

WE ARE WINCHESTER

DEC 2025

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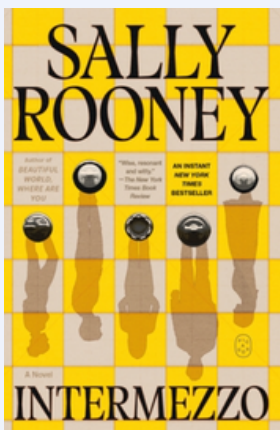


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PHOTO BY
KATIE JORDAN



Winchester Book Gallery Recommends:



Aside from the fact that they are brothers, Peter and Ivan Koubek seem to have little in common.

Peter is a Dublin lawyer in his thirties—successful, competent, and apparently unassailable. But in the wake of their father's death, he's medicating himself to sleep and struggling to manage his relationships with two very different women.....Ivan is a

twenty-two-year-old competitive chess player. He has always seen himself as socially awkward, a loner, the antithesis of his glib elder brother. Now, in the early weeks of his bereavement, Ivan meets Margaret, an older woman emerging from her own turbulent past, and their lives become rapidly and intensely intertwined. For two grieving brothers and the people they love, this is a new interlude—a period of desire, despair, and possibility; a chance to find out how much one life might hold inside itself without breaking.

WinchesterBookGallery.com

| 7 N. Loudoun St

LETTER FROM THE EDITORS

From festive trolley tours to pub crawls in Santa hats, December brings the kind of small-town magic that lights up our downtown—literally and figuratively. But it's not just about the lights and events. This month, we're spotlighting people doing deeply meaningful work in our city.

Stephanie Shahan of *Faire Isles Trading Company* brought her love for Celtic culture full circle with a shop that blends heritage and heart. Commonwealth's Attorney Heather Hovermale is showing what justice with compassion can look like. The team at *Bridging the Gaps* continues to transform lives through a holistic, deeply personal approach to recovery. And the all-volunteer *Community Cat Alliance* is out there (even in the cold!) working to humanely manage our community's feline population.

We'll see you in Old Town!



*Misty Weaver
& Katie Jordan*

**WE ARE
WINCHESTER**

GOLF INDOORS WITH WINCHESTER PARKS & REC



Winchester Parks and Recreation is teeing up a new experience for local golfers with the addition of a state-of-the-art golf simulator at Jim Barnett Park. Whether you're looking to keep your swing sharp during the off-season or challenge your friends to a round at one of more than 100 world-famous courses, this new feature brings the game to you—no matter the weather.

Available for just \$25 per hour, golfers can reserve the simulator and bring up to three friends for a virtual foursome. The system's advanced technology tracks spin rate, velocity, and other swing metrics, making it ideal for both serious practice and casual play. Realistic graphics and detailed swing analysis create an immersive experience that's fun and informative for all skill levels.

Rentals are available Tuesday through Thursday from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. and from 5:00 to 9:00 p.m. To schedule a session, call or stop by the front desk at Jim Barnett Park. Because this is a new offering, availability may adjust as interest grows—and there's already talk of future leagues. The simulator has even been featured in youth golf clinics, helping introduce young players to the sport in an engaging, accessible way.

So grab your clubs (or a few friends) and take a swing—Winchester Parks and Recreation is bringing golf to you!



FAIRE ISLE TRADING: CELTIC SOUL

When Stephanie Shahan was growing up in Stephens City, she'd spend her teen weekends on the bricks of downtown Winchester, ducking into Daily Grind, walking the mall, and just soaking up the history. "This place is magical," she says. "I've always loved old architecture and how alive this part of town feels."

Decades later, she's back—this time as the owner of Faire Isles Trading Company, Winchester's own Celtic specialty shop tucked into the unexpectedly spacious storefront at 11 East Boscawen. With faux-leather handbags, handmade Scottish pottery, swords (yes, real ones), and a deeply curated collection of Irish and Scottish goods, it's equal parts gift shop, heritage boutique, and Ren Faire wardrobe central.

The path to downtown retail was anything but direct. Stephanie and her husband spent years helping friends who originally ran Faire Isles as a traveling vendor business at Highland Games and Celtic festivals up and down the East Coast. The couple fell in love with the events, the energy—and eventually, the business. "It was just so much fun. Everyone is in a good mood, enjoying the music, the culture, the food... it's contagious."

When the original owners were ready to retire, the Shahans took the leap and ran the traveling shop for a year before realizing: maybe it was time for a home base. That home became Boscawen Street in 2024, just after a successful trial run as a vendor at the city's Celtic Fest. "We always said if we opened a store, it would have to be downtown," she says. "This is where the people are." With an interior that stretches far beyond what you see from the front window, it was the perfect fit.

Inside, you'll find everything from kid-sized wooden shields to proper Highland wear to cheeky flasks and hand-poured candles. "I kind of break it up into three departments in my mind," Stephanie explains. "Gifts, clothing, and gear." Some items are imported directly from Scotland and Ireland; others are made by indie artists Stephanie discovered on Etsy. She's intentional about what she stocks—and it shows. "We're the only retail shop in the U.S. that still has pottery from Tain Pottery in Scotland. Brexit changed the way they ship, but we stocked up when we could, and now we're the last ones with it on shelves."

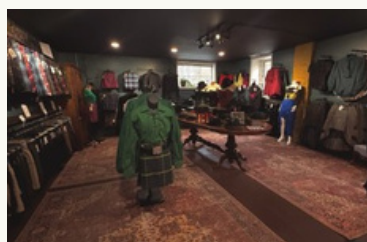
Authenticity matters here. "We're not just printing a shamrock on something and calling it Irish," she laughs. "Our flat caps are real Irish tweed. Our kilts are made in Scotland." Many customers place custom orders—whether it's a kilt in their clan tartan, a set of pewter drinking mugs, or a ceremonial dagger. "If you know, you know," she says. "And our customers know."

"We get everyone—locals, travelers, people driving from South Carolina to New York who stop in Winchester for the night and stumble in. So many folks just love the culture. And now that we're here, people who've seen us at events can find us again."

The family still travels for Highland Games and Celtic festivals throughout the year, often closing the shop and taking the whole operation on the road. Her kids pitch in, her dad helps when they're in Florida, and her husband handles "the heavy lifting." It's a true family affair.

Stephanie herself left a 17-year federal career to run Faire Isles full time. "I used to read those stories about someone leaving a big job to go run a goat yoga farm in the woods," she laughs. "And now I get it. This was the right move. The stress, the burnout—I'm so much healthier and happier now. I always say this has all grown very organically," she says. "But when you know where you're going, you recognize the right opportunities when they show up. And this? This feels exactly right."

Learn more at FaireIslesTrading.com



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HEATHER HOVERMALE: COMMONWEALTH'S ATTORNEY



Heather Hovermale, Winchester's Commonwealth's Attorney, leads a team of 20—including nine attorneys and three victim witness advocates—dedicated to keeping the community safe while promoting fairness and compassion in the justice system. Her office prosecutes all crimes that occur within the city limits, from misdemeanors to murder cases.

When Hovermale took office after serving as deputy to former Commonwealth's Attorney Mark Abrams, she inherited six pending murder trials in the wake of COVID. "We prosecuted all of those successfully," she said. "And I'm knocking on wood—we haven't had any murders since then." Hovermale personally handles violent crimes and often responds to shooting scenes to assist detectives with charging decisions and search warrants.

Each attorney in her office has a specialty, from drug cases and probation violations to juvenile and domestic relations matters. Hovermale is particularly proud of her team's expertise and dedication. "They know their jobs and this community. I couldn't do this work without them."

But Hovermale's leadership extends beyond traditional prosecution. She helped establish Winchester's Behavioral Health Docket, a special court for defendants whose mental health challenges contribute to their offenses. "These are people who aren't necessarily criminals—they're struggling," she said. "The program connects them to counseling, medication, housing, and job support so they can get back on track."

She also staffs Winchester's Recovery Court, which offers intensive treatment and accountability for those battling addiction. "For many participants, it's their last chance before serious prison time," she said. "But we've seen incredible success stories."

Hovermale grew up in rural West Virginia, raised by her mother and grandparents in a one-stoplight town. Her grandfather was a coal miner, and her mother taught first grade. "We didn't have a lot, but we had love and a strong work ethic," she said. From second grade on, she knew she wanted to be a lawyer—though she laughs that she didn't even know one at the time.

After earning degrees from Concord University and West Virginia University's College of Law, Hovermale clerked for a federal judge, worked at a large law firm, and then joined the Winchester Commonwealth's Attorney's Office thirteen years ago. "I knew right away this was where I belonged," she said. "As a prosecutor, I can help the most people."

Hovermale identifies mental health, drug use, and gun violence as Winchester's greatest challenges. Her office's latest initiative—a Human Trafficking Task Force—aims to ensure victims receive the right care and protection.

Hovermale emphasizes openness and accountability. "I want everyone to know we represent all people in Winchester—regardless of politics or background," she said. "Our goal is simple: justice and safety for this community."

Down-to-earth and approachable, Hovermale welcomes public engagement. "If someone sees a better way to do something, I want to hear it," she said. "We don't want to just put people in jail—we want to help them become good neighbors and productive citizens. Sometimes thinking outside the box is how you get there."

To learn more about the Commonwealth's Attorney, visit the office in the Creamery Building at 21 S Kent St or go online to Winchesterva.gov/Government/City-Leadership/Constitutional-Officers/Winchester-Commonwealth-Attorney



BRIDGING THE GAPS: TREATING THE WHOLE PERSON

Bridging the Gaps, a local addiction treatment center now in its 25th year, doesn't look like a traditional rehab facility. And that's exactly the point. Even neighbors living just blocks away don't realize that within those walls, lives are being rewritten—one day, one meal, one deeply personal conversation at a time.

"We're intentionally low profile," says Executive Director Pam Reiman. "We want to maintain a safe, confidential space for the people who come here. But we also want the community to know—we're here, and we're doing something different."

Pam would know. She first walked through the doors in 2006—not as an employee, but as a client. "I was in a place where I needed help. And what BTG offered me went beyond anything I expected. It wasn't just therapy. It was education, brain chemistry, nutrition, movement. I felt seen in a whole new way."

That blend of science, support, and soul has become BTG's signature. While many treatment centers speak in broad terms about "mind-body-spirit" recovery, Bridging the Gaps has been quietly pioneering what that truly looks like in practice.

Founded by Stan Stokes, an early advocate for addiction as a neurochemical disease, BTG built its foundation on the belief that recovery requires more than just willpower or talk therapy. "If your brain chemistry is out of balance," Pam explains, "you're working uphill. We use tools like amino acid therapy, nutrition, and exercise to help people feel better, faster—so they can do the deeper emotional work."

That emotional work happens in group and individual sessions, through trauma-informed care, and in practical life re-skilling. Clients don't just talk through their challenges—they also relearn how to build a meal, manage a schedule, go to bed on time, and connect with others in healthy ways.

Director of Admissions Sue Dennis has been with BTG for more than two decades. "I originally came just to help a friend out on maternity leave," she laughs, "and never left." A parent of children in recovery herself, Sue is the steady voice on the other end of the phone for most families and loved ones navigating the chaos of early crisis. "I'm always on call. Because sometimes it's Saturday night and someone is finally ready to say, 'I need help.' And I want to be there when that moment happens."

Clients at BTG don't live on-site in a sterile dorm—they live in three nearby residential homes that model real life. Each house is part of a phased recovery system: the first focuses on full stabilization, the second on building responsibility and independence, and the third—often where clients stay for a year or more—is peer-led sober living.

"We're really clear that 30 days isn't enough," says Pam. "That might be how long it takes to start feeling better. But the real healing comes with time, trust, and deep work. And that's only possible when the client, the clinician, and the community are all in sync."



The center's small size is part of its success: a high staff-to-client ratio ensures individual attention and deep relationships. "I think people imagine big institutional programs," Lauren says. "But this is intimate. It's clinical, but also very personal."

Families are part of the process, too. BTG requires loved ones to participate in virtual education sessions before visits, and offers individual and group family therapy. "The client may do amazing work, but if they go back into an unchanged family system, the cycle can start all over again," Sue explains.

Despite being a private facility, BTG is working to increase access. They currently accept most private insurance and TRICARE, and are actively pursuing Medicaid approval. They also maintain strong relationships with community service boards, local attorneys, and even the court system. "We've had people remanded to us instead of going to jail," Pam says. "We can change lives if we get them here."

The team is expanding in unique ways, like Marketing Director Lauren Winnings developing professional resource hubs for HR and other professionals to support employees in treatment. They hope to reintroduce evidence-based therapies like IV amino acid treatments, and are opening their doors monthly for Addiction Support Community Nights each 1st Wednesday—a new initiative where anyone can come, ask questions, and get help without judgment.

"We're not here to fix people," Pam says. "We're here to help them reclaim who they were meant to be."

Learn more at BridgingTheGaps.com

December events

5

SANTA PUB CRAWL

Grab your Santa hat (or full costume!) and join us for a holly jolly night in Old Town - proceeds benefit Froggy's Closet! [Ivy Room](#)

6

WINC WINTER VILLAGE

Whether you're here for the shopping, the music, the lights, or the rides, this is a weekend you won't want to miss - [OTW](#)

6

MSV WOVEN ORNAMENTS

Make three unique holiday ornaments to adorn a tree, window, or bring festive cheer to your kitchen in this hands-on workshop led by expert basket maker Anne Bowers. [MSV](#)

CONCERN HOTLINE

Call us. We care.

12

TROLLEY LIGHT TOUR

Come and celebrate this holiday season with our 2025 Holiday Lights Trolley Tour! [Visitor Center](#)

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IF YOU NEED:

- ☑ SOMEONE TO LISTEN
- ☑ HELP IN A CRISIS
- ☑ TO FIND SERVICES

[CONCERNHOTLINE.ORG](#)

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20+

KIDS SHOP FREE SPCA

Kids of all ages (yes, even teens!) can come in and shop for up to 5 family members – completely free! Dec 20-23 [SPCA](#)

COMMUNITY CAT ALLIANCE



Ten years ago, a handful of local animal advocates in Winchester and Frederick County came together to address a growing crisis: free-roaming, unowned cats were reproducing at an overwhelming pace. From that concern, the Community Cat Alliance (CCA) was formed, and today the all-volunteer nonprofit has become the area's most active Trap-Neuter-Return (TNR) organization.

CCA focuses on humanely trapping feral and free-roaming cats, transporting them for spay or neuter surgery, vaccinating them for rabies and distemper, treating them for fleas, cleaning their ears, and returning them to their outdoor homes. Over the past year, the group TNR'd over 600 adult cats in Winchester and Frederick County. Each cat receives a full medical package that costs about \$110 through veterinary partners.

The organization relies on a working board and active volunteers who trap, transport, foster, and respond to emergencies. Recently, CCA helped a county woman with terminal cancer who feared leaving behind the twenty cats she had cared for on her property. Volunteers are stepping in to trap and fix the entire colony to ensure her family can manage the cats safely after she's gone.

Fostering remains one of CCA's greatest needs, since pulling kittens from outdoor colonies is vital to breaking the cycle of overpopulation. A spare bathroom or extra bedroom is enough space to foster successfully, and CCA covers all medical expenses while typically also providing food. Additional volunteers are needed for trapping, transportation, fundraising, and social media support.

This year, CCA helped launch the Community Coalition for Cats—a partnership with Winchester Area SPCA, Dakota's Dream, Shirley's Angels, and Shady's Paw—to tackle large hotspots more efficiently. While most partner groups are not TNR organizations, they are training volunteers and

pooling resources to conduct coordinated trapping efforts. Their first joint project is planned for Old Town Winchester in the spring, just before breeding season peaks, with teams mapping cat locations and trapping simultaneously to fix entire colonies in concentrated sweeps. With more than 1,600 cats taken in collectively over the last ten months, the coalition aims to reduce the shelter burden through strategic prevention.

A painlessly "tipped" ear on a cat indicates it has been fixed and vaccinated, and spotting these cats throughout the community serves as a visible sign of progress. With limited resources and a passionate volunteer team, the Community Cat Alliance continues to make an outsized impact on both feline welfare and the people who care for these animals.

For more information about the organization, volunteering, or to donate to the cause, visit communitycatalliance.org. If you would like to report a cat colony or feral cat, you can email the location to TNR@winchesterspca.org.

PRESENTING THE

WINCHESTER LITTLE THEATRE

2025-2026 SEASON





SEPT 5-20, 2025
Hilda and Sam Fluck are celebrating their Empty Nest. It's 1956 and they are getting their first TV... until their adult children, Gary and Jenny, are back and they are not alone. As Hilda's backyard fills with unexpected guests and the family cares into an afternoon of bumbling calamity, the stakes and the laughs grow in this heartwarming family comedy.
By NOEL FOSTER • DIRECTED BY GARY UNDAVON



NOV 7-DEC 6, 2025
We are thrilled to once again present this musical adaptation of the beloved Christmas classic with its new twist in storytelling... and an original score you'll want to hear again and again! From "Bah, humbug!" to "God bless us every one!", if anyone knows how to keep Christmas... we do!
BASED ON THE NOVEL BY CHARLES DICKENS
ADAPTED BY LYNN STENKAT
MUSIC AND LYRICS BY PAUL KERN
DIRECTED BY SAM GRUBB
MUSICAL DIRECTOR BY DUSTIN CROOK



JAN 16-31, 2026
A menacing con man and two ex-convicts meet their match when they trace the location of a mysterious doll to the apartment of Sam Hendrix and his blind wife, Susy. Through clever lies and deceit, they convince Susy they are there to help her. But as their deception slowly unravels, Susy finds herself in an intense game of cat and mouse.
By Frederick Knott
DIRECTED BY Joette Ordorff



MAR 13-28, 2026
Virginia Hascall has left her home and fiancé to become a Women Airforce Service Pilot (WASP). Joining a varied group of other women doing their part to help defeat the Axis powers in World War II, these women form a sisterhood that travels through triumph and tragedy, exploring both the skies and themselves.
By MEREDITH DAVIA LEVY
Directed by Theresa Apple



MAY 15-30, 2026
Best friends Chris and Annie are determined to raise money for the cancer wing of the local hospital. They decide to use their annual Women's Institute calendar - but instead of bucolic country scenes, Chris hits upon the idea of featuring the ladies doing typical Women's Institute endeavors - while nude. The calendar is wildly successful, but their friendship is put to the test as news of their venture spreads beyond their little town.
By Tim Firth
Directed by Betsy Arnett



James and the Giant Peach
By Roald Dahl
Directed by [Name]



Musketeers
A Musical
Directed by [Name]



WLT for Kids

Summer 2026

315 W. Boscawen St. Winchester VA | 540.662.3331 | winchesterlittletheatre.org

707 E CORK ST WINCHESTER - \$399K WALK TO OLD TOWN

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Whether you're buying, selling, or investing, trust a local expert who knows Winchester inside and out. As highly involved members of this community, we bring not only deep market knowledge but also strong local connections to help you navigate every step with confidence. Let our experience and commitment open the right doors for you — in a place we both call home.

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JUST CLOSED - \$365K
166 LAKE HOLIDAY RD

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WINCHESTER STAR AWARDS



Katie Jordan



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