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the hands-on favorite

Why
Co-op Education Works
Bricks Are Forever!

Not to knock diamonds, but buying a brick will benefit more people than any gem can claim.

You can make a lasting contribution to Forsyth Tech by purchasing one or more bricks to complete the Alumni Oval on the Main Campus. Designed by Forsyth Tech’s own Herb Burns, Chair of Architectural and Construction Technologies, the Oval is destined to become a distinctive feature of the campus and a favored gathering place.

In its first stage of construction, the Alumni Oval also provides some of the most interesting reading material on campus. On these bricks, you’ll find the names of people who have graduated from Forsyth Tech, esteemed instructors, proud parents and grandparents, and dedicated donors.

Buying a brick is your opportunity to have your name—or the name of someone you want to honor—be forever a part of Forsyth Tech’s place in the world.

At the price of $35 per brick, you’ll want to celebrate several people in this special way. Corporations can buy a brick to be incorporated into one of the Pillars of the Community that support the Oval.

For more information call Michael Glontz, Alumni Relations Office, 336-734-7307 or email mglontz@forsythtech.edu. Or buy a brick online at http://alumni.forsythtech.edu.

Help complete the Alumni Oval in time for Forsyth Tech’s 50th Birthday Celebration in 2010. Order today.
A Different Kind of Collaboration – A Different Kind of Car

A cooperative education experience that is bound to be coveted by students is in the offing. In June, President Gary Green signed a memorandum of understanding with Creation Autosportif, an international racing and race car manufacturing company. Forsyth Tech has the largest race car technology program in the state, and this new partnership will give some of its students the chance to work on a car unlike the familiar NASCAR vehicles.

According to Leonard Kiser, Dean of Engineering Technologies, the cars that Creation Autosportif builds are different in design and structure. They are faster and are made to use different fuel mixtures and run on different types of courses. These cars are raced in the famed Le Mans event in France and similar competitions abroad and in the U.S. Another benefit for Forsyth Tech – the college logo will be featured on the cars the Creation Autosportif builds.

Whatever NASCAR Needs

Chassis setup, record keeping, blueprint reading – these and many more industry-specific skills will be taught in our new Associate in Applied Science degree program in Race Car Technology, beginning this fall. Since 1990 Race Car Performance has been a concentration within the Automotive Systems Technology program, and a popular one at that. It has operated at full enrollment capacity right from the start. The new stand-alone program will allow Forsyth Tech to help meet NASCAR’s needs at a higher level. Forsyth Tech’s curriculum is expected to be a model for race car programs at other colleges.

Early College Meets With Early Success

Early College of Forsyth, an innovative alternative high school scheduled to open this fall, has met with an enthusiastic response, despite the fact that sports and clubs won’t be part of the experience. More than 60 applications were received in the first month the program was announced. A collaboration between Forsyth Tech and the Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Schools, Early College will enable motivated students to earn their high school diplomas and nation’s-free-college credits simultaneously. It will be housed on our Main Campus, and enrollment will be limited to under 100 students at each grade level.

Here We Grow Again

Construction has begun on a $2.4 million expansion of our nursing and allied health programs space. N.C. Baptist Hospital, Forsyth Medical Center, and the Forsyth County Commission are sharing the costs of the expansion, which will add 20,000 more square feet of classrooms, computer labs and simulation labs. The two hospitals are our county’s two largest employers, with combined employment of more than 11,600 people. They’re expecting a 29 percent increase in new health care jobs over the next three years, and they’re relying on Forsyth Tech to train those skilled workers.

It’s a Small World After All

Four Danish students spent the spring semester at Forsyth Tech, taking courses toward their Financial Management degrees from Niels Brock Business College in Copenhagen. As part of this new international exchange program, a group of Forsyth Tech students will go to Denmark to study at Niels Brock in the coming academic year.

When School and Work Go Hand in Hand

A Therapeutic Massage student is assigned to Hospice, instead of the spa setting he was hoping for, and discovers that staff members benefit from stress relief as much as – or more than – their patients.

An Interior Design student finds out that great organizational skills and computer savvy are just as important as taste and talent when she takes on big responsibilities at Piedmont Craftsmen.

A Nanotechnology student explores the legal and business aspects of this emerging science, and lands himself the new position of business manager for a nanotechnology center.
Forsyth Tech has had co-op programs in several disciplines—including Criminal Justice, Automotive Systems Technology and Medical Transcription—for many years. Unlike students in more loosely structured internships, co-op students must have the basic skills to do real work. They must spend at least 160 hours a semester on the job, and they are supervised by a Forsyth Tech faculty member.

Beth Agnello is the college’s coordinator of cooperative education. Her background is in business, and she was director of the small business center at Davidson County Community College before coming to Forsyth Tech. The co-op job is both different and more rewarding than what she anticipated.

“I thought my major job would be to find businesses to participate. In fact, it’s to help faculty. This is a different way of thinking for faculty. Instead of spending so much time in the lab or classroom, they’re supervising students in the field. It is demanding of their time, but such phenomenal things happen from working in the field that it makes it worth the time. You can’t instill that confidence in someone who’s making a career change strictly in the classroom.”

Navigating the “Real World”

Faculty members who worked with the co-op program for the first time in the past year or so are some of its most enthusiastic advocates.

One is Rosa Otero, coordinator of the Interior Design program. “Co-op is optional but highly recommended in our program,” she said. “It teaches students that a career in interior design requires more than just talent. It involves being on time, getting along with people, using the right language, knowing how to present yourself, and understanding how to work as part of a team.”

Kevin Conley, coordinator of the Nanotechnology program, says, “I see the education in three parts—the first part is theory, the second part is hands-on with the science, and the third part is co-op, the real thing. I give them all equal weight. In co-op, the students’ job is to decide if they’re good at it.”

Faculty and students alike say that working with industry in the field expands students’ understanding of what their chosen career path really entails.

“People show up with preconceived ideas of what a program is, usually based on very limited information,” Agnello said. “There’s a lot to be said for coupling theoretical and practical knowledge.”

Corey Whitt, a recent Nanotechnology graduate, agrees. “With nanotech, you’re not sure how you’re going to use it. I had no idea what to expect. I’d done manual labor and worked some in the corporate world. This is a whole different environment.”

“Students often come into the program thinking that interior design is about decorating houses. In fact it is closer to architecture,” Otero observed. “Placed in industry, some of what students learn from me is underscored and some is discounted,” said Conley. “Co-op transcends the limits of the program coordinator.”

Bypassing the Job Interview

Because of co-op assignments, students often walk into good jobs right after graduation, at their co-op sites.

“Corey Whitt is a perfect example of that,” said Dr. Stephen Susalka, Assistant Director of the Office of Technology Management at Wake Forest University Health Sciences. The office works with PureLux, a start-up company that is a spin-off from the Wake Forest Center for Nanotechnology and Molecular...
Materials. Whitt did a co-op semester at Purelux as the last part of obtaining his associate’s degree, and was hired immediately afterward as a research assistant.

“Right away, he was a tremendous asset to the company,” Susalka said. “PureLux found a perfect guy right in our backyard, and the company is in a much better situation because of Corey.”

Employers and students get a fuller and more accurate impression of one another from a co-op assignment than they could from a resume and job interview. And that saves both all the pain and expense of bad hires.

The benefits extend beyond recruiting new employees. In many cases, co-ops allow organizations to take on projects that otherwise would be more than their resources would allow.

That happened at Piedmont Craftsmen, which was organizing its fourth highly successful downtown loft tour when Meredith Mason started her co-op semester.

“The main thing we hear from volunteers is that people who take the tour don’t get enough information about the spaces,” said Jane Doub, President and CEO of the nonprofit organization.

She assigned Meredith to interview all the loft owners. The detailed information Meredith gathered was incorporated in the tour guidebook. Meredith also recruited volunteers for the tour, loaded information onto Piedmont Craftsmen’s web site, helped set up displays in the gallery and worked on exhibits. Then she went to work on bringing some consistency to the artists’ statements of the organization’s 370 artist members.

Dr. Stephen Susalka (foreground), Assistant Director of the Office of Technology Management at Wake Forest University Health Sciences, sees the value of the co-op program to start-up scientific companies. Recent Nanotechnology graduates Michael Owens and Corey Whitt (back) found their own professional strengths – and full-time employment – through their co-op experience.

We gave her such a big project, such real responsibilities. I think it did transform her,” Doub said. And Meredith had made herself invaluable. She was hired on a part-time basis, and is working toward the launch of Piedmont Craftsmen’s online gallery.

Exploring New Options

At Hospice, having two co-op students provided an opportunity to see how massage therapy could fit into that setting, said Katie Cyre, Complementary Therapies Program Manager for Hospice & Palliative CareCenter in Winston-Salem. “We wanted to see how this could benefit staff, family caregivers and patients.”

As it turned out, she said, the students worked most often with employees and came to appreciate how much massage could alleviate their stress. “The students developed a heart for the staff members in Hospice care facilities. They developed compassion for the professionals who deal with end-of-life issues.”

What Stephen Demet and Chinma Oparanozie did was operate a chair massage clinic that any Hospice employees could take advantage of. As Katie Cyre noted, most employees could not take an hour out of their busy workday for a full massage. But 10-minute chair massages did a great deal to relax and refresh them. The results were so impressive, in fact, that for four weeks all six students in the Therapeutic Massage program participated, and conducted surveys following the massages.

“Their research underscored the benefit of this care for the staff,” Cyre said. “They did 150 chair massages, and 90 percent of the recipients said it had decreased their stress.”

Agnello says she knows that co-op requires a lot from faculty, and she is trying to remove as much of the paperwork as possible. She sees how much everyone involved stands to gain. Between employers and Forsyth Tech, co-op facilitates a dialogue where there has sometimes been a disconnect. Between academicians and business leaders, co-op promotes mutual understanding and appreciation. And for students, co-op is frequently personally and professionally transformative.

“Through co-op, students learn about professionalism and what to expect in the workplace,” she said. “They gain an understanding of how they fit into an organization. How are you going to teach that? They have to be out in the field.”

For more information about Forsyth Tech’s Cooperative Education program, contact Beth Agnello at 336-757-3269 or bagnello@forsythtech.edu.
What’s So Great About Co-op?

Students Say

“I like taking my students outside the classroom, where they are exposed to different vocabularies, different values, different points of view. And co-op turns former students into people who can advise me about the program.”
— Dr. Kevin Conley, Program Coordinator, Nanotechnology

“Networking is one of the biggest values. There are not a lot of opportunities in nanotechnology yet. Co-op turned into a job for me.”
— Corey Whitt, Nanotechnology graduate, research assistant at PureLux

“I’m the type that always doubts myself. Doing my co-op at Hospice gave me a little bit of another side of me. Now I have confidence that I can do it. One of the staff members who worked in maintenance came in with a pain in his shoulder. He had already gone to the chiropractor that day and it hadn’t helped. After I gave him the chair massage, he said, ‘Oh my God, what did you do?’ Every time I saw him after that, he mentioned it. I never knew I could help people to that extent.

“Networking is one of the biggest values. Getting in early on is where your contribution can make the most difference.”
— Jane Doub, President and CEO, Piedmont Craftsmen

Employers Say

“I can explain to our industry partners that we’ve got a program down the block that turns out students who are well-qualified and ready to work. They’re thrilled with that.”
— Dr. Stephen Susalka, Assistant Director, Office of Technology Asset Management, Wake Forest University Health Sciences

“I like doing research and I like the fact that no two days are the same. I like working on things that nobody has ever done before. I’m the type that always doubts myself. Doing my co-op at Hospice gave me a little bit of another side of me. Now I have confidence that I can do it. One of the staff members who worked in maintenance came in with a pain in his shoulder. He had already gone to the chiropractor that day and it hadn’t helped. After I gave him the chair massage, he said, ‘Oh my God, what did you do?’ Every time I saw him after that, he mentioned it. I never knew I could help people to that extent.

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Faculty Say

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— Jane Doub, President and CEO, Piedmont Craftsmen

“I absolutely love it. I had no idea there were jobs like this. I thought the nanotech degree would lead to a job running a machine or using a fancy microscope. It’s great to be in on the ground floor of an emerging industry. Getting in early on is where your contribution can make the most difference.”
— Jane Doub, President and CEO, Piedmont Craftsmen

Chioma Oparanozie

“I came here from Nigeria 12 years ago. There I was a soldier, doing dentistry in the military. I tried dental hygiene when I moved here, but that didn’t work out. My husband suggested Therapeutic Massage and I switched to that program.

“I’m the type that always doubts myself. Doing my co-op at Hospice gave me a little bit of another side of me. Now I have confidence that I can do it. One of the staff members who worked in maintenance came in with a pain in his shoulder. He had already gone to the chiropractor that day and it hadn’t helped. After I gave him the chair massage, he said, ‘Oh my God, what did you do?’ Every time I saw him after that, he mentioned it. I never knew I could help people to that extent.

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— Jane Doub, President and CEO, Piedmont Craftsmen

Corey Whitt

“I went to Forsyth Tech and earned an Associate in Arts degree and an Applied Science degree. Then I transferred to NC State, to major in Engineering. It looked like that would lead to a career in civil engineering, designing roads for the rest of my life, and that didn’t sound like fun. I like working on things that nobody has ever done before.

“I enrolled in the nanotech program at Forsyth Tech and the co-op was the last thing I did as a student. I made thin films for PureLux, a young company that is in partnership with Wake Forest. At the end of the co-op I was hired as a research assistant at PureLux. I am now working with a small team of people, developing a more efficient light.

“I like doing research and I like the fact that no two days are the same. I am now working on my bachelor’s degree in physics at UNC-G.”
— Jane Doub, President and CEO, Piedmont Craftsmen
Look Out World,

Here they come!

Graduation 2008

Forsyth Tech graduations are joyous occasions, and very much family affairs. It’s not unusual to have three or four generations not only in the audience, but also capped and gowned. Degrees, diplomas and certificates were conferred on 1,100 individuals at the College Commencement on May 8 at Lawrence Joel Veterans Memorial Coliseum. An additional 178 students graduated from the Adult High School Program and the General Educational Development Program on May 22 in Wait Chapel on the Wake Forest University campus.

Phillip Jermaine Weaver brought a special honor to Forsyth Tech. On this year’s GED test, he scored higher than anyone in North Carolina.

Taking the Law into Her Own Hands
Lourdes Benitez, seen here with her daughter, Marissa Richardson, is the office manager at Legal Aid of Northwest North Carolina. She’s also the mother of five and grandmother of eight boys.

She began working toward her associate degree in Paralegal Technology in 2003, taking evening and online courses. At age 69, she’s planning to pursue a bachelor’s degree. She thinks that if two-year colleges were ranked like universities, Forsyth Tech would be “the Harvard of community colleges.”

If the Shoe Fits
Samuel Hughes and Derek Cornelius are proud to announce their career choice: Fire Protection Technology.

No Generation Gap Here
Franklin Haynes and his daughter, Candice Haynes, offer the same advice: Don’t quit school! “It’s a shoes, not a grate,” says Franklin, who waited 30 years to complete his high school education. He signed up for the scholarships and Tuition Deferment Program. He received and says, “Forsyth Tech is a wonderful school.” Both these new high school graduates will be starting their college education at Forsyth Tech – father in a business program – and daughter in Criminal Justice.

A Mom Who Rocks
At Forsyth Tech graduations, it’s hard to tell who’s prouder – graduates or their families.

Newly-Grads
Husband and wife Jonathon and Christina Smith march down another aisle together.

The Venerable Mrs. Venable
Ola Mae Venable has the distinction of being the oldest graduate in this year’s GED class. At age 72, she has two sons, six grandchildren, and 10 great-grandchildren. They were among the many people cheering her on when she had trouble passing the algebra and geometry test required for graduation, missing a passing grade by two points on the first try and one point on the next. “Two determined tries to be a drop-out again,” she said. The third time was the charm, and Ola Mae was surrounded by her excited family when she donned her cap and gown and lined up for the procession. I’ve proved that it’s never too late,” she said.

Newly-Grads
Husband and wife Javon and Jodee Smith march down another aisle together.
When Bill Wilder started teaching at Forsyth Tech in the late 1960s, things were a little different. For one thing, even as an automotive technology instructor, he had to wear a suit and tie at work in the shop. For another thing, the president of the college warned him that he wasn’t to talk to students about his avocation – car racing.

Bill’s first relationship with Forsyth Tech was as a student.

“I came here in 1965 from Portsmouth, Virginia. The equipment is what got me here originally,” he explains. “I was looking for a trade program in automotive. Virginia had no trade schools at all. North Carolina had just started what’s now the community college system but then was a technical institute system. Forsyth Tech at that time was one of the larger schools in the state. I made an appointment and came down here on a weekend, and the equipment they had in that shop, the layout of the shop was just amazing to me. So I decided this is where I was coming to school. Paid out-of-state tuition, but it was absolutely worth it.”

After graduating from the one-year automotive program at what was then Forsyth Technical Institute, Bill returned to Virginia and was drafted into the Army. Following his military service, he returned to Winston-Salem to pursue some job offers.

“Told a mild-mannered instructor, by night a daring race car driver – Bill Wilder’s passions converged when he helped usher in the Race Car Performance Technology program.

“I worked at a car dealership as a line technician for a couple of years,” he recalls, “and came to teach here at night in 1968, part-time, then came full-time in August of ’69. I taught up through 2007.” Since that time, Bill has been working with President Gary Green on special projects for the North Carolina Motor Sports Consortium and for the new Transportation Center the school is building.

A lot has changed in his long career here.

From Forbidden Topic to Flourishing Program

“When I came to work here, we had 600 full-time students and 40 employees,” he says. “We basically had all trade programs – plumbing, carpentry, automotive, diesel, air conditioning/refrigeration. And then it evolved and added all these other programs since that time.

“We wore a suit and tie to work every day. We worked in the shop wearing a suit and tie. You could not take your coat off. The president would not let you take your coat off. That was Dr. Parry (Dr. Ernest B. Parry, President 1961-1977).

“When Dr. Parry hired me he knew I raced as an avocation, and he said, ‘You can’t talk about racing in class.’ But the times were different, things were different.”
Indeed, today not only can Bill talk to students about race cars, he can offer them a Race Car Technology degree. This fall, thanks to Bill, Forsyth Tech will offer a stand-alone curriculum in Race Car Technology.

“Ours is a technician-level course to take people that know absolutely nothing about racing and bring them up to the level where they can do all the setup work and all the necessary mechanical work to assemble and maintain a race car,” he says.

It was Bill’s passion for racing that gave him the idea for the program, which the school has offered for the past several years as a concentration under Automotive Systems Technology. A racer since the late 1960s, Bill has driven or owned cars in the Hobby Division, Sportsman Division and Modified Division at tracks in North Carolina, South Carolina and Virginia.

“Bowman Gray, Hickory, Metrolina, Wilkesboro, South Boston, Richmond, fairgrounds – just any place they ran a short-track race,” he remembers. And he had a lot of success. “We have won races at every track that we’ve been to. We have been fortunate enough to win three track championships.” And, like a true automotive technician, he credits know-how more than talent. “When we were really, really successful, it’s nobody’s doing anything. We’re just turning a car over and we go.”

Bill attributes part of the success of the Race Car Technology program to putting in some kind of racing program. He said, “I approached my boss about putting in some kind of racing program. I said, ‘There’s a couple of times that only had five students in them. Everybody was asking, ‘How do we get interest back?’” Wilder had an idea. “I approached my boss about putting in some kind of racing program. I said, ‘We’ve won races at every track that we’ve been to. We have been fortunate enough to win three track championships.’ And, like a true automotive technician, he credits know-how more than talent. “When we were really, really successful, it’s nobody’s doing anything. We’re just turning a car over and we go.”

Racing Into the Future

He’s also excited about what’s happening at Forsyth Tech in the areas of racing and automotive technology: the school’s partnership with the Le Mans racing team Creation Autosportif and the development of the new Transportation Center. Of the former, he says, “The more industries people we can get on board with the program, the stronger it becomes. Their technical level is at a higher level. They use more electronics, more data acquisition than some of the other forms of racing.”

Through interning and co-op opportunities, Forsyth Tech students will be exposed to this incredible technology.

As for the Transportation Center, “We’re excited about it,” Wilder says. “It will double our square feet and enable us to do a lot of things that we haven’t been doing in the past. When we move over there, we would like to have plans to expand to the point where we can double the enrollment in the daytime and run two classes, and maybe run some night classes or some continuing education classes.”

Bill Wilder has been at Forsyth Tech as a student and instructor for over 40 years, but he doesn’t think much about the past. Whether it’s developing a new program, adding a new piece of equipment, or helping a new student find the right path to success, Wilder is focused on what’s happening now, and what’s going to happen tomorrow. To him, it’s very simple: “The purpose of all this is to bring more motor sports people into North Carolina and furnish them with a well-trained workforce.”

Thanks to Bill Wilder, Forsyth Tech is able to do just that. For more information about Forsyth Tech’s Race Car Technology program, contact Randy Butner, Coordinator of Race Car Technology, at 336-734-7259 or rbutner@forsythtech.edu.
A native of South Carolina, Rachel graduated from Mars Hill College with a degree in Vocal Performance. She earned her Master of Science degree in Information Technology Manage- ment at UNCG-Greensboro. She and her husband John have two sons, aged 14 and 3.

Even with her busy work and family life, Rachel continues to enjoy vocal performance. She is a member of the Southern Appalachian Chamber Singers, an A Cappella-based ensemble. The group performs throughout the Carolinas and for five years straight sang at the Piccolo Spoleto festival.

Her favorite composers? “Bach to listen to, Mozart to sing.”

Making Forsyth Tech the Southeast’s leading technological community college is one of President Gary Green’s top priorities. Rachel Desmarais, the new Vice President of Information Services, is leading the charge.

Her responsibility, broadly, is to promote the infusion and integration of technology across the college. That means helping faculty and staff filter all the new technological tools that are coming available, and choosing the right path and prod- ucts. It means helping people figure out which tools they need to accomplish their objectives.

“Information technology is so pervasive now – even names use computers, even cars can be hooked up to computers to diagnose problems – that we need to look at it from a strategic perspective,” she says.

When Rachel was promoted to the position in May, Information Services was expanded to include two separate areas, the traditional Information Technology that applies to infrastructure and the fast-growing Distance Learning and Instructional Technologies.

On the infrastructure front, Forsyth Tech’s long-awaited Internet portal will be unveiled this month.

It will have major implications for both students and employees.

“Students will be the primary focus, but this will change how employees do their jobs,” Rachel said. “Some of our processes will become electronic. The hope is that we will have less paper and more collaboration. People will not be so inundated with paper, and will be able to focus more on their core competencies.”

A great benefit, she said, is that instead of routing reports and other paper documents, members of work groups and committees will all be able to see and share information at the same time, online.

As for the students, they’re demanding the instantaneous access to relevant information that the portal will provide, she said. Instead of long waits and elaborate procedures, they’ll be able to find out what grades they are, fill out a form to drop a class, or explore “what if” scenarios and simulate course outcomes.

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Roger, what should gardeners and would-be gardeners know about fall conditions in our part of the world?

It's a tough season. Fall is a time to cope with heat and drought, and to prepare for the winter. Fall can also be a time to reflect on what you should have done — to learn from experience and make some better decisions for next year.

What do you mean by that?

Well, putting in drought-tolerant plants, for example. If you've ever grown impatiens, you know those plants are begging for water by late afternoon. But native plants, and plants from parts of the world with similar climates, can withstand our hot, dry early autumn. Hollies, camellias and pieris are all examples of shrubs that we think of as native plants, but that have been brought in from other places and do very well here. And there are ways to use more interesting plants in the garden at this time of year.

What kind of plants?

I'm thinking of tropical houseplants. They don't really like houses. Outdoors, they grow like mad and can provide some exotic effects. Then you can bring them in for the winter.

What about fall color? Do we have to go to the Blue Ridge Parkway for that?

Color can come from berries, as well as flowers and foliage. Nandina and some hollies have bright berries, and are quite easy to grow. The Chinese Flame Tree has bright yellow flowers in the fall that become pink, lantern-like seed pods. And the gingko tree has spectacular yellow leaves in the fall that have the advantage of all falling off at once. Sugar maples are another good tree for the home landscape, with brilliant fall color. Most people don't think of fragrance as part of the fall garden. Osmanthus, which looks like a holly, is a wonderful shrub to plant near a doorway or deck. It has a great fragrance.

We're in a position to see what new plants are becoming available. What recent arrivals would you recommend?

Like many of the decorative grasses, especially Purple Muhly grass. The miniature cigar plant, genus Cuphea, is another attractive newcomer.

We all know we have to rake leaves, but what other garden tasks are best done in the fall?

It's important to make sure trees, shrubs, and perennials have a layer of mulch. Two to three inches of mulch will hold water in and keep the roots cooler. As you get the plants and the ground ready...
for winter, any fertilizer you use should be low in nitrogen. Nitrogen is what stimulates top growth, the green stuff, and you don’t want to do that. You want any new growth to be in the roots. In mixed fertilizers the first number refers to the nitrogen, and it should be a low number.

Speaking of mulch, what kind do you recommend?
I like fine pine bark. The leaves you rake up also make good mulch or compost. For either purpose, you just need to run a lawnmower over them a few times to break them up.

Is fall a good time for planting?
Fall is the best time to plant or transplant any woody plant. It gives them a little time to get settled in before the cold. Fall is also a good time to divide plants like peonies, irises, daylilies and daffodils – or to plant the ones your neighbor shares with you. Fall is the best time to put more grass seed out, or to clean off your old lawn and start over.

So you can really get a fresh start with a lawn?
Yes, if your lawn has turned into a field of weeds like wild Bermuda grass, you can get rid of that with a broad-spectrum herbicide. If you’ve just got some clover or violets in your lawn, I wouldn’t try to kill them. In fact grass seed used to come with clover seeds mixed in, because clover fixes nitrogen.

What about a fall vegetable garden?
Basically, the same cool weather vegetables that you harvest in the spring can be planted in late August for a fall harvest. Those would include greens like cabbage, lettuce, spinach, chard and broccoli.

Are there bugs or other pests to contend with in the fall?
Fall is a good time to zap the Japanese beetle that comes out in June and July around here and does so much damage. In the fall they’re in the grub stage and they like lawns, where they can be found feeding close to the surface. Treating them with pesticides is most effective in August and September. A pest you’ll see in the fall is the lacebug that feeds on azaleas and camellias. They can be attacked with soaps or oils, or my preference, a systemic chemical pesticide, in moderation.

What about pruning?
Most deciduous trees are pruned in the winter, but it makes sense to prune dogwoods, maples and birches in the fall, because they bleed more in winter and spring. What you want to prune out in the fall is any dead or diseased wood in shrubs and trees. We’ve been seeing antracnose in domestic as well as wild dogwood recently; it’s a fungus that can kill the trees.

What design mistakes do you see most often in gardens in our community?
Probably the most common is the tendency to plant flowers and shrubs in straight lines. Curved lines usually look better. You can lay out the shape of the bed with a garden hose or a length of rope. Similarly, using even numbers of the same plant often gives a forced look. It works better to use three or five of the same variety than to plant two or four. A lot of people don’t think enough about where they will be viewing the plant from. For instance, if you’re thinking about putting in a tall shrub in view of your living room window, it’s a good idea to stick a pole in the ground, and look at it from inside. Then you can gauge whether that is a good spot, or whether it might look better four feet to the left.

If you could give just one piece of advice to people who want to create attractive home landscapes, what would it be? Go with the flow. Most plants have a size and shape they naturally want to be. It makes sense to choose plants with the characteristics you want, rather than fighting against their nature to make them conform to a particular size and shape. And of course some plants want sun while others want shade. And some plants need a lot of water and others not so much. You don’t want to mix plants with different needs in one spot. It’s better to work with the conditions you have and with the plants’ needs and tendencies, instead of working against them.

For more information about Forsyth Tech’s Horticulture Technology program, contact Roger Richardson at 336-734-7404 or rrichardson@forsythtech.edu.
In the beginning, our name was Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Industrial Education Center, and our address was 2100 Link Road. In this photograph from the early 1960s, Silas Creek Parkway (foreground) is under construction. The long one-story building pictured is the Winston Building. It’s been in use for almost 50 years, but is now invisible to motorists on busy Silas Creek Parkway, overshadowed by the new face of Forsyth Tech – the handsome Technology and Student Services Building.

Do you have photographic memories of your days at Forsyth Tech? We’d love to see them and to print some in future issues of Tech Quarterly. Send photographs by mail to Shari Covitz, Vice President for Institutional Advancement, Forsyth Tech, 2100 Silas Creek Pkwy., Winston-Salem, NC 27103, or electronically to scovitz@forsythtech.edu. Be sure to provide detailed information about who and what is pictured, and the year the photo was taken. Also include your address so that we can return the photo to you.

The Original Face of Forsyth Tech.

In 1999, Forsyth Tech became the only two-year college in the country to offer a program in Latent Evidence Technology. Training for finding fingerprints, bloodstains and such will be enhanced in fall 2008, when the Criminal Justice program moves to the new state-of-the-art Northwest Forsyth Center in King.

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Not long ago a customer came and asked Steve Plemmons to sell his recreational vehicle for him. He’d bought his first RV from Bill Plemmons RV World in 1966. Now he needed to sell the sixth and last RV he’d bought from the dealership. Sadly, the customer acknowledged that he was too old to drive.

"With tears in his eyes, he handed me the key," recalls Steve Plemmons, owner of the oldest family-owned and operated RV dealership in the country, and probably in the world. Loyal customers who keep returning are part of the reason the company has been thriving and growing since 1951. The qualities that keep people coming back resulted in Bill Plemmons RV World being named the 2007 Top Quality Dealer of the year by the national Recreational Vehicle Dealers Association.

There’s the schoolteacher in England who stores his camper in Winston-Salem during the school year, to be near the kind of customer service he values. There’s the customer who has his mail sent to the dealership, since he’s usually on the road. And there’s the 98 percent satisfaction rate on the customer surveys that Plemmons conducts on all sales and service.

"It really bothers me about those two percent," Steve says. The secret of his success is something Steve said he learned from his father, Bill Plemmons, who founded the company and ran it until his death in 1992. "Dad said, 'Treat people like family.' We treat our customers and our employees like family, and try to do the right thing." And he doesn’t take all the credit. "I give the good Lord all of the glory for what’s been accomplished." Bill Plemmons RV World has been located on University Parkway in Rural Hall since 1975, and has gradually expanded from 3.8 acres to 16 acres. Now the company employs
Steve Plemmons circa 1987

Steve has a clear vision for the company and a hands-on management style.

“We have monthly meetings of each department and I’m in every one of those meetings,” he said. “I open every piece of mail that comes in. When we get negative feedback I stop what I’m doing. I go to the appropriate manager and find out what happened. We look at what went wrong and why, and the ways to resolve the problem, and then the best way to solve the problem. Then the manager calls the customer.”

“We have lots of customers who have bought from us half a dozen times or more. We’re really known for taking care of our customers.”

The Long, Long Success Story

You might think that the son of a successful business owner would go on to grow up expecting to take over the family business. In Steve Plemmons’ case, you would be wrong.

He did some part-time and summer work at the dealership as he was growing up. His first job was picking up cigarette butts in a gravel parking lot.

But Steve wanted to be a basketball player, and play for Dean Smith at Carolina. When that didn’t work out, he wanted to be a NASCAR driver. He did join a race crew, and in 1978 started driving race cars. He had his own race team, and drove at Bowman Gray Stadium and other area tracks for a full ten years.

Then, he said, “The Lord called me out of the auto race and into the human race.”

With a wife and two children, he did not want to make the sacrifices a career in racing demanded. He began devoting himself full-time to management of the RV company, and developed a strong guiding vision for the business.

“Working here should be enjoyable, and it should be a purpose in life,” he said. “When we help people with an RV, they call it a home away from home. We’re helping them pursue a dream with their family.”

Everybody wins. Before Forsyth Tech had the program, the nearest RV training institute was in Florida, impractical for local students, who, like Plemmons himself, usually have to work while going to school.

Steve has maintained his ties with Forsyth Tech in other ways, too. Both his children attended the college. And Steve now serves as a member of the Alumni Association Board.

Happy Campers

“So many people love this lifestyle,” says Steve Plemmons. “I grew up going to campgrounds, and meeting people at campgrounds who became friends. It’s not like going to a motel.”

When Bill Plemmons went into business for himself in 1951, the term recreational vehicle had not yet been coined. A few years later, the trend of taking one’s home on the road was popularized in the hit movie The Long, Long Trailer with Lucille Ball and Desi Arnaz.

Steve points out that camping is a much different experience from conventional family vacations at hotels, motels and condos. The kids can run loose. You can mingle with the other guests. There’s the reassurance of a security guard. And you don’t have to wonder who’s been sleeping in your bed.

And there’s a flexibility that comes with taking your lodging along.

There was the heart surgeon who’d made all the arrangements to get away to Myrtle Beach for a week with his wife and children. He called Steve to ask him about a mechanic problem he was experiencing with his motor home. As Steve started to diagnose the problem, he asked the doctor if he was at Myrtle Beach yet.

“Nope, the doctor replied. When they got to the beach, it was raining, with more rain forecast for several days. So they just kept on driving.

“We’re on our way to Disney World,” the man said. “Man, am I loving my RV now!”

The high-end motor homes Bill Plemmons RV World sells can run $350,000 to $450,000. But there’s a recreational vehicle within just about any family’s price range, starting with fold-down units at about $5,000.

RVs can be handy even when you’re not on vacation, Steve says, serving as play houses and guest accommodations. He remembers when his daughter invited six other cheerleaders from high school for a pajama party. They all stayed in the RV.

Even with gas prices going through the roof, he says, RVs make for economical vacations. Traditionally, camping vacations cost 15-45 percent less than conventional trips. Recently, that estimate has been revised: a family camping trip is likely to cost 25-75 percent less than other kinds of recreational travel. And that’s sure to make for some happy campers!
Gerontologists Understand the Changes that Come with Aging

Life expectancy in the United States continues to rise. Many people are not only living longer than their parents and grandparents, but are living more productive lives. This demographic trend has created a need for new kinds of services, and gerontology is stepping into the void.

Gerontology is the study of the processes of aging. It includes learning about the physical, mental and social changes people experience as they age, as well as the changes in society that have come about as a result of a large elderly population. Gerontologists are people who apply this knowledge to policies and programs.

A Gerontology program has been under development at Forsyth Tech for several years. Jamie Edwards, coordinator of the program, explains that it will begin as a concentration within the Human Services degree program. To ensure that they will be appropriately prepared for jobs, students in the program must complete Certified Nursing Assistant training and do one semester of co-op education before they graduate.

The associate’s degree prepares people to work in long-term care facilities, retirement communities, adult day care, home health services, rehabilitation and respite care services among others. Already there is a shortage of people with specialized knowledge of the needs of the aging, and the gap is growing.

By the middle of this century, one in five Americans will be over 65. It is projected that between 15 million and 18 million people will then be over 85. The children of these people face challenges that were unknown 50 years ago, Edwards said. Many middle-aged people have responsibility for their elderly parents, their own children and their careers. They may need assistance, for example, in helping older family members manage their medications. Typically seniors are taking six to nine prescription medications, and nobody in the family has time to understand all the side effects and interactions, and manage the business of getting them refilled on schedule. Similarly, older adults may need help remembering to make appointments with all the medical specialists they may need to see.

People who go into Gerontology as a career need to have a deep sense of caring, and a lot of respect and patience, Edwards said. “It takes a special personality to work with older adults,” he said. “How a 30- or 40-year-old views the world may be quite different than how an 80-year-old views the world. Gerontologists need to be able to relate to different perspectives.”

For more information about Forsyth Tech’s Gerontology program, contact Jamie Edwards at 336-734-7959 or jedwards@forsythtech.edu.

By the middle of this century, one in five Americans will be over 65. It is projected that between 15 and 18 million people will then be over 85.
Kristin Hartz Garden: Morning Textures  The Hartz Garden welcomes students and visitors to the Main Campus, and might be called Forsyth Tech’s most beautiful lab. The garden is named for Kristin Hartz, an honors graduate of UNC—Chapel Hill, who decided that horticulture was her true calling. She was a student in the young horticulture program in 1988 when she tragically died in a car accident. Her family established a trust that has helped the garden grow and thrive.

ForsythTech

More Than You Know

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46,000 copies of this document were printed at a cost of $0.62 per copy.