

827 BEST OF AWARDS  PLUS OUR ANNUAL PHOTO CONTEST WINNERS

JUNE ANNUAL
OUT ALL YEAR LONG

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BEST OF 
Cape Cod
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Plus Our Annual Photo Contest Winners!



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CLASSIC CARS

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I'm sure there's a time, over the course of a year that you eagerly anticipate. It could be because of your busy season at work, or maybe it's a holiday that you host or you're awaiting a vacation. It's a feeling of knowing something big is ahead, an excitement that builds before the event actually arrives—a kind of buzz as you prepare and make plans. That is how we feel at Cape Cod Life about the June issue.

Working here, I get to see what goes into the making of the issue—a peek “behind the curtain” so to speak—and there's a quiet pride in being part of this, knowing that Cape Cod Life's founder Brian Shortsleeve didn't just follow a trend but started it, and that we get to continue that almost 35 years later.

We completely recognize that you are inundated with other contests, asking for you to cast your vote, so the fact that thousands of you vote and support local businesses, share your opinions on the beauty of the region, and feel as strongly as we do about this wonderful tradition we have created, means so much to us.

My brother and sister-in-law recently moved to the Cape after vacationing here for years with their family. We met them for dinner a few weeks ago and their excitement over the upcoming summer—their first in their new house, as full-time Cape residents—was palpable. In fact, my sister-in-law joked that my brother-in-law is literally, “inviting everyone he knows to visit!” It reminded me that the “Best of” issue has that same sense of anticipation as the summer season—the buzz, the energy, and that feeling that something really good is just around the corner.

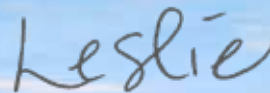
As June remains on the newsstands all year long, we try to choose pieces that reflect the heart and soul of the region, and this issue has some wonderful stories about Cape Cod traditions. There's something so pure and Americana about the town bands that play every

summer across Cape Cod. Sitting on a blanket or in a lawn chair and watching these performers, many of whom are friends and neighbors, is a cherished summer ritual. Check out that story, written by a band member herself, on page 46. For many of you and your families, it's also a tradition to visit the Hyannis Chamber of Commerce car show and Heritage Museums and Gardens, an experience that goes beyond admiring vintage cars, it's an occasion where generations connect and memories are made. You'll find that story on page 60 by Matt Nilsson, a new Dad in the midst of creating memories with his family.

We're pickled (see what I did there?) to introduce you to the Cape's newest entertainment destination, Island Pickle in Mashpee—a place where it's less about games and more about community. Another new spot you absolutely must visit is Love Farms in Dennis; open just a few months, they are fast becoming the place you will plan your whole day around. Our publisher, Julie Wagner, welcomes you there starting on page 100.

I plan on giving this “Best of” issue to my in-laws to show them the many gems their new home has to offer, and I hope you have someone to share it with too—it makes a great gift! Whether it lands in your beach bag, onto your coffee table, or maybe you're thumbing through it at the hairdresser or the dentist; however you experience it, our goal is simple: to help you see the Cape a little differently, or to remind you why you fell in love with it in the first place. Thanks for your votes!

See you out there,



Leslie Hatton
Editor
Cape Cod LIFE





Serving Up Community

The buzz over the newly built Island Pickle in Mashpee is worth the hype.

by Leslie Hatton

If you're of a certain age you probably remember the popular *Brady Bunch* episode where Jan, has an outburst over feeling invisible alongside her celebrated sister, whining, "Marcia, Marcia, Marcia!" I wonder then, if the game of tennis had a voice, would it say, "Pickleball, pickleball, pickleball!" Because in case you haven't heard, pickleball is pretty popular. Its origins actually date back to the mid-60s, steadily increasing in popularity with each passing decade so that by the 90s, it was a household name and being played in all fifty states—proving it wasn't just a passing "dink," but a sport that was around to stay.

And while owner and Cape Cod resident Bill Russell (a.k.a. "The

Big Dill" around the courts) didn't even play pickleball, he recognized both the absence of a large entertainment facility and the opportunity to create one. It wasn't an overnight idea however, Russell began evaluating several existing properties for the project back in 2024, including the Kmart building, the Bed, Bath & Beyond building, and the Christmas Tree Shops building—all located in Hyannis. For multiple reasons that included parking or renovation complications, none of those options proved suitable for Russell's intended use, so he began to think about building his own original space. "Things all happen for a reason," he says with a smile, looking back on the process that included working



through the approval process with the Cape Cod Commission, which proved to be both lengthy and complex, requiring a significant personal investment and considerable financial risk. He adds, “I couldn’t be more delighted with where we are. It’s geographically centered to everything on the Upper Cape and it’s in close proximity to the bridges. It’s a strong community that I’m building and if I was somewhere else, I wouldn’t have the community impact that I can have here.”

Russell’s impact and imprint is felt in every corner of the business, from the artwork he personally chose and hung himself to the genuine relationships he forges with every visitor, and perhaps most powerfully in the culture of trust and empowerment he is instilling in his team. All of these factors contribute to that warm, welcoming feeling of a place you want to visit again and again. And with three distinct “islands”: a tavern that serves up refined pub fare and drinks that are garnering excellent reviews among foodies; six golf simulator bays outfitted with gold-standard Trackman technology, a system used by the world’s top professional golfers for both practice and coaching; and 10 tournament-quality pickleball courts with everything from an advanced flooring system,



video recording for replay, pristine locker rooms, a pro-shop, and almost 37,000 square feet of indoor space—the phrase “there is something for everyone” rings true. There’s even an impressive tiki-themed juice bar (named Pickle Juiced, of course) that serves fresh juices, and an array of coffees and smoothies.

Russell runs Island Pickle with his daughter, Adriana a.k.a “The Little Dill” and wife Tammy a.k.a. “Momma Pickle.” When the family got the opportunity to get away, they loved vacationing in the Bahamas, specifically Exuma Island, therefore much of the decor of Island Pickle is inspired by the colors and getaway vibes they experienced there. The colorwashed ceiling planks in the tavern area, the whimsical

wooden swings at the juice bar and the hull of a boat hanging from the ceiling are reminiscent of a tropical escape, making you forget you’re in Mashpee altogether.

Often dubbed the game that can be played from age eight to eighty, pickleball is relatively easy to learn but hard to master, Russell shares. “It’s a social game before it’s an athletic event. You can pick the game up and learn it the very first time you play and have a good time. It also doesn’t cost a lot of money to play and you can pick it up at any age, so the growth continues to expand within every demographic.” As with any sport, there’s always room for improvement, and Island Pickle employs three expert-level coaches in Todd Zukowski and Nat and Nancy Boughton who provide lessons as well as a variety of clinics for all levels of player from beginner to advanced. Coach Nat Boughton says, “My





goal is simple. I want you to love the sport so much that you want to continue to play it. We want to create a community. I don't want this to be an environment where only the best come to play, I want it to be an environment that entices and excites people to want to play whether you've never played or if you're a pro. We make a conscious effort here to create programs for all levels."

Community is actually a word that gets repeated over and over at Island Pickle. And when something is repeated several times, it's probably for a reason. Though they've only been open since November of 2025, it's quickly become a gathering place—whether you come for live music, line dancing, trivia, cornhole or simply the great food, it's the kind of place that makes

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you feel like you belong.

Falmouth resident and member of the Cape's professional pickleball team Cape Sharks, Tara Sullivan laughs, but says earnestly, "I think pickleball saved our lives during the winter. Literally it saved our mental health. For people that don't go away in the winter, Island Pickle is so important. We're loyal and we want to see this place succeed."

Because like pickup basketball, a golf league or mahjong, it isn't just about the game—it's a social opportunity, where keeping score can easily turn into friendships and familiar faces can become part of your daily routine. For many of the players who utilize the courts at Island Pickle, the camaraderie that comes after the match is just as important—the laughs, the drinks and the



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snacks—it’s all better when it happens under one roof.

Mark Becker, also of Falmouth, credits Russell for creating a dedicated premier facility that appeals to all ages. “This place on the weekends? It’s fabulous,” he says, adding, “Bill is the most tenacious guy I’ve ever met. He listens, he gets feedback and he makes adjustments for us.” Another player, Sue Moore, who can be found at Island Pickle several times a week says, “At Christmas we brought my whole family here for a ‘Dink the Halls’ tournament. We took up two or three courts, and we had ages ranging from two to eighty.”

Recently, Russell walked by a group at the golf simulator overhearing one say, “This place is pretty amazing,” and it’s in that kind of moment when

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he knows the countless hours thinking about each and every detail has been worth it. He says, "It's so much more than a 'pickleball place.' I want us to leave an indelible mark, to create a communal family here. It's a family environment and it's an entertainment center, from the people that come to it, to the people that run it."

Ultimately Island Pickle isn't just a place to play, it's a place to belong, proving that what's been built here is more than a venue—it's community, and that's a pretty big dill. 🥒

Visit Island Pickle at 51 Evergreen Circle in Mashpee and online at islandpickle.com as well as their social media pages @ [islandpickle](https://www.instagram.com/islandpickle).

Leslie Hatton is the editor of Cape Cod LIFE.



Paula Frohn (center, front line) teaches line dancing at Island Pickle.



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