

Start-up FEVER

Their stories are all different except that these entrepreneurs are living the dream while making a living in Southern New Hanover County. Most of them just got here within the last few years. What makes them tick? We have only tapped the iceberg, we think, while trying to get their stories and pinpoint what it is about this area that is turning out entrepreneurs everywhere you look.

by Steffaney Cohen and Mike Hoffer

Have a story like these neighbors? Contact SCM! We'll continue to track our community as we morph with the times.

Look for these faces as you go about your business throughout Southern New Hanover County



Ernie and Andrew Manzella
Divine Wines

I've noticed something very interesting going on here. My husband, my neighbors, my bosses and well, a bunch of my friends and their friends and families are starting their own businesses. Some are doing it on the side, some are doing it as a second act, some are doing it as an alternative to working for "the man" and some are just plain doing it. Come to think of it, most of them—and their businesses—weren't even here five years ago. So what is going on? Is it a trend or is it just me? Do I attract Yankee upstarts?

The correct term of course is not upstart, but start-up, because that is what they call an entrepreneurial business, and not all of these transplants are from up North. I talked to a lot of transplant entrepreneurs around here and I looked into the matter properly. And yes it is a trend, although if I do attract upstart transplants, Yankee and otherwise, I have to say they are good company.

continued on next page

© Steffaney Cohen



Dan & John McQueen
Sandpiper Subs



Leah & John Garcia
Mad Science/Jupiter Jack's



Dave Sinclair/Cori Haydu
Ocean Grill & Tiki Bar



Andrea & Clark Wilson
Southern Signs

© Dale Cohen



Adam Zazalli
Satellite Army



Katrina & Dennis Barber
Port City Java



Russell Haywood
The Last Resort



John & Jane McLaughlin
Portofino

© courtesy of Jamie Moncrief



Dr. Dale Cohen, Dr. Len Lecci, Dr. Julian Keith
MARS Memory Health Network



Carl Ettlinger
Smart Strength Fitness



Duke Hagestrom, Lou Belo,
Tracee Hagestrom
Wheel Fun Rentals/Fudgeboat



Travis Koontz
Bluewater Carpet



Linda Piccinin
Pic n' Paint



Craig Hubbard
Craig Hubbard Financial Svcs



Jody Smith
Stroller Strides



Mike Malion and wife Jenny (not pictured)
Island Kite and Surf

Entrepreneurs have certain qualities in common according to personality inventory research. It seems successful ones have high need for achievement, high conscientiousness, high internal locus of control and medium risk-taking propensity (Certo & Certo, 2005). Plain English, they are motivated, they are careful in big and small matters, and they believe very firmly in free will. Sounds exactly like my husband, neighbors, bosses, and most of those transplant entrepreneurs with whom I spoke.

So why are they congregating here? Why does it seem there so many new transplant entrepreneurs in this area? Of course we all know people are moving here in droves. The US Census showed between 1990 and 2000 NC's population grew a healthy 21% while New Hanover County's population grew a whopping 33%. What made a real stir was the famous booming real estate market spurred by this population growth. In 2006, CNN and Money Magazine recognized Wilmington as the 7th best place to buy real estate in the whole country.

This steady population growth helps New Hanover County thrive when other areas flatten or sputter. In fact, in 2007, according to the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation, the overall economic growth rate in New Hanover County outpaces the rest of the state and the country. Our growth rate was 3.1%, whereas the NC growth rate was 1.4% and the national growth rate was 1.1%.

"We don't see the lows other places see," said local venture capitalist, Chad Paul, III, Managing Partner of Harbor Island Partners, LLC. "Wilmington is a safe bet."

Though we have a few large employers such as Corning, GE, and PPD, most of our area's employers are small. According to Dr. Woody Hall, UNCW economist, 75% of businesses in our area have 9 or fewer employees. According to the Kauffman Index of Entrepreneurial Activity, New Hanover County is a particularly ideal place for entrepreneurship because our economy relies mostly on those entrepreneurial enterprises with the most rapid recent growth in the country: service, trade, and construction.

One of the problems with living in an area with so few large employers is that good paying jobs are hard to come by. Statistics confirm what everyone in the Cape Fear region already knows—wages are low around here. While the average household median income in the Raleigh and Charlotte areas is well over \$50,000, the median income in New Hanover County is less than \$42,000. Combine low wages with a robust economy and it's no surprise that many people go into business for themselves. After all, you can't live the dream if you can't make a living.

Though their stories are different, the entrepreneurs I spoke with all had similar motivations. And of course they all share one thing—they love living here.

The Accidental Entrepreneurs

Some folks came to the area with no intentions of becoming entrepreneurs, but necessity, circumstances or opportunities presented themselves.

Accountant Craig Hubbard started working for himself out of necessity. He did extensive research on the area before re-locating from Tulsa, OK (he is an accountant after all) and he knew that wages would be lower here. But he was surprised at just how much lower. He took a 25% pay cut on his first job and soon found out that he would be lucky to do much better.

"I had 20 years of experience and I couldn't find a decent salary," says Craig. "I knew I wasn't going to make as much money here, but I didn't know it would be this bad. I knew right away that I'd have to go out on my own."

He now is the sole proprietor of Craig Hubbard Financial Services, where he provides accounting and tax planning services to many of the businesses that you'll read about in this article.

Russell and Carla Haywood came to own The Last Resort by happenstance. They purchased the bar from a neighbor who got a job offer out of town. Russell is originally from Florida but he graduated from UNCW. Though he subsequently lived other places, he eventually returned. In addition to running The Last Resort, both have regular jobs. Russell is a paramedic and Carla is a flight attendant.

"It's a small place, but there's still a lot of work. That was a surprise," said Russell, who then

added, "The effort is worth it though. I've met so many great people and developed relationships I wasn't able to develop before."

The Ocean Grill and Tiki Bar is owned by Corey Haydu and Dave and Abbie Sinclair. Dave is from Kinston, North Carolina, Abbie is from Virginia Beach, Virginia and Corey grew up locally (although she was born in California). Interestingly, Corey is a second generation entrepreneur. Her family owns Island Lock and Key.

The Sinclairs and Corey with her well-loved late husband, Steve Haydu saw an opportunity and seized it. Steve and Dave were working at what was known as The Chowder Company when the owner suggested they buy it. Dave, Steve and Corey had extensive restaurant

"I knew right away that I'd have to go out on my own." – Craig Hubbard

experience, but it was still a big risk.

"It was scary at first. We took loans and I gave up a good job with tips and a salary. We all lived and breathed the Ocean Grill for the first year," recalled Haydu.

A special type of entrepreneur uses their expertise and experience in a field to seize opportunity. Usually this type of entrepreneur has worked many years in the field. Then they have a revelation, "Nobody is providing X. People need X. I know how to do X!"

Dr. Dale Cohen, with two other UNCW psychology professors, Dr. Len Lecci and Dr. Julian Keith, formed MARS Memory Health Network with that same type of insight. MARS, which has been in business since 2005 and employs eight people, performs memory assessments for people 55 and older or those who are referred by their physician. They also provide counseling for those with diagnosed memory problems and their caregivers.

"We found memory loss wasn't being detected early enough. There was a gap in services that seriously affected the health of the community. We decided to fill that gap," said Dr. Cohen.

The Pioneers

Some people come to the area because of a 21st century version of manifest destiny. They



Matt Piccinin
Shuckin' Shack



Sean Cook
Shuckin' Shack & PI Rentals



Gordon McInnis, MA, LPC
Carolina Beach Counseling



Yves Tondeur, owner of
Analytical Perspectives

came looking for a better life; in Wilmington they saw a place with a great climate, great lifestyle and great opportunity to grow.

Southern Signs on Carolina Beach Road is

own company after working for someone else. He grew up in Maryland but moved to California after college and worked installing satellite systems in the upscale San Diego area. He found

owned by Clark Wilson who is from Pretoria, South Africa and Andrea Cianni-Wilson from Rochester, New York. The couple met when Andrea traveled to South Africa as an exchange student in high school. Later, after Andrea earned a fine arts degree they lived in southern California, where Clark learned the sign-making trade. They decided to combine his sign-making abilities with her artistic talents in their own sign-making business. Because of family ties, North Carolina was at the top of the list.

"We wanted to be near the ocean. We considered the Outer Banks but there isn't enough business there. Wilmington seemed like the perfect place from a business standpoint and quality of life," said Wilson.

Adam Zazzali, owner of Satellite Army, also started his

"What I enjoy most is meeting people. I didn't expect so many friendships to develop."
– Ernie Manzella.

himself working for himself on his days off and eventually in 2003 he started Satellite Army, his own custom satellite installation business.

His friends in Carolina Beach, who were in real estate, assured him that the rapid growth in this area, especially the many new upscale homes, would be an ideal environment for Satellite Army. He too, considered the Outer Banks, but chose Carolina Beach because the proximity to Wilmington allows for a better year-round economy.

"I saw so much potential here. Compared to San Diego, the area was a little behind the times in tech-savvy homes. There were just a few companies who do what we do. Plus for the cost of a one-bedroom condo 20 minutes from the beach in San Diego, I have a house that's walking distance to the beach here," said Zazzali.

The Pursuers of Happiness

Of course, not all people start a business doing something they are experts at. Remember part of the entrepreneurial personality is internal

continued on next page



CHILDREN 1ST PRESCHOOL

Kristin R. Newberry, Owner

- ★ Afterschool and Summer Camp Program
- ★ NC Credentialed Teachers
- ★ Low Child to Staff Ratios
- ★ Creative Curriculum
- ★ Infants-12 Years

Now Serving 2 Locations!

Monkey Junction to Carolina Beach

222 Winner Ave.
Carolina Beach

910-458-7242

6501 Carolina Beach Rd.

Wilmington

910-392-1515

Coastal Dental Care

Serving Southern New Hanover County Since 1979

910-458-9401

Do you have old fillings or crowns that need replacing?

before



→

after



Dr. Smith is pleased to announce he now offers Cerec reconstruction for crowns and onlays. Cerec is a pure ceramic, metal free and bio-compatible material. Crowns and onlays can be completed in one visit, eliminating the need for a temporary crown.

We invite you to call **Coastal Dental Care** for more information!

Vincent R. Smith, D.D.S.

1300 Bridge Barrier Rd. • Carolina Beach
Federal Point Medical Center

© Dale Cohen

© Brenda Tondeur



The gang at CMS.

continued from previous page

locus of control, which means that you believe you create your own destiny. Entrepreneurs in this category, the pursuers of happiness, are so driven to be in charge of their own destiny that they seek a business opportunity that sometimes they have to teach themselves about. John and Leah Garcia, who opened Mad Science of Coastal Carolina in 2007, fit this category, as do the hardworking Haegestrom/Belo clan of Wheel Fun Rentals and the Fudgeboat.

The Garcias are from Fairfax, VA where John was in real estate and Leah worked as an attorney. It disheartened them, as working parents that their young boys spent so much time in the care of others.

"We were working more and more and seeing our kids less and less. We wanted to watch them grow up," explained Garcia. "Regardless of money-making, we didn't want to move to do the same thing. We didn't want to get caught in the same wheel."

Together, the Garcias looked into a number of possibilities and discovered Mad Science, a territory-based franchise which provides educational and entertaining science classes, camps, workshops and parties for children. They believed it provided an important service to the community as well as being a sound business opportunity.

"There are so many good things about Wilmington. We can live at the beach but the area doesn't rely entirely on tourism," said Garcia. "The freedom of owning our own business has made it easier to manage our family life."

Leah's brothers, Dan and John McQueen followed the family down and now they live here too. In fact, they're also transplant entrepreneurs—they bought Sandpiper Subs last spring and are settling in nicely.

The Second Actors

Yet another type of entrepreneur has achieved success and longevity in their field of work but they are ready for a second act. Remember that high need for achievement entrepreneurs have? Once they've achieved success at one thing, they are ready to climb that next mountain.

Ernie Manzella, owner of Divine Wines, is an example of this type of entrepreneur.

After over 20 years of service, Ernie retired as a senior vice president of Aspen Publishers. Manzella's priorities were shifted dramatically after he witnessed the collapse of the World Trade Center towers on September 11, 2001.

"From our office windows we saw the towers collapse," said Manzella. "I said to myself, you know, life is precious."

Manzella took early retirement in December 2001 and based on his life's passions, he considered what type of business to start, a wine shop or a classic car remodeling, and eventually chose to open a wine shop.

He and his wife Carole, who is the guidance counselor at Carolina Beach Elementary, looked into many coastal areas, but settled on Wilmington because of the beach, the climate, and the culture. Their son, Andrew, recently moved here too and helps with the family business as well.

"I'm not a connoisseur, but a student of wine. The focus of the shop is to teach people about the wine they pull off the shelf," said Manzella.

Manzella echoed Haywood (of the Last Resort) in the unexpected fringe benefits of

"We didn't want to move to do the same thing. We didn't want to get caught in the same wheel." — John Garcia

their entrepreneurial activity—friendships and connectedness to the community.

"What I enjoy most is meeting people. I didn't expect so many friendships to develop. It has been very rewarding," said Manzella.

Another example of second actors is Mario and Linda Piccinin, who opened Pic-N-Paint, a paint-your-own pottery studio on the Carolina Beach Boardwalk. The Piccinins are originally from Windsor, Ontario in Canada. Mario worked for 27 years with Starkist Tuna in quality assurance and currently works for Wild American Shrimp. The Piccinins had vacationed here for about 20 years before they moved for good in 2005.

"It was truly a family project," said Linda of Pic n' Paint. "Our daughter, Angela, who graduated from the Art Institute in Florida, worked in a pottery studio. When we visited her, we always spent a lot of time in that studio. We learned to like it. Angela thought it would be a great idea to open one in Carolina Beach."

Indeed entrepreneurship runs in this family. The Piccinins' son, Matt, who graduated from UNCW in 2006 has chosen to settle here too. He along with Sean Cook, who also owns Pleasure Island Rentals, opened the Shuckin' Shack on Lake Park Blvd in November 2007.

The list of entrepreneurs goes on and on of course. No doubt you probably have been to a business founded by one. Even the Mayor of Carolina Beach, Joel Macon, is an entrepreneur—he just opened Two Wine Guys at the Grind, a wine shop/wine bar/coffee shop, with his good friend Shawn Underwood.

Whether its the lifestyle, happenstance, the draw of freedom or financial gain or the potential opportunity, its obvious our economy is producing self-starters. If this trend will continue at this pace, is yet to be determined. What seems constant, however, is that people are being drawn to North Carolina and are determined to stay, even if they have to start a business to do it. ■

© Dale Cohen

CALENDAR June 2008

ART Sunday, June 1 Yard Art Party

A fun day for all artists to interact with the community and for everyone to get creative. There will be a kids art and toy table set up and musicians can jam on the open mic! Open to all ages. The Fat Pelican, Carolina Beach. 1pm til dark. FREE. For more info contact Kristi Jenkins at 910-228-1818.

MUSIC Sunday, June 1 Corey Smith

Downtown Sundown Summer Concert Series. Corey Smith with Jason Adamo. Friday. 6-10pm. Downtown Wilmington, Waterfront Park. FREE.

HEALTHY HOME Monday, June 2 Healthy Home Party

Learn how to make your house a healthy home. Simple solutions to leading a healthy life with less chemicals, toxins, and hazards in your home. You Are My Sunshine Maternity-Baby Boutique in the Cotton Exchange. 12:00pm. For more info email jodysmith@strollerstrides.net.

BOATING COURSE June 2-June 30 Boating Skills & Seamanship Course

US Coast Guard Auxiliary 10-06 (Wilmington) will offer an 8-Lesson course. see details on page 24. Call Lois at 686-4479.

FISH FRY Friday, June 6 Fish Fry

The American Legion Post 129 will be hosting their monthly fish fry from 11am-7pm. Fried Fish, cole slaw, potato salad, corn on the cob, and hushpuppies will be served. 1500 Bridge Barrier Road (up from the Post Office). \$7/plate. Call 910-458-4253 for more information.

MUSIC Friday, June 6 Bradlouallen

Rooftop club, The High Tide Lounge offers the best view on Pleasure Island! Live music from 10:30pm-1am. Info line 458-0807.

POLITICS Friday, June 6 Coffee with the Candidates

A great way to meet the candidates who will be going on to the general election and give you a chance to express your concerns and ideas. Sponsored by The Big Talker FM, Westfield Mall and Chick-fil-A. 7-10am at Westfield Mall. Visit www.thebigtalkerfm.com for more info.

MUSIC Saturday, June 7 Beach Music Festival

Enjoy a full day of live entertainment with the hottest beach music bands in the South. A shag contest will be held for prize money. Beer and soft drinks will be available for purchase. The doors will open at 10am. Tickets are \$15 in advance and \$20 at the door. Contact the Pleasure Island Chamber of Commerce or call 910-458-8434 for advance tickets and more information.

MUSIC Saturday, June 7 Fusesticks

Rooftop club, The High Tide Lounge offers the best view on Pleasure Island! Live music from

10:30pm-1am. Info line 458-0807.

MAGIC Saturday, June 7 Magic Show

sponsored by Kids Making It. This event will help raise money to keep the doors of Kids Making It open to our youth. Bring the kids in the early afternoon for a magic show designed just for them or come late for the adult show which begins at 6:30 pm with cocktails and local magician Joel Givens. Located at City Stage inside Level 5 in downtown Wilmington. For more information, call Diane Boissiere at 910-815-3426.

AQUARIUM June 7, 14, 21, 28 Aquarist Apprentice

Join staff on a behind-the-scenes tour, help prepare animal diets, and participate in some daily care and maintenance tasks. Includes an animal feeding. NC Aquarium at Fort Fisher. \$12/NCA Members. \$20 for non-members. Must be at least 10 years old. Call 910-458-7468 or email NCAFF.registrar@ncmail.net to register. Pre-Registration is required.

MUSIC Sunday, June 8 Who's Bad

Downtown Sundown Summer Concert Series. Who's Bad (tribute to Michael Jackson) with opener Spencer Rush. Friday. 6:00pm-10:00pm. Downtown Wilmington, Waterfront Park. FREE.

MUSIC Friday, June 13 FREE Summer Concert

Valentino and the Piedmont Sheiks will be opening this year's summer concert series. Bring blankets and chairs. This year food will be allowed, but please do not bring pets or beverages! Held at the Fort Fisher Military Recreation Area in Kure Beach. FREE. For more info, contact the Pleasure Island Chamber of Commerce at 458-8434.

MUSIC Friday, June 13 Levi & Lucia

Rooftop club, The High Tide Lounge offers the best view on Pleasure Island! Live music from 10:30pm-1am. Info line 458-0807.

PETS Saturday, June 14 Paw Jam

Enjoy a day of fun and great music with your dog to raise money for area shelters and rescue groups. All proceeds benefit area no-kill, non-profit animal shelters and rescue groups. There will be vendors, food, demonstrations and contests. Saturday, 11am-9pm. Battleship Park. \$5 admission. For more info call 259-7549 or 232-3832.

FISHING Saturday, June 14 3rd Annual Children's Fishing Day

Sponsored by Step Up for Soldiers. For all children of active duty military. At the Kure Beach Pier. Breakfast and lunch will be served and each child will receive a rod and reel. Free. 7am-1pm. www.stepupforsoldiers.org or call 910-297-4981

ART Saturday, June 14 Arts & Crafts Show

Covenant Moravian Church is having an Arts &

Open all year 7 days!

JUNE MUSIC

- 6/1 Steve Todd "Gospel Duo" 12-3pm
- 6/1 The Casserole Duo 6-9pm
- 6/5 Organix 6-9pm
- 6/6 The Mantras 6-9pm
- 6/7 Da Howlies 6-9pm
- 6/8 Keith Allen 12-3pm
- 6/8 Trent Boswell & No Dollar Shoes 6-9pm
- 6/12 Charlie & Rose Lucas 6-9pm
- 6/13 Rogersville Road 6-9pm
- 6/14 Root Soul Project 6-9pm
- 6/15 Steve Todd "Gospel Duo" 6-9pm
- 6/15 The Casserole Duo 6-9pm
- 6/19 Two Cents Worth 6-9pm
- 6/20 The Nosiders 6-9pm
- 6/21 Da Howlies 6-9pm
- 6/22 Colby Wahl Duo 12-3pm
- 6/22 Two Chord Cracka 6-9pm
- 6/26 Raise the Bar w/ Swede 6-8pm
- 6/27 Big Fish 6-9pm
- 6/28 Mason Smith Band 6-9pm
- 6/29 Steve Todd "Gospel Duo" 12-3pm
- 6/29 The Casserole Duo 6-9pm



TIKI BAR OPEN
7 DAYS @ 11am
(weather permitting)

Check out our NEW beer selections!

DINNER 7 DAYS

LUNCH 7 DAYS

BRUNCH SUN. 10AM

1211 S. Lake Park Blvd • Carolina Beach

458-2000 • www.oceangrill.us

continued on next page