

June 2023

WILLIAMSBURG'S

Next Door Neighbors[®]

VOL. 17, ISSUE 6

PRICELESS

Discovering the people who call Williamsburg home

Loving Life's Work

Ann Minns



WilliamsburgNeighbors.com

Murawski Photography

VEDA McMULLEN

Spreading Good News

By Laura Lane



Born and raised in Gloucester County as the middle child of her family, Veda McMullen is the daughter of two schoolteachers from Statesville, North Carolina. Her dad, Stanley, taught agriculture and horticulture in Gloucester County schools for 35 years, while her mom, Glenna, taught English and business with Mathews County schools for 30 years.

In addition to her parents, other educators also made a significant difference in Veda's early life during her own time at Gloucester High

School. "I had three wonderful teachers, who honestly knew me better than I knew myself and continually reminded me I could achieve whatever I wanted," Veda says. "I knew I wanted to work in mass communications, and in my junior year, I decided I was going to be a television news producer in one of the country's top 20 television markets. I was young and I could dream. Why not?"

Veda graduated from high school in 1977 and pursued her mass communications degree, ap-

plying to one college, Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU). At the time, it was the only in-state college she found with extensive outlets for internship programs to gain experience while earning a degree.

During her time at VCU, Veda acquired the skill perhaps most fundamental to her career, writing. "I think learning to write opens up so many doors, whether that's writing a technical manual for NASA or sharing your favorite recipe," she says. And Veda was determined to learn

Are you looking for
BRANDED
items for your company?

BRANDURGEAR

Employee Engagement Programs | Company Stores | Promotional Handouts

brandurgear.com

Please visit our site or call us today!
757-473-0806

A division of **BreegerMedia**

CELEBRATING 10 YEARS

Serving Seniors and Their Families

Let me help you explore your senior living options. You are not obligated to make a move, but having a plan in place before you actually need it will give you and your family peace of mind.

I'm Dawn Michelle with Choice Connections of Virginia...a Williamsburg resident, proudly serving families since 2013.



Dawn Michelle

Choice Connections of Virginia can help you understand the differences between the many options available in Williamsburg and the surrounding areas.

- Independent Living
- Assisted Living
- Alzheimer's/Dementia Care
- Private Adult Care Homes



(757) 778-2772 or DMichelle@ChoiceConnectionsVA.com
www.ChoiceConnectionsVA.com

the art of newscast writing.

"Every day I looked for the newspaper's top story, which was generally 500 words or more," she says. "I pulled only the who, what, when, where, how and why to edit it down to a 30-second clip. At night, I watched a newscast to see how they edited that same story, and I finally got the hang of it. This isn't just about news, but about being understood. To attract someone's attention, you have to keep the message simple and quick. Once you set that tone, you can add more to the story." Veda was already setting the tone for her career with ambition, a strong work ethic and a desire to learn.

She completed two internships at Channel 6/CBS over the course of a year. "Back then, internships were competitive, and interns paid to volunteer, versus being paid," Veda says. "I remember the day I went in for my intern interview. As I sat in the newsroom waiting for the news director, the phones were ringing off the hook! I started answering the phone and ended up taking two pages of messages for people I didn't know. The news director finally arrived, said, 'Who are you?' and then 'Give me those

messages and you can go directly to personnel.' He didn't ask anything else about me."

From six to 10 a.m., Veda rewrote scripts from the previous night's newscast, operated the teleprompter for the morning newscast and prepped for the noon newscast. She returned to the station from six to 10 p.m. to prep the evening newscast. Between those two shifts, from 10:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., she earned a paycheck by working for VCU Housing so that she could pay her bills. It was a rough year for Veda, but she knew it was her ticket to something better. After graduation, she was hired as a full-time producer for the seven p.m. and 11 p.m. newscasts at a bare-bones salary of \$8,000 annually. Her debt mounted. When a Channel 6 coworker left for a job in St. Louis, she contacted Veda about an open position there. Veda left Richmond to become the weekend news producer and staff writer for that top-20 television market station, fulfilling her lifelong dream at age 28.

Though she learned a great deal and paid off her debt while working long days and nights in St. Louis, Veda realized that this job wasn't at all what she wanted. Managing the daily dose

of top news, which typically included murders, fires, wrecks and mayhem, weighed heavily on her. "Looking for the good news, as we still do today, became harder and harder," she says. In 1987, seeing the purpose of that stepping stone in her life but needing a change, she headed home, looking for another way to make a difference.

She found it in James City County. Veda started her now 35-year career with the county in 1988 as a communications assistant. The world of communications was much different then, of course. "There was no internet, but we had word processors," she says. "Many projects were still completed using a typewriter. I remember the sheer delight of getting a typewriter with auto correction, and all you had to do was hit the backspace to correct your errors."

In a trailer behind Berkeley Middle School outfitted with collections of bare-minimum camera equipment and editing stations, James City County's video services were run solely by volunteers, with Veda serving as staff liaison.

"We conducted in-studio and on-site tapings, compiled a weekly tape of local programs and



The poster features a dark blue background with a stylized sun and waves. The sun is yellow with orange rays and contains the text "PROJECT: FIVEFORTYSEVEN". A banner across the sun says "JUNE 21". Below the sun is a blue banner with "PLAY ALL DAY!". To the right, the text "James City County's LONGEST DAY OF PLAY" is displayed in large, bold letters. Below this, it says "JOIN US ON JUNE 21 TO CELEBRATE THE SUMMER SOLSTICE WITH A FULL DAY OF FUN PROGRAMS & FREE FACILITY ACCESS!". A "FREE" starburst is also present. A QR code is labeled "SCAN ME". At the bottom, two columns of activities are listed: "TRACKLESS TRAIN RIDES", "SPECIAL YOUTH PROGRAMS", "HEALTH & WELLNESS CLASSES", "PADDLING PROGRAMS", "SCAVENGER HUNT" and "FREE OUTDOOR POOL ACCESS", "FREE CENTERS ACCESS", "FREE SELECT GROUP FITNESS CLASSES", "REC CONNECT FIELD DAY", "INSTAGRAM PARK PIC CONTEST". A footer note states: "ACTIVITIES TAKE PLACE AT VARIOUS TIMES AND LOCATIONS BEGINNING AT 5:47 A.M. REGISTRATION IS REQUIRED FOR SOME PROGRAMS AND ACTIVITIES. TO PREREGISTER AND FOR DETAILED INFORMATION, VISIT JAMESCITYCOUNTYVA.GOV/RECREATION. FOR EVENT UPDATES, VISIT US ON FACEBOOK AT FACEBOOK.COM/JCCPARKS." The James City County Virginia logo and "Parks & Recreation" text are in the bottom right corner.

JUNE 21

**James City County's
LONGEST DAY
OF PLAY**

**JOIN US ON JUNE 21 TO CELEBRATE THE
SUMMER SOLSTICE WITH A FULL DAY OF
FUN PROGRAMS & FREE FACILITY ACCESS!**

FREE

PLAY ALL DAY!

**TRACKLESS TRAIN RIDES
SPECIAL YOUTH PROGRAMS
HEALTH & WELLNESS CLASSES
PADDLING PROGRAMS
SCAVENGER HUNT**

**FREE OUTDOOR POOL ACCESS
FREE CENTERS ACCESS
FREE SELECT GROUP FITNESS CLASSES
REC CONNECT FIELD DAY
INSTAGRAM PARK PIC CONTEST**

**ACTIVITIES TAKE PLACE AT VARIOUS TIMES AND LOCATIONS BEGINNING AT 5:47 A.M.
REGISTRATION IS REQUIRED FOR SOME PROGRAMS AND ACTIVITIES. TO PREREGISTER AND
FOR DETAILED INFORMATION, VISIT JAMESCITYCOUNTYVA.GOV/RECREATION. FOR EVENT
UPDATES, VISIT US ON FACEBOOK AT FACEBOOK.COM/JCCPARKS.**

**James City County
VIRGINIA
Jamestown 1607
Parks & Recreation**

then drove the tape to Yorktown for broadcast on our shared community channel with Continental Cable, now Cox Cable,” Veda says.

Eventually, the county hired its first video technician to cover Board of Supervisors meetings, which went from tape playback to a simple but live broadcast. By that time, part of Veda’s role as video services coordinator was to explore private business, government, group and organizational partnerships to build and operate a high-tech community video center. Through her hard work and that of staff across virtually every county department, as well as a team of dedicated video volunteers, the Community Video Center opened in 1996 as a joint operation between James City County, the City of Williamsburg and Continental Cable.

In 2006, Veda moved from the county’s communications office to her current role as Parks & Recreation as Senior Communications Specialist to learn more about every aspect of mass communications. This position gives her the opportunity to tap into her other areas of interest, including publications, public relations and media design. She handles the production

of three annual activity brochures and print promotion of all the programs, events and activities featured in each brochure. A great deal of her time is spent proofing, writing department materials and responding to public inquiries. “I’m here to help you find what you need to know,” Veda says.

Veda finds living and working in James City County to be a fulfilling combination. She has lived in the same home that she purchased 30 years ago after settling into the area. “James City County is a beautiful community,” she says. “The county’s parks and facilities are outstanding assets and provide families with inexpensive ways to have fun together. Being part of the process to spread the good news is so rewarding. Much of my job is performed in an office setting, so when I have the chance to work directly with citizens, I find that their passion for community is always wonderful. I feel proud to live in such a caring and compassionate community.”

As her 35th anniversary with James City County approaches this August, Veda is thinking about retirement sometime within the next year or so. Though she hopes to continue work-

ing in some capacity “for fun” after her official retirement, she anticipates a more relaxed schedule. This will give her more opportunities to participate in volunteer community-outreach efforts in her neighborhood and with her church, Williamsburg Church of Christ.

Though she’s lost both of her parents over the past few years, Veda looks forward to spending more time with her siblings, both musicians, and maybe even seeing them perform more often. Her older brother, who is retired and lives in Herndon with his family, is a percussionist for two jazz bands in the D.C. area. Her younger sister, who works for York County Parks & Recreation as the program coordinator for the Senior Center of York, performs locally with her husband as a musical duo. Veda also hopes for more opportunities to travel with her sister. “We love the flurry of a big city, and we visit New York City whenever we can,” she says.

Feeling very grateful for her long career in news and storytelling, Veda McMullen looks forward to a new season to explore new interests, find more good news and add to her own story. **NDN**



**YOUR INDEPENDENT
PHARMACY THAT
DOES MORE
THAN JUST FILL YOUR
PRESCRIPTIONS.**

**Our main goal is
to provide
healthy solutions
so you can be your
healthiest self!**

Functional Testing & Consultations
Compounded Medications for People & Pets
Professional Grade Supplements • CBD
Medical Supplies & Equipment • Nutrition Plans
Specialty Gifts • And SO MUCH MORE!



WDC 18 ★
95
THE WILLIAMSBURG DRUG COMPANY
HEALTHY SOLUTIONS SINCE 1895



240 McIaws Circle #147 (757) 229-1041 • 310 Jamestown Road (757) 229-3560 • WilliamsburgDrug.com
f @WilliamsburgDrugCompany Instagram @WilliamsburgDrug