



RON MACARTHUR PHOTO

**THE REV. DALE DUNNING** and her husband, Ken, hold the cover of the new book "Jusst Dale" by Debby Coughlan. The couple will host a book reveal from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturday, June 8, at the Jusst Sooup Ranch along Route 9 near Lewes.

## Just the facts: Dunning is subject of new book

Church set to open soon at Jusst Sooup Ranch in Coolspring

By Ron MacArthur  
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Those who know the Rev. Dale Dunning would agree her life's story is worthy of a book.

Operating on a shoe-string budget, she started a soup kitchen almost 14 years ago, cooking soup in her own kitchen and dishing it out at area churches. She developed a strong following of people in need and the homeless whom she called her Little Soupers.

Over the years, she expanded her ministry to include more churches and provide other services to those in need. Stories about her devotion to her ministry were featured in "People" magazine and she even was interviewed by Oprah Winfrey. She was honored with a Jefferson Award for her unselfish volunteerism.

When Baltimore author Debby Coughlan learned about Dunning's story, it didn't take long for her to make contact with the Dunnings. For more than year, Coughlan drove to the Jusst Sooup Ranch near Lewes to meet with Dale and her husband, Ken, to gather information for her book, "Jusst Dale."

The first copies of the book were delivered to the Dunnings late last week. They are planning a book release party from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturday, June 8, at the Jusst Sooup Ranch off Route 9 in Coolspring.

"It's always been the desire of my heart to have a book," Dunning said as she cleaned up after her Thursday soup kitchen in the Rehoboth Presbyterian Church of Midway fellowship hall.

The Dunnings hope work will be completed within the month

to allow them to expand their ministry by offering church services at the ranch.

She said the new church can accommodate up to 88 people. "It's not going to be an ordinary church. It's going to be a church for people who are starting over, those who are coming back to church and others who have never been," she said.

The Dunnings received national publicity about their ministry as the subject of an "Extreme Makeover: Home Edition" television show segment that aired as a Thanksgiving special in November 2011.

During the last week of August 2011, and after months of planning, Extreme Makeover fever ignited the Cape Region as thousands of volunteers and dozens of contractors volunteered their time day and night.

Under the supervision of Schell Brothers, the Jusst Sooup Ranch was constructed in seven days, surviving an earthquake, tornado and the threat of a hurricane.

The Dunnings were looking forward to setting up her own soup kitchen in the large dining room and commercial kitchen constructed as part of the makeover building project. But that effort ran into a major roadblock. The soup kitchen soon became entangled in a controversial whirl of government regulations fueled by objections from neighbors.

The Dunnings learned that because of zoning restrictions - the 6-acre parcel is zoned AR-1 - a soup kitchen was not allowed. The Dunnings had permission to operate an off-site ministry as a home-based business, but only family members were permitted

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## DANCE STUDENTS ACCEPTED INTO SUMMER PROGRAMS



SUBMITTED PHOTOS

**LOCAL DANCE STUDENTS** (l-r) of the First State Academy of Dance, under direction of Michele Xiques, auditioned and were accepted to study in the following programs: Katie Fields, 14, Seaford, Kirov Academy of Ballet, Washington, D.C. and American Academy of Ballet, N.Y.; Jill Wilkins, 13, Lincoln, Burklyn Ballet Theatre, Vt.; Danielle Del Negro, 19, Rockettes Summer Intensive, Radio City Music Hall, New York, N.Y.; and Owen Lawson, 14, Milton, Orlando Ballet School, Orlando, Fla.

These students will be performing with First State Academy of Dance's end of the year Dance Concert at 3 p.m., Sunday, June 9, at Milford High School. Call 302-422-2633 or email firststatedance@verizon.net for more information.

In addition, two FSAD former students, Anna Edmondson, below left, and Ian Boyan, below right, have both been accepted into major dance schools for year-round schooling. Anna attends the Kirov Academy of Ballet School and Ian attends the Pittsburgh Ballet School, Pittsburgh, Pa.



## Dunning

Continued from page 34

to assist in the ministry at the ranch. That meant that no volunteers were permitted to help on site.

When they applied for a special-use exception to serve food, the Sussex County Board of Adjustment turned down the request.

That's when attorney Heidi Gilmore stepped in to assist the Dunnings. She helped them with the legal work to establish a church at the site, which is a permitted use in AR-1 zoning. Working pro-bono, Gilmore guided the Dunnings through the process of site-plan approval.

State agencies are requiring the Dunnings to construct a stormwater retention system, upgrade the septic system, expand the driveway and provide additional handicapped accessibility.

Ken said the estimated \$60,000 cost for the work is being covered by an endowment established by Schell Brothers to cover costs of operating the Jus Sooup Ranch. Part of the makeover was estab-

lishing an endowment to assist the Dunnings with utility bills and upkeep of the house, cottage, grounds and soup kitchen. Ken pointed out that endowment funds cannot be used for operation of the ministry.

### Proceeds to benefit ministry

The book will sell for \$19.99 with all proceeds going to the Dunning's ministry.

Dale said even though her life's story has been publicized, there are still parts of her life that she hasn't talked about. "People will call it a miracle when they see where I came from," she said. "They will see how I can relate to the people I minister to."

The Dunnings are still among the hardest working people around; they get up at 3 a.m. most mornings to start cooking soup for area soup kitchens.

Although he retired last year, Ken still cuts grass for 50 customers each week. Even in 90-degree heat, he was getting ready to cut five yards last Thursday afternoon after spending all morning at the soup kitchen. All the money he receives from cutting grass goes to support the ministry.

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