



# SPRING HILL HIGH: AN E+ FOR EDUCATIONAL *Excellence*

by Marilyn Thomas

As Spring Hill High School Career Pathways Magnet completes its sixth successful year, the administration and educators who serve on its campus are proud to be a part of its leadership team, special programs, and impressive accomplishments. Their main priority, however, is to encourage the students who attend this school to strive for excellence by utilizing the strengths they already possess to build a strong academic foundation and future.

Seven years ago, Dr. Stephen Hefner, Lexington-Richland School District Five's former superintendent who retired in 2018, secured approval from the district board to design a new, "all-choice, all-magnet school," says Dr. Michael Lof-

ton, the founding and current principal of Spring Hill High.

"He had the vision that people want public choice, and so he brought that here to District Five and started that with Spring Hill," explains Katrina Goggins, District Five's director of communications.

While serving as the principal of Chapin Middle School, Dr. Lofton interviewed for the position at Spring Hill High, and, once hired, "I did have a unique opportunity to really focus on making Spring Hill a very special magnet program for District Five," he says. During the construction phase of the 267,000-square-foot facility, Dr. Lofton was "intimately involved with the building of Spring Hill."





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Every detail of its structure, furniture, and academic focus was selected deliberately with a specific purpose in mind. For example, in an aerial view, the building appears to be shaped like a capital “E,” and this letter inspired Dr. Lofton to choose “E” themes for the specialized academy programs that the magnet school offers, which include engineering, entertainment, entrepreneurial, environmental studies, and exercise science.

Inside the building, district standards require that all rooms be equipped with the latest in technology, and Dr. Lofton picked out everything from the paint colors to doorknobs and insured that these choices were functional, durable, and harmonious. After consulting with a furniture engineer, he outfitted each classroom with student desks that can easily be rearranged to accommodate group activities and are “ergonomically designed” to allow students to move more freely.

## Snapshot of Top Stats

- 2019 Palmetto’s Finest School (South Carolina Association of School Administrators)
- Listed in “The 100 Best Public High Schools in the U.S.” (Thebestschools.org)
- Dr. Michael Lofton named 2019 South Carolina Secondary Principal of the Year (South Carolina Association of School Administrators) and 2018 National Magnet Principal of the Year (Magnet Schools of America)
- Graduation rate of 96 percent and higher than state and national averages in EOC passage rate and AP, ACT, and SAT scores in 2018
- National Merit Award School of Distinction 2017–2019 (Magnet Schools of America)
- Third Best Public High School in South Carolina (U.S. News & World Report)
- Jefferson Award bestowed upon Students in Action Club for founding the Special Olympics Young Athletes Expo in 2015

For the educators, he designated a “teacher cave” area in each room to encourage connectivity with students and fashioned a podium that easily converts from a lectern into a desk that adjusts to the pupils’ level. Additionally, Dr. Lofton says, “I got to hire every person in the building, from custodians, cafeteria, teachers, support staff, and administrators.”

“I’ve been teaching here from the beginning,” says Andreaetta Whaley, an instructor in English hired by Dr. Lofton, “and one of the great things that I enjoy about teaching here is that we have kids who are



hungry to learn, and we teach through the lens of the academies here, and that's what I appreciate about this school, as well as the leadership.”

“Our teachers really do a good job of working with our young people to get them to be successful in class,” says Dr. Loftin. “We have all of the courses that are required by the Department of Education for graduation purposes, so we take the standard, we take their interest, and we build on that.” Like other schools in the district, Spring Hill provides advanced placement, honors, college prep, special education, and high-end elective courses as well as clubs and other extracurricular activities.

Chase Raymond, a senior who has been with the school since his freshman year, was recently named Athlete of the Week in Varsity Basketball at Dutch Fork High School because he excels in the sports program at his zoned school. Students at Spring Hill are still eligible to participate in sports at their zoned schools; and, if needed, pupils who attend Spring Hill can be bussed to and from those schools.

During Chase's freshman year, he chose to enroll in the engineering academy at Spring Hill but later decided to change his focus to the medical field. “I like how



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## Spring Hill High School Career Pathways Magnet

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it allows you to explore other options,” he says and adds that his guidance counselors adapted his schedule to match his goals because he believes “they do their jobs specifically for us.”

At the beginning of each year, applications for Spring Hill are accepted through the district’s website at [www.lexrich5.org](http://www.lexrich5.org), and only District Five residents are eligible to apply. “We have a computer-generated random lottery system that we use for selection of students, so we can take up to 300 students per grade level,” explains Dr. Lofton. Students who are not chosen by the lottery system can be placed on a waiting list.

Even so, recruiting for Spring Hill begins well before high school. “We have a magnet fair (in November and January), and hundreds attend that every year,” says Director Goggins. “They go to Spring Hill’s booth, and they inquire about it, so that recruiting is already starting for people who have very young kids, and it’s because they’re getting a lot of attention. People move to this district because the flagships of your district are your high schools, and they know that our high schools are among the top, and they know that Spring Hill is among the top.” ■

An advertisement for Peak Dental. It features four smiling women in a dental office setting. One woman on the left is wearing a white lab coat and has a name tag that says "Dr. Yehemov". The other three women are wearing blue polo shirts with the "PEAK DENTAL" logo. The background includes a Christmas tree and a sign that says "FREE".

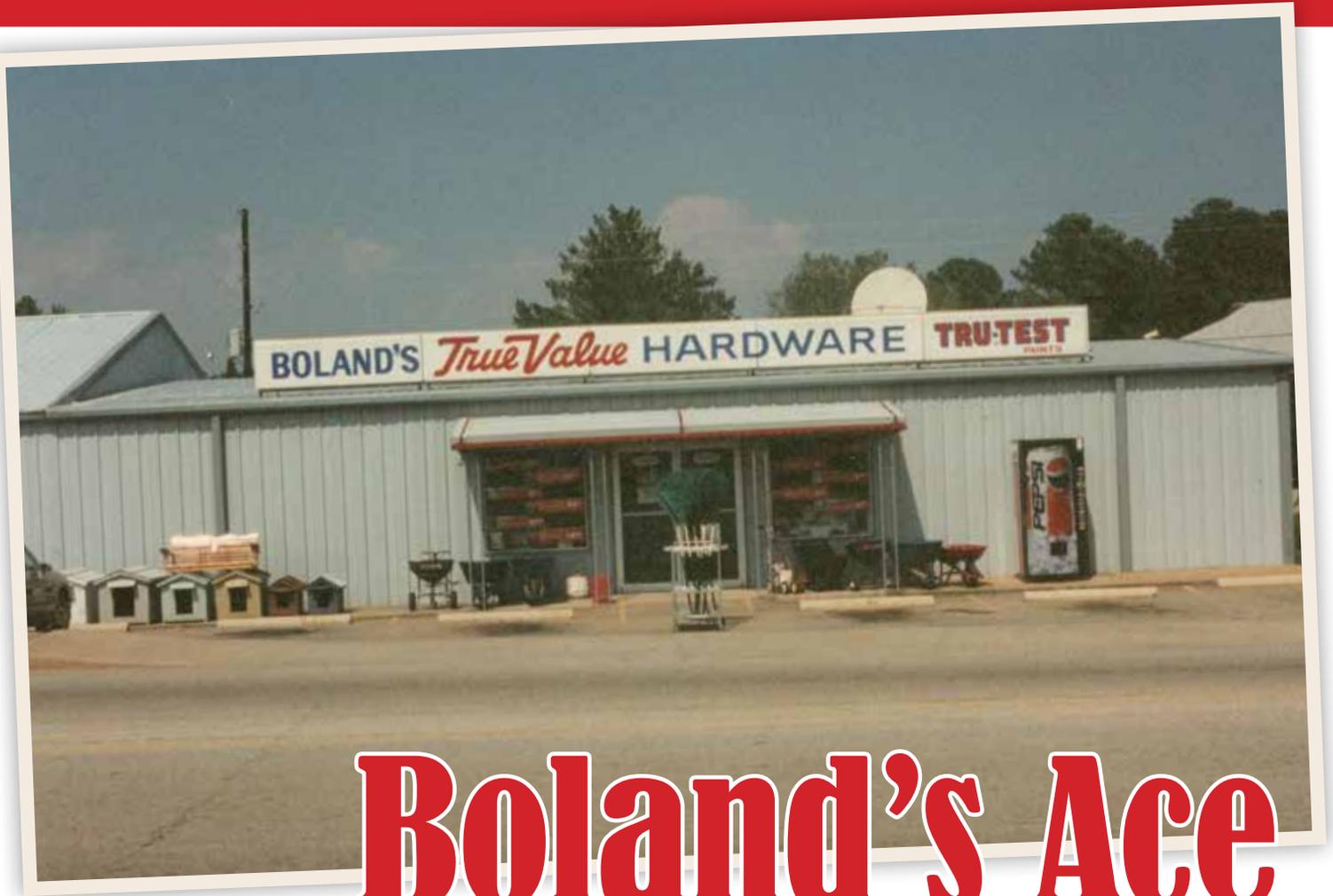
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# Boland's Ace Hardware:

The Hardware Store of Choice for the Community



by Jackie Perrone

**O**n December 7, 1982, Boland's Hardware Store operating as True Value opened its doors to the community. Ronnie and Tonia, along with their son Eric Boland, daughter Lisa (Boland) Spigner, and friends and family, had a hand in building the original store. Boland's Hardware operated as a True Value franchise from 1982 until September 2015. Boland's Hardware then changed its franchise from True Value to Ace Hardware. Ronnie Boland says, "It was a tough decision," as they had enjoyed a good relationship with True Value for many years. With the helpful guidance of a longtime family

friend and business associate Steve Byrd, the Bolands felt that Ace was indeed the place for hardware.

The original store at 1304 Chapin Road was a 3,000-square-foot facility. The business grew rapidly, and expansion of the original space was carried out several times: In 1987, 4,870 square feet were added, and in 2000, another 3,350 square feet. Additional employees were taken on regularly. Parking spaces became almost impossible, and, by 2009, the owners realized that continuing to serve their growing customer base in Chapin would require more space. Thirty-seven years later, Ronnie and Tonia handed control to their son Eric and can now claim a well-deserved retirement. The Boland family appreciates its long tradition of excellence in Chapin and hopes for its continuation many more years into the future. Eric and his wife Teresa (a special-ed teacher in Whitmire), along with their children, plan to do exactly that. The Boland's core values will continue the tradition of personal service and quality merchandise, which has been the Boland's staple trademark for nearly four decades. Ronnie, Tonia, and Eric Boland have 37 years of service to the community. They have guided the company from a true mom and pop store, built on a shoe-string budget, into today's thriving store, which never seems to stop growing.

Anyone who was in business in 2009 recalls the fear and apprehension that clouded the business world as the banking and world economy underwent seismic shocks. Some businesses went under, and many postponed their hopes for expansion, as they waited out the financial crisis. The Bolands, however, pushed forward and, with faith, proceeded with expansion plans, zeroing in on a suitable property available at 745 Chapin Road. It offered exactly what their growing business required: a highly visible and convenient location on the principal traffic artery in Chapin with plenty of space for parking and merchandise. While others backed off their business hopes, Ronnie and To-



Leigh Ann Whitticar, who recently was promoted to vice president, has been part of the Boland's team for 23 years. She's a walking history book of the store's progress through the years. Leigh Ann discussed the expansion that took place in 2017, and the decision to grow was based on providing more to the community, i.e., 6,000 square feet were added to the Boland store along with a 14,000-square-foot lumber shed. With expansion came new friendly faces. Matthew McGinnis, a Chapin native, returned to work with the Boland's family as the new operations manager. Matthew worked with the Bolands while he attended the University of South Carolina. After 10 years of logistics management, Matthew is happy to have returned to the Boland family. Former business owner and esteemed colleague, Tom Sherrod, who operated Chapin Building Supply for 38 years, decided to dissolve his business. In October 2017, he persuaded the Bolands to join him in offering lumber and construction materials at their store.

Through the decades, the Bolands have focused on serving their community. They believe that taking care of those in the community is the greatest return of invest-



ment for any business. Lexington County Sheriff's Department, and fundraising drives for special needs children—all have benefited from the Boland's support. One can see their involvement based on all the plaques and certificates on the walls of the store. In 2013, True Value named Boland's Hardware as its Best Hardware Store in the country. It was also given the national Beacon Award for Excellence that same year.

In the twenty-first century, many locally owned businesses have floundered because of the competition from the so-called big box stores. Ronnie, Tonia, and Eric Boland have always said, "The big box stores might have a lot, but what they don't have is the Boland's employees." They believe strongly that their level of personal service and quality merchandise have proved a better choice in the Chapin community. Boland's employees are what makes Boland's different. With 23 employees, some new and many who have been with the Bolands for several years, one thing is for certain, the employees take pride in quality service. Several Boland's employees have "certified" status, which assures customers of their knowledge and skill in project assistance. From pools to paint and lumber to plumbing, Boland's Ace is the place that has you covered. ■

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nia gamely faced up to a \$2,000,000 investment in the future. Their newly built store held a "soft" opening in March 2011, followed by the official grand opening in May. The country's uncertain financial picture had not deterred their confidence to move to a bigger and better location.

ment for any business. The Bolands have found a variety of ways to show support. Some of these include Toys for Tots, hosting the annual Veterans Day parade and the Christmas motorcycle run benefitting the Boys Farm in Newberry, "Stuff a Patrol Car" at Christmas with Chapin police and