

WE ARE WINCHESTER

DECEMBER 2024

OLDTOWNIST.COM



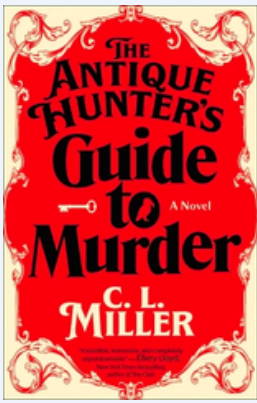
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PHOTO CREDIT
DANIEL ASHWOOD PHOTOGRAPHY

Winchester Book Gallery Recommends:



The Antique Hunter's
Guide to Murder
by C.L. Miller

*What antique would
you kill for?*

Freya Lockwood is shocked when she learns that Arthur Crockleford, antiques dealer and her estranged mentor, has died under mysterious circumstances. She has spent the last twenty years avoiding her quaint English hometown, but when she receives a letter from Arthur asking her to investigate—sent just days before his death—Freya has no choice but to return to a life she had sworn to leave behind.

Joining forces with her eccentric Aunt Carole, Freya follows clues to an old manor house for an advertised antiques enthusiast's weekend. But not all is as it seems. It's clear to Freya that the antiques are all just poor reproductions, and her fellow guests are secretive and menacing. What is going on at this estate and how was Arthur involved? More importantly, can Freya and Carole discover the truth before the killer strikes again?

WinchesterBookGallery.com | 7 N. Loudoun St

LETTER FROM THE EDITORS

December is a busy and festive time. We love how the walking mall looks like it was lifted from the set of a Hallmark movie with its elaborate decorations and lights. It's the perfect place for a date night, getting together with friends, or shopping for holiday gifts.

To celebrate the season and our recent milestone of reaching 5,000+ followers on Facebook, OldTownist is giving away gifts from 12 shops and restaurants in old town. (It is easy to get all your holiday shopping done locally!) The giveaways are from: Tin Top, Handworks, Murphy Beverage, Hideaway Cafe, Panhandle Apothecary, Thinker Toys, Dawn Earles Design, Nibblins, Back to the Media, Fleur de Lis Cheese Shop, Winchester Book Gallery, and Red Fox Creamery.

Be sure to follow and interact with us on social media to participate in our giveaways and to stay up-to-date on the happenings in Winchester.

We'll see you in Old Town!



*Misty Weaver
& Katie Jordan*

**WE ARE
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THE LOCAL PLATE: OAK STONE CRAFT PIZZA & BAR



Caroline Brown joined Katie and I as we dove into the delicious offerings at Oak Stone, well known for its inventive flavors in food and drinks.

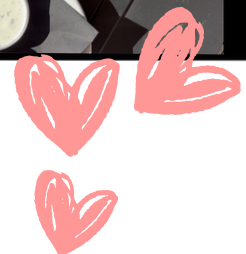
With your votes guiding our menu picks, the culinary journey kicked off with the highly recommended Kung Pao Veggies and Brussels Sprouts, both bursting with flavor and perfectly complemented by Oak Stone's signature homemade ranch dressing. For pizza lovers, the showstopper was the Bee's Knees—topped with a dreamy white sauce, three cheeses, apple, onion, and honey, making it a delightful mix of sweet and savory. Even skeptics of white pizza were converted! To cap off the feast, the gluten-free Key Lime Pie stole the spotlight, a refreshing summer dessert with a tangy strawberry drizzle that left everyone raving.

Oak Stone's menu accommodating dietary needs, like gluten-free options, makes it a great option for groups in the Winchester food scene. Whether you're a veggie enthusiast or a pizza purist, this is a must-visit spot. Find Oak Stone at 1000 Valley Ave across from Handley High School.

Where to next.....



**WATCH
THE VIDEO**



STRENGTH, COMMUNITY, AND CONFIDENCE : 540 FITNESS

Jessica Gordon, co-owner and coach at 540 Fitness, exudes warmth and determination as she talks about the gym's mission: fostering not just physical strength but a sense of belonging. From the outset, it's clear this is no ordinary fitness facility. Instead, it's a hub for connection, education, and empowerment.

Jessica and her husband, Jared Gordon, founded 540 Fitness in April after recognizing a unique need in the local fitness landscape. "We wanted to create a space that prioritizes accountability, proper programming, and real community," Jessica says. That vision has paid off—members from their previous gym rallied behind the couple, following them to this new venture.

Jessica attributes much of the gym's success to the atmosphere they've cultivated. "We're not just a gym. We're a place where people support each other and celebrate wins—big or small," she says, pointing out their community board where members can advertise their small businesses. "It's about uplifting one another."

540 Fitness offers something for everyone. Their flagship Strength and Conditioning classes combine barbells, dumbbells, kettlebells, and conditioning exercises, and are meticulously designed to suit all fitness levels. Classes are capped at an hour and always coach-led. "We know people have busy lives," Jessica explains. "We make sure every minute counts."

For beginners, the gym provides a Foundations Class to ease members into fitness. And for those seeking more specific guidance, onboarding sessions with a coach ensure every individual feels confident stepping into a class.

Additionally, 540 Fitness offers specialty programs like a women-only beginner class, born from listening to community feedback. "Teaching women to strength train is a passion of mine," Jessica shares. "I want every woman to feel strong, capable, and confident."

Nutrition is another pillar of 540 Fitness. Jessica, a certified nutrition coach, is dedicated to helping members make informed choices. "There's so much misinformation out there," she says. "We work hard to educate our members so they can live healthier lives."

The gym hosts regular wellness talks, with topics ranging from winter health strategies to hormone education. On January 5th, they're welcoming a local expert for a discussion on menopause—a resource Jessica feels is deeply needed.

For Jessica, fitness is personal. After losing her first husband to a heart attack, she sought out a healthier lifestyle but was overwhelmed by conflicting advice and gimmicks. Now, she's determined to cut through the noise and help others find lasting solutions.

"I thought healthy meant skinny," she recalls. "But real fitness isn't about how you look; it's about how you feel and what your body can do." This philosophy drives everything at 540 Fitness, from their programming to their supportive environment.

As the gym approaches its first anniversary, Jessica is excited about its future. Plans include adding a mobility class to help members improve flexibility and prevent injury, increasing class options, and expanding educational programming. Locals can try a free class on the second Friday of every month.

Above all, Jessica emphasizes that 540 Fitness will continue to adapt to the community's needs. "We're here to meet people where they are," she says. "Whatever the community wants, we'll make it happen."

Learn more at 540-fitness.com



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WINCHESTER WINTER VILLAGE: HOLIDAY MARKET

If you're looking to get swept up in the holiday spirit, mark your calendar for December 6–8 and head to Old Town Winchester's Winter Village, where holiday magic awaits! The whole area transforms into a cozy European-style holiday market, featuring handmade crafts, local treats, and festive décor that brings a sparkle to the season. Stroll through booths, shop for unique gifts, and discover local treasures, from handmade soaps and woodcrafts to whimsical holiday décor.

As you wander, stop by some of Old Town's favorite spots for a taste of "gluhwein"—a traditional German spiced mulled wine that'll warm you from head to toe. The drink menu extends to non-alcoholic "kinderpunsch," a spiced cider that's perfect for kids and anyone steering clear of wine. Participating spots will have their own spin on these seasonal sips, so try a few to find your favorite!

Friday night kicks off with the Third Annual Santa Crawl, an adults-only holiday bar crawl benefitting Froggy's Closet, a local nonprofit. Starting at 4 p.m., wristband holders get exclusive drink and food discounts, plus entry to the Jingle Ball after-party at the Monument—a festive evening you won't want to miss. Tickets are \$10, and if you bring along new clothing, toys, or other donated items, you'll be entered to win a \$100 raffle prize. Deck yourself out in your most spirited holiday attire, because costumes are encouraged, and the best ones could take home a \$50 prize!

Saturday and Sunday bring out the family-friendly fun with the Kinder Village, a tented area filled with crafts, face painting, a photo booth, and even a visit from Santa (and the Grinch)! Kids will have plenty to keep them entertained, and you can snap some memorable holiday photos while you're at it.

And for a truly magical experience, hop on a complimentary horse-drawn wagon ride from Shenandoah Carriage Company. The rides run Saturday from 3–6 p.m., offering families the chance to take in the lights and sights of Old Town in timeless style. If you've ever dreamed of a classic holiday experience, this is it.

For those who enjoy holiday music, the sounds of the season will fill the air with strolling carolers and live music. Local choirs and jazz ensembles will host concerts in various Old Town churches throughout the weekend, creating the perfect holiday soundtrack to your shopping and exploring. Be sure to check VisitWinchesterVA.com for the full schedule.

If you want to share a special message of hope, love, or remembrance, stop by the Wishing Tree near the Godfrey Miller home. Here, you can write a wish for a loved one or leave a message for the community, which will be added to the tree—a beautiful way to spread joy and good will.

IA few vendors to look out for: Pastries on the Porch for delicious holiday treats, River of Mountains Studio for unique, nature-inspired art, and Harmony's Charm Soap Company with their handcrafted, wintery-scented soaps. And don't miss Rocky Top Acres for unique, locally produced gifts or Posh Fairy Floss Cotton Candy Co. if you're looking for a sweet treat with a twist!

Winter Village hours:

- Friday, December 6: 4–8 p.m. (Santa Crawl: 4–9 p.m.)
- Saturday, December 7: 11 a.m.–8 p.m. (Kinder Village: 12–5 p.m.; Carriage Rides: 3–6 p.m.)
- Sunday, December 8: 11 a.m.–4 p.m. (Kinder Village: 12–4 p.m.)

On Saturday at 10 a.m., join us by the north end archway to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Loudoun Street Mall with a special ceremony!

Come out to Old Town Winchester and embrace the festive atmosphere, a little holiday cheer, and the warmth of our community.



SEE *December events* AND BE SEEN

1 A VERY GRINCHMAS GALA

Enjoy live performances by The Martinsburg Rock School bands while supporting Froggy's Closet. [The Monument](#)

2 HOLIDAY PARADE & TREE LIGHTING

We're lighting up the City on Monday, December 2, at 7:00 p.m. with the brightest nighttime parade you've ever seen! Tree lighting will follow! [Old Town](#)

6-8 WINE WINTER VILLAGE

Be transported to a cozy European holiday market this Christmas season in beautiful, historic Old Town Winchester, Virginia! A village of traditional European food and crafts vendors will be at the heart of the Old Town pedestrian mall, and our many shops will be fully decked out for the holidays and offering specials for shoppers young and old. See article on pg 4 for more details! [Old Town](#)

31 NYE 2024 GODS & GODDESSES

Let's try to shake off what we can and ring in the New Year together! Grab your toga and your Mjollni and dance the night away with us! Ticket includes dinner from Billy Sous, desserts, champagne toast at midnight, dancing till your grape leaves fall off, and general merriment! [Winchester Brew Works](#)

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NAACP: A LEGACY OF JUSTICE & EMPOWERMENT

The Winchester Area Branch of the NAACP is rooted in a history of courage and advocacy. The branch emerged in 1944 following the Howard Walker case— a tragic event that paralleled the injustices depicted in Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird*. Howard Walker, a Black resident, faced circumstances eerily similar to those of Tom Robinson, the novel's wrongfully accused Black character. This case underscored the systemic racial injustices prevalent in the Jim Crow South, right in our backyard, and brought together over 200 Black residents to form the local chapter.

The following decades the NAACP fought locally against policies that entrenched racial segregation and delayed school desegregation after *Brown v. Board of Education*. These policies included measures like cutting school funding and enforcing poll taxes, perpetuating systemic racial inequality.

Under the current leadership of President Michael Faison, the branch continues its mission of fostering equity, inclusion, and opportunity through numerous programs. Faison, a Bermuda native with roots in Virginia, moved to Winchester in 2014 and brought with him a passion for education and social justice. Influenced by mentors and local NAACP leaders like John Hill, he stepped into leadership determined to address pivotal challenges with the full support of the community. Education is at the heart of the Winchester NAACP's mission. Programs like the AP initiative aim to inspire minority students to pursue advanced coursework, while partnerships with Frederick County Public Schools help improve reading scores. These efforts reflect a commitment to nurturing young minds and creating equitable opportunities.

Beyond academics, the branch addresses a wide range of issues, from financial literacy with an eight-week business course to women's healthcare, such as a recent panel on endometriosis awareness, with plans for future presentations. The branch also partners with local businesses, like Bank of Clarke, to promote Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) programs that benefit the entire community.

NAACP annual events serve as a cornerstone for fundraising and community engagement. The Freedom Fund Banquet, Juneteenth celebrations, and the beloved Chili Cookoff at Winchester Brew Works, bring the community together to honor progress while supporting the ongoing fight for justice. "We invite the community into the ongoing work and welcome voices to grow and expand for a great life in the Shenandoah Valley," says Faison.

Becoming a member is as simple as attending a monthly meeting, held every second Saturday at the historic Douglass School, now home to the Douglass Museum and Winchester Public Schools administrative offices. These meetings are open to all who are passionate about civil rights and equality.

The Winchester Area NAACP remains steadfast in its mission to eradicate social injustices, protect voting rights, and advocate for marginalized communities. With a focus on education, allyship, and community involvement, it invites everyone to join its efforts. As Michael Faison emphasizes, the branch is not just about tackling adversity but also about building a better, more inclusive life for everyone in the Shenandoah Valley.

Learn more at NAACPWinchesterArea.org/



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WHEELS FOR WELLNESS: DRIVING CHANGE

In a cozy, unassuming office, Traci Toth, director of Wheels for Wellness, beams with enthusiasm as she recounts the path that led her to this vital nonprofit. With a background rooted in social work and IT, her career has been an unexpected journey into public service—a field she never envisioned for herself. But as she puts it, “The need is there, and it gets you.”

Traci’s involvement with Wheels for Wellness began in 2010 when the organization was still known as Faith in Action. “I started on the board of directors while working at Frederick County Social Services,” she recalls. After leaving her position to spend four years as a full-time mom, she was encouraged to take on the directorial role. “They said, ‘You have time on your hands, don’t you want something to do?’” she laughs. She officially stepped in as director in 2017 and has been at the helm ever since.

Her years in social work, which ranged from assisting families in crisis to handling IT and HR, shaped her perspective on community needs. “People think things like poverty or lack of resources don’t happen here,” she says, “but I’ve seen houses with dirt floors and no toilets.”

Wheels for Wellness provides free, volunteer-driven transportation for medical appointments across the community. “Our clients are a mix,” Traci explains. “Some have no income or a vehicle, while others just don’t have anyone available to drive them.” Whether it’s a family member unable to take more time off work, a spouse with dementia, or a senior living alone, the organization steps in.

From colonoscopy pick-ups (since hospitals won’t release patients without a ride) to routine dialysis trips, Wheels for Wellness ensures no one is left stranded. “About 62% of our clients are going to dialysis,” Traci notes, “but we also help with dentist appointments, mental health visits, and more.” The only requirements? Clients must be ambulatory (able to walk and get into a car), not reliant on Medicaid (which has its own transportation program), and seeking medical-related rides.

With over 4,000 transports projected for this year, Wheels for Wellness operates like a well-oiled machine despite its modest structure. “We’re all about keeping things simple,” Traci says. The organization relies entirely on volunteer drivers—most of whom are retirees—and operates without charging clients or their insurance.

“Our volunteers use their own vehicles, so we can’t accommodate wheelchairs,” she explains. “But we do allow personal oxygen tanks, canes, and walkers.” For wheelchair-bound clients, the team refers them to services like Seniors First.

As a nonprofit, Wheels for Wellness is funded solely through grants, donations, and two annual fundraisers. The fall’s highlight is a gas card raffle, featuring generous donations from local businesses like H.N. Funkhouser and Marlow Auto Group. In spring, the much-anticipated Tablescape event steals the show, with arrangements like the one below by Tricia Simpson, titled: Fruit et Fleur.

“This year was our eighth year, and it’s really grown,” Traci shares. Tablescape features themed dining table displays, food from local restaurants, live music, and demonstrations ranging from floral arranging to napkin folding. “Next year, we’re adding mocktails and charcuterie boards!” she says with excitement. The 2023 event drew nearly 275 guests and raised a record-breaking \$27,000.

When asked what makes Wheels for Wellness unique, Traci pauses thoughtfully. “It’s a very basic, no-frills service,” she says. “But it makes an enormous impact. We’re here to fill the gaps, whether it’s for someone who can’t afford transportation or someone who simply doesn’t have family nearby to help.”

With just one part-time employee, a contracted scheduler, and an army of dedicated volunteers, the organization’s minimal operating costs are a model of efficiency. “This is the biggest office I’ve ever had,” Traci jokes, motioning to the tidy space that houses the entire operation. Under Traci’s leadership, this small but mighty nonprofit continues to drive change, one ride at a time.

To learn more about getting a ride or volunteering visit their website at Wheels4Wellness.org and join them at next spring’s Tablescape event on March 30.



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