

HILTON HEAD ISLAND & BLUFFTON

June 2018

# local life



*home sweet home*

SIZZLIN' SUMMER FASHION + GARDEN-FRESH RECIPES + HOME ON THE RANGES

**LETTER TO THE EDITOR**

Hilton Head Island resident Joni Vanderslice sent us the following letter about what being a local means to her. Vanderslice is president of J. Banks Design Group. LOCAL Life welcomes letters to the editor and comments to our website. **Write to lance.hanlin@wearelocallife.com**

# What makes it *local*

**adjective. lo·cal | lō-kəl**

**1:** characterized by or relating to position in space: having a definite spatial form or location **2:** of, relating to, or characteristic of a particular place: not general or widespread: of, relating to, or applicable to part of a whole **3:** primarily serving the needs of a particular limited district of a public conveyance: making all the stops on a route

## *It's all about relationships*

*LIFE REALLY IS ALL ABOUT RELATIONSHIPS. IT'S A LESSON I LEARNED EARLY AND ONE THAT I HAVE MADE A CORNERSTONE OF MY BUSINESS HERE ON THE ISLAND.*

BY JONI VANDERSLICE



**PAW PATROL** Hilton Head Island resident Joni Vanderslice with June Pug and Daisy.

Several friends and I moved to Hilton Head Island after graduating from East Carolina University. Our plan was to work and play on the island for the summer before returning to "reality." During my first Sunday on Hilton Head, I accepted an invitation to go sailing on the Compass Rose, Charles and Mary Fraser's sailboat. The fortuitous outcome of that trip was an offer to work with Mary, helping her to coordinate the design of the renovations to all the Sea Pines properties.

At that time, the Sea Pines offices were the hub of everyone and everything Hilton Head. Spending time in those offices and with the Fraser family introduced me to all of Hilton Head. Work, errands, events and parties allowed me to befriend the people who made Hilton Head work then and who laid the groundwork for the Hilton Head we know and love now.

Hilton Head is relationships - the people with whom Charles Fraser worked and socialized included a who's who in development, architecture, land planning and design. Time with Charles and Mary was always educational; they welcomed you, shared information, asked for your perspective and they listened. I always felt both informed and as though my brain had been emptied out.

Those Sunday afternoon gatherings on the Compass Rose included politicians, pastors, celebrities, educators and experts of all kinds. Those same people were going in and out of the Sea Pines offices and the Frasers' home. This time in my life was my true education. Mary's influence, in particular, shaped my

spiritual journey. She and the others I met that first summer created my roots here on the island and became the backbone of who I am and what I do today. Needless to say, I never left Hilton Head and every project, relationship, client or opportunity can be traced back to those early days.

At J. Banks Design, we now have a cohort of talented people who have grown up here, moved away to find their way elsewhere, and have chosen to come home and use their gifts and talents here in the Lowcountry. That is the magic of the Lowcountry — we choose this life. We choose to walk on the beach, paddle board at dusk, smell the ocean breezes — casual becomes our way of life and getting to know someone becomes more important than your background or your job.

I met my husband, Rick, here on Hilton Head. We raised our daughters here. Rick's delight in the Spanish moss swaying in the breeze as we walked to an oyster roast on the May River one evening, reminded me of how captivating and seductive the Lowcountry is. My daughter, Sarah, home from Sewanee, reminded me again recently as we were sitting on the porch, "Mom, you don't realize how fabulous it is here until you live somewhere else."

As my daughters move away for school to find their own way in the world, they will have amazing experiences and form lifelong relationships of their own, but they will always have that intoxicating experience of driving across the bridge, seeing the water and the marshes around them and knowing they are home. And home is local. *LL*