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Learning Re-Imagined

By CATHY GRIFFITH

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on the web

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**On the cover: Camden Campbell
builds a peg game.**

Steffen Harris Photography



FROM THE EDITOR

The coronavirus has made it necessary for educators and students everywhere to innovate, get creative. We thought it would be interesting to take a look at one school in our area where outside-the-box thinking has always been the norm.

"Ultimately, our goal is to give the kids the skills so they can create," Buckeye Friends School co-founder Kristie Campbell told Cathy Griffith, who visited the school for our cover story.

It's part of the school's self-directed, project-based experiential learning model.

"When kids are working on problems and projects that matter to them, the sky's the limit," said Campbell.

Campbell opened the school last year in a one-room building in rural Teutopolis after wanting to establish an innovative educational experience for her daughter. The rural setting allowed the kids access to nature, which Campbell said is really important to the school's curriculum.

Students are called "seeds" and the teachers who help them grow are called "co-learners."

Besides the return to school, fall conjures up images of hunting season. Gary and Glenda Bartels have hunted on six continents.

Bears, goats, and even a crocodile line the office walls of MBI Construction in Effingham.

"We plan on going down to the Antarctic so we can say we've been to all seven continents," Gary said. "There's nothing to hunt down there. I think I'd like to sleep on an iceberg. It was something I wanted to do as a young boy. I got an opportunity in my late teens, actually, I think I was 20 or 21, to do an elk hunt out West on a spur of the moment. From that moment, I was just hooked on larger, bigger game."

We hope you enjoy hunting through the pages of Effingham Magazine for these and other stories about our community.

Jeff Long
Editor.



Jeff Long is the editor of the Effingham Daily News. A 1987 graduate of the University of Wisconsin, he has worked for newspapers in England, Pennsylvania and Virginia. For 13 years, he was a reporter and later an editor at the Chicago Tribune. He lives in Altamont with his wife, Karen.



Cathy Griffith is news editor of the Effingham Daily News. She is a 1998 graduate of Eastern Illinois University with a Bachelor of Arts in Journalism. She has worked at the Daily News for 18 years in news and magazine publications. She is a lifelong resident of Effingham, where she resides with her husband, Tim, and daughter, Leah.



Charles Mills is reporter and videographer for the Effingham Daily News. A 1983 graduate of Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, he is the son of a south-central Illinois newspaper publisher, worked as master control director for a St. Louis television station, assistant video editor at a video editing facility on Music Row specializing in music-videos, served as senior video editor for a Nashville television station and learned the art of computerized video editing while living in Hollywood, California in the middle 80s. Mills is a native of Vandalia, where he lives with his wife, Zoryana.



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Ember Hudson saws a piece of wood as Finn Hemmen works in the background in the BenchWorxs trailer.

Cathy Griffith photo

Learning Re-Imagined

Buckeye Friends School provides innovative educational experience

CATHY GRIFFITH
EFFINGHAM MAGAZINE

A hammer pounding nails, a hand saw buzzing back and forth, the friction of sandpaper against wood.

Those were the cacophony of sounds emanating from a trailer in rural Teutopolis on a recent afternoon.

The sounds weren't being made by professional carpenters, but by kids at Buckeye Friends School.

Lydia Lessley was making a handle for a caddy box. The 12-year-old likes doing projects, which are a common part of the curriculum at the school. It is why Lessley likes attending the school.

"You can have fun while you're doing school," she said.

While Lessley was sanding away, Camden Campbell was busy making a working train – a project she estimated would take days, noting she planned to make three more cars.

Ben Hemmen, 10, finished constructing a truck. He said building is his favorite activity at the school. It helps him learn math.

The students were working under the guidance of BenchWorx instructor Jeff Schrock, who visits the school periodically throughout the year with his educational mobile trailer, which is filled with wood and tools to help kids on their projects.

"Part of this hands-on is the application of what you learn in school. It's the application of math," he said. "They're measuring things and dividing, so this is a good way the youth see it's important to learn."

Buckeye Friends School co-founder Kristie Campbell said another goal of having Schrock visit is to show the kids how to use tools safely and to become confident with them.

"Ultimately, our goal is to give the kids the skills so that they can create," she said.

It's part of the school's self-directed, project-based experiential learning model.

"When kids are working on problems and projects that matter to them, the sky's the limit," said Campbell.

It's one of the reasons Campbell said the kids love coming to the school.

"Every time I come here the joy and enthusiasm and the passionate engagement that I see in our kids just makes it all worth it," she said.

Buckeye Friends School

Campbell opened the school last year in a one-room building in rural Teutopolis after wanting to establish an innovative educational experience for her daughter. The rural setting allowed the kids access to nature, which Campbell said is really important to the school's curriculum.

Students are called "seeds" and the teachers who help them grow are called "co-learners."

"We call our teachers co-learners because we believe that teaching in its best form is an organic, reciprocal process where you learn together," said Campbell.

Enrollment at the tiny school has doubled since it opened to 16 seeds, who range in age from 5 to 12.

The growth has necessitated the move to a larger facility north of Effingham along Illinois Route 32/33, where next year a preschool program will be introduced. The new location allows the learners to continue to be close to

"Ultimately, our goal is to give the kids the skills so that they can create."

Kristie Campbell

nature with access to three acres, a forest, a field and a pond.

The school has also hired two more co-learners to guide the seeds.

The purpose of the school is to teach the life skills needed to thrive in every circumstance while honoring the needs of the whole child – body, mind and soul. The school is described as a hybrid homeschool, offering a modern, challenging, learner-centric curriculum. The school incorporates science, technology, engineering, art, math (STEAM) and literacy into its learning model.

The kids are grouped in mixed-aged pods.

"During silent reading times, a lot of times the older kids will read with the younger kids. And we love that, because that type of leadership builds confidence and it's beneficial for both parties. It goes back to kind of that co-learning idea," said Campbell.

The school does not subscribe to a



Monroe Hemmen creates string art for her mother in the BenchWorx trailer.

Cathy Griffith photo



Steffen Harris Photography

Buckeye seeds celebrate their work with family during Exposition Nights at the end of each trimester.

traditional grading system.

"The reason we don't have grades at Buckeye is because we know that when grades become the focus they become the objective, not 'How well did I understand the material?,'" said Campbell.

Progress is tracked through a portfolio in which seeds write a narrative at the end of each trimester, covering specific areas that will include milestones and areas that need more attention.

"We have student-led parent-teacher conferences. The students present their work – what they've done, what their goals are for the next trimester – and then they'll collaborate with their parents on making a decision on kind of what milestones they want to hit in that next year," said Campbell.

Seeds also don't have homework, although kids will occasionally be working on projects by choice or maybe researching something with their families.

"I have found very little to indicate homework is beneficial. There is a ton of research that indicates homework is detrimental to kids. It robs them of their free time. It robs them of their creative time. It robs them of time with family. It disengages them further from a cur-

riculum they're not interested in," said Campbell.

The students do learn practical skills pertaining to such things as money, sewing and cooking, but the school strives to empower kids to direct their own learning, a skill that will last their entire lives.

"We answer questions with questions. We're just here to encourage them and make sure they have all the tools they need to succeed," said Campbell.

The buckeye story

Campbell's inspiration for the school's name and philosophy came from renowned educator Craig Lindvahl.

The long-time Teutopolis educator, who died earlier this year, started the Creating Entrepreneurial Opportunities (CEO) program that has spread to high schools nationwide. Campbell said the school's learning method is a lot like the CEO program, but starts at a younger age.

In mentoring Campbell, Lindvahl shared a story with her from his early years teaching and has shared the story with others through the years. It stems from when Lindvahl taught first

grade.

In the fall, a kid would come in from recess and would hand Lindvahl a buckeye. Although the kid wasn't articulate enough to say it, Lindvahl said in one of his seminars this is basically what the kid would say:

"I picked this out for you and it's like the coolest thing. You can shine it up and it just keeps getting shinier. You can carry it with you and it's good luck. You can plant it and if you plant it, it might actually sprout. If it sprouts, it can grow up into this huge tree and you can climb in it, and then you know what else, you can put a tire swing on it. And if it gets hot, you can actually sit underneath it, and no matter what happens in the fall, you can actually jump under the leaves. This is like the best thing you can ever have."

Lindvahl said an adult might tell the child:

"First of all, I've got a drawer full of these. Every day one of you comes in with some great thing. Secondly, it's brown. Even if it's shiny, it's just brown. It doesn't bring good luck. If you plant it, odds are it's not going to sprout. If it sprouts, you know how old you're going to be by the time it gets to that size. Tire swing? What do you know about

putting up a tire swing? Where are you going to get the rope? Where are you going to get the tire? Do you have any idea the kind of liability you're introducing into our life by putting this up. If you were smart enough, you'd know this is not something to be excited about."

Lindvahl said the kid then looks at the buckeye seed as a liability and isn't so sure it is worth the trouble and tosses it away.

"And we put them through 12 or 16 years of this kind of training that you don't do stuff you don't already know how to do. You don't dream about stuff that you don't already do. And then what happens is new knowledge, new information, new experiences, new people become a threat because we don't know them," he said.

Campbell said Lindvahl challenged those who hear the story to find out what their buckeye seeds are, to grow them, protect them and enjoy whatever comes from them.

"That's what we do here at Buckeye Friends School. We're helping kids discover who they are, what they love and the things they're great at," she said.

Problem-solving

The Buckeye Friends School philosophy of true innovation and successful problem-solving believes that can only happen when kids have the courage to fail.

An example of that is a problem that was posed to the kids last year: Your

co-learners are stuck on a deserted island. A pirate stole your ship, and you have to figure out how to get them safely back to Buckeye.

The kids decided they were going to build a boat. Campbell said they started researching boats, went to marinas, went out on Lake Sara, and met with a boat builder. They started by building tin-foil boats. They filled them with marbles to see how much weight each boat would hold. Then they assessed themselves and each other.

They took what they learned and applied it to a more complex iteration. After moving from Popsicle sticks to recycled material to cardboard, the challenge was to paddle each boat across the pool.

"I think 80 percent of their boats sank. But that's OK because we're not interested in perfection. We want our kids to be able to learn from their mistakes. At Buckeye, 'F' never stands for failure. It stands for find another way," said Campbell.

Campbell said the kids then took everything they learned and collaborated on a single boat. Everybody submitted their ideas as a team. They figured out what design they wanted. Then they put together a budget and a presentation, which they presented in a public-speaking forum for approval.

"They literally engineered and built this boat entirely on their own. This boat carried the entire class across the pond and they had this beautiful back story and they called it cowtastrophe."

Campbell said the school's approach to problem-solving doesn't rely on one solution.

"When the only answer you will accept is the one in the book, kids are going to stop looking for other solutions," said Campbell.

Campbell has noticed the problem-solving skills take root in her daughter.

"My daughter woke up this morning, got up off the couch and she stubbed her toe on the metal post. She said, 'Mom, please do something about this couch. I need a towel and a glue gun,'" said Campbell.

"It was awesome because that's Buckeye. She saw a problem and was thinking of a creative solution for it and that's the goal we want for these kids."

Learning

"I think in some ways we lost sight of the fact that kids come into the world primed to learn, and I think oftentimes we get in the way of that a little bit with our own agendas and our own expectations," said Campbell.

Because kids learn differently, at Buckeye they have the freedom to move at their own pace and to study subjects that interest them. Campbell said some kids will go multiple grade levels past their cohorts because they're passionate about a subject whether it's math, reading or writing.

"What's beautiful is that in the way that we're set up those advances don't come with labels, so we don't have gifted kids. We don't have kids that are behind. And there's so much fear and pressure on parents to kind of perfect the learning of their kids that I think we just lose sight of the fact that kids are really capable of directing a lot of their own learning and getting what they need," she said.

Campbell said colleges are recognizing self-directed learning, citing that more are getting rid of the SAT and ACT admission requirements as an example.

"They tend to be innovators and so actually the move away from grades is being driven by the ivy leagues. They understand that the portfolio assessment is a much richer depth predictor of success more so than grades."

Companies are also looking for critical thinkers more than degrees,



Steffen Harris Photography
Buckeye seeds explore biodiversity on the farm.



Steffen Harris Photography
 Founder Kristie Campbell watches daughter Camden collaborate with Finn Hemmen on their passion project.

Campbell said, noting a lot of the most innovative companies no longer require a college degree, such as Google, Microsoft and Apple.

In addition, rapidly changing technology and information means skills training will be ongoing.

"So, it's so important that we inspire a lifelong love of learning, because our kids are going to have to be getting skills training for most of their lives because things are going to change so quickly," she said.

Social-emotional development

The students start and end the school day with a moment of silence. Campbell said the "settle in" in the morning brings attention to the day and gets everybody focused on what they're doing.

During the school day, the students have social-emotional time, which Campbell said is important, especially now.

"Given the cumulative stress that our culture is in right now with the pandemic, paired with the most contentious election in history, we're trying to teach our kids to have respectful discourse," she said.

At the beginning of the year, the kids decide their expectations for each other and the community in the form of safety rules and how they want to treat one another.

"This type of empowering process really builds their confidence. Our kids do a good job at holding one another accountable. That's why we establish these class rules at the beginning of the year and why we have the kids

involved in it, so that they're invested in those expectations and then should somebody not meet those expectations then the community can hold them accountable to that," said Campbell.

The school's flexible model allows seeds opportunities to become more focused.

"If a child is having a hard time paying attention, for example, we can say why don't you go run around the building five times and try to burn off some steam and then we invite them back to the group," said Campbell.

Campbell's lifelong love of learning

Campbell's lifelong love of learning was instilled by her parents.

"It's the driving force in my life," said Campbell, who is co-owner of Firefly Grill restaurant in Effingham.

Campbell's parents were educators in Maine, who got together with some like-minded parents and created a school that was similar to Buckeye – self-directed, project-based experiential learning in mixed-aged pods. Campbell said the one-room schoolhouse with 12 kids was "just like Eden."

Even though Campbell and her brother, who also is an entrepreneur, were only at the school for a short time, she said it fundamentally changed the way they see the world.

When Campbell entered the public school system, she found she was bored and became disengaged pretty quickly.

"By the time I was 15, I put enough pressure on my parents to sign the paperwork, so I could drop out of high

school," she said.

After dropping out, Campbell went to work as a graphics artist – a skill she still uses today, traveled the world, found a back door and started college at 16.

When Campbell became pregnant with her daughter, Camden, who is now 8, she wanted to also instill in her a lifelong love of learning and wanted school to be a joyful experience, not a drag.

Following her parents' divorce, Campbell's mother, Carrie Huff, moved to North Carolina and taught at the Carolina Friends School, which is how Campbell became acquainted with the Friends community and some of their models, missions and values.

Huff is now a head co-learner at the school after moving to Effingham in 2017.

"We're very, very lucky to have her," said Campbell.

Why Buckeye?

Brett and Amanda Lessley realized they wanted to send their two daughters – Lydia, 12, and Nora, 11 – to Buckeye Friends School after realizing they weren't thriving in a traditional classroom setting.

The couple began noticing that somewhat in the girls' grades, but even more so in their attitudes toward school and learning, not to mention their declining emotional health.

They found Buckeye school and decided to send the girls there with the goals of building back up their confidence and regaining a love of learning.

"We also believe that Buckeye's approach to project-based and experiential learning is a better fit for their hands-on learning styles," said Amanda Lessley.

The couple made the move this school year from St. Thomas School in Newton and enrolled the girls in Buckeye and so far they say the experience has been great.

Amanda admits it was a leap of faith moving away from the traditional academic settings.

"At Buckeye, our girls have individualized learning plans for core academics

"It's so important that we inspire a lifelong love of learning, because our kids are going to have to be getting skills training for most of their lives because things are going to change so quickly."

Kristie Campbell

like reading, writing and math, along with the project-based group work. Through these plans, the co-learners help the girls 'master the concept' and not move on until they have really learned or understand. In a traditional classroom, a teacher has to move onto the next concept, whether or not every student understands," she said.

After only a few weeks, the couple has noticed a change in the girls, especially emotionally.

"We see them building skills to work through challenges and frustrations in a healthier way. They are already taking more ownership over their learning and making goals for themselves and what they want to accomplish this year," said Amanda.

Lydia and Nora are now excited to go to school each day.

"Lydia said the other day, 'It is like we are a family at school,'" said Amanda.

The Lessleys also like the mixed-aged pods approach.

"This takes away some of the comparing you get in a traditional classroom and is more natural to any other setting in your life and work. Mixed-age pods create more opportunities for leadership and serving," said Amanda.

Another benefit is not having homework.

"Our family has enjoyed the extra time in the evenings that we can spend together," said Amanda.

Marietta Mayo discovered Buckeye after looking for educational alternatives for her 7-year-old daughter.

"I saw a call for co-learners and it just kind of called to me and here I am," she said.

Mayo said she loves being able to experiment and not be tied to a particular curriculum.



Above: Buckeye kids engineered and built this boat that carried them across the pond entirely on their own. They came up with a back story for the boat and named it Cowtastrophe.

Top: Buckeye seeds, from left, Ember Hudson, Harper Franklin, Rain Hudson, soon-to-be Buckeye seed Journey Hudson and Camden Campbell celebrate the zoo they created during an Expo Night.

Kristie Campbell photo
 Steffen Harris Photography

"Just kind of that flexibility of whatever we are feeling that day we can go ahead and do that, change our plans, go outside, and maybe we have something we didn't consider before," she said.

Mayo was also drawn by something else.

"Because it's so STEAM focused, that drew me even more – the science, the

building, the hands-on is for me one of the best ways that anyone can learn," she said.

The school has an arcing theme each year with different under-subjects each trimester. This year, the seeds are learning about climate.

"So, for example, right now we're working with wind. Next trimester we have another theme that's associated

to climate," she said.

Campbell said a lot of the kids are interested in climate change.

Mayo, who is a Puerto Rican native, is also incorporating Spanish.

"I ask them during the day whenever they hear something in Spanish to try and respond in Spanish. All those greetings in the morning, the please and thank you, we started with that. So, they're getting the hang of it. Spanish is not just about learning the language but it's learning the culture. I started introducing different countries, where the Spanish language originated and how it became a predominate language in the Americas," she said.

The future

Campbell said the school will eventually carry the seeds through what is traditionally 12th grade. She expects enrollment to grow after receiving a lot more interest in the school since the pandemic hit.

Campbell would like to pick up the

fundraising effort she started before COVID-19 to give other families an opportunity to attend the school without having to worry about the financial cost.

"Accessibility is very important to us as is diversity," said Campbell.

While Campbell said there are great schools in Effingham County, they may not be a great fit for every child. She is hoping to be able to collaborate with other schools and share the Buckeye

Friends School model with anyone who is interested.

"We're definitely an open book," she said.

For now, Campbell is thrilled with the response she is getting from the kids.

"When the kids talk about how much they love being here and how they want to be here more than anywhere, I feel like we've been really successful," she said.

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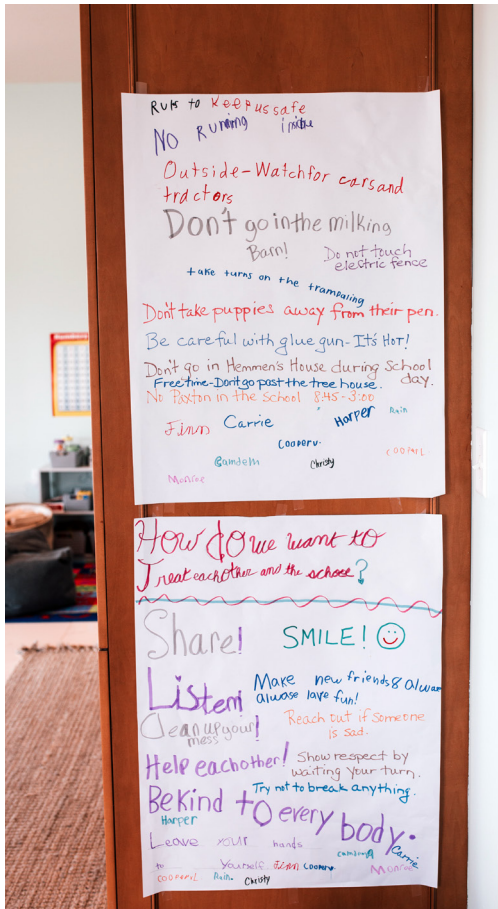
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Hunting and being hunted across the world

CHET PIOTROWSKI, JR.
EFFINGHAM MAGAZINE

Bears, goats, and even a crocodile line the office walls of MBI Construction in Effingham. The owners of the concrete construction business, Gary and Glenda Bartels, have hunted on six continents.

"We plan on going down to the Antarctic so we can say we've been to all seven continents," Gary said. "There's nothing to hunt down there. I think I'd like to sleep on an iceberg."

"It was something I wanted to do as a young boy. I got an opportunity in my late teens, actually, I think I was 20 or 21, to do an elk hunt out West on a spur of the moment," Gary said. "From that moment, I was just hooked on

larger, bigger game.

"I've been blessed with how things came together with us. It was about 2000 where we were able to travel the world. I met a gentleman I hunt with a lot, we would take one or two trips a year (up until this year due to COVID-19) and sometimes taking our spouses with us and make it a spouse trip also. We could stay out of trouble for not going hunting all the time without them."

"I go to keep his sanity," Glenda said, laughing. "To get him through airports and whatnot. We've spent two trips and 21 days in the bush. It's exciting. You don't see that here. They're long days. They're short sleeping nights. You get up and eat breakfast in the dark. You're out in the sun all day. You

see giraffes running. You don't see that here. You can't shoot one in Tanzania. They're like their special animal. I toured Spain when he hunted."

The interior of much of the office space looks like a museum. Heads of various species of elk line the very top of one wall with a diorama of four ibex – the grand slam of ibex from Spain, taking its name from the grand slam of tennis – nurturing one corner of the OSHA Room. The trophies are kept at work instead of in their home.

"We live over in St. Elmo in the middle of nowhere. No one would have the opportunity to view it, to look at it. We needed a bigger room to have our safety meetings (at MBI). It just came into fruition – hey let's build a bigger room where we can have our safety

Chet Piotrowski Jr. / Piotrowski Studios
Above: Gary and Glenda Bartels sit among just a few of their trophies from hunts across the world.

"It was something I wanted to do as a young boy."

Gary Bartels

Top right: Gary Bartels with a bearskin and other trophies.
Middle right: Victoria Island, Northwest Territories Canada Muskox 2007
Bottom right: Chillicothe Mountains, British Columbia, Canada. 2008 Mountain Goat

Glenda Bartels photos





Glenda Bartels photo
Alaska Peninsula Grizzly hunt. October 2009 (first bear he got)

and carried on. It ate every caribou we had."

They realized the dead caribou were attracting the bears.

"It was just every time someone had shot a caribou, it was like ringing a dinner bell. You had to get your caribou out of there very quickly. When you don't hunt bear, that's what could happen. When you don't keep the numbers in check, there's bears everywhere," he said. "Once man started messing with the ecosystem ... if we take this animal out, we have to take some other predators out. There is a fine balance in between. I really realized how wild and vast this area is.

"Being lost and how my guide was lost on that trip, made me appreciate having a sense of direction," he laughed. "There was some interesting moments on that trip."

The trips to Africa are much more consequential.

The Africa trips are different," he said. "Those people have become our friends. We are a huge part of their financial system. In Tanzania, for example, without hunting they don't exist. That is their income. They have very little to export."

He said they have a vast amount of animals to hunt which up until recently was done by Europeans but now Americans are doing the hunting.

"They're counting on U.S. citizens to come over there and support their economies," he said. "We've become friends with them. We see them every two years."

He said this year's trip was canceled because of the coronavirus.

"You feel like you're doing some good over there," he said. "It costs a lot of money, yeah, but you're putting a dollar where a dollar is needed."

"The conservation is just amazing," Glenda said.

Gary said the biggest return the Tanzania economy gets from U.S. hunters is financial.

"They have hunting blocks in Tanzania, for instance," he said. "The government sets a strict quota on what can be taken. If X,Y,Z has been used up, then you can't shoot any more of them."

Hunters are charged a trophy fee for every animal they shoot.

"Grizzly bears are huge, tough animals. They're fun to hunt because they can kill you."

Gary Bartels

"Poaching is a huge problem in Africa," he said. "Tanzania is a very poor country. They (citizens) will risk their lives for \$10. We've never been there where we didn't witness poaching. Dead elephants. Small elephants that didn't have 10 inches of ivory. Just shot and killed. They poach wood and honey."

Glenda said the poachers will rig pots to trees so they can poach the honey since all the animals and bees are on government ground.

A government scout is always with them to provide necessary protection, as well as helping them observe regulations because the ramifications are severe.

"They deal with poaching harshly," he said. "They (poachers) are shot on the spot with very little paperwork filled out. So a little different than what we do things here in the United States."

"We've enjoyed all of our Africa trips," Gary said. "It's a much more relaxing hunt than some of the bear hunts where you're living in a tent with pouring down rain, or living in a mountain house, flying on little planes. Or even Russia. It is always scary at best."

"It took about six weeks and the almighty dollar to get our stuff out of Russia," Glenda said as she points to a bear Gary shot on the eastern side of Russia.

"That was a traveling experience," he said. "And an experience in the wild. At that time, you couldn't fly into Russia without getting into Moscow. When we flew there, it was a 13-hour trip. When we landed in Moscow, we were further off from where we were going than when we took off from the United States. It's a lot shorter to go through Alaska."

It took a bit of financial persuading to get through some red tape.

"In Moscow, they hassled us right at eight hours over paperwork. We didn't realize how the system worked, and our hunting outfitter should have known. It just took about an \$800 bribe and we



Helicopter and gear for a 2011 bear hunt in Russia.

Glenda Bartels photo

were done in five minutes," he said. "On the way back, we knew better so we went into a room with a police guy, and we all divvied up \$100 bills and we were out of there in no time."

"They want to help you so you can help them," Glenda said as they laughed.

Argentina, Spain, Tanzania, South Africa, New Zealand, Australia, Russia and Canada are just a few of the countries they've been to on their six-continent journey.

Gary enjoyed his time in Spain. "We took a couple of weeks to do the grand slam of ibex in Spain," he said, "Spain is a great beautiful country."

"It has a lot of history," Glenda added.

He said he hopes to live long enough to be able to hunt again in Spain.

"Anything that can kill you is obviously more of a thrill like a cape buffalo," as he points to one that charged his hunting party.

"Not that one specifically, but I've been charged by lions four times," he said as he pointed to one that took 33 days to hunt. "Those are thrills."

Glenda points to a leopard that's part of a diorama in a corner.

"That cat walked right by our tent the night before (they killed it)," she said. "And by tent, I mean a grass hut that had little peep holes you could see out in one direction."

"Grizzly bears are huge, tough ani-

mals. They're fun to hunt because they can kill you," he said.

The hunters have become the hunted a few times. They had a grizzly walk around camp twice in Alaska.

"We could feel her breathe," Glenda said.

"We had to put her down because she was going to eat us," Gary said. "There was no choice. It happened real quick. It was an instant decision. She already went by us snarling and growling. That was one of those situations where we thought we could outrun her. And she wasn't giving up. She's a nice trophy. It's a heck of a story. It's the only time I've had a bear actually hunt us."

Gary said it took several shots between him and the guide to kill her.

"Many of the guns I would use, you would not need to hunt anything in the United States with. I have a .416 Remington Mag and a .500 Double Nitro," he said. "I'd use a .325 short mag and that's on the small end of something you'd want to use to shoot grizzly."

He said the .500 Double Nitro is used for only the biggest of animals such as elephants and hippos.

"We use that for ones that we want to stop immediately."

Gary said when they're in Africa they are always with a "PH," which stands for professional hunter. One PH could very well have saved Gary's life.

"When we got charged by two female lions in Tanzania, we knew they

were there and we knew they were angry. My PH told me we don't want to shoot these females if we don't have to due to the amount of paperwork."

It was just him, a PH, and a driver. "He (PH) told me, 'The minute we move this truck backwards they're going to charge. It's a sign of weakness.' We must have sat there for 15 minutes," Gary recalls. "They were snarling at us and pawing the ground. We knew they were pissed. We also knew there were three or four other lions with them."

"And he was right. The minute we decided to back up, here she came." The PH told Gary to shoot the one on the left, and he would shoot the one on the right.

"But don't shoot until I say shoot," Gary recalls. "'I'll try to fire my first barrel in front of them to stop them. If she keeps coming, then go ahead. But don't forget to shoot your second shot."

The PH told him that he'd miss on the first attempt because she's charging and one tends to shoot over the animal.

"If you're lucky," he recounts the PH saying, "You can hit her as she's com-

ing up over on top of you."

"He talked me through the whole thing. That made it a bit more comfortable," Gary said. "When they came out, it was a real eye-awakening experience. I had to look down to make sure I hadn't wet myself. They were 10 yards from us when he shot and blew rocks up at them in their face."

"That was the most scared I've been on any trip."

The trips have made the Bartels appreciate the country they live in even more.

"I've never come back to the United States that I wasn't proud to be here. When you travel, you realize how great we have it in this country," said Gary.

"Even with all the hassles from the different airports, no one does anything the same," Glenda said.

If you're a first-time big game hunter, the investment is high.

"To go to Tanzania to shoot an unlimited amount of animals, you could drop \$125,000-\$150,000 in a heartbeat," Gary said.

While supplies are brought into camp, the meat doesn't go to waste.

"There's no choice in Africa," Gary

said. "You are eating what you shoot. They aren't bringing anything else into camp other than what you shoot. One thing about Tanzania and South Africa is that we provide them with their year of meat. There is no other meat unless they know someone who has a cow. But they can't afford that. They'll take a buffalo and they'll dry that meat. They'll go home with that and that'll feed their family for a year. Other than that, they'll eat corn or mash."

"It's tough for me to hunt here especially in deer season, where I love to hunt. This business pulls me away from it," he said. "It's much easier to get on a plane and you're 5,000 miles away and locked into hunting. If I'm up in a stand, I'm thinking about all the things I have to do."

For Gary, there's no animal left that he dreams of hunting.

"The elephant was something I didn't know if I really wanted to hunt. Then the opportunity came along. I said OK. We'll go do that. I'd love to lion hunt again. I don't want to be a pig, but that was a real thrill. The last 20 years since we started hunting abroad, has pretty much been a dream."

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Queen Beatrice and driver Darla Martin Lohman, of Effingham, rally for the win in the 3-year-old & Up Mare Pace Topline race at the 2017 Effingham County Fair.

Ruth Alwert joins Superintendent of Speed Ernest C. Ballard in presenting the trophy for the Illinois Big Ten Colt Stakes Two-Year-Old Pace to winning driver Jake Foster and Wyn Dale Dusty at the 1956 Effingham County Fair.

ZACHARY RAINEY
EFFINGHAM MAGAZINE

The cancellation of the Effingham County Fair this year marked the first time harness racing was not featured at the fairgrounds since 1945. "Even in years where we might have caused some rain-outs and cancellations of particular racing programs, there were still days where we had racing," said Kurt Becker, the fair's long-time public address and harness race announcer. "Harness racing is an event that was important to the founders of the fair. A number of the fair founders actually owned race horses, which is why they were determined to make it a feature of the fair on an annual basis. "It will be a strange feeling not to have the fair this year, especially for those of us who grew up in the horse racing business."

Becker remembers his first glimpse of a race at the fair.

"My first memory of harness racing at the fair was Monday, Aug. 6, 1973 – when I was 4 years old," Becker said. "I can recall that my mother drove me out to the fairgrounds and we were arriving as the first race was starting. I still recall my mother lifting me up so I could see over the old picket fence and watch the horses coming down the home stretch.

"I remember being enamored with the sights and sounds and the bright colors of the drivers' uniforms, the sounds of them whistling and chirping at their horses, the sound of the hooves hitting the racetrack.

"I remember I was hooked. As it turned out, my dad owned a filly that won that day and beat the colts, which made for quite the memorable afternoon. It was an experience I've never forgotten."

That same year, Becker also saw the demolition derby. Those early experiences of both events are what helped him develop an interest in horse and motor racing, and would lead to a career as an announcer for the Motor Racing Network and the Horse Racing Network.

"At that time, my dad was also the announcer for the demolition derby,"



Becker said. "Since he was on the fair board, my family had box seats, so as a 4-year-old kid, I got to sit in a wooden chair in the front row of the grandstand, where you could almost reach out and touch the derby cars as they went by. To a child, especially, the sound of the engines and the brightly painted cars crashing into each other was sensory overload.

"It was sheer theater, drama, competition, all the above. I remember the feature event that night came down to two guys that were from the area. Both were from Fayette County. One of them had the door fly open on his car and would flap in the breeze every time he went to make contact, and the crowd got a kick out of it.

"It's strange what sticks in your mind after 47 years," he added. "To me it was like watching (Indy car racers) A.J. Foyt and Mario Andretti."

Exciting memories

The fair with all of its luster still has the power to captivate the imagination of children, such as it did Becker all those years ago.

"I think that's one of the great roles that the fair fulfills to this day. It's a fantastic way for a child to get his or her first experience watching competitive events," Becker said. "Frankly, I found

it inspirational. I remember thinking, 'Wow, whatever this is that goes on, these events, I don't know how people go home at the end of fair week and go back to their regular life. I want more of this.' It really made an impression on me."

While Becker has announced the biggest horse races in the world, he says there's just nothing like the Effingham County Fair harness racing.

It saddens him that the COVID-19 pandemic, which has affected everyone's lives in so many ways, has also taken away this rite of summer.

"The thing that I will miss is the social aspect," Becker said. "It's a wonderful countywide event. It's the one time of year I get to see a number of folks from across the county. But I think the fair is going to come back in 2021 better than ever."

Some history

Harness racing has always been a staple at the fairgrounds, even before the fair as it's known now. It dates back to 1906, during what was then called the Altamont Agricultural Fair until 1918, laying the groundwork for the track that's there today.

"There was a half-mile racetrack and they did have harness racing," Becker said. "But when that fair disbanded,



Kurt Becker calls harness racing at the 2017 Effingham County Fair.

Photo by Albert Higgs

Memories of the Fair

The history of harness racing in Effingham County

that racetrack lay dormant for 27 years.

"In 1945, when the ECF was formed, they bought those grounds and carved out the modern day racetrack by using the outline of the former track. It had gone up in weeds, but it was still visible. There had been a lot of rain that year in 1945 and on the Fourth of July, the fair board literally had to take horses with plows behind them. There was so much water, they couldn't use vehicles or tractors to plow the track, they used horses to carve the new racetrack where the old racetrack sat.

"The only reason stories like that have been preserved is because one of the charter members of the fair board in 1945, a man by the name of Ernest Ballard, took time to write these memories in book form and really took the lead on the Effingham County Fair history book that was published in 1995. He was the first superintendent of the racing program. If not for his account of that story, that story would probably be lost to history."

2020 decisions

Even if the Effingham County Fair Board had found a way to hold the fair this year, harness racing would not have been a part of it. Because

racers and horsemen must know what to expect for the season, the Illinois Department of Agriculture decided in mid-June to run the county fair races at the state fairgrounds this year.

"There are horsemen that need to be able to plan and have a general idea from the Illinois Department of Agriculture, what to expect with the summer racing schedule," Becker said. "One of the challenges for the local fair board was what to do with the fact that the IDA, around mid-June, said that they would be contesting all of the Illinois-bred stakes races that had been scheduled for county fairs.

"They would be contested on a weekly basis throughout the summer at the Illinois State Fairgrounds. The horsemen were thrilled, because the state could've just canceled all races for the summer. The only difficulty for a fair like Effingham County, when they sat down and tried to figure out if they could still have a fair, that obviously would've taken away a significant portion of their afternoon entertainment."

Without the county fair, Becker will not get to call the races this year. He'd taken over that job in 1986 from his father, Carl, who had been calling them since 1965.



Carl Becker, far left, on behalf of the Effingham County Fair Board of Directors makes an official presentation prior to the harness races to, from left, Mart Alwert, Ben Reiss and Ernest Ballard on an August day in 1971 in recognition of having served for 25 years on the board of directors. The three had decided to resign following the fair of 1970, having helped found and establish the fair and then having guided it through its first quarter century of existence.

Announcing gigs

In the summer of 1985, Becker approached his father and expressed an interest in calling races. The request took Carl Becker by surprise.

"He had had a weather situation where weather had caused a rain-out in a set of races in one fair and carried over 24 hours later," Becker said. "The races had rained out at the Edwards County Fair at Albion. They were to race July 31, but was carried over to Aug. 1. But he was already booked to be at the Coles County Fair that day and could not find a substitute.

"I finally spoke up and said 'If you can't find anybody, I'd be happy to give it a shot.' I was 16 and had volunteered to help. To this day, he will say he had no idea that I was interested in giving horse race announcing a try."

That turned out to be Becker's first experience calling a horse race, something that since has turned into much more than a hobby for him.

"The one thing I do remember is that when he and I had both arrived home that day and he had asked how it had gone, my mother answered the question," Becker said. "At that time, the Charleston races were broadcast on AM radio and she said I had done fine.

"I remember my dad telling me that if this was something I wanted to do, he would find me more work, but specifically cautioned me about the Effingham County Fair, which was set to open three days after I made my debut," Becker said. "My father was concerned that if the nerves got to me announcing at home in front of the home crowd, if I got stage fright or misidentified a horse, he wanted to help me avoid trying to tackle too much too soon, which is why I didn't call a race at the Effingham County Fair until the next year in 1986."

Becker said his father inspired him to get into the business. After all, he accompanied his father to many of the races at the fair since he was 9.

"He knew I had an interest in the sport, and that had given me a lot of days in the summer to sit in the grandstand and listen to him and make mental notes about how he approached the craft," Becker said.

"My mother was the one who had some concern. As she put it, 'What if Kurt is not like his dad in terms of being able to handle the job?' I always appreciated that. That to me is a mom-

type of concern, something a mom would think about more than a dad.

"I've always remembered that. But she was literally the first person to tell me, 'You have the ability to do this. If you want to pursue it for a career, I believe you can do it.'

"Despite her concern, she was also very good about offering encouragement at the end of that first day. My mom will often say that when she was pregnant with me and was a clerk at the fairgrounds with my dad announcing that perhaps there was something about a whole summer of my dad announcing that might've taken root with me."

Fair people

In all of his years being around the fair, Becker says it's the people of Effingham County who make racing and everything else about the annual gathering in Altamont so great.

"When you see folks who don't have a dime invested in the sport, but are willing to take a vacation week and volunteer to jump on a tractor or drive a water truck and condition the racetrack, it is a fantastic thing to witness," Becker said. "If not for the efforts of those folks, we would have lost many racing programs due to weather. It speaks to their appreciation of the fair."

While the harness racing at the Effingham County Fair has been a big part of Becker's summers going all the way back to his childhood, he hopes the citizens of the county understand canceling the fair this year.

"A lot of us tend to be linear in our thinking, I'm a horse-racing guy, so I tend to focus on that. Somebody else might be a tractor puller, another might show livestock," Becker said. "The fair board has spent months looking at all of those factors; the whole panoramic view and everything the fair entails. I think the fair board did everything they possibly could and it just was a year where it wasn't meant to happen."

Extraordinary times

While the county fair races were held at the Illinois State Fairgrounds, no spectators were allowed – only the required personnel.

"The only folks allowed on the grounds are racing officials, the race horse trainers, drivers and caretakers," Becker said. "If you're an owner



Top: In this 2016 file photo, Kurt Becker asks Pamela Coleman to speak about what it feels like to be in a horse race for the first time since her battle against breast cancer.

Above: In this 2012 file photo, horse trainer Pam Coleman struggles to remove staples from the leg of Talk Forever, a horse she was training for harness-racing competition.

and you own a horse that is racing on a weekly basis at the fairgrounds this year, you are not allowed to attend the races. Given the fact the fairgrounds are a state-owned property and the Illinois Department of Agriculture offices are right there on the grounds, they do have officials from

the state who have been patrolling the situation closely to enforce those restrictions."

For a short time, the idea of the Effingham County Fairgrounds hosting some of the races canceled in other parts of the state was thrown around.

"My understanding is that there were officials with the Effingham County Fair that spoke with the Illinois Department of Agriculture and the fair board informally offered if they wanted to switch and get away from the 1-mile track and come down and race at a new venue and add a different factor to those races," Becker said. "But the Department of Agriculture decided it was ultimately better to keep the races at one central location with staff already in place.

"These are such extraordinary times. When you're dealing with a pandemic that can be lethal, this is a matter that does require everyone to acknowledge the realities and science involved. I commend both parties. It was a huge decision for the Department of Agriculture when they decided to have the races on a weekly basis. I think it's fantastic that the fair board explored every possible avenue to try and make this happen."



Passion for tea leads to Whistling Kettle Tea Shoppe

CHARLES MILLS
EFFINGHAM MAGAZINE

Rachael Tieffel has been enjoying tea for most of her life. Her passion led to opening her own tea venue called Whistling Kettle Tea Shoppe in Effingham.

"I've always been a tea drinker," Tieffel said. "When I was growing up, my grandmother always gave us hot tea and toast."

Then Tieffel's cousin, Ashley Volker, introduced her to loose-leaf tea seven years ago.

"She told me to try it. I loved it, and that was it," Tieffel said. "I was hooked."

That made her want to learn more about loose-leaf tea. Her interest grew with time.

"It lit a fire and I've been drinking it ever since," Tieffel said.

But Tieffel had to drive to Champaign or St. Louis to find a loose-leaf tea store.

"I was tired of traveling to get loose-leaf tea," Tieffel said. "There just wasn't a tea store close."

One evening in mid-November she was enjoying an evening reading about tea in her living room while watching TV when she came up with an idea.

She told her husband, "I'm going to



Above: The Whistling Kettle Tea Shoppe is located at the intersection of West Jefferson Avenue and South Mulberry Street.

Right: Rachael Tieffel is owner of the Whistling Kettle Tea Shoppe in Effingham. The store is located at 711 West Jefferson Avenue.

open a tea store."

Her husband told her it was something they needed to talk about and two months later her idea became reality. Tieffel opened her tea store at the corner of West Jefferson Avenue and South Mulberry Street on Jan. 24. Tieffel no longer had to travel to get her loose leaf tea.

A few of the types of tea Tieffel offers in her Effingham store includes black, oolong, green, white, rooibos loose-leaf tea, herbal and fruit teas.

"There is no end to what you can do to tea," Tieffel said. "Once you find a good loose-leaf tea, it's hard to go back to bag tea. There is a huge difference."

She has at least 100 different tea flavors to choose from, including a couple of tea blends she created herself. Some of the flavors offered in the store include Great Scotts!, Pinkies Up, Lychee Oolong, Formosa Oolong, Golden Monkey, Ooo La La, Chai This!, Chai That!, Vintage Earl Grey and many, many more.

Tieffel also offers seasonal teas. She is now featuring fall flavors, including apple, pumpkin, maple and cinnamon. She said peppermint is popular in the winter, spring features more flowery flavors and fruit flavors are popular in the summer.

The Whistling Kettle Tea Shoppe has seating for those interested in drinking tea in her store and has a dedicated tearoom. The tearoom is offered for rent for small groups up to 15.



Tieffel hopes to one day start hosting events. She wants to also have what she calls "Tea 101."

"It would be an event to learn about different kinds of tea," Tieffel said. "Learn about how to properly brew a cup of tea and offer a regular etiquette class."

She said the etiquette class is designed for small groups interested in learning formal tea-drinking skills, including what spoons to use, how to sit, where your spoon goes and how to hold your cup.

Tieffel said there is a book club that

comes in and welcomes any group up to 15 that might want to rent the tearoom for birthday parties, church groups, bridal showers or just about any small group. After-hours meetings are also welcome.

The Whistling Kettle Tea Shoppe is open Tuesday through Friday 10 a.m.-5 p.m. and Saturday 10 a.m.-1 p.m. The business is closed on Sunday and Monday.

In addition to tea selections, Tieffel has tea wear, honey, chocolates, infusers, tea sets, mugs, tea kettles, children's tea sets and teapots for sale.



A tearoom is available for rent for up to 15 guests at Whistling Kettle Tea Shoppe.

Charles Mills photos
Top left: Kettles, honey, infusers and mugs are just a few of the items offered at Whistling Kettle Tea Shoppe.
Bottom left: The Whistling Kettle Tea Shoppe offers several tea sets and mugs.



Photo courtesy Pixabay

Since spring bulbs need a cold period during the winter in order to bloom, the best time to plant is late September through October to allow enough time for a good root system to develop.

Select and plant spring-flowering bulbs now

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS EXTENSION

As fall approaches, many perennial plants are ready to go dormant for the winter. Now is the time to start thinking about next spring's floral display and planting spring-flowering bulbs.

Since spring bulbs need a cold period during the winter in order to bloom, the best time to plant is late September through October to allow sufficient time for a good root system to develop, says Brittnay Haag, University of Illinois Extension horticulture educator.

"Investing a little time and money in the fall will pay off greatly next spring when you start seeing pops of color blanketing your garden," Haag says. "Depending on the location, spring bulbs, such as snowdrops, begin blooming in late February and continue until late June with alliums."

Bulbs should be firm and free of rotting spots or signs of disease.

"When buying bulbs, keep in mind that larger bulbs will produce larger blooms," Haag says.

If the bulbs cannot be planted immediately after purchasing, store them in a cool, dry place away from ethylene-producing fruits, such as apples, bananas, melons, pears and peaches to prevent flowering disorders.

For the greatest visual impact, plant bulbs in groupings and large drifts or waves of color. Mix them in with other perennials and shrubs to screen the foliage after blooms fade. To produce maximum blooms, most bulbs will need at least eight hours of sunlight daily.

Most bulbs require fertile, well-drained soil to prevent the bulb from rotting. Poorly drained soil can be improved by adding organic matter such as compost or peat moss. The material should be incorporated into the soil before planting at a rate of four-parts soil, one-part organic matter. A balanced fertilizer, 20-20-20, can also be incorporated into the soil at this time.

"The general rule of thumb when planting bulbs is to plant them two to three times the length of the bulb, measured from the bottom of the bulb," Haag says.

Large bulbs, such as daffodils or

tulips, should be planted 6 to 8 inches deep. Small bulbs, such as snowdrops and crocus, should be planted 3 to 4 inches deep. Bulbs should be spaced 6 to 12 inches apart to allow for spread and future divisions. Plant bulbs with the nose of the bulb facing upward and the root plate facing down.

After covering the planted bulbs with soil, water the area well to settle the bulbs into the soil and initiate root development. If there is little rain in the fall, continue to water weekly until the ground freezes. A light, 2-inch layer of mulch can be added after planting to minimize effects of winter temperature fluctuations and to help conserve soil moisture.

"Spring bulbs can vary in flower color, timing, height and shape, depending on the species and variety," says Haag. "Add a new type of bulb each fall to have a beautiful mix of spring bloomers in your garden."

Visit Illinois Extension's website "Bulbs & More" at extension.illinois.edu/bulbs for more information about selecting and caring for spring bulbs.

Photo by Jennifer Fishburn.

This unripe butternut squash will be ready to harvest in September or October when its skin has turned a golden hue and the squash skin is hard.

Harvest abundant squash for food, decoration

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS EXTENSION

Winter squash is a tasty, nutritious fall treat that comes in a variety of sizes, shapes, colors and flavors. There are hundreds of varieties available to grow and enjoy on the dinner table.

"A few of the more popular winter squash include butternut, acorn and spaghetti," says Jennifer Fishburn, University of Illinois Extension horticulture educator serving Logan, Menard and Sangamon counties.

Butternut squash is one of the most popular. This long, pear-shaped squash is tan, with a thin rind that is easy to cut or remove with a vegetable peeler.

Acorn squash is a small squash that resembles an acorn and is available in a variety of skin colors, including dark green, gold and white.

Spaghetti squash, as its name suggests, resembles pasta strands when cooked. The strands can serve as a low-calorie, low-carbohydrate pasta substitute.

Harvesting and storing winter squash

Squash, a fruit, is generally harvested in September or October and must be harvested before a hard frost. A light frost will kill the vines, but won't harm the fruit.

"Unlike summer squash, such as zucchini, which is harvested in the immature stage, winter squash is harvested when the fruit is mature," Fishburn says.



Their rinds are dull, dry and hard and cannot be punctured with a fingernail. Rinds should be free of cracks and soft spots. Use caution not to injure the rind during harvest.

When cutting squash from the vine, leave a 2- to 3-inch stem. Avoid handling fruit by the stem since the weight of the fruit can cause the stem to break.

Most winter squash, with exception of acorn and delicate, benefit from a curing process. To cure, place squash at a temperature of 70°F to 80°F for 10 days.

Winter squash have a long shelf life if stored properly. Acorn squash can be stored up to two months, butternut up to three months, and hubbard up to six months. Optimum storage conditions for most winter squash harvests is about 55°F with a 50 to 75% humidity in a cool, dark location with good air circulation. If possible, store squash in a single layer and keep fruit from touching each other. All winter squash

except hubbards should be stored with stems attached.

Eating winter squash

Most winter squash can be baked, boiled or steamed. Fishburn cautions that the hard, tough rind is a challenge for most cooks.

With the exception of spaghetti squash, winter squash is often eaten as a sweet or savory side dish. Squash can be flavored simply with salt and butter or with warm fall spices, such as cinnamon, ground cloves, nutmeg or basil and sweetened with brown sugar, maple syrup or honey.

Squash's dense texture holds up well in soups, stews, chili and casseroles. The flesh can also be used in pies, muffins, and cakes.

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Editor's Note: Gardener's Corner is a seasonal media release prepared by University of Illinois Extension horticulture educators.



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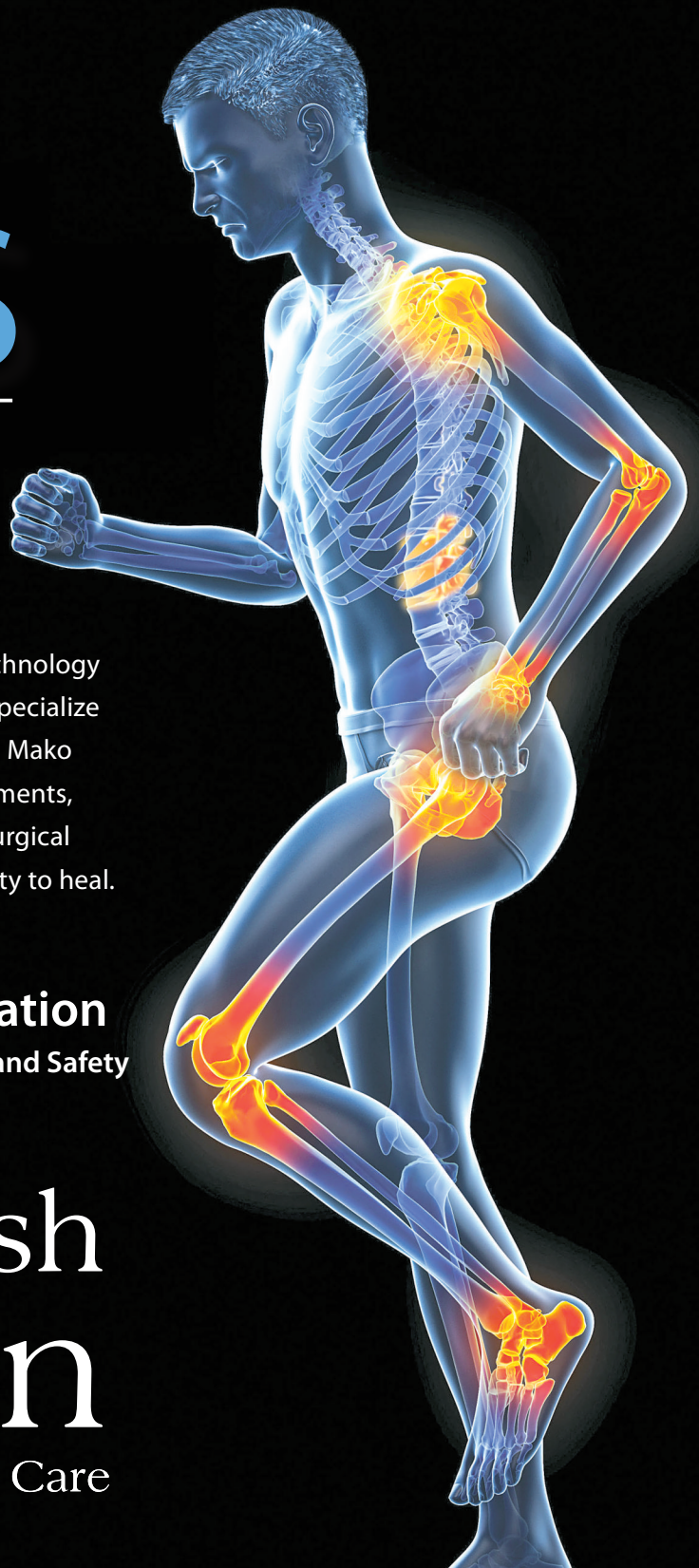
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