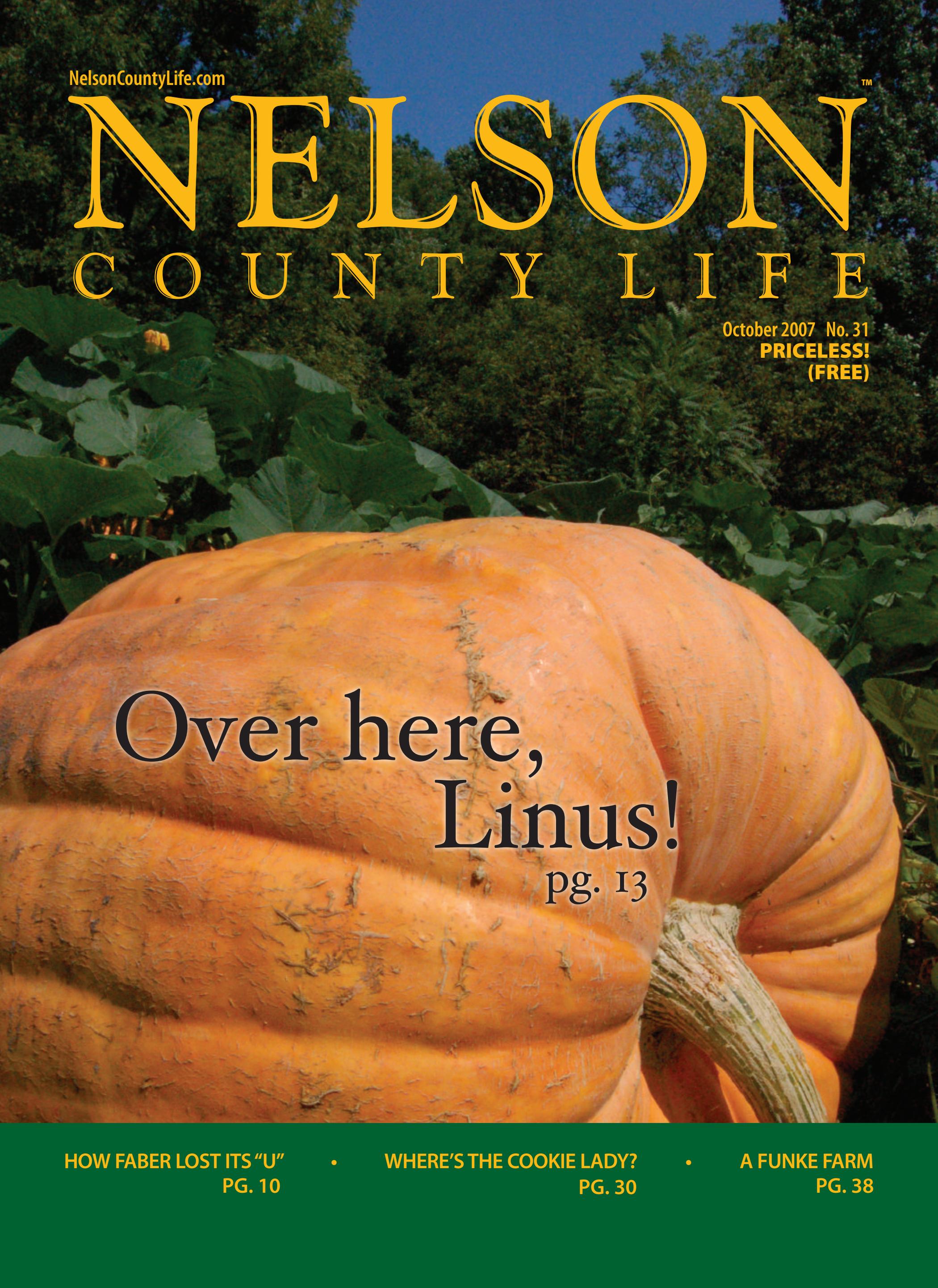


NelsonCountyLife.com

# NELSON<sup>TM</sup>

## COUNTY LIFE

October 2007 No. 31  
**PRICELESS!**  
**(FREE)**



Over here,  
Linus!

pg. 13

HOW FABER LOST ITS "U"  
PG. 10

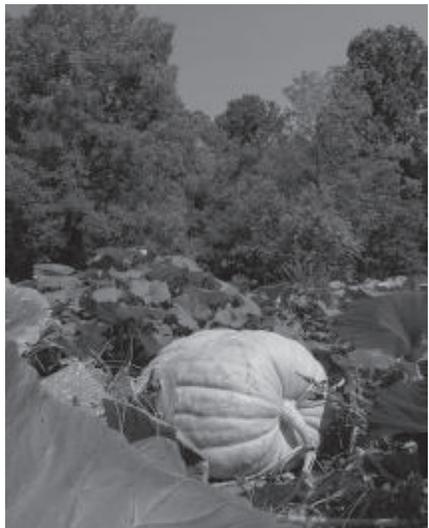
• WHERE'S THE COOKIE LADY?  
PG. 30

• A FUNKE FARM  
PG. 38



## 10 faber's missing "u"

*It might be in one of these boxes.*



## 13 great pumpkins

*And this isn't even the big one.*



## 38 funke farm

*I am a cute and cuddly wallaby  
from the land down under.  
Pet me.*

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## on the cover

**Pictured:**  
A Dill's Atlantic Giant Pumpkin  
**Photographer:** Tommy Stafford

This pumpkin, one of several in a patch, sits at an undisclosed location in Tyro. Why are we being so secretive? Because like Linus van Pelt, we are superstitious. So superstitious, in fact, that for fear of jinxing things, we didn't put the patch's biggest pumpkin on the cover. We saved it for page 13. Are we crazy or what?!!

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Everyone's talking about it which is why we're blogging about it.  
Keep the comments coming.

To Laura, Elschen and Iliana:

Friends, family and strangers miss you.  
You will not be forgotten.

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know your nelson.



## from the publishers

Angelo wants some equal time so here goes.

This is the season for debates and Tommy and I have yet to both agree that chasing the cat with a laser pointer is a good thing.

Tommy says it is okay for the cat to obsess over "electronic yarn." I disagree.

Can you imagine if the dodge balls on our playgrounds were make believe? Every ball I pegged at Sean Stanley was worth it. Every one of James Messick's balls I caught was worth catching. Sure, it stings. But that's dodge ball.

Humans need dodge ball like cats need yarn. Not fake here-one-minute-gone-the-other-minute yarn, but real, tangible yarn. Yarn you can unspool from a basket. In our case, Angelo amuses himself with the terry cloth belt on my bathrobe. If Angelo is cunning enough to rip it to shreds without us finding out, he has earned the glory (and punishment) that goes along with it. Try teaching similar life skills with a laser pointer and you'll be spending hundreds, if not thousands, in feline therapy. *Why did daddy tease me with his laser? Why? Why? Why?!*

Making a cat hallucinate is bad enough. Tricking a cat into *thinking* it is hallucinating is downright wrong. *Wrong* I tell you!

So what about the picture? That doesn't look like yarn, does it?



No, it isn't yarn. And neither is it a laser pointer. It is my coffee, dotted with a hit of cream. Angelo loves it.

For this photo, and this photo only, we let him indulge. You tell a dog to stop trying to lick mommy's coffee and he'll stop. You tell a cat to stop and he just comes back for more. The opening to that mug, a Nan Rothwell, is about 2.5 inches wide. The width of Angelo's head is at least three inches. Even so, I have caught him with half of his head in that mug, hoping to reach for a drop of caffeinated cream. And unlike "electronic yarn," that tasty cream is worth chasing. Even if the coffee's a bit hot. It stings.

Just like dodge ball.

Enjoy!

Yvette & Tommy Stafford

A man with a mustache, wearing a light blue t-shirt, stands behind a massive, smooth-skinned orange pumpkin. The pumpkin is the central focus, filling most of the lower half of the frame. The man is looking towards the camera. In the background, there are green trees and a clear blue sky. Two white poles are visible, crossing the frame horizontally.

When his buddies are gone fishing or watching Nascar, William Layton of Tyro is growing pumpkins.

**Big ones.**

continued on **page 36**



continued from **page 13**

STORY by YVETTE STAFFORD  
PHOTOGRAPHY by TOMMY STAFFORD

Sheila Layton is a pumpkin widow.

"It's like hunting and women who have husbands that hunt. You lose them during hunting season. I lose him in pumpkin season."

Sheila's husband, William, owns a masonry and excavation company. After watching a television show about giant pumpkins, William got excited and began researching varieties. He settled on Dill's Atlantic Giant.

"I had a 220 pound pumpkin the very first year, which was bigger than I expected. I only expected a 100 pound pumpkin and I got 220 pounds and I was hooked after that."

Sheila says when her husband sets his mind on something, there's no turning back.

"Every year he kept setting goals and he kept meeting them and then this year I hadn't gotten excited until I came down here and it was 800 pounds," she says.

William plowed the field in March and put the plants in the ground in April. Of his seven plants, one has record-setting potential.

"They say for a good pumpkin you put on 300 to 400 pounds in 30 days. That pumpkin right now is 1130 to 1140 and a little over 60 days," William says, pointing to a bloated pumpkin resting underneath a tarp to protect it from the sun's scorching rays.

"I knew when it was 600 pounds at 30 days I had a monster on my hands."

So all summer, William nursed the monster. Sheila says William spent so much time in the field, it was as if the pumpkin had become part of the family.

"He comes down here in the mornings. He comes down here during the day. He comes down here at night and he could spend two or three hours down here."

"Here" is a field in Tyro. Its exact location is a

closely guarded secret. Hallowed ground, if you will.

"You can watch the plants grow. They react to you when you're out here," William says. "When you spray water the leaves will come up, cone up in a matter of seconds to cone up the water. And the vines will grow 2 foot a day in length. Or sometimes as much as 3 foot. And the pumpkins they say will put on 40 to 50 pounds a day in weight."

For a relative novice, William seems to have discovered the secret to growing gigantic pumpkins.

"There's no magic formula. You put a lot of manure and lot of fertilizers," William says matter-of-factly. "I Miracle Grow once a week. Fish emulsion and a little bit of everything. Plus I play them a lot of blue grass music. Every day I'm working down there, I play blue grass on my XM radio and they love the music."

To have a chance at a state record, William says he has to beat Tim Herring's 913 pounder set in 2004. To take home a world record title, William will have to come in at over 1502 pounds.

"200 or 300 pounds takes an awful lot more luck, an awful lot more work," he says. "What happens is the bigger you grow the pumpkins, the more chance you have of them splitting and busting open or ruining."

"If you want to see a grown man cry, watch him when his pumpkin rots," Sheila tells me.

A lot of things can happen on the way to state fair in Richmond. Lifting it off the ground and getting it there is risky. Even so, William says the experience has taught his two children, Olivia and William, a life lesson.

"They see that when you're doing something you don't quit and you continue to work. The harder you work, the more privilege and stuff."

Or, at the very least, a cover story. **NCL**

"I knew when  
it was 600  
pounds at 30  
days I had a  
monster on  
my hands."

– William Layton

“It’s like hunting and women who have husbands that hunt. You lose them during hunting season. I lose him in pumpkin season.”

– Sheila Layton, William’s wife

