

WE ARE WINCHESTER

APRIL 2025

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MURAL BY
SARAH GALLAHAN

Winchester Book Gallery Recommends:



After Tova Sullivan's husband died, she began working the night shift at the Sowell Bay Aquarium, mopping floors and tidying up. Keeping busy has always helped her cope, which she's been doing since her eighteen-year-old son, Erik, mysteriously vanished on a boat in Puget Sound over thirty years ago.

Tova becomes acquainted with curmudgeonly Marcellus, a giant Pacific octopus living at the aquarium. Marcellus knows more than anyone can imagine but wouldn't dream of lifting one of his eight arms for his human captors—until he forms a remarkable friendship with Tova.

Ever the detective, Marcellus deduces what happened the night Tova's son disappeared. And now Marcellus must use every trick his old invertebrate body can muster to unearth the truth for her before it's too late.

Shelby Van Pelt's debut novel is a gentle reminder that sometimes taking a hard look at the past can help uncover a future that once felt impossible.

WinchesterBookGallery.com | 7 N. Loudoun St

LETTER FROM THE EDITORS

Spring in Old Town always feels like the start of something special—fresh air, fuller calendars, and a sense of anticipation that's contagious.

From Margie Cullers' gluten-free magic at The Crown & Crumb to Jennifer Shea-Roop's grassroots generosity through The Porch Project, the stories this month highlight how personal passion can ripple outward. Whether it's a dress for prom or a bag of groceries on someone's porch, it's the quiet kindnesses that make the loudest impact.

We're also shining a light on the exciting developments out at the Winchester Regional Airport, where a shared vision is turning a local hub into a vibrant destination. And for families navigating special education, Bonita Chatfield offers both expertise and empathy at a time when it's needed most.

There's a lot happening this month—from the Apple Blossom festivities to flashlight egg hunts to trunk sales packed with treasures. If it's been a while since you wandered Loudoun Street or visited a local small business, consider this your sign to make time for it. You never know who you'll bump into—or what story you'll become part of next.

We'll see you in Old Town!



*Misty Weaver
& Katie Jordan*

**WE ARE
WINCHESTER**

THE CROWN & CRUMB: GLUTEN FREE DELIGHTS

Two years ago, Margie Cullers, the talented baker who first introduced gluten-free baked goods to Firefly Café, launched her own home-based bakery located at 421 W Clifford St, The Crown & Crumb, in response to enthusiastic demand from her former customers.

Margie's journey into gluten-free baking began as a way to provide delicious options for a family member with dietary restrictions. Today, she offers a rotating selection of mouthwatering gluten-free treats, with a menu that changes monthly to reflect the seasons. Customers can order sampler boxes to try a variety of goodies or purchase items by the dozen or half-dozen.

Despite specializing in gluten-free treats, Margie's baking has won over a diverse clientele—about a third of her customers have no dietary restrictions but keep coming back for the exceptional taste and quality.

Having sampled her creations, we were amazed at how delicious everything was. If you're looking for high-quality, gluten-free baked goods, The Crown & Crumb is a must-try.

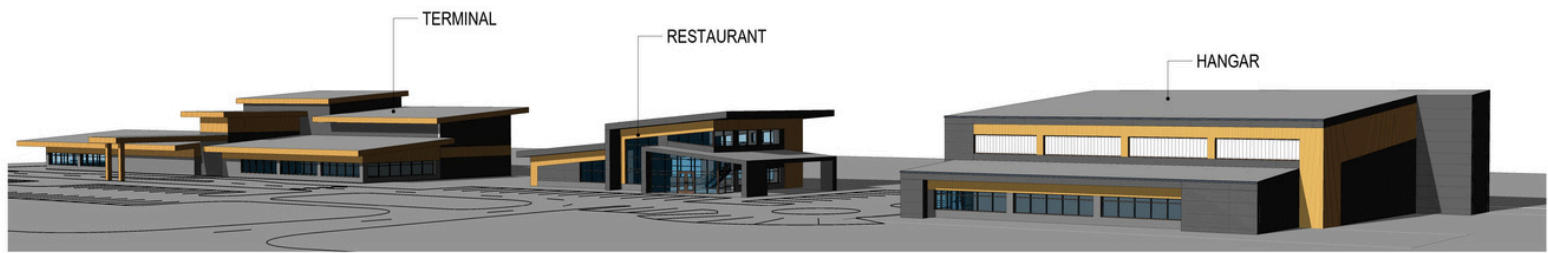
You can check out the monthly menu on Facebook or place an order by calling/texting Margie at 540-664-8051.



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



FUTURE PLANS FOR WINCHESTER REGIONAL AIRPORT



Winchester Regional Airport (OKV) is more than just a place where planes take off and land—it is becoming a vital part of the community, a destination for families, and a catalyst for regional economic growth. Through a strategic public-private partnership with TMG Construction, the airport is expanding its facilities to accommodate more aeronautical activity while also enhancing its role in the community. The recent expansion of the terminal marked the beginning of this transformation, and now, with TMG's support, the airport is moving forward with plans to build additional hangars and potentially a restaurant. A restaurant would not only provide a unique dining experience with a proposed outdoor terrace and upstairs loft offering views of aircraft activity, but it would also serve as a place where children can be inspired by aviation and families can gather to enjoy the atmosphere.

Beyond infrastructure improvements, the airport is deeply committed to community engagement. By partnering with the Top of Virginia Regional Chamber and the Handley Regional Library, it has strengthened its role as more than just an aviation facility. The "Storytime at the Airport" program, held on the second Friday of each month at 10:30am, has already drawn hundreds of children eager to learn about aviation in an immersive setting. The program has been so successful that two other Virginia airports have adopted similar programs. Plans are also underway for a playground near the terminal, making the airport an even more welcoming space for families. Additionally, the airport hosts the Civil Air Patrol, which houses the second-largest squadron in Virginia, the Young Eagles and STEM flights programs which allow young aviation enthusiasts to experience flight, often at no cost.

TMG Construction, owned by aviation enthusiasts Joe and Tanya Matthews, is playing a key role in the airport's expansion. The company has already built six of a planned 32 hangars, with proposed corporate hangars and restaurant their current focus and next in line for development, provided the right operators are identified. Renderings are pictured above. Given the increasing demand for hangar space—currently at a 10-year wait in the DMV area—these additions will support the aviation community while also bolstering the airport's long-term growth. Joe and Tanya's dedication to aviation runs deep, with both having started flying in the 1970s. Tanya has held leadership roles in multiple aviation organizations, including the Dulles Area Transportation Association and the Committee for Dulles, and has been an advocate to Congress, even playing a role in lobbying for the reopening of National Airport after 9/11. Their company's mission, "building lifelong relationships," is reflected not only in their billion-dollar contract to develop air traffic control towers across the country but also in their work at Winchester Regional Airport.

The partnership between TMG and the airport authority began with a simple conversation. In 2019, the Airport Authority purchased a hangar, and Joe and Tanya Matthews were among the tenants. A discussion between Joe and Airport Executive Director Nick Sabo about building a hangar for their plane quickly evolved into a broader dialogue about what the airport truly needed. That initial conversation sparked a collaboration that has since grown into a major development initiative, demonstrating how shared vision and good faith can lead to lasting community impact.

Winchester Regional Airport is positioning itself as a key economic driver in the region, fostering opportunities for business, tourism, and aviation growth. With taxiway realignment planned on the north side and Hunt Country Sotheby's managing listings for the hangars and restaurant, the airport is on a path toward long-term success. More than just an aviation hub, it is becoming a destination where families, businesses, and aviation enthusiasts can connect. Through strategic planning, community partnerships, and a commitment to building for the future, Winchester Regional Airport is ensuring that its impact on the region extends far beyond the runway.

To inquire about hangar space, contact Charles Thies of Hunt Country Sotheby's at charles.thies@hcsir.com



GOWNS FOR HIS GLORY

In 2012, Bethany Searfoss and Dorcas Sturgill were volunteering in the clothing room at CCAP when they noticed prom dresses being donated. Recognizing a need in the community, they decided over lunch that they could be the hands and feet behind a solution. Their idea was simple yet powerful: collect donated gowns and provide them for free to local high school students attending prom. With that vision, they founded the nonprofit Gowns for His Glory. In its first year, they gathered several hundred dresses, borrowed racks from a local thrift store, and hosted a one-night event, serving around 50 girls. The initiative quickly grew, moving to Shenandoah University, where it expanded into an all-day Saturday event. Since its inception, Gowns for His Glory has been held every year except in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The event now takes place at the Frederick County Fairgrounds, with this year's dates set for April 11 from 5-9 p.m. and April 12 from 8:30 a.m.-1 p.m.

The nonprofit dreams of securing a space where they could operate for several months each year, offering store-like hours so more girls can find their perfect dress. The current two-day event structure, while impactful, inevitably means some students miss the opportunity. However, there are no conditions for participation—any female attending prom is welcome, whether from public schools, private schools, or homeschool communities. The event has even drawn attendees from multiple surrounding states, and no reservations are required.

Dress donations are welcomed year-round at designated drop-off locations, including Alamo Drafthouse and The Quirky Closet, as well as during the event itself. Contributions of dresses, shoes, and accessories help make this initiative possible. Volunteers play a crucial role in the experience, assisting each participant in finding the perfect dress and accessories. Upon arrival, attendees receive a number, which is called in groups of 10-15 to ensure an organized and enjoyable experience. Once a girl selects her dress, it is steamed and bagged at no cost, with the ultimate goal of making every attendee feel beautiful.

Gowns for His Glory is run entirely by volunteers, and Bethany and Dorcas' family members are deeply involved, from welding racks and handling graphic design to transporting dresses. The nonprofit is actively seeking additional industrial Z racks to accommodate its growing collection of gowns.

Each year, heartwarming stories emerge from the event. Attendees have shared experiences of financial hardship, single-parent households, and job losses that made affording prom attire difficult. For many, Gowns for His Glory has been a blessing, providing not just a dress but also confidence and joy. Bethany and Dorcas are continually amazed at how perfectly dresses fit the girls who receive them, reinforcing their faith in their mission.

For more information, visit gownsforhisglory.com.



We are proud to announce the first ever official vanity license plate commemorating the Shenandoah Apple Blossom Festival®. **SHOW YOUR PINK AND GREEN PRIDE** year-round with the floral design that is sure to turn heads wherever you travel, from the Commonwealth and beyond!

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SEE AND BE SEEN

April events

4

FLASHLIGHT EGG HUNT

An evening hunt of 12,000 eggs hidden throughout the different age division areas. We've also got something special for the teens! Winchester Parks

6

SPRING TRUNK SALE

Second-hand designer fashion sale featuring styles from Anthropologie, Free People, Johnny Was, Sundance, Boden and more! Twice Is Nice

25+

THE BLOOM

The annual Apple Blossom event, 10 days, over 50 events, from parades to wine festival, there is something for the whole family! TheBloom.com

26

BLOSSOM ARTISAN & FAIRE

The 2-day family friendly show will have a variety of quality handmade items from all over the mid-Atlantic region. There will be a large selection of items such as wreaths, leather goods, jewelry, candles, handbags, pet items and more! Fred Cty Fair

26

LOCAL PLANTS & PINTS

Join us and Blandy Experimental Farms for a day of drinking beer and talking about our planet! Winc Brew Works



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THE ADVOCATE'S EDGE



Navigating the intricacies of special education can be overwhelming for many parents. Every parent wants to do the best they can for their child, but understanding the complex issues surrounding disability and the resources available for parents that are unfamiliar with the services schools are required to provide, is not an easy path to find or follow. The Chatfield Advocacy Group, led by Bonita Chatfield, helps families seeking guidance and support.

Bonita's path to becoming an advocate was deeply personal. When her own children faced challenges within the educational system, she immersed herself in understanding disability laws and the nuances of special education in Virginia. This firsthand experience illuminated the gaps and inconsistencies many families encounter, especially when schools identify issues but lack effective follow-through. Established to bridge the gap between families and educational institutions, The Chatfield Advocacy Group offers a range of services tailored to each child's unique needs:

- **Meeting Representation:** Bonita accompanies parents to school meetings, ensuring their voices are heard and their concerns addressed.
- **Educational Record Review:** She assists in deciphering educational records, helping parents understand their child's progress and areas needing attention.
- **Legal Education:** Educating parents about state and federal laws related to special education rights empowers them to advocate effectively for their children.
- **Resource Identification:** Connecting families with additional resources, such as private evaluators and therapists, ensures comprehensive support for the child's development.

Bonita observes that while schools are adept at identifying students with learning disabilities, the subsequent support often falls short. Special education teachers are stretched thin, balancing direct instruction with administrative duties, leading to potential oversights. Moreover, the shift towards digital learning, with increased reliance on Chromebooks, poses challenges for students who thrive on tactile and visual learning methods.

Central to Bonita's philosophy is empowering parents. She encourages them to trust their instincts, emphasizing that they are pivotal members of the Individualized Education Program (IEP) team. By staying informed and assertive, parents can ensure their children receive the appropriate education they deserve. Bonita also highlights the importance of recording meetings (with prior notice) to maintain accurate records and accountability.

Clients consistently praise Bonita's unwavering commitment. One parent from Winchester shared:

"The Chatfield Advocacy Group is dedicated to having your voice and the voice of your children be heard! Bonita Chatfield is a powerhouse of grace and strength, knowledgeable on the verbiage needed to receive the services needed, and has learned through the struggle of the system firsthand with her own family. She will stop at nothing to help your family as well!"

Bonita envisions a future where educational systems adopt more inclusive and research-based programs, benefiting all students, not just those with identified disabilities. She cites examples like Page County's implementation of the Orton-Gillingham approach, a multi-sensory reading program that has yielded positive results across the board.

For parents feeling overwhelmed or uncertain about their child's educational journey, The Chatfield Advocacy Group offers a compassionate and knowledgeable ally, ready to navigate the complexities of special education alongside them.

Learn more at Chatfieldadvocacy.com



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THE PORCH PROJECT: GUERRILLA PHILANTHROPY

It all started on March 13, 2020. Schools were shutting down, and Jennifer Shea-Roop immediately thought about the kids who relied on school meals. She knew help would come eventually from established organizations, but what about that weekend? What about right now?

She didn't wait.

Jennifer, already deeply involved in her community through the Kids Club, reached out to friends and immediately started organizing food donations. What began as a quick response to an emergency need turned into what she now calls "The Porch Project," a grassroots effort that has continued for years, filling in the gaps where traditional assistance programs fall short.

The Porch Project is simple. No qualifications. No tracking. No paperwork. If you need food, we give it to you. If you have extra, you leave it for others.

"The best part is that everyone contributes," Jennifer explains. "People who have received help will turn around and leave something small—maybe toothbrushes from the dollar store, maybe a bag of oranges. No one wants to feel like they're just taking. They want to be part of something."

And the community has shown up, time and time again. Nurses dropping off groceries after their shifts. Parents teaching their kids to leave an extra snack pack. Someone sees a need and someone else meets it.

"You don't have to qualify for food. It's there. If you need it, we'll give it," she says. "People ask, 'Well, what if someone scams you?' I say, 'Who cares?' If we've helped 1,000 people and maybe five didn't need it, does that really matter?"

As the pandemic receded, the food crisis eased, but the Porch Project remained. Jennifer and her network of volunteers shifted focus to other urgent needs.

One winter, a group cooking for the WATTS homeless shelter mentioned they had no budget for liquid creamer. A small thing, but a hot cup of coffee with real creamer could bring a little bit of comfort to someone struggling. Jennifer put the word out. Within days, her porch was overflowing with donations.

It's these small gaps—things too minor for big nonprofits to focus on—that the Porch Project fills. Air mattresses for families in transition. Personal hygiene items. Emergency groceries for a single mom whose paycheck won't stretch. Even connections for housing. And it's all done informally. No organization, no red tape—just a community taking care of its own.



Jennifer calls it "guerrilla philanthropy"—a grassroots approach to giving where people help in the ways that make sense for them.

This flexibility makes the Porch Project work. People contribute in whatever way fits their life. Some donate food. Others drive supplies to families who can't get to a pantry. Some just spread the word.

The message is clear: you don't have to do everything, but you can do something.

Jennifer envisions a future where communities everywhere adopt this simple, effective model. Gardens in neighborhoods to supplement the food supply. More porches collecting and distributing essentials. Less division, more action.

"This is how people used to survive—by taking care of each other," she says. "We're just doing what communities have always done."

At a time when so much feels uncertain, The Porch Project proves that kindness still thrives. A small act—leaving a box of mac and cheese, dropping off a bag of apples—can ripple outward, touching lives in ways we may never fully see.

And that's the magic of it. One porch, one act of giving at a time, changing a community from the ground up.

Donations to The Porch Project can be dropped on the porch at 448 N Braddock St!

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