

Golden Girl Pageant inspires confidence

By CHARLES CONRAD
STAFF REPORTER/TIMES VIRGINIAN

Young girls, from infants to teenagers, took the floor during the Miss Appomattox Golden Girl Pageant that was held Saturday at the Appomattox Community Center.

Dressed up in fashionable clothing and making their best personal impressions, the girls walked, posed and twirled in front of friends and families as well as a panel of Judges. The youngest participants needed a little assistance from their parents, and some were adorably shy, but all made the event memorable in their own way.

Most girls were participating in their first or second pageant but some were a bit more experienced, according to Carolina Case, the event's director and master

of ceremonies.

The majority were from the local area but a few were from out of town because the pageant is open to non-local contestants.

Age groups were divided into Baby Miss (0-23 months), Tiny Miss (2-3), Little Miss (4-5), Junior Miss (6-8), Pre-Teen Miss (9-11), Teen Miss (12-14) and Miss (15-19).

The girls were judged on various categories such as clothing, personality, eyes, photogenic, and more. All the girls received gifts or ribbons.

The three fashion categories were Gowns, Outfit of Choice, and T-Shirts and Denim.

During the intermission period while final scores were being tallied, the children danced and played on the floor to

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CHARLES CONRAD/TIMES VIRGINIAN

Top category winners at the Miss Appomattox Golden Girl Pageant. From left: Emma (Grand Supreme), Anslee (Golden Girl Baby Doll), Avery (Junior Miss), Lydia (Most Beautiful), Gwendolynn (Pre-Teen Miss), Piper (Grand Supreme), Neviah (Miss), Delilah (Baby Miss), Madison (Teen Miss), Natalie (Tiny Miss), Alice (Little Miss). See more photos on Page 12 and in next week's Times Virginian.

BREAKING THE CHAIN BAND ROCKS APPOMATTOX!!!



CHARLES CONRAD/TIMES VIRGINIAN

Breaking the Chain, a Stevie Nick tribute band, performs Saturday night at Marshal's Bar & Grill in Appomattox. See more photos at www.timesvirginian.com.

By CHARLES CONRAD
STAFF REPORTER/TIMES VIRGINIAN

Appomattox was rockin' and rollin' Saturday night as Stevie Nicks cover band Breaking the Chain performed a live concert at Marshal's Bar & Grill. The band reportedly set an attendance record at Marshal's, which opened for business in September 2024.

Breaking the Chain was co-founded in 2022 by lead singer Desiray Lorain Gunter, a lifelong fan of Stevie Nicks, whose voice is amazingly similar to the rock legend who has excelled as a member of Fleetwood Mac since the 1970s and a solo artist since the 1980s.

During Saturday's packed house performance, the band cranked out Stevie Nicks and Fleetwood Mac popular hits such as "Go Your Own Way," "Stand Back," "Rhiannon," "Gold Dust Woman," "Dreams," "The Chain," "Stop Draggin' My Heart Around," "Say You Love Me," "Sara," "Gypsy," "The Chain." (for which the band is named), and more. Several non-Nicks/Mac hits were played, such as "Play That Funky Music" by White Cherry and Long Train Runnin' by The Doobie Brothers.

Band members are Gunter (lead vocals, tambourine), Paul Mallory (lead guitar), Mark Ryan (acoustic guitar, keyboards), Mike "Spike" Worley (bass guitar), Chris Salzone (drums), Chris Schmitt (aerophone, keyboards, vocals), and Victoria Guthrie and Michelle Motley (backup vocals). Jen Ryan is the band's manager and stage handler.

Appomattox and its people hold a special place in Gunter's heart. She called Appomattox home for five years, four of which she was employed as property manager of the Dogwood Apartments. Her parents and sister currently reside in town. Her father is a retired U.S. Navy veteran. Her best friends (one of whom passed away) owned a barber shop in town, at which she used to "harass" people for fun and bring along her pit bull dog for a visit.

Appomattox is also one of the first locations where she performed with her former band, Desert Rose.

"I really love the people of Appomattox, I really mean that from the bottom of my heart," she said. "Over 20 years ago I played in a band, and my third show I played in Appomattox, and they just have been so good to me. And so honestly, it was a private party and I met so many people, and basically friendships have just blossomed — you know, people have turned into family to me."

There was brief talk of canceling Saturday's concert due to several recent deaths in band members' families. Worley lost his father, Schmitt lost his grandfather, and Salzone lost his uncle.

Despite the heavy hearts, the band decided to play on with the blessings of its grieving members, who wanted to perform with their bandmates and play music for the public.

"Spike had made the comment that his daddy would have wanted him to play, not cancel. His daddy was musically inclined and everything," Gunter said. "And Chris (Schmitt) kinda felt the same way about his grandfather, too. So, it's been a little rough for us lately."

The band's family atmosphere, love for music, and interaction with their fans helps them to survive amid difficult circumstances.

"I think music is therapeutic, and I think that that's what gets us through, is just playing music, you know, and being with each other," Gunter said. "A lot of people say when you get our group together that it's like a big family reunion, and we want people to feel welcome and appreciated. Maybe that's why the band is successful, because we actually care about our following."

Speaking in regard to backup singers Guthrie and Motley, Gunter describes them as "phenomenal" and a "big support system for me behind the scenes."

Breaking the Chain made its Appomattox debut during the 2023 Railroad Festival.

Recovery mission performed at American Airlines crash site



GIUSEPPE LOPICCOLO/CAPITAL NEWS SERVICE

Recovery crews search wreckage in the Potomac River for victims of the American Airlines crash

By EMMA TUFO AND SASHA ALLEN
CAPITAL NEWS SERVICE

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Authorities worked to recover the bodies of victims from the Potomac River on Thursday in the hours following a mid-air collision between an American Airlines passenger jet and a U.S. Army helicopter.

Emergency responders had pulled more than two dozen people from the plane and the helicopter, John Donnelly, chief of Washington, D.C.'s fire and emergency services, said in a Thursday morning press conference.

"We are now at a point where we are switching from a rescue operation to a re-

covery operation," he said. "At this point, we don't believe there are any survivors from this accident."

The crash involved American Eagle Flight 5342, which was traveling from Wichita, Kansas, to this city on Wednesday night. The flight had 60 passengers and four crew members on board, according to the airline. The military helicopter had three people on board.

Shortly before 9 p.m. that night, the control tower at Reagan National Airport sounded the alarm, local officials said. This set off an immediate response from several emergency departments across the metropolitan area, including the fire department

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TILLOTSON RECALLS TIME AS 4-H AGENT, DISCUSSES DEPARTURE

By CHARLES CONRAD
STAFF REPORTER/TIMES VIRGINIAN

Bonnie Tillotson has been known in Appomattox County primarily for her work as a 4-H Extension Agent Youth Development, overseeing 4-H programs at the county's public school system, and as a former real estate agent at Century 21.

Tillotson has a long history in forestry, having worked in Tennessee before landing a job at Virginia Tech via the Virginia Co-operative Extension (VEC). She has lived in Appomattox County since the 1980s and worked for the Virginia Department of Forestry from 1985-1989. Her history with 4-H spanned 19 years, beginning in 2004.

Tillotson succeeded former 4-H Extension Agent Laura McClenny, who is now retired, and continued active programs with the schools while adding her own expertise. Tillotson stated that while McClenny's focus was more home economics and leadership, her strengths are natural resources, science and shooting sports.

Programs such as sewing remained, and Tillotson added others such as the Science Fair and Young Farmer's Day at Appo-



CONTRIBUTED

Bonnie Tillotson, former Appomattox 4-H Extension Agent.

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