

The Soda City Market occurs every Saturday in downtown Columbia, SC. On March 4, a Run Hard race fundraiser took place. This market brings together local vendors, artisans, farmers and performers,” Vendor Sewell Gelberd said. “They call it Soda City Market. “There are some crafts, there is farm produce, there are a lot of bakers, meat purveyors, egg purveyors and all kinds of products.” Photo by Suncana Pavlic.

THE SODA CITY

BY SUNCANA PAVLIC AND EMMA CRANE

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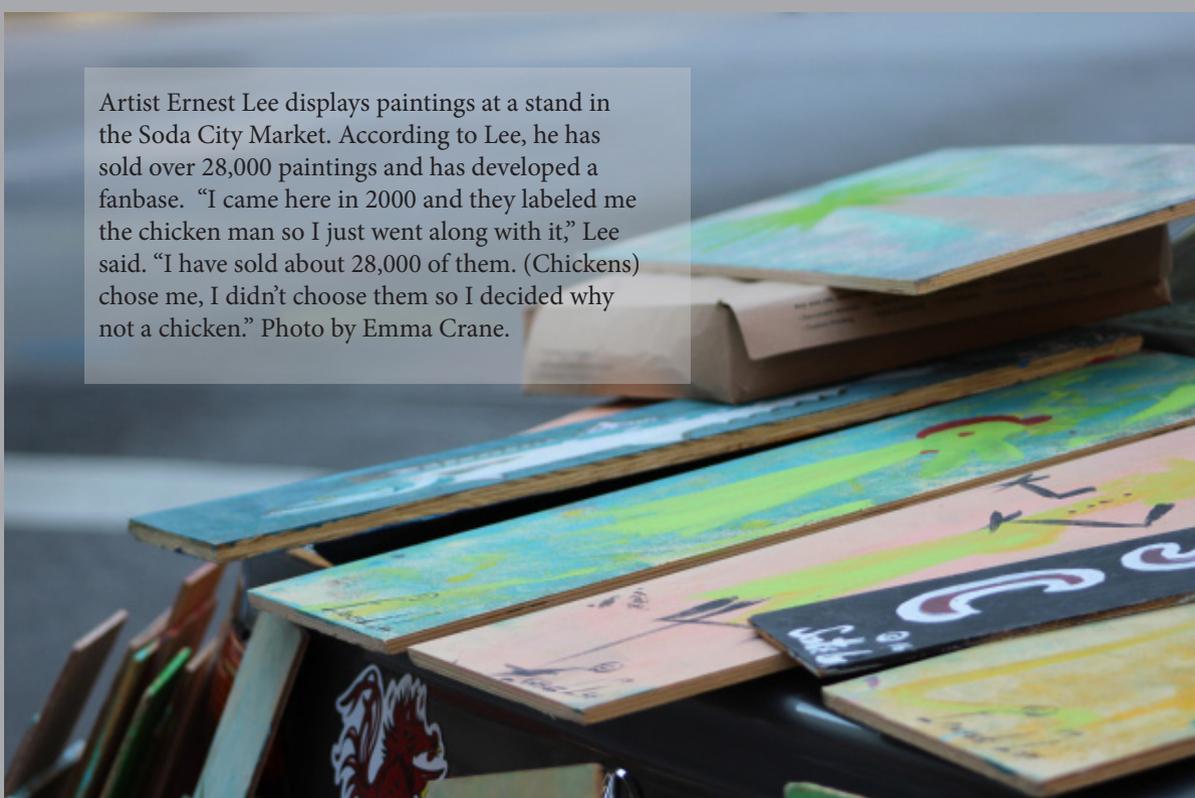


Guitarist Kameron Willingham performs covers of rock bands at the Soda City Market. He has been playing at the market since the fall of 2016 and where he has developed connections. “I play Jimi Hendrix and Guns N’ Roses and around that time period and some people don’t like it but most of the people here do so it is a good crowd,” Willingham said. “The man that sells Annabel’s Chocolates I am good friends with. The man who makes muffins says he does recordings, so he’s glad to hook me up. The guy who makes popcorn, I am friends with him.” Emma Crane.



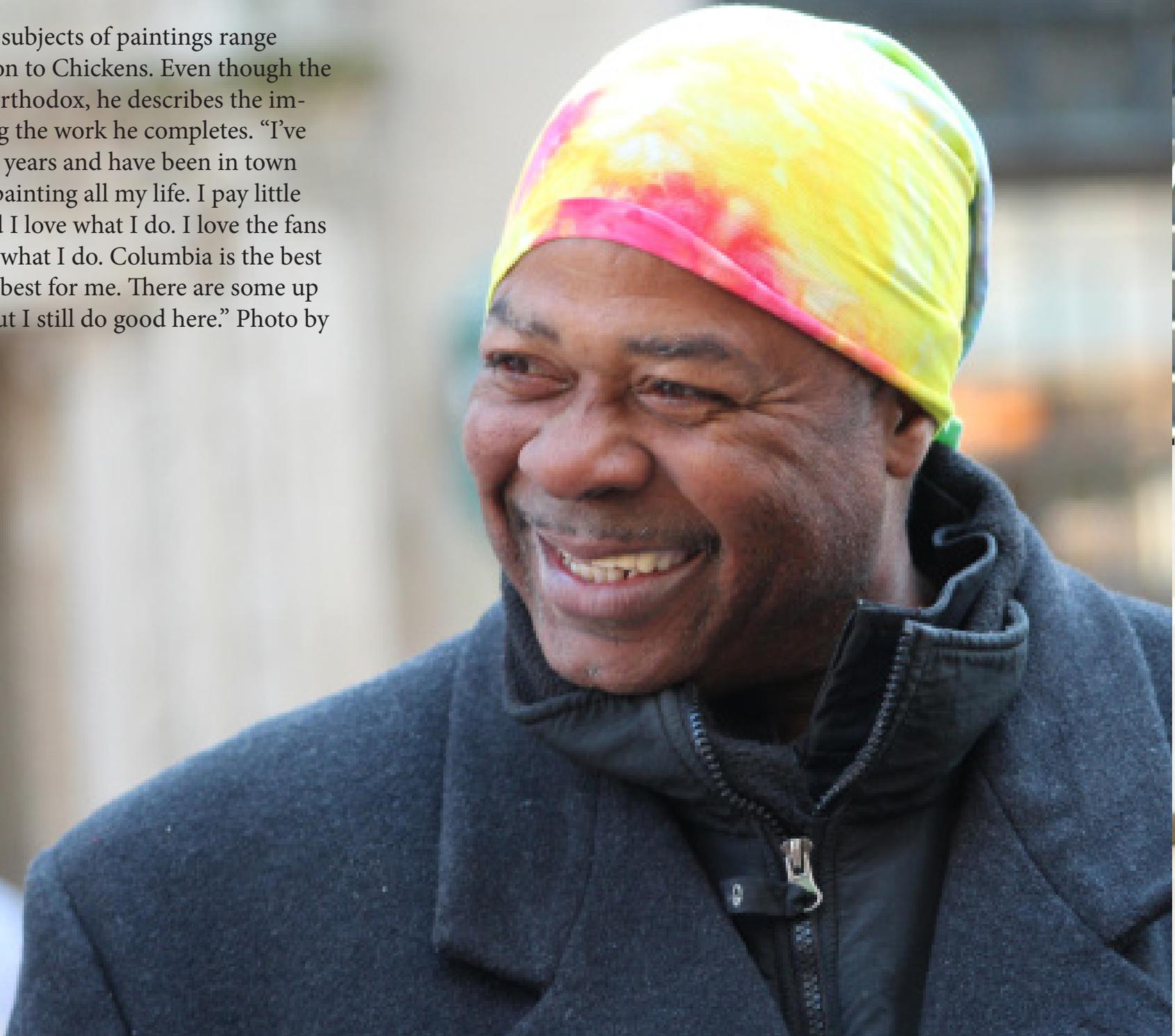
Street vendor Jay Scoggins prepares and packages his kettle corn. He is one of the original vendors of the Soda City Street Market. "I've been here at the soda city market downtown ever since they opened about (eight years) ago," Scoggins. "We've been here every saturday rain or shine. We have a partnership with the city, the local merchants and the streets, and they are really good to us, to let us sit out here and take up their parking places every saturday morning until almost two." Photo by Suncana Pavlic.

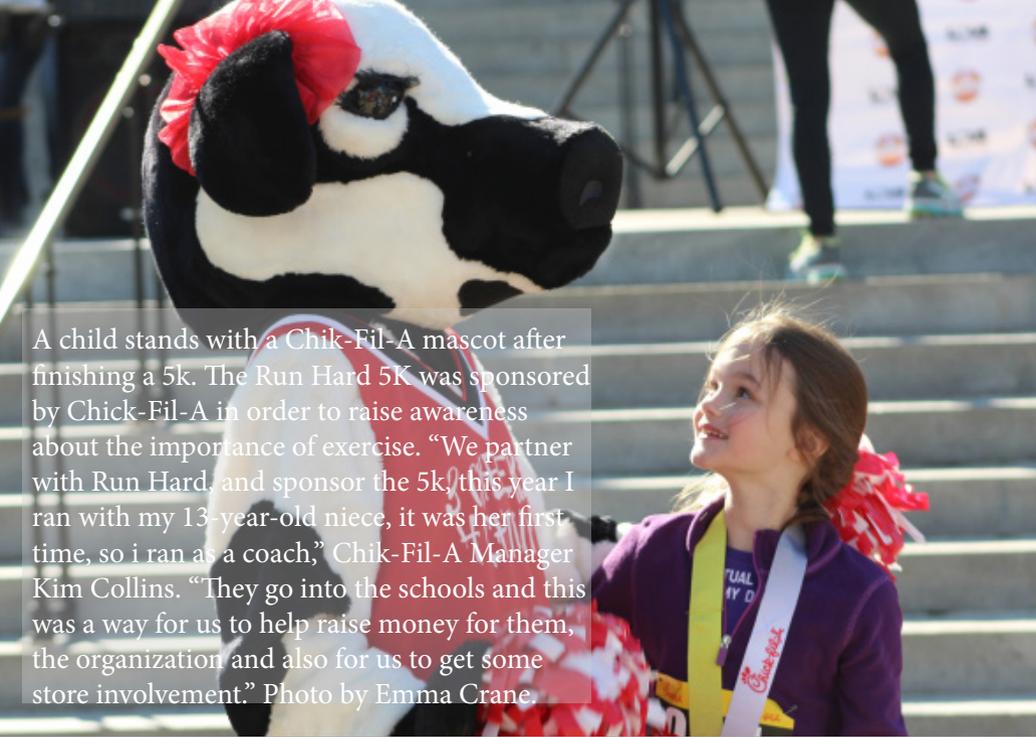
Artist Ernest Lee displays paintings at a stand in the Soda City Market. According to Lee, he has sold over 28,000 paintings and has developed a fanbase. "I came here in 2000 and they labeled me the chicken man so I just went along with it," Lee said. "I have sold about 28,000 of them. (Chickens) chose me, I didn't choose them so I decided why not a chicken." Photo by Emma Crane.



Columbia, SC artist Ernest Lee describes his love for chickens. According to Lee, he is known as the "Funky Chicken Man" because of his various paintings of chickens. "We eat chicken all the time. I hope you eat chicken. There's a chicken on the car. It's a patriotic chicken." Photo by Emma Crane

Artist Ernest Lee subjects of paintings range from Willie Nelson to Chickens. Even though the paintings are unorthodox, he describes the importance of loving the work he completes. “I’ve been at it for fifty years and have been in town for 17. I’ve been painting all my life. I pay little child support and I love what I do. I love the fans and so I just love what I do. Columbia is the best and has been the best for me. There are some up and down days but I still do good here.” Photo by Emma Crane.





A child stands with a Chick-Fil-A mascot after finishing a 5k. The Run Hard 5K was sponsored by Chick-Fil-A in order to raise awareness about the importance of exercise. “We partner with Run Hard, and sponsor the 5k, this year I ran with my 13-year-old niece, it was her first time, so I ran as a coach,” Chick-Fil-A Manager Kim Collins. “They go into the schools and this was a way for us to help raise money for them, the organization and also for us to get some store involvement.” Photo by Emma Crane.



Run Hard Director and Founder discusses the specifics of the race with a participant. The Run Hard Program began in 2012 to provide exercise within the Columbia and develop positive qualities for local children in the community. “We also teach them character values, we feel like when they implement these values into their life, it puts them on a platform for them to see themselves succeed. The first week, we always teach them about teamwork, how to be a good teammate, show them what it looks like, what is required of them.” Photo by Suncana Pavlic.



Brian Alexander waits with his daughter for his wife to finish racing. Alexander believes that the races give people a goal and something to strive for. “My wife is running the half marathon. She wanted to compete one of them before we had our next child,” Alexander said. Photo by Emma Crane.



Volunteers hand out water to the Run Hard race participants. Mason Leitch believes that no matter the cause, it is important to support people within the community. “There’s nothing better to do on a Saturday than to help out people,” Leitch said. “(I’m) Not really sure (what the purpose of the marathon is) but it doesn’t matter because we’re helping out. (Events like this happen) Usually every other week. (I try to help out) as much as I can.” Photo by Suncana Pavlic.

