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september/october 2024 • vol. 15, no. 5

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On Vacation



Jeff and Cora Hancock went to Italy for vacation. They took Suffolk Living Magazine to Cinque Terre and Florence.

Correction

In the July/August 2024 feature on Mary Hill, two photos were included on page 14. Both photos were submitted by Hill.



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FEATURE

Recognizing the men and women who keep us safe on land, in the air, and at sea.

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In the News

Suffolk Fire & Rescue does more than just provide fire and medical assistance.

SUFFOLK *Living*



ON THE COVER



18

Suffolk Scenes

Where you scene at one of the summer events?



Submitted photo

Investigator N. Smith is one of many divers who serve the Suffolk Police Department's Underwater Search and Recovery Unit.

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SUFFOLK
Living

sept.- oct.
2024

publisher's note

Fall is in the air

Another summer is coming to a close. The hustle and bustle of the school year is getting underway for many Suffolk families. Friday night lights, fall sports, and festivals return to the area and schedules seem to get a little busier in the months ending in “-ber.” As we pack up our beach gear, return camping equipment to our garages and settle into a new routine for Autumn, it’s easy to overlook good work in our community. Like the work and dedication, the Special Units of the Suffolk Police Department do day in and day out to keep our community safe.

Yes, we all know that our men and women in blue do plenty more than just protect and serve the community in times of crisis, but did you know our very own SPD has an Underwater Search and Recovery Team and an Unmanned Aerial System? Starting on page 12 in this edition of Suffolk Living, we’ll introduce you to the Ancillary Unit of the Suffolk Police Department. You’ll learn more about how they conduct specific missions and training and how they help not just the residents of Suffolk but also answer the call when assistance is needed around Hampton Roads. You’ll even get to know more about our 4-legged officers of the SPD K9 Units and the special care their handlers give them around the clock.

Speaking of good work in our community, head on over to page 11 and read more about how our Suffolk Fire Department went the extra mile to help one of our citizens in this edition’s In The News.

With cooler weather on the horizon, special events and festivals give us something to look forward to, like Taste of Suffolk in September or The Peanut Festival in October. Check out our Suffolk Scenes on page 18 to look at some of the festivals and events we visited with you over the summer. Maybe you’ll even see a friend of two.

As we head into the fall season and ultimately into the fast-approaching holiday season, we hope you’ll take a moment to look for the excellent work going on in our community, especially the work that sometimes goes unnoticed.



Lindsay Richardson, Publisher

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\$30/per person all-you-can-ride wristbands are available on **SUN., OCT. 13**.
 Military Appreciation Day is **SUN., OCT. 13**. (Half-price admission for active, retired military and active first responders; Valid I.D. required).

  /suffolkpeanutfest

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what to do

Send us your news

To submit your calendar or news item, simply email it to: news@suffolklivingmag.com

OCTOBER 12

Nansemond River Cleanup @ 100 E. Constance Road, Suffolk, (Constant's Wharf Park and Marina). 9 a.m -12 noon. All supplies will be handed out and registration will be handled on-site. It is a land and water-based cleanup, so if volunteers have a canoe or kayak, please bring them! For more info contact 757-514-7604

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 20

The Suffolk Nansemond chapter of the Izaak Walton League of America is hosting a Captain Bob's barbeque dinner drive-thru pick-up fundraiser on Friday September 20th from 3:30 to 6:30 p.m. at Westminster Reformed Presbyterian Church, 3488 Godwin Blvd. Tickets are \$14 (\$15 at the gate). For tickets, Contact Richard Wentz at rehwentz@gmail.com or 757-635-1215 (leave a message).

The Route 17 Band will perform from 7:30 to 9:30 p.m. featuring Country/Rock/Oldies music at the Bethlehem Ruritan Club House,

140 Manning Rd., Suffolk. You don't have to be a Ruritan member to attend" there is no admission charge. Donations to the Band go to the tip jar, please give generously. Come early doors open at 5:30 p.m. BBQ, Hot Dogs, Deserts, Pop Corn, and Soft Drinks Also 2 lb. containers of Hardison's BBQ will be available to purchase. We are celebrating our 75th Anniversary for the Bethlehem Ruritan Club. Y'all Come Now!! For more information call George Fowler 757-617-5955

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 21

Liberty Spring Christian Church, 4213

Whaleyville Blvd, will host a free Family Game Night from 5 to 7:30 p.m. There will be pizza, lots of board games, crafts, and other family-friendly fun, as well as a few surprises. All are welcome.

Suffolk Parks & Recreation Outdoor Movie Series: Saturday Cinema features Elemental (PG), at Holland Park, 6720 Ruritan Blvd. The movie begins at 7 p.m., all the fun starts at 5 p.m. Food and vendor items will be available for purchase. Admission is free. All children must be accompanied by an adult. For inclement weather updates please check our

what to do

Suffolk Parks & Recreation Facebook page (facebook.com/suffolkparksandrec) or call 757-514-7250 ext. 5. For more information, contact Suffolk Parks & Recreation at 757-514-7250, or sslate@suffolkva.us.

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 22

90th Celebration at Great Sweet Beulah Apostolic Church continues at 4 p.m. Pastor Bertha Smith Gethsemane Apostolic Church, Petersburg, VA

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 28

Virginia Army National Guard Join Us for a Day of Learning and Fun Activities for the Entire Family. Display of Military Vehicles, Military Equipment, Military Demonstrations, Meet and talk to community partners, JROTC Demonstrations, Armory Tours, HMMWV Tours, Inflatables for Kids of all ages and School Supplies for Students. Food Trucks will be on site. For more information contact: SSG Eric McKenna-Hallal 434.480.6851

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 12

Make A Dress Workshop - Ebenezer UMC Suffolk, invites experienced sewers to make a dress, in partnership with Dress A

Girl Around the World, for distribution to impoverished areas. A dress packet will be provided; bring your sewing machine, pins, thread, etc. Free Workshop will be 9:00 – 2:00 in Room 7 of the Admin Bldg, 1589 Steeple Dr, Suffolk. New participants must pre-register; for registration and additional information, email Katherine kpaitforward@spectrum.net.

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 16

Catfish Dinner: The Smithfield Ruritan Club will have catfish dinners, catered by Captain Bob, from 11 a.m. - 2 p.m. in the Little's Supermarket parking lot. For tickets or more information, call Brenda Redd at 757-647-9894. Tickets can also be purchased at Ringo's Donuts at 1200 S. Church Street in Smithfield.

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 19

Suffolk Parks & Recreation summer event season with its Outdoor Movie Series: Saturday Cinema features The Nightmare Before Christmas (PG), at Bennetts Creek Park. The movie begins at 6:45 p.m., all the fun starts at 4:45 p.m. Bring your blankets and lawn chairs. Food and vendor items

will be available for purchase. Admission is free for all ages. All children must be accompanied by an adult. For inclement weather updates please check our Suffolk Parks & Recreation Facebook page (facebook.com/suffolkparksandrec) or call 757-514-7250 ext. 5.

SATURDAY OCTOBER 26

Halloween Cleanup 3 p.m.- 5 p.m., The meetup spot is at the Nansemond Brewing Station parking lot. Supplies and registration will be handled on-site. It's Halloween, so come dressed to impress! For more info call 757-514-7604

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 9

Make A Dress Workshop - Ebenezer UMC Suffolk, invites experienced sewers to make a dress, in partnership with Dress A Girl Around the World, for distribution to impoverished areas. A dress packet will be provided; bring your sewing machine, pins, thread, etc. Free Workshop will be 9:00 – 2:00 in Room 7 of the Admin Bldg, 1589 Steeple Dr, Suffolk. New participants must pre-register; for registration and additional information, email Katherine kpaitforward@spectrum.net.

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where am I?

In each edition the Suffolk Living staff provides a challenge of sorts, testing how much of Suffolk you really know. We photograph some location in Suffolk that is readily accessible and open to the public, and see if you can tell us where it is.

If you know where this photo was taken, submit your answer, along with your name and contact information to news@suffolklivingmag.com. If you're right, you will be entered for a chance to win a \$25 gift card.

So, if you know where this is, let us know. If you're right, you could be a winner.

Go out and enjoy Suffolk!



Suffolk Fire & Rescue goes the extra mile

Story by James W. Robinson
Submitted photos

Two Suffolk Fire and Rescue members went the extra mile to help a resident in need on Tuesday afternoon.

SFR Capt. Matt Allemand, Master Firefighter Kevin Bland, and Master Firefighter John Oliver each helped a patient on Tuesday, Aug. 20, after he fell during a bike exercise. The firefighters helped the gentleman further by personally delivering his bike back to him after the fall.

Allemand recounted that a medical emergency called out after they returned from their daily fireboat check. Allemand says that they each decided to go along with the medic.

"It was a medical emergency call. The guy was riding his bike and we treated him. Medic took him to the hospital and the bike was left on the side of the street," Allemand said. "He gave us his address and we asked him if he wanted us to return it to his house so he didn't have to

worry about it."

Allemand says it was just the right thing to do for another human being.

"If we're running into somebody, it's generally not the best day of their life," he said. "So if we can take one last stressor off their plate, then why not?"

Bland agreed with Allemand, noting that each of them serves SFR as a public servant.

"Like he said, he was having a bad day. He had his bike there and we don't want to just leave it there on the side of the road," Bland said. "So we just decided to do the right thing and take it home for him."

Oliver followed, noting that the patient lived only a mile from where he exercised.

"He was out trying to get his exercise, so we thought the best thing to do was to take it back for him so he can have it for when he wanted to ride it again," Oliver said.

Allemand says that one doesn't need to be

a firefighter to help others and be kind simply, and encourages Suffolk residents to do the same.

"Just keep doing the right thing, whether you're a firefighter or not," Allemand said. "If you see somebody broke down on the side of the road, help them," Allemand said. "Whatever it takes, be nice to somebody."



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SPD Special Units Showcase



By Sea

Underwater Search and Recovery is a 10-diver unit, each engaging in search and recovery for vehicles as well as pieces of evidence and deceased individuals.

“We are more of a recovery rather than a rescue when it comes to diving, looking for items or persons. The other thing that we do, all of our members are Swiftwater Rescue Technicians,” Helvestine said. “So during Hurricane Matthew a few years ago when Suffolk flooded very [badly], the dive team – because we were certified – responded with inflatable rafts and/or jon boats and went through the high water to rescue people from their cars and/or their houses when the flooding was very bad during the storm.”

Helvestine says that different techniques are used based on

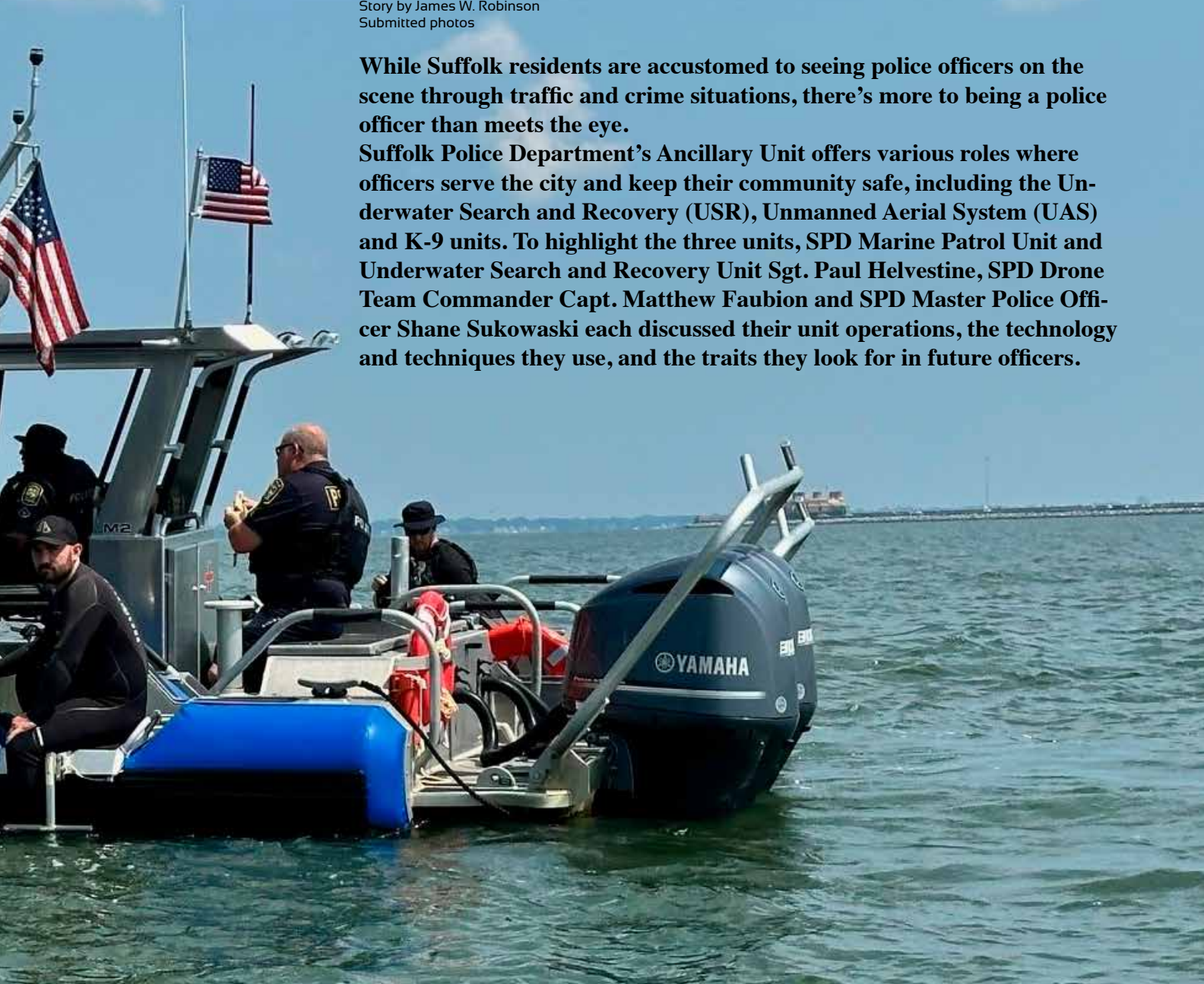
each search’s scope for recovery and search missions that divers have to conduct. He also detailed making sure their divers are safe in their searches.

“We make sure that all of our divers are on the same page, as far as what the plan of the search is. We do safety checks every 20 minutes to make sure that the divers have air while they’re in the water, and then every 20 minutes they surface and provide their air reading. We don’t want them to run out of air,” he says. “Fatigue is another concern. Every so often, we will – regardless of their air or their capacity – we will change out divers because of fatigue. So there’s many things, and there’s standards that are being pushed through in the last couple years to prevent any hazards from occurring while on a

Story by James W. Robinson
Submitted photos

While Suffolk residents are accustomed to seeing police officers on the scene through traffic and crime situations, there's more to being a police officer than meets the eye.

Suffolk Police Department's Ancillary Unit offers various roles where officers serve the city and keep their community safe, including the Underwater Search and Recovery (USR), Unmanned Aerial System (UAS) and K-9 units. To highlight the three units, SPD Marine Patrol Unit and Underwater Search and Recovery Unit Sgt. Paul Helvestine, SPD Drone Team Commander Capt. Matthew Faubion and SPD Master Police Officer Shane Sukowaski each discussed their unit operations, the technology and techniques they use, and the traits they look for in future officers.



dive operation.”

Helvestine notes that every diver is certified through open water dive certification, which everybody can obtain as a citizen or a public safety diver. He also detailed some of the gear and technology the unit uses in their work.

“We also use full-face masks. That way, we don't have contamination because normally a mouth piece would be in your mouth and then you could have contaminated water that could enter your mouth or nose. So we have full-face masks,” Helvestine said. “We also use drysuits, that way for the exposure, [if] we're diving in a very dirty retention pond or ditch or a lake, we don't have issues or concerns with contamination of the skin or open cuts. So when our divers are in the water,

they're fully encapsulated. That way there is no exposure.”

Helvestine also discussed the team's working relationship with the Port of Virginia, which has provided yearly grants for the dive team's new gear. Helvestine calls them a “great partner.”

“Because the Port of Virginia is so large and has a lot of revenue coming in and out, they want to make sure that the partners that they work with, whether it be our Marine Patrol or our Dive Teams, that they are outfitted to the best that they can be,” he said. “So that way if they need assistance on their end, we can already be ready and have everything we need to assist them, just like they assist us with replacing our gear occasionally.”

A person wearing a black beanie and a dark jacket is seen from behind, operating a drone controller. A tablet is mounted on the controller, displaying a live video feed from a drone. The background shows a paved area with a white car and a person in the distance. The person's jacket has "POLICE" and "FLEETS" visible in yellow lettering.

By Sky

The Unmanned Aerial System (UAS) is used to support the SWAT team during the execution of search warrants. Faubion says the UAS provides an eye in the sky, giving SPD a visual of all angles of the targeted structure, ensuring no one can escape undetected.

“So we provide overwatch for them just to look at the residence that is being hit by the

SWAT team, just to record the whole thing and just make sure if anybody tries to flee out of it, we can watch what they’re doing,” Faubion says.

Faubion says the drones are also used extensively in search and rescue operations and is called on to assist neighboring cities like Virginia Beach.

“So anytime we have something like a missing juvenile or like a dementia patient or something that walks away from a residence, we can put the drone team up for that,” he said. “We also use the drone team heavily in other jurisdictions, both for search and rescue operations and for SWAT operations as well. We have gone most frequently to Virginia Beach a lot to help them with their search and rescue operations.”

Faubion says those wanting to be a drone team member must pass an online class that gives them the knowledge for the Part 107 test, which SPD currently operates under. He also details that training is done every month.

“If we get a new piece of technology or gear, we train everybody up on that, otherwise we try to focus on things that have been issued in the past and we try to correct whatever those are so we’ll work better the next time,” Faubion said.

Along with having Matrice 200, Enterprise, and other mini drones, Faubion detailed that the team was working with an M30T, the team’s larger and primary drone they operate with.

“It has multiple cameras and sensors built into it. Primarily, it has a zoom camera, a wide-angle camera, and then a thermal camera built into it. And that’s the primary drone that we use for overwatch, or for the search and rescue,” he said. “All the individual operators or supervisors that are on the team, are either issued the Mini3 drones or the Avadas, and then we also still have some of our older drones as back ups or for doing something that requires multiple larger drones be up in place.”



Detective D. Green tests out one of SPD’s drones as part of the Unmanned Aerial System unit.



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By Land

The Suffolk Police Department's K9 unit's primary daily function is to support other SPD divisions, assist Uniform Patrol as backup on service calls and traffic stops, patrol the city, respond to alarm calls, and much more.

"They are often called upon to track subjects who have fled on foot from officers, or to locate evidence thrown by suspects while they were fleeing from officers. Narcotics detection teams assist officers on traffic stops with narcotics sweeps of vehicles or parcels at the request of officers," Sukowaski said. "When the department's new explosives detection teams are certified they will be utilized to conduct sweeps for explosive materials in response to bomb threats and assist in locating firearms thrown or hidden by suspects."

A K-9 officer's job isn't over when their shift ends. As Sukowaski notes, their canine partners also reside with the officers at home.

"...they are responsible for caring for their partners 24 hours of the day to include feeding, grooming, medical visits, kennel cleaning, and exercising," he said. "They are also often called out when off duty if there is a need for a K9 team when one is not currently on duty in Suffolk or surrounding areas for mutual aid."

Sukowaski details that the unit purchases the dogs from a vendor who imports them from Europe, noting that they are bred specifically for their role. He also details the unit spending a full day evaluating the available dogs that the vendor has. Sukowaski also discussed the deep bond between the officers and their canine partners, calling them "family members."

"Many handlers come to this position because of their love for animals and have grown up having a dog or multiple dogs. The bond and relationship that you develop with your partner is so much more than that of the average pet," Sukowaski says. "When your partner retires it is like leaving a piece of who

you are at home, even after getting a new partner."

Sukowaski talked about the physical demand that comes from their training, detailing that each handler has to fill the role of decoy wearing a bite suit to help facilitate the training of apprehension work.

"They will set tracks for the other

teams across varying terrain no matter the weather of the day. Decoys will hide in any number of locations to simulate situations that may be presented while searching for suspects. Training aids will be set out in varying environments and scenarios to ensure the accuracy of the dogs detection ability," Sukowaski said.

Despite the physical demand for the





officers and the dogs, Sukowaski notes how it is still “fun and enjoyable.”

“Every task asked of the dogs is like a game to the dogs with a reward of some sort after each task. The dogs truly enjoy the work that they do and it is apparent in their behavior as handlers arrive at regularly used training locations,” he said. “The dogs are very intelligent and require mental stimulation as well as physical exercise. The physical exercise alone is not enough to ensure the proper enrichment of the dogs’ life and handlers will train with their dogs outside of the scheduled training days to ensure this enrichment.”

On key traits that each unit is looking for in future recruits, Helvestine emphasized future recruits should have

“the want” to do the job to endure what comes with it. Faubion says officers must be “good learners” regardless of the unit. Likewise, Sukowaski says K-9 officers should be physically capable of keeping up with working with the dogs.

“They need to be able to remain calm and have extraordinary problem solving skills in high stress situations. K9 handlers also need to be able to arrive on scene and direct others and take a leadership role as they are often looked to for direction by officers,” Sukowaski said. “There also must be an ability to interact with the public in a public speaker capacity as members of the K9 unit often perform public demonstrations and speaker requests.”



Top, SPD K9 Unit’s Master Police Officer Shane Sukowaski and his K9 Salvo provide a demonstration. Above, Officer J. Gauf and his K9 Dunney are both a key force in SPD’s K9 Unit. Opposite page, Officer K. Carter and his K9 Ace are one of many top duos who serve the Suffolk Police Department.

National Night Out

Suffolk held their city-wide National Night Out celebration on Aug. 6 with plenty of fun and fellowship with Suffolk's first responders and city officials.



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50 Fest

Despite the weather, residents celebrated the 50th anniversary of Suffolk's merger at the grand opening of Downtown Festival Park on Saturday, Aug. 3.



SUFFOLK CENTER'S FALL PERFORMANCES!

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Masquerade Murder Mystery **9/21**

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Masters of Soul Motown Christmas **12/21**

VINYL RADIO 70's Rock **1/11**

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suffolk scenes

July 4th

The residents of Eclipse came out to celebrate 4th of July with a fun-filled parade held at Ebenezer United Methodist Church.



Suffolk Pride

Residents celebrated acceptance and love for the LGBTQ+ community at the Suffolk Pride Festival held on June 30 at Bennett's Creek park.



Pow Wow

It was a joyous celebration of Native American heritage during its 36th Annual Nansemond Indian Nation Pow Wow held at Mattanock Town on Saturday, Aug. 17.

suffolk scenes



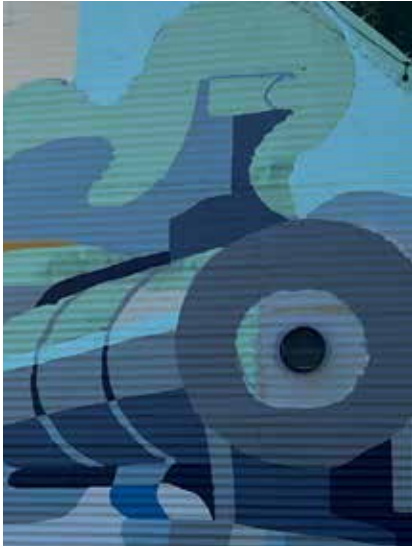
TGIF


Suffolk's TGIF Summer Concert Series heated things up with plenty of exciting music performances.



Last edition's Where Am I?

Gary Barlow was one of three people who correctly identified the Where Am I in the July/Aug. edition. The image was a section of the new mural painted by Chris Kozak on the side of Happy Hour Glass Works in Driver. Find this month's challenge on page 11.




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scrapbook



PEANUTS: The peanut "combine" performed the operations of both pickup and threshing of the peanut vines. In this picture an inclined conveyor has been added to the front of a peanut picker to take dried vines directly from the ground into the machine. The man standing on the platform beside the machine directed the picked peanuts into burlap bags, which he dropped beside the row as the machine moved along.

— COURTESY OF "SUFFOLK IN VINTAGE POSTCARDS," SUFFOLK-NANSEMOND HISTORICAL SOCIETY



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