  
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# The Dress

## Jean's Bridal

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Jean's Bridal has been taking care of brides since 1974, offering a full selection of bridal gowns in every style you can imagine. And although your mom may have purchased her gown there, Jean's Bridal is up on the latest trends.

Styles change and Michelle Wellmon Waterbury said that "fewer brides are asking for strapless gowns" in favor of more modest looks. She added that simple yet whimsical dresses are popular for destination weddings. Michelle advised brides to be open-minded. A bride who wants one style at first may find another style is much more flattering.

Jean's Bridal also tends to the rest of the wedding party.

Bridesmaids' dresses can be beautiful (really!) and, like the wedding gown, ideally should be chosen six to nine months in advance to allow for proper fitting. Bridegrooms are tending to casual attire such as suits, although tuxedos are still requested for more formal weddings. Mothers of the bride and bridegroom are not forgotten here – they offer an outstanding collection of dresses.

Attention is in the details, and Jean's has all the little extras, such as jewelry, headpieces, shoes and even gifts for the bridal party.

And good to know: "We do alterations, even if you bought the dress elsewhere," Michelle said.

Looking for the perfect dress? No worries. It's at Jean's Bridal. 🍷

*Jean's Bridal is located at 798 Johnnie Dodds Blvd. in Mount Pleasant. More information is available at [www.JeansBridalCharleston.com](http://www.JeansBridalCharleston.com), or you can call (843) 881-2056 for an appointment.*

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Photo by Jenn Cady.

# One Sweet Day

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Gail Holdcraft, who owns Bakies, along with John Olson, is a wedding cake artist with the creativity that will make your dream cake become a reality. With decades of experience, Holdcraft has a way of talking to the bride and groom and creating exactly what they are envisioning. Whether it's your wedding cake, groom's cake or any other sweet treats you want for your

event, Bakies can make it happen.

"A lot of brides come in with a lifetime of dreams,"

Holdcraft said. "I draw as much as possible from that to create that one unique cake made just for their special day."

Bakies offers cakes in just about any flavor imaginable, from traditional vanilla and chocolate to a multitude of more exotic flavors, all from scratch. It doesn't end there – they have filling choices to complement any cake flavor. Holdcraft suggested you choose one basic flavor for your largest tier and then let your imagination run wild. 🍷



Photo courtesy of Bakies.

Your wedding cake should be beautiful, reflect your personality and be absolutely delicious. At Bakies, it will be all three.

Drop by Bakies at 426 West Coleman Blvd., Sweet C, in Mount Pleasant, call (843) 881-2364 or visit [www.BakiesSC.com](http://www.BakiesSC.com) to see photos of wedding and groom's cake designs.

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# Food with a View

## The Charleston Harbor Fish House

**T**HE CHARLESTON HARBOR FISH House, located on Patriots Point, offers diners a wonderful view of the USS Yorktown and a sweeping panorama of the downtown Charleston skyline.

The atmosphere is upscale but casual. The dining room is a big, open and bustling space that is modern yet at the same time welcoming. No matter where you sit in the dining room, or in the spacious bar area, you will be treated to a fantastic view of Charleston Harbor. The wait staff is relaxed and knowledgeable about the menu, the wine and beer selections and the fresh cocktails from the bar. There is a semi-private dining room that seats around 44 people, and the upscale bar – which seats 100 – can be opened up onto the outdoor deck. Upstairs, there is a private events room for receptions and corporate events, along with the open-air Bridge Bar, which is available when the weather is nice.

BY JULIE THIGPEN

Behind the menu is chef Rich Demarse, who has been with the Fish House for about four months and has been actively fine-tuning the menu to add fresh local seafood and produce. He participates in the South Carolina Aquarium's sustainable seafood initiative and is sourcing local farms for seasonal produce. If you don't find him in the Fish House kitchen, you might see him in McClellanville buying local seafood fresh off the boats.

Even though it is primarily a seafood restaurant, The Fish House offers something for every taste. Among the dozen or so starters are the usual local oysters and shrimp, as well as fried pickles and grilled bruschetta. The fried green tomatoes with smoked corn relish and bacon aioli are not to be missed. If you are a more adventurous eater, a selection from the raw bar includes local oysters on the half shell and shrimp ceviche with avocados, red onions and corn chips.

The main course menu is broken up into two sections – Coastal and Inland. Two of Demarse's favorites on the Coastal menu are the Roasted Scallops – which are perfectly seared on the outside – and the Tuna Poke Stack, consisting of Carolina plantation rice, avocado



Photos courtesy of The Charleston Harbor Fish House.

Even though it is primarily a seafood restaurant, The Fish House offers something for every taste.

chunks, scallions, and ponzu vinaigrette. On the Inland menu you'll find Demarse's grandmother's own Buttermilk Meatloaf, which is served with portobello red wine demi-glaze and smashed potatoes.

The Charleston Harbor Fish House also offers a couple of traditional deep-fried favorites, including shrimp, oysters or scallops with two sides, or the fried fish combo with two sides.

To pair with your meal, The Fish House offers 33 wines by the glass and 70 wines by the bottle. There is also a nice beer selection, as well as a wonderful choice of cocktails.

Whether you are looking for a romantic dinner or need to book a group function such as a wedding or business event, this place has it all – and a magnificent view as well. 🍷

*To learn more about the Charleston Harbor Fish House, visit [www.charlestonharborfishhouse.com](http://www.charlestonharborfishhouse.com) or call (843) 284-7070.*



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# New York Glamour, Charleston Charm Michael's on the Alley

**M**ICHAEL'S ON THE ALLEY sits just off of bustling King Street, tucked away on Hutson Alley in downtown Charleston. It is an upscale, modern steakhouse with a passion for the freshest seasonal ingredients.

As you enter the restaurant door under an ivy covered wall, you will discover a spacious dining room filled with leather booths and linen tablecloths.

BY JULIE THIGPEN

The mix of old-school, New York steakhouse glamour and modern Charleston charm emphasizes comfort in this upscale yet casual space.

Chef Aaron Lemieux is the driving force behind this concept from Holy City Hospitality. He has been with HCH since 2007 and has developed a menu that is sure to make even the hungriest meat-eater happy. The general manager, Whitney Standish, who has the reins of the dining room, has put quality of service and excellence of experience at the forefront of the operation.

The menu features some tempting options. For starters, there is a table-side Caesar salad that is prepared from start to finish while you watch. The foie gras torchon is served on a stack of crispy, French toast wedges with fresh strawberry purée. It is one of the best foie gras dishes in all of Charleston.

Once you have finished your starters, you can move on to the varied menu of entree options. All the steaks at Michael's come from Meats by Linz of Chicago, so whether it is a dry-aged or a wet-aged steak, the beef is

always of the highest quality. The 30-ounce Tomahawk Ribeye has been dry-aged to perfection for 60 days. There also are dry-aged Kansas City strip, bone-in ribeye and an eight-ounce petit filet. Michael's is currently running several weekly specials: "Tomahawk Tuesdays," which includes the 30-ounce bone-in ribeye, two sides and one bottle of select wine for \$100, and prime rib on Saturdays and Sundays, which includes a 14-ounce cut of beef with creamy horseradish and a choice of one side dish for \$45.

If you prefer something a bit lighter, Lemieux offers a rotating poultry and seafood menu, which changes daily to ensure the freshest seasonal ingredients are used. And once you've finished your meal, Michael's offers a range of homemade desserts.

As for cocktails and accompanying beverages, Michael's partners with the bar inside its sister operation, The Victor Social Club. All of their specialty cocktails are named after Ernest Hemingway novels. There is a large beer selection, but the wine list is the star of the show. The restaurant has concentrated its wine list on West Coast and New World wines that are big and bold enough to complement the food it serves. And coming for 2015, a new glass-encased wine room, capable of holding 1,200 bottles, will be up and running in the dining room. 🍷



Photos courtesy of Holy City Hospitality.


Chef Aaron Lemieux has developed a menu certain to make the hungriest meat-eater happy, not to mention one of the best foie gras dishes in Charleston.




encased wine room, capable of holding 1,200 bottles, will be up and running in the dining room. 🍷

*Michael's On The Alley holds a little bit of dining pleasure for everyone. Visit Michael's at 39 E. John St. (Hutson Alley) or call 843-203-3000 for a reservation.*

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# A Southern Tradition on Shem Creek

## R.B.'s Seafood Restaurant

**T**HE REPUTATION OF DINING on Shem Creek has reached far and wide, well beyond the South Carolina Lowcountry. Its beauty and romantic ambience have attracted locals and visitors alike. This vision is partially thanks to Ronnie Boals, founder of R.B.'s Seafood Restaurant.

"In 1967, I had more guts than common sense," said Boals, referring to his first restaurant. He's opened eight altogether, four of them along Shem Creek.

In 1979, Boals opened the original R.B.'s Seafood Restaurant.

"It had 35 seats and was located in an old fish shed. Talk about a relaxed setting," he remarked.

Even today, diners at R.B.'s often witness boats moving through the water, along with paddleboarders and wildlife that consider Shem Creek their home.

"I work hard to create a place where you come when you're hungry and not just for your birthday," Boals pointed out.

In the spring of 2002, the fortitude of R.B.'s Seafood was tested when a construction fire completely destroyed the original building.

"Everyone who was having lunch inside the restaurant had to evacuate and finish their meal outside," said current manager Delaney Goodrich, who began working at R.B.'s shortly after the restaurant reopened its doors in 2003.

Fortunately, the tasty menu items and friendly customer service that made the restaurant a success in its early days are still around. And, as Goodrich pointed out, the "off season" that occurred on Shem Creek so many years ago is nothing more than a memory now; the enclosed sunroom at R.B.'s is the perfect place to view the creek when it's chilly outside.

The dinner menu at R.B.'s is a collection of Southern dishes both of land and sea. One must-try entree is the baked stuffed mahi with blue crab hollandaise sauce. With collard greens and red rice, two of the many side choices on the menu, it's the kind of meal that reminds us of Lowcountry dining as it used to be – simple and flavorful



Photo courtesy of R.B.'s Seafood.

The tasty menu items and friendly customer service that made R.B.'s a success in its early days are still a staple of the restaurant in 2015.


with wholesome ingredients. Paired with either the Clos du Bois Chardonnay or the Kim Crawford Sauvignon Blanc – both recommended by Goodrich from the wine list – the result is the perfect creek-side meal.

"I also suggest the fried flounder, the sesame seared tuna and, for the non-seafood visitor, the pasta pomodoro," Goodrich said.

As for lunch hours, R.B.'s offers several sandwiches, including ever-popular seafood po' boys, crab melts, as well as Goodrich's favorite, the club sandwich, which he described as "incredible." The restaurant also features a number of blue plate lunch specials during the week, such as fresh catfish, old-fashioned pot roast or Southern fried chicken. 🍷

*R.B.'s is located at 97 Church St. in Mount Pleasant on Shem Creek. Visit online at [www.RBsonShemCreek.com](http://www.RBsonShemCreek.com) and view the complete menus for lunch and dinner, blue plate specials, happy hour specials and the kids menu. You can also call (843) 881-0466.*





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# Delicious Eccentricity Andolini's

**S**TEPPING FOOT INSIDE THE newly renovated Andolini's, I'm immediately hit by the comforting smell of crisp, oven-bound crust reaching its full potential. My eyes are treated to the décor – bold, vibrant, with just the right amount of offbeat bravado, a far cry from the traditional checkered tablecloths you'd expect to find in an establishment with the best New York style pizza in town.

BY KALENE MCCORT

But then again, owners Michael and Edie Rabin aren't ones for going the route most traveled. Veterans in the Charleston restaurant scene for nearly 25 years, this husband-and-wife duo brings a bit of delicious eccentricity to the Lowcountry.

With a funky revamp and enticing menu, something tells me the location at 414 Coleman Blvd. will be an institution of quirk for years to come.

Just one bite of the classically thin mozzarella-laden slice and it becomes clear why Andolini's has earned the title of "Best Pizza" from Charleston City Paper for more than two decades.

"We try to make everything as fresh as possible, as fresh as it can be," said Michael Rabin, whose admiration for pizza is rooted in hometown childhood memories of Queens, New York. "We've done it right from the beginning."

From grating the cheese daily to practicing the time-honored tradition of crafting excellent hand-rolled dough, it's the details that separate Andolini's from other parlors.

The menu, much like the music selection, is varied and sure to please just about everyone. Hits from Death Cab For Cutie were followed by classics from folkstress Joni Mitchell, as I sampled two different types of sangria.

Just when you think you have Andolini's figured out, they keep the mystery alive with seductive flavors such as Chianti with Grapefruit Elderflower and Pinot Grigio with Honey Basil. Made in-house, using soda from Charleston-based Cannonborough Beverage Co., these cocktails pack a punch.

With a wide variety of beers on tap, including Chucktown favs Revelry and Palmetto, Andolini's is the perfect environment to sit, sip and savor. A daily special of two large slices and a draft beer for \$7 simply cannot be beat.

The ambience – a hodgepodge of odds and ends – comes together in a boho mosaic that is just as appetizing as the cuisine. While the food is provided courtesy of a staff that works hard to bring the very best to your plate, the atmosphere is a quirky culmination of yesteryear's treasures. Overhead you'll find ornate, intricate gold vine plaster tiles, which once adorned Vegas' legendary Sands Hotel and Casino – the birthplace of The Rat Pack.

The wood booths and counters are repurposed from bowling alley lanes. Colorful murals, done by famed graffiti renegades Ishmael and Patch Whisky, stretch from one end of the restaurant to the other.

"You get to know a lot of people and see them grow up in 25 years," said Edie, gazing at a wall displaying framed photos of past and present tie-dye-clad employees. "That's what I love. That's what means a lot to me."

With good food, good vibes and good people, Andolini's is a name you can trust when seeking foodie nirvana. Expand your horizons and come in for an experience outside of the pizza box. 🍕

*To find out how you can get your piece of the pie, visit [www.andolinis.com](http://www.andolinis.com) or call 843-849-7437.*



Photo by Kalene McCort.

Michael and Edie Rabin have been part of the Charleston-area restaurant scene for nearly a quarter of a century.

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# Host Your Own Roast

## IT'S OYSTER SEASON IN THE LOWCOUNTRY

*Story by Courtney Davis O'Leary.*

**W**HILE THE wintry months often conjure up images of hot chocolate by the

fire, here in Mount Pleasant, there's a distinctly Southern tradition that's equally savored: oyster roasts. Many are happy to ignore the cold winter air in exchange for the chance to sidle up to a table laden with freshly steamed oysters. If you fall into this category, you might be interested in the tools and know-how you'll need to host your own oyster roast and perhaps start a tradition of your own.

Rial Fitch of Mount Pleasant Seafood confirmed the popularity of winter roasts.

"People in this area associate cold weather with oysters. Oyster season in the Charleston area is generally October through April. Typically, the busiest months are December, January and February. It's cold, it's party time and the oysters are fatter when the water is cold," he said.

The requirements for an oyster roast are pretty simple – oysters, a place to cook them and a place to eat them.

Getting your hands on some oysters is relatively easy and surprisingly inexpensive. A bushel of fresh cluster oysters from McClellanville, enough to feed four to seven adults, recently was going for \$32 at Mount Pleasant Seafood. The local business also offers Beaufort oysters and singles from other areas.

Be forewarned that your oysters will need some TLC once you pick them up.

Fitch explained: "Clusters are not washed very well. They've been washed one time, but they need to be washed again. You can do it by putting them in a laundry basket. Some people put them on the driveway and simply rinse them off with a hose."

After that, it's cooking time. There



While you need an oyster knife to keep your fingers from getting cut up, a glove is optional; you can use a rag.

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are a few options. You can use a turkey steamer, put a big pot on a burner with a basket or put some tin over an open fire to roast them. Oyster steamers, however, are the easiest option. You can rent one at Mount Pleasant Seafood, unless you suspect that hosting an oyster roast might be a repeated adventure. If that's the case, head on over to Royall Ace Hardware, where owner John Royall has a number of different options to choose from.

"You're looking at about \$120 for pot and basket, plus you need a burner and that's a starter kit. And then I've got a dedicated oyster steamer with wheels on it – it's basically a big box with a burner in it, and that's \$599. A mini version of that is \$299, and it fits about a third of a bushel. It's a nice basic tabletop unit. I've got one myself; it works really well. You can put corn or crabs in there – you can cook all kinds of things in them," Royall explained.

If you're feeling ambitious and want to impress your



One way to roast oysters is to put some tin over an open fire.

guests with oysters that will have them begging for more, Finz Bar & Grill owner Chad Shores has a recommendation.

"The absolute best oysters you can ever have is over an open flame on a grate with hickory or oak firewood," said Shores. "You can use your own barbecue grill or Big Green Egg to do this. It is harder and harder to come across burlap sacks these days, but you will need to locate a few to do this type of cooking."

Shores explained how to maximize your oyster roasting: "Get your fire to a medium flame and keep your burlap sack soaking in a five-gallon bucket full of water. It's as simple as dumping your oysters over the fire and covering them with the saturated burlap sack, being sure to completely cover the oysters. In actuality, you are steaming the oysters a bit and roasting them from the bottom. They soak up some of that smoky flavor from the fire, as well as maintaining that briny flavor our oysters are so well known for. Cook to desired

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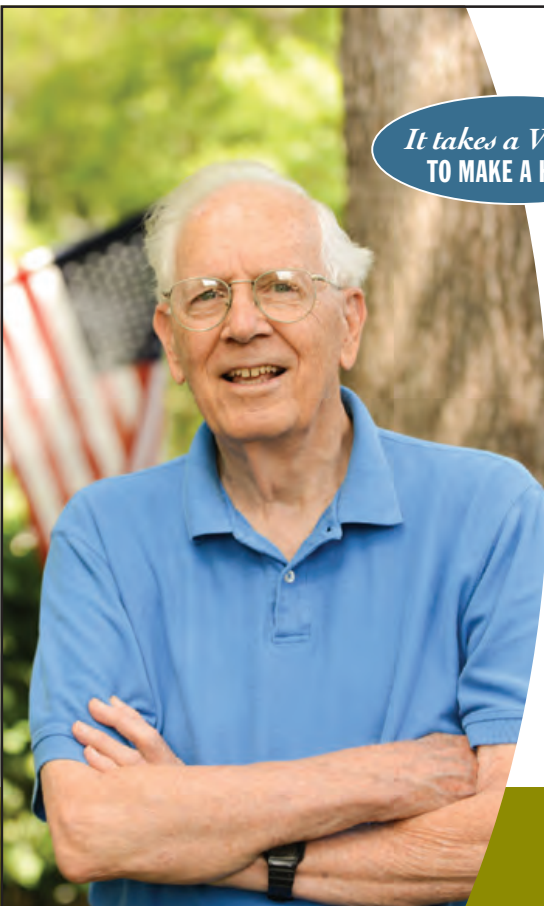
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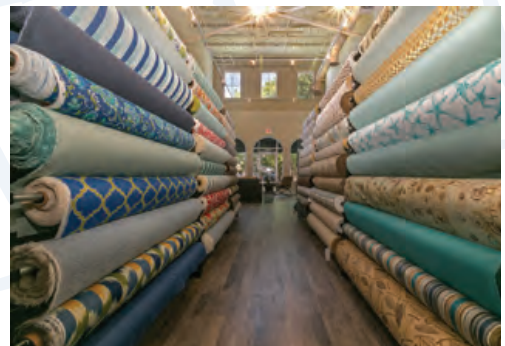
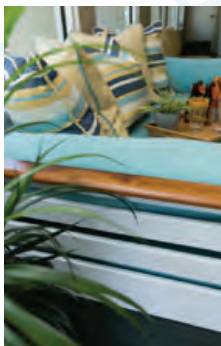


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Kevin Johnson, the chef at The Grocery, is one of the people behind the Chef's Golf Classic.

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*Story by John Torsiello.*

*Photos courtesy of the Charleston Wine + Food Festival.*



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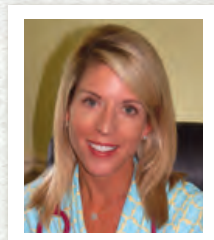
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**P**ROMINENT CHARLESTON area chefs will be offering up a few birds, perhaps even an eagle and likely a number of snowmen at this year's inaugural Chef's Golf Classic. The tournament will be held at Patriots Point Golf Links in Mount Pleasant March 8 as part of the 10th Annual BB&T Charleston Wine + Food Festival, which stretches from March 4 through March 8.

"Golf has always been enjoyed casually among the chefs during the Festival, but, in the past, it has been informal," said Gillian Zettler, executive director of the Wine + Food Festival. "This year, led by Chef Kevin Johnson (of The Grocery) and Chef Mike Lata (of FIG and The Ordinary), we decided to create the Golf Classic so that chefs and Festival guests could



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have an opportunity to officially enjoy one of their favorite sports together. With golf at the heart of Charleston's charm, the Festival was delighted to organize and host this new event."

The tournament begins at 11 a.m. and concludes around 4 p.m. The ticket price of \$500 includes golf at one of the area's premier layouts, food and drink on the course, a ticket for a significant other or friend to "Toasted: The Festival Finale" and a pass to the Festival's Culinary Village on Sunday, so golfers can feel guilt-free for taking the day off to hit the links. Foursomes will be comprised of two chefs and

two guests competing in a scramble-style tourney, all the while sampling cocktails and food on their way around the course, which is located on Charleston Harbor. Included in the delicious fun will be special cocktails from Firefly Distillery, one of the event sponsors, and tasty bites served on various holes. There will also be an opportunity to win a brand-new car from Festival sponsor Baker Motor Co. for making a hole-in-one.

Zettler said, "As we celebrate a decade of BB&T Charleston Wine + Food, we wanted to focus on unforgettable experiences throughout

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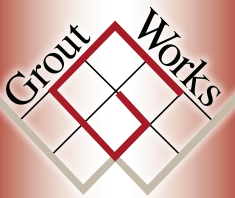
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She called Mount Pleasant “a beautiful part of Charleston County” and added that the Festival is “delighted” to offer a number of great events across the Ravenel Bridge, including Clammer Dave’s Oyster Roast on Saturday, March 7 and Toasted: The Festival Finale, on Sunday, March 8.

Zettler said she’s certain the Golf Classic will appeal to chefs since it was created at their request. She predicted that those joining in the experience will be a mix of golfers, food lovers and anyone who wants “one-on-one time

to connect with their favorite chef.” It is anticipated that 40 players will be paired in foursomes with 40 chefs.

A little about Patriots Point Golf Links: With four sets of tees ranging from 5,100 to 7,000 yards, players of all skill levels can attack the Willard Byrd-designed links course. Opened in 1979, the course features perhaps the best par 3 in the region, the beautiful 17th, which is perennially awarded “Best Par 3 in the Lowcountry.” An island green is poised in the Charleston Harbor with a backdrop of sweeping vistas of Fort Sumter, Shem Creek and the historic downtown Charleston skyline. The ever-changing winds that typically sweep across the harbor can make the course take on a completely different perspective from one day to the next. Patriots Point was rated “South Carolina Course of the

Year for 2001” by the National Golf Course Owners Association.

To sign up for the golf tournament, visit [www.charlestonwineandfood.com](http://www.charlestonwineandfood.com), go to “Tickets” and scroll down to the event – or simply search the event title on the website’s navigation bar. If golfers have a specific partner they would like to play with, add his or her name in the “Notes” field of the ticket purchase.

By the way, for non-golfers, that “snowman” mentioned at the top of the story is a term for a score of eight strokes on one hole. That’s not good, but there probably won’t be too many people worrying about their score. 🍷

*For more information about the golf tournament or the BB&T Charleston Wine + Food Festival, visit [www.charlestonwineandfood.com](http://www.charlestonwineandfood.com) or call 843-727-9998.*



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# BALANCING ACT


## GROWTH AND QUALITY OF LIFE IN MOUNT PLEASANT

*Story by Brian Sherman.*

*Photo by Cassandra Michelle Photography.*

**E**RIC DEMOURA HAS NEVER BEEN one to shun difficult decisions. As a high school senior in Taunton, Massachusetts, he was drafted in the 44th round by the Boston Red Sox, the major league team he still adores. Instead of signing a professional contract and starting what might have been a long and uncertain journey from the low minors to Fenway Park, he chose to continue to play the game he loves and earn a solid education at the same time. He attended Clemson University on a baseball scholarship, worked relentlessly to earn a job as the everyday third baseman and helped the Tigers make two trips to the College World Series.





Mount Pleasant Town Administrator Eric DeMoura is standing in the middle of what soon will be Billy Swails Boulevard. Behind him, Jennie Moore Elementary School and Laing Middle School are under construction.

Though he posted a nifty .354 batting average during his senior season, DeMoura reached the realization that his future was not in baseball but in government. With an undergraduate degree in Political Science in hand, he continued his education at Clemson and earned a master's in Public Administration.

DeMoura still faces difficult decisions today. As Mount Pleasant's town administrator, his major challenge is to keep his adopted home from being overwhelmed by its incredible rate of growth. Working with nearly 600 full-time employees, the mayor and the town council, he must make hard choices that ensure that the town will be able to serve the needs of a burgeoning population while maintaining

the quality of life that continues to lure new residents to Mount Pleasant.

To the 40-year-old DeMoura, growth is the most important issue facing Mount Pleasant, and careful planning is the key to easing the town's growing pains.

"People see Mount Pleasant as a place to meet their families' aspirations for a better life," he commented. "The other side is that we must act in ways that make sure we are maintaining the quality of life our residents and business owners are used to. Our citizens rightfully demand quality in everything from public education to recreational services."

Though he expects Mount Pleasant to continue to grow, with its population nearing the 100,000 mark in the

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next two decades, DeMoura insists that it won't look much different than it does now.

"You'll come across the Ravenel Bridge and see trees. That's what Mount Pleasant looked like yesterday, that's what it looks like today and that's what it will look like tomorrow," he said. "The fact that this community is still as beautiful as it is and the fact that people still choose to want to live and invest here is a success story. In five years, there will be more people and more buildings, but the character will remain because of the planning efforts of this town."

Planning has indeed been a high priority for Mount Pleasant since DeMoura took over for longtime Town Administrator Mac Burdette in October 2010. He immediately went to work implementing the town's



Mount Pleasant Director of Transportation Brad Morrison and Town Administrator Eric DeMoura discuss upcoming projects.

long-term plan, a comprehensive vision of how the town should grow, and established a five- to seven-year strategic plan and an emergency plan, so the town will be able to react to emergencies such as hurricanes.

"Being strong financially al-

lows us to weather unexpected ripples," DeMoura commented, pointing out that the town's bond rating was recently upgraded to AAA. "Our finances have never been stronger. If there is a hurricane, we can spend the money to respond. The people are counting on us."

DeMoura gave much of the credit for the town's continued success to his predecessor.

"Mac Burdette was one of the finest local government managers in South Carolina," he commented. "I feel lucky to have had the opportunity to learn from him."

In addition to long-term, strategic and emergency plans, DeMoura and the town's elected officials have established a Capital Improvement Plan, depositing more than \$3 million a year into a fund that will help repave

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streets, replace storm water lines and pay for other projects necessary to maintain the infrastructure of a growing municipality.

"I'm proud of our council for addressing hard problems with our infrastructure," DeMoura commented. "That's important."

While residents of Mount Pleasant probably appreciate freshly-paved streets and better drainage, DeMoura has had to make more than a few unpopular decisions to maintain the town's fiscal integrity. For example, he changed the way Mount Pleasant was paying for health insurance benefits for retired employees.

"That was \$12 million we didn't have," he explained. "We were as fair as we could be, but it was painful. Today we are fully funding all the promises we made."

Mount Pleasant drivers can expect

to share some pain regarding traffic issues during the next year-and-a-half. Ground on several projects will be broken this year, but, when the dust settles and work is completed, town residents will have an additional fire station, a new park, a new city hall, an enhanced Memorial Waterfront Park and a good start on a third north-south road. In addition, seven or eight streets will be resurfaced and Coleman Boulevard will get a major facelift.

**Here, according to DeMoura, is what Mount Pleasant residents can expect to see between the beginning of 2015 and the middle of 2016.**

■ The land has been cleared for the town's sixth fire station. Located in Carolina Park on the north side of Mount Pleasant, it is scheduled for completion in September 2015.

■ Work is expected to begin on the second phase of Memorial Waterfront Park in mid or late 2015.

■ Design work will get underway soon on a 250-acre park on Rifle Range Road. A joint project with the Charleston County Park and Recreation Commission, it is scheduled for construction late in 2015.

■ Construction on the new city hall is slated to begin in March 2015. The three-story, 90,000-square-foot building will be located at the current municipal complex on Houston Northcutt Boulevard. When completed, it will bring most of the town's administrative services under one roof.

■ Hungryneck Boulevard will be extended to the northeast in two phases, first connecting Porchers Bluff with Hamlin Road. This section will be completed when the new Jennie Moore Elementary and Laing Middle

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schools open in August 2015. Later, the road will be extended to the southeast to Six Mile Road. At this point, Hungryneck, Sweetgrass Basket Parkway and Billy Swails Boulevard – all part of the same road – will go from the intersection of Highway 17 and Interstate 526 to Porchers Bluff.

■ Coleman Boulevard will get a new surface, curbs, gutters, much-needed drainage improvements and a landscaped median from Mill Street near Shem Creek to about a quarter mile past its intersection with Chuck Dawley and Ben Sawyer boulevards. In addition, the traffic lights at the intersection will be removed and replaced by a two-lane roundabout. The 16-month project is expected to begin in the spring or summer of this year.

All this will, of course, enhance Mount Pleasant’s regional and national reputation as “a place where we work

hard to do things the right way,” according to DeMoura, who was county manager in Caswell County, North Carolina, and deputy mayor in his home town of Taunton before coming to Mount Pleasant as deputy director of administrative services in 2003. He was appointed deputy administrator of the town in 2006.

Working hard is nothing new to DeMoura. As a high schooler, he remembers trudging through snow in the middle of the Massachusetts winter to hone his baseball skills by hitting balls off a tee. And though he was a football and baseball star in high school, he arrived at Clemson to find himself surrounded by athletes who were bigger, stronger and more talented than he was.

“I was overwhelmed at the level of talent around me,” he commented. “I’m proud of the way I worked to

get to the level of being an everyday player at Clemson.”

He’s also proud of the town he now runs.

“We’re known as a community that offers a high quality of life. We’re not perfect. We make mistakes at times. But Mount Pleasant is a really special place. Communities like this don’t just happen on their own. There are people who have to make it happen,” said DeMoura, who lives in Mount Pleasant with his wife, Jamie, a native of Easley, South Carolina, and their children: Cally, 10, and Cannon, 6.

“I’m proud of our record the last four years,” he added. “We’ve had a great record of accomplishment together. In government, no one does it alone. It requires partnerships with the town council, the mayor, our tremendous staff and our citizens.”



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*Story by Brian Sherman.*

*Photo by Brian Sherman.*

# ASSEMBLING THE PUZZLE

## The Department of Planning & Development

**A** HALF CENTURY AGO, MOUNT Pleasant was no more than a sleepy suburb of Charleston, a tiny dot on the map along Highway 17 with a population barely tickling the 5,000 mark. Today, the fourth largest municipality in South Carolina and the ninth fastest-growing town in the United States is home to more than 75,000 people who sometimes take for granted decent roads, varied recreational opportunities and efficient water, sewage, fire, police and sanitation services.

As the town's employees and elected officials strive to strike a balance between continued growth and the quality of life Mount Pleasant residents have come to expect,

someone has to decide what's going to be built and what isn't. Some people might think that task falls under the job description of the Department of Planning & Development, but they would be wrong – or at least imprecise – according to Department Director Christiane Farrell.

“Our staff doesn't make recommendations to approve or deny,” said Farrell, who has been with the Planning Department for 15 years and in her current job since 2009. “We just figure out how a project can be better. We're trying to make sure we're planning and not just processing.”

“The job of the Planning Department is to manage and advise to maintain the long-term prosperity of the community,” Mount Pleasant Town Administrator Eric DeMoura commented. “Its primary function is to protect the health



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of the community through proper planning.”

He added that Farrell’s job is “tremendously difficult.” She and her 30 employees face a wide range of responsibilities that include building inspections, making recommendations on rezoning property, issuing building permits and providing valuable input to the town council for Mount Pleasant’s Comprehensive Plan, a document that “provides a framework for future growth and development and serves as the foundation for zoning and planning for the town,” according to Mount Pleasant’s website. The 10-year plan, mandated by the state, was updated during its fifth year in 2014.

Though Farrell and her staff play many roles in making sure Mount Pleasant grows at a steady but reasonable rate, one of their most important jobs is to provide input on new neighborhoods. Several entities are involved in the process before the town council makes the final decision, and many of the people who say yes or no depend on information gathered and analyzed by Planning Department employees.

For instance, let’s say a developer wants to build a community in Mount Pleasant. Its request would first go to the Planning Department, which would review the details and provide recommendations for the Planning Commission

and, eventually, for the entire town council.

The Planning Commission, consisting of nine local residents appointed by the council and serving without pay, studies the plan and gives its opinion to the council’s Planning Committee, whose current members are Thomasena Stokes-Marshall, Elton Carrier, Chris O’Neal and Mark Smith. The final step is for the full council to grant its approval or turn down the developer. The process usually takes around three-and-a-half months, “if it’s relatively straightforward,” Farrell pointed out. For larger developments that require an impact assessment, a study of how the new development could affect the town in a variety of ways, it might take four or five months.

The most important factors that are considered are how the new development will affect the flow of both drainage and traffic – where will the stormwater go and will, for example, 250 new homes require wider roads, more turn lanes and additional traffic signals.

“With drainage, we review water quality and water quantity,” Farrell explained. “What we review with new developments is that the post-development rate of flow cannot exceed the pre-development rate of flow.”

In other words, the Planning Department must make sure

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building one neighborhood doesn't cause flooding in another.

Farrell was quick to point out that the developer and not the town of Mount Pleasant pays to prepare the necessary reports. And developers, both commercial and residential, also are charged impact fees that help pay for the services the residents of the new neighborhoods or businesses will receive from the city, including fire, police, recreation and road work.

Another way the town of Mount Pleasant can grow is by annexation. Farrell pointed out that homeowners and business owners whose property is taken into the town might pay higher taxes, an increase that could be balanced by other factors. For instance, they no longer would have to pay for garbage collection, and, because they would be protected by the Mount Pleasant fire and police departments, their homeowners insurance rates would fall.

According to DeMoura, the work Farrell and her employees do often goes unnoticed and unappreciated.

"Hers is a thankless job," he commented. "There are things she does every day to protect the community. I believe Christiane is one of the finest planning directors in South Carolina, and I feel that this community is fortunate to have her." 🐝

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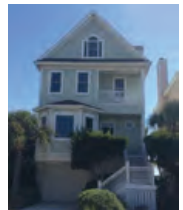


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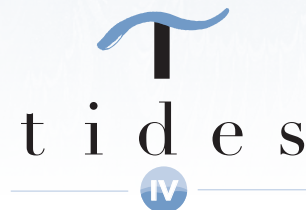


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*Story by Denise K. James.*

# All the World's a Stage

## The Mount Pleasant Writers Workshop

**W**HEN IT COMES TO artists, the birth of something exciting often leads to a kind of community that fosters even greater art. Here in our town of Mount Pleasant, that very thing is happening thanks to the efforts of the Culture Arts and Pride (or CAP) Commission and a few individuals who have blended their creative resources to help Lowcountry writers find a home for their craft.

The brainchild of town council member Chris Nichols, the CAP Commission is made up of individuals in Mount Pleasant who care about arts and volunteerism. Soon after CAP began, a subcommittee formed to start a new project known as the Writers Workshop. The members of that subcommittee include Susan Sloate, Charlie Williams, Marie-Louise Moreto – all members of CAP – plus Teralyn Reiter, a talented theater teacher, actor and director who was recruited from the community to help the cause. The subcommittee began meeting back in April of 2014 for the inaugural Writers Workshop, which was held in Novem-

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The members of the Writers Workshop Subcommittee include, left to right, Marie-Louise Moreto, Teralyn Reiter, Susan Sloate and Charlie Williams.

ber. According to the workshop's founders, much more is to come.

"The idea for a Writers Workshop in Mount Pleasant came to me after I attended one myself in Los Angeles with Bob McKee," Sloate said. "Bob invited 12 writers to bring in their in-progress plays to share."

According to Sloate, these 12 writers responded well to the opportunity to collaborate, taking notes of constructive feedback from one another and talking about ways to improve upon the work. So why not bring the same sort of artistic community to Mount Pleasant? Because Sloate and Moreto each care about theater, it came naturally to them to start the process, ask for the support of the town's CAP commission and form the subcommittee along with Reiter, who heartily dove into the project as well.

The idea of the Writers Workshop is to present a safe place for Lowcountry playwrights to have

their pieces performed by actors from within the community, directed by professionals and observed by other workshop members. No one else is allowed to attend the workshop, a rule that perpetuates the idea of a closely knit community solely for artists.

That said, although I attended the first ever workshop, I am not allowed to say much about what happened. I can, however, vouch for the fact that it was well-received by everyone who attended – from the writers to the directors to the actors to the subcommittee members themselves. I caught up with Sloate, Reiter, Moreto and Williams during the workshop's lunch break, and they all expressed joy at the "beta version" going well.

"The workshop offers the opportunity for directors to meet writers, for one thing," remarked Reiter. "And from the perspective of the participating actors, it's cool to see the screenplay all the way through."



Photo by Brian Sherman.

Reiter's background in teaching theater has shown her the importance of writers receiving feedback on their work – and the special treat of watching the work performed. A theater teacher at East Cooper Montessori, Reiter remarked how her student's mother, Julie Hussey, is on the CAP Commission and has shown enormous support for the project.

"The feedback has been great and insightful," she continued, "from the directors and actors especially. I anticipate that the workshops will become a regular event, and we can eventually perform these plays on stage around Charleston. That would be awesome."

All the committee members agreed that though the first workshop had a few things to tweak, the writers most definitely found it beneficial and looked forward to coming back.

"I'm thrilled with the response," said Sloate. "Everyone said they loved the collaborative process and that

they felt comfortable and safe. All of the writers want to come back with new scenes – and even one of the stage managers was inspired to write a scene!"

The future of the Writers' Workshop is bright for 2015. The CAP commission met again in early December and garnished continuing support from the town of Mount Pleasant, much to everyone's delight. Interested writers and actors can stay tuned for the second workshop, set to happen in the spring.

"Having the town's support is invaluable," Sloate said. "I think this is good for the town as well as writers and the theater community – and this will build that theater community for years to come." 🍷

*For more information about the upcoming Writers Workshop and how to participate, email Susan Sloate at [Susan@SusanSloate.com](mailto:Susan@SusanSloate.com).*

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# “The Civil War and its Aftermath in Mount Pleasant”

## “Surrender”

*This is the tenth part in a series about Mount Pleasant’s role in the Civil War. It has been offered to Mount Pleasant Magazine by former Post and Courier editor and writer John L. All, who resides East of the Cooper and is passionate about preserving its history. We hope you will enjoy this tale about Mount Pleasant’s past.*

–The Editors

“**A**BOUT 12 O’CLOCK ON SATURDAY,” Tew’s letter continued, “three barges landed from the fleet and as I had been elected intendent (mayor) by the people on Friday, in that official capacity I surrendered the town, submitting to the military authority of the U.S. and was promised protection to persons and private property. The boats were commanded by Lt. Gifford. They brought a small U.S. flag ashore and hoisted it for a while on the lighthouse.”

BY JOHN L. ALL

Tew described the officers as being very courteous and the men quite peaceful, as were others from the Union fleet who followed them into town later that afternoon and on Sunday.

Union Army Col. Edward E. Potter’s official report includes the following. The march’s starting point is not known.

“On Feb. 19 (Sunday) we began the march toward Charleston with the 144th New York Volunteers and the 55th Massachusetts. At Andersonville, the 32nd U.S. Colored Troops joined the column. A number of Negroes with carts loaded with household goods were met on the road who readily turned back with us. About 100 head of cattle were captured, which were being driven up the country. At 7 p.m., the column arrived at the Christ Church lines. Seven guards were captured here and another two near Mount Pleasant. The troops bivouacked at Christ Church, leaving Col. A.A. Hartwell, 55th Massachusetts, in command.

“I rode with my staff to Mount Pleasant and crossed the harbor in a small boat, arriving in Charleston at midnight.”

About 11 a.m. Monday, three regiments of Negro troops under the command of Col. Hartwell marched into town.



Photo by Jose Gil.

Tew’s letter to his daughter relates the events of that day:

“Many of the Negroes from the plantations came down with the Army train, and together with those from the village made quite a multitude of shouting wild creatures whom the thought of freedom had changed from quiet to transports of uproarious joy. I must tell you what I did for my own.

“A few days before, I gave them \$50 and told them the money would soon be worth nothing and advised them to buy whatever they could then. I also told them that when the troops came, they knew they were free to go or stay as they pleased; if they stayed, as long as I had anything to eat, they would share as they always had done.”

Some of Tew’s former slaves left the following Wednesday without a word of leave-taking. How many departed is not known; four were still with him on Feb. 26 when he wrote the letter to his daughter.

The Confederacy was in its death throes. As for Mount Pleasant and the rest of the Lowcountry, it was an occupied land. For some, the worst was yet to come. 🗿

# Our Mount Pleasant Neighbors

**W**E'RE SPENDING A LITTLE TIME WITH SOME OF OUR NEIGHBORS TO HELP YOU GET to know them better. Get to know *us* better by liking us on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/MountPleasantMagazine](http://www.facebook.com/MountPleasantMagazine). If you want to appear in Facetime or to suggest someone you find interesting, please email the name and contact information (email and/or phone number) to [Facetime@MountPleasantMagazine.com](mailto:Facetime@MountPleasantMagazine.com).



## Melissa Greg

**Lives in:** Mount Pleasant, South Carolina.

**From:** Rehoboth Beach, Delaware.

**Education:** BS in Criminal Justice and a minor in

Psychology.

**Employment:** Server at The Islander on Daniel Island.

**Favorite reading:** James Patterson and Nicholas Sparks.

**Favorite music:** Alternative rock and country.

**Activities:** BBQing with friends and reading at the beach.

**Interests:** Boating, get-togethers, anything water related.

**Favorite quote or philosophy:** "You only have this one life. Make the most of it!

Never give up!"



## Clayton Williams

**Lives in:** Mount Pleasant, South Carolina.

**From:** Brooklyn, New York.

**Education:** Palm Beach Atlantic University ·

Business major.

**Employment:** Bojangles.

**Favorite reading:** Sports biographies.

**Favorite music:** Anything that can make me dance and sing along.

**Interests:** Basketball, friends, pingpong and the beach.

**Activities:** Playing ball and chilling with family and friends.

**Favorite quote or philosophy:** "Got to keep your head up or you will

miss what is right in front of you."



## Barbra Nistor

**Lives in:** Daniel Island, South Carolina.

**From:** Northern Virginia.

**Education:** College of Charleston · Business

Administration with a concentration in marketing.

**Employment:** The Islander and Crave.

**Favorite reading:** Recent favorite is "The Help."

**Favorite music:** Feel good music like Jack Johnson and Train.

**Activities:** Cooking, home décor and art.

**Interests:** Relaxing at the pool, spending time with friends and family,

HGTV, therapeutic drawing.

**Favorite Quote or Philosophy:** "Be yourself – everyone else is taken." –

Oscar Wilde.



## Andrew Peterson

**Lives:** Mount Pleasant, South Carolina.

**From:** Sarasota, Florida.

**Education:** Coastal Carolina University · Biology

major.

**Employment:** Belk.

**Favorite reading:** Not much of a reader.

**Favorite music:** Country music: Blake Shelton, Billy Currington.

**Interests:** Basketball, music, watersports, fishing.

**Activities:** Hanging out with my friends, going to the beach.

**Favorite quote or philosophy:** "Advice is what we ask for when we

already know the answer but we wish we didn't." – Erica Jong

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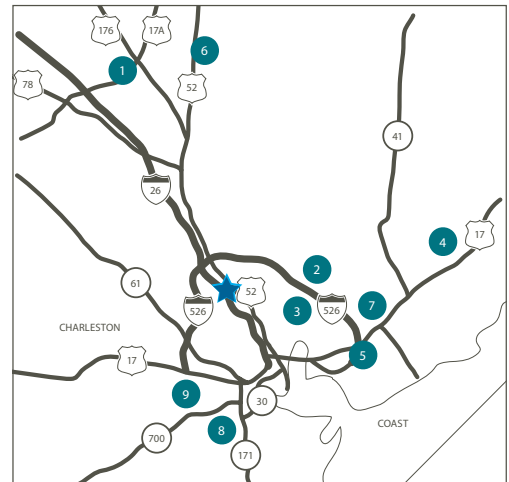
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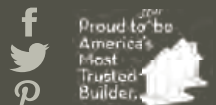
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Chuck Lattif, local owner of Arthur Rutenberg Homes, enjoys the marsh breezes from the porch of the company's Daniel Island model home.



# At Home in the Lowcountry

## ARTHUR RUTENBERG HOMES



*Story by Julie Sprankles.*

*Photos by William Quarles.*

**A**S I WALK FROM ROOM TO room at 117 Rivergreen Place on Daniel Island, it's easy to imagine the home might have been lovingly custom built by a fourth-generation Lowcountry builder. My eyes light on detail after detail: crisp shiplap, vaulted ceilings, exposed beams, the kind of screened porch overlooking the marsh that begs me to abandon my worldly pursuits and get lost instead in a faint sea breeze and a dog-eared copy of a Pat Conroy book.

And it's also easy to imagine the warm, gregarious man giving me the tour is that builder – the one who spent summers growing up learning the art of shiplap and other hallmarks of Southern coastal homes alongside his grandfather and father.

But while the home was custom built and the man standing before me is in fact a custom home builder, his story in the Lowcountry has only just begun. His name is Chuck Lattif, and he is the local owner of Arthur Rutenberg Homes.

Until last year, he lived in the Northeast, where his work on the national custom home building level earned him awards such as Best Custom Home under 6,000 square feet by the Main Line Builder's Association, as well as industry-wide respect – he was appointed chairman of the Historical Architectural Review Board in Lower Merion Township in Pennsylvania.

He fostered his lifelong passion for custom home building by kicking off his career working for three of the largest home building companies in the country – NVR, Weyerhaeuser and Pulte – before starting his own company.

This side of 10 years ago, he even had the privilege of building the Delaware home of Vice President Joe Biden.

But after learning of the opportunity to become a part of the Arthur Rutenberg family – and after being wooed by the Charleston area during subsequent visits – Lattif knew his future in custom home building lay in the Lowcountry.

Listening to Lattif speak, it's clear his respect for the Arthur Rutenberg name extends beyond a professional perspective.

“Art's been in the business for over 60 years and still works five days a week, and he's still an inspiration to how we look at housing and trends,” Lattif said of the company's namesake and founder, whom he calls a “terrific individual.”

For Lattif, then, investing in a franchise was a no-brainer because it was this franchise.

“What you gain from associating yourself with someone as respected as Art Rutenberg is you know that a great deal of thought has gone into the evolution of the franchise,” he explained. “The history makes a big difference.”

It's a history that stretches back to 1953, when a 26-year-old appliance dealer in Chicago decided to purchase 10 Florida lots. He immediately set to work designing and building three spec homes.

Thus, Arthur Rutenberg Homes was born, at a time the

Part of Arthur Rutenberg's new Coastal Home Collection, the Port Royale, features decidedly Lowcountry curb appeal.





Architects in Clearwater, Florida, and Charlotte, North Carolina, continually study lifestyle trends to create floor plans that adhere to the Arthur Rutenberg motto that form follows function. "In this home, there's no 'living room,'" explained Lattif. "It's one large, open area. ... this is where people live."

founder said "loans were made with a handshake, building permits took all of 15 minutes to pick up – 10 of which were devoted to chitchat – and sales contracts were written on a half sheet of paper."

While much has changed since the simple days of the company's inception, the guiding principle remains the same – "form always follows function."

But how does the company find the ideal marriage of the two for modern families whose needs are far more complex than the families of half a century ago?

"We have architects in Clearwater and also in Charlotte who travel the country, continually looking at trends in lifestyle," said Lattif, "and their floor plans are a culmination of looking and reviewing and altering our floor plans so that they constantly have a sense of how people live and where they like to live."

And perhaps that's why this home – "the Port Royale" – feels so inherently local.

"The homes we've designed for the Lowcountry have never been built before and, as Art so rightly put it, we want to look like we grew up in Charleston," elaborated Lattif. "We've given a lot of thought to how we design here versus anywhere else. It takes a lot of effort by a lot of people to bring this to fruition."

Savannah Classen of Jilco Kitchen and Bath was one such person; Classen designed the kitchen and the bathrooms for 117 Rivergreen Place.

"We chose a refined cabinetry style to complement the other





Above: Professional-grade appliances, granite countertops and dramatic tile backsplash make this kitchen a chic space for entertaining.  
Below: A formal dining area sits just off the living room, offering both privacy and ease of accessibility.





finishes,” Classen pointed out. “Incorporating glass in the upper kitchen cabinets created a clerestory look. It was all about being timeless.”

In keeping with the company’s commitment to convenience for homeowners, the process of incorporating local design is streamlined, state-of-the-art and offers impressive savings of both budget and time.

“What we like to do is understand their needs – what is it about their current home that they don’t like? – and direct them toward what we have to offer that comes closest to what they’re looking for,” said Lattif.

From there, sales consultant Sharon Cassidy can make changes to the floor plan to suit the homeowner’s specific tastes. These changes, she underscored, are at no additional cost.

“We can actually customize the home any way you want,” Cassidy said. “We are a custom builder, so we can do whatever you’d like. These are no-cost changes to the client.”

Homeowners who want to modify a home plan don’t have to worry about impeding the overall process.

“In 48 hours, we’ll have the floor plan revised and back to them,” said Lattif. “They can do that until they’re satisfied with the layout and, when they’re done, we can have a budget ready within three or four days.”

The family would then travel to the company’s design center in Myrtle Beach, where they’d be afforded as much time as they need with one of the company’s interior designers to help make all of their selections.

“Along with the budget, they’ll receive an itemized list 15 to 20 pages long of absolutely every detail that will go into their home, down to the serial number and model number of their towel bars,” added Lattif.

It’s a process the veteran builder truly stands behind.

“The one thing that age affords you if you’ve been in this industry long enough is knowing what things consumers look for that save time and money,” he said. “People’s lives are so hectic today, and this system that we have allows people to save a great deal of time and a great deal of money. And the homes



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speak for themselves in terms of design.”

Although he only recently moved to the Lowcountry himself, Lattif has already adopted the Southern way of considering everyone who walks through the door to be extended family.

“I was fortunate enough when I worked for large national companies that they allowed me to build a house for my family on my own,” he said, “and over the course of 30-plus years of marriage, I’ve probably built 10 or 11 custom homes for my family.”

Through Arthur Rutenberg Homes, Lattif intends to parlay his experience creating custom homes for his loved ones into helping Lowcountry homeowners build the homes of their families’ dreams.

With every new home he builds, Lattif said he’ll really just be returning part of a greater favor – after all, it’s the



The home’s expansive porches are meant to feel like an extension of its main living area, boasting welcoming elements such as an outdoor fireplace.

residents here who’ve made the Lowcountry home for Lattif and his team.

“It’s a wonderful, easy lifestyle,” he said, smiling, “and the people have been so incredibly welcoming.” 🍷

*To learn more about Arthur Rutenberg Homes, visit [www.arthurrutenberghomes.com](http://www.arthurrutenberghomes.com) or call 843-371-1432.*

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# COME ON OVER (AND STAY A WHILE)

*Story by By Bill Farley.*

**S**OMETIMES A BIG MOVE SUCH as relocating to a new town is a bit like purchasing a new automobile. It can be exciting – even exhilarating. At other times, the thrill comes from buying a beautifully restored and updated classic from your youth, only to discover that it's even better than you remembered it.

That's how it is with Mount Pleasant, as throngs of newcomers are pleased to report. For people who settle down in Mount Pleasant for the first time, everything about the town is an adventure. For those who are returning – or, in their hearts, never really left – it's a welcoming old friend.

To find out what makes Mount Pleasant such a desirable home to folks “from off,” as well as to others with a long history here, we spoke with two women with different life

experiences. Each has her own reasons for loving this community by the sea.



Kim Powell, who moved to Mount Pleasant last June, lives in Marsh Harbor at Toler's Cove. A third-generation Ohioan from Dayton, friends and family members were perplexed when she and her husband, Keith, uprooted their three sons and headed for the Lowcountry.

Diane Valentino, who grew up on the Isle of Palms but attended school and shopped in Mount Pleasant, remembers the days when the town's "supermarket" was a grocery store on Pitt Street – the only "downtown" around – and the sole department store was Kenny's. If that tiny general store, which stocked everything from Keds to bedsheets to clothing, didn't carry it, people liked to say back in the day, "You didn't need it."

Powell arrived in Mount Pleasant when the town had exploded from the 4,000 or so residents in Valentino's youth to some 70,000 today. For her, huge food stores are in abundance and everything from formalwear to fire pits is available at a wide range of major



Photo by courtesy of Kim Powell.


Kim and Keith Powell moved to Mount Pleasant from Ohio, putting down roots in Marsh Harbor at Toler's Cove.








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merchants, from Belk to Walmart to Lowe's.

Valentino left Mount Pleasant for a while, moving with her husband, Marion, during a military tour in Germany. They have been permanent residents of Mount Pleasant since 1984.

Powell moved here for reasons both personal and professional. Two sons at the College of Charleston and a third now a student at Porter-Gaud offered family reasons. Business beckoned as well. She and Keith opened a division of their construction company, Summit Industrial Flooring, 18 months ago, and they fell in



Photo by Cassandra Michelle Photography.

Diane Valentino, pictured here with her husband, Marion, grew up in Mount Pleasant, left for a while, then returned to her hometown in 1984.

love with the area. Additionally, she's in the process of launching a new luxury spa, Woodhouse Day Spa, at the old Zeus Restaurant site on Johnnie Dodds Boulevard. At first, it's hard to imagine how two people with such different stories

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could both be so enthusiastic about living here.

Among the things about Mount Pleasant that excite Powell is the town's business community. Her demographic research showed that this town would be ideal for a new luxury day spa such as the one she plans. In fact, Mount Pleasant has a higher economic rating than any of the other locations in the Woodhouse Day Spa organization.

She loves "the creativity ... and all the artisanal brands of almost anything you can imagine. I love the passion for life here. Every day, people are doing things that are out of the ordinary."

Predictably, Valentino cherishes "family and friends and all those wonderful memories."

Just taking a ride around town recalls for the Lowcountry native a

time when Mount Pleasant was just a quaint little village – when Boone Hall Plantation was just a plantation, Sneec Farm didn't yet exist and the ancient Grace Memorial Bridge was the only way to access the bright lights of big city Charleston.

Powell is also impressed with the cocktail culture.

"I'm a big fan of Hat Trick Gin and the other botanical tonics like the kind that can be found at Rarebit," she commented.

Valentino likes all the new shopping, dining and entertainment opportunities available today but feels that despite all its growth, Mount Pleasant is still deep down the same friendly small town she knew in her youth.

Yet there are more similarities than differences in why both women are so

fond of our town.

Both love the outdoors: Powell for the running and bicycling, paddle boarding and boating; Valentino for the birds, the wildlife and the shrubs, flowers and plants "that bloom in every season of the year."

Both love the ocean and the easy access to the beach, and both have a special affection for Shem Creek and everything the historic fishing enclave offers. And everybody loves the weather.

While moving to Mount Pleasant or returning home here may be like buying a "dream car," that's not because it's the means to reach a destination. It's because for a growing number of new arrivals and longtime residents, it is the destination. And it's just too good for them ever to want to leave. 🍹



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# Attention to Detail

## CK Custom Homes & Remodeling

**T**HE FIRST TIME CHRISTOPHER Klick put on a hard hat at age 7 and walked onto a construction site, the foundation for a career in building was set.

“Every day there was something new to see and to learn,” said Klick. “I was completely fascinated.”

Now the owner of Mount Pleasant-based CK Custom Homes & Remodeling, Klick

BY KALENE MCCORT

has helped clients throughout the Lowcountry build the homes of their dreams for more than a decade. With a keen eye for design, he treats each unique venture as if it were his own home.

“Attention to detail is achieved when projects are kept at a manageable number,” said Klick, who has built and remodeled a selection of charming properties throughout the Charleston area.

From crafting houses to remodeling bathrooms, there is no project too big or small for CK Custom Homes & Remodeling. Taking pride in getting a clear sense of a client’s vision, Klick welcomes new opportunities that both challenge and inspire.

“When you are in the process of building your house, you are in a temporary marriage with your builder,” said

Klick. “Like any good marriage, you need communication for it to be successful.”

The diversity of CK’s projects is vast. Currently the company is completely remodeling a 1950s ranch home in Bayview Acres, set to be completed in March.

“I like the whole process and the reward of seeing the finished product,” said Klick. “I credit our success to hard work, dedication and perseverance.”

Photo courtesy of CK Custom Homes & Remodeling.



Christopher Klick, right, shown with his family, treats each unique venture as if he were building his own home.

To find out more about CK Custom Homes & Remodeling, visit [www.ckcontractingsc.com](http://www.ckcontractingsc.com) or call 843-352-4975.

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# Subtle or Dramatic

## AGM Imports

**F**OR JOHN ANTUNES, NATURAL stone isn't just a passion – it's the family business.

It began with Antunes' father, who founded a stone company in their native Portugal and then passed the time-honed skills of the trade to his son. When Antunes moved to the United States and started a family, he followed in his father's footsteps by passing his own knowledge of the family trade to his son, John Joseph.

In 1994, the family opened AGM Imports to help homeowners in the Southeast meet their natural stone needs. By 2003, the company also included warehouses in Atlanta and Charlotte to meet growing demand.

Today, AGM boasts 12,000 natural stone slabs company-wide, with 2,500 here in Charleston. To source the beautiful array of stones, Antunes puts his international connections and multilingual skills to work with buying trips all over the world.

"A majority of our granite comes from Brazil," explained Office Manager Melanie Richardson.

"India is our second largest supplier, and Africa is a close third. Our marbles hail from Italy and Spain, and our limestone and travertine are from Turkey and Portugal."

The slabs are available at AGM to anyone in the market for natural stone. Open to the public, they serve homeowners, builders, designers and more.

The process upon visiting the showroom is pretty straightforward, said Richardson, noting, "Everyone is welcome to take a tour through our vast assortment of stone. Once you've made your selections, we will send that information along to your fabricator so they can work up a price for you."

This year, Richardson explained, the biggest trend in natural stone is "white, white and more white," as homeowners continue to lean toward clean and bright

kitchen spaces.

In addition to white marbles, homeowners drawn to neutral stone will likely appreciate the quartzites, which Richardson said "tend to look more like marble with their softer patterns and lighter colors, yet they are just as hard as granite."

Personally, Richardson can't help but gravitate to bolder stones. In fact, she chose just such a stone for her own home.

"I have Crema Bordeaux in my kitchen," she revealed. "It is full of color, which is exactly what I wanted. Reds, purples, grays ... you name it, it's in there somewhere."

Buyers like Richardson who prefer the more unusual stones will be pleased to find a selection of bold slabs immediately upon entering the warehouse. Right now, the most popular species among the distinctive stones are the Patagonia, Superior White and the Labradorite Extra Blue.

But whether subtle or dramatic, stone chosen at AGM can be used for a variety of applications – although some are better suited in certain areas than others.

For the kitchen, Richardson always suggests granite ("It's the hardest and most durable natural stone"), which she said also works well for outdoor kitchens and fireplaces.

"Bathrooms are where I would suggest marble," she elaborated. "They are lighter, softer colors that tend to look better in smaller areas that don't always get the most light."

For those wary of trying granite outdoors, AGM suggested Vetrazzo – a recycled glass product that comes in several colors and serves as a great conversation starter, too.

When asked why natural stone will remain a mainstay in home design, Richardson mused, "Its natural beauty is what attracts us to it, and I don't believe that will ever change." ❧

*To find out more about AGM Imports, visit [agmimports.com](http://agmimports.com) or call 843-747-0088. The store, located at 4520 Scott St. in North Charleston, is open from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday and from 8 a.m. to noon on Saturday.*



Photo courtesy of AGM Imports.

AGM boasts 12,000 natural stone slabs company-wide, 2,500 of them in Charleston.

# BEST of MOUNT PLEASANT



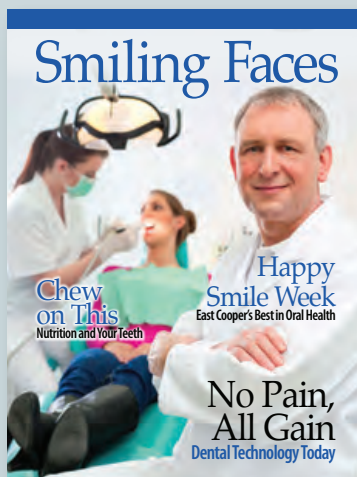
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## Publisher's Note

# BEST of MOUNT PLEASANT

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**T**HE BEST OF MOUNT PLEASANT 2015 IS PROBABLY ONE of the most anticipated issues of the year. Mount Pleasant Magazine not only feels passionate about the Best Of issue, but we feel our efforts, combined with your votes, have tremendous value to you, our reader – so much value that we decided to publish the results in our new annual custom magazine, Best Of Mount Pleasant 2015.

The fact that 36,800 readers cast their vote in 140 categories is one more indicator of the popularity of the Best Of Mount Pleasant. Publishing the results in a special publication will allow residents to refer back to the results throughout the year. When they are looking for that special dining spot or where to grab a cocktail, it will be at their fingertips. If you need a professional such as a plumber, Realtor, doctor or dentist, you'll know who to call by thumbing through these pages or accessing them online at [www.BestOfMountPleasant.com](http://www.BestOfMountPleasant.com).

Jenn Cady shot the Best Of cover on the Cotton Dock at Boone Hall Plantation. Actually, Boone Hall was voted best place to have a wedding. Our front cover personalities are some of Mount Pleasant's movers and shakers, all of them winners



in their category. *Left to right:* **John Sullivan**, CEO of Roper St. Francis Mount Pleasant Hospital – Best Hospital; **Kim Coleman**, owner of Vanity Salon – Best Beauty Salon; chef **Forrest Parker** of Old Village Post House – Best Brunch; **Brooke Ryan** – Mix 96 morning show – one of the Best Radio Personalities; and **Dr. Leslie Steele** of Advanced Animal Care – Best Veterinarian. 🐾

Until next issue,

— BILL MACCHIO

**Publisher**

P.S. - if you're a newcomer to Mount Pleasant or East Cooper, we hope you'll make Best Of Mount Pleasant 2015 Magazine your new best friend. For Best of results from previous years, visit [www.BestOfMountPleasant.com](http://www.BestOfMountPleasant.com).

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# That's the Ticket!

## Mount Pleasant Locals Enjoy a Day at the Game

**H**ANGING OUT WITH PEOPLE who actually enjoy football and have a great time at the game regardless of who wins and who loses might be one of my lifelong dreams. Thus I'm thrilled that ticket winners Glen and Stephanie Ownby of Mount Pleasant were able to get their jollies at the last Clemson-Carolina football game on us – and that they had a blast, even though they're Carolina fans.

BY DENISE K. JAMES

“We are both USC fans and have been ever since we moved to the Charleston area in 2007,” affirmed Stephanie Ownby. “We’ve attended several Carolina games, but the best one was probably in 2010 when South Carolina (ranked #19) beat Alabama (ranked #1). You could literally feel the ground vibrating at the stadium – that was a great day to be a Carolina fan.”

As for the recent Clemson-Carolina game, well, it was everything the Ownbys expected it would be. Though they said it took over an hour to park the car, the couple had fun tailgating and meeting a variety of fans on both sides. They were particularly surprised to find how amicable the Clemson attendees were, despite Stephanie and Glen being “Carolina fans in Clemson country.”

“Stephanie actually dropped \$40 and a Clemson fan picked it up and handed it back to her,” mused Glen Ownby. “We were pleasantly surprised by the amount of Southern hospitality.”

The Ownbys were grateful for the chance to witness some football action from a spot they described as “close enough to the end zone to see some amazing plays.” Though Carolina lost, they still had a great time and enjoyed cheering for USC.

“The first quarter was exciting, especially taking the lead after a 20-yard run by Pharaoh Cooper,” remarked Glen.

As residents of Mount Pleasant since 2007, Glen and Stephanie have been Mount Pleasant Magazine fans since their first copy was direct-mailed to their house.

“We love the local news and events; it’s a great way of

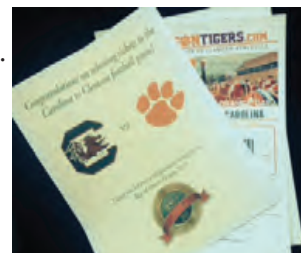


Photos courtesy of the Ownbys.

Clemson won its recent battle with arch rival South Carolina, but the Ownbys had a great time at the game anyway.

knowing what’s happening in the community,” said Stephanie. “We also enjoy reading about the newest restaurants. We are big foodies!”

Everyone who voted in the 2015 Best of Mount Pleasant was automatically entered into the contest for the football tickets – but the Ownbys insisted they enjoy voting even without the lure of prizes. Stephanie Ownby particularly liked casting her vote for Crave as the best macaroni ’n cheese and Crossfit as their favorite fitness center.



“We voted last year, too,” she commented. “It’s something we’ll continue to do, since we like supporting our local businesses.”

The Ownbys are partial to Mount Pleasant for a few reasons, including the fact that they wed here at the Dunes West Golf Club. They described themselves as beach bums, as many East Cooper residents do, and claimed to love living near the Isle of Palms and Sullivan’s Island. The couple enjoys outdoor activities, including the Cooper River Bridge Run, and one of their favorite traditions is jumping in the ocean during the Polar Bear Plunge on New Year’s Day, an event hosted by Dunleavy’s Pub on Sullivan’s Island.

“It’s a great way to start the new year,” said Stephanie.





# The Best Of Mount Pleasant 2015

## YOU Make It Happen

**W**ELL, IT'S OUR ANNUAL Best of Mount Pleasant issue – one of our favorite editions of the year, due to the fact that our readers (that's you!) help us write it.

Without our readers, the Best of Mount Pleasant would not exist – nor would it exist without the businesses, people and places throughout East Cooper that grace the ballots. On the cover are a few winning members of the community: Left to right: John Sullivan of Roper St. Francis Mount Pleasant; Kim Coleman of Vanity Salon; Forrest Parker, chef at the Old Village Post House; Brooke Ryan of Mix 96; and Dr. Leslie Steele of Advanced Animal Care.

We had 36,801 votes in more than 140 categories for the 2015 Best of Mount Pleasant, and we could

not be more excited. We know the Best of Mount Pleasant will continue to foster relationships between businesses and patrons, and we are already seeing the proof when certificates from the previous years appear in windows or on walls at local businesses. Readers, you have yourselves to thank for sharing all this good news throughout East Cooper.

Keep reading to see the list of who placed in each of the categories, in addition to fun, humorous blurbs about the first place winners written by myself, Cullen Murray-Kemp and Bill Farley.

Thanks again for your vote in the 2015 Best of Mount Pleasant!

*Denise K. James*

*Managing editor, vote counter and enthusiastic resident of Mount Pleasant • [www.BestOfMountPleasant.com](http://www.BestOfMountPleasant.com)*

## Final Results For Best of Mount Pleasant 2015



### BEST ASIAN

Why stump yourself about the differences between glass noodles and cellophane noodles when **Basil** has done all the hard work for you? According to our readers, it's the best spot for Asian cuisine, no noodling about it.

1. *Basil*
2. *P.F. Chang*
3. *Tokyo Bistro*

### BEST BAKERY

If you're searching for a place with flour power, our readers tell us that **Kudzu** of Mount Pleasant has it. Whether you're ordering a special occasion cake or just need a bite of dessert after lunch, they'll hit your sweet spot.

1. *Kudzu*
2. *The Village Bakery*
3. *Publix*

*Best Food & Drink*



## BEST BAR

When Amos Milburn first sang the blues tune “One Bourbon, One Scotch, One Beer” in 1953 – You didn’t think George Thorogood wrote it, did you? – he must’ve had **Red’s Icehouse** in the back of his mind. Our readers have chosen it as the best bar in the East Cooper area – whether you drink bourbon, scotch or beer. (Or wine.)

1. *Red’s Icehouse*
2. *The Shelter*
3. *SOL*

## BEST BARBECUE

People like to pleasantly debate about whether the best barbecue is vinegar based, mustard based or tomato based. Not our readers, though. Instead, they just head



over to **Home Team BBQ**, order a naked plate, put the sauce on for themselves and agree to disagree.

1. *Home Team BBQ*
2. *Melvin’s*
3. *Mamma Brown’s BBQ*

## BEST BREAKFAST

After a night of Jagerbombs, lemon drops and an epic swan dive from the Red’s Icehouse satellite bar into Shem Creek, your epicness deserves more than the usual McDonald’s breakfast burrito. Roll on over to **Page’s Okra Grill**, where you’ll get just enough breakfast fuel to make it through your Monday sales meeting.

1. *Page’s Okra Grill*
2. *Charleston Café*
3. *Eggs Up*

## BEST BRUNCH

When you’re feeling the sting from Saturday night’s fever but you somehow manage to drag yourself out of bed on Sunday, reward yourself and have brunch at **Red Drum**. Our readers think their eye-opening cocktails and cuisine will put the pep back in your step.

1. *Red Drum*
2. *Page’s Okra Grill*
3. *Crave*

## BEST BUDGET-FRIENDLY MEAL

We hear ya – money’s tight while you save up to buy a waterfront home on one of our East Cooper beaches. So check out **Page’s Okra Grill**, our readers’ favorite spot for budget-friendly grub. You’ll leave with your belly and wallet both feeling full.

1. *Page’s Okra Grill*
2. *Boulevard Diner*
3. *Five Loaves Cafe*

## BEST BURGER

The cows have come home to **Sesame Burgers and Beer** in Mount Pleasant. Fortunately for we burger-eating buffoons, the not-so charismatic cows were unaware that their new home would be atop a sesame seed bun decorated with thick-cut bacon and sliced avocado.

1. *Sesame*
2. *Poe’s*
3. *5 Guys*

## BEST COCKTAIL

**SOL Southwest Kitchen and Tequila Bar** has answered our cocktail needs with top shelf liquor and gourmet add-ons. Celebrate your freedom to imbibe along with our readers, and visit them this evening.

1. *SOL*
2. *Burttons Grill*
2. *Red Drum*

## BEST COFFEE SHOP

So if I’m tired in the middle of the afternoon, I head to **Starbucks**, along with our readers, for a skinny vanilla latte. Meanwhile, my co-editor orders a plain black coffee. His is probably the least complex order they get all day.

1. *Starbucks*
2. *Metto Coffee & Tea*
3. *Dunkin’ Donuts*

## BEST CRAFT BEER

I’ve found that there are two ways to guarantee you are welcome at every party in Mount Pleasant. One is if you bring along dreamy country music sensation Darius Rucker as your sidekick, and the other is if you bring a six-pack of **Westbrook Brewing Company’s** White Tai beer.

1. *Westbrook Brewing Co.*
2. *Coleman Public House*
3. *Liberty Tap Room*

## BEST DELI

The **East Bay Deli** sandwich has roots that tie into

some of the most important moments in American history. Thomas Edison was eating an East Bay cold cut when he invented electricity. Our founding fathers were chomping down on roast beef and turkey subs when they signed the Declaration of Independence. And voters marked down East Bay Deli when choosing the best deli in Mount Pleasant.

1. *East Bay Deli*
2. *Mozzo Deli*
3. *Momma Goldberg's*

### BEST DESSERT

The best dessert I ever saw starred in a scene from the 90s film "Varsity Blues." Aside from that infamous whipped cream, **Page's Okra Grill** offers up the best dessert in East Cooper.



1. *Page's Okra Grill*
1. *Village Bakery*
3. *Cupcake*

### BEST DOG-FRIENDLY RESTAURANT

They say dog is man's best friend. Well, it's time to reward your pooch for his loyalty, and take him out for a night on the town at Mount Pleasant's favorite dog-friendly restaurant, **Dog & Duck**.

1. *Dog & Duck*
2. *Red's Icehouse*
3. *The Shelter*

### BEST FRIED CHICKEN

There are two ways to find yourself having the Southern delicacy of fried chicken as your next meal. Either find a live chicken, cut off its head, defeather it, skin it and cook it in a vat of grease – or just go to **Publix** and buy one like the rest of our readers.

1. *Publix*
2. *Page's Okra Grill*
3. *Bojangles*

### BEST FROZEN YOGURT

I once lost a \$5 bet to my 15-year-old writing tutee, and I had a feeling he would spend his winnings on frozen yogurt. (I later found out he didn't, but it was a good guess.) Our readers love **TCBY** for quelling their own frozen yogurt cravings, and, unlike placing bets,

it's a safer pastime.

1. *TCBY*
2. *YoBe*
3. *FreshBerry*

### BEST GROCERY STORE

The people have spoken – **Publix** is the public's favorite place to go for everything from turkey to toilet paper for the second year in a row.

1. *Publix*
2. *Harris Teeter*
3. *Whole Foods*

### BEST HAPPY HOUR

All day long you're maneuvering decimal points, photocopying your boss' memos and listening to the screechy-voiced secretary blab to her sister about the season finale of "Gossip Girl." You deserve to head on down to **Water's Edge** on Shem Creek, where the beer is always cold and the sounds of happy hour are sure to make you forget about the last eight hours of work misery.

1. *Water's Edge*
2. *Red's Icehouse*
3. *Liberty Tap Room*

### BEST HOT DOG

There is truly no better way to put a new romance to the test than to ask your significant other to choose her favorite place to eat. Fellas, if she picks a hot dog joint, more specifically **Jack's Cosmic Dogs**, and orders you up two large dogs with all the fixins, you can be certain that there are wedding bells in your near future. The dogs are just that good.

1. *Jack's Cosmic Dogs*
2. *Skoogies*
3. *Johnny's*

### BEST ICE CREAM

Ice cream is synonymous with the whimsy of yesteryear, and, when we're feeling worn down by the modern world, we visit **Ye Ole Fashioned**, along with the rest of our readers. The name says it all.

1. *Ye Ole Fashioned*
2. *Baskin-Robbins*
3. *Marble Slab Creamery*

### BEST ITALIAN FOOD

It's a rarity to come across authentic Italian cuisine – the tart wine made from grapes in Tuscany's rolling hills or seafood just plucked from the Mediterranean Sea in a



Naples market – here in America. Instead of spending your money on transatlantic plane tickets that cost as much as junior college for your kid, why not just head over to **Bricco Bracco** for the real feel of Italy?

1. *Bricco Bracco*
2. *La Pizzeria*
3. *Carrabbas*

### BEST KID-FRIENDLY RESTAURANT

Moms and Dads: We know how hard it is to re-create the perfect Rachel Ray pork roast from last week’s episode while simultaneously making sure your kids don’t burn the house down. Why not just pile the little rascals into the minivan and head on down to **Chick-fil-A**, Mount Pleasant’s best kid-friendly restaurant?

1. *Chick-fil-A*
1. *Moe’s Southwest Grill*
3. *Wild Wing Cafe*

### BEST MAC ‘N CHEESE

It flows like molten lava from a volcano’s open mouth. **Crave’s** mac ‘n cheese, of course, is beckoning to coat your mouth with a gooey goodness that is unparalleled East of the Cooper.

1. *Crave*
2. *Coleman Public House*
3. *Graze*

### BEST MEXICAN

We love Mexican food, and we don’t see anything wrong with talented cooks crossing our Southern border to prepare our tacos and fry up our chimichangas. So if thinking about smoking hot fajitas and chips and salsa made you sorta hungry, maybe you should join our readers for a meal at **Los Arcos**.

1. *Los Arcos*
2. *Santi’s*
3. *SOL*

### BEST NEW RESTAURANT

I’ve said before that the Lowcountry reminds me of New York City, opening new restaurants faster than you can say “Where should we eat tonight?” If you haven’t yet checked out **SOL Southwest Kitchen and Tequila Bar**, our readers



think you should.

1. *SOL*
2. *The Obstinate Daughter*
3. *The Granary*

### BEST PLACE TO DINE OUTDOORS

Fresh air in Mount Pleasant and the surrounding islands is like the back of a baby’s neck. So why not enjoy it? Our readers suggest **Water’s Edge** as the place to enjoy good food outdoors. It’s like a picnic, except someone else fills your water glass.

1. *Water’s Edge*
2. *Vickery’s*
3. *Red’s Icehouse*

### BEST PLACE TO TAKE AN OUT-OF-TOWNER

Your visitors expect you to show them a good time and introduce them to the best spots in East Cooper. In our readers’ opinion, a good time can be had at **Water’s Edge**. Just be prepared for your guests to announce that they’re staying.

1. *Water’s Edge*
2. *Red’s Icehouse*
3. *Vickery’s*

### BEST PIZZA

The buzz around town about the magic mushroom pizza served at **Mellow Mushroom** had lines out the door and around the corner. When the Mount Pleasant folks figured out that the mushrooms weren’t “magical,” just downright delicious, they added pepperoni and ate the best pizza in town.

1. *Mellow Mushroom*
2. *La Pizzeria*
3. *Grimaldi’s*

### BEST RAW BAR

Some people like their beef so raw that it’s still mooing – and we like our shellfish so raw that they’re still, uh, filtering. And here’s a pearl of wisdom from our readers: **Shem Creek Bar & Grill** has the freshest oysters around.

1. *Shem Creek Bar & Grill*
2. *Salt*
3. *Red’s Icehouse*

### BEST RIBS

Legend has it that the renowned barbecue chef “Old Man” Rivers once told his protégés that no one man or woman could reach the holy grail of ribs alone. Instead, it would take a team of studied chefs to cook the best ribs ever. **Home Team BBQ** on Sullivan’s Island has



followed the old man's wise words and reached the barbecue pinnacle with its remarkable ribs.

1. Home Team BBQ
2. Sticky Fingers
3. Melvin's

### BEST SEAFOOD

It would be a shame to live near all this water and eat shrimp from some restaurant's freezer. That said, our readers think locals and their guests should get their fresh fish from **The Wreck of Richard and Charlene**.

1. The Wreck
2. RB's
3. Shem Creek Bar & Grill

### BEST RESTAURANT SERVICE

Locals report that **Red Drum's** wait staff is so proficient that the restaurant has never hosted an unhappy patron. There is even a legendary busboy – who shall remain anonymous so as to eliminate recruiting by competing restaurants – who can literally set, clear and clean tables before you can bat an eye.

1. Red Drum
2. Page's Okra Grill
2. Langdon's

### BEST SHRIMP 'N GRITS

There are many ways to adorn a bowl of grits: butter, cheese, salt and pepper or hot sauce, to name a few. Around Mount Pleasant, our readers prefer shrimp as the accompaniment to their grits – and they prefer **Page's Okra Grill** as the place to get it.

1. Page's Okra Grill
2. Old Village Post House
3. Water's Edge
3. Southerly

### BEST STEAK

Despite mad cow rumors, overzealous animal rights activists and Dr. Oz' cholesterol advice, the love of a good steak survives. Our readers suggest **Langdon's** as the place to go when beef is what's for dinner.

1. Langdon's
2. Longhorn
3. Outback

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### BEST SUSHI

Last time my editor and I were eating sushi, it was deep-water yellow fin tuna caught off the coast of Guatemala. "Denise!" I exclaimed, as I cut off a chunk of raw tuna. "Try this." The next time my editor and I had sushi this fresh, we were at **Tsunami** – they even throw in some free rice.

1. *Tsunami*
2. *Fuji*
3. *Locals*

### BEST TACO

Ay Mamacita! The tacos at **Taco Mamacita** on Sullivan's Island are so good that after just one bite, patrons will begin salsa dancing and speaking fluent Spanish. Andale! Andale! Get down to Taco Mamacita for some great



taco-eating times.

1. *Taco Mamacita*
2. *SOL*
3. *Santi's*

### BEST UPSCALE DINING


If you prefer escargot to chicken wings, favor elegant suede napkins to paper towels and would rather attend the ball than the club, then you have a taste for life's finer things. Venture over to **Langdon's** – Mount Pleasant's best upscale dining experience.

1. *Langdon's*
2. *Opal*
3. *Red Drum*

### BEST WINGS

Best wings of all time: Michael Jordan, a bald eagle and a pterodactyl. **Wild Wing Café**, however, took the crown for best wings East of the Cooper.

1. *Wild Wing Cafe*
2. *Home Team BBQ*
3. *East Coast Wings*



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**Best Art Gallery**  
- Karen's Korner.



**Best Board Shop**  
- Parrot Surf & Skate

## Best Shopping and Goods

### BEST ART GALLERY

The folks at **Karen's Korner** have framed and sold art created by artists from all corners of the world. They host an assortment of styles, from Charleston Rainbow Row to beautiful sea creature renditions. And even if Karen's Korner refuses to sell your unclothed self-portrait from college, they will still surround your painting with a stunning frame.

1. *Karen's Korner*
2. *Treasure Nest*
3. *Sandpiper*

### BEST PLACE TO BUY ANTIQUES

If Doc Brown in "Back to the Future" had built a time machine that actually worked, perhaps homeowners would be traveling back and finding furniture from bygone eras. Though we don't have a time machine available to us, we have the second best thing, according to our readers – **Page's Thieves Market**, where you can find something antique without leaving 2015.

1. *Page's Thieves Market*
2. *6 Mile Antiques*
3. *Mount Pleasant Mall*

### BEST BABY GOODS

Remember those old movies when fathers would pace the hospital waiting room, puff a cigar with a pink or blue band and wait for the good news? Well, if they had had the option of shopping at **Baby Bloomers** and picking out a gift for the newest member of the family, it would have made the time go faster.

1. *Baby Bloomers*
2. *The Ragamuffin Shop*
3. *Southern Belles*

### BEST BOARD SHOP

With three beautiful beaches in a 20-mile radius and the sun shining 12 months a year, it's certainly safe to say that the surf's up in Charleston, South Carolina.

Finding the perfect surfboard may be a daunting task unless, of course, you venture down to **Parrot Surf & Skate**, where your soul-matching surfboard is right around the corner.

1. *Parrot Surf & Skate*
2. *Odyssey Board Shop*
3. *Air & Earth*

### BEST PLACE TO BUY A BOAT

So your neighbor "Big John" is out cleaning his 26-foot Key West boat in his driveway, and once again he flexes his hairy arms as your wife drives by. Had enough? Well, head on down to **Seel's Outboard**, where they are happy to help you show Big John just who the big man on the block is with a brand new 30-foot Aquasport.

1. *Seel's Outboard*
2. *Hall Marine Group*
2. *Longshore Boats*

### BEST BOUTIQUE

There are times when you want something out of the ordinary to wear to the gallery opening or a monthly date night. All the best-dressed ladies in Mount Pleasant, our readers included, eschew big box stores during those times and, instead, take a look at what **Copper Penny** has to offer.

1. *Copper Penny*
2. *Il Brunettes*
3. *Out of Hand*

### BEST BRIDAL SHOP

It's hard to find the right person to marry these days. Fortunately, it's not quite as hard to find the right wedding gown. Our readers are fans of **Jean's Bridal** as a place to say "yes" to the dress and outfit the rest of your wedding party as well. As for fights with the in-laws, we can't offer any solid advice.

1. *Jean's Bridal*
2. *White*
3. *Gown Boutique*



### BEST PLACE TO BUY A CAR

Whether you're looking for the most fuel-efficient smart car on the lot or want to ride like a rapper in a new Rolls Royce, **Baker Motor Company** has a set of wheels for you. So before your bucket-on-wheels breaks down on your next road trip, stop by and see Tommy Baker for the car of your dreams.

1. *Baker Motor Company*
2. *Mount Pleasant Chevy*
3. *Lowcountry Volkswagen*

### BEST CHILDREN'S CLOTHING

Believe it or not, your small children are already trying to make their mark in society, and they can't do it in subpar clothing. So do them a favor and visit **Southern Belles** for outfits that will make them look good in the art room and on the playground. They'll thank you – our readers are sure of it.

1. *Southern Belles*
2. *The Ragamuffin Shop*
3. *Gymboree*

### BEST COCKTAIL/DRESS ATTIRE

So the man or woman of your dreams has finally asked you to dinner, but you've checked out your closet and everything looks like a tired rehash of 2002. Don't just borrow something from your best friend's closet when you can start fresh. Our readers suggest **Gwynn's of Mount Pleasant** for plenty of head-turning options.

1. *Gwynn's*
2. *Copper Penny*
3. *Jean's Bridal*

### BEST CONSIGNMENT

Consignment shops have become all the rage in Mount Pleasant, and our readers are among the fashionistas who've followed (pants)suit. For enviable outfits that don't break the bank, check out **Uptown Cheapskate** – and, when the time comes to clean your closet, check them out again.

1. *Uptown Cheapskate*
2. *Butterfly Consignment*
3. *Angels and Rascals*

### BEST CUSTOMER SERVICE

With all the competition in Mount Pleasant, our retail stores must go far beyond simply selling their products. It's all about the shopping experience. **Belk** of Mount Pleasant won in the Best Customer Service category by serving one happy customer after another.

1. *Belk*
2. *Gwynn's*

### 3. *The Ragamuffin Shop*

### BEST DEPARTMENT STORE

Sometimes, you just want to get a new set of frying pans, your underwear and a gift for your cousin's engagement party all in one spot. When that's the case, **Belk** is the department store to suit all of your needs. Our readers confirmed it.

1. *Belk*
2. *Gwynn's*
3. *Kohl's*

### BEST FISHING AND TACKLE SHOP

Studies show that fish these days are smarter than ever. In fact, the fish that call Mount Pleasant waters home are said to have some of the highest fish IQs in the country. Knowing all this, fisherman are heading down to **Haddrell's Point** by the boatload in search of the most convincing lures on the market.

1. *Haddrell's Point Tackle and Supply*
2. *Charleston Angler*
3. *Henry's Sporting Goods*
3. *West Marine*

### BEST FLORIST

Men make a lot of mistakes, but, fortunately for men, **Belva's Flower Shop** exists to correct a good percentage of those errors. Our readers (both women and men) are in full support of picking up a fresh bouquet when things go poorly. The blooms will not only brighten up the room, they'll also brighten up your relationship. Until next time, that is.

1. *Belva's Flower Shop*
2. *Buy the Bunch*
3. *Out of Hand*

### BEST FURNITURE CONSIGNMENT

So you've decided to update your home with a few new pieces? Visit **Next to New Furniture Consignment**

and pick out the furnishings you've always dreamed of at a decent price. You can also consign your own furniture and make sure it ends up with a good family – maybe one that keeps Mount Pleasant Magazine on the coffee table.

1. *Next to New*
2. *The Coleman Collection*
3. *Encore Interiors*







### BEST GARDEN CENTER

Mom always said that a green garden is good for the soul. And for all the searching souls out there, **Abide-A-While** of Mount Pleasant offers local patrons all they need for a green garden and peace of mind.

1. **Abide-A-While**
2. **Lowe's**
3. **Royall Ace Hardware**

### BEST PLACE TO BUY A GIFT

There still may be a way to make up for referring to your mother-in-law's physique as "questionable" in front of the whole family at Christmas dinner. Head on down to Coleman Boulevard and see if the folks at **Southern Season** have the perfect gift for your wife's fuming mother.

1. **Southern Season**
2. **Out of Hand**
3. **Zinnia**

### BEST HARDWARE STORE

So you're a do-it-yourself kind of guy. You built the back porch in four months and the dock in six months, but now it's time to tackle



the project of 2015. Keep the kids happy and head on down to **Royall Ace Hardware** for all the equipment and materials you need to build a state-of-the-art treehouse.

1. **Royall Ace Hardware**
2. **Lowe's**
3. **Sweetgrass Ace Hardware**

### BEST HOME GOODS

It's not a good idea to throw a baseball in a house, as we learned from plenty of 1950s television sitcoms.

*"Shop often...  
the good stuff goes fast"*



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Photo by Jenn Cady

But what IS a good idea is shopping for a new lamp or vase at **Marshalls HomeGoods**, according to our readers. Heck, once you're admiring the new lamp in the broken lamp's place, you might even forget to yell at the kids.

1. Marshalls HomeGoods
2. GDC
3. Celedon

**BEST JEWELRY STORE**

They say diamonds are a girl's best friend, but "they" never do you the favor of telling you where to buy them. Good news – our readers stepped in where the theysayers have left off, and **Skatell's** is apparently the spot to look for upscale jewelry.

1. Skatell's
2. Loy Harn
3. Polly's

**BEST LIQUOR STORE**

Rumor has it that last year Charlie Sheen and John Daly threw a joint party on the Isle of Palms and invited everyone they knew. The only liquor store fit to cater to such an event was **Bottles** in Mount Pleasant.

1. Bottles
2. Dante's Spirits
3. Palmetto 80

**BEST MENSWEAR**

Gentleman, no longer shall we go unnoticed with boring blue jeans and wimpy white shirts. It's time we stand out, follow fashion and catch that coveted glimpse from the pretty girl because she recognizes your sharp new outfit from **Belk** in Mount Pleasant.

1. Belk
2. Jos. A. Bank
3. Gwynn's

**BEST SHOES**

They say that style starts from the feet up. Well, whoever "they" are knew that the piece of clothing that can tie your outfit together like no other is your footwear. So stay stylish, and go get those feet fitted at **Phillips Shoes** in Mount Pleasant.

1. Phillips
2. Copper Penny
3. Rack Room Shoes

**BEST SPORTING GOODS**

The folks down at **East Cooper Sporting Goods** can't promise that their shoes will make you jump like Jordan or that their golf clubs will make you swing like Woods. What East Cooper Sporting Goods does promise is that you will look good on the hardwood, the golf course or





wherever else you choose to strut your stuff.

1. *East Cooper Sporting Goods*
2. *Haddrell's Point Tackle and Supply*
3. *TrySports*

### BEST SWIMWEAR

We live in a place where your swimwear matters just about as much as your workday wardrobe matters. So don't show up on a sunny weekend looking like a frumpy slouch – check out the options at **Drift**, along with the rest of our readers who are looking sharp poolside.

1. *Drift*
2. *Salty Girls*
3. *Belk*

### BEST THRIFT SHOP

Oh, those ugly sweater parties and those unexpected Halloween carnival invites. Where would you be without **Goodwill**? Our readers think they're the best place to hunt for a worthwhile bargain – and with a couple of locations in East Cooper, you're sure to score a sweet find.

1. *Goodwill*
2. *Habitat ReStore*

3. *Mount Pleasant Mall*
3. *Next to New*

### BEST TOYS

Deadline is 30 minutes away and you have to give your editor 1,500 words about Mount Pleasant's infrastructure reform, but your 6-year-old thinks it's funny to dive bomb your laptop while screaming "kamikaze!" If only you had taken your kid to **Wonder Works** in Mount Pleasant and bought him some toys. Maybe then you could work in peace.

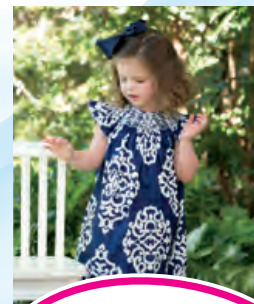
1. *Wonder Works*
2. *Hollipops*
3. *Target*

### BEST WOMEN'S ACCESSORIES

Some of the best short stories in literature have been written about accessories. There's *The Necklace*, by de Maupassant, and *Gift of the Magi*, by O. Henry, just to name two. That said, **Versona** is a favorite spot for our readers to adorn their necks, wrists and fingers. After that, inventing your own fairy tale is up to you.

1. *Versona*
2. *Francesca's*
3. *Out of Hand*

## Come see why we're voted Best Children's Shop in the Charleston area!



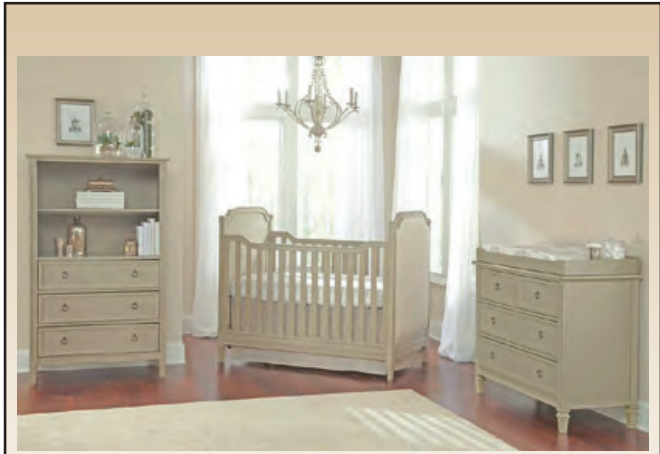
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**Best Allergist**  
- Dr. Bruce Ball.

*Best Health and Wellness*

**BEST ALLERGIST**

If you can't walk outside without sneezing your head off or pet your friend's cat without scratching your skin raw, it might be time to make an appointment with **Dr. Bruce Ball**. Our readers think he's the guy for determining which allergens you should avoid and significantly lowering your Kleenex bill.

1. *Dr. Bruce Ball*
2. *Dr. Ned Rupp*
3. *Dr. John Ramey*

**BEST AUDIOLOGIST**

Being a good listener is an art form, and listening to your patients discuss their concerns regarding hearing is something our readers believe **Dr. Mary Anne Larkin** has mastered. So if you find yourself straining during a conversation, give her a call – she is all ears.

1. *Dr. Mary Anne Larkin*
2. *Dr. Kristen Bish*
3. *Dr. Jennifer Bonner*

**BEST CHIROPRACTOR**

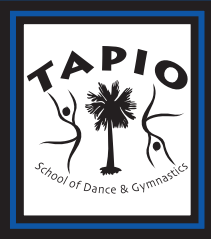
At his Maximized Living Clinic, **Dr. Brian Class** offers the best all-natural holistic chiropractic care available. Dr. Class and his staff provide patients with simple, common-sense tips to preventing disease and living a fuller, healthier lifestyle. Give him a try. ... if you have the spine for it.

1. *Dr. Brian Class*
2. *Dr. Matthew Murrin*
2. *Accurate Chiropractic*

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## BEST DENTIST

Remember your old dentist who bribed you with cheerful balloons, new toothbrushes and flavored fluoride to forget your fears and enjoy your cleaning?

Our readers insist that **Pleasant Family Dentistry** is the best dentist without such gimmicks – they simply do a good job with your smile.

1. *Pleasant Family Dentistry*
2. *Dr. Nicole Dahlkemper*
3. *Assey Dental Associates*



## BEST DERMATOLOGIST

Our skin is the largest organ of our bodies, and taking care of it is important. Readers voted **Dr. Marguerite Germain** as the best in skin care, so before you slather another miracle cream on your mug, try giving her a call.

1. *Dr. Marguerite Germain*
2. *Dr. Sam Stafford*
3. *Dr. Stephanie Smith-Phillips*

## BEST EYE DOCTOR

For all your optical needs – examinations, eyeglasses, frames, contact lenses and more – **Dr. Brad Bodkin** and his skilled staff provide patients with the best outcomes in a high tech and environmentally friendly way. And he never makes a spectacle of himself.

1. *Vision Center at Seaside*
2. *Dr. Brad Majors*
3. *Dr. Wm. Christopher Orr*

## BEST FAMILY DOCTOR

We've all seen those fuzzy black-and-white films and television shows that depict a caring family doctor curing the household of fevers and chicken pox with the magical items inside his doctor's bag. Our readers voted **Dr. John Knepper** as the modern version, so give him a call at the first sign of illness.

1. *Dr. John Knepper*
2. *Dr. John Rowe*
3. *Dr. Lee Allison*

## BEST FITNESS CENTER

It's East of the Cooper and a few miles from the shore, but East of the River Pretty Near the Beach was too long a name. But don't join **East Shore Athletic Club**

for the name. Join it for the wide range of exercise equipment and fitness gear and for their available personal trainers. They're "gonna pump you up!"

1. *East Shore Athletic Club*
2. *Iron Tribe Fitness*
3. *EcoFitness*

## BEST GERONTOLOGIST

Modern society is right about one thing: Life begins at 60, especially East of the Cooper! For those of you searching for the right specialist to ensure the quality of your golden years, our readers suggest the talented **Dr. Rex Morgan**.

1. *Dr. Rex Morgan*
2. *Dr. Scott Evans*
3. *Dr. John Kleckley*
3. *Dr. Leonard Lichtenstein*

## BEST HOSPITAL

When the **Roper St. Francis Mount Pleasant** physicians and health care professionals claim that they put patients first, they're not kidding. Year after year, they rack up national awards in patient satisfaction to prove it. No one wants to go to the hospital, but, when you have to, you'll get world class care.

1. *Roper St. Francis Mount Pleasant*
2. *East Cooper Medical Center*
3. *MUSC*

## BEST LASIK SURGEON

Seeing is believing, so after we counted up all our readers' votes for **Dr. Kerry Solomon** as the best lasik surgeon, we decided that they must be right.

1. *Dr. Kerry Solomon*
2. *Dr. David O'Day*
3. *Dr. David Vroman*

## BEST OBGYN

Pregnancy is sometimes depicted as a nail-biting experience on romantic-comedies, but thanks to **Dr. Toya Pound**, the ladies of East Cooper are feeling relaxed throughout the entire process. As for the fathers, well, that's another story.

1. *Dr. Toya Pound*
2. *Dr. Natalie Gregory*
2. *Mount Pleasant OBGYN*

## BEST ORAL SURGEON

Sometimes, bad things happen to good mouths. On those occasions, our readers put their trust in Shelbourne and Associates and look forward to **Dr. Courtney Shelbourne** opening his new dental practice in



the spring of this year.

1. *Shelbourne and Associates*
2. *Dr. Phillip Prickett*
3. *Dr. Craig Rhyne*

#### **BEST ORTHODONTIST**

At **Nash Orthodontics**, the goal is to help patients achieve and maintain a beautiful and healthy smile by offering the absolute best quality orthodontic care in a caring, fun, and friendly environment. No truth to the rumor that Jerry Seinfeld does the chair-side warm-up.

1. *Dr. Travis Nash*
2. *Dr. James Kelley*
3. *Dr. Roberta Gardner*

#### **BEST ORTHOPEDIC SURGEON**

When people talk about “feeling something in their bones,” they mean that they know it without any real proof. However, the readers of Mount Pleasant Magazine have proven to us that **Dr. Billy Estes** is the best orthopedic surgeon when it comes to ridding yourself of any pains in the neck – or elsewhere.

1. *Dr. Billy Estes*
2. *Dr. William Carroll*
2. *Dr. John Graham*

#### **BEST PEDIATRICIAN**

The tenured physicians at **Coastal Pediatric Associates** have been caring for the children of the Lowcountry, providing the most current, compassionate and comprehensive care, for more than 20 years. Pretty soon, their first patients will be switching to Coastal Middle-Aged Care Associates.

1. *Coastal Pediatric Associates*
2. *Dr. Matthew Davis*
3. *Dr. Sheri Scott Ziemnick*

#### **BEST PHYSICAL THERAPIST**

**Imagine Physical Therapy's** founder and guiding light, **John Mart**, was a Marine – and it shows! Whatever your sports-related, post-operative or other general physical tuneup, you'll get it here double time! But John's staff has a softer side, too. If you work hard, they just might give you a cookie.

1. *Imagine Physical Therapy*
2. *Danielle Licari*
3. *Olympic Physical Therapy*

#### **BEST PLASTIC SURGEON**

At the Lowcountry Plastic Surgery Center, **Dr. Jack**

**Hensel** and his team provide a wide range of services, from breast augmentation, reduction and reconstruction to liposuction, body contouring and more. You'll love the results so much, your smart phone will probably never leave “selfie mode” again.

1. *Dr. Jack Hensel*
2. *Dr. Heidi Williams*
3. *Dr. Tom Funcik*

#### **BEST URGENT CARE**

Urgent care means what it says – it's care you need right now – not in three or four hours. Not tomorrow. Now! And that's what **Nason Medical Center** is all about: ambulatory urgent care. That, and making some great TV commercials starring head doc Barron Nason himself.

1. *Nason Medical Center*
2. *HealthFirst*
3. *Roper Hospital*

#### **BEST UROLOGIST**

If you find yourself asking “Where's the powder room” a bit too often at parties, it might be a good idea to give **Dr. Dennis Kubinski** or **Dr. John Donaldson** a call. These fine physicians tied for readers' favorites when it comes to flushing that issue away.

1. *Dr. Dennis Kubinski*
1. *Dr. John Donaldson*
3. *Dr. David Brandli*
3. *Dr. Stanley Hall*

#### **BEST WEIGHT LOSS PROGRAM**

Those stubborn pounds that you haven't been able to lose since the decade of your 20s aren't a problem for the **Lowcountry Beauty and Wellness Spa**, according to our readers. Voted the best weight loss program, it's a great way to regain your self confidence and avoid a midlife crisis.

1. *Lowcountry Beauty and Wellness Spa*
2. *Metabolic Medical Centers*
3. *Weight Watchers*

#### **BEST YOGA STUDIO**

Yoga is hot, especially at **Bikram**. Go ahead and work every muscle in your body with a series of 26 postures and two breathing exercises. You'll be able to cool off at one of the many bars and restaurants near Bikram in the Shoppes at Seaside Farms.

1. *Bikram*
2. *Charleston Power Yoga*
3. *Serenity Now*
3. *Gaea*



**Best Apartment Community**  
- Belle Hall Apartments.

## *Best Entertainment and Leisure*

### **BEST APARTMENT COMMUNITY**

So you just scored your dream job in Mount Pleasant and need to move across the country in two weeks. Our readers say to check out **Belle Hall Apartments**, **Edgewater Plantation** or **Thickett** for the perfect combination of fair prices, upscale amenities and friendly neighbors. It'll be like living at the college dorm again, but with much nicer floors.

- 1. Belle Hall
- 1. Edgewater Plantation
- 1. Thickett

### **BEST PUBLIC BEACH ACCESS**

There's something special about a day at the beach. Folks who normally wouldn't dare to show skin rip their shirts off and waddle toward the water without thinking twice. Children zoom in and out, under and over mindless tanners. The beach-goers of Mount Pleasant have voted **Sullivan's Island** as the best to see all the wonders of the beach.

- 1. Sullivan's Island
- 2. Front Beach Isle of Palms
- 3. Isle of Palms County Park

### **BEST PLACE TO RIDE A BIKE**

In today's fast-moving world, it's important to ditch your Maserati every so often and hop into relax mode with a bike ride. Mount Pleasant Magazine readers have decided that **The Old Village** provides the ideal route for folks looking for a leisurely ride that's guaranteed to free your soul – at least temporarily.

- 1. The Old Village
- 2. Isle of Palms
- 3. Palmetto Islands County Park
- 3. Sullivan's Island



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### BEST PLACE TO PUT A BOAT IN THE WATER

Let's not have a re-enactment of last year, when dad tried to lower the family boat off the dock and into the water using hand pulleys and rope that hadn't been uncoiled since 1960 – we all know how that ended. Just head down to **Shem Creek** and use the boat ramp this time.

1. *Shem Creek*
2. *Remley's Point*
3. *Isle of Palms Marina*

### BEST CONCERT VENUE

Oh, those summer evenings listening to Darius Rucker strum his guitar as he sings "Wagon Wheel." The breeze blows off the water and gently through my combed hair. I hug my girlfriend and gyrate smoothly to the tune. Sorry. I got carried away reminiscing about the best concert venue in East Cooper: **The Family Circle Cup Stadium**.

1. *Family Circle Cup Stadium*
2. *Boone Hall Plantation*
3. *Awendaw Green*

### BEST CUSTOM BUILDER

So you want a hot tub in your kitchen? We understand if cooking pork chops while the jets massage your

calves is something that you need. Time to call **David Weekley Homes**, the best custom home builder in Mount Pleasant.

1. *David Weekley Homes*
2. *Structures*
3. *John Wieland Homes*

### BEST PLACE TO FISH

Just like "deer" and "sheep," "fish" is the same whether its singular or plural. So when you tell a friend you "caught fish" at the **Pitt Street Pier**, you can let him guess exactly how many. But bring a big cooler – that's what our readers do.

1. *Pitt Street Pier*
2. *Waterfront Park*
3. *Shem Creek*

### BEST PLACE TO PLAY GOLF

Any golfer knows that golf is an invigorating game. The open fairways, accessible greens and gorgeous views at **Dunes West** make your never-ending duck-hook tee shots just a little easier to digest.

1. *Dunes West*
2. *Charleston National*
3. *Patriots Point*



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### BEST KIDS' ACTIVITY

The ability to fly has been at the center of human desire for eons – people dream about it, write songs about it and take acid in hopes of experiencing it. But in an effort to discourage drug use, why not venture to **Sky Zone** of Mount Pleasant along with the kids? We hear from our readers that it's the perfect way to get that airborne feeling without endangering yourself.



- 1. Sky Zone
- 2. Art Buzz
- 3. Blackbeard's Cove

### BEST PLACE TO FLY A KITE

Telling your nemesis to "go fly a kite" sounds more like a privilege around East Cooper, where there are plenty of beautiful places to let that long tail soar. Our readers are partial to the **Isle of Palms** for those days when the salty breeze beckons.

- 1. Isle of Palms
- 2. Sullivan's Island
- 3. The Beach

### BEST MOVIE THEATER

Think back to when going to the movies was your one true escape as a teenager – a place where you could sneak an arm around your beloved's shoulders, share a container of buttery popcorn and put aside the woes of adolescence. If this still sounds good to you, try a date night at **Cinebarre** of Mount Pleasant, recommended by our readers as the place to forget your troubles.

- 1. Cinebarre
- 2. Palmetto Grande

### BEST NEIGHBORHOOD FOR FAMILIES

Mr. Rogers' neighborhood might not have been **Park West**, but it darn well should've been. Voted as the best neighborhood for families by our sociable readers, it's clearly a great community for making friends, borrowing sugar and introducing your kids to the kids two doors down.

- 1. Park West
- 2. Dunes West
- 3. The Old Village

### BEST NEIGHBORHOOD FOR RETIREES

Do you remember Woodstock like it was yesterday? Has it been a while since you waved goodbye to your 50s? Do you prefer golf to flag football? Maybe it's time to relax and retire to Mount Pleasant's favorite neighborhood for retirees: **Dunes West**.

- 1. Dunes West
- 2. Seaside Farms
- 3. I'On

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843.216.7181



### BEST PLACE TO PADDLEBOARD

Paddleboarding is all the rage around East Cooper, thanks to our delightful waterways. Our readers think there's nothing better than a trip down **Shem Creek** on a sunny day, along with the dolphins and coastal birds. Just don't drop your phone in the water while trying to capture the moment.

1. *Shem Creek*
2. *IOP Marina*
3. *Coastal Expeditions*

### BEST PLACE TO HAVE A CHILDREN'S BIRTHDAY PARTY

So your twins are turning 10 and they have been bouncing off the walls all week in anticipation of their birthday party. I mean literally – they've been bouncing off the walls playing a game called wall jumper. Now it's time to save what's left of your once-beautiful white walls and take the twins down to **Sky Zone**, where they'll bounce higher than any wall has ever let them bounce.

1. *Sky Zone*
2. *Art Buzz*
3. *Blackbeard's Cove*

### BEST PLACE TO HAVE A PICNIC

A perfect picnic requires three key factors: good company, great food and, most importantly, an appealing outdoor venue. With the Cooper River Bridge overhead and the Holy City as a backdrop, Mount Pleasant Magazine readers found **Memorial Waterfront Park** to be the perfect place for a picnic.

1. *Memorial Waterfront Park*
2. *Alhambra Hall*
3. *Pitt Street Bridge*

### BEST PLAYGROUND

Ahoy, Matey! The pirate ship at the **Alhambra Hall** playground is calling all of Mount Pleasant's young pirates to jump aboard. Equipped with many other fun playground features, **Alhambra Hall** brings home the honors as the best playground in Mount Pleasant.



1. *Alhambra Hall*
2. *Palmetto Islands County Park*
3. *Waterfront Park*

### BEST PLACE TO GO FOR A RUN

Treadmills are perfectly fine for some folks, but, around here, our readers prefer the **Ravenel Bridge** for wearing out those sneakers.

Besides getting you prepared for the 2015 Cooper River Bridge Run, the breathtaking views aren't bad either.

1. *Ravenel Bridge*
2. *The Old Village*
3. *Isle of Palms*



### BEST PLACE TO MEET SINGLES IN PERSON

True love can be awfully elusive, and playing the online dating game can be frustrating and fruitless when you're single. Instead, give **Charleston Wine Pairings** a call and enjoy the opportunity to meet interesting people. Our readers who are happily matched up say it's worth it.

1. *Charleston Wine Pairings*
2. *Red's Icehouse*
3. *SOL*
3. *The Shelter*

### BEST PLACE TO WATCH SPORTS ON TV

So your marvelous man cave is having some flooding and electrical issues, leaving you with nowhere to watch your hopeless Redskins lose their tenth game this season? Head on down to **Wild Wing Café**, voted the best place to watch sports in Mount Pleasant – even if your NFLers would probably lose to your son's co-ed pee wee flag football team.

1. *Wild Wing Cafe*
2. *King Street Grille*
3. *Big Game Bar and Grill*

### BEST PLACE TO PLAY TENNIS

It's no mistake that people flock to East Cooper to watch the Family Circle Cup each year – this is a great place not only to watch a professional tennis match but also learn the sport yourself. For those of you who are trying to amp up your skills, our readers suggest **Dunes West** as the place to practice your serve.

1. *Dunes West*

2. *Mount Pleasant Recreation Center*
3. *l'On*

**BEST PLACE TO VIEW THE RAVENEL BRIDGE**

There are tons of bridges around the Lowcountry, but the Ravenel Bridge is our favorite, for obvious reasons. And when your guests from out of town want an up-close-and-personal peek at your favorite bridge, our readers suggest that you take them to **Memorial Waterfront Park**.

1. *Memorial Waterfront Park*
2. *The Harbor Breeze*
3. *The Fish House*

**BEST VOLUME BUILDER**

For the buyer who has champagne taste but a beer budget, our readers suggest looking up **David Weekley Homes**. Voted the best Volume Builder for 2015, you're guaranteed to find your home sweet home at a reasonable price.

1. *David Weekley Homes*
2. *John Wieland Homes*
3. *D.R. Horton*
3. *Pulte Homes*
3. *Ryland Homes*



*Best Personalities and Services*

**BEST ASSISTED LIVING FACILITY**

There's no doubt about it; age is nothing but a number, and older people still like to have fun. And our readers say they can have plenty of fun when they hang out at **Franke at Seaside**.

1. *Franke at Seaside*
2. *Somerby*
3. *Sandpiper*

**BEST ATTORNEY**

We aren't suggesting you did anything wrong. But if you need to prove you didn't, call the law offices of **Manaker, Cipolla and Associates**. Our readers say they're the best for when bad things happen to good people.

1. *Manaker, Cipolla and Associates*
2. *Taylor Alderman*
3. *Dennis O'Neill*

**BEST AUTOMOBILE TECHNICIAN**

Who knows what evil lurks in the heart of your car? Shadow Drive does! Because that's the home of **East Cooper Auto**



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1. *East Cooper Auto Pros*
2. *Gerald's*
3. *Automotive Excellence*

**BEST BODY SHOP**

Reviews tell the story for **East Cooper Paint & Body**. "The work done here is second to none" and "you can't go wrong with this shop." You do understand that we're talking about auto bodies, don't you?

1. *East Cooper Paint & Body*
2. *Ascue's*
3. *Fender Mender*

**BEST CAR WASH**

From a quick wash-and-dry to a complete detailing, your car will leave **Liquid Highway** sparkling and showroom fresh. Drive your Fiat 500 there and sneak it in right behind a Hummer. Get a free cleaning!

1. *Liquid Highway*
2. *Americana*
3. *Cactus*

**BEST CATERER**

At **Mosaic** in the Iron Gate Plaza Shopping Center, you can dine al fresco, have your pasta al dente, then invite all your friends to a big party, and they'll happily cater it with their menu of healthy, eclectic world cuisine.

1. *Mosaic*
2. *Savor*
3. *Charleston Bay Gourmet*
3. *Southerly*



### BEST LOCAL CELEBRITY

Once he was a mega-star as Hootie. Now **Darius Rucker** is a super nova just as himself. It's hard to say anything bad about this musical icon and all-around philanthropist and good guy. What's next, secretary general of the U.N.?



- 1. *Darius Rucker*
- 2. *Bill Murray*
- 3. *Rob Fowler*

### BEST CHILD CARE

At some point, you have to hand the reins over to someone you trust, have a little "me" time as a parent and enjoy the influx of refrigerator art. Our readers suggest **Springview Academy** for children up to 5 years old.

- 1. *Springview Academy*
- 2. *Children's Discovery Center*

### 3. *Christ Kids Academy*

### BEST HOME CLEANING SERVICE

Did the kids track mud all over the floor and you don't feel like mopping? Or the fans are caked in dust and you have a fear of heights? Our readers suggest **Molly Maid** for a cleaner house. You'll be eating toast off the floor after it falls buttered side down.

- 1. *Molly Maid*
- 2. *Maid Pure*
- 3. *Maid Pro*
- 3. *Mount Pleasant Maids*
- 3. *New Image*

### BEST DANCE STUDIO

This is the place to master the fundamentals, individual expression and creative movement of dance and gymnastics. Students



**THANK YOU READERS**  
FOR VOTING....  
**T.J. PHILLIPS & BRIAN CLEARY**  
BEST RADIO PERSONALITIES

103.5 WEZL | iHeart MEDIA CHARLESTON | Y102.5

at **Tapio School of Dance and Gymnastics** have been dancing since 1955 – although not continuously.

1. *Tapio School of Dance and Gymnastics*
2. *Dance Carolina*
3. *Charleston Dance Institute*
3. *Once Upon a Ballet*

**BEST ELECTRICIAN**

When God said, “Let there be light,” he probably put **Mount Pleasant Electric** on speed dial just in case. Our readers insist that this company is the best for making sure we don’t stay in the dark.

1. *Mount Pleasant Electric*
2. *Metro Electric*
3. *Tom Thompson*
3. *Frampton Electric*

**BEST PLACE TO HOLD AN EVENT**

Planning an event is a lot of work, whether it’s your high school reunion or your youngest sister’s engagement party. Our readers suggest **Alhambra Hall** as the best venue for making a great impression. Just think, you get to take the credit!



1. *Alhambra Hall*
2. *Wine and Design/Art Buzz*
3. *Boone Hall Plantation*

**BEST FINANCIAL PLANNER**

Edward Jones “makes sense of investing’ so their slogan goes, and financial advisor **Philip Cingolani** at Towne Centre makes sense of investing your money. Leave your portfolio to Philip and go take in a movie.

1. *Phillip Cingolani*
2. *Ross Evans*
3. *Landon Heatherington*
3. *Morris Financial*

**BEST HAIR SALON**

Vanity, thy name is ... the best and most comprehensive hair salon in Mount Pleasant! Shampoo, cuts, highlights, keratin treatments and more, this full-service shop does it all. Special events and big weddings? No problem at **Vanity Salon**.

1. *Vanity Salon*
2. *Stella Nova*

**3. Visage**

**BEST HOTEL**

The old saying about houseguests and fish might not apply to your beloved in-laws, but, even so, you’ll probably be happier if you book them a room at the **Courtyard By Marriott** – our readers think so.

1. *Courtyard by Marriott*
2. *Hampton Inn*
3. *Holiday Inn*
3. *Charleston Harbor Resort*

**BEST INSURANCE AGENT**

You never know when life is going to deal you a frustrating hand, and skipping the insurance is a gamble our readers would rather not take. Instead, they call **Billy Swails** of State Farm to rest easy at night.



1. *Billy Swails*
2. *Jack Tankersley*
3. *Sam Schirmer*

**BEST INSURANCE COMPANY**

When **State Farm** says it’s committed to “being there” for its customers for auto, home or life insurance, they really mean it. With seven agents just in Mount Pleasant, you can’t drive down Coleman Boulevard without running into one of them!

1. *State Farm*
2. *Allstate*
3. *Nationwide*

**BEST INTERIOR DESIGNER**

We aren’t judging you if the carpet doesn’t match the drapes – we’re merely suggesting that you give **Joy Lang** a call for your interior design needs. Our readers think she’s the best at giving your home a decorative upgrade.





1. *Joy Lang*
2. *Sidney Wagner*
3. *Miriam Ricks*
3. *Anne Kelley*

### **BEST KENNEL**

Can you think of a place where your dog will enjoy the company of other friendly dogs, get plenty of exercise and sunshine and have the sting of your absence lessened by a scratch behind the ears? According to our readers, **My Three Dogs** is the answer.

1. *My Three Dogs*
2. *Paws in Paradise*
3. *Pooch Palace*

### **BEST LOAN OFFICER**

So you've decided to settle down in Mount Pleasant and buy a house? According to our financially savvy readers, **Wes Sellew** is the guy to call after your parents announce they spent your inheritance in Vegas.

1. *Wes Sellew*
2. *Bob Tennyson*
3. *Peter Insabella*
3. *Donna Williamson*

### **BEST PLACE TO GET A MORTGAGE**

**The Mortgage Network, Inc.** office on Wingo Way is ready to handle all of your financing with first-class service and a personal touch. If you don't care to be touched, they'll do everything over the phone.

1. *The Mortgage Network*
2. *Wells Fargo*
3. *Lukey Mortgage*

### **BEST NAIL SALON**

We're all for artwork that you can keep on hand, literally. And our readers think **Princess Nails** is best for when you want to express yourself through your fingers and toes – think of them as 20 miniature canvases.

1. *Princess Nails*
2. *Nails So Dep*
3. *Creative Nails*

### **BEST PEST CONTROL COMPANY**

Something bugging you? **Palmetto Exterminators** is the specialist in quality pest control, mosquito control and termite control services throughout the Lowcountry. They trap 'em and bag 'em and ship 'em out.

1. *Palmetto*
2. *Terminix*
3. *Buzz Off*

### **BEST PET GROOMER**

Leave Fido in good hands at **aFORTable Grooming**, for everything from a wash and brush to a full groom with upkeep trim. There's a reason why "aFORTable" is spelled that way, so turn to page 50 and find out.

1. *aFORTable Grooming*
2. *My Three Dogs*
3. *Pleasant Paws*

### **BEST PLUMBER**

Where are those bright blue **Coastal Plumbing and Gas** trucks going in such a hurry? To get to work on commercial and residential construction, gas line installation and repair, general plumbing services, hot water heater installation and repair. And they're busy!

1. *Coastal Plumbing and Gas*
1. *Blitch Plumbing*
3. *James Harrington*

### **BEST POOL AND SPA COMPANY**

Get in the swim with the owners of **Atkinson Pools and Spas** and their friendly staff. They've been at it for 30 years, so you know they can backwash a filter blindfolded. They provide full service – from sales to pool and spa maintenance, they'll do everything except blow up your ducky float.



1. *Atkinson Pools and Spas*
2. *Leslie's Pool Supplies*
3. *Alaglas*
3. *Crystal Clear Pools*

### **BEST PRIVATE SCHOOL**

The word coming through the Lowcountry grapevine is that Mount Pleasant has some of the best schools, and **Palmetto Christian** is no exception, according to our readers. If you're considering private education, give them a call.

1. *Palmetto Christian*
2. *Bishop England*
3. *Christ Our King*

### **BEST PUBLIC SCHOOL**

There's hardly an academic, extracurricular or sports activity in which **Wando High School** doesn't dominate. Here's a tip of the mortarboard to the secondary school



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that does it all! What's next, an ice fishing championship?

1. *Wando High School*
2. *Mount Pleasant Academy*
2. *Whitesides Elementary School*

### BEST RADIO PERSONALITY

**T.J. Phillips** rules the early morning airwaves from 5 a.m. to 10 a.m. on WEZL 103.5 FM, "The Weasel." Then he goes home to his burrow and sleeps for the next 19 hours. When he says he's into "country" he means it literally.

1. *T.J. Phillips*
2. *Brooke Ryan*
3. *Brian Cleary*



### BEST RADIO STATION

Sure, sometimes we all get stuck in traffic. But that's a great time, according to our readers, for tuning into the **Bridge at 105.5** and dancing in the driver's seat.

Just don't take your foot off the brake.

1. *The Bridge*
2. *95.1*
3. *Y 102.5*

### BEST REAL ESTATE COMPANY

We've got to give credit where it's due, and we're giving it to **Carolina One** for helping all the people moving to East Cooper find a place to hang their hats. Our readers agree with us.

1. *Carolina One*
2. *Agent Owned*
3. *Cassina Group*
3. *Mave & Market*

### BEST REALTOR

**Patrick Mahaney** and Charleston House Hunters provide professional real estate services to buyers, sellers and investors, as well as to those going through short sales and foreclosures. C'mon! Say it. "Who ya gonna call?"

1. *Patrick Mahaney*
2. *John Crompton*
2. *Marcia Wray*

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### BEST TANNING SALON

You say it's been raining for six weeks and your neighbor looks like he spent all winter in the Bahamas? Could be **Ultratan**. Give them a try for the ultimate tanning experience. And don't forget your Speedo!

1. *Ultratan*
2. *Sun Station*
3. *Vanity Salon*
3. *Jamaican Me Tan*

### BEST TELEVISION PERSONALITY

Despite Netflix, Amazon Prime and all the ways to watch your favorite sitcom or drama on the World Wide Web, our readers still love watching **Rob Fowler** on local television stations.

1. *Rob Fowler*
2. *Dean Stephens*
3. *Tom Crawford*



### BEST VETERINARIAN

Our four-legged children deserve our attention, and, if your cat is grumpier than those Internet memes, our readers suggest taking Fluffy to **Advanced Animal Care** for a checkup.

1. *Advanced Animal Care*
2. *Patrick Vet Clinic*
3. *Park West Veterinary Associates*

### BEST PLACE TO HAVE A WEDDING

Remember the line from that old song by the Dixie Cups, "Goin' to the chapel and we're gonna get married"? Well, some of our readers have replaced the chapel with **Boone Hall Plantation** – still dancing to those oldies at the reception, of course.

1. *Boone Hall Plantation*
2. *Alhambra Hall*
3. *Dunes West Golf Club*

### BEST PLACE OF WORSHIP

Sunday mornings are about coffee, good reading material – such as Mount Pleasant Magazine – and a rousing service at **Seacoast Church**, according to our readers, to inspire you for the rest of the week.

1. *Seacoast Church*
2. *St. Andrew's*
3. *East Cooper Baptist*

Bruce D. Ball, MD  
Andrew E. Davidson, MD

Jeffrey J. Dietrich, MD  
Thomas B. Harper, III, MD

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# Best of Mount Pleasant Special Section

## The Winners Tell Their Success Stories



**N**OW THAT YOU'VE READ through the results in the 2015 Best of Mount Pleasant (and hopefully enjoyed a chuckle or two), you might be curious about what, precisely, makes those folks good enough to be voted "best" by East Cooper residents – unless, of course, you voted for them yourself. Whether we're talking about a restaurant, a dentist or a liquor store, it's useful to know the business' philosophy and learn a thing or two about what goes into being a winner.

That's why we are introducing a new aspect of our 2015 Best of Mount Pleasant results – a special


marketing section in which our winners present their success stories. In the following pages, you will find several of this year's first, second and third place winners and read their special business profiles, all tailored to discuss why they got voted best.

We also decided to reprint the 2015 Best of Mount Pleasant Magazine as a special publication to be enjoyed all year long. At the rate that Mount Pleasant and the surrounding islands are growing, we're certain that newcomers and visitors will find this information useful.

On behalf of everyone at Mount Pleasant Magazine, thanks for being part of the 2015 Best of Mount Pleasant. It has been an astounding success, and we can't wait for next year.










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Suite 1104, Mt. Pleasant



# Pleasant Family Dentistry Winner – Best Dentist

**T**HERE'S NO REAL SECRET TO what it takes to be “the best,” according to the dentists at Pleasant Family Dentistry.

There's the obvious requirement for excellence in dentistry, state-of-the-art tools and a knack for knowing how to maximize your practice's full potential. But what really sets them apart, they said, is a no-brainer: Put the patient first – always.

This patient-centric philosophy complements the management style that has been an integral part of the business plan since the practice was established by Drs. Rick Jackowski and Greg Johnson in 1989. The two dentists agreed that the foundation of their success starts with their employees.

“Dr. Johnson and I make an effort to promote an attitude of gratitude as the cornerstone of our office culture,” Dr. Jackowski said. “When we put others first, amazing things happen. I think this is why we have the best team in town.”

This philosophy drives decisions, changes and expectations at Pleasant Family Dentistry.

“Every day we ask ourselves a simple question,” Dr. Johnson said. “How can we best serve our patients today? We constantly strive to exceed expectations.”

Charleston resident Linda Lopez said she has experienced this “above and beyond” effort as a patient at Pleasant Family Dentistry for nearly a decade.

“They are the most friendly and progressive dentists in the area,” she said. “People respond to this kind of positive energy. That's why they have been voted the best three years in a row.”

Beyond the intangibles are the more concrete aspects of the practice's success, such as staying open until 7 p.m.

during the week and offering Saturday appointments.

“We want to be open when our patients need us, and we don't want them to have to further complicate their schedule to get here,” Dr. Jackowski said.

In addition to convenient hours, Pleasant Family Dentistry welcomes walk-ins and offers a multitude of services, including same-day CEREC crowns.

It seems like yesterday, the dentists mused, that the practice was located in a small office on Houston Northcutt Boulevard, and they had a staff of just one. At the time, they both were recent graduates from the dental school at Virginia Commonwealth University. They moved to Mount Pleasant two days before Hurricane Hugo destroyed the coast they had fallen in love with.

“It was devastating,” Dr. Johnson said. “But just as

much as we loved the area, we had a great appreciation for the wonderful people here, many of whom are still our patients today.”

Twenty-five years later, the practice still calls Mount Pleasant home but is now located off the Isle of Palms Connector. In 2013, the founding dentists hired an associate, Dr. Rob Carimi, a graduate of the University of Tennessee College of Dentistry. With a staff of 19 and counting, they plan to continue to build on the

practice's solid foundation.

“We will always be all about the patient,” Dr. Johnson said. “I think being voted the best is evidence that they get it, and they appreciate it, and that's all we could ask for.”

“It's great to be recognized for doing what you love to do,” Dr. Jackowski added. “Our patients inspire us to excel every day, and for that we say, “Thank you.””

To learn more, visit [www.pleasantfamilydentistry.com](http://www.pleasantfamilydentistry.com) or call 843-881-8881.



Photo courtesy of Pleasant Family Dentistry.

With three dentists and a staff of 19, Pleasant Family Dentistry expects to continue to grow.



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# Lowcountry Beauty and Wellness Spa

## Winner – Best Weight Lost Program

**M**ANY INDIVIDUALS WHO are desperate to lose weight turn to purchasing chalky, bland snacks and entrees through so-called weight loss websites – or they crash diet for a certain period of time, cutting out everything tasty from their lives, only to put the weight back on eventually because, well, you can't ignore good food forever.

At the Lowcountry Beauty and Wellness Spa, none of the above applies, yet patients are losing weight, keeping it off and re-establishing their self-confidence with the help of owner Michele Hensel and a talented, supportive staff of experts. You won't find any gimmicks at

Lowcountry Beauty and Wellness Spa – but you will work hard and feel great, promises Hensel. As for winning first place in the Best Weight Loss Program category for Best of Mount Pleasant, Hensel and her team can name a few ways they've gained their patients' trust.

"We have a strict protocol, and we expect to see our patients weekly," Hensel explained. "We want to make sure they are following the program and obtaining the goals they've set for themselves."

But fear-mongering is not the name of the game at the Lowcountry Beauty and Wellness Spa. You won't be asked to step on a scale and humiliate yourself over the difference between what you do weigh and what you "should" weigh. Instead, your compassionate program experts will help you determine a personal weight goal and reach it. Plus, you get to eat real food!

"We introduce innovative weight loss techniques that

help you not only lose the weight but keep it off," Hensel pointed out. "By eating real food and creating positive habits, we help our patients with both weight loss and weight maintenance."

Because patients at Lowcountry Beauty and Wellness Spa are able to lose between a half-pound and a pound per day by following the program, they are motivated, according to Hensel, and often share their good news with others.

"It's important not to feel alone in your weight loss journey," she said. "We have seen over 5,000 patients in the last four to five years for the purpose of weight loss. We've heard, more often than not, that we are attentive to our patients and just as serious as they are about their goals."

Hensel remarked that updated weight loss techniques are on the horizon, and she plans to stay on top of the trends for the sake of her patients.

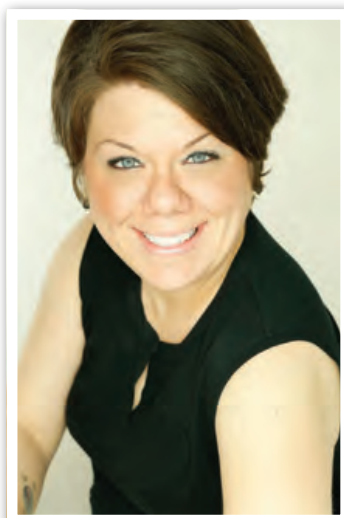
"There is a new program getting ready to emerge, but we're uncertain as to when it will happen in South Carolina," she said. "Currently, clinical trials are happening in Florida, and we are keeping our eyes and ears open for news."

Hensel feels that Lowcountry Beauty and Wellness Spa serves the

community by promoting proper weight loss techniques as well as a healthy lifestyle to keep weight off.

"After weight loss is obtained, we stress the importance of continuing a healthy regime with correct portions of food and exercise," she said.

*To learn more about how Lowcountry Beauty and Wellness Spa can help you achieve your weight loss goals for life, visit [www.lowcountryplasticsurgery.com/weight-loss.html](http://www.lowcountryplasticsurgery.com/weight-loss.html) or call 843-971-2860.*



Photos by Jenn Cady.

You're not alone in your weight loss journey at Lowcountry Beauty and Wellness Spa, according to weight loss consultant Amelia Johnson, left, and owner Michele Hensel.





# Lowcountry Plastic Surgery Center

## Winner – Best Plastic Surgeon - Dr. Jack Hensel

**Y**OU MIGHT SAY THAT DR. JACK Hensel of Lowcountry Plastic Surgery Center in Mount Pleasant has a gift for bringing out the distinct beauty in each of his patients. He does this by ensuring that he is able to offer patients an array of techniques – many so up-to-date that they are exclusively available within his practice.

This is not a new business model for Dr. Hensel: Since the first day he opened Lowcountry Plastic Surgery Center, he has strived to bring modern, simple and painless procedures to East Cooper patients and to keep the practice “ahead of the curve,” he said, and in touch with other leaders of the industry.

“We have close relationships with a number of other leaders in the industry elsewhere in the country, who keep us updated on new technology as it is being researched,” commented Michele Hensel, marketing manager for Lowcountry Plastic Surgery Center as well as owner of Lowcountry Beauty and Wellness Spa. “We often know at least two or three years in advance when a new technology is going to be launched.”

For example, Dr. Hensel was the first surgeon who was certified to use the 410-shaped implant. He was also the first surgeon to use this implant in the Charleston area. Lowcountry Plastic Surgery Center was the first practice in this area to offer coolsculpting – and continues to implement the advanced coolsculptor developed by world-renowned plastic surgeon Dr. Grant Stevens. Furthermore, Lowcountry Plastic Surgery Center uses the

new SmartLipo Triplex for body contouring and cellulite treatment and has the Picosure laser for the most advanced form of tattoo removal.

But it doesn't stop there – Dr. Hensel and his wife were swift to point out that the field of plastic surgery is constantly evolving, and it's important to keep a keen eye on changes for the sake of Lowcountry Plastic Surgery's methods and reputation in the medical community.

“We will continue to research the best technology on the market and bring it to this community,” confirmed Dr. Hensel. “We want our patients to understand that they do not have to travel outside of this area in order to get advanced treatments.”

Currently, Lowcountry Plastic Surgery Center offers several advanced “head to toe” beauty treatments, including botox and fillers; latisse; expert teeth whitening; and toe fugus laser – all performed with minimally invasive techniques and customized for the patient.

Lowcountry Plastic Surgery sets itself apart from similar practices through its diligent customer service. While it is easy for a patient to feel like he or she is just a number in some offices, the Hensels are conscientious about making each person who

walks inside feel like a member of the family.

“From the initial phone call to a lifelong relationship, we are here to serve the patient's every need,” Michele Hensel pointed out. “We also make sure our providers have the best training so that our patients are confident in us.”

To learn more, visit [www.lowcountryplasticsurgery.com](http://www.lowcountryplasticsurgery.com) or call 843-971-2860.



Photo courtesy of Lowcountry Plastic Surgery.

Dr. Jack Hensel keeps up with the latest advancements in the constantly changing field of plastic surgery.

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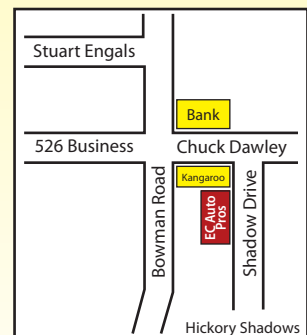


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# East Cooper Auto Pros

## Winner – Best Automobile Technician

**T**HERE'S A CERTAIN VIBE BOTH longtime and new customers feel when visiting East Cooper Auto Pros. It's hard to pinpoint at first, but, after a while, it's obvious: optimism. Owner and self-declared optimist William "Willie" Hopkins is at the helm of this family-owned-and-operated business in Mount Pleasant, and his positive attitude is what keeps his team happy and his clients coming back. The shop was voted first place for Best Automobile Technician in the Best of Mount Pleasant in 2015, second place in 2014 and first place for the last three years in the Moultrie News Reader's Choice Awards.

"I stay positive because I value the important things in life, which are faith, family and friends," Willie commented.

Willie and his wife, Christine "Chrissie" Hopkins, started the business back in 1994 on Lansing Drive. It was a terrific blending of the couple's talents: Willie, who had his A and P license for working on airplanes, elected to bring his passion and skill set to the automobile industry. Meanwhile, Chrissie had been working in the education field as a preschool teacher for years and was a natural at networking within the community, spreading the word that East Cooper Auto Pros was open for business.

Today, East Cooper Auto Pros is a full-service automobile shop for both domestic and import cars, but, more importantly, Willie and his team strive for a type of customer service that instills trust and fosters good relationships among the staff and clients. It's a simple technique, according to Willie – the customer is always given options and the freedom to make the choice.

"When a car comes to us, it's completely checked," he affirmed. "We tell you the options and educate you thoroughly – but we leave it up to you. It's our job to educate and advise the customer – and to show them, if necessary."

The show and tell method of helping customers with their vehicles has been the cornerstone of East Cooper Auto Pros' success since the beginning. Willie stressed how the number one person in the business is not himself or even the members of his talented crew – it's the customer. Naturally, the customers note that a visit to East Cooper

Auto Pros saves time, headaches and money. The shop even offers a generous two-year parts and labor nationwide warranty. And since East Cooper Auto Pros is a NAPA auto repair shop, the warranty is good for three years on parts and labor with the use of a NAPA credit card.

"Our customers come to us for an honest opinion," Willie explained. "If their car is still under a manufacturer's warranty, we'll look it up to make sure and then tell them. If it will save them money to purchase tires at Costco, we'll tell them."

"We don't use scare tactics," added Bob McCormack, the shop manager. "We simply show you what the issues are with your car and give you choices."

But no matter what news is in store regarding your vehicle, a trip to East Cooper Auto Pros is never a sobering experience. In fact, Willie, Bob and the rest of the staff take pride in the amount of fun they have on a daily basis. They agreed that what sets the shop apart, besides customer service, is the sense of humor shared among staff members and customers.

"I keep candy bars and coffee at the front desk. ... and I have customers who stop in for no other reason than to say hello," Willie remarked. "We like to have a good time, but our customers' needs are the most important aspect of this business." 🍪

*To find out more about East Cooper Auto Pros, located at 1198 Shadow Drive in Mount Pleasant, visit [www.eastcooperautopros.com](http://www.eastcooperautopros.com) or call 843-881-2820.*



Photo by Cassandra Michelle Photography.

Willie and Chrissie Hopkins blended their talents in 1994 when they started East Cooper Auto Pros. The business is still thriving today.

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# Advanced Animal Care Winner – Best Veterinarian

**M**AHATMA GANDHI ONCE said, “The greatness of a nation and its moral progress can be judged by the way its animals are treated.” One local veterinary center, Advanced Animal Care, echoes this sentiment and is changing the dynamic of the field one dog and cat at a time.

Since 2001, the husband-and-wife team of Drs. David and Leslie Steele has helped thousands of animals achieve a better quality of life, implementing innovative practices that ensure the emotional well-being of the patient and truly getting to know pet owners.

“It’s fantastic,” said Dr. David E. Steele, reflecting on the hospital being named Best Vet in Mount Pleasant. “It’s a little bit of validation regarding the things we’re doing that separate us from other practices.”

By implementing “Low Stress Handling,” Dr. Steele strives to make pets and owners feel completely at ease. His main objective is getting to the core of what the patient experiences emotionally. Knowing the anxiety and fear that revolve around a pet’s trip to the vet, Dr. Steele strives to eliminate this trepidation by instilling a sense of peace as early as the initial puppy/kitten visits.

“The work we’ve done with low stress handling is notable,” said Dr. Steele. “It’s been a very concerted effort on our part to change the way we work with our patients.”

Rather than resorting to drawing blood by restraining the animals, the dog or cat can be trained to stay still during the procedure. Low Stress Handling has already been implemented in zoos nationwide, with lions and dolphins. By establishing a deep trust, Dr. Steele has witnessed numerous

significant changes in animals once plagued by distress.

“I can 100-percent honestly tell you that I love my job,” said Dr. Steele. “It excites me when I see a patient who is initially fearful and then, by the end of the visit, they make a wonderful transformation.”

In addition to its pioneering practices, he also credits the center’s success to the dedication and drive of the people he employs.

“My staff is here because they have a strong desire to help animals,” said Dr. Steele. “It’s really all about our passion for our job. We are passionate about improving the quality of life of every pet.”

Wanting to touch lives beyond sporadic vet visits, Dr.

Steele has plans to host evening education classes. The sessions will run the gamut from correcting separation anxiety to implementing obedience training.

“This community feeds us, so we owe it to them to do the same,” said Dr. Steele, who works with a variety of rescue groups throughout the Lowcountry.

Currently, he is the proud owner of six cats and two dogs but gleefully admits that number has a tendency to fluctuate in his household.

As I make my way to the exit, a fox terrier is playfully interacting with three pointer puppies, and, like their owners, they look enthused, cheerful and happy to be here. Trusted, warm and knowledgeable, Advanced Animal Care is the obvious choice if you are looking for treatment for your four-legged family members. 🐾

*To learn more, visit [www.advancedanimalcaremp.com](http://www.advancedanimalcaremp.com), call 843-884-9838 or drop by 3373 Morgans Point Road, Suite 301, in Mount Pleasant.*



Photo provided by Advanced Animal Care.

Dr. David Steele has helped thousands of animals achieve a better quality of life.



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# Wes Sellew

## Winner – Best Loan Officer

**T**HE PROFESSION OF LOAN officer involves a lot of paperwork and a load of logistics. A good loan officer is tenacious, has extraordinary interpersonal skills and is known for getting the job done.

These requirements and characteristics of a successful loan officer describe Mortgage Network's Wes Sellew, who was voted the best loan officer in Mount Pleasant.

Sellew said being known as the "people who get it done" is not something that happens overnight. It has taken nine years of hard work and the dedication of his entire team, which includes an underwriter and closing department colleagues who work out of the Mortgage Network corporate office near Boston.

"I have the best team in the industry," he said. "If you are a client, you definitely know my processor, Colleen (McNamara). She is here locally and has worked with me since day one. We pay extra attention to details to ensure that we provide the best possible experience."

Sellew began his career 13 years ago in his hometown of Hilton Head. After an internship opportunity while attending Wofford College in Spartanburg, he signed on with Mortgage Network and headed to Boston for training.

"I learned from the ground up by helping with all aspects of the mortgage business," he said. "It was an experience I use every day when I originate loans."

With his training complete, Sellew moved back to Hilton Head to begin his career. In 2005, he made the move to the Charleston office, where he and his colleagues assist more than 250 clients each year.

In order to keep up with all of those clients and

successfully manage their loans, communication is key, Sellew said.

"I have to see each client's whole financial picture. This can be intimidating, so I try to get to know them on as much of a personal level as possible," he said. "We regularly follow up on our past customers with updates in the market or just to say 'hi' and see how the family is doing."

Currently, the company has a customer satisfaction rating of 98 percent, which is pretty impressive for any industry – let alone one that has so many moving parts and nightmare stories associated with it, Sellew explained.

Being voted the best, he said, is proof that his clients appreciate the effort that he and his company put toward turning previous financial nightmares into success stories and solid partnerships.

"(Mount Pleasant) is my backyard, and it's an honor knowing that the work we are doing is appreciated by so many of my neighbors," he said. "Thank you!"

Other than hard work and a good education, Sellew said there are several people to whom he attributes his success, including his parents, his mentor and friend, David Crowell, and his partner, Colleen McNamara.

"We are a great team, and I am looking forward to many more years of working together," he said. "We love what we do, and we want to be the best at what we do."

He said he can't give away all of his secrets to success. But as any good loan officer would, he sets his goals annually and keeps them nearby as a reminder and a way to celebrate milestones. 🏆

*To learn more about mortgages, contact Wes Sellew at 843-388-1772 or visit [www.mortgagenetwork.com/wes-sellew](http://www.mortgagenetwork.com/wes-sellew).*



Photo courtesy of Wes Sellew.

Earning the title of "the best" isn't something that happens overnight, according to Wes Sellew.



# Bricco Bracco

## Winner – Best Italian Restaurant

**T**HE NORTHEASTERN UNITED States and top-notch Italian food go together like spaghetti and meatballs. From New York’s Little Italy to Boston’s North End, pasta aficionados flock to secure their spot at one of the many fine eateries those city streets provide.

Lucky for those of us south of the Mason Dixon Line, one New Jersey native is bringing exceptional Italian cuisine to the Lowcountry. With two locations that differ slightly, Joe Spiotta’s Bricco Bracco restaurants have created a warranted buzz within the Mount Pleasant community.

Just one visit to either establishment and it’s easy to see why Bricco Bracco has earned the title of “Best Italian” two years in a row.

“We have the best customers on the planet,” said Spiotta, who spent every Sunday as a boy alongside his Nonna, in the kitchen, entranced by herbs and spices. “We are on a first-name basis with our guests. It’s really one big family.”

The very name “Bricco Bracco” translates to “this and that,” a phrase Spiotta’s grandmother would throw out when curious onlookers would inquire about just what she was preparing. Fittingly, a variety of fresh flavorful sustenance is what you’ll find on the menu.

Authentic Italian family recipes that have been passed down from generation to generation make their way onto diners’ plates in a speedy fashion. From house-made ravioli and mozzarella to creamy cannoli and cinnamon-dusted tiramisu, the drool-worthy options continue from appetizers through dessert.

Perhaps even more impressive is the selection of privately labeled Bricco Bracco wines that are sourced from California and Italy. The happy hour is unmatched. Monday through Friday, from 4 p.m. to 7 p.m., pizza, calamari, bruschetta, meatball sliders and other tantalizing items ring in at a deal

of \$4.50 apiece.

Spiotta credits both restaurants’ popularity to the quality of food, friendly atmosphere and level of service.

“We accommodate our people,” said Spiotta, who has opened and run close to a dozen restaurants throughout his career. “Every single dish is made to order, so we can customize anything you want.”

The best-selling item on the menu, the Chicken Zarro, is Spiotta’s wife’s grandmother’s cherished recipe. Folks just can’t get enough of the savory poultry, generously smothered with mozzarella and prosciutto, swimming in a sea of mushroom marsala sauce.

From hosting neighborhood Limoncello contests to sponsoring the Wando High School band, Bricco Bracco takes its role within this community as serious as it does its marinara.



Photo courtesy of Bricco Bracco.

In the world of Bricco Bracco, fresh mozzarella pairs perfectly with vine-ripe tomatoes and aromatic basil.

“We love the town of Mount Pleasant,” said Spiotta. “The relationships we have built within the community are fabulous. We hope to develop more restaurants in the area.”

As Spiotta sped to the kitchen to cook up Bricco Bracco’s second-best seller, eggplant parm, a savory scent of simmering garlic wafted through the air while classic hits from Otis Redding blared overhead. In minutes, Spiotta presented a stack worthy of royalty – perfectly breaded eggplant, layer upon layer, cooked to utter perfection.

With generous portions and a staff as vibrant and comforting as its cuisine, you’ll definitely want to become a Bricco Bracco regular – whether it be at the original location on Basketweave Drive, off of Highway 17, or at the newly-opened Cucina on Chuck Dawley Boulevard. Enter a world where fresh mozzarella pairs perfectly with vine-ripe tomatoes and aromatic basil. La famiglia awaits! 🍷

*Bricco Bracco is at 1034 Chuck Dawley Blvd. and 1161 Basketweave Drive. Visit [www.briccobracco.net](http://www.briccobracco.net) or call 843-416-8290 or 843-352-2294 for more information.*





# Dr. Travis Nash

## Winner – Best Orthodontist

**F**AMED WRITER WILLIAM Arthur Ward wrote, “A warm smile is the universal language of kindness.” Nash Orthodontics couldn’t agree more with this sentiment and is working hard to ensure that the grins of Mount Pleasant stay aligned and appear often.

“I feel very honored to be voted,” said Dr. Travis D. Nash, reflecting on his practice’s recent accolade of being named the Best Orthodontist in Mount Pleasant. “We really have fantastic patients and a fantastic staff.”

Once you step foot inside the office, it’s clear to see why this practice, now in its sixth year, continues to grow rapidly. Sleek overhead lighting, starfish décor and vibrant photographs of Lowcountry marshes and sunsets adorn the walls, emitting the essence of a spa rather than a doctor’s office. A board behind the reception desk welcomes new patients by name, adding to the personal, friendly feel that permeates throughout the property.

“We really try to make a very comfortable family environment,” said Nash, who once served as an Orthodontics Department head in the U.S. Navy. “We want people to want to be here.”

From a Wii video game nook to a well-stocked coffee station for parents, the concept of waiting room reaches a whole new level – way beyond the outdated publications and harsh fluorescent lighting of the past.

Originally a Biology major, Dr. Nash’s career path took a different route when his college friend’s father, an orthodontist, shared with him the gratifying experiences that come along with the profession.

“Orthodontics was a great combination of science and art,” said Dr. Nash, who also has a budding practice on James Island. “It’s a way to apply science outside of the lab.”

Toward the back of the spacious office, a row of plush orthodontic chairs can be found in a room painted a calming shade of indigo. This is Nash Orthodontics’ treatment bay, where patients sit side-by-side in a relaxed setting.

“We put a lot of thought into keeping it open with the windows and high ceiling,” said Dr. Nash. “The Bay lends itself to comfort. Patients can look around and see what everyone is doing. There is a lot of joking and conversation that takes place in this room.”

From Invisalign to traditional braces, Nash Orthodontics helps a variety of people with multiple needs.

“We look at a patient’s goals and match the treatment,” said Dr. Nash, who currently treats individuals ranging in age from 7 to 78.

“It’s really rewarding watching the younger patients we treat,” Dr. Nash, who hosts an annual appreciation day for loyal patients at Blackbeard’s Cove Family Fun Park every July, added. “Their whole personality changes as their smile gets better. Their confidence builds.”

Hanging on the wall is a copper-colored cowbell adorned with silver, blue and white ribbon. Dr. Nash explained that patients ring the bell after they get their braces removed, to signify the celebratory start of a new journey.

“It doesn’t matter what clothing you wear or the car you’re driving, a beautiful smile is always in fashion,” said Dr. Nash.

From helping with local book and food drives to running raffles where the grand prize is a pair of tickets to a Carolina/Clemson football game, Nash Orthodontics’ community involvement knows no bounds.

With extended hours, gift card giveaways and care that exceeds expectations, Nash Orthodontics definitely gives us something to smile about. 🦷



Photo by Jenn Cady.

It doesn’t matter what clothing you wear or the car you’re driving, a beautiful smile is always in fashion, according to Dr. Travis Nash.

*Nash Orthodontics is located at 1127 Queensborough Blvd., Suite 107, in Mount Pleasant. For more information, call 843-884-6336 or visit [www.nashorthodontics.com](http://www.nashorthodontics.com).*



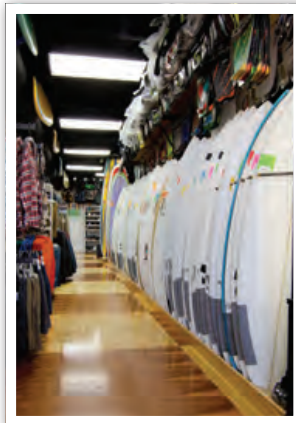
# Parrot Surf Shop

## Winner – Best Board Shop

**W**HETHER YOU ARE A young grommet learning how to surf or a well-weathered surfer, Parrot Surf & Skate will soon become your second home.

From cruising the beach break on a long board on the Isle of Palms to skate sessions with your friends, Angelo Vlcek's well-presented store on Coleman Boulevard just before it turns into Ben Sawyer Boulevard is the one-stop shop for everything you will need. That's because Parrot Surf & Skate has been voted The #1 Best Surf Shop in Mount Pleasant for the third year in a row!

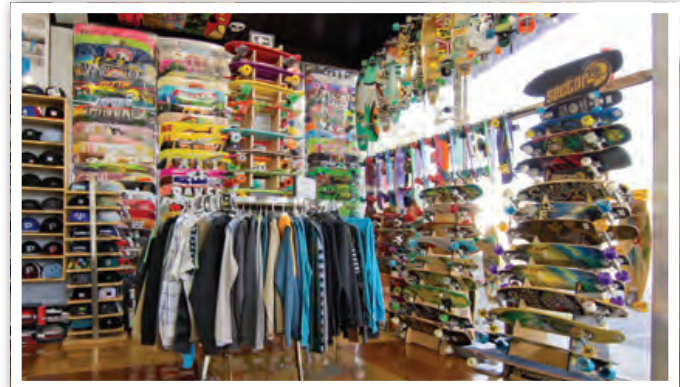
When the Czech Republic ex-pat moved to Mount Pleasant in 1997, he already possessed a background in skateboarding and snowboarding, so, naturally, surfing was another passion he developed as soon as he moved



to the Lowcountry. This led to the opening of his shop in 2000, Parrot Surf & Skate, which has focused on spreading the feeling of a surf and skate community.

According to Vlcek, "Our primary customers range from little kids to middle school, high school, college students and young adults. They are the customers for whom surfing and skating aren't just sports; they are lifestyle activities, and Parrot Surf & Skate has everything they need to fit right into those lifestyles."

As expected, Parrot stocks everything from the best in surf, skate and paddleboards to hoodies and thermals, polos

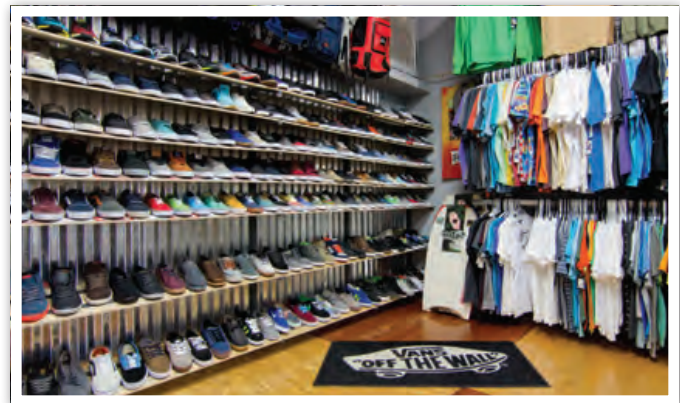


Photos courtesy of Parrot Surf & Skate.

and button downs, board shorts and shorts, wet suits, board bags, fins and leashes, skateboard decks, helmets and pads, trucks, wheels and much more. The store also carries the best backpacks around, not to mention one of the most extensive selections on the East Coast of Nixon watches, the surf and skate enthusiasts' timepiece of choice.

Parrot goes above and beyond just merchandise. Its expert staff is equipped to assemble or repair every type of gear, even if it was purchased elsewhere

"Customer service has been and will continue to be our



focus," Vlcek said. "When you shop with Parrot Surf & Skate, you are not just buying an item. You are becoming a member of our family."

In addition to its brick-and-mortar store, Parrot Surf & Skate has an attractive and easily navigable online store as well. And – good news for online buyers – if you see an item listed there, it will be available. No "out of stock" messages permitted! 🍹

*To learn more about Mount Pleasant's best board shop, visit [www.parrotsurfshop.com](http://www.parrotsurfshop.com) or call 843-884-1035.*



# Dr. Mary Anne Larkin Winner – Best Audiologist

**M**EDICAL PROFESSIONALS NO LONGER consider hearing loss to be simply the result of the aging process, which is why it's vitally important for everyone over the age of 55 to have their hearing checked by a doctor of audiology as part of their wellness program.

Dr. Mary Anne Larkin of Advanced Hearing Care, chosen by readers of Mount Pleasant Magazine as the best audiologist East of the Cooper, pointed out that hearing loss in many cases serves as an early warning sign of medical issues such as cardiovascular disease, dementia, diabetes or kidney disease.

"Hearing loss is not just an inconvenience," said Dr. Larkin. "It's important to address your hearing."

She added that the reason she was cited by MPM's readers is that "we put our patients first."

"We take time to listen to them and formulate a plan together to enrich the quality of their lives through better hearing," she said.

Dr. Larkin pointed out that your hearing starts to diminish when hair cells in the inner ear are damaged. The first sign

that something is wrong might be that you have trouble picking up consonant sounds. Once the cells are damaged, they can't be repaired.

"You only have one pair of ears. It's vital that you protect the hearing you have left," she said.

Dr. Larkin, an audiologist for 32 years, said her practice has been blessed by the Mount Pleasant community.

"We've grown over the years, and we look forward to helping residents of the Lowcountry hear their best," she commented.

*To find out more about Advanced Hearing Care and, if you are 55 or older, to schedule a free hearing screening, visit [www.advhearing.com](http://www.advhearing.com) or call 843-606-6306.*



Dr. Mary Anne Larkin always puts her patients first.

Photo by Brian Sherman.



## Proudly providing service in Mt. Pleasant for 22 years!



Dr. Mary Anne Larkin  
Owner & Board Certified Audiologist  
Over 30 Years of Experience

Our Board Certified Audiologist, Dr. Mary Anne Larkin, is honored to have been voted Best Audiologist! At Advanced Hearing Care, we are committed to enriching lives through better hearing!

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# aFOrTable Grooming Winner – Best Pet Groomer

**B**RIGGS FORT, OWNER AND operator of aFOrTable Grooming, has been an animal lover all her life. She's been in the pet business for 15 years and it shows. Before establishing herself as Mount Pleasant's best pet groomer, she worked in the profession for more than eight years and graduated from a certified grooming academy to perfect her craft. aFOrTable Grooming, a play on Briggs' last name, has been in business for about four months.

The business offers a variety of services for all dogs, including haircuts, bathing, nail trims and more. One of the most popular options is "The FURminator," which helps to keep dogs from shedding quite as vigorously.

"Because of the weather in the Lowcountry, dogs shed year-round," Briggs explained. "The FURminator treatment combats that issue."

Briggs was modest about how the business received kudos in the Best of Mount Pleasant; she credits her customers, friends and family for spreading the word.

"Word of mouth has been my best advertising," said Briggs.

She and her husband, Alton Fort, live in Mount Pleasant with three children, ages 5, 3 and 1. They have six pets: four dogs; a chameleon and a bearded dragon. A chinchilla who resides at the shop gives the environment a more personal touch.

"I like for people to know that I'm the one who actually grooms their dog; I want to express myself as a groomer," Briggs said. "Whether it's me or an employee doing the grooming, I'd like for my customers and their pets to know us personally." 🐾



Photo by Brian Sherman.

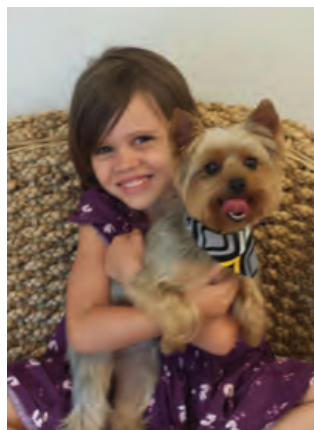
Briggs Fort offers one-on-one time with owners and dogs. Baxter seems to be enjoying his time with Mount Pleasant's best pet groomer.

Reach aFOrTable Grooming by calling (843) 972-8660 or visiting <http://www.afortablegrooming.com>. Or, just bring your furry friend to 2700 Highway 17 North, Unit E, at The Shoppes at Brickyard in Mount Pleasant.

## Thank you Mount Pleasant for voting us "Best Pet Groomer"



(Located in The Shoppes at Brickyard)



### \$5 OFF Thank You Gift



Bring in this coupon and get \$5 OFF your next grooming service!

One coupon per visit. Offer expires 12/31/15

2700 HWY 17 N, Unit E 🐾 Mount Pleasant, SC 🐾 843.972-8660

Mon-Fri 8am-5pm, Sat 8am-2pm

[www.afortablegrooming.com](http://www.afortablegrooming.com) 🐾 [afortablegrooming@gmail.com](mailto:afortablegrooming@gmail.com)



# Assey Dental Associates

## One of the Best Dentists

**V**OTED AMONG THE TOP THREE DENTAL practices in Mount Pleasant, Drs. Tim and John Assey of Assey Dental Associates share a vision for quality dentistry. Dr. Tim has been in practice for more than 30 years, and his son, Dr. John, graduated from the Medical University of South Carolina a few years ago, eager to join his father and establish their practice as the only father-son restorative team in Mount Pleasant.

“We both enjoy the ability to transform smiles and see the joy in our patients’ eyes as they view their new appearance,” remarked Dr. John. “Giving patients a renewed zest for life is the ultimate validation in our profession.”

Currently, Assey Dental Associates offers a wide range of services, from the essentials such as regular cleaning and cavity prevention to advanced procedures, including

dental implant placement, periodontal therapy and restorative crowns and bridges. In addition, cosmetic services, including teeth whitening and porcelain veneers, can enhance the beauty of a patient’s natural teeth.

Drs. Tim and John agree that there are many good dentists in Mount Pleasant and choosing one is a difficult task. However, individualizing care for each patient’s time frame and budget is an aspect of their practice that sets them apart.

“We pride ourselves as being a warm and safe environment where our patients feel they are part of our family,” said Dr. Tim. “We are here to serve people and to help them feel comfortable and better by visiting us. That’s what we do – we serve!”

Photo courtesy of Assey Dental Associates.



Drs. John and Tim Assey are both experts at transforming their patients’ smiles.

*For a truly satisfying dental experience, contact Assey Dental Associates at 843-884-6004 or online at [www.assedydental.com](http://www.assedydental.com).*



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DENTAL  
ASSOCIATES**

Tim Assey, DMD | John Assey, DMD

1041 Johnnie Dodds Blvd. Suite 1 | Mt. Pleasant, SC

**(843) 884-6004**

[www.assedydental.com](http://www.assedydental.com)



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# Next to New

## Winner – Best Furniture Consignment

**T**HE KEY TO MAKING A HOUSE A HOME starts with the right furnishings. Whether you fancy crimson throw pillows adorned with tassels or an art deco-inspired sofa, Next to New has you covered. With a vast array of top-quality pieces, it's no wonder they were named the Best Furniture Consignment store by the readers of Mount Pleasant Magazine.

Since opening in 2010, owners Catherine Moorehead and Cindy Clark have built a devoted clientele which, like their inventory and space, continues to grow. Just one step into the store, located at 2700 N. Highway 17, and it's clear to see why they have become a Lowcountry favorite.

"Our selection offers many options that fit a wide variety of needs," said Clark, walking through the 5,000-square-foot suite in The Shoppes at Brickyard. "We have a little bit of everything – from vintage to contemporary to traditional."

If clients don't spot exactly what they are looking for, Next to New keeps a Wish Book, where they write down the description of the treasure an individual seeks, along with their contact information. If the desired item surfaces, they call the client, who has the option of placing the item on hold.

"Our customer care sets us apart from other stores," said Clark. "We like to keep customers happy so they will keep coming back. It's very rewarding getting the furniture to the right person."

With a 20-percent price reduction every three weeks, Next to New makes it easy to find a quality item within budget.

Clean, efficient and community-minded, Next to New is the obvious choice when it's furnishings you seek. Stop in today and get your hands on that unique find you didn't know you needed until now.



Next to New owners Catherine Moorehead and Cindy Clark have built a devoted clientele since they opened their doors in 2010.

Photo courtesy of Next to New.

To learn more, visit [www.nexttonewsc.com](http://www.nexttonewsc.com) or call 843-606-2715.

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# Page's Okra Grill

## Winner – Best Breakfast, Best Shrimp 'n Grits, Best Dessert, Best Budget-Friendly Meal

**T**HERE IS A PLACE WHERE PERFECTLY seasoned shrimp bathes effortlessly in a bowl of savory grits. Slices of hummingbird cake and pecan pie sparkle behind a translucent glass tier of sweet goodness. This beacon of culinary delight, located at 302 Coleman Blvd., is none other than Page's Okra Grill. Family-owned and operated since 2006, the Southern staple continues to satisfy the appetites of locals and visitors alike.

"It's good when your hard work pays off," said co-owner Courtney Page, reflecting on the establishment taking top honors in four different categories for the second year in a row. "This market is tough. Charleston is a food mecca, so to have people recognize us is such a compliment."

A half hour before noon, and the kitchen is already hopping with orders of crab cake sandwiches and BLTs. Courtney's sister, head chef Ashleigh Page, is hard at work. All the while, the front door is continually opened by a steady stream of enthused patrons.

"I find customer interaction most rewarding," said Page. "It's great to be able to make their day better, whether it's

by having a conversation or blowing them away with a great plate of food."

With an engaging yet laid-back atmosphere and comforting dishes that delight taste buds, Page's Okra Grill continues to grow a devoted foodie congregation. Putting slightly different spins on old classics, they source local ingredients as much as possible.

Courtney's latest favorite is The Chicken and Waffles. Jazzing up this traditional dish by adding sausage, jalapenos, roasted corn and cheddar cheese right into the batter, they create a meal that is truly memorable.

"I credit our success to four things," said Page. "Excellent customer service, impeccable food quality, good value prices and an atmosphere that feels like home."

Next time you're driving down Coleman Avenue, stop where you see the oversized lawn chair and cornhole board. Your stomach and wallet will thank you. 🍷

*To learn more about one of Mount Pleasant's most popular restaurants, visit [www.pagesokragrill.com](http://www.pagesokragrill.com) or call 843-881-3333.*



# Page's OKRA GRILL

*Local Food for Local Folks*



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New Beer and Wine List**



*Thank you for voting us Best Of Mount Pleasant year after year! We really appreciate all of your support.*



# Somerby of Mount Pleasant

## One of the Best Assisted Living Facilities

**A**CCORDING TO LISA KINSELLA, executive director of Somerby of Mount Pleasant, the reason her residents are so happy is because they stay engaged. Somerby, located in Park West in North Mount Pleasant, was voted one of the top two assisted living facilities in the Best of Mount Pleasant competition due to the fact that everyone who lives in this thriving community enjoys a life of friendship, intellectual stimulation and fulfillment.

“We boast a beautiful property, spacious living areas and more fun-filled events than you could count,” Kinsella pointed out. “But what sets us apart is not the four walls of our buildings or the beauty of our landscape; it’s all about the lifestyle.”

Indeed, the lifestyle of Somerby is centered around a few important statistics regarding aging. According to a study conducted by Dr. Roger Landry and funded by the MacArthur Foundation, 70 percent of physical aging and 50 percent of mental aging is determined by an individual’s daily lifestyle choices. Thus, Kinsella and the Somerby staff work diligently to provide each resident with opportunities

for social, spiritual, physical and intellectual interaction each day, through a community philosophy known as Masterpiece Living.

“We’re always tapping into the talents of our residents,” said Kinsella. “Right now, for example, we have an ex-mayor from the state of New York, who’s also a horticulturalist, teaching everyone about growing orchids!”

Kinsella was swift to point out that the most rewarding part of her job is enhancing the lives of others and helping residents see that life does not end after retirement.

“We believe in the saying, ‘What’s your next adventure?’” she emphasized. “And we present those opportunities to our residents each and every day at Somerby.”



The staff works diligently to provide each resident with opportunities for social, spiritual, physical and intellectual interaction.

Photo courtesy of Somerby of Mount Pleasant

*To learn more about Somerby of Mount Pleasant, visit [www.somerbyofmountpleasant.com](http://www.somerbyofmountpleasant.com) or call 843-849-3096.*



## What will you find at Somerby? Friendships that last a lifetime.

Most likely, you’ll find Myra in the creative arts studio. Missy will be in the pool, and Jolene is probably holding court in the Somerby Room. But come lunchtime, you bet the sparks will fly. These ladies met here at Somerby, and it looks like friendship for life. Somerby is more than a smart, comfortable retirement residence at rates that make sense. It’s the key to leading a life you want, a life you’d enjoy, including health care if you ever need it. Discover your true spark. Somerby is the place.

**Thank you for your continued support of Somerby in the annual “Best of Mount Pleasant”!**



**SOMERBY**

of Mount Pleasant

3100 Tradition Circle | Mount Pleasant, SC 29466 | 1-888-906-7180 | [www.SomerbyofMountPleasant.com](http://www.SomerbyofMountPleasant.com)



**Independent Living | Assisted Living | Memory Care | Respite Care**







# Bottles Beverage Superstore Winner – Best Liquor Store

**B**OTTLES – A WINE, BEER AND SPIRITS superstore – has made a name for itself in Mount Pleasant since opening its doors three years ago. In fact, Bottles was voted the Best of Mount Pleasant by the readers of Mount Pleasant Magazine for the second year in a row.

“We are just thankful for our loyal customers, and we hope they will continue to spread the word,” said Erica Bowen, marketing manager. “Our customers are special because they typically aren’t just from Mount Pleasant. We are located just off Coleman Boulevard, and people from the peninsula to Daniel Island come to see us. Our customers range from a 21-year-old looking for a keg to a 91-year-old looking for a fabulous scotch.”

Located in the Moultrie Plaza Shopping Center, Bottles fills

a 15,000-square-foot space that includes the area’s largest selection of highly rated wines, a unique assortment of domestic, imported and craft beers as well as a superior selection of spirits.

“We have the best prices in town and are the only locally owned and operated beverage superstore,” explained Bowen. “We have an amazing selection. We have a liquor buyer that is highly knowledgeable and brings in anything rare, hard-

to-get or is a new product. We also have a sommelier who keeps up with anything hip and trendy from all over the world.”



The customers at Bottles range from a 21-year-old looking for a keg to a 91-year old looking for a fabulous scotch.

Photo courtesy of Bottles Beverage Superstore.

Visit Bottles online at [www.ShopBottles.com](http://www.ShopBottles.com) to discover one of the largest inventories of spirits in South Carolina, or call the store directly to find out about your favorite beverage of choice at 843-849-WINE.



**Thank you**  
Mt. Pleasant! For voting  
*Bottles Beverage Superstore*  
“**Best Liquor Store**”  
Three Years in a Row!



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[www.shopbottles.com](http://www.shopbottles.com)

[shopbottles](https://twitter.com/shopbottles)



# Molly Maid Winner – Best Home Cleaning Service

**I**F CLEANLINESS IS NEXT TO GODLINESS, then the employees of Mount Pleasant-based Molly Maid are angels armed with disinfectant. Pesky dust bunnies and smudged mirrors don't stand a chance in the wake of these experts, who take the business of tidying up very seriously.

Detailed and thorough, Molly Maid has been a trusted name in the industry for 30 years. For a decade, they have served Mount Pleasant and surrounding areas, touching lives of the Lowcountry in ways that go beyond making countertops glisten.

"This is our second year winning," said local franchisee Jennifer Poole, reflecting on the company's recent award of being voted Best Cleaning Service in Mount Pleasant. "It feels good to keep the crown, knowing we're an important part of our customers' families."

Putting clients' requests and satisfaction first, Molly Maid tailors each cleaning to an individual's needs. Keeping the visiting cleaning team to two people, so clients aren't overwhelmed, they strive to maintain a personal touch.

"We become a part of the rhythm of people's lives," said Poole, who estimates the local company, headquartered at 1035 Johnnie Dodds Blvd., does well over 10,000 cleanings a year. "Seeing the impact we have on their lives is very rewarding. We give people more time to spend with their families."

Families depend on Molly Maid's weekly, every other week and monthly cleaning services as trusted companions to their routines.

"We stick to what we know and what we know well," said Poole, who credits the company's success to the caliber of people they hire.

Seasoned, bonded and insured specialists make up the housekeeping staff. Before newbies are brought on board, they go through a training process to fully obtain the skills

needed to meet the Molly Maid criteria.

"We've built a family atmosphere within the four walls of our office," said Poole. "It's rewarding to know we can provide people with good, steady jobs."

Clients and staff aren't the only ones whose lives are enriched by Molly Maid. A portion of every sale from each house cleaning goes toward The Ms. Molly Foundation – the company's organization that makes a positive difference for women and children affected by domestic violence.

By donating directly to local safe houses and shelters, Molly Maid ensures a better tomorrow for many.

"Since we opened in 2004, we've given over \$20,000 in goods and services to the Ms. Molly Foundation," said Poole. "Ninety-five percent of people affected by domestic violence are female. Our employees are traditionally female, and the majority of the customers who call to make the house cleaning arrangements are female, so it makes this an important aspect of all the lives we touch



Photo courtesy of Molly Maid.

Before newbies are brought on board, they go through a training process that gives them the skills they need to meet the company's criteria.

as a business."

Profits accumulated for donations are trickled down to organizations throughout the Charleston area, such as My Sister's House. This nonprofit provides a temporary shelter, at an undisclosed location, for women and children looking to flee from the hands of their abusers.

With no rigid contracts and an altruistic spirit, Molly Maid is the obvious choice if you seek a home that sparkles and shines. Those looking to get a sense of what a visit would entail can log onto the Molly Maid website and receive a no-obligation, in-home cleaning estimate.

So, put down that mop and let the polished professionals take over. 🧹

*To find out how to get your home sparkling clean, visit [www.mollymaid.com](http://www.mollymaid.com) or call 843-216-6130.*

# Thank you Mount Pleasant!



PHOTO COURTESY OF PLUFFMUDKIDS.COM

## Memorial Waterfront Park:

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- ★ Best Place to View the Ravenel Bridge

## Alhambra Hall

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