



Perspectives
Ken Dyer
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The Albany HERALD



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4C Robotics
Team-building
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ALBANYHERALD.COM

THURSDAY, APRIL 23, 2026

Speakers announced for annual ALDON National Day of Prayer

By **Carlton Fletcher**
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ALBANY -- Along with a noted pastor, local leaders from the medical field and law enforcement will be the

speakers May 7 at the 75th annual ALDON National Day of Prayer, which will be held at the courtyard of the Albany-Dougherty Government Center at 222 Pine Ave. in downtown Albany.

The Day of Prayer starts at noon.

The Rev. Harriet S. Gainer, the pastor of New Beginnings Christian Church and one of the founding members of the Albany-Dough-

erty National Prayer Committee (ALDON), will join surgeon Dr. Price Corr and Dougherty County Sheriff Terron Hayes as speakers

See PRAYER, 2A



Staff Photo: **Carlton Fletcher**
One of the highlights of Albany's annual National Day of Prayer is when small groups gather at the end of the event to pray for the community.

TANK YOU, ALBANY:

Retired paramedic's venture sets sail on local creek



By **Kathryn Crockett**
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ALBANY — After decades of answering emergency calls, a local retired paramedic is preparing to launch what he says will be Georgia's first business of its kind — shifting from crisis response to a venture centered on recreation and recovery along the water.

Scott Conley, a long-time paramedic in southwest Georgia, plans to open "Get Tank'd" this summer, a business built around an unconventional concept: galvanized livestock troughs converted into floating, family-style vessels for small-group creek outings.

The idea, Conley said, is rooted in both accessibility and simplicity.

Set to launch in the coming months, the venture will offer guided or self-paced trips along the Kinchafoonee Creek using the modified troughs, which can hold four to six adults. Designed to be more stable and less physically demanding than kayaks or canoes, the vessels are intended to create a slower, more social experience on the water.

The concept draws from a growing recreational trend known as "tanking," which has gained popularity in states such as Nebraska and Tennessee. The

See TANK, 2A

Staff Photo: Kathryn Crockett

Scott Conley, right, stands with a young supporter beside one of his converted livestock trough vessels branded "Get Tank'd," a new creek-floating business he plans to launch this summer in Albany. The vessels are designed to carry small groups on slow-moving trips along local waterways.

Best Running store looking to bring the right fit to downtown Albany



By **Alan Mauldin**
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ALBANY — Albany's Best Running is bringing custom-fitting shoes for those who pound the pavement, but the shoes, geared for comfort, are also a hit with individuals who spend much of the work day on their feet.

The store, the fourth specializing in running shoes and accessories for owner Don Borowski, has soft-opening days planned starting next month, with a June 1 grand opening.

"Seventy percent of our business is health care workers, teachers, people that just need a good pair of shoes," Borowski said. "It's a lot better to have good shoes than to have to go to a podiatrist. We're so excited to come to Albany because there are so many people from Albany who already

See RUNNING, 2A

Staff Photo: Alan Mauldin

Don Borowski, owner of Best Running stores in Statesboro, Tifton and Valdosta, plans to open his fourth location, Albany's Best Running, on June 1. The store at 108 Pine Ave. will offer custom fitting for running shoes as well as a pledge of superior customer service and support for the community.

Knuckles set for 'four-pete' with homeschoolers' 'Newsies'

By **Carlton Fletcher**
carlton.fletcher@albanyherald.com

ALBANY — When the student actors in the Southwest Georgia Homeschool Association complete the three-show run of "Newsies Jr." this weekend, the show's director, Vickie Knuckles, will have completed a feat most likely unmatched in local theater.

Once the final curtain comes down on "Newsies Jr.," Knuckles will have directed three plays in three consecutive months, leaving her at the helm of four high-profile productions over a period of seven months.

Knuckles, a theater lifer who recently took a year-plus off to finish work on her master's degree in Theater Education, directed Theatre Albany's production of "Cinderella" in February, Byne Christian School's spring musical "Annie Jr." in March and the homeschool group's "Newsies Jr." in April.

See KNUCKLES, 2A

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From 1A RUNNING

shop with us.” Albany residents looking for running shoes already make the drive to Tifton’s Best Running, which has been in business for five years, he said. The other locations are in Statesboro, the original location, which opened 15 years ago, and Valdosta.

A 3D scanner that allows for a custom fit is part of the formula for making sure shoes will be comfortable and supportive, whether for running a marathon or teaching first-graders. But that is not the sole reason for making sure the shoes will cushion customers’ feet.

People can purchase shoes at big-box stores or online, but making the experience positive by making sure the customer’s needs are met is what Borowski said differentiates Best Running.

“We have built our business on being the best in customer service, being kind and giving back,” Borowski said. “I say the second thing you bought was a pair of shoes. The first thing is friendship. We really work harder than anybody to just go above and beyond.”

Another important element for Borowski is giving back to the community.

“We partner with the Pink Ladies in Tifton and Valdosta,” he said. “What we’ve done, we come in there and fit all the employees. At the end, we give 10% back to the Pink Ladies. In Tifton, we gave \$6,300 back to the Pink Ladies for all the things they do with their patients.”

“We’ve done it two times in Tifton and once in Valdosta. I think that’s the part that goes back to supporting your community and making a difference. I feel like small businesses are the foundation of a community.”

Best Running also has donated shoes to the Called to Care nonprofit. Borowski said that he also has participated in the Albany Marathon Expo, held in conjunction with the Combos Marathon and Half Marathon, for the last four years.

The lockdown that came with the COVID-19 epidemic closed gyms, bringing out more participants in sports that allowed for social dis-

tancing and for people to get outdoors. That trend included running, which reportedly saw an increase in individuals picking up the sport and individuals already engaged running more frequently.

The store owner’s personal preference is to do a little bit of running and a little bit of walking. It is an activity that also can bring people together.

“When I found running 20-something years ago, it was the camaraderie of it,” he said. “We all had that in common. I think a lot of people run at a different pace, but you just have to put one foot in front of the other.”

“In 15 years, having great customer service, being genuine and giving back to our community has been the secret of our success.”

For the downtown area, which recently celebrated the launch of renovations for the Georgia Grown Resource Center and adjacent 4C on Front Street project, with both scheduled to open in the fall, the new shoe store at 108 Pine Ave., between the Flint Restaurant and Cool Scoops, represents a completion.

“That building (Albany’s Best Running) completes the occupancy for the Front Street Market,” Albany Downtown Manager Lequerica Gaskins said. “It’s going to increase the retail space and opportunities for shopping.”

More retail shopping availability downtown was identified by residents as being a need in the city’s downtown master plan, and the store helps deliver on that request, she said.

Other downtown projects that are currently planned or under construction include the renovation of the former Davis Exchange building for a 56-apartment development, the Harlem Renaissance Legacy Wellness Center, opening of the St. Nicholas Hotel, Albany Museum of Art in the former Belk building and the Look Again project with plans for luxury apartments and dining opportunities.

“Those projects that have been started are being completed, and they’re all coming to fruition at the same time,” Gaskins said. “They’re all happening simultaneously.”

From 1A PRAYER

at the annual event, during which prayers are offered for local and national leaders, business professionals, educators, physicians, military personnel, law enforcement, city and county workers, and others.

“What we do with this day of prayer is not to lift up man, but to lift our prayers to God for the people in our community, our state and our nation who serve us,” Larry Price, the ALDON chairman who

serves as director of the annual event, said. “And I believe our nation definitely is in need of prayer right now. This nation was founded on principle, and I believe if we honor God, He will honor us.”

Corr, one of the principals of Albany Surgical Associates and Southern Surgical Center, is an active member of Porterfield United Methodist Church, while Hayes, who is serving his first term as sheriff of Dougherty County, is a deacon at Mt. Zion Baptist Church.

The Rev. Charles Jones, the retired minister of music at First Baptist Church of Daw-

son, will lead the gathering in song. Music will be provided by Ana and Stanley Franklin of Cornerstone Coffee.

The theme for this year’s National Day of Prayer, taken from 1 Chronicles 16:24, is “Glorify God among the nations, seeking him in all generations.”

“Since COVID, nobody’s recovered to where we were in the past as far as attendance, but we’re not concerned with trying to count numbers,” Price said. “We’ve had as many as 250 people, and one year when it rained real hard, we had 50. But 50 or 250, if we go expecting it,

God will hear our prayers.”

As is the custom for the annual event, each speaker will offer a brief message and prayer, and then participants will split into groups of six to eight to pray together.

There is no cost to participate, and no collection will be taken. Seats are provided around the courtyard -- most in shaded areas -- but the community is invited to bring lawn chairs for more comfortable seating.

For additional information, contact Price at (229) 317-3900 or online at price2406@bellsouth.net.

From 1A KNUCKLES

In October, Knuckles helmed the homeschool association’s fall production of “Dare to Dream.”

“Work on the three shows from February to now all overlapped,” Knuckles, who worked in the business offices of Phoebe Putney Memorial Hospital and the defunct Palmyra Medical Center (which is now part of Phoebe) before teaching for 30 years, said. “But I’d do it all again.”

“My dad asked me one time, ‘When are you going to stop doing this?’ and I told him, ‘When I’m not excited by the next project.’ I love the theater, love seeing something come to life out of a thing that’s not what it appears to be.”

Knuckles, who retired from teaching “when the Lord told me it was time to go,” said she returned to the classroom – and to theater – when He told her the time was right to get back in.

She’d attended Albany Junior College in the late ‘70s, earning an associate’s degree in Music before settling into family life and the business world. But the acting bug that bit her when she was helping start a theater program at Sherwood Christian School wouldn’t let go, and she returned to school at Albany State University, finishing requirements for her Music degree.

“It took me 25 years from the time I got my bachelor’s degree (in 2000) to finish my master’s,” Knuckles said.

After she retired from teaching, Knuckles’ love for theater did not abate. When officials at Byne Christian School called and opened a door – first with a homeschool group and lat-



Staff Photo: Carlton Fletcher

When the final curtain falls on the Southwest Georgia Homeschool Association’s production of “Newsies Jr.” Saturday, Vickie Knuckles will have completed direction of three high-profile plays in three months, four in seven months.

er with Byne itself – on a return to the classroom – and to the stage – she jumped at the chance.

Now, she’s directing plays for Byne, for the homeschool association and for Theatre Albany. She says “Newsies Jr.,” became an obvious choice for the Southwest Georgia Homeschool Association spring production after she heard a Columbus College classmate talk about the show.

“I was at one of my master’s classes, and the people in class were talking about shows they’d done,” Knuckles said. “One girl started talking about ‘Newsies,’ and after a while, I said, ‘That’s the show.’”

Now 42 homeschool students (including five seniors, among them play lead Jackson Morrow, who plans to study theater at Columbus State) are ready to present the play at the Byne Baptist Church Worship Center Friday (at 6:30 p.m.) and Saturday (at 2 p.m. and 5:30 p.m.).

And the director of that play? Well, she’s smack dab in the middle of doing what she loves best.

“I just love this, love working with these kids,” Knuckles said. “I couldn’t do this without such a wonderful team working with me, and I’m just thankful for the opportunities I’ve been given.”

“When a parent comes up

to me after a production and says something like, ‘I didn’t even know my kid could sing ...’ well, that’s about as good as it gets.”

Students who are part of the “Newsies Jr.” cast, and their roles include: Kelly (Jackson Morrow), Katherine Plumber (Iva Evans), Cade Williams (Crutchie), Preston Rooks (Davey), Wells Dallas (Les), Jordyn Jackson (Race), Abby Schmidt (Hazel), Hanna Mendoza (Muriel), Calley Rooks (Nancy), Haley Taylor (Albert/Bertie), Jane Hopkins (Pigtails) Vayda Campbell (Specs), Emilee Young (Dorothy), Katelyn Dooley (Buttons), Lucy Allgood (JoJo), Wesley Delong (Tommy Boy), Logan DeLong (Romeo), Lo-

ralye Delong (Scab 1), Marley Nichols (Scab 2), Oakley Sheffield-Hayes (Scab 3), Atticus Evans (Bill), Wade Durden (Bunsen), Blake Jackson (Pulitzer), Madeleine Pitts (Wiesel), Benjamin Battaglia (Police Chief), Max Allgood (Snyder), Sarah Knight (Hannah), Ella James (Medda), Mary Alice Allgood (Olive), Ivy Bryan (Ada), Chloe Sanders (Ethel) and Madeline Henderson (Darcy).

Other cast members include Meredith Blake Sims (Seitz/Newsie), Nathan Goodson (Roosevelt/Newsie) and Newsies Ava Hardie, Eva Schmidt, Tucker Miller, Nolan Carlton, Andrew DeLong, Kallynn Jones, Jaycee Taylor and Quinn Brooks.



Staff Photo: Carlton Fletcher

Vickie Knuckles is a theater “lifer” who finds joy in directing plays with various acting groups in southwest Georgia.

From 1A TANK

oversized metal tubs, often outfitted with seating and coolers, offer a shallow-draft, low-effort alternative to traditional tubing or paddling, with trips typically lasting between two and six hours.

For Conley, the business is as much personal as it is practical.

“I lived off this road, so we utilized this creek for almost 17 years – we used this same landing,” he said.

A single father who raised four daughters, Conley said the creek played a central role in their upbringing.

“I came here with four children all the time. They grew up in this neighborhood, and I always wanted to start a tubing business, but I just never developed it into anything,” he said.

Now, after a career spent responding to emergencies,

he said the water offers something different.

“I watched people die for 30 years,” Conley said. “So this is therapeutic. This is very therapeutic to come out here and get on the water.”

That perspective helped shape the business model, particularly its focus on accessibility.

“Getting access to the water is difficult for a lot of people,” he said. “For some, they’re not going to get on kayaks, they’re not going to get on boats or canoes – physically they can’t do it. This seems like a more stable option. It’s budget-friendly and can accommodate larger groups that can go together.”

Unlike kayaking, which often requires loading equipment and sustained paddling, Conley said tanking is designed to be lower effort.


“With tanking, there might be times you have to get out and push across a sandbar, but it’s still going to be less

work,” he said. “It floats well. It doesn’t turn as sharply as a kayak, but it’s easy to maneuver because of its size.”

Beyond convenience, Conley said he sees the concept as a way to bring more people to the water – and to each other.

“It’s just a simple idea to float these things down the creek, but it’s a way to have fun and a way to bring more people out here to enjoy nature,” he said. “It’s perfect for families, for corporate events, for team bonding. It could even be a fun date – bring something like chocolate-covered strawberries and just enjoy the time.”

As of this spring, Conley said five vessels are already in rotation, with more being added as demand grows in the coming weeks. Reservations are currently being accepted through the business’s Facebook page ahead of its official summer launch and from Conleys’ store front on Ledo Road.

GEORGIA LAKE LEVELS  Scan code to view lake levels

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Daily Horoscopes

ARIES (March 21-April 19): Stars are beginning to slide, it's fine to stage things but wait to launch at least until early May, below-zero beginnings deliver below-zero outcomes. Also hold off until then to make a substantive financial decision.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20): If you're feeling down, it's not your responsibility to put a smile on your face or otherwise mask yourself. But it is your responsibility to consider the wellbeing those around you. Walk a mindful line.

GEMINI (May 21-June 20): The deeper you go into self-work and healing, the more treasure can be unearthed and carried into attaining your goals. An urge to fool around and spend unwisely should not be acted on now.

CANCER (June 21-July 22): A desire to give generously is a noble one, just don't break the bank. A friend could be under a dark cloud for a few days and need a ray of sunshine, or you could be the friend seeking the light.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22): Some intrusive thinking could be fading, leaving you mentally tired but feeling less fraught. The way may not be clear but falling into despair doesn't open any maps. Stay neutral and allow time for a situation to clarify.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22): Emotions could go from zero to 100 quickly today, then pass as if nothing happened. Seek out enough inspiring and uplifting content to counterbalance the influx of negativity in the world.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22): Whatever situation is dragging you down should shift within a few days, don't unpack your pessimism for a long stay. A new friend could be intriguing but give the relationship time to reveal itself.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21): An impulse could be hard to ignore but think it through and don't act until it's not an impulse anymore. You could be very visible now

and even a small error in judgment could get magnified.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21): Face up to what's eating you — name the issue, look it in the face, assess options, choose a plan of action. And then wait until early May for better odds unless there's absolutely no option for delay.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19): A good partnership can be a refuge in troubled times; a bad relationship brings the trouble directly to your doorstep. Lean in if you've got a supportive partner. Despite fears, there is room for more joy.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18): The flex is neither to fake being happy nor collapse into depression. Reality is what it is, naming it isn't being negative. It's inside your mindset that you either struggle and suffer or pivot to look for options and opportunities.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20): You might find a little island of sweetness amid the challenges of the world, drift in beauty and let it feed your soul. A potentially discouraging message should be investigated before you let yourself worry.

IF TODAY IS YOUR BIRTHDAY: The rocky road that's been 2026 so far should begin to smooth for you, hang on through month-end and the positive changes should begin to flow in. Increased focus is the precursor to some real financial improvement in May. Twisted inside the opportunity could be a hidden complication, be sure to delve deeply before you jump in. About the same time your popularity or social media presence could increase. Consider what could be accomplished through this heightened visibility and you might have an exciting new goal to work toward. Later June could bring a deeper and more granular understanding of your path in life. July could bring more blessings, provoking deep gratitude. Breathe it all the way in down deep. Then, a windfall or another happy surprise could land in July.

hits # 1 on the U.S. charts with 'Where Do Broken Hearts Go'.

1993 - 'Tommy', a musical from Peter Townshend of the British group, The Who, premieres in NYC

1997 - The Four Tops received a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame

TODAY IN HISTORY

1963 - Jan & Dean recorded 'Surf City'.

1971 - The Rolling Stones released their album 'Sticky Fingers'.

1985 - The 'We Are the World' album was released

1988 - Prince released the single 'Alphabet St.'

1988 - Whitney Houston

CALENDAR OF OBSERVANCES

- Army Reserves Birthday
- Canada Book Day
- English Language Day
- German Beer Day
- Impossible Astronaut Day
- International Girls in Information and Telecommunication Technologies
- International Pallas's Cat Day
- Love Your Thighs Day
- Movie Theatre Day
- National Cherry Cheesecake Day
- National English Muffin Day
- National Lost Dog

- Awareness Day
- National Picnic Day
- National Teach Children to Save Day
- Saint George's Day
- Spanish Language Day
- Take A Chance Day
- Take Action for Libraries Day - April 23, 2026 (Thursday of National Library Week)
- Take Our Daughters and Sons to Work Day
- Technologies Day
- UN English Language Day
- World Book Night
- World Laboratory Day

QUOTE OF THE DAY

"The only limit to our realization of tomorrow will be our doubts of today. Let us move forward with strong and active faith."

Franklin D. Roosevelt,
U.S. president (1882-1945)

CORRECTION

This newspaper is committed to publishing fair and accurate information. Errors should be brought to the attention of Editor Carlton Fletcher at (229) 888-9300. Corrections or clarifications will appear in this space.

SQUAWKBOX

squawkbox@albanyherald.com

Stop all gerrymandering. All votes should be at-large. If there are five Congressional openings, there should be five positions open on the ballot, not by specific, arranged districts.

Do the taxpayers of Albany/Dougherty realize that if we had the current leadership in our city and country governments in the 1970s, MillerCoors and Procter & Gamble would have never come here?

A reader asked, "Why would the county allow a convicted felon to run for public office?" Yet the same reader probably voted for Trump, a 34-count convicted felon, sexual assaulter, and probable pedophile. It would be laughable if it wasn't so hypocritically pathetic.

FBI Director Kash Patel filed a \$250 million lawsuit Monday against a reporter at The Atlantic who reported Friday that Patel is a drunk, so much so that it has prevented him from doing his job. Sounds like he and Secretary of War (formerly Defense) Hegseth have the same issue. Reps. Swallow, D-Calif., and Gonzales, R-Texas, resigned from Congress amid sexual impropriety. Are there no standards for leaders in government?

I hope Bo, Persley and Heard feel good about paying an Atlanta company to give school zone camera tickets to Albany's working single parents going 37 mph to get their kids to school. Maybe we all should take off our license plates and mufflers and go 95 mph like the Charger clowns on Westover, Dawson and Slappey. Those losers just do whatever they want without consequences.

Who is running this circus disaster? Are our best military leaders making these imbecilic decisions that a 4-year-old knows better? Congress is so obsessed with who screwed who that the nation dies in debt, every ally is abandoned, socialism takes over, Nato falls, Iraq is empowered. Is AOC leading in POTUS polls, brainless Kamala is running and idiot Hegseth is instructing the Pope while quoting "Pulp Fiction" as Scripture. Lord, this makes Biden a hero.

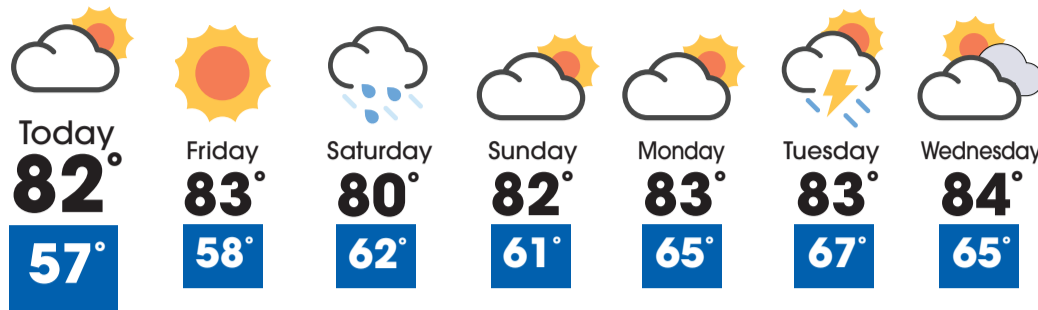
Braves squawker who started whining after the first couple of games of the season: I bet you're not saying very much right now, frontrunner that you are.

It was intriguing to read Mr. Martin's comments about trying to provide volunteer services in the community. The rude, unprofessional public "service" provided by Albany and Dougherty employees toward the people who pay their salary is really a problem that should be addressed.

If a convicted felon can be elected president, why can't one or more run for local office in Albany or Leesburg? Both instances are ridiculous.

Congratulations to Ken Dyer and the Dougherty School System on the recent statewide -- and positive -- recognition. It must be difficult for all the naysayers and complainers to find something negative to say about that ... not that it will stop them from doing so.

Weather Forecast



Daily Bridge Club

Mad bridge party

By Frank Stewart
Tribune Content Agency

"It's not easy, your majesty," Alice sighed. "Winning tricks is the basis of the game."

"That's what my cousin the

NORTH			
♠ A Q 6			
♥ 6 5 2			
♦ A K 5			
♣ A Q 10 4			
WEST			
♠ 9 3 2			
♥ A 8 3			
♦ J 10 8 6 4			
♣ 6 5			
EAST			
♠ 10 8 7 4			
♥ J 10 9 7			
♦ Q 3			
♣ K 7 3			
SOUTH			
♠ K J 5			
♥ K Q 4			
♦ 9 7 2			
♣ J 9 8 2			
North	East	South	West
1 ♠	Pass	1 NT	Pass
Opening lead - ♠ J			
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Frank Stewart

when West took the ace of hearts, he ran the diamonds. Down one.

South succeeds if Alice fails to unblock. When she takes the king of clubs and leads the queen of diamonds, South ducks effectively.

DAILY QUESTION

You hold: S A Q 6 H 6 5 2 D A K 5 C A Q 10 4. You open one club, your partner responds one heart, you jump to 2NT and he bids three clubs. What do you say?

ANSWER: Show your three-card support for partner's major suit, which may be what he wants to hear. Bid three hearts. If partner's hearts are weak and his pattern is almost balanced, he can return to 3NT to offer a choice of games. With A104,AK4,A73,KJ94, you would jump to four hearts.

North dealer
N-S vulnerable

Queen of Hearts thinks," the Queen of Diamonds said. "I insist that being part of a losing trick can be better than winning one."

The Mad Hatter played at 3NT, and West, the Dormouse, led the jack of diamonds. When declarer put up dummy's ace, Alice was about to play low, saving her queen, when she felt the Queen of Diamonds' gaze. So Alice dumped her queen under the ace.

EIGHT TRICKS

The Hatter next led a spade to his hand and finessed in clubs (certainly not best), but Alice took the king and returned her last diamond to establish the Dormouse's suit. Declarer had only eight tricks, and

Advice Columnist

Potential retiree fears boredom

By Eric Thomas
Tribune Content Agency

Dear Eric: I'm a woman in my early 60s. I was recently given notice that my job will end in a couple months due to the current federal financial situation (it was grant funded). I loved this work but because my husband can't move or work remotely, I'm limited to jobs close to home or remote.

I've been applying but haven't received any offers. I'm wondering whether I should just retire. I could take care of my health, pursue hobbies and be there for my parents and potential grandkids.

But I worry that I'll get bored, and then when even older have even more trouble finding work. I'm sure I'm not the only one in this position. Any words of wisdom or solace?

- I'm Still Worthy

Dear Worthy: I'm really glad you chose this sign-off for your letter because it's true. You are worthy. And though the job market is difficult, and you may encounter ageism as you pursue a new position, your worth is not defined by what you do.

First, the truth: you may get bored. But you've been bored before. One of the challenges that retirees often talk about is having to re-learn who they are and how they relate to the world. This can be counter-intuitive: you're not different the day after you retire, but there can sometimes be a challenge to programming your time meaningfully.

Give yourself grace and take it day-by-day without committing yourself to a version of your new life too quickly. You may find, for instance, that your calendar fills up and you

don't have time to be bored. Or you may find that activities and hobbies don't scratch the itch and you want to get a part-time job in a new field or volunteer your time. It's all possible.

Possibility is daunting, but possibility is also such a treasure. Think of this transition — whether to another job or to a retirement chapter — as akin to going off to college. You have the skills, but you will be learning a new terrain, so it may not always seem easy or comfortable. Talk to friends and loved ones who are already retired or have changed careers later in life; they'll have tips and suggestions as you feel your way through.

Dear Eric: We recently lost a 14-year friendship, and we have no idea why. My husband and I became friends with this guy through church. Over the years, we saw him as a younger brother. We helped out whenever asked. Buying a car, moving, etc. He had helped us with similar stuff as well.

He told us that he and his wife are moving at the end of January. We reached out to them to see if they needed help.

We called and texted and were sent to voicemail or no response to our texts. Getting worried, we reached out to a mutual friend to find out if everything was OK.

The mutual friend said he would call and find out and then let us know. As we waited on pins and needles, we did not receive a call back. (We tried reaching out to the mutual friend, and we feel like he has blocked us too.)

Later that evening as we were waiting for a response from the mutual friend, I received a



Eric Thomas

text message from our friend stating our friendship is over. We were removed from various social connections and our numbers were blocked. My husband was so distraught, he wanted to confront them at their current home. (We don't know where they are moving to.) I told him not to, as it could cause more issues.

We don't make friends easily and to lose one over who knows what, is heartbreaking. Is there anything we can do to find out? Or should we just leave it and try to move on?

- Lost and Confused in Seattle

Dear Lost and Confused: This behavior is so perplexing, especially after a 14-year friendship. Even if there's much that hasn't been included in this letter — and I'm not saying there is — this situation doesn't seem like it's your doing.

What's clear is that there's another narrative going on for your friend, and perhaps the mutual friend. Why they would choose to cut you off instead of being upfront about what the problem is, I don't know. It indicates that they feel the problem is something they can't address or that you won't change.

I agree that showing up at your friend's house and forcing a conversation would escalate things, but it seems unlikely that you'll get to the bottom of this without a direct conversation.

Try approaching the mutual friend in person, talk about what you've noticed in their behavior, and ask them to help you understand what you're missing.

Send questions to R. Eric Thomas at eric@askingeric.com or P.O. Box 22474, Philadelphia, PA 19110. Follow him on Instagram and sign up for his weekly newsletter at rerichthomas.com.

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**TODAY'S
BIBLE
VERSE**

*"For the Lord giveth wisdom: out of his mouth
cometh knowledge and understanding."*
Proverbs 2:6

LETTER TO THE EDITOR ■ KEN DYER

Beyond the headline: Setting the record straight on DCSS finances

"The first obligation of journalism is to the truth. The essence of journalism is a discipline of verification." — Kovach & Rosenstiel

In light of a recent article in The Albany Herald, I write to provide context, clarification, and a more complete understanding of the information presented. Without that context, the article's framing risks leaving the community with an inaccurate and incomplete view of the Dougherty County School System's financial position.

Let me be clear: The Dougherty County School System remains on solid financial footing.

The projected use of our general fund reserves is not the result of financial mismanagement or an unplanned "overspend." Rather, it reflects an intentional and strategic use of reserves, an established and widely accepted financial practice.

As noted, the district entered the fiscal year with a strong general fund reserve of more than \$39 million, and even after the planned use of reserves, we are projected to end the year with nearly \$33 million remaining. That level of reserve reflects continued fiscal stability and responsible stewardship.

Like many school systems across Georgia and the nation, we are navigating increased costs in key operational areas, including staffing, benefits and services. At the same time, we are making strategic investments in student support, safety and academic improvement, investments that are already yielding measurable gains in student outcomes. We remain firmly committed to meeting the needs of the children we have been called to serve.

These are not overspends. They are targeted, strategic investments. Even with these investments, we have maintained a strong record of fiscal discipline, including reducing the millage rate for eight consecutive years while continuing to invest in our schools and our people.

Capital Fund

The article also presents capital fund activity in a way that, without proper context, could easily be misunderstood. Capital projects, such as school construction, major renovations, and facility upgrades, are not funded based on a single year's revenue. Instead, these projects are supported by funds accumulated over multiple years, primarily through voter-approved E-SPLOST, state capital outlay funds, and, in some cases, bond proceeds.

Because of this, it is entirely expected that in any given year, capital expenditures may exceed that year's revenue collections. When that occurs, the district is not "overspending." It is drawing down previ-

ously accumulated funds for their intended purpose.

In the Dougherty County School System, we have been intentional and disciplined in securing capital revenue streams, building reserves over time and closely monitoring project costs so that we can responsibly invest in safe, modern and effective learning environments for our students. Comparing capital fund revenues and expenditures within a single fiscal year, without acknowledging the multi-year nature of these funds, presents a misleading picture of the district's financial practices.

Transparency

I also want to address any suggestion that the Dougherty County School System operates without transparency. Our board governance process is designed to be open, accessible, and participatory. During each work session, the board chair explicitly invites board members to ask questions or offer comments on every agenda item, ensuring that financial reports and other matters are discussed in a public forum. Detailed materials and recommendations are provided in advance, and many questions are addressed through that process and discussion.

In addition, we provide two distinct opportunities for public participation at every board meeting:

- At the beginning of the work session.
- At the beginning of the regular board meeting.

During these times, any individual in attendance has the opportunity to address the board, including on matters related to the agenda and financial reports. These are meaningful opportunities for engagement, and they are consistently provided. Transparency is not simply about publishing documents; it is about creating space for dialogue, questions and accountability in real time. That is a standard we take seriously and uphold at every meeting.

To our Albany and Dougherty County community, I offer this reassurance: The Dougherty County School System remains fiscally sound. Our financial decisions are thoughtful, strategic, and aligned with both our long-term sustainability and our moral responsibility to meet the needs of our children.

We will continue to operate with transparency, and we welcome opportunities to provide accurate information and meaningful context to our stakeholders — including our partners in the media. Accuracy matters. Context matters. Our community deserves both.

Kenneth Dyer
Superintendent

Dougherty County School System

COLUMNIST ■ DICK YARBROUGH

A tale of war, passports and good constituent service

While most of us have viewed the war with Iran on television from the comfort of our home, to Shelly Corgel in Cobb County, it has been up-close-and-personal. Her daughter, Leah, has lived and worked in Abu Dhabi, the capital of the United Arab Emirates, for the past 10 years. For security reasons, I have agreed not to get into the details of her work. Suffice it to say it is in a dangerous part of the world.

The UAE, along with other Arab countries, had come under attack from missiles and drones being launched by Iran, resulting in injuries and fires and damage to industrial sites.

"When I saw the headline that the U.S. and Israel had attacked Iran, I immediately contacted Leah," Corgel told me. "She was very frightened and distraught. Not only was she terribly afraid because of not knowing exactly what was happening, she was hearing extremely loud explosions, which it turned out were missiles being shot down by the UAE defense system." (According to reports, the UAE was hit by some 2,300 drones and more than 500 missiles, and their defense systems had intercepted 90% of them.)

As a result of what was happening, Leah Corgel was told to shelter in place by the UAE government. If she chose to evacuate, she would have to go alone. Because of the nature of his work, her husband could not leave. That brought up a problem. No passport.

"I sent my passport for renewal on Feb. 17, which was about two weeks before the conflict started," Leah Corgel said. "While I was not planning to return to the U.S., I was very frightened by the initial and confusing 'Depart Now' orders from the State Department and not having a travel document in hand and no way to get out."

"My fear was that if she didn't get out soon, the whole Middle East might erupt into war and then she wouldn't be able to leave," Shelly Corgel said of her daughter. "She had several dealings with the U.S. authorities there, but by Tuesday, March 3, there was still no passport."

One option was to get an emergency passport, which would allow her to get out of the country but

then she would not be able to get back into the UAE. Also, she was not sure which countries would allow her entry with that kind of passport.

In desperation, Shelly Corgel called Sen. Jon Ossoff's offices. A friend who had hosted fundraisers for Ossoff gave her his cellphone number. She called that number, and left a message. After reminding him that they had met previously and had talked at length about her daughter living in Abu Dhabi, she got to the issue at hand: Her daughter desperately needed a passport, and they were following every avenue they could to get it.

Corgel said within two hours of calling Ossoff's office, "I got a call from his constituent services representative to follow up on Leah and the passport situation and was told that Sen. Ossoff personally instructed them to check in with her about Leah if anything else was needed." Leah now has her passport.

"Thinking about this now brings back so many emotions about that time and the situation," Shelly Corgel said. "I was so touched by Sen. Ossoff's compassion and his staff's personal response to our situation that I cried."

A number of former members of Congress from both sides of the aisle read this column on a regular basis, and I suspect they would be the first to tell you that while their political positions got them elected, it was good constituent service that kept them there. I know of several who were so busy creating a national profile for themselves, they were not responsive to their constituents' needs and lost re-election. We may forgive you on how you voted on a political issue. We won't forget if you failed to help us in our time of need. First things first.

As of this writing, Leah Corgel says things have been calm in Abu Dhabi since the ceasefire, and that life is relatively back to normal.

"It's important for your readers to know that their representative or senator can help in these situations," she says and adds, "that said, let's hope they are never in this situation."

COLUMNIST ■ GARY WISENBAKER

SCOTUS takes on birthright citizenship

The debate over birthright citizenship is not new, but it is newly urgent. And like many of our most difficult national conversations, it sits at the intersection of law, history, and common sense.

"Tell me, are you a Roman?" Saint Paul's affirmative response to a Roman guard's inquiry is one of the earliest recorded discussions of citizenship. Roman citizenship was not incidental, it was prized, protected, and, at times, life-saving. The Romans understood something modern nations still wrestle with: Citizenship carries meaning, and sovereign nations guard it carefully.

Two thousand years later, the United States Supreme Court finds itself revisiting that same fundamental question. The current debate has been reignited by President Trump's executive order seeking to limit automatic citizenship for children born on American soil to those here unlawfully.

His argument hinges on a specific clause in the Fourteenth Amendment, that citizenship applies only to those "subject to the jurisdiction" of the United States. Critics dismiss this as radical. Supporters call it overdue. The truth, as is often the case, lies somewhere in between — but it leans more toward reconsideration than reflexive rejection. To understand why, a review of the amendment's origins is instructive.

In the aftermath of the Civil War, Congress faced a profound moral and legal crisis: How to define citizenship for newly freed slaves. The infamous Dred Scott decision had declared that black Americans could not be citizens. The Fourteenth Amendment, ratified in 1868, was designed to correct that injustice and to prevent states from stripping citizenship from those born into freedom.

Its language is clear on its face: All persons born or naturalized in the United States, and subject to its jurisdiction, are citizens. But clarity in wording does not always translate to clarity in application.

In *United States v. Wong Kim Ark*, the Supreme Court held that a child born in the United States to foreign parents was a citizen. That case has long been cited as the definitive interpretation of the amendment. Yet it is worth noting that Wong Kim Ark's parents were lawfully present and subject to U.S. law in a meaningful and enduring way. That distinction matters.

The unresolved question — one that has been largely glossed over for more than a century — is whether individuals who are in the country unlawfully, and therefore subject to removal, are fully "subject to the jurisdiction" of the United States in the con-

stitutional sense. Does mere physical presence suffice?

If that were the case, then why add "and subject to the jurisdiction thereof" unless "jurisdiction" implies something more durable — legal allegiance, political accountability, a legal presence, and reciprocal obligation?

There is also a practical dimension that cannot be ignored. The strain placed on immigration systems over the past several years has brought renewed attention to incentives embedded in our policies.

It is not unreasonable to ask whether the promise — real or perceived — of automatic citizenship for children born here serves as a motivating factor for unlawful entry. That question alone warrants debate, not derision.

To be clear, this is not an argument against immigration. The United States has been strengthened, economically and culturally, by generations of immigrants. Nor is it an argument to strip citizenship from those who have long relied on established interpretations of the law. It is, however, an argument for intellectual honesty.

Those who oppose revisiting birthright citizenship often invoke constitutional permanence. "It's a new world, same Constitution," as Chief Justice John Roberts observed during the recent SCOTUS hearing. Fair enough. But that same Constitution once accommodated the doctrine of "separate but equal" under *Plessy v. Ferguson*, a doctrine later recognized as fundamentally flawed.

Precedent, while important, is not infallible.

Trump cannot rewrite the Fourteenth Amendment by executive order. No president can. But he can force a long-avoided conversation about its scope and meaning, one that may ultimately require the courts, and perhaps the country, to revisit assumptions that have gone largely unchallenged for generations.

The framers of the Fourteenth Amendment addressed a specific injustice in a specific historical moment. It stretches credulity to suggest they contemplated a modern system in which individuals could enter the country unlawfully and secure citizenship for their children as a matter of course. To say so is not callous, it is candid.

Sovereign nations, like Rome before them, define and defend the boundaries of citizenship. The United States should be no exception. The debate over birthright citizenship deserves a careful reading of history, a sober assessment of present realities, and a willingness to ask whether our current interpretation aligns with both.

Gary Wisenbaker is a Realtor with Century 21 Realty Advisors in Valdosta, a former state chairman of the Georgia Young Republicans and a former commissioner on the Georgia Student Finance Commission. He can be reached at gary50155@gmail.com.

The Albany Herald encourages letters to the editor on topics of general interest, but reserves the right to edit them for content and length. Letters should be no longer than 400 words and must include the writer's name, address and daytime phone number for verification purposes.



What to watch THURSDAY

April 23, 2026

All times Eastern. Start times can vary based on cable/satellite provider. Confirm times on your on-screen guide.

Stranger Things: Tales From '85

Netflix ■ **New Series**

Return to Hawkins with this exciting new animated series from showrunner Eric Robles and executive producers the Duffer Brothers. In the winter of 1985, snow blankets the town and the horrors of the Upside Down are finally fading. Our heroes Eleven, Mike, Will, Dustin, Lucas and Max have settled back into a normal life of D&D, snowball fights and quiet days. But beneath the ice, something terrifying has awakened. Could it be from the Upside Down?

Scrabble

The CW, 8 p.m.

Word enthusiasts compete for a chance to cartwheel into the final round to play for \$10,000 in the new episode "Feeling Pumped." Craig Ferguson hosts.

Next Level Chef

FOX, 8 p.m.

With only seven talented cooks remaining, the chefs must make a next-level noodle dish that honors tradition and elevates this globally loved ingredient in the new episode "Use Your Noodle."

Law & Order

NBC, 8 p.m.

A talented local news reporter is brutally murdered, and Maroun (Odelya Halevi) goes up against her defense-attorney mentor in the new episode "Ride or Die."

Ghosts

CBS, 8:30 p.m.

In the new episode "The Investor," Sam and Jay (Rose McIver and Utkarsh Ambudkar) are forced into a difficult choice when a promising opportunity to save Woodstone is threatened by a personal conflict.

Matlock

CBS, 9 p.m. ■ **Season Finale**

Season 2 of the legal drama concludes with a two-episode finale. In "Who Are You?" and "Matty Matlock," the team confronts an unexpected final hurdle in bringing Senior (Beau Bridges) to justice for his role in the Wellbrea cover-up. Meanwhile, the team defends an airport ramp operator accused of safety negligence in the death of a passenger.

Trivial Pursuit

The CW, 9 p.m.

A new homeowner takes on the six iconic Trivial Pursuit categories to try to win \$20,000 in the new episode "House Rules." LeVar Burton hosts.

Animal Control

FOX, 9 p.m. ■ **Season Finale**

The workplace comedy following Frank (Joel McHale) and his cohorts at an Animal Control precinct wraps up Season 4 with "Golden Moose and Wiener Dogs." FOX has renewed *Animal Control* for Season 5.

Sugarcreek Amish Mysteries

UPtv, 9 p.m. ■ **New Series**

This series is about finding family in unexpected places and uncovering the true parts of ourselves. After her engagement is called off, Cheryl Cooper (Galadriel Stine-man) escapes to an Amish community in Sugarcreek, Ohio, to manage a gift shop. Drawn into one mystery after another, Cheryl quickly realizes her sharp instincts and outsider perspective are exactly what this tight-knit community needs.



UPTV

Law & Order: Special Victims Unit

NBC, 9 p.m.

A mysterious death in a hotel leads the squad into the world of professional fighting in the new episode "Gimmick."

Going Dutch

FOX, 9:30 p.m. ■ **Season Finale**

The comedy following Col. Patrick Quinn (Denis Leary), commanding officer of U.S. Army Garrison Stroopsdorf in the Netherlands, finishes Season 2 with "NATOcean's Eleven." Taylor Misiak and Danny Pudi also star.

The Hunting Party

NBC, 10 p.m.

In the new episode "Dylan Miles," Bex (Melissa Roxburgh) and the team try to guess the next move of a serial-killer comedian.

CATCH A CLASSIC

TCM Spotlight: Deep in the Heart of Texas

TCM, beginning at 8 p.m.

Tonight's Texas spotlight begins with two of the most moving films ever made about ordinary people trying to hold onto dignity in difficult times. First is **Places in the Heart** (1984), with Sally Field giving a deeply felt performance as a widow fighting to keep her farm during the Depression. Then comes **Tender Mercies** (1983), the powerful drama that earned Robert Duvall



UNIVERSAL PICTURES

an Oscar for his portrayal of a washed-up country singer searching for redemption. After those two films, the night continues with **A Well Spent Life** (1971), 1956's **Written on the Wind** (pictured), **Blossoms in the Dust** (1941) and **Boom Town** (1940).

MOVIES YOU'LL LOVE



'Let's Be Cops'

FRANK MASI, SMPSP

Alien: Romulus (2024, Science fiction) Cailee Spaeny, David Jonsson **HBO, 6:55 p.m.**

Held Up (2000, Comedy) Jamie Foxx, Nia Long **BET, 7 p.m.**

Thor: Ragnarok (2017, Action) Chris Hemsworth, Tom Hiddleston **FX, 7 p.m.**

Raiders of the Lost Ark (1981, Adventure) Harrison Ford, Karen Allen **USA, 7:30 p.m.**

Ratatouille (2007, Children) Patton Oswalt, Ian Holm **Freeform, 7:30 p.m.**

Aurora Teagarden Mysteries: Death at the Diner (2024, Mystery) Skyler Samuels, Evan Roderick **Hallmark Mystery, 8 p.m.**

Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix (2007, Fantasy) Daniel Radcliffe, Rupert Grint **E!, 8:30 p.m.**

Let's Be Cops (2014, Comedy) Jake Johnson, Damon Wayans Jr. **FXM, 9:30 p.m.**

Rambo III (1988, Action) Sylvester Stallone, Richard Crenna **BBC America, 9:30 p.m.**

Pushed Off a Plane and Survived (2026, Suspense) Eva Marcille, Tyler Lopley **LMN, 10 p.m.**

Turbulence (2025, Suspense) Hera Hilmar, Jeremy Irvine **Starz, 10 p.m.**

Silent Night (2023, Action) Joel Kinnaman, Scott Mescudi **SYFY, 11:30 p.m.**

From the editors of

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What to watch FRIDAY

April 24, 2026

All times Eastern. Start times can vary based on cable/satellite provider. Confirm times on your on-screen guide.

Apex

Netflix ■ **Original Film**

A grieving woman testing her limits in the Australian wilderness is suddenly ensnared in a deadly game of cat and mouse with a ruthless predator. Stars Charlize Theron, Taron Egerton and Eric Bana.

NFL Draft: Rounds 2-3

ABC, ESPN & NFL Network, 7 p.m. Live

The NFL Draft in Pittsburgh continues with selections from Rounds 2-3.

UFL Football:

D.C. at Birmingham

FOX, 8 p.m. Live

Week 5 of the United Football League season opens with the DC Defenders on the road against the Stallions at Protective Stadium in Birmingham, Alabama.

Sheriff Country

CBS, 8 p.m.

While Skye (Amanda Arcuri) celebrates her 24th birthday, Mickey (Morena Baccarin) investigates a brutal attack tied to a land-grab scheme in the new episode "Twenty Four Candles."

Happy's Place

NBC, 8 p.m. ■ **Season Finale**

Two episodes wrap up Season 2 of this sitcom. In "Everyone's a Critic," the staff is not pleased with Isabella's (Belissa Escobedo) "compliment sandwich" during performance reviews. Then, in "Couples Counseling," Isabella accuses Bobbie (Reba McEntire) of stealing customers, causing the sisters to attend couples therapy.



'Apex'

KANE SKENAR, NETFLIX

Fire Country

CBS, 9 p.m.

Bode (Max Thieriot) sets out to prove his leadership skills during a historic cold snap that plunges Edgewater into crisis mode in the new episode "Not Worth the Risk."

Great Performances:

Now Hear This

PBS, 9 p.m.

Explore the layered sounds of Istanbul, where empires met and music evolved. Host Scott Yoo joins Turkish musicians who perform everything from European classical music to modern jazz.

CATCH A CLASSIC

Rock 'n' Roll High School

TCM, 9:45 p.m.

Roger Corman made a career out of turning small budgets into big entertainment, and this 1979 film shows just how great he was at it. Executive produced by Corman, this chaotic teen comedy stars P.J. Soles as a rebellious student who declares war on her school's strict new principal. The film also features the Ramones, whose music helps fuel the movie's anarchic and punk spirit.

Boston Blue

CBS, 10 p.m.

In the new episode "Anatomy of a Bomb," Danny and Lena (Donnie Wahlberg and Sonequa Martin-Green) work to calm a volatile situation after a crisis erupts at a local hospital over a critical transplant error.

International Jazz Day From Abu Dhabi

PBS, 10 p.m.

This special features performances by jazz and blues musicians from around the globe who gathered in Abu Dhabi last year to celebrate International Jazz Day.



NEW WORLD PICTURES

MOVIES YOU'LL LOVE



'The Hunger Games'

MURRAY CLOSE

The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers (2002, Fantasy) Elijah Wood, Ian McKellen **Paramount, 6 p.m.**

Breakdown (1997, Suspense) Kurt Russell, J.T. Walsh **MGM, 6:25 p.m.**

Doctor Strange in the Multiverse of Madness (2022, Action) Benedict Cumberbatch, Elizabeth Olsen **FX, 7 p.m.**

The Hunger Games (2012, Science fiction) Jennifer Lawrence, Josh Hutcherson **AMC, 7 p.m.**

A House Built on Lies (2026, Suspense) Kimberly-Sue Murray, Diana Salvatore **LMN, 8 p.m.**

Dirty Dancing (1987, Romance) Jennifer Grey, Patrick Swayze **POP, 8 p.m.**

The Peanuts Movie (2015, Children) Noah Schnapp, Hadley Belle Miller **Disney, 8 p.m.**

The Blues Brothers (1980, Musical comedy) John Belushi, Dan Aykroyd **IFC, 8:15 p.m.**

The Devil Wears Prada (2006, Comedy-drama) Meryl Streep, Anne Hathaway **Freeform, 8:30 p.m.**

Steel Magnolias (1989, Comedy-drama) Sally Field, Dolly Parton **POP, 10:45 p.m.**

Fast Times at Ridgemont High (1982, Comedy) Sean Penn, Jennifer Jason Leigh **IFC, 11:15 p.m.**

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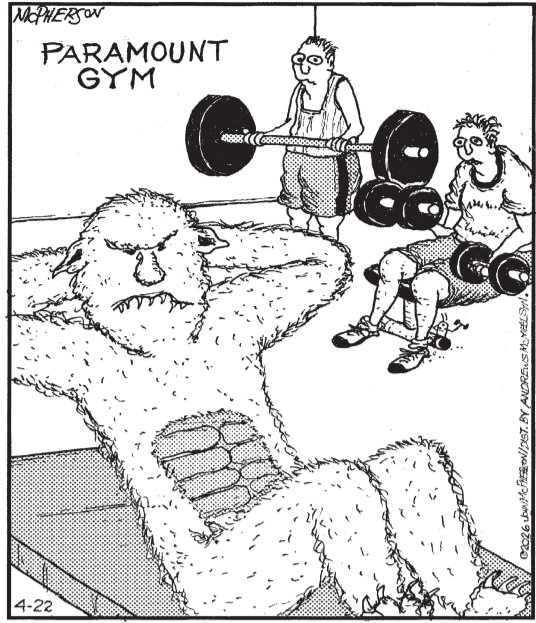
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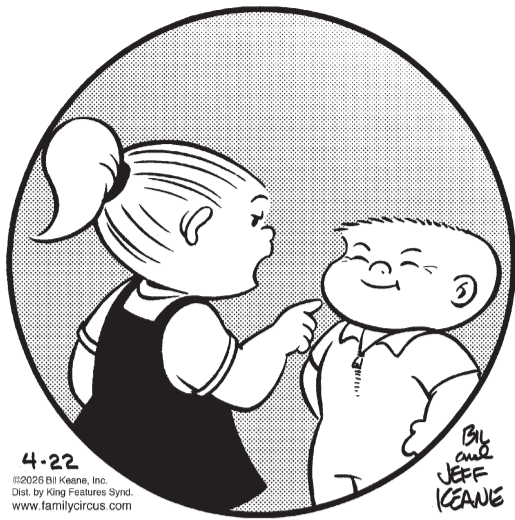
TV - What to watch

CLOSE TO HOME John McPherson



The Abdominal Snowman.

THE FAMILY CIRCUS Bill Keane



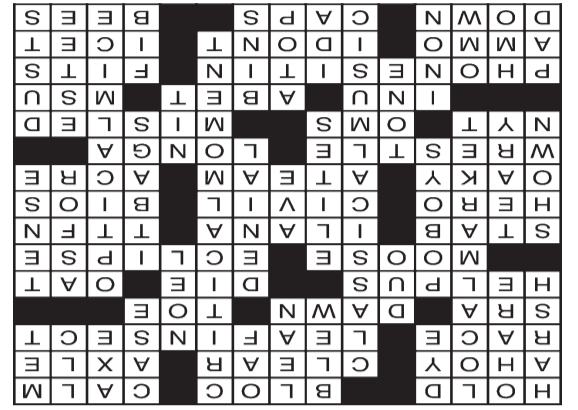
"You're blinking, not winking, P.J. A wink is HALF of a blink."

Los Angeles Times Daily Crossword Puzzle

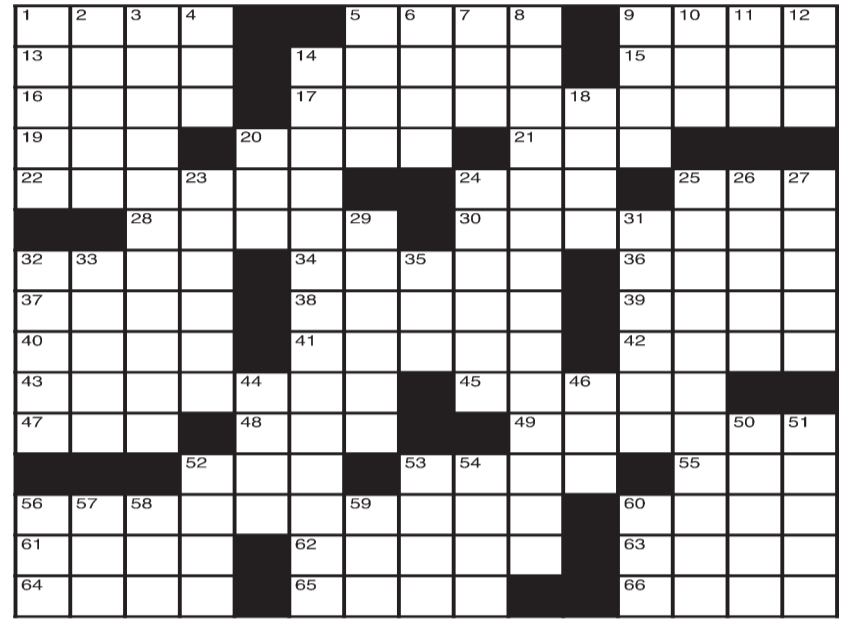
Edited by Patti Varol

- ACROSS**
- 1 Embrace
 - 5 Voting alliance
 - 9 With 64-Across, "Chill!" or what can be found four times in this puzzle
 - 13 "Hi there, matey!"
 - 14 Like the top coat of nail polish
 - 15 Toll unit
 - 16 Sprint or marathon
 - 17 Green bug named for its camouflaging ability
 - 19 Mrs. in Mallorca
 - 20 First light
 - 21 Tip of a sock
 - 22 "We need assistance!"
 - 24 Go kaput
 - 25 Aveeno grain
 - 28 Largest deer species
 - 30 Solar event
 - 32 Wild guess
 - 34 "Broad City" star Glazer
 - 36 "C u l8r"
 - 37 Sub in a deli
 - 38 Part of ACLU
 - 39 "About the Author" sections
 - 40 Like some bourbons
 - 41 Starting squad
 - 42 Decent size for a meadow
 - 43 Grapple in a ring
 - 45 Stage presence?
 - 47 Big Apple newspaper, for short
 - 48 Meditation chants
 - 49 Took for a ride
 - 52 Shiba
 - 53 Partner in crime?
 - 55 NCAA sch. with the mascot Sparty
 - 56 Gives only perfunctory effort
 - 60 Is just the right size for
 - 61 Nerf darts, e.g.
 - 62 Shocking response at the altar
 - 63 Rapper born Tracy Marrow
 - 64 See 9-Across
- DOWN**
- 1 Tough to endure
 - 2 Busiest airport in the Midwest
 - 3 Neighborhood spot for fresh produce
 - 4 Turn red, perhaps
 - 5 Made bubbles, say
 - 6 Tilt
 - 7 Galoot
 - 8 Make-or-break point
 - 9 Violin carrier
 - 10 Log chopper
 - 11 Inc. alternative
 - 12 Crossed paths
 - 14 Genre with symphonies and sonatas
 - 18 French holiday
 - 20 Key and Peele, e.g.
 - 23 N'awlins sandwiches
 - 24 "Wasn't me," e.g.
 - 25 Accessories favored by serious gamers
 - 26 Regarding
 - 27 On pins and needles
 - 29 Privileged groups
 - 31 Must-have purses
 - 32 Aired
 - 33 All choked up
 - 35 Blvd. kin
 - 44 Mood
 - 46 Trivial complaint
 - 50 Lauder of cosmetics
 - 51 Uses a Swiffer
 - 52 Privy to
 - 53 Perched upon
 - 54 Storage boxes
 - 56 Writer's block?
 - 57 Med. insurance option
 - 58 Texter's "Be there soon"
 - 59 St. known for spuds
 - 60 Lie to spare someone's feelings, perhaps

TODAY'S SOLUTION:



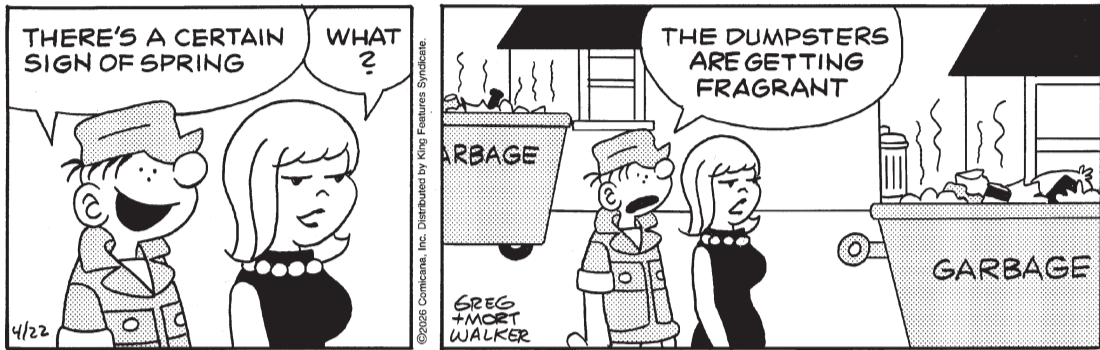
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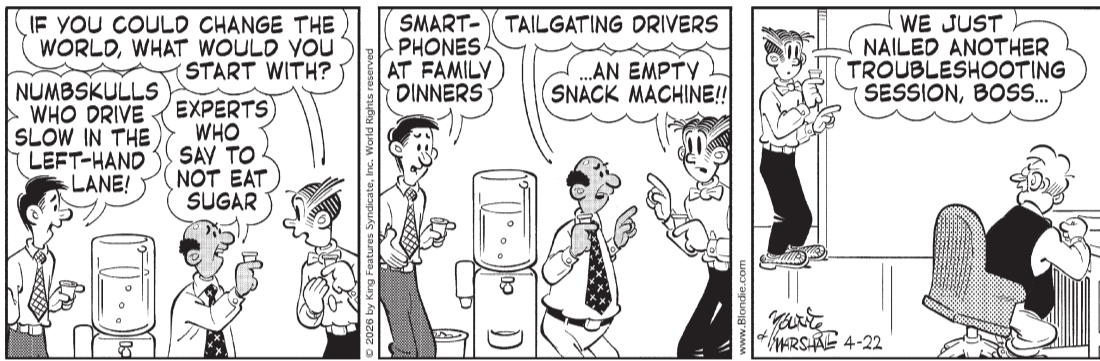
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04/22/26

BEETLE BAILEY Mort & Greg Walker



BLONDIE Dean Young & John Marshall



THE BORN LOSER Art & Chip Sansom



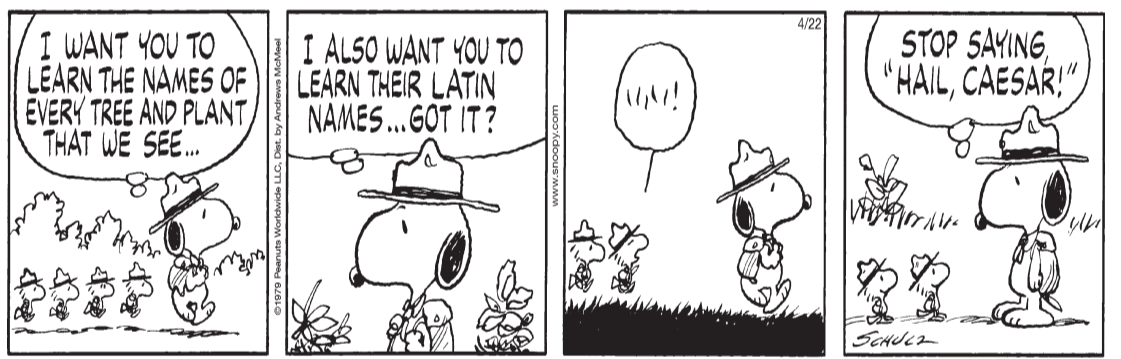
HAGAR THE HORRIBLE Chris Browne



ZITS Jim Borgman & Jerry Scott



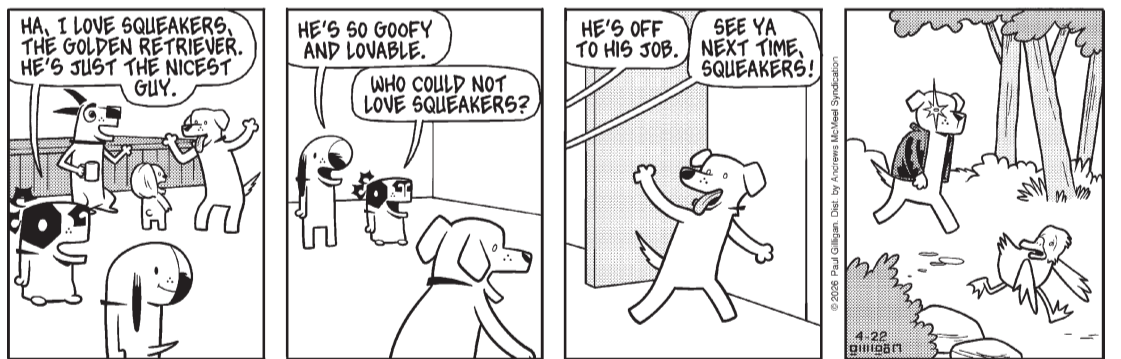
PEANUTS Charles M. Schulz



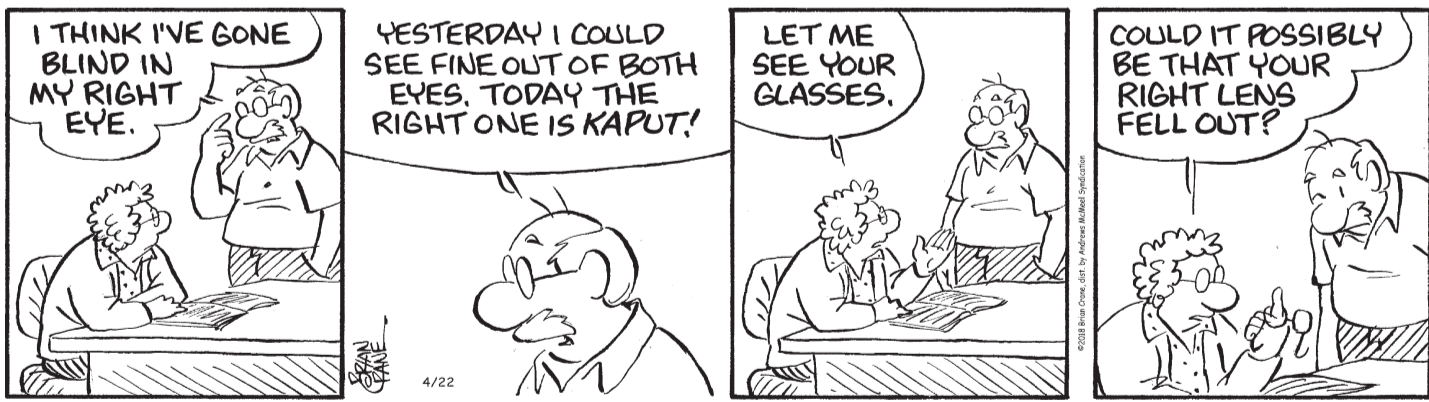
GARFIELD Jim Davis



POOCH CAFE Paul Gilligan



PICKLES Brian Crane



WONDERWORD

By DAVID OUELLET

HOW TO PLAY: All the words listed below appear in the puzzle — horizontally, vertically, diagonally and even backward. Find them, circle each letter of the word and strike it off the list. The leftover letters spell the WONDERWORD.

JESSE JACKSON (1941-2026)

Solution: 6 letters

E T A T I T N A S E N A T O R
 S N N N A C I R E M A R C H A
 N H I E I E J O N A T H A N N
 G E A L M S T C E T O R P F I
 I Q B D E N F A R R O T N E M
 A U R C O U R A G E I O P S E
 P A E E N W Q E Y E I G W U S
 M L T D R C C V T L E H Y J
 A I S E H I I E A O N E E T E
 C T I A O V P N F J G L O R S
 D Y N V I O I S E A H E L O S
 A G I C H M F A N S I C O P E
 E C M R O F E R A I H T B P J
 L F I N A N C E C A E P H U R
 E T A C O V D A C T I V I S T

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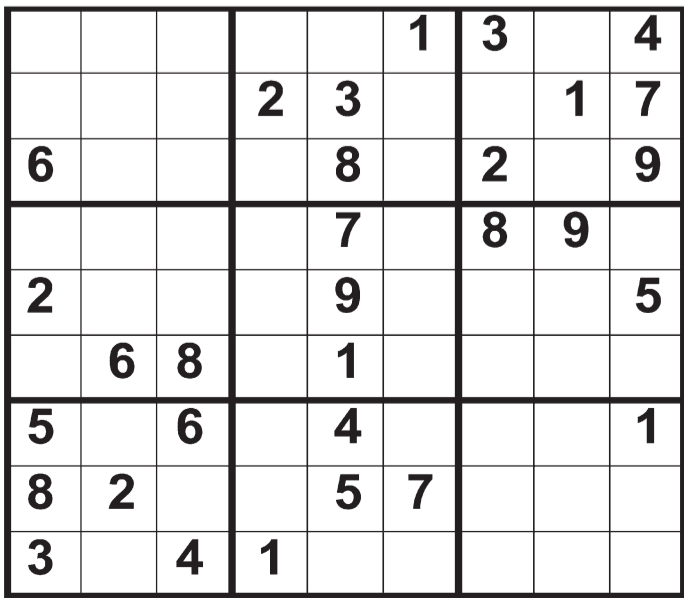
4/22

Activist, Advocate, American, Ashley, Bold, Campaign, Change, Civic, Courage, Delegate, Elect, Energy, Equality, Faith, Fans, Finance, Funds, Government, Hope, Inspire, Jacqueline, Jesse Jr., Jonathan, Lead, March, Mentor, Minister, News, Nomination, Peace, Protect, Public, Reform, Rights, Santita, Seminar, Senator, Shadow, Support, Voice, Yusef

TODAY'S ANSWER: Speech

SUDOKU

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★★



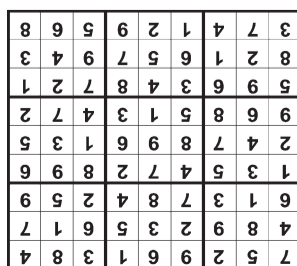
WHATZIT?

Find the familiar phrase, saying or name in this arrangement of letters.



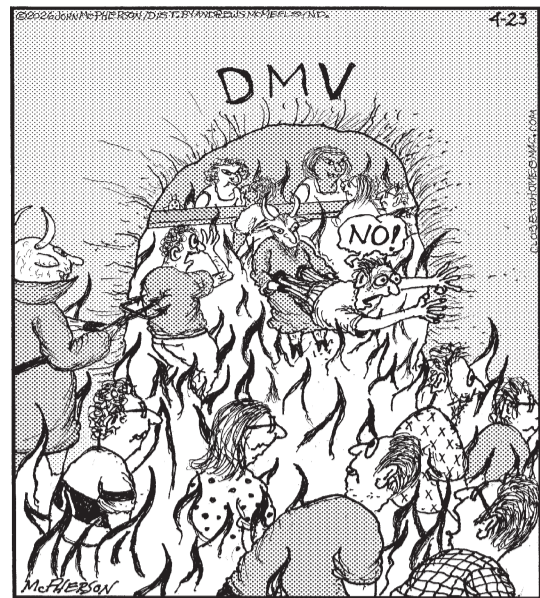
SUDOKU INSTRUCTIONS: Each row, column and set of 3-by-3 boxes must contain the numbers 1 through 9 without repetition.

TODAY'S SUDOKU SOLUTION:



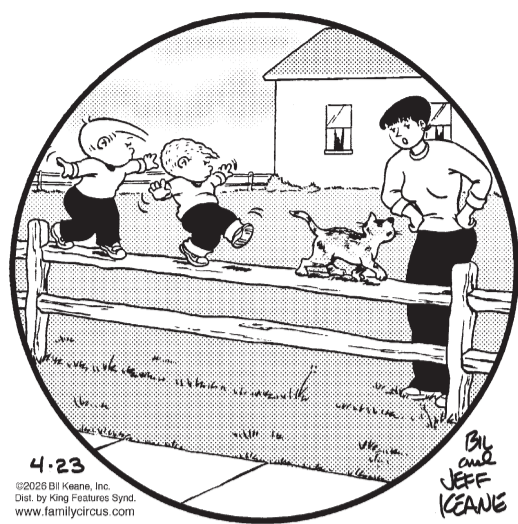
TODAY'S WHATZIT SOLUTION: Back to square one

CLOSE TO HOME John McPherson



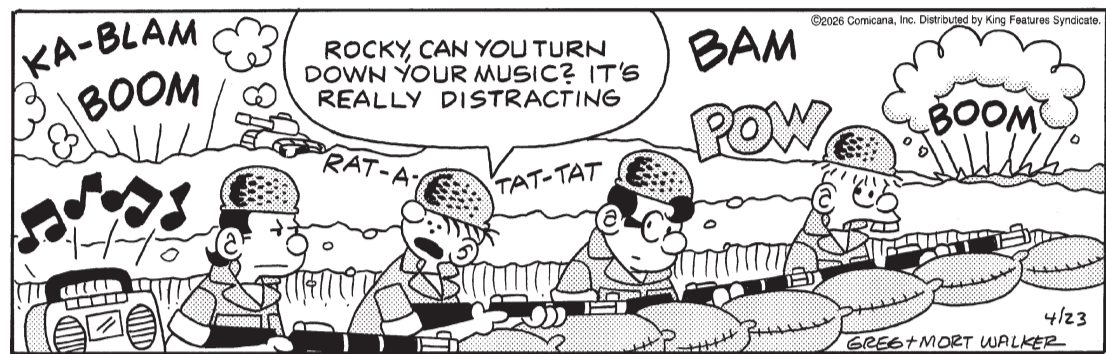
"Oh, that room? It's only for the very WORST of the worst."

THE FAMILY CIRCUS Bill Keane



"You are not a good role model."

BEETLE BAILEY Mort & Greg Walker



BLONDIE Dean Young & John Marshall



THE BORN LOSER Art & Chip Sansom



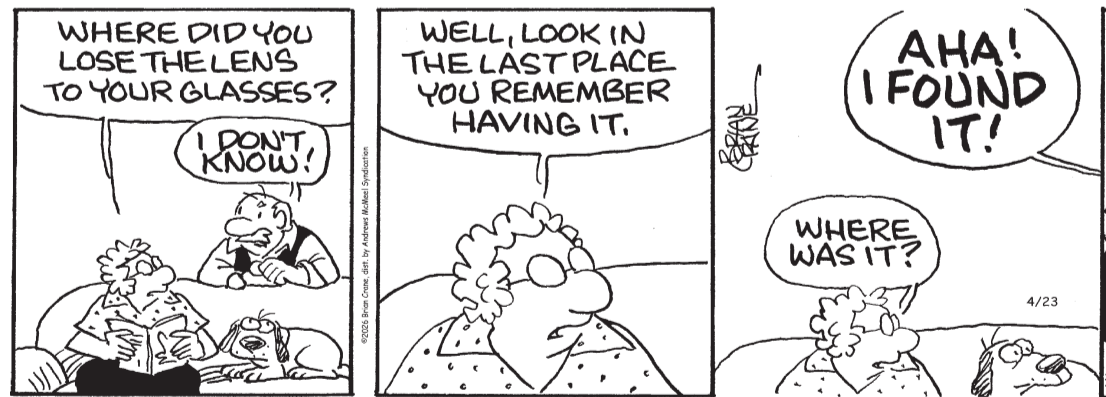
ZITS Jim Borgman & Jerry Scott



GARFIELD Jim Davis



PICKLES Brian Crane



CROSSWORD

- ACROSS**
- 1 — and hearty
 - 5 Justice Dept. agency
 - 8 Alaska seaport
 - 12 Wife of Osiris
 - 13 Traitor
 - 14 Old Roman poet
 - 15 Train stops
 - 17 Patch
 - 18 First (Abbr.)
 - 19 Halloween haul
 - 20 "Serial —"
 - 22 Unexploded bomb
 - 23 Rabid
 - 27 Weight units (Abbr.)
 - 30 Leave out
 - 31 Actor — Johnson
 - 32 Debatable
 - 33 Philosopher — Descartes
 - 34 Synthetic hair
 - 35 Emanation
- DOWN**
- 1 That man's
 - 2 About (2 wds.)
 - 3 Fibber
 - 4 Rough calculation

TODAY'S SOLUTION:

S	S	E	L	V	W	N	A	E	R	L		
N	O	T	E	P	O	W	S	S	E	L		
E	N	I	R	H	S	N	E	S	U	P	O	
E	A	V	E	C	A	B	O	R	O	C		
R	E	R	O	L	T	V	A	T	E	R	E	
V	A	V	A	G	I	M	E	N	E	R		
T	O	O	M	N	O	D	T	I	W	O		
S	L	B	S	L	V	C	I	O	V	A	N	F
Y	D	N	A	V	C	O	M	O	V	A	N	F
D	N	E	M	S	N	O	I	T	V	A	S	
D	I	V	I	O	V	A	T	R	A	S	I	S
M	O	N	O	M	E	F	B	I	F	A	L	E

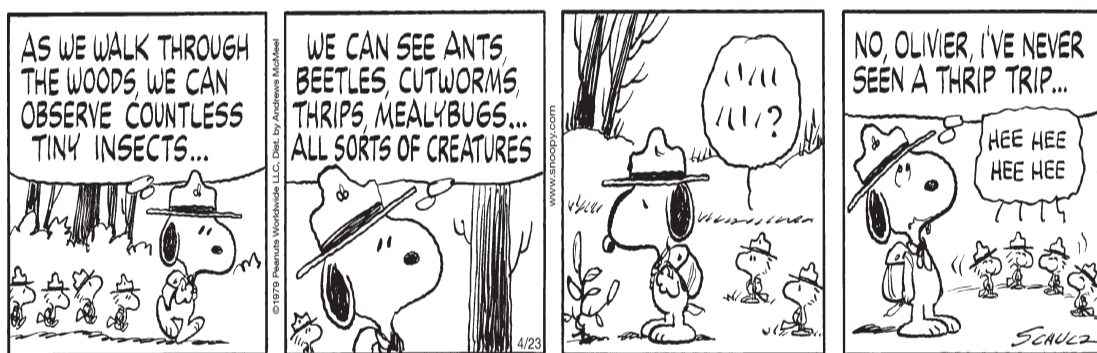
- 5 Move to and —
- 6 Prohibit
- 7 "— about time!"
- 8 Wanderer
- 9 Kiln
- 10 Watch over
- 11 Circular current "—"
- 16 "Rhythm" (Gershwin tune)
- 19 — -de-sac
- 21 Chicago airport
- 22 Hang
- 23 Links cry
- 24 From the U.S.
- 25 Muse number
- 26 Helix
- 27 Raucous
- 28 Drill
- 29 Play the lead
- 32 Former PM — Thatcher
- 37 Clumsy boat
- 38 Theater area (Abbr.)
- 39 Domineering
- 41 Young equine
- 42 Copycat
- 43 Trick
- 45 Loathsome
- 46 Grandson of Adam
- 48 Big bird — de guerre
- 49 Health club
- 51 Print measures

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12				13				14		
15				16				17		
18				19						
20				21				22		
23	24	25		26				27	28	29
30				31				32		
33				34				35		
36				37				38		
39				40						
41	42	43					44	45	46	
47				48	49	50				51
52				53				54		
55				56				57		

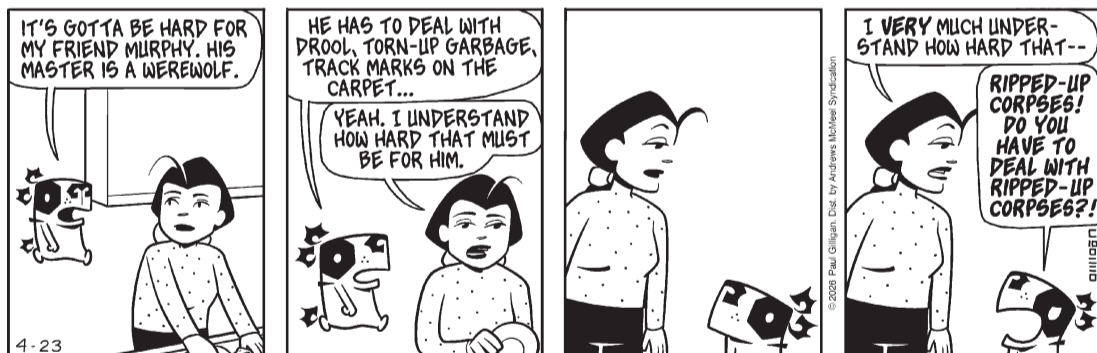
HAGAR THE HORRIBLE Chris Browne



PEANUTS Charles M. Schulz



POOCH CAFE Paul Gilligan



SUDOKU

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★★

	3		4	5				6
1			7	3				
	2	7		1				3
	8		2	6				5
		6				3		
	1		4	9				6
	7			9		5		8
				8	7			
6			2	3				9

WHATZIT?

Find the familiar phrase, saying or name in this arrangement of letters.

ALL PLACE

SUDOKU INSTRUCTIONS: Each row, column and set of 3-by-3 boxes must contain the numbers 1 through 9 without repetition.

TODAY'S SUDOKU SOLUTION:

4	6	7	5	2	1	8	9	3
2	1	9	4	8	5	7	6	3
5	8	5	7	6	9	1	2	4
8	9	4	6	7	5	2	1	3
1	2	5	4	8	9	7	6	3
7	5	6	1	9	2	5	8	4
3	5	8	9	1	6	7	2	4
6	2	8	5	4	7	1	9	3
9	1	7	5	2	4	6	3	8

TODAY'S WHATZIT SOLUTION: All over the place

WONDERWORD By DAVID OUELLET

HOW TO PLAY: All the words listed below appear in the puzzle — horizontally, vertically, diagonally and even backward. Find them, circle each letter of the word and strike it off the list. The leftover letters spell the WONDERWORD.

MAKING RICE BALLS Solution: 9 letters

S S O N O I N O N A I L A T I
 W B A T S R E P A C H O P N E
 E R M U A F D D N E V O I P S
 E E Y U S M L Y E E R C I E E
 T H B E R A O O M K N C E P E
 P O O A O C G T U A E I F P H
 E T I B K O D E R R E I W E C
 A S R O R E G A N O L R T R H
 S E O T L A S G E L U N C H I
 A P B T M R A W I R E S O F C
 L H R O T R L N A D B M O L K
 A T A S L L G N L P F A K A E
 M O U I O R C A I E D H C V N
 I R C R C H E D D A R T F O S
 C B O L O G N E S E G G S R N

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Al Dente, Arancini, Arborio, Bacon, Bake, Bite, Bolognese, Breadcrumbs, Broth, Capers, Cheddar, Cheese, Chicken, Chop, Cook, Creamy, Crust, Eggs, Filling, Flavor, Flour, Garlic, Golden, Goey, Hams, Herbs, Italian, Lunch, Onion, Oregano, Oven, Pepper, Pesto, Pork, Ranch, Recipe, Risotto, Roll, Salami, Salt, Sausage, Soft, Sweet Peas, Tomato, Warm, Wine

TODAY'S ANSWER: Deep-fried



Special Photos: Georgia South

Georgia South Graduate Medical Education has announced that its residency programs have successfully filled their complement of residents for the upcoming academic year, including a significant addition through its Obstetrics and Gynecology Rural Track in partnership with Wellstar Health System. Residents working in the region include, from left, Drs. Toluwani Adebisi, Greg Rasmussen, Jacob Winchester, Paul Yermachenkov, Richard Griggs, Elyse Kyle and Tyler Key.

Georgia South Residency Programs classes now full

Staff Reports

news@albanyherald.com

MOULTRIE -- Georgia South Graduate Medical Education has announced that its residency programs have successfully filled their full complement of residents for the upcoming academic year, including a significant addition through its Obstetrics and Gynecology Rural Track in partnership with Wellstar Health System.

Through this partnership, Georgia South will welcome Dr. Tyler Key as the inaugural

resident. Key, a Moultrie native, will begin his training at Wellstar Kennestone in Marietta before transitioning to Colquitt Regional in Moultrie, where he will complete the majority of his clinical experience.

The program reflects a shared commitment to expanding access to women's health care in rural communities while training physicians in both high-volume and community-based settings.

In addition to this milestone, Georgia South Graduate Medical Education is

preparing to celebrate a decade of impact, as the Family Medicine Residency Program graduates its 10th class of residents this year.

The Georgia South Family Medicine Residency Program has fully matched with its 11th class of residents, including Drs. Greg Rasmussen, Jacob Winchester, Paul Yermachenkov and Toluwani Adebisi.

For its fifth year, the Georgia South Psychiatry Residency Program also achieved a full match. These residents who will spend four years training in the psychiatry program

include Drs. Richard Griggs and Elyse Kyle.

In a residency program, "matching" means that the physicians selected by Georgia South also chose Georgia South as their preferred training site. This year, these residents were selected from a highly competitive pool of applicants from across the country.

"Our residency programs play a vital role in strengthening health care access in our region," Colquitt Regional President and CEO Jim Matney said. "We are proud to

continue growing our programs and attracting talented physicians who are passionate about serving communities like ours. Welcoming Tyler through our partnership with Wellstar Kennestone is especially meaningful, as it represents both the strength of this partnership and the opportunity to train physicians who are committed to rural health care."

Georgia South continues to attract outstanding medical talent, with several program graduates choosing to remain in the region to practice med-

icine. Currently, eight Georgia South graduates practice in Colquitt County, with two of the upcoming graduates signed on to stay, helping expand access to primary care and specialty services for local patients.

The new academic year will begin this summer, and a formal ceremony will be held later this year to officially welcome the incoming residents to Georgia South Graduate Medical Education and the Colquitt Regional family.



Special Photo: ABAC

Carry The Load, a tradition at ABAC since 2014, will be held at the front of ABAC's campus at 2802 Moore Highway in Tifton on May 6.

ABAC to honor hometown heroes at 'Carry the Load'

Staff Reports

news@albanyherald.com

TIFTON -- Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College will host Carry the Load on May 6 at the Tift Hall front circle as part of Memorial May, a national movement honoring the sacrifices of military service members, first responders and their families. The community is invited to join this powerful event celebrating courage, service and remembrance.

Attendees will hear moving testimonials from veterans, first responders and families honoring loved ones. They may also participate in the walk of remembrance and connect through fellowship.

Carry the Load national organizers have praised ABAC's commitment to the event.

"ABAC is a true community partner to Carry the Load," Matt Fryman, operations and events director for Carry the Load, said. "We sincerely appreciate the effort put in to make this event great and the dedication ABAC has shown to continue this important annual event that came to Tifton for the first time in 2014."

Carry the Load is a nonprofit organization dedicated to providing active ways for Americans to honor the sacrifices of military members, veterans, first responders and their families. Through Memorial May and other national programs, Carry the Load raises awareness, unites communities, and offers meaningful ways to remember and honor those who serve.

Event Schedule - May 6

- 3 p.m. – Gather in front of Tift Hall
- 3:30 p.m. – Welcome and National Anthem
- 3:35 p.m. – Speakers: veterans, first responders, families share stories honoring those who served
- 4 p.m. – Community walk through the ABAC campus, encouraging reflection, gratitude, and connection
- 4:45 p.m. – Walk concludes
- 4:50 p.m. – Post-walk gathering with food
- 5:30 p.m. – Event ends

The event will involve several leaders from the community, including ABAC President Tracy Brundage and Tifton Mayor Julie Smith.

"Carry the Load's presence on our campus brings our community together in a meaningful moment of gratitude and remembrance," Brundage said. "We are honored to help uphold the legacy of our local heroes who have sacrificed for our community and nation."

"Honoring both our military service members, our public safety officials, and their families is the least we can do," Smith said. "Every day they support our communities and our country. To have this time set aside to recognize their commitment, their heroism, and their sacrifices will hopefully help them feel the love and respect we have for each and every one of these brave individuals."

Register to participate at link.abac.edu/ctlabac. Participation is open to the public. To learn more about Memorial May events, visit carrytheload.org/memorial-may/.

Businesses line up for \$166 billion in refunds from illegal Trump tariffs

By Ashley Murray

Georgia Recorder

WASHINGTON -- The U.S. Customs and Border Protection tariff refund system went live Monday, marking what small business advocates call a "complex" first step for entrepreneurs to recoup \$166 billion in import taxes accrued under President Trump's emergency tariffs, which the U.S. Supreme Court struck down in February.

Importers and brokers can now upload a detailed list of each tariff paid under Trump's now illegal order to charge duties under the International Economic Emergency Powers Act, or IEEPA.

Customs officials estimate 330,000 importers paid the duties. Refunds are expected within 60 to 90 days, according to CBP.

The Supreme Court's 6-3 decision earlier this year found Trump's steep global tariffs exceeded his presidential powers. Following the high court's decision, U.S. Court of International Trade Judge Richard Eaton ordered the government to stop charging the tariffs and establish a refund system.

A handful of small businesses and Democratic state attorneys general led the legal challenge to Trump's 2025 "Liberation Day" tariffs.

Many small businesses are experiencing a "confusing mix of relief," Richard Trent, executive director of Main Street Alliance, said.

Trent, whose organization advocates on behalf of small businesses said "our entrepreneurs, many of whom were an-



Special Photo: Ashley Murray/States Newsroom via Georgia Recorder

The U.S. Customs and Border Protection tariff refund system went live Monday, marking what small business advocates call a "complex" first step for entrepreneurs to recoup \$166 billion in import taxes accrued under President Trump's emergency tariffs, which the U.S. Supreme Court struck down in February.

order, for importers and brokers who paid IEEPA duties," according to an agency spokesperson. "CBP has issued guidance to the trade community to help them prepare to use the new CAPE tool. Importers and brokers can visit CBP's website for resources and step-by-step guidance."

Monday's launch is the first part of a four-step process in refunding the taxes paid by American businesses of all sizes.

Trent said the "complex" process is yet another hurdle for small operations.

"This is progress, but it's not yet justice," Trent said in an earlier statement Monday. "Small business owners should not have to jump through hoops to get back money they never should have had to pay. We

need a refund process that is simple, accessible, and fast."

The Liberty Justice Center, the libertarian legal advocacy group that represented small business plaintiffs before the Supreme Court, has established the Tariff Equity Refund Resource for America. The platform offers online guides for how to properly submit documentation for the refunds.

"We took this fight all the way to the Supreme Court on behalf of small businesses, and we're not stopping now," Sara Albrecht, chair of the Liberty Justice Center, said in a statement. "We are a nonprofit law firm — our only goal is to help businesses recover every dollar they are owed, not to take a percentage of it. At a time when others are looking to profit off confusion, we are making this process clear, accessible and free."

Trump declared international trade a national emergency just over a year ago, citing a trade imbalance on imports and exports between the United States and several other countries. The president imposed a 10% blanket tariff on all global imports and steeper double-digit taxes on products from some of the top U.S. trading partners.

The president delayed and changed the rates on numerous occasions.

Following his Supreme Court loss, Trump imposed a new round of universal, temporary tariffs under a separate statute. The Liberty Justice Center is again representing small businesses in court to fight the new import taxes.

Criminal with possible Georgia ties on FBI's Most Wanted list

Staff Reports

news@albanyherald.com

ATLANTA -- The FBI Kansas City and Kansas City, Mo., Police Department have announced the addition of KaShawn Nicola Roper to the FBI's Ten Most Wanted Fugitives List. The addition comes with a \$1 million reward leading to the arrest and conviction of Roper.

Through the investigative process, FBI Kansas City has determined Roper may have ties to Georgia.

Roper is wanted for her alleged involvement in a shooting on Aug. 23, 2020, in Kansas City, Mo. During an altercation, it is alleged that Roper fired multiple shots at a car, which struck two female victims, resulting in the death of one of them. On Sept. 10, 2020, Roper was charged with second-degree murder, armed criminal action,

and unlawful use of a weapon in the 16th Judicial Circuit in Missouri, and a state warrant was issued for her arrest.

On July 1, 2021, a federal arrest warrant was issued for Roper in the United States District Court for the Western District of Missouri, after she was charged with unlawful flight to avoid prosecution.

Roper is described as a black female, 5-foot-5 tall and approximately 120 pounds with black hair. She was born in Kansas and is 50 years old. Roper has tattoos on her left arm, upper left arm, upper right arm, back, left calf, neck, right wrist, right breast and abdomen. Roper also has pierced ears.

While she previously resided in Kansas City, she has ties to, or may visit, Kansas, Nebraska, Texas, Colorado, Georgia and South Dakota.

She should be considered armed and dangerous.

FBI TEN MOST WANTED FUGITIVE

UNLAWFUL FLIGHT TO AVOID PROSECUTION - SECOND DEGREE MURDER, ARMED CRIMINAL ACTION, UNLAWFUL USE OF A WEAPON



Special Illustration

KaShawn Nicola Roper

Sherwood's Moorhead wins GIAA state tennis title

By Joe Whitfield
Sports Editor

MACON — At Sherwood Christian Academy, the Moorhead name has come to mean one thing on the tennis court.

Championships.

On Tuesday, Sam Moorhead made sure that tradition didn't just continue — it stayed perfect.

The Sherwood standout captured the GIAA Class AA boys singles state championship in

commanding fashion, rolling to a 6-2, 6-1 victory in Macon just one week after winning the region title.

With the win, the Moorhead family has now claimed five consecutive state singles championships for Sherwood — a run that began with Sam's older brother, Will, who won four straight titles and now plays club tennis at the University of Georgia.

"Attitude, effort and prepara-

tion — three things a player has control over on the tennis court," Sherwood head coach Wes Sadler said. "Sam Moorhead brought all three today to clinch the individual singles state championship and continue the Moorhead family tradition."

If there was pressure, Sam didn't show it.

From the opening serve, he controlled the match with poise and

See **STATE**, 10A



Special Photo: Submitted

Sherwood Christian's Sam Moorhead stands with the state championship banner after claiming the GIAA Class AA state championship in Macon. He won in straight sets, 6-2, 6-1.

No. 2 Georgia Tech routs No. 5 Georgia, 14-4

By Joe Whitfield
Sports Editor

ATLANTA — For a brief moment Tuesday night, it looked like Georgia might turn Truist Park into its own personal launching pad.

Then Georgia Tech turned it into a rout.

The third-ranked Yellow Jackets answered an early deficit with a relentless offensive attack and rolled past No. 5 Georgia, 14-4, in front of a crowd of 20,000 at Truist Park in the Spring Classic benefiting Children's Healthcare of Atlanta.

Georgia (32-10) struck first — and struck loud.

Michael O'Shaughnessy continued his torrid stretch at the plate, blasting a two-run homer in the first inning to give the Bulldogs a 2-0 lead. The shot marked his third straight at-bat with a home run dating back to last weekend and his 13th of the season.

But that momentum didn't last long.

Georgia Tech (33-7) answered immediately with two runs in the bottom of the first, then kept applying pressure with two more in the second and three in the third to seize control of the game.

By the time the Bulldogs settled in, they were staring at a 7-2 deficit.

"They hit a lot of seeing-eye ground balls that got through, and it was just one of those nights," Georgia head coach Wes Johnson said. "We need to execute a little better with



Special Photo: Kameron Taylor

Georgia catcher Daniel Jackson waits for a throw as Georgia Tech's Alex Hernandez slides home for a run for the Yellow Jackets. No. 2 Georgia Tech whipped the Bulldogs, 14-4 at Truist Park in Atlanta.

two strikes. We have to get better."

Georgia showed signs of life in the fifth inning.

O'Shaughnessy launched his second home run of the night — his 14th of the season and fourth homer in his last five at-bats — before Henry Allen followed with a blast of his own. The back-to-back home runs, the 10th time

Georgia has accomplished the feat this season, trimmed the deficit to 9-4.

But any hopes of a comeback were short-lived.

Georgia Tech erupted for five runs in the bottom half of the fifth inning, highlighted by a two-run homer from Ryan Zuckerman and a two-run single from Jarren Advincula,

pushing the lead to 12-4 and putting the game out of reach.

The Yellow Jackets added two more runs in the sixth to cap a dominant night at the plate, finishing with 14 runs on 14 hits while drawing seven walks and consistently capitalizing on scoring opportunities.

Drew Burress led the way for Tech with four hits and three RBIs, while Advincula also drove in three runs in a balanced offensive effort.

Georgia, meanwhile, finished with 10 hits but struggled to string together timely offense, going 0-for-4 with runners in scoring position.

On the mound, the Bulldogs used six pitchers in a planned staff night. Starter Paul Farley (4-1) took the loss after allowing four runs on six hits in two innings.

Despite the loss, Georgia continued its historic power surge. With three more home runs Tuesday night, the Bulldogs now lead the nation with 116 on the season.

The game also marked the first top-five matchup in the history of the Spring Classic, though Georgia still holds a 15-8 edge in the all-time series.

Georgia will look to regroup quickly as it returns to SEC play this weekend, traveling to No. 22 Ole Miss for a three-game series beginning Friday night.

"We've got a big, tough weekend coming up," Johnson said. "We're going to get back to Athens and get to work."



Staff Photo: Joe Whitfield

Albany State center fielder Jaden Camp dives back to first base during an earlier game against Georgia Southwestern in Albany. The Hurricanes took the third game of the year between the two teams Tuesday night in Americus, 12-3.

Hurricanes claim series with 12-3 win over Albany State

By Joe Whitfield
Sports Editor

AMERICUS - The deciding game in a season-long tug-of-war between two Southwest Georgia rivals quickly slipped away from Albany State on Tuesday night.

Georgia Southwestern broke it open early and never looked back, rolling past the Golden Rams 12-3 in the rubber game of the season series in Americus.

The loss dropped Albany State to 25-16 on the year, while the Hurricanes improved to 24-23 and claimed bragging rights in the three-game season series after the teams split a pair of one-run

games earlier this spring.

"We got off to a bad start and were down 5-0," Albany State head coach Scot Hemmings said. "We had a couple chances to pick up one here and one there but left runners stranded."

That early deficit proved decisive.

Georgia Southwestern struck for two runs in each of the first two innings and added another in the third to build a 5-0 lead before the Golden Rams could settle in. Albany State starter Armando Nunez took the loss after a tough opening inning in which he issued four walks, part of a night where Rams pitching struggled to find the strike zone.

In all, Albany State pitchers handed out 11 walks — the same

number of hits allowed — putting constant pressure on the defense and creating scoring opportunities the Hurricanes didn't waste.

Meanwhile, the Golden Rams' offense never found consistent rhythm.

Albany State managed just four hits on the night and struck out nine times, though there were chances to climb back into the game. The Rams broke through in the sixth and seventh innings, scoring three runs to trim the deficit to 5-3.

The biggest missed opportunity came in the sixth inning when Albany State loaded the bases with no outs but failed to deliver a decisive hit.

See **ALBANY STATE**, 10A

Nationals power past Braves

Field Level Media



Special Photo: Geoff Burke-Imagn Images

Luis Garcia Jr. had four hits and drove in three runs, Curtis Mead socked a three-run homer and the host Washington Nationals ended the Atlanta Braves' six-game winning streak with an 11-4 win on Tuesday.

James Wood hit his eighth homer of the season, walked four times and scored three runs for Washington, which leveled the four-game series at one victory apiece.

Nationals starter Foster Griffin (3-0) allowed three runs on five hits over six solid innings. He walked one and struck out three.

Drake Baldwin and Eli White homered for the Braves, and Mauricio Dubon had two hits.

Atlanta starter Reynaldo Lopez (1-1) allowed four runs in one-plus inning and gave up five hits and three walks while fanning one. Braves pitchers issued 12 walks.

Ronald Acuna Jr. was in the Atlanta lineup and went 1-for-5 one day after being hit by pitch twice, including once on the left hand.

The first six Nationals reached base in a three-run first. Wood walked and Garcia singled him to third, then stole second. Jacob Young lined a single to center, scoring Wood. CJ Abrams and Daylen Lile walked, with Lile getting an RBI. Nasim Nunez singled to score Young with the third run.

Back-to-back two-out doubles by Dubon and Michael Harris II got the Braves within 3-1 in the second.

Wood homered leading off the bottom half, and Lopez was done for the night after Garcia singled.

Baldwin's solo homer in the third pulled the Braves within 4-2.

White homered in the fifth to make it 4-3, but the Nationals answered in the bottom half when Brady House singled, stole second and scored on a two-out single by Garcia to make it 5-3.

In the seventh, the Nationals loaded the bases with two walks and a single. Garcia followed with a two-run double, and another runner came home on a groundout by Young.

Austin Riley's RBI groundout pulled the Braves within 8-4 in the eighth, but a pair of walks and Mead's three-run homer put things out of reach in the bottom half.

The Braves placed closer Raisel Iglesias on the 15-day injured list with right shoulder inflammation, and they promoted Dylan Dodd from Triple-A Gwinnett to fill the roster spot.

Baseball Roundup: Three local teams lose in Thursday games

By Joe Whiffield
Sports Editor

It was a tough night on the diamond for three area teams Tuesday, as Terrell Academy, Deerfield-Windsor and Sherwood Christian all suffered lopsided losses.

While each game took a different path, all three followed a similar theme — early trouble or one decisive inning that proved too much to overcome.

TERRELL ACADEMY

DAWSON - For five innings, Terrell Academy looked like it might come out on top in a back-and-forth battle with Tiftarea.

Then one inning changed everything.

Tiftarea broke a 5-5 tie with a seven-run sixth inning and added six more in the seventh to pull away for a 17-5 win over the Eagles.

"They got some big hits late and it snowballed on us," Terrell Academy head coach Ashley Walker said. "It's been one or two innings all year that has put us behind, and we just aren't veteran enough across the board to recover."

Terrell actually out-hit Tiftarea 11-10, with Jack Hampson, Flint McCullough, Hunter Green and Bo Holland each collecting two hits. Hampson drove in two runs from the heart of the lineup.

The Eagles led 5-4 after four innings and were still tied in the sixth before Tiftarea's bats erupted.

A key moment came earlier in the third inning when Terrell took the lead but left the bases loaded after a strikeout, missing a chance to create separation.

"We have to be able to weather the storms and keep our-



Staff Photo: Joe Whiffield

Terrell Academy's Tillman Faust applies a tag a second late as a Tiftarea runner scurries home on a wild pitch during Thursday's game in Dawson. The Tiftarea Panthers broke open a tight game in the sixth inning and beat the Eagles, 17-5.

selves in games by stopping the bleeding," Walker said.

Terrell Academy will travel to Tiftarea for a rematch Thursday in Chula.

DEERFIELD-WINDSOR

VALDOSTA - The anticipated showdown between the top two teams in GIAA Class AAA didn't quite live up to its billing.

Top-ranked Valwood methodically built its lead and knocked off No. 2 Deerfield-Windsor, 8-2.

Valwood (20-2) scored in the first inning and added to the lead in the third, then relied on a dominant pitching perfor-

mance from Asher Wells, who allowed just one hit over six shutout innings while striking out nine.

Deerfield-Windsor (14-4) showed patience at the plate with six walks but managed just two hits and couldn't generate timely offense.

David Hutchins drove in both runs for the Knights, while Hutchins and West Rushton accounted for the team's only hits.

Valwood added pressure on the basepaths with five stolen bases and gradually pulled away to secure the win.

The two teams will meet again in a pivotal doubleheader Friday in Albany, with first pitch set for 4 p.m.

SHERWOOD CHRISTIAN

DAMASCUS - Sherwood Christian's struggles continued Tuesday.

Southwest Georgia Academy jumped out to a commanding early lead and rolled to a 13-2 win, handing the Eagles their sixth straight loss.

The Warriors scored six runs in the first inning and added five more in the second to take control early, capitalizing on walks, errors and aggressive baserunning.

Sherwood was limited to three hits, with Braiden Parrish, Michael Merritt and John Seward each recording one. Parrish also drove in a run.

Seward provided stability out of the bullpen, tossing 4 1/3 innings while allowing seven runs — none earned — but the early deficit proved insurmountable.

Southwest Georgia Academy drew six walks and stole nine bases, consistently putting pressure on the Eagles' defense. Sherwood will look to snap its skid Thursday at Brookwood

Hawks to host New York for Game 3 Thursday

Field Level Media

ATLANTA — The series is heading south — and suddenly, it has all the feel of a toss-up.

After stealing Game 2 in dramatic fashion Monday night, the Atlanta Hawks return home for a pivotal Game 3 against the New York Knicks on Thursday night at State Farm Arena. Tipoff is set for 7 p.m., and the game will be available for streaming on Prime Video.

Atlanta evened the Eastern Conference first-round series at one game apiece with a stunning 107-106 comeback win in New York, fueled by a late surge and a clutch closing stretch from CJ McCollum.

McCollum poured in a game-high 32 points, including six in the final two minutes, as the Hawks closed on a 15-6 run to erase an eight-point deficit in the final five minutes. His fade-away jumper with 33.5 seconds remaining proved to



Special Photo: Imagn Images

Atlanta's CJ McCollum, 3, drives past New York's OG Anunoby during Game 2 on Monday at Madison Square Garden, where McCollum scored 32 points and sparked a late 15-6 run to lift the Hawks to a 107-106 comeback win. The series shifts to Atlanta for Game 3 on Thursday night at State Farm Arena.

be the difference in a game late — shooting a blistering 72.2 percent in the final period — while holding the Atlanta trailed for most of the night.

The Hawks, who led only briefly before the fourth quarter, found another gear

points, including a key layup during Atlanta's late push, while Onyeka Okongwu contributed 15. Jonathan Kuminga chipped in 19 points off the bench to help spark the comeback.

New York had chances late. Jalen Brunson, who led the Knicks with 29 points, tied the game at 103-103 with a clutch 3-pointer before McCollum answered again. The Knicks got one final look after Brunson's deep 3 cut the deficit to one, but Mikal Bridges' 12-foot jumper at the buzzer fell short.

Karl-Anthony Towns scored 18 points for New York, while Josh Hart added 15 points and 13 rebounds. OG Anunoby finished with 14 points, and Mitchell Robinson had 13 off the bench.

Now the series shifts to Atlanta, where the Hawks will try to build on the momentum of one of their most complete fourth quarters of the season.

PGA confirms intention to end presence in Hawaii

Field Level Media

The PGA revealed on Monday that it intends to end its tournament lineup in Hawaii in 2027.

That news came on the heels of the 2026 Maui event having to be canceled due to drought-like conditions on the Plantation Course at Kapalua.

The Sentry, formerly known as the Tournament of Champions, served as the starting-off point for the PGA Tour each January from 1986-2013 and 2024-25. This season's cancellation created a less ceremonious January start to the PGA season at the Sony Open in Hawaii, at Waialae Country Club in Honolulu, a week later than usual and The American Express, in La Quinta, Calif., after that.

The star-studded Sentry event typically boasted the top 50 from the FedEx Cup final standings and all winners from the previous season. Overall, the PGA has hosted an event in Hawaii for more than 50 consecutive years.

The Plantation course that hosted The Sentry had been involved in a water rights dispute with another local company that it had been unable to resolve, leading to the announcement of the cancellation of the 2026 event last October.

The Sony Open on Oahu,

an event which paired with The Sentry to enable golfers a two-week stay in the Pacific, has been caught in the crossfire and could be moved to the Champions Tour instead. The PGA Tour floated the possibility of pairing it with the senior circuit's Mitsubishi Electric Championship at Hualalai going forward.

Still, the PGA Tour stressed that more details about the 2027 schedule would be shared at a later date. In a press release, the PGA Tour addressed the larger move, saying in part, "We are grateful to The Plantation Course at Kapalua, Kapalua Resort, Maui County and the state of Hawaii for their longtime support of our season-opening PGA Tour event, as well as the fans, partners and volunteers across Maui who have supported the event throughout the years."

Sentry's event title sponsorship with the PGA Tour continues through 2025, leaving the organization in need of a tournament to lend its name to. Several executives reportedly visited Torrey Pines in San Diego this season, as that event's partnership with Farmers Insurance is expected to end this year, according to multiple media outlets.



File photo

Former Georgia and Miami quarterback Carson Beck is one of the quarterbacks looking for that NFL draft call when the draft opens Thursday in Pittsburgh.

Carson Beck's résumé sparks draft debate

By Joe Whiffield
Sports Editor

PITTSBURGH — In a draft filled with flashier names and bigger headlines, former Georgia quarterback Carson Beck may be the most overlooked résumé on the board.

And at least one former NFL head coach doesn't understand why.

As the 2026 NFL Draft opens Thursday in Pittsburgh — the first time the city has hosted the event since 1948 — Beck enters the conversation not as a sure-fire first-round pick, but as one of the most debated quarterbacks in the class.

Should he be?

Former Atlanta Falcons head coach Mike Smith isn't shy about where he stands.

"I'm a little miffed that he's not being touted as a first-round pick," Smith said in an interview with Betway. "I think they might be missing the boat on this."

It's a strong stance — but one backed by production.

Beck's college résumé stacks up with just about anyone in the draft. At Georgia, he went 24-3 as a starter, throwing for nearly 8,000 yards with 58 touchdowns and just 20 interceptions. He was part of two national championship teams and later transferred to Miami, where he led the Hurricanes to a national title game appearance in 2025.

"The other guy that's very interesting, especially when you talk about resumes, is Carson Beck," Smith said. "He's always been on winning teams, and he might be the most accomplished quarterback in this draft."

Still, Beck hasn't generated

the same first-round buzz as others — often labeled as a "game manager," a term that tends to cool draft stock in a league obsessed with upside.

Smith sees that critique differently.

"Even if that's the case, he's a game manager with tons of high-level experience," he said.

At 6-foot-5, Beck checks the physical boxes. What separates him, Smith argues, is something harder to measure — experience in big moments and a track record of winning at the highest level of college football.

"He knows what it takes," Smith said.

Part of the disconnect, Smith believes, comes from Beck's time at Georgia, where a roster loaded with NFL talent often made it difficult for any one player to stand out.

"When you're at Georgia with the roster they had, it's easy to get overshadowed," Smith said. "They were stacked."

That leaves NFL teams with a familiar draft dilemma: do you bet on traits, or do you trust production?

Beck's case leans heavily on the latter.

"Usually, if you win in college, then get to a good organization with structure, you have a good chance to be successful," Smith said.

As the draft unfolds this week along the banks of the Allegheny River, Beck's name may not be among the first called.

But if Smith is right, it might be one team's wish they hadn't passed on.

From 9A STATE

precision, never allowing momentum to shift as he closed out the title in straight sets.

For Sherwood athletic director Jay Flynt, the moment was about more than just another championship trophy.

"I echo what Coach Sadler says," Flynt said. "We're extremely excited for the Moorhead family. A lot of hard work and dedication has paid off.

More importantly, Sam and Will have been a staple with tennis at Sherwood Christian Academy for many years."

And now, the legacy continues.

Sam, the son of John and Amanda Moorhead, didn't just follow in his brother's footsteps — he extended them, ensuring that for at least another year, the road to a state tennis title in Class AA still runs through the Moorhead name.

that didn't fall and played good defense," he said. "But we gave away too many free passes."

Albany State left 10 runners on base, a number that underscored the missed opportunities that kept the game from tightening in the middle innings.

Now, the Golden Rams will turn their attention to closing the regular season on a strong note.

Albany State travels to Tuskegee for a three-game series beginning Thursday in Alabama before shifting focus to the SIAC Tournament, which begins April 30 in Macon.

"I'm looking forward to this last weekend and getting back to Macon for the conference tournament," Hemmings said.

After a frustrating night in Americus, the Golden Rams will be looking to clean up the free passes and capitalize on opportunities — two areas that could determine how deep their postseason run goes.

From 9A

ALBANY STATE

"We had bases loaded, no outs in the sixth and could not deliver a big hit," Hemmings said. "We did cut the lead to 5-3, but they stretched it right back out."

Georgia Southwestern answered emphatically.

The Hurricanes erupted for five runs in the bottom of the seventh inning — highlighted by a solo home run from Drew Reaves and a series of run-scoring hits — to push the lead to 10-3 and put the game out of reach.

Drake Harman led the Hurricanes offensively with five RBIs, while Evan Wainman added three hits and two RBIs in a balanced attack that produced 12 runs on 12 hits.

Despite the lopsided score, Hemmings noted that not everything was negative for his team.

"We hit some balls hard

Take extra measures to help prevent check fraud

(StatePoint) The use of checks may be declining, but check crimes are actually on the rise due to new, creative criminal schemes. Once a check is stolen, it can be altered or signed on your behalf to withdraw money from your account, and there are online marketplaces where criminals will sell stolen checks for other criminals to use for fraud.

Luckily, there are steps you can take to protect yourself:

- **Pay Digitally.** Reduce the number of checks you send and utilize card or digital payment methods instead. Consider using check fraud prevention services like Positive Pay, if available at your financial institution.

- **Go to the Post Office.** If you must mail a check, use the secure mailbox inside a USPS facility or hand the envelope over to a postal worker who can mail it for you.

- **Follow Up.** If you mail a check, confirm with the payee that they received it.

- **Monitor Accounts.** Set up account alerts and review statements regularly. Most banks will provide an option for an image of each check to be viewable on statements. Cross-reference this image to ensure that the check processed is

identical to the one you wrote.

- **Report Quickly.** Approximately 50% of stolen check images are posted online for sale within eight days of theft. Criminals act fast, and you need to act fast, too, to stop them in their tracks. As soon as you identify an account or payment anomaly, notify your bank to put a stop payment on the check and a freeze on your account. File a police report and submit a separate report with the Federal Trade Commission. Keep a record of all conversations, reports and correspondence in case later problems arise.

Methods of fraud continue to evolve, and a simple check can be used in a variety of ways to commit theft. For instance, criminals can create fraudulent checks using your account information and sign your name. Or they could copy down your account information and use it for fraudulent purposes digitally or otherwise. Mail theft-related check fraud – where a check is stolen while enroute – accounts for hundreds of millions of dollars in attempted theft annually.

Here are some of the most common fraud methods used: Account Theft. Checks are

used to steal account information details to either steal money directly or fraudulently open additional accounts.

Forgery. Criminals have long forged the legitimate signature or altered the payee or amount on a check. However, artificial intelligence (AI) is making it easier than ever to do so with accuracy.

Check Washing. Criminals “wash” a check, using chemicals like acetone or bleach to erase the payee and amount, then rewrite the check to themselves for their amount of choice.

Counterfeits. Criminals create entirely fake checks that look real using stolen account information.

Check Return Schemes. Criminals will send what they claim is a paycheck or other payment by way of a check where they “overpay.” They ask you to deposit it, then return the “extra” money back before it’s discovered that the check is fake.

For more fraud prevention information, visit PNC’s Security and Privacy Center.

Safe handling of checks may not only protect against theft but also defend against more widespread account compromise.



iStock via Getty Images Plus

Safe handling of checks may not only protect against theft but also defend against more widespread account compromise

Obituary announcement

Ms. Mary Virginia Griffin (Griffin)

Mary Virginia Griffin, 77, formerly of Albany, GA and recently of Cumming, GA passed away April 1, 2026. Virginia was born in Albany, GA to the late TJ and Katherine Griffin and lived in Albany her entire life. She graduated from Albany High School in 1966 and received her BA from the University of Georgia and her MA from Valdosta State College.

Virginia dedicated her career to serving others through various nonprofit organizations in Albany. Prior to her retirement she served as Executive Director of the Margaret Jo Hogg Alzheimer’s Outreach Center, now known as the Margaret Jo Hogg Dementia Support Center. She was instrumental in guiding the center into a strong path and helping it grow to better serve the community. Virginia’s leadership and commitment made a lasting impact. A memorial service will be held in the near future. Those wishing to make a memorial contribution may do so at the Margaret Jo Hogg Dementia Support Center, 229 North Jackson Street, Albany, GA 31701.

Ingram Funeral Home & Crematory, 210 Ingram Avenue, Cumming, GA 30040. 770-887-2388.

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, For they shall be filled. **Matthew 5:6 - NKJV**

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Estate Sales

Huge Estate Sale Frances Patrick Estate Sales, LLC 229-347-4848

Estate of Kathryn Lynn Yanel 440 Church St. NE, Dawson, Ga April 24, 8 am - 5 pm, 25th 9 am - 4 pm, 26th 9 am - 3 pm Cash, Ck, CC

Enter property at own risk, Not responsible for accidents. Enter front door, checkout under carport Two Story Home – Children not allowed on stairway & must be with a parent when on property.

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Estate Sales

statuary and birdhouses. 5 pc. parlor set, antique hall tree, 9 ft. xmas tree filled with ornaments for your selection, several marble top small tables, nice chest, chest of drawers, butler's desk, vintage oak file cabinet, oak planters desk, Queen poster bed, queen cane headboard, 3 cushion sofa & pair wing chairs, dining table w/6 matching chairs, walnut high back server, long console table, nice oval top china cabinet, curio cabinet, 2 bookcases, one room filled with craft items and toys, room filled with xmas décor, Tiffany style lamps, pictures, and loads of other decorative items. GE washer, porch furniture and much, much more. "Illinois" 21 jewel pocket watch. Huge collection baseball cards. See estatesales.net for over 300 photos.

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CELEBRITY CIPHER

by Luis Campos

Celebrity Cipher cryptograms are created from quotations by famous people, past and present. Each letter in the cipher stands for another.

"RY CGZT' L K FKTC QY BQVZUI
R MQSZ, RC'L CGKC RC'L K
CTKELVRLLRQE UZSRBZ YQT GQEZLCI
- LQVZCRVZL JTNCKM GQEZLCI."
- JQJ QUZEARTA

Previous Solution: "I was a full-blown tomboy, I was very mischievous and got into a lot of trouble ... My friends used to call me Huckleberry Tig." — Tig Notaro

TODAY'S CLUE: N sjenbe 3

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CELEBRITY CIPHER

by Luis Campos

Celebrity Cipher cryptograms are created from quotations by famous people, past and present. Each letter in the cipher stands for another.

"O HAVL SQDC OK DA VJKGDMRQ
SVC KVTQ NQVNRQ, JBG OG OK DA
ORRBKOVA GV TQ. SDORBCQ DRLDIK
TDEQ TQ GCI ZDCEQC AQFG GOTQ."
- TOMZDQR YVCEDA

Previous Solution: "If there's a part of comedy I love, it's that it's a transmission device for honesty – sometimes brutal honesty." — Bob Odenkirk

TODAY'S CLUE: S sjenbe 3

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Los Angeles Times Daily Crossword Puzzle

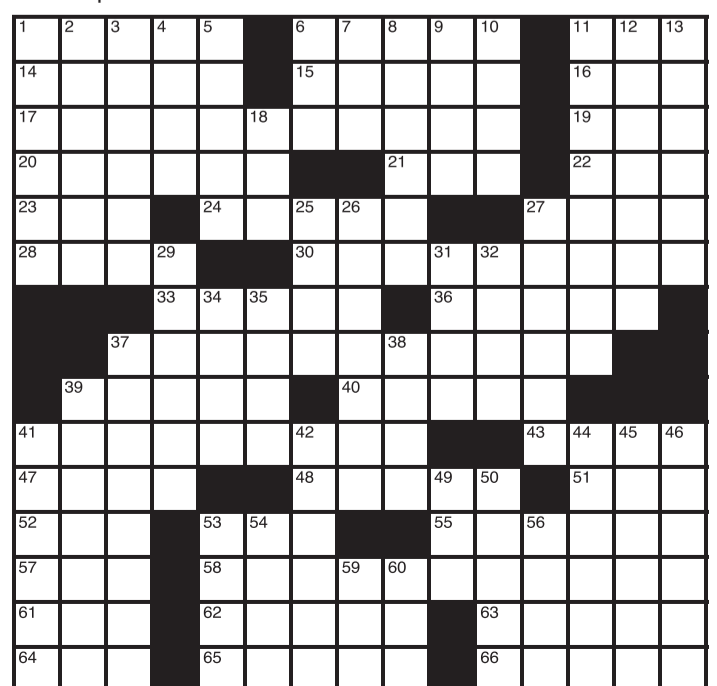
Edited by Patti Varol

ACROSS	66 Good point	32 Gardener's parcel	45 New citizen, perhaps
1 Revels (in)	DOWN	34 With 19-Across, "How We Do (Party)" singer	46 Doohickey
6 Kremlin cash	1 Perplex	35 Robert of "The Sopranos"	49 Otto meno cinque
11 Part of the DHS	2 Island where Excalibur was forged	37 "Hallelujah!"	50 Hågar the Horrible's wife
14 Like sparrows and swallows	3 Trim and muscular	38 Video game giant	53 Slightly open
15 One of several mistakes in a Shakespeare comedy?	4 "Citizen _"	39 Collector of rainwater	54 Offer no amusement to
16 Ashen	5 Pique	41 Suddenly hit	56 Tavern quaffs
17 "Fried Green Tomatoes at the Whistle Stop Cafe" novelist	6 NFL employee	42 Increase slowly	60 Big name in jewelry
19 See 34-Down	7 Brief address	44 Claws	
20 Naval groups	8 Corleone player		
21 Fresh start?	9 Theater section		
22 Govt. figure	10 Therefore		
23 Whispery	11 Like many electric plugs		
24 Observed furtively	12 Some Malaysian attire		
27 Florence's river	13 Like Big Ben's clock		
28 One-named singer from Donegal	18 Dubious ability		
30 Rapper featured on the Dr. Dre song "Nuthin' but a 'G' Thang"	25 Michigan's ___ Royale National Park		
33 Warble	26 Make bigger		
36 Custardy desserts	27 Maxims		
37 Circumnavigator in a Jules Verne novel	29 Greek city in "The Two Faces of January"		
39 Greek island in "The Two Faces of January"	31 Trade-___: compromises		
40 Stay put, in Paris			
41 English actress who played Emma Peel on "The Avengers"			
43 Fret (over)			
47 eBay caveat			
48 Opposite of o'er			
51 Lille pal			
52 Oz. and mg.			
53 "The View" airtel			
55 Driver's lic. with an added star			
57 Bom			
58 "The Road to Wellville" role for Anthony Hopkins			
61 Round topper for a scepter			
62 Part of the Dutch Caribbean			
63 Netflix category			
64 Vane dir.			
65 Satisfy, as a debt			

ANSWER TO PREVIOUS PUZZLE:

I E S S V A V P E R E N N
 E H N E G V B U H V B H O
 G O I T E K N H O V S E N
 D I L V A E R C O V A S I M
 I W V H I V E N S I S V
 M E T S G G I R V N V I D
 G O F S V E T I H P
 S N O T F L L I I T R
 G O V D P O N S V A N E
 O N R A D E D S P S M O L
 L O P O E N S T E L F
 V R O G G V L F E F I N N I F
 N V M O R H E N V I A V
 I S A T E R U B R S K S V B

04/23/26



By Jeffrey Wechsler ©2026 Tribune Content Agency, LLC 04/23/26

7 LITTLE WORDS

Find the 7 words to match the 7 clues. The numbers in parentheses represent the number of letters in each solution. Each letter combination can be used only once, but all letter combinations will be necessary to complete the puzzle.

- | | |
|----------------------------------|------------------|
| CLUES | SOLUTIONS |
| 1 news sources (5) | _____ |
| 2 financial game plans (7) | _____ |
| 3 get a hold of (5) | _____ |
| 4 interlaced strips of wood (11) | _____ |
| 5 suspended sculpture (6) | _____ |
| 6 McGill University's home (8) | _____ |
| 7 naturally extract (6) | _____ |

RK	SP	BU	MED	ETS
IA	IC	AL	LA	MOB
GRA	ILE	EWO	DG	NT
MO	IVE	RE	DER	TT

Tuesday's Answers: 1. NAPPING 2. OSCAR 3. ALGAE 4. BUSIER 5. DELAWARE 6. SUBLIME 7. ANTONIO 4/22

7 LITTLE WORDS

Find the 7 words to match the 7 clues. The numbers in parentheses represent the number of letters in each solution. Each letter combination can be used only once, but all letter combinations will be necessary to complete the puzzle.

- | | |
|------------------------------------|------------------|
| CLUES | SOLUTIONS |
| 1 while swallowing one's pride (6) | _____ |
| 2 transitional shift (5) | _____ |
| 3 Austen's craft (5) | _____ |
| 4 wading birds (6) | _____ |
| 5 had a summer job, maybe (8) | _____ |
| 6 island in the Cyclades (7) | _____ |
| 7 highly flexible (9) | _____ |

SO	HU	LY	NED	HE
NS	ON	OSE	THE	SE
LI	GUE	MYK	MB	ER
PR	ME	INT	RO	OS

Wednesday's Answers: 1. MEDIA 2. BUDGETS 3. GRASP 4. LATTICEWORK 5. MOBILE 6. MONTREAL 7. DERIVE 4/23

While others talk work force solutions, this Albany robotics team is building them

By Kathryn Crockett
kathryn@albanyherald.com

ALBANY — In a brightly lit “STEM gym” tucked inside a public charter school, a group of high school students is quietly doing something many communities spend years trying to figure out: building a work force pipeline that actually works.

Relaxed but focused, they sit haphazardly across the floor, eyes locked on their team captain talking through competition strategy. They’re not sitting in rows. They’re not memorizing for tests. They’re designing, wiring and programming competition robots — machines sophisticated enough to compete on a global stage — while learning the kind of skills local employers say they can’t find.

And they’re doing it right here in Albany.

At the center of this gathering is the Commodores 6919 Robotics Team at Commodore Conyers College & Career Academy, a specialized charter school drawing students from across Dougherty, Terrell, Baker, Lee and Calhoun counties. In a matter of days, they’ll head to Houston to compete at the FIRST World Championship — one of the largest robotics competitions in the world.

But the competition itself is only part of the story.

What’s happening inside this lab may say more about the future of education — and the future of Albany — than many realize.

FIRST, the global nonprofit behind the competition, has built its reputation on a simple premise: Students learn best by doing. At 4C Academy, that philosophy has formed the foundation of the school’s culture and approach to learning.

“The mission is to produce college- and career-ready graduates with relevant skills, education and an exceptional work ethic,” Chris Hatcher, the CEO of the academy, said. “Students who can compete and succeed in the real world.”

Inside the robotics lab, that mission takes shape in real time. Students operate like a company — divided into mechanical, electrical, programming, media and business teams. They design and build robots from scratch, develop autonomous code, attract sponsors, manage public relations and present their work to judges.

They also win. And then, the process begins again: refining, rebuilding, improving.

“It’s a game, and they love it,” Hatcher said. “But what they’re really learning is electrical, programming, mechanical — and just as important, teamwork, communication and work ethic. That’s what every employer is asking for.”

For all the intensity, what stands out most for the students isn’t the competition — it’s how they compete. Despite operating at a high level, the

team carries itself with a quiet confidence defined by competence, and grounded in discipline, not ego. That culture traces back to FIRST’s philosophy of “gracious professionalism,” a concept that blends competition with respect.

And it shows. “We pride ourselves on being respectful to everyone,” Reaghan Bush, team captain of The Commodores, says. “We don’t really have any rivals.”

Despite it sounding somewhat idealistic, that approach is built into the structure of the competition itself.

“At competitions, you’re in an alliance with two other teams at all times,” Bush said. “One match, you’re with a team, the next match you might be against them. So it’s important to stay respectful and work well with everyone.”

Hatcher said the format reinforces that mindset.

“That’s why it’s important to be on your best behavior; it’s a very well-thought-out system,” he said.

Even within that collaborative environment, the level of competition is real — and constantly evolving.

“Every competition gets harder, so you have to constantly update and improve the robot,” Louis Alexander, the team’s co-captain who oversees programming, said. “You’re always adapting.”

That adaptation often means learning from the very teams they’re competing against.

“You’ll see other robots and think, ‘That’s really good — we should try that,’” Alexander said. “Steal from the best, invent the rest,” he added playfully.

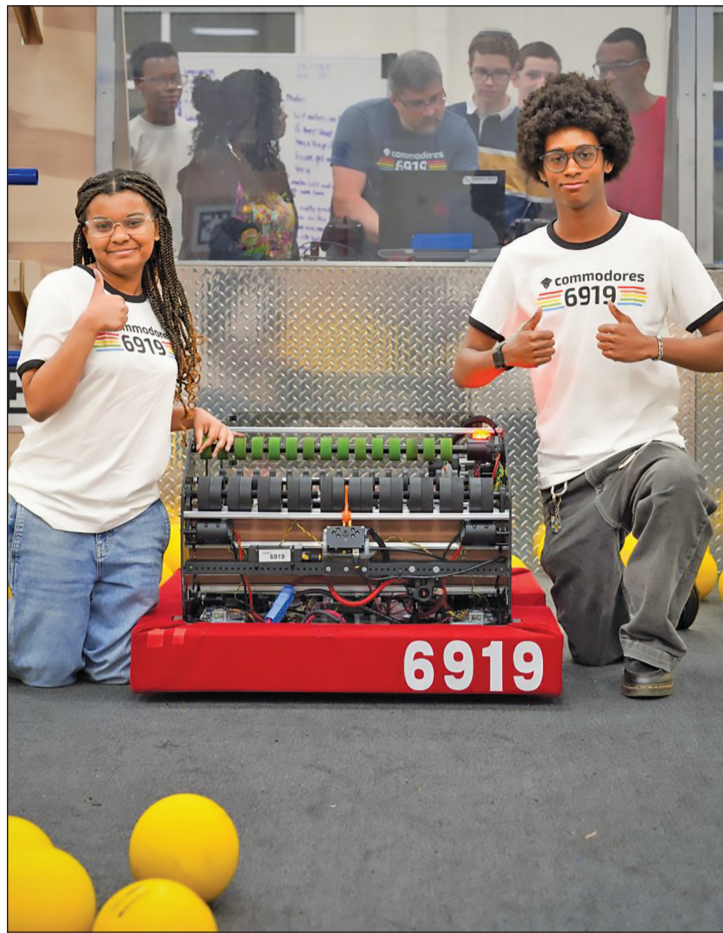
In that way, the competition mirrors the real world — fast-moving, collaborative and driven by continuous improvement.

The scale of the world championship is difficult to overstate. More than 600 teams from across the globe will compete — from the United States to South America, Asia and beyond — while major companies and universities recruit directly from the event. Even the team’s own number is a reminder of just how broad the competition is: 6919 reflects its place in FIRST registration — assigned after 6,918 teams had already registered before them.

For many students, it’s exposure they would not otherwise have.

“For communities like ours, that matters,” Hatcher said. “It’s not always easy to recruit high-tech talent into smaller markets. So the investment we make is in the students who are already here — the ones with roots here — and giving them the skills and opportunity to come back.”

From that perspective, the robotics program isn’t just education. It’s economic development.



Staff Photo: Kathryn Crockett

Reaghan Bush, left, and Louis Alexander work with the Commodores 6919 competition robot inside the STEM lab at Commodore Conyers College & Career Academy in Albany. The two are part of a team that will travel to Houston to compete in the FIRST World Championship.

And for the students, the impact is immediate.

“It’s everything,” Bush said. “We work with sponsors; we run outreach programs; we mentor younger teams. It’s not just building a robot — it’s what you do for your community.”

Her goal for the world championship isn’t just winning.

“I want to meet people,” she said. “There are opportunities to connect with different careers — NASA, engineering programs, companies. It opens doors.”

Across the lab, Alexander is focused on the code that drives the robot — particularly the autonomous systems that allow it to operate without human control.

“It’s problem-solving constantly,” he said. “You’re always improving, always updating.”

But the most significant changes, both students say, aren’t technical. They’re personal.

“You see people come in quiet, not really talking,” Alexander said. “And by the time they’ve been through competition, they’re confident. They’re communicating. They’re leading.”

That transformation is by design.

Programming instructor and head coach Darren Hagler said robotics places students in sit-

uations where growth is unavoidable.

“They have to present. They have to collaborate. They have to solve problems in real time,” Hagler said. “What you see over time is confidence — students who might not have spoken up before are leading conversations, explaining their work and owning what they’ve built.”

It’s a shift educators say traditional classrooms often struggle to produce. Here, it’s built into the system. Students begin with career exploration, move into specialized pathways, earn certifications and, by their senior year, often transition into internships, sometimes already working in the industries they plan to enter.

“We’re not just teaching content,” Hatcher said. “We’re building a pipeline.”

For a city often defined by work force challenges and economic constraints, the robotics lab offers a different narrative, one where students from southwest Georgia are already competing and succeeding on a global scale.

A narrative where education is aligned with industry, and where innovation isn’t something in the distant future. It’s already here.

Swim for Life prepares for 11th year teaching Dougherty County youngsters life-saving skills

By Alan Mauldin
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ALBANY — More than 1,000 Dougherty County youngsters signed up to jump into the pool last summer to learn to swim during an annual program, and more participants could dive in for this summer’s edition.

Swim for Life, initiated by Dougherty County Coroner Michael Fowler in 2016, has taught thousands of children to be safer in and around the water, which is handy in a region that sports a plethora of bodies of water, including ponds, creeks and the Flint River.

In response to the drowning in March of an autistic 12-year-old boy who wandered away from his home, there will be an emphasis on teaching autistic children to swim, the coroner said.

Some autistic individuals are drawn to the calming effects of water, and those situations can end in tragedy, as was the case in Dougherty County earlier this year.

“We’re going to have one of the instructors teaching autistic kids this year,” Fowler said. “That’s going to be one of the focuses. We had it last year, but not many participated. We’re pushing it a lot harder this year.”

Prior to the March drowning, there had not been an instance of a child drowning in the county since the inception of the program, Fowler said, and he wants to continue to teach children to swim in hopes of reducing drownings in the future.

“I had a lot of drownings when I worked for the GBI (Georgia Bureau of Investigation) Crime Lab,” the coroner said. “When I became coroner, I thought



Staff Photo: Kathryn Crockett

Students in the Lake Park Elementary School Chorus perform the national anthem during a ceremony recognizing the school as a Georgia Military Flagship School.

Lake Park Elementary named one of 88 Military Flagship Schools in Georgia

ALBANY — Lake Park Elementary School has been named one of Georgia’s Military Flagship Schools, a distinction reserved for campuses that demonstrate a commitment to supporting military-connected students and their families — a designation held by just 88 schools statewide.

School leaders, district officials and military representatives gathered Monday to mark the recognition, which is awarded through an annual application process overseen by the Military Interstate Children’s Compact Commission and the Georgia Department of Education.

“This recognition as a military flagship school is a reflection of your ongoing commitment to ensuring that every military-connected child and family feels welcome, supported, respected and connected,” Trina Bush, the school’s principal, said.

The designation highlights more than a single program or initiative. Instead, speakers emphasized that it reflects a sustained, schoolwide culture built around understanding the unique challenges military families face, including frequent relocations, deployment cycles and disruptions to students’ academic and social stability.

Dougherty County School System Superintendent Kenneth Dyer called the award a validation of that culture.

“It wasn’t just a title — it represents a culture that honors and recognizes the service and sacrifice of our military-connected families,” Dyer said, noting the school’s intentional efforts to ensure students “feel supported and seen and connected.”

During the program, two Lake Park Elementary students, Athena and Atiba Garvey, read a poem describing the dandelion as the official flower of the military child — symbolizing resilience, adaptability and the ability to thrive in any environment. Like dandelions, military children “put down roots” wherever the wind carries them, relocating frequently due to deployments and permanent change-of-station moves while remaining resilient and strong.

Military leaders echoed that sentiment, pointing to the often-overlooked impact of constant transitions on children. Col. Matthew McKinney, commanding officer at Marine Corps Logistics Base-Albany, said community support plays a critical role in helping families navigate those changes.

“Every time you move, that presents a new challenge,” McKinney said. “The thing that makes me feel the safest for my family ... is the community that embraces them each time we move to a new city or town.”

For families, that sense of belonging can be a deciding factor when choosing where to enroll their children. Soy Garvey, president of the Lake Park Elementary PTO, military liaison and mother of Athena and Atiba Garvey, described the process of relocating to Albany and selecting the school, citing its responsiveness and willingness to provide virtual tours and direct communication — steps that helped bridge the gap between on-base and off-base school systems.

Over the past four years, the school has built a network of support that includes military liaisons, community partnerships and annual events such as Month of the Military Child, reaching hundreds of families each year.

State officials say that level of intentionality is what sets flagship schools apart. Rachale LaVoie, the Georgia Department of Education’s military student and family specialist, noted the program’s rapid growth — from just 18 schools to 88 since 2021 — underscoring both the demand and the rigor of the designation.

“This award is not easily earned,” LaVoie said. “It represents a deep, consistent commitment to supporting military-connected students and their families.”

Georgia has one of the largest military populations in the nation, ranking among the Top 5 or 6 states, and education leaders say schools like Lake Park play a key role in attracting and retaining service members by providing stability for their children while setting a standard for other schools in the district.

For Lake Park Elementary, the recognition is both a milestone and a mandate.

“This recognition is a proud moment,” a school leader said in closing remarks, “but it’s also a reminder of the responsibility we carry to continue building a school community where military-connected families feel seen, valued, supported and celebrated.”

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