

FOCUS !

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Serious photographers sharing their knowledge and experiences

Notes from the President

By Cyane Lowden

Greetings FGCC

September kicks off our next year, offering some new and some old favorites in our programs. Check the newsletter calendar to see what we have scheduled either during our monthly meetings or in between. My hope for this year is that everyone will find new ways of exploring their vision whether it is in the Brown Bag challenge or trying a few weekend meet ups in different places in Richmond. We are a very talented group of people who can charge up curiosity or transform ways of looking at the world with the click of a shutter, not to mention the "save" button on the computer. My photo philosophy, now that I am freed of grip and grins, is to explore, to challenge my ideas, and experiment with new ways to photograph. I know this may not be for everyone but I believe that whatever each person finds to spark an on going interest in the photographic image, it will expand that idea. That being said I hope this year will provide a lot of fun while we learn from each other and explore our own photographic adventures.



By Hangki Lee

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Uses For The Nik Collection in Creating Realistic HDR Images

By Al Warfield

In 2008 Charlie Stout led a workshop on HDR for FGCC. I attended that workshop, and have been using HDR ever since that time. Until recently the only HDR software I used was Photomatix by HDR Soft, which is now up to version 4. In the workshop in 2008 we also were introduced to Nik's HDR Efex Pro, which I didn't like as much as Photomatix, probably because they are very different and I didn't spend much time on the Nik software. Recently Nik Software was taken over by Google. There are several types of software in the Nik suite in addition to HDR Efex Pro. Each previously sold for about \$100 or more in some cases. But the Google-Nik Collection is available now for as little as \$147; even less if you already have one or more of the items. So I bought the collection a few months ago. I have started using it to good effect, and this article describes a few of the uses I have found.

First, here is a good book I recommend if you have or intend to buy the collection and are not familiar with how Nik software works: "Plug In with NIK, a Photographer's Guide to Creating Dynamic Images with Nik Software", by John Batdorff. I found it to be very comprehensive and complete.

Dfine 2.0, Viveza 2, Color Efex Pro 4, Silver Efex Pro 2, HDR Efex Pro 2, and Sharpener Pro 3 are the members of the Nik Collection. These are for noise control, color control, B&W conversion, HDR processing, and sharpening respectively. That's a lot of excellent software for very little in cost.

I have owned Dfine 2.0 for a few years and it is very effective. I have not really gotten around to trying Color Efex Pro, or Silver Efex Pro yet but will do so in the near future. I use mostly PhotoKit Sharpener 2 for sharpening, but I have a feeling I'll try Sharpener Pro very soon. Mainly I have used Viveza and HDR Efex Pro to this point. My experience using those has made me realize how valuable this collection is going to be for me in the future. So I'll summarize what I have learned so far.

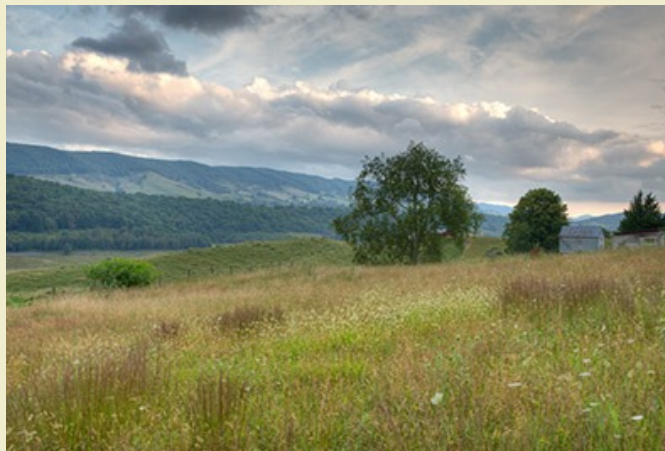


Figure 1

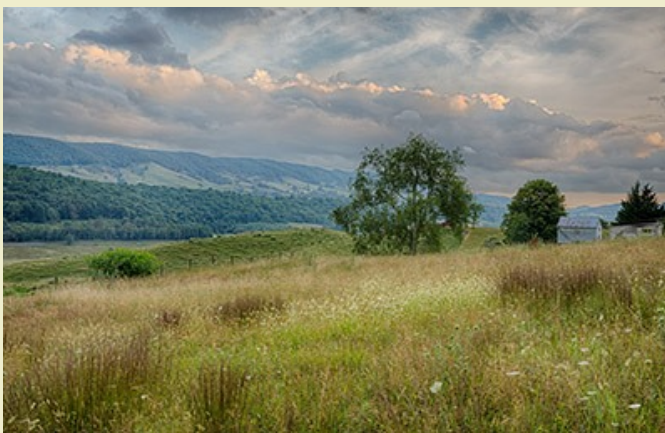


Figure 2



Figure 3

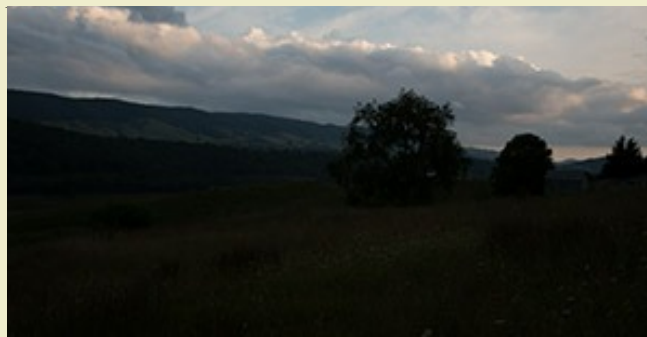


Figure 4

The best examples are from a recent trip Linda & I took to Highland County in July. We stayed at a B&B in Monterey - Cherry Hill B&B. The owners live on a farm in Blue Grass Valley, a few miles west over Monterey Mountain, and we had permission to photograph there. Views of the valley include buildings, cattle and horses, Snowy Mountain, Devil's Backbone, and Monterey Mountain.

We arrived just as the sun was setting on a partly cloudy day. A little earlier would have made things easier, but the sun went behind a cloud to the west just as we got there. Nevertheless I shot several nice scenes with my Canon 5D Mark III. HDR is easy with this camera, and I shot 3 exposures at 2 EV apart. When I got home I ran the raw files through a sequence where the files are stacked in Photoshop (CS6) layers, which are then aligned using a script, and then the aligned layers are converted to tiff files using another script. At this point the files can be used in any HDR software to create an HDR rendition. I tried both Photomatix Pro 4 and HDR Efex 2. There are a lot of differences in how these two HDR products work, and a lot of variables. I came up with two final versions of each image that were very different from each other. It's a good idea to have a way of visualizing the original files that were used to create the HDR to keep from going way off base with saturation, contrast, etc. You could make 8x10 prints, or make jpegs of those files and display them on a laptop. Glancing at those images during the tonemapping process and not deviating too much will keep the scene realistic.

I used two different techniques on the files from Highland County. In the first I made two different HDR images from the same rawfiles, one using Photomatix 4 (Figure 1) and the other using HDR Efex Pro 2 (Figure 2). Figures 3 and 4 show the +2 and -2 original files for reference. The Photomatix version (Figure 1) looks a little more realistic than Figure 2 (Nik) (*probably because of my lack of experience*) but the sky is not very intense, the foreground is not contrasty enough, and the buildings don't stand out enough. I arrived at Figure 5 by layering Figure 2 on top of Figure 1, setting the blend mode of the top layer to "Screen", and reducing the opacity of that layer to about 50%. After flattening the file I used control points in Viveza 2 to further enhance the grass in the foreground and bring out the detail in the buildings. So in this example I used two different HDR software products to generate two files, which were blended and then further modified using another of the Nik suite members.

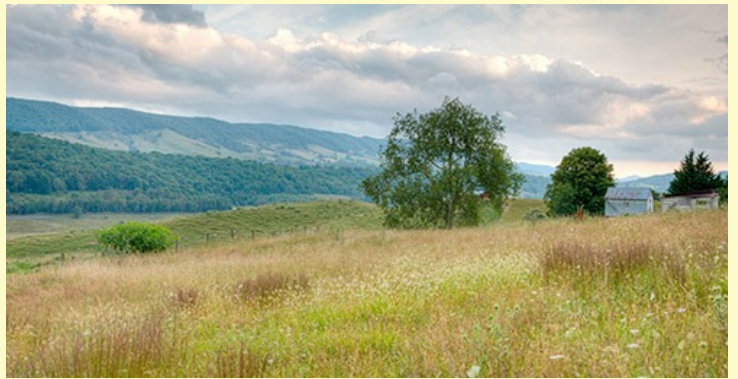


Figure 5

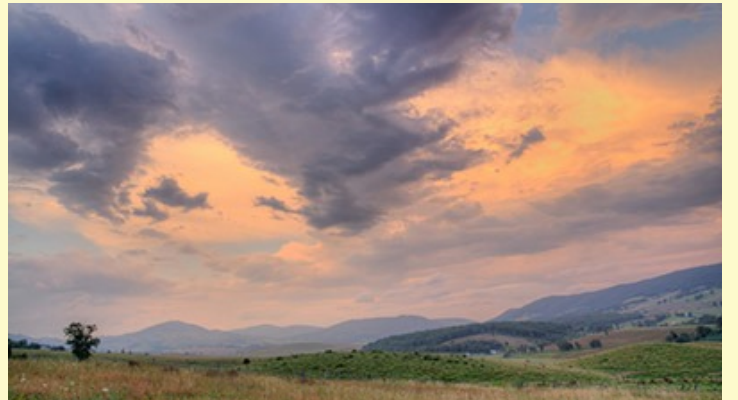


Figure 6



Figure 7

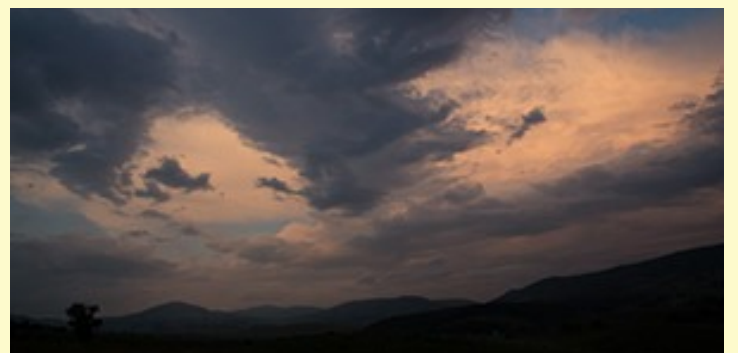


Figure 8

In the second technique, I used only Photomatrix 4 to create Figure 6 from three rawfiles processed as described earlier. Figures 7 & 8 are the -2 EV and +2 EV rawfiles for comparison. Compared to Figure 8, the sky in Figure 6 is too saturated, but otherwise it is a pretty realistic image of what I saw. So I used control points in Viveza 2 to slightly desaturate the two large pink zones in the sky, to produce Figure 9. That is pretty much exactly what I saw.

Control points in the Nik software do more than just modify effects in a radial shape. When a point is placed, exactly what it is placed on determines how the mask that results is calculated. This mask can be visualized. The circumference of effect is set, and then parameters like brightness, contrast, structure, saturation, shadows, highlights, and warmth can be adjusted. Viveza has the same ability to do these adjustments as does HDR Efex Pro. That means that it can be used to modify the results after Photoshop or other brands of software. Photomatrix allows more control of how the tonemapping is done after the 32 bit HDR file is made, but HDR Efex Pro has more tools to affect the final look of the file. It would be almost impossible to obtain exactly the same result from these two brands of HDR software.

So that's where I am now. The more I work with the Nik software the more I pick up on how to use it to best advantage. I hope at least a few other FGCC members will share their experiences with the Nik software suite. It should also be noted that other brands of HDR software I have read reviews on are now available, and they may be better than either of the two I have used here. I'll get around to trying some of them later. I'd be interested in your experience with those as well.

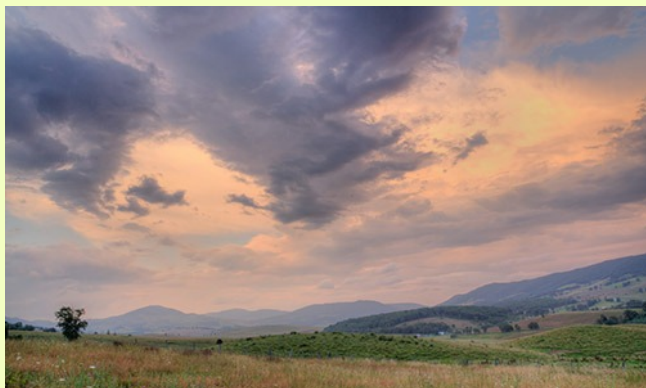


Figure 9

Additional Nik Comments

By Ron Ratcliffe

Just a few comments after Al's excellent Nik article. I use Lightroom as a host application for Nik. All of the Nik products are standalone, but it is a lot smoother when you continue your edits from a host. To use the HDR plug-in, simply select your set of images to merge and export with presets to the HDR by menu selection. Nik's HDR will perform the magic enhancements and save a TIF file. Very fast and simple since Nik does all the alignments.

A few additional notes about the U-Point. U-Point refers to the invisible selection engine in all Nik software. U-Point is just a selection tool and does no work. The mods are all made by the product you are running i. e selective noise control or maybe selective brightness and contrast. The object is to make a mask that is easily defined.

It is important to understand that one should use many control points. Each additional point makes a more refined, more precise selection within an object. More points will help in selecting lighter or darker shades within an object making it more uniform. A common problem extra points help solve is overspray.

Help the publisher

When submitting photos for reproduction in the newsletter, please send photo as a file **attached** to the e-mail and not embedded within the message. In other words, while composing the message do not insert a picture but insert a file where the file is name of the .JPG or .TIF. I can not use pictures buried in a message.

When text is submitted, just type it out. There is no need to format headings and titles etc. Just the words. Also, please do not place two blanks after each period.

Another Nik book that may be of interest is *Nik Software Captured*. By Tony Corbell and Joshua Haltel. I found it to be all-inclusive with excellent illustrations. \$18.63 at Amazon.

Ron Ratcliffe

Field Trip News

By Debra Roberts

There are some fabulous opportunities in VA this fall for field trips and photography. We can have fun as a group, or you can go on your own. There will be reminders at club meetings, and anyone interested in participating is urged to contact Debbie: DKRoberts1@gmail.com

Grayhaven Winery:

Sat. & Sun., Sept. 14 & 15 11AM-6PM

The 8th annual South African Wine & Food Festival, at a vineyard only 30 miles from Richmond. This 2-day festival offers much to photograph: grapevines, barn horses, antique farm machinery, pond, wine-making facilities. \$20 in advance, \$30 at the door, \$5 more includes wine tasting! Tickets are available on line. www.southafricanfoodfest.com/html/info.html

Chickahominy PowWow:

Sat. & Sun., Sept. 28 & 29 11AM

The 62nd annual PowWow features dancing & drumming, beautiful costumes, arts & crafts, & food. The grounds open at 10AM and the Grand Entry is at noon. Meet at 11AM at the entrance to allow time to get familiar with the grounds and the circle. There may be a \$5 entrance fee. Please let Debbie know to expect you.

www.chickahominytribe.org/Events/2013PowFlyer.pdf

Metro Richmond Zoo:

Sat., Oct. 5 9:30AM

Admission is \$15.75 for adults, \$14.75 for seniors, \$10.75 for kids. (If we have 10-15 people, we can each save \$1.00.)

Please RSVP to Debbie.

www.MetroRichmondZoo.com/index.shtml

2 Street Festival: Sat., Oct. 5

Celebrating 25 years! Live music on 4 stages, children's activities, food, vendor shopping, & dancing in the street. Great street photography, natural light portraits, fashion, music. No admission charge. Street parking.

Maps.google.com/maps?q=2ND+street+in+Jackson+Ward,+Richmond,+VA

Revolutionary War Reenactment:

Fri., Sat., Sun., Oct. 18, 19, & 20 at the Inn at Warner Hall, Gloucester

A national event with more than 1,000 uniformed participants reenacting the 1781 Yorktown Campaign & Washington's victory over Cornwallis, ending the American Revolution after 6 years of fighting. No admission fee, no parking fee.

www.battleofthehook.org/

9th Annual Richmond Zombie Walk: Sat., Oct. 26, 1PM

Pre-walk meet up at Byrd Park Boat Lake at 1PM. The "walk" begins on the sidewalk in front of Kroger on W. Cary Street, continuing down Cary St. in a loosely organized fashion. No admission fee, no parking fee. Street photography dependent on costumes & audience participation.

Virginia Thanksgiving Festival,

Sun., Nov. 3, 12Noon

Berkeley Plantation in Charles City, off Rte 5.

Festival, Plantation Gardens & grounds free. Parking \$5.

House tours (fee) are available 9AM -4:30PM.

Period interpreters strolling the grounds, food & craft vendors. **Program at 3PM** includes music, speeches, & reenactment of 1619 landing of Capt. Woodlief and portrayal of America's 1st Thanksgiving. Please respond to Debbie.

www.VirginiaThanksgivingFestival.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/10VA.Thanksgiving111962Annual-Flyer.jpg

Membership Committee Report

Following Larry McCann's resignation for health reasons, we have 33 members. We wish Larry and his family the best.

The totally unscientific sampling (i.e. respondents to one request) of members' travels this summer yielded the following, in reverse order received):

Cyane Lowden: Ireland, Baseball Hall of Fame and the Little League World Series, Blue Ridge Mtns, and "I am not done yet."

Robert Sabatini: Two weeks in Alaska (Anchorage, Seward, Homer and, the highlight, a week photographing coastal brown bears in Lake Clark National Park., plus photographing local wildlife around Mechanicsville).

Bob Jones: Maine and the Canadian Maritime Provinces, and were gone from July 4th to August 23rd: *New Brunswick* (including Campobello, St. Andrews, Grand Manan, Island, St. John's, Sediac, and Fundy); *Nova Scotia* (including Truro, Grand Pre, Annapolis Royal, Port Royal and Digby, Le Havre, Lunenburg, Peggy's Cove, Halifax Havre Boucher); *Cape Breton* (including Badeck, Cheticamp and the Cabot Trail, Englishtown, and Louisbourg); *Prince Edward Island* (Cavendish etc.)

Ed Fuhr: Shenandoah NP, Smoky Mountains, Grand Tetons, La Jolla, California.

Wade Emmett: a week in Finksburg, Maryland at my sister's house; several days at the Carroll County 4H FFA Fair. Her granddaughter was baking cookies and cakes for the cake auction. There were cows, horses, dogs, chickens, parades, displays, farm tractors and vendors. I took a lot of pictures.

Al Warfield: Smith MT Lake, Lake Anna Winery (FGCC FT), Highland County, Richmond Floodwall July 4th,

Bill Billings: Bismarck, North Dakota; Alpine Scenic Loop, Utah; Jackson Hole, Wyoming; Capitol Reef National Park, Utah; False Cape State Park, Virginia; Glacier National Park, Montana; Lolo Pass, Idaho; Lemhi Pass, Montana; 100th Year Celebration, BSA

Troop 17 Courtland, VA; Colonial National Historical Park, Yorktown Victory Center; Jamestown Island; Great Dismal Swamp National Wildlife Refuge.

Vicky Eicher: a week in Florence Italy & a week in Anghiari Italy in May; two weeks in Western Greenland and above the Arctic Circle in Canada!

Gilpin Brown: My front yard with grandkids; Pipeline; Chincoteague and Assateague Islands, VA; VA Beach

Linda Warfield: War Memorial, Highland County, and Lake Anna Vineyard.

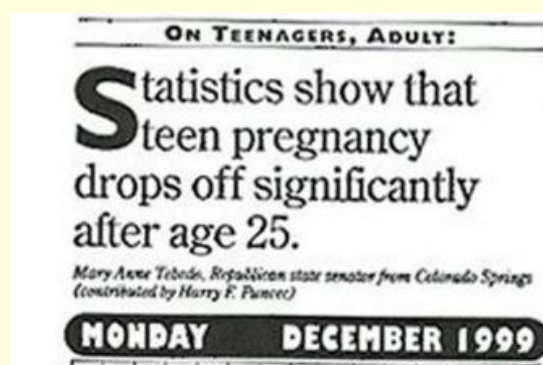
Cindy & Charles Krumbein: Mt. Rushmore, The Badlands, the Black Hills, etc., South Dakota; Minneapolis, MN.; Rangeley, Maine.

Frank Feigert: Netherlands canal boat tour to museums (Amsterdam; Haarlem, Leiden, Delft, Rotterdam, The Hague); Santa Fe and Acoma Pueblo, NM; Bath County twice.

Bob Coles led FGCC meetups at the VA War Memorial (4 attendees) and at Forest Hill Park Farmer's Market (7 attendees).

Ron Ratcliffe: Asheville, NC, Charleston SC, Outer Banks NC

Clips from other papers



Character Shots

Focus Group Camera Club

Programs 2013-2014

September 10 William Lebovich, a Washington DC architectural historian who worked in the National Park Service’s National Register and other programs.

Bill is an independent large format architectural photographer who has documented many historic projects for inclusion in the Library of Congress, and other archives. As an independent architectural historian, he evaluates and documents historic properties.

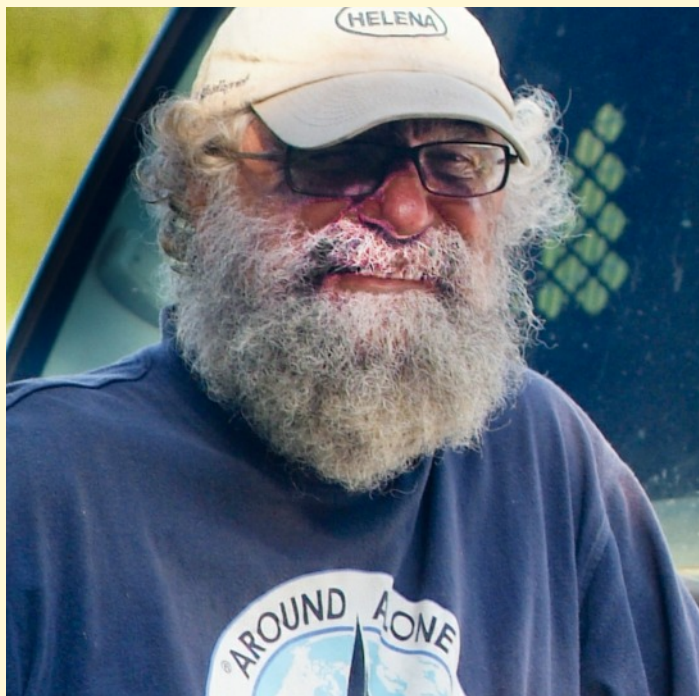
Bill is the author of several books of architectural photography, and has written for many periodicals, including Progressive Architecture, Architectural Record, and Australian Art & Architecture. His newest book will be released on September 12, just after our meeting.

You can see his work and read about him on his website, www.BillLebovich.com.

October 8 Opening of our Annual FGCC Exhibition at the James Center. Please be sure to invite your family and your favorite art-buying friends!

November 12 For this meeting, we have a real treat: Local photographer, Jeff Glotzl will come to talk to us about the work that he creates. Jeff’s company, Glotzl, provides clever solutions to visual problems using retouching, photography, and CGI. He is a photographer, retoucher, digital tech, darkroom technician, and his experience allows him to see and experience image making from every angle.

Jeff is the master of making art and we will talk about how he envisions the creation before he begins. You can see Jeff’s work at www.Glotzl.com.



Here we have an ex- SC multi term state legislator, farmer, award winning author, and state’s foremost expert on Hydrangeas. By Ron Ratcliffe.



Some folks near LoLo Pass in Idaho “The camera captured the image but not the smell”. By Bill Billings



The Back Story

This guy will be displayed at the James Center Exhibit. We were in the Canadian Arctic on a ship North of the Arctic Circle, looking for polar bears and other wildlife. This guy was one of two that were attracted to the huge, strange sight, and probably interesting smells from the galley. He was larger than the first bear and scared him off; then he cautiously advanced on us. I was hanging over the bow with my Nikon D300 at the ready. My lens was the 80-400, and I had to shorten it because he was so close!



Still looking for a title, if you have any ideas. Vicky Eicher



Capitol Reef National Park Fuji 550EXR

By Bill Billings



Bison Fuji 550EXR

By Bill Billings

FGCC 2013-14 Club Calendar				
Month	Day	Activity	What	Contact
September	10	Club Meeting	William Lebovich, DC Architectural Historian	Cindy
	10	James Center	Deadline for titles, prices and contact info.	Vicky/Peggy
	30	Deadline	For October Newsletter	Ron
October	1	Board Meeting	All are welcome 6:30PM	Cyane
	5	Show	Deliver work to James Center 9-10AM	Vicky
	5	Show	James Center (10/5 to 10/26)	Vicky/Peggy
	8	Meeting/Reception	James Center Reception 6PM to 7:30PM	Vicky/Peggy
	25	Show	Pick up work after 2PM or on 26th Before 10AM	Members
	28	Deadline	For November Newsletter	Ron
November	1	Show	SunTrust Gallery (11/1 to 11/30)	TBD
	5	Board Meeting	All are welcome 6:30PM	Cyane
	12	Club Meeting	Jeff Glotzl, Image Maker	Cindy
	25	Deadline	For December Newsletter	Ron
December	3	Board Meeting	All are welcome 6:30PM	Cyane
	6	Show	Richmond Public Library (12-6 to 12/31)	TBD
	6	Reception	Richmond Public Library Show	TBD
	10	Club Meeting	TBA	Cindy
	30	Deadline	For November Newsletter	Ron



DIGITAL CAMERA FOR SALE TO HELP PAY MEDICAL BILLS