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NEWS: Impacts of NC's anti-immigration legislation ◊ **PG. 4**

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NIGHTLIFE: Aerin drops in on McHale's Pub ◊ **PG. 14**

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The local ICE office is located in the Department of Homeland Security building in south Charlotte. Photo via Google

A CULTURE OF FEAR

The ramifications of NC's latest anti-immigration legislation

BY ANNIE KEOUGH

On July 29, Republicans in the North Carolina General Assembly pushed through the state's latest anti-immigration bill with the help of a lone Democrat who helped override Gov. Josh Stein's veto.

House Bill 318 — titled the "Criminal Illegal Alien Enforcement Act" — builds on House Bill 10, which requires law enforcement to notify agents with Immigration and Customs Enforcement when an individual with undetermined legal residency is charged with certain offenses.

While House Bill 10 only required law enforcement to check a person's immigration status if they were charged with a violent crime, House Bill 318 amended the list of offenses to include all felonies, some serious misdemeanors and impaired driving.

If a judiciary official issues what is called a "detainer" on the charged individual, the law enforcement office must hold them for an additional 48 hours — on top of the initial 48 hour hold — to allow time for ICE to retrieve the person and take them into federal custody.

Stein vetoed HB 318 and another anti-immigration bill, Senate Bill 153, in June.

"I am vetoing House Bill 318 because it is unconstitutional," Stein said then. "My oath of office requires that I uphold the Constitution of the United States ... The Fourth Circuit is clear that local law enforcement officers cannot keep people in custody solely based on a suspected immigration violation. But let me be clear: anyone who commits a serious crime in North Carolina must be prosecuted and held accountable regardless of their immigration status."

However, the following month, Republicans in the NCGA voted to override the veto with the help of Democratic NC Rep. Carla Cunningham. Cunningham was the only Democrat to vote to override the veto, though it was her comments leading up to the vote that garnered blowback from many voters and fellow party members.

Presenting her case in support of HB 318, Cunningham repeated talking points used by the Trump administration to justify mass deportations and other nationalist policies.

"As a people, it is time to recognize that it's not just the numbers that matter, but also where the immigrants come from and the culture they bring with them to another country," Cunningham said. "As a social scientist reported, all cultures are not equal. Some immigrants come and believe they can function in isolation, refusing to adapt. They have come to our country for many reasons, but I suggest they must assimilate. Adapt to the culture of the country they wish to live in."

She went on to say that "naïve" Americans "have been exploited and abused by the different tactics to gain citizenship in America."

As head of the agency most directly affected by the new law, Mecklenburg County Sheriff Garry McFadden said he believes HB 318 places an undue burden on the state as it requires a state magistrate judge to request a hold on behalf of the federal government and authorize the Mecklenburg County Sheriff's Office (MCSO) to adhere to federal matters in turning someone over to federal custody.

State magistrates decide to hold a person for an additional 48 hours — time that costs Mecklenburg County taxpayers $398 a day for each person in custody, McFadden said.

The sheriff has been an outspoken opponent of all past iterations of HB 318, including HB 10 and the 287(g) program, which allowed participating state and local law enforcement agencies to act as immigration enforcement agents and which McFadden ran on a platform to do away with.

He terminated the county's participation in the program in 2018.

Who asked for House Bill 318?

After a person in custody meets the criteria of their release and the additional 48-hour hold begins, the MCSO must notify ICE within two hours of the detainee's release.

ICE then has the obligation to pick that person up from MCSO while their original charges are still pending.

McFadden told Queen City Nerve that this procedure creates a cyclical process in which detained individuals are not held accountable for any state charges.

If ICE agents deport the person to another country and that person returns to the United States and comes into contact with law enforcement again, the person is then put back into the state judicial process and it starts all over again.

"That is the issue that I had from the very beginning [that] was not addressed in House Bill 10 and it was not addressed in House Bill 318," McFadden said. "House Bill 318 is still interrupting the local, state judicial process when people have state current pending criminal charges," he said.

Carolina Migrant Network co-founder Becca O'Neill said ICE doesn't have the capacity to pick up everyone who has a detainer.

Though O'Neill said this may change once ICE reaps the benefits of the "Big Beautiful Bill" and its $75 million in funding for ICE, the current agency doesn't have the resources to send officers to each of North Carolina's 109 jails and transfer them to the state's only detention center in Alamance County.

In a March email to county commissioners, McFadden said ICE failed to pick up 163 detainees at MCSO since December, costing the sheriff's office $65,000 to house them.

The communication — or lack thereof — between MCSO and ICE was on full display in January after Honduran citizen Jose Napoleon-Serrano was charged with assaulting a female and domestic assault.

Serrano, who had already been deported from the US twice, was arrested by CMPD and held at MCSO after ICE issued a detainer.

An ICE officer accused McFadden of not honoring the detainer placed on Serrano and neglecting to call the agents 2 hours before his release, according to WSOC-TV. Because ICE did not pick Serrano up within the detainer time period, Serrano posted his bond and was released from custody.

McFadden claimed his office received no correspondence from ICE following the detainer while ICE claimed that McFadden was being "uncooperative."

These are claims that McFadden has grown used to, he said, as they began "30 minutes after I took office seven years ago."

McFadden explained that he believes the blame is not equally placed on ICE or the North Carolina lawmakers who enact these bills but instead creates a rhetoric that local sheriff's offices in places that are largely African-American and Democrat-run aren't cooperating with ICE.

"So we know that this is the vehicle and platform that our local lawmakers build very well and present it to the local media ... that we are not cooperating with ICE," he said. "We are cooperating with ICE but the issue is no one is listening to what we are saying, how this is not making our community safe."

McFadden said that local lawmakers who create these immigration bills may not be educated enough on the topic and don't meet with the sheriffs that have concerns and deal with it directly.

He said he would like to see state, local and federal officials come together with a task force or group to create a comprehensive immigration reform bill.

Instead, McFadden said that "we are now simply just making things up as we go with immigration and it is not making our cities any safer."

O'Neill said the impact of HB 10, passed in a veto override vote in November 2024, has been to create fear, which is evident in the way entire communities are afraid to leave their homes out of fear of being detained.

The bill has also led to more people being detained by ICE.

"And then now I think HB 318 is an attempt by the General Assembly [to try] to tighten or fix [HB 10] because I don't think they are getting the results they wanted from HB 10," O'Neill said. "And so now there's an attempt to make it work and make it worse."

Because there are still 21 counties in North Carolina with 287(g) agreements in place, O'Neill questions the validity and effectiveness of HB 318. Paired with McFadden's vocal condemnation of the bill and the burden it places on the state and its taxpayers, the question remains: Who wanted this bill?

O'Neill pointed at the Republican-led NC General Assembly.

"[They're] a bunch of racist assholes ... [with a] weird fixation where they're going to constantly pass anti-immigration bills the same way they're going to pass bills that are going to target trans people and educators," she said.

"They lack any fundamental understanding of these systems and they really, really, really hate immigrants."

A veto override vote for Senate Bill 153, titled the North Carolina Border Protection Act, is expected in September.

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CleanAIRE NC partners with Ronald Ross (above) to monitor air quality in the West End. Photo by Ryan Pitkin

CLEARING THE AIR

CleanAIRE NC launches academy amid cuts to environmental programs

BY WILL ATWATER, NC HEALTH NEWS

Since the start of the Trump administration, federal officials have been rolling back funding to federal environmental programs and scientific research — moves that threaten to leave vulnerable communities with fewer resources to address air quality concerns. That reality, along with the desire to broaden its reach, prompted the Charlotte-based advocacy group CleanAIRE NC to launch a new interactive online tool designed to educate North Carolinians on environmental issues and provide them with resources for healthier communities.

"Air pollution is an invisible and often understated problem, yet its impact on public health is profound," said Rafi Vaca, CleanAIRE NC's education manager. "We created this platform to demystify complex issues and inspire meaningful engagement."

Mounting research reveals ongoing threats to air quality in urban and rural settings from vehicle emissions, industrial sources and agriculture. One recent study found that residents living near concentrated animal feeding operations face significantly higher exposure to fine particulate matter (PM2.5).

CleanAIRE NC has responded to air quality issues by partnering with communities across the state — from Charlotte's Historic West End to rural Sampson County — to establish local air-quality monitoring and provide training and educational support for residents most affected by pollution.

A sense of urgency

Particulate matter, or particle pollution, is a mix of solid particles and liquid droplets in the air. Some, like dust, pollen or soot, are visible. Those usually fall in the range of PM10, particulate matter that is 10 micrometers, about one-fifth the diameter of a human hair.

Other particles, such as PM2.5s, are so small they can only be seen with powerful microscopes, according to information provided by the EPA. Exposure to particle pollution can trigger serious health problems including heart attacks, worsened asthma, reduced lung function and even premature death in people with heart or lung disease.

A 2018 study found that efforts to reduce PM2.5 levels in the US from 1999 to 2013 resulted in a reduced mortality rate among elderly Americans, "worth $24 billion annually by the end of that period."

Even as the Clean Air Act faces mounting challenges, environmental groups like CleanAIRE NC are working to bridge the gaps created by shifts in federal and state policy. The U.S. Supreme Court's 2023 *Sackett v. EPA* decision redefined "Waters of the United States," stripping federal protection from some wetlands.

More recently, EPA Administrator Lee Zeldin announced plans to reevaluate the 2009 Endangerment Finding, which declared greenhouse gases a threat to public health. Leaders of CleanAIRE say that together, these developments illustrate the importance of efforts like theirs to inform and empower communities.

Addressing the problem

Findings like these underscore the need for accessible information about air quality, which CleanAIRE is working to address through a new web platform called CleanAIRE Academy.

"The landscape of environmental health in North Carolina has drastically shifted in recent months," CleanAIRE NC said in a statement. "Growing concerns about our state's readiness to handle potential environmental emergencies, coupled with recent legal changes, underscore the urgent need for informed community engagement. The CleanAIRE Academy offers a reliable, expert-backed source of information, with content developed by seasoned professionals in air quality, health, policy, advocacy and data science."

"The CleanAIRE Academy greatly expanded my knowledge of air quality and advocacy," said Naami Abbey, a student at UNC Charlotte who described herself as "passionate" about environmental justice and community health. She was an early user.

"The self-paced courses made learning so much easier, deepening my understanding of air quality and how to turn concern into meaningful action for environmental justice," she said.

The academy offers two learning modules. Air Quality 101 is designed to build a user's foundation in air quality. The second, "Advocacy in Action," helps participants "learn to navigate policy, craft compelling messages and engage effectively with decision-makers."

Four more modules are planned: Air Pollution and Your Health, Environmental Justice, AirKeeper Dashboard and Community Science and Air Monitoring.

"CleanAIRE NC has had a history of providing this type of environmental and air pollution education, starting with Atrium Health Network residents," said Vaca. "That was to connect environmental factors and pollution to support health outcomes, especially since this is often missing from traditional medical school curricula."

Vaca said the shift to online learning will help the organization meet growing demand. "We can't always take on additional projects like in-person trainings, but the requests we receive from communities facing pollution and other environmental challenges keep growing. So we wanted to scale our work to support them, even if we didn't have a dedicated grant for their community."

Vaca expects the academy to expand as it gains traction, to reach beyond their usual partners to transportation agencies or corporations.

"It's for the public and our impacted communities," Vaca said. "Now we want to grow it and expand it so it covers a lot more topics."

Drawing on experience

The idea for the academy originated in house with staff experts in 2024.

"Part of the reason it's taken so long is because we are getting expert advice and going through a full review process to gather feedback and update these courses so they meet the highest standards," Vaca said.

The potential audience of academy users includes residents of affected communities, academics, students and policy makers, Vaca said.

"I hope our participants or students see that these topics don't have to be boring or intimidating.

"The takeaway should be that hope and resilience come when we lean on our communities, when we educate ourselves and support the work that is already being done for a cleaner environment."

To learn more about the CleanAIRE Academy, visit cleanairenc.org/academy.

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'Last Supper' Artwork by Kirsten Stolle

THE TOXIN AVENGER

Kirsten Stolle's art raises the red flag about pesticides and chemicals in the food supply

BY MAVEAH GRIFFITH

"My mom was dressed up as this giant strawberry with fish gills."

It was this childhood memory that sticks with Asheville-based visual artist Kirsten Stolle as a pivotal moment that would later influence her work. It came during the mid-1990s during a protest in Santa Cruz, California, against American multinational chemical company Monsanto introducing genetically modified organisms, known as GMOs, into the country's food supply.

"I went down to the protest, and my mom was dressed up as this giant strawberry with fish gills," Stolle said. "It sounds bizarre and the reason she and her kind of cohorts did that is at the time, Monsanto was trying to genetically engineer a strawberry with a flounder gene to withstand cold temperatures in an effort to allow farmers to produce more fruit."

She let out a small laugh. "It sounds like science fiction; it's bizarre."

Later in life, Stolle would become engrossed in the world of chemicals, pesticides and GMOs. These interests connected her already artistic nature to spur a style of activist art that incorporates environmentalism into collages, tapestries and other works that warn of the impacts that corporations such as Monsanto, Dow Chemical, Bayer and Shell have on our food systems through the use of chemicals, petroleum, pesticides and the like.

As a professional artist over the last two decades, Stolle's work has been featured in publications such as Harper's Magazine, The Atlantic, and The Charlotte Observer.

Her art has been shown near and far, with exhibits at the Asheville Art Museum, the Mint Museum in Charlotte, the Weatherspoon Museum of Art in Greensboro, the NC Museum of Art in Raleigh, and the Southeastern Center for Contemporary Art, now The NC Museum of Art - Winston Salem.

Stolle also had a solo exhibit at NOME in Berlin and one of her pieces, "Last Supper," will soon be flown to Poland for display there.

But before then, it will finish out its run as part of her current exhibit, Under the Influence, on display in the Projective Eye Gallery at UNC Charlotte's Dubois Center in Uptown through Oct. 17.

"Pitched at the intersections of art, science, and culture, [Stolle's] work examines the global influence of chemical companies on our food system," reads the exhibit's website. "Delving into propaganda and greenwashing, Stolle appropriates corporate advertising strategies and aesthetics, highlighting the contradiction between public image and facts."

Stolle will be at Projective Eye Gallery on Sept. 11 for a reception and artist conversation with curator Adam Justice.

From coast to coast and landing in the Carolinas

Born in Massachusetts, Stolle remembered with clarity how that one experience at a Santa Cruz protest sparked an interest in food systems, the environment and their impact on health. After moving to San Francisco, Stolle became a vegetarian, eating a primarily soy-based diet. When that diet led to health issues, she began researching our country's food systems further.

"I was eating a lot of processed soy actually and I began to have health problems," she said. "I potentially attributed that to all the soy, which then led me to remember about the GMOs. Then that led me to try to figure out who the companies are that are genetically engineering plants."

Having bounced back and forth between coasts throughout her life, Stolle credits the places she's lived for the environmentally conscious aspect of her work. From living in San Francisco, which she referred to as the "mega epicenter" of food and environmentally conscious people, to Asheville, where she has found that the people have a different approach to environmentalism.

"I would say Asheville is more like, we don't need to yell from the rooftops that we believe in sustainability, they just do," she said. "They do what's right and important. I mean at least people I hang out with."

She pointed out that, in the United States, there has been a surge in colorectal cancer cases in younger age groups. Many researchers have attributed the rise in these cases to diets that are low in fiber but high in processed foods.

Furthermore, recent reports show that more than half of the average American's diet comprises ultra-processed foods, and the percentage only goes up for children.

Many Americans aren't aware of just how harmful genetically modified and ultra-processed foods can be, which is why Stolle points out these problems with her work. Her pieces incorporate advertisements for older agricultural and chemical companies like Monsanto to showcase just how contradictory the industry can be.

The work and the message

Stolle's favorite work, and the one that's gained the most international acclaim, is a jacquard-woven wall tapestry titled "The Last Supper," a piece that she acknowledges can be interpreted in many different ways. The original photo that serves as the basis for the piece was taken during a 1952 Monsanto chemical company retirement dinner.

On her website, Stolle writes, "To construct a dynamic portrait, I resized, reversed, repeated, and colorized the original 8" x 10" photograph. The final image transformed into a large tapestry, reimagines the corporate gathering as a celebration of success amid a problematic future. Last Supper expands my practice to highlight the contrast between ordinary-seeming chemical company employees and the business of war."

Speaking to Queen City Nerve, Stolle laughed at the image. "These four guys are eating and they're at this table," she said. "They just look kind of sad, you know they're supposed to be celebrating this retirement."

Plants and agriculture are often woven into her work, as in "Last Supper," which features floral decorations exploding off the table in a way that Stolle said symbolizes "the relationship to plants feeding us supper."

As was the case when she was experiencing health issues, Stolle said her artistic process begins with DIY research, utilizing library archives online, scientific journals, government and military collections, and the like.

"I actually go to physical archives sometimes and in libraries and then the idea sparks all the research," she explained. "After that, what happens is I find the appropriate medium that supports that idea, so 'Last Supper' is a great example of that."

Stolle said she finds much of the source material for her work shopping at flea markets and antique shops, where she can sift through old photographs and vintage advertisements for inspiration.

Her other pieces include "Pesticide Pop," which explores the colorful advertising style for pesticides despite their toxic natures.

"New Way to Stop the Weeds" is a riveting collage on Plexiglas that calls back to the years following World War II when corporations that made pesticides pivoted to try to market it as a consumer product rather than a tool of war.

The piece places a 1960 magazine advertisement and other similar finds on top of neon Plexiglas.

"The neon was very important to this project because I wanted them to glow," Stolle said. "There's this weird eerie glow, especially the green. It seems like acid or something."

For Stolle, the goal is not always to awe the viewers of her work but to pass them a message — one that they may dive further into it in a similar vein to the rabbit holes she often finds herself in.

"It doesn't have to be beautiful, but it has to be interesting and compelling so that whoever comes to see it gets drawn in," she said.

Interesting and compelling ... like a strawberry with gills.

To learn more about Stolle's work, visit kirstenstolle.com.

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'New Way to Stop Weeds' Artwork by Kirsten Stolle

RUPAUL'S DRAG RACE WERQ THE WORLD TOUR 2025

Sept. 5 • 8 p.m. • Ovens Auditorium, 2900 E. Independence Blvd. • $66 and up • boplex.com

Drag is as old as civilization, with men playing women's parts on ancient Greek and Elizabethan stages. The art of gender switching and blending picked up steam in the late 1800s with America's first self-identified drag queen, formerly enslaved Black man William Dorsey Swann. Today another Black performer, RuPaul, furthers the cause of the subversive art form, popularizing and legitimizing drag with reality TV juggernaut *RuPaul's Drag Race*, launched in 2009. Werq the World Tour is a glitzy, high-powered offshoot of RuPaul's fabulous franchise, showcasing fierce queens like Jimbo, Sasha Velour, and finalists from Season 17 of the show.

CHARLOTTE SOUL FEST

Sept. 6 • 11 a.m. • First Ward Park, 301 E. 7th St. • Free • charlottesoulfest.com

Both a music festival and a catalyst for cultural change, Soul Fest augments performances by local and regional jazz, soul and R&B artists like Curt Keyz, Emmanuel Wynter, Harvey Cummings, Shamika Chantae and more with spoken-word luminaries Bluz and BPoetic, dance workshops that celebrate the rhythm and soul of the African diaspora and an art walk showcasing Black creatives. The event also couples celebration with service, offering tools and counseling to attain affordable housing, a food drive and access to health care with a mammogram center and a blood drive. It's a way to be part of the soul of Charlotte.

FAMILY MEAL, A QUEER COMMUNITY DINNER

Sept. 7 • 2 p.m. • Resident Culture, 2101 Central Ave. • $15 and up • tinyurl.com/RCFamilyDinner

A fundraiser for Time Out Youth, Family Meal helps make Charlotte a safer, more affirming place for LGBTQ+ youth — with dumplings. Renowned Charlotte chefs Sam Diminich, Treasure Williams, Sam Enriquez, Jamisen Booker and Jasmine Macon will throw down their own (loosely defined) versions of dumplings for a pay-what-you-can tasting. Patrons can cover the cost of their dumplings for $15-$25 all the way up to $500 to cover the cost of a LGBTQ+ youth's housing, meals, counseling and more for a month. The event also hosts a Chosen Family beer release from Resident Culture and a queer vendor market featuring LGBTQ+ artists.

MOTOCROSSED, LICHTENVOL, PASTORAL, JORDYN ZAINO

Sept. 7 • 8 p.m. • The Milestone, 3400 Tuckaseegee Road • $10 • themilestone.club

On recent single "Yearning," Charlotte septet Motocrossed retains the questions about identity and acceptance that singer-songwriter Blaire Fullagar posed in her previous band sayurblaires. Motocrossed's musical palette is much more expansive than Fullagar's former outfit's, however, wedding vulnerable vocals to a gentle but rough-hewn alt-country vibe. Inspired singer-songwriter and rock troubadour Jordyn Zaino has been playing with her band WITH HASTE! since 2024, but here she returns to her lyrical, emotionally raw solo roots. Richmond's Lichtenvol envelopes heroic spiraling guitars and Danielle Josephine Rae Huser's pretty shoegaze vocals in a dense aural haze. Fellow Richmonders Apastoral complete the bill.

ELLAS: CELEBRATING WOMEN IN LATIN MUSIC

Sept. 11 • 7 p.m. • The Long Room, 1111 Central Ave. • $16 • tinyurl.com/EllasTheLongRoom

Local vocal powerhouses Liza Ortiz (La Brava), Ana Lucia Divins (Café Amaretto), Brenda Nova, Gaby Marcano and Wanda Lopez essay intimate unplugged versions of iconic songs by Latin music legends including Celia Cruz, Selena, Gloria Estefan, Thalía, Shakira and more. The vocalists' backing band Ultima Nota fuses Latin rhythms with pop, funk and blues and is as illustrious as the frontwomen. Launched in 2007 by guitarist Tony Arreaza, the group is devoted to educating listeners that Latin music is Charlotte's music, and that the musicians who create it are an integral part of — and not outliers within — Charlotte's greater creative community.

PANDA FEST

Sept. 12-14 • times vary • Ballantyne's Backyard, 11611 N. Community House Road • $13-$35 • tinyurl.com/PandaFest2025

Launched as a one-day pop-up event, Panda Fest has grown to be one of the biggest outdoor Asian food festivals in the U.S., spread across eight major cities. The Charlotte iteration of the fest features more than 70 food vendors offering over 300 dishes from China, Japan, Korea, Thailand, Vietnam, and beyond. K-pop choreography exhibitions and lion dances, will be joined by displays of traditional arts like calligraphy and sugar painting. The most fun might be found in the fest's branding based on its titular black and white bearlike mammals, including a 15-foot inflatable panda and a panda bounce ring.



Jordyn Zaino
Photo by Geddi Monroe
9/7



Panda Fest
Photo courtesy of Panda Fest
9/12 - 9/14

ADDED COLOR, HAUNT3D, THE ABSTRATICA

Sept. 13 • 8 p.m. • Evening Muse, 3227 N Davidson St. • $17-$20 • eveningmuse.com

Brazilian-born brothers Daniel and Kiko Soares relocated to Brooklyn to form melodic post-hardcore grunge band Added Color. What makes Added Color stand out is its sense of drama on tunes like latest single "Cling to Me." Here, the trio crafts a heavy shoegaze sound with regretful lyrics that seems to harken to choro, an older Brazilian style of instrumental music boasting complex harmonies. Charlotte producer and multi-instrumentalist Juan Mendoza is haunt3d, composing moody and melodic electronic soundscapes. Building on intricate interlocking guitars, Charlotte alt rockers The Abstratica harken to the post-punk proto-goth of The Cure and Echo and the Bunnymen.

MOVE TOGETHER

September 14 • 10 a.m. • The Green, 425 S Tryon St. • Free • charlotteartsfest.com

Just one colorful skein in the Charlotte international Arts Festival's weave of multifaceted events, Move Together is a 90-minute celebration of movement and music, designed to get everybody on their feet and dancing. The all-ages experience blends playful dance, rhythm games and connection-based movement to create moments of joy, camaraderie and togetherness. No choreography skills are required for attendees to explore easy-to-follow group dances, interactive rhythm games and movement activities that encourage cooperation and creativity. Move Together is all about moving in ways that feel fun and natural; a special playdate that creates a space where families can cut loose and bond.

'LA BESTIA'

September 15-16 • 7:30 p.m. • Booth Playhouse, 130 N. Tryon St. • $37 • blumenthalarts.org

A production by Charlotte circus arts ensemble Nouveau Sud, *La Bestia* is a thought-provoking look at the indomitable human spirit. The troupe's aerialists and acrobats trace the torturous route immigrants take to reach the US border aboard the titular La Bestia ("The Beast"), a circuit of freight trains where people cling to the boxcars' rooftops to hasten their journey. The dangerous passage where death comes in many ways — dehydration, exposure and mechanical accidents — is depicted as a smoking, demonic runaway train. The infernal metaphor is apt as masked thugs tear families apart in America on the orders of debased officials.

KASSA OVERALL, BRAVO PUEBLO

September 16 • 9 p.m. • Snug Harbor, 1228 Gordon St. • $22 • snugrock.com

For drummer, producer, rapper, and vocalist Kassa Overall, there are no boundaries between edgy hip-hop, avant-garde post-bop jazz, and indie rock. On his 2025 LP *Cream*, the Seattle-based polymath crafts audacious freeform collages that pull the listener through a dreamlike labyrinth where blasts of ambulance-siren saxophones, rippling waterfalls of keys and hissing skittering drums coalesce. There's no better local artist to share the bill than Latin-tinged revolutionary electro-pop trio Bravo Pueblo. Percussionist Claudio Ortiz and guitarist-synth player Lee Herrera surround Lisa Ortiz's warm compassionate vocals with a heady fusion of hypnotic grooves, funky instrumentation and swarming harmonies.



Perry Fowler (left) performs at Petra's with Sinners & Saints. Photo by Daniel Coston

THE HOME BASE

Petra's marks 18 years cultivating community in a changing neighborhood

BY PAT MORAN

It's a Thursday night in August at Petra's, and the room is on fire.

Two disparate acts are on the bill. One, folk-inflected singer songwriter Emily June, crafts delicate, dusky tunes as mysterious as a faded photo found in an abandoned building. The other, melodic hard-edged alternative rockers Dog Days, nod to genre forebears like The Pixies.

There should be two different audiences packed into Petra's 100-person capacity barroom, but they act as one, shouting and cheering wildly throughout Dog Days' blistering set and erupting with the same energy and enthusiasm after listening to June's songs in attentive silence.

It's an event that's both challenging and comforting — a response that's typical for Petra's. In the course of 18 years, the unassuming, inviting neighborhood bar has encouraged artistic exploration and expression while building a sense of community and inclusion in a changing neighborhood.

From September 14-20, the venue will celebrate its 18-year anniversary in Plaza Midwood. The highlight of the weeklong festivities is Sugartank! Sundae Fest on Sept. 14. The show's eclectic bill boasts Comino, Noir Noir, Dexter Jordan, Default Modes and YH Artgang, plus an afterparty with DJ Black as the Cosmos. The show will be split between two stages; one in the bar's main room and the other on Petra's back patio.

The event is presented by Petra's and Sugartank Records, a local label formed specifically to highlight LGBTQ artists in the Charlotte area, and it's a perfect example of the type of inclusive, genre-blending events the venue has become known for.

A piano bar sets the stage for an event space

When Curtis Tutt, a retired banker who became Petra's co-owner in 2011, first stepped inside the establishment in 2007, he was simply a curious patron. The cozy piano bar, then-recently launched by queer community members Connie Huddleston, her partner Petra Fugger and local educator Jerry Brown, was less than half its current size, confined to the main bar-and-piano room.

"Petra's was opened by two lesbians and a gay man, but they did not consider it a gay bar," says Tutt, also a member of Charlotte's queer community.

Petra's aimed to be all-inclusive from the very beginning, Tutt maintains, which led many patrons to call it a gay bar, particularly after Dilworth queer club Liaisons closed in 2009 and its clientele migrated to the bar on Commonwealth Avenue.

A year later, Brown recruited Tutt and Dean Freeman to buy out Huddleston and Fugger, whose interest in the bar was waning. By 2010, Petra's had expanded to the two storefront spaces it currently occupies on Commonwealth — the original bar room and a space that has been used until recently as a gallery for art shows.

In the meantime, local musician Perry Fowler was playing with two-man-band Sinners & Saints, a rootsy, acoustic folk-rock duo he formed with bassist Mark Baran. The band first played Petra's as part of a bill put together by then-Charlotte singer-songwriter Jon Lindsay.

Brown, who was the bar's talent booker, kept bringing the duo back.

Fowler fell in love with the place and started working part time at Petra's on New Year's Eve 2013 as a barback. After that, he started working the door before becoming bar manager. Brown soon stepped away from booking performers and events for the venue, so Fowler assumed those duties too.

After Brown passed away in 2016 at the age of 62, Fowler and his wife Marta Suarez del Real joined Tutt and Freeman as co-owners of Petra's.

Petra's offers music and more

In 2024, Flower stepped away as bar manager, ceding the position to Jason Boomhower, who had begun working at Petra's in 2016. Now the bar's full-time talent booker, Fowler devised a method he calls "touring sandwich."

"If you're bringing in someone from out of town, it doesn't make sense to have them open or close the show," he notes.

Drawing on his experience as a touring musician, Fowler noticed that putting a local band at the top of the bill encouraged that band to dip out after playing, taking their fans with them. Putting local favorites on either side of a touring act encourages crowds to stay for the entire bill.

"Live music defined a new direction for Petra's," Tutt says, though the venue also books dance parties, karaoke, variety showcases, drag shows and more. Past events include everything from art exhibits and gaming meetups to dance and theatre performances and film productions like Molly J. Brown's *Murder & Moonbeams*.

Current popular events include Hazy Sunday, a back patio day party hosted by local DJ Probably Will; UltraViolet, a sapphic dance party for queer, lesbian, bisexual, and pansexual women; TuTu Tonight!, a variety show featuring music, comedy, burlesque and drag; and the weekly Piano Karaoke & Sing Along hosted by performer Ryan Stamey.

Tutt notes that TuTu Tonight! has drawn a lot of new faces to Petra's, though it may soon be moved from Tuesday nights to Sunday afternoons.

Fowler is particularly proud of the The Bill Hanna Legacy Jazz Session on Mondays. Here, local musicians jam and pay tribute to the late godfather of Charlotte jazz.

"I'm glad we have [the event] because jazz is a truly American art form," Fowler says.

He notes that Petra's gallery has had a good run as an art space, but informed Queen City Nerve that the team may soon repurpose the room into a retail store to cater to the neighborhood's increasing daytime foot traffic.

Petra's has consistently proved willing to adapt. During the 2020 COVID lockdown, the bar stayed



Celeste Moonchild at Petra's. Photo by Dan Russell-Pinson



Baran Dance performs at Petra's. Photo by Dréa Photo Artistry

afloat by subleasing its space to Charlotte's School of Rock and securing funds through the Shuttered Venues Operational Grant (SVOG).

After a 17-month closure, Petra's reopened in August 2021, boasting additions such as the gallery space, the back patio and a new bar in a tiki-themed space between the main bar room and .

Why Petra's matters

Over the years, Petra's has fostered fond memories from employees, patrons and owners.

Tutt points with pride to a 2012 residency by queer icon and actor Leslie Jordan (Will & Grace).

"He had a tour promoting his book My Trip Down the Pink Carpet, and did six shows benefiting nonprofits here in Charlotte," Tutt remembers. The beneficiaries included Time Out Youth and One Voice Chorus.

Fowler cites a blistering performance by Wu-Tang Clan's Cappadonna in 2016. After the set, when the rapper was partaking of post-show recreation in the gallery, Fowler had to intervene tactfully.

"I'll never forget telling a Wu-Tang Clan member that he couldn't smoke weed in here," Fowler says.

He also recalls an August 2024 show by Reina Tropical (guitarist-singer Fabi Reina), who entwines tender vocals with lush, Afro-Mexican six-string textures and reggaeton beats.

"[She] stood on the piano to play guitar," Flower says. "Usually I would snatch someone down from there, but it was such a cool rock 'n' roll move."

Bar manager Boomhower's fondest Petra's memory is meeting his future wife Ashley Columbus at the bar's '80s-themed dance party Mirror Moves. In October 2022, the couple was married at Petra's by one of their drag queen friends.

"Our families came to gather with friends and even some people who happened by, thinking an event was happening," Boomhower says. "I made more friends that way, just being welcoming to them in a place that was established as a neighborhood hangout and safe space."

Petra's bartender, local musician and Sugartank! Records co-founder Nic Pugh says he can't pick just one favorite recollection.

"I've seen some great bands cut their teeth … had some of my favorite late-night hangs and developed lifelong friendships there," Pugh says.

Hattie's Tap & Tavern owner Jackie DeLoach first started patronizing Petra's in 2012. She quickly befriended Fowler and is so comfortable with Petra's that she's celebrating her 40th birthday at the bar at a private party the night before Sugartank Sundae Fest.

"One of the best nights that I've ever had was … one of my first dates with my partner," DeLoach remembers. "We went to Petra's after dinner and had the best time."

Patrons and employees also share their thoughts about why Petra's matters to them. DeLoach cites the many great bands that have played there and the venue's support for the city's LGBTQ community.

"I always know I'm going to have a good time [at Petra's]," DeLoach says. "I can feel comfortable and safe there."

"It's been a safe, eclectic space for everyone to congregate, create, and grow together for almost 20 years," Pugh says.

Fowler notes that several people have told him that Petra's is homey. They say attending a show at the venue is like having a talented group of musicians setting up to play in your living room.

"For people to acknowledge that makes me feel good," he says. "That's why I fell in love with [the place] 15 years ago."

For longtime patrons to neighborhood newcomers, the notion of Petra's as a safe space is not a mere slogan, but rather a feeling deeply ingrained in a place where all are truly welcome.

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SETTING THE BAR

The changing faces of Charlotte's queer-friendly venues

BY PAT MORAN

When I moved to Plaza Midwood in 2004, the happening place in the neighborhood was The Penguin. You could get a good but greasy black bean burger with a side of fried pickles at the funky diner, and meet interesting people in the parking lot beneath the eatery's iconic sign depicting a flightless arctic bird.

Otherwise, there wasn't much going on.

Three years later, that changed with the opening of two bars that also served as music venues: Snug Harbor on Gordon Street and a cozy piano bar on Commonwealth Avenue called Petra's.

When I asked about the place in those early years, practically everyone told me it was a lesbian bar. Curtis Tutt, who first visited the establishment soon after it opened, heard the same.

Tutt, who became co-owner of Petra's in 2011, says the bar's original owners intended it to be an all-inclusive space that welcomed everyone. He thinks there are several reasons why the establishment was considered an exclusively gay joint by everyone but the people who owned it.

Petra's initial owners — Connie Huddleston, her partner Petra Fugger and local educator Jerry Brown — were all openly gay. Then, in 2009, a gay club called Liaisons in Dilworth shut down, and its customary clientele migrated to Petra's.

"By the virtue of that crowd moving over, I think a lot of people interpreted that Petras was a gay bar," Tutt says. "[Plus] a piano bar is … somewhat considered to be a gay format."

When Perry Fowler first stepped inside Petra's around 2010, he too thought it was a gay space. He was accompanying his roommate, a queer man who normally avoided gay bars. The roommate had been processing a breakup with a longtime boyfriend and was hoping to meet someone.

Petra's, however, wasn't a pick-up spot. Instead, the bar was presenting the kind of quirky, inclusive entertainment that defines it to this day; in this case, a drag queen playing cat videos on the bar's big screen TV.

The biggest contributor to Petra's perceived gayness is that owners like Fowler, who is straight, and Tutt, who is gay, have always openly welcomed Charlotte's queer community, scheduling gay-centric events like drag shows, the TutuTonight variety showcase, Ultraviolet Sapphic Dance Party and, on Wednesday nights, karaoke and sing-along hosted by openly gay comic Ryan Stamey, who's also a staple of the local drag scene.

"Wednesday is one of our queerest nights," Tutt notes. "It's one of the reasons I like being here on Wednesdays. The kaleidoscope of people that you see is always fun to watch."

The disconnect between how bar owners view their businesses vs. the public's perception is perhaps understandable given the state of Charlotte's LGBTQ+ bar scene, which is constantly in flux.

Writing for Q Notes in 2019, Camilla K. Cannon counted more than 20 exclusively gay or lesbian bars, some dating like Scorpio back to the 1960s. Of that tally, only five — Chasers, Side Lines, Bar Argon, The Woodshed and Scorpio, which relocated to Fairwood Avenue in South End in 2024 — appear to still be in business.

The city's handful of lesbian bars once included L4, Hartigan's and Garbo's, launched by Doubting Thomas members Gina Stewart and Brenda Gambill. Now lesbian clubs seem to have vanished entirely.

In a comprehensive look at Charlotte's vanished lesbian bars in 2023, Queen City Nerve's Annie Keough notes that even when lesbian bars thrived in other cities, they never really caught on in Charlotte. That's due in part to the fact that lesbians are a niche clientele, and unless the same members of that small clientele patronize a business night after night, that business's model is economically unsustainable.

Exacerbating that economic pinch is the fact that women in general continue to earn less than men and have less disposable income for frequenting exclusive safe spaces.

Afer gay marriage became legal in North Carolina in October 2024, acceptance and inclusion of queer people in straight places gradually increased. Younger members of the LGBTQ+ community, many of whom never experienced the necessity of needing and finding the safety and representation that exclusively gay spaces have provided since the 1960s, preferred being in places that cater to diverse crowds offering a blend of orientations and genders.

"Owners of … queer-friendly bars in Charlotte, found a balance to sustain [their businesses] while also compensating for the void left to the LGBTQ+ community. Holding themed nights aimed at certain parts of the community allows businesses to remain lucrative without relying on everyday business from such a small portion of the population," Keough writes.

In Charlotte, two bars that follow the course that Keough charts are Petra's and Hattie's Tap & Tavern.

Although Hattie's owner Jackie DeLoach is a gay woman who bartended briefly at Hartigan's before it closed, she never considered launching her establishment as a lesbian bar.

"A lot of people thought of Hattie's as being a gay bar but I wanted it to be a safe space for anyone," DeLoach tells Queen City Nerve. "As long as you are respecting other people, you're good to be here."

The inclusive policy at Hattie's means the bar schedules queer events like The Drag Kings of Charlotte on the second Wednesday of each month, but that show sits comfortably beside live music, karaoke every Thursday and bingo on the second Tuesday of each month.

"When you come in, you can sit next to a person that works at Bank of America or next to a person that works at Wendy's and you can have a conversation," DeLoach notes. "It's an atmosphere where everybody can feel themselves and be comfortable."

DeLoach is friends with Fowler and frequents Petra's because she feels that establishment is much like hers.

"[Petra's] is an everybody bar, but it's a safe everybody bar," she says.

That overriding dedication to patrons' safety has been much on Tutt's mind lately.

Speaking to Queen City News in June 2022, Tutt noted that the culture's shift to LGBTQ+ inclusion was bittersweet because it signaled the end of the exclusively gay bar's role as the sole safe and comfortable space for queer Americans.

Nowadays, however, Tutt is concerned about another cultural shift, the movement toward bigotry, xenophobia and division fostered by an increasingly fascistic federal government.

"For several years, the LGBTQ+ community felt like they didn't really need their own spaces because … they were welcome anywhere they wanted to go, but I feel … that may be changing in a bad way," he says.

For Tutt, that makes it all the more important that places like Petra's and Hattie's continue to be who they are in the community, welcoming and safe spaces for people who want to be who they are without worries or fear.

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SOUNDWAVE

CHARLOTTE'S LIVE MUSIC CALENDAR * SEPT. 3 - SEPT. 16 *

WEDNESDAY SEPT. 3

EXPERIMENTAL/MIXED-GENRE/FESTIVAL
- Bark Culture w/ Nathan Matthews Ensemble, Curiosidades de Bombrile (Snug Harbor)

SINGER-SONGWRITER/ACOUSTIC
- Josh Daniel, Jim Brock & Kerry Brooks (Smokey Joe's Cafe & Bar)*

JAZZ/BLUES
- Jazz Night feat. DJAM Collective (Camp North End)
- Charles Craig Quartet w/ Ramsey Lewis (Middle C Jazz)
- Lovell Bradford Trio Jazz Jam (VisArt Video)

COUNTRY/FOLK/AMERICANA
- Clay Johnson & the Hard Promises w/ The Maggie Valley Band (Evening Muse)

COVER BANDS
- Eternally Grateful (Comet Grill)

OPEN MIC
- Singer/Songwriter Open Mic (The Rooster)*
- Open Hearts Open Mic (Starlight on 22nd)

THURSDAY SEPT. 4

ROCK/PUNK/METAL
- Blissful Thoughts w/ Lodis, Pet Bug (The Milestone)
- Chevelle w/ Alexandria, Dead Poet Society (Skyla Amphitheatre)

COUNTRY/FOLK/AMERICANA
- Bluegrass Jam (Birdsong Brewing)
- Blake Whiten w/ Duke Jones (Neighborhood Theatre)
- Folk Night feat. AP Rodgers (The Rooster)

FUNK/JAM BAND/REGGAE
- Shana Blake's Musical Menagerie (Smokey Joe's Cafe & Bar)*

JAZZ/BLUES
- Ladies of Soul: Gena Chambers, Jackie O and Tre'Jae (Middle C Jazz)

SINGER-SONGWRITER/ACOUSTIC
- Jade Moore (Comet Grill)
- Lou Hazel w/ Alexa Rose (Petra's)

FRIDAY SEPT. 5

ROCK/PUNK/METAL
- True Lilith w/ Yes Dear, Jackson Fig (Petra's)
- Anciients (The Rooster)

POP/DANCE/ELECTRONIC/DJ
- Feyleux w/ Idol Talk, Cold Choir, IIOIOIOII (The Milestone)
- Kumo 99 w/ stripmall ravestarr, Girl Brutal (Snug Harbor)

COUNTRY/FOLK/AMERICANA
- Ryan Montgomery (Coyote Joe's)
- The Wilson Springs Hotel w/ Ranford Almond (Evening Muse)
- Anderson East w/ Benny G (Neighborhood Theatre)

COVER BANDS
- Karma w/ Ellie Morgan (Girl pop tribute) (Amos' Southend)
- Chasing Phoenix w/ Caroline & Omar (Goldie's)
- September in the Park (EWF tribute) (Middle C Jazz)
- Tribute (Allman Brothers tribute) (Visulite Theatre)

SATURDAY SEPT. 6

ROCK/PUNK/METAL
- Something Clever w/ Scars Remain, Enemies and Allies (Amos' Southend)
- Wilmot w/ The Great Indoors (Evening Muse)
- Chained w/ Out to Destroy, Lucky Feeling, Vexen, Bay Street Beatdown (The Milestone)
- Breaking Benjamin w/ Three Days Grace (PNC Music Pavilion)
- Lilith Rising w/ Venus Invictus, Shadows Prevail, Random Alignment (Snug Harbor)
- Couldn't Be Happiers w/ Pam Taylor & The Flyin' V, Riverstone (Starlight on 22nd)

JAZZ/BLUES
- The Best of Noel & Maria (Middle C Jazz)
- Christone 'Kingfish' Ingram (Neighborhood Theatre)

COUNTRY/FOLK/AMERICANA
- The Silverwood Band (Comet Grill)
- Freddie McClendon w/ Gabe Quinn (Evening Muse)

POP/DANCE/ELECTRONIC/DJ
- Reaper (Blackbox Theater)
- Big Wild (The Fillmore)
- Gimme Gimme Disco (The Underground)

HIP-HOP/SOUL/R&B
- Underground Mixer Vol II (The Rooster)

COVER BANDS
- Sweet Leaf w/ Rid Fiske Duo (Goldie's)
- Brightside (Visulite Theatre)

SUNDAY SEPT. 7

ROCK/PUNK/METAL
- Motocrossed w/ Apastoral, Lichtenvol, Jordyn Zaino (The Milestone)

COUNTRY/FOLK/AMERICANA
- Southern Resonance Roots Festival (Heist Brewery & Barrel Arts)
- Caamp (Skyla Amphitheatre)
- James McMurtry w/ Bonnie Whitmore (Visulite Theatre)

POP/DANCE/ELECTRONIC/DJ
- Hazy Sunday (Petra's)
- Soul Sundays feat. Guy Nowchild (Starlight on 22nd)

COVER BANDS
- Justin Varnes: Ella Fitzgerald tribute feat. Maria Howell (Middle C Jazz)

MONDAY SEPT. 8

JAZZ/BLUES
- The Bill Hanna Legacy Jazz Session (Petra's)

OPEN MIC
- Find Your Muse Open Mic feat. Hibou (Evening Muse)

TUESDAY SEPT. 9

ROCK/PUNK/METAL
- Our Last Night (The Fillmore)
- Brenden Starr w/Lacy Dooms, Caught Off Guard (The Rooster)
- Mandako w/ Saintlogic, Fueled By Ma (Snug Harbor)

JAZZ/BLUES
- Menastree (Evening Muse)

POP/DANCE/ELECTRONIC/DJ
- 76th Street (Petra's)

OPEN MIC
- Open Mic Night feat. The Smokin J's (Smokey Joe's Cafe & Bar)*

WEDNESDAY SEPT. 10

ROCK/PUNK/METAL
- Violent Gypsies (Comet Grill)
- Emerald Empire Showcase (Heist Brewery & Barrel Arts)
- Lucero (Neighborhood Theatre)
- Willingdon w/ blush! (Snug Harbor)

SINGER-SONGWRITER/ACOUSTIC
- Josh Daniel, Jim Brock & Kerry Brooks (Smokey Joe's Cafe & Bar)*

JAZZ/BLUES
- Jonathan Scales Fourchestra (Evening Muse)
- Lovell Bradford Trio Jazz Jam (VisArt Video)

COVER BANDS
- Choir! Choir! Choir! Epic Queen Sing-Along (Carolina Theatre)
- Joe Gransden plays Chuck Mangione (Middle C Jazz)
- Lauren Jade: A Tribute to Gladys Knight (Stage Door Theater)

OPEN MIC
- Singer/Songwriter Open Mic (The Rooster)*
- Open Hearts Open Mic (Starlight on 22nd)

THURSDAY SEPT. 11

ROCK/PUNK/METAL
- D.R.I. w/ Paralysis, Mafia (The Milestone)

FUNK/JAM BANDS/REGGAE
- Dessert Tacos Band (Comet Grill)
- Marlon Funaki w/ Twin Suns (Neighborhood Theatre)
- Shana Blake's Musical Menagerie (Smokey Joe's Cafe & Bar)*

SINGER-SONGWRITER/ACOUSTIC
- Beth Gatlin (The Rooster)

HIP-HOP/SOUL/R&B
- Cash Cobain (The Underground)

LATIN/WORLD
- Junior H (PNC Music Pavilion)

COVER BANDS
- Epic Proportion Party Band (Middle C Jazz)

FRIDAY SEPT. 12

ROCK/PUNK/METAL
- Porcelain Parrot w/ Peach Candy Nut Boys (Camp North End)
- The Lenny Federal Band (Comet Grill)*
- South Side Punx w/ Find Out, Van Huskins, Aloha Broha (The Milestone)
- Pink Turns Blue w/ Some Days Are Darker, Secret Shame (Snug Harbor)
- Cartel (The Underground)

POP/DANCE/ELECTRONIC/DJ
- SVDDENDEATH w/ Prosecute, YVM3 (Blackbox Theater)

JAZZ/BLUES
- Tony Exum Jr. (Middle C Jazz)

COUNTRY/FOLK/AMERICANA
- Corey Smith (Coyote Joe's)
- Curtis Eller & The American Circus w/ MOA (Petra's)
- Austin McNeil w/ Adam Church, Warrick McZeke (Visulite Theatre)

SINGER-SONGWRITER/ACOUSTIC
- Abbey Elmore Duo w/ Pluto Duo (Goldie's)

COVER BANDS
- Fake Happy (Paramore tribute) w/ Dovecage, Escape from Salem (Amos' Southend)
- Beginnings (Chicago tribute) (The Amp Ballantyne)
- Zoso (Led Zeppelin tribute) w/ DAZR (Neighborhood Theatre)
- Make Yourself (Incubus tribute) w/ Frizzle Fries (Primus tribute) (The Rooster)

SATURDAY SEPT. 13

ROCK/PUNK/METAL
- Added Color w/ haunt3d, The Abstratica (Evening Muse)
- American Theory w/ Den of Wolves, Sunbreak, Infinxty (The Milestone)
- Autumn Lies Buried w/ The Coursing (The Rooster)
- Ottoman Hogs w/ Groove Skeletons, The Olde Guard, The Situational (Snug Harbor)
- Bayside (The Underground)

POP/DANCE/ELECTRONIC/DJ
- SVDDENDEATH w/ Prosecute, YVM3 (Blackbox Theater)
- Latin Dance Party (Salud Cerveceria)*
- Brooke Alexx w/ Melina KB, Lynsea (Snug Harbor)

JAZZ/BLUES
- Cosmic Collective (Birdsong Brewing)
- Chris Standring (Middle C Jazz)

SINGER-SONGWRITER/ACOUSTIC
- Randy Franklin (Comet Grill)

FUNK/JAM BAND/REGGAE
- Dugi B Experience (Primal Brewery)

COUNTRY/FOLK/AMERICANA
- Megan Moroney (Bojangles Coliseum)
- Little Big Town (PNC Music Pavilion)

CHRISTIAN/GOSPEL/RELIGIOUS
- Strings & Heart w/ Isly (Neighborhood Theatre)

COVER BANDS
- Excitable (Def Leppard tribute) w/ Wicked Love (Amos' Southend)
- Y2K Kids w/ Big Fun (Goldie's)
- The Dirty Doors (Visulite Theatre)

SUNDAY SEPT. 14

ROCK/PUNK/METAL
- La Dispute w/ Glitterer, Tummyache (Neighborhood Theatre)
- Bayside (The Underground)

SINGER-SONGWRITER/ACOUSTIC
- Jade Bird (Amos' Southend)
- Unplugged feat. Mechanical Blvd, Jayne Huntsman, Steven Massey, Trace Casanova (The Rooster)

HIP-HOP/SOUL/R&B
- K Camp (The Fillmore)
- Nelly w/ Ja Rule (PNC Music Pavilion)

POP/DANCE/ELECTRONIC/DJ
- Michael Minelli (Evening Muse)
- Soul Sundays feat. Guy Nowchild (Starlight on 22nd)

LATIN/WORLD
- Anuel AA (Bojangles Coliseum)

CHRISTIAN/GOSPEL/RELIGIOUS
- Purpose By Design, The Concert (Middle C Jazz)

EXPERIMENTAL/MIXED-GENRE/FESTIVAL
- Sugartank Sundae Fest (Petra's)

MONDAY SEPT. 15

ROCK/PUNK/METAL
- Overturn w/ Friend, Agonize, Tongues of Fire, Conquer (The Milestone)

OPEN MIC
- Find Your Muse Open Mic feat. The Rough & Tumble (Evening Muse)

TUESDAY SEPT. 16

ROCK/PUNK/METAL
- Red Rocking Chair (Comet Grill)*
- Dream Theater (Ovens Auditorium)
- A Day to Remember w/ Yellowcard (PNC Music Pavilion)
- Superheaven (The Underground)

POP/DANCE/ELECTRONIC/DJ
- Bunt (Blackbox Theater)
- Jack Van Cleaf (Evening Muse)
- Malcolm Todd (The Fillmore)

JAZZ/BLUES
- Kassa Overall w/ Bravo Pueblo (Snug Harbor)

OPEN MIC
- Open Mic Night feat. The Smokin J's (Smokey Joe's Cafe & Bar)*

*WEEKLY EVENTS THAT MAY BE SUBJECT TO CHANGE.
VISIT QCNERVE.COM FOR THE FULL SOUNDWAVE LISTING

QUEEN CITY NERVE

The Soundwave is Queen City Nerve's comprehensive guide to live music happening in Charlotte every night of the week. This list is pulled together by our editorial team every other week from combing through Charlotte music venue calendars and separated by genre. None of these listings are paid advertisements. We understand that many non-traditional music venues offer live music like coffee shops, breweries, art galleries, community events and more.

This list may not have every event listed. To have a venue included in the editorial compilation of this list, please send an email to info@qcnerve.com with the subject "Soundwave."



Wendy and Eliseo Pascual of Pascuales' Farm. Photo Ryan Pitkin

IF YOU BUILD IT...

Pasquale's Farm is built on pillars of fresh food, nature and community

BY RYAN PITKIN

To drive down Plaza Road Extension in far east Charlotte is to witness change happening in real time.

In the area between Hood Road and I-485, new communities like the Cardinal Creek neighborhood already have residents moving in while construction crews are just starting construction on still newer developments across the street.

Easily missed by less observant drivers on the north side of the road is a small, black gate with seven yellow letter signs next to it that spell out "WELCOME."

The message is not only a broad one welcoming those new neighbors to east Charlotte but a literal one that invites folks to enter the gates and check out something special that's happening at Pasquales' Farm.

Purchased in 2018, built out during the pandemic, launched in 2023 and opened to the public this summer, Pasquales' Farm is the passion project of Eliseo and Wendy Pascual, who have turned their 5 acres in far east Charlotte into an urban farming oasis amidst ongoing growth and development.

The family-owned farm is home to dozens of chickens, a handful of goats and tons of produce being grown in 40 raised beds, a climate-controlled greenhouse and a high tunnel with the help of Eliseo's custom-made irrigation systems.

Over its two years in existence, Pasquales' Farm has sold produce at area markets such as Rosa Parks Farmers Market in west Charlotte. This summer, they opened their Farm Stand for the public to shop for produce on the Pasquales' property on Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays.

Eliseo and Wendy have a bigger vision for Pasquale's Farm than to simply serve as a produce market, however; they want to become a community hub and agritourism destination to educate folks about urban farming and where their food comes from.

"There's nothing, I think, that brings people together more than food — food and nature," Eliseo told Queen City Nerve on a recent visit. "If we can put those things together and we don't bring the community parts, we are missing the point."

On Sept. 12, Pasquales' Farm will host a free outdoor screening of the 2021 film *In the Heights* as part of local Latin American film organization Cine Casual's Cine en los Barrios event series.

"Bring your blankets, chairs, and family — it's going to be a night full of music, joy, and community vibes," reads the event page.

Other upcoming events include Latin Rock Night on Oct. 3 and on Oct. 10 the inaugural mental health awareness festival called Mindful Together, creating a symbiotic relationship between the farm and its neighbors near and far.

Finding a home

Eliseo was born and raised in Santo Domingo, the capital and largest city of the Dominican Republic. Despite the urban environment, as he explains it, "In some way, every Dominican is a farmer."

His father grew up on a farm that remains in the family to this day, and Eliseo spent most of his summers there learning the ways of agriculture.

When he grew up, he attended college in Soviet-era Moscow, where he studied agricultural engineering.

He returned home to Santo Domingo, where he earned Master's degrees in public administration and economics.

In 2001, he arrived in the United States to visit a close friend from college. His intention was never to stay, but his friend was in the midst of launching a real estate company and asked Eliseo to join him in the venture. Eliseo acquired a work visa and got onboard.

He found success in real estate and development, but in the back of his head he always had a desire to return to his roots in farming.

Upon moving to North Carolina in the early aughts, he had noticed a lack of local produce available for those who sought it out.

"When I started checking around, I went to supermarkets, and everything that I saw in a supermarket was either from California, from Canada, from Mexico, but no products that I see, 'Okay, this is local,'" he recalled.

He launched a greenhouse project in a church parking lot in the Sugar Creek corridor in 2015 to help address the food desert there but couldn't build out the proper infrastructure to make the project worthwhile without owning the land.

In 2018, he was part of a development team that aimed to build a townhouse community on a 5-acre plot off Plaza Road Extension. Land surveyors found that it wouldn't be feasible to build enough homes to make the project worthwhile for developers, so Eliseo pivoted.

"When I found this land for them and I saw that we couldn't do the project that they were trying to do, then I told them, 'Okay, for you, it doesn't work, but for me, it's perfect,'" he said. "The location, the land and everything, all the resources that were here, it's perfect for what we were planning to do."

The pandemic gave Eliseo and his family a chance to focus on building out the property. They cleared land, built access roads and laid the groundwork for sustainable farming.

Food supply and the importance of urban farming

Meanwhile, COVID-19 also sparked a reawakening among many around the country regarding food supply and access, with grocery stores shutting down and supply lines becoming choked off, leading to empty shelves.

"People understood that the distribution system is very fragile," he said. "That if we have an important event like COVID, if we don't have local production, we can starve ... They understood that when you have people producing milk here or meat, when nothing can come, you can rely on those people because they are producing that in your vicinity and you go there."

Eliseo's larger vision involves support from city, county and state governments to build a network of urban farms located around the county, interspersed along properties located strategically along I-485, with the capacity to serve the surrounding population in the event that food supply lines are once again halted.

In order to create such a network, however, Eliseo insists there must be incentives that encourage more folks to get into urban farming. With land affordability skyrocketing just as the overall cost of building materials and other necessities increases, it's becoming more difficult for people with knowledge and experience to actually start a project like Pasquales' Farm.

Entering the farm's third year, Eliseo has not yet come close to breaking even as he continues to experiment with ways to make the most out of every inch of his property.

"My taxes go through the roof and I don't have the production yet that keeps up with the cost that I have associated to the property," he said. "People want to do it, but there's no funds available to get the land in the condition that you can develop for production.

"That is one of the biggest barriers that people have to start [farming] produce, especially in the urban setting, because there's a very high upfront cost that you need to do it in order to little by little start recovering."

On his land, Eliseo and Wendy continue to build out more ways to not only produce fresh foods but make their farm a destination for field trips, educational workshops, produce shopping and community events.

Eliseo is currently working on a boardwalk for visitors to tour the backside of the property where the goats, ducks, chickens and other animals roam, plus a barn near the front for workshops and other activities.

They will also continue to build out the Farm Stand to become a Farm Store that is open to the public seven days a week.

It's all being done in the hopes that, if they build it, the people will come, which has proven to be true during volunteer days and other community events held over the summer.

"That's why we think that having [food and nature] together and bringing the community can make the difference," said Eliseo. "Because the community will see how they can support us and also how we can support the community and have the win-win relationship. Because there's a lot that we can do from here that will positively impact the community. If we have to support the community, if the community sees us as a source of solutions for some of their needs, that will allow us to keep growing."

Visit pascualesfarm.com to learn more about Pasquales' Farm.

RPITKIN@QCNERVE.COM

HOROSCOPE

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SEPT. 3 - SEPT. 9

ARIES (March 21 to April 19) Your ideas earn the respect of your colleagues, but you'll have to present some hard facts and figures if you hope to persuade those who make big decisions to support you.

TAURUS (April 20 to May 20) Keep your bright Bull's eyes focused on the project at hand. Avoid distractions. There'll be lots of time for fun and games later. Expect to get welcome news later on in the month.

GEMINI (May 21 to June 20) You might soon have to decide about moving a relationship from its current status to another level. Don't let anyone influence your decision. It must be yours and yours alone.

CANCER (June 21 to July 22) You can finally get off an emotional roller coaster and get back to focusing on your goals without interruptions through the rest of the week. A nice change is due later on in the month.

LEO (July 23 to August 22) Trying to make an impression on some people runs into a bit of a snag at first, but it all works out. Meanwhile, an old and almost forgotten personal matter once again needs attention.

VIRGO (August 23 to September 22) A rise in your energy level helps you finish an especially demanding task. Take some time now to spend with family and friends before starting a new project.

LIBRA (September 23 to October 22) This is a good time to reestablish contact with trusted former associates who might be able to offer good advice regarding a career change you've been contemplating.

SCORPIO (October 23 to November 21) Your resourcefulness combined with a calm, cool approach can help you work your way out of a knotty situation and avoid a potentially serious misunderstanding.

SAGITTARIUS (November 22 to December 21) A calm, quiet period allows you to recharge your energies. But later on in the month, you'll be ready to saddle up and gallop off in pursuit of your goals.

CAPRICORN (December 22 to January 19) Family matters need your attention. Check things out carefully. There might still be unresolved tensions that could hinder your efforts to repair damaged relationships.

AQUARIUS (January 20 to February 18) It's a good time to take a stand and show as much passion on your own behalf as you do when arguing for the rights of others. You might be happily surprised by the reaction.

PISCES (February 19 to March 20) You bring sense and sensitivity to a confusing situation. Things settle down later on, leaving you free to enjoy a weekend of fun and relaxation with friends and family.

BORN THIS WEEK: You have a resourceful talent for being able to perceive possibilities where others see only problems. This makes you a crucial person to have around during a crisis.

SEPT. 10 - SEPT. 16

ARIES (March 21 to April 19) An offer to help with a stalled project should reassure you that you have a workable plan in spite of the problems in getting it up and running. The weekend brings more positive news.

TAURUS (April 20 to May 20) A past problem about a workplace situation reemerges early in the week. Talking things out helps ease tensions by midweek, but some hurt feelings could linger for a few more days.

GEMINI (May 21 to June 20) Optimistic aspects dominate your efforts. However, expect to confront criticism, some of which might be valid, so keep an open mind. But overall, it's your views that will count.

CANCER (June 21 to July 22) Social interaction with new people, especially on the job, could be a bit strained in the early part of the week. But the awkwardness passes as you get to know each other better.

LEO (July 23 to August 22) Expect news about a follow-up to a workplace change that could make a difference in your career path. Meanwhile, new friends widen the circle for all you social Lions who love to party.

VIRGO (August 23 to September 22) Enjoy your well-earned plaudits for a job well-done. But be aware that some people might not share your colleagues' admiration, and you might have to work harder to win them over.

LIBRA (September 23 to October 22) It's a good week to recheck your probably already overlong to-do list and decide what to keep and what to discard. Lose the clutter and focus your energy on what's really important.

SCORPIO (October 23 to November 21) This is a good time to take a new perspective on what you've been offered. Expanding your view could help to uncover any plusses or minuses that weren't apparent at first.

SAGITTARIUS (November 22 to December 21) Applying the usual methods to this week's unique challenges might not work too well. Instead, use your creativity to find a way to resolve any impasse that develops.

CAPRICORN (December 22 to January 19) So what if fate throws some obstacles in your path this week? Just keep in mind that the sure-footed and resolute Goat can get past any barrier by focusing on the goals up ahead.

AQUARIUS (January 20 to February 18) This week calls for better communication with people in both your private life and the workplace. Start by asking questions, then pay close attention to the answers.

PISCES (February 19 to March 20) Potentially beneficial workplace changes could be closer than you realize. Make sure you know what's going on so that you're not left high and dry when the good things happen.

BORN THIS WEEK: You're not timid about pushing to have your aims realized once you've set your mind to accomplishing your goals.



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GO FIGURE!

The idea of Go Figure is to arrive at the figures given at the bottom and right-hand columns of the diagram by following the arithmetic signs in the order they are given (that is, from left to right and top to bottom). Use only the numbers below the diagram to complete its blank squares and use each of the nine numbers only once.

	+		+		= 20
+		-		-	
	-		+	2	= 7
+		×		÷	
	+		-		= 2
= 13		= 35		= 1	

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

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Even Exchange

by Donna Pettman

Each numbered row contains two clues and two 6-letter answers. The two answers differ from each other by only one letter, which has already been inserted. For example, if you exchange the A from MASTER for an I, you get MISTER. Do not change the order of the letters.

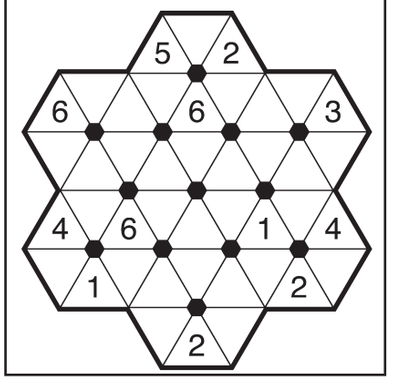
1. Light rain	__ H __ __ __ __	More pokey	__ L __ __ __ __
2. River transport	__ __ __ __ E	Religious law	__ __ __ __ N
3. Up to date	__ __ __ E __ __	Retract a statement	__ __ __ A __ __
4. Track star's barrier	__ __ R __ __ __	Football conference	__ __ D __ __ __
5. Selected	__ H __ __ __	Nearby	__ L __ __ __
6. Lone Star capital	A __ __ __ __ __	Actor Hoffman	D __ __ __ __ __
7. Redden in the face	__ L __ __ __	Painting tool	__ R __ __ __
8. Shiny lip cosmetic	__ __ O __ __	"The ____ Menagerie"	__ __ A __ __
9. Indigenous	__ __ C __ __	Faithful	__ __ Y __ __
10. Long-armed ape	G __ __ __ __ __	Hair decoration	R __ __ __ __ __

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SNOWFLAKES

by Japheth Light

There are 13 black hexagons in the puzzle. Place the numbers 1 - 6 around each of them. No number can be repeated in any partial hexagon shape along the border of the puzzle.



CryptoQuote

AXYDLBAAXR
is **LONGFELLOW**

One letter stands for another. In this sample, **A** is used for the three L's, **X** for the two O's, etc. Single letters, apostrophes, the length and formation of the words are all hints. Each week the code letters are different.

RJ LIAJ, GU RJ'TJ DPHOX,
IQEPK KLGTKX KLEPZICV VIXZ
KE BDIX KLJ SIWJ EU DGUJ.
– ITGICCI LPUUGCSKEC

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CryptoQuip

This is a simple substitution cipher in which each letter used stands for another. If you think that X equals O, it will equal O throughout the puzzle. Solution is accomplished by trial and error.

Clue: **A** equals **D**

KH XVDOH V AVAS'H KCAVTJG
JKCMY KH HYKH XCSSG
MCG'O ISZ-JVSZD, TCH HYZS
V YKA K YK-YK LILZSH.

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TRIVIA TEST
BY FIFI RODRIGUEZ

1. FOOD & DRINK: The Middle Eastern dish called falafel is made mostly of what ingredient?
2. GEOGRAPHY: Which country has the most UNESCO World Heritage sites?
3. TELEVISION: What is the name of Hawkeye's living quarters in the "M*A*S*H" sitcom?
4. ANIMAL KINGDOM: What is a male swan called?
5. LITERATURE: Which Irish author wrote his last novel in crayon?
6. MEASUREMENTS: How many square feet are in a square yard?
7. SCIENCE: What's the main function of red blood cells?
8. MOVIES: Streaming movies became eligible for the 2021 Oscar awards for what reason?
9. ANATOMY: What type of acid is found in the human stomach?
10. U.S. CITIES: Which city was named for a British prime minister?

SUDOKU
BY LINDA THISTLE

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4	6		9	5				
	3	2	7		1		6	8
	9		3				5	1
	8		6				7	
						2	4	6
7	2	6	4	3	5		1	
				9			8	
		8		1		5		
6		5	8	7		1		2

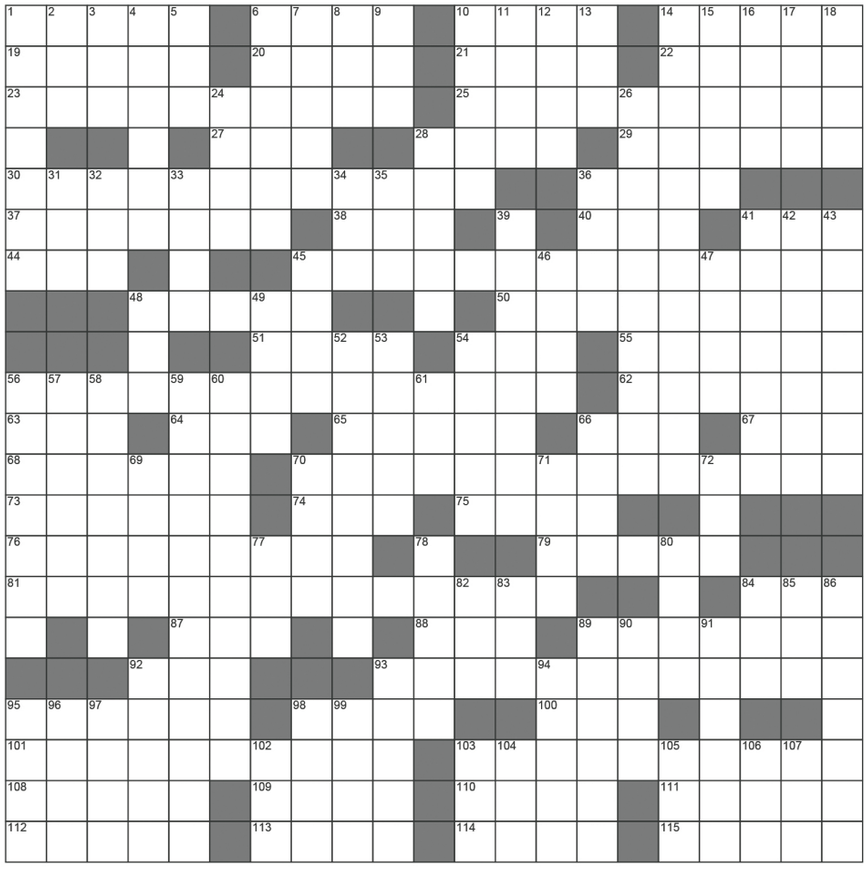
PLACE A NUMBER IN THE EMPTY BOXES IN SUCH A WAY THAT EACH ROW ACROSS, EACH COLUMN DOWN AND EACH SMALL 9-BOX SQUARE CONTAINS ALL OF THE NUMBERS ONE TO NINE.

CROSSWORD
?

ACROSS
1 Greek restaurant item
6 Coup d'___
10 Highland group
14 Zodiac sign on Sept 9th
19 Figure of speech
20 It's not common, in Barcelona
21 Dwell (on)
22 He is my god, in Hebrew
23 Job in a factory in 1830
25 Reader of heavenly signs
27 "The Simpsons" bartender
28 Evening, in ads
29 Betsy and Diana, for two
30 Energy from fission
36 Marathon, e.g.
37 Secures
38 Punch sound
40 Pasta suffix
41 PIN requester
44 Nine-digit ID
45 The art of motion picture
48 Be honest (with)
50 Outward behavior
51 Hefty volume
54 Advanced degs.
55 Incantations
56 Unlucky mishap with a dinner-table shaker
62 Holy Roman Emperor who died suddenly in 983
63 On, in Amsterdam
64 Get ____ for effort
65 Explosive liquid, for short
66 Wedding words
67 Six-shooter
68 Figures out
70 ?
73 Informal designation for some LGBTQ+ allies
74 Eisenhower's nickname
75 Popular South Indian breakfast food
76 Home to the Blue Ridge Mountains
79 Eel, at sushi bars
81 Largest dance group of the 20th century
84 Biblical boat
87 Legal document for borrowing money
88 ____ kwon do
89 Early Southwestern natives around the Virgin River
92 When lunch is over?
93 Footballer nicknamed 'Golden Balls'
95 Robotic supervillain in the first "Avengers" sequel
98 Pate de ____ gras
100 Historical period
101 Russian art treasure
103 Rapper's sound
108 Muscat native
109 Chile neighbor
110 Newspaper page
111 "Cool!"
112 Sealy competitor
113 Put one's foot down
114 To be, in Paris
115 Extraterrestrial

DOWN
1 Japanese robes
2 First name of sports brand founder Dassler
3 Much money, briefly
4 "C'est magnifique!"
5 German auto
6 Mistakes
7 Room, in the Kelabit language of Borneo
8 "You ____ So Beautiful"
9 Rocky peak
10 Committee head
11 Endure
12 Commedia dell'___
13 DC-based network
14 Dinosaur featured in the film Jurassic Park
15 "You win"
16 Fixes, as a fight
17 Clarified butter
18 Couple's pronoun
24 Yemen neighbor
26 Drink featured in sitcom 'Keenan and Kel'
28 Staircase post
31 Swiss investment banking giant
32 Wholesale qty.
33 German article
34 Nail polish brand
35 Prevailed
36 French town, scene of 1942 trial.
39 Animosity
41 Mea culpa
42 Chemical element with atomic number 69
43 Genus of flowering plants in the family Primulaceae
45 Drain problem
46 Exam
47 Work without ___
48 Online chuckle
49 Sicilian volcano
52 Nicknames
53 Submit a paperless return
54 "Queen of Scots" monarch
56 Having a baglike structure
57 Priest's concern
58 Reduced to rubble, as by a fire
59 Largest water body in Africa
60 Imparting
61 Letters on a Cardinal's cap
66 "Sign me up!"
69 Jazz trumpeter Baker
70 ____ E. Coyote
71 Eskimo knives
72 Big name in outdoor gear
77 Acronym for spatial coordinates
78 Curriculum ____
80 Nacho topper, for short
82 Toyota ____4: SUV model
83 Circle of flowers
84 Sound of relief
85 Wu-Tang Clan producer
86 Worldwide hotel chain
89 Wear down
90 Tidy
91 Amateur astronomer's magazine, in brief
92 "____ we all?"
93 Unearth
94 Dissuade
95 Strange sightings
96 Weak, as an excuse
97 Ski lift
98 Shoe fillers
99 Shrek, for one
102 Mini-LPs
103 Fish eggs
104 Fitting
105 Santa ____ winds
106 Mai ____
107 Consumed





AERIN IT OUT

THIRD TIME'S A CHARM

McHale's feels like returning home for the first time

BY AERIN SPRUILL

Access to street parking within a couple blocks of any bar, restaurant or hangout in NoDa is unheard of most days — especially on a Sunday before Labor Day. The fact that we'd lucked into a close spot only added to the illusion that the night was ours.

As we walked past familiar favorites that seemed quieter than usual, it felt like the perfect setup to check out NoDa's new Irish pub, McHale's. Surely it would be dead, just the way we like it.

But as boo and I passed the bold red, black trim and gold lettering of the pub's façade to take the walkway past the bustling dining room to the outdoor patio, it became clear most of NoDa's patrons had the same idea.

The back porch and beer garden spilled at the seams with bargoers circling up for the second half of a Miami/Notre Dame game on the big screen hanging from the patio wall.

We quickly ordered and closed our tab at the outdoor bar, convinced we wouldn't be able to elbow our way back to it later. But snagging a quiet corner with an abandoned barrel — and realizing the game had guests in more of a chokehold than the drinks — made it obvious we'd closed out prematurely.

By the time our British mate arrived, beaming over a freshly poured taste of home — a Boddingtons brewed in Manchester — we'd fully adjusted to the busier atmosphere. And to my surprise, my appreciation for that quiet corner only grew under the string lights swaying above tables and barrels, creating the kind of cozy scene you'd expect to stumble into on a "Jet2holidays" trip to Ireland.

Feeling at ease, I made my way inside to check out the interior, half-expecting to confirm my doubts that anything new could actually feel right here. But standing in the bustling main dining room with a crisp Magners in hand, I realized how quickly the walls had adapted — now holding Irish staples like sausage rolls where they once pulsed with the spice and rhythm of the Caribbean.

At the end of July, McHale's Pub opened in the former Roy's Kitchen & Pub — which had replaced Mangos before it, hoping to carry a Jamaican dream forward. It's a story this popular neighborhood stretch knows well: a revolving door of concepts that has haunted more than a few storefronts, each one fading before the next arrives.

But that's the thing — McHale's isn't some rookie trying to break into the neighborhood. It's a reopening, a comeback, a revival of a name that's been around for decades.

The OG McHale's locations were serving up pints in Fort Mill (1997–2014) and Rock Hill (2004–2020). That's why NoDa's version feels less like a debut and more like a homecoming.

The air buzzed with that unmistakable pub energy — fried food and malt hanging thick while friendly banter danced off the walls. When a platter of fish and chips landed nearby, the perfectly golden haddock all but dared me to steal a bite without asking. But I'd promised the boo I wouldn't be tempted to thwart our late-night leftover plans.

Seeing the "snugs" (the private nooks built for three or four), a bar packed with slightly stressed bartenders hustling through orders and an endless loop of cocktails framed by family photos, sports memorabilia and soft lighting, I felt my initial skepticism toward change begin to fade.

Behind the bar, a familiar face from Al Mike's was pouring beers and cocktails, adding another layer of comfort to the room. It only felt fair to follow the lead of the patrons I'd side-eyed and order a dirty martini. Another drinker dismissed it as "swamp water" and, truthfully, it was mid — but *in my best Shrek voice*: It was my swamp water.

For all my hesitation about an Irish pub "fitting in" with the cool kids on the block, it already felt like it had been there forever. The exposed brick, rich wood paneling and vintage fixtures sealed the deal, keeping the space from veering into anything chintzy and giving it a warmth that feels authentic rather than staged.

Returning to our corner barrel, I thought about how our British bud had insisted he'd recently come to McHale's for just one, only to end up staying all night. I raised a brow at the time, doubting the place could hold anyone's attention that long, let alone mine. But I stood corrected.

There's a rare pull to McHale's — the kind that comes from Irish roots and a name with history behind it. This isn't just a revival of an old pub; it's something sturdier, something that feels like it might finally outlast the curse of 3112 N. Davidson St.

And if the line for the two single-stall restrooms gets unbearable, salvation comes in the form of three porta-potties out back. Stay a while.

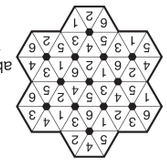
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PUZZLE ANSWERS



2	9	1	3	7	8	5	4	6
4	3	5	6	1	2	8	7	9
7	8	6	4	9	5	3	1	2
9	1	8	5	3	4	6	2	7
6	4	2	7	8	1	9	5	3
5	7	3	9	2	6	4	8	1
1	5	4	2	6	3	7	9	8
8	6	9	1	4	7	2	3	5
3	2	7	8	5	9	1	6	4

EDITOR'S NOTE: *This crossword was created by Lawrie for Vanessa to celebrate their love for one another. There's no one he'd rather solve the puzzle of life with.*



CryptoQuote
answer
We have, if we're lucky, about thirty thousand days to play the game of life.
— Arianna Huffington

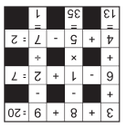
CryptoQuip
answer
At first I didn't audibly laugh at that funny guy's one-liner, but then I had a ha-ha moment.

Even Exchange
answers

1. Shower, Slower	6. Austin, Dustin	11. Chose, Close	16. Gibbon, Ribbon
2. Canoe, Canon	7. Blush, Brush	12. Local, Loyal	17. Gloss, Glass
3. Recent, Recant	8. Gloss, Glass	13. Hurdle, Huddle	18. Recent, Recant
4. Hurdle, Huddle	9. Local, Loyal	14. Gloss, Glass	19. Canoe, Canon
5. Chose, Close	10. Gibbon, Ribbon	15. Blush, Brush	20. Shower, Slower

Trivia Answers

1. Chickpeas or fava beans.
2. Italy.
3. The Swamp.
4. A cob.
5. James Joyce.
6. 9.
7. To carry oxygen.
8. COVID-19 pandemic.
9. Hydrochloric acid.
10. Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania (William Pitt the Elder).



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SAVAGE LOVE

ALL TIED UP

Not here for the kink shaming

BY DAN SAVAGE

Long-time reader! I'm a mostly straight boy in my early 20s with a new girlfriend. I say "mostly straight" because I'm into bondage and finding men who wanted to tie me up was always easier than finding women who wanted to tie me up. But I met a girl at a party this summer and we started dating. She's beautiful and smart and really into me but she isn't into bondage at all. She's not okay with me getting tied up outside our relationship. She said I should "stop being kinky" for her, as it makes her uncomfortable to think I have sexual needs she can't meet. She also hates thinking about me being "abused by predators." None of the half a dozen men and one woman who've tied me up since I became sexually active were "predators." If anything, they were extremely kind to me and I've had nothing but good experiences. But seeing my bondage photos deeply upset my girlfriend. (She asked to see them when we "laid our kink cards on the table," which we did three months in, like you recommend.)

I know what you're going to tell me — break up with her — but there aren't lots of other girls lining up to date me. I'm tall and skinny and pretty in a twinky way that attracts male attention but turns off women. (Gay men are disappointed when I tell them I'm straight, but at least they believe me. When I tell straight and bi women I'm straight, they think I'm lying.) The last time I had a girlfriend was in high school, Dan, and I've really enjoyed having a girlfriend for the first time in my adult life. Finding another girl who is into me isn't going to be easy.

Is this a case where I need to settle? ("Settling down requires settling for." — Dan Savage) My very first sexual fantasies were about bondage. I don't think I've ever had an orgasm when I wasn't either thinking about being tied up or actually tied up. Do I give up my kink for now — or pretend to give it up (I'll still be thinking about it) — in the hopes that my girlfriend gets more comfortable over time? Or do I break up with her even if it means I'll probably wind up alone the rest of my life? I sometimes wish I wasn't like this. It honestly feels like a curse. Finding a girl who is into me is hard enough. Finding one who is also into bondage feels impossible.

Thai American Bondage Boy

She's beautiful, she's smart, and she's wrong for you; she wasn't a mistake, she was right for this summer … but she's not right for the long haul.

At 24, TABB, you're too young to settle for someone who doesn't respect your sexual needs. (Please note: I said, "doesn't respect your sexual needs," I didn't say, "doesn't satisfy every one of your sexual needs.") But even if you were 64, you shouldn't settle for someone who shames you for having sexual needs/interests/kinks they won't or can't meet.

As a long-time reader, you're no doubt familiar with my "price of admission" concept: we don't get everything we want from our sexual and/or romantic partners — some needs go unmet, everybody has their annoying shit, no two people are a perfect fit — and figuring out whether you wanna be with someone comes down to deciding whether you're willing to pay the price of admission. Your partner is a slob and you're a neat freak; is being the one who keeps things tidy without (too much) complaining a price of admission you're willing to pay to be with them? You're into anal or bondage or watersports or whatever and your partner isn't into anal or bondage or watersports or whatever; is going without anal or bondage or watersports or whatever a price of admission you're willing to pay to be with them?

Being the one who tidies up (the price of admission I pay to be with my husband) or going without anal or bondage or watersports or whatever are reasonable prices of admission that a reasonable person might be willing to pay to be with someone who makes them happy in lots other ways/meets lots of other needs. But what your girlfriend is asking — what your girlfriend is demanding — is not reasonable. She's not asking you to go without being tied up by her, TABB, something you might be able to live with if you were allowed other outlets, she's asking you to reach into your erotic subconscious and rip out your kinks for her psychological comfort. That demand is equal parts unreasonable, disrespectful and impossible, TABB; it's not only a price of admission you shouldn't be willing to pay, it's one you cannot pay.

That said, TABB, there are people out there with kinks they don't get to act on because they fell in love with someone who doesn't share their kinks and wants monogamy. But there's a difference between a loving partner who says, "You can explore this through fantasy and solo play," and a controlling lunatic who says, "You must cut this out of your erotic imagination like it's some sort of tumor." The loving partner's ask ("I'm willing to make space for this") demonstrates respect for your erotic autonomy. The lunatic partner's ask ("I'm asking you to kill this part of yourself") shows no respect for your erotic autonomy, TABB, and puts you in the impossible position of having to lie to your partner for the rest of your life.

Now, you could play the long game here — you could tell your girlfriend what she wants to hear and hope she comes around — and I've met people at kink events (enthusiastic participants) who weren't into kink until they fell in love with someone who was and slowly warmed to their partner's kinks. But they were the kind of vanilla people (or formerly vanilla people) who'd given their kinky partners permission to enjoy and explore on their own and not the kind of vanilla people who demanded that their partners take their kinks behind the barn and Old Yeller 'em.

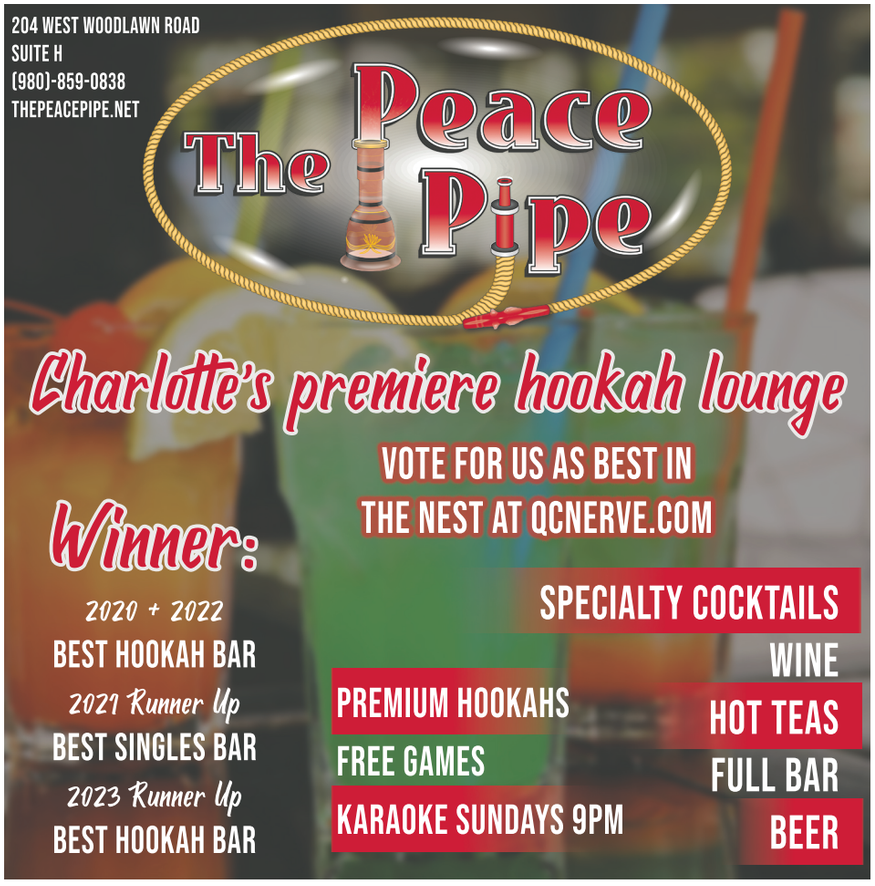
Finally, TABB, right now you're telling yourself that this girl was a fluke and that she's the only pretty girl you're ever gonna pull. Why not tell yourself that you've turned a corner? You could be telling yourself that you've grown into your body and/or aged into your face and you're suddenly attracting female attention, and this girl is proof. But instead of telling yourself a story that builds your confidence ("Getting this girl proves I can get a girl!"), TABB, you're telling yourself a story that tears it down ("This girl is the only girl I'm ever going to get."). Tearing yourself down instead of building yourself up is a choice, TABB, and it's a dumb one.

P.S. You're a grown ass adult man. Get involved in the kink scene where you live. Keep going to normie parties where you'll meet women who may or may not be kinky while also attending kink events where you'll meet women who are definitely kinky. And you might wanna learn to switch, TABB, as most women into bondage are subs. A woman who's just as turned on by bondage as you are — and they're out there — won't ask you to "just stop being kinky," TABB, and she's far likelier to be okay with you getting your submissive needs met elsewhere if she can't meet them herself. (You and your subby girlfriend can go to play parties and get tied up together and think of how much fucking fun that would be!)

P.P.S. Listening to you say you wish you weren't kinky made my heart hurt, TABB, because it reminded me of how I used to wish — when I was 14 — that I wasn't gay. All the bad things came at once (disappointed parents, lost friends, crushing loneliness) and the good things took so long to come that I thought they never would. But by the time I was a little older than you are, TABB, I realized that I had gone places and done things (and people) I wouldn't have gone and done if I weren't gay. I realize the experiences of a gay boy and a kinky straight boy aren't analogous, but the more you put yourself out there — the more people you meet — the sooner you'll be able to see all the good things/people/experiences kink brought into your life. Your kink will take you places and introduce you to people you wouldn't have met if you weren't kinky. And if you're lucky, TABB, one day you'll be with someone you love and who loves all of you and it'll be someone you wouldn't have met if you weren't at that shibari workshop together or you weren't already strung up in that dungeon when she walked in. And you'll look at her and your life together and you'll think, "Holy shit, I have bondage to thank for all of this."

P.P.P.S. In case I wasn't clear: dump your fucking girlfriend.

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