

[Skip to Main Content](#)[Help](#)[View Gale Resources](#)[Return to Library](#)Select Interface Language:

GALE BUSINESS INSIGHTS: ESSENTIALS

[Back to Search Results](#)

Saving; a dream

[The News & Record \(Piedmont Triad, NC\)](#)

Byline: JERI ROWE

For the past month, every Thursday through Saturday, Sam Pass has parked his mobile kitchen near Bennett College and served up hot dogs and platters of chicken, fish and ribs.

Customers have trickled in, but the lack of traffic hasn't deterred Pass. He looks out his kitchen window and sees his dream sitting across the street -- an abandoned granite-and-wood structure where piano genius Ray Charles and other talented African Americans stayed so long ago.

Pass is raising money to rebuild the Magnolia House Motel. He knows he needs at least \$350,000. And that, he admits, is a lot of chicken, fish and ribs. But Pass is determined to see the Magnolia House bloom once again.

"Dreams come true, but you have to make the dreams come true," said Pass from behind the counter recently . "I'm not going to stop until I hit the stars and this is a reality."

Pass and his wife, Kimberly, bought the Magnolia House eight years ago. They want to restore the 19th century, Victorian-style home at Gorrell and Plott streets rather than see it remain a scary flop house for homeless people and drug addicts.

So far, the Passes have spent \$90,000 of their own money. The city helped them secure \$110,000 in federal grants, and N.C. A&T, Sam's alma mater, contributed \$34,000 toward shoring up the granite foundation and replacing the roof and decaying wood.

Meanwhile, Preservation Greensboro and its subsidiary, Architectural Salvage, each contributed \$5,000 because they saw the Magnolia House as a significant part of Greensboro's African American history.

"Greensboro has lost a lot of its African American history after the destruction of resources along East Market Street and Southside in the '60s and '70s," said Benjamin Briggs, executive director of Preservation Greensboro.

"What we have left is so important."

Singers James Brown and Joe Tex. Baseball legends Satchel Paige and Jackie Robinson. Electrifying duo Ike and Tina Turner. They all stayed at Magnolia House, a 14-room, 4,800-square-foot motel, because they weren't allowed to stay in hotels that catered to Caucasians across town.

Today, the Magnolia House Motel is a dilapidated, abandoned structure surrounded by a 9-foot fence.

But Pass sees something else outside his mobile kitchen window: a bed-and-breakfast, a restaurant that serves lunch and dinner, a place where teenagers, college students and young adults can learn about business and civic involvement. And he wants it all to start next fall.

He shares his dream with anyone who stops by Canteen Express, his 8-by-20 kitchen where he works with A&T student Kevin Hopkins. When three teenagers stopped by Thursday afternoon, he motioned across the street and said : "You got any idea why we're doing this? Restore that house right there. For you."

Pass, a Greensboro native, knows about the Magnolia's history firsthand. He grew up hearing stories about who stayed there. Now 55 and retired after a 25-year career at Fed Ex , Pass works full time to save Magnolia House.

He's asked for donations and in-kind supplies from various businesses, organizations and individuals he's met over the years in Greensboro. It's worked. At prominent street corners in southeast Greensboro, you'll see small Canteen Express

signs created by Carolina Screenworks. Or listen to WNAA (90.1 FM), A&T's campus radio station. You'll catch a public service spot that pushes the Canteen Express with the phrase, "Have something to eat and watch the Magnolia bloom."

"It's not about me; it's not about you; it's about us," Pass said. "I care about this community. I'm trying to do something constructive. That ain't my house. I mean, we're not talking just the preservation of a structure.

"We're talking about the preservation of a community."

Contact Jeri Rowe at 373-7374 or jrowe@gotriad.com

CAPTION(S):

N.C. A&T student Kevin Hopkins helps Pass cook the dinners at Canteen Express, a mobile, 8-by-20 kitchen. Pass said he sees in Magnolia a place where young adults can learn about business and civic involvement. Joseph Rodriguez/News & Record; Sam Pass and his wife, Kimberly, owners of the Magnolia House Motel, have spent \$90,000 of their money for renovations. The city helped secure \$110,000 in federal grants, and N.C. A&T gave \$34,000. Joseph Rodriguez/News & Record; Sam Pass, owner of Magnolia House Motel at Gorrell and Plott streets in Greensboro, has started selling chicken, fish and rib dinners to raise money for renovations. "Dreams come true, but you have to make the dreams come true," he said. "I'm not going to stop until I hit the stars and this is a reality." Carolina Screenworks created signs for Canteen Express to display on street corners in southeast Greensboro that advertise the dinners. This sign at Gorrell and Bennett streets points people toward the food.

BY JERI ROWE

Full Text: COPYRIGHT 2006 News & Record.

<http://www.news-record.com>

Source Citation:

"Saving; a dream." *News & Record* [Piedmont Triad, NC] 8 Apr. 2006: A1. *Business Insights: Essentials*. Web. 19 May 2019.

URL

<http://bi.galegroup.com.libproxy.uncg.edu/essentials/article/GALE%7CA144307497/74bb4e0252174e3020ca869da3c66eu=gree35277>

Document Number:

GALE|A144307497

