

# WACHAPREAGUE Times

News, information  
& happenings from  
the Flounder  
Capital of the World

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## Wachapreague General Store A True Passion Project

**EMILY PATRICK, ANA** Zapata and Chaundra Thorp didn't know each other all that well when they decided to open the Wachapreague General Store, just about two years ago. And they hadn't thoroughly analyzed the idea, made a business plan or done any sort of deep study.

Patrick lives on Main Street. Two years ago, says she had been answering phones for the Wachapreague Inn, mostly as a way to meet people and to help the Inn.

Walking home one day, she noticed work happening in the General Store building. She stopped in and took a look around. The building's owner, Allen Stevens, was there, and they started talking.

Patrick had helped run a bookstore/cafe with a friend outside of Yellowstone National Park, and was familiar with that seasonal small-town business model. She expressed that something new that carried the previous general store spirit, would be great for this small fishing town. Allen asked her if she wanted to rent it and she said yes. Just like that.

**Top: the store. Middle: left to right, Ana Zapata and Emily Patrick. Bottom: Chaundra Thorp, who couldn't make it to the interview.**

She called Zapata and Thorp, whom she knew from a group of young professionals who get together monthly for dinner. Thorp said she thought Zapata might be interested, and Patrick said, "Well, let's do it."

And the idea became a reality.

**"THE AMERICAN DREAM** is to own your own business," Zapata says, and the general store is proving just that.

Their vision is a little out of the ordinary. For instance, making a profit is not one of their top goals. They were hoping only to break even, in what they call their "passion project."

All three have full-time careers. Patrick, 32, as a physician assistant at Rural Health; Zapata, 32, an assistant oyster hatchery manager for Cherrystone; and Thorp, 33, as owner of Sunstar Massage

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## Person of the Year

**HERE IS A** brief rundown of your Person of the Year choices.

**PAT HART** has lived in Wachapreague her whole life. For years, she ran the Burton House bed-and-breakfast, and eventually operated two other B&Bs in the town..

She worked as a meat-cutter for years, then became a Realtor, and was responsible for many home sales in town over the decades.

More recently, she operated Seaside Art and Antiques, in a Main Street building she owns. These days, she sells her antiques mainly at the shop in Painter.

Pat's nomination comes for a lifetime of service to and support of Wachapreague.

**STEVE JOSEPH** was a commercial airline pilot before starting his current vocation of buying and renovating homes in town.

Right now, he's renovating the newly mint-green home on the north side of Main Street near the Wachapreague sign. He's renovated homes on Brooklyn and on Lee Street, as well.

While his renovation work has done wonders to polish the look of the town, it's his unflinching generosity and energy that brought about his nomination. He owns the Snorkle lift that has come into play for stringing lights and hanging banners. He helped with the Town Hall

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## This and That

**SANTA VISITED TOWN** earlier in the month, and there was a grand celebration at the Gazebo.

Children, families and residents came out to welcome Santa and enjoy cookies and community.



**POWELTON PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH** services are live on Facebook on the church's page.

And the church will be holding a Christmas Eve service at 5 p.m. Anyone is invited to attend; it will also be live on Facebook.

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**Store, continued**

Therapy on Market Street in Onancock.

All three have education in biological fields, and only Thorp has substantial business experience. Patrick says. Thorp, with a degree in neuroscience and behavior biology, was a site administrator for Algae Systems, a biofuels initiative company, and was also director of customer success at OnceHub. Zapata took a course in accounting in college. Patrick took an intro to economics class in college. Now they're learning, she says, laughing, in the school of hard knocks.

And they've had a string of surprises. One big one is how strong beer sales are.

Another, Zapata says, is the building codes, and how they have constricted their ideas about what they wanted with the store.

They're hoping that when the sewer comes in, they'll be able to put more of their ideas into action.

**THE THREE OWNERS** worked hard and long to open the store, and then to keep it running. It was a huge focus of their lives, together and apart. They ate, slept and breathed Wachapreague General Store.

And when they closed last year for the winter, they were surprised at how hard it was to see either of the other two without feeling guilty, or feeling that they should have been working on the store, coming up with ideas, making buying trips or doing some sort of store-related work, the way all three of them had throughout the year.

When they reopened in the spring of this year, the whole operation was easier. It took a couple weeks to get into the flow, but they'd figured a lot of things out. It was easier.

They had good help and they didn't have to invent



everything from the ground up, as they had the first year.

This let each of them take some time off, and focus on visiting family.

"We're in our 30s," Zapata says, "and we are growing to appreciate our parents and grandparents and brothers and sisters in family dynamics."

They also took time to do some things they'd wanted to do, in addition to visiting family. Patrick took a van trip through some of the great national parks in the West and Zapata and Thorp traveled to the Burning Man Festival in Nevada.

**THEY'VE BEEN PLEASED** at the response the store has received. "People would make the trip here for their eggs, their milk, their donuts and coffee," Patrick says.

They appreciate the people who show up regularly to have their Sunday ice cream, their daily lattes, their afternoon smoothies.

The store will be closed Christmas Day, and will stay closed until April 1. When it reopens, expect to see minnows and bait, new artists and artisans, more "Wachapreague" items and more "Wachapreague General Store" merchandise.

Happily, Patrick says, they are better friends than ever, and in a fun way, feel they are in a marriage of sorts, with the store as the baby they all three co-parent.

"It has a Social Security number," Patrick says, laughing. "And you have to take care of it every day."

**Person of the Year, continued**

renovation, and has performed innumerable acts of assistance for the town and its citizens.

**SEAN FATE** works as watercraft operations manager for VIMS, and is the chief of the Wachapreague Volunteer Fire Department. In addition to holding these two big and time-consuming jobs, Fate works hard to forge links between the town and the Fire Department and the town and VIMS.

It was his brainchild to offer unused Carnival food to the town at the Fairgrounds celebration after the Fourth of July parade. He manages the Carnival, the Christmas light-stringing on Main Street, and runs the Fire Department that helps so many people in and around Wachapreague.

**CHARLIE GIBBLE**, Wachapreague town clerk, exceeds the bounds of her job day in and day out. She is available to answer questions, solve problems, welcome residents and visitors to Town

Hall, and she does it all with a smile.

She was also instrumental in setting up the Fourth of July celebration, maintaining interest in and enthusiasm for the crab cake cookoff and apple pie contest, decorating the gazebo for Christmas, and many more activities.

Her job runs Monday-Wednesday but she works for the town week in and week out, and always with good cheer.

**THESE FOUR PEOPLE** have set great examples of leadership, hope, faith and community-building. Without them, our town would be poorer in spirit and less of a community. Any of them would be a great Person of the Year.

Please cast your ballot at the Wachapreague General Store until Dec. 24, and then at the Post Office until the deadline, Jan. 8, or email your vote to me by Jan. 8 at [carrieBjacobson@gmail.com](mailto:carrieBjacobson@gmail.com). The Person of the Year will be announced in the January edition of the Wachapreague Times.

**More This & That**

**YIKES!** The recent storm brought just shy of 6 inches of rain, according to some local gauges. Left, the Crains' home on Richardson.



**BELOW**, the Puchalskis' house at the corner of Pearl and South streets is ablaze with lights. Do you have a good photo of your decorations? Email me at [carrieBjacobson@gmail.com](mailto:carrieBjacobson@gmail.com)



**THANK YOU** for reading the Wachapreague Times in its inaugural year. I hope to continue the paper, and improve it - and I hope also that more of you will help me, by sending photos, ideas, criticisms. In the meantime, good wishes for a safe and joyful holiday season.

Carrie

While the general store is closed, you'll find the Wachapreague Times at the post office and Town Hall