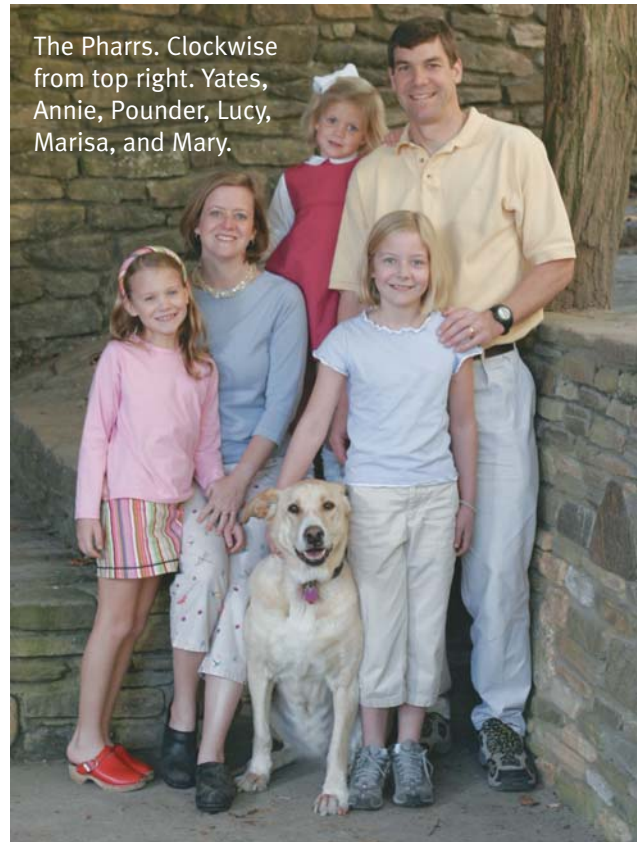


Under careful supervision, Falling Creek campers often visit local rock faces to hone rock climbing skills.

# Yates Pharr, Who Played a Vital Role in the Early Development of Ballantyne, Recently Returned to Lead His First Passion—Falling Creek Camp in Henderson County, NC

**TUXEDO, North Carolina**—Yates Pharr had pretty much everything a young and successful commercial real estate professional could want—an executive position with the top developer in Asheville; a beautiful wife and three beautiful and delightfully rambunctious daughters; instant access to hiking, mountain biking, white-water rafting, and other outdoor activities; a membership to the magnificent and storied Biltmore Forest Country

Club; a commercial development resume that could net him a job pretty much anywhere in the world. Last year, everything changed when the owners of Falling Creek Camp in North Carolina's southern Blue Ridge Mountains began to think about the proper succession plan for Falling Creek Camp. The owners knew that Pharr, 37, and his wife Marisa were a great fit if they were interested in purchasing and running the camp.



The Pharrs. Clockwise from top right. Yates, Annie, Pounder, Lucy, Marisa, and Mary.

## All the Happy Campers

By Scott Martin, Editor

First, it's important to go back several years to when Pharr was growing up near SouthPark in the late 1970s and early 1980s. He lived close to Bissell Companies' founder, chairman, and CEO, H.C. 'Smoky' Bissell, who, at the time, was successfully developing offices, shops, and a hotel around SouthPark Mall. Many weekend mornings, Bissell would leave sticky notes on his door asking Pharr to complete basic tasks in and around the house or Bissell Companies' various properties in return for pocket money. Yates subsequently graduated from Charlotte Country Day School and disappeared into the mountains for four years in pursuit of a recreational management degree from Appalachian State University.



# All About... Falling Creek

## FULL NAME:

Falling Creek Camp for Boys

## DIRECTORS:

Yates & Marisa Pharr and  
Donnie & Kim Bain

## ASSOCIATES DIRECTORS:

Chris Stec and Frank Tindall

## LOCATION:

Tuxedo, North Carolina

## TELEPHONE:

(828) 692-0262

## WEB:

fallingcreek.com

## SPECIAL EVENTS:

- Falling Creek Olympics
  - Backwards Day
- Wild, Wild West Day,
- Counselor Hunt
- Iron Man Triathlon

## ACTIVITIES INCLUDE:

- Canoeing • Whitewater Kayaking
  - Mountain Biking
- Hiking • Backpacking
- Rock-climbing • Swimming
- The Blob • Roller Coaster
  - High Wire • Sailing
  - Sliding Rock • Fishing
- Fly Fishing • Soccer • Tennis
- Basketball • Weightlifting
- Lacrosse • Cross Country
- Ultimate Frisbee • Archery
- Riflery • Horseback • Riding
- Crafts • Nature • Woodworking
- Indian Lore • Boy Scout Merit  
Badge Program • Music



The bell rings and it's  
time for breakfast in the  
cavernous dining room.



When it was time for Pharr to re-enter the real world, Pharr contacted Bissell and asked for a job. Bissell stationed Pharr in Greensboro where his property management responsibilities included cleaning walkways in the summer heat in a suit—Pharr had elected to enter the property management side of the house. However, he soon moved back to Charlotte and became a property manager in SouthPark.

Still in his 20s, Pharr became a vice president overseeing multi-million

dollar budgets and ensuring that tenants had all they needed to be successful—all while maintaining a sense of humor and an Eagle Scout attitude and level of attention to detail. In fact, before the birth of his first daughter, Annie, in 1996, Pharr was an assistant Scout Master with a Charlotte troop. Everyone at The Bissell Companies knew this because Pharr would change into his Boy Scout uniform (shorts included) every Tuesday afternoon before going straight from work to Scouts. Remarkably, nobody ever

We're at camp! So let's sing!



gave him a difficult time about the shorts.

In the early 1990s, with most of the available raw land developed in SouthPark, Ballantyne became a bigger blip on the Bissell Companies' radar screen. Pharr was part of a team charged with the responsibility of facilitating the development of Ballantyne. In addition to continuing his property management duties, Pharr helped the Bissell Companies build and develop most of the early office properties in Ballantyne Corporate Park.

When Smoky Bissell decided to build the golf course at Ballantyne Resort, Pharr remembers asking Bissell:

"So who is going to oversee this project?"

"I'm looking at the chief overseer," said Bissell.

Pharr had never built a golf course and played only sporadically (and usually in hiking boots) yet in 1998, the course he nurtured won the prestigious 'Best New Course' award from the North Carolina Magazine Golf Panel and remains a fixture in the top 30 of the state's rankings.

In 1999, the siren-song of the mountains was too loud and Pharr left Bissell to become an executive with the Biltmore Farms Company in Asheville where he helped Jack Cecil develop an expansive tract of land just south of downtown into the very successful Biltmore Park. The responsibilities were similar to those that Pharr had at The Bissell Companies—building a mixed-use development and making it part of the community; the centerpiece of Biltmore Park is an expansive YMCA branch.

Pharr and his wife Marisa were happy with their spot in the mountains. Yet in 2005, the phone rang—it was Chuck and Jean McGrady, the owners and directors of Falling Creek



TOTAL CARDIAC CARE

[sangerclinic.com](http://sangerclinic.com)

This HEART month, Sanger Clinic celebrates patients making healthy choices every day.

Healthy choices, healthy hearts. Sanger Clinic.

APPOINTMENTS: 704-373-0212



**SANGER CLINIC**  
Carolinas HealthCare System

Camp; they wanted to ensure that Falling Creek would continue for future generations. After initial discussions, it didn't take the Pharrs long to realize they wanted to make a full time commitment to this calling—a calling that started when Yates was 10 and began the first of what would be 12 straight summers at Falling Creek. He started as a camper then became a

counselor during college summers. He met his wife, Marisa, at Appalachian State University and introduced her to Falling Creek where she was in charge of the aquatic programs one summer. (In Charlotte, she would head the aquatic programs at The Dowd YMCA for several years and

*continued on page 48*



later served as a Certified Therapeutic Recreation Specialist at Alexander Children's Center).

As a camper at Falling Creek, Yates not only developed a passion for the outdoors and all that happened at the camp—climbing, swimming, kayaking, sports, archery, hiking, camping, horseback riding and more; but most importantly, he learned what camp can do for young people.

"The camp experience allows you to build the skills necessary for paddling and tennis," says Pharr. But you build life skills—how to get along with each other and how to be independent and make decisions for yourself. You can't do that in the classroom setting."

**Y**ates and Marisa Pharr closed on Falling Creek Camp on September 1st 2005 and realized a lifelong dream.

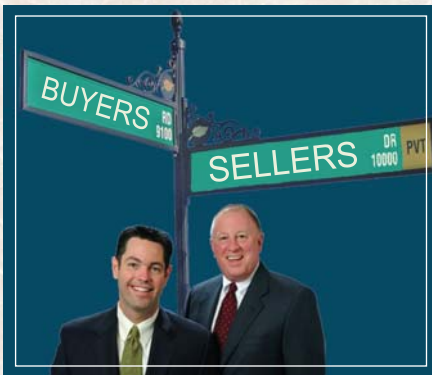
"One of the best parts of reconnecting with Falling Creek is that the Camp will continue as it has in the past," says Pharr. "Donnie and Kim Bain, directors for the past 17 years and staff members for a total of 34 years at Falling Creek will remain on the year-round staff that includes eight outstanding team members, most of whom have been here for double-digit years. These people are the back-bone of Falling Creek," says Pharr.



**F**or boys age 6-16, Falling Creek is a 425-acre paradise. Over three summer sessions beginning in June and ending in August, the campers rise at the relatively sensible hour of 7:30. Cabin duties follow. Then there's breakfast at 8:30 before the campers go their separate ways to any one of several activities.

A group might spend the morning at Falling Creek's spectacular climbing wall. Or a group might learn the intricacies of lacrosse on the expansive sports field. Or a group might be 'off campus' hiking the Appalachian Trail. Or a group could be practicing kayaking moves. Or a group might be learning carpentry in the woodworking shop. Like all meals, dinner takes place in the confines of the expansive dining hall that features the flags of the countries from which counselors

## Where Buyers & Sellers Meet



Whether looking for a New Home or Selling Your Existing Home, the Team of Steve Brooks & Marty Dukes stands Ready to Make Your Real Estate Experience a Seamless and Profitable One!

Contact us Today!  
Steve Brooks & Marty Dukes

704.575.0535 or 704.575.1219

sbrooks@kwcharlotte.com or mdukes@kwcharlotte.com



2115 Rexford Road - Suite 102 - Charlotte, NC 28211

## Let Countrywide show you the way home.



At Countrywide, the entire loan process is handled locally, so there is less hassle, less waiting.

Countrywide also offers:

- Fast up-front approval, so you'll know how much home you can afford\*
- Zero down and reduced document loan programs, for fast and easy qualifying
- Construction to Permanent financing; all in one loan, with one low rate\*\*

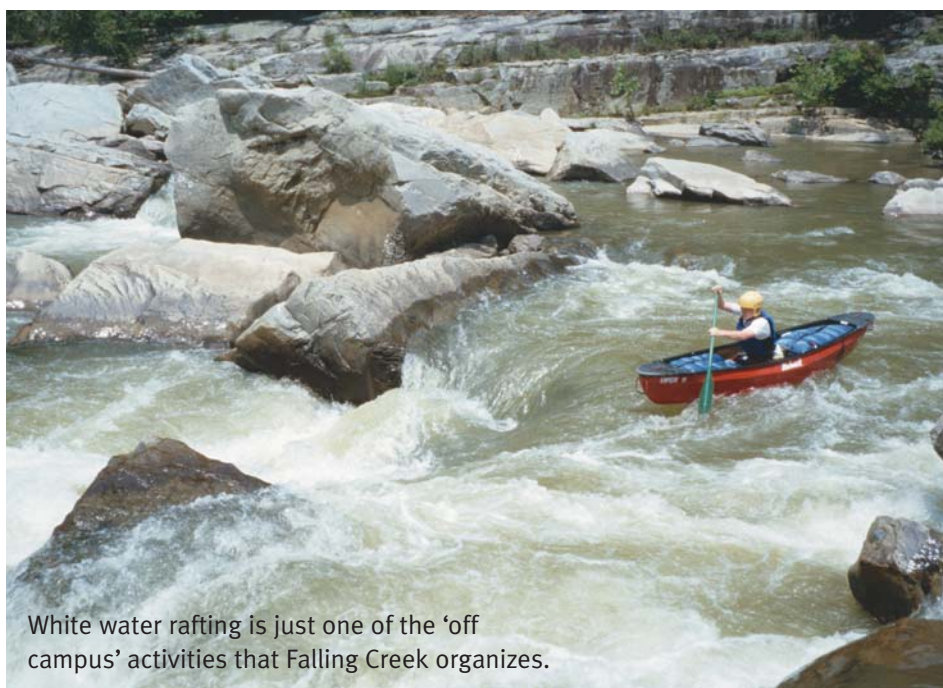
Call us today. With Countrywide you could be home before you know it.

**Don R. Witter**  
Branch Manager

13860 Ballantyne Corporate Place, Ste. 150  
Charlotte, NC 28277  
(704) 752-1346 Office  
(704) 906-9461 Cell  
donald\_r\_witter\_III@countrywide.com



Equal Housing Lender. © 2004 Countrywide Home Loans, Inc. Trade/service marks are the property of Countrywide Financial Corporation and/or its subsidiaries. \*Up-front approval is subject to satisfactory appraisal and title review and no change in financial condition. If the rate is not locked or rate protection expires, any rate increases may lower the loan amount for which the borrower qualifies. \*\*Single rate option is locked for the life of the loan for both construction to permanent phase, except for some ARM products. Offer good only at retail branches and not for mortgage broker, correspondent or other third party loans. For North Carolina properties only. Some products may not be available in all North Carolina. Prices and guidelines are subject to change without notice. Restrictions apply. All rights reserved. 30707



have come—twenty countries and counting. Campers and counselors come from 24 states and as far away as Europe.

Swimming and related activities on the two spring-fed freshwater lakes are very popular, especially jumping onto the giant inflatable 'blob' which is a massive balloon that lets the campers try to bounce each other off into the water. Each camper must pass a challenging swimming test before being allowed to participate in any water-based activities. Most boys, spurred on by the desire to play in and around the water, pass the test.

"It's amazing what these young boys can do when you challenge them," says Pharr.

Campers can choose from a wide variety of activities. These range from lacrosse to singing and from rock climbing to sailing. As anyone who looks at the camp's promotional DVD will tell you, Falling Creek is a place to have fun. The skills progress with the boys and, at times, the activities are often serious, strenuous, and demanding. The rock climbing takes place on

well-regarded crags. The sailing takes place on expansive nearby Lake Summit. The mountain biking takes place on difficult trails in and around the property. The whitewater canoeing takes place on top area rivers. In fact, when Pharr was a camp counselor, he taught the young Chris Ennis the fundamentals of paddling; Ennis went on to paddle for the United States in the Athens Olympics in the Whitewater Slalom Canoe.

In the evenings, campers stay with fellow campers and at least one counselor in cabins. Cabin life and keeping the cabin clean are very much part of Falling Creek life. After the large bell at the dining hall rings to wake everyone up from a sleep that must be very sound, campers must take out the trash, sweep the cabin, and make sure that it's in top shape.

And just in case the boys get tired of being with boys all the time, the camp organizes weekly dances with neighboring all-girls camps.

"It was square dancing only when I was a camper," Pharr reminisces. "It's

*continued on page 50*

## A Week-Day in the Life of a Falling Creek Camper

7:30 AM	Wake Up
8:00 AM	Morning Watch
8:20 AM	Breakfast/ Morning Assembly
9:20-10:10 AM	First Activity
10:15-11:05 AM	Second Activity
11:10-12:00 AM	Third Activity
12:00 PM	Free Swim/ Free Activities
1:00-3:00 PM	Lunch/Rest Period
3:00-3:50 PM	Fourth Activity
3:55-4:45 PM	Fifth Activity
4:50-5:40 PM	Sixth Activity
5:40 PM	Free Swim/ Free Activities
6:30 PM	Supper
7:30 PM	Evening Program
9:00 PM	Call to Quarters
9:30 PM	Lights Out

NOTE: Boys can sign up at any time to go on out-of-camp activities that can range up to 5 days long.





a DJ now.”

The depth and breadth of activities at Falling Creek is only possible with a cadre of experienced and dedicated camp counselors. Each has passed the requisite courses and each has at least one year of college under his belt. Many, like Pharr, were campers who became counselors. Camper counselor ratio is about 3:1. In addition to the counselors, Pharr hires support staff who handle everything from preparing meals to providing medical care; there’s even an on-site doctor.

Campers stay anywhere from five days to 4 weeks depending on age. There are three sessions in the summer, each with a capacity of 224 campers who come from a variety of backgrounds.



**F**alling Creek camp has a pristine and secluded location yet it’s easily accessible—just an easy 2-hour drive from Charlotte. The camp sits in a sylvan and bucolic valley between two exposed ridges. Hendersonville, about 25 minutes by car, is the nearest major town. The valley is almost completely wooded and self-contained: campers can literally yell their lungs out at the appropriate times and not disturb any neighbors.

Former owners Chuck and Jean McGrady could have sold the camp to residential developers for a small fortune, such is the beauty and accessibility of the land. But the mission of the camp was far too important to the McGradys.

“Jean and I have been living our dream since 1989,” said Chuck McGrady. “The Pharr family will now return to Falling Creek to live a long-time dream of theirs.”

Part of the reality of the dream for Pharr is traveling to cities and towns across the United States to visit current Falling Creek families and staff and introducing camp to their friends, thus ensuring the traditions continue for years to come. From October to March, Pharr is seeing the inside of airports and the inside of his Subaru as he goes on the annual Falling Creek promotional road show, typically making presentations and answering questions in the living rooms of current and former campers. The show starts with a showing of the DVD—a must for any prospective camper. The most important sales

## The Best Spas In The Market!

12,000 Local Satisfied Customers Since 1979



Enduring  
Quality,  
Exceptional  
Prices!

Huge  
Selection  
In Showroom  
& In Stock!

Quick  
Ship  
Special  
Orders!



Fine Quality Spas & All-Weather Patio Furniture

At Carolina Place, Take I-485 to Exit 64B, Pineville,  
11729 Carolina Place Parkway behind Thomasville Furniture  
704.542.5300 1.800.839.3665 [www.oasispoolsplus.com](http://www.oasispoolsplus.com)

Pools • Spas • Chemicals • Patio • Accessories • Plus ...

## Fine Outdoor Living Rooms!







Tennis
Fitness Center
Racquetball

# Perfect Match

\* Summer Tennis Camp \*  
 \* After School Programs \*  
 \* Beginner thru Advanced Adult Programs \*



Play to Exercise!

1st Month  
Membership  
Dues Free  
(mention this ad)

704-841-PLAY (7529)

[www.brccharlotte.com](http://www.brccharlotte.com)

10607 Rea Road

Ask about our  
Racquetball/Fitness  
Memberships

pitch comes from Pharr as he meets parents, campers and staff face to face and conveys the benefits of a camp experience.

Pharr, who is triathlon-fit with a tall, slim frame, coat-hanger shoulders, and broad smile, makes a wonderful first impression. He looks more 23 than 37 and has a quick and camper-ish sense of humor yet is serious without indulging in morosity. He was probably the camper who short-sheeted his buddy in the cabin yet was the camper that the counselor trusted to handle a rope and belay safely at rock face.

"Yates played an important role in the early development of Ballantyne then played a vital role in the development of an important new community in Asheville," said Smoky Bissell. "I'm delighted that he is now the new owner of Falling Creek. I sent one of my boys there and I would not hesitate to recommend it as a wonderful place for boys to have fun and learn about the mountains. Part of me wishes that he was still part of our team but he loves the mountains and Falling Creek and has his dream job. I'm delighted for him and for his family."



Working with Smoky Bissell and The Bissell Companies and also with the Biltmore Farms development team has helped Pharr.

"I learned very quickly at Bissell that you get it right the first time and do everything you can to make the customer happy," says Pharr. "It was all about quality and being the best while operating within budget parameters. It was exciting and fun and challeng-

*continued on page 52*

# "NOTHING MEANS MORE TO ME THAN THE HEALTH OF MY CHILDREN."



"My husband and I were on our 10th year anniversary trip in the mountains when we received a call from our babysitter. Our 22-month-old son was bitten on the ear by a horse while waiting for his older sister to finish her riding lessons. After calling our son's pediatrician and not getting through, we contemplated canceling the balance of our trip and returning home. Fortunately our InHomeMD membership allowed us to speak to a doctor within minutes of our call. The doctor put our minds at ease, assuring us we had nothing to worry about, and had a prescription called into our local pharmacy right away. Our son felt better, and our vacation was saved."

Kendra Tardif : Mother, Wife, Business Owner

**InHomeMD**

**HOME MEDICAL CONCIERGE PROGRAM**

- \* 24-hour a Day Physician Telephone Consultations
- \* Prescription Refill & Delivery Service
- \* 24-hour a Day In Home or Office Physician House Calls
- \* Surgical and Specialist Referral
- \* Physician-Coordinated Emergency Room Admittance
- \* Access to Doctors While Traveling

FOR INFORMATION ON BECOMING A MEMBER

**1-888-562-2339**

**www.InHomeMD.com**



## Falling Creek's Stated Mission and Philosophy

Nestled in a peaceful mountain-top cove, Falling Creek provides a unique opportunity for physical, spiritual, and social growth. We believe boys need a place where they can just be boys: to play and explore away from modern technology. Under enthusiastic, mature leadership, boys learn to live together and develop lifelong friendships. Falling Creek campers will tell you there's nothing like camp friends.

Falling Creek believes that boys living together with fellow campers from different parts of the world fosters social maturity. Therefore, we make an effort to balance our enrollment by accepting campers from various geographic areas. Embracing traditional Christian values, Falling Creek welcomes all campers and strives to nurture spiritual growth in a relaxed setting.

Falling Creek's mission is to provide a setting, a program, and dedicated leadership to allow our boys a maximum opportunity for personal growth and fun as they develop an understanding of their relationships with nature, their fellow man, and God.



There's plenty of camping in among the Falling Creek property but hikers routinely visit other areas. There's even a five day Appalachian Trail excursion.

ing to be part of building Ballantyne into what it is today. And I learned a lot about making sure that things go well right off the bat."



With its abundance of just that...abundance, the physical location of Falling Creek is magnificent, even in mid-winter with the leaves off the hardwoods. It has the type of location that perhaps begs reflection, navel gazing, and long discussions about inner growth but in lieu, the boys and counselors derive their spirituality from non-denominational daily devotions and participating in events that almost require the campers to extend themselves.

Environmental stewardship is also a significant part of the curriculum at Falling Creek. Pharr, the staff, and the counselors help the campers practice minimum-impact camping and simply

cleaning up after themselves and each other.

"The campers hopefully leave with a completely new or updated appreciation for the beauty of nature and the beauty of the North Carolina Mountains," says Pharr. "But this appreciation comes primarily from all the activities and actually doing things in the woods."

For the foreseeable future, Pharr and his family will be spending a significant amount of time in these woods: as part of the ownership gig, the Pharr's get to live about half a mile from the main camp in a superb mountain home on top of a ridge. Campers come in the summer and camp readiness takes place throughout the spring.

After years in the commercial real estate world, Pharr's life has changed but it's a change that was always going to happen, just not this soon.

"It's a dream come true and I can't wait for the first camper to arrive." **B**

