

GASTON ALIVE

MAGAZINE

HOME | GARDEN | STYLE | FUN | FOOD | HAPPENINGS

Think Big- Shop Small
**Downtown
Belmont**

p6

MMA Fighter Nicole Hunt
p10

**Daniel Stowe's Annual
Holiday Display**
p12

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Before



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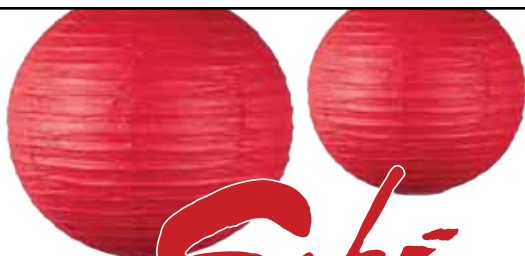
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FROM THE PUBLISHER

The holidays can be a whirl of parties, travel, shopping, and, well... stress. Perhaps this year we can take a breath and think about what is really important. For many of us it's our faith, our families, and our health. It's also the time of year that we think of those less fortunate, and what we can do in our small way to help. If you find you have a heart for giving this holiday season, here are a couple of local organizations that could use your help:

The Shelter of Gaston County
Department of Health & Human Services
330 Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Way
Gastonia, NC 28052
704-810-6492

Catherine's House
Post Office Box 1633
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Wishing you a safe and joyous holiday season,

David

featured this month

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SHOP DOWNTOWN BELMONT

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MMA FIGHTER
NICOLE HUNT

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DANIEL STOWE'S ANNUAL
HOLIDAY DISPLAY



HOME | GARDEN | STYLE | FUN | FOOD | HAPPENINGS

on the cover



The November cover was shot on location in downtown Belmont at Blythe Gallery, and features Katie Foerste of Belmont. See more shopping opportunities and activities in Belmont on page 6. Photo by Rick Haithcox, cover graphic design by David James.

our staff

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MAIN STREET

THINK BIG – SHOP SMALL! Downtown Belmont!

In a world of big boxes, superstores and malls, Belmont's downtown shops and eateries challenge holiday shoppers to "Think Big – Shop Small" this holiday season. Locally-owned small businesses, that is.

Historic Downtown Belmont offers a collection of over fifty unique specialty shops and eateries in a beautiful and charming small town setting. With treasured antiques, hand crafted pottery and jewelry, customized gifts, local wines and specialty foods, there are plenty of great choices for customers seeking one of a kind unique gifts. Boutiques, galleries, gift and novelty shops also provide a wonderful holiday selection wrapped up with exemplary customer service.

Share the full experience and love of Downtown Belmont with gift cards (offered at many shops, eateries, salon, and spas) to be redeemed in person at a later date for the perfect bonus to any gift.

From holiday themed special events to private parties at the three downtown event venues, Belmont continues to boast that certain historic small town charm with its beautiful buildings, attractive storefront window display, and bustling sidewalks day or night.



Feel good about shopping when you visit your favorite local downtown businesses and keep the holiday goodwill going. The shop small movement is less about competing with the big boxes and more about supporting the local community.

Did you know that approximately 73 percent of the money spent at locally owned businesses stays local, compared to 43 percent of the dollars spent at non-locally owned stores, and zero percent of money spent in other communities or online are retained in Belmont? So when you Shop Small this holiday season, you'll not only find a unique gift, but you'll be giving the gift of a sustainable community.

SMALL BUSINESS SATURDAY – November 26

Downtown Belmont will be OPEN FOR BUSINESS for Small Business Saturday as businesses roll out the carpet with holiday merchandise, discounts, refreshments, and special promotions.

On Saturday, November 26, businesses throughout Downtown Belmont will celebrate Small Business Saturday. Created in 2010, Small Business Saturday encourages holiday shoppers to visit locally owned stores to check off their shopping lists.

This annual event falls on the first Saturday after Thanksgiving – or as some know it – the recovery day after Black Friday. But as Black Friday has crept into Turkey Day, Small Business Saturday offers more mindful shoppers a way to enjoy Thanksgiving and then support the local community two days later.



Belmont Christmas Village



Belmont Christmas Village

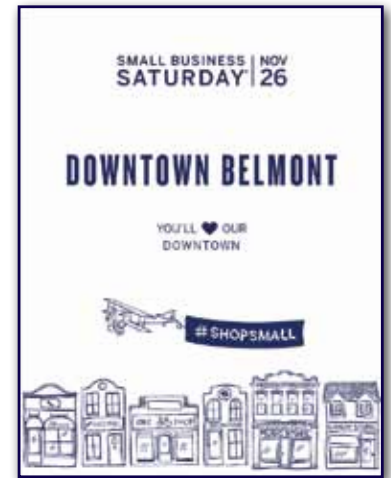
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Historic Downtown Belmont

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HOLIDAY CALENDAR OF EVENTS

In Historic Downtown Belmont

Thanksgiving Day

THURSDAY	NOV 24	5th Annual Run for the BCO 5k Time: 8:30 A.M.
SATURDAY	NOV 26	Small Business Saturday Time: All Day
SATURDAY	DEC 3	Girls on the Run 5k Time: 8:30 A.M.
MONDAY	DEC 5	Belmont Tree Lighting Ceremony Time: 5:30 P.M.
TUESDAY	DEC 6	Belmont Christmas Parade Time: 4:00 P.M.
FRIDAY	DEC 9	Belmont Christmas Village Time: 6:00 P.M. – 9:00 P.M.

For more information please visit: www.cityofbelmont.org

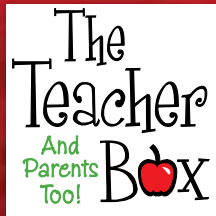
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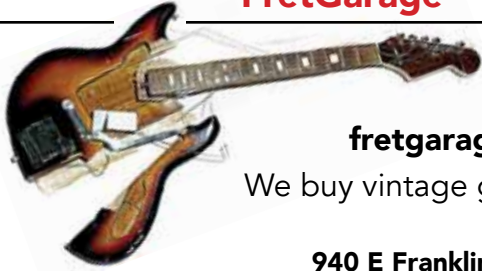
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DEMURE OR DANGEROUS?

NICOLE HUNT IS BOTH... *By David Hamrick*

GA: How did you get started in MMA fighting?

Nicole: Unlike most, I had no background experience in any martial arts, but I was always fairly active – coming up on 5 years ago, I got interested through a friend that boxed for hobby. Then, I happened to see an ad for a local MMA gym on Facebook, and decided to try it out. I really had no plans of it becoming much more than form of exercise, but 6 months later I found myself walking into a cage, making my amateur debut.

GA: What do you do for a day job?

Nicole: I think most people who meet me in the gym are usually surprised to find that I have a totally normal desk job working for Mark A Stephens, CPA – and the clients who meet me in the office are always surprised to find out what I do in my free time. Unfortunately, fighting doesn't pay the bills for me quite yet, but I am lucky enough to work for a great company with very flexible and understanding bosses who allow me to pursue my dreams, and don't mind too much when I walk into work with the occasional black eye.

GA: What do your friends and family think about you being a fighter?

Nicole: Everyone has been really supportive... I'm sure that it's hard for my mother sometimes to see her daughter compete in combat sports, but I know she's proud and is always cheering me on. Finding time for friends and family between my work and training schedule can be a challenge, but I have a truly wonderful support group, and they are definitely my biggest fans.

GA: What would you like to see happen with your fighting career?

Nicole: Obviously, the most important thing is to know that I put my best into this, and gave it a genuine shot – but as a competitor, I am hungry for the biggest and best. I had an amateur record of 5-1, I am currently 1-0 as a professional – I have won more medals in BJJ tournaments over the last 4 years than I remember... I know that I am more than capable of reaching the next level of this sport; I just have to keep at it. I want to see the UFC add the women's atom weight division, and I want to be on that roster. In addition to being a professional MMA fighter, I also hold a purple belt in Brazilian Jiu-jitsu. I want to compete in as many grappling tournaments as I can, win gold at the IBJJF World's competition, and continue my journey to black belt.

GA: Do you think of yourself as a girly girl, a fighter, or both?

Nicole: I'm probably about as girly as one could be in this sport. There's just about nothing I love more than dressing up, and putting on makeup, and wearing the highest heels I can find. However - long, beautiful, painted fingernails, and perfectly pedicured feet are just not a reality. I spend most of my time in a gym sweating, (and getting sweated on), and punching and kicking and choking people... so you can imagine it's hard to maintain that "Stepford Wife" look – but I sure try! Fortunately, I at least have a wonderful hair stylist here in Gastonia, James Summey, who helps keep that part of me presentable.



GA: I know you are looking for sponsors- tell us about that...

Nicole: It is no secret that sports are expensive. Anyone who has competed in one, or has a child that competes, knows the struggle. Most fighters will obtain business sponsors to help offset the costs of gym dues, tournament fees, gear expenses, supplements, and healthy

food to keep up a proper diet during a weight cut. In return, these businesses get the benefit of 'shout-outs' on social media, and logos on a fighter's competition uniform for exposure to potentially thousands of people. It's a great form of advertisement for them, while also supporting a local athlete. I was able to pick up a supplement sponsor, Inner Armour, but I am currently focusing on finding sponsors to help with my tournament fees, gear expenses, and potentially a meal prep company for weight cuts.



Photo courtesy of CAM Photos & Design.



GA: What weight do you fight at, and what do you normally weigh?

Nicole: I am currently fighting as an atom weight (105lbs). My normal walk around weight is 120-125lbs. Now, I know that sounds like a huge amount of weight to lose, but keep in mind it is done over a period of about 6 weeks and most of it comes off by just cleaning junk out of my diet and eating really healthy. Over the last week I will begin to shed off water weight to complete the cut, but I have an excellent coach, Michael Allen, who is very experienced in this area and makes sure I am safe. I have to be capable of cutting the weight off, rehydrating intelligently, and having plenty of energy to potentially fight for a total of 15 minutes, (3x5 minute rounds), or 25 minutes for a title, (5x5 minute rounds).

GA: How often do you train, and what is that like?

Nicole: During a camp, I am training 6 days a week, sometimes multiple times a day, if possible. Even outside of a camp, I am still training 4-5 days a week. MMA is short for "Mixed Martial Arts" – This means I have several disciplines I must work on. My main focuses are boxing, BJJ, and wrestling. As I stated before, I had zero background in any martial art until I started training 5 years ago – So, to learn, and be GOOD at this many sports is a tough and time consuming job. I work full time during the week, and train in the evenings. It can be very exhausting - but if it is worth doing, it is worth doing right. I watched one of those motivational videos the other day that said "Don't do what makes you happy, do what makes you great." I would compare my MMA career to a marriage – You love your spouse all of the time, but they do not make you happy all of the time, it's impossible. I love this sport, I couldn't imagine my life without it... but am I happy about my training or performance ALL of the time? No. But, that's ok – I won't let that stop me from being great. >> Article continued online gastonalive.com/2016/10/demure-or-dangerous



"The Anvil" Nicole Hunt

Gym: Checkmat/Real American Grappling – 3226 Nevada Blvd, Charlotte, NC 28273



GARDEN GEARING UP FOR ANNUAL HOLIDAY DISPLAY

Daniel Stowe Botanical Garden's annual holiday display has become a tradition for thousands each year, but the display is anything but traditional.

Preparations for Holidays at the Garden are in full swing at Daniel Stowe Botanical Garden with opening night set for Nov. 18. Staff and volunteers have been stringing lights, assembling decor, and installing the seasonal horticulture displays since Labor Day. Planning for the massive display with more than 600,000 LED lights begins a full year in advance as the Garden assembles teams to execute each year's theme.

"We really strive for something new and unique every year," said Katy Widrich, the garden's director of events. "We also look for trends and themes that will set the stage inside the Visitor Pavilion and lead the guest through an experience they won't find anywhere else."



This year's theme that will accent the outdoor light display is Balsam & Blue. Guests will discover driftwood, eucalyptus, and navy decor throughout the Visitor Pavilion, Orchid Conservatory and seasonal horticulture displays.

"Natural materials such as stone, driftwood and cut cedar branches harvested locally create context and a connection to place that build relevance and inherent familiarity," said Peter Grimaldi, the Garden's director of horticulture, who leads light installations as well as development of horticultural displays.

With the guidance of staff, the Garden's creative team of volunteers carefully assembles, paints and prepares wreaths, centerpieces and so much more. Together the team meticulously and strategically hangs each string of lights to create the twinkling winter wonderland guests have come to love. Staff members are also busy booking entertainment, vendors and horse-drawn carriages along with coordinating the visits of Santa and Mrs. Claus. And don't forget about the model railroads, developed and installed in partnership with volunteers from the Metrolina Model Railroaders club or the spectacular orchid tree, composed of more than 300 white orchids.



"We're excited about a new color combination and custom light forms featured at the center of the display in the Scroll Garden," said Grimaldi. "Structural elements in the horticultural display also lend themselves naturally a festive punctuation with holiday lights."

For those who want to learn more the Garden's holiday team will give a behind the scenes look at the holiday preparations during the upcoming First Tuesday discussion on Dec. 6 from noon to 1 p.m. Monthly First Tuesdays are free for members or free with general admission.

Holidays at the Garden will be open Nov. 18, 2016 through Jan. 1, 2017. The Garden will be open 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. daily with the exception of Thanksgiving (5 to 9 p.m.) and Christmas Day (closed). The lights illuminate at 5 p.m. nightly. Holiday admission begins at 4 p.m. and is \$14.95 per adult, \$13.95 per senior 60+, \$8.95 per child 2-12 and free for children under age two. Garden members receive a 30% discount and also receive 30% off the purchase of up to four guest passes. Guests are encouraged to purchase tickets online in advance at www.dsbg.org or 704-829-1252. Tickets are also available at the door.

To learn more about classes, Holiday Tea, Holiday Wine Pairing, Capture the Magic with Santa, and other events visit www.dsbg.org or call 704-825-4490.



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