



## FARM WOMAN OF THE YEAR

# Chuckatuck farmer/environmentalist honored

By Linda McNatt  
The Virginian-Pilot

## SUFFOLK

On a chilly winter day, when the late afternoon sun has finally come out after a drenching morning rain, Shelley Butler-Barlow is busy helping her husband repair a tractor tire on a big John Deere.

Tire changing isn't a job normally assigned to women, but Barlow is different. She drives the tractor, plants crops, keeps books, pays bills, participates in major farm decisions and helps to promote agriculture whenever she can in both community groups and schools.

This year she was named the Virginia Farm Bureau Federation's state Farm Woman of the Year. Representing female farmers throughout the Commonwealth, she was runner-up for the award last year.

No matter how busy she is on the farm, she still has time to watch an eagle soaring over the Chuckatuck farm or to point out a flock of turkeys in a near-



LINDA MCNATT

As Farm Woman of the Year, Shelley Barlow represents female farmers throughout Virginia.

by field, to enjoy the fringe benefits.

Barlow easily balances chores such as keeping track of the cat population on the

farm and plotting next summer's vegetable crops.

"We put sweet corn in the baskets for six weeks this year," she said, smiling

across the bare fields. "We had squash, melons, cucumbers."

She likes to talk about her CSA, or community-

supported agriculture program, something she started a few years back and is now serving about 40 local families with weekly fresh vegetables.

She isn't certain how she came to be named to such a high state farm position, but she's proud of the accomplishment, and she means to make the most of it.

"In the interview, they asked me about the future of agriculture in this country," she said. "There are so many things to consider. Food safety, food for fuel. I am a farmer/environmentalist. My big thing is agricultural education for kids. We have a whole generation removed from farming, and it's important that the children growing up today know where their food and fiber comes from."

Barlow, 49, started out at Virginia Tech, with the idea of becoming a veterinarian. She soon decided she wasn't going to make the grades to enter the field.

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## VALENTINE'S DAY FUNDRAISER

## TREAT YOUR FURRY FRIENDS TO A GOURMET MEAL

By Eric Feber  
The Virginian-Pilot

For Valentine's Day bring home a gourmet meal for your sweetie.

It's sure to cause tail wagging or purring. Of course, the "sweetie" in question is not your human one, but the family dog or cat.

On Feb. 13 and 14, the Suffolk Humane Society is sponsoring a



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fundraising take-home meal for the family's four-legged members.

These doggie dinners/kitty casseroles are \$10 apiece and can be picked up between 5 and 10 p.m. Feb. 13 and from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. and 5 to 9 p.m. Feb. 14.

Proceeds will benefit the society's low-cost spay/neutering programs, efforts to find permanent and

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Debbie George, left, Suffolk's director of media and community relations, and Selena Cuffee-Glenn, city manager, rode on a dump truck as it plowed city streets.



COURTESY CITY OF SUFFOLK

## SNOW | REMOVAL

## Two city officials get to go along for the ride

By Hattie Brown Garrow  
The Virginian-Pilot

## SUFFOLK

As snow blanketed the area last weekend, an unlikely person helped man one of 29 dump trucks clearing

Suffolk streets.

City Manager Selena Cuffee-Glenn boarded a city truck about 9 a.m. that Saturday. A couple hours later she was still onboard and using the joysticks to operate the plow blades.

It was Suffolk's first major snowfall since taking over road maintenance from the Virginia Department of Transportation.

The clean-up effort cost about \$265,000 in labor and materials. Public Works Di-

rector Eric Nielsen said.

During Wednesday's City Council meeting, Nielsen recognized his crew for a job well done and thanked

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## VALENTINE

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loving homes for stray cats and dogs, and educating the public on responsible pet ownership.

In addition, a portion of the proceeds will benefit FETCh a Cure, a Richmond-based charity that specializes in pet health, particularly those with aging and cancer concerns. It works to offer financial aid to those families unable to afford the high costs of cancer treatment and rehabilitation for their ill pets. It also provides resources to help pet owners recognize the symptoms of early cancer and issues regarding senior pet care.

The gourmet goodies will be available from the Mosaic Café at the Suffolk Center for Cultural Arts, 110 W. Finney Ave. The downtown eatery will also be cooking up these all-natural healthful dinners; the canine casserole will feature peas, carrots, green beans, chicken stock, brown rice and pump-

kin, while the cat concoction will substitute tuna for the pumpkin.

"They sound pretty yummy for people, too; TLC will be a main ingredient," joked Kay Hurley, Suffolk Humane's director of community outreach. "It's just a fun way for pet lovers to celebrate the holiday."

Hurley suggests humans enjoy a romantic meal at the Mosaic Café on the 13th or Valentine's Day and then bring one home for Rex or Mittens. Sorry, pet owners, the Mosaic, like every other restaurant in the state, doesn't allow the family dog or cat inside to sup with the family.

And if there's some leftover doggie or kitty casserole, better label it before putting it in the 'fridge so your brother-in-law won't polish it off during a midnight munchie raid.

For more information, call the society at 538-3030 or the Mosaic Café at 538-9090, or visit [www.suffolkhumanesociety.com](http://www.suffolkhumanesociety.com).

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LINDA MCNATT

Shelley Butler-Barlow helps her husband, Joe, repair a tractor tire on a big John Deere.

## AWARD

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She graduated from the university with an animal science degree.

Coincidentally, she and Joseph Barlow Jr. were in Blacksburg at the same time, but they didn't meet until years later, after she was married and widowed.

The Barlows married in 1994. Instead of a diamond, she got her own John Deere tractor.

Her duties as woman of the year started recently at the American Farm Bureau convention in Seattle. The trip was part of her winnings for the award, she said. She mostly attended meetings. Her husband got "to play," and he enjoyed it, she said.

"I've convinced Joseph and his dad that they can't run the farm without me," she said, double-checking a bolt her husband had just

tightened.

Joe was easily convinced.

"We couldn't do what we do without her," he said. "Sometimes, it takes two people to do something like putting on a tractor tire. She takes care of paying the bills and keeping the other paperwork straight. It's a balance."

For her most recent accomplishment, she got a tiara from her sisters. Her mother called her as soon as her family in Pennsylvania heard about the award.

"You know your father would be proud of you," mom said.

Her dad, Bob Butler, died in August at age 81. It was a few months before the state Farm Bureau convention.

"He loved the farm as much as I do," Barlow said. "We'd put him up on the old tractor, and he'd drive it. I wish he was here."

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