



HOME

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### THE SECRETS OF SELLING A HOUSE

Learn how to sell a house with tips and tricks from a professional.

### MAKING A HOUSE A HOME

A house should be more than a place to just survive.

### FEATURED: HOW TO SHOP FOR HOME INSURANCE

Finding the right insurance can be frustrating. We have a checklist to make insurance buying easier.

Home Edition

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# BLADENONLINE WEEKLY RECIPES OFFERED ON YOUTUBE

BY: BLADENONLINE

Every Thursday the BladenOnline team publishes a new video with recipes.

We invite you to join our Weekly Recipe Videos on the Bladen Online Youtube Channel.

## Monkey Bread

### Ingredients:

- Three cans of the 8-10 count biscuits
- One cup of regular sugar
- One cup of brown sugar
- A teaspoon of cinnamon
- 1/2 cup of butter

### Directions:

1. Cut the biscuits into quarters and place them in a large mixing bowl.
2. Add the cinnamon, the regular sugar, and half of the brown sugar. Mix all together.
3. Place biscuits in a microwave-safe container
4. Mix remaining brown sugar and the melted butter.
5. Pour the melted butter and brown sugar mix over the biscuits.
6. Put the biscuits in the microwave for 10- 12 minutes.
7. When done, let the biscuits rest for at least five minutes before turning out onto a platter.

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# Bladen Community College Hosts “Gold Standard” Graduation

by Charlotte Smith



Bladen Community College held its annual graduation ceremony on Friday, May 14, 2021. Graduates and BCC staff members celebrated uniquely this year, showcasing resilience and fortitude amid a Pandemic.



BCC President Dr. Amanda Lee stated, “Graduation is my favorite time of the year, and this year is no exception.”



Dr. Lee proved this statement as she stood on concrete in heels from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m., shaking hands, posing for photos with each graduate in attendance, and wishing them well.

There were stations around the campus offering free gift bags, yard signs, food, drinks, photo ops, and more. A band rocked the parking lot at the library with live music as people in attendance danced and enjoyed the festivities.



Chad Porter, a nationally renowned motivational speaker and author with local ties, was the guest speaker. Porter was on site offering autographs with his best-selling book, “Severed Dreams.”

At 8:15 p.m., the college broadcasted a video of the virtual graduation ceremony on a big screen featured on the lawn.

Continued from page 4



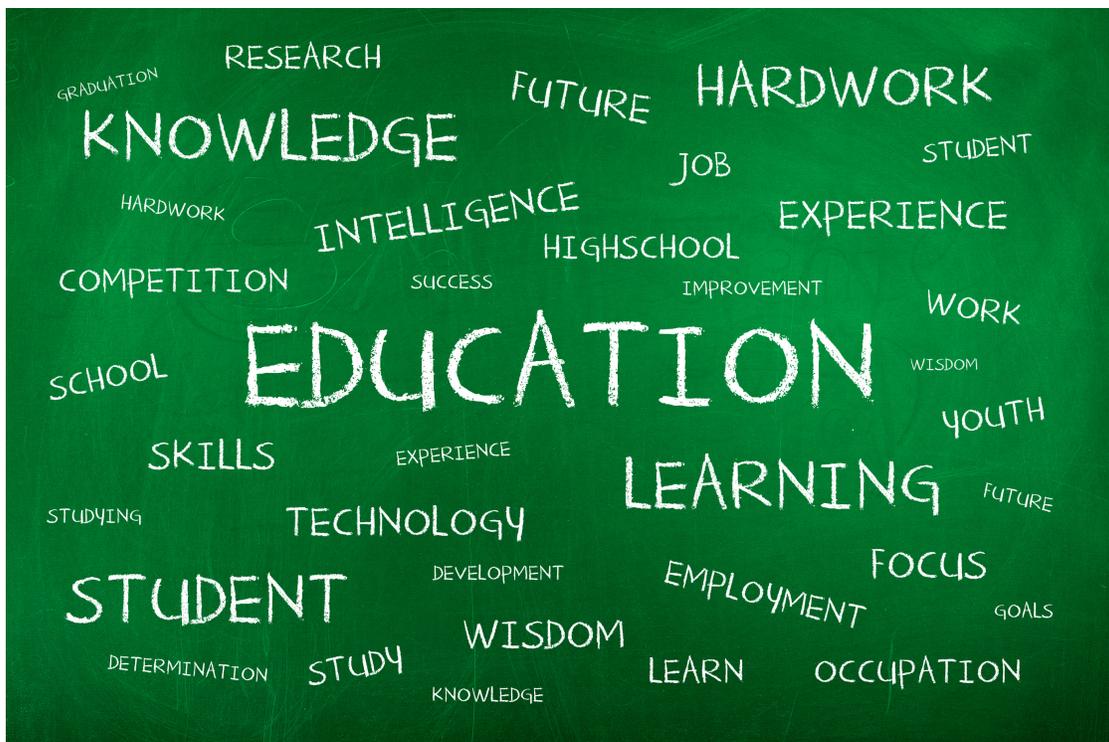
Executive Vice President and Chief Academic Officer Jeff Kornegay stated during the virtual ceremony, “Congratulations Class of 2021. You know, as you entered the college for the very first time, you had a goal in mind, and that goal was to graduate, and you’ve done it. You’ve met that accomplishment.” In closing, Kornegay challenged the graduates to continue setting goals in life and congratulated them again on their accomplishments.



Vice President of Student Services, Barry Priest, thanked the students for choosing Bladen Community College and said, “Now go and be awesome!” BCC SGA President and member of the Class of 2021 Michael Dunbar gave the invocation. Jackson Bostic with Career and College Promise and BCC 2021 Graduate sang the National Anthem. The video included the BCC graduates’ names, photos, degrees, and quotes.



Students and parents alike were very impressed with the graduation service. Stephaine Norris, the mother of Nick Norris, a 2021 BCC graduate, stated, “This is the gold standard of graduations!” The public is welcome to view the virtual graduation on Bladen Community College’s social media and on YouTube.



# HOW TO SHOP FOR HOME INSURANCE

**WHETHER YOU'RE PURCHASING A NEW HOME, SHOPPING AROUND FOR A BETTER PREMIUM, OR LOOKING TO BUNDLE WITH YOUR AUTO INSURANCE, THERE ARE SEVERAL THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW WHEN SHOPPING FOR A NEW HOMEOWNERS INSURANCE POLICY.**

**HAVING ALL OF YOUR INFORMATION ON HAND CAN SAVE A LOT OF TIME WHEN GETTING A HOMEOWNERS QUOTE. YOU MAY BE ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT YOUR HOME RANGING ANYWHERE FROM "WHAT IS THE SQUARE FOOTAGE?" TO "WHAT KIND OF PLUMBING DO YOU HAVE?".**



Written by Nicole Smith. Photo by Jamie Corbett



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## HERE IS A LIST OF OTHER DETAILS YOU MAY BE ASKED ABOUT YOUR HOME:

-What year was the house built?

-What materials are the exterior walls built of?

-What year was the roof last replaced? What is it made of?

-How many bedrooms/bathrooms?

-Is there a garage? How many cars does it hold?

-Is there a fireplace?

-Is there a sprinkler system? Fire/burglar alarms?

-How is the home heated?

-Are there any detached structures such as a tool shed?

-Is there a mortgage on the home?

-How close to the nearest fire station and fire hydrant?

-Do you own a trampoline?

Aside from details about your home, you will also be asked questions about yourself and your current insurance (if applicable).

Here are some examples:

-What is your name, date of birth, marital status, and contact information?

-How long have you lived in your home?

-How many people live with you?

-Do you own any dogs or other pets?

-Do you run a business out of the home?

-Who is your current insurance carrier?

-Have you filed any claims in the last five years?

These are just some of the questions that may come up when shopping for a new policy.

While being tasked with researching, deciding on, and purchasing new homeowners insurance can seem overwhelming, having as much information in front of you as possible will definitely make the experience go more smoothly.

Although getting quotes online may be the quickest and most convenient way to compare rates and policies, it is not necessarily the most accurate. Expect to receive follow-up calls and emails from live agents.

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Captive agents are experts in their specific provider's policies. Independent agents sell policies from multiple providers and can be cheaper than working with a captive agent; however, they are less knowledgeable on specific policies and products.

The process of getting a home insurance quote is relatively straightforward, but if you want an accurate quote, it is handy to have essential information on hand. Don't just go for the first quote you get. Do your research, and remember, your agent is there to help you, so don't be afraid to ask questions. After all, it's your home and your family you are protecting.



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# MAKING A HOUSE A HOME



**BY: BETH M. FOSTER**

According to Maslow's Hierarchy of Human Survival Needs, we all need air, water, food, shelter, safety, sleep, and clothing. Most of us live in a house or an apartment where we go to supply these needs daily. In addition to having our essential needs met, we all want our houses to be much more than places where we survive from day to day.

Each of us longs to have a place we call home. So, what makes a house a home? You may have heard it said, "Home is where the heart is." What makes your house a home depends upon what delights your heart. Your home is unique, because you are unique. As you change, so should your home.

**"ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT ASPECTS OF HOME IS THAT IT SERVES AS A RETREAT FOR YOU - A SAFE HAVEN".**



One of the most important aspects of home is that it serves as a retreat for you – a safe haven. It is important to create spaces in your home that provide rest and peace for you when you need it. A cool and clean place to sleep is so important to your health and peace of mind. A quiet spot on your porch or in your garden may be just what is needed in the morning or at the end of a tough day. It is ideal to create such spaces that are uncluttered and clean in order to escape the chaos that so frequently surrounds you.

Incorporating plants and fresh flowers in your home adds a sense of health and vitality while actually improving the air quality. They also add pleasing decorative touches, providing color and festivity.

Another essential aspect of home is that it is a gathering place for family and friends. An uncluttered dining room table with ample seating for unexpected guests helps make your home an attractive place to share food, fun, and love. Outdoor gathering spots have become increasingly popular, providing a welcoming environment to your family and friends to enjoy when the weather allows.

Your home should be an expression and reflection of who you are. It should be decorated with art that pleases you and should include pictures of your loved ones. Photos and mementos of fun memories will boost your spirits when you are feeling blue. Adding color can also serve as a mood changer. Painting walls your favorite hues or interjecting your colors using pillows, curtains, rugs or blankets can give your home a substantial lift.

Home furnishings should be cozy, practical, and inviting. Leaving ample space for movement creates a feeling of openness. Pieces of furniture and other objects associated with family stories or history add warmth and character to your home that can bring joy to the next generation.

You may research home ideas and find many features which look perfect for you and your family. While many of these wonderful ideas may sound appealing to you, they will not make a house a home if it is lacking one essential element: love. The people who live in your home, and the compassion, patience, and flexibility it takes to happily cohabitate are much more important than any interior design plan. When God is more than a welcome guest – when He resides and reigns in your home, the love, laughter, and tears shared will make your house a home.

Sources used:

"7 Basic Human Needs According to Maslow" by Mike T, [survivalreporting.org](http://survivalreporting.org) (May 4, 2017)

"13 Things That Make a House a Home" by Jolene Bouchon, [goodhousekeeping.com](http://goodhousekeeping.com) (April 10, 2014)

"20 Ways to Make Your House a Home" by Homes to Love, [homestolove.do.nz](http://homestolove.do.nz)

# Harmony Hall Offers Historical Experience and Outdoor Adventure



by Charlotte Smith

One of Bladen County's oldest residences is Harmony Hall Plantation, and it beckons folks to step back in time. The historical landmark on the Cape Fear River in White Oak was built in the 1760's era by Colonel James Richardson.

Hurricanes have damaged the buildings, but dedicated community members volunteer their time and resources to restore the structures. Harmony Hall Plantation Village, Inc., President Eric Melvin, said, "It's an outdoor paradise. We are trying to get Harmony Hall restored and make it a tourist destination."

The property was added to the National Register of Historic Landmarks in 1972. However, due to Hurricanes Matthew and Florence, the properties are in great need of repair.

According to Melvin, the Harmony Hall not only offers a historical experience, but an outdoor adventure.

The Mountains to the Sea Trail runs right by the location and offers a rest stop for those on the trail when the property is open.

Melvin stated, "It's 100 acres from the road to the river, and about a mile from the house to the river. It is a great place to camp and enjoy the outdoors."

Harmony Hall Plantation Village Inc. holds a 501(c)3 tax exemption. Donation of any amount will be accepted and appreciated according to the volunteers. Donation may be mailed to ATTN: HHPV, Inc.

The grounds of the historic landmark are open to the public to enjoy every Sunday. Reservations are required to tour the house. Make an appointment by calling (910) 874-1707.

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# Get to Know Your House for Emergencies

by Danna Martínez

Knowing more about home risks can save lives. Emergencies can happen anywhere, even at home. Identify risks in the house to prevent an accident.

These are the five most common emergencies at home, how to avoid them and how to handle them:



## Fire in the kitchen.

- How to prevent it? Avoid leaving the stove or oven unattended while food is cooking. Remember to check your smoke detectors periodically; replace batteries if necessary.
- How to handle it? For a small fire on the stove, try smothering it with baking soda or sliding a metal lid over the pan. Turn off the stove and not use water to put out the fire. For an oven fire, keep the oven door closed and turn the oven off. If the fire continues, help everyone evacuate the house, close the door behind you, and call 911 from a safe distance from your home.

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### **Water overflow.**

- How to prevent it? In the face of rain, try to keep the roof clean and waterproof, cover doors and windows, avoid humidity, and regularly check drains and gutters.
- How to handle it? In the event of flooding due to rain, use tools such as buckets to collect and circulate the water. When a bathtub, sink, or toilet overflows, first stop the water flow. Either by turning off the faucet or turning off the main water valve in your home. Then clean out the standing water. Finally, try to determine the cause, and if necessary, consult a plumber.

### **Power Outage.**

- How to prevent it? Consider investing in a generator that helps power essential things in your home, like a refrigerator or freezer, in anticipation of prolonged power outages.
- How to handle it? Check if the power outage is in the whole community or just in your house. If you are alone at home, check your electrical switches. If it is throughout the neighborhood, contact your power company to report the outage.
- Keep one or more flashlights at hand, test them monthly, and store spare batteries in a familiar and accessible place.

### **Gas leak.**

- How to prevent it? Have your gas appliances serviced annually. Consider installing a gas detector.
- How to handle it? If you smell natural gas inside your home, evacuate immediately. Call the gas utility company and 911. Do not turn any electrical appliance on or off.

It is essential to know both emergencies and natural disasters. According to the American Red Cross, these are four of the most common disasters in the southeastern states, including NC:

- Tornadoes.
- Landslides.
- Earthquakes.
- Hurricanes.

It is helpful to create action plans in the event of a potential disaster. The American Red Cross recommends some tips for creating emergency plans. For more information, visit the website [redcross.org](http://redcross.org).

Remember to call 911 in case of an emergency that you cannot control.

# The Secrets of Selling a House

by Danna Martínez

The process of selling a house can seem almost impossible to cope with and often frustrating. However, with enough tools and the right tips, this process can be summed up in seven easy steps. For more information on how to sell a home, the Bladen Online team spoke with Ken Register, owner and broker in charge of Global Realty LLC.

## Consult a real estate agent.

"Just as important as seeking assistance from a good surgeon for a heart transplant," stated Mr. Register. Whether it is for advice, requesting information, or hiring to help in the sale process, it is necessary to count on the professional opinion of a real estate agent; who knows the area and can make a proper evaluation of the property, guiding the sale in the best possible way. Each agent handles the deal differently; it is crucial to inquire about the service and ensure that the demanded requirements are met.

In selling a house, it is essential to have a good knowledge of the home sale prices in the area, tax values, size of the house, records of the appliances, and accurate information. According to Mr. Register, the help of an informed and educated real estate agent can lighten and adequately manage this and more information in the sales process.

## Check and repair any damage.

It is essential to put order and improve the appearance of the house, structurally and superficially.



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Ken Register, owner and broker in charge of Global Realty LLC

It is imperative whether or not the house is for sale to review and fix the data that compromises its structural integrity. On the other hand, preparing the visual scenario includes controlling clutter and organizing furniture differently and attractively. Several aspects are not recommended when improving the appearance of the house. Mr. Register said, "Go neutral or don't paint and let someone else come in and more affordably buy the home and paint it the color that they would like it, not necessarily the color the previous owner wanted."

### **Set the price of the house.**

It is essential to set the correct price of the house, taking care of all aspects. On multiple occasions, the price at which the home was purchased is irrelevant compared to the property's market value. A suitable price can accelerate the sale; But, if the price is exaggerated, the property will last more days listed for sale, which will reduce the bargaining and selling power. Home repairs, closing costs, and transfer of title need to be included in the total value. A real estate agent can be of great help in calculating this cost.



### **Publicize the home.**

It is true that advertising the sale will not ensure the sale of the house in the same way that a real estate agent could; however, the internet has several portals to publish the necessary filters for free to publicize the sale of a home, and this can be attractive to the public.



When taking photos of the property, the house's best qualities and main characteristics should be highlighted, always hand in hand with good lighting. It is important to show good quality in the photos; expose in detail the size, location, services, nearby points, and house plans. Staying up-to-date on your home visualization is just as important as being willing to take calls and answer questions.

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### **When is the best time to put a house for sale.**

Spring and summer are, according to studies, the seasons when houses are sold most frequently. However, Mr. Register tells us that in rural areas, typically in Bladen County, sales are sporadically throughout the year, sometimes better than others. Still, it only depends on interest rates and economic stimuli. In the words of Mr. Register, "The best time to sell is right now."

### **Take the buyer's perspective.**

An essential part of buyer concern is qualification. Mr. Register said, for a buyer, being qualified is one of the priorities n. 1 when looking for houses because, in that way, the buyer receives a more serious response from the seller. He stated, "When a buyer (who has done all the homework and is ready to go) approaches me like that, I hit the ground running with him because I know he is going to buy that house, and I am going to be the one to sell it to him."

According to Mr. Register, Location is one of the first things buyers look for when looking for a home. "Most of the time, location will exceed the need for specific homes are supposed to price." On the other hand, for Mr. Register, "the most important thing for a seller is to be ready to open the door immediately when you put your house on the market for folks to see it."

### **Take the process in stride.**

The process of selling a home can be challenging and sometimes overwhelming. It would help to take enough time to reflect, recharge, and make decisions calmly and consciously.

"In any real state market, the more competition is in the area, the better off the general public, buyers and sellers both are. If you do things fairly and ethically and sleep well at night after you do something, you're going to prosper," Mr. Register stated.



# MILITARY SERVICE MEMBERS APPRECIATED IN BLADEN COUNTY

written by Charlotte Smith

Photos by United States Veteran and local Photographer, Kenneth Armstrong



Honoring those who protect our homes is essential. Bladen County residents understand this, and observing our Military Service Members is a priority.

Bladen County American Legion Post 404, Disabled American Veterans Chapter 99, Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 8062, and N.C. Works held a Veterans and Community Stand Down on Thursday, April 22, 2021, inside Elizabethtown Baptist Church's Christian Activity Center.

The event offered assistance and support services for veterans in various areas, including VA benefits and claims, VA medical, vocational rehab, suicide prevention information, housing information, and legal services. Representatives from Wounded Warrior Project, Smart Recovery, Lone Survivor Foundation and Military Missions in Action attended. Many United States Military Veterans entered the church's doors to glean information from the event.

Robert Johnson, Regional III Manager with the State of North Carolina Department of Military and Veterans Affairs, was on-site with Bladen County Veterans Affairs Director Larry Hammond, who were all smiles during the event. Johnson handed out his business card and was happy to be at the event organized to help local veterans.





North Carolina Veterans may also receive assistance by reaching out to Mr. Johnson at his office at 225 Green Street, Suite 903 in Fayetteville, NC.

Jalyssa Nava with Veterans Services of the Carolinas explained her company advocates for Veteran Services and assists them with benefits such as clothing, household goods, shelter, education, employment, entrepreneurship, mental and behavioral health, money management, physical health, transportation, and more. She explained Veterans could receive services by calling her company at 1-844-435-1838 or by visiting the company's website at [www.ncserves.org](http://www.ncserves.org).

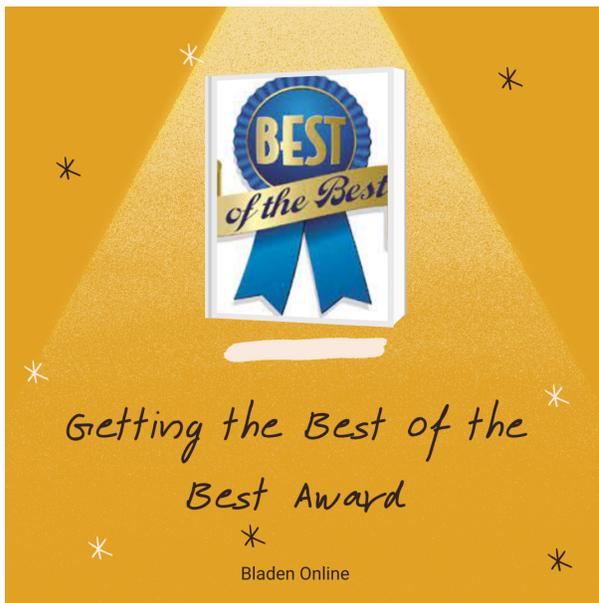
Local dignitaries were also present at the event. Some of the dignitaries present at the event to show their support for Veterans were Bladen County Commissioner, Arthur Bullock, Bladen County Sheriff, Jim McVicker, new Town of Elizabethtown Manager, Dane Rideout, Bladen County Republican Party Chair, Wayne Schaffer, and Bladen County NAACP President, Rev. Corey Lyons.

Mr. Schaffer, a political chairperson, and a United States Veteran, explained how pleased he was with the turnout and how the last event in 2018 was successful. "We will probably do this again," Mr. Schaffer stated.



# Getting to Know Some of BLADEN'S BEST OF THE BEST

BY DANNA MARTÍNEZ



It is one of the community's duties to recognize its members' work, dedication, and loyalty. Especially appreciate those who go above and beyond their roles. BladenOnline readers acknowledge the importance of their community members each year in the Best of the Best contest.

The Bladen Online team contacted some of 2020 Best of the Best contest winners about the award, and here's what they had to say about it:

## **Dan Ward. Best of the Best Farmer.**

- What has been your greatest motivation to achieve the best of the best? *"I take pride in my work, love my job, and so that is my motivation. I try to do my farm work as pretty as I can."*

## **Ulysses Baxley. Best of the Best Personal Trainer.**

- What are you thankful for about winning the Best of the Best Fitness Trainer? *"Mostly, I thank God. He has blest me to do what I do. You know, I enjoy training. I am very passionate about it. I love everything. The training goal, I love it."*

## **Shannon Ventura. Best of the Best Receptionist.**

- What was your biggest motivation to reach the Best of the best? *"My motivation has been pleasing people, making people happy. I was beyond ecstatic, overjoyed, most happy tears."*

## **Ron Taylor. Best of the Best Local Manufacturer.**

- What was your biggest motivation to reach the Best of the best? *"Just making sure that we get the product out safely. I'm always glad to be able to do something in a productive manner."*

**Kevin Robeson. Best of the Best Electrician.**

- How do you feel about winning the best of the best? *"Definitely not the best of the best; I would say that my father was or even somebody before him was the better, and I just give all of that to God because he definitely has drawn me to this point."*

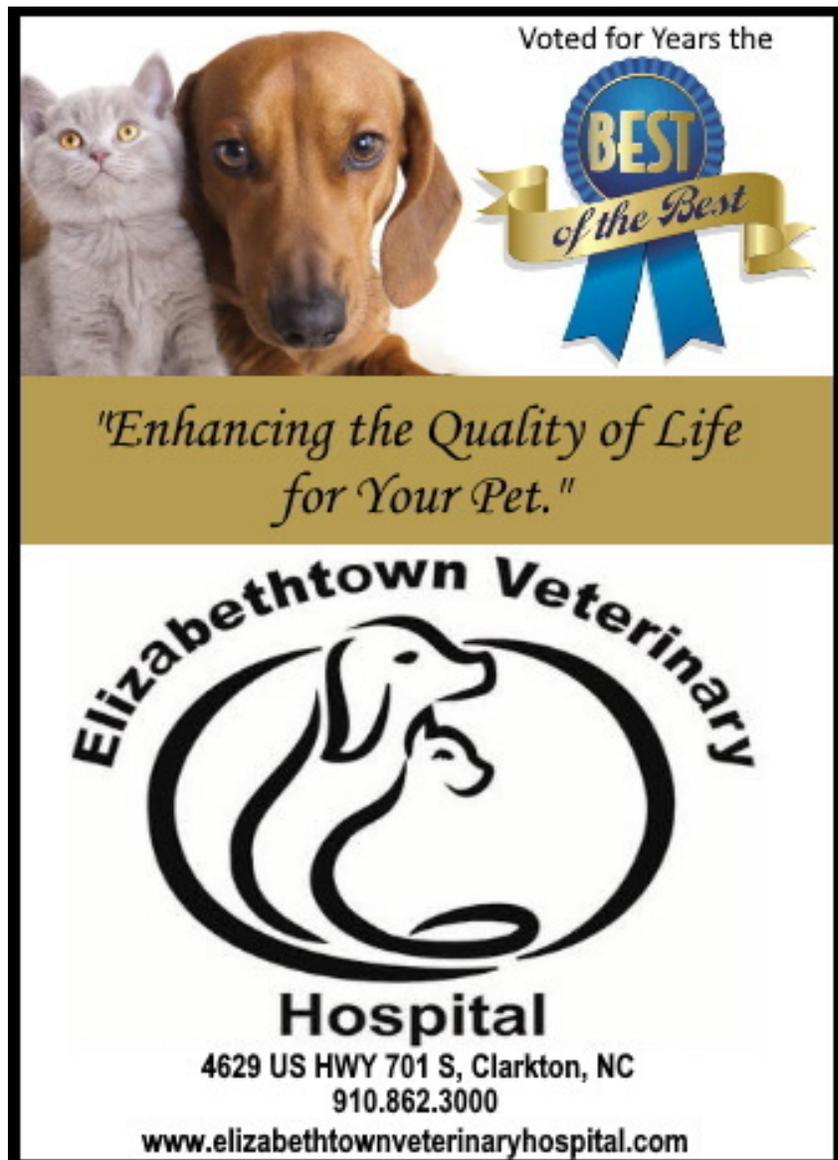
**Daine Smith. Best of the Best HVAC Technician.**

What has been your biggest challenge at work? *"A challenge in our industry, and not just in heating and air, but across all trades for the past several years, has been skilled people. It's unfortunate. The trade, it's a good business, and it pays well, and it can provide well, but we don't have a lot of folks coming into the industry, so we struggle, we got a great group of people right now, but we could always use more help, and we can't do more work without more people."*

He added, *"So we try to train our own folks and try to promote within. Even if we hire people of a very basic knowledge level, then we just try to get them to grow into whatever position we've needed filled, and that's worked well for us. But there's still a problem in finding quality workers."*

For many of the Best of the Best, the commitment was to demonstrate effort, devise plans, and carry out work. The multiple sectors make up part by part of the essence of daily life in a community. Therefore, area residents must appreciate each person's time, effort, and work as well as value them.

Recognizing these and many other people's essential work is crucial in job empowerment. It helps drive high performance and exemplary leadership. Moreover, it increases motivation for commitment and productivity.



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## RECIPES FOR BLUEBERRIES



Blueberries are a staple in Bladen County North Carolina. With students out of school and families cooking more meals at home than usual, here are some kid-friendly blueberry recipes from the N.C. Department of Agriculture and Consumer Service just in time for the start of blueberry season. The blueberry season runs from mid-May through mid-July.

### SAVORY BLUEBERRY PIZZA

Preheat oven to 450 F. Lightly flour a work surface. Pat and stretch dough into a 10 x 14-inch oval, and place on a large baking sheet. With a fork, pierce dough in several places. Leaving a 1-inch border, sprinkle dough with half the mozzarella, the gorgonzola, pancetta, and red onion.

#### Ingredients:

1 pound pizza dough  
1-1/2 cups grated mozzarella cheese, divided  
1/2 cup crumbled gorgonzola cheese  
4 ounces diced pancetta (can also use bacon or ham if pancetta is not available), cooked and drained  
1/4 cup thinly sliced red onion  
1 cup fresh blueberries  
1/4 cup thinly sliced fresh basil  
Freshly ground black pepper

Bake until crust is golden brown, 12 to 14 minutes. Sprinkle blueberries and remaining mozzarella over pizza. Bake until cheese is melted and crust is golden brown, about 2 minutes longer. Remove from oven, and top with basil and pepper.

Find more recipes on BladenOnline.com and Gottobenc.com.

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### **BLUEBERRY CREAMSICLES**

- 1 1/2 cups fresh or frozen blueberries
- 1 tablespoon water
- 1 tablespoon pure maple syrup
- 1 1/4 cup unsweetened coconut milk (from a carton)
- 3 tablespoon coconut cream
- 1/4 teaspoon grated lime zest

Over medium heat in a small saucepan, combine blueberries, water and maple syrup. Lightly crush blueberries with the back of your spoon and cook until liquid is syrupy and thick. Remove from heat. Cool to room temperature. In a small bowl, whisk together coconut milk, coconut cream and grated lime zest. Fill popsicle molds a little over half full of coconut milk mixture. Spoon in blueberry mixture to each popsicle – about 1-2 tablespoons per popsicle. Place mold in freezer for 1 hour. Remove molds and add popsicle sticks into each popsicle. Place molds back in the freezer for at least another 4 hours until ice pops are solid.



### **BLUEBERRY SPARKLERS**

- 1 cup large fresh blueberries
- 1 cup white chocolate chips
- 1 teaspoon vegetable oil
- 2 tablespoons multi-color candy sprinkles
- Ten 8-inch bamboo skewers

On each skewer, spear 8 blueberries. In a perfectly dry microwavable cup, stir chocolate chips and oil. Microwave on medium power 30 seconds and stir. Microwave 20-30 seconds longer and stir until the chocolate is smooth. Transfer melted chocolate to a resealable plastic bag. Snip a very small corner off the bottom of the bag. Drizzle the melted chocolate over the skewered blueberries and immediately roll lightly in sprinkles.

North Carolina is the seventh-largest producer of blueberries in the nation. Growers indicate the forecast for mid-and late-season varieties looks good. For shoppers, it means blueberries will be available through July at grocery stores, farmers' markets, and roadside stands.

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# Dublin First Baptist Church



## Our Purpose

To glorify God by enjoying Him forever.  
*(Psalm 16:11)*

## Our Mission

To make the name of Jesus treasured in our community, nation, and around the world by fulfilling the Great Commission.  
*(Matthew 28:18-20)*

## Our Vision

A community of devoted followers of Jesus Christ who glorify and enjoy God by denying self, joyfully taking up their cross, and following Jesus.  
*(Mark 8:34-35)*

## Dublin First Baptist Church

7275 Albert Street  
Dublin, NC 28332  
910-862-2277

<http://dublinfbc.org/>

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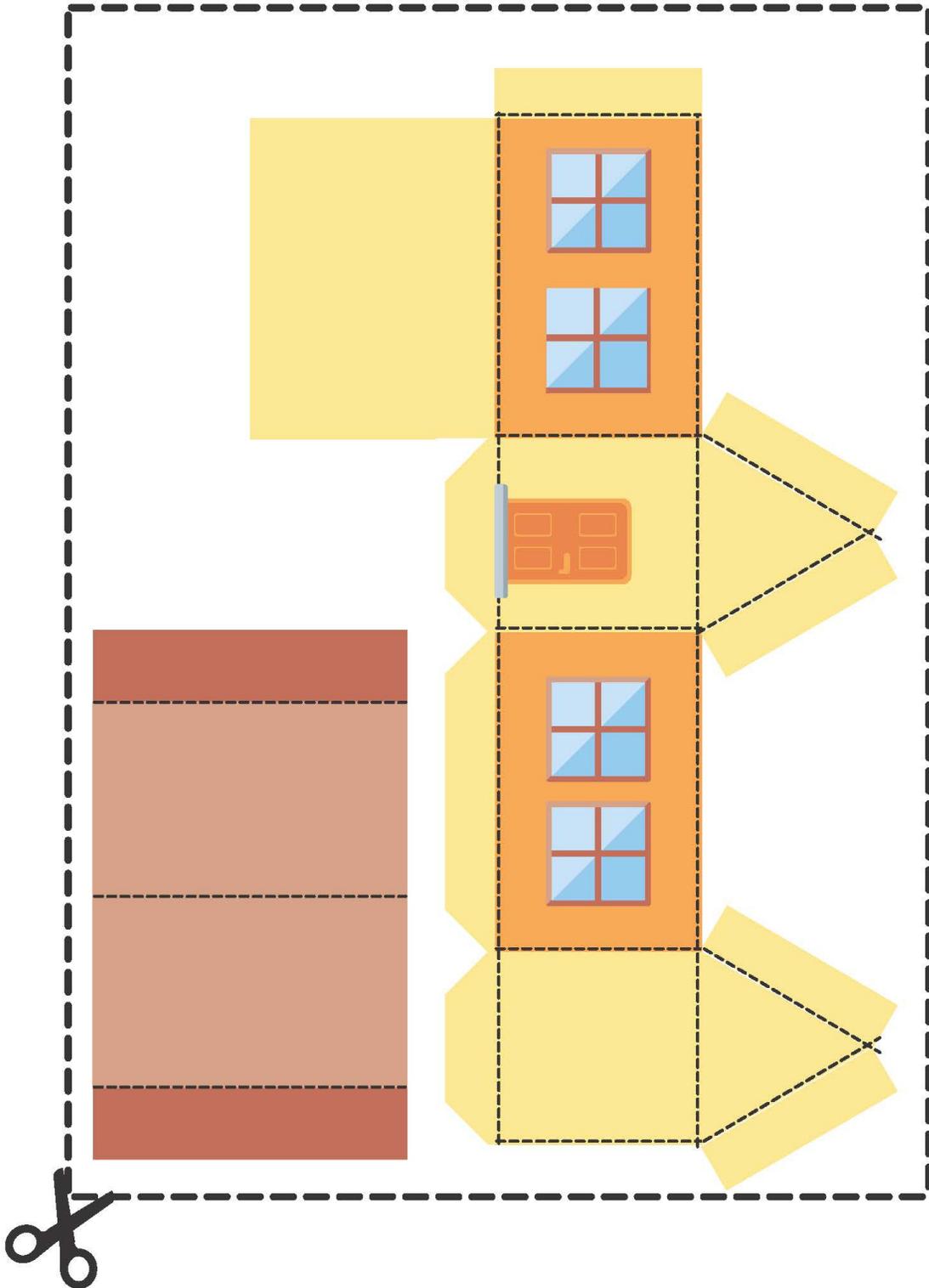
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(Behind the hospital)*

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# Build Your Dream Home

by Danna Martínez



# Benefits to Hiring a Licensed Contractor for Home Projects

by Charlotte Smith



A home is usually a consumer's most prominent investment. Hiring a non-licensed contractor has several potential dangers.

Rarely do unlicensed individuals have a bond or workers' compensation and liability insurance. In addition, permitting home projects plays an integral role in gaining protection against issues because they provide a check on the quality of work. An unlicensed contractor will not get a permit due to the risk of being exposed to the authorities for not being licensed.

The first question for any contractor should always be whether or not they are licensed and current with their license requirements.

Hiring a licensed contractor will give a consumer assurance on the services offered. When you hire a licensed contractor, it means they have the requisite skill and character. They understand the local laws and codes. They know the basics of administering a contracting business.

A licensed contractor helps minimize the risk to the consumer's financial security. They are required to have insurance in the case a worker is injured on the job, the property is damaged, or if the work is incomplete or faulty.

Also, ask if the contractor performs the work with employees or if they use subcontractors. If subcontractors are hired, make sure they are licensed to perform the necessary work.

After a consumer has confirmed the contractor(s) is a license holder by asking for their license number, the next step should be researching their history with the state and county. Consumers can find if the contractor has been subject to any disciplinary action. After that, weigh the price against reviews and recommendations before signing any contracts.

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*- Alison Carroll*



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