

IN THIS  
ISSUE

NEW GHS SWAMP RABBIT ROUTES • LET THERE BE 'LUX' • CLOSING MAIN STREET PART 2

# GREENVILLE JOURNAL

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## SNAKES ALIVE

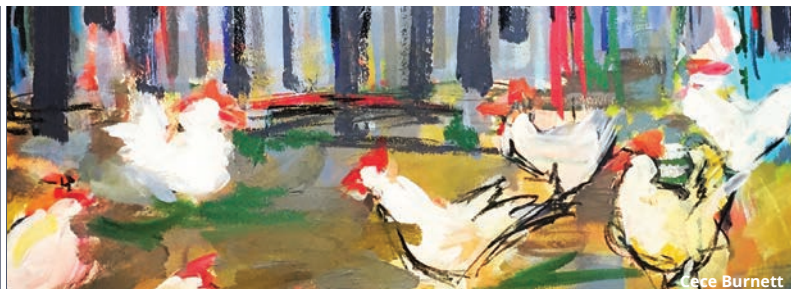
The Curren family's 'Scaly Adventures'  
takes a bite out of educational television

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Rick, Pierce, and Tanya Curren

Will Crooks / Staff

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Lee Burnett

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A photograph of a person wearing a hat and sunglasses, holding a large snake with a brown and black patterned skin. The background is a blurred forest with sunlight filtering through the trees.

How one  
Upstate  
family  
turned  
their  
outdoor  
adventures  
into an  
international  
television show

# CREATURE FEATURES

WORDS BY ANDREW MOORE | PHOTOS BY WILL CROOKS





In a recent afternoon, along a secluded trail at Jones Gap State Park, 17-year-old Pierce Curren pried open a plastic container and gently reached inside to retrieve his Peruvian red-tailed boa constrictor named Lewi. “He loves fresh air and sunlight,” said Curren. “But I usually don’t take him out in public areas, because I don’t want to scare people.”

As the 5-foot-long snake slithered up his right arm and shoulder, Curren explained that many people have a deep-seated fear of snakes. “I completely understand why some people are afraid,” he said. “But they aren’t as dangerous as people make them out to be.”

Boa constrictors like Lewi kill by coiling around their prey and squeezing until its heart stops. Then the serpents swallow their victim whole. Luckily, they only feed on small mammals like mice and birds, Curren said.

“I would be lying if I said you shouldn’t handle these animals with care, but for the most part, they’re gentle giants,” he said. “It’s really just a matter of educating people and clearing up any misconceptions they might have.”

That’s why Curren has spent the past four years working alongside his parents, Rick and Tanya, to produce an educational television show called “Scaly Adventures.”

The show, which airs internationally, features the Curren family as they travel across the Southeastern United States to interview wildlife experts and participate in conservation efforts.

“The purpose of the show is not only to teach what rep-

tiles are really like, but also to teach kids how they should interact with and care for animals,” said Tanya Curren. “It’s also our way of trying to inspire families to get outside and have their own adventures.”

The family of three, who live just outside of northern Greenville County near Table Rock, decided to film their own reality television show after a series of unfortunate events inspired them to pursue Pierce’s dream of working with animals.

In 2004, Tanya had a routine hysterectomy but contracted a staph infection, which spread through her entire body. She fell into a coma for eight days and was given only hours to live. She recovered not long after, but by 2007 she became addicted to prescription drugs and was ready to commit suicide.

“I felt so broken and worthless and like everything had gone wrong in life. But after praying with my family, I decided to get back up and fight. It wasn’t easy, but I was able to eventually break free from my addiction,” she said.

Soon after Tanya beat her addiction to prescription drugs, Rick was laid off from his \$200,000-a-year sales job. “The company provided a small severance package and even offered to help me find another job, but I honestly felt like it was time to move on,” he said. “I had a good salary, but I was miserable in sales. I was tired of traveling and ready to spend more time at home with my family.”

In 2009, Rick and Tanya launched Boundless Limits International, a nonprofit dedicated to “creating positive

media with the sole purpose of inspiring others to lead a life of purpose and passion.” The couple wrote several books, recorded Tanya’s story on audio CD, and spoke at conferences and churches about their journey.

They also devoted themselves to their son and his education, including his passion for reptiles. “I went through several phases as a kid,” said Pierce Curren. “I was really into geology and dinosaurs for a while. But then I discovered reptiles, which are fascinating.”

Pierce got his first pet snake in 2009 when Rick captured a red-bellied brown snake in their yard. “I named that snake Chester and kept him for about a year,” said Pierce Curren. “Then we started attending reptile shows and collecting more snakes.”

After collecting more than a dozen reptiles, the Currens decided to share their son’s passion with others and launched “Scaly Adventures.”

With no money, help, or experience, the family of three started a website and began filming educational videos in front of animal exhibits at the Greenville Zoo.

Their videos garnered a large following across the Southeast and were soon being aired as filler spots for a television station in Atlanta. That’s when the station’s manager recommended that the Currens film a pilot episode for a television series.

“We never set out to do a television series. It was just an outlet for Pierce to share his passion for reptiles with other kids,” said Rick Curren. “But we also knew it was a great opportunity to provide young kids with a family-friendly show.”



**“We use animals as a hook to engage students and teach them lessons on bullying, drugs, racism, and other prominent issues affecting our society today. We need to address these things if we’re going to survive as a species.”**

**Rick Curren**





Tanya Curren

**In 2004, Tanya had a routine hysterectomy but contracted a staph infection, which spread through her entire body. She fell into a coma for eight days and was given only hours to live.**

In 2013, the Currens created a pilot episode and distributed 40 copies at a National Religious Broadcasters conference in Nashville, Tenn., where a distributor from Russia decided to release it internationally on multiple networks. The Currens raised \$5,000 and shot 14 episodes across the Southeast for their first season, which aired in September 2013.

The show, which airs on the Daystar network on Saturdays at noon and on various other networks across the world, has become a big hit among young kids and their parents since debuting, said Tanya Curren. It was even nominated for a Southeast Regional Emmy Award for Outstanding Children's Programming in 2013.

More recently, it was named nonprofit of the year by the Environmental Education Association of South Carolina. The show, which is operated under Boundless Limits, offers information on a variety of animals, their habitats, and conservation issues.

In 2014, for instance, the Currens featured Greenville's Safe Haven & Educational Adventures, a sanctuary for exotic animals that have either been abandoned or abused by their owners. Another episode featured the Georgia Sea Turtle Center, which is one of the country's only rehabilitation centers for sick and injured sea turtles.

Scaly Adventures also spotlights organizations and careers, such as veterinarians, police officers, educators, and military officers. The show's fifth season, which aired earlier this month, features the Greenville Police Department's SWAT team, K-9 unit, and patrol officers



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**Pierce Curren**

in action. It also includes an interview with Chief Ken Miller.

"We love shining a positive light on the work they do to keep our communities safe," said Rick Curren. "They don't get paid huge salaries for putting their lives on the line, but they are passionate about their job. That deserves our respect."

The Currens also do presentations for school groups, camps, and organizations and offer birthday party entertainment across the Upstate. It not only allows them to connect with their fans but also teach life lessons to kids, according to Rick Curren.

"I always stress that our show is more about human conservation than anything else," he said. "We use animals as a hook to engage students and teach them lessons on bullying, drugs, racism, and other prominent issues affecting our society today. We need to address these things if

we're going to survive as a species."

The Currens plan to film 10 more episodes across the Southeast this spring for the sixth season of "Scaly Adventures." It will feature the Greenville Swamp Rabbits hockey team and several other organizations across the region, according to Tanya Curren.

As for Pierce, he's already thinking ahead and planning a career as a veterinarian.

"I'm not completely sure about my plans for college, but I'm definitely looking to go somewhere that's close to home," he said. "As for the show, we'll either have to take a different approach or continue to film during my winter and summer breaks. It just depends on what I decide to do about school."

*For more information, visit [scalyadventures.com](http://scalyadventures.com).*

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