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Wednesday, January 11, 2012 • Page 1C

ON THE COUCH



Michelle Goff

The mystery of the missing lasagna recipe

My sister, Pam, has a new recipe box.

I'm sure this is exactly the kind of "stop the presses" news that entices you to read our venerable publication.

But, wait, there's more to the story.

In order to fill the aforementioned box, she's rifling Mother's recipes. During this process, she came across one titled, "Lasagna," which read, "400 degrees, spray pan, bake 20 minutes."

That's the recipe in its entirety, nothing added, nothing omitted.

Of course, I questioned the veracity of the recipe.

"That must have been the second card," I suggested.

"No," Pam answered. "There was nothing else about lasagna in 'Pasta and Rice.'"

Our beloved Sierra and I shared a hearty laugh over this find and decided supernatural forces must play a role in baking the lasagna.

"You spray the pan, put it in the oven and, just like magic, the lasagna appears," Sierra said with a smile.

Although she made a logical point, I wondered if something else was amiss.

Perhaps the recipe, such as it was, had been written in invisible ink or maybe the author had been wearing Harry Potter's invisibility cloak when composing the recipe.

Yet, upon closer inspection, I identified the handwriting as Mother's and dismissed those theories.

Needing to shush my inner Nancy Drew, I consulted Mother to inquire about this mysterious recipe.

"It's in there (the recipe box) somewhere," she answered nonchalantly. "It will turn up."

How could she act so casually about something as important as a missing lasagna recipe? And how could she be so confident it would suddenly appear? After all, Pam has already made it to the "Pies." That leaves only a handful of letters, and most of those contain no categories.

Daddy speculated Pam or I had taken the

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Berea's Bill Best is saving Appalachia one seed at a time

Friends Drift Inn



By JOYCE PINSON

Gardeners, seed collectors and chefs regard Bill Best as somewhat of a rock star. At first glance he appears as a huggable summertime Santa Claus, but Best speaks with a rebellious and compelling white hot energy, defiantly demanding to be heard.

His face is weathered. He moves slowly and deliberately as his eyes sweep the room at the Kentucky Fruit and Vegetable Conference seeking out those who share his passion. His eyes fall on young chef Jeremy Ashby. He stops a moment. His sharp gaze meets mine, and we both smile.



See BEST, Page 3C Fall beans, "leatherbritches," hang from the roof to dry out.

Photo for the News-Express by Joyce Pinson



Photo for the News-Express by Joyce Pinson
 Jacob Frantom of Johns Creek is the next generation of farmers who are rediscovering Appalachian Heirloom Beans. He is pictured here with Greasy Grit Pole Beans.



Photo for the News-Express by Joyce Pinson
 Chef Jeremy Ashby learns about Appalachian Fall Beans grown by Bill Best of Berea during the Kentucky Fruit and Vegetable Conference and Trade Show. The largest conference of its kind in Kentucky, the conference brings together producers, researchers, and chefs.

November Students of the Month



Submitted photo
 Mullins School recently recognized the November Students of the Month. Students are chosen according to academic achievement, attendance, citizenship and positive behavior. The Students of the Month are, from left: front row, Caleb Akers, Jackson Kennedy, Grace Chapman, Sierra Taylor and Brenden Anthony; middle row, Samara Thacker, Sean Justice, Jacob Thacker, Makayla Clem and Marshall Justice; back row, Sydney Elswick, Rachel Horn, Tatiana Wilson, Ethan Hayes, Hanna Collins and Nick Maynard. Not pictured: Logan Newsome.

'The Bear Affair' is coming to Pikeville

BY KRISTY STEVENS
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

The bears are coming! Ten 5-1/2-foot tall bears are making their way to Pikeville right now! The only problem is ... they're naked!

The Artisan Alliance of Pikeville/ Pike County, in conjunction with the city of Pikeville, has ordered 10 fiberglass bears as part of a public art project called "The Bear Affair." The bears won't be naked long, though.

Soon, artists from all over will have a chance to apply to create unique works of art using the bears as their canvases. Once completed, the bears will be on public display throughout Pikeville before being auctioned to raise money for the non-profit AAPP.

While we wait on the bears to arrive, the Artisan Alliance is offering everyone another chance to flex their artistic muscles: the Double Vision Art Contest.

Everyone has a favorite piece of famous art. Maybe you adore da Vinci's Mona Lisa or Rodin's The Thinker. They say imitation is the sincerest form of flattery, so pay homage to your favorite piece by submitting your version to the contest.

An art exhibit will be held at the Artisan Alliance on

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Feb. 10 to showcase contestants' work and winners will be announced. For contest forms or more information, call Samantha Rogers at (606) 444-5291.

Don't forget to make plans to visit the Stone Heritage Museum! The museum will be open Saturday, Feb. 4, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. If you have a group, the wonderful folks at Stone Heritage will be happy to accommodate you and offer a private tour.

From John F. Kennedy's father to Henry Ford, there have been some major players in the community of Stone. Visit the museum and discover its fascinating history!

Stone Heritage is located at 1355 Pond Creek Road, Stone. Call Peggy King at (606) 237-6099 or B. L. Ball at (606) 353-9834 for more information.

Artists Collaborative Theatre has done it again! For the second year in a row, ACT will be representing Kentucky at the Southeastern Theatre Conference, to be held this year in early March in

Chattanooga, Tenn.

The cast and crew of "Dearly Departed" won four out of six possible awards for their performance at the statewide Kentucky Theatre Festival, including first place. ACT now has the distinction of being Kentucky's most award-winning community theater!

ACT will soon begin holding fundraisers and seeking tax deductible donations for the trip. "Festival of Love: A Special Valentine Concert" is tentatively scheduled for Feb. 11. If you haven't heard the incredible vocal talents of the Honky Tonk Angels, this is your chance! Details are being finalized and more information will be available very soon.

The next production staged by ACT will be "Twelve Angry Men," which begins Feb. 23 and runs through March 18. "Twelve Angry Men" is filled with intense scenes that are sure to electrify and keep you on the edge of your seat. It is drama at its finest.

Show times will be



Kristy Stevens

Thursdays, Fridays, and Saturdays at 7:30 p.m. and Sundays at 3 p.m. Tickets are \$8 each and will be available at the door, online at www.act4.org, or by calling (606) 754-4228.

The theater is located at 207 N. Patty Loveless Drive, Elkhorn City.

You can now find out what's going on in the arts around Pike County on Facebook! Just search for "Pike County Fine Arts" and follow us! If you are interested in becoming involved in the arts, please contact the Pike County Extension Office at (606) 432-2534 or e-mail kristy.stevens@uky.edu.

Thank you for supporting and participating in the arts in Pike County.

Kristy Stevens is the Fine Arts Program assistant at the University of Kentucky Cooperative Extension Pike County Office.

POET'S CORNER

Missed

I couldn't believe it was really true,
the day I got the call saying we had lost you.

I know you wouldn't have wanted any other,
but I should have been a better brother.

I never thought I'd be writing this,
I just had to tell you that you'll be sadly missed.

Sis, you could never, ever fade away
because I'll think of you each and every day,
and in my heart, that's where you'll stay.

I thank God for the time He gave us with you
and I want you to know my next tattoo,
will be in memory of you.

Bob Darren

*"Written for Colleen 'CoCo' Little.
"I love you, Sis."*

BEST

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"There was a time when we knew what a bean was supposed to taste like. With the growing interest in old-time vegetable varieties, I believe that time has come again. It is this generation of children who are realizing tomatoes can taste good. It is these children who say, 'No Mommy. I want the real beans from the garden.'" Best says, his hands slicing through the air with startling vigor.

Varieties of seed names roll off Bill Best's tongue in a sing-song rhythm. Georgia Candy Roasters, Conover Butter Beans, Cherokee Long Greasy, Grandma Minnie, and Turkey Crow are notes that recall a measure of gardening harmony; a symphony in our history when seeds were as diverse as the people who nurtured them.

January is the month referred to as "seed month" in the business. This year instead of buying hybrids bred for shipping quality and not flavor, why not try growing traditional varieties? Best can set you on the garden path.

At the Sustainable Mountain Agriculture Center near Berea, four freezers stand with contents more precious than the gold in Fort Knox. Heirloom seeds, our

unique Appalachia history, are secured there. Best grows out the treasures, increasing seed stock. He sells small quantities to those interested in preserving a piece of our agricultural legacy for the generations to come.

According to the "National Geographic Food Ark," the decline of vegetable varieties in the last 100 years is staggering. For instance, we have moved from 408 varieties of tomatoes to less than 80 varieties available today. Selections of squash have diminished from 341 varieties to 40. With less diversity, comes less food security. With less variety comes fewer flavor experiences.

"I remember as a little boy going to the garden. We picked field beans growing up cornstalks. Momma would pick up high, and I would pick down low," Best reminisces.

"From those seeds my collecting began. I continue to collect seeds through swaps, through a network of heirloom growers, and from strangers who hear about me one way or another and send seed my way."

He pats a winter squash with hands that have seen years of country living. He invites the audience to come up, to touch the Georgia Candy Roaster; to feel its texture, to see its

beauty. He holds bags of colorful beans over his head for the crowd to see. "Did you know beans can come in so many colors? It is something that has fascinated me since I was a child," he says.

At the conclusion of Best's presentation the crowd surged eagerly forward to talk with the Appalachian hero. Across the room, Best's grandson, Brian, smiled as he packed up the computer used for the PowerPoint presentation. It's a modern way to help spread an ancient story that thanks to Bill Best will continue for at least one more generation.

Best believes the key to the future of Kentucky's food security is planted deep in the past. And like all gardeners, he knows the harvest depends on how hard we work tending what we have planted. To change what we reap, we must first change what we sow.

"I went to the Cherokee Reservation to collect heirloom seeds," Best says. "The authorities chided me. 'We are trying to move these people away from their old varieties and get them to grow more mod-

ern seed.'

"Grow so-called modern seed, when the old-time varieties were doing just fine? I call that sacrilege!" Best growls, shaking his head in disbelief. "Do you

find it ironic that now the Cherokee seek me out to find the seed stock of their ancestors?"

Visit www.heirlooms.org for seed ordering. For a behind-the-scenes look at

the Kentucky Fruit and Vegetable Conference and more on heirloom seed saver Bill Best visit

www.friendsdriftinn.com.
Joyce Pinson is a Master Gardener, home cook, and a

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GOFF

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recipe home and had returned only the last card.

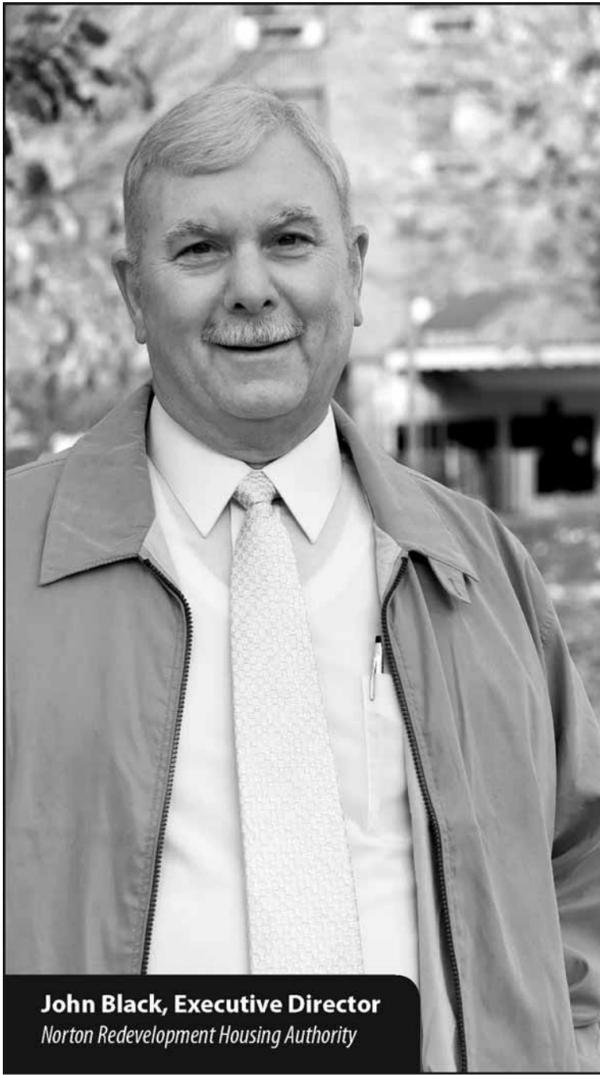
Pam and I quickly dismissed that hypothesis. She has her "own" lasagna recipe. I eat the dish only when forced and then I simply nibble on the pasta as well as any cheese not identified as ricotta.

So, where does that leave us? Perhaps the complete recipe has been lost for decades. It could be that one day, just as Mother returned the second card to its cozy home among "Pasta

and Rice," she was distracted by a phone call, a knock at the door or a bare-knuckled brawl between two unruly offspring fighting over the last teaspoon of chocolate ice cream. Maybe she laid the first card upon a table where it quickly became hidden underneath a pile of report cards, junk mail or empty ice trays.

Or perhaps the first card is burrowed between beef stew and butt roast in "Meats," and Pam passed it by.

Michelle Goff writes a column for the News-Express and can be reached at gmgoff@setel.com.



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