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A progress edition of The Clinton Chronicle



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Gus Demott is ‘king’ of the rails

By Bristow Marchant
Horizons 2010

A small corner office on Musgrove Street near the square in Clinton seems like an unlikely place to find a regional headquarters. But Gus Demott’s office covers hundreds of employees spread across six states, and they generate enough activity to keep him at his desk, either on the computer or on the phone, surrounded by stacks of binders containing railroad contracts and regulations.

Demott is the general chairman of the southeast general committee of the International Brotherhood of Railroad Signalmen, a full-time position that makes him responsible for meeting the needs and representing the interests of about 500 signalmen on the CSX railroad line, running from southern Virginia to the tip of Florida and west to Birmingham, Ala., and passing right through the middle of downtown Clinton.

“There’s no stipulation for where the chairman has to live. Clinton’s kind of in the middle of my region, but I could move somewhere else and keep the job,” Demott said. “For the first several years, I tried to do this job from home, but that was a mistake. It’s a lot of work when 500 people go to you to solve their problem.”

Demott has spent more than 30 years working with the railroads in one capacity or another. He started in 1976 by doing construction work for the old Seaboard Coast Line Railroad in his hometown of Moultrie, Georgia. At the time, he was 19 years old.



Gus Demott is the regional chairman of the International Brotherhood of Railroad Signalmen, and represents the interests of about 500 signalmen on the CSX railroad line in six states from his small Musgrove Street office. Demott was a signal maintainer in charge of upkeep at railroad crossings with that line and CSX before taking a position with the signalmen’s union.

— Photos by Bristow Marchant



“In construction, you’re out for 14-hour days, you’re living in and out of hotels. You can be called up anywhere in that (six-state) region. I might be in Moultrie in southern Georgia and get called to a job in North Carolina,” he said.

So after Demott got mar-

ried to his wife Leigh in 1981, he took a maintenance position in Greenwood. “In maintenance, you have a headquarters with a defined territory. After I got married, I didn’t want to do those kinds of hours anymore,” he said.

The young Demott family stayed in Greenwood until a

quirk of the job shook up the situation.

“In the railroad, everything goes by seniority; if your job gets abolished, you can move in and claim the job of someone who’s a junior to you,” Demott said. “That happened to me in Greenwood. I got bumped.”

For a short time, he was bumped to Hampton County, then in 1988 the Demotts moved for the last time to Clinton, where he worked as a signal maintainer.

A signalman’s job is pretty much what it sounds like; he’s in charge of maintaining the signals along the railroad tracks, both those at road crossings and those directing the trains where to go.

“Everything’s regulated by the Federal Railroad Administration, and they require us to test monthly, quarterly and annually,” Demott said. “If the gate goes down on a road crossing but there’s no train coming, the signalman’s got to go fix it 24/7.”

“There were two maintenance men in Clinton” then, he said. “My territory went from Hurricane Church Road all the way to Chester, and the other’s went from Hurricane Church down to Greenwood.”

Demott was a Clinton signalman for 10 years, raising his three daughters Maggie, Katie and Mollie here, as the Seaboard Coast Line went through a string of mergers to become CSX.

Then in November 1999, he was asked to run for the post of general chairman of the southeast region — the area of the old Seaboard Coast Line — of the Brotherhood of Railroad Signalmen, known along the tracks as the BRS.

“I’m a full time labor representative, representing 480 to a high of 523 members from Richmond down to Miami and west to Birmingham, all who do what I used to do,” Demott said.

Technically, Demott still works for CSX and if he stays in his position for a few more years can draw a company

pension. But he’s on a “leave of absence” while working full time for the union, which provides all his pay and benefits.

He was chosen initially for a three-year term by the southeast general committee, made up of 11 local chairmen from the six states in the region, and has been re-elected twice to a four-year term. He’s proud to say that since he was first selected for the position, he’s run unopposed.

“I negotiate contracts and disputes between the employees and the company,” Demott said. “We have a very cooperative relationship most of the time, and I think it’s a good example of how a union can work with a corporation. We have a contract for our members, they’re paid good wages and benefits, and the railroad still makes a profit.”

Demott’s main job as a labor representative is to attempt to resolve disputes between railroad workers and management whenever they arise, following procedures laid out by the federal Railway Labor Act (which, along with covering every railroad in the country, also covers airline workers).

“Under the RLA, you need to have what’s called a fair hearing before a worker can be dismissed,” Demott said. “I represent the employee at the hearing, sort of like a defense attorney. I’ve got a hearing coming up in a couple of weeks. My duty is not necessarily to defend them but to ensure there’s a fair investigation.”

The general chairman also manages claims from railroad workers — “someone might

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Cheryl Ettinger shows off a book chronicling one of her daughter's work for 4-H. Ettinger has been involved with 4-H since she was very young and passed on her love for the organization to her daughters Erica and Amber, who have both very active in the organization through their lives. - Photo by Nick McCormac

On the farm with Cheryl Ettinger

By Nick McCormac
Horizons 2010

Being born and reared on a farm can instill a certain set of virtues and a strong work ethic in a person. Not everyone has what it takes to have his or her day start at 3 a.m. only to see a job through to its end, however long that may take.

But for those people that can and do take on the challenge, their work ethic, determination, compassion and willingness to get out and do the job that needs to be done has a way of extending into other spheres of their lives.

Both of these are true for the Ettingers of Kinards, a close-knit family whose strength in the field and willingness to lend a helping hand



Ettinger helps another member of the Oak Grove Family and Community Leaders put together a Christmas tree for the Laurens County Memorial Home for the Aged. Ettinger has worked for the community service group since 1991 and helps decorate a tree for the home every December.

to those who need it is also mirrored by their strength in their personal lives.

Ever since each of them were young, the Ettingers - husband and wife Cheryl and

Ed and their two daughters, Erica, 23, and Amber, 19 - have been ingrained in farm life.

Ed Ettinger was born in Alexandria, Va., and had a job at an early age milking cows. He met Cheryl, who was born on a farm in Vermont, at a dairy show for Jersey cows, and they've been farming together for the 28 years they've been married.

"I was raised to care for a different breed of cow, but when I met Ed, he introduced me to Jerseys, which are a lot smaller and easier to care for, and things just kind of clicked after that," Cheryl Ettinger said.

The Ettinger daughters were also exposed to farm life almost from birth. Cheryl would put the girls into baby bjorns when they were toddlers and take them out into the field when she went to do chores. Once the girls were able to take care of themselves, they were given responsibilities of their own.

"We gave each of the girls their own calf when they were both young and that required a lot of responsibility from them," Cheryl Ettinger said.

Ettinger knew being exposed to that kind of life was important to her while she was growing up and wanted to do the same for her children. Having them active on the farm from a young age meant they could grow up with the same sense of reliability and determination their mother did.

"Since we have all of these major responsibilities, we've always been a real goal-driven family, even if that goal is getting through the day with all the chores done," Ettinger said.

While the girls have grown up and moved on — Erica is a Coastal Carolina graduate and Amber is a freshman at Virginia Tech — Cheryl Ettinger said she was glad to give her daughters a growing experience many people don't encounter.

All of the concern and tending that goes into taking care of the family's 300 cows spread across their 350-acre Will-Do Jersey farm near Joanna is what Ettinger said she enjoys most. The interaction with the animals is rewarding, she said, because even though they may not seem like they need much help, in reality they're

more dependant on people than you would think.

"It really is a unique way of life. It can be really tough at times, but I think having grown up in this kind of setting has taught me, Ed and the kids a really good work ethic that we all carry into our outside lives," she said.

The Ettingers have always been a family that would rather learn by doing, which is fitting since "leaning by doing" is a phrase commonly used to describe another activity the family has been invested in for a long time - 4-H.

Like her life on the farm, Cheryl Ettinger's experience with 4-H began when she was younger. Her time on the farm encouraged her to become more active in her community and learn life skills through hands-on experiences.

As with love for farming, Ettinger passed on her love for 4-H down to her children, both of whom took to the group quickly.

Both of the girls achieved a lot of success during their time in 4-H. Ettinger still holds on to books her daughters put together chronicling their achievements and milestones during their time with the group.

In October 2009, Amber was one of four South Carolinians to receive the 4-H Presidential Tray from Clemson University, the highest award given to a 4-H member in the state. She was also only the second 4-H member from South Carolina to serve on the 2009 National 4-H Conference Planning Committee. Erica received the Presidential Tray in 2005.

Both daughters and their mother have dedicated a lot of time and effort into the various activities and opportunities offered through 4-H, much like they did in their lives on their farm.

"Our lives outside of the farm are definitely complementary of our lives on the farm," said Cheryl Ettinger. "We learn skills on the farm

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Cheryl Ettinger pets one of the calves that lives on the farm she helps operate. Ettinger worked on a farm when she was younger and grew up taking care of cows. She was introduced to Jersey cows when she met her husband, Ed, at a dairy show.



A handful of the cows on Cheryl Ettinger's farm enjoy a mid-day snack. The 350-acre Will-Do Jersey farm holds 300 Jersey cows which the Ettingers milk and care for.



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Coleman helping develop home county

By Bristow Marchant
Horizons 2010

Laurens County helped Jonathan Coleman grow up. Now the 25-year-old Laurens native is returning the favor. Coleman is the existing businesses manager at the Laurens County Development Corporation, where his job is to boost local businesses, attract investment and spur the county's development.

"With people here, the perception is kind of, 'well, Laurens County is Laurens County,' but Laurens County has got a lot going for it," Coleman said in his office at the LCDC building on Professional Park Road. "There was a quote in the Anderson paper the other day where someone said 'Laurens is booming.' Other people outside the county can see we're going places."

Jonathan — called Jon by just about everybody — grew up on Highway 221 just south of Laurens, the son of Laurens County Council Chairman Jim Coleman and his wife Nancy. He attended Laurens District 55 High School and then, as the Tiger memorabilia decorating his office can attest, went to Clemson University, where he graduated in 2006 with a degree in community and economic development.

As a Clemson senior, Coleman worked an internship in the Anderson County Office of Economic Development, and got a fulltime job there after graduation. For two years, he did research on Anderson County's economic prospects and potential development projects.

In 2008, Coleman was



Jonathan Coleman in his office at the Laurens County Development Corporation, where he is existing businesses manager. Fresh out of Clemson University, the 25-year-old is helping develop the county he grew up in. Below, a ribbon cutting for Unifor Aluminum Forgings last year drew Gov. Mark Sanford, left, to Laurens County. Coleman, representing the LCDC, can be seen on the right.

called home, when he was hired for his current job at LCDC, becoming the first person to hold the position. "I never knew I would make it back to Laurens this quick," he said.

"Here I get to work with existing industry. Seventy to 80 percent of job creation and investment comes from existing businesses."

Coleman was drawn to development because he sees it as a way to improve the lives of a community, a job that's especially gratifying when the community you're improving is your own.

"Gov. Sanford had a good quote at the Unifor opening," Coleman said. "He said 'This might not seem like a big deal. It's just eight jobs. But it's a big deal to the person who now has one of those jobs.'"

"You can see life-changing effects, and know it's part of something that you've done. In this job, you can really see the fruits of your labor. Someone coming back to Laurens



County in 20 years won't recognize it."

Coleman's current project is a strategic plan that will give the LCDC a better idea of where to target their recruitment efforts.

"This tells us where Laurens County stacks up, what fits here," he said. "For example, Target requires 100,000 people within a five mile radius of its store, so obviously that's not us. But you have to

walk before you can run."

Target is on Coleman's mind because the county's big need right now, he says, is retail shopping.

"Retail would fill a big need," he said. "Having the interstate here helps us with industrial projects, but it hurts us if shoppers drive to Simpsonville or Greenville or Columbia...Industries want to come and see a community before they locate here, but a

chain store or a franchise that's never been here just sees the numbers; highway traffic statistics, average local income, how the population is spread out.

"One figure I saw is a \$31,000 gap in household expenditure and retail. That's over half the average household income being spend outside the county...That's what they look for. If you can show that \$4 million in Laurens

County goes to buy shoes, that means a shoe store can open here and make at least a couple million dollars easy."

The future of that kind of development depends on coordinated action, he said. Coleman points out the Highway 76 corridor between Clinton and Laurens is "ideal" for the kind of shops he envisions for Laurens County, but because the stretch of road is not inside either city, no one has really taken the initiative to develop it.

"The water and sewer board has taken the first steps out here with the new sewer line," he said. "That (infrastructure) has to be here. It's like Field of Dreams; 'build it, and they will come.' They might come without it, but you'll have to spend the money then anyway. We can be eliminated as a site if the sewer is a quarter-mile away, versus elsewhere they can get it on site."

A sewer line can be extended once an industry is

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Young just wants to dance, dance, dance

By **Bristow Marchant**
Horizons 2010

Allyson Young had a very specific dream. Unlike some people who are unsure what their future path will be, she knew from an early age exactly what she wanted to do with her life.

“I’ve been dancing since I was 2,” she said, “and at 12 I wanted to open my own dance studio, which sounds like kind of a strange thing to want so young.”

She sounds a little embarrassed about it, but her wish came true. Young is talking about her childhood vision in her office at Dance South studio on Highway 76, the dance studio she founded in 2002.

“We started with about 60 students,” she said. “It took three months to renovate one studio.”

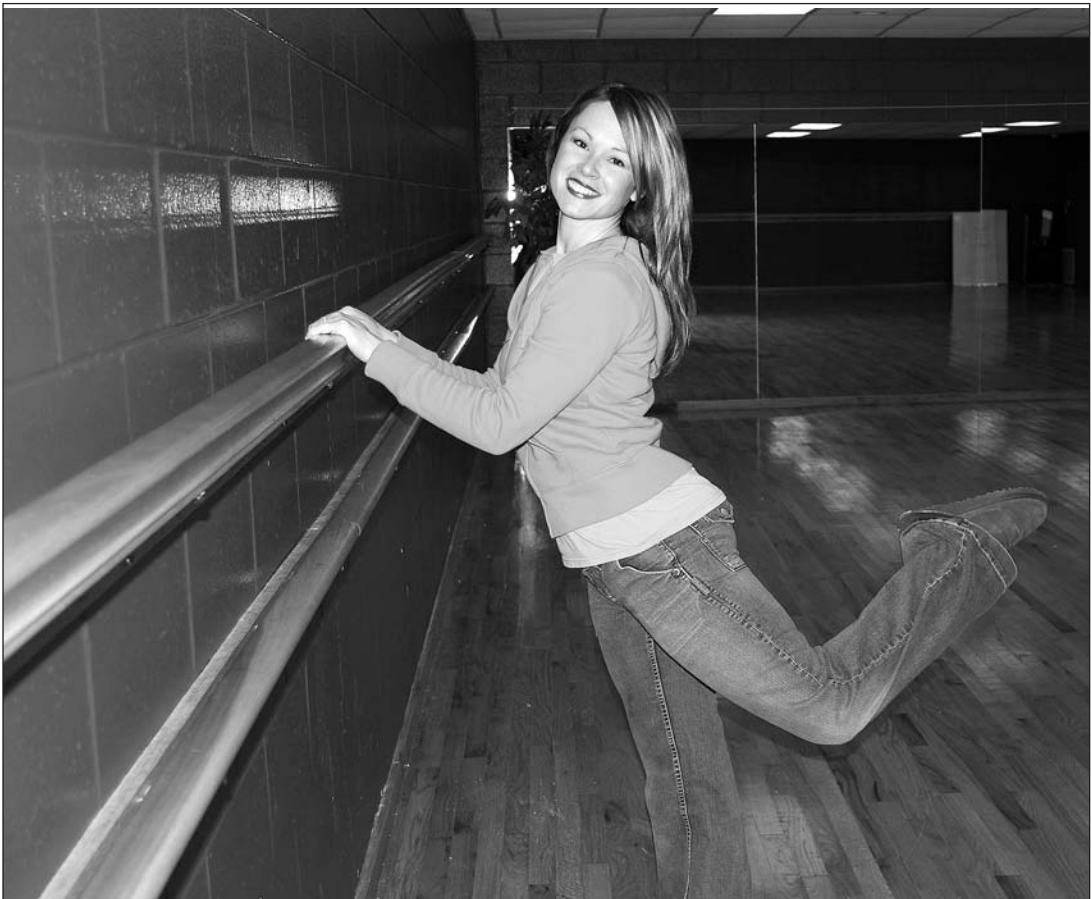
Even when she was a teenager, Young was serious about meeting her goals. She took dance classes at Converse College, and graduated from Winthrop University.

“At Converse, I was in the dance ensemble while I studied for a business degree,” she said. “I wanted to concentrate on dance while I went for my degree, but I decided that wasn’t enough, and after two years I transferred to Winthrop to get my B.A. in dance education.”

While she was still in school, Young got a jump start on her career as a professional dance instructor.

“My senior year, Dee Price sold her studio to me,” she said. “So on Saturdays I came home and taught three classes... Basically, my hobby turned into my career.”

But Young did not yet have her own building. The classes



Allyson Young first wanted to be a dance instructor when she was 12. She now owns her own studio in Dance South on Highway 76. At left, she looks over the products in Dance, Bags and Beyond, the dance studio’s retail shop selling clothes and performance apparel. — Photos by Bristow Marchant

she taught her senior year of college used the Karate-Do in downtown Clinton.

The summer she graduated, Young decided to buy her own studio here, and in May 2002 opened Dance South with Tinsley Irwin, another former dance student.

“We grew up in the same studio with LaBruce Heist,”

Young said. “We did ballet, tap and jazz, and gymnastics together.”

Young cites Heist as a major influence on her own dance and teaching philosophy, and Dance South’s course catalog reflects that. The studio began offering classes in ballet, tap and jazz, and gymnastics, as well as hip

hop and cheerleading.

Today, the studio also offers clogging, music theatre, adult belly-dancing, point (an extension of ballet), and “mommy and me” classes.

In the nearly eight years since its founding, Dance South has grown from an initial 60 students to a height of 220, with as many as 50 in a

single class. Too many for one woman to handle on her own, Young now employs 10 other instructors.

Together, they have a sizable facility to work with. Dance South sits on a 15,000-square-foot property, with two 1,500-square-foot studios. Dance South also includes a 5,000-square-foot gym, complete with gymnastic bars and a trampoline.

Beside the main entrance is the studio’s retail store Dance, Bags and Beyond, selling clothes and performance apparel.

“In the future, I hope to add a third studio, and expand the shop, the offices and the dressing room,” Young said. “That could all be done within the next two years.”

Young attributes a lot of her success to God.

“It could be something like losing a teacher in the middle of the year,” she said. “I need a replacement, and God will send another one to me. I’ve never had to put out an ad for a new teacher.”

A lot of Dance South’s success can be attributed not just to Allyson but to the entire Young family.

Parents Calvin and Melanie helped develop the property with their landscaping company Design South. Young’s father and her brother Michael also did work on the inside of the building.

“My parents helped me a lot financially,” she said. “My mom is my financial adviser, and my dad installed a full-sized gym and a lot of the hardware with my brother.”

She even has her fiancé Daniel Sherer doing backstage work with props and sets. The couple met on Young’s birthday in November 2003, and within a month

she had attracted him to Dance South’s Christmas production.

“Oh, he’s been recruited completely,” Young said. “He builds sets for us, he does a lot of hammering and gluing. He’s been very helpful behind the scenes.”

“I couldn’t have done any of it without the support of my family,” Young said.

A goal-oriented person since she was 12, Young reads off the list of things she wanted to accomplish when she graduated from Winthrop. She wanted to open a successful studio, and she’s certainly done that; she wanted to teach 200 students, and Dance South has surpassed that; and she wanted to run a Christian studio.

“I wanted us to be known as a wholesome place where family is important and people can send their kids,” she said. “And I think we are.”

But other goals have changed as Young’s priorities have shifted. Influenced as she was by her own dance instructors as a girl, Young originally wanted to teach in school.

“I was going to teach and do the studio at the same time,” she said. “I wanted to become a mentor, but I later decided not to do it. Running the studio is a fulltime job, so I have no free time as it is.”

Overall, Young is glad she’s been able to accomplish so many of the goals she set for herself, and in the process stay so close to her friends and family in her hometown.

“I’m very thankful that I can stay here and be this happy,” she said. “I used to have an ambition of opening a second studio somewhere else, but I really don’t want to be away from here.”

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From printing to promotions, Roth business still family affair

By Bristow Marchant
Horizons 2010

Thirty-five years ago, Printers Associates opened with the goal of providing commercial printing services to the Clinton area. Today, the family-owned company offers a wide variety of printing services to customers in several states.

“Everything the customer wants to do,” said Ronnie Roth, “they need to be able to do in one place.”

Roth, now vice president of the company, was instrumental in Printers Associates’ growth from the beginning. When he joined his father Benson Roth in the printing business in 1980, it was to move the company into screen-printing, the process of printing images onto fabrics and other materials.

“I’ve been here ever since,” Roth said.

Benson Roth, a graduate of Thornwell and Presbyterian College, started Printers Associates in 1973 at the age of 43, and has continued to oversee the business as times and technology changed on the way to the 21st century and the digital age.

“My father’s been involved in printing all his life,” said the son. “Printing is strong in my family. All my uncles learned printing at Thornwell.”

The younger Roth, also a graduate of PC, came to the business after a stint in the army. He’s seen nearly as many changes in printing as his father, starting with screen-printing.

“When I started we were doing glassware, collegiate glassware,” Roth said. “The year we started, Georgia won the national championship, and Clemson won it the next year, so that created markets in this area for the business... The last big one was when Alabama won the championship (in 1992). We did a lot for them.”

College-sports-themed glasses eventually expanded well beyond the market for local schools.

“That market covered many states,” Roth said. “We shipped all over the SEC, the ACC, even the Big Ten. For a while, we even did baby bottles that would say something like ‘Clemson baby’ on them.”

Eventually, Printers had to get out of glassware — “the shipping costs were too expensive,” Roth said — but the company continued to cast a wide net for customers. On a recent day, the company was printing bumper stickers for a school in New Jersey, and in the past has shipped products as far away as the West Coast.

Today the presses at Printers Associates produce everything from envelopes, letterheads and business cards to t-shirts, bumper decals and specialty license plates.

It very much remains a family business; until the end of last year, Roth’s sister Sandra Bigbee also worked in the printers’ shop on Hampton Avenue. Sister-in-law Kay Roth has worked for Printers Associates for 30 years.

“Sandra does everything,” Roth said. “She could run the press, she would do everything you could ask her to do. Kay does pre-press (transferring an image from computer to film) and binding.”

But the market for printed material today is both diverse



Printers Associates is a family business operated by the Roth family since 1973. Here Kay Roth, sister-in-law Sandra Bigbee and co-worker Debra Carroll work in the press room at the printers’ shop on Hampton Avenue. — Photos by Bristow Marchant



Sportswear is a big part of Printers Associates’ production. The Clinton print shop once made college-brand products for sale as far away as Big Ten country.

and specific, and so are the methods available for meeting their needs.

“It’s very spread out,” Roth said. “We have a lot of out-of-state customers who are nice-sized businesses. (But) in today’s economy, the customer base is changing, based on competition and technology.”

Sometimes the two are tied together. A small business like Printers Associates faces

more competition now, Roth said, because of advances in technology.

“The competitive base today is not what it was five or 10 years ago,” he said.

“The customers we serve are not large, so bigger companies would bypass them. Now

the technology has made it easier for big printers to accommodate them. They can do what’s called gang-up printing on one sheet.”

Technology has changed Printers Associates as well. Large digital printers now allow the company to print bigger designs, including signs and posters. Advances in computer printing have also shortened the process, letting printers take something from the computer screen directly to film or even directly to the printing plate.

“The younger generation grew up with the internet,” Roth said. “They used it in high school and college. It’s harder for older folks to adapt to it. But at the same time, a lot of them have a harder time making a sale face-to-face.”

The history of the company can be seen in one corner of the printing room, where an original Heidelberg offset printing press — “older than dad” — sits unused, its

shelves of platelets standing as a reminder of the history of the business. Roth knows eventually the rest of his printing equipment could join it there.

“Right now, we need to look at where we need to go with the business,” he said. “With the downturn our competition base has increased. We need the economy to recover to see where we should go and what equipment we need. Our customer base is going to dictate that. When we buy our equipment based on the needs of our customers, it’s always worked out for us.”

Whatever good fortune the Roths had over the last 35 years, Roth attributes to the community where their business is based.

“I’ve always appreciated the community, they’re very supportive,” he said. “I can’t say enough about what we’ve received from the Clinton and the Laurens County communities.”

When asked if he expects the next generation of Roths to continue in the printing business whatever changes come, he ponders the question for a while.

“You know, that had never occurred to me before,” he said. “I’m going to have to give that some thought.”



Michael Holbert mans the printing presses at Printers’ Associates. The locally-owned company is a second-generation business, managed by Ronnie Roth after it was started by his father Benson.



Part of Printers Associates’ business is screen-printing, the process of applying images onto fabrics and other materials. The presses at Printers Associates produce everything from envelopes, letterheads and business cards to t-shirts, bumper decals and specialty license plates.

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Neighbors 7



Wesley Owings stands outside of the admissions building on the campus of Lander University in Greenwood. Owings is a junior majoring in special education and will teach at a school in South Carolina after graduating as part of one of his scholarships. The University's study abroad



program is just one of the many activities Owings has participated in at the school. Owings has studied in Italy, Belgium and Guatemala and said his time in each country has helped shape his views on education. - Photos by Nick McCormac

By Nick McCormac
Horizons 2010

For many kids, school can be a lifesaver in more of a metaphorical sense. For Wesley Owings, school was a lifesaver in a literal sense. While kids usually dread having to wake up early to get ready for school only to return home at the end of the day to do homework and study instead of playing, Owings relished it. Growing up, the schoolhouse was pretty much the only permanent home he had. Growing up in Clinton, tests and quizzes were only one of the challenges Owings faced every day. His mother had no steady income and suffered from depression and Charcot-Marie-Tooth disease, a neurological disorder affecting nerves surrounding the brain. Because of her pain, she abused prescription medication and other drugs as a painkiller and an escape. She also occasionally abused alcohol. Owings' father - who Owings only hears about sporadically - has been in prison for most of his son's life. School soon became the only escape he had. "I had to be resilient from a very early age," Owings, now 21, said. "I had to make sure I woke up early enough, had to get myself dressed, had to make sure I got to school on time ... but it was worth it, because school was my chance to get away. It was my home away from home." When he was in sixth grade, he started living with

his aunt and uncle, Wanda and Henry Pitts, while his mother was in and out of the hospital for pain management. He would soon have to call their house his permanent home. Shortly after moving in with them, Owings' mother was killed in a car accident. Wanda Pitts knew the death of Owings' mother — and her only sister — was a huge psychological blow to a child who had already gone through so much. "It was devastating for both of us to lose someone we loved so much, but having him around was like having a piece of her still with me," said Pitts, the secretary to Clinton High School principal Robby Roach. Pitts said her sister didn't have a great education grow-

ing up and stressed to her nephew that he could overcome the challenges his mother couldn't. "He was already amazingly resilient at such a young age. I think I just wanted to give him the extra push and be a helping hand," she said. Owings said for the rest of grade school, his aunt acted as his guiding light. "She stressed to me that it wasn't a question of whether I would be going to college," he said. "She told me I was." Throughout high school, Owings pushed harder than ever to excel and continue down the resilient path he had blazed for himself at a young age. He participated in groups like the Fellowship of Christian Athletes, Key Club and

the National Honors Society, which he was the president of, at CHS. "I knew being part of all of these clubs would be beneficial in the long run, which is what I was aiming for," he said. During his junior year at CHS, Owings began applying for scholarships to college, and they began rolling back in. He received a scholarship to every college he applied to, as well as additional scholarships including one from KFC, which gave him \$20,000 over the course of four years. The scholarships, which are so numerous Owings can't name them all, have been a huge help in his college career. Neither Owings nor Pitts

have had to pay a penny for tuition. "Wes was the kind of kid that never asked for anything," said Pitts. "He was so humble and thankful for having anything. I'm sure getting so much help academically was amazing to him." In 2007, Owings graduated from CHS with a GPA exceeding 4.0 and began attending Lander University, where he is currently a junior majoring in special education. Since beginning his life at Lander, Owings' love for education has grown exponentially. He's studied abroad in Italy, Belgium and Guatemala, trips that have given him a worldly perspective on education. He doesn't plan to abandon education any time soon. As a

teaching fellows scholarship recipient, he will have to teach in a South Carolina school for four years after graduation. After that, he's determined to get his master's degree, and said being a college professor would be his dream job. "It doesn't surprise me that he still has such a passion for teaching and education," said Pitts. "I know he's the kind of kid who puts everyone else first. He does this because he wants to help kids in the same situation he was and show them you can make it out all right." That's a sentiment Owings said he definitely agrees with. "I had to overcome a certain stigma, and it's my goal to do that for other kids," he said.



Always prepared, Wesley Owings unloads some of the tools he uses as a student at Lander University. Owings graduated from Clinton High School with a GPA exceeding 4.0 and received so many scholarships that he hasn't paid a cent for any of his college education.

Coleman

From Page 4 here, but Coleman points out, "When they're doing these searches, they don't look for reasons to keep you on the list." Another problem Coleman sees is people in "upper management" choosing to live outside Laurens County because of the perception there's "nothing to do" here. Addressing this issue will be a big step to keeping young people in the area. "Out-migration is a problem all over South Carolina," Coleman said, "It hurts the population. In Anderson, I could see the city population projections decrease from 2008 to 2013." It's also a particular concern for the young Coleman and his wife Hannah, an event planner with the United Way of Laurens County, as they begin to



LCDCs Jonathan Coleman

make a home of their own here. The couple moved into a house in Laurens in December. "We had lived in Mauldin while she was working in Greenville," he said. "It's kind of typical; we couldn't find a house, so I built one. And that's something else industries look for, they want to see rooftops when they come in. It's like the chicken or the egg." Coleman sees the future as bright. He notes the new pharmacy school at Presbyterian College will lead to new business and an increase in housing, and industry is pumping up the local economy after a rough decade. "Luckily, we've had no mass layoffs since Timken closed in '06," he said. "Some companies have laid people off, but it has not been as bad, and some are ramping back up. 2009 was rough, but now that it's over with, we should be good in 2010."

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Compassion abounds for pharmacist / snake wrangler

By Nick McCormac
Horizons 2010

Jan Smith loves her children very, very much. All seven of them.

There's Chevy, who's been with Smith through thick and thin for the last 13 years.

And there's Houdini, who has a tendency to bite from time to time.

And there's the one she had to ship home once in a FedEx box, and the one named after a character from Pulp Fiction.

While "children" may not exactly be a term Smith applies to the seven snakes that populate her home in Laurens, the reptiles have grown to become just as much a part of her family as her warm blooded, non-reptilian child.

Smith, who spends her days as a pharmacist at the Sadler-Hughes Apothecary in Clinton, was first drawn to the creatures years ago when her husband, Randy, and 14-year old son, Jake, both of whom had asthma, didn't respond well to typical pets.

"I've always loved animals and I really wanted to get a pet, but I couldn't get a cat or dog because of the asthma, so I decided to look into getting a snake," said Smith.

Since then she's welcomed Chevy, Houdini, Rex, Vega, Scully and Squid as part of her extended family. She's also taught herself about everything snake related, keeps a journal to see how much all of them have grown, attends reptile shows and takes her snakes to schools to help teach kids about them.

"Snakes are really misunderstood animals and me being able to take them out

and show people they really don't have anything to be worried about is fun for me," she said.

Her care for snakes and other reptiles extends outside her home. She keeps a hook and trapping kit in her car to help rescue snakes and move them out of the road, which she does whenever she comes across one. She's also not afraid to hold up traffic to help a turtle cross the road.

She recently participated in a study conducted by the biology department at the University of Texas on what part of the country had the healthiest box turtles.

"If we came across a box turtle, whether it was dead or alive, we had to clip one of its claws and mail it off to the lab for DNA testing," she said. "Not exactly the best way to spend your free time but I was interested in helping out."

All of this is not just a hobby to her; it's an extension of the care she shows for many of the people in her life.

While her life isn't completely dedicated to her pets, the compassion and care Smith gives to them is mirrored in her job as a pharmacist.

She grew up in Statesville, N.C., but was drawn south thanks to her Clintonian parents, Dianne Parker and J.W. Davis.

She majored in math while attending Presbyterian College for two years and also studied pre-pharmacy classes there before attending the Medical University of South Carolina in Charleston for her degree in pharmacy.

She spent the next few years shuffling among different pharmacies in the region but never felt that close of a connection with the people



Jan Smith shows off one of seven snakes that live with her and her family in Laurens. Smith said she's always been an animal lover but became interested in the cold-blooded creatures when her husband and son's allergies began to flair up around other animals. When not moonlighting as an amateur snake charmer, Jan Smith works as a pharmacist at the Sadler-Hughes Apothecary in Clinton. - Photos by Nick McCormac



that came to see her. That changed when she started working at Sadler-Hughes seven years ago.

"I had worked at larger

pharmacies like CVS and the customers there never seemed all that welcoming to me," she said. "But now, people seem so much warmer and

friendlier, and that makes me enjoy my job so much more."

Being at a smaller local pharmacy helps Smith connect with her customers better

and allows her to give them a sense of care they might not get at larger chain store.

For Smith, being able to provide a service like home delivery of medication is something she never experienced at other stores.

"Home delivery isn't an official service offered by us but we like to be able to work out something like that for customers who really need the help," she said.

As with her snakes, education is part of her job at the apothecary, and one she takes to heart.

If a customer needs a vaccination she's happy to sit down with people and inform them about how it will benefit them. The pharmacy also hosted a bone marrow registration drive and Smith was happy to give people information about how their registration could help save someone's life.

"Part of a pharmacist's job entails working closely with people to make sure they get what they need and to help ensure them everything will be OK," she said. "People put a lot of confidence in me and it's not something I take lightly."

While she spends most of her days behind the counter helping customers with their ailments, there's always a place in the back of her mind egging her on to lace up her boots and head out into the woods to look for another serpentine friend.

"I would most definitely moonlight as a veterinarian if I ever had the chance," she said. "I still I still have a lot of care to give out."

It's safe to say Smith has the best interest of everyone in mind, forked tongue or not.

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Demott

From Page 2

work five hours, and they only get paid for three" — meeting with representatives from the railroad after receiving a claim from a local chairman.

If a dispute can't be settled in conference, it might go before a team of mediators from the U.S. Labor Department, and in major incidents the president can appoint a presidential emergency board to prevent a shutdown of the nation's railway system.

That hasn't happened in Demott's time as chairman, but he remembers a dispute between the BRS and the railroad that had to be settled by a PEB in 1991.

"We ended up accepting their settlement," he said. "Some other unions didn't and ended up getting a worse deal."

A chairman also sometimes has to get involved in the legislative process. On this day, Demott was on a conference call with the president of the BRS, trying to preserve the jobs of signalmen along a track in Florida that the state wants to purchase from CSX to put in a commuter rail.



Gus Demott, right, overlooks a drawbridge on a visit to south Florida. As a regional chairman of the BRS, Demott sometimes gets involved in state and federal issues affecting the railroad.

Demott says he never imagined he'd have a chance to meet with state and national legislators on railroad issues, but running for the chairmanship has effectively allowed him to have two careers, he said.

"I really enjoy it," he said. "I used to be responsible for equipment, and now I'm responsible for people. What I get out of it representative-wise is a lot. I help people

get sick benefits, employment assistance, drug and alcohol treatment."

The last part of his job is as a public spokesman for railroad workers. Demott has spoken at Clinton High School about the industry and about the benefits of being a railroad signalman.

"The response I heard from the kids at the end of it was 'when can I get a job'," he said.

Ettinger

From Page 3

that help us in our personal lives and activities with 4-H, and vice versa."

Ettinger has also been a member of the Oak Grove Family and Community Leaders, another community

service group, since 1991. The group does a lot of work at the Laurens County Memorial Home for the Aged, including decorating a Christmas tree for the home every December.

Through their participation in 4-H, on their farm

and working in other community organization, the Ettinger Family has learned a set of life skills they might not find somewhere else, and their love for charity and compassion is sure to keep them coming back.

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