

Two from Hickory area  
spotlighted, among more  
than 4,200 to graduate  
from App State. PAGE A2



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# FROM WINE TO WELLNESS



**BILLY CHAPMAN, RECORD**

Dennis Baucom and Twyla Deese stand in front of a building on their property at AnandaRasa Catawba.

## Catawba Farms owners shifted business model after spiritual trip to India

**BILLY CHAPMAN**  
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Twyla Deese and Dennis Baucom say they played the role of traditional capitalists and small business owners for years.

After the death of their business partner in Catawba Farms, Michael Waltuch, and a trip to India, Deese and Baucom reconsidered their priorities and their business.

The result is AnandaRasa Catawba, a place for yoga, meditation and the arts.

Deese, Baucom and Waltuch owned and ran the 34-acre Catawba Farms. The property had a bed-and-breakfast, a local produce and arts market, winery, brewery and year-round ice skating rink.

The owners worked closely with Catawba Valley Community College. The

property held festivals, including the Catawba Valley Festival of the Arts, which Deese helped create.

The farm was a setting for socializing, enjoying beer and wine and listening to music.

COVID-19 forced the venue to adapt,

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## Owners

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but the business was still running strong in May 2021, according to Deese and Baucom.

By the end of that month, Catawba Farms would expedite a shift in its business model that Deese and Baucom said had been coming.

## Death, closure and a trip to India

Waltuch died May 27, 2021.

His death was felt heavily by Deese, Baucom and the business. Catawba Farms stopped operations in 2022.

Deese and Baucom traveled to India.

They placed the Catawba Farms property up for sale in 2023. The couple planned to leave Catawba County and move to Portugal to open a wellness center there.

"We entertained several offers of folks interested in buying the farm," Deese said. "All of those fell through. We put a bid on a property in Portugal. We were like, 'We're out of here, we're done.' And that fell through."

The pair decided to keep the property, but wanted to repurpose it.

They made another trip to India in 2023 and spent time at an ashram.

At the ashram, Deese and Baucom said they experienced an awakening of how they wanted to live their lives. "Our lives greatly improved as soon as we quit grasping for business success," Deese said.

Baucom said meals and accommodations were free for those staying at the ashram. He said medical services at the ashram

## Upcoming events at AnandaRasa Catawba

### Yoga Classes in May

Yin Yoga: Monday, 6:30 p.m.

Intermediate Sivananda Yoga: Tuesday, 7 p.m.

Flow and Stretch Yoga: Thursday, 6:15 p.m.

Mind-Body-Spirit Yoga: Friday, 10 a.m.

Community Yoga: Saturday, 10:30 a.m.

Yoga Stretch: May 18, 4 p.m.

Satsang: Seeking Truth: May 18, 5 p.m.

For more information, visit [anandarasa.org](http://anandarasa.org).

## What is an ashram? What is a sound bath?

According to Merriam-Webster online, an ashram is a "secluded dwelling of a Hindu sage" or a "religious or spiritual retreat."

According to the Cleveland Clinic, a sound bath is "an experience where you're immersed in deep sound vibrations. ... More precisely, sound baths are rooted in the idea that these particular frequencies correspond to specific energy centers in your body."

## What does AnandaRasa mean?

According to dictionary.com, Ananda is a Sanskrit word meaning "extreme happiness, one of the highest states of being." Rasa is a Sanskrit word meaning "essence, flavor or sentiment."

were also free.

The ashram Deese and Baucom visited was established so devotees could learn from Hindu sage Ramana Maharshi, who died in 1950. The ashram exists for those seeking inner reflection and to learn about Maharshi.

"Staying at their ashram for that period, ... it just opened our eyes to a whole new way of existing," Baucom said.

## 'Inspirations have presented themselves'

The trip to India inspired the creation of

AnandaRasa Catawba. "The inspirations have presented themselves, and life got a lot easier when we started moving that direction," Baucom said.

Returning from India, Catawba Farms still had a brewery and winery. That changed after Hurricane Helene.

When a tree fell during the storm, destroying the small brewery, Deese and Baucom were not troubled. They viewed it as just another event, another opportunity to do something different.

"When that happened, we were like, 'Oh, OK,'"

Deese said about the tree falling. "No emotion, just, 'Oh that's interesting.'"

Deese and Baucom do not have much interest in brewing beer and making wine anymore. They hope to one day turn AnandaRasa into a spiritual, peaceful retreat, like an ashram, for those seeking self-reflection and meaning in their lives.

AnandaRasa Catawba started hosting yoga and other wellness classes in 2024. Yoga classes are around \$10. Deese is one of the yoga teachers at AnandaRasa Catawba.

Deese and Baucom are hosting, for a cost, artists for residency programs. They are also continuing to have art exhibits and festivals. They offer yoga classes, satsang discussions and sound baths.

"We love the notion of art being a catalyst for healing," Deese said.

Deese and Baucom recognize the changes are a shift from when the property served as Catawba Farms. Deese closed the winery. They do not plan to rebuild the brewery. As of February, there were no plans to reopen the bed-and-breakfast to the public.

They do plan to host art and wellness festivals.

"The idea of the space is for people seeking inner-calm and peace and truth to come and be with others who are looking to accomplish the same thing," Baucom said.

To learn more about AnandaRasa Catawba, visit [anandarasa.org](http://anandarasa.org) or AnandaRasa's Instagram page.

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