



Porters Neck Plantation resident Stan Weinrich practices on the driving range at the golf course in the Wilmington neighborhood. Weinrich moved to the neighborhood more than five years ago and is president of the homeowners association. MATT BORN PHOTOS/STARNEWS

Lush & laid-back

Affable, unassuming residents populate beautiful community

By Phil Fuhrer
StarNews Correspondent

The community might be a showplace, but it's not a place for showoffs.

Porters Neck Plantation is a beautifully attended and meticulously-groomed series of neighborhoods framed by meandering roads, ancient oaks and sprightly pines. All of it is centered by a lush golf course of subtle colors that might have caught Van Gogh's eye.

But completely unassuming are the people who fill the 625 homes spread over 750 acres. Most of the population here, following careers of accomplishment that provided the incomes to purchase retirement homes from \$300,000 to \$1.5 million, couldn't care less about what you did up North.

The land is gated, but the folks are grounded.

"Nobody wears their resume on their sleeve," said Hal Garrett, who retired here with wife Ann from hoity-toity Stamford, Connecticut, in 2003. "When we were looking to buy a home in the area, Porters Neck had that vibe about being comfortable and friendly. Nobody asks what you



The Porters Neck Country Club clubhouse is located just off the 18th green at Porters Neck Plantation in Wilmington.

did before."

And, said Ginny Thompson, who moved with husband Gary down from Boston in 2006, "That's huge. What you did before is not part of the culture here. There is camaraderie. It feels like the neighborhoods where I grew up in Bethesda. You go to our snack-and-chats and

you feel like you're home again."

Who knew that Thompson, as she set up snack-and-chat tables or started playing different community-organized sports, was a highly-regarded research administrator for the National Institutes of Health.

"In fact," she said, "when I ran for office in the HOA here, I had

to hand out my resume as a formality. And people were saying, 'Wow, we thought she was just a ditz.'"

Thompson, who wears her engaging personality, if not her resume, on her sleeve, won election as president of the HOA, and



Porters Neck Plantation resident Jackie Adams walks through the neighborhood on her daily walk. Adams moved to the neighborhood in 2010 from Winston-Salem.

PORTERS NECK

From Page C1

since has turned over the duties to Stan Weinrich.

Weinrich, a New York City native, and wife Arlene, targeted Porters Neck five years before he ended his career with International Paper in 2010.

"We made more friends here in the first five months than we had made anywhere else ever before," said Weinrich, who spotted Porters Neck during summer vacations at Oak Island.

What Weinrich and others saw was a down-home feel seeping from shaded streets that section Porters Neck into a series of neighborhoods, or mini-associations. The overall PNHOA costs each homeowner \$1,000 annually, half that for those who own the approximately 60 unbuilt lots.

Inside the PNHOA, said Weinrich, there are six neighborhoods -- Eagles Ridge, Carnoustie, Woodlands, Edgewood, Glen Oaks and Jupiter Hills, but

also seven neighborhoods with mini-associations: Champions Row, Emerald Dunes, Fairway Commons, Hunters Green, Masters Ridge, Village on Five and Belfair. "These seven, as mini-associations, allow residents to share landscaping services at additional costs," said Weinrich.

They also share entertainment and other activities inside their particular area, said Jackie Adams, who with husband Dave built on Champions Row in 2011. Example: She mentioned movie night in neighbor Dick Elmer's driveway, or the number of clubs available to neighbors, from gardening to poker.

Other sports beyond tennis and golf also attract the majority of residents -- retirees who suddenly have time and energy to play with.

"The athletics here, that's how you make friends," said Thompson. "I didn't grow up in that type of environment."

Considering the number of 60- and 70-something neighbors whacking balls and chasing down baseline shots, Weinrich said,

"We have been a great boost to the Wilmington orthopedic community."

The Fazio-designed 18-hole golf course is the showpiece of the Porters Neck Country Club. It is not part of the PNHOA, and only about 50 percent of homeowners belong to it.

"But it is a pretty good place for members to get to meet each other from our neighborhoods, said Garrett, who also is part of a hefty contingent of Porters Neck homeowners who belong to the Seahawk Club, which supports UNC Wilmington athletics.

Pressed for information on his background, Garrett peeled back a corner of his resume to reveal his long-time post as vice president of management services for Seagram's, the liquor and entertainment group that owns, among other things, Universal Studios and several adult beverages.

"At one time I was in charge of the sample room," said Garrett, with a neighborly wink and curled eyebrow. "That's why I'm so fortunate that Ann is a nurse. She takes care of my liver."

About Porters Neck

In the beginning: The development began selling lots in 1991. Developer was Porters Neck Limited Partners, owned by John Elmore and Lionel Yow.

Staying active: Besides the golf course, there are seven Har-Tru tennis courts, plus a swimming complex and fitness center targeted to different age groups, skill levels and interests.

Who's here: In the Porters Neck area, the population is 5,375; median age 51; median household income is \$93,173, and average household net worth is \$703,047. Over 91 percent are married, but two-thirds no longer have children at home.

New Hanover County Schools: Blair Elementary, Helly Shelter Middle and Laney High School.

Education: In the Porters Neck area, 67 percent completed a bachelor's degree or higher, which is 26 percent higher than that of New Hanover County as a whole. Education statistics sourced from census, 2015.

On the web: www.porters-neckhoa.com