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## LETTER FROM THE EDITORS

As the crisp air of October settles in, we're reminded of the many ways dreams can take root and flourish right here in Winchester. This month, we're honored to feature stories of resilience, creativity, and giving back. You'll read about Kesha Harris' culinary journey with D.A.H. Cuisines LLC, the community impact of SVEC and Veterans Subs, and the incredible art and design work happening at Purple Fern Photography.

The more I speak with the creative people in Winchester, I'm reminded that we all need art in our lives. With busy schedules, and the holidays approaching, I'm taking time to fill my soul with creative endeavors like a recent sewing class. I'd love to hear how you are connecting to creativity in Winchester!

We hope these stories inspire you to find your own way to connect, contribute, and celebrate this beautiful community. We'll see you in Old Town!



Misty Weaver & Katie Jordan

**WE ARE  
WINCHESTER**

## VETERANS SUBS: WHERE SUBS MEET SERVICE



John Kline, a man with deep roots in the military community, has made it his mission to serve both his country and his local veteran community in a unique and delicious way. A proud U.S. Army veteran, John spent ten years in the service, only to be medically retired in 2005. His connection to the armed forces runs deeper still: his father was drafted into the Army during the Vietnam War, and his father-in-law served in the Navy. His military legacy continues through his son-in-law, who is currently stationed at Fort Drum, awaiting an overseas assignment. These strong ties have inspired John to use his life's work to help the community that means so much to him.

In October 2022, John blended his passion for supporting veterans with his love of food and opened Veterans Subs on Jubal Early Drive. Since then, the restaurant has become more than just a place to grab a bite. It's a beacon of hope, charity, and camaraderie for veterans. From supporting local charities to promoting veterans' causes, Veterans Subs is a community hub where patrons can enjoy delicious meals while also making a difference.

John's philanthropic efforts have been tireless. He's hosted events to benefit organizations like Thin Line Service Dogs and Heroes on the River, and regularly donates food to the local Vietnam Veterans of America chapter. He's also involved with the Community Veterans Engagement Board and Veterans Business Community Group, working through the Top of Virginia Regional Chamber to help veterans connect with the resources they need. One day, John hopes to create his own nonprofit to assist those struggling with PTSD.

Stepping into Veterans Subs, the military theme is clear from the moment you enter. The walls are painted in army green, setting the tone for a space that honors service members. A stunning mural, created by local artist John Kiernan from Blue Line Studios, adds a personal touch to the décor, celebrating the service and sacrifice of those who have worn the uniform.

The menu is as creative as it is flavorful, with each sub named after military terms. Popular favorites include the Cannonball (a hearty meatball sub), the Liberty Bell (a classic steak and cheese), the Devil Dog (a savory combination of salami, capicola, and provolone), and the spicy Nuke (featuring chicken, mozzarella, jalapeños, and buffalo sauce). With new items regularly added to the menu, there's always something exciting for customers to try.

Beyond subs, the restaurant offers a variety of sides like potato salad and mac and cheese, along with ice cream, beer, and wine. You can choose to dine indoors or enjoy the fresh air on the covered outdoor patio. Veterans Subs is a place where good food meets great service, in every sense of the word.

Visit Veterans Subs at 621 Jubal Early Dr

# D.A.H. CUISINES: LIGHT BULB MOMENTS

Kesha Harris, the culinary mastermind behind D.A.H. Cuisines LLC, has a story that's as flavorful as her dishes. Raised in North Carolina, and currently residing in Winchester, Kesha always knew she had a love for cooking – but that wasn't always the path she followed. "Cooking has always been in my blood," she shared, but it wasn't until later in life that her passion became her full-time career.

Kesha grew up in a family where cooking was a tradition, passed down from both the men and women in her family. Her father, who raised her and her sister after her mother's passing when she was just three years old, took on the role of primary cook. Despite his reluctance to let her cook herself, Kesha absorbed everything she could from observing him. But it was at her grandmother's house, with a backyard garden overflowing with fresh vegetables, that she truly started honing her skills.

At age 12, she convinced her grandmother to let her take over the kitchen. Her first attempt? Meatballs. "I didn't know how I was going to make them," Kesha recalls, "but I knew what they were supposed to taste like." The experience was a revelation. It was her first taste of true culinary freedom, one that would stay with her for years.

Despite her love for cooking, Kesha chose a more traditional path first, earning her degree in computer science from North Carolina A&T State University in Greensboro, NC. After graduation, she pursued a successful career in software engineering, working for a Fortune 500 company in Pennsylvania for 21 years. But cooking was never far from her mind. "I catered for friends and family all the time. It was a joy for me," she shared.

In 2012, Kesha was diagnosed with breast cancer. "It changed my world forever," she says. "I had no family history of it, so I couldn't understand why." After undergoing chemotherapy, radiation, and losing her hair, Kesha emerged cancer-free – and with a newfound determination. Then, just two years later, her father suffered a stroke and passed away. These two life-altering events made Kesha reevaluate her life's direction. "It was like a light bulb went off," she says. "What are you doing? What do you want to do with your life?"

She decided it was time to follow her dream. She left her job in 2017, took a leap of faith, and began setting up her catering business. At the same time, she enrolled in the Culinary Institute of America in Hyde Park, New York. Despite feeling out of place at first—after all, she was a 40-something engineer with no professional culinary background—Kesha thrived. She graduated with honors in 2019.

Just as Kesha was getting ready to launch her business in Winchester, COVID-19 hit. Like so many others, she had to pivot quickly to survive. "We started doing meal deliveries," she explains. "I sent out a text to 20 people, asking if they'd be interested, and every one of them said yes." What began as a temporary solution soon became a staple service of D.A.H. Cuisines.

Today, D.A.H. Cuisines offers an impressive range of services, from private dinners and weddings to corporate events and seasonal meal delivery. One of Kesha's favorite aspects of her business is the chance to create unique, personalized menus for small intimate private dinners. "That's my jam," she admits with a laugh. "It allows me to let my creative juices flow."

Kesha's culinary style can best be described as "elevated American cuisine with a French flair." Inspired by Julia Child, whom she grew up watching on TV, Kesha approaches cooking with the same sense of creativity, fun, and authenticity. "Julia showed me I could do things my own way. I didn't have to follow anyone else's playbook," she says. Today, her love for fresh ingredients and her knack for combining flavors in unexpected ways shines in every dish.

Though her culinary roots are Southern, Kesha isn't afraid to explore other flavors and cuisines. From classic French techniques to Mediterranean and Asian dishes, she's mastered a wide range of styles, giving her the flexibility to cater to any client's tastes and dietary needs. From vegan and vegetarian dishes to gluten-free and allergen-friendly menus, Kesha and her team take pride in crafting meals that are delicious and accommodating.

For Kesha, building D.A.H. Cuisines has been a labor of love—and a lesson in setting boundaries. After spending years in a high-stress corporate job, she's learned the importance of taking care of herself and not overextending her business. "I want to offer clients a wonderfully positive experience they'll never forget," she says. "But I can't do that if I'm not my best self."

As she looks toward the future, Kesha has big dreams of opening her own bistro—an American eatery with a touch of French sophistication. And while she's taking it one step at a time, she's confident that she's on the right path. "I'm 51 years old, and a few years ago, I started living my dream. It's never too late."

As D.A.H. Cuisines continues to grow, Kesha remains committed to delivering high-quality, personalized catering experiences. Whether it's a cozy private dinner for four, a large wedding celebration, or a bi-weekly meal delivery, Kesha pours her heart into every dish.

Connect with Kesha at [DAHCuisines.com](http://DAHCuisines.com)



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# PURPLE FERN PHOTOGRAPHY: CREATIVE COLLECTIVE

Meet the dynamic team behind Purple Fern Photography, a multi-faceted creative business that's as vibrant as the art they produce. Founded by Sarah Garman nearly 18 years ago, this studio has grown into a flourishing hub for photography, design, and artistic experiences. Today, Sarah, alongside Studio Manager Meghan Whitlock, and Vintage & Design Expert/Second Photographer Sydney Arnette, bring their vision to life in Winchester, offering photography, branding, art exhibitions, vintage shopping, and more.

Sarah's journey began with a passion for creating and a boutique on Featherbed Lane that offered handmade and fair-trade items. As an art teacher with a background in graphic design and engineering, Sarah's love for art was undeniable. But as she recounts, "I never made just one pair of earrings. I made 75." This drive to create in abundance led her to start selling online, opening a brick and mortar, and eventually, she transitioned from the boutique world into photography.

"It felt natural," Sarah explains about the shift to photography, "I was already taking photos of jewelry, products, and artists' works that we carried in the boutique." Soon, people began asking Sarah to photograph them, and that's when Purple Fern Photography found its calling. Over time, her style became recognizable – vintage, boho, and always full of warmth. With a built-in client base from her boutique days and teaching career, Sarah quickly became known for capturing authentic, emotion-filled moments.

Sarah's journey with Purple Fern Photography took a significant turn when Meghan Whitlock, now the Studio Manager, joined the team around 14 years ago. Together, they've worked hand-in-hand to build a creative business that stands out. Sarah describes Meghan as the glue that holds everything together, keeping them organized and ensuring all projects run smoothly. Sydney Arnette, the latest addition, joined in 2021 and has seamlessly integrated her own skills, curating vintage collections and serving as a second photographer. "Having Sydney on board has allowed us to expand into more areas," says Sarah. "We all have our own strengths, and it's been wonderful to bring that together."

The team made a triumphant return to the familiarity of a studio space, now operating out of 3 S Loudoun St on the walking mall. "It felt like coming home," she says. With exposed brick walls, warm lighting, and gallery tracks lining the room, the studio is both a welcoming workspace and a modern gallery space. The Purple Fern studio now serves as more than just a photography headquarters – it's a venue for art shows, workshops, live music, and pop-up markets.

At its core, Purple Fern Photography specializes in capturing the real, raw, and emotional moments of life. Whether it's weddings, family portraits, branding sessions for businesses, or artists in their creative spaces, the team's approach is to tell a story. Meghan emphasizes, "We're all about the genuine smiles, the real personalities – not just the posed, perfect photos." Sydney, who brings her own eye for detail, assists Sarah in photography sessions and in curating their vintage collections, helping to add depth to their artistic offerings. The team's passion for creating authentic and timeless work is evident in every photo, and their clients feel that personal touch.

The studio hosts various workshops, art classes, and live music events that cater to the community's creative spirit. They've offered workshops in bookbinding, watercolor layering, linoleum block carving, cyanotype printing, and even a butterfly pinning workshop led by a local artist. "We wanted to bring classes to the area that you wouldn't typically find unless you signed up for college," Sarah says. Sarah will be featuring her own original artwork in a show opening Oct 4th, through the 6th which is reminding her of what other artists go through as they prepare.



Their commitment to offering unique, approachable experiences extends to their popular monthly art markets, where locals can shop for handmade items, vintage finds, and original artwork. The holiday market, held in December, transforms the studio into a wonderland filled with gifts, artwork, and treasures reminiscent of the original Purple Fern boutique experience.

Recently, the team has expanded into offering branding and design work for local businesses. Meghan shares, "We've been diving deep into branding sessions, and it's been incredibly fulfilling. It's allowed us to combine all of our strengths – from photography and design to creative thinking." Their most recent project involves designing a restaurant downtown, which includes everything from mural work by Sarah to photography and layout design. This new venture has given the team an opportunity to apply their creativity in fresh ways and support local businesses in showcasing their unique identities.

The team takes pride in working with women-owned businesses, hearing their stories, and sharing in the ups and downs of entrepreneurship. They understand the challenges of balancing business with motherhood, relationships, and life in general. "It's so important to have your village," says Meghan. "We want to be part of that village for other women and business owners."

Purple Fern Photography has an exciting lineup of events and shows this fall. You can connect with Purple Fern Photography at [PurpleFernPhotography.com](https://PurpleFernPhotography.com)

# SEE *October events* AND BE SEEN

## 5 REPTILE EXPO

Enjoy a day immersed with other enthusiasts who share your passions for exotics including snakes, lizards, frogs, spiders and so much more. Chat with the experienced hobbyists and breeders in attendance.

[Winchester Sports & Event Center](#)

## 5 PRIDE AT MSV

Join this celebration during LGBTQ+ History Month featuring free site-wide admission! Music, vendors, presentations, drag shows—featuring Heidi N Closet, a RuPaul's Drag Race contestant, activities, food/drinks and more!

[MSV](#)

## 14 CREEPY DOLL PAINT & SIP

Come express your spookiness by creating a Haunted doll of your own. Snacks by Cafe Del Sol and Duck Donuts!

[Winchester Brew Works](#)

## 19 EXCITING AND TERRIBLE TIMES

Join National Historic District Park Ranger Wade Custer on a downtown walking tour of Civil War sites in Winchester. See original buildings, historic locations, and hear the stories of soldiers and civilians. [Civil War Museum](#)

## 24 ART IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD

Unique fundraiser showcasing local art in a private home party setting with wine, food, and local art shopping! [ShenArts](#)



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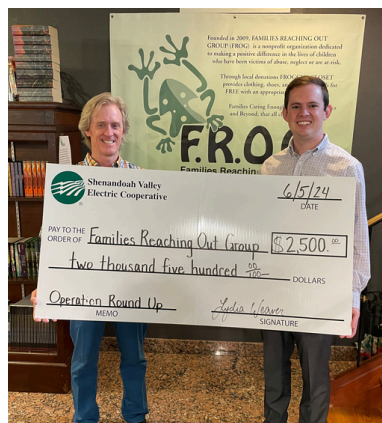
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# SVEC: POWERING THE VALLEY AND GIVING BACK

Shenandoah Valley Electric Cooperative (SVEC) may have a humble, behind-the-scenes presence, but when you dig a little deeper, it's clear that this organization is about more than just keeping the lights on. With roots tracing back to the 1930s, SVEC was formed to provide electricity to rural areas that larger utility companies ignored. Over the years, it's grown to serve nearly 90,000 members across the Shenandoah Valley, including parts of Winchester and Frederick County.

But SVEC doesn't stop at powering homes and businesses; it powers up local communities through its steadfast dedication to service. As Preston Knight from SVEC explains, community involvement is a core part of their mission. "There are seven core principles for co-ops, and one of them is 'Concern for Community.' That's something we live by," Knight shared. This principle is evident in everything from youth programs to grants for local non-profits, making the co-op much more than just your typical electric company.

One of SVEC's standout initiatives is **Operation Round Up**. This program gives co-op members the option to round up their monthly electric bills to the nearest dollar, with those extra pennies going directly to local non-profits. "It averages out to just about six bucks a year for most people," Knight said, "but when you multiply that by thousands of members, the impact adds up."



So far in 2024, several Winchester-area organizations have benefited from these small but meaningful donations of \$2,500 each including the Winchester First Presbyterian Church, Families Reaching Out Group (Froggy's), Love to NIC, and WATTS. SVEC's Operation Round Up program is open to any non-profit in their service area, making it a broad-reaching resource for organizations making a difference in the valley.

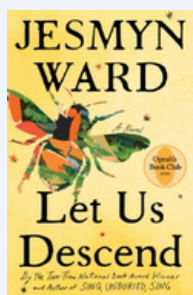
But SVEC doesn't just focus on today's needs; it's invested in the future, too. Their **Youth Tour** program gives local high school juniors a chance to visit Washington, D.C., for a weeklong, all-expenses-paid trip. Students tour historical landmarks, attend leadership seminars, and even meet with legislators on Capitol Hill. It's a unique opportunity for young people to get a behind-the-scenes look at government and civic engagement.

Additionally, SVEC offers scholarships for high school seniors, with \$1,000 awards available to ten students each year. To qualify, students must have a parent or guardian who receives electricity from SVEC. Knight acknowledges that, while \$1,000 may not go as far as it used to, it still helps with some of the smaller expenses of higher education. "We've talked about increasing the amount, but for now, we're sticking with 10 scholarships at \$1,000 each," he said. In fact, in 2024, three of those awards went to students at James Wood High School, showing just how much the Winchester area benefits from SVEC's dedication to education.

Whether it's through direct support of local nonprofits or investing in the future of area youth, SVEC continues to prove its commitment to being more than just a utility provider. "We're always looking for ways to give back," Knight emphasized, "and we want to be more than just the company you think of when the lights go out or when the bill comes. We're part of this community."

You can learn more about SVEC's Operation Round Up, Youth Tour, and scholarship programs by visiting [SVEC.coop](https://www.svec.coop)

## Winchester Book Gallery Recommends:



Let Us Descend describes a journey from the rice fields of the Carolinas to the slave markets of New Orleans and into the fearsome heart of a Louisiana sugar plantation. A journey that is as beautifully rendered as it is heart wrenching, the novel is "[t]he literary equivalent of an open wound from which poetry pours" (NPR).

Annis, sold south by the white enslaver who fathered her, is the reader's guide. As she struggles through the miles-long march, Annis turns inward, seeking comfort from memories of her mother and stories of her African warrior grandmother. Throughout, she opens herself to a world beyond this world, one teeming with spirits: of earth and water, of myth and history; spirits who nurture and give, and those who manipulate and take. While Annis leads readers through the descent, hers is ultimately a story of rebirth and reclamation.

From one of the most singularly brilliant and beloved writers of her generation, this "[s]earing and lyrical...raw, transcendent, and ultimately hopeful" (The Atlanta Journal-Constitution) novel inscribes Black American grief and joy into the very land—the rich but unforgiving forests, swamps, and rivers of the American South. Let Us Descend is Jesmyn Ward's most magnificent novel yet.

# DAY OF CARING 2024: GOOD VIBES, BIG IMPACT

September 20, 2024 – Picture this: nearly 900 volunteers, endless good vibes, and a whole lot of love for the community. That’s what happened at this year’s United Way of Northern Shenandoah Valley’s Day of Caring, the valley’s biggest volunteer event of the year. With First Bank leading the charge as the presenting sponsor (and getting their hands dirty at the Winchester SPCA), this was more than just a day of service—it was a full-on celebration of what happens when people come together for a common cause.

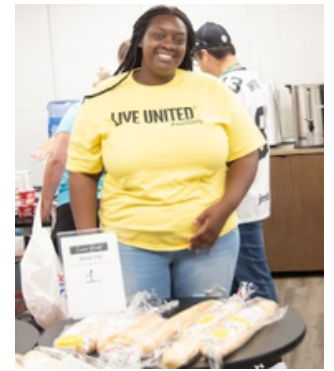
The day kicked off bright and early at Shenandoah University’s James R. Wilkins Athletics and Events Center with breakfast, beats, and a buzz of excitement that could rival any morning coffee rush. United Way’s CEO, Andy Gail, set the tone with a pep talk that got everyone hyped up to “Spark Change, Together We Can Because Together We Have.” And with that, they were off!

From sprucing up playgrounds to painting walls and even giving dental checkups to kids, these volunteers were all over the valley, making magic happen at 83 different project sites. First Bank, the event’s MVP, was out at the Winchester SPCA, putting their green thumbs to work with landscaping and clean-up projects in and out of the shelter that made the place shine. “We want to be involved in the community to support it non only economically but physically as well.” said Jim Youngblood from First Bank. “We take a lot of pride being in the community, and it supports us we want to give back.”

Pulling off something this big takes a dream team, and the Day of Caring Committee, led by the dynamic duo Beth Falu and Kim Price from Navy Federal, along with Janet Michael and the United Way Staff and they nailed it. Their behind-the-scenes hustle made sure every volunteer had a place to shine, and every nonprofit got the help they needed. “This isn’t just a bunch of chores—it’s about lifting each other up,” said Falu. “Our local nonprofits are the backbone of this community, and today’s all about showing them some love.”

After a day full of hard work, everyone was ready to kick back at the after-party at West Oaks Farm and Market. There were laughs, selfies, and a sense of accomplishment that hung in the air like the perfect sunset. Volunteers got to unwind, swap stories, and toast to the kind of change you can only make when you work together. So what’s the takeaway? It’s simple: when you mix a little elbow grease with a lot of heart, incredible things happen. And thanks to everyone who showed up, from sponsors like First Bank, Marlow Motors, Navy Federal, Tolly Dental, Continental, REC, Valley Health, Southeastern Container, YHB and the project and t-shirt sponsors to the everyday heroes who gave their time, the Shenandoah Valley is just a little brighter today.

For more information about United Way NSV and its Day of Caring, visit [unitedwaynsv.org](http://unitedwaynsv.org)



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## THANK YOU TO OUR CLIENTS AND SUPPORTERS!

We appreciate your trust in us! It was a clean sweep in the Winchester Star awards, with Katie taking 1st place and Misty taking 2nd!



**MISTY WEAVER**  
**KATIE JORDAN**

540-999-8826

[misty@dreamweaverteam.com](mailto:misty@dreamweaverteam.com)

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