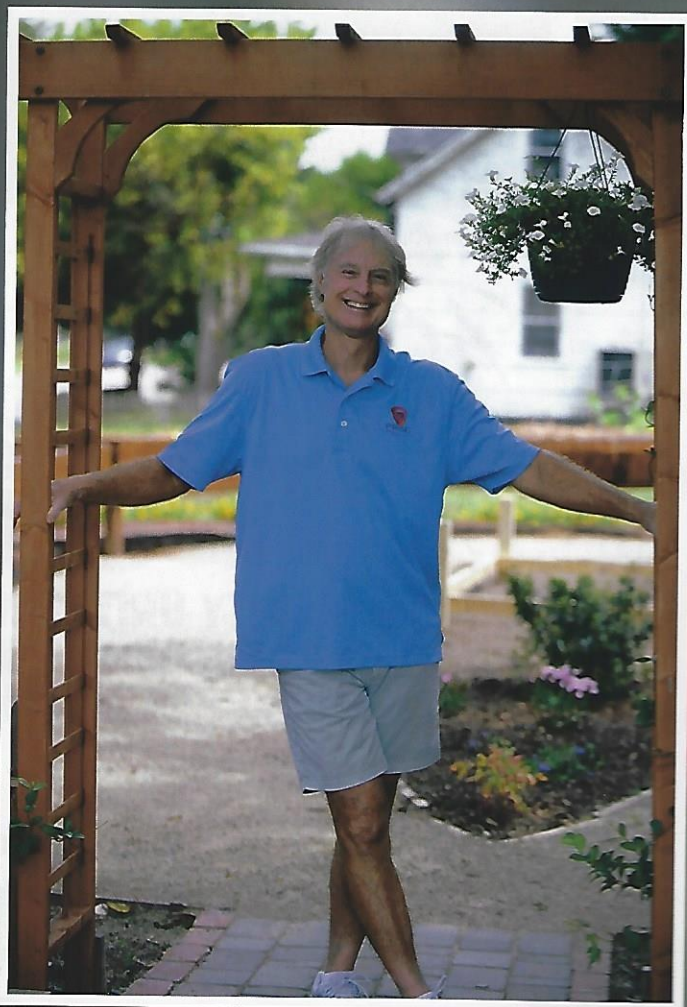


creating a HAVEN

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Pamlico Rose CEO Robert Sands, pictured, wanted the main focal point of the Rose Haven Center to be the landscape, which is full of edible produce and colorful flowers.





A house built for the underrepresented

Boarded up and covered in weeds, the house on 219 E. Third St. was once invisible to the people of Washington. No one thought about the historical eyesore, let alone its story or potential, but with the creation of The Pamlico Rose Institute for Sustainable Communities, the once-forgotten house is full of life and now a main topic of local conversation.

Pamlico Rose, with CEO Robert Sands and project engineer David Steckel, was created in 2017 with the purpose of transforming a historical home into a rehabilitation center for female veterans. With the purchase and restoration of the Rose Haven Center of Healing on East Third Street, that dream is slowly becoming a reality.

"A lot of events kind of created a perfect storm," Sands said. "... For five years, my wife was working at the Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Office (in the Pentagon), so she became very intimate with the problems that female veterans have, such as what they call military sexual trauma. I have a sister who's in her second recovery period, she's working through substance abuse, and that was about the time we came upon this house."

The house is only one aspect of the Rose Haven Center. The lot also highlights peaceful gardens and a former blacksmith's barn that will soon be used to teach female veterans new skills, such as woodworking.

According to the North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office, the house first appeared on the map in 1892. Although some people, including Sands, believe it was built before that date because of the style of the home, the house was nonetheless unique for its time.

The house was owned by an African-American widow in 1910, Hannah Bowen, who ran a laundry out of the home, as well as a boarding business, establishing a pattern of blue-collared residents that adapted the house as needed.

"I like to think of the first 20 years as sort of a period that was more serving the needs of those who are underrepresented or those who were marginalized or at-risk economically," said Sands. "So that's the period I like to focus in on when I talk about the house and what we're doing, because we're serving at-risk, underrepresented people, and this house started that way. It represents ordinary people just trying to make a living, just trying to do what they can."

John and Lillian Duke bought the property in 1934, and in 1937, John Duke built a blacksmith shop in the backyard. Once again, the house was used as both a residential and commercial building, following the established pattern of working families.

By 1976, the building was no longer owned by the Duke family, and although the house had a constant flow of new owners, it was left empty, the lot overgrown and wasting away.

After lying vacant for decades, Sands bought the house for the Rose Haven program in 2017 and immediately began fundraising for the restoration process. Pamlico Rose obtained a building permit and a general contractor easily enough, and the process was seemingly smooth sailing, but the team did not anticipate the obstacles they would face months later.

"A local business came on and said they were going to be our (general contractor), but it didn't work out for various reasons, and they decided to back away from the project," Sands said. "So we were kind of just left swinging in the wind."

Around the same time that the team lost their contractor, Hurricane Florence hit, and almost every contractor in the area became instantly overwhelmed with local repair jobs, leaving the Rose Haven House without a foreseeable future. Luckily, there was one contractor willing to help the nonprofit's cause—Matt Sopher of Turning Point, Inc.

Waiting for another building permit, along with an available roofer, the house's visible progress ceased again. In the meantime, the team remained busy, doing smaller jobs that do not require oversight, such as landscaping, priming donated clapboards and Steckel personally restoring the historic windows.

"A lot of what we could do is sort of limited due to workers comp and liability and stuff like that," Steckel said. "Our contractor pays close attention to that. We had an inspector come out and actually point out, 'This needs to be done.' So we've been using that as a checklist."

As the project remains paused and the wait for an available roofer continues, the Pamlico Rose team is looking toward the future, finalizing their plans for the rehabilitation programs.

The first program is a three-month residential program, where four female veterans will work on mindfulness and social skills through activities seen as gardening, community service, yoga and more. The second program





David Steckel is personally restoring all 42 windows in the Rose Haven home despite having no previous experience. After restoring over half, he said he enjoys the work so much that he is contemplating starting his own restoration business.



The detailed gardens are dedicated to individuals who have helped Pamlico Rose along the way, such as The Louis Randolph Garden, which is dedicated to the original owner of the New Beginning Funeral Home, now owned by Louis' wife, Betty Randolph, who allowed Pamlico Rose to share its parking lot.

is a condensed version, lasting three to four days, and works to provide a quick, mindful getaway while encouraging female veterans to engage with the community.

"When you try to help people through a reintegration process, one of the key things that they need to be aware of and to understand and to reach for is wellness," Sands said. "... Our program is designed as more of a social program, where we get them involved in the community, get them involved with each other."

According to Sands, the first program will start in October. While the house will not be completely finished, it will be an opportunity to put their plan into action and work out any kinks



Troop 21 Eagle Scout Lucas Wood organized the construction of six raised produce beds with accessibility in mind. While the produce will be used to feed female veterans who attend the Pamlico Rose rehabilitation program; any leftover food will be donated to local organizations.



Although progress on the Rose Haven Center house may not be visible to the public, the Pamlico Rose team has been busy working on the details, such as priming the clapboards for Matt Sopher to use in the future.

in the program.

Although the restoration process has had its ups and downs in the past two years, for both Steckel and Sands, the house has been a worthwhile experience in Washington, making all of the arguments, headaches and obstacles worth it.

"We had grand ideas when we first started Pamlico Rose," Steckel said. "We wanted to make actual communities of houses grouped together and have them all veteran-based. And that's still a possibility after this program, depending on if this takes off. But one of the things is, if this is the only thing that Pamlico Rose does, I still I think it's a success that we've turned an overlooked vacant lot into something that's viable, useful." *