

CONNECTION



RACE TO THE TOP

Salyersville drag racer keeps on winning

FAMILY AFFAIR

Dentist's roots are in health care

CREATIVE COMMUNITIES

Online connections inspire photographers



By SHIRLEY BLOOMFIELD, CEO
NTCA-The Rural Broadband Association

Building a connected future

As the nation’s leaders work to improve the infrastructure that supports our economy and our communities, there is a growing understanding of just how vital broadband service is to rural areas.

It’s important rural providers have the resources and regulatory stability they need to connect areas that often have no other options for service. The challenges those providers face go beyond simply building an internet network that must keep pace as the demands of users grow from decade to decade.

Recently, representatives of several cooperatives — among them, Golden West Telecommunications Cooperative, South Dakota; the Yelcot Telephone Company, Mountain Home, Arkansas; and Totelcom Communications, De Leon, Texas — made sure members of Congress heard this message.

Similarly, months of coping with a global pandemic proved the success of rural broadband. Countless households, businesses, schools and others leaned on their local internet providers during these challenging times. However, there is still work to do in deploying networks and delivering robust and affordable services.

This is where public policy can continue to play an important role, setting standards for broadband infrastructure and leveraging the know-how of community-based experts, like the company providing your internet service today.

I’ve been delighted at the bipartisan nature of these discussions and the understanding that broadband kept the American economy humming during the pandemic. Now, we just need to ensure the lasting investment needed to future-proof this powerful system. 📡

'SIX PILLARS' OF RURAL BROADBAND

Fast internet builds successful communities

Rural broadband's influence extends throughout every community where fast internet networks are available. How many of these "six pillars" of rural broadband play a role in your daily life?



1. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Housing values increase and businesses move more product when rural communities have broadband.



2. PUBLIC HEALTH

Instead of driving 50 miles to a health center, a telemedicine visit can bring care into the home.



3. TELEWORKING

Remote work creates fresh opportunities.

4. EDUCATION

Educators from grade school to colleges and universities are reaching students remotely.



5. PUBLIC SAFETY

Broadband networks can improve the communications systems used by emergency responders.

6. QUALITY OF LIFE

Thanks to broadband, young people find rural communities more appealing.



These pillars of rural broadband are based on the work of Christopher Ali, an associate professor in the Department of Media Studies at the University of Virginia. He is also the author of "Farm Fresh Broadband: The Politics of Rural Connectivity." 📖

CORRECTION: In the July-August issue of your magazine, the final word of a travel story on Page 7 about the Red River Gorge was omitted. This is the complete sentence: As the Red River continues through the heart of the gorge, it levels out and provides gentle Class I paddling ideal for beginners.



Better-looking videos are just a few steps away

Thanks to smartphones, recording and sharing videos has never been easier. Whether you're capturing precious moments to share with friends and family, showcasing your talents or documenting a moment the rest of the world needs to see, a high-quality video helps get your message across loud and clear.

Here are some tips to help make sure your next video is your best one yet.

- **Clean the lens** — Sometimes it's easy to overlook the obvious. We're touching our phones constantly. We're taking them out of our pockets and purses multiple times a day, so they're bound to pick up a few fingerprints and smudges along the way. Take a second and give the lens a couple of swipes with a moistened cleaning wipe. No wipes? No worries — a quick breath and a swab with your shirttail can get the job done, too.
- **Orientation** — Make sure to turn your phone horizontally when shooting videos. Shooting horizontally, also called landscape orientation, results in a more aesthetically pleasing experience for viewers, and it looks great across multiple platforms, especially on wide screens. Shooting this way also allows you to capture more of the surroundings in the video.
- **Stabilization** — Nothing is harder to watch than a shaky video. A simple way to make your video better is by using two hands to hold the phone steady. Instead of extending your arms, tuck your elbows in close to your sides and hold the phone closer to your chest. If a professional-quality video is what you're after, consider investing in a tripod or a gimbal to give your arms a rest. Also, many newer phones now include image stabilization features that can correct for inadvertent movements during shooting.
- **Composition** — Take a moment to compose your shot before pressing the record button. For example, if you are making a video in a controlled environment, perhaps filming a tutorial in your home, look around and make sure the background is clear of anything you wouldn't want people to see.
- **Lighting** — When recording indoors have the subject face a window if possible. If there is no natural light, consider purchasing an LED light ring. Light rings have become very popular and are an inexpensive way to make your video look professional. Avoid backlit settings, which can erase a person's features on video and replace them with a dark figure instead.
- **Zoom cautiously** — While the digital zoom option is a nice feature to have, using it while recording can result in an awkward-looking video. Instead, to keep the image crisp, take the time to frame the shot before recording and avoid using the zoom. Unless you're planning to use the zoom distortion as an effect, get as close to the subject as you safely can to preserve the image quality.



Decades on the line

Celebrating 70 years of dedicated service

It's hard for us to imagine now, but as some people in our community can remember, there was a time when our area didn't have reliable telephone service. In the early 1950s, rural residents of Johnson, Lawrence and Magoffin counties were still waiting for a modern telephone system. So on Sept. 10, 1951, they decided to stop waiting and to make it happen themselves.



RUTH CONLEY
Chief Executive Officer

That was the date Foothills Rural Telephone Cooperative Corp. incorporated under the leadership of Duell Williams, our first general manager. He and a group of dedicated local citizens got to work knocking on doors and collecting applications for service. Once they had enough, they secured a loan from the Rural Electrification Administration to start building.

That initial \$398,000 loan was enough to begin constructing telephone lines and installing switching equipment across all three counties in the Foothills service area. But

there was still plenty of work to do. It would be 1955 before the first pole went up at Fritz Arnett's farm on Route 30, bringing the most modern dial telephone system available at the time to Hendricks, Kentucky.

Then, telephone service was much different than today. With the expense and difficulty involved in running lines to rural areas, many residents would share party lines serving as many as eight households. At least they had the convenience of selective ringing to keep all eight phones from sounding each time a call came in to a party line subscriber.



Duell Williams, Foothills' first general manager, served from 1951 to 1975.

This September, we celebrate the 70th anniversary of Foothills Telephone's incorporation. Our cooperative has come a long way since those early days, offering technology well beyond a private phone line. Now our customers rely on us for cutting-edge fiber to the home service that connects them to their favorite entertainment, powers local businesses and opens up new learning opportunities.

So much has changed since that small group of rural citizens came together to bring phone service to their community. But in other ways not much has changed at all. We are still an organization of local residents working for our community. We still answer to the people we serve each day. And we are still dedicated to bringing the highest quality service to our neighbors.

Workers raise the first telephone pole at Fritz Arnett's farm in 1955.

As we mark this important milestone for our cooperative, I think we can all be proud of how far we have come and the guiding principles we still hold dear. We may be running lines for high-speed internet instead of party telephone service these days, but you can rest assured that the dedication demonstrated by those founding members continues as strong as ever. 📞

The Foothills Connection is a bimonthly newsletter published by Foothills Communications, ©2021. It is distributed without charge to all customers of the company.



Foothills is a member-owned cooperative that has been serving residents and businesses in eastern Kentucky since 1951. In the early days, we only offered telephone service over copper wires. Over the years, we have expanded our network and now provide broadband internet and cable TV services over fiber optic facilities to much of our service area, which includes Magoffin County and portions of Johnson County and Lawrence County. We love being part of the communities we serve. Our customers are our families, friends and neighbors.

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Foothills Mission Statement

"To provide the latest in communications at affordable prices with exceptional service."

Produced for Foothills Communications by:



On the Cover:



Martin Connelley, a Salyersville native, has made a big name for himself in the world of drag racing.
See story Page 12.



FESTIVAL SEASON IS HERE!

It's fall in Eastern Kentucky, and that can mean only one thing — festival time! Make sure to put these fun-filled events on your calendar:

Lawrence County Septemberfest
Sept. 10-11 | East Perry Street, Louisa

58th Annual Kentucky Apple Festival
Oct. 1-2 | Downtown Paintsville



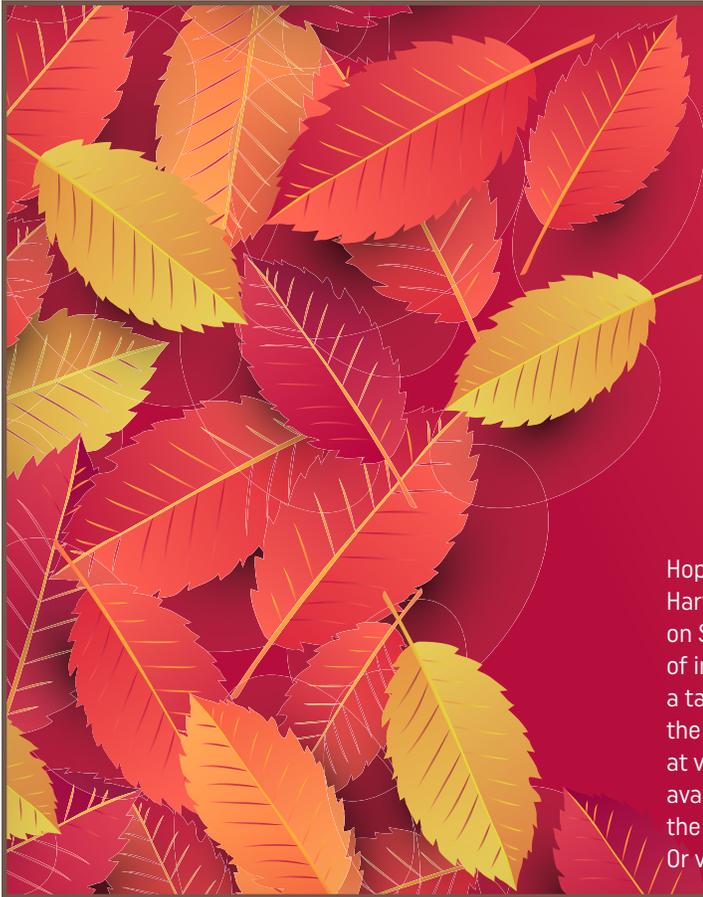
Happy Labor Day!

Foothills Communications will close Monday, Sept. 6, to observe Labor Day. Have a relaxing and safe holiday!



WATCH SOME FLICKS ...ON US!

Foothills Communications video customers can access movie channels for free Sept. 4-6. Check out channels 400-492 to see what's on.



THE Heritage Harvest Tour IS BACK!



Hop in the car and head out to the countryside with the Heritage Harvest Tour. The popular self-guided tour runs from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Saturday, Sept. 25. Historic churches, local farms and other points of interest will open their doors to the public, offering food, music and a taste of Eastern Kentucky. The tour, which is sponsored in part by the University of Kentucky Cooperative Extension Service, takes place at various points of interest along Route 3 and U.S. 23. Brochures are available at most local shops, fairs and festivals. You can also contact the Lawrence County Cooperative Extension Service at 606-673-9495. Or visit the Heritage Harvest Tour Facebook page.

AS MOTHER NATURE INTENDED

Okefenokee Swamp
is a wildlife
watcher's dream

Story by ANNE BRALY

Nestled deep down in Georgia and stretching into Florida, the Okefenokee Swamp is eerie in places, and just plain spooky in others. It's a mosaic of vast pine islands, cypress forests and water as black as night — all elements that make up this national treasure.

The swamp, one of the world's healthiest water ecosystems, is protected from human encroachment by the National Wildlife Refuge System, an organization established to oversee a network of lands and waters for conservation, says Susan Heisey, supervisory refuge ranger of the Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge.

The Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge has 80% of the Okefenokee Swamp under its jurisdiction, as well as close to 40,000 acres of uplands immediately surrounding the swamp. At 407,000 acres it's the largest national wildlife refuge in the East.

Where there is swampland, there are gators. And alligators love this swamp because they're protected here. The refuge provides them a safe haven — a wealth of food and shelter to sustain a thriving population of the reptiles.

"There are generally no problems between man and alligators due to the amount of habitat the refuge provides," Heisey says. "Generally, when an alligator sees a person, it moves in the opposite direction."

The only times that alligators can be confrontational or dangerous is if they identify people with food, Heisey explains. "So, we try to educate our visitors about the dangers of feeding and approaching wildlife so there are no issues with nuisance alligators."

Alligators can basically be found in any portion of the swamp and most adjacent ponds, ditches or other bodies of water. Alligators do live in the water, but they can also be found on land at times. The females will build up their nests adjacent to

the water where they live. Interesting trivia: Female alligators protect their nests and their young for several years, and they are the only reptiles that do this.

And their numbers remain pretty stable, although there has been no recent official count. It's a matter of water level fluctuation, a limited amount of food sources and competition between males for territorial rights.

The largest alligator ever documented was in Louisiana in the early 1900s and was more than 19 feet long. "We do not have a record of the largest alligator in the Okefenokee Swamp, but occasionally there can be individuals at around 14 feet or so," Heisey notes.

Gators aren't the only creatures found among the swamp's wetlands and woodlands. The refuge is home to 39 fish species, 37 amphibian species, 63 other reptiles, 234 birds and 50 mammals.

Most notable among the animals are wood storks, indigo snakes, gopher tortoises, black bears, endangered red-cockaded woodpeckers and sandhill cranes.

The refuge is home to both migratory and resident sandhill cranes, and most recent observation found that there are about 100 nesting pairs in residence. The migratory sandhill cranes are usually present from November through February, at which time they'll migrate up the Atlantic Flyway to their breeding grounds.

Wildlife observation is one of the most common types of recreation for visitors to enjoy while on the refuge. Walking the Chesser Island Boardwalk to the 40-foot observation tower at its end and boating the water trails on a prearranged or self-guided tour are the best ways to see the animals.

Finding the cranes is easy. Just listen for their loud bugling calls and look among the refuge prairies where the water is relatively shallow — good hunting grounds for the big, long-legged birds. Look down, not up. Sandhills nest on the ground, not in the trees.

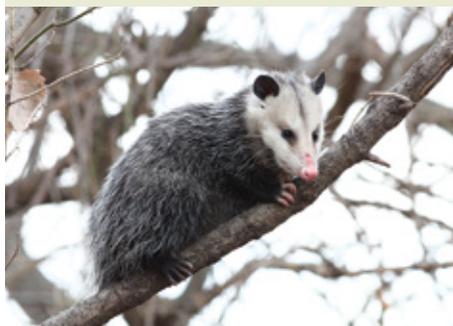
"Visitors love seeing those cranes," Heisey says. 🗨️



THE 'POGO' CONNECTION

Some baby boomers may remember "Pogo," one of the most popular comic strips of their youth. Pogo was a possum that lived in a tree in the Okefenokee Swamp and came to life weekly in newspapers across America, born from the mind of cartoonist Walt Kelly.

At its peak, "Pogo" appeared in nearly 500 papers in 14 countries, and close to 300 million copies of books about Pogo and his friends were sold. Kelly died in 1973, and his widow, Selby, continued the internationally syndicated comic strip until July 1975. After 26 years of syndication, "Pogo" the comic was completely discontinued, but the character lives on today in the welcome center at the Okefenokee Swamp Park in Waycross, Georgia. There, a large room has been turned into Kelly's studio, complete with a likeness of the man himself and his alter ego, Pogo.



SWAMP TRIVIA

The Okefenokee is OK, for now, but its future is directly tied to maintaining the integrity of the ecosystem's complex processes. The future of people and communities surrounding the swamp also is dependent on conserving the swamp.

- The swamp is the largest intact black-water swamp in North America and is more than 7,000 years old.
- The swamp is a massive, peat-filled bog inside a huge, saucer-shaped depression that was once part of the ocean floor.
- Fire is an important part of the Okefenokee ecosystem, and the refuge has a prescribed burn program in place to accomplish what wildfires once did. The fire staff burns an average of 6,000 to 10,000 acres per year.
- Most area residents have ancestors who once lived or worked in the swamp as a part of their heritage.
- The Okefenokee Swamp, as the headwaters of both the Suwannee and St. Marys rivers, provides clean water to the most pristine rivers in the Southeast.
- A National Geographic publication included the Okefenokee Swamp as among the top 100 most beautiful places on Earth.

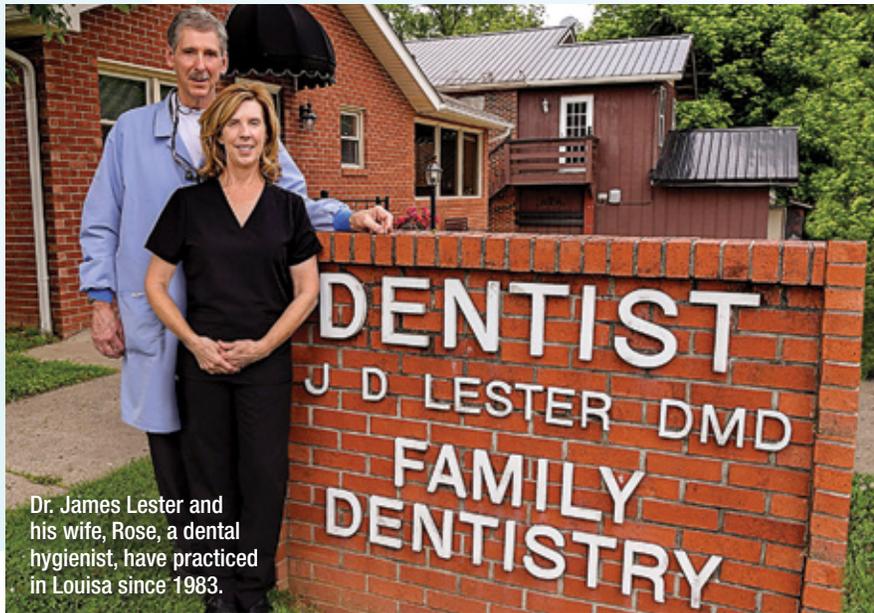
Decades of care

Louisa dentist continues a family tradition

Story by JEN CALHOUN

Some might say James Lester was born into the medical field. After all, his uncle, a medical doctor based in the hills of Eastern Kentucky, delivered Lester at a hospital not too far from his family farm in Martha. And before that, Lester's great-uncle worked as a dentist.

His family formed their health care roots in the early part of the 20th century, and the tradition grew and blossomed as the years went on. Lester's sister became a nurse, and his brother managed community health matters. His first cousins became doctors, and his own children went the medical route, too. "We always just gravitated towards it, I guess," he says.



Dr. James Lester and his wife, Rose, a dental hygienist, have practiced in Louisa since 1983.

STARTING OUT

Lester got his own start in dentistry after graduating from Morehead State University with degrees in biology and chemistry. He went on to study at the University of Kentucky College

of Dentistry, graduating in 1983. Meanwhile, his wife, the former Rose Sammons, whom he met at Morehead, studied dental hygiene after earning a business degree.

Together, they decided to open a dental practice in Louisa. There were already five dentists practicing in the town, but most were around retirement age. "We opened July 1, 1983, and we've been together ever since. We actually live and work together every day — 42 years of marriage and 38 years in practice. It's gone pretty quick," Lester says.

After the other local dentists retired, life moved faster for the Lesters. "I was the only full-time dentist there, and I was bombarded with patients," he says. "I generally worked 10 hours a day. Since then, we've had a few part-time dentists, and that's helped."

MOVING RIGHT ALONG

As busy as he was, Lester continued to take on other projects. He taught dentistry and brought interns to the practice to give them experience. He also started working at the Bureau of Prisons in Inez on his day off. A colleague who was then a full-time dentist for the prison system had deployed to Iraq. The Bureau needed help, and Lester was willing to pitch in. At first, he was skeptical. But as the months went on, he found the work — and the people — interesting.



Lester's family has a long history of medicine and dentistry in the region.

“I’ve met people from all over the country and the world,” he says. “I can’t tell you exactly who they are, but I’ve seen some inmates who were Somali pirates and other people from overseas. After about three months, I started really liking the job. I ended up doing a lot of oral surgery, like taking out teeth.”

CONTINUING THE TRADITION

When the Lesters’ children grew up, they also gravitated to health care careers. Melanie Sparks, the couple’s oldest child, is a specialized neonatal nurse practitioner and works at the University of Alabama at Birmingham Hospital. Their son, Marc, graduated from the University of Kentucky College of Dentistry. He now works alongside his father, and his wife, the former Morgan Cox, works as a physical therapist in Louisa.

James Lester, who is 65 now, figures he’ll keep practicing dentistry for a few more years before turning the practice over to his son. When he retires, he’ll probably enjoy his hobbies of flying small planes, fishing, gardening, carpentry and playing with his grandchildren.

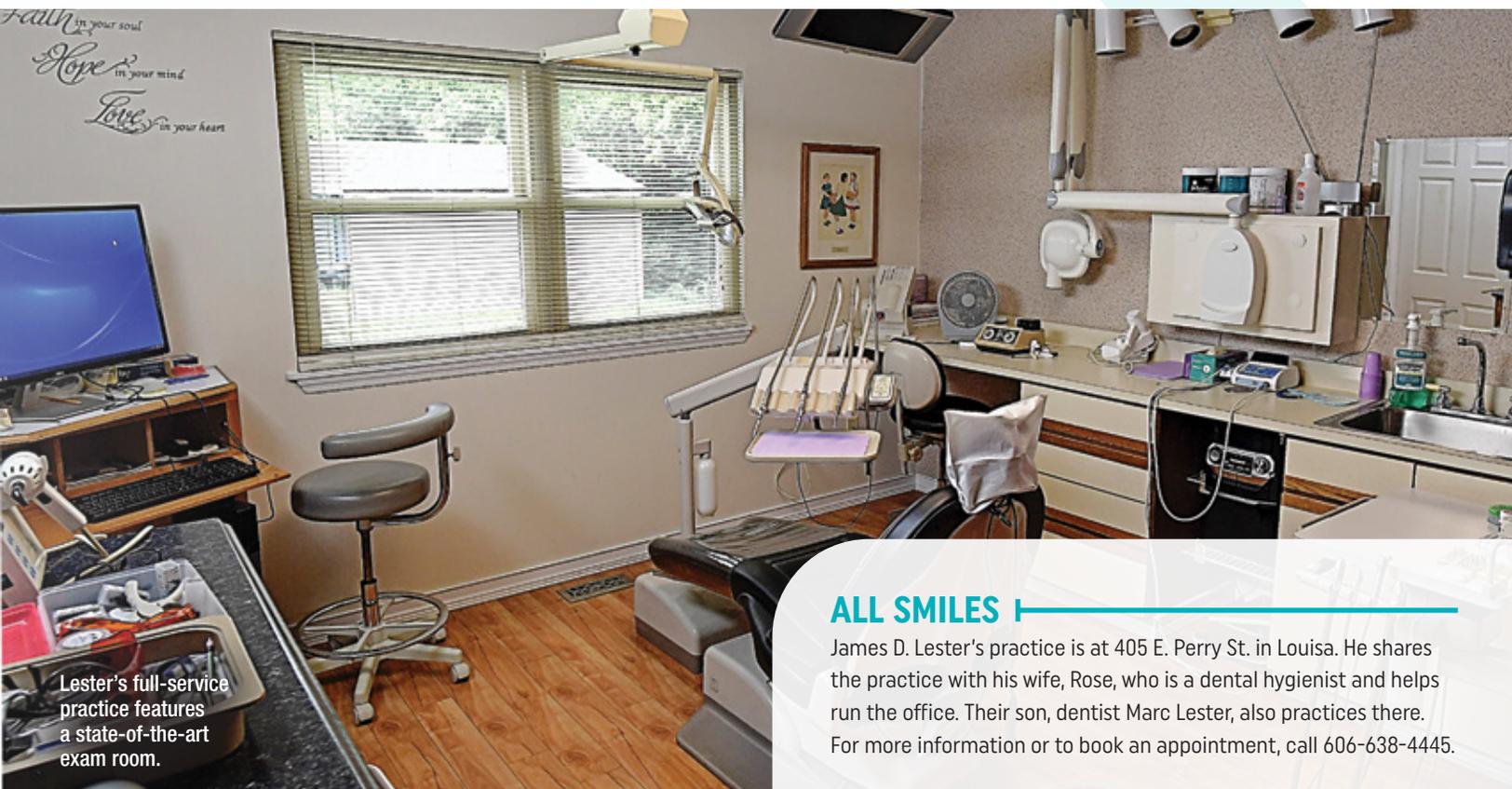
He’s seen plenty of changes over the years, whether it’s in the health of the patients or the way he runs his practice. “We’re all paperless now,” Lester says. “We use the internet all the time. We’re digital, as far as the X-rays go. We also do pretty much everything — preventative care, all facets of restorative procedures, crowns and bridges, veneers, implants and oral surgery.”

Lester and his son typically see 20 to 30 people each day, and they find themselves wading through lists of medications and health care issues — something old-time dentists didn’t need to do as much. “What used to happen years ago is that the dental office would be upstairs,” Lester says. “They figured if you were healthy enough to get up the stairs, then you were healthy enough to pull a tooth. But now we have so many patients with health care issues. It can get complicated.”

“What used to happen years ago is that the dental office would be upstairs. They figured if you were healthy enough to get up the stairs, then you were healthy enough to pull a tooth.”

— Dr. James Lester, a dentist in Louisa

Over the nearly four decades he’s practiced, Lester says, he’s seen positive and negative changes in the town that he loves. “It’s a simpler life here than it is in a big city. Our police protection and fire departments are great, and we don’t see as much crime as bigger cities. I love the area, and I love the lifestyle.”



Lester’s full-service practice features a state-of-the-art exam room.

ALL SMILES

James D. Lester’s practice is at 405 E. Perry St. in Louisa. He shares the practice with his wife, Rose, who is a dental hygienist and helps run the office. Their son, dentist Marc Lester, also practices there. For more information or to book an appointment, call 606-638-4445.

NEW PERSPECTIVES

Jason Stitt sees rural Texas through a different lens

Story by DREW WOOLLEY

Jason Stitt has always seen the world a little differently. Through the lens of his camera, he likes to find new views of the places other people might pass every day without a second thought.

“Photography helps me to view the world in ways most people don’t get to. To look at things from different angles, different perspectives and to see things in a way that others may not,” he says. “Mostly, it’s an outlet for me to be creative and to show the world the beauty of God’s creation, whether that be people or nature.”

Now, with the help of the internet, he can encourage others in his community to find their own individual perspectives. Social media has been a place for Stitt to grow as a photographer by sharing his work, asking questions and engaging in critiques with other professionals. He even runs his own Facebook group, Tyler Area Photography, with more than 600 members dedicated to growing the

photography community in Tyler, Texas. “I’m still learning and growing and will never stop,” Stitt says. “We don’t have lots of photography shops like you might find in bigger cities. So almost all of my continuing education and growing the craft relies on the internet.”

Stitt caught the photography bug 18 years ago while living in California. Working as a graphic designer, he started submitting his shots to a stock photo website before becoming a full-time photographer two years later. After moving back home to New Zealand with his family, Stitt discovered his passion for landscape photography. But it was only a few years before the cost of living caught up with them. They didn’t want to give up the opportunity to have his wife, Ruth, home-school their children. So, Stitt took his newfound talent for capturing natural beauty to Tyler, where he could continue pursuing his career while supporting his family.

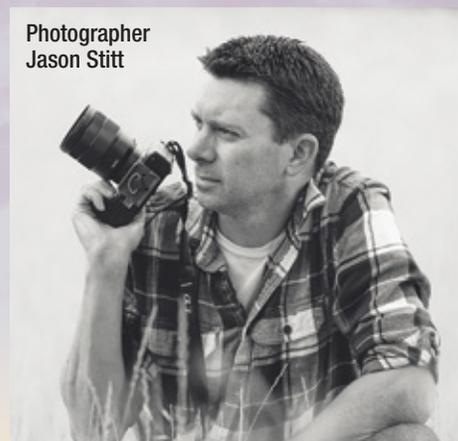
“I am an introvert by nature,” he says. “So I really enjoy the quiet solitude of being out in nature with just my camera gear.”

IN FOCUS

When Stitt and his family were deciding where to relocate on their move back to the States, there was one must-have for his business: a strong internet connection.

“That was one of the most important factors in choosing a place. It had to have a reliable and fast internet connection,” Stitt says. “Ninety-nine percent of my business I get through either my site or social media. So without the internet, I lose all of that.”

Photographer
Jason Stitt



He isn't exaggerating. About a year and a half after moving to Tyler and gradually building momentum as a professional photographer, Stitt and his family visited New Zealand for five weeks to see his parents. Stitt stayed away from social media during the trip and returned to find business had ground to a halt.

"I felt like I had just lost all the momentum I had built while we were gone and had to start all over again," he says. "Now, ideally, I try to post something every weekday to keep business relatively steady and keep getting inquiries. If I'm not posting regularly, those inquiries just stop happening." 📱



Getting the shot

Whether you're just starting out or a seasoned pro, Stitt offers some pointers to make your photos stand out.

- **Shoot, shoot, shoot** — As with any learned skill, the best way to hone it is to do it. Get out and take as many photos as you can to develop a better idea of your interests and style.
- **Be intentional** — Ansel Adams said, "You don't take a photograph, you make it." Photography is art, and good art requires forethought and planning. Think about what you want to capture and how you want to photograph it.
- **Study the greats** — Look closely at the work of photographers you admire. Figure out what it is about their work that appeals to you and then try to emulate it.
- **Master the light** — Light is the single most important factor in photography. More than determining how bright or dark your photos are, controlling light also decides the tone, mood and atmosphere of your images.
- **Learn to edit** — Don't neglect learning how to use your editing software. In today's world, the ability to edit well is one of the elements that makes for a great photographer.
- **Find your community** — Locate a local camera club or Facebook photography group to join. These can be great places to meet like-minded people from whom you can learn and grow.

TOOLS OF THE TRADE

The internet is full of resources for aspiring photographers and professionals alike. Whether you're looking to manage your shots or learn a new skill, there's something for everyone.



- **Education** — Even the best photographers have something to learn. For professional courses, Stitt turns to sites like CreativeLive and Improve Photography. If you're looking for something to peruse at your leisure for education and inspiration, he recommends Scott Kelby's blog.
- **Editing** — With Adobe's Photography package, anyone can get access to professional-grade software like Photoshop and Lightroom to edit and organize your photos on any device — all for little more than some streaming subscriptions.
- **Website builders** — Every photographer needs a place to share their work with the world. Popular website builders like Squarespace and Portfoliobox make it easy to show off your best shots and even to sell your work.
- **Storage** — As all those photos pile up, you'll need somewhere to keep them. Flickr offers a substantial 1 TB of free storage, while services like Dropbox and Google can provide up to 16 TB of space as your portfolio grows.

BUCKLE UP!

Local drag racer keeps on winning

Story by JEN CALHOUN



Martin Connelley, pictured with his wife, Michelle, races cars throughout the country.

You'd never know it to talk to him, but Martin Connelley is kind of a big deal. By day, the Salyersville native is a friendly, hardworking delivery driver for UPS. But when he's finished with a long day, he takes off. Literally.

Connelley is known as one of the premier drag racers in the country for his class. A few months ago, he even made the April cover of "Drag Illustrated," the definitive source for drag racing news and information. Last year, the Connelley Racing Team did something few — if any — in their class of drag racing have ever done. At a February event, they raced two different cars and won both races. Later that year, they did it again. "It's almost impossible to do that," Connelley says. "It's how I got on the cover of Drag Illustrated."

THERE'S NO 'I' IN TEAM

Interestingly enough, talking about the magazine is one of the few times that Connelley uses the word "I." And that's probably because it's his picture gracing the cover. In almost every other instance when talking about racing, Connelley uses the word "we." He always includes the hardworking team that helps make everything happen. "We won," or, "We go to a race with a target and an intention," he'll say.

"In this sport, there are drivers, tuners and crew," says Connelley, who competes in Ultra Street and NMRA Renegade events. "That's typically the way it goes. There are guys that make a living going around to racetracks and tuning cars, which is basically running the laptop and making chassis adjustments. It's a big

ordeal, actually. Everybody that sees it for the first time can't believe how much work it takes."

Connelley Racing Team includes Eric Mitchell, Dalton Winfield and Cory Brooks, all of whom live in the Lexington area. The team also gets help from Jason Waterman. And Connelley's wife, Michelle, who works at Foothills Communications, has been a driving force behind the team since the couple first started dating 20 years ago. She actually bought the silver 1990 Mustang he races.

But it's a little different today. Now, the vehicle includes a high-powered engine and transmission, as well as other high-tech components. "Our cars look similar to street cars, only ours make, like, 2,000 horsepower," Connelley says. "These things are way more complicated than

a regular car. They practically need an electrical engineer to run them, and they live and die by the laptop. Literally, you can punch a wrong button on the laptop, and you can kill the engine.”

HOME BASE

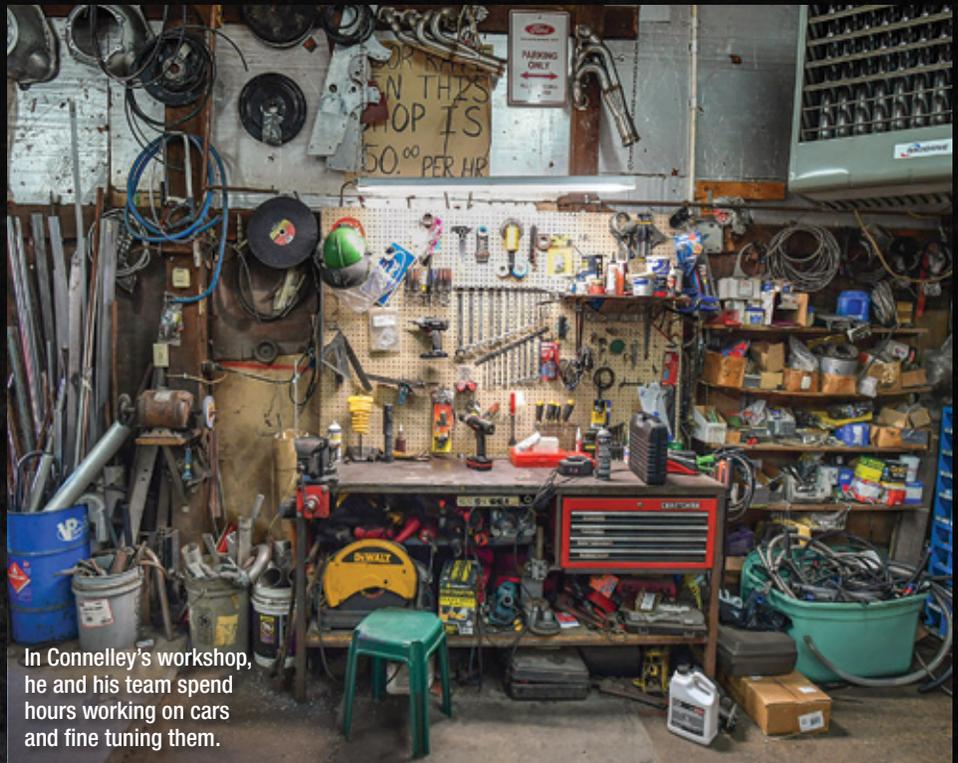
These days, Connelley competes in events from Florida to New England and beyond. His time in the drag racing world has brought in fans from all over the country. People ask for his autograph. They want to take pictures with him. But Salyersville is home, and that’s that. “I grew up on the same farm I live on now,” he says. “I was born and raised in Eastern Kentucky, and I don’t want to live anywhere else.”

When he was around 11 or 12, he competed with go-karts on dirt tracks. When he got older, he became interested in cars. His family supported his passion, but they never took to it the way Connelley did. “But that helped, because I learned a lot on my own,” he says. “I knew how to do things other people might not know.”

He also developed a competitive streak that helped drive him. “I don’t know if it’s a good thing or a bad thing,” he says. “But even when I played sports in school, I didn’t want to lose. I wanted to win.” Even today, Connelley says it’s not the recognition or the size of the purse that drives him. He likes the competition. He likes the game of it all — figuring out the different pieces of the puzzle and putting them together into a single, winning combination. And he wants to win.

“To do this right, you can’t fake the effort or the ability,” he says. “I love that about it. When you come to a race, nobody here is faking this. They’re good at it, and they have to be. In other things, people can say, ‘Oh, it’s too hard. I’m tired. I quit.’ I don’t get that.”

But he also knows what he does might not be for everybody. Racing cars is intense, in and out of the driver’s seat. “It’s a big ordeal to do this,” Connelley says. “It’s a dumb adventure, really. But when I’m old and sitting around, I’ll have some good stories to tell.” 📱



In Connelley's workshop, he and his team spend hours working on cars and fine tuning them.

Photography by John Michael Laney/Images by John Michael



Martin's wife, Michelle, bought the 1990 silver Mustang Connelley races.

FOLLOW THAT CAR!

To find out more about Martin Connelley and the team, follow Connelley Racing on Facebook. Racing information, photos, videos and stories are updated often. To get a feel for the strong connections made in the racing community, visit the Facebook page for Krusty's Race. The page is dedicated to Brent "Krusty" Ramsey, a friend of Connelley's who is fighting stage 4 colon cancer.

Palate pleasers

Pears make perfect sweet and savory dishes

Pears add a dose of seasonality to dishes this time of year with a sweetness that's nuanced and subtle yet plentiful. But understanding which type of pear is best for what use will help you choose wisely from the fruit you'll see in the produce section of your local market.

Any type of pear is good to eat as long as it's ripe enough to bring out its sweetness. But when it comes to using pears in cooking, the variety you choose matters. Do you want the pear to retain its shape when poached? Or do you want it to melt into a sauce? Just remember your pear ABCs — Anjou, Bosc and Comice.

Anjou is an all-purpose pear that can be grilled, roasted or eaten as a snack.

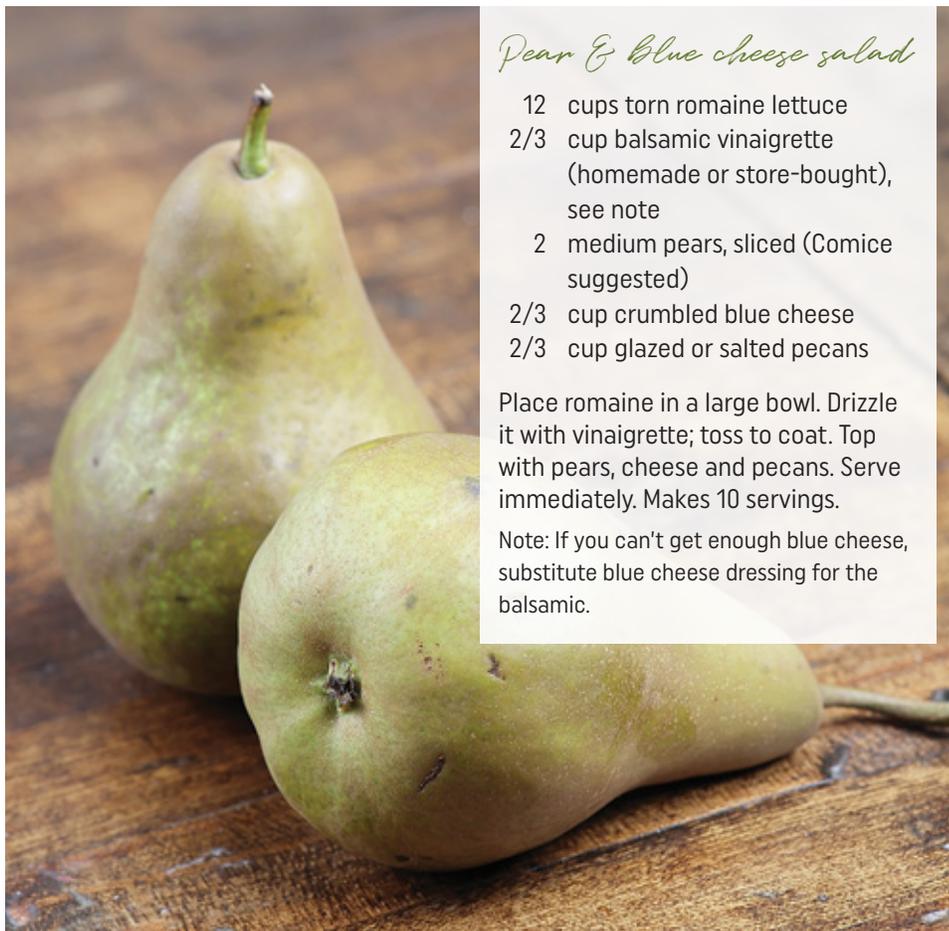
Bosc pears are best for poaching, as they maintain their shape well when cooked.

Comice pears are best used raw, as their tender flesh will not hold up well under heat. They are a sweet pear to pair with cheese.

The best way to ripen pears is on the counter at room temperature, a process that requires patience, since the fruit can take up to a week to reach its sweet peak. Once fully ripe, pears may be stored in the refrigerator for up to a week, if they stick around that long before being used in any of the following recipes.



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Pear & blue cheese salad

- 12 cups torn romaine lettuce
- 2/3 cup balsamic vinaigrette (homemade or store-bought), see note
- 2 medium pears, sliced (Comice suggested)
- 2/3 cup crumbled blue cheese
- 2/3 cup glazed or salted pecans

Place romaine in a large bowl. Drizzle it with vinaigrette; toss to coat. Top with pears, cheese and pecans. Serve immediately. Makes 10 servings.

Note: If you can't get enough blue cheese, substitute blue cheese dressing for the balsamic.



PEAR & GORGONZOLA PIZZA

- 1 (16-ounce) package refrigerated pizza crust dough
- 4 ounces sliced provolone cheese
- 1 Bosc pear, thinly sliced
- 2 ounces chopped walnuts
- 2 1/2 ounces Gorgonzola or blue cheese, crumbled
- 2 tablespoons chopped fresh chives

Preheat the oven to 450 F. Spread the pizza crust dough on a medium baking sheet. Layer provolone cheese on the crust and top the cheese with Bosc pear slices. Sprinkle walnuts and Gorgonzola cheese over the pears.

Bake for 8-10 minutes, or until the cheese is melted and the crust is lightly browned. Remove the pizza from the oven, top it with chives and slice to serve.

PEAR PANCAKES

- 1 1/2 cups baking mix (such as Bisquick)
 - 1 medium ripe pear, peeled and finely chopped
- 2/3 cup old-fashioned oats
 - 2 tablespoons packed brown sugar
- 1 1/2 teaspoons ground cinnamon
 - 1 cup milk
 - 2 tablespoons butter or margarine, melted
 - 1 egg
- 1/2 cup butter or margarine, softened
 - 2 teaspoons powdered sugar
 - Maple syrup, if desired

Heat a griddle or skillet over medium heat. Grease it with butter or vegetable oil if necessary.

In a large bowl, stir the baking mix, chopped pear, oats, brown sugar and 1 teaspoon of the cinnamon until blended. In a medium bowl, beat the milk, melted butter and egg with a fork or wire whisk. Add the milk mixture to the dry ingredients, stirring just until moistened.

For each pancake, pour about 1/4 cup batter onto a hot griddle. Cook the pancakes until bubbles form on top and the edges are dry. Flip, then cook the other side until golden brown.

While the pancakes are cooking, make cinnamon butter: In a small bowl, mix 1/2 cup butter, the powdered sugar and the remaining 1/2 teaspoon cinnamon. Serve the pancakes with cinnamon butter and syrup.

BAKED PEARS WITH WALNUTS

- 2 large ripe Bosc pears
- 1/4 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 1/4 cup crushed walnuts
- 2 teaspoons honey
- Vanilla ice cream or whipped cream, optional

Preheat the oven to 350 F. Cut the pears in half and place them on a baking sheet. You may want to cut a sliver off the uncut side so that they sit upright.

Using a measuring spoon or melon baller, scoop out the seeds. Sprinkle the pear halves with cinnamon, top them with walnuts and drizzle 1/2 teaspoon honey over each one.

Bake for 30 minutes. Remove from the oven, let them cool slightly and serve the pears topped with ice cream or whipped cream, if desired.



PEAR CLAFOUTIS

Think pear cobbler, only easier.

- Salted butter for the dish
- 2 ripe but slightly firm Anjou pears (about 1 pound total)
 - 1 cup half-and-half
 - 3 eggs
 - 1/3 cup plus 1 tablespoon granulated sugar
- 1 1/2 teaspoons vanilla extract
 - 1 teaspoon orange zest
 - 1/8 teaspoon nutmeg
 - 1/4 teaspoon kosher salt
 - 1/2 cup flour
 - Powdered sugar

Peel, core and slice the pears lengthwise about 1/3-inch thick. Preheat the oven to 350 F. Butter a shallow 3-quart baking dish and arrange the pears over the bottom — they will rise to the top as the batter bakes.

Put half-and-half, eggs, granulated sugar, vanilla, orange zest, nutmeg, salt and flour (in this order) in a blender and whirl until very smooth and frothy, 1 minute. Pour the batter over the pears.

Bake until the clafoutis is well browned and a little puffed, about 50 minutes. Let it cool on a rack about 15 minutes. Serve warm, sprinkled with powdered sugar.



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