

# CHATHAM County Line

where all voices are heard



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FREE ~ GRATIS

December, 2013 – January, 2014

## 7th Annual Free Christmas Eve Dinner at Bella Donna

by Donna Bianco

It has become a tradition now as we enter our seventh year of providing Chatham County and beyond, a free Christmas Eve dinner. It started in 2007 when my restaurant would close down for the week between Christmas and New Years. Since my restaurant only uses fresh food, I was concerned about what I should do with all the food that would spoil during the holidays. My husband gave me \$100 to get incidentals, we put the word out and on Christmas Eve 80 people showed up for their free take-out dinner. I remember my husband washing the dishes and pots and pans as fast as I could dirty them.

From that time on it has blossomed into a tradition for many people here in Chatham. It doesn't matter if you are wealthy or poor. People come in their Sunday best, some before their Christmas Eve service. Maybe you are just tired of wrapping all those presents and know you will be cooking like crazy on Christmas Day — come on down, load up with some great food and take it home and feast!

The first year, I had Our Neighborhood School, a private school with about six students enrolled. We went to the PTA Thrift Shop and the Dollar Store and bought up as many plain ornaments as we could. We painted the ornaments and wrapped each one to hand out to all the people who came. It was a blast! The following year we had about 10 volunteers and my husband didn't have to wash one dish (he was happy). For the past six years we have fed over 1200 people while 20–30 volunteers come and do all sorts of things. You can take as much food as you need, all you have to do is tell us how many people you will be feeding at your house. You can bring your own dishes to fill up or we have containers for you to use.

It becomes a magical time to say the least. People bring desserts, (I have never made a dessert for this event.) so no one goes without dessert. Other local businesses bring their signature dishes as well, including my dear friend Angelina Koulizakas of Angelina's Kitchen. Efrain Ramirez always brings his black beans and rice and he and Mark Barosso have helped me cook for the past four years! What troopers they are!

One year, Michael Rodriguez from the Subway by Food Lion brought a ton of fresh baked chocolate chip cookies. Another year, Ray and Melissa Kelly from

Cambridge Hills had purchased 12 turkeys for CORA and were told that they (CORA) had too many turkeys, so they gave them to me and what fun we had cooking, carving and distributing those yummy turkeys. We made a wonderful turkey soup that was gobbled up as well. Ford's produce has given me 100 pounds of potatoes the past three years.

Pizza dough is used to continually make pizzas and all the pasta dough is used to make whatever we feel like, maybe lasagna, maybe Chicken Bianco... you never know. I don't plan anything, I just come in at 9 a.m. on Christmas Eve and start cooking. By 10 a.m. the kitchen is full of people chopping, sauteing, peeling, washing dishes, decorating and by 5 p.m., when the food is beginning to be served, musicians magically appear and start playing Christmas carols.

For the past three years, while we were in our old location on Thompson Street, the Town of Pittsboro donated the Pittsboro Community House. The Town employees set up tables and chairs at the beginning of the night and came in the next day to take them down. Then volunteers decorated and made luminaries lighting the path from the restaurant to the Community House. Musicians set up over there as well. It was something to behold. We won't have that option this year with the new location but it will be awesome, just the same.

You can take as much food as you need, for as many people as you need, just let us know how many people you are serving and sign the book. There will also be a donation jar for anyone who would like to give to the cause. Last year we served over 300, and I would love to break that record.

Chatham Community Church has helped with decorations, cooking and making ornaments. New Salem Baptist Church makes up lots of goodie bags for everyone to take home.

This year, we have decided to only be closed December 23–25 for Christmas and closed December 30, 31, Jan 1 for New Year's. We will be open Thursday–Sunday, December 26–29.

On New Years Eve we are having a party, from 9 p.m. to 1 a.m. Tickets are \$35 and include music, heavy appetizers, party favors, glass of champagne at midnight and a breakfast buffet.

*Donna Bianco is proprietor of Bella Donna's Italian Restaurant, located at 440 East Street in Pittsboro.*

## Sustainable agriculture sustains community

by Adrienne Bashista

When Meredith Leight and her first husband, Ed, bought 140 acres in central Chatham county in 2000, they didn't buy it to farm. They were looking for a change of pace and location. But it wasn't long before Meredith, inspired by what she was learning about industrial food and the alternatives available through sustainable farming, decided to take matters into her own hands — literally — and grow what they ate.

Meredith, a former mortgage processor and home-schooling mom, started what is now Granite Springs Farm, a market garden that grows vegetables without the use of synthetic pesticides, herbicides or fertilizers. She sells seasonal vegetables at the Saturday Chatham Mills Farmers' Market and the Thursday Pittsboro Farmers' Market, as well as through shares in her CSA, or community supported agriculture. She has a number of CSA customers in Chatham County, but also a number through her church in Chapel Hill.

One of Granite Springs' specialty items is their oyster mushrooms; in 2012 the farm received a grant through RAFI to investigate year-round mushroom propagation in a hoop house and she brings mushrooms

to almost every market she attends. Her daughter, Allie, a student at Salem College, often helps at market as well as preparing the CSA bags for delivery.

In 2006, plans for the farm had just gotten underway when Ed was diagnosed with cancer. The course of Ed's illness forced Meredith to recognize the importance of

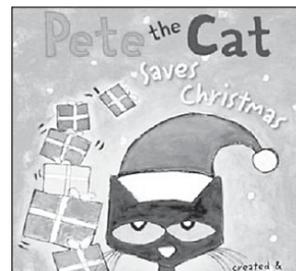


Allie Leight holds up an oyster mushroom at the Chatham Mills Farmers Market.

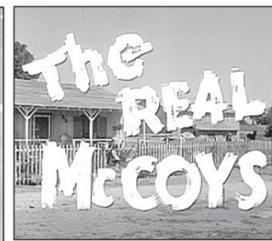
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## PROSPERITY IN THE 21ST CENTURY

An ode to what is known, yet still forgotten...

### “You and the land are one”

by Kathleen Hundley

We now end our series concerning what we must do to have Prosperity in the 21st Century, we end with “An ode to what is known yet still forgotten”.

Generations ago, before our country was a servant of the King,  
the land was idyllic, a folk tale —

green and clean, hills and valleys wooded and wild with  
pristine rivers that wound across them like blue-green sashes of royalty.

Residents were self-sufficient, conservative in consumption,  
friendly to new-comers and committed to nurturing their wooded home.

Newcomers came, cut trees for homes, settled in communities  
with store, church, school and alike people,  
and the aborigines who loved and nurtured their world  
were not wanted and were forced to leave.

The forests grew smaller, huge trees were cut, soils washed away.  
A new industrial order rose, powered by carbon—oil, gas and coal—  
that, like cultures before it, ignored the Natural order.

But more than before, the new carbon order  
gave rise to undreamed wealth, including useful things  
and mindless trinkets,

all part of an American Dream gone world-  
wide and embraced by seven billion souls.

It also gave untold toxins that circled back as cancers,  
acidic oceans, polluted rivers, collapsing  
fisheries, dying reefs, and melting ice,  
slowly ushering in the sixth great massive death of life on earth.

Now, Nature has judged this new industrial order as unworthy.

She has shown her wrath at the squandering of her gifts  
and responded in almost Biblical fury with global warming that,  
by century's end, will likely yield a planet  
warmer than in 65,000,000 years,  
one heralded by climate change that under-  
mines cities, farms and forest alike  
and robs both young and middle-aged of their futures.

What can we do to appease Nature in her justified wrath?

How can we reaffirm our nurturing abilities,  
re-generate a “green and clean” folk tale of a land  
and calm the turbulence of a planet now  
on collision course with failure?

How can we open many minds now closed  
to the responsibilities of wise communal management,  
that attends to the needs of all — both the 1% and the 99% —  
and all of God's creatures?

The answer is this.

We must learn ancient truths and newer ways.

We must relearn moral lessons of old  
as told in the stories of Creation and Noah and his ark,  
as told in the story of King Arthur and the  
lost secret of the Holy Grail ...

“You and the land are one”

and we must learn from discoveries by scientists and Nobel Laureates.

Then we must act to protect all of God's Creation.

We must protect natural and environmental resources all,  
we must reduce our numbers to where they were not long ago,  
we must master new technologies and work long, fast and hard,  
especially now when the threat of natural  
collapse is stronger and more dire.

We must select, then elect leaders who see the need for such change  
and agree to cast their vote to make it so.

This Ode is to what is known, yet still forgotten -  
to knowledge and wisdom that, if learned and remembered,  
may still lead us to a modern promised land -  
to Prosperity in the 21st Century -  
to a place where ...“You and the Land Are One”

*Kathleen Hundley is President of the Friends of the Rocky River and a Psychology and Human Services Instructor at Central Carolina Community College. This article is the 12th in a series designed to highlight what we must do to create widespread prosperity in the 21st century. The series is sponsored by CONNECT — a Chatham based network of civic groups (see ConnectChatham.com). These articles emphasize one main point. Prosperity is the product of natural resources (N), environmental resources (E), population (P), technology (T) and work (W). This reality can be expressed in equation form: Prosperity = (N+E) ÷ P X (T+W).*