

# Countenance

Spring 2023

An award-winning  
magazine by  
ECU students

Explore  
Eastern North  
Carolina's  
people and  
places.

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TOWN

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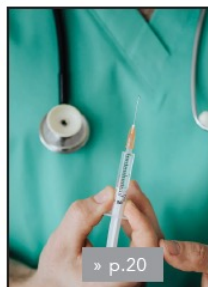
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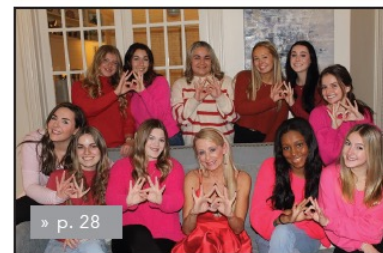
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For more information about Countenance, please visit:  
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Countenance (Vol. 7, Issue 1) is a general feature magazine produced by students in the School of Communication at East Carolina University since 2017. The articles were written by students in the Fall 2022 Feature Writing class taught by Cindy Elmore. Countenance was designed by students in Desktop Publishing, which was taught by Barbara Bullington in the spring of 2023. Funding for the magazine was provided by the School of Communication.

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# A NEW CHEF IN TOWN



by **Mark Wetherington**

Lucas Owens came to Greenville after cooking at Chef & the Farmer, a Kinston restaurant that became nationally known as the featured subject of a long-running PBS television documentary and cooking show. Now in charge at Julep, he's looking for ways to make this new workplace stand out as a culinary experience.

**L**ucas Owens arrives at Julep Contemporary Kitchen just as breakfast ends. He greets the host and servers before making his way into the kitchen, where two other chefs greet him.

"Smoke break!" they say as Owens enters the kitchen. They finish their current task and head to the front patio, taking seats at a round, white table. The chefs pull out a variety of American Spirit cigarette packs, and a single pink vape.

Discussing the evening before, a trying dinner rush that made a sizable dent in the kitchen's supplies, the team considers what could have been done better. A shortage of chicken leaves tonight's menu minus an entree. Sous Chef Kyle Hobbs pitches a solution.

"Lately we have been running porketta," says Hobbs. "We would take it and butterfly it and then basically roll it all up like a really sexy Swiss roll and roast it in the oven."

Owens, who is the restaurant's executive chef, approves the porketta, but adds, "It just needs something else."

Later, Hobbs explains that his work at Julep is open to creativity, and he is always trying to make the food better.

"In some kitchens, if you have a new idea, either the chef doesn't like it, or someone else doesn't like it, or you don't have this," explains Hobbs. "We really can just do whatever we want on a whim."

*Lucas Owens, executive chef/owner of Julep Contemporary Kitchen, prepares a pizza, a menu item described as one that "never disappoints" by a customer on Facebook.*

photo by Jaclyn Morgan



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*If you're not trying to do more and making yourself a little uncomfortable, then you're not growing.*

Julep is unique for more reasons than its chefs having creative freedom. The restaurant, located in the Hilton hotel on Greenville Boulevard, is one of the few hotels in Greenville to have a built-in restaurant.

Jessica Flores, a server at Julep, embraces the uniqueness that comes with the restaurant's location.

"I've been working in restaurants since I was 16. I'm 28 now and it's so weird to figure this restaurant out," says Flores. "There's so many aspects going into it. You know, compared to a normal restaurant which does not have the hotel side to it."

Flores says that Julep comes with all sorts of unique situations because of it being a hotel restaurant.

"There's people literally staying in this building," says Flores. "Sometimes they stay here 230 nights a year."

### Carving out a niche

The restaurant industry has been struggling since the COVID 19 pandemic started and many restaurants are not enjoying the success Julep has. The built-in customers of the Hilton have largely contributed to Julep's success. But that's not enough for Owens, who came to the restaurant after cooking at Chef & the Farmer, a Kinston restaurant that became nationally known as the featured subject of a long-running PBS television documentary and cooking show.

Now in charge at Julep, he wonders: "How do we push ourselves to get the brand out there and to not settle for just what's already built-in?"

Customer Claire McCrea is one person who came to the Hilton just for Julep. "It's a mixture of everything; they serve every style," says McCrea. "They even have a brunch pizza with a literal egg on the pizza."

On this visit, McCrea shared steak and chips, brunch pizza and a cinnamon roll with friends. The steak and chips are not like a pizza-place appetizer. There is a whole steak, cooked to the diner's preference and sliced, on top of hand cut fries, and topped with mushrooms and cheese.

"The steak was so juicy, and you could dip the fries in the juice," says McCrea. "And I don't like mushrooms but the ones on that are actually good."

The combination of different culinary styles is part of what makes Julep unique. Creating a dish that might sound strange, such as a whole steak on top of fries, is a sum of several chefs working to make a new dish.

Finishing their discussion about tonight's dinner menu, the chefs ash cigarette butts into a tray, then rise from their seats and file into the restaurant. Owens wipes some stray ashes from the table before following his employees inside.

### A food culture melting pot

The kitchen line is an aisle of steel machinery. One half is an inferno of grills, stoves, ovens and fryers whose heat fills the kitchen, even while sitting idle. The other half is a line of counters, refrigerators, cutting boards and cold metal tabletops.

Owens and a cook stare at a cooler with a list of items written in dry erase marker on the steel lid. "The stuff that goes on top of the chard? What stuff goes on top of the chard?" Owens asks, baffled.

"I have no idea," replies a cook next to him.

Laughing, the two pull containers out, reading each label out loud, trying to decipher the message. "What did they put on the chard last night?"

Owens announces to no one in particular.

Giving up he laughs, shrugs it off and proceeds down the line.

"I feel in the way on the line," Owens explains, stepping out of the way of a cook walking by. The executive chef takes a basket of fries out of the fryer and shakes away the bubbling grease. He dumps the fries for a customer's lunch into a bowl and tosses them with salt, each wave falling back into the bowl.

"Fries look good, chef!" says a waiter walking by.



*Hasselback sweet potato, pumpkin spice granola and crème fresh, sweet potato agrodolce, and andouille sausage wellington at Julep Contemporary Kitchen.*

photo courtesy of Julep Contemporary Kitchen

"Eat one," Owens offers, sliding the bowl across the server line.

"Appreciate [it] chef," the waiter says, smiling, while taking a fry.

After spending some time reorganizing the freezer, Owens returns with a metal tray of leftover cabbage, radishes, carrots and lettuce from previous menu items.

"Any of you care if I get rid of these?" he asks, tilting the tray toward his chefs, causing the vegetables to roll down and drum against the metal countertop.

Without response, Emily Parker, pastry and sous chef at Julep, takes the tray and puts it next to her pastry station, currently being

used to make Hawaiian rolls.

"We can use them for garnish," says Parker, working the dough. "Or [for] our family meal." The staff all gather for a family style meal before the restaurant opens for the evening each day.

Leftover ingredients are common at Julep because the restaurant's menu changes almost daily to bring new and unique foods to Greenville.

Parker explains why: "As far as food culture, [Owens] wants to make Greenville a bigger food city."

This goal, to make Greenville a food culture melting pot, is shared by the other chefs at Julep.

Parker explains that the chefs spend their free time reading and researching to get better at their craft.

Parker connects her phone to a speaker and plays '90s music before starting a fresh batch of Hawaiian rolls. She moves the large bowl of dough from the counter to the mixer, triple the size of a KitchenAid someone might use at home.

"We're all 100% in," says Parker, wiping off her hands as she walks into the freezer.

"Someone made it really hard to cut squares," says Owens, pulling a tray of misshapen desserts from the freezer.



*A buzz prompts Owens to check the oven. He removes a loaf of fig bread and cuts a piece to taste. "That's so good," Owens says, pleased.*

"It's me. I did that. Mama did it." Parker giggles as she stands on her tiptoes to see the top shelf, back-to-back with Owens, who stares down at the shelf opposite.

### Starting from scratch

Pulling out a container of sourdough starter, Owens considers one of the menu items, adding, "We are always pushing to be better."

To Owens, who became Julep's executive chef in 2022, being better is not about sales. Owens wants to make creative and good food, not just money.

"I think we put a lot of pains on ourselves. This place could easily coast and do exactly what it's doing right now," Owens says, then considers what the sourdough could be used for before returning it to the shelf. "If you're not trying to do more and making yourself a little uncomfortable, then you're not growing."

A buzz prompts Owens to check the oven. He removes a loaf of fig bread and cuts a piece to taste.

"That's so good," Owens says, pleased.

Rhythmically chopping strawberries, Owens takes one from the pack, cuts off the top, cuts it in half and tosses it into a tray, each one taking only a second, but perfectly cut.

"We could just buy cobbler," Owens says leisurely. "It would be easier and cheaper, but it wouldn't be nearly as good."

In an effort to improve, Julep's staff makes everything they can themselves.

Owens collects his strawberry

tops into plastic containers and walks them over to the trash.

"HELLO!" A voice announces from the back of the kitchen. Kenny Karalan, Julep's sous chef, arrives for the evening shift.

As is tradition for any of the chefs arriving, it is time for another smoke break. It's just as much a meeting as it is a ritual.

Karalan says he is inspired by the other chefs to improve his cooking.

"Nobody wants to be the worst person in the kitchen," says Karaian. "Definitely makes me step up – just working with people like them."

The chefs gather around the white table on the front patio; the collection of American Spirit boxes and the single pink vape joins them again.

Owens pulls out a menu and the team continues to plan how to next improve the culinary scene in Greenville. ■

*Mark Wetherington graduated with a Bachelor of Science degree in Communication in December 2022. He works as a project manager for Catch Creative, a marketing company in Greenville.*

*Silverware and glasses are placed for dinner. Soon, the ever-changing menu will be guiding guests through new flavor combinations.*

*photo courtesy of Julep Contemporary Kitchen*



*Mint julep photo courtesy Ari Agustian on unsplash.com*



# PAIN FREEZE CRYO



story and photos by Noah Walker

After experiencing the benefits themselves, two business entrepreneurs decided to bring cryotherapy treatment to Greenville, their hometown, and Cryo252 was born.

The storefront at 123 W. Fourth St. in Greenville looks notably different than any other business downtown. It has a fake grass walkway with two circular purple seats and a welcome mat that reads “Good Vibes Only.” Above the door, a sign that reads “Cryo252” protrudes over the sidewalk.

Athena Wilson, a Greenville woman, walks in and is instantly greeted by a flashing sign on the wall that reads a message of self-love. Smooth R&B music plays just quietly enough that it remains in the background, and an abundant smell of calming incense fills the air. On the only counter in the store are many jars containing legal CBD cannabis edibles, “better sex” gummies and pamphlets about the health benefits Cryo252 claims to provide.

The co-owner, Kenneth Bowman, is relaxing on one of the many couches, playing the new “Call of Duty” game on a large flat screen TV. Upon Athena’s entrance, Kenneth gets up and gives her a big hug. “What’s wrong with your car?” Kenneth asks. “Somebody hit it,” she mumbles back.



The first stop when entering Cryo252, a cryotherapy business espousing physical and mental health benefits, is a lobby complete with calming scents, decorations and music.



## Ice bath times a thousand

Athena walks into the hallway, passing many rooms that contain different forms of cryotherapy treatment. To the right is co-owner Mike Hickman's office. It is a small room with expensive Nike shoes strewn about the floor, RAW brand rolling papers next to his computer, and his old 2006 East Carolina University football jersey up on the wall, something he later downplays: "Sports are boring. I don't even watch that s---. That's the only reason why that's there. Icebreaker."

Mike gained a spot on the ECU Football scout team in 2004 after walking on as a freshman. He remained on the scout team his sophomore year, and then played eight games his junior year, earning a varsity letter.

In the compression therapy room, two people including Mike have freezing compression sleeves on both legs and are sound asleep. Athena enters the changing room to get undressed for the sauna and Kenneth returns to playing "Call of Duty."

Cryo252 is a business for cryotherapy treatment, a new form of therapy that uses extremely cold air to decrease inflammation, reduce soreness and, it claims, improve mental health.

Prices range from \$45 for a session in the cryotherapy chamber to \$225 for localized facial cryotherapy.

"Ice bath times 1,000. You know what I mean," Kenneth describes. "Simple science. Freezing your body to negative temperatures reduces inflammation in your body, which is a major cause of aches and pains to our body and disease."

## Making sense for Greenville

D'Nia Freeman, a sports performance coach at Kinetic Physical Therapy across town, describes cryotherapy in a similar way. According to D'Nia,

“

They started out with it just being for inflammation, and then people started to notice, like, 'Wow, I had a great night's sleep. My anxiety is not as high anymore. I'm noticing that I'm able to move a lot more.'

the chamber blasts minus-220-degree air at the body, which causes the body to react. "

"What your body is doing is rushing out your blood cells," she explains, "which kinda regenerates you to bring you back to life."

The medical benefits of cryotherapy include reducing fluid buildup, post-surgery swelling, constant back pain, and pains from old age or arthritis, according to D'Nia. She mentioned, however, that the benefits extend past just inflammation.

"They started out with it just being for inflammation, and then people started to notice, like, 'wow, I had a great night's sleep. My anxiety is not as high anymore. I'm noticing that I'm able to move a lot more.'"

These are the benefits that the owners of Cryo252 were hoping to bring to Greenville customers years before starting their business.

Kenneth and Mike, both 37-year-old Greenville natives and friends since they went to D.H. Conley High School together, returned from Los Angeles four years ago to start Cryo252. They first learned about cryotherapy in Los Angeles, where Kenneth managed a juice bar and Mike was on a "mental health reset" after leaving New York. Kenneth and Mike would work out at a 24-hour gym, where they met someone who offered to let them try the cryotherapy machine in a downstairs room.

"We tried it after the workout and felt, like, that much more recovered," Kenneth said.

His future business partner, Mike, had a kinesiology degree from ECU, so, as Kenneth explains, given his understanding of the body, Mike believed cryotherapy was "something that makes sense to bring to Greenville."

Their focus, however, is not to provide therapy to athletes or high-activity people. They have discovered a less expected niche that has some support in research.



Cryo252 storefront on Fourth Street in Greenville, North Carolina



Co-owner Kenneth Bowman putting a compression sleeve on customer Jennifer Moody

## From 7 to 94

Whole body cryotherapy is an effective way to reduce depression and improve mental health, according to the results of a clinical trial published in "Frontiers in Psychology." The 2020 study concluded, "The [whole body cryotherapy] intervention reduces mental health deterioration, especially in mood disorders, such as depression, and can be beneficial for well-being and quality of life."

The study adds that future research should investigate the effects cryotherapy has on underlying biological mechanisms, but confirms it is effective in helping mental health.

A year later, the journal "Complementary Therapies in Medicine" conducted a meta-analysis of research about the effects of whole-body cryotherapy on mental health. The analysis concluded that

there is preliminary evidence supporting its effectiveness as "an add-on intervention for mental health problems," especially for depression symptoms.

Kenneth and Mike have made such cryotherapy uses the forefront of their business.

"I think our three main reasons are people coming for anxiety, depression and post-traumatic stress disorder. That's our clientele," Mike explains.

He emphasizes that those mental ailments do not discriminate. The customers range "from mom and pop to athletes. Our youngest is 7, our oldest is 94."

Doctors' offices, which Mike considers to be his competition, often prescribe medicine, while Cryo252 wants to provide alternative solutions.

"Mainly man, it's about getting people off pills and surgery. That stuff is evil, and we're trying to help," Mike explained.

To Mike, cryotherapy is a lane toward teaching people about self-love and the many benefits of this unorthodox form of therapy. More than anything, Mike and Kenneth say they want to be able to help as many people as they can.

"We just trying to help people, so we don't have to turn them away. So, we give a lot of different options for people," said Kenneth.

The only person they turned away had a history of heart attacks, which would make the shock of entering a cryotherapy chamber dangerous.

## Business at full blast

About a half an hour after entering the sauna, Athena leaves it and gets ready for the compression therapy room. Athena began coming to Cryo252 at the recommendation of her husband, a Cryo252 customer who works out frequently.





It's not all about the cold. Cryo252 also has a sauna.

Despite originally coming for her muscle soreness, Athena said she found a new benefit from the sauna.

"I started coming because I was super sore. But I have sinus issues as well, so coming here helps a lot. That's why I was sitting in the sauna."

Athena adds that she leaves Cryo252 much more relaxed than when she got there.

"My soreness doesn't last as long, and I sleep much better. I think I come more because I sleep good

afterwards," Athena explains before taking a seat next to Teraza Foster, a Greenville mother.

Teraza began coming to Cryo252 for her son, who injured his ankle playing football. After talking with Mike at a session, she found out she could benefit from the clinic too.

"I have been coming for a year. Mainly for mental health and relaxation," Teraza said. "When I was coming consistently my headaches pretty much stopped, and stress levels have gone down."

According to the co-owners, Cryo252 has over 200 customers a month. Mike said their vision of the business is at full blast.

"I mean, we just trying to be ourselves. You know, not too many people now are individual people. We just trying to put our fingerprint on the community. Obviously, we're not for everybody, our vibe isn't for everybody, but the ones it's for have been here since the beginning."

While new locations and treatments are being developed, Cryo252's daily operation remains unchanged.

Mike explains, "We started small, started with a couple services and now we're at where we are today. More than anything, just trying to protect our brand, brother." ■

*Noah Walker is a communication major from Raleigh, North Carolina. He hopes to have a career in media production after graduating from the accelerated master's program in Communication in 2026. He is especially interested in multi-media journalism and broadcast production.*

## Quick history of cryotherapy



2500 BC: Egyptians use cold to treat inflammation.

1845-51: Dr. James Arnott uses crushed ice and salt solutions to freeze various cancers.

1889: New York City physician Campbell White performs the first clinical application of liquid air.

1950: Dr. Ray Allington introduces liquid nitrogen into clinical practice.

1968: Setrag Zacarian releases the first commercially available handheld cryotherapy device.

source: escholarship.org

## What does cryotherapy feel like?

"My session had three phases. First, it was the compression. Second, massage with mixture of chiropractic then the cold therapy. After my session, I felt great. I felt rejuvenated."

source: Cryo252 Yelp review

"I feel like a human Popsicle...in a good way. I definitely feel the tingles. I definitely need some lotion...definitely, you know, very pink...I'm excited to see how I feel in the next couple of hours...My body is already starting to feel so much better than it was before."

source: Meghan Mamlock, Host of Hello ENC! while trying the cryotherapy chamber during a Hello ENC episode on [youtube.com/watch?v=Bv6WuRTmXos](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bv6WuRTmXos)



We just trying to put our fingerprint on the community. Obviously, we're not for everybody, our vibe isn't for everybody, but the ones it's for have been here since the beginning.



Customer Jennifer Moody receiving cryo treatment



# WHEN FAMILY MEMBERS BECOME CAREGIVERS



Johnny Lee celebrating his 87th birthday with his wife, Peggy Lee.

photo by Jamie Ennis

While dementia affects millions of people directly, countless others — often family members — are helping to provide care while juggling multiple other responsibilities at the expense of free time. One family discusses their experiences caring for a beloved husband/great uncle with Alzheimer's.

J.L. sits on his front porch in a white wicker rocking chair, talking to his great-nephew while they wait for J.L.'s wife, Peggy, to come back from the dialysis center.

"I am on call right now!" J.L. says sternly to his great-nephew, Josh.

Josh looks at his uncle because he has heard this same spiel before. Josh nods and lets his uncle continue talking, playing along with the memory that J.L. thinks is real.

J.L. leans in closer to Josh and says, "Go to my closet in yonder...I keep a suitcase packed in case they call."

J.L. mimics a phone ringing 'ding-a-ling-a-ling' and says, "All they say is 'be at the Dunn Armory at 10 o'clock in the morning.'"

According to Josh Williams, his great-uncle believes that he is on call for the Army and could be sent to Germany at any time. His stories originate from core memories made long ago. J.L. was sent to Germany in 1959.

Johnny "J.L." Lee, is an 87-year-old Army veteran who was diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease in 2019. While in the



## Home safety tips for caregivers of those with dementia or Alzheimer's

- Monitor garages, basements and outside areas, where there are more likely to be tools, chemicals, cleaning supplies and other potentially hazardous items.
- Avoid safety hazards in the kitchen. Use appliances that have an automatic shut-off feature. Apply stove knob covers. Disconnect the garbage disposal.
- Changes in levels of light can be disorienting. Add extra lights in areas between rooms, stairways and bathrooms. Use night lights in hallways, bedrooms and bathrooms.

source: list condensed from alz.org

For more safety tips and more information for caregivers, please visit the Alzheimer's Association website at [alz.org](http://alz.org)

Army and National Guard for 20 years, J.L. worked his way up to first sergeant and chief mechanic. Today, J.L. is a frail man with great pride, who walks hunched over, seeming to weigh about 90 pounds soaking wet. He likes his snow-white hair very short, like a buzz cut. Josh says that J.L. will let his family know if his hair is getting too long. To avoid getting J.L. all out of sorts, Josh and his sister, Renee Glover, make sure to get J.L. to the barber shop every three weeks or so. According to his wife, J.L. is very peculiar about his appearance.

## Stepping up

J.L.'s wife of 61 years, Peggy Lee, who is 85, was Johnny's sole caregiver until December 2021 when she fell and broke her foot. Since then, their great niece and nephew, Renee and Josh, have stepped up to take care of them. Peggy's late sister was Josh and Renee's great grandmother and essentially raised the brother and sister, who are now in their 50s. So, Peggy and J.L. watched Josh and Renee grow up, get married to their spouses and create families of their own.

J.L. and Peggy met at a very young age. Peggy was an orphan when they met; Peggy's mother died when she very young. Her older sisters couldn't take care of

her full time, but Peggy's older sister, Virginia, would pick her up from the orphanage on the weekends and the sisters would spend the weekends together. Peggy and J.L. got married in 1961 but the couple never had children. All they have ever known is each other.

J.L. and Peggy live in a 1,200-square-foot home on the outskirts of Dunn, North Carolina. Their three-bedroom, one bathroom house sits near neighbors closer than they prefer. It is a white house with black shutters and a brick chimney but no fireplace. There's a small front porch, the perfect size for J.L.'s white wicker rocker and a small plastic rocker. J.L. and Josh spend many warm afternoons on the front porch watching the cars go by. Josh is aware of what comes with sitting on the porch with his great-uncle. One of J.L.'s most told stories is about a ramp that the family recently built. It is a silver metal ramp that attaches to the front porch. The ramp is for Peggy to use with her wheelchair as she goes in and out for dialysis, but just like J.L.'s Army story, Josh hears about the ramp regularly.

J.L. tells Josh that the ramp is "tacky," not put together correctly, and demands that whoever built it come take it down. Peggy says that J.L. doesn't realize why the ramp is there and that it was given to them in their time of need. J.L. doesn't realize why his wife needs the ramp to get in and out of their home.

On a November Friday, Peggy is tired from the dialysis treatment but overhears J.L.'s rant about the "tacky" ramp. In an aggravated and stern tone, she reminds J.L. that it was built for them, and he should be grateful that he has people who love and take care of him.

J.L. is unmoved by Peggy's response. He looks at Peggy with an irritated frown and insists, "Tell whoever put it there to come get it. I don't want it in my yard."

Josh can tell that J.L. is beginning to get "riled" up, as he calls it. So, Josh asks J.L. to sit out on the porch with him.

J.L. grabs the handlebars of his silver walker as Josh holds on to his great-uncle's belt loop to help him out of his black leather recliner, which sits right next to Peggy's red velvet lift chair. Josh and J.L. make it to the doorway, where Josh looks over his right shoulder at Peggy and says, "Get some rest."

Peggy needs the rest after three years acting as J.L.'s shadow, keeping him as close to her as possible, making sure he couldn't wander off and not know how to make his way back to her. Peggy spends many nights in their sitting room wide awake, worrying that J.L. might get up during the night. She started noticing that something was off three years ago, when J.L. didn't recognize their friends and family when they ran into

“The turning point for me was when he left (in) his truck one day and he didn't remember how to get back home.

them in town at Walmart or at a restaurant. She started putting the pieces together and took J.L. to see his doctor, where he was diagnosed with dementia.

"The turning point for me was when he left (in) his truck one day and he didn't remember how to get back home," Peggy recalls. She waited for two hours, hoping J.L. would be back home soon, but he never showed up. She called the Dunn Police Department and described the truck J.L. was driving. The police found him and brought him back home.

Both Josh and Renee agree that this is a story they hear often, but they hear it differently when J.L. tells it. Renee hears J.L. say the police took his driver's license and never gave it back.

Even today, J.L. gets angry when talking about the police. Most of J.L.'s angry stories are about people stealing his license, money or nail clippers. Josh says his great-uncle gets rattled when "outsiders" come in, explaining that J.L. immediately assumes the "outsiders" are there to steal his belongings.

## A hard pill to swallow

Renee and Josh aren't the only ones making great sacrifices for the older

people they love. According to the Alzheimer's Impact Movement, "In 2019, more than 16 million family members and friends provided 18.6 billion hours of unpaid care to people with Alzheimer's and other dementias, at an economic value of \$244 billion."

J.L. and Peggy's caregivers, Josh and Renee, both say that staying over at least three nights a week, bathing their great-aunt and uncle, and preparing meals, on top of living their own lives, is difficult and exhausting. When Peggy fell and broke her foot in December 2021, the brother and sister would alternate who stayed the night. Renee says that they quickly learned their overnight schedule wasn't something they could continue to do long-term. Josh and Renee began looking for some assistance, with their last resort being to place their great-aunt and uncle in a nursing home.

Thankfully, Renee was able to find retired nurses and certified nursing assistants to provide private care at J.L. and Peggy's home. Renee explained that this was a hard pill for Peggy to swallow at first because Peggy and J.L. have always been private people. To have someone they don't know well come and stay in their home was difficult for them. Yet, regardless of Peggy and J.L.'s preferences, Peggy knew how hard Renee and Josh were working to take care of them and was open to allowing the aides in their home. So today three aides come in to help: Betty, Debbie and Tammy.

The women have become like family to the elderly couple. Betty tends to buy goodies and bring them to the couple on her day off. Once in while on a Monday afternoon, she even brings dinner or a special sweet treat for J.L. As an overnight aide, Betty stays a couple

nights each week with the couple. The other aides are assigned either daytime or nighttime hours as well.

J.L. and Peggy have grown fond of their aides and Peggy says they are so thankful for the work they do. She explains that the help takes a lot off of Renee and Josh.

Josh is 52 and has a family of his own, as does Renee, who is 56 and has a new grandbaby she feels she is missing out on. Nonetheless, the siblings are there for their great-aunt and uncle because it is what their great-grandmother would have wanted. To Josh and Renee, it is the right thing to do.

J.L. continuously tells Josh and Renee how thankful he is for their help. Sometimes, J.L. tells the siblings to go home, that he will take care of Peggy, as if he doesn't need help himself. At other times, he will ask repeatedly which sibling is staying the night. Either Josh or Renee reassure J.L. about who will be staying and that he and Peggy will be taken care of. ■

*Jamie Ennis is a senior journalism and public relations student from Dunn, North Carolina. She graduated in Spring 2023 with hopes of working in feature writing or broadcast news.*



## You're not alone!

**ALZConnected** is a free online community designed for people living with dementia and those who care for them.

To sign up for ALZConnected and/or to find a local chapter of the Alzheimer's Association, visit: [alz.org](http://alz.org)



# THE HPV VACCINE:

WHAT  
YOU  
DON'T  
KNOW  
CAN  
HURT  
YOU



by **Bailey Mennemeier**

Years after doctors began recommending the HPV vaccine, some adults are still learning about the importance of this precautionary health measure. For some, it might have meant avoiding cervical cancer.

**L**ast year, at 21, I walked into an OB-GYN office in Greenville and got my first Pap smear, a daunting test I've known about since I was a teenager.

It's such a big deal when you talk to other girls your age about how scary it is to have another person look at a part of your body that only you know. However, it was a much bigger deal when I told my doctor holding the swab that I never got the HPV vaccine.

## A 1-in-10 story

The HPV vaccine protects against a virus called human papillomavirus, which is transmitted sexually.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, HPV is the most common sexually transmitted infection, and in nine out of 10 cases it goes away on its own within two years. However, in 1-in-10 cases, it can lead to genital warts or, even worse, cancer.

An example of a 1-in-10 story is Kate Brown, 39, of Apex. In 2015, at 32, Brown felt like she had a bowling ball in her lower pelvic region and was having very abnormal menstrual cycles that would last for three weeks.

After being ignored by all the clinics she called, she was finally able to get an appointment in 2016. Brown hadn't seen an OB-GYN in over 10 years – since her son was born in 2005.

Brown's gynecologist conducted the pelvic exam and slipped into silence, then turned to a nurse and asked for a biopsy kit. The next silence-breaking words were like glass daggers going into Brown's body.

"I never want to say anything with 100% certainty, but I am 99.9% sure that you have cervical cancer," Brown's gynecologist told her.

photo courtesy of pexels.com



## HPV: What You Need To Know

The HPV vaccine, also known as Gardasil 9, has been administered since its approval by the United States Food and Drug Administration in 2014.



### When should I get the vaccine?

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommend that the HPV vaccination be given at 11-12 years of age. At least two doses are needed within a six-to-12-month period.

However, Gardasil 9 can be administered and is recommended up until age 26. If above the age of 26, consult your doctor.

### Why should I get the vaccine?

- The HPV vaccination is cancer prevention.
- HPV vaccination prevents new HPV infections.
- At any age, having a new sex partner is a risk factor for getting a new HPV infection.



source: cdc.gov

The tests came back two days later, and it was confirmed that Brown had cancer and it was stage 2 invasive squamous cell carcinoma.

Brown started chemo and underwent experimental radiation treatments, which led to her survival, and she is now six years in remission.

However, she is still burdened mentally and physically by the disease.

"I went into menopause at 33, my ovaries are small and shriveled, I have bowel and kidney issues, I couldn't have sex for four years and I have to have hormone replacement," Brown said. "I have a lot of anger, because how didn't I know this could happen?"

Brown never had the HPV vaccine, so she is now an advocate for cervical cancer survivors and for the HPV vaccine, making sure that people know how to protect themselves and seek the treatment they need.

"You know your body more than everyone else, and if they're not taking you seriously, be firm, and if that office or doctor doesn't listen, [go to the] next one," Brown said.

Someone who saw Brown's triumph firsthand was her long-time friend, Alysha McPeak. McPeak found it hard to believe that her own friend had a cervical cancer diagnosis, as she had never met anyone with it before.

Seeing how the chemo and radiation had changed Brown, McPeak said, "It makes me take my sexual health very seriously, and I make sure to go to every appointment."

McPeak herself got a Pap smear in 2018, two years after Brown's diagnosis and it came back as abnormal.

"I had to get a biopsy," McPeak said, "and I was scared that it was going to happen to me."

McPeak had received the HPV vaccine as a young girl and her biopsy came out benign, or cancer-free. McPeak was 24 at the time of her friend Brown's cancer diagnosis and is now 30 and uterus-free from a hysterectomy she had in July 2022.

McPeak ultimately was influenced by Brown to be aware of her own health and her family's health history. Unfortunately, the same thing can't be said for others who are unvaccinated for the HPV virus.

### Early vaccination and education are key

Dr. Lisa Rubin, of Titusville, Pennsylvania, has over 33 years of experience as an OB-GYN and says that educating patients about the importance of receiving the HPV vaccine starts young.

"The pediatricians are the ones that are supposed to get children vaccinated, but most pediatricians have not seen HPV and don't know anything about it," Rubin said.

Rubin said that the main issue with people not getting the vaccine is that the vaccination regimen

*HPV can also manifest into cancer in males as well as in the form of oral or throat cancers, which have been seen in men in their 30s.*

begins at 11 or 12 years old, and those parents think that administering a vaccine against a sexually transmitted infection is condoning sex for teens.

Another frequent lapse involves the vaccination of boys, as many parents don't see how cervical cancer would affect them. Yet, Rubin said that HPV can also manifest into cancer in males as well as in the form of oral or throat cancers, which have been seen in men in their 30s. These findings have increased the vaccination rate in boys.

"Currently I think we're at about 60 to 65% of all boys and girls being fully vaccinated, with about 75% having one dose," Rubin said.

One of those boys was Daniel Santiago, now 22 and a student at Brigham Young University. Santiago says that he received the vaccine as a child but was not made aware of HPV or what it can cause.

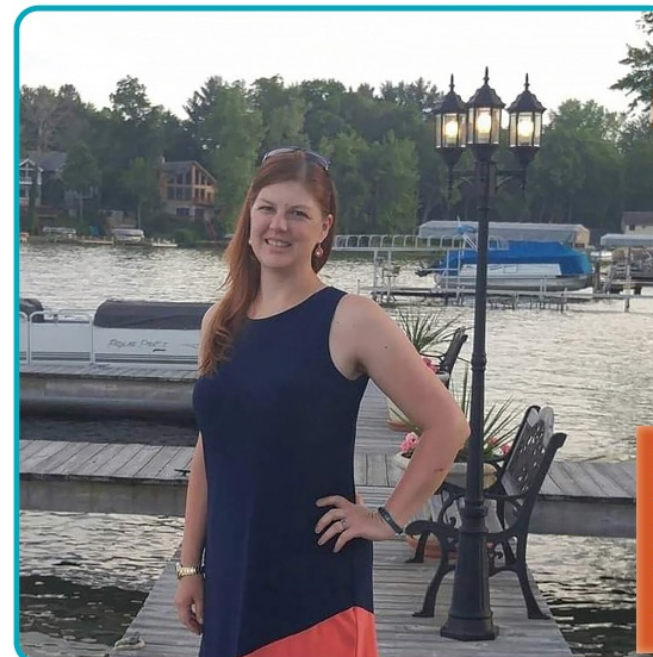
"I am protected against this, but never knew this problem existed.

Everyone should be vaccinated for HPV," he added.

The next step for getting a higher vaccination rate is ensuring awareness of the human papillomavirus, a virus that the CDC says 43 million people get each year, causing over 12,000 cases of cervical cancer annually. These statistics are intimidating but can be battled by getting the HPV vaccine, wearing protection during sex and getting regular exams.

So, of course, I started by getting the first of three rounds of the vaccine against HPV, the cancer-starting virus. ■

*Bailey Mennemeier is a communication and public relations major from Pennsylvania. After her May 2023 graduation, she hopes to work as a communications specialist, preferably for the cause of sustainability.*



*I have a lot of anger, because how didn't I know this could happen?*

*Kate Brown is an advocate for spreading awareness of cervical cancer and its effects, and is a fervent supporter of getting the HPV vaccine. After six years of remission, she has become dedicated to ensuring that others do not face the same struggles she did.*

photo courtesy of Kate Brown



# SPEAKING OUT FOR CHANGE

by Katrina Orefice



East Carolina University's campus was the most "alive" with demonstrations during the years 1967 to 1977, due to the Vietnam War, the Civil Rights Act and the Women's Rights Movement. However, like many campuses across the country, ECU has seen an increase in freedom of expression activities, such as protests, demonstrations and marches, since the 2016 election.

Protestors marching at the Stand With Survivors March and Rally on ECU's campus in November 2021.

photo courtesy of The Daily Reflector taken by Willow Abbey Mercado

The warm August air blew past the two sorority girls as they headed toward a frat party on a random Saturday in 2021. The pair was speed walking down the streets of Greenville, full of excitement as they couldn't wait to meet up with the rest of their sorority sisters. Classes at East Carolina University had just started up again for the sophomores, and the 19-year-olds could not wait to be dancing and sipping punch with other stressed-out students, after jumping right back into a heavy course load. However, what was supposed to be a fun girls' night to let loose ended up being a night the two would carry with them forever.

Music was ringing off the walls as the pair walked into the frat house. Pushing past the mesh of students, their first destination was to get a drink. After they both filled their red Solo cups with "party juice," which is a term for the combination of fruit punch and cheap vodka, they went to the dance floor to let loose. Soon, both girls stumbled to an upstairs bathroom with feelings of unease, unsure why they were feeling drunk after having just one drink. The next morning, the duo realized they had been victims of drink tampering, as they ended up blacking out and not remembering what happened after going upstairs.

Now, two years later, the pair are roommates in their last year at ECU and news broke out about drink tampering and sexual assault allegations against a different fraternity on campus, Theta Chi. This was the third year in a row that Theta Chi was investigated for drink tampering, and the second year in a row for alleged sexual assault. An email was sent to all ECU students, and in response to this alert, a student-organized protest was planned outside the frat house.





Prompted by reports of sexual assault at Theta Chi Fraternity, protestors carried signs about ending sexual violence.

photo courtesy of The Daily Reflector, by Willow Abbey Mercado

“When I realized what happened I was thankful and felt pride in seeing students step up and have their voices heard.”

## A way to spread awareness

According to RAINN, the nation's largest anti-sexual violence organization, women ages 19 to 24 are at an elevated risk for sexual violence, and more than 50% of college sexual assaults occur in the months August through November. Even though Theta Chi was under investigation and not all the facts are known about what happened, Chris Sutton, the field operations captain for the East Carolina Police Department, says that students gathering to help institute change may be the most successful way to bring attention to the issue of drink tampering and sexual assault.

East Carolina University has seen an increase in other freedom of expression activities, such as protests, demonstrations and marches, since the 2016 election, and whenever news breaks out about certain political or social topics. Sutton says that the more controversial the topic, the more demonstrations on campus.

“Incidents that involve the actions of law enforcement, race, gender, sexual orientation, political figures, sexual assault and abortion tend to be

the events that trigger more widespread and localized demonstrations,” says Sutton.

## Alive with protests

According to Dr. John Tucker, ECU historian for the past 10 years, ECU's campus was the most “alive” with demonstrations during the years 1967 to 1977, due to the Vietnam War, the Civil Rights Act and the Women's Rights Movement. He says that these events inspired students to prioritize a response over schoolwork, and demand their voices be raised.

According to “ECU Chronicles,” the university's continuous historical account of events, the fall of 1969 was one of the most politically charged semesters in East Carolina's history due to the “outspoken resistance to the draft coupled with vocal advocacy of withdrawal from Vietnam, the suffrage for 18-year-olds, and full recognition of student rights.”

When asked about how vocal ECU students are compared to those at other universities in the UNC system, Tucker says that the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill is considered more of a “hotbed” campus as it's on the news more

### Assaults versus reports

Sexual violence is more prevalent at college compared to other crimes but college-age victims often do not report to law enforcement.

Only 20% of female student victims, age 18-24, report to law enforcement.

source: [rainn.org/statistics/campus-sexual-violence](http://rainn.org/statistics/campus-sexual-violence)

than ECU. But he says that “almost always, when one speaks, others are speaking as well,” in reference to neighboring universities.

According to the “ECU Chronicles,” a nationwide anti-war protest, the Moratorium to End the War in Vietnam, a large demonstration and teach-in across the U.S. on Oct. 25, 1969, had participation from not only ECU, but also UNC Chapel Hill, N.C. State, Appalachian State, and many more North Carolina colleges and universities.

Such activism isn't only a trend at North Carolina colleges and universities, but rather, colleges get influenced by similar trends elsewhere.

“We are a microcosm of our country, of our world. What affects individuals in California or Calcutta can also affect our students at East Carolina on some level,” says Sutton, the ECU police captain.

For example, according to a data set and analysis released by the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project in 2020, there were more than 10,600 demonstration events across the U.S. between May 24 and Aug. 22, 2020, including Black Lives Matter, BLM counter-protests and COVID-19 pandemic-related protests.

After George Floyd was murdered at the end of May 2020 by a police officer in Minneapolis, Minnesota, this number peaked, according to the analysis. Black Lives Matter protests erupted all over the United States, which led to various freedom of expression activities being organized on ECU's campus in support.

## A launchpad for 'difference makers'

Melody Martinez, now a senior at ECU, witnessed a Black Lives Matter protest happening on campus in fall 2020. Martinez said she felt confused when she first saw the large gathering in the mall on campus as she personally hadn't seen any protests about racial injustice at ECU.

“When I realized what happened I was thankful and felt pride in seeing students step up and have their voices heard,” says Martinez.

Martinez didn't have time to join in on the protest, but to help bring awareness to what was happening, she added a short video on her Instagram story telling others to come support it.

Dr. Erik Kneubuehl, ECU's free speech officer, says he and his staff want to build trust with ECU students and the last thing they want to do is shut down protests.

“We're successful because we built a really great relationship with our faculty, staff and our students ... They trust us, and they know we're not out to get them, like at other schools, potentially,” Kneubuehl says, adding that he and his staff have never had to kick students off campus for violent protests. “Not one event ... let's knock on wood somewhere. Not one event since 2015 has been shut down [on ECU's campus].”

Events are often organized on ECU's campus in either favor, or against, current affairs happening around the world. Just as the George Floyd protests asked for police reform in the U.S., Iranian citizens were asking for the dismantling of the Iranian morality police after they were accused of killing a woman for wearing her hijab inappropriately. Kneubuehl says he hasn't yet seen any requests at ECU for freedom of expression activities about the Iranian uprising, but he has seen demonstrations and vigils for Israel or Palestine in recent years.

With this constant increase of protests in parts of the world, Kneubuehl says that East Carolina just wants to make sure its students are safe, have a chance to get their voices heard, and know that their constitutional right is being upheld.

Police Captain Sutton agrees, saying, “Ultimately, I want our students to know their voice matters and find an effective way to use their voice to impact our campus, our community, our world. I want ECU to develop and launch out difference makers.”

The Vice Chancellor of Student Affairs office at ECU sent an email to all students updating them about the status of the Theta Chi's allegations. It's not known if the protests at Theta Chi were a factor in sending this email, but the message had students feeling hopeful that their

efforts to bring attention to the issue of drink tampering and sexual assault with fraternities was recognized, and that the allegations hadn't been swept under the rug. ■

*After majoring in communication with a concentration in journalism and in dance performance and choreography, Katrina Orefice graduated from ECU in May 2023. She is from Harrisburg, North Carolina, and hopes to write and design for either a magazine publication or a production company.*

### HOW TO BE THE CHANGE:

### QUICK RESOURCES

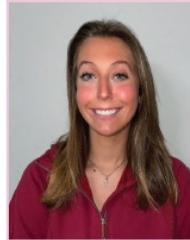
- 1) [edumed.org](http://edumed.org)  
Includes tips for getting started as a student activist, small steps students can take for big results and links to additional resources.
- 2) [thefire.org](http://thefire.org)  
Information at this site includes do's and don'ts of campus activism, FAQs for student protestors, and college free speech rankings.



## HITTING THE FLOOR RUNNING: PROFILE OF A 'HOUSE MOM'

story and photos by **Kayla Precht**

Being a house mother (or, sorority house director) means living on campus and serving as everything from role model to authoritarian. Lesa Scharnett is more than happy to look after her "extended family."



**L**esa Scharnett starts every day waking up in the small cottage she lives in behind East Carolina University's Zeta Tau Alpha sorority house. It is a 350-square-foot building that contains a living room, bedroom, bathroom and kitchenette with a sink, microwave and fridge. A screened-in porch outside the cottage is where Lesa spends much of her time with college students: the ZTA sorority women.

Lesla, an energetic, physically fit, 59-year-old from Champaign, Illinois, comes across as any other grandmother or mom. However, she plays a big role in the lives of the 118 ZTA members because for five years she has been the sorority's house director — sometimes referred to as a sorority "house mom."

On this autumn day, Lesa begins her morning walking through the first floor of the grey three-story chapter facility and opens the blinds to let in the sunlight. Twelve members live in seven rooms at the Zeta Tau Alpha sorority house, but it can accommodate up to 22 women each semester.

Before the members head to class, Lesa helps the sorority house chef with inspecting

and preparing each meal to meet members' dietary restrictions.

Lesla is one of five house directors at ECU, each of whom is responsible for overseeing a different sorority on campus. Only five of the 11 sororities at ECU have a house director. The others are overseen by either a student officer selected by a sorority chapter or an alumni volunteer.

ECU Director of Student Engagement John Mountz says the primary reason those sororities do not have a house director is because they don't have the space for one to live alongside them.

Each national sorority organization "determines if its chapters need a house mom or not," said Jenna Mallberg, a Zeta Tau Alpha member and the 2022 president of the ECU Panhellenic Association, which represents all the sororities on campus.

Lesla's job is a contracted salary position that runs from August to June each year, with her salary paid by ECU's Iota Rho Chapter of Zeta Tau Alpha sorority. The chapter votes whether or not to rehire her each new school year.



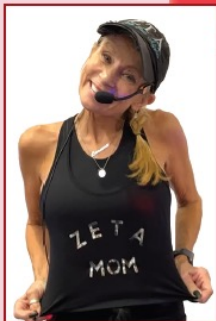
Above: Back row from left to right — Aysia Wolf, Gianna Rigdon, Saba Khanmohammadi, Erica Scott and Grace Ruffino. Sitting on the left arm of the couch is Sarah Lezzer and on the right arm of the couch is Sydri Hall. Bottom row on the couch from left to right — Aryn Cimmerer, Haley Dudley, Lesa, Victoria Woooley and Katie Wellinghoff.

Right: Scharnett has been the sorority's house director for five years.

ZTA crown logo modified to remove ZTA. This image is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 4.0 International license. source: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Crown\_%26\_ZTA\_Logo.jpg







## Role model and caretaker

Women who take on the role of a sorority house director range in age and background, but all have one thing in common: the desire to be a role model and caretaker for the young women in Greek life. Lesa has many tasks as house director that help to ensure the young women

have the best sorority and academic experience possible.

On many days, “She is not only outside working in the yard, making porch furniture, and baking us cookies on Sunday, but she makes us feel safe. Lesa is always checking in on us and making sure we are fed and happy,” said ZTA member Emily Molesky, a junior nursing major.

Some of Lesa’s responsibilities include ensuring supplies and food items are in stock, assuming a leadership role during emergencies, enforcing chapter house rules and safety, and creating a home away from home for the chapter members. She is also assigned to oversee the facility and coordinate building maintenance and repair when needed.

“Some days I just hit the floor running,” says Lesa. “No day is ever the same.”

## Home away from home

Lesa did not plan to be a house director for a college sorority. She started out working in multiple different jobs in California. After eight years there, Lesa had her daughter and moved back to her hometown of Champaign to raise her child as a single mom. She later worked 15 years as an office manager for an engineering, architectural and surveying company.

After Lesa’s daughter graduated from college, Lesa decided that she needed a less stressful career. She found a house director position on Indeed.com at Marietta College in Marietta Ohio, with a sorority called Chi Omega.

She loved the job and decided that she could make “sorority house mom” her career. Eventually Lesa decided Marietta was too cold and small, so after a year with Chi Omega, she found the opening at Zeta Tau Alpha in Greenville. Lesa went through an extensive interview process with the ECU ZTA chapter and was hired two weeks later, moving to Greenville in 2017, where she has been since.

Being raised in a family of nine children, as well as having a daughter and granddaughter of her own,

Lesa knows the importance of family. Being able to have summers off to spend with her daughter and granddaughter is a big reason she took the position in Greenville.

While at ECU, however, “The Zeta ladies have become my family, even though the faces change from year to year,” Lesa explained. “I love my job. I’m grateful and honored to be a part of these young ladies’ college experience.”

## Sometimes a 'second mom'

The ZTA house is a short walk from the ECU Eakin Student Recreation Center, where students go to work out and play sports. Lesa is with students there, too, because she is the instructor for some of the rec center’s fitness classes. She is passionate about staying in shape and teaching, which is why Lesa has been a professional fitness instructor for 40 years.

Kyra Bertolini, a junior ZTA member who previously lived in the sorority house, said she had a close relationship with Lesa throughout her time there. Today, she sees Lesa as a second mother.

“One night I was extremely homesick,” Kyra recalled. “Lesa and I just sat on her porch together and I cried, telling her about why my family means so much to me. She was super helpful and knew exactly how to make me feel better and very much at home.”

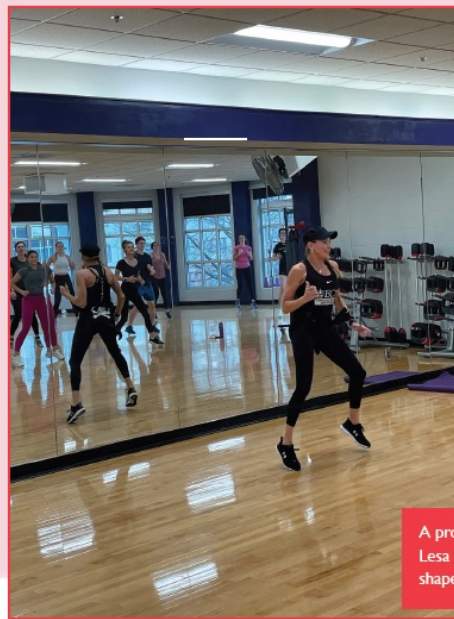
Many of the members who live in house are away from home and rely on Lesa for advice and guidance. ZTA member Grace Ruffino is from New York, and she, too, experiences homesickness during the school year, which is why her mom is glad that Lesa is ZTA’s house director.

“I’m extremely grateful ZTA has given my daughter someone that is looking out for her while I’m so far away,” said Grace’s mom, Laura Ruffino. “I can rest assured knowing she is safe and well cared for.”

## And sometimes an enforcer

Being a sorority house director is not always easy. Lesa has had to break up arguments between the girls, talk about relationship issues, and constantly has to remind the house residents to do their chores. She says the worst part of being house director is having to yell at the members who break rules and think they got away with it.

Yet, it is a part of her job as house director to enforce the rules set by Zeta Tau Alpha’s governing body. One of the house regulations is that no alcohol is permitted on the property. Another is that the girls must leave the house for house closings during school



A professional fitness instructor for 40 years, Lesa Scharnett is passionate about staying in shape and teaching others how to do the same.

“

I would do anything for the Zeta ladies, from just a hug on a bad day to picking up the pieces of a broken heart. I am always here for my girls 100%; there’s nothing off the table.

breaks. When the members don’t follow the rules, Lesa does not hesitate to confront them.

“If I start a sentence with ‘Is there anything you need to tell me?’ I already know,” Lesa explained.

## Fewer opportunities

Being house director for a sorority is not as common as it was in years past. According to University Archivist Alston Coburn, records indicate that a “House-Mothers Club of East Carolina College” was founded in 1964. The group consisted of all house mothers for ECU fraternities and sororities.

“There are also Sorority Fall Rush booklets between 1977 and 1990, and they all mention that some of the sorority fees will help pay house mothers’ salary,” said Coburn. “But suddenly in

1993, the booklet takes out these references to the house mothers (and house directors).”

As a result, there are relatively few opportunities for house directors today at ECU. Maybe that’s why Lesa cherishes her unique job as the ZTA’s second mother.

“I would do anything for the Zeta ladies, from just a hug on a bad day to picking up the pieces of a broken heart. I am always here for my girls 100%; there’s nothing off the table. I am protective about them and the house,” says Lesa. “I have the best job ever.” ■

*Kayla Precht is a communication major with a minor in sports studies from Huntersville, North Carolina. After her graduation in May 2024, she hopes to work in sports broadcasting and reporting.*

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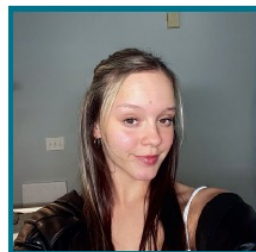




# FROM DOUBT TO CLOUT

How Scott Shook went from lackluster student to financial advisor and chair of the East Carolina University Board of Trustees

by **Kathryn Jenkins**



If you saw him walking into his office at Truist Wealth, you might never believe there was a time when Scott Shook thought he wouldn't graduate high school. Yet today, you can often find him wearing his suit and tie, and he is a well-known member of the Greenville community. Shook serves on many boards and is the chair of the East Carolina University Board of Trustees.

His friends describe Shook as someone who is crazy and fun, yet caring and kind.

"Scott loves to have fun, but at his core he cares about people more than anything," says Shook's colleague, Bryan Jenkins.\*

Shook's journey to get where he is today hasn't always been easy, but, throughout it all, he has remained dedicated to the things he loves — ECU Pirates and finance.

Shook did graduate from Sanderson High School in Raleigh, but with a 1.0 grade point average and a score of just 800 on his SAT.

When asked about his time in high school, he had just one thing to say. "It's amazing how bad things can go when you don't apply yourself," he says. He viewed high school as optional, often skipping class and spending most of his days hanging out with friends or partying. Shook's dad never thought he'd see his son get a diploma.

“

Scott loves to have fun, but at his core he cares about people *more than anything.*

Scott Shook is shown here in a photo taken during a meeting with Chancellor Philip Rogers and Student Government Association president Chandler Ward.

photo by Rhett Butler  
courtesy of ECU







Coming full circle, Shook, who launched his own career journey with the help of others, now has a plaque on the Department of Economics "Wall of Fame," at ECU. The wall recognizes "those who by their major contributions have provided opportunities for economics students to succeed."

photo courtesy of ECU Department of Economics

"I'm sure my dad thought I'd be leaving high school in handcuffs," Shook said, describing himself as a screw-up who didn't care about anything except having a good time. Even so, things quickly changed for him once he applied for and attended college.

With his options for colleges being limited due to his low GPA, Shook applied to Louisburg College in North Carolina. This was when Shook decided to make a change and do something he had never done before.

## Moving to the head of the class

"I decided to sit in the front row," he recalled. It was at this moment he began to dedicate himself: sitting in the front row, attentive instead of sitting in the back with his head down, waiting for the moment he could sneak out.

"I found out that I actually enjoyed learning and I realized how much I could do if I applied myself all along."

This began Shook's flame for learning, and he even made the Dean's List his first semester.

After completing his first year at Louisburg in 1989, he decided to transfer, move a little closer to home and attend N.C. State University.

He enrolled at N.C. State in fall 1989, which he describes as the most pivotal time of his educational journey. He registered for his first economics class and immediately fell in love.

"I knew from the first day that this was exactly what I wanted to do," Shook said. He also took a business law course and an angling class (angling is a fishing technique that uses a fish hook) for a physical education credit.

"Angling might be my favorite class I have ever taken," he says. Although he stayed at N.C. State for only a semester, the connections he made and the things he learned would change his future forever. He then applied to two economics programs: one

at East Carolina University and one at N.C. State. The department chair of the ECU program reached out, asked Shook to come down and visit, and even offered to be his advisor. The department at N.C. State sent him a packet with financial aid options and a map of the dorms.

"At that point, the choice was clear for me," Shook said. "I wanted to be somewhere that was as dedicated to my education as I was, and that place was East Carolina."

So, he drove east and hasn't looked back.

In 1990, Shook was officially an East Carolina Pirate. He registered for his classes and was doing well until old high school habits returned, and his focus began drifting.

"I realized what it means to be a Pirate," he said. He became the president of Sigma Tau Kappa fraternity and began to enjoy his social life a lot more than his studies. His grades started to fall and after some self-reflection, Shook knew this wasn't what he needed to be doing. So, he got back to the books, getting himself out of the hole he had dug. It didn't take long for his grades to rise.

In 1993, Shook was named "Senior of the Year" for the Economics department.

"I think back to that moment and remember how crazy it felt. I went from almost failing high school to graduating top of my department. It was surreal."

## Trading pizza making for financial advising

Shook went on to graduate in 1993. After graduation, he was invited to be a member of a management program at BB&T, where he met people who would help him in his career journey.

Scott was introduced to Bill Baggett, eastern regional manager of Wachovia Banking, now known as Wells Fargo. Baggett asked Shook his plans, to

which Shook replied, "I'm going to grad school."

The Wachovia manager then told Shook to give him a call if he changed his mind. Shook moved back to his parents' home in Raleigh after graduation and began working at his local pizza shop to save up money for grad school. As time passed, Shook realized he was making decent money at the shop and both he and his family could see the dream of grad school slipping away. His father wasn't pleased, since Shook had put in all this hard work and was using it for baking pizzas.

"He came home from work one day and saw me laying on the couch," Shook said. "He said I can either get up and get a real job using my degree or get out of his house."

So, Shook found Bill Baggett's number and gave him a call. After one ring, Baggett answered the phone.

"I said, 'Sir this is Scott Shook' and he immediately laughed and said, 'How's grad school working out for you?'"

After some conversation, Baggett offered Shook a job in Manteo and Shook was off. From Manteo to Manns Harbor, to Ahoskie, Shook moved around a lot from bank branch to bank branch with Wachovia. During his time in Ahoskie, he met his wife, Karen, an accountant. His work ethic as he moved from place to place in order to work his way up the ranks was something she admired.

"Scott has a work ethic like no other. He gives off this persona of a fun guy, which he is, but he has also worked hard for what he has," says Karen Shook.

They got married in 1999 and he eventually got a job with Truist banking as a financial advisor, finally settling in Greenville, where he lives today. Though much is still the same, a lot has changed in Shook's life in the past few years.

Shook became chair of the North Carolina Community College System for a double term from 2015 to 2019 and was appointed to the ECU Board of Trustees on May 3, 2020, also becoming chair. Shook was "instrumental in

bringing Dr. Philip Rogers to ECU, helping ease the chancellor's transition into leadership," said Brian Farkas, a state House of Representatives member from 2020 to 2022. Farkas also said Shook helped to bring over \$215 million in new construction funds for the ECU Brody School of Medicine.

"On top of all that, Scott Shook is a good person whose heart is in the right place," Farkas added.

## Advocating for ECU

Many who know and work with Shook describe him as passionate about the students at ECU, much of this credited to his former mentors and his journey to get where he is today.

ECU Chief of Staff Chris Locklear sees Shook as a proud and passionate Pirate who often recalls those important mentors during his time at ECU who helped to shape his educational experience and professional journey.

"It is through this lens that he advocates for ECU in pursuit of delivering on our mission. He is generous with his time, talents and treasure and I am so grateful for his service," Locklear added.

At 53, Shook has made a good life for himself. He's still working hard and hasn't missed an ECU home football game yet. Shook's close friend, Patrick Johnson, describes him as someone who perseveres and finds good in everyone.

"Scott believes in the exceptionalism of all people," Johnson said. "He has an amazing ability to set out a goal and achieve it. If there's a roadblock, he will work around it. He has boundless energy, a wicked sense of humor and is a gracious host to anyone in his presence." ■

*Kathryn Jenkins, from Smithfield, North Carolina, graduated from ECU in May 2023. She hopes to pursue a career in sports media/journalism.*

*"Bryan Jenkins, one of the sources quoted in the article, is the father of Kathryn Jenkins.*

## FUN FACT:

### A LOT OF DEDICATION

After longtime Pirate Club members Karen and Scott Shook made a significant investment in the Pirates Unite Campaign for Comprehensive Excellence, ECU Director of Athletics Jon Gilbert announced in September 2022 that the Fieldside parking lot off Berkley Road in Greenville, North Carolina, will be named "The Shook Lot."



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