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# Features

**Leading Lady: Nikki Haley** .....WIB 6  
*South Carolina's first female governor, Nikki Haley, is a fine example of one success story – not just for women but also in the field of public service. Haley, who has been in office since 2011, is consistently in the spotlight thanks to her candor.*



**Getting Ready to Work** ..... WIB 10  
*Getting a job is about more than just sending out resumes; it's about having the skills, vision and confidence to make it happen. The Center for Women focuses on these aspects of the job hunt in its free six-week course – Ready for Work (R4W).*



# Profiles

Jan Clouse and Jennifer Crider.....	WIB 13	Kimberly Powell.....	WIB 28
Mary Lee Busick and Kate Walker.....	WIB 14	Dr. Casey Adkins.....	WIB 29
Cameron Reid and Lee Reid Hope.....	WIB 15	Kathie Livingston.....	WIB 30
Pam Bishop.....	WIB 16	Meredith Nelson.....	WIB 30
Melissa Watson.....	WIB 17	Dr. Gina Courson.....	WIB 31
Michele Hensel.....	WIB 18	Windi McKeithan.....	WIB 31
Dr. Emily Curry.....	WIB 19	Dr. Rachael Click.....	WIB 32
Franne Schwarb and Chari Karinshak.....	WIB 20	Dr. Cynthia Garner.....	WIB 33
Gina Schirmer.....	WIB 21	Nancy Swift.....	WIB 34
Edie Edelson-Rabin.....	WIB 22	Tracy MacKellar.....	WIB 35
Marnie Renshler.....	WIB 23	Susie Molony.....	WIB 36
Summer Eudy.....	WIB 25	Rachael Geib.....	WIB 37
Nancy Meyers and Nicole Wallen.....	WIB 26	Gail Holdcraft.....	WIB 38
Amanda Rosen.....	WIB 27	Dr. Nicole Dahlkemper.....	WIB 39



# Managing Editor's Note

**I** REMEMBER MAKING making my first real money. It was usually the result of a combined effort with my best friend Gayden (we're still friends, naturally). We'd erect lemonade stands in our neighborhood on warm, sunny days and make our own stationery or bookmarks when it rained, getting creative in the margins with colored pencils and magic markers. We felt empowered, as well as encouraged, by our relatives and friends. Lucky us, right?

Later, in high school, I worked in the family business for spending money, feeling pride at the ability to work in a place that my grandfather and grandmother built from the ground up. Still later, I earned my college and graduate degrees and began a career in writing. I can honestly say that the love of creating something – from a cup of lemonade to a poem – and being recognized for it is a joy that never fades.

Welcome to our 2016 *Lowcountry Women in Business* magazine. Inside you'll find a crew of local ladies who feel the same way I do about following their dreams. From retail to medicine to law, these savvy professionals can tackle anything they put their minds to. You'll also find our feature on Gov. Nikki Haley, who believes that women "bring a lot to the table," as well as a feature on the Center for Women's Ready for Work program, empowering ladies to do what they love.

We hope you find these stories as satisfying as we did. And, if you haven't started building your dream, we hope *Lowcountry Women in Business* will kindle that spark. 🐼

Yours,  
DENISE K. JAMES  
Managing Editor



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in business  
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Photos courtesy of the office of Gov. Nikki Haley.

# LEADING LADY

## A Chat with Gov. Nikki Haley

W

BY DENISE K. JAMES

HO DOESN'T LOVE A success story? Many of us turn to magazines, television, film and even family or friends for those inspiring tales of triumph – especially as women and especially when we need a boost when the going gets tough.

South Carolina's first female governor, Nikki Haley, is a fine example of one such success

story – not just for women but also in the field of public service. Haley, who has been in office since 2011, is consistently in the spotlight thanks to her candor. Whether you tend to vote Republican or Democrat, it's hard not to give her credit for being a strong woman.

*Mount Pleasant Magazine* caught up with Haley for a few questions during her visit to East Cooper for the Volvo Car Open in April. She was happy to share her opinion that “women bring a lot to the table” in both business and politics.





**MOUNT PLEASANT MAGAZINE:** Describe what or who first piqued your ambition as a child or young girl.

**GOV. HALEY:** I started doing the books at age 13 for our family business – then I realized in college that wasn't necessarily ordinary. [laughs.] At 13, I learned the value of a dollar. My family knew not to celebrate on occasions we had money because sacrifice would come again.

My parents also told me that whatever you do, be great at it and to make sure people remember you. Because of them, I understood the concepts of service and hard work. There wasn't one day that they didn't tell me we were lucky to be in this country and to have opportunity.

**MPM:** Did you face discouragement during your younger years? How did you overcome it?

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**GH:** We were Indian, and we were looked upon as being different. Growing up was hard. I didn't fit in anywhere racially. But our parents stressed the idea of unity and to find similarities with others, not differences. I still believe in that concept, to unite and not divide.



Gov. Haley with American Red Cross volunteers at Team South Carolina Day in Sumter.

**MPM:** What is your background? What gigs during the early years helped you?

**GH:** I had great jobs. I did my parents' accounting, then I was assistant to a chiropractor while I attended Clemson. Then I did an internship with Liberty Insurance's Audit Department. I learned to understand numbers through that experience – and I learned to understand people through working with the chiropractor. Today, as governor, I deal both with people as well as benchmarks and goals.

**MPM:** What was your first experience with public service, and what impression did it leave?

**GH:** I was not interested in politics in high school or in college. But I did notice, through the family business, how many of our dollars the government was taking. And I became interested. Once I ran for office,

the only option was to win. I remember knocking on doors with the kids in the back seat, getting to know the district.

**MPM:** What advice do you have to offer our readers who are considering public service or simply pursuing a personal dream?

**GH:** Two things: We need women as leaders and as public servants. Women bring a lot to the table. When you feel fear, push through it and realize how strong you are. And trust your gut. Never second-guess yourself. 🍌



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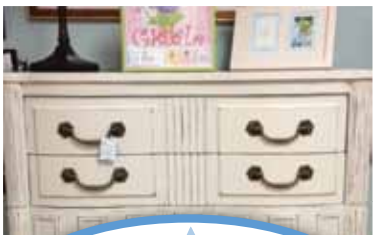
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# Getting Ready to Work

## The Center For Women's R4W Program

**G**ETTING a job is about more than just sending out resumes; it's about having the skills, vision and confidence to make it happen. The Center for Women focuses on these aspects of the job hunt in its free six-week course – Ready for Work (R4W). The program starts regularly throughout the year and helps women prepare to enter or re-enter the workforce by giving them the “soft” skills they need to pursue the career they want.

BY ERIN DANLY

R4W, which started as a pilot program in July 2014, was created to help a wide variety of women, said Leigh Ann Garrett, program and events manager at the Center for Women.

“We’ve worked with female veterans. We’ve worked with domestic survivors. We’ve had women participate who have master’s degrees,” she said.

No matter how different women appear on the outside, the objective is the same: To help them identify and achieve their goals.

The Center for Women partners with local organizations to work with a group of women with similar interests or challenges, such as teens or women over 50, and the course content is tweaked to address each group’s unique

challenges. The program wouldn’t run without dedicated volunteers, experts in fields such as human relations and career development, who give their time and knowledge.

Though the time commitment is very manageable – two hours, one day per week, for six weeks – the women get a lot done in that time, including preparing resumes, doing mock interviews, filling out applications and choosing appropriate interview outfits. But R4W goes far beyond that.

“There are other places you can get your resumes reviewed, but it starts and ends there,” said Garrett.

In the R4W program, women also learn about the power of nonverbal communication and first impressions, personal goals, how to overcome fears and how to build confidence.

Diane Sancho, who went through the program in late 2015, was happy to discover that it went beyond simply helping women find a job.

“It was more introspective,” she explained. “We identified strengths and weaknesses and how we would describe ourselves. We focused on what we want people to know about us – what we’re proud of.”

Sancho, who has her master’s in Social Work and had been out of the workforce for a year after 30 years in administrative positions, credits the program for helping her discover what she truly wanted to do.

What she wanted, she realized, was to be an entrepreneur. Sancho now





runs her own business, South of Broad Eldercare Services, offering resources and counseling services for caregivers to those with dementia. It was not something she had seriously considered before R4W.

“I thought about it, but I never really believed I could do it,” she said. “I credit the Center for Women for giving me the confidence that, yes, this is something I can do.”

Women entering the program often have low confidence, and one of the goals of R4W is to rectify that. Leila Shebaro, an Americorps Vista volunteer who manages the R4W program at the Center, considered the source of that lack of confidence.

“Many women have been told that they’re not good at their job, or they’re discriminated against, or they’re pulled away from the workplace and have a hard time getting back in,” she said. “An experience that shattered the way you view yourself leaves you with a lot of self-doubt.”

Participants work on building confidence from week 1. The volunteers foster a cooperative and safe environment where walls break down and friendships form quickly. Week 1 is such a positive experience, they can’t wait to come back for week 2.

When the women “graduate” from the program, they get a certificate of

completion as well as complimentary membership to the Center for Women, where they can take advantage of the other programs and networking opportunities the Center offers. Garrett and Shebaro also reach out to past participants to ask them to be mentors. In the future, they want to track past participants and measure success rates. For now, they are happy to watch success stories in the making.

“Most of the time you can literally see the transformation,” said Garrett. “You see a woman at the start who’s not very interested in being there, and, over the six weeks, the smile comes to her face, and her posture changes. By week 6, she’s ready to conquer the world.”

“Women are just incredible. They are amazingly capable and powerful and dynamic and intelligent,” said Shebaro. “That’s what I think is so gratifying about Ready for Work – all we do is remind women that they can accomplish what they want to accomplish. Having the opportunity to send that message every day is very rewarding.”

*To participate in Ready for Work for free or to volunteer, contact Leila Shebaro at [leila@c4women.org](mailto:leila@c4women.org) or at the Center for Women at 843.763.7333, ext. 206.*

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# About Our Cover

**T**HERE'S NOTHING LIKE GETTING TOGETHER WITH THE ladies. Whether it's a girls' night out, a girls' night in, a ladies-only networking event or a cover shoot for *Lowcountry Women in Business* magazine, it's a great occasion to meet some inspiring women, share ideas and have some fun.

My dear friend and trusted photographer Jenn Cady of Jenn Cady Photography captured several of the Lowcountry's finest businesswomen in this year's shot. From left to right and top to bottom, meet Jennifer Crider, Carolina Lanterns & Lighting; Kimberly Powell, The Woodhouse Day Spa; Pam Bishop, Carolina One; Jan Clouse, Carolina Lanterns & Lighting; and Gina Schirmer, Schirmer Insurance Group. Of course, these ladies are only a few of the awesome collection of locals you'll meet inside the pages of this magazine.

It wasn't easy to get these five busy ladies – seven including Jenn and me – into one spot on a weekday. Even being a seasoned editor, I had to send out multiple emails to all of them, Jenn included, going over what everyone would wear, where everyone would meet and what time. A few days prior, Jenn and I met with Kimberly Powell, owner of The Woodhouse Day Spa, to figure out where the ladies would pose for the photo. Luckily, there were plenty of options, and my appreciation goes out to Kimberly for sharing her space and hosting this shoot.



Thanks for reading our 2016 *Lowcountry Women in Business*.

DENISE K. JAMES  
**Managing Editor**

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**C**AROLINA LANTERNS WAS BORN when Jan Clouse was snubbed. While building her new home in 1998, she thought that gas lanterns flanking the front door would add the ideal finishing touch. At a local lighting store, the sales associate told Jan that gas lanterns would be more than her \$3,500 budget and turned away to assist another customer.

Clouse doesn't accept "no" for an answer and searched until she found someone who could make gas lights not only for her home but for other houses as well. She

BY BARBARA MILLEN PATRICK

bought all the copper lanterns she could and sold them out of the back of her car. From that humble beginning, Clouse has grown her company over nearly two decades to become the premier lighting company in the Lowcountry and beyond. Most of her 18 employees are ALA certified Lighting Specialists, offering a new standard of customer service.

"I went to Staples," she said. "I named the company on the spot and had business cards printed."

Clouse said she "groveled" to bring those first customers on board and many of those well-known builders have remained loyal. Today's clients, who have expanded beyond Mount Pleasant to Kiawah Island and even Turks and Caicos, tend to want whole home lighting designs.

Starting with a space in the Mount Pleasant Antique Mall, she stepped up to larger locations as her clientele expanded, ultimately purchasing and renovating the current location at the corner of Chuck Dawley Boulevard and Bowman Road.

Clouse's daughter, Jennifer Crider, has followed in her mother's footsteps.

"I worked in shipping for several years," Crider said. "It's an interesting business."

It has proved to be a useful skill since Crider joined this family owned and operated business 11 years ago. Currently she is preparing to open a new retail outlet, the Carolina Lighting Clearance Center, just off Clements Ferry Road. It will be a separate entity, offering lighting fixtures at affordable prices from a select group of vendors.

"One of my projects today includes negotiating shipping, both products coming in as well as delivery to customers," she said.

As vice president of operations and partner in the Carolina Lanterns Clearance Center, Crider's skills perfectly complement her mother's visionary thinking and sales expertise.

Clouse speaks highly of her daughter's hands-on capabilities. Crider handles the day-to-day operations, fielding advertising strategies, hiring new employees and seeking more efficient shipping options – literally whatever the day



Photo by Jenn Cady.

## Jan Clouse Jennifer Crider

### Carolina Lanterns

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brings across her desk.

Clouse has earned her place in the local and national business community. She has gone from being a "fish out of water" to being a board member of the Charleston Trident Homebuilders Association. The list of honors and awards is long, but she is especially pleased to be included in *Southern Living's* 50th Anniversary celebration.

Clouse said, "I'm relentless. I love making sales calls."

But she does know how to relax: "I like walking, working out, dinner with friends and reading."

In addition to her ever demanding role at Carolina Lanterns and its new Clearance Center, Crider has a domestic side and enjoys canning, running, boating and spending time with her husband, Charlie, and son, Hayden.


With Jan Clouse and Jennifer Crider as the guiding lights, the future of Carolina Lanterns is indeed bright. 



Photo courtesy of Mainstream Boutique.

# Kate Walker Mary Lee Busick

## Mainstream Boutique

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**K**ATE WALKER NEVER SAW HERSELF as a small business owner. She'd worked hard to earn her nursing degree and loved her job, but, when her best friend opened a Mainstream Boutique in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, Kate began to dream. Fast forward a few years, and Walker is now the owner of not one but two boutiques that sell casual women's clothing. She opened her first Mainstream Boutique in 2013 in Florence, South Carolina, where she lives with her husband and son. Kate knew from the start that she wanted to open two or three stores and recently open a second location in Mount Pleasant's Belle Hall Shopping Center with the help

BY AMY MERCER

of her mother, Mary Lee Busick.

When Walker started researching locations, her mother said, "If you open a store in Charleston, I want to do it with you." The two have a great working relationship and bring different strengths to the business. Busick worked for years in marketing and communications and loves promoting the store, while her daughter gets excited about buying, managing store operations and working with the staff.

Mainstream Boutique is a franchise, and there are currently 78 boutiques across the country, with a flagship store in Apple Valley, Minnesota. Walker said the pros of owning a franchise are many, but what she enjoys most is the freedom to customize her store to fit her customers' needs.

"I choose all of the inventory and make the buying decisions. The company encourages owners to put a personal spin on their individual store," Walker said.

Mainstream Boutique Mount Pleasant opened on Oct. 1, 2015, the same day as a massive flood.

"Not even a hurricane could hold us back!" Walker laughed. "We were standing there in our rain boots, sending home our staff, but, thankfully, people still came out to shop."

Busick rented a condo nearby and was able to manage the store while Walker commuted from Florence. (Busick will move from her Florida home to Daniel Island in June.) Now that the water has receded, mother and daughter are happy to report steady sales and a growing customer base. It took about a year of preparations to open the store; Walker and Busick worked hard to get the details just right.

"Mom made the dressing room curtains and was key in choosing the décor," Walker pointed out.

Walker described the selection at Mainstream Boutique as trendy and unique. They also have accessories and a selection of shoes.


"When clients come to us, they find quality products, a unique selection and a good price. But what's most important is their experience. We offer a personal touch – because when you run a small business, good customer relationships are really important. It's what keeps you going." 





Photo by Rick Waldo.

## Cameron Reid Leigh Reid Hope

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**C**AN YOU HEAR THE WOOF-WOOF? Old MacDonald's farm it is not but rather the popular Woof Gang Bakery & Grooming that has opened in Mount Pleasant to the chorus of cheerful barking. This upscale neighborhood pet store is the dog-diggity for the most refined pets.

Woof Gang Bakery & Grooming carries the vibe of a doggie Tiffany's, with calming brown tones accented with hot pink and chandeliers.

"Our store has a different feel than others in Mount Pleasant," explained Cameron Reid, co-owner of Woof Gang Bakery & Grooming. "We are super friendly and have a happy store. You will love bringing your pet here."

The retail store offers all-natural dog foods, durable toys, a senior section and the very popular treat table.

"Our senior section carries products geared toward older dogs that may need soft treats," explained Reid. "We have treats that help with memory, joints and for the heart that many people really want for their older dogs."

In addition to the gourmet dog treats, Woofgang Bakery & Grooming, located in Crickentree, offers full-service dog grooming.

"We have an incredible groomer with a lot of experience," said Leigh Reid Hope, co-owner and Reid's mother. "We are so excited over this business. The business is a family affair for us, and I am so proud of my daughter. We have only been open a short time and we are doing great. We can't wait to meet more of the four-legged residents that live in our town."

Many people already know that Woof Gang Bakery & Grooming, part of a franchise, is recognized as the 11th largest pet retailer in the country.

"I can't say enough good things about this franchise," boasted Hope. "It is a high-end dog store, and we worked hard to find the perfect location. We believe we have found it in Mount Pleasant."

Reid agreed and has great enthusiasm for her first business, but being a young woman in business has its challenges.

"I look a lot younger than I am, and people didn't always

take me seriously," Reid shared. "I've learned to stand up for myself and not get pushed around. I've really enjoyed the experience so far, and it's really good working with my mother. She has over 30 years of experience in the business world and has pushed me in the right direction."

Hope has owned another business for decades and also has raised four children as a single mother.

"While I went through my divorce, it was nice having a career to fall back on. It is important to love what you do. Prior to owning my business, I was torn between being at work and needing to be home with the children. Owning a business was a great solution because I was able to make my own hours. A person can definitely sleep better at night when they are able to put their family first." 20



Photo by Jenn Cady.

# Pam Bishop

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**B**Y THE TIME PAM BISHOP DECIDED to enter a career of real estate, she knew more than a little bit about her choice. Her father, brother and even nephew had all enjoyed success in her home city of Fort Lauderdale with the family business, and Pam felt that real estate might be the right choice for her as well.

“My father, Harlan Drum, started Drum Realty in 1952,” she remembered. “It’s still in Fort Lauderdale and is managed by a third generation of our family. Real estate was the centerpiece of my environment. Being the youngest of four children, I understood success in business and in life required dedication to hard work.”

Bishop and her husband met at Reinhardt College and were married two years later in Fort Lauderdale. Thanks to

multiple relocations with her husband and three children, she realized what it was like to move, settle again and create a comforting new home – and she felt that she would be able to relate to the clients’ concerns when it came to moving.

“I had the opportunity to assist a top-producing agent,” she commented. “He suggested and encouraged that I go full-time. It became apparent that my family’s real estate background made it a good choice. I started full-time as an agent with Presson & Stromon Realtors.”

In 1986, the family moved to Mount Pleasant and, according to Bishop, their “love for the area was immediate and continues to this day, though it was a smaller town then.”

Today, her career with Carolina One, which has spanned more than 20 satisfying years, has brought her plenty of challenges, accolades and enjoyable moments with the community. She credits the opportunity to “help people make the Lowcountry their home” as the reason she has enjoyed her career. She described helping potential buyers find the right place to live and the right house as a fulfilling challenge. Even during the housing market downturn, Bishop felt that the situation gave her further insight into the local market conditions.

“People are moving here now for all the area has to offer – good schools, great dining, shopping, beaches and a great climate,” she commented.

Bishop’s business motto has always been to treat others in the way she would like to be treated, and she hasn’t strayed from it since beginning her career in real estate. Her distinctions include being a Certified Residential Specialist, an honor earned by only 4 percent of the top Realtors in the nation. Recently she received her SRES – Seniors Real Estate Specialist – certification as well. She also is an Accredited Buyer Representative. In addition, she continues to be a frequent Realtor of Distinction in the Charleston Trident Association of Realtors, a consistent member of East Cooper Top Producers and the recipient of Carolina One’s Lifetime Achievement Award, plus numerous other achievements including CTAR Realtor of the Year in 2007.

Because Bishop believes in giving back to the community, she has been able to garnish accolades and recognition from her peers in the real estate market. She has served on the board of directors for the Charleston Trident Association of Realtors and worked with the Realtor Housing Fund, also known as RHOF. On a more personal note, she and her husband are members and stewards of St. Peter’s Anglican Church and regularly host small groups and Bible study.

“I knew when I started my career in real estate that my reputation would always be important to me,” Bishop said.



Photo courtesy of Melissa Watson.



# Melissa Watson

**Spartina Cabinetry and Design Consultants**  
 l'On Square - 152 Civitas  
 Mount Pleasant  
 843-971-4882  
[www.spartinacabinetry.com](http://www.spartinacabinetry.com)

**O**PENING HER OWN BUSINESS was something Melissa Koger Watson always knew she wanted to do one day when the timing was right.

The president and principal designer at Spartina Cabinetry and Design Consultants, LLC, comes from a long line of business owners, so she knows the drive it takes to get the job done.

After graduating from Converse College with a degree in Interior Design, Watson spent time in commercial and residential design in Atlanta and Charleston. She eventually settled in Charleston, where she was born and raised, and started working for a local company doing kitchen and bath design.

BY ANNE HARRIS

“Kitchen and bath was always one of my loves in design,” she said.

Throughout her career, Watson also obtained professional membership in the National Kitchen and Bath Association and became an allied member of the American Society of Interior Designers.

It wasn't too long before the stars aligned and Watson was able to make her dreams of owning a business come true. Spartina Cabinetry and Design Consultants was opened nine years ago.

As for what she loves most about her job, Watson said, “engaging the client in all aspects of the design phase. I enjoy getting to know them personally and listening to their wants and needs. It's always rewarding to see the end product and have a satisfied client on the project.”

Relationships are important to Watson in all areas of her

life, and she credits her family and her church in aiding her success.

“The full and constant support of my family has always been in place,” she said.

Watson also concentrates on building relationships within the community, serving on local boards and getting involved in regional kitchen and bath boards as time allows.

As a creative type, Watson is constantly looking for inspiration and said finding it feeds her soul. She enjoys cooking, travel, art and fitness and reads voraciously.

But its clear her biggest inspiration remains the people she works with each day. As she said, “I have such wonderful clients from all over that motivate me every day. I am truly passionate about what I do.” 20



Photo by Jenn Cady.

# Michele Hensel

Lowcountry Beauty and Wellness Spa  
1205 Two Island Court  
Mount Pleasant  
843-971-2860  
[www.lowcountryplasticsurgery.com](http://www.lowcountryplasticsurgery.com)

**S**UCCESS COMES FROM HARD WORK, life balance and the willingness to invest in others. Michele Hensel has committed to live out these positive attributes by creating something more than just a local business.

At a young age, Hensel saw that achievement didn't come easy. She watched her father as he struggled in the working world and wanted more for himself and his family. He eventually took a chance and decided to open his own restaurant. Those were amazing years for Hensel. She witnessed her father build his dream, and, after many years of hard work, that dream became a financial success. This experience provided the foundation for how Hensel runs her business today.

Knowing that she wanted to pursue something within the medical field and help others, the Georgia native's first career path was to become a registered cardiovascular invasive specialist. At the time, there were relatively few of these specialists trained to assist cardiologists, and the technical aspect of the position appealed to her. She graduated from the Georgia Heart Institute and took her first job as a newly minted RCIS in Charlotte, North Carolina. But Hensel wanted to use her creativity as well.

"I started a gift basket business on the side after I made a few Valentine's Day baskets, and they were a hit around the hospital; people wanted more," she remembered.

Hensel started creating gifts for other occasions as well – holiday and thank you baskets soon followed the Valentine batch, and eventually she found herself running a thriving gift business.

"Although I never had a background in marketing – never went to school for it – I've always understood the importance of selling myself," she mused. "No one is going to sell your talent but you. You have to show people what you have to offer and believe in it."

In 2002, while still working in the cardiac cath lab, Hensel took a travel assignment with Memorial Hospital in Savannah, Georgia, and, while visiting a friend in Charleston, met her husband, Dr. Jack Hensel. For three years, the couple lived between Savannah and Charleston because they were engrossed in their separate careers. He was starting Lowcountry Plastic Surgery Center in Mount Pleasant and she was busy with her work in Savannah.

They were married in 2006, and Hensel eventually launched her current business, Lowcountry Beauty and Wellness Spa, where she has helped transform patients from where they are to where they want to be. Every day she is in the business of changing lives. Because of her hard work, her use of cutting-edge services and her efforts to create an atmosphere of comfort, the patients of Lowcountry Beauty and Wellness Spa continue to rave about their experiences.

Hensel continues to be inspired by her father's example; she is creating a lasting legacy for her community, family and children.


"Being a woman who runs her own business, I fully believe that women can have it all – career and family," she said. "We just have to understand how to divide our time and create a level of balance. My motto is to surround myself with those who are wise, believe wholeheartedly in what I do, love my family with every beat of my heart and work every day at creating something that will give others a new perspective in their own lives." 





Photo by Rick Waldo.

## *Dr. Emily* Curry

### Sweetgrass Eyecare

3070 Highway 17 North, Suite 201


Mount Pleasant

843-352-9977

[www.sweetgrasseyecare.com](http://www.sweetgrasseyecare.com)

She credits her patients as the reason she and her staff strive to stay on the cutting edge of optometry by learning new techniques and employing advanced technology. Sweetgrass Eyecare offers the latest in refractive technology, contact lenses, eyewear and ocular health detection. While she is an expert in all of these services, she especially enjoys refractive surgery and fitting specialty contact lenses.

Most of all, Dr. Curry finds inspiration in her career as an optometrist through her patients.

“I love my patients, and it humbles me that they choose to come to Sweetgrass Eyecare for their vision needs,” she smiled. “Vision is such a precious sense, and I love being able to help people see the best they are capable of seeing.” 

**N**OT EVERY YOUNG CHILD HAS the opportunity or interest to watch surgeries be performed, but, for Dr. Emily Curry, owner of Sweetgrass Eyecare, those fond memories inspired her to pursue a career in the medical field.

“My dad was a private practice veterinarian, and my siblings and I grew up in that practice just as much as we grew up in our house,” she said. “As a child, I saw my father perform a lot of small animal surgeries, and it was captivating to me.”

BY ANNE TOOLE

Dr. Curry has been fascinated with the human eye since high school. After working in the optometric field in college, she knew that becoming an optometrist was her dream. She earned a bachelor of arts in Biochemistry from Otterbein College and went on to graduate first in her class with a doctorate of Optometry from The Ohio State University.

She came to Charleston in 2007 as a clinical director and then worked for other private practices before opening Sweetgrass Eyecare in Mount Pleasant two years ago.

“Private practice is where my heart is, and, after having two of my three children, I knew that the next step was starting my own,” Dr. Curry said. “Not only does owning my practice allow me to practice eye care the way I dream of, but I also hope that my children will have the same sort of childhood memories that I have of my dad’s clinic.”

While being able to set high standards of eye care and acting as a role model for her family are two perks of owning an optometry practice, Dr. Curry finds joy in helping people.

“I absolutely love seeing patients, not only examining the health of their eyes but listening to their vision problems and working with them to find a solution,” she explained.



Photo by Jenn Cady.

## Franne Schwarb Chari Karinshak

Coldwell Banker United, Realtors  
1127 Queensborough Blvd., Suite 103  
Mount Pleasant  
843-270-1207 • 843-810-8287  
www.wearecharlestonrealestate.com

**T**HE MOUNT PLEASANT AND Charleston real estate markets are ever changing, and lately the two have been in high demand. Having an experienced and knowledgeable Realtor on your side, whether you are a buyer or seller, is essential to getting the most out of your sale or purchase.

For many people, the decision to rely upon the Charleston Fine Homes Team at Coldwell Banker United, Realtors turned out to be the right choice. Led by Franne Schwarb and Chari Karinshak, this team with more than 30 years of experience has found great success in the past five years.

“The Charleston market is still figuring out how to react

to teams. We think two heads are always better than one,” said Schwarb.

“We complement each other’s personalities by lending support or constructive criticism when necessary,” said Karinshak. “Franne and I bring a unique perspective to the table for each transaction because we are from different generations and backgrounds. Our honest communication and trust in one another plays a key part in our success.”

Schwarb and Karinshak are women in a professional field that has always had a female presence.

“Historically, women have been in real estate since its inception in the late 1700s, but mostly in clerical roles. They didn’t become agents and brokers until the 1880s. I don’t think we changed the profession but instead bring different perspectives,” shared Schwarb. “As in any profession, you have to earn respect from your male and female counterparts. Knowledge is power.”

Karinshak agreed and added, “Helping others make a major purchase in their life is a serious responsibility, not to be taken lightly. Women just beginning in the real estate profession should know that real estate is a life-consuming job choice. Flexible hours are key to meeting the ever changing needs of clients.”

Today, the method for buyers to find their new home begins with the Internet, and Realtors such as Schwarb and Karinshak have adjusted.

“When I started in real estate, I chose the homes I showed my clients,” explained Schwarb. “Today, my clients often go online and tell me what they want to see.”

As part of the platinum level Coldwell Banker United, Realtors ‘A’ relocation team, Schwarb and Karinshak are usually the first to introduce newcomers to the Lowcountry. This team never forgets their goal of providing a smooth transaction, from contract to closing, by always working for their clients.

“We are honest, dependable and hardworking women who value a client’s time and opinion,” explained Karinshak. “Our years of experience and knowledge of the area will put our clients at ease and make for a less stressful experience. We are passionate about our business and it shows.”

The ladies of the Charleston Fine Homes Team are members of the East Cooper Top Producers Club and achieved the International Diamond Society level in 2014 within the Coldwell Banker network. They are members of the Coldwell Banker Previews International, which means they are certified to participate in their luxury marketing program. Additionally, Schwarb and Karinshak are Realtors of Distinction and achieved the Coldwell Banker International Sterling Society in 2015. 20

**F**OR GINA SCHIRMER, OWNING AND operating an insurance agency is second nature. She is CEO of Schirmer Insurance Group LLC, in Mount Pleasant.

Originally from Greenville, South Carolina, Schirmer comes from a family insurance background that exceeds 62 years, beginning with her grandfather, Gene Adams, a 40-year Nationwide Insurance agent. A high school file clerk and receptionist in the insurance office, she said with satisfaction, “The summer job was always secure.”

In 1983, after graduating from Winthrop University with a degree in Foreign Politics and a minor in Spanish, she married Mount Pleasant native Sam Schirmer.

“My grandfather and my grandmother baited Sam just enough to spark his interest in insurance and encouraged him to interview with Nationwide, and that was the beginning of our Lowcountry insurance life together,” she said.

After five years in commercial banking and real estate, she worked privately doing interior design and renovation projects while assisting her husband with building and growing Sam Schirmer Nationwide Insurance Agency – and setting about raising a family.

“The three children added the icing to the cake, bringing major joy and consistent activity to our lives,” she said.

Schirmer has engaged in every aspect of parenting, from teaching academics to coaching sports. She also acted as Booster Club president, PTA president and board member for the Charleston Collegiate School for a number of years.

In 2009, when the couple’s youngest child started high school, Schirmer returned to the insurance business full-time and with vigor. She began the foundation work to open an independent insurance agency, and, in 2011 partnered with her oldest son, Sass Schirmer, to open the doors of Schirmer Insurance Group.

Today, Schirmer Insurance Group focuses on the individual insurance needs of its clients and finds solid solutions based on the planned, as well as the unexpected. The agency offers a variety of carrier options and a full line of insurance products. They gladly share their knowledge of personal and commercial property insurance guidelines within the coastal region.

Since its inception in 2009, the company has doubled in size, according to Gina Schirmer, and obtained a “full fledged” sales team, marketing team and human resources department. Finding the right fit within the company is a passion for Schirmer, as she values happy employees who



Photo by Jenn Cady.

## Gina Schirmer

**Schirmer Insurance Group**  
Mount Pleasant and Moncks Corner  
843-881-1771  
[www.schirmerinsuranceagency.com](http://www.schirmerinsuranceagency.com)

will keep the clients happy as well.

“We are very service and relationship focused,” she explained. “We strive to have an environment that stays on top of sales and service.”

One way the company keeps that service promise is through a new digital platform that sends automated emails to clients and prospective clients. As for sales, the company has achieved five acquisitions since 2009 and maintains an “internal structure that allows for growth,” according to Schirmer. Her daughter, Grayson, who obtained her insurance license in January 2016, recently came on board for marketing and social media.

“We’re all about relationships,” Gina Schirmer emphasized. “We encourage everyone on the team to engage with the community and give back. We want our clients to feel satisfied after speaking with us.”





Photo courtesy of Edie Edelson-Rabin.

## Edie Edelson-Rabin

**Juanita Greenberg's Nacho Royale**  
410 W. Coleman Blvd.  
Mount Pleasant  
843-329-6224  
[www.juanitagreenbergs.com](http://www.juanitagreenbergs.com)

**I**T'S SAFE TO SAY THAT EDIE EDELSON-Rabin has a lot on her plate. She's the owner of Juanita Greenberg's Nacho Royale in Mount Pleasant and a partner in its downtown location and Andolini's Pizza in Mount Pleasant with her husband Michael.

After waiting tables in Atlanta, she moved to the Lowcountry in 1991 to work for a friend's growing local restaurant group. At the same time, her boyfriend – now husband – owned an Andolini's Pizza in New Hampshire and wanted to open one in Charleston.

"We were dating and eventually I went to work for him. I said I wanted to buy the restaurant," she laughed. "We

dated for five years, and it was only after we got married that he sold it to me."

Shortly after opening downtown Charleston's first Andolini's in 1992, the couple opened Juanita Greenberg's Burrito Palace in 1994, which moved to its current location on King Street four years later. Andolini's Pizza eventually grew to five locations, some of which were sold to other entrepreneurs. Juanita Greenberg's Nacho Royale is celebrating its fifth year of serving great margaritas and Mexican food on Coleman Boulevard in Mount Pleasant.


As a mother of two teenage girls, Rabin strikes a balance between raising her children and keeping up with the operations of three restaurants.

"I would be considered the 'detail person' of daily operations. I leave the management to the restaurant managers, who do it best," she said.

Instead, Rabin spends her time ensuring things are running smoothly at all three locations and keeping her team enthusiastic in what they do.

"I make my rounds to each location. Each restaurant needs different attention for different reasons. I love being able to pop in, say hello and make sure things are clean – that kind of thing. We're a family. I check up on them to make sure everyone is happy."

With more than 25 years working in the industry, Rabin loves what she does.

"The energy of the restaurant business is non-stop," she said. "I love being around the good people who work here and the customers, too. There's never a dull moment. It makes it fun." 

**I**T WAS A FATEFUL JOG IN THE DARK that turned a light bulb on in Marnie Renshler's head, illuminating a five-year path that led to starting her own business, Mama Lights.

"I had just had my second child, and the only time I had to go running with my neighbor was at 4:30 in the mornings. One morning, my neighbor stepped on a pine cone in the dark and broke her foot," Renshler

said. "I shopped for a light we could wear to help us see on our runs – and to help us be seen – but there were no comprehensive websites where I could find exactly what I needed that was also of good quality."

BY ANNE TOOLE

Over the years, Renshler scoured the Internet and tried a variety of options; some lights were too dim, some didn't stay in place well and couldn't be safely relied upon.

Renshler, who sold medical devices at the time, happened to meet with a client who mentioned to her the concept of LED lights for use in the medical field and beyond.

"He told me 'People are going to light up everything they possibly can in the next 10 to 15 years,'" she said. "And that really resonated with me. More than just the right light I needed for jogging, LED lights can be useful in so many applications, and that could help increase safety and even be fun."

Renshler recently left her 20-year sales career and decided to work for herself instead by selling LED light products of all varieties.

"I am what they call an affiliate Internet marketer, and I work through Amazon," she explained. "I run my website, [mamalights.com](http://mamalights.com), and choose the LED products that meet my standards. I market these products for the distributors on my website so that people looking for them can choose the best product for their needs in one place, and the items are sold and shipped from Amazon to your front door."

Renshler has branched out from selling only LED lights for safety and active wear; her website offers LED options for children, pets and gear, and even LED lights for events



Photo courtesy of Marnie Renshler.

## Marnie Renshler

Mama Lights  
[www.mamalights.com](http://www.mamalights.com)

and fun activities.

"I sell products that are useful or fun that people otherwise wouldn't know to look for," she said. "It's much more than the standard LED safety products you may think; there are LED umbrellas, rechargeable LED collars and leashes for dogs and even toy footballs to play with at night."

She is most excited, though, about sharing her passion for safety and fun with others.

"I get to go to schools and talk to children about fun ways to be safe," she beamed. "I talk to anyone who wants to listen about ways that LED can improve their lifestyle. It has improved mine and keeps my children and me safe. I love that I can do the same for others." 🌟

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**C**LICHÉ AS IT IS, I ALWAYS WANTED to go to law school,” said Summer Eudy, managing partner of the Good Law Group. But Eudy is anything but cliché. At the University of North Carolina, she double-majored in Political Science and Exercise and Sports Science and even considered going to physical therapy school before following her heart to the Charleston School of Law.

BY ANNE TOOLE

“Nobody in my family is a lawyer, so I wasn’t trying to follow in anyone’s footsteps,” she said. “Law school just appealed to me.”

While her thoughts of physical therapy school never came to fruition, Eudy’s exercise and sports science background helped her get into the type of law she practices today.

“I do a lot of personal injury cases,” Eudy explained. “Of course it’s important to know about anatomy and physiology, but there are a lot of cases where the injury is disputed. Having a degree in that allows me a deeper understanding and ability to fight for my client.”

Eudy began her career doing plaintiff’s work for a small practice, where she met her future business partner, Joe Good. She then spent three-and-a-half years doing civil defense work before partnering with Good to form the Good Law Group LLC in 2013.

“Those experiences helped shape me as a lawyer, because I got to see both sides of the aisle by representing individuals as well as corporate and government entities,” Eudy said. “It helped me decide what kind of firm I wanted to establish. And I can use what I learned to benefit my clients.”

Today, Eudy represents clients in all realms of civil litigation, including personal injury, business litigation, employment and construction defect litigation, as well as family law and criminal defense cases.

Good Law Group LLC is located in a unique building – a renovated 1970s bank – which sits right on Shem Creek, at the corner of Coleman Boulevard and Mill Street. The home of Good Law Group LLC has been a staple on Coleman Boulevard for many years, and now it is getting a facelift. Eudy and her clients really enjoy the cottage that houses the firm and the easy parking. Eudy designed the interior of the office to be chic but rustic and intentionally

Photo by Rick Waldo.



## Summer Eudy

Good Law Group  
122 Coleman Blvd.  
Mount Pleasant  
843-277-8373  
[www.goodlawgroupcarolina.com](http://www.goodlawgroupcarolina.com)

unlike a typical law office.

“It makes our clients feel relaxed when they meet with us, and that is helpful considering they are generally facing a stressful situation when they come to our office,” she said.

Eudy is inspired in her career to seek out the right and the wrong and protect people’s rights.

“In one of my early cases, I represented a young woman who was wrongfully marked by the police as ‘at fault’ in a terrible car accident in which she lost her life. I got to know her parents; they became my friends,” she smiled. “We had a good outcome in the case, but my biggest accomplishment was proving the accident was not her fault. That meant so much more to her parents than the money. And that was worth everything to me.” 20



## Nancy Meyer



## Nicole Wallen

**Barre Evolution**  
320 W. Coleman Blvd.  
Mount Pleasant  
843-654-9045  
www.barreevolution.com

Photo courtesy of Nicole Wallen.

Photo courtesy of Nicole Wallen.

while the work is intense – 12-to 14- hour workdays – they would never go back to a 9 to 5 job.

“The secret is that there is no secret,” Wallen laughed. “Running a successful business is recognizing that it’s not about you. It’s about our clients and the health and strength of the business.”

The biggest challenge of being a female-owned business is managing people, and part of what distinguishes Barre Evolution is their commitment to the ongoing development of their staff.

“We work hard to figure out the most effective way to motivate our instructors without being discouraging,” said Meyer.

After teaching dance for 10 years, instructor Jess Ross came to the Barre Evolution Method two years ago.

“I love working for BE because they let me be the best version of myself,” she explained. “I am the happiest when I am teaching. Watching clients grow stronger, become more flexible and do something they couldn’t before is one of the most rewarding parts of my job.”


As women and moms, Meyer and Wallen have a greater understanding of the changing needs of their staff and strive to work around these needs, including pregnancy and family emergencies.

“You might not get this flexibility in a workplace run by a man or larger corporation. As a result, we have had a very high retention rate with instructors,” Meyer said.

A lot has changed in the last six years, and there are now four Barre Evolution studios, including a Greenville location. Their latest studio opened this spring in North Mount Pleasant, and, while continued growth is part of their plan, the women are committed to maintaining the boutique feel.

“We work hard to foster a community of women that is diverse and supportive,” said Wallen. “We love seeing how impactful barre and Pilates can be in people’s lives. Our students feel better about themselves, and they reward us every day by coming back and bringing their friends.”

### TIPS FOR ENTREPRENEURS:

- Location is key! Spend time to research your location. Spend time and money to be an expert in your field. Continue your education so you can innovate.
- Be prepared to reinvest everything you make in the first few years so you won’t have to take on debt.
- Don’t be afraid of change. Tweak your business plan as needed. Don’t stick with something if it isn’t working.
- Hire good people. Don’t hire teachers just because they have the cute “girl next door” look. Be picky and wait for the smart and genuine candidates to come calling.
- Don’t skimp on hiring a CPA, attorney and bookkeeper. These people are your best business advisors. 

**W**HEN NANCY MEYER AND Nicole Wallen joined forces to open Barre Evolution in 2010, there were no other barre studios in Charleston. “People thought you had to be a ballerina,” Wallen joked.

Meyer had recently moved with her family from New York City, where she’d worked in marketing, and met Wallen in a barre class at Wallen’s Pilates studio. The two entrepreneurs saw the opportunity to combine their strengths and open the first Barre Evolution studio. Part of their success lies in the fact that they have a shared vision and a similar passion. They both come from business backgrounds and agree that

BY AMY MERCER

**T**RANSFORMATIONS OCCUR daily at Butterfly Women's Consignment Boutique – turning an outfit from drab to dramatic or turning expensive brands into affordable items.

On a bright Thursday morning, the store in the Belle Hall Shopping Center bustles with activity. Owner Amanda Rosen assists two women dropping off high-end clothing for consignment while a friendly employee helps other customers find the right dresses in the right sizes. Racks of colorful clothing, from casual items to evening wear, fill the intimate boutique. One whole wall features an irresistible collection of shoes, while fashionable accessories are on display throughout the store – most notably Chanel and Louis Vuitton handbags.

Rosen, polite and professional with a slight accent revealing her British roots, has owned Butterfly Consignment for the past seven years. She believes passionately in the motto behind her business as a “store where every woman matters.”

“The most rewarding part of my job is that we are, on all levels, able to support women,” she said.

Clients get paid for consigning, customers benefit from a huge selection of designer brands at discount prices and even clothes that are not sold go to ECCO – East Cooper Community Outreach – to help those in need. Amanda emphasized the main philanthropic drive behind her store is a focus on women and their families. The business has supported girls in Kenya, sponsored scholarships and is willing to work with any local community outreach groups that share the goal of educating and empowering women.

Originally from England, Rosen has lived in Mount Pleasant for 18 years with her pilot husband. Her daughter, 14, will be attending Wando High School in the fall, and her son, 12, will go to the University School.

“I like that this is a small enough community that I have access to a myriad of experiences for our family to embrace and enjoy the area,” she said.

Rosen relies on her staff of five to help her business run smoothly.

“The women are all fabulous. They allow me flexibility to fully participate in my children's lives,” she said with gratitude.

If a woman brings in items for consignment, Rosen and her staff will assess each garment to make sure there are no



Photo by Rick Waldo.

## Amanda Rosen

**Butterfly Women's Consignment Boutique**  
624-H Long Point Road  
Mount Pleasant  
843-884-8577  
[www.butterflyconsignments.com](http://www.butterflyconsignments.com)

stains or imperfections and will agree on the prices. If an item is sold within 60 days, the money goes directly to the client. Butterfly Consignment accepts merchandise seasonally, without appointment, and is always seeking couture house, designer label and top mall brand clothing in all sizes. Designer accessories including purses, jewelry, shoes and hats also are welcome.

While she believes in quality clothes and personal style, Rosen admits that as a busy parent and small business owner, her lifestyle is far from glamorous – but she prefers it that way.

“I just try to be part of the fabric of everyday life that makes Mount Pleasant a great place to live,” she said. 🍷





Photo by Jenn Cady.

# Kimberly Powell

**Woodhouse Day Spa Charleston**  
725 Johnnie Dodds Blvd.  
Mount Pleasant  
843-203-1772  
[www.charleston.woodhousespas.com](http://www.charleston.woodhousespas.com)

owners in Hilton Head, Savannah, Columbia and Greenville – areas which fall into Powell’s territory. Powell herself owns 12 locations in all throughout the Southeast, including Mount Pleasant’s, the largest Woodhouse Spa in the country at 9,000 square feet.

“I wanted to invest not only in the people of Mount Pleasant but the real estate as well. I’m here to stay, I want to give back, and it’s important to me to be a part of this community in a meaningful way,” she commented.


To that end, Powell is a member of the Chamber of Commerce leadership circle, The Center 4 Women, The Women of Renaissance Group and the Mount Pleasant Business Association and sits on the board at Thrive, an organization that protects victims of domestic violence. Woodhouse Day Spa Charleston donates to countless charities, and Powell has been involved in charity work all of her adult life.

Having met her Beaufort-born husband, Keith, in the Lowcountry in 1985, they both share a genuine love and respect for the area and its majestic landscape. They have co-owned Summit Industrial Flooring, based in the Midwest, for over 26 years. They recently launched Summit Garage Solutions in Charleston, providing high-end garage cabinetry and flooring solutions to help make your garage an extension of your home.

Powell’s admiration of Lowcountry culture runs deep. She has always loved the art of sweetgrass basket making and Gullah art and history. Inspired by the candles in her spa and her respect and appreciation for sweetgrass basket weaving, she decided to launch a luxury candle line inspired by Charleston. The Chandèl candle line will represent the rich fragrance and sophistication of the Lowcountry, combined with the artistry and cultural significance of the sweetgrass basket. The candle scents are being created by renowned candle maker Frederick Bouchardy, and Kim and her business partner, Cara Florence, will be taking pre-orders beginning in May.

“This is my love letter to the Lowcountry, a place that has been very good to me since meeting my husband here at 15 years old,” Powell explained.

Despite multiple business endeavors, it is clear that the spa is her baby. April 18 was the official end to her first year, and it appears as if things are going well. She received the 2015 Woodhouse Day Spa Horizon Award for best new spa and has just broken the record for the highest gross sales in a first year.

When asked how she did it, Powell was quick to answer: “Every day I just got up and focused on two things – my team and my guests, in that order. I just knew if I took care of people, they would take care of me. I’m beyond proud and protective of my Woodhouse family. They are everything.” 

**WOODHOUSE DAY SPA**  
Charleston is celebrating its first year anniversary, and owner and regional developer Kimberly Powell is feeling both reflective and inspired.

“As I look in the rear view mirror, I’m so grateful and proud of my amazing team, who truly carried me through some very tough days,” Powell said. “Yet, as I face the dashboard, I am motivated and inspired by Charleston’s entrepreneurial spirit and just want to hit the accelerator and explore unpaved roads.”

And that’s exactly what she’s doing. There is already a great deal of interest by potential new Woodhouse Day Spa

**D**R. CASEY ADKINS WAS HAPPY to trade in cold, wet winters for the sunshine and warm temperatures prevalent in the Lowcountry, but there's a more important reason she left Indiana for South Carolina – the opportunity to work in an audiology practice that is more about health care than retail.

BY BRIAN SHERMAN

Dr. Adkins, a native of Woodford County, Kentucky, moved to the Lowcountry in June 2015 to join Dr. Mary Anne Larkin at Advanced Hearing Care in Mount Pleasant. A graduate of the University of Kentucky, she earned her Doctor of Audiology degree at Purdue University in Indiana.

"I was tired of the cold. I had to chip the ice off my windshield every morning," she commented. "The Charleston area has been a welcome change in my life. Every person I've met is open and welcoming. It's a close-knit community, and there's lots of things going on, such as farmers markets and oyster roasts."

As much as she enjoys the weather and the Southern hospitality, Dr. Adkins is more appreciative of the chance to build a patient base and help her patients make the most of their hearing.

"The most important thing we do here is reconnect people to what's most important in their lives. It's different for everyone," she explained. "For some it might be morning meetings at work, while for others it's hearing their grandkids or feeling involved at a party or a noisy restaurant."

Dr. Adkins cited several ways she and Dr. Larkin help their patients hear better. They offer hearing devices, of course, but patients and their family members also can participate in an active listening training class. Physical therapy for the ears and brain – basically teaching people how to be better listeners – also is available two or three times a month at the Advanced Hearing Care office on Johnnie Dodds Boulevard.

"We do whatever we can to improve the overall quality of our patients' lives," Dr. Adkins said. "One of the reasons I came to Advanced Hearing Care was because of the full-spectrum program Dr. Larkin has built. It's important for people to have realistic expectations. Nothing is going to restore their hearing to normal, but we can work together to build a customized treatment program to optimize their hearing and communication abilities."

Advanced Hearing Care maintains its longtime connection to the community by holding free educational seminars on hearing at senior facilities such as Sandpiper Village and The Palms of Mount Pleasant. Drs. Larkin and Adkins also offer free hearing screenings to residents and to any

Photo courtesy of Dr. Casey Adkins.



## Dr. Casey Adkins

**Advanced Hearing Care**  
900 Johnnie Dodds Blvd.  
Mount Pleasant  
843-606-5658  
[www.advhearing.com](http://www.advhearing.com)

other adult member of the community.

Dr. Adkins pointed out that loud noise can affect a person's hearing, adding that smoking, cardiovascular issues and diabetes also can affect your ability to hear. She said changes in hearing sometimes indicate that there are other health issues. For example, after testing a patient's hearing, she sensed that something wasn't quite right, especially considering that the patient's father was just a year older when he died of a heart attack. She called his cardiologist, who soon discovered the man's heart blockage.

"Your ears are definitely a window into other things going on in your body," Dr. Adkins said. "That's another reason why you should see a Doctor of Audiology."

Dr. Adkins lives on Johns Island with her fiancé, Seth, and Ollie, their boxer mix. Her October wedding is scheduled for the Charleston Tea Plantation. ☞



Photo courtesy of Kathie Livingston.

## Kathie Livingston

**Nature Adventures Outfitters**  
Shrimp Boat Lane  
Mount Pleasant  
843-568-3222  
www.kayakcharlestonsc.com

**K**nown locally as “Woods Woman” and “Kayak Lady,” Kathie Livingston not only loves what she does but shares that love with others.

“As a child, I lived outdoors. I was always on my horse, hiking in the woods, camping outside. My mother and sisters would literally pay me to wash my hair,” the owner of Nature Adventures Outfitters laughed.

Livingston studied Resource Planning and Ecology at the University of Michigan before moving to South Carolina in 1988. She worked as director of the Edisto River Canoe and Kayak Commission and as a naturalist for the National Audubon Society at Beidler Forest.

BY ANNE TOOLE

Eleven years later, she opened Nature Adventures Outfitters, which is dedicated to helping others experience the great outdoors: kayak, canoe and paddle board rentals and instruction, camping equipment rentals, paddletit classes, hiking tours, overnight expeditions and more.

“I want to get people unplugged and connect them to nature. It is so important to relate to our natural world and see the bigger picture of how our relationship to the environment is interrelated to our very existence,” she said. “Every decision we make affects so many dynamics for not only us but for future generations.”

While running the business requires her to spend more time indoors than she would prefer, Livingston credits her excellent staff of biologists, naturalists and operations managers for sharing with 24,000 clients annually the same knowledge and respect for the Lowcountry that she has had for 28 years.

“I have been blessed in being able to do what I love to do, and to work doing it,” she said. “Watching people connect to nature, see a dolphin or a thousand-year-old bald cypress tree always brings a smile and amazement to their face. That I can help people experience things like that is the best part.”



Photo courtesy of Meredith Nelson.

## Meredith Nelson

**PrimeTime Fitness**  
1558 Ben Sawyer Blvd.  
Mount Pleasant  
843-883-0101  
www.primetimefit.net

**M**eredith Nelson has a varied and extensive history in the fitness industry. Starting in the 1980s and carrying 30 extra pounds, she gradually developed a love of all things active – especially running, weightlifting, yoga and cycling. She also gets her thrills putting others through a grueling indoor cycling class, weight-training workout or boot camp. Ask her about weight loss and she’ll talk for hours – after all, she’s been there and lives it every day.

Nelson opened PrimeTime Fitness on Sullivan’s Island in 2000. With a masters in Rehabilitation Counseling, her original goal was to incorporate fitness into the lives of those with disabilities. She continues to provide a haven for anyone, regardless of age or ability, to pursue their fitness goals. After 15 years of offering the residents of Sullivan’s Island a place to go for all their fitness needs, PrimeTime Fitness relocated to Mount Pleasant in December 2015.

BY AMY MERCER

PrimeTime Fitness is unique in that it offers big-gym fitness with boutique individualization. Group fitness classes, personal training, indoor cycling, boot camps, yoga and more fill up the schedule, but the trainers know each person by name. Some members prefer to do their own thing, without the guidance of a trainer, and that is encouraged at PrimeTime as well, with members having access to the facility between 5 a.m. and 10 p.m. Anyone can feel comfortable walking in the front door – from the seasoned athlete to the novice exerciser.

“Building on success is critical for retention, so we celebrate even the smallest accomplishments along with our clients and members,” Nelson said. “We also listen to the ideas, suggestions and even criticisms of our members in our efforts to provide the experience they are looking for.”



**D**r. Gina Courson is a chiropractor who received her undergraduate degree in business from the University of Georgia and her doctor of Chiropractic degree from Life University in Atlanta. Courson is certified in physiological therapeutics and cold laser therapy. She has practiced in Mount Pleasant for 15 years and shares two offices of Accurate Chiropractic with her husband. She is member of the South Carolina Chiropractic Association and Junior League and volunteers with various charitable organizations around the country. She enjoys outdoor activities and playing with her Great Danes.

BY AMY MERCER

Courson said that each year more than 15 million Americans choose chiropractic care for safe, natural and effective relief from back pain, neck pain, headaches, extremity pain, poor overall health, low energy levels and more. Because chiropractic treatments are primarily applied to the spinal region, many individuals incorrectly assume that chiropractors treat only back and neck ailments. While they do quickly and effectively eliminate back and neck pain, it's not the only goal. The objective is to restore and optimize health.

"When evaluating and treating patients, we take a holistic approach which includes identifying and correcting the cause or causes of the patient's health ailment. Chiropractors believe that correcting the cause of the problem provides significant long-term benefits over only treating the symptoms."

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"Our treatments are safe because we only use natural and noninvasive methods of care. Research consistently shows that care from chiropractors is among the safest care available and is light years ahead of traditional medical care in terms of safeness," she explained. 

Photo by Jenn Cady.



## Dr. Gina Courson

**Accurate Chiropractic**  
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Mount Pleasant  
426 W. Coleman Blvd.  
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843-971-8814  
www.mtpleasantchiro.com

**W**hen she was 23 years old, Charleston native Windi McKeithan took a leap of faith and decided to buy two children's wear shops in Mount Pleasant.

Armed with a fashion merchandizing degree, good taste, an eye for upcoming trends and an entrepreneurial spirit, the businesswoman grew her trio of small businesses – Ragamuffin Children's Boutique, Stride Rite Shoes and Radical Rags – into a success story.

This spring she's celebrating 32 years in business.

"I had been a buyer for junior sportswear, and I decided to try out the world of children's fashion, and I ended up falling in love with it," she said.

The entrepreneur said one of her favorite things about her job is building lasting relationships with customers.

"I'm definitely a people person and love the great relationships I have with our customers. Customers that used to shop for their children now come in with their grandchildren. It's such a blessing for us to dress the newest generations of their family."

McKeithan said her days stay filled with helping customers, placing orders, meeting deadlines and "personally handpicking everything that comes into the stores." Although tedious, she said "Owning these stores doesn't feel like 'work' to me. I'm so thankful."

She credited her continued success, in addition to her own hard work, to her support system: her husband and children, her staff and a higher power.


"My husband and children are always by my side. My mom worked here for many years. Every one of the ladies that work here is amazing and they all love what they do. We have the best time working together and helping our customers. When you love what you do, it shines through!" 

Photo by Ronnie Martinelli.



## Windi McKeithan

**The Ragamuffin Children's Boutique**  
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Mount Pleasant  
843-884-4814  
www.ragamuffinchildrensboutique.com



Photo courtesy of Dr. Rachael Click.

## Dr. Rachael Click

Preferred EyeCare Center  
1118 Park West Blvd., Suite 5  
Mount Pleasant  
843-856-4775  
www.preferredeyecarecenter.com

**D**r. Rachael Click knew opening her own practice was going to be a challenge, but she didn't want to do it any other way.

"I started from scratch because I had a lot of good ideas for patient care. I also knew that if I didn't do it, someone else would," she said.

In 2007, Dr. Click moved from Indiana to Mount Pleasant and opened Preferred

BY AMY MERCER


EyeCare Center in Park West the following year. She knew that the area was going to grow and looked forward to being a part of her patients' health care team for years.

Park West has grown dramatically since that time, and Dr. Click recently expanded her business to accommodate the growth and take advantage of the latest technology in eye care.

"There are great advances in eye care, and we've recently added technology that is unique to the Lowcountry and enables us to take a picture of the back of the eye to detect a problem more efficiently. Photos can be taken without having your eye dilated and can replace dilation in healthy eyes."

Preferred EyeCare Center offers a treatment plan that includes a vision assessment and 13-point health evaluation.

After eight years in business, Dr. Click has doubled the size of her practice and is not slowing down.

"As a small business owner, you have to be driven to do the work. You have to juggle the roles of HR and CFO and marketing," she said. "These things are essential to being a successful business owner, but it's the impact on people's lives that continues to inspire me." 

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**D**r. Cynthia Garner always wanted to be in the health care field. She chose dental school over medical school because she was drawn to the artistic aspect of cosmetic dentistry.

“In my profession, you have to have an aesthetic vision for each patient. To make that vision a reality, you work with your hands like an artist to shape veneers or carve teeth from wax. For bridges, crowns and veneers, I choose materials, colors and shapes to craft something that is customized to each patient and makes their smile brighter while ensuring their occlusion functions properly,” Dr. Garner explained.

Following dental school and advanced training at Temple University, she began practicing dentistry in Omaha, Nebraska, where she met and married Lt. Col. Alan Garner, a native of the Isle of Palms. She continued to work as a managing dentist and associate with different practices during her husband’s military career.

When he retired, they moved back to the Lowcountry, where an opportunity opened for Dr. Garner to buy a practice of her own. She has now been practicing dentistry for over 20 years.

Dr. Garner owns Garner Family Dentistry, where the constant goal is providing outstanding dental care. She stays on the cutting edge of dentistry through comprehensive hands-on courses with Spear Education and active membership in the Seattle Study Club, an international network of dentists.

“What inspires me most in my career is the difference dentistry can make in someone’s life,” Dr. Garner said. “I love helping people improve their health and feel better about their appearance. To see someone truly excited about their smile and feeling good and out of pain is truly rewarding. It is why I love what I do and why I am so thankful for the privilege of caring for my patient families.”

Photo by Jenn Cady.



**Dr. Cynthia Garner**  
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Photo by Jenn Cady.

## Nancy Swift

**Swift Appliance**  
625 Johnnie Dodds Blvd.  
Mount Pleasant  
843-388-7283  
[www.swiftappliancesc.com](http://www.swiftappliancesc.com)

**N**ancy Swift is quick to tell you that Swift Appliance is a family business. Her father was in the lumber business in New Jersey, and she learned the many different facets of running a business from him. With an associate degree in Fashion Merchandising plus a Marketing degree, she began working in retail and said her job at Nordstrom was a “wonderful retail experience.” Their emphasis on customer service has been instrumental in guiding her through owning her own business.


In New Jersey, Swift’s husband was a general contractor who was not only adept at building but at installing appliances. When they decided to move the family to the Charleston area, he suggested that she run a business. She saw a niche for a locally owned appliance store and, in July 2012, Swift Appliance officially opened for business in Mount Pleasant.

“When a customer comes in, I have a checklist,” Swift said. “You have to feel customers out to guide them to the right purchase.”

Swift works to assess the customer’s needs and explained that “listening is important.”

“A small retailer can be more accommodating,” she said, adding that it is important for her customers to feel that they’ve not only paid a fair price but that she is accessible if issues crop up.

“My customers always receive exceptional customer service, product knowledge and the best price,” she said.

Swift is best on the sales floor and genuinely enjoys the challenge of helping her clients find the right appliances for their lifestyles. Not only does she head a thriving business, but she is especially proud that a second location will open soon in Murrells Inlet. And they’ll keep it all in the family, with her son in charge. 



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**B**ack in 2008, Tracy MacKellar's teenage daughter made an observation at her high school dance that would lead to a new life purpose – and a career in fashion – for the two of them.

“She noticed some students hadn't gone to the dance because they had nothing to wear,” MacKellar explained. “We wanted to do something about it, so we reached out to family and friends to collect donated dresses.”

The response from the community was “overwhelming,” according to MacKellar, and, with that, Couture Girls Closet was born, a nonprofit boutique that migrated from their family living room in California to a 1,500-square-foot space.

“Even before the nonprofit experience, my husband and I have always had our own businesses,” MacKellar explained. “We owned a pharmacy in California.”

Eventually, MacKellar and her family moved to the Lowcountry, and the concept for Couture Girls Closet moved with them. The boutique is now locally operated by The Assistance League, and MacKellar, true to her new love for fashion, opened MODE in Mount Pleasant in July of 2015, following research on Entrepreneur.com. She liked how MODE specialized in fashion for all women, carrying nothing over \$50 and sizes 0-24.

Since last summer, business at MODE has been smooth sailing, and MacKellar enjoys offering “designer fashion for less” to local ladies. Her future plans for MODE include opening a second location, likely in Summerville, as well as a third in West Ashley. But she assured me that she's taking it slowly, building clientele and reputation in the community through hard work.

“My advice to other women hoping to open a clothing boutique is to do the research,” she emphasized. “Know your demographics, your price points and location. Also, get a great manager. Personalized customer service is important.” 20

Photo by Jenn Cady.



## Tracy MacKellar

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Photo courtesy of Susie Molony.

## Susie Molony

**Southern Belles**  
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843-881-1741  
www.southernbelleschildren.com

The path to a satisfying and successful career is not always straight or easy to navigate. Susie Molony, owner of Southern Belles: A Children's Clothier, knows this all too well. After leaving her career in hospital pharmacy to get married, she became a stay-at-home mom who felt the need to fill her time and spent years building what was once a hobby into a thriving Mount Pleasant favorite.


BY ANNE TOOLE

Her hand-painted designs on children's clothing and accessories grew from being just gifts for friends to being sold at local and then national craft markets.

When traveling to national shows wore on her, Molony pursued a local storefront so she could spend more time with her family. She worked her way up from subleasing a small corner of a children's store to purchasing a children's clothing store. Southern Belles has been in the same location in Northcutt Plaza for more than 20 years.

"Owning your business is not for the faint of heart. It requires a great deal of time and energy," she said. "But I truly love what I do, and I get great joy from helping customers buy for their children. I try to offer something for every need and every occasion, making sure there's a price point to fit every wallet."

Aside from her array of children's clothing, gift items, shoes and more, Molony gives credit to her customers as the reason her store has been a favorite for more than two decades.

"Southern Belles has been successful not only because of my hard work and that of my employees, but also because of our wonderful customers' loyalty and support," Molony said. "Southern Belles has been voted Charleston's Best Local Children's Shop for the past 11 years. I never take that for granted. It's a huge honor that I cherish." 

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**N**ine years ago, Rachael Geib's dream came true when she opened SalonSalon of Charleston, located on Houston Northcutt Boulevard in Mount Pleasant.

"I always wanted to be a hair dresser. My grandparents were barbers in the service," Geib explained. "For my whole life, it has always been my passion. I worked hard to get where I am, and I love what I do."

Geib and SalonSalon's seven employees specialize in hair, makeup, nails, pedicures and waxing. But Geib has steered her business to be much more than just a place to go for beauty treatments.

"Being part of the community is so important to me. We volunteer with the March of Dimes, Pet Helpers, Alzheimer's, Susan G. Komen, the Shriners and more," she said. "Part of what makes us so successful is that we give back to the community that gives so much to us."

SalonSalon will even be providing free hair and makeup to the lucky winners of a wedding giveaway for the book launch of local author Mary Alice Monroe's "A Lowcountry Wedding," which was released in May of this year.

Most of all, Geib finds inspiration through her work.


"All of us have been there; if your hair's not good, you get down and out," she laughed. "I am a therapist, a counselor, a friend, a sister, a mother. It's a great feeling to be able to brighten someone's life." 



Photo by Jenn Cady.

## Rachael Geib

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Photo by Jenn Cady.

# Gail Holdcraft

## Bakies

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www.bakiessc.com

**D**id you ever meet someone who is both left- and right-brained? Soon after finishing her degree in accounting, Gail Holdcraft started making cakes. While working for former Charleston Mayor Joe Riley's father after graduation from college, Holdcraft had one of her first opportunities in custom baking. She prepared a cake for the daughter of a co-worker and learned an important lesson.

"The cake decoration came out neon, and I gave the decorator pale yellow," she remembered. "I realized that if I was going to continue baking, I had to do my own decorating."

Holdcraft soon landed a position at Johnson & Wales and, as an employee, was able to take culinary courses.

That combination of interests – accounting and cake – has stuck with Holdcraft; she now runs Bakies in Mount Pleasant in addition to helping out with her sister's CPA firm. She is thankful for the support of employees, family and friends.

"My sister comes here and makes icing, and I go there and help with taxes," she pointed out. "Another friend is our baker, another mans the front and takes orders, another is our word person and helps with weddings and email, another helps with custom cookies, and our Wando student and my husband help wherever needed."

Holdcraft admitted that "long hours and hard work" are vital to running any small business, so entrepreneurs should pick something they love. For Holdcraft, the opportunity to meet – and bake for – several generations of the same family is particularly rewarding.

"It's great to be the family baker," she mused. "To bake cakes for a little one's birthday party and then their wedding day is cool." ☺

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**D**r. Nicole Dahlkemper is originally from Pennsylvania and enjoys the outdoors, whether it is in the mountains or on the beach. She loves spending time with her dogs – Kirby, Sully and Ditka – reading, yoga, kayaking and giving back to the community. She volunteers her time at the local East Cooper Community Outreach Dental Clinic and also travels to various countries to provide dental care, including the Dominican Republic and Ecuador. She most recently returned from Peru on a mission trip with Dental Community Fellowship, where her group provided more than 900 dental services in a week. She was excited to visit Machu Picchu and climb to the top of Huayna Picchu.

BY AMY MERCER

Dr. Dahlkemper graduated with honors from Allegheny College with a bachelor's in Biological Neuroscience and Psychology, finishing in the top of her class. She earned her DMD from Case Western Reserve University School of Dental Medicine in Cleveland.

"I can't think of a community I would rather be in. My patients are truly wonderful people who make my job more fun. How could I not love having a business here?" said Dr. Dahlkemper.

Water's Edge Dentistry offers a full array of dental services to improve the health of your mouth and the beauty of your smile. Services range from routine cleanings to full-mouth restoration and everything in between. Dr. Dahlkemper provides TMJ therapy with the most advanced nonsurgical techniques and even treatment for sleep apnea and snoring.


"Our team attends numerous continuing education classes annually to increase knowledge and stay on top of the newest advances made in the dental field," she explained. "Our office alleviates patients' fears by providing a relaxing environment, free of judgment, where patients can feel confident in their care." 

Photo by Jenn Cady.



## Dr. Nicole Dahlkemper

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