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On the Threshold

August prepares us for something new, without rushing summer out the door

IN MANY WAYS, August is a threshold month; that time when summer and ambition overlap. It carries the season's ease with more daylight hours and plenty of sunshine while pulling us towards the anticipation of fall and what comes next. Calendars slowly refill. Group chats shift from vacation plans to sports practices. August exists in that rare in-between space suspended between relaxation and routine.

Summer, of course, hasn't ended. The pool is still open, and in many cases, there's still traveling to be had, but the school year is knocking on the door, waiting to be welcomed. In this issue of *Stroll Quail Hollow*, we truly savor summer while looking ahead. Yet August resists urgency. It allows both realities to exist at once, lingering in what is still here while making space for what is coming into view.

There is a particular clarity in this in-between season. It's a moment that invites reflection not on what's been left behind, but on what we want to carry forward. The best parts of summer don't disappear; they evolve into something steadier, more integrated into daily life. The grill is still fired on a weeknight, and the garden remains lush with herbs. As we move through these final weeks of the season, this issue is designed to sit right in that threshold with you, celebrating what remains of summer while offering inspiration for the months ahead.

Andrea Kroger

Publisher
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COMMUNITY EVENTS

You Are Invited

Join us for an evening dedicated to wellness, connection and community at our Stroll Into Wellness event on Thursday, September 3.

This special evening will bring together local wellness companies and professionals for a relaxed, engaging experience focused on all things health, beauty, lifestyle and well-being. Guests will have the opportunity to meet local experts, learn about wellness-focused services, discover new resources and connect with neighbors and business owners in a welcoming setting.

The evening will include music, networking, light refreshments, raffles, door prizes and a cash bar, creating the perfect atmosphere to mingle, unwind and explore ways to feel your best from the inside out.

Whether you are interested in fitness, nutrition, self-care, aesthetics, mental wellness and healthy living, or simply want to enjoy a fun night out with the community, this event is designed for you.

Come Stroll Into Wellness with us and celebrate the people and businesses helping our community live well.

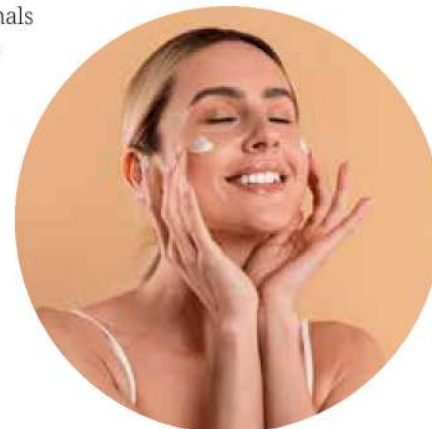
EVENT DETAILS

Date: Thursday, September 3

Time: 6—8 p.m.

Location: Ballantyne Country Club, Stephenson Room
11120 Ballantyne Crossing
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Featuring: Local wellness companies, music, networking, light refreshments, raffles, door prizes and a cash bar



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BUILT ON FAITH, FAMILY & COMMUNITY: THE GIRDWOOD FAMILY STORY

From Charlotte roots to raising their family in the neighborhood they love, Tom and Tanner Girdwood are building a life centered on faith, purpose, and connection.

**BUILT ON FAITH, FAMILY
& COMMUNITY**
For Tom and Tanner Girdwood, a life centered on faith, family, and purpose has made Quail Hollow the perfect place to call home.

For Tom and Tanner Girdwood, home has always been about more than an address. It's about the people, traditions, and values that shape everyday life. Both grew up in Charlotte—Tom attended Myers Park High School, and Tanner graduated from Charlotte Latin. Their story began through Tanner's brother, who played football with Tom. Years later, they reconnected while home from college, and that friendship eventually grew into a marriage in 2017. Today, they're raising three children—Maggie, Mays, and Bella Grace—with the



same values that have guided their own lives: faith, family, and serving others. In 2019, they moved to Baltusrol, a neighborhood that already held special memories. Tanner's family had once lived next door to the home they now own, and it was there that she and Tom shared their first conversation. When their current home became available, the timing couldn't have been better. Just months later, the pandemic brought the world to a halt, but it also brought neighbors together. "We spent every day in our cul-de-sac," Tanner says. "Our neighbors have loved us through some of our highest highs and lowest lows. They've truly become like family." For Tom, one of those "highs" came when he took a leap of faith and started Kingdom Demolition. After years in the demolition industry, he knew he was being called to build something of his own. As he sketched out his vision on a pink legal pad, he wrote a simple prayer across the top of the page: "Whatever it is, Lord, let it be honoring to Your Kingdom." In that moment, Kingdom Demolition found both its name and its purpose. Launching a business while preparing to welcome their first child wasn't easy. Every dollar the company earned went back into the business, and Tanner's unwavering support gave Tom the confidence to keep moving forward. Today, Kingdom Demolition has grown into one of Charlotte's premier demolition contractors, but Tom believes its greatest success isn't measured by the buildings it tears down. Instead, he hopes the company is known for its integrity, generosity, and commitment to serving others. Tanner shares that same heart for service. As Executive Director of Youth Commission International, she has the opportunity to encourage students to live out their faith and make a difference in their schools. "I am convinced I have one of the best jobs in the world," she says. "I get to witness firsthand God at work." When they're not working, the Girdwoods enjoy spending as much time together as possible. Maggie plays soccer with Alpha Soccer League, Mays plays baseball with SouthPark Baseball—where Tom also coaches—and Bella Grace loves ballet at the Harris YMCA.

“
We desire to honor the Lord in all that we do. We want people to know they can always come as they are. What you see is what you get with us.”



Some of their favorite family traditions happen at home. On Christmas morning, the children wait together on the staircase until it's time to see what's under the tree. Before opening presents, the family gathers to read a Christmas story, followed by a special breakfast. Christmas Eve is another favorite, spent celebrating with Tanner's extended family. Whether they're cheering from the sidelines, visiting a Kingdom Demolition job site, spending Saturday mornings at the farmers market, or enjoying time with neighbors, the Girdwoods cherish life's simple moments. When asked what they hope people think of when they think of their family, their answer reflects the way they strive to live each day. "We desire to honor the Lord in all that we do. We want people to know they can always come as they are. What you see is what you get with us." For the Girdwoods, building a meaningful life has never been about success alone. It's about building a family rooted in faith, investing in their community, and creating a home where everyone feels welcome.



PEOPLE OFTEN ASK ME about the sweet dog who greets everyone at The Fitness Studio, and I always smile because Brody has been my best friend for nearly 10 years.

His story began when I was living in Tampa, Florida. One day I came across a Craigslist post from someone who said they were planning to dump a litter of puppies if no one took them. I knew I had to go.

When I arrived, the man had a box full of adorable black puppies that all looked like little German Shepherds. But before I even had a chance to look at them, one tiny puppy came running out of the man's car, jumped straight into my arms, and started licking my face. At that moment, he chose me—and I knew he was coming home with me.

I originally named him Paisley after one of my favorite country singers, Brad Paisley. My husband, Troy, wasn't convinced. He looked at this energetic little puppy and said, "He's

not a Paisley... he's a Brody." Looking back, he was absolutely right. The name fits him perfectly.

Over the years, I became curious about his background, so I had a DNA test done. It turns out Brody is a mix of Staffordshire Bull Terrier, German Shepherd, Chow Chow, and Labrador Retriever. Somehow, all those breeds came together to create the sweetest dog you could ever meet.

Brody goes almost everywhere with me, so it was only natural that he became the official mascot at The Fitness Studio in Piper Glen. He absolutely loves greeting our clients each day and happily accepts every belly rub and ear scratch that comes his way. Some of our members even bring their children by just to see him because he's so gentle and loves everyone he meets.

If you've ever visited the studio, chances are you've been welcomed by Brody before you even checked in.

When we're not at work, Brody is happiest simply being wherever I am. He's my shadow and follows me from room to room. At bedtime, you'll usually find him sleeping on top of a pile of pillows—or stretched out in bed, convinced he's a tiny lap dog.

He's especially attached to my husband, Troy, who often ends up with a 70-pound "lap dog" sprawled across him while they're relaxing together.

Like most dogs, Brody has a few favorite treats. He's completely obsessed with Starbucks pup cups, which works out perfectly since Starbucks is right next door to the studio. He also loves carrots and rawhides, but pup cups will always be his number one choice.

Brody has two rescue siblings at home. Juno, our pit bull-pointer mix, joined our family about a year ago, and Hunter, our tabby cat, has been with us for almost 10 years. Brody and Hunter grew up together and have become the best of friends. Watching a dog and cat share such a close bond never gets old.

Everyone who knows Brody says the same thing—he doesn't have a mean bone in his body. He loves people, adores children, and has a special way of making everyone feel welcome. Whether he's greeting clients at the studio or simply following me around throughout the day, he's happiest when he's surrounded by the people he loves.

Brody may have started life as one puppy in a box, but today he's so much more than my dog. He's family, he's the heart of our studio, and he's brought joy to countless people in our fitness community. I truly can't imagine life without him.



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Shell-Shockingly Gorgeous

From West Coast to East Coast, decorate with shells in a way that feels chic and sophisticated without the clutter and kitsch.

BY NICOLE LETTS

HOME MATTERS

Summer might be fading, but incorporating shells into interior design is a classic look that's here to stay. Shells have been used for decoration for centuries, serving as both building materials and motifs. The entire Rococo movement even took its name from the French word *rocaille*, meaning shells, rock formations, and scrolls, and art aficionados will certainly recognize shells in famous works like Botticelli's *Birth of Venus*. In 2026, however, shell decor is understated but maintains sophistication.

To avoid the coastal clichés, opt for design moments that uniquely showcase shells. A mirror encircled in shells is a timeless choice. The mirror can be a simple circle or have an elaborate, shapely motif, but the style will be at home no matter where you live. Instead of filling a bowl with your finds, have special shells or sand dollars mounted on your favorite wallpaper or grasscloth and framed as a collection. Oyster shells with their mother-of-pearl inside become salt cellars in your kitchen or trinket dishes on your bedside table. For larger pieces such as conchs, incorporate them into your bookshelf styling, perching them on a stack or using them as delicate bookends.

Shells also translate beautifully into textiles and wallcoverings. Look for fabrics or wallpaper with subtle shell or scallop motifs to add pattern without overwhelming a space. A scallop-edged throw pillow or lampshade, for example, adds just enough nod to the theme without being too on the nose. When in doubt, remember the sage rule that less is always more. One well-placed shell will always outperform a shelf full of them.



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Every day, perfectly good food goes to waste while neighbors just down the street wonder where their next meal will come from. Feeding Charlotte, a local food rescue nonprofit, is working to close that gap, one delivery at a time.

Since launching, Feeding Charlotte has built a model centered on efficiency through mission: rescuing nutritious surplus food from grocery stores, restaurants, and other professional kitchen partners before it ever hits a dumpster, then getting it directly to partner agencies helping those in need. The numbers tell the story. Last year alone, Feeding Charlotte completed nearly 3,000 food rescue runs, diverting more than 1.3 million pounds of food and turning it into over 1.1 million meals for neighbors across Mecklenburg, Gaston,

and Iredell Counties at a cost of roughly 25 cents per meal.

At the heart of every rescue run is a volunteer or program driver, picking up surplus food and delivering it, often the same day, to partner agencies across the three counties Feeding Charlotte serves. It's a flexible, low-barrier way to give back. From there, those meals flow through a network of 67-plus partner agencies like transition programs, shelters, churches, and community centers. By plugging into infrastructure that already exists, Feeding Charlotte moves food quickly without building duplicate systems, stretching every dollar and pound further.

"Food insecurity isn't happening somewhere else. It's happening right here in our own neighborhoods, often just

blocks from the restaurants and grocery stores we go to every day," says Lesha Dodson, Feeding Charlotte's Development Manager. "What excites me about this work is how solvable it is. Perfectly good food already exists and we just have to move it before it goes to waste." For Dodson, that mindset traces back to a belief she carries into everything she does: "Community is a verb. It's knowing who has what, who needs it, and closing the gap."

This year, Feeding Charlotte is expanding how Charlotte gets involved. The new Round Up for Rescue campaign invites local restaurants and businesses to let customers round up their bill to the nearest dollar at checkout, with proceeds going toward food rescue operations. It is a simple way to make a

CONTINUED ►



UPCOMING EVENTS

Food Sustainability Summit Saturday

September 26, 2026 | 1:00–4:00 PM
Elevation Church University Campus,
Charlotte, NC

An all-ages community event featuring a panel discussion and hands-on volunteer projects benefiting local hunger relief organizations — including Feeding Charlotte. Details & registration: foodsustainabilitysummit.org

Feeding Charlotte Kickball Throwdown

November 21, 2026 | 9:00 am
Park Road Park Charlotte, NC

Grab a team and join the fun! Sponsorship opportunities from \$500–\$5,000 available for businesses and community groups. Register or sponsor: feedingcharlotte.org





GET INVOLVED

Round Up for Rescue: Ongoing

Ask your server to round up your bill to the nearest dollar and your spare change goes straight to local food rescue. Looking for more participating restaurants across Charlotte! Encourage your favorite spot to sign up at feedingcharlotte.org.

Lunches of Love :Year-Round Program

Help pack and deliver fresh individual meals to partner agencies serving those in need. Lunches of Love sponsorships, and partner opportunities are available. Sign up at feedingcharlotte.org.

To volunteer, donate, or learn more about all programs, visit feedingcharlotte.org or contact Lesha Dodson, 704-458-9178, lesha@feedingcharlotte.org



difference without changing their routine. The organization is actively recruiting restaurant and business partners across Charlotte to join.

For a more hands-on way to support the cause, mark your calendars for the Feeding Charlotte Kickball Throwdown!, a community kickball tournament fundraiser set for November 21, 2026, at Park Road Park, bringing together up to twelve teams with sponsorship opportunities ranging from \$750 to \$2,500.

Feeding Charlotte is also expanding its Lunches of Love program, hands-on meal packing events designed for

community and corporate groups alike. The organization is looking for volunteers, meal sponsors, and partners to help bring the program to even more neighbors in need.

For families looking to get involved together, Feeding Charlotte will take part in the upcoming Food Sustainability Summit, an all-ages event featuring a panel discussion and hands-on volunteer projects benefiting local hunger relief organizations on Saturday, September 26th at Elevation Church.

Whether it's rounding up a restaurant tab, lacing up for kickball, packing a

Lunches of Love meal, or joining the Food Sustainability Summit, there are more ways than ever to plug into Feeding Charlotte's mission.

To learn more, volunteer, or get involved, visit feedingcharlotte.org or contact Lesha Dodson, lesha@feedingcharlotte.org, 704-458-9178.



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Decision-Making Authority & Legal Custody: WHAT ARE MY OPTIONS?

TIFFANY BYRD OF MODERN LEGAL

AS A PARENT, making major decisions for your child is one of your most important responsibilities. When navigating co-parenting after a breakup, separation, or divorce, this responsibility can become more complex. Like most issues involving children, there is no “one size fits all” solution. Courts have several approaches to address decision-making, and the right structure will depend on your family’s unique dynamics.

JOINT LEGAL CUSTODY

The most common arrangement is for the Court to award *joint legal custody*. This means both parents share the responsibility of making major decisions regarding the child’s education, medical care, extracurricular activities, and overall welfare. Parents must reach mutual agreements before moving forward on these important issues.

JOINT CUSTODY WITH A DESIGNATED FINAL DECISION-MAKER

Sometimes, the Court will still award joint legal custody but allow one parent to act as the “tie-breaker” if the parents cannot agree. This authority may apply to *all* major decisions, or the Court may assign each parent decision-making power in specific areas (for example, one parent has final decision-making authority for medical issues and the other parent has final decision-making authority for educational decisions).

SOLE LEGAL CUSTODY

In rare situations, the Court may award one parent *sole legal custody*. This gives that parent the exclusive right to make major decisions for the child without consulting the other. Because the Court typically wants both parents involved in a child’s life, sole legal custody is usually reserved for extreme or special circumstances, such as cases involving safety concerns or a history of uncooperative behavior.

FINDING THE RIGHT SOLUTION FOR YOUR FAMILY

One important thing to remember: As co-parents, the Court strongly encourages you to discuss and create a solution that you feel works best for your family dynamic.

If you and your child’s other parent agree on a different arrangement for decision-making, you have the agency to put your agreed-upon legal custody arrangement in writing and submit it to a Judge for approval. Once formalized by way of a consent order, that legal custody arrangement will guide how decisions are made moving forward. For those who cannot reach an agreement on their own though, legal custody will be decided by the Court.

NEXT STEPS

Be sure to sit down with a family law attorney to discuss what you believe is best for your situation. Our Modern Legal team is here to guide you through the process and help you find the solution that protects your child’s best interests while supporting your role as a parent.

If you or somebody you know would like to learn more about child custody, our team at Modern Legal is here to help.

Please note: these educational materials are based on North Carolina and South Carolina law where my legal practice is based. While the insights may have wide applicability, readers should consult with an attorney regarding the specific laws in their state or country.

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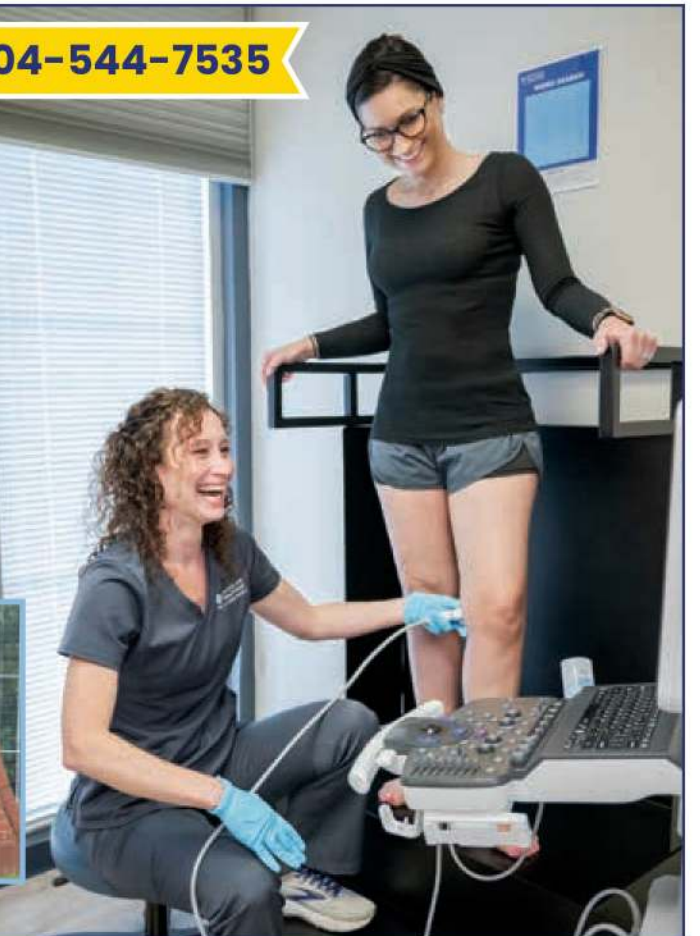
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DR. DEMETRY AT KING TUT CHIROPRACTIC

Every day in practice, I meet people who are tired of living with pain. Some have tried stretching, medications, injections, rest, or even considered surgery. Others have simply accepted discomfort as part of getting older. One of the most common things I hear is: "I just want to feel like myself again." That is exactly why I became interested in offering SoftWave Technology at King Tut Chiropractic.

SoftWave is an advanced, non-invasive treatment designed to support your body's natural healing process. Rather than masking symptoms, SoftWave uses acoustic wave technology to stimulate



tissue and encourage recovery at a cellular level. What makes this treatment exciting is that it works with your body—not against it.

When SoftWave energy is applied to an area of concern, it creates mechanical stimulation that encourages increased circulation, supports healthy inflammatory responses, and activates healing signals within the tissue. The goal is to help your body do what it was designed to do: repair and recover. Patients are often surprised that treatment is comfortable, quick, and requires little to no downtime.

At King Tut Chiropractic, we use SoftWave as part of a comprehensive approach to care for a variety of conditions, including:

- Neck and back pain
- Shoulder discomfort and rotator cuff issues
- Knee pain
- Plantar fasciitis and heel pain
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- Muscle strains and sports injuries
- Tendon and ligament irritation
- Joint stiffness and mobility concerns
- Chronic soft tissue discomfort
- Recovery support after repetitive stress or injury



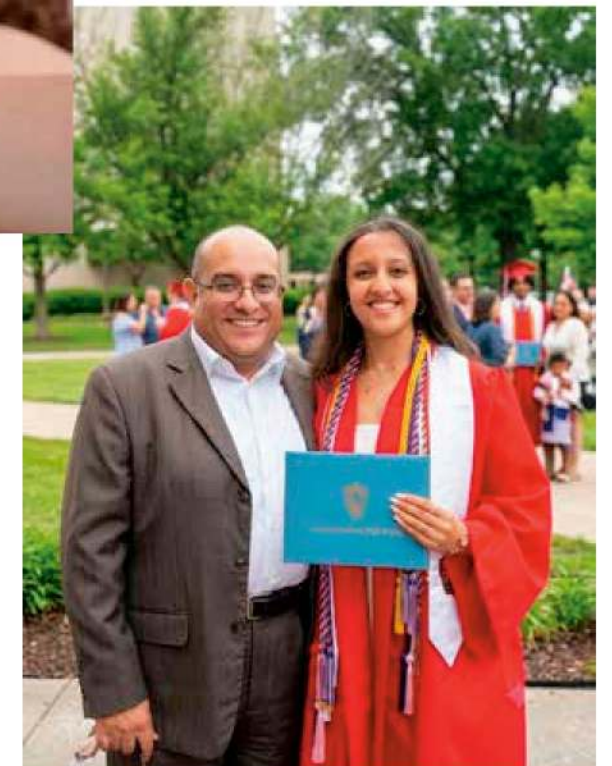
My philosophy has always been simple: help people move better, feel better, and live better.

One of the things I appreciate most about SoftWave is the variety of people who may benefit from it. Whether you are an athlete trying to stay active, a parent keeping up with your children, someone recovering from an injury, or simply looking for alternatives before more invasive procedures—this technology may offer another option to explore.

My philosophy has always been simple: help people move better, feel better, and live better. No two patients are the same, which is why every recommendation starts with understanding your goals, your history, and what matters most to you. If you've been dealing with pain, stiffness, or limited mobility and you're wondering whether there's another path forward, I invite you to come talk with us. We would be honored to help.

DR. DEMETRY

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FLICKER & FLAME

Give new life to citrus scraps with a DIY project that blends scent, sustainability and a little summer magic in every spark.

BY SHAUNA OSBORNE, NATIONAL EDITOR

MAKE & BAKE

Sparked by citrus

Citrus peels aren't just compostable — they're flammable in the best way. The natural oil limonene, found in orange, lemon and lime rinds, burns easily and smells delightful as it does. Paired with dried herbs like rosemary or lavender, the finished starters release a soft, aromatic scent as they ignite. They're a clean-burning alternative to chemical-heavy store-bought versions and a smart way to use what you already have.

Gather your goods

- Dried citrus peels (orange, lemon, lime or grapefruit)
- Dried herbs (optional: rosemary, thyme or lavender)
- Soy or beeswax
- Mini muffin tin and paper liners
- Cotton string or candle wicks
- Double boiler or heat-safe bowl

Crafting the kindling

Dry leftover citrus peels until they're crisp, either by air-drying for several days or baking at 200°F for a few hours. Line a mini muffin tin with paper liners and add a few peels to each cup. Tuck in a sprig of dried herb, then place a short cotton wick or string in the center. Melt soy or beeswax, pour just enough into each cup to bind the ingredients, and let cool until hardened. Once set, pop them out and store in a dry container.

Light it up (or wrap it up)

These little starters look as good as they smell. Wrap a few in kraft paper or a small tin with twine for a thoughtful thank-you gift or party favor. Keep a stash by your own fire pit and enjoy the quiet joy of lighting up something you made yourself.

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Stroll Quail Hollow is your neighborhood publication. Break out your cameras and share your pictures with us for our May 2026 issues. Please send pictures to us at strollquailhollow@gmail.com for our upcoming issues. Pictures must be 1 MB or larger to be of good print quality.

NEW TO THE NEIGHBORHOOD?

Are you and your family new to Quail Hollow? If so, welcome! Please send your contact info to Andrea at andrea.kroger@n2co.com to be added to our monthly sneak peek email and event invitation list. To submit an idea, photo or article, please email us at andrea.kroger@n2co.com

HERE ARE A FEW SUGGESTIONS FOR PHOTO SUBMISSIONS:

Summer Holiday - We want to see all your photos of decor, events and family.

Milestone Celebrations - Do you or a loved one have a milestone birthday or anniversary coming up? Send us some photos!

Weddings - We'd love to share photos from spring weddings in our community. Share the love by sending your special wedding day pictures to us!

Family and Neighborhood Gatherings - *Stroll Quail Hollow* is all about family and community. Our favorite photos are those of kids playing, birthday parties and neighborly gatherings.

Travels - We would love to see all the exciting places you visited over spring break

Pets - We would love to see your fur babies or feather babies



Cool kids - Do you have a "cool kid" in your house?

Athletes - Are you running a marathon? Do you have an athlete in your family? Are you a dancer?

Local Nonprofits - Local nonprofits are changing the lives of Charlotte residents. Do you volunteer for a great organization? Are you a board member of an awesome organization making a difference?

Resident Business Guide - Do you own a business? We have guide. Email us to have your business listed.

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ROCKING ROLLER COASTERS

A new wave of amusement parks is raising the bar and the stakes across the country.

BY NICOLE LETTS

WE ARE IN an amusement park resurgence. Do you feel the need for speed? These exciting new amusement parks across the country might just be the answer you've been (thrill) seeking.

Thrillz in Atlanta, Georgia

Opened early summer, this indoor adventure park features 22 distinct experiences, including a 35-foot indoor mega slide tower (the only one in North America), a 40-foot indoor drop tower, a 10,000 square foot soft play jungle gym, and a fully indoor roller coaster. Thrillz is a reason to extend your layover in Atlanta; in fact, it might be worth an entire trip.

Kalahari Waterpark in Spotsylvania, Virginia

Once open this December, the African-inspired waterpark resort near Fredericksburg will boast 50+ attractions in 175,000 square feet, making the location the largest waterpark in Virginia. A boomerang-effect raft ride, a four-lane head-to-head racing slide, and a record-breaking water coaster that holds the title of longest in North America make this park unmissable.

COTALAND in Austin, Texas

Built alongside the legendary Circuit of the Americas, this new park blends rides, family attractions, and iconic motorsport energy. Attractions include Palindrome, the first infinity shuttle coaster in the U.S. and the only steel coaster to soar over an active road, and Hot Lap, a ride-along on the nation's only purpose-built Formula 1 track.

Netflix House in King of Prussia, PA

Your binge-watching era just got a physical address. Netflix House spans more than 100,000 square feet of immersive entertainment. Step into a Wednesday-inspired twisted carnival, play nine holes of Netflix-themed mini golf, or go full main character in a Squid Game or Stranger Things virtual reality experience.



YOUR FAVORITE PARKS, UPGRADED

Dollywood's NightFlight Expedition, the world's first hybrid coaster and whitewater raft ride, takes guests on a 5.5-minute journey through the Tennessee Smoky Mountains at night.

Kings Island in Ohio brought back the beloved Phantom Theater as an all-new interactive dark ride with modern animatronics and flashlight gameplay.

Universal Studios Hollywood in California debuted Fast & Furious: Hollywood Drift. Topping out at 72 miles per hour, it's the fastest roller coaster in the Universal Destinations & Experiences portfolio.

FAMILY MATTERS

The most important financial conversations don't start in the classroom; they start at home.

BY NICOLE LETTS

Money lessons for kids work best when they're woven into everyday moments.

Kids are always watching. Long before they understand the word "budget," they're forming ideas about money based on what they see and hear at home, at school, and in the media. That's why teaching good financial habits isn't a one-time conversation. It's an ongoing practice, and the earlier it starts, the better.

The good news? You don't need a formal sit-down to get started. Money lessons for kids work best when they're woven into everyday moments. A trip to the grocery store becomes a lesson in comparison shopping. A birthday gift of cash becomes a chance to talk about saving versus spending. A family vacation in the planning stages is the perfect opportunity to show kids how a goal becomes a reality.

For younger kids, offer them two or even three ways to keep track of their money (spend, save, and/or give). For teenagers, start introducing them to low-stakes money lessons, such as price comparing at the grocery store or at their favorite shop. Consider a local money and investing class for kids and teens. Remember, the goal here is to empower them with knowledge, not instill anxiety.

Involve them in setting tangible family financial goals together. Something as simple as saving for a family pizza night gives everyone a goal to work towards and establishes success from the jump. Teaching them early helps good financial habits form naturally.

You don't need a multitude of apps or gadgets to get your family's financial fitness on track. A spreadsheet can serve as a household budget, a shared note can hold your savings goals, and a family calendar can remind you when something is due, or when it's time for a money check-in (if monthly is too much, try a quarterly convo). Involve your children by sitting and showing them how much it costs to run your household. More specific tools, such as Greenlight and Acorns Early use expense tracking, savings goals, and financial literacy lessons or gaming to encourage healthy habits.

The tools matter far less than the habit of using them consistently. Start with whatever feels most approachable, and build from there. The best system is the one your family will actually stick to.



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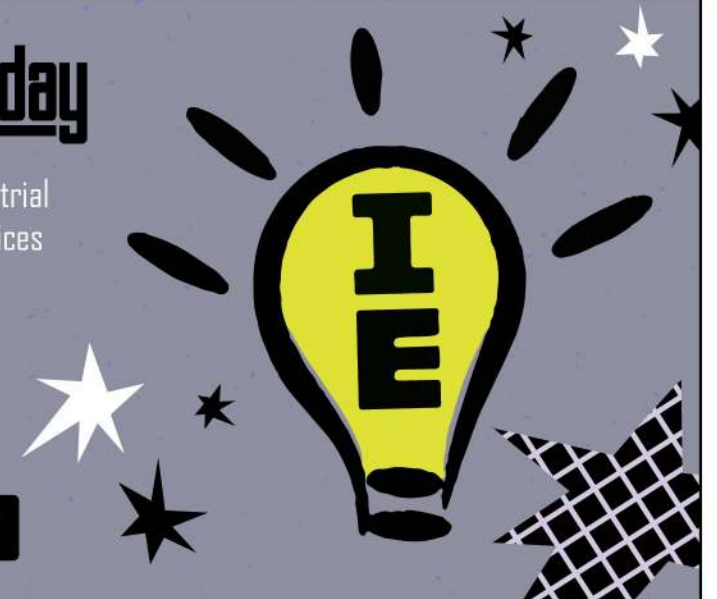
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Seeing Green

Your comprehensive guide for growing lush grass just before (and after!) the leaves change.

BY NICOLE LETTS

Did you know that late summer or the first few weeks of fall are the best time of year to plant grass? A few weeks before the first frost, the ground stays warm while the air cools down, creating an ideal environment for germination. Plus, there are fewer weeds, more reliable rainfall, and less opportunity for disease (fungus is caused by humidity, after all). A little effort now pays dividends come spring. The well-established lawn that goes into winter is the one that comes back lush, thick, and ready for spring.



Know Your Grass Type

Cool-season grasses, like Kentucky bluegrass, tall fescue, and perennial ryegrass, thrive in fall conditions and are most common in northern regions. Warm-season grasses, like Bermuda, zoysia, and centipede, peak in late spring and early summer and are better suited for southern climates. Whatever your region or grass type, aim to plant at least 45 days before your expected first frost.

Prep Your Soil First

Before you scatter a single seed, the soil needs attention. A healthy lawn starts with at least four to six inches of good, weed-free topsoil. If your soil is compacted or nutrient-poor, consider aerating it first and incorporating organic matter or fertilizer into the top six inches. A quick soil test, available at most garden centers, can tell you exactly what your lawn is missing and save you guesswork down the road.

Seed with Intention

For even coverage, use a drop spreader rather than scattering by hand. Apply half your seed moving horizontally, then apply the other half moving vertically. This



checkerboard method ensures you won't miss any patches. Once seeded, apply a starter fertilizer to give your new grass a strong foundation.

Tend with TLC

The work doesn't stop once the seed is down. Water daily for the first few weeks, keeping the soil consistently moist but not waterlogged. Hold off on mowing until the grass reaches three to four inches tall, and when you do mow, set the blades high to avoid stressing the young growth.

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