

# communities



After taking a decade off, Barbara Blythe has resurrected her passion for writing romance novels. This year, two more of her unpublished works are scheduled for release, in April and October. **BOB RUEGSEGGER PHOTOS/FOR THE VIRGINIAN-PILOT**

## Love stories: Chesapeake author

### HAMPTON ROADS HAPPENINGS

#### HAMPTON

#### Community concert today

The Norfolk Street Choir Project presents its Community Sing! The performance will be held 3 p.m. today at Hampton Baptist Church, 40 Kings Way.

For more information on the choir, or to make a donation, visit [thenorfolkstreetchoir.org](http://thenorfolkstreetchoir.org).

#### WILLIAMSBURG

#### Free community concert today

Williamsburg Music Club Inc. will present a free concert featuring husband and wife duo Julian Schwarz, cello; and Marika Bournaki, piano. 1:30 p.m. today at Lewis Hall, Bruton Parish Church, Duke of Gloucester Street. Reservations are not required.

For more information about the music club, call 757-880-8631 or visit [williamsburgmusicclub.com](http://williamsburgmusicclub.com).

#### CHESAPEAKE

#### Applicants needed for city boards and commissions

City Council is seeking residents who may be interested in serving on various boards and commissions, which provide vital services to various city departments.

Citizens interested in serving must complete an application form.

Applications for the vacancies listed below are due in the clerk's office by next Saturday.

Animal Services Advisory Board, Board of Zoning Appeals, Chesapeake Agricultural Advisory Commission, Chesapeake Bicycle/Trails Advisory Committee, Chesapeake Board of Historic and Architectural Review, Chesapeake Historic Preservation Commission, Chesapeake Integrated Behavioral Healthcare Board, Chesapeake Other Post Employment Benefits Finance Board, Hampton Roads Disabilities Board, STOP Inc., and Transportation Toll Facility Advisory Committee.

For more information or to apply, call 757-382-6151 or visit Boards and Commissions at [cityofchesapeake.net](http://cityofchesapeake.net).

#### NORFOLK

#### Brick and mortar celebrates 90 years of film experiences

In celebration of the building that opened in 1936 as the Colley Theater, "My Man Godfrey" will be shown at 7 p.m. Tuesday at what is now known as The Naro Expanded Cinema, 1507 Colley Ave.

The 1936 romantic comedy was nominated for six Academy Awards.

Tickets are \$2.

For more information, visit [narcinema.com](http://narcinema.com).

#### NEWPORT NEWS

# Love stories: Chesapeake author rolling out 3 new romance novels

By **Bob Ruegsegger** Correspondent

While the majority of folks probably accept the old admonition that it's imprudent to judge a book by the cover, Barbara Blythe, a local romance novelist in Chesapeake, has never subscribed to that age-old theory.

"An attractive cover is imperative. I remember reading my mother's old Nancy Drew books. They had fascinating covers," Blythe said. "The illustrations on the covers were drawn like old Coca Cola posters. They were done in very precise detail."

After a ten-year hiatus, the Chesapeake resident returned to her passion for writing inspirational romance novels. "Far Greater than Paradise," her most recently published novel, was released by Elk Lakes Publishing, Inc. on Jan. 20.

Two additional novels, "Stronger than Shifting Sands" and "Fire Bird's Star," are scheduled for release by Pelican Book Group in April and October, respectively.

Publishers handle the cover design and graphics with feedback from the authors. "I've been very pleased with how they portrayed the characters and the settings on the covers," said Blythe. "I'm very happy with that."

The title of a romance novel is also critical marketing element. Together with the illustration on the cover or book jacket, the title and what it suggests — nostalgia and passion — is another component of the literary success an amorous adventure might enjoy. And Blythe has an uncanny ability to generate her own compelling titles.

"All the books that I've had published, including the two I had yet to have come out, the publishers have taken my title. I have been very blessed with that," Blythe said. "They apparently approve the names because they haven't offered or suggested a change in titles. They can do that."

While the book cover naturally has a visual impact and the title of the book suggests and embraces its amorous appeal, a romance writer's real legal tender is a well-developed love story.

Margaret Mitchell's classic Civil War era romance story, "Gone with the Wind," is Blythe's favorite book, and her favorite line is Scarlet O'Hara's repeated observation, "After all, tomorrow's another day."

Once the perspective reader has a romance novel in hand, the writer has to engage them and quickly convince them that the story is worth reading. This "hook" is the writer's most valuable resource, Blythe said.

"If you don't make it a punch on your first page, you could lose your reader. That was a thing I had a hard time learning," she said. "I try to start the story with either an interesting line being spoken by somebody or someone finding themselves in the middle of a mess."

"Yeah, the hook is at the very beginning."

"Fire Dragon's Angel," published by Pelican Book Group in 2010, was the first book Blythe wrote. Its sequel, "Fire Bird's Star," will be released in October.

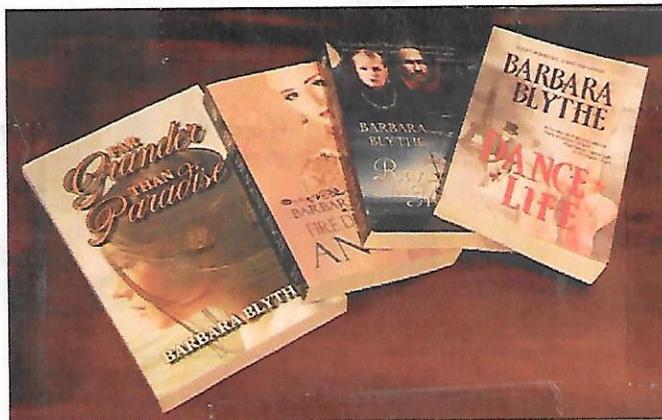
"I'm also writing a third sequel — and a fourth — which is going to include the Battle of Great Bridge," Blythe said.

Blythe's last published book, before the Jan. 20 title, was released in 2014.

Blythe never intended to allow so much time to go by and never planned to take a break. But she decided that the books she completed more than a decade ago needed to be pulled back out and offered for publication.

"It's a miracle," she said. "Truly, I do thank God that he gave me this second chance. It didn't have to work out this way. It's been a blessing, and I'm just trying to do the most I can with it."

Blythe has had four books published. When she's not occupied writing novels, she serves as a docent at the Great Bridge Battlefield Museum in Chesapeake.



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