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*Summer*  
*2017*

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**Pine Needle Sewing Club**  
**Preserving Summer**  
**A Day in the Woods**  
**Dawson Mathis**  
**Teens & Tweens**

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# My Georgia Magazine Hometown



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Cover: Ruby (8) and Alex (10) Reyes earn money for school clothes every summer by selling watermelons. This load came from Lenox Farms. Parents are Janeth Soto and Alejandro Reyes

# One Scoop or Two?

By Joshua Clements

"I want vanilla in a waffle cone," said a little girl as she looked into the glass case housing the different flavors of ice cream. The smile on her face was priceless as Isabella Waddell handed her the cone with a freshly rounded scoop of vanilla.

Waddell and her sisters Megan Scarbor and Mallory Waddell co-operate Sisters, an ice cream shop in Tifton Georgia. One scoop at a time, the girls bring joy to the local community. Along with their parents, who help make sure everything is running smoothly, the sisters see this business venture as an opportunity to invest back into Tifton and learn responsibility along the way.

Isabella, 16, has always wanted to own her own business, but also hopes to serve in the medical field when she gets older.

"It's fun most days," she says about the experience of running the shop with her sisters.

Megan, 15, is glad that her work balances responsibility with fun.



"It's great to have a job and hang out with my friends," she says.

Many of the sisters' friends visit the shop, which hosts parties and other events for young people. Megan plans to pursue a career in the Air Force when she graduates high school.

Being the youngest at 12 years old, Mallory knows it is hard work, but exciting as well.

"It feels like I have big responsibilities as a little girl, but it's fun to see what people think about our shop and what kind of ice cream they get," she said.

Her plan for the future is to become an orthodontist, but for now, she enjoys helping with the business.

Continued on page 24

## For Every Phase of a Woman's Life




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**Bishara Baddour, M.D.**  
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# BUILDING SUCCESS FOR THOSE WHO SERVED

By Carmen Statham



Lindsay Gutierrez is working hard to build success for others through her efforts to help women veterans fight homelessness in Georgia and across the nation. The reality that there are thousands of women veterans needing help prompted Gutierrez to become a Final Salute Inc. supporter and semi-finalist for Ms. Veteran America 2017.

"The cause I'm advocating for isn't about me," said Gutierrez. "It's about homeless women veterans who desperately need a second chance at life."

Recently, this Lakeland resident and U.S. Air Force veteran entered the preliminary Ms. Veteran America (MVA)



contest in Arlington, Va.

The two-part audition consisted of a question-and-answer session and a presentation of the contestant's platform. Gutierrez presented a "unique and original" storyboard "about looking for the blessings God provides us."

"I was soooooo nervous!" she said. "Overall, I felt good with the audition and now it's a waiting game. We will know the first week in July who has been selected for the Top 25," she said.

If chosen, she'll go on to the final competition in October in Washington, D.C. The MVA contest also reserves five of the Top 25 spots for those who raised the most money for Final Salute, Inc.

"I feel very blessed to be a part of this mission, and I can't wait to hear what July has in store!" Gutierrez said. "Even if I don't make it to the finals in October, it's been fantastic to be able to bring awareness of female veteran homelessness to our area."

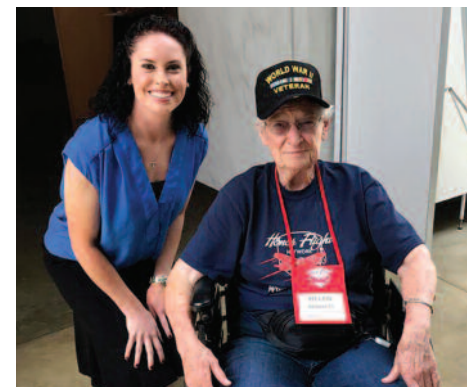
The MVA pageant is sponsored by Final Salute Inc., a nonprofit organization that supports homeless women veterans. Gutierrez has been involved with Final Salute since her honorable discharge in 2016.

"There's so much I could say that I was able to gain from participating in the Ms. Veteran America competition, but the greatest part was meeting so many incredible women advocating for Final Salute,

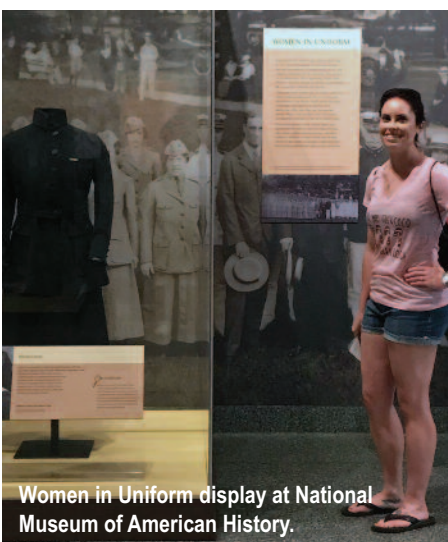
Inc. and homeless women veterans," she shared in a recent Facebook post.

Gutierrez also met with Congressman Austin Scott and spoke with him about homelessness in South Georgia. Scott's comments to her encouraged her to continue promoting community awareness and education in order to advocate a change.

Gutierrez, who has been busy promoting Final Salute across South Georgia, pointed out, "It just takes continuously chipping away and never stopping the mission for things to eventually change. It's a process that's so worth it!" ✨



It was an honor to meet 93 year old Helen Bennett, a World War II veteran.



Women in Uniform display at National Museum of American History.

## Poised for Battle: Relief for Female Veterans

Ms. Veteran America isn't a beauty pageant, nor a competition, but a platform to raise awareness for homeless women veterans, their children, and their family. It reminds us and America that we are sisters, mothers, wives, and daughters...we are unified for one another. For one night, we are able to go beyond the uniform and come together to advocate for our sisters-in-service. These women courageously fought for our freedoms and liberties while in the military. Now, they're fighting the biggest battle of their life: homelessness. If chosen as Ms. Veteran America, I would spend the next year educating the public about this epidemic, working with public figures to create plans and policies to prevent homelessness, and ensuring our homeless women vets are cared for. Taken from Gutierrez's Facebook post



# Growing South Georgia

By Dalton Spangler



Molly Giddings, new Regional Manager for the Georgia Chamber office in Tifton and Morgan Law, Georgia Chamber's VP Strategic Initiatives



Chris Clark, President and CEO of the GCC, rolls up his pant legs in order to "fit in" with Congressman Sam Watson and Senator Tyler Harper.

## Georgia Chamber of Commerce taking steps to revitalize rural economies

It was an afternoon of food and networking as elected officials from all over the state of Georgia gathered in Tifton for the grand opening of the first Georgia Chamber of Commerce regional office established outside the metro-Atlanta area. The May 15th opening signifies an outreach from Atlanta officials to mend some of the divide between rural and urban regions by revitalizing the local economies in South Georgia.

---

"...the first effort in 102 years to get a beachhead established somewhere else around the state of Georgia."  
- Bill Linginfelter

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Adding to the event's festive air, a surprise announcement was made naming Molly Giddings as regional manager of the new office. Her goals are to learn what the regional needs are and move forward by working alongside the county chamber offices. She encourages citizens who wish to learn more, or get involved with revitalizing their local industry, to get in touch with her or their local chamber. The purpose of the regional office is to provide access to GCC staff and resources and a

hub for regional and state economic development meetings.

Monday's grand opening was followed by a Tuesday breakfast meeting. During his speech, Bill Linginfelter, Executive Vice President of the GCC, stated: "I remember Chris [Clark, President and CEO of the GCC] said 'Look, I think we need to establish a base outside metro-Atlanta to show our dedication, our determination to be a part of the great things we hope will happen to Georgia over the next several years.' And here you go, right behind us is the first effort in 102 years to get a beachhead established somewhere else around the state of Georgia."

The purpose of the breakfast meeting was to inform the South Georgia chambers of the area's current and future status regarding the ebb and flow of business, education, healthcare, defense, and population expectations.

Senator Tyler Harper (District 7, [Ocilla]) and Congressman Sam Watson (District 172 [Moultrie]) explained how the Chamber plans to partner with local government to incentivize business and allow the private sector to naturally grow the economy, unobstructed by government. The defense industry, better infrastructure

through investments into broadband and transportation, as well as mentor programs for students were some of the opportunities brought to the local chambers' attention.

Piedmont National Corporation as well as the Philadelphia College of Osteopathic Medicine Georgia Campus (PCOM) sponsored the event. Piedmont National is a packaging company who has invested in local business in the area. PCOM is working to provide South Georgia with much needed healthcare, one of the issues the lieutenant governor's office is currently focused on, according to Field Representative George Lee. ✧



"Not everything happens in Atlanta. We really need to focus on rural Georgia's needs." -Bill Linginfelter, Executive Vice President of the GCC.



## Lieutenant Governor Cagle guest of honor at Irwin Chamber luncheon

By Dalton Spangler

In early May, many politicians from all over the state like the Lieutenant Governor, gathered in Tifton for the unveiling of the first Georgia Chamber of Commerce Regional office outside of the metro-Atlanta. The Irwin County Chamber of Commerce capitalized on the situation by hosting a Luncheon in Ocilla to “Show appreciation for legislatures and state officials” as well as “Put Ocilla and Irwin County on the map,” according to Senator, Tyler Harper.



Clay Pirkle (R) Ashburn; Senator Tyler Harper; Lisa Hudson, Chamber Board President; Lieutenant Governor Casey Cagle; Ocilla Mayor Matt Seale; Georgia Commissioner of Labor Mark Butler.



Lieutenant Governor Casey Cagle focused on established industries in Irwin County and how to provide them with better broadband and a skilled workforce.

Lieutenant Governor Casey Cagle was the guest of honor at the event. Cagle echoed much of what was touched on at the Chamber breakfast earlier that



Georgia State Patrol, Ocilla Police Department, Georgia Bureau of Investigations and Georgia DNR gathered for the luncheon.

morning, speaking about the importance of better broadband and building a better workforce through career academies and workshop classes in high school.

After the luncheon, some investors and elected officials toured growing businesses around Ocilla like the Hudson Pecan Company and the Osceola Cotton Company. Hudson Pecan Company has found its success as an exporter of pecans to



Chloe Paulk: An Honorable Task - 13 year old Chloe provided the desserts for the event. She learned her baking skills from her mom. Among the festive cupcakes and cookies was a sour cream pound cake. The scratch recipe was given to Chloe by Rep. Tyler Harper's Grandma. The young check attends Irwin County Middle School.

other nations, specifically China. They've been spotlighted by multiple publications before, the least of which being two spotlights by The New York Times. Osceola Cotton Company is one of the only gins within Irwin County bringing in business from eight surrounding counties. ✨

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# working on that dream JOB

By Monique Nagel



If you could go on vacation permanently in the US, where would you go? It would be nice to learn about manatees at Crystal River National Wildlife Refuge in Florida. Some time at the Okefenokee Swamp might be fun. How about a summer at Banks Lake in Lakeland, Georgia?

Meet Barb and Tom Kramer. Barb is a retired nurse, and Tom is a retired Navy man who used to work on submarines. They met while working as corrections officers at an all-male prison system after both of their spouses had passed away. After selling their house in Folkston, Georgia they joined the ranks of those who take volunteer positions at federal or state forests, wildlife refuges, and historical sites. Volunteers are needed all across the country and provide much-needed services in exchange for a free RV hook up with utilities, camping spots, bunkhouses, and cabins. Many sites offer paid positions as well as access to onsite events.

Never more than a day's drive from family, the Kramers wake up every morning on the edge of a lake and take their coffee while watching mockingbirds play in the Spanish moss

and cypress trees. Tom says he was introduced to this lifestyle through Barb, a volunteer at the Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge. Both are wildlife and out-door enthusiasts, making this lifestyle perfect for them.

For anyone interested in this kind of retirement, Barb suggests these sites to find information about volunteering:

- [volunteer.gov](http://volunteer.gov)
- [work-for-rvers-and-campers.com](http://work-for-rvers-and-campers.com)
- [koa.com/community-camping-programs/work-camps](http://koa.com/community-camping-programs/work-camps)

You can man oilfield gates in Texas or be a seasonal worker with an airplane "flight seeing" tour company in Alaska. Perhaps you can be a service representative at the Bozeman Hot Springs Campground and RV Park in Montana. The places and possibilities are too many to mention here.

Think you are too old to pull up roots and do something like this? One of Barb and Tom's friends spent last summer counting buffalo in Yellowstone National Park. She's 72 years old.



Barb keeps the canoes looking good and ready to launch.



Park maintenance is every day routine for Tom and Barb.



# Ahhhh! Retirement

Still think you're too old? Here are sage words of advice for those considering this lifestyle:

"Buy as big as you can get," Tom says when referring to the camper/RV you plan to live in. They both strongly advise you to go camping before setting out. Experience the space you plan to live in. That sounds like good advice.

"If you haven't touched or used it in the last three months, get rid of it," Barb advises about downsizing to RV life. "You'd be amazed at the things you have but don't need or use."

What about things like bills and taxes you ask?

The Kramer's son collects their mail; although, there are plenty of services that will filter your mail according to your wishes then package it up and ship it to you. This gives an address to those who live on the road and no longer have a permanent one. These days many people stay in touch and pay bills with the internet (some sites offer free Wi-Fi as a perk). Unfortunately, taxes are a part of life whether you own a permanent home or a traveling one. Be sure to get your advice from a reputable source.

In their off time the Kramers are talented craftsmen. Tom creates handsome furniture and walking sticks out of branches and tree limbs, while Barb turns reclaimed wood into fanciful art.



Wear-and-tear on the pier is a simple fix for Tom.

Examples of their work can be found at the Banks Lake Outpost, or you can check out their online store at [dragonflypalletart.etsy.com/](http://dragonflypalletart.etsy.com/). She has also been hard at work on a Facebook page titled *Banks Lake Outdoors* and has posted informative videos

providing back-ground history of the area while showing the lake and some of the boats, as well as the boardwalk and viewing areas. They are very enthusiastic in their praise of the Banks Lake area and the Lakeland Chamber of Commerce.

Banks Lake is a local treasure that should not be missed.



Photography buffs are welcome; it would be hard to take a bad picture in so lovely a place. You can rent a boat and fishing gear and then spend the day casting your line; there is even a short walking trail to explore. Don't forget to ask Barb to show you the fairy house, another of her inspired creations and a big hit with the local youngsters. ✨



Monique Nagel is a local writer living in Stockton, Georgia.



Yes, Burt Reynolds shot the movie "Gator" here.



# A Day in the Woods

## A Journey through Nature's Classroom *By Dalton Spangler*



**top:** Heather Brassel helps visitors create masterpieces with a paint made of dirt and clay. **middle:** Making palmetto fans. **above:** Blacksmith Stephen Zacharias was one of six exhibits from the Georgia Museum of Agriculture.

From making crafts with plant-life to chewing on crickets, the annual “A Day in the Woods” event reconnects families with the ever-declining Georgia wilderness in a fun but educational experience. The person behind this woodland excursion is Heather Brassel, a local forestry scientist who opened Gaskins Forest with her late husband, Murray Gaskin, in 2009 as a nature center for researchers from local institutions.

“I want to help young people, in particular, to understand, to therefore love, and to therefore conserve,” Brassel stated.

This line of thinking is what inspired the organization of “A Day in the Woods,” bringing environmental organizations from all over to collaborate on an accessible educational event. The event began at 1 P.M. with station activities ranging from dirt painting and wildlife identification to eco-friendly crafts like tree-bark baskets and pinecone bird feeders along with samples of unusual foods being served like wild hog, edible insects and deer. The day ended with Bring-Your-Own Cookout at 5 P.M., followed by an Astronomy demonstration put on by Valdosta State University’s Astro Team.

Brassel stresses the importance of making the event as accessible to all groups of people as possible. One of the ways she tries and achieve this is by ensuring it’s completely non-commercial.

“I’ve heard so many parents say, ‘I can’t afford to take my kids,’ Not because of the entry fee but because of all the candy that they sell.”

She feels that when the kids aren’t looking to spend money, they’re more focused on learning the skills offered at the stations and they see the people working the stations as “more than just vendors but as possible mentors so it’s about learning from them rather than buying from them.”

Some of the stations put on this year were animal skins and footprints by the ABAC Wildlife Society, a knot exhibit by the Boy Scouts, Astronomy with VSU, an inflatable BB gun range with the National Wildlife Federation, and six displays by the Georgia Museum of Agriculture ranging from blacksmithing to a history of the turpentine industry. Some other organizations who were there were the Natural Resources Conservation





Service, the Georgia Forestry Commission, Georgia Department of Natural Resources and the Alapaha Tutoring Program.

Brassel's passion for the outdoors and teaching began with her career in forest research when she was living in Australia. There, she worked with the Australian equivalent of the USDA, doing federally funded but independent research. She moved to the United States in 1982 and began teaching at Coffee County High School and later at VSU in the education program.

She retired right around the time when her husband, Murray Gaskins, had become very ill. Together, they discussed the future of the property. They settled on inviting researchers from universities like UGA to the site. Being educators and scientists themselves, Brassel and Gaskin knew how to go about making their farm an ideal place to educate and conduct research. They flipped an old tobacco barn into an education center and began inviting universities to the property.

"Coming from a science background, you understand the importance of controlled comparisons and things which most landowners do not," Brassel explained.

However, they had difficulty finding participation from researchers and Gaskins died not long after they opened the land. Brassel was reluctant to continue at first, but she pushed forward and achieved their mission of conservation, education, and research for forest communities. Schools took field trips to the property and Berrien County High School began to have outdoor classes there.

ABAC was one of the first schools to jump on to the opportunity. She admires ABAC and has taken some courses there saying the programs were high-quality and rigorous.

"ABAC has been making extensive use of the property for senior projects. VSU has done two field trips to the property and two other universities have been there once each," she said.

Currently, Brassel is expanding the education center by



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# Berrien County

## DAY IN THE WOODS/Spangler Continued...

developing new facilities. One of the facilities in development currently is an Arboretum that Brassel affectionately calls her "Noah Project." She has planted 150 pairs of different species pulled right out of the Georgia Forestry Commission books many 4-H and FFA members use to identify trees.

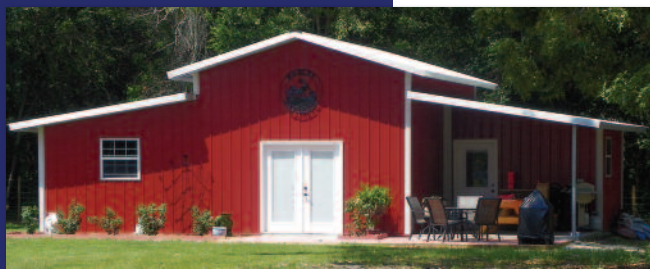
Although Gaskin Forest is open to the public, it is by invitation only to groups with legitimate environmental activities in mind. If you are interested, email Heather Brassel at [heather.brassel@gmail.com](mailto:heather.brassel@gmail.com). ✨



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# **"LIFE. Worth Defending"**

## *Help for Dealing with Crisis Pregnancies*

By Geneva Crooks & Vickie Harsey

Pregnancy is the greatest gift of life. Many women cherish their pregnancies, from hearing the first sound of their babies' heartbeats to feeling the first tiny kicks. Unfortunately, for some women, pregnancy can be a confusing time. Feelings of regret and hopelessness can be overwhelming and help is needed.

This is where the Pregnancy Care Center of Tift Area steps in.

If you've never heard of it before, the Pregnancy Care Center (PCC) reaches out to women at all stages of pregnancy. From the unplanned pregnancy to post-abortion counseling, volunteers and professionals are there to help and to advise.

Each April, the PCC holds a fundraising event that informs the community about center updates and announces its vision for the year. This year, the dinner was held at the UGA conference center

and featured well-known American Family Radio host and author J.J. Jasper.

Jasper, who is Pro-Life, shares a like-mindedness with the PCC. He is no stranger to the grief of losing a child or an unplanned pregnancy. He and his wife Melanie have experienced the overwhelming emotions of the tragic death of their 5-year-old son and a late-in-life pregnancy. Jasper's message offers hope in the face of tragedy and affirms that all life is precious in the eyes of the Lord.

His story is a reminder that loss and unplanned pregnancy are universal things that can come at any time.

Of his son's death, Jasper told the crowd, "I don't think there is a chart to gauge the pain... It is unnatural. It's out of order. Caskets shouldn't be that small."

"God is faithful and His grace is sufficient. We're still standing, and it's all because of His grace and His goodness



and His mercy," Jasper said about dealing with the loss of a child.

On the topic of crisis pregnancy, Jasper shared the hard decisions he and his wife faced after finding out they were pregnant with twins and that one baby had Down's syndrome.

"We weren't surprised, we were

Continued on page 15



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# Giving Voices to the Broken



## Court Appointed Special Advocates: A Special Breed of People

By Geneva Crooks & Vickie Harsey

They are one big, noisy, blended, and blessed family. For Lisa and Michael Fender, their teenaged daughter, and the four children who appeared on their doorstep, life has been a journey of hard work, love, therapy, and lots of prayers.

The four were in the foster system because of various abuses and other issues. The Fenders had been CASA foster parents for some time before deciding to adopt the family of children. The goal was to reunite the siblings after being separated into different foster homes. The first arrival was expected, but the other three came quickly, turning the Fender household upside-down.

"I don't think we were prepared," said Lisa about taking in her new children.

"They're in foster care for a reason," CASA Program Director Elaine Grice said, referring to the many children they serve.

"There's been some type of trauma or something that a normal child wouldn't go through," she continued. "These children don't act like normal children because of what has happened to them previously. That took a lot of patience on their part as a family [The Fenders] because that's hard and not everybody is willing to do that."



Michelle Knight, Evelyn Fox, Donya Gillespe, Elaine Grice, Lisa and Michael Fender.

Which is why Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) is so important for children in harsh situations of neglect and abuse. CASA strives to help make the rest of their lives better.

### I am for the child

CASA is a national non-profit program which started in 2008 with zero volunteers and zero children. By 2009 there were 179 children and 25 to 26 volunteers. From that point, the number of children in need continued to grow, as did the need for volunteers.

CASA volunteers are unique. They enter the program with an awareness of what is expected of them. Volunteers go through at least 30 hours of training and 10 hours of juvenile court observation. Their references are scrutinized and background checks are mandatory. A volunteer must have the child's well-being in mind.

"Without the volunteers, we don't have a program," said

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Grice, explaining that staff and employees of CASA cannot be advocates for children, so volunteers step in.

Children in the foster care system do not have a voice of their own, so CASA is their voice. The volunteers range from foster parents like the Fenders to school officials like Donya Gillespie to members of the legal system like Mitchell Moore who serves as Guardian Ad Litem. These volunteers help save children from neglect and abuse.

CASA raises awareness through fundraising events and donations. On April 29th, they held their annual child abuse walk in Lanier County. Soap bubbles drifted through the air and a quilt was raffled, all to help support the children.



Each child in CASA is a foster child that desperately needs the love and encouragement that comes from volunteers. CASA considers the circumstances of the child's situation, where the child is located, how long they've been in foster care, and a plethora of other things before taking action.

"People need to realize how important CASA is for these kids. There's so many of them that they need that individual person to care for them," Grice stated. ✕

*If you are interested in volunteering for CASA, contact or come by the office at 1015 Exum St., Nashville, GA, 31639 or call 229-686-6576.*

## LIFE/Crooks Harsey Continued...

shocked," he said. "We were [also] surprised and disappointed about how many negative comments we heard even from the Christian community."

The Jaspers already had four children. Were they prepared for twins? Were they prepared for a child with a disability? They decided that God would not put more on them than they could bear, and they accepted the pregnancy.

Jasper stressed to the crowd that, in his pro-life beliefs, he does not want to shame those who have had abortions, but to help them realize that God's grace and forgiveness are available. God can heal, restore and make them whole.

Although Jasper's message traced his journey through grief and heartache, it was filled with humorous anecdotes about

joys of raising children and life, causing the crowd at the UGA Conference Center to realize good can come from everything. Laughter filled the hall and the hearts of those gathered to support the workers and the PCC organization.

The PCC's goal is to aide women in difficult situations by educating and supporting them through the gospel.

Of the many services provided, volunteer Sandra Simmons said, "We are able to speak to the woman's heart and show her compassion and love; we remind her that she has worth. It is not only about the baby, but it's also about the woman and giving her hope."

Sandra's story hits very close to home for many of the women who attend the Pregnancy Care Center, so she does not hesitate to give her testimony to women considering abortion.

"I got involved [with PCC] because as a woman that [once] chose abortion, I want to be able to minister to women that they can have hope. I was in a position that I didn't see a light at the end of the tunnel. I didn't know that there was hope. I didn't know that there could be someone to listen to me and help me. I was just scared; and many times, women are scared and they make the first decision they can think of."

That is why the Pregnancy Care Center's mission is to help by informing women about the various stages of their pregnancy, give them valuable resources and a greater sense of hope. Since 1985 the Pregnancy Care Center has taken women into their care and supported them in whatever decision they make, something they plan to offer to the Tift area forever. ✕

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# Berrien High Drama

Kudos to the Berrien High Drama and teacher Carla Burns for their outstanding work. Everyone did a wonderful job in this outrageous comedy. The play ran for two nights with a different cast except for Ms. Morgan Jones and fellow co-stars.



Photos by Vickie Harsey. For more photos see our website.



*presents*

## The DROWSY Chaperone



# Morgan Jones

By Carmen Statham

Whether she's belting out a role on stage or stepping out in pageant finery, 17-year-old Morgan Jones sparkles brighter than any of the glamorous dresses or glittering crowns she wears.

Recently, Jones performed the role of Janet Van De Graaff for the comedy musical "Drowsy Chaperone" with her Berrien County High drama team. The troupe's two-night performance delighted the audience.

Along with drama, Jones is also on the FCCLA Parliamentary Procedure Team. Her team took State for the last three years in a row and are heading to Nationals in Nashville, Tennessee. They've previously been to San Diego, California and Washington, D.C. where they won 3rd in the Southern Region. Her other activities include church, cheerleading, hunting, fishing, and just being a teenaged girl.

In the midst of all that, she competed in pageants, winning many local ones before winning the 2013 Junior Miss Georgia South Pageant and the 2015 Miss Georgia Jr. Teen America Pageant. She was also first runner-up in the Miss Junior Teen America pageant.

Pulling out her trunks and scrapbooks for a 2015 interview with MGH, Jones stepped back in awe of her own accomplishments. She even commented on how her trophies had taken over her dad's man-cave.

Jones began pageants early. Her first costume included a bedazzled gown and a diaper, and she won. By age 5, she was competing as a regular pageant contestant. From ages 7 to 10, she was performing on stage in New York and became the favored fair-haired model as fashion trends targeted other ethnic groups. She has graced the covers of fashion magazines like Laura Ashley, posed for Cocoa Cola, and has been in Sansa Energy





# following her DREAMS

of Atlanta, Woman's World, Small Magazine, and Cookie Magazine. Her first big break came in Georgia through Amanda's Models & Talent. Then she was off to America's stage.

Shortly after competing in Miss Junior Teen America, Jones took a two-year hiatus from competing to focus on school and other interests. She plans to return to pageants next year. Her last competition was for Miss Georgia Teen Preliminary.

Beautiful, inside and out, Jones chose to be different than the in-crowd by following her own path. She tried to follow the crowd, but discovered she wasn't interested in what they offered.

"I've always been the person who wants everyone to like me, and I want to fit in," Jones said, "But, as I've gotten older, I've realized that it doesn't really matter. As long as you are who you are, you'll find friends who agree with who you are and like you for who you are. You can be yourself around them, and they don't care."

Jones comes from an athletic family, but prefers competitive cheerleading—although, she does make time for football with her dad Wayne Jones. She also enjoys deer hunting with her mom Michelle, fishing, and wants to go turkey hunting.

Her personality reflects her family. Her sensitivity comes from mom and Nanna Norma Gaskins. Dad is strict but loving.

Jones loves to take him shopping because he is impatient and will buy whatever she

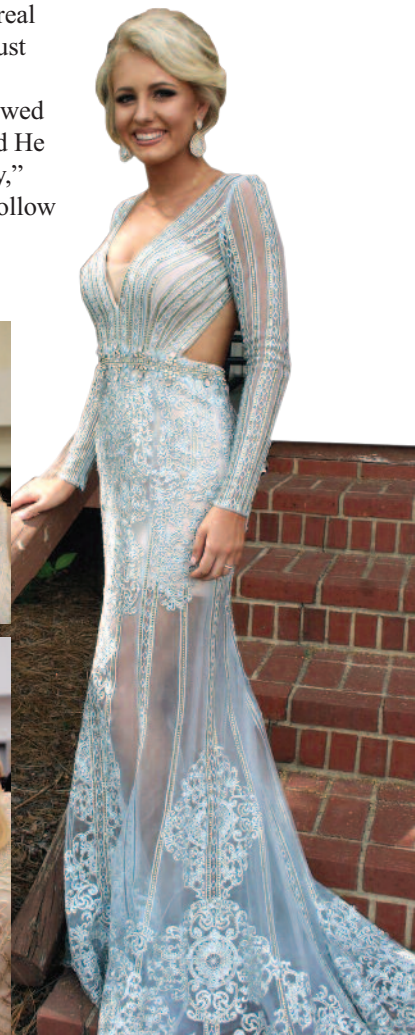
wants to just to hurry her up. He's also a little overprotective. So, watch out guys!

Jones always tries to be herself in the pageants. At home, she tries to be a role model and a kind-hearted person as much as possible. Her goal away from pageants is to keep all A's in school.

Jones said she doesn't know how many pageants she's been in and won but her grandma's scrapbooks are running over. Her many trophies fill her father's man-cave and draw complaints from him about how girly it makes his man-cave look.

Who is Morgan Jones? She is a real princess. Her advice to girls is to 'just follow [your] dreams.'

"That's what I have done—followed my dreams and trusted the Lord and He has brought me to where I am today," she said. "... All you have to do is follow your heart." ❀





# Eighty-Five Years: A Legacy of Fellowship and Friendship

By Carmen Statham



**T**he Pine Needle Sewing Club's great triumph lies in its long history of fellowship and friendship—a closeness which members have embraced all of their lives. Caring words, thoughtful deeds, and lots of laughter are stitched into this colorful patchwork, along with a responsibility to family and community.

Women of the club and the New Lois

They reflected on the past years and their shared experiences through their love for the sewing arts.

"I'm sure [the founders] had no idea it was going to last this long," said current president Joyce Akins to a room full of members and their families.

Founded in 1932 as a monthly meeting, the sewing club idea was born at Minnie Stallings' stork shower. Friends

Over the years, these remarkable women have touched so many through their good deeds and their love for sewing.

A quick glance around the packed fellowship hall attested to the fact that, no matter their differences, members have always felt a special bond within the club. Throughout the celebration, the warmth and concern they feel for each other was unmistakable.



Members at work.



Joyce Akins

Community recently gathered at the Community United Methodist Church in Nashville to celebrate the club's 85th year.

Frances Stallings and Gladys Carter shared their idea with the twelve other ladies present and all agreed to meet regularly.

From this one meeting came many years of fellowship pieced together with threads of faith, love, and friendship.

Part of this can be attributed to their meeting place. Every third Thursday, members meet in each other's homes like the founders once did. Family news and area happenings are discussed while busy hands work effortlessly to create various works of art. If anyone forgets to bring a



**above:** Life-long members Betty Devane Hancock, Carolyn Peters Griffin, and Jane Stallings Knight, consider the Pine Needle Sewing Club one of the finest organizations in the nation or at least in Berrien County.

**left:** The names of the members are listed on the rolling pin.

**below:** Pine Needle Sewing Club members are hoping this is the longest pine needle according to the Guinness Book of World Records.





## **"I don't remember when I did not do some kind of sewing." -Jane Stallings Knight**

project, they are fined 25 cents (an increase from the original 10 cents).

On what makes the club what it is today, Akins said it's the founders, "our sisters who have gone on to accept their heavenly rewards," "our servants" who served as its officers, the current and future members who keep the group moving forward, and finally, "our families, our husbands, and our descendants" who support the members. Simply put, each

in 1976 and made ornaments for the nation's Christmas tree. A photo of the late Mattie Mariah Knight Stallings' hand and machine-pieced cotton quilt was also published in the book, *Georgia Quilts: Piecing Together a History*, along with a brief history of the club.

One of the last quilt projects was in the late '90s. Each month, quilting squares were made until the ladies had enough to make a quilt. Although some are not able

members, Knight considers it a part of her heritage.

Having grown up in the club, Knight remembers her mother and others sewing handmade clothes. Quilts were added later.

Currently, Knight makes beautifully crafted quilts with vibrant colors and intricate designs.

When asked how long she has been sewing, Knight said, "I don't remember



has "played a very important part in our past, now and the future."

The club's past accomplishments include a quilt, which raised \$2,500 for charity, a wall hanging featuring T-shirts, and other projects, with proceeds going to various charities. They even presented a skit at the local bicentennial celebration

to quilt anymore, they still enjoy spending time together and sharing their love of sewing. At Christmas, they often raise money for children's toys.

Jane Stallings Knight knows how important the club was to her mother, Mattie, and the other founders. As one of the three daughters of the original club

when I did not do some kind of sewing." She said she often made doll clothes as a little girl. "I've always been familiar with a needle."

For Knight, sewing is more than just an opportunity to get together. It's a time

Continued on page 22

**above:** Jane Knight with the Georgia History of their club; Candlewicking; Jane Knight hand quilting.

**below:** The Pine Needle Club and spouses celebrated its 85th anniversary with a luncheon.







# Remembering Dawson Mathis

## Nashville's First Statesman in Washington D.C.

By Dalton Spangler

Often portrayed as chain-smoking, slow-talking, witty, southern gentlemen till the day he died, Dawson Mathis never conceded his principles and loyalty to the Democratic party as well as the whole of Georgia. He was a proud native of Nashville, Ga., and is well-known for his time as news director at WALB-TV in Albany and for being elected to the House of Representatives at the age of 29 in 1970.

Mathis passed away April 17 at the age of 76 at a hospital in Tifton.

He was a college drop-out who found his way into radio working part-time for a station owned by Nashville politician, Hanson Carter. Mathis was later employed full-time by WRPB in Warner Robins.

It was a political dispute between Mathis and his WRPB boss that drove him to seek work at other radio stations. Eventually, he found his way into television, working as the news director for WALB.

Mathis had always been a popular guy—after all he was voted most popular male student in his senior class. But

becoming a news anchor boosted him to a whole new level, allowing him to follow his passion of politics all the way to the Capitol.

Mathis's wife, Kathy Jo, described him as a genuinely caring politician.

"Dawson was always very respectful of politicians. I'm not that respectful of them," she laughed, explaining their differing opinions.

Referring to a politician's job as a civil servant, she proceeded to explain the duties are to serve the people, not give the people a difficult time.

"And that's what he [Dawson] did with his staff," she said with a warm smile. "If somebody calls and they've got an issue, you help them,"

She went on to explain how he was so well-known for working with his con-



stituents that people still called his office after he became a lobbyist. The staff would have to redirect the calls to the right congressman.

When he wasn't busy with political

matters, Mathis spent his free time reading, often re-reading, the many books from his personal library. He was very patriotic and had a passion for American history especially for the Civil War and Abraham Lincoln.

He went as far as to move into a renovated log cabin from the 19th Century where he married Kathy Jo in front of the fireplace, just like Lincoln. The cabin is also filled with photos of his other treasures, his family and children.

Mathis also had an interest in music, recording his own folk album about God and Country called "Reasons to Sing." It was recorded while he was in congress in 1976, consisting of mostly covers except the track, "Be Proud of America," which he wrote himself.

After being voted out in 1982, Mathis continued his work in politics as a lobbyist for companies like United Parcel Service, Massachusetts Mutual Life Insurance, Westinghouse Electric, Pacific Gas and Electric, and the Georgia Peanut Producers Association.

Through the years, Mathis worked with a diverse crowd of fellow statesmen, many of who expressed condolences after his death. One of the most notable came from Jimmy Carter himself. In a letter to Kathy Jo, Carter wrote: "[Mathis] was a champion for the rights of farmers."

In the hearts of many, Dawson Mathis will forever be a champion for all he accomplished. ❀







## Mrs. Margie Goes to Washington

Christy Hulsey, 2017 Mayesh Design Star and owner of Colony House of Flowers, had the distinguished honor of being on the floral design team for First Lady Melania Trump's Luncheon this past May. The annual event, which began in 1912, is organized and held by members of the Congressional Club—the spouses of members of the House, Senate, and Supreme Court.

This year, the organizers chose American Grown Flowers to grace the tables and halls of the Washington Hilton where the event was held. Florists Review Magazine noted that the flowers became the central attraction.

Hulsey, who owns and operates Colony House of Flowers, went to Washington with a special helper by her



Mrs. Margie and Christy added their personal touches to the beautiful floral arrangements for the First Lady's luncheon.

side—her grandmother Margie Tygart. According to Hulsey and Mrs. Margie, they had a wonderful working adventure in Washington and made some new friends. On the way home, Mrs. Margie told Christy, “My Dad was a farmer, and he'd be so proud. He'd never believe his daughter did flowers for the White House.” ✨



Photos courtesy of Certified American Grown and photos by Susie and Becky photography. Special thanks to Florists Review Magazine.

New friends



# Berrien County

## SEWING/Statham Continued...

for quiet reflection and spending time with friends like Zella Fuller, a retired high school teacher. Knight, herself, is a past club president, avid quilter, and retired teacher.

Looking back, Joyce Akins feels she can see the remarkable strength and perseverance of its members and the founders' extraordinary purpose.

"I think our founders prepared in advance some of the works they wanted us [and their descendants] to carry on," she said. "And I'm really proud of the fact that we're still doing that."

Akins concluded, "[The founders] had a clear vision of what they wanted to go on in this community. The main part of that was to keep the relationship in the community thriving together and fellowshiping together."

And it's this vision which lives on through the members and hopefully, one day, their daughters, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren. ✨

**above, right:** Dorian Osborn, left, shows club members the world record pine needle.

**right:** Handcrafted birdhouse centerpieces graced the tables at the party.



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# The Crescent

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

By Geneva Crooks

On the corner of South Gordon and North Patterson Street you'll find the Crescent House; a timeless reminder of Valdosta's rich history and character.

The Crescent is a landmark home on the National Register of Historic Places and was built in 1898 by Colonel W.S. West, a lawyer and United States Senator. Story has it that West took his cane and traced in the soil where he wanted the notorious crescent-shaped front porch to be.

The Crescent has a total of 23 beautiful rooms including a library, a "spinning room" for quilting, and a sprawling ballroom covering the entire third floor of the home. Children were always welcomed at the West home.

The West family welcomed children from all over Valdosta to play on their property, and when Mrs. West passed away, the entire town closed its businesses for a day in honor of her life.

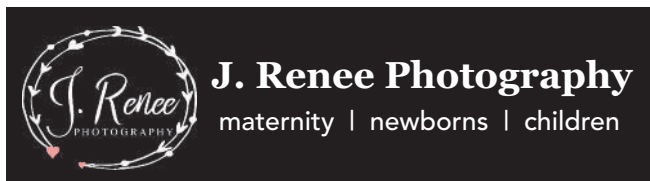
During the Great Depression, like many, the West's only child, William Jr. went through hardships and lost the majority of his wealth. The property was then split into sections and rented off as apartments. Other income came from displaced churches that needed a place to hold services.

In 1951, the financially-challenged property was sold and marked to become a used car lot and gas station. However, three

ladies of the Garden Club couldn't stand the idea of such a beautiful historical building going to waste, so they raised \$35,000 to purchase the landmark. On the day the sale's closing, they marched up the steps of the Crescent with money in hand, and the rest is history.

The Crescent has since been restored and now stands in the same glory that it did when it was first built in 1898. It is available as the perfect venue for a wedding, party, family reunion or special event. The beautiful chapel, built in 1898 and later renovated from a washroom to multiple gardens, is perfect for making great memories and beautiful photographs. The Crescent also offers a large reception hall for any event.

The Garden Club also encourages anyone who is interested in plants, flowers, and gardening to join them. The Crescent has been standing for over 100 years and continues to radiate its timeless beauty for all of Valdosta to see. *For more photos: [mygeorgiahometown.com](http://mygeorgiahometown.com).* ✨



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# Autism Awareness Bike Ride Riding for a Cause

by Jayden Futch



Jayden Futch  
Latonya Daniels

On April 22, I had the privilege to attend the First annual autism bike ride. The bike ride was for autism awareness. Autism "is a complex developmental disability, and can affect a person's ability to

communicate, and interact with others," according to AutismSociety.org.

The event was originated by Ms. Latonya Daniels. She began her own journey with autism when her son was born. Since then, she has traveled all the way up to Baltimore, Maryland to get her son help.

The riders started at Carrie Dorsey Perry Memorial Library and finished at Tygart Park.

There weren't very many that came, but the ones who did attend had a great time. We even had a few that attended out of Berrien County! When we got to the park, we played relay games and Red Rover. There was pizza, apples, grapes, extra-mini cupcakes, water, and juice. There were also little freebie bags.

At the end, there was a balloon release at 12:00. The balloons were blue and white to represent autism.

"Even though the event was not as large as the ones in Atlanta, we hope it grows year after year," Ms. Latonya Daniels said this at the event.

*Jayden (10) is in the Gifted Program at Berrien Elementary School*



## SISTER/Clements Continued...

Knowing that few employers were going to hire the girls, who are heavily involved in school and church, their mother Susie Chitwood and her husband Shane decided to invest in a business for the girls to run. After several years of discussion, the girls decided to open the ice cream shop. Learning about inventory and customer service has been tough for the girls, but worth it according to Chitwood, who sees the bigger picture.



"It's our goal for the girls to have a place to work that has a Christian environment where young people can hang out and just be kids," she says.

In operation since November of 2016, Sisters Ice Cream Shoppe serves a variety of flavors. You can find them next to Tifton City Hall. During the summer, they will be open Thursday, Friday, and Saturday from 12 to 8 p.m. Stop by and let Isabella, Megan, and Mallory sweeten your day with a scoop and a smile. ✨

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# If You Can... *Can!*

By Carmen Statham

Whether it's candied jalapenos and Georgia peach salsa or strawberry pepper jelly and pickled okra, home canning produces flavorful, high-quality foods, saves money, builds self-reliance, and creates lasting memories.

As spring comes to an end and the full flourish of summer colors spreads across the Georgia landscape, I anticipate the coming harvest season and remember my family's tradition of preserving the summer's garden-fresh flavors in a jar.

Growing up, my family kept a large garden in the backyard. We had a variety of foods from bell peppers to squash and strawberries to tomatoes. What food we didn't grow, we found at a local farmers' market.

When summer turned to fall, it was canning time. Memories of my siblings and myself getting off the school bus, walking into the house, and finding our mother heating jars in the kitchen are at the forefront of my mind. We knew this meant homemade jams that would last for months. To a young heart, nothing was more enjoyable than popping open a jar of strawberry jam and tasting the scrumptious flavor of sweet summer.

Growing our own food is a family tradition handed over from my grandmother to my mother. My grandmother lived during the Depression when canning was common. She passed it on to my mother who then passed it on to me.



## Canning: Then and Now

Since our earliest days, people have been salting, fermenting, and drying food for later use. But it was not until the 18th century that preserving food by heat-treating and sealing it in airtight containers came about. In the early 1900s, home canning was vastly popular and

was embraced as a common household practice.

However, sometime after the last world war the Americans moved away from home-prepared foods and turned to ready-made canned goods. This was mainly because it was easier than canning it themselves. As a result, Americans lost some of their culinary roots.

With today's lack of knowledge in food preservation skills and access to ready-made foods, it's easy to believe that home canning is a lost art. But, as more and more people make the effort to be self-sufficient, canning is undergoing a huge revival. Americans are returning to their culinary roots by turning to home preservation and regaining control over what they eat.



Rachel Hubbard, a Lanier County Family and Consumer Sciences Agent, said in the past few years she has seen an increase in the number of people learning how to preserve their own foods.

"Many [people] have started canning their own food so they know what is in the food they are eating. Others have begun canning because it may be cheaper," said Hubbard.

With this heightened awareness comes a new problem.

"While canning and other methods of food preservation used

Continued on page 25

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to be a way of life, modern conveniences have made home canning less of a necessity. This has led to fewer people canning and teaching food preservation skills,” she added.

In an effort to change that, Suzanne Williams, a Dougherty County FACS Agent, teaches food preservation classes each summer and fall. Participants spend time learning how to safely preserve food at home.

Like Hubbard, Williams has seen a resurgence in canning, but said it’s because people are concerned about additives and preservatives. She noted young mothers worry about the amounts of salt and sugar added to their children’s food.



“When you grow, harvest and preserve your own food, you have more control over what you eat. You can determine if your food is treated with pesticides or what ingredients are added to the food in the can,” Hubbard said.

This idea has sent people like Lauri Jo Bennett and Layne Varnedoe of Lauri Jo’s Southern Style Canning on a mission to keep canning alive in the South. Lauri Jo’s South Style Canning is a family owned business in Norman Park which grows, picks, processes, and labels their own jellies, jams, pickles, salsas, and sauces.

Bennett already knows what preserving her own food really means. Her love of canning and preserving fresh fruits and vegetables began as a child. She remembers days with her mother and grandmother in the kitchen, and later her own attempts at canning. Many of her recipes were found written in her great-grandmother’s hand on an old brown bag.

“Our pickles are most of my great-grandmother’s recipes, and they’re the old-fashioned lime pickles that take 3 to 4 days to make,” said Bennett, who sources fruits and vegetables within a 7 and 8-mile radius year-round.

Bennett and Varnedoe occasionally source outside that range for blueberries from Homerville, Varnedoe’s hometown. The bulk of what they use – bell peppers and jalapenos – comes from Norman Park, as well as peaches and strawberries.

“We’re truly blessed that we live in the produce capitol right here in South Georgia,” Bennett said.

Canning and preserving the fresh fruits and vegetable we love so much is only as important as preserving this lost art for future generations. ❀

Coming in our FALL issue: “The Mechanics and Methods of Canning” To read the full article on canning, go to our website at [www.mygeorgiahometown.com](http://www.mygeorgiahometown.com)

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# Thyme to Garden

By Samantha Reese, Southern Seasons  
Landscape/Nursery, Dawson, GA



## *A Flavor for Summer: the Vanilla Strawberry™ Hydrangea*

A graceful garden element - hydrangeas have long been a staple of southern landscapes. From our native oakleaf hydrangea to the fun, color-changing French or bigleaf hydrangea, gardeners have always enjoyed the beautiful summer-time blooms.

Recently, an exciting new panicle hydrangea selection was introduced—Hydrangea Paniculata 'Renhy' or Vanilla Strawberry™ hydrangea. Discovered in France and formerly released by Bailey Nursery, Vanilla Strawberry™ hydrangea was voted top plant by the American Nursery and Landscape Association in 2010.

Blooming begins in July, with a profusion of bold 10-inch conical-shaped, white blooms which transition to pink in 2–3 weeks and then mature to a rich strawberry-red to burgundy—certainly making it worthy of its award-winning status. The blooms last 3–4 weeks longer than other hydrangeas and are borne on sturdy red stems, creating quite a contrast against the green leaves. An additional feature, the blooms make great cut flowers—both fresh and dried.

Because Vanilla Strawberry™ hydrangea blooms on new growth, all three-color stages can be enjoyed at the same time, making it an ideal choice for

adding rich, vibrant color to your late summer landscape. As an added bonus, pruning is a snap. Blooming on new growth allows Vanilla Strawberry™ hydrangea to be pruned after it flowers—fall, winter or spring.

Like its classic relative Pee Gee hydrangea, this deciduous shrub performs best in full sun to partial shade preferring a well-drained, rich, loamy soil. Vanilla Strawberry™ hydrangea has an upright

growth habit and will mature to a height of 6–7 feet, with a spread of 4–5 feet. Once established, Vanilla Strawberry™ hydrangea is drought tolerant and adaptable to most soil types with soil pH having no influence on bloom color.

Planted as a mass hedge, specimen, or incorporated into a mixed shrub border or woodland garden, Vanilla Strawberry™ hydrangea is certainly a summer show-stopper destined to become a classic. ✨



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# BBQ, Boiled Peanuts, and Sweet Tea

By Amanda  
Williams

...there was something unique about watching my  
Granddaddy get up in the middle of the night to turn the meat...

Just a red wooden shack on the side of Highway 32 between Douglas and Ocilla, Ga. called Hunter's BBQ. That's the place where I learned so many lessons during my growing up years and how special the South can truly be.

We lived in Jacksonville when I was a little girl; but even when I came to visit, I knew there was something unique about watching my Granddaddy get up in the middle of the night to turn the meat that was smoking behind the restaurant. Chin in my hands, I looked on as he and my Grandmother made their special sauce, Brunswick stew, stuffed sausages and pound cake from scratch. During the summer, I would stand to the right of the shack by the picnic tables and sell bags of boiled peanuts and sweet tea to the hard-working truck drivers passing through our little town. There was also a time where we could grind sugar cane stalks and sell cane juice.

When I was in sixth grade, we moved to Ocilla and, for many summers, I worked at Hunter's.

Here are some of my life's lessons learned on the side of that busy road:

1) **Quality is worth the hard work.** That Barbecue was good; I haven't had its equal since they passed. Goat, beef, pork, and ribs smoked all night. Carl Hunter sat back on that stool and sorted through that meat to remove the gristle and fat. That took time, but time is what made that stuff so, so good.

2) **Always count change back.** Working with young people today, I realize this is a special skill, one that apparently isn't a focus. But my Grandma Nell was adamant that I would count the change back to every single customer. And the register? Old school. No cheat sheet numbers that told you how much the guests were supposed to receive.

3) **Stick to the recipe.** In my kitchen, I am notorious for not following this rule. However, consistency is golden, and you just

didn't mess with the checks and balances of those measurements.

4) **There is more about food than food.** There was an experience involved. Manners were required—always.

5) **Last but not least, the register was not meant for any bill larger than a 20.** Those had a particular hiding spot in Grandma's brassiere! Oops, maybe I wasn't supposed to tell?

Journaling through my growing up years, I have learned to appreciate what I took for granted then.

Quite simply, I'm thankful. ✨

The South Georgia Writers Guild was formed in March, 2015, after a group of writers met at An Evening with the Authors at The Myon in Tifton, Georgia. As a creative collective, we support, encourage, and endorse diversity of voice in the written word and are home to over forty local and regional authors.

Find The South Georgia Writers Guild: Web: [southgeorgiawritersguildwordpress.com/](http://southgeorgiawritersguildwordpress.com/)-or- Twitter: @SGAWritersguild. Or contact the administrators Tracey M. Cox and E.M. Knowles at [southgeorgiawritersguild@gmail.com](mailto:southgeorgiawritersguild@gmail.com)



Hunter's Bar-B-Que shack:  
After my grandparents passed, a family bought it out; it's now called Hutto's. My grandparents owned and ran it from 1970-2002, I believe. The original sign hangs on the back. It was part of my grandparents' set-up.

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# Megan Fowler: Walking on the Positive Side

By Dalton Spangler

You've probably seen her on stage in your hometown. Now, one of the brightest female country artists to come out of south Georgia has recently moved from her hometown to Nashville, Tennessee in an effort to promote her newest single, "Tomorrow's Just A Memory."

Megan Fowler is a singer/songwriter who has won the Georgia Music Award Female Country Artist in 2014 and 2015, as well as, the Georgia's Country Female Artist Award in 2013 and 2014. Her regional success could be accredited to her EP, "We've All Got A Song," that's all about getting through heartbreak and naysayers until you achieve your dreams and write your own song into history.

Born and raised in Butler, Georgia, Fowler and her family are heavily invested in their church. It was there that Megan's passion for music and song ignited.

"I just kinda knew," She said. "I knew my whole life I wanted to sing."

When she was 14, she started taking vocal classes. At 16, she started taking guitar lessons, and played out as much as possible.

"Once I learned how to play guitar

well enough to play and sing, I started playing more seriously," Fowler said about her senior year in high school.

She's still a member of the church she grew up in and occasionally leads worship there and at several other local churches.

Fowler prides herself with being able to incorporate her beliefs into her music without her music coming across like a sermon. She described her song "Match Made In Heaven" as a heartbreak song, not a Christian song, using biblical references to paint a picture of a friend's relationship.

"It was a guy...in a horrible relationship," she explained, "and he didn't want to take my advice to get out of [it]; so, I wrote a song about it! He's now engaged to that person, so he definitely didn't listen to my advice."

As for her own relationships, Fowler, typically doesn't write songs about them. But, in her newest single, "Tomorrow's Just A Memory," she uses some of the same, Christian style to sing about her own break-up.



Megan Fowler performing at the Salty Snapper Seafood Bar in Valdosta



"I'm pretty private about that kind of stuff," she said, "but I was going through a pretty bitter-sweet breakup at the time and felt like it was a song that needed to be written. So, I went to Nashville, wrote it, and recorded it."

Currently, she is working towards her new album as well as preparing a tour alongside the release of several acoustic,

hymnal recordings which she completed in January.

Fowler pointed out, "It's nothing full-production, but it's something I've always wanted to do. It's always been a dream of mine."

There are no set release dates, but she expects her hymn to release in the Fall and her next country album in Spring 2018.

Fowler has a very positive attitude that shines in her music and in her personality. All she wants is for her listeners to hear God through her music and be happy when they tune in. One of her tracks, titled "We've All Got A Song," delves into the idea of finding who you are and the power behind your own unique story.

Fowler described her song as being, "Pretty normal for a small-town country girl."

She says "People would always try to talk me down from my dreams." But she found a way to stay determined through her family's encouragement.

She added "Go after your dreams or else one day you will regret it. I want people to know—don't be afraid to chase your dreams, even if someone says you can't do it. Because, in the end, no matter what the turnout, it'll be worth it." ❀

*"Don't be afraid to chase your dreams."*





# ED WILEY COMEDY

YOU'LL GET A **kick** OUT OF HIS JOKES

By Josh Clements

"I am a computer goat farmer comedian," said Ed Wiley when asked to describe exactly what he does for a living. His plaid shirt and blue jeans accented by a lengthy beard hides the fact that he is an intelligent software guru by day and a comedian by night, all the while running a goat farm and homeschooling six kids.

How do you get a gig like that? Wiley believes it was providence. Growing up in Albany and currently residing in the greater metro Tifton area, he looks for the



comedy in his daily life. Running a goat farm offers many opportunities for laughter. His videos depict goats running amok while he tries to "keep the romance alive on the farm."

Even his kids are funny (the human ones, no pun intended). During a fishing excursion, a younger child (Wiley says with six kids, there is no middle child)

**"Comedy is like farming: soil is a premium. As a comedian, your soil is the stage. You have good soil and bad soil."**

tells his older brother you have to use "beet" to catch fish. His brother responds, "You mean bait?" The younger sibling says matter-of-factly, "Yeah, bait."

Wiley noted, "Comedy is like farming: soil is a premium. As a comedian, your soil is the stage. You have good soil and bad soil." He never knows what kind of night he will have when performing. The challenge he faces with each routine is



the demographics of the crowd and the dynamics of the atmosphere change. One night he might receive a few laughs, while others garner standing ovations.

A longtime entertainment producer once told him, "No one in the entertainment industry knows what they are doing. Everyone is just guessing." Lucky for Wiley, he knows how to make people laugh. Currently, he is on tour with Anita Renfroe, bringing his act to various churches and venues across America.

Check out his website at [www.edwileycomedy.com](http://www.edwileycomedy.com) or follow him on Twitter at @EdWiley. You'll be sure to get a "kick" out of his jokes. ✂

## Art is...

Linda Butler of Nashville recently hosted an Art Exhibit at her art studio where a group of talented students



showcased their paintings and drawings. Brothers Jay and Clay York were just two of the talented artists who displayed their beautiful art work at the exhibit. A kids' scavenger hunt throughout the grounds was another highlight of the afternoon.

A children's garden was created in

Nov. by Butler who wanted a special place for children to explore and discover the natural world. Butler's grandchildren Bryson, Trent, Tate, Allison, and Tripp Butler whose parents are Barry and Stephanie Butler; and Bob and Joy Butler, took a moment to appreciate what God had given them.

Everyone who came enjoyed music from the Strummers Act II with Joan Shepard and others. ✂





# Red Carpet Treatment

By Trevor Clayton

I am a student at Lowndes High School. I have been in the Theatre Arts program for two years now. Being in theatre has given me so many amazing opportunities. Because theatre has so much to offer, it requires much time; but it pays off in the end. It is truly an art.

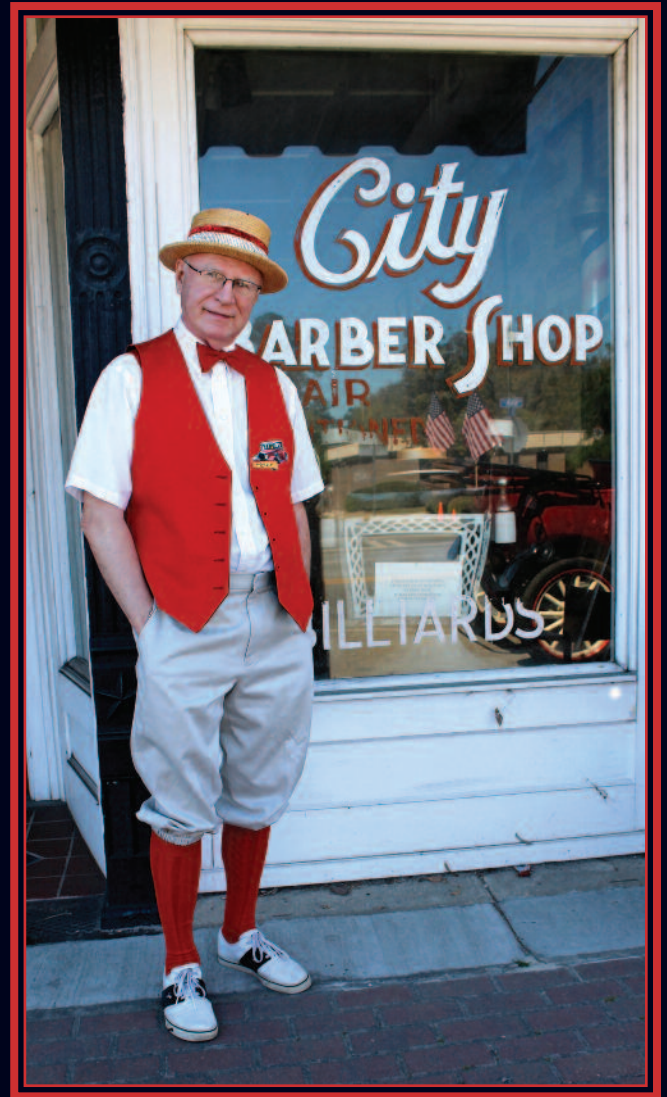
I just recently received an incredible opportunity. I was given the honor to go to Atlanta for the Georgia High School Musical Theatre Awards ceremony, which is fashioned after Broadway's Tony Awards. The purpose of these awards is to recognize and celebrate excellence in high school musical theatre.

Every year, only 75 high schools across the state of Georgia are selected to participate. Each school sends one technician and two members from the ensemble cast. This year, Lowndes High School was selected. We were the only school in South Georgia to have that honor.

This year my amazing drama director, Sheri Dorsett, chose me to go as a technician. Two of our female cast members from our show *South Pacific* traveled with me. I was part of the STAR Council team. Everyone on the Council was assigned a specific job—I got the Red Carpet. Getting to walk on the Red Carpet was amazing, especially since this was the first year that the Red Carpet portion was broadcast on live TV. It was truly a once-in-a-lifetime event for me.

If I may, I want to encourage everyone to get involved with high school theatre. There are so many unique opportunities. I honestly never expected anything that amazing to happen to me. Theatre is one of the best things a person could ever join. Becoming a part of theatre can change a life. ✨

*Editor's Note: Trevor and the LHS drama team received Honorable Mention at the GHSMT Awards. Since then, this talented teen has been recognized and been awarded for the following: The Young Georgia Authors competition – First Place in 10th grade; Georgia Sheriff's Boys Ranch as outstanding youth.*



## Festivals & Events





## DARYLE SINGLETARY

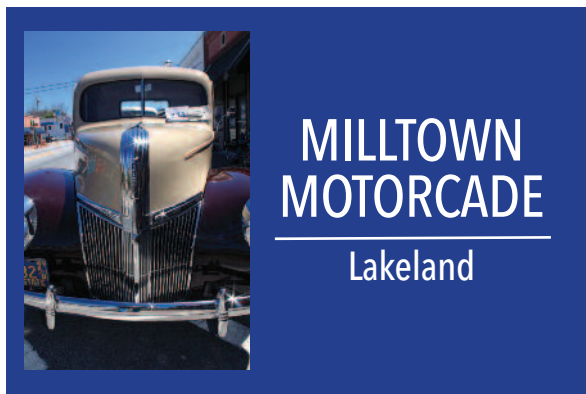


*Vince Gill*



On Thursday, June 8th Vince Gill came to the UGA Tifton Campus Conference Center to perform. He interacted with the audience, told stories about his songs, and honored country music legends with a variety of covers. The event was hosted by Six String Southern Productions and McAlpin Entertainment. *Photo by Shelby Evans*









The ladies of the Ant-erprise were selling t-shirts to all who wanted to "live long 'ant' prosper..."



Nothing says "festival" quite like a ferris wheel.



The Vintage Vixens got the festival goers movin' to their groovy tunes.



From tutus to funky pants dancers brought their A game to the festival. Young ladies of all ages danced their hearts out to a wide variety of music.



Everyone enjoyed the many sights and sounds of the Fire Ant Festival! Things even got a little snaky...



Fire Ant Festival 2018 is currently looking for ideas for next year! See their Facebook page for more details!









Photo by Wenda G. Bailey



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