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IT'S TIME TO VOTE IN THE
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Best of Downtowner Awards!



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Time is almost up for voting in the Best of Downtowner Awards, where you get to tell us all your favorites throughout the Triangle. We'll close the voting on April 30th, tally up the ballots, and share the winners with you and our other 145,000 monthly Downtowner readers. We truly appreciate all the great recommendations each and every year on where to find the tastiest burger, freshest seafood, spot for great dancing, where to adopt a new furry friend, or that go-to place for Sunday Bloody Marys. Your votes help to promote all the great places to dine, drink, shop, and visit throughout the Triangle, which we'll present in the upcoming 9th Annual Best of Downtowner Awards issue.

The Downtowner Awards are about promoting local and you, our loyal readers (PS: we love you guys!). We are truly grateful to be able to live, work, and play here and truly enjoy showing off all the great locally owned businesses that make the Triangle a great place. We've added a few new categories based on your suggestions from last year's Awards, including your favorite local Distillery, Coolest New Building (and most Blah New Building), where to buy awesome T-shirts, Juices & Smoothies, and more.

Ready to vote?! Remember, being a locally-owned business ourselves, we support the heck out of local business in our Best of Downtowner Awards by not allowing chains or national brands in our results, so be sure to only vote for local businesses. We're glad to see a few other magazines in the area have finally followed our lead and are doing the same with their contests. Don't forget, voting stops at the end of April, so vote soon and help your favorites take home the blue ribbon! Check back in our Best of Downtowner Awards issue for all the winners!

We've added some demographic questions to help us learn more about you and as our way to say *Thank You*, we're giving away 100 Downtowner T-shirts and over \$500 in restaurant gift cards to randomly chosen voters. We'll contact you by email if you're a winner!

 Head over to www.TriangleDowntowner.com, click on the **CLICK HERE TO VOTE** banner at the top of the page, and tell us all your favorites. Good luck and happy voting!

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THE TRIANGLE DINING



SCRATCH KITCHEN & TAPROOM

BY CHRISTY GRIFFITH • PHOTOS BY CRASH S. GREGG

At the end of downtown Salem Street, Apex's Tobacco & Mule Exchange houses a bevy of locally owned businesses. From salons to boutiques to outdoor outfitters, the property is alight with southern charm, and Scratch Kitchen & Taproom may burn the brightest of them all (they don't call Apex "the Peak of Good Living" for nothing).

Jon & Maggie Pierce and their team from The Mason Jar Tavern worked with seasoned restaurateurs Jeff & Meredith Kromenhoek to create Scratch, a collaboration that is inadvertently posh in the way that stylish people look when they throw on a plain white tee and slacks. The aforementioned folks look effortlessly cool and next to them I look like the title character from Bob's Burgers...

Scratch's open ceiling, high and bright, houses a large skylight that fills the room with just enough sunshine to make you forget which season North Carolina is in today. If the restaurant were a day of the week, it would be, without question, a warm, breezy Saturday spent drifting aimlessly on a pontoon boat, with coolers

icing down craft beers, and the radio tuned to a station playing songs that should not go together, but somehow always do.

We started our meal with a cast-iron skillet of Jalapeño Cornbread (\$7), more of a sweet corn cake than the traditional dry cornbread for drenching in pot liquor (aka potlikker. Google!). It pairs nicely with the pronounced flavor of the jalapeño pepper, but without the heat associated with the seeds, making it safe for any spice-averse diners in your party. A scoop of whipped honey butter that slowly melts atop this concoction is what Instagram dreams are made of, and thanks to all that natural lighting, you can add hashtags like #nofilter or #carblife or the ever-insufferable #foodporn which

is only slightly more sufferable because it might, in fact, be applicable in this case.

The Smoked Pimento Cheese Wontons (\$7) arrive single-file on a shallow river of sweet, piquant red pepper jam. Fried to chewy, bubbly perfection, the wontons hide parcels of Scratch's take on the ubiquitous spread using house-smoked hoop cheese in lieu of the usual



Co-owners Jon Pierce, and Meredith and Jeff Kromenhoek



Poké Bowl

cheddar, plus sweet corn and green onions. Paired with a salad, it would make for a lovely meal. You could also swap out the salad for a burger – no judgement here.

Scratch has several bowls on the menu, which is the way I prefer to eat all my food. Bowls get messy and mixed up and aren't everyone's cup of tea. But if you agree that food tastes better when it touches all of the other food, this section of the menu is for you. The Poké Bowl (\$13) is a bed of sticky sushi rice that comes topped with what I can only imagine is what the clouds in heaven directly over Honolulu taste like; a generous serving of cubed tuna sashimi is surrounded by >>>



Bibimbap Bowl

orderly piles of avocado, edamame, cucumber, seaweed salad, and pickled ginger so expertly arranged that even Marie Kondo herself would approve. Sauces of wasabi, miso, sweet mirin, and soy lend familiar sushi-ish notes to the dish for a much smaller price tag. Plus, I didn't have to awkwardly pretend I know how to use chopsticks because I'm already an expert with a fork, which is what you eat this with. Yes, Marie, this bowl sparks joy.

Next up, the Bibimbap Bowl (\$12): a dish so sexy, you might feel uncomfortable eating it in front of an audience. A disc of seared rice, crispy on the outside, sticky on the inside, hides beneath all things that are good in this world. Carrots, cucumbers, mushrooms, scallions, and pickled red onions are your alibi in case you are later questioned by your accountability partner; YOU BASICALLY ATE A SALAD. Loads of fresh spinach turn wilted-in-a-good-way because they are next to a steamy heap of marinated ribeye, shaved so thin that it requires minimal mastication. Finally, pop the velvety yolk of the over-easy egg | mix | moan | repeat.

That shaved ribeye is also the main feature of the Fusion Reuben (\$12). Fuquay's Stick Boy Bread Company's rye is buttered and grilled to a perfect crispness – all the better to provide the structural support needed for the hefty dose of steak on this sandwich that rightly usurped corned beef's throne. Instead of sauerkraut, a different version of fermented cabbage appears – collard green kimchi, which is a pleasantly sharp and funky foil to the richness of the Swiss cheese and house-made Thousand Island duo. We had ours with the Traditional Potato Salad, an ironic side to go with this sandwich if you ask me, but Scratch's potato game is on point. Loaded with the ever-underappreciated



Jalapeño Cornbread

hard-cooked eggs and held together by the best condiment that ever was and ever will be – mayonnaise – I found myself scraping the bottom of the dish with a spoon like a person who had not already eaten two appetizers, two bowls, and a sandwich. It tasted like summer potlucks but without the hassle of swatting away flies and that one guest who always freaks out if a mayonnaise-infused salad sits out for more than thirty minutes.

In news of other potatoes Scratch is slaying, why not get some incredibly golden, crispy hand-cut fries to drag through all of the goeyness that is going to ooze off your Jammin' Burger (\$11)? Stick Boy makes a mean brioche, and that's what hugs this brisket and short rib-blend burger. The red pepper jam and creamed feta toppings are reminiscent of the South's easiest and arguably most delicious appetizer, cream cheese and pepper jelly, but without the stress of having to eat it at a Tupperware party while deciding what's the least expensive



General Tso Cauliflower

plastic item you can buy so as not to appear as the tacky guest who ate all the Wheat Thins without purchasing the three-piece set. Their Korean mayo brings the tiniest bit of heat with some gochujang and a bit of WHAT EXACTLY IS THIS with the (now not-so) secret addition of their collard green kimchi. You can't put your finger on it, but you can put your finger in it because it is a very messy burger. The fried onion straws beneath the patty are a spectacular addition and probably the straw that's going to break your accountability partner's back. "YOU SAID YOU WERE GOING KETO THIS YEAR!"

There are several meatless dishes on the menu (and that aforementioned burger can be replaced with a veggie burger at no additional cost), General Tso Cauliflower (\$14) among them. I can support this dish because the cauliflower in question was not used to trick me into thinking I was eating pizza crust or rice or mac and cheese. I don't know how many essential oils one has to sniff to ever believe that mashed cauliflower tastes just like mashed potatoes but I don't think I have the time, money, or lung capacity to find out. This dish is pretty much what you are expecting – battered and fried florets in that familiar sweet and tangy sauce, served over rice. Actual rice, not cauliflower rice. Because I heard there was a #realfood movement and I want to make sure that real rice gets the recognition it deserves.

What makes a good bowl of Shrimp and Grits (\$19)? Good shrimp and good grits! Scratch has both. Eight



Shrimp and Grits

large tempura shrimp come standing straight up like the good soldiers they are, trying not to sink into the most sublime stone-ground cheese grits I have ever had the extreme pleasure of shoveling into my mouth – coarse, yet perfectly creamy from the Monterey Jack. A brown, silky miso gravy made with a delicate touch of ginger and garlic packed so much celestial umami that I had an out-of-body experience. In reality, I was eating it too fast and too furious without regard to the fact that I had just eaten two appetizers, two bowls, a sandwich, potato salad, a burger, french fries, and some deep-fried cauliflower, so much that I was actually having an out-of-pants experience. But, being the consummate professional that I am, I had pre-gamed with a Zantac and some Lycra-heavy pants.

Have you ever surprised yourself by doing something and not being able to stop yourself as you were doing it? That would be me when the Lobster Mac & Cheese (\$23) appeared. Both hands went to my cheeks as my chin dropped and I loudly made the word WOW into a two-syllabled expression. Lobster mac has appeared on menus all over for many years, but never before my visit to Scratch had I seen one where a cast-iron skillet full of macaroni and cheese came topped with an actual poached lobster in the shell. The fancy microgreens on top were a nice touch – very Iron Cheffy of them. The pasta was remarkably flavorful thanks to the additions of truffle oil and lobster bisque in the cheese sauce base. Your accountability partner has given up on you at this point. That's okay. You don't need that kind of negativity in your life.



Lobster Mac & Cheese

The dessert menu should not be glossed over – it's full of reasons to call today a cheat day and regret nothing. When the Coco Seduction (\$6) arrived, a towering cylinder of chocolate and white chocolate mousse on a rich,



Coco Seduction

fudgy brownie-like base, it was so artfully plated that I wondered how many ladies will give it a twice-over to make sure there are no engagement rings hiding in there.

It's impossibly even more delectable than it is fetching; this may be the classiest way to eat your feelings.

The menu of handcrafted cocktails features beverages just as mouth-watering as the rest of the chewable offerings. If you're a brown liquor fan, the bourbon selection at Scratch is more than respectable, and their Old Fashioned (\$8) is one of the smoothest I've had. However, my main passion is gin and the Rhubarb Fizz (\$8) did not disappoint. The house-made rhubarb and ginger shrub was full-bodied and complex, and pairing it with a bright squeeze of lime juice was like a day at the lake distilled into a glass. You'll find a large selection of rotating taps from craft brewers, the Mason Jar Lager Co. included, in addition to bottles of familiar domestic stand-bys. As a bonus, their website is updated often to reflect what's currently on tap, and what's on deck. There's lots of poison to pick from, so you'll be sure to find something that tickles your fancy. My fancy likes that gin-tickle.

Although this place is perfect for meeting up with other adults in your life, children are welcome as well. The kids' menu (\$6) is a nice departure from the normal fried offerings that we put in front of kids: Quinoa Salad, Sautéed Shrimp, Beef or Pork Sliders, Tuna Poke, and Hard Boiled Eggs are lovely alternatives to the usual fare, although your kids will still be able to find chicken tenders and macaroni & cheese on the menu if those are their fancy ticklers. Now, please excuse me while I find my Roloids. I may have over-tickled myself. 🍷



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Around Town News in the Triangle

We love hearing about new local businesses and sharing it with our readers. Please keep us posted on any new locally owned restaurants, bars, retail shops, or businesses opening in downtown Raleigh, Durham or across the Triangle. Send an email to news@welovedowntown.com and clue us in. To say "Thanks Y'all," we'll pick a random tipster each month to win a free Downtowner t-shirt.

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Jim Pietryka and Matt Gray have opened **Ealdwine Gentlemen's Shop**, which answers the need for a higher-end men's store in **downtown Raleigh**. Located at 412 S. McDowell St. in the Empire Properties' L building near Poole's Diner, the shop will carry Alden shoes, custom suits by Coppley, Southwick suits, Mizzen + Main shirts, Naked & Famous Denim, Frank Clegg leather bags, William Henry Studio accessories and knives, and more. They're open Monday through Saturday, 9:30am to 6pm. Visit them at www.ealdwineraleigh.com, on FB at @ealdwineraleigh, or call 984.242.0025.



Barcelona Restaurant & Wine Bar is now open in the **Dillon Building in downtown Raleigh** at 430 West Martin Street. They are owned by the Del Frisco Restaurant Group based out of Texas with locations in eight states. Barcelona is a tapas bar inspired by the cultures of Spain and features an ever-changing menu of Spanish and Mediterranean small plates as well as one of the largest Spanish wine programs in the U.S. Learn more at www.barcelonawinebar.com and follow them at @barcelonawinebar on Insta.

Trophy Brewing's original location on **Morgan Street** is expanding by adding 756 square feet and renovating more than 5,000 existing square feet in the next door space that was previously a convenience store and laundromat. The permit for renovations was issued at the end of last December and renovations will continue throughout the



summer in hopes of reopening by fall. www.trophybrewing.com

Cameron Village will soon welcome **Cava Mezze** into the old Noodles & Company space on Daniels St. The chain was founded in 2006 in the Washington, DC area and is a sister restaurant of the fast-casual Cava Grill chain. The restaurant offers modern takes on traditional Greek & Mediterranean recipes and their menu includes ingredients like lamb, hummus, falafel and more. www.cavamezze.com

LemonShark Poké opened its first North Carolina location in late February at **Stone Creek Village in Cary**. The restaurant is inspired by the notoriously picky lemon shark, which is apparently known for having a particular preference for tasty fish. LemonShark Poké is dedicated to serving poke made with only the finest ingredients at great prices. <https://lemonsharkpoke.com>



A new fast-service restaurant has recently joined the **Hillsborough Street** lineup. **Guasaca Arepa & Salsa Grill** opened underneath the Target building, joining the ever-changing list of Hillsborough Street's places to grab a quick bite to eat. This South American grill specializes in arepas stuffed with an array of meats and salsa. Guasaca prides itself on providing delicious and healthy food for a reasonable price that the college crowd is sure to enjoy. www.guasaca.com



The 4th annual **Fest in the West** returns to **Cary** on Saturday, May 4th at the USA Baseball National Training Complex. Western Cary's signature festival includes 10 food trucks, a beer garden, live music, arts & crafts, a KidZone, and even a



pie-eating contest! For more information visit the fest's website: <http://festinthwest.com>



Dates for upcoming **Durham Central Park's Food Truck Rodeo** will be June 16th, Sept. 1st, and Nov. 3rd. Try a variety of delicious food options from various food trucks that also feature locally-brewed beers and ciders. The event is dog-friendly and free with the exception of paying for the food of your choice. Parking is available and free in nearby lots. Make sure to bring a chair or blanket to relax and take it all in. www.durhamcentralpark.org/events/food-truck-rodeo-info

Located on **North Blount Street**, the **Heck-Andrews House** is currently undergoing renovations. This house was completed in 1870 and is known for being one of the first houses built after the Civil War in Raleigh. It was listed as a historic place on the national registry in 1972. The North Carolina State Government owned the house for several years until it was purchased in 2016 by the **North Carolina Association of Realtors**. The new owners plan on using the main floor for weddings and events and the second floor for office space once renovations are complete. The Heck-Andrews House is known for its elaborate Second Empire architectural design making it a unique asset to Raleigh's downtown.



Pho Happiness has recently opened at 508-A West Franklin Street in **Chapel Hill**, much to the delight of noodle enthusiasts in the area. Aiming to both connect with the community and provide customers with authentic-yet-modern examples of Vietnamese cuisine, the restaurant features a menu rife with delicious options, including Banh Mi, Vermicelli bowls, Pad Thai, and more. If that isn't enough to arouse your appetite, Pho Happiness is open until 10pm from Monday to Wednesday and

Around Town News in the Triangle

continued...

all the way until 1am from Thursday through Saturday. Pay them a visit online at www.phohappiness.com, on FB and Insta @phohappiness.



Craft beer lovers rejoice, **Shop Local Raleigh's Brewgaloo** returns to **Raleigh's City Plaza** on April 26th, expanding to all of Fayetteville Street the following day. The Southeast's largest craft beer festival features a variety of food trucks, live bands, DJs, vendors, local brands, and (of course) delectable North Carolinian brews. Fun fact: Brewgaloo was nominated by USA today as one of the top festivals in winning the their online tickets before they run out and read more about the festival at www.shoplocalraleigh.org/brewgaloo.



Citrix Cycle is now live with their bike-sharing program in the Downtown and university areas of Raleigh. Unlike other pick-up-and-drop-anywhere sharing programs such as Lime and Bird, Citrix Cycle bikes are available only at docking stations. Citrix plans on eventually having over 300 bikes, but for now, the company is calling its arrival



in Raleigh a soft launch with over 100 bikes at 14 docking stations. The first docking stations are located exclusively in Downtown and near NCSU, but Citrix plans to eventually add more docks at various locations such as the NC Museum of Art. One 45-minute ride costs two bucks, while a whole day's rental costs six dollars. The catch with an all-day rental is the inconvenience of returning the bike to a dock every 45 minutes; however, an all-day rental includes unlimited 45-minute rentals throughout the day. Monthly and Annual Mem-

berships are available for \$20 and \$85 respectively, with the first 45 minutes of each ride are free, and unlimited rides per day. Want to ride longer? Each additional half hour is \$2. Sign up and learn more at www.citrixcycle.com.

321 Coffee has opened a retail location at the State Farmers Market. 321 Coffee is a "nonprofit coffee shop staffed by individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities" and operates in partnership with students from NC State. The 321 in the name is "representative of Down Syndrome, the third copy of the 21st chromosome." The business hopes to "highlight the uniqueness of those with Down Syndrome and other intellectual and developmental disabilities." Give them a follow on @321coffee-social on Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter and at <https://321coffee.com>.



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From the Publisher

Welcome to Issue 143 of the Downtowner. In this month's issue, you'll find Christy's great restaurant profile of Scratch Kitchen in Downtown Apex; my interview with Valerie Hillings, the new Director and CEO at the NC Museum of Art; what's next at Dix Park, lots of restaurant openings and news from around town, our artist profile of the month with the illustrating musician George Hage, event photos from Toast to the Triangle (a fundraiser for the Tammy Lynn Center); and notice for the last few weeks of voting for our 2019 Best of Downtowner Awards. We're looking forward to compiling all the thousands of votes to see which restaurants, businesses, and people make it to the best of lists this year. We're already seeing some trends but there's still time to cast a ballot for all your Triangle favorites. Be sure to visit www.TriangleDowntowner.com and click on the **CLICK HERE TO VOTE** banner at the top of the page before April 30th and help us promote some of the many reasons that the Triangle is a great place to live, work, and enjoy.

Speaking of promoting the Triangle, if you're passionate about where you live and want to help us spread the

word on all the amazing things about our area, then we're looking for you. We need more contributing writers who want to help with articles on local entrepreneurs and startups, charities, events, businesses, makers, breweries, and everything in between. Send us a message to writers@welovedowntown.com and let us know what you're passionate about and include a writing sample or two to show us your style. We're also looking for website authors as well, so if you're an expert in your business field and want to help our readers with advice in short but informative articles, you can send us an email, too. We look forward to hearing from you.

Cheers,

Crash

Crash Gregg

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I had the pleasure to interview Valerie Hillings, the new Director and CEO of the NC Museum of Art, and have no doubt she will continue the remarkable legacy her predecessor Larry Wheeler developed during his 24 years. You can read our interview in this issue on pages 12 and 13.

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Valerie Hillings

Director & CEO of the NC Museum of Art

INTERVIEW AND PHOTO BY CRASH S. GREGG

TRANSCRIBED BY ESTHER McCASKILL-BAKER

Valerie Hillings was born in Fairfax County, Virginia and grew up in Alexandria. She had an early interest in being a doctor, but then decided she really enjoyed politics and applied to study political science at Duke University, where she would meet her husband. She planned on studying politics but found herself in an art history class with a professor she loved. She then became interested in the idea that it was possible to think about politics and history through art and ended up with an art history degree from Duke. Afterward, she headed to New York University for her master's and Ph.D. In the intervening time, she interned at the Metropolitan Museum of New York and also taught at NYU. After finishing her Ph.D., she landed at the Guggenheim Museum in New York where she's stayed for the last 14 and a half years. She was a curator principally working on exhibitions at the Guggenheim museums in New York, Bilbao, and Las Vegas. She then began working on a future museum in Abu Dhabi in the United Arab Emirates, which forced her to switch gears and think about staffing structures and organization planning. She realized along that path how much she wanted to be a museum director and began searching for an opportunity. Fortuitously, NCMA's Larry Wheeler had decided to retire after 24 years, creating a remarkable opportunity for Valerie to return to North Carolina.

Was there a defining moment in your life when you realized you wanted to pursue a career in art?

I think it was while I was working on an exhibition at Duke as a senior. I really learned how much I enjoyed not just thinking about the history of art but putting objects together to tell a story and building a collection that would have meaning for visitors. It was a great opportunity because I got to write a book and do a radio interview, which was very challenging and interesting. I worked with living artists. All the things that went into the lifeblood of a museum were all there and I thought 'this seems like a really interesting way to spend your career.' From that early point, I was working closely with museum directors of various types and was fascinated by what they were doing.

Is there an art exhibit you've seen that stands above the rest?

I've seen so many good exhibitions but there was one really defining one for me was because I really wanted to study Russian art. Right before I graduated from Duke, I flew to New York and went to the Guggenheim for my very first time in 1992. They had a big exhibition called "The Great Utopia" which was the history of Avant-Garde art in Russia from the early 20th century to mid-century and some of these great experimentations of graphic design, painting, and sculpture. It was thrilling to be really immersed in that exhibition.

What was your first order of business at your new position?

I did what's now become very common in new leaders. I spent a couple of months on a listening tour. We have a staff of around 200 and it was very important to me coming in to know everyone, to know everyone and every role and to learn through their eyes. I wanted to know everyone's background, which was fascinating for me. And also how they saw the museum. I think what I asked is 'what is the most important thing for me to know?' And through that, it helped me to build a really clear picture that there is so much in common here and we have all these amazing ideas. Everyone can say 'what is your vision' and of course, I have ideas but what I realized in listening to them is many things that can form a vision for the institution are sitting right here.

What are your plans for the next few years?

We're getting ready to kick off a strategic plan, so we'll have a lot more to say as that comes around. I want to work with our team to think about new ways of installing our art collection and coming up with new narratives we can tell that will energize visitors' experiences. The other piece is making sure that we continue to originate amazing exhibitions. Our curators have really exciting ideas, so I want them to help demonstrate the leadership of this museum to the world.

What do you like to do in your spare time?

I've always been a dedicated foodie, so I would say part of my decision process in moving here was how much the food scene in the Triangle and North Carolina has evolved. My husband and I try to go out every Monday

night to restaurants on everyone's list to make sure that we're really experiencing all of what we can.

Speaking of food, what is your favorite meal?

That's a really hard one. I like so many things. I love barbecue but I think probably it'd have to be a great Italian or Asian meal. I don't know how to cook Asian food, but I really love it.

Is there an app that you can't live without?

It seems so trite to say, but Instagram! I was not on any social media for a long time. One of my assistants suggested I try out Instagram saying, 'I just know you're going to love it!' because she knew how visually oriented I am. What's been fantastic about it is that I can keep up with all the major museums and all the arts that I'm interested in, and of course other outside interests. I find in that quick moment you can begin to understand what people are thinking and see into their world and also share what I see. Oh, and also the Open Table app!

How awesome is it that four of the major museums in the Triangle are all run by women?

There was an article five years ago in the New York Times talking about the growing trend to have women directors, but often not in the larger museums. It's really exciting that's the case at the Nasher, Ackland, CAM, and others throughout the state, plus there are also women cultural leaders, which is great progress. I was very lucky to have had a lot of male director mentors who encouraged me.

What are your favorite things about North Carolina?

There is so much open hospitality. I lived in New York City for 25 years and traveled throughout the world. It's great to see how much everyone you meet wants to help and wants to help orient you. The sense of civic pride is something that is very gratifying here especially being in the cultural field. I'm learning to drive again, so that's been an interesting challenge and opportunity. I'm really looking forward to traveling across the state. In fact, I've been going up in little spurts to different parts of the state. There's a really vibrant community here.

Any businesses or venues that you think are missing in the area?

That's a hard question. I was just in a meeting yesterday where I was hearing about some of the great ideas that our colleagues in different corners of the city are thinking about. I think an important piece is to continue to build infrastructure and businesses that connect all the parts of the city and all the greenways. We're sitting right in the middle of the Blue Ridge Corridor. I think this is an area that still has room for so many areas of development to make the mixed-use form of living that is so characteristic of urban centers a full reality. I would like to see the continued knitting together of different parts of this area.

How would you describe the museum here to someone who has never been?

The North Carolina Museum of Art is a campus with exciting buildings, 5,000 years of art, and a 164-acre park where many encounters can occur.

Anything you would like to add to promote here at the museum?

We're opening a big exhibition of the South African artist Wim Botha Matilda that will be presented in partnership with 21C Museum Hotel in Durham. It's his first major survey in the United States. We're also getting ready for two really major park sculpture pieces. One, called Oracular Rooftops, will look like a house from the Wizard of Oz landed here and has an interactive element, which is very exciting. We have also commissioned North Carolina artist Samuel Johnston who has created a masterpiece that will be out in the park of different ceramic columns, varied in scale to create a solid horizon line. He has been working diligently and we're really excited about it. We'll have some great offerings outside and in. 📍



You can listen to the podcast of our interview with Valerie (and future podcasts) at www.downtownner-podcast.com.



Learn more about the NC Museum of Art at www.ncartmuseum.org.





George Hage Art & Music

Photo: Samanco Photography

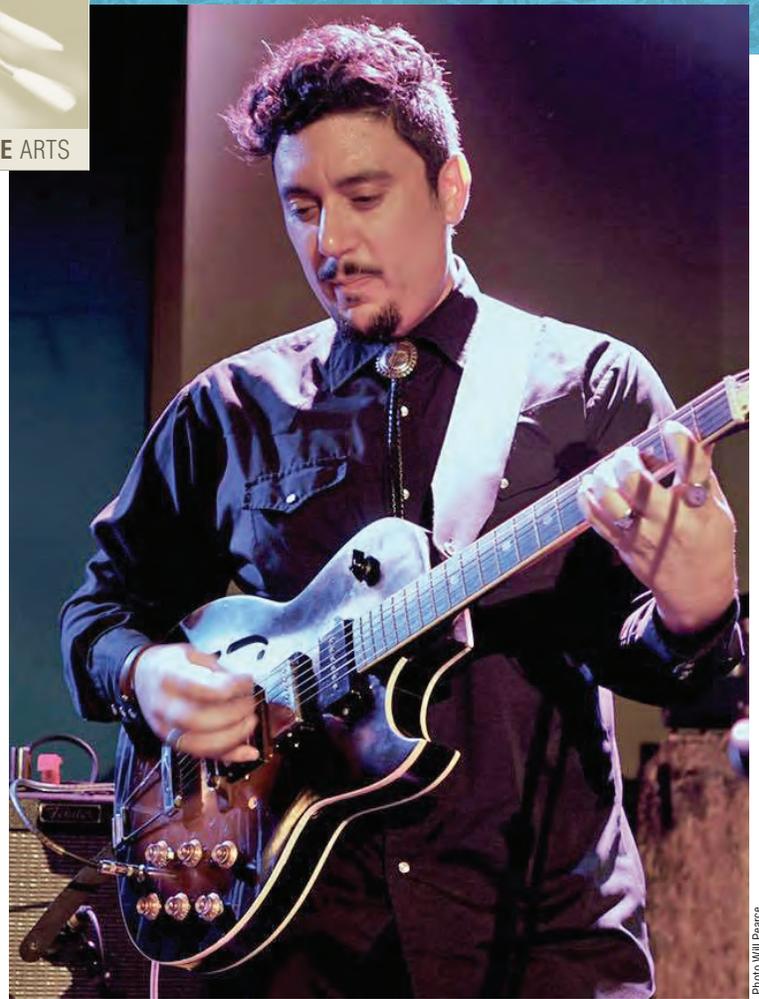


Photo: Will Pearce

BY DUSTIN HUBEL • PHOTOS FROM GEORGE HAGE

Raleigh artist and musician George Hage has been making a splash in North Carolina since the early 2000s. You might have seen his art posters for various Hopscotch Music Festivals or featured with local bands like Marcy Playground. His music career has led him to share the stage with the likes of Hall and Oates and The Avett Brothers. These days, you can see him performing alongside his bands New Reveille and Jack the Radio. A true creative in every sense, George keeps his hands full juggling projects that bring together his passions for music and visual art.

I had the pleasure of interviewing George at Sir Walter Coffee in early March. Our conversation spanned everything from comic books to what's in store for 2019.

How old were you when you started drawing?

I remember drawing as a little kid, maybe ten years old, about when I first discovered comic books. I used to subscribe to Wizard Magazine and they had these tutorials on how to draw figures and pictures with perspective. I had no idea what any of that meant, but I would just try to draw and mimic what they were showing. From there, I would draw stuff for the bands I was playing with in school. At 13, I got into guitar and put down my pencil and paper and stopped drawing for most of high school and college.

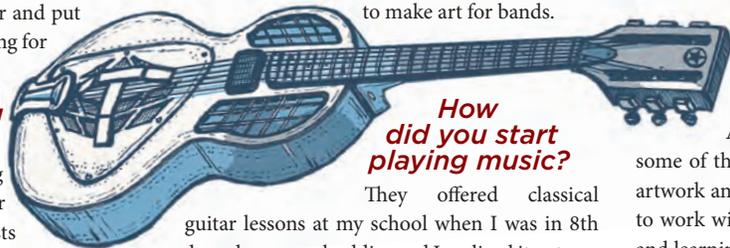
How did you break into doing artwork for other bands?

Hopscotch Music Festival was something that really helped me progress. The first year they did Hopscotch, there were four local artists who did posters and I remember thinking, 'That's awesome that there are local people doing concert

posters.' They ran a contest and I submitted a poster idea but honestly, it was terrible. The next year they invited back submitters from the previous year. I did a poster and my first screen print, and actually got to meet some of the other artists in the area. I knew people that did art, but I didn't know anyone that drew art for bands.

How did you end up creating art for Soul Asylum and Marcy Playground?

It usually happens in ways you never think about. There are companies that do merchandise for bands and Port Merch is one here in Raleigh. They have a huge roster of awesome bands they work with. I found Marcy Playground through them. The work I did for Marcy was two years ago and since then, they've hired me to do their Lake Street Dive tour shirt and most recently, I've done artwork for Soul Asylum. When I first started playing guitar, 'Runaway Train' was a huge hit. I still have their sticker on my guitar case, which I always thought was a great design. It was such a cool feeling to be able to make art for bands.



How did you start playing music?

They offered classical guitar lessons at my school when I was in 8th grade and once my buddies and I realized it got you out of going to class, we were like, 'Hell yeah, let's do

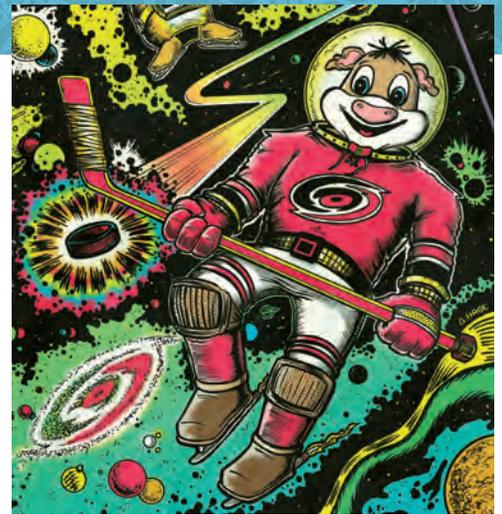
that.' I took lessons for a couple months, and of course we were listening to a lot of Nirvana and Foo Fighters, so we started teaching ourselves power chords. After a while, I started playing more rock music.

What music are you working on now?

Most recently, New Reveille recorded an album in Nashville that we released last September. The reception's been awesome, and we just signed with a booking agent, so we're adding dates from late April through the rest of the year. We're doing a lot of four or five-day runs for out-of-town festivals. Locally, we're going to be playing a benefit concert with the Me Fine Foundation on April 26 at The Stockroom in Downtown Raleigh.

Do your music and art inspire one another?

They absolutely inspire one another. Guitar World used to have a cool centerfold in their magazine. On one side was an iconic guitar player and on the other was album artwork. At 13, I wasn't thinking, 'who drew this,' I was thinking, 'this is awesome, I gotta put this on my wall.' As time progressed, I started looking into some of the artists more. I became inspired by album artwork and concert poster artwork. I enjoy being able to work with different artists, discovering their music, and learning what elements define them, then combining that into a piece of band art.



What are you most excited about for 2019?

I think the biggest challenge as a freelancer is surviving. Over the last two years, I've figured out how to survive; now it's figuring out how to grow. The culmination of these two years has led me to work more with festivals and events in downtown. Just in the last two months, I've made a poster for the Raleigh Comic Convention, which is something I've gone to for years. And I've created take-home posters for a Carolina Hurricanes game. The promoters for the Dreamville Fest in Dix Park took my alphabet letters and are doing a Hollywood-style art installation. The letters are about six feet tall and 45 feet wide. It'll be the biggest art installation I've had anywhere.

Do you have any advice for artists that are pursuing creative careers?

I've said this before to friends: just get out there and do it. It's so easy to make excuses; it's so easy to keep putting things off; it's so easy to want things to be perfect. You have to embrace imperfection. It's never going to be perfect and there are always little things to take

care of. For instance, my only regret about the book I'm working on is that I'll probably look back at it in a couple years and think, "This is awful, why did I put this illustration in here?"

Perfectionism is great, but there has to be a point where you step away and say, 'It's done' instead of chipping away at it for years. I have songs that I've probably been writing for ten years, but sometimes you just have to say 'It's good' and leave it alone. If you want people to ever see it or enjoy it, you gotta put it out there.

The other thing is creating community. It's great to promote yourself and it's great to do your thing, but it's also important to find other people that do things that relate to what you're doing. Connect with them, see what they're doing, pick their brains, and support each other. Over time, that will naturally help everybody grow.

You can pick up a copy of New Reveille's album, *The Keep*, and see them perform in Raleigh on April 26 for a benefit at The Stockroom. You can also pick up their album on their website, www.newreveille.com, on iTunes, or listen in on Spotify. If you see George around town, be sure to shake his hand and maybe buy him a beer for being such a standup Raleigh guy. Ask him what

he's working on and see if you can get him to tell you about the time he and one of his early bands, *Yearling*, were almost eaten alive by pit bulls after a gig in Texas.

Learn more about George, his art, and his music:

www.george-hage.com

www.instagram.com/thegeorgehage

www.instagram.com/newreveille

www.instagram.com/jacktheradiomusic

Dustin is a writer for the Downtowner and also doubles as business development manager. If you would like to partner with us to promote your business to our 145,000 monthly readers, please contact Dustin at dustin@welovedowntown.com.

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Around Town in the Triangle

Photos below from the 33rd Annual A Toast to the Triangle, the culinary competition and silent auction benefiting the Tammy Lynn Center for Developmental Disabilities. Thirty local restaurants, breweries, and wineries competed against each other for the top spots in this year's competition. Guests were treated to fabulous food and drink plus a silent auction with 100+ items. The Tammy Lynn Center provides educational, residential and family support services to nearly 400 families throughout the Triangle. Since 1969, the Tammy Lynn Center remains dedicated to providing the individuals it serves with the opportunity to maximize their abilities in a loving, nurturing environment. Learn more at www.tammylynncenter.org. More photos at www.TriangleDowntown.com.



Left: ABC11's Steve Daniels, TLC President/CEO Holly Richards. Center: TLC's Heather Miller, Dan Daniel. Right: Deb Loercher, Alex Midgett, Dana Dorroh, Dan Daniel.



Left: Judge's Choice 1st Place: Angus Barn. Center: People Choice 1st Place: O-Ku Sushi Raleigh. Right: Judge's Choice 2nd Place: Oak Steakhouse



Left: People Choice Brewery: Trophy Brewing. Center: People's Choice Winery: Jones von Drehle. Right: Relish: Jen Pierce, Chasidie Glover, Jan Wrzesien



Left: Nancy Thomas, Crash Gregg (Triangle Downtowner Magazine). Center: Rye Kitchen & Bar (Downtown Marriott). Right: Ragazzi's Italian Restaurant

What's Next @ Dorothea Dix Park

On February 19, 2019, the Dorothea Dix Park Master Plan was adopted unanimously by Raleigh City Council. This was an important and exciting milestone. Below you'll find more information on the next steps in the park planning and development process.

What's next? Along with Master Plan adoption, City of Raleigh staff was directed by the Council to develop an implementation plan for Phase 1. Recommendations on cost and funding options, governance structures, and scope of work for Phase 1 projects will be brought back to the Council for review and approval.

What projects are included in Phase 1? The Master Plan recommends five major projects in Phase 1:

1. Restoration and enhancement of the Rocky Branch Creek
2. Restoration and enhancement of the Historic Cemetery
3. Renovation and/or demolition of buildings in the early transfer from the State
4. Creation of the Gateway plaza entrance and play area along Lake Wheeler Road
5. Creation of a multi-use path along Lake Wheeler inside the park boundaries to connect the Walnut Creek Greenway to the Rocky Branch Greenway.

What's the timeline for developing the park? The Master Plan sets a long-term vision for the park, which will be constructed in phases and may take 30 years or more to complete. It's anticipated that Phase 1 will be completed within 10 years, but each Phase 1 project will have

its own timeline for completion. The start and completion of other phases will depend on a variety of factors including project feasibility, costs, funding and fundraising, and existing leases. Parks of this size and caliber often take decades to complete.

When will we start to see changes in the park? Phase 1 projects are expected to break ground within 2-4 years, depending on funding, results of future planning studies, and Council direction. Park improvements to enhance the visitor experience will begin this year, which could include wayfinding signage, park amenities, and trail maintenance – along with ongoing programs and events.



Spring Fling at Dix Park



How will the park be paid for? The Master Plan outlines four funding opportunities that parks across the country use:

1. Public Funding (City general fund, bonds, taxes)
2. Contributed Income (fundraising by the Dix Park Conservancy, donations, grants)
3. Earned Income (concessions, event fees, rentals)
4. Value Capture (leases of park property, real estate value capture of neighboring property) .

The Master Plan provides this toolbox of funding options, but it's up to the City and its partners to figure out which tools are most appropriate to use as the park develops over time. Park partnerships, like that with the Dix Park Conservancy, will be critical to successful funding of the park.

How can I be involved? As the park moves into this new phase, volunteer opportunities will continue to exist around park stewardship and events. Information about these opportunities will be shared through our social media channels. If you are interested in volunteering, you can also contact info@dixpark.org.

What's going on at Dix? Lots! There are more and more activities planned at the park with plenty scheduled for this summer. Dreamville Festival takes place April 5, Spring Fling Adult Easter Egg Hunt is April 17, Pop-PupAlooza Dog Park is April 27, and Destination Dix 2.0 is June 1 complete with a Ferris wheel, food trucks, fireworks, and much more. Visit www.dorotheadixpark.org or @dixpark on Facebook for more events + details.

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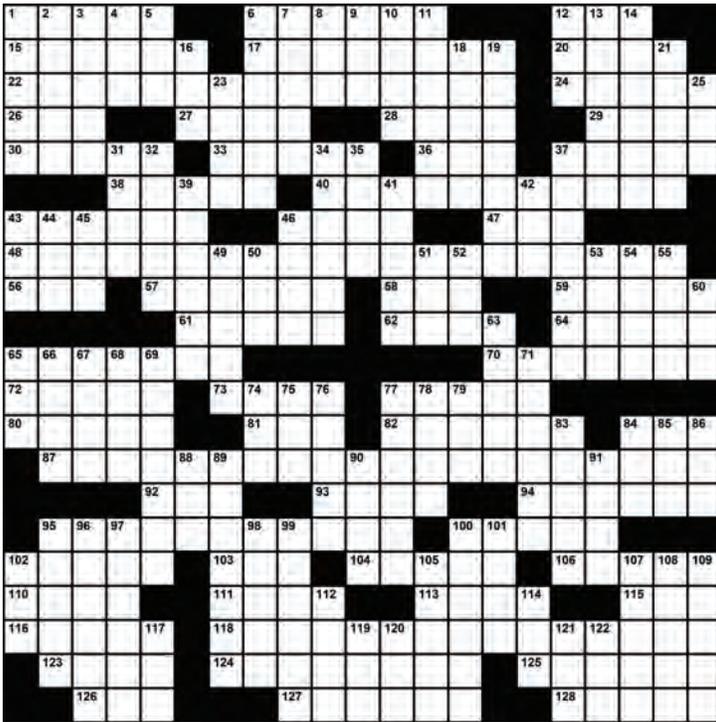
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"C, See, or Sea"

ACROSS

1. Sporty British auto
6. Worthy principles
12. Web address ender
15. Douro river port
17. Win back the favor of
20. Annie Lennox hit "No More I Love ____"
22. Wire haired dog
24. C-____
26. Speech stumbles
27. Swing about
28. And others, for short
29. Baseball card datum
30. Paid attention
33. Swashbuckler Flynn
36. Berlioz's "Les nuits d'____"
37. Banquets
38. Inspector in a UK TV series
40. Apartments
43. Alice Walker's color
46. Peddle
47. Art photographer Goldin
48. Skilful veteran
56. Dictionary abbr.
57. Djokovic's nation
58. BBC rival
59. Stair part
61. No-see-ums
62. Drug buster
64. Electrolysis particle
65. Artistic figures
70. "Umbrella" singer
72. Unspoken
73. Unfreeze
77. It's a gas
80. Make really happy
81. Where Belg. is
82. Annexes
84. Bread buy

DOWN

87. They all start with sea
 92. Payoff
 93. Fix
 94. Bugs
 95. Burned up
 100. Center
 102. Regal
 103. ____ compos mentis
 104. Tiff
 106. Garden watering tubes
 110. "____ never fly!"
 111. "Love Kills" novelist Buchanan
 113. Distinctive flair
 115. Wire service (abbr.)
 116. Painter Veronese
 118. Romantic 1962 hit for Bryan Hyland
 123. Word with judgment or shot
 124. Bear
 125. Southwestern grassy plains
 126. Concorde or Tupolev?
 127. "Later"
 128. African tribesman
14. Feliciano's instrument
 16. Understanding words
 18. Milk dispensers
 19. City in France
 21. Tired
 23. Microbrewery outputs
 25. Dolls of the 80s
 31. Strike callers
 32. Some shirts
 34. Carmen and MacBeth
 35. "____ And Stitch"
 37. Hanukkah item
 39. Go back
 41. Fey
 42. Indo-China language
 43. 2nd letter addendum
 44. One-eighty
 45. Campaigned for office
 46. Show disgust
 49. Surrealist painter Max
 50. Business abbreviation
 51. In-flight info, for short
 52. Elder
 53. Mexican child
 54. Q ____ queen
 55. Former heavyweight champion Spinks
 60. DNA's cousin
 63. Sing softly
 65. Fr. martyress, maybe
 66. Hard to believe
 67. Type of berry
 68. Cosmonaut, Dennis
 69. Part of a place setting
 71. Poor
 74. Self starter?
 75. Hung. neighbor
 76. Extract
 77. Kubla Khan's region
 78. Turning point
 79. Confidentiality agreement, for short
 83. Pile up
 84. E.F. personnel
 85. Nay's opposite
 86. Guess: Abbr.
 88. Cupcake
 89. Most accessible
 90. Imitator
 91. Palindromic dog's name, in the comics
 95. Bits
 96. Hose
 97. Memorable soprano
 98. Bucking bronco show
 99. Chronicles
 100. Surroundings
 101. ____ the finish
 102. Separate
 105. Unfamiliar with
 107. Appealing
 108. Racetrack town near London
 109. Space of "Crimes of the Heart"
 112. On the safe side
 114. Ice hockey org.
 117. Decide
 119. Poetic conjunction
 120. "Waterloo Bridge: Gray ____" by Monet
 121. European skyline sight
 122. Mary ____; Cosmetic mogul

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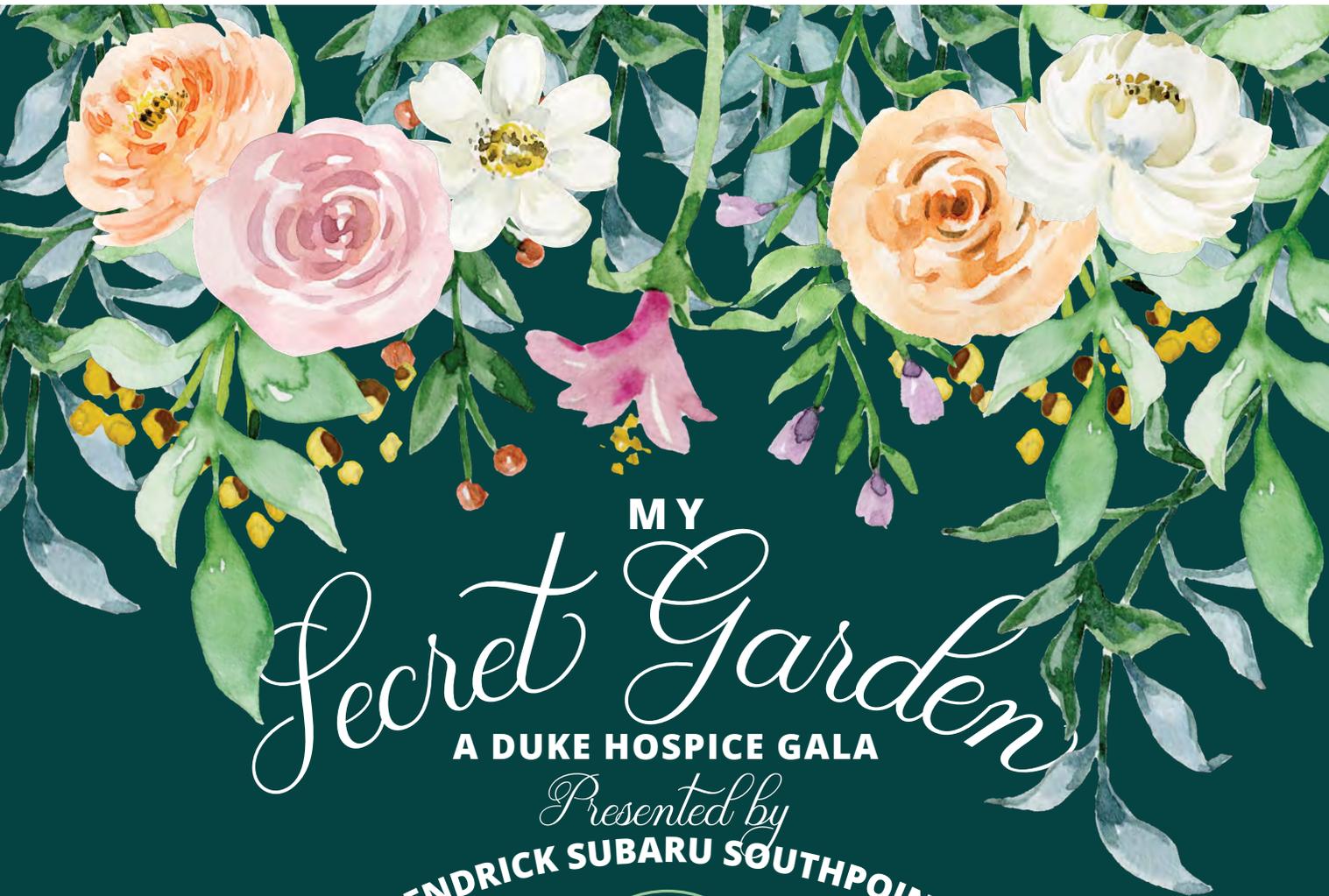
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