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16 million illegals
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ALBANYHERALD.COM

TUESDAY, AUGUST 4, 2026

Phoebe among world's first hospitals to use advanced technology to treat irregular heartbeats

Staff Reports
news@albanyherald.com

ALBANY – Phoebe Putney Memorial Hospital is one of only three hospitals in the country given access to the most advanced equipment used to perform pulsed field ablations, a procedure that corrects atrial fibrillation and other irregular heartbeats by scarring tiny areas of heart tissue that trigger faulty electrical signals.

Medtronic, one of the world's

largest medical device companies, recently installed the latest version of its PulseSelect Pulse Field Ablation equipment in the PPMH Electrophysiology Lab.

“PFA uses electric fields to target just the right heart tissue,” Phoebe Electrophysiologist Dr. James Coman said. “That was already an improvement over previous forms of ablation that depend on extreme heat or cold. The latest generation does even more to ensure precision, im-

prove patient safety and shorten procedure times.”

Medtronic chose Phoebe as one of the first seven hospitals in the world – three in the U.S and four in other countries – to receive this updated equipment because of Phoebe's astounding volume and success with the procedure. Since January 2025, Coman has performed more ablations using the PulseSelect system than any physician in the world.

“I was actually quite surprised to learn that, but I think several factors explain it,” Coman said of his world-leading numbers. “We have a lot of people in south Georgia living with atrial fibrillation that isn't well-managed. We also attract patients from a wide geographic area. And we have an excellent team here at Phoebe.

“We have developed an effective and efficient process that

See **PHOEBE**, 2A



Special Photo: Phoebe

Dr. James Coman and the Phoebe Electrophysiology team show off the new PulseSelect Pulse Field Ablation equipment.

Roaming 'gator causes a stir in Dougherty County subdivision

By Alan Mauldin
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ALBANY – When Floyd Jones' wife called him twice in rapid succession while he was at work, he knew it must be an emergency and that he should call her back quickly.

It's a good thing he did: There was a prehistoric visitor in the yard stalking the couple's home.

Well, actually it was a 5-foot-long alligator that was just taking a stroll on the 600 block of Pine Glenn Drive.

When a neighbor pulled in to alert her, Patricia Jones, probably fortunately, did not look at the security camera. If she had, she would have seen the alligator at their bedroom window.

“She would have probably had a heart attack,” Jones said. “A neighbor from down the street was riding by on his motorcycle. At first he thought it wasn't real; then he saw his head moving. He stopped and blew his horn. He told her ‘Don't go out.’



See **GATOR**, 2A

Submitted Photo: Patricia Jones

An alligator roaming in the 600 block of Pine Glenn Drive brought out the Dougherty County Police Department and the Georgia Department of Natural Resources, which captured the animal.

Morris Brown, ASU sign Graduate School Pathway memorandum of understanding



Special Photo
Morris Brown College President Kevin James, left, and Albany State University President Robert Scott sign a memorandum of understanding that will allow Morris Brown students to seamlessly continue their education at ASU.

Staff Reports
news@albanyherald.com

ATLANTA – Morris Brown College and Albany State University signed a memorandum of understanding recently to

establish a partnership that expands academic opportunities and strengthens educational pathways for Morris Brown College graduates.

The signing took place at Mor-

ris Brown College, located at 643 Martin Luther King Jr. Drive in Atlanta.

Through this collaboration,

See **MORRIS**, 2A

Dougherty County schools target chronic absenteeism with proposed truancy officer

By Kathryn Crockett
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Ken Dyer

ALBANY – After chronic absenteeism more than tripled during the COVID-19 pandemic, Dougherty County School System leaders say the district now has enough attendance cases to justify hiring a full-time truancy officer as part of a broader effort to reconnect students and families with schools.

Superintendent Kenneth Dyer outlined the proposal during last week's Dougherty County Board of Education meeting while presenting district priorities for the upcoming school year, calling chronic absenteeism “a persistent challenge” that continues to affect student achievement despite recent improvements.

“We're going to continue our efforts, and we're planning to hire a truancy officer,” Dyer told board members.

The district's attendance data illustrate both the scale of the problem and the progress officials say has been made.

According to Dyer, Dougherty County's chronic absenteeism rate stood at 12.3% in 2019 before falling to 9.5% in 2020. Like districts across the nation, however, the system experienced a dramatic increase following the pandemic.

“Keeping with trends across the country, chronic absenteeism rates spiked ... to almost 32.5% in 2022,” Dyer said.

Although attendance has improved since then, Dyer said the pace of improvement remains slower than district leaders would like.

“We've begun our efforts to impact chronic absenteeism, and as you can see, we've had a decline, but the decline is, in my opinion, not steep enough,” he said.

The superintendent said administrators are evaluating additional strategies that will eventually be presented to the school board.

“We have plans in place to impact chronic absenteeism in our school system, which is a persistent challenge,” Dyer said. “We're vetting some interventions right now that we'll bring to the board.”

Among those interventions, Dyer identified restoring a full-time truancy officer as a priority.

“I think a significant piece would be to add a truancy officer to make home visits to ensure students are attending and parents are aware of the issue,” he said.

Board members questioned how parents would be involved and whether the district would ultimately hold families accountable when students repeatedly miss school.

District 1 board member Carolyn Hand asked

See **DCSS**, 2A

Periodical — Mail Label

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Back-to-School Health Tips

- 1. Wash hands frequently** - Handwashing is the number one rule to cut down on colds and illnesses.
- 2. Good sleep habits** - Sleep is important for kids of all ages.
- 3. Eat healthy** - Good nutrition is important to maintain a strong immune system.
- 4. Exercise** - Getting plenty of exercise helps kids' bodies and minds stay healthy.
- 5. Get Vaccinated** - Keep yourself and your kids up to date on immunizations.



Georgia father sentenced to 15 years in prison for son’s mass shooting

By Jennifer Mascia
The Trace

This story was originally published by The Trace, a nonprofit newsroom covering gun violence in America.

WINDER -- Colin Gray, the father of the 14-year-old who killed four people and wounded nine others at Apalachee High School in Winder in 2024, was sentenced July 29 to 15 years in prison for failing to secure the gun used in the shooting. Gray is the first parent of a shooter in the country to be convicted of second-degree murder for providing a gun to their child. During the sentencing hearing, Gray’s lawyer asked for leniency, arguing that Gray was not indifferent to his son’s struggles, and that taking his son hunting was a form of therapy. “He believed that his presence and his generosity and the outdoors would pull Colt out of troubled waters,” the attorney said. “What he did not comprehend was the current that ran through a world that Colin Gray could not see, toward an infamy that he could not imagine.” Prosecutors countered that Gray should have known that exposing his son to guns held the potential for violence, reminding jurors that po-

lice had already visited the home over a mass shooting threat the teen made online. Gray gave his son a semi-automatic rifle for Christmas, several months after police visited their home about the threat. He also neglected to take his son to an inpatient psychiatric facility the night before the shootings even though a bed had been secured for him. The teen had been grappling with paranoid delusions for years. His son was sentenced to life in prison without the possibility of parole on July 28 after pleading guilty to all 55 counts — including murder — for the shooting that also left many wounded at the school of 1,900 students northeast of Atlanta. Jennifer and James Crumpley, parents of the 15-year-old who killed four people and wounded seven others at Oxford High School in Michigan in 2021, were convicted of involuntary manslaughter for failing to secure the gun used in the shooting. They’d given their son the Sig Sauer 9 mm handgun as an early Christmas present. They were each sentenced to 10 to 15 years in prison in 2024. The Crumbleys were the first parents in the country to be held criminally responsible for a mass shooting at a school by their child.

Jeffrey Rupnow, father of the 15-year-old who killed two people and wounded six others before killing herself at Abundant Life Christian School in Madison, Wis., in 2024, was charged with intentionally giving a dangerous weapon to a person under 18 and contributing to the delinquency of a child, both felonies. The case is ongoing. Deja Taylor, mother of a 6-year-old who shot his teacher in a Newport News, Va., classroom in 2023, was sen-

See **SENTENCED**, 11A

Southern Regional Tech students score 100% pass rate on national exam

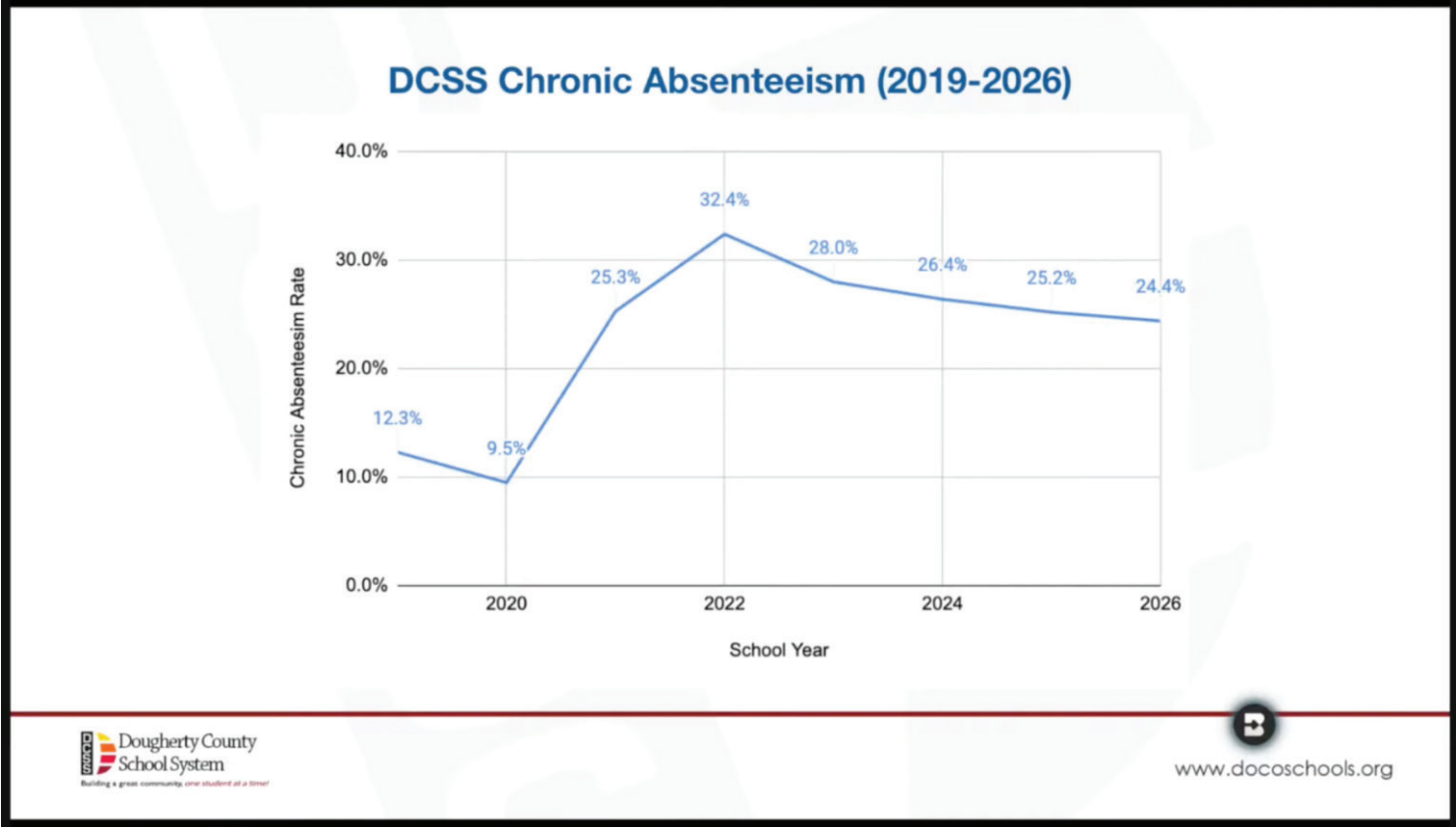
Staff Reports
news@albanyherald.com

THOMASVILLE -- Southern Regional Technical College’s Surgical Technology program graduates achieved a 100% passage rate on the Certified Surgical Technologist examination, administered through the National Board of Surgical Technology and Surgical Assisting. The students were honored at a pinning ceremony held recently in Moultrie, celebrating the culmination



Special Photo
Southern Regional Technical College’s Surgical Technology program graduates who achieved a 100% passage rate on the Certified Surgical Technologist examination, include, from left, Alexis Nykera Anderson, Jessica Bishop, Emily Ragan Lamb, Mirmi “Ana” Lopez, Cameron Loving, Ashley Salabarría and Loren Rose Smith.

See **EXAM**, 11A



Special Graphic



Special Photo
Colin Gray, the father of the 14-year-old who killed four people and wounded nine others at Apalachee High School in Winder in 2024, was sentenced July 29 to 15 years in prison for failing to secure the gun used in the shooting.

From 1A MORRIS

Morris Brown College graduates will find a clear and supported pathway to Albany State University to pursue graduate studies both on campus and through ASU Online. Morris Brown College bachelor’s degrees graduates in good standing will be eligible to apply for admission to ASU graduate degree programs, including those online. Degree programs include:

- Online
- Master of Science in Trauma Psychology
- Master of Science in Nursing
- Master of Business Administration
- Master of Education
- Master of Science in Criminal Justice
- Master of Public Administration
- Master of Secondary Education

Master of Science in Integrated Biotechnology

Master of Social Work

Main-Campus Programs

Master of Business Administration

Master of Science

Master of Science in Criminal Justice

Master of Public Administration

ASU President Robert Scott and his counterpart at Morris Brown, Kevin E. James, offered remarks before officially signing the MOU. Founded by formerly enslaved religious leaders at Big Bethel AME Church in 1881, Morris Brown College is the first college in Georgia to be owned and operated by African Americans. Fountain Hall and the current Morris Brown campus are where W.E.B. Du Bois wrote “The Souls of Black Folk” in 1903. Notable alumni include Alberta Williams King, mother of Martin Luther King Jr., and James Alan McPherson, the first black writer to win a Pulitzer Prize for fiction.

From 1A DCSS

whether parents would receive formal notification once students become truant. “Will, once done and completed, the parents be notified about truancy?” Hand asked. Dyer said the district already has an established notification process and is working with multiple community partners to address attendance before legal action becomes necessary.

“The committee that started meeting last year was charged with putting together a comprehensive community-wide plan to impact chronic absenteeism,” Dyer said. He said the initiative extends beyond the school system. “The court system is involved; we have a Student Attendance Advisory Board,” he said. “If a student misses so many days, parents get notifications, and if it becomes excessive, it could end up in the court system where parents

From 1A PHOEBE

anything had been developed that could fix it, and I thought I would just have to try to manage it the best I could for the rest of my life.” Then, a health crisis changed the trajectory of her healthcare journey. “One night, I couldn’t walk,” she said. “I couldn’t breathe, and my sister took me to the hospital in Americus.” The team at Phoebe Sumter Medical Center stabilized Moncrief, then immediately transferred her by air ambulance to PPMH in Albany, where she underwent two procedures to remove blood clots from her lungs. “It was a tough, tough time, but they (the Phoebe care teams in Americus and Albany) were all wonderful to me,” Moncrief said. “I was pretty much out of it for a couple of days, but that’s when Dr. Coman came in to talk to me about the procedure to get my heart back in normal rhythm.” A genetic condition puts

could be held accountable.” Even so, Dyer emphasized that prosecution is intended to be the final step, not the first. “Of course, that’s the stick, and we want that to be a last resort,” he said. “We’re trying to put interventions in place so we won’t get to that point.” The superintendent said the district once employed a truancy officer and believes current attendance rates justify bringing the position back. “I think the missing piece we have now is a truancy officer,” Dyer said. “We used to

Moncrief at higher risk of complications while under anesthesia, but she said she was willing to try anything. “That’s one reason I’m so grateful to Dr. Coman,” she said. “They were so careful with my anesthesia. It was one of the easiest and best things I’ve ever had done.” Moncrief says the impact of her ablation was immediate, and it’s been long-lasting. She hasn’t noticed an irregular heartbeat a single time since her procedure, and she doesn’t struggle with fatigue or shortness of breath. Moncrief remains a bit surprised she had to come back home to southwest Georgia to get the relief she sought for so long, but she said she will be forever grateful for the care and compassion she received at Phoebe. “I would highly recommend this procedure, Dr. Coman, his staff and Phoebe,” she said. “I think God has a way of putting us where we need to be.”

have one. I think based on the rates that we have, we have enough volume for a full-time truancy officer on staff.” Board members expressed support for pairing intervention with accountability. “I just want to echo what Dr. Hand stated: enforcement is essential,” District 5 board member the Rev. James Bush said. “I don’t think you have to be mean, but I think you have to be firm to let the parents know that we are concerned about that.” Dyer agreed that parental involvement remains central to improving attendance, particularly among younger students. “When a child in pre-kindergarten through eighth grade has an attendance issue, it’s not the child,” he said. Instead, he said, the district wants to strengthen communication with parents while helping families understand the long-term importance of consistent attendance. “We want to improve engagement with parents and help them understand that attendance does matter,” Dyer said. He also suggested that lingering attitudes formed during the pandemic continue to influence attendance habits. “I think one of the things that happened with COVID is people started thinking if you don’t make it, you can do it virtually,” he said. “But attendance does matter, particularly in education.” Dyer concluded by describing chronic absenteeism as a community challenge rather than solely a school issue, saying the district will continue working with families, the courts and other local partners to improve attendance. “We want to engage our village to assist because this is a community issue, not just Dougherty County, not just Georgia, but nationwide,” he said. In addition to the proposed truancy officer, Dyer said the district plans to launch a Parent University program designed to provide parents with additional tools and resources to support their children’s academic success, describing it as another component of the district’s broader effort to improve student outcomes through stronger family engagement.

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From 1A GATOR

“I knew something was going on because my wife called me back-to-back. She said, ‘There’s an alligator in the yard.’” The Dougherty County Police Department and Georgia Department of Natural Resources, which lassooed the alligator for removal, responded. So did a number of curious neighbors. “Everybody came out to look,” Jones said. “It gave a lot of excitement in the subdivision here. He started out in the front yard and he ended up in the back.”

It was the second sighting of an alligator in the subdivision in about a decade, Jones said. Alligators who wander into residents’ yards are usually trapped and released in a safe area for them and farther away from people, Kayla Harrelson, administrative assistant for the DNR’s Wildlife Resources Division office in Albany, said. The office generates a number of calls about alligators, particularly from Lake Blackshear, where the reptiles sometimes take up residence at boat docks. People sometimes feed them, which leads them to becoming a nuisance as they will approach other humans looking for a snack.

“If it’s a pond, we can remove them,” Harrelson said. “If it’s a lake, there’s nothing we can do. That’s where they live.” The large reptiles are moving this time of year, probably looking for a cool spot in the heat, she said. Residents in areas where alligators roam should be on the alert, keep pets on a leash and keep children away from the water. “They can give us a call and we can see about sending trappers out to remove them,” Harrelson said. “Most of the time, (trappers will) relocate them. If they see one that’s deemed to be aggressive, they (trappers) could euthanize it.”

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Daily Horoscopes

ARIES (March 21-April 19): This is the most electric day in August as stars slide dramatically upward into tomorrow, August’s highest scoring day. It could be a positive day for a family decision concerning money. Find a creative direction.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20): Your nurturing energy could be the loving hug, the warm cup of tea, the soak in a soothing bath for someone today. Some new ideas or directions could be brewing up in your living space.

GEMINI (May 21-June 20): Friends could be all over the place today and tomorrow — swinging from genius to friendly to extremely off-putting. Flow with the rapid changes, no need to react other than to uphold boundaries if needed.

CANCER (June 21-July 22): Use patience and discretion in the workplace today and tomorrow as energies could rapidly shift between positive and negative poles. A new path toward increasing cash flow could emerge.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22): While an idea could look plausible for a few hours, new intel could arise quickly that will clarify the downsides. Get full details and consider downstream consequences before you decide to act.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22): If you’ve been investing in your growth and self-mastery, you could be close to an important breakthrough. Much could become clear about next steps in your life. Get answers from within for the win.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22): A short-term rocky road through a partnership could be evening out into an easier path to walk as new ideas bring forth greater cooperation. Look to a friendship for an insight or offer one to a friend.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21): Something that might have had you very frustrated could suddenly resolve itself in a beautiful yet completely unexpected way. A fringe benefit could be bringing people together. Career

insights could be vital.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21): A novel adventure with a friend could make special memories if you have the luxury of playing hooky for a few hours. Don’t play small, let in something entirely new. Pivotal intel could land soon.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19): A potentially trying few days at home could level out now into a more cooperative vibe centering around a new way of doing things. If you truly have the clarity and your individual cycles align, consider a financial move.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18): Misunderstandings in communication could settle down and more receptivity could be the frequency now. A long-term relationship could be entering a period of growth as new options emerge.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20): Your head could be clear enough today to know how to postilion yourself or how to move financially now but beware someone else’s urgency or insistence. It may not be based on any tangible benefit.

IF TODAY IS YOUR BIRTHDAY: Once you know the direction clearly, the journey gets a lot easier. While much of 2026 may have tested you, things should have begun getting easier. One big gift for your birthday month is a clearer than ever understanding of your own purpose and destiny. Don’t let its potentially breathtaking scope frighten you, your whole life has been preparing you to step into this. September could bring the cash flow, charm and attractiveness you’ve wanted. Be wise with these gifts — don’t misuse them as could be possible. Pay close attention to glimmers and intuition in October, some very high guidance could come through. So could a happy surprise or windfall, along with renewed belief in yourself and your life. November could bring a parade of help, ideas and resources, including more money.



70 - The Romans destroy the Second Temple in Jerusalem

1783 - 1,400 people are killed in Japan when Mount Asama erupts. The eruption causes a famine and 20,000 additional deaths occur.

1790 - The U.S. Coast Guard is founded as Revenue Cutter Service

1821 - The Saturday Evening Post is published as a weekly newspaper for the first time and is published until 1969

1902 - The Greenwich foot tunnel under the River Thames opens in East London

1914 - During World War I, Germany invades Belgium. Belgium and the United Kingdom declare war on Germany, while the United States declares it’s neutrality.

1944 - Jewish diarist Anne Frank, her family and four

others are arrested in Amsterdam by the Gestapo following a tip from an informant.

1946 - An 8.0 magnitude earthquake hits northern Dominican Republic. 100 are killed, and 20,000 are left homeless.

1964 - North Vietnam torpedos U.S. destroyers USS Maddox and USS Turner Joy in the Gulf of Tonkin

1977 - U.S. President Jimmy Carter establishes the U.S. Department of Energy

1991 - The Greek cruise ship MTS Oceanos sinks off the coast of South Africa

2019 - A shooting in Dayton, Ohio results in nine people killed and 26 injured

2020 - 2,700 tons of ammonium nitrate explodes in Beirut, Lebanon kills 220 people with over 5,000 wounded

CALENDAR OF OBSERVANCES

- Hooray For Kid’s Day
- National Chocolate Chip Cookie Day
- National Night Out - August 4, 2026 (First Tuesday in August)

- National White Wine Day
- Raisin Bran Day
- Single Working Woman’s Day
- US Coast Guard Birthday (USCG)

QUOTE OF THE DAY

“Life is something that happens when you can’t get to sleep.”

Fran Lebowitz,
writer (1950-)

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

Of the list of gross misappropriations -- \$600G for hotel consultant, \$198G non-existent virtual tour, \$2M for downtown, countless money for the Ritz -- let’s not forget the most glandulous of all farces: Desota and the \$2 billion grant to an associated group of shell nonprofits, to this day totally unaccounted for.

Yes, by all means, let’s all of us -- the 15 or so that exist -- go out and celebrate the half-million-dollar skate park. What this commission has proven is that it has no concept of the term fiscal responsibility, nor does it get the concept of wasteful spending. How long before this park ends up looking like the other one ... decrepit, vandalized and in need of more (taxpayer) money?

You cannot subsidize irresponsibility and expect people to become more responsible.

Exactly what do you consider your fair share of what I have worked for my whole life?

Poor Terrell Jacobs. He has a group of commissioners under his charge who are swayed by a handful of constituents: some who pay for the privilege, others who simply get preferential treatment because of their wallets, ethnic backgrounds or their church affiliation. Every study says data centers could be an immediate boost to communities’ bottom lines, especially communities like Albany that’s filled with non-workers who pay no taxes. We just can’t seem to get things right ... and with this group, we never will.

Damn, Fletcher, you’re sounding more and more like an old crank. Surely there’s something about modern-day America you like?

Now that everyone around here has decided to put a hold on data centers, how about we do a two-year moratorium on The Albany Herald and other news outlets talking about them? I’m sure the Second Coming might get close to as much coverage ... if it’s not on a busy day.

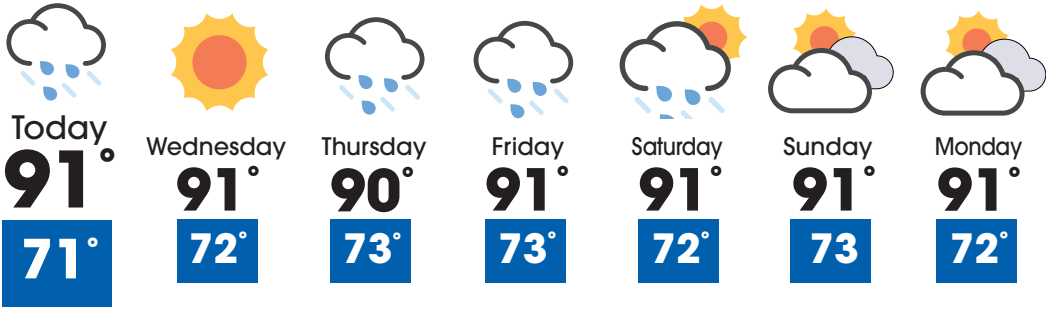
It’s easy to figure out what the latest talking points will be on any given day. Trump and some of the buffoons in his clown car get out and start saying meaningless things that the chief clown told them to say. And his ever-shrinking -- but blindly loyal -- band of followers spout the same things, just like good little cult members are supposed to do.

In 1959 Khrushchev said, “Your children’s children will live under communism.” Control health care, and you control people. Increase the poverty level as high as possible; poor people are easier to control. Increase debt to an unsustainable level. Gun control: Remove the ability to defend yourself. Welfare: Take control of every aspect (food, housing, income) of people’s lives This is socialism/communism, which we already have brewing. Wake up, America.

Carlton’s goal in life is to be the reason local politicians need therapy and bail money.

Since 2015, left-wing Democrats act like Trump’s movement is temporary. The American people don’t want what they’re selling, but they keep wondering why the country keeps telling them no.

Weather Forecast



Daily Bridge Club

Expert errors

By Frank Stewart

Tribune Content Agency

“I’ve heard some mistakes called ‘expert errors,’” a club player said to me. “I thought experts didn’t make errors; that’s

why they’re experts.”

“Everybody makes errors,” I said. “An expert will make few technical errors, but anyone can have a blind spot.”

Having overcalled in spades, today’s West led the king against four hearts. South, reputedly an expert, put up dummy’s ace – and East ruffed and led a diamond. South took the ace, drew trumps and led a spade, but West played low. Dummy’s nine won, but South wound up losing a spade, a ruff, a diamond and a club.

FOCUS

South lost focus at Trick One; dummy must play a low spade. West next leads a low spade: nine, ruff by East. South can win the diamond return, draw trumps, lead a spade to dum-



Frank Stewart

my’s jack and take the ace for 10 tricks.

South would have done well to raise North’s 1NT to 3NT. South could count eight tricks in his own hand, and surely North would produce one more.

Maybe South was really no expert.

DAILY QUESTION

You hold: S None H 10 7 5 3 D Q 10 8 6 2 C K 9 8 4. The opponents are vulnerable. Your partner deals and opens three clubs. The next player doubles. What do you say?

ANSWER: Your opponents can surely make six spades, maybe seven. Experts would have various tactical approaches. Some might raise gently to four clubs or five clubs; others might try some outrageous bluff bid. My preference against good opponents would be to bid seven clubs.

South dealer
Both sides vulnerable

Advice Columnist

Friend left out of burial plans but still grieving

By Eric Thomas

Tribune Content Agency

Dear Eric: This question may be way off base, but is there a way to find out if a Celebration of Life is going to be held? A very dear friend passed away last fall and was laid to rest.

Sadly, nobody contacted me as to when the burial was because I had to move from our home.

I’m trying to move on, but closure may be affecting me. I have no ill will against anyone. I just want to know if there is a gathering coming up. I’m probably grasping at straws here. Thank you for listening.
– Sad and Missing Him

Dear Missing Him: I’m sorry for the loss of your friend. Funerals and Celebrations of Life can help us to start to find closure when we’re in grief. Without them, the grief can be harder to navigate. This isn’t to say it will always be there, or that you don’t have any options, however.

First, reach out to your friends to find out if there is a gathering planned or, if there was already a gathering, if there’s a program or a video or a remembrance website you can visit to share your feelings and memories of the deceased. It’s not inappropriate to ask, especially since you’ve moved away. People will understand that you’re trying to process your grief and honor your friend.

If there isn’t something planned, consider planning something yourself. It doesn’t have to be large. It could be as simple as having friends over to your place, or meeting in a park or coffee shop, and sharing stories about your friend. Community and commemo-

ration are the most important aspects here. It doesn’t have to be formal; it just has to be an opportunity for you and your friends to feel less alone as you process your grief.

Dear Eric: I have a friend who is generally wonderful and well-meaning but can be an exasperating conversationalist. She is rather full of herself – her activities, her opinions, her experiences, her history – and loves to talk endlessly about all things “her.”

She is intense, goes on and on, adds unnecessary details, and hardly takes a breath. She is either terrible at reading the room or simply doesn’t care.

In addition, but related, she is only interested in other people’s lives or activities, so that she can give her opinion on the same, so it again becomes about her.

What are some things I can do to stop this behavior without making her hurt or mad?
– Conversation Conundrum

Dear Conversation: You might start from a place of assuming she doesn’t realize what she’s doing. It could be an issue with attention or an eagerness to entertain that’s going sideways. In that case, you could point it out gently when it happens. “We’ve been talking about [x] for a bit. I’d like to share something. Can we switch gears?” Gauge her response to redirects like this. She may be happy to talk about something else with you.

Or she might be resistant to it. If that’s the case, you might need to be more direct. It will be more effective to talk about her habits in the context of your friendship rather than casting a wide net over her behavior



Eric Thomas

with everyone.

Have a conversation about how the two of you talk and what aspects of it you want to be different. Go in with suggestions that are proactive, like, “it would mean a lot if you could ask me about [x] more. Do you think you could do that?”

Part of this may simply be how she’s built. But if it’s rubbing you the wrong way, it’s good to say something so that you can maintain the friendship without hard feelings. She may not totally change her ways in every conversation, but that’s not your job to fix. What you can work on is the way that you two communicate so that you both feel heard.

Dear Eric: Just wanted to share a resource with you for grief support for survivors of suicide in reference to the letter from “Confused and Grieving Daughter”, who lost her mother to suicide. Heartbeat (https://www.heartbeatforvivorsafter-suicide.org/) is an organization that offers group support, as well as other resources.

If a person seeking help isn’t ready to attend the meetings, the resource tab offers literature that I found comforting during the grief process of my brother’s suicide. Best wishes and thank you for all you do.
– Walking Life’s Journey

Dear Journey: I’m sorry for the loss of your brother and I appreciate this resource. Heartbeat is one of a number of very helpful organizations to which people can turn when grieving a loved one. Other survivors of suicide will surely benefit from knowing they’re not alone and can find comfort and healing.

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 rerictthomas.com.

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THE ALBANY HERALD

Perspectives

The Albany HERALD
ALBANYHERALD.COM

Carlton Fletcher
EDITOR

—Georgia Trust for—
LOCAL NEWS

TODAY’S
BIBLE
VERSE

“I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins: return unto me; for I have redeemed thee.”
Isaiah 44:22

COLUMNIST ■ THOMAS KNAPP

Fauci unmasked, despite the 5th Amendment

On the advice of counsel, I respectfully decline to answer based upon my rights under the Fifth Amendment to the Constitution.”

On July 29, Dr. Anthony Fauci said that 111 times in response to questions from members of the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Subcommittee.

“What day of the week is it today?”

“On the advice of counsel, I respectfully decline to answer based upon my rights under the Fifth Amendment to the Constitution.”

“What color tie are you wearing?”

“On the advice of counsel, I respectfully decline to answer based upon my rights under the Fifth Amendment to the Constitution.”

And so on, and so forth.

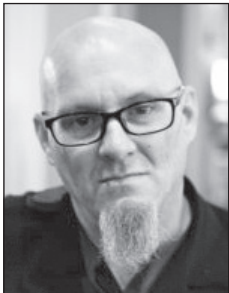
I’m no Fauci fan, but I don’t blame him one bit for refusing to answer questions. His pardon from then-president Joe Biden for all actions taken between 2014 and 2025 wouldn’t cover any accusation of lying to Congress now, and his enemies in the Senate clearly have it in for him.

“What color tie are you wearing?”

“Navy blue with white spots.”

“Liar! It’s midnight blue with off-white dots. You’re going to jail.”

American political conflict really has become that petty, and it’s a



THOMAS KNAPP

shame ... because Fauci has a lot to answer for. Witch hunt tactics aside, U.S. Sen. Rand Paul, R-Ky., performed a valuable public service by releasing excerpts from Fauci’s diaries.

I’ve been browsing those excerpts for a couple of days now; they run to several hundred pages, so I haven’t had time to do a thorough beginning-to-end read.

They unmask (pun entirely intended) Fauci as a not very likable bureaucrat, flattered by attention and susceptible to that flattery, constantly butt-hurt by any attack on or even public disagreement with his pronouncements, and laser-focused not on “public health” as such nearly so much as on maintaining his position and reputation as America’s top “public health authority.”

That’s obvious from any number of issues the excerpts cover, but I’ve already mentioned masks, so let’s go there.

On March 8, 2020, Fauci offered sound, scientifically supported advice on masks in an interview with CBS’s “60 Minutes”:

“There’s no reason to be walking around with a mask,” he said..

“When you’re in the middle of an outbreak, wearing a mask might make people feel a little bit better and it might even block a droplet, but it’s not providing the perfect protection that people think that it is. And, often, there are unintended consequences — people

keep fiddling with the mask and they keep touching their face.”

That advice remains sound and scientifically supported to this day ... but within weeks, possibly days, Fauci’s political instincts had him second-guessing himself. In an April 15 email, Fauci relents: “Walk out of the streets and people are wearing them anyway. We should be on board with them.”

More than just “on board,” Fauci became an avid mask evangelist and active mask scold. At least partially as a result of his efforts, the U.S., state, and local governments spent billions on masks and legally mandated their wear.

For many fearful and gullible individuals, the masks became quasi-religious garments, signifiers of faith in St. Fauci.

What the masks didn’t do was prevent transmission of COVID-19.

How many Americans died from the virus after believing — because Fauci said so — that putting pieces of cloth over their faces would keep them safe?

Biden’s pardon protects him from criminal penalties for past misdeeds and the Fifth Amendment protects him from further incriminating himself by talking to Congress ... but how about a class action lawsuit seeking damages in the amount Americans spent on the useless but mandated masks he abandoned science to shill for? Any lawyers out there who’d like a percentage?

Thomas L. Knapp is director and senior news analyst at the William Lloyd Garrison Center for Libertarian Advocacy Journalism (thegarrisoncenter.org). He lives and works in north-central Florida.

COLUMNIST ■ WAYNE FOWLER

It’s time for many to ‘touch grass’

Popular culture comes up with some doozies.

“You need to go touch grass” is a playful way to suggest someone has been online too long. In a deeper sense, it means someone needs to connect with what is true and real. They need a reboot.

Truth claims abound these days. Some look an awful lot like conspiracy theories, which insist (without evidence) that a secretive group of people are controlling events with malicious intent.

Another way to drift away from reality is “expressive individualism.” This is philosopher Charles Taylor’s term describing how “each of us has his/her own way of realizing our humanity ... as against surrendering to conformity with a model imposed on us from outside” (i.e. society, parents, or religion).

In other words, you are supposed to find your own meaning and define your own morality according to what connects to



WAYNE FOWLER

your feelings. The irony is, chasing happiness like that is not new, nor does it work. It becomes its own captivity, resulting in loneliness, guilt, and anxiety. It causes crises of identity, fear of failure, and loss of hope for the future.

These pathologies are rooted in the bad soil of self-idolatry. It’s time to go touch grass. These pathologies are what you would expect if the world has no design, no purpose, no evil, no good, nothing but blind, pitiless indifference, using the words of Richard Dawkins.

But if there is a Creator, for Whom I submit there is overwhelming evidence, then there is a joy to be found, a reality to be known. To accept the Creator’s design and intent for you as a human calls for blessed change.

C.S. Lewis wrote, “If you are on the wrong road, progress means doing an about turn and walking back to the right road; and in that case the man who turns back soonest is the most progressive

man. There is nothing progressive about being pig-headed and refusing to admit a mistake.”

So recognizing cultural captivity, you can either be pig-headed or go touch grass. (Please take that in the good humor intended.)

“By what a man is overcome, by this is he enslaved.” (2 Pet. 2:19)

That is pig-headed.

But Jesus said, “If you continue in My word ... you will know the truth,

and the truth will make you free.” (John 8:31-32)

That is an offer to walk away from captivity, barefoot on the green grass.

The reality is God created you with purpose and dignity. He loves you and invites you to enjoy the repentant life of faith in Jesus, your Savior. Step outside in the yard at night and look up.

“When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, the moon and the stars, which You have ordained; What is man that You take thought of him?” (Psa. 8:3-4)

Go touch grass.

By Wayne Fowler mountainchristian@brmemc.net

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.

COLUMNIST ■ YONATAN HAMBOURGER

The difference between getting older and truly living

One of the quiet fears many people carry is not simply aging. It is the fear of slowly disappearing while still alive.

Not physically, but inwardly. Days accumulate. Responsibilities are handled. Yet somewhere beneath the movement of ordinary life, a person senses that time is no longer being fully inhabited.

That tension lives inside a subtle phrase in Parshat (Torah portion) Chayei Sarah (Genesis 24:1): “Abraham was old, he came in days.”

At first glance, the wording sounds redundant. Of course someone who grows old has accumulated days. But Jewish tradition hears something deeper inside the phrase.

Abraham did not merely possess many days. He entered them.

The sages understand “he came in days” to mean that Abraham arrived fully into the life he was given. His days were not empty stretches of time simply endured or consumed. They were inhabited intentionally — filled with purpose, action, growth and moral presence.

That understanding transforms the Torah’s vision of aging. Modern culture often treats aging as gradual diminishment. Youth becomes associated with possibility, movement and significance, while later years are quietly framed as retreat from relevance. Even people who reject that idea intellectually often absorb it emotionally. They begin speaking about their most meaningful experiences as though they already belong permanently to the past.

But Abraham’s story moves in the opposite direction. Many of the defining moments of his life occur late, not early. At 91, he enters the covenant through circumcision. At 100, Isaac is born. Later comes the Akeidah — the binding of Isaac — which becomes the greatest spiritual test of his life. After Sarah’s death, he purchases the Cave of Machpelah, securing the first permanent foothold in the Promised Land. He arranges Isaac’s future and continues shaping the generations that follow.

Abraham does not fade from the story as he ages. He deepens into it. That may be one of the Torah’s most radical ideas about



YONATAN HAMBOURGER

human life: Meaning is not confined to youth.

Aging, in the Torah’s understanding, is not merely surviving past one’s prime. It is the opportunity to become more fully formed, to carry wisdom with greater humility, to act with deeper intentionality, and to stop confusing novelty with purpose.

There is something deeply countercultural about that idea. Modern life often measures value through speed, visibility and constant reinvention. Aging can therefore feel threatening because it appears to move a person further from what society celebrates most. But the Torah suggests that a meaningful life is not built primarily through novelty or attention. It is built through depth — through becoming more present, more generous, more thoughtful, and more

awake to the responsibilities and relationships entrusted to us.

Chassidic teaching expands this idea further. Each day lived with awareness, kindness and spiritual intention adds light to the soul. To “come in days” means more than passing through time. It means bringing oneself fully into time, showing up awake to one’s responsibilities, relationships and opportunities rather than drifting mechanically through them.

That challenge belongs to every age. A younger person can waste years while remaining outwardly busy. An older person can remain inwardly alive through curiosity, generosity and continued growth. The issue is not chronology. It is presence.

And presence is often revealed through very ordinary choices. A conversation listened to attentively. A kindness offered deliberately. A moment of gratitude genuinely felt instead of rushed past. The willingness to continue learning rather than assuming life has already taught everything worth knowing. These moments rarely appear important while they are happening, yet they quietly shape the texture of an entire life.

None appears dramatic on its own. Yet over time, these moments become the difference between merely aging and truly living.

Abraham’s greatness was not only that he lived a long life. It was that he continued entering life fully until the very end.

Yonatan Hambourger is a rabbi and teacher. He welcomes questions and comments at y@TasteofTorah.org. More of his work can be found at www.TasteofTorah.org.

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What to watch TUESDAY

August 4, 2026

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

Kitchen Nightmares

FOX, 8 p.m.

Slow service, an inexperienced staff and half-baked leadership have Borelli's Pizzeria crumbling. In tonight's new episode, Gordon Ramsay learns about the personal struggles affecting the owner and helps put both the owner's well-being and the restaurant on the path to recovery.

Beat Shazam

FOX, 9 p.m.

In the new episode "No One Can Stop Them!," teams of best friends, mechanics and physical therapists try to identify some of the biggest hit songs for the chance to win \$1 million. Host Jamie Foxx returns with co-host and deejay Corinne Foxx.



'Once Upon a Time in Space'

PICASA

Hard Knocks: Training Camp With the Seattle Seahawks

HBO, 9 p.m. ■ **Season Premiere**

This will be the first time since *Hard Knocks* launched in 2001 with the Baltimore Ravens that the series has documented the defending Super Bowl champion. The five-episode series will unfold at the Seahawks training camp in Renton, Washington, and will feature head coach Mike Macdonald, quarterback Sam Darnold, 2025 Associated Press NFL Offensive Player of the Year Jaxon Smith-Njigba, and defensive standouts Devon Witherspoon and Byron Murphy II.

Once Upon a Time in Space

PBS, 9 p.m. ■ **Series Finale**

The documentary series sharing personal stories from the past 50 years of space exploration concludes with "Friends Forever." The International Space Station is only half complete when the loss of space shuttle *Columbia* and its crew in 2003 delays construction. The ISS is eventually completed in 2011, and the space shuttle program is retired after 30 years. NASA sends astronauts to space aboard Russian rockets until private companies enter the market with new vehicles. Tensions between the U.S. and Russia rise over Russia's annexation of Crimea and invasion of Ukraine, casting doubt on the two countries' future cooperation in space.

Kitchen Undercover

Food Network, 9 p.m.

This high-stakes, sneak-attack restaurant rescue premiered last week and is led by chef Antonia Lofaso, alongside sous-chef Nestor Milian, who goes full undercover and slips into failing restaurants that are one more bad review away from total collapse. Tonight's episode visits Broken Spirits, a once-booming barbecue joint that is about to go bust. The team goes undercover to clean up the kitchen and the staff's attitudes before the owner is forced to go out of business.

The Proof Is Out There: Unexplained Edition

History, 10:30 p.m. ■ **Season Finale**

Unexplained lights continue to baffle witnesses around the world. From North Carolina's Brown Mountain Lights to Texas' legendary Marfa Lights, Tony Harris and his team investigate the evidence and deliver their verdict.

MOVIES YOU'LL LOVE



'Joker'

NIKO TAVERNISE

Old School (2003, Comedy) Luke Wilson, Will Ferrell **Paramount, 6 p.m.**

Tangled (2010, Children) Mandy Moore, Zachary Levi **Freeform, 6:55 p.m.**

Spider-Man: No Way Home (2021, Action) Tom Holland, Zendaya **FX, 7 p.m.**

My Mother Looked Just Like You (2025, Suspense) Jenny Heaton, Avery Joy Davis **LMN, 8 p.m.**

Starship Troopers (1997, Science fiction) Casper Van Dien, Dina Meyer **BBC America, 8 p.m.**

Uncle Buck (1989, Comedy) John Candy, Amy Madigan **AMC, 8 p.m.**

The Accountant (2016, Suspense) Ben Affleck, Anna Kendrick **TNT, 9 p.m.**

The Princess and the Frog (2009, Children) Anika Noni Rose, Bruno Campos **Freeform, 9 p.m.**

Double Double Trouble (2026, Suspense) Tami Roman, Colin Lawrence **LMN, 10 p.m.**

The Great Outdoors (1988, Comedy) Dan Aykroyd, John Candy **AMC, 10:15 p.m.**

Easy A (2010, Comedy) Emma Stone, Penn Badgley **VH1, 10:30 p.m.**

The Hangover Part II (2011, Comedy) Bradley Cooper, Ed Helms **Paramount, 10:30 p.m.**

Joker (2019, Crime drama) Joaquin Phoenix, Robert De Niro **TNT, 11:30 p.m.**

From the editors of **weekly tv** TV Weekly and tvinsider.com

CATCH A CLASSIC

Summer Under the Stars: Glenn Ford

TCM, beginning at 6 a.m.

Gwyllyn Samuel Newton Ford, later known in the industry as Glenn Ford, is being honored today with a marathon of 12 movies. This Canadian American actor was most popular as a go-to leading man during Hollywood's golden age. The day kicks off with **Don't Go Near the Water** (1957), the film adaptation of the novel by William Brinkley, which landed Ford a 1958 Golden Globe nomination for Best Actor. It tells the story of a Navy man trying to capture the attention of a nurse. Ford's ability to play an ordinary man in an out-of-the-ordinary situation is seen in the films **It Started With a Kiss** (1959), a rom-com about an impulsive marriage between an Air Force sergeant and showgirl who wind up in



MGM

Spain; **The Courtship of Eddie's Father** (1963), in which a widower falls in love with his neighbor; **Dear Heart** (1964), the story of two middle-aged people who fall in love at a postmaster convention; **The Big Heat** (1953), where a rogue cop takes the law into his own hands; and more. The last movie in the lineup is **Cimarron (pictured)**, a 1960 Western starring Ford as frontiersman Yancey Cravat, based on the real-life pioneer Temple Houston, which tells the tale of pioneer struggles and corrupt developers.

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What to watch WEDNESDAY

August 5, 2026

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

MasterChef

FOX, 8 p.m.

Former contestant Nick DiGiovanni is a guest judge in the new episode "Global Feed," in which the contestants must strike the perfect balance between authenticity and social media appeal.

Nation's Dumbest

FOX, 9 p.m.

Only nine contestants remain in the new episode "Feud for Thought," as tensions rise and rivalries start to form. The celebrities push themselves to their limits, tackling everything from general knowledge trivia to a life-sized human labyrinth. Jack Whitehall hosts.

Alone

History, 9 p.m.

Tonight's episode, "Tides of Fortune," sees turbulent weather continuing to batter the survivalists, and one participant takes to the open water while another finds a gold mine of food in an unlikely source. Meanwhile, a severe stomach issue puts one survivalist's future in jeopardy, and another struggles to recover from a failed moose hunt.



'The Shards'

PARI DUKOVIC, FX

The Shards

FX, 9 p.m. ■ **New Series**

Based on the acclaimed bestselling novel by Bret Easton Ellis, and backed by TV mastermind Ryan Murphy (*American Horror Story*), this is the summer sizzler you've been waiting for. Set against the vivid backdrop of 1980s Los Angeles, the series follows a group of privileged high school seniors at an elite prep school as they navigate identity, sex, jealousy, obsession and the dangers surrounding them with a serial killer loose and targeting teens. At its center is Bret (Igby Rigney), an aspiring writer and keenly observant teenager whose reality begins to unravel with the arrival of the mysterious and magnetic new student Robert Mallory (Homer Gere). The series also stars Kaia Gerber, Hayes Warner, Graham Campbell, Wes Bentley, Evan Rachel Wood and Jordan Roth.

How to Catch a Dirtbag

Discovery Channel, 10 p.m. ■ **New Series**

In a chaotic world, Michael McWhorter tries to be a voice of reason. The filmmaker and director of music videos and commercials, known as Tizzy, is a go-to justice seeker. McWhorter finds bullies — a young woman attacking an older woman selling fruit on the street, a woman spewing hate speech at neighbors, men harassing children — then asks his roughly 11 million social media followers, "Can you help me find this person?" Tizzy is the big brother everyone wants. He's not starting fights; he ends them. His new eight-episode series features interviews with victims, law enforcement, witnesses and perpetrators.

MOVIES YOU'LL LOVE



'Ghost Rider: Spirit of Vengeance'

COLUMBIA PICTURES

Sixteen Candles (1984, Comedy) Molly Ringwald, Anthony Michael Hall **AMC, 6 p.m.**

The Royal We (2025, Romance) Mallory Jansen, Charlie Carrick **Hallmark, 6 p.m.**

Jurassic World: Fallen Kingdom (2018, Adventure) Chris Pratt, Bryce Dallas Howard **SYFY, 7 p.m.**

Pitch Perfect (2012, Musical comedy) Anna Kendrick, Skylar Astin **Freeform, 7:30 p.m.**

Footloose (1984, Drama) Kevin Bacon, Lori Singer **AMC, 8 p.m.**

Toast to Italy (2026, Romance) Will Kemp, Torrey DeVitto **Hallmark, 8 p.m.**

Ghost Rider: Spirit of Vengeance (2011, Action) Nicolas Cage, Idris Elba **BBC America, 9 p.m.**

The Drama (2026, Drama) Zendaya, Robert Pattinson **HBO, 9:15 p.m.**

A Young Father's Nightmare (2025, Suspense) Kate Dailey, Andrew Reid **LMN, 10 p.m.**

ATL (2006, Comedy-drama) Tip Harris, Lauren London **VH1, 10 p.m.**

Pretty Woman (1990, Romance-comedy) Richard Gere, Julia Roberts **TNT, 10:30 p.m.**

If I Had Legs I'd Kick You (2025, Suspense) Rose Byrne, Conan O'Brien **HBO, 11 p.m.**

From the editors of **weekly tv** TV Weekly and tvinsider.com

CATCH A CLASSIC

Summer Under the Stars: Joan Bennett

TCM, beginning at 6 a.m.

From silent films to the sound era, Joan Bennett delighted audiences through a wide range of roles, transitioning from charming ingenue to sensual femme fatale and, finally, to warmhearted wife and mother figure. Today, she returns to Turner Classic Movies' annual Summer Under the Stars event for a 14-film lineup that celebrates her range, including the 1977 supernatural

horror classic *Suspiria*, Bennett's last film role, for which she earned a Saturn Award nomination. You'll also catch Bennett deliver iconic film noir performances in *Scarlet Street* (1945), where she plays two-timing art criminal Kitty March, and 1944's *The Woman in the Window* (pictured), where Bennett and costar Edward G. Robinson find themselves enmeshed in a murder plot. Other highlights of the day include the 1929 biopic *Disraeli*, which kicks off the lineup; *Father of the Bride* (1950), the comedy that inspired the 1991 Charles Shyer remake; *House of Dark Shadows* (1970), a Gothic horror feature in which Bennett's family is tormented by vampires; and more.



RKO PICTURES

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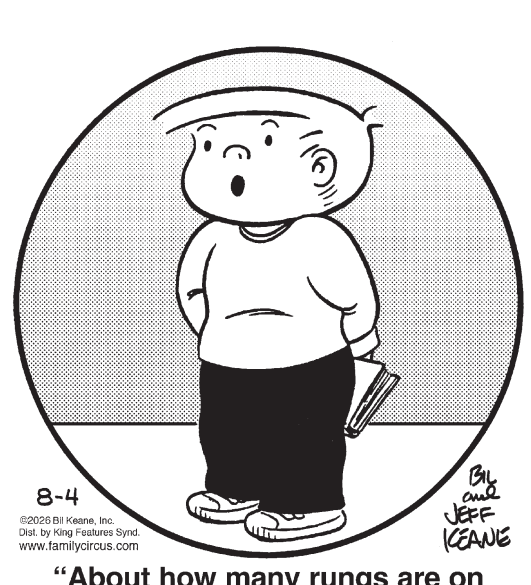
TV - What to watch

CLOSE TO HOME John McPherson



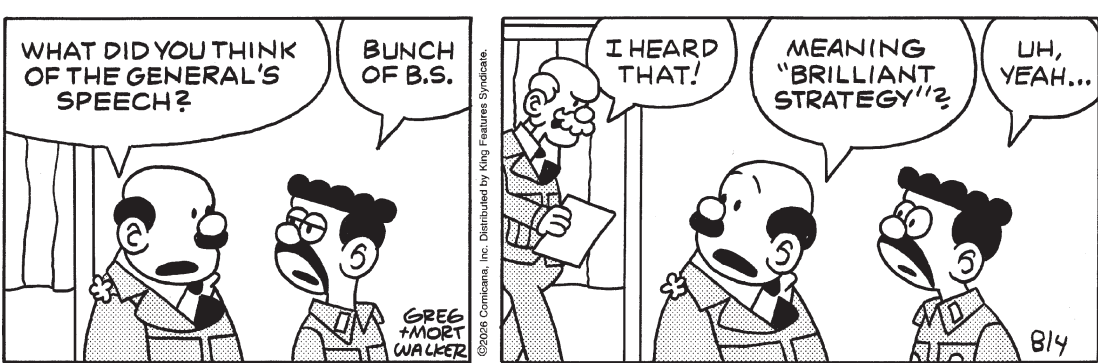
"I appreciate your insights into life, the afterlife and relationships, but I'm really here to say, 'Guru Rafa Shankira, you've been served!'"

THE FAMILY CIRCUS Bil Keane

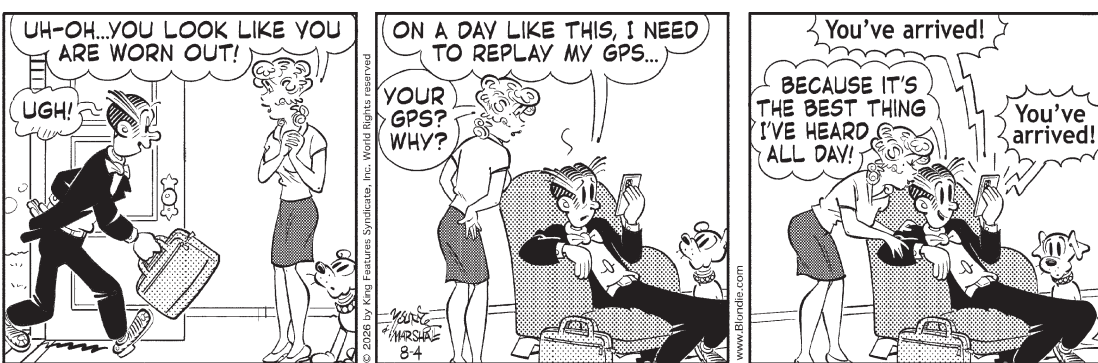


"About how many rungs are on the ladder of success?"

BEETLE BAILEY Mort & Greg Walker



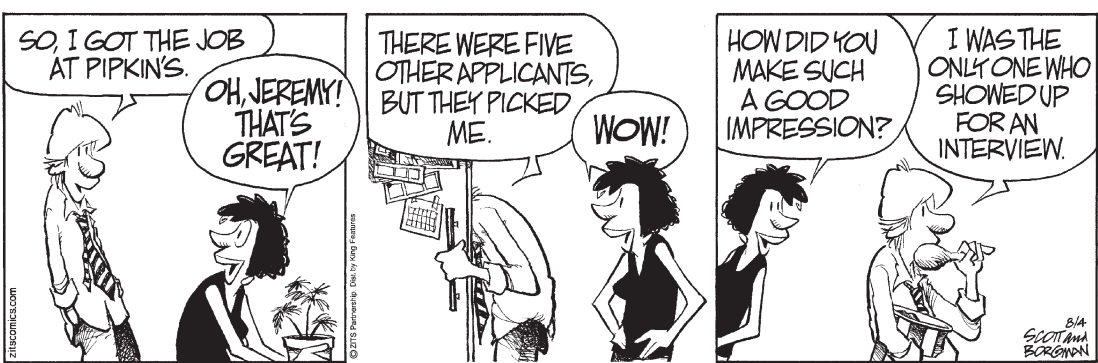
BLONDIE Dean Young & John Marshall



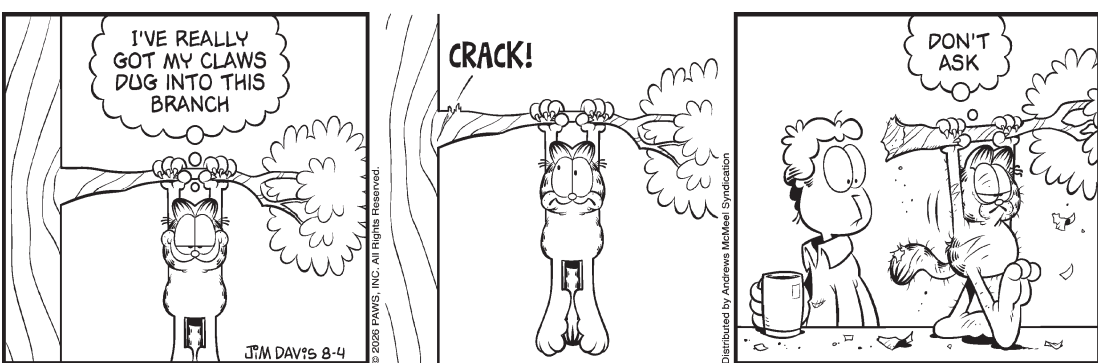
THE BORN LOSER Art & Chip Sansom



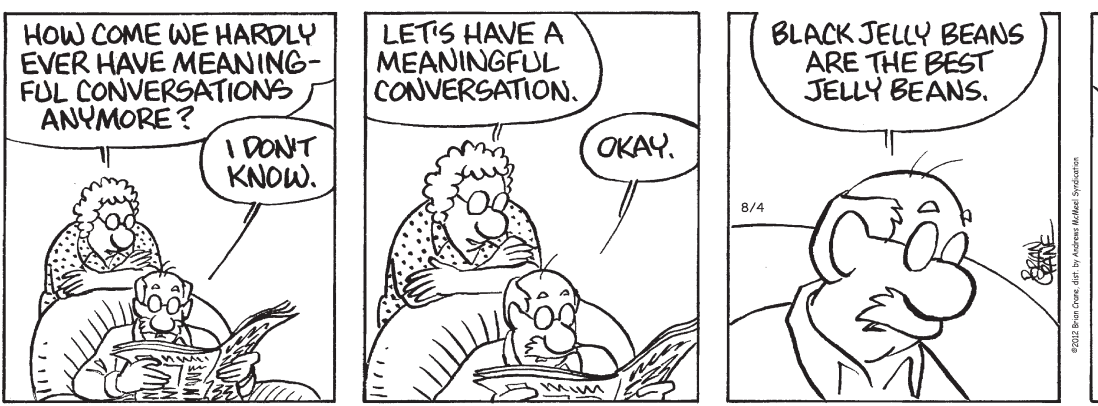
ZITS Jim Borgman & Jerry Scott



GARFIELD Jim Davis



PICKLES Brian Crane



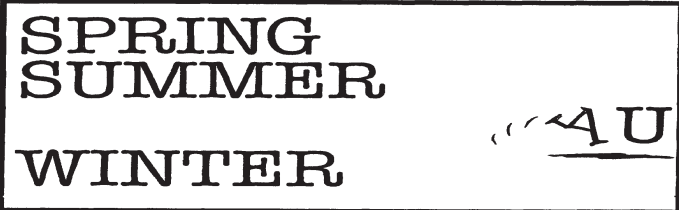
SUDOKU

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★☆☆☆☆

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

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 WHATZIT SOLUTION: Autumn leaves

CROSSWORD

ACROSS

- 1 Punch
- 4 Jumble
- 8 Fret
- 12 Totality
- 13 Spoken
- 14 "Daddy Day —"
- 15 "Nice to meet —!"
- 16 Press
- 17 Reddish-brown
- 18 Prophets
- 20 Fills with joy
- 22 Coach
- 23 Layover
- 24 Hazelnut
- 27 Eagle's nest
- 31 Bother
- 32 Horse's foot
- 34 Stat. in baseball
- 35 Author — Tolstoy
- 36 Go for the —
- 37 — excellence

DOWN

- 38 Big spoon
- 40 Things to consume
- 43 Merit
- 45 Luau fare
- 46 "— the Ides of March"
- 49 Unskilled writers
- 52 Designer — Cassini
- 53 — salmon
- 56 Singer — DiFranco
- 57 Stead
- 58 Soon
- 59 Weight measure
- 60 Miami- County
- 61 Bishop of Rome
- 62 Female sheep

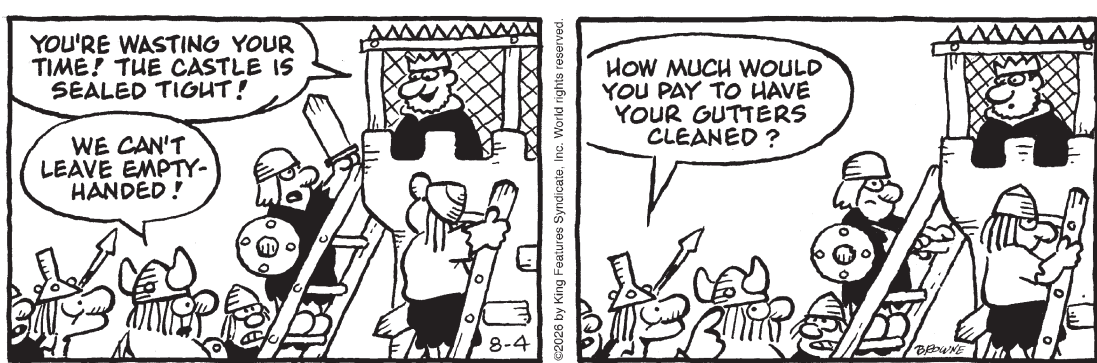
TODAY'S SOLUTION:

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

- 3 Aristocrat (2 wds.)
- 4 Puddinglike dessert
- 5 Blunder
- 6 Droop
- 7 Winter weather
- 8 Scratch
- 9 Tense
- 10 Irish Gaelic
- 11 Moistens
- 19 Massage
- 21 Bread unit
- 23 Pilfered
- 24 Tumble
- 25 Notion
- 26 Between pi and sigma
- 28 Make a copy
- 29 "Dies —"
- 30 Corn spikes
- 33 Unmatched
- 36 Wheel with teeth
- 39 "A — of Their Own"
- 41 Apple mobile device
- 42 Snake
- 44 Summarize
- 46 Fearless
- 47 "Essays of —"
- 48 Garden invader
- 50 Recognize
- 51 — qua non
- 54 Artist Yoko —
- 55 A —, skip and a jump

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HAGAR THE HORRIBLE Chris Browne



PEANUTS Charles M. Schulz



POOCH CAFE Paul Gilligan



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.

FROM SOUP TO NUTS ...

Solution: 7 letters

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

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8/4

Acre, Apples, Beginning, Cheese, Complete, Comprehensive, Cover, Dessert, Details, Dinner, Eggs, Ending, Entire, Event, Everything, Exact, Finish, First, Full, Global, Idiom, Include, Intensive, Last, List, Meal, Menu, Method, Package, Party, Phrase, Pies, Positive, Right, Saying, Sports, Start, Stem, Stern, Task, Timeline, Together, Total, Trip, Unit, Whole

TODAY'S ANSWER: All of It

Albany man arrested in sub-\$2 robbery

Staff Reports
news@albanyherald.com

ALBANY -- Albany Police Department officers arrested a 37-year-old Albany man on charges of robbery by sudden snatching, theft by taking, and obstruction of a law enforcement officer. after the man was accused of stealing tobacco products valued at less than \$2.

The suspect, identified by witnesses as John Bush, was arrested after APD officers responded to a report of a robbery on the 1200 block of Dawson Road. When they arrived, they learned that a woman had been robbed of tobacco products. Witnesses identified the suspect as Bush.

During an altercation, the victim threw her cellphone at Bush as he was fleeing the scene. Bush picked up the phone and fled on foot. Witnesses said Bush ran to his residence, and he refused to open the door after officers knocked and announced their presence.



John Bush

Investigators later obtained a search warrant for Bush's residence, where several other tobacco products matching the brand involved in the incident were observed. Bush was taken into custody and transported to the Dougherty County Jail.

APD officials noted that community involvement continues to be a valuable resource in helping solve crimes and keeping neighborhoods safe. They praised witnesses who came forward in this incident.

The department reminded citizens that any information that could assist with an ongoing investigation may be reported through Crime Stoppers at (229) 436-TIPS, the Albany Police Department mobile app, or by contacting the Criminal Investigative Bureau at (229) 302-0756.

Valdosta man sentenced for illegally possessing firearm used in assault

Staff Reports
news@albanyherald.com

ALBANY – A Valdosta resident with more than a dozen prior felony convictions in Georgia and Florida was sentenced to prison for illegally possessing a firearm after police responded to a victim who was beaten and pistol-whipped by the defendant.

“Violent armed repeat offenders who continually ignore the law and disturb the peace will be held accountable at the federal level for their crimes,” U.S. Attorney Will Keyes said. “Working alongside our local, state, and federal law enforcement partners through the Department of Justice’s Project Safe Neighborhoods, our office is identifying and bringing to justice the most egregious offenders.”

“ATF is committed to holding repeat offenders accountable and putting an end to their cycle of violence,” ATF Special Agent in Charge Benjamin Gibbons said. “Our communities are safer when those who consistently break our laws and threaten our safety are brought to justice.”

Charvez Thompson, 33, of Valdosta, was sentenced to serve 84 months in prison to be followed by three years of supervised release by U.S. District Judge Leslie Abrams Gardner. Thompson previously pleaded guilty

to one count of possession of a firearm by a convicted felon. There is no parole in the federal system.

According to court documents and statements made in court, Valdosta Police Department officers were dispatched to a residence in response to an assault. Upon arrival, officers discovered the victim with visible injuries, including a head hematoma, after being struck by Thompson with a handgun wrapped in tape. Thompson initially denied assaulting the victim, claiming that the victim struck him first. However, officers observed no visible injuries on Thompson.

A small-caliber leather holster was found attached to Thompson’s left boot, and a revolver that was loaded in electrical tape and wrapped with seven rounds was located hidden in his truck. The victim identified the firearm as the one used in the assault, a fact corroborated by a witness. Thompson has an extensive criminal history, including prior convictions for aggravated assault with a deadly weapon and battery. As a convicted felon, it is illegal for him to possess a firearm.

The Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives and the Valdosta Police Department investigated the case. Assistant U.S. Attorney Monica Daniels is prosecuting the case for the government.



Special Photo: Georgia Recorder

A new report says the unauthorized U.S. immigrant population grew to its highest level ever by mid-2024, increasing to 15.8 million after hovering at about 11 million since 2010.



File Photo

Electric power-line installation and repairs is one of the six in-demand occupations that are highlighted in the Georgia Chamber’s Occupational Profiles: All Career Tracks resource.

Georgia Chamber Foundation releases Career Track Profiles

Staff Reports
news@albanyherald.com

ATLANTA – The Georgia Chamber Foundation has released its new Career Track Profiles, a workforce resource designed to help students, educators, employers, workforce professionals, and policymakers better understand career opportunities available in Georgia’s fastest-growing industries.

The inaugural Occupational Profiles: All Career Tracks highlights six in-demand occupations that are essential to Georgia’s economic competitiveness: aircraft mechanics and service technicians, electrical engineers, electrical power-line installers and repairers, electricians, industrial engineers and machinists. Each profile provides a detailed overview of the

occupation, including required education and credentials, salary expectations, projected job outlook, key skills, and career advancement opportunities.

“Utilizing the state’s first unified High Demand Career List, our team was able to develop an actionable tool to guide students and job seekers with the next steps to find employment in our fastest-growing, high-demand careers,” Georgia Chamber Foundation Executive Director Daniela Perry said. “This resource highlights the numerous paths that can be taken whether the individual is a high school student or an adult making a career shift and aids Georgia businesses in filling their greatest talent needs.”

Developed through the GeorgiaLAUNCH initiative of the

Georgia Chamber Foundation’s Center for Workforce & Talent Preparedness, the report serves as a practical guide for connecting Georgians to rewarding careers while helping employers build the skilled workforce needed to support continued economic growth. By combining labor market information with career planning resources, the publication helps Georgians make informed decisions about education, technical training, apprenticeships, certifications, and employment opportunities.

GeorgiaLAUNCH is a two-year project aimed at bolstering the workforce pipeline for high demand careers. These six occupations highlighted in the profiles are a few of the state’s top high-demand careers with

significant upward mobility in numerous communities across the state. This research also includes a skills overlap analysis among these six occupations, creating new opportunities for streamlined training and upskilling.

The GeorgiaLAUNCH report dives deeper into this analysis as well as policy solutions and employer insights on this topic. GeorgiaLAUNCH builds upon the Georgia Chamber Foundation’s growing body of workforce research and support the goals of GEORGIA | 2050, the Chamber’s long-term strategic plan to ensure Georgia remains the best state in the nation to live, work, and do business.

The full report can be found through the Georgia Chamber’s Data Hub.

Writers Museum to welcome best-selling author Robert Gwaltney

Staff Reports
news@albanyherald.com

EATONTON -- Southern Literary Review wrote: “Robert Gwaltney undoubtedly has one of the most stunning imaginations of any author now writing. Winner of the Georgia Writer of the Year Award for First Novel, he brings his second novel, “Sing Down the Moon,” taking readers into a mythical barrier island off the coast of Georgia and into the troubled lives of a generation of women strangely cursed.”

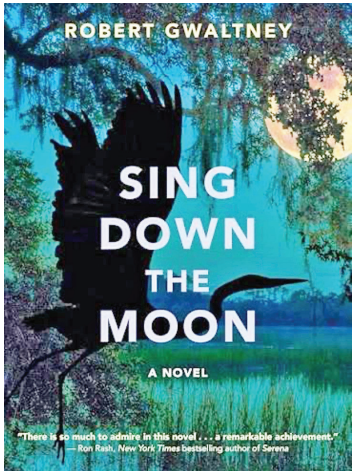
The Georgia Writers Museum is excited to announce Gwaltney is the August Meet the Author

presenter on Tuesday at 7 p.m. Tickets are \$45 (\$40 each for two or more) and include a gourmet meal. Contact www.georgiawritersmuseum.org to register and pre-order a copy of Gwaltney’s new book.

Filled with lush, vivid descriptions and wild plot twists, “Sing Down the Moon” follows 16-year-old Leontyne Skye on her quest to escape the devastating heritage of her mother on the Georgia barrier island known as Good Hope. Right off, too, Gwaltney teases his readers with the mystery of “Tribulation Day” and the accident that cost Leontyne the loss of her right hand and a partial loss of memory.

Gwaltney is a graduate of Florida State University. By day he serves as vice president of Easter Seals North Georgia, a non-profit organization strengthening children and their families at the most critical times in their development. His literary work has appeared in Southbound Magazine, Southern Literary Review, The Blue Mountain Review, and The Dead Mule School of Southern Literature.

In 2022, Gwaltney was the recipient of the Pat Conroy Writer’s Residency. He is the new recipient of the Somerset Award for Literacy and Contemporary Fiction. Gwaltney is also a contributing writer for “Well Read



Special Photo

Author Robert Gwaltney will be the August Meet the Author participant at the Georgia Writers Museum.

Magazine” and podcast host of “Inside Voices.”

His debut novel, “The Cicada Tree,” won the 2023 Georgia Author of the Year Award for First Novel.

Number of unauthorized immigrants in U.S. at nearly 16 million in 2024

By Ariana Figueroa
Georgia Recorder

WASHINGTON — The unauthorized U.S. immigrant population grew to its highest level ever by mid-2024, increasing to 15.8 million after hovering at about 11 million since 2010, according to data released Wednesday by a non-partisan think tank that tracks migration.

The increase primarily stemmed from the historic levels of migration at the southern border that started in 2021 and the Biden administration’s wide use of humanitarian parole and other temporary legal status for millions of people, according to a Migration Policy Institute report based on the most recent data from the U.S. Census Bureau’s American Community Survey in 2024.

“Between 2019 and 2024, MPI estimates the unauthorized immigrant population experienced a net growth of approximately 5 million people, or an average of 8% per year,”

according to the report. “The increases were driven by the uncommonly strong U.S. economic recovery after the COVID-19 pandemic as well as the large-scale displacement from countries throughout the Americas fueled by gang violence, political repression and economic challenges.”

But under the second Trump administration’s aggressive deportation campaign and continued practice of revoking previously granted legal status for immigrants, a decrease in the unauthorized population is likely.

“Should the administration succeed in its efforts to sizably ramp up deportations and if border entries remain at their remarkably low levels, the unauthorized immigrant population may begin to decrease into 2026 and beyond,” according to the report.

Some of that 2024 growth was also due to several Biden administration policies. The administration created new humanitarian parole programs

that allowed migrants from Afghanistan, Cuba, Haiti, Nicaragua, Ukraine and Venezuela to legally enter the United States and obtain work permits, according to the report.

Another tool rolled out by the Biden administration, the CBP One app, which allowed migrants to schedule appointments to apply for asylum, also contributed to the growth of migration to the U.S.

The biggest growth spurt occurred between 2022 and 2023, with an increase of 1.6 million newly arrived migrants. The report also found that while Mexico typically stands as the top country of origin for migrants arriving, “the Mexican share of the unauthorized population has dropped dramatically — from being the overwhelming share in the 1980s and 1990s, to 62% in 2010 and 35% as of 2024.”

Migrants from Central and South America have driven the change in nationality makeup, according to the report.

“This trend reflects sharp

increases in recent arrivals of Ecuadorians, Colombians and especially Venezuelans, as well as steady growth in unauthorized arrivals from Guatemala and Honduras,” according to the report.

In 2023, the Biden administration created two new humanitarian parole processes. One was for Cubans, Haitians, Nicaraguans and Venezuelans. The second was for migrants using the CBP One app.

Those humanitarian programs were similar to one created in 2021 for Afghans, after the chaotic U.S. withdrawal from the country, and for Ukrainians, after Russia invaded Ukraine in 2022. In total, those humanitarian parole programs included roughly 1.4 million immigrants.

The second Trump administration ended those humanitarian parole protections, turned the CBP One app into a self-deportation tool, and has moved to end Temporary Protected Status for hundreds of thousands of immigrants.

Harris has Terrell Eagles focused on becoming tougher

By Joe Whitfield
Sports Editor

DAWSON — Jack Harris has coached football long enough to know winning games doesn't begin on Friday nights.

It starts months earlier, long before the lights come on.

For Terrell Academy, that process began in the weight room.

"The stronger we are, the faster we are," Harris said. "The better we are, the more confidence we have."

After guiding the Eagles through a 4-7 season in his first year after retiring from Terrell County High School,

Harris identified one issue that affected nearly everything else.

His team simply wasn't strong enough.

The Eagles were forced to shuffle lineups throughout last season after approximately 30 players missed at least one game because of injuries. At times, Harris had little choice but to rely on backups and players learning unfamiliar positions.

"We played hard," Harris said. "But we just couldn't overcome those kinds of problems."

Rather than dwell on last season's setbacks, Harris challenged his players to change the program's mentality.

The message has been

consistent throughout the summer.

"I want you better tomorrow than you were today, and better today than you were yesterday."

It's a philosophy Harris credits to legendary Alabama coach Bear Bryant, and one he believes has taken root inside the Eagles' locker room.

"Our seniors have really taken ownership," Harris said. "They've done a great job holding each other accountable. The older kids are showing the younger kids what work ethic and commitment look like."

That accountability has carried over into offseason workouts.

Harris praised his players for attacking the weight room

all summer, saying the gains extend well beyond adding muscle.

"The weight room builds confidence, too," he said. "It's the physical part, but it's also the mental part. We've got to have the mindset that we're going to be as tough as we can possibly be."

Terrell enters preseason practice with 53 players on the roster, including a large senior class and several newcomers experiencing varsity football for the first time.

"I love where we are right now," Harris said. "We're still climbing the hill, but we've got our foot in the door."

Competition has been one of

the biggest differences.

Several positions remain unsettled, something Harris believes benefits everyone.

"Iron sharpens iron," he said. "Competition drives athletes."

The increased depth has also allowed Harris to limit many of the ball, a luxury smaller schools rarely enjoy.

That should help keep players fresher as the season progresses.

"We're more athletic than we were last year," Harris said. "And we've got kids pushing each other every day."

The Eagles won't have long to wait before seeing how far they've come.

Terrell Academy will host

a preseason jamboree on Friday, Aug. 7, beginning at 5:30 p.m., with the Eagles facing Frederica Academy in a controlled scrimmage.

Southwest Georgia Academy and Calvary Christian will play the second scrimmage.

For Harris, the evening won't be about the scoreboard.

It will be about measuring the progress made since the final whistle of last season.

"We're excited," Harris said. "Our kids have worked extremely hard. They've bought into what we're trying to build, and now we just have to keep getting better every week."



Special Photo: Rebecca Johnson, Sherwood Christian Academy

Sherwood Christian senior Dylan Clark will be leading the Sherwood Christian defense into the new season after earning All-State honors last season.

Sherwood taking championship culture to 11-man football

By Joe Whitfield
Sports Editor

ALBANY — For four years, Sherwood Christian Academy measured itself against the best teams in GIAA 8-man football.

Now the Eagles will find out where they stand in an entirely different game.

After winning three state championships in the past four seasons while losing just two games, Sherwood is making the jump to 11-man football this fall, trading dynasty status for the uncertainty that comes with starting over.

The Eagles enter GIAA Class AA, where familiar championship expectations remain but the path becomes considerably tougher. Region games against Southwest Georgia Academy and perennial power Valwood await, along with an early-season showdown

against defending Class AA state champion Robert Toombs.

"We've had a really good summer," head coach Doug Eason said. "We've got work to do, but we have a good group of players. We are going to be young, but we will be alright."

Youth is impossible to ignore.

Sherwood graduated 13 seniors from last year's team, including GIAA Player of the Year Tripp Roberts, an entire offensive line and every starting wide receiver.

Only four seniors remain to help guide the transition, led by all-state defensive end Dylan Clark, defensive back Hunter Gregg and wide receiver Witt Baker.

"A lot of new faces," athletic director Jay Flynt said. "We've got some guys that can really play, but we are going to be very young. We know what we have signed up for. It is going to be challenging, but

this season will tell us how we stack up."

The adjustment goes well beyond replacing experienced players.

Eight-man football and 11-man football demand different strategies, spacing and responsibilities, forcing even returning stars to rethink the way they play.

Clark, an all-state selection a year ago, said his role has changed dramatically.

"Last year I was focused on getting the tackle or making the sack," Clark said. "Now my job is more about containment and letting the linebackers make the tackle, so it is a little bit of an adjustment."

Returning all-state running back Chuck LaGrange has noticed similar differences on offense.

See **SEASON**, 10A

The Price of Winning: Georgia's roster valued at \$30.4 million

By Joe Whitfield
Sports Editor

ATHENS — Not long ago, the biggest number attached to a college football program was its recruiting class ranking.

Today, it's the estimated value of its roster.

As college athletics enters its first full season of direct revenue sharing with athletes, roster valuations measured in the tens of millions of dollars have become the sport's newest benchmark. According to The NIL Standard, Georgia enters the 2026 season with an estimated roster NIL value of \$30.4 million, ranking 13th nationally and illustrating just how dramatically the financial landscape has changed.

Texas tops the nation with an estimated roster value of \$47.6 million, followed by Oregon (\$41.4 million), LSU (\$39.8 million), Miami (\$37.9 million) and Ohio State (\$37.6 million). National Champion Indiana, which rounds out the top 15, carries an estimated value of \$29.4 million.

Collectively, the nation's 15 highest-valued rosters are estimated at more than \$521 million.

The numbers are not payrolls or audited financial statements.

The NIL Standard describes them as estimates of each roster's overall market value, calculated using player production, recruiting rankings, positional importance, experience, projected role, program market and other performance indicators. When credible contract information becomes available, those figures replace the model's projections.

Viewed that way, the rankings offer perhaps the clearest snapshot yet of college football's new economic reality.

Just a few years ago, schools could not legally compensate athletes beyond scholarships and limited educational benefits. Now, following the arrival of revenue sharing and an increasingly sophisticated NIL marketplace, championship contenders are fielding rosters valued at more than \$30

million.

Georgia's placement is especially noteworthy because the Bulldogs reached that figure differently than many of the programs ranked ahead of them.

Rather than relying on a handful of mega-contracts, Georgia's value is spread throughout the roster.

Quarterback Gunner Stockton owns the Bulldogs' highest individual estimate at \$2 million. Offensive lineman Earnest Greene III and defensive lineman Elijah Griffin are each valued at approximately \$1 million, while Gabe Harris Jr., Juan Gaston, Drew Bobo, Ekene Ogboko, Jordan Hall, Isiah Canion and KJ Bolden round out the team's 10 highest-valued players.

Those 10 players account for only about one-third of Georgia's estimated roster value. The remaining \$20.3 million is distributed across

See **ROSTER**, 10A

The following ranking uses The NIL Standard's live roster totals accessed July 31, 2026. The service warns that its pages update as transfers, depth charts, reported contracts and model inputs change. A May 2026 media snapshot, for example, had materially different ordering and totals for Miami, Ohio State and other schools, demonstrating that these figures must always carry an "as of" date.

Rank	School	Estimated 2026 roster NIL value	Share of top-15 total	Figure confidence
1	Texas	\$47.6M	9.1%	Medium-low
2	Oregon	\$41.4M	7.9%	Medium-low
3	LSU	\$39.8M	7.6%	Medium-low
4	Miami	\$37.9M	7.3%	Medium-low
5	Ohio State	\$37.6M	7.2%	Medium-low
6	USC	\$34.3M	6.6%	Medium-low
7	Texas Tech	\$34.2M	6.6%	Medium-low
8	Notre Dame	\$33.1M	6.4%	Medium-low
9	Texas A&M	\$32.2M	6.2%	Medium-low
10	Ole Miss	\$31.8M	6.1%	Medium-low
11	Alabama	\$31.2M	6.0%	Medium-low
12	Michigan	\$30.6M	5.9%	Medium-low
13	Georgia	\$30.4M	5.8%	Medium-low
14	Tennessee	\$29.6M	5.7%	Medium-low
15	Indiana	\$29.4M	5.6%	Medium-low
Combined		\$521.1M		100%

Terrell Academy tunes up for season with preseason scrimmage

By Joe Whitfield
Sports Editor

DAWSON — The blazing South Georgia sun, full uniforms and fans lining the fences made it feel like opening day.

The only thing missing was a game that counted.

Terrell Academy took another step toward the start of the 2026 softball season Friday, hosting Tatnall Square Academy of Macon in a preseason scrimmage at its home field. While the outcome won't appear in either team's record book, the afternoon provided exactly what Lady Eagles coach Ashley Walker wanted — a chance to evaluate his team against quality competition before

the regular season begins.

"I thought our pitchers did really well today," Walker said. "I thought we did a good job of competing in the batter's box. We worked a lot of counts and put some pressure on their pitchers to throw strikes."

Terrell Academy consistently challenged Tatnall's pitching staff throughout the afternoon, showing patience at the plate while producing several well-struck balls.

Walker believes the next step is capitalizing on those opportunities in key situations.

"We hit some balls hard," he said. "We just have to do a little bit better job with our approach in different situations."

Defensively, the Lady Eagles showed flashes of solid play

but also experienced the type of lapses that are common during preseason competition. A handful of errors extended innings and created additional scoring chances for Tatnall Square.

Walker, however, viewed those mistakes as teachable moments rather than long-term concerns.

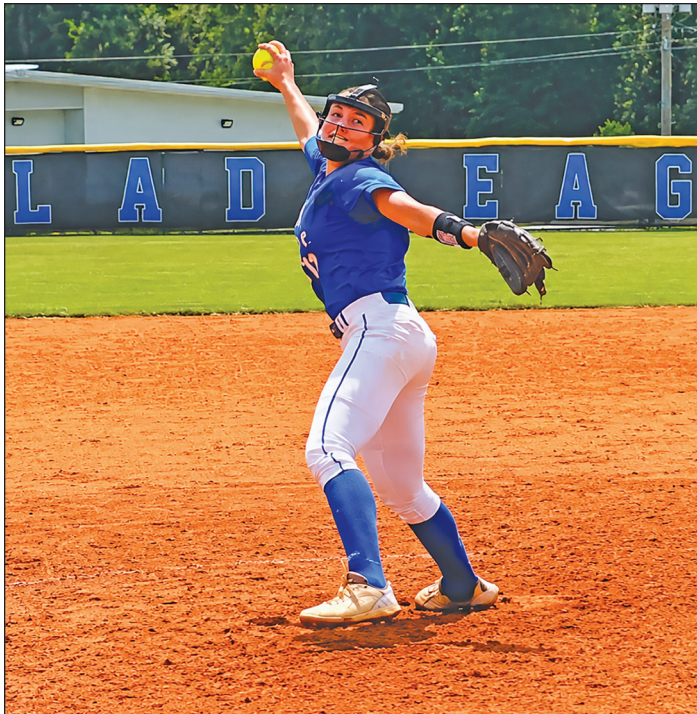
"Defensively, we had innings where we gave them extra outs because of errors," he said. "Luckily, those errors were a result of our lack of focus, trying to do too much or simply slowing the game down."

The veteran coach came away encouraged because the issues he identified are correctable before the regular season begins.

"The good thing about today was all of our mistakes are things that can be corrected at practice," Walker said. "Overall, I am pleased with the way we competed."

The timing of Friday's scrimmage was especially valuable with the regular season just days away. Terrell Academy opens its 2026 campaign Tuesday with a formidable road test at defending GIAA state champion Southwest Georgia Academy in Damascus, giving the Lady Eagles little time to dwell on mistakes and every reason to sharpen their focus.

If Friday's preseason tune-up was any indication, Walker believes his team has a solid foundation. Now the challenge shifts from learning lessons in a scrimmage to putting them into practice when the games begin to count.



Staff Photo: Joe Whitfield

Terrell Academy pitcher Michaela Zingarelli delivers a pitch during the Lady Eagles' preseason scrimmage against Tatnall Square Academy on Friday in Dawson.

Braves face uncertain future on the mound

Field Level Media

ATLANTA — Just a few months ago, the Atlanta Braves appeared to have one of baseball’s deepest collections of pitching talent.

Now, questions surrounding the health of Spencer Strider and Hurston Waldrep have created uncertainty about the club’s long-term rotation while making the organization’s top pitching prospects even more valuable.

According to MLB.com Braves beat writer Mark Bowman, Atlanta’s farm system remains one of the strongest in baseball, headlined by Cam Caminiti, the Braves’ No. 1 prospect and the No. 41 overall prospect in MLB

Pipeline, and right-hander Eric Hartman, the organization’s No. 2 prospect and No. 74 overall.

Whether those prospects remain in the organization or eventually become trade chips, Bowman believes their value has increased because of lingering concerns surrounding the Braves’ current pitching staff.

Strider has not pitched since leaving a June 12 start against the New York Mets with right elbow inflammation. The Braves announced he would be re-evaluated four weeks later, but have not provided another update. According to Bowman, the expectation around baseball is that Strider is unlikely to

return as a starting pitcher this season, raising questions about whether the former ace will eventually return to the rotation or transition into a relief role.

Waldrep’s future also remains uncertain.

The former first-round draft pick underwent surgery during spring training to remove loose bodies from his pitching elbow before returning to throw 29 innings between the minor leagues and the majors. He was shut down again after experiencing right elbow discomfort during a Triple-A start on July 19.

Bowman noted that two elbow issues in such a short period are cause for concern. The Braves are hopeful

Spencer Schwellenbach can provide better news. The right-hander is expected to accelerate his rehabilitation after missing significant time with elbow injuries dating back to last season. A fractured elbow ended his 2025 campaign, and bone spurs delayed his return this spring.

Despite those concerns, Atlanta still has a solid foundation in its major league rotation.

Veteran left-hander Chris Sale is under contract through 2027 with a club option for 2028. Bryce Elder remains under team control through 2029, AJ Smith-Shawver through 2031, Reynaldo López is signed through 2027, and Grant Holmes remains under

club control through 2030. Martín Pérez is eligible for free agency after this season.

Bowman believes Sale, Elder and Smith-Shawver are the safest bets to remain key members of Atlanta’s rotation over the next several seasons.

The next wave of pitching talent is also approaching.

Didier Fuentes is expected to transition back into a starting role next season, while JR Ritchie gained valuable experience during seven major league starts this year. Owen Murphy continues to develop after making his major league debut, and teenage prospects Caminiti and Briggs McKenzie are viewed as longer-term

rotation candidates.

Another name to watch is Herick Hernandez, who struggled with command after reaching Triple-A but posted an impressive 32.5 percent strikeout rate at Double-A.

Bowman’s assessment is that Atlanta still possesses enough pitching depth to build a strong rotation for years to come. But after injuries have sidelined several of the organization’s most promising arms, projecting exactly what that future will look like has become much more difficult.

As a result, the Braves’ greatest strength — their stockpile of young pitching — may also be their biggest question mark.



Special Photo: Imagn Images

Former New Orleans Saints coach Sean Payton talks with quarterback Drew Brees during their championship run in New Orleans. Brees recently asked Payton to present him for induction into the Pro Football Hall of Fame on Aug. 8 in Canton, Ohio.

Sean Payton caught ‘off guard’ by Drew Brees’ HOF intro call

Field Level Media

Sean Payton wasn’t expecting a call from Drew Brees to serve as an emotional reminder of their 15 seasons together in New Orleans.

Brees contacted his former coach by video call to ask Payton to serve as his presenter when the quarterback is enshrined in the Pro Football Hall of Fame on Aug. 8 in Canton, Ohio.

Payton, now coach of the Denver Broncos, teared up before accepting.

“Honest to God, I can’t believe you just did that,” Payton told Brees in a video released by the Saints.

Payton said Thursday that he was preparing to play golf with a group of friends when the call arrived. His wife and the others already knew what Brees planned to ask.

“Listen, it caught me off guard,” Payton said. “... It was just a lot being 15 years

together.”

Payton added that the bond between a coach and quarterback can sometimes be overlooked, particularly because those partnerships do not always conclude on good terms.

“I was really proud that it ended the way he wanted it to, so I’m excited for him,” Payton said. “As a coach, it’s an honor that someone would ask you to do that.”

Payton and Brees arrived in New Orleans in 2006 and helped transform the Saints into regular contenders. Their tenure included a victory in Super Bowl XLIV, where Brees was named the game’s Most Valuable Player.

Brees retired after the 2020 season with 80,358 passing yards and 571 touchdown passes. He will enter the Hall of Fame alongside Larry Fitzgerald, Luke Kuechly, Roger Craig and Adam Vinatieri.

\$2.5 million contract valuation from On3. Neither figure represents a verified accounting of actual cash received. Instead, each measures a different form of player value.

The rankings also remain fluid. The NIL Standard updates its live valuations as transfers occur, depth charts shift and new contract information becomes available.

What doesn’t appear likely to change is the direction of the sport.

In only a few years, college football has gone from debating whether athletes should be paid to comparing rosters valued at more than \$30 million. The question facing national championship contenders is no longer whether money matters. It’s how much is enough.

The following ranking uses The NIL Standard’s live roster totals accessed July 31, 2026. The service warns that its pages update as transfers, depth charts, reported contracts and model inputs change. A May 2026 media snapshot, for example, had materially different ordering and totals for Miami, Ohio State and other schools, demonstrating that these figures must always carry an “as of” date.

Cristina Ulbrich, wife of Falcons DC Jeff Ulbrich, dies after cancer battle

Field Level Media

The Atlanta Falcons announced Thursday the death of Cristina Ulbrich, wife of defensive coordinator Jeff Ulbrich, who was fighting cancer.

The Falcons confirmed her passing in a pair of statements. The team called Cristina Ulbrich “a constant source of love and support to Jeff, their family, and the broader Falcons community.”

The team also released a statement from owner Arthur Blank.

“Cristina will always be an important part of our Falcons family,” Blank said. “My heart is with Jeff, Samantha, Jax, Jace and the entire Ulbrich family during this unimaginable time.

“It was always evident how deeply Cristina loved her family and how fiercely she supported them. She faced every challenge with extraordinary courage, strength and grace, inspiring so many through the way she lived and the way she fought. My family and I, along with the entire Falcons family, send our love and prayers for strength to everyone mourning her loss.

“The greatest legacy Cristina leaves behind is the family she loved so completely, and her strength and spirit will continue to shine through them.”

Funeral arrangements were not mentioned in either statement. Jeff Ulbrich had not yet joined the Falcons at the outset of training camp due to a personal matter.

Ulbrich has spent the bulk of his coaching career with Atlanta. He was on the defensive staff from 2015-20, including as interim defensive coordinator for part of



Special Photo: Brett Davis-Imagn Images

Atlanta Falcons defensive coordinator Jeff Ulbrich patrols the sideline during a game last season. The Falcons announced Thursday that Ulbrich’s wife, Cristina, died after a battle with cancer.

2020, before the New York Jets named him their defensive coordinator in 2021.

He spent four seasons with the Jets and served as their interim head coach for the final 12 games of 2024 following the firing of Robert Saleh. After that, Ulbrich returned to Atlanta as its defensive coordinator. The Falcons retained him this offseason despite the head coaching change from Raheem Morris to Kevin Stefanski.

Moving the Chains: Big once more

By Scott Ludwig

MagicLudwig1@gmail.com

Beginning with Florida’s National Championship in 2006, the Southeastern Conference (SEC) had bragging rights to having the best team in the country 13 times over the next 17 seasons. The only ‘outsiders’ between 2006 and 2022 were four years when Florida State, Ohio State, and Clemson — who did it twice — were on top.

But now the SEC is no longer the big man on campus. That title now belongs to (inhale and take a deep breath) the Big Ten, fresh from pulling off a midwestern ‘threepeat’ after winning a third National Championship in a row.

And they didn’t do it the way you might expect, with a single dominant team. Instead, the Big Ten pulled it off with three different ones.

That’s right: the conference that doesn’t know how to count — the last time I checked the Big Ten has expanded to eighteen teams - has produced the last three NCAA Champions in college football: Michigan in 2023, Ohio State in 2024, and Indiana in 2025. Defending champion Indiana is also the first FBS team to finish with a record of 16 — 0

since Yale did it back in 1894 — more than a decade before quarterbacks like Hoosier/Heisman winner Fernando Mendoza were allowed to throw the ball past the line of scrimmage.

Time will tell if Indiana’s dream season was just a fluke, or if the Hoosiers are indeed poised to claim Penn State’s spot amongst the conference’s Big Three (Ohio State and Michigan being the other two).

Actually, let’s make that Big Four, now that odd duck Oregon has joined the conference. If you’re curious as to why a team from the west coast now belongs to a conference originally based in the Midwest, you’re not alone. In fact, you may be wondering the exact same thing about Rutgers, which is on the east coast (not to mention in New Jersey) and on the complete opposite side of the country from Oregon.

Teams like Oregon and Rutgers will say it was for a number of reasons, but if they’re being honest they’d say the main reason was financial stability. The fact that the *geographical alignment makes absolutely no sense — to time-zone challenged players as well as fans opposed

to long-distance travel — is irrelevant. Money talks a lot louder than either one of them.

*“Hold my beer,” the Atlantic Coast Conference said right before inviting teams from the Pacific coast to join.

The expansion of the Big Ten sets up potential conference rivalries that will take some time getting accustomed to. For example, UCLA and Maryland sounds more like a Liberty Bowl matchup rather than a regular season ‘rivalry’ game. And there’s also that nasty three-hour time difference separating the two schools.

Now, as for having 18 teams in a conference named the Big Ten ...

At one time the Big 12 was called the Big Six. Over time and with expansion, it became the Big Seven, then the Big Eight, and by 1996 ceased existing altogether. Then it simply merged with several teams from the Southwest Conference to form the Big 12.

*The conference of west coast teams went through a similar transition, beginning with the Pac-8, then the Pac-10, and ultimately the Pac-12 that, for the sake of argument, died a quick death when 10 of the 12 teams jumped ship,

leaving behind just Oregon State and Washington State.

Fear not, because the Pac-12 will live to see another day: seven teams have been added for the 2026 season.

Why they don’t just start fresh and call it the Big-9 is anyone’s guess.

OK, Big Ten, the ball is in your court. It’s time for a new name that makes sense. Here are three options:

Big Eighteen (B-18), because it’s numerically correct.

Coast-to-Coast Conference (CCC), because it is geographically correct.

Big Four + 14 Others (B4+14), because it’s the truth.

One last thing. Now that the Big Ten has some of their games televised in prime time on NBC under the network slogan Big Ten Saturday, you might want to consider this:

At one game last season two announcers were standing on either side of NBC’s banner, which was supposed to look like this:

BIG TEN SATURDAY

Only the announcer on the left blocked out the letters ‘SA’ and the announcer on the right blocked out the letters ‘AY’ as well as the entire word ‘TEN.’ That left just these letters visible to the viewers at home.

season matchups.

For a program accustomed to competing for championships, the move to 11-man football represents unfamiliar territory.

But Eason doesn’t see it as a rebuilding project.

He sees it as the beginning of Sherwood’s next chapter.

From 9A

SEASON

After rushing for 1,112 yards and nine touchdowns as a sophomore last season, LaGrange said success in the running game now requires

greater patience.

“The field is wider in 11-man, but you have more players on the field, so the gaps to run through are more compact,” he said.

Sherwood will receive its first test Aug. 14 when Brookwood visits Legacy Field

for a preseason scrimmage.

The Eagles open the regular season Aug. 21 at Central Fellowship before returning home a week later to face defending GIAA Class AA champion Robert Toombs in what promises to be one of the area’s marquee early-

From 2A

SENTENCED

tenced to nearly four years in prison after pleading guilty to charges of using marijuana while owning a gun and felony child neglect. Taylor's son told police he found his mother's 9 mm handgun in her purse on the top of a dresser and brought it to school in his backpack. Taylor was released from federal prison in 2025 and transferred to state prison, where she completed her sentence and was released in May 2026.

Robert Crimo Jr., father of the 21-year-old who killed seven people and injured 48 others at a Fourth of July parade in Highland Park, Ill., in 2022, pleaded guilty to seven counts of misdemeanor reckless conduct for sponsoring his son's gun license application months after police responded to reports of concerning behavior. In 2023 Crimo was sentenced to 60 days in jail and two years of probation. Raymond Fryberg, father of the 15-year-old who killed four

people and himself at Marysville Pilchuck High School in Marysville, Wash., in 2014, was convicted of illegally purchasing and owning the gun used in the shooting. Fryberg lied on a background check form about being the subject of a protective order for domestic violence. He was sentenced to two years in prison in 2016.

The prosecutions fill a gap left by a lack of federal gun storage laws, under which parents could be charged for allowing children access to guns. At least 26 states and the District of Columbia have laws that require parents to store their guns securely when a child could access them. Georgia's law makes it a crime to knowingly, intentionally, or recklessly provide a handgun to a child, but not to unsafely store a firearm.

In the case of the Apalachee shooter, red flags didn't prompt his father to lock up his guns. In May 2023, sheriff's deputies acting on an FBI tip visited Gray's home regarding school shooting threats his son had made on the chat service Discord. They asked

him to restrict the teen's access to weapons, prosecutors said. But seven months later, Gray bought his son a SIG Sauer M400 assault-style rifle and took him to the range to learn how to shoot it. It's the same gun he'd use to shoot his classmates.

Gray did not address the court before his sentencing.

In closing remarks, the sentencing judge said to Gray, "It is clear you failed as a parent." He described how Gray didn't heed the warnings and keep his son away from guns. He noted that his son was at risk of suicide. He told Gray, no one thinks their child is going to be the next school shooter, and went on to say, "You had gun locks and you didn't use them. You could have put your guns in the safe. You could have removed the ammo from the magazines. You could have let someone else hold the guns while you got Colt help. If you'd done any of those things you wouldn't be here today."

Gray's lawyer said he plans to appeal the first-of-its-kind conviction.

From 2A

EXAM

of their hard work and dedication to the field of surgical technology.

Graduates of SRTC's Surgical Technology program receive an Associate of Applied Science degree and are prepared to step directly into the operating room, where they learn to prepare surgical suites, arrange instruments and equipment, and assist physicians during procedures. Coursework covers surgical

procedures, aseptic technique, medical terminology, anatomy, and pharmacology, along with the interpersonal skills students need to thrive in a fast-paced clinical setting.

"Every graduating class leaves its mark, but this one stands out for its resilience, teamwork, and unwavering commitment to becoming the best they could be," Surgical Technology Program Chair Gina Chambers. "I couldn't be prouder of the professionals they've become, and I have no doubt they will make a lasting difference in every operating room they enter."

Southern Regional Technical College offers over 150 degree, diploma, and certificate programs that are designed to get students quickly into their desired careers, and 38 general education courses that transfer to the University System of Georgia institutions and 19 private colleges and universities in Georgia.

For the most up-to-date information on registration, class dates, and program offerings, interested individuals can log on to www.southernregional.edu or call (888) 205 - 3449. Fall semester begins Aug. 18.

Obituary announcements



Mrs. Utoka Broadway
Mrs. Utoka Broadway of Bainbridge, GA, passed away on Tuesday, July 28, 2026. A funeral service was held on Friday, July 31, 2026, at 11:00 AM at Sheffield Funeral Chapel in Colquitt Funeral Home with John Woodrum officiating. Mrs. Utoka was interred at Black Jack Baptist Church Cemetery. Mrs. Utoka retired from Synovus Bank. She is survived by two sons, Gregory (Rachel) Davis and Kevin Davis; two grandsons, Zekeria Davis and Owen Davis; and five siblings, Wayne, Vernon, Sharon, Leon, and Anna Mae. She was preceded in death by her husband, Jimmy Broadway; and parents, Dorcas and Walcie McCollough.



George M. Chastain, III, MD
George M. Chastain, III, MD died Sunday, July 19, 2026 at his home. His memorial service will at 11 AM on Saturday, August 8, 2026 at St. Paul's Episcopal Church. The Rev. Stephen Norris and the Rev. Christopher A. Pappas will officiate. There will be a reception to follow the memorial service at St. Paul's Parrish Hall. Dr. Chastain was born in New Brunswick, NJ and graduated from Sayerville High School, Sayerville, NJ in 1955. He received his BA from Emory University in 1959 and his Doctorate of Medicine from the Emory University School of Medicine in 1963. Dr. Chastain served as a flight surgeon with the US Air Force Air Rescue Service from 1963 to 1967 at Eglin Air Force base, Ft. Walton Beach, FL and at Ton San Nhut Air Force Base, Republic of Viet Nam. Captain Chastain was awarded the Bronze Star for meritorious service. Following his discharge from the Air Force, Dr. Chastain

began his Anesthesiology Residency at Emory University in 1970. He began private practice in Albany in 1972. In 1985, Dr. Chastain became an Associate Professor of Anesthesiology at Emory University School of Medicine. Dr. Chastain became the Chief Medical Officer of Phoebe Putney Memorial Hospital in 1987. He was the first physician to hold this office in the State of Georgia.

During his medical career, Dr. Chastain was recognized for many achievements. He was appointed by Governor Joe Frank Harris to the Georgia Composite State Board of Medical Examiners in 1980 and was elected president in 1982 and served until 1992. He helped develop the Phoebe Putney Memorial Hospital Chaplaincy Program. He co-chaired the Best Practice Committee and Peer Review Committee of the Partnership for Health and Accountability with the Georgia Hospital Association.

Dr. Chastain was a member of the American Medical Association, the Medical Association of Georgia, the Dougherty County Medical Society, past president, American Association of Anesthesiologists, Georgia Society of Anesthesiologists, past president, Physician Executives of Georgia, Inc., past president. He was an alumnus of Leadership Georgia and served in the first Board of Directors of Leadership Albany and helped plan healthcare presentations to new members. Dr. Chastain is a member of St. Paul's Episcopal Church and was a former member of Porterfield Methodist Church. He was a past board member of the Albany Symphony Board and the Boy Scouts of America. He was also a past member of the Albany Chamber of Commerce and the American Cancer Society where as a cancer survivor he lectured on "Seasons of Survival, the Road Following Cancer."

Dr. Chastain was preceded in death by his first wife, Sarah Anne Chastain.

Dr. Chastain is survived by his wife: Fran Pappas Chastain; her children, grandchildren, and great grandchildren; his children: Sarah Beth Morgan, Scott Chastain, and George Chastain, IV; three grandchildren.

Those desiring may send memorials to the Willson Hospice House, 312 Foundation Lane, Albany, GA 31707, or to Wounded Warrior Project, support.woundedwarriorproject.org.



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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 having a quibble (9)	_____
2 lightning follower (11)	_____
3 Taylor and Banks (10)	_____
4 opening eggshells, perhaps (8)	_____
5 set up (9)	_____
6 Stonehenge and Sphinx (9)	_____
7 classic French pastries (10)	_____

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Saturday's Answers: 1. GROTESQUE 2. ARAB 3. CRAFTS 4. LANDO 5. CHARLI 6. CHIRPINESS 7. MARRAKESH 8/3

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 in a furious way (7)	_____
2 reaching by cell (7)	_____
3 breathes out (7)	_____
4 "Knives Out" star Craig (6)	_____
5 Hungary's capital (8)	_____
6 false pretense (5)	_____
7 "putting your foot down" (8)	_____

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Monday's Answers: 1. BICKERING 2. THUNDERCLAP 3. ELIZABETHS 4. CRACKING 5. CONFIGURE 6. MONUMENTS 7. CROISSANTS 8/4

Release Date: Tuesday, August 4, 2026

Los Angeles Times Daily Crossword Puzzle

Edited by Patti Varol

ACROSS

1 Corn cores
5 Pet rehoming org.
10 Sandwich letters
13 Opera solo
14 Replacements for flat tires
15 "___ la la!"
16 "Video game boost that may repair damage
18 ___ Lanka
19 "Absolutely out of the question!"
20 Wall surface
22 Quick snooze
23 "Waterproof garment
24 Unleashed
27 Cry for attention?
28 "You're ___ human"
29 Charged particle
30 Barely gets (by)
32 Vietnamese soup
34 "Internal setting controlled by thermoregulation
40 Span of epoch proportions?
41 Frozen dessert brand
42 NBC show that inspired "30 Rock," for short
43 Dull pain
46 Superhero franchise initials
47 Steel gilder
49 "High-intensity workout program
52 Kissing in the open, for short
53 Beeper on the road
54 Promo in a magazine
58 Sci-fi visitors
59 Go over twice, or what can be found in the answer to each starred clue
61 Alumna bio word
62 Add to a kitty
63 Lo ___: noodle dish
64 Take a crack at
65 Cook in a basket
66 Annual May auto race, informally

DOWN

1 "High Hopes" lyricist Sammy
2 "Milk's Favorite Cookie" brand
3 Skewed view
4 ___ solution: contacts wearer's need
5 Cathedral recess
6 Sticky tree juice
7 Purchase in advance
8 String section instruments
9 Lion of Narnia
10 Paul Revere House city
11 Cosmetics giant
12 Two points, in tennis
14 TV soccer analyst
17 Swap with
21 "Amscray!"
23 High regard
24 Bit of baloney
25 Milne youngling
26 Infinity sign's lack
27 Stitched border
31 "Jeopardy!" host
32 Be nosy
33 Like some Orthodox Jews
35 "For crying out loud!"
36 School URL suffix
37 Draw upon
38 Molecule in some vaccines
39 Shade tree with serrated leaves
43 Regional speech pattern
44 Meteorite's mark
45 Rocking toy, in baby talk
46 Very hard to see
48 Vietnamese sandwich
50 Combo meal drinks
51 Moving line on a weather map
52 Work overseen by a sous-chef
54 Deep purple
55 Adolescent
56 Tart
57 Big Apple fashion letters
60 Arthur of "The Golden Girls"

ANSWER TO PREVIOUS PUZZLE:

A	G	N	I		W	V	E	L	S		A	H	I
N	I	E	W		d	U	E	L	N	V		E	N
X	I	O	H	C	O	E	T	B	N	O	V		S
D	V	L	N	I	H	d		N	H	O	H	V	C
			V	d	d		L	I	F	S	S	O	H
W	V	E	B	I		N	O				E	H	O
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E	H	U	L	V	E	d		W	E	L	A	d	O
			O	H	d			S	E	K	E	N	O
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L	V	O	O	N	I	V	H		d	V	N		
H	E	L	S	V	T	d		E	E	L	I	S	O
I	H	S		T	E	d		S	H	L	T	V	E
H	O	O		S	E	V	d	S		V	I	H	V
L	T	B		V	O	d	S	V		S	B	O	C

08/04/26

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
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43	44	45			46				47	48			
49					50	51			52				
53								54			55	56	57
58					59			60					
61					62						63		
64					65						66		

By Robin Stars
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08/04/26

Sumter Development Authority receives grant to begin Workforce Housing Subdivision infrastructure

Staff Reports

news@albanyherald.com

AMERICUS -- The Sumter Development Authority has received final approval to begin work on a new housing development aimed at expanding workforce housing options in Sumter County.

Authority leaders met last week with representatives from the Georgia Department of Community Affairs, grant administrators, and Smith Douglas Homes to finalize policies and outline procedures. Smith Douglas Homes will construct approximately 83 homes at the corner of Bumphead Road and Industrial Drive, directly across from primary, elementary, and middle schools.

Homes will range from 1,200 to 2,200 square feet, include garages, and be valued between \$150,000 and

\$290,000 depending on buyer-selected features and amenities. The subdivision will feature a pond/retention area, walkable open spaces, two access roads, and restricted covenants.

“This is a great placement for a subdivision to address workforce housing,” Rusty Warner, executive director of the Development Authority, said. “Its location provides a convenient option for our industrial park workers. In addition, we hope this will be a draw for much-needed housing for hospital workers, education staff, fire and police.”

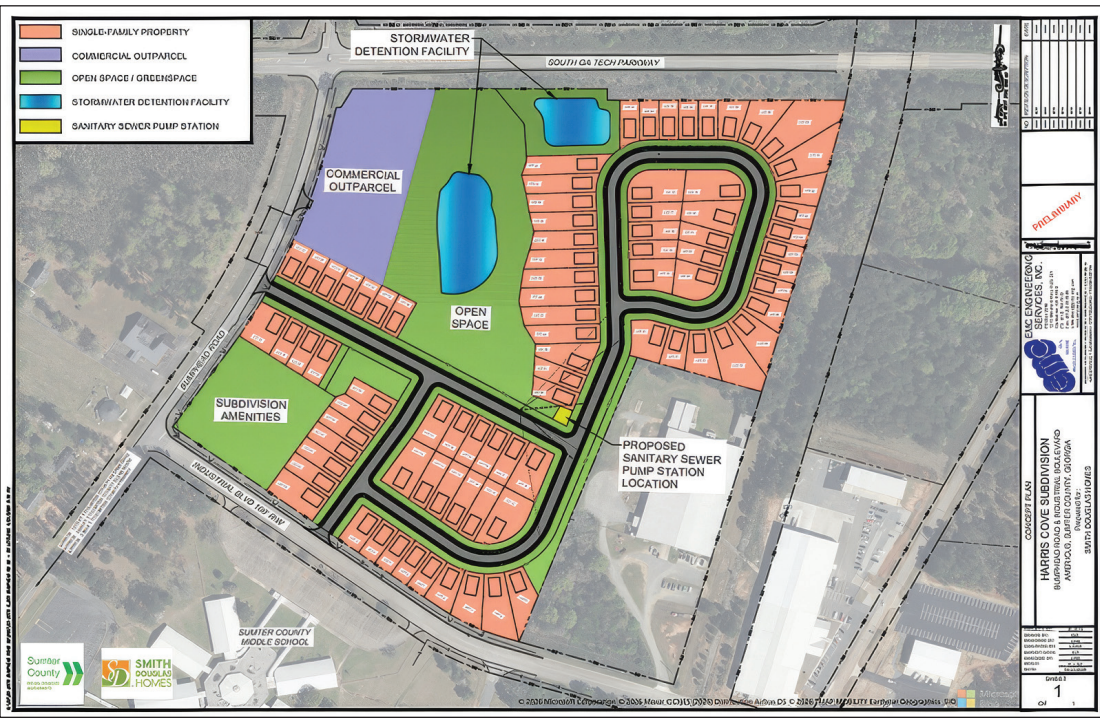
Warner emphasized the broader economic impact of the project.

“This development is a strategic move to enhance Sumter County’s housing infrastructure and economic growth,” he said. “Providing employee



housing is essential for our businesses, and as our residential base expands, retail and restaurant sectors tend to follow. Economic development involves not only job creation but also attracting new investments across the county.”

The development is a significant win for the county and the city. Americus will receive all infrastructure and building permit fees associated with the development, along with more than 83 new water and sewer customers, while each will receive their portion of property taxes. The authority has encour-



Special Graphic: Sumter Development Authority

The Sumter Development Authority has received final approval to begin work on a new housing development aimed at expanding workforce housing options in Sumter County. Plans are to construct approximately 83 homes.

aged Smith Douglas Homes to consider using services available in Sumter County when they align with compa-

ny standards. A request for proposals will be published.



Special Photo: ABAC

ABAC students, from left, Melissa Rodriguez, Evelin Del Angel and Josiah Marshall, took second place in the Southeastern Association of Educational Opportunity Program Personnel Regional Academic Competition held recently in Atlanta.

ABAC TRIO students earn second place at regional academic competition

Staff Reports

news@albanyherald.com

TIFTON — Three students from Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College’s TRIO Student Support Services program are set to return to campus with an impressive accomplishment under their belts. As members of the TRIO SSS debate team, the students secured a second-place finish at the Southeastern Association of Educational Opportunity Program Personnel Regional Academic Competition held recently in Atlanta.

Evelin Del Angel of Sparks received top honors for overall speaker points, while Josiah Marshall of Irwin County placed second in the same category. Speaker rankings were based on performance in the first four of five debate rounds.

The ABAC team included Del Angel and Marshall as competitors, with Melissa Rodriguez serving as an alternate. Despite competing against many upperclassmen, including seniors from other institutions, the team demonstrated strong communication skills and poise throughout the competition.

“We are so proud of the hard work of these three students,” Melissa Moore, director of TRIO Student Support Services at ABAC, said. “Evelin and Melissa are freshmen and Josiah is a sophomore, and many of their competitors were college seniors. They showed a remarkable level of skill and poise throughout all five debate rounds. They are an excellent representation of ABAC and our TRIO

SSS program.”

Del Angel said the opportunities provided through TRIO Student Support Services helped prepare her for the competition.

“The most helpful thing TRIO has been able to offer me is the opportunities, the chances to go out and make a name for myself,” she said. “I was able to go to one of Georgia TRIO’s conferences where we gave a presentation on how to ‘survive college’ and gave guidance to students who are interested in going to college. Without those opportunities, I wouldn’t have gotten the chance to go to SAEOPP and compete for our school or for the state of Georgia.”

Marshall said competing against older students made the experience especially rewarding.

“Going up against upperclassmen was very exhilarating and a wonderful experience that I hope to recreate,” he said.

Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College provides a personalized, hands-on learning experience for students across Georgia and beyond, college officials said. With a strong focus on academic excellence, affordability and student success, ABAC offers more than a dozen bachelor’s degrees and is recognized for its leadership in agriculture, business, humanities, nursing, science and education.

ABAC serves as a vital resource for the region, preparing graduates who are ready to lead their communities and careers.

Another former state lawmaker pleads guilty to pandemic-related fraud

By Ty Tagami

Capital Beat News Service

ATLANTA — A third former Georgia lawmaker has pleaded guilty to unemployment assistance fraud in federal court in connection with the COVID-19 pandemic.

Sharon Henderson, 67, of Covington, has pleaded guilty to making false statements to fraudulently obtain thousands of dollars from the federal government through a program established by Congress to help workers through the crisis, according to the U.S. Department of Justice.

“While running for and holding political office, Rep. Henderson was fleeing taxpayers, lying to steal money



Sharon Henderson

from federal programs intended to help people who lost their jobs due to the pandemic,” U.S. Attorney Theodore S. Hertzberg said in a statement.

Two other former state representatives, also Democrats, were previously convicted of similar unemployment assistance fraud.

Karen L. Bennett pleaded guilty Jan. 21 to making false statements to obtain \$13,940 in unemployment benefits, and Dexter L. Sharper pleaded guilty March 11 to making false statements and collecting \$13,825, according to Hertzberg’s office in the Northern District of Georgia.

Henderson pleaded guilty to collecting \$17,811 in unemployment benefits by filing fraudulent weekly certifications that she could not report to her job with Henry County Schools, Hertzberg’s office said. Henderson

claimed she had worked for the school system throughout 2019 and into early 2020, until quarantines made that impossible.

Yet she had only worked as a substitute teacher for five days in 2018 and had signed an acknowledgment that substitutes were ineligible to draw unemployment wages, prosecutors said. She applied for unemployment benefits in June 2020 while running for the state House and filed eight fraudulent certifications in June 2021 after she was sworn in, they added.

Henderson is scheduled for sentencing before U.S. District Judge Michael L. Brown on Nov. 3.

State agencies told to freeze spending, draft contingency plan

By Alander Rocha

Georgia Recorder

ATLANTA -- Gov. Brian Kemp’s office has instructed Georgia state agencies to keep their spending level as they prepare budget proposals ahead of next year’s legislative session.

Kemp is term-limited and signed his final budget earlier this year, cutting more than \$300 million in new spending at the time to help pay for an income tax cut package that lawmakers passed earlier this year.

The next budget will be signed by Georgia’s new governor, who could be healthcare executive Rick Jackson, a Republican, or former Atlanta mayor Keisha Lance Bottoms, a Democrat, but state agencies must submit their budget requests by Sept. 1, giving Kemp some control over the process in his final months in office.

Office of Planning and Budget director Richard Dunn wrote in a memo sent to agency heads earlier this month that the budget for the next fiscal year has to maintain the current fiscal year’s level. Requests for funding increases must be approved by Dunn’s office and will be limited to an “urgent, unavoidable need that cannot be addressed through internal redirection without negatively affecting essential service delivery,” according to the memo.

Dunn touted the Kemp administration’s accomplishments but hinted at the uncertain economic conditions that await. As state agencies prepare their new spending plans, Georgia is also still bracing for the financial impacts of the federal tax and spending bill that passed last year.

“To sustain these achievements while implementing historic tax relief for our citizens, responsible fiscal management principles require that we continue to live within our means,” Dunn wrote in the memo. The guidance instructed agencies to plan to redirect their current funds for non-mandatory spending and new projects and to draft contingency plans that identify “potential efficiencies and savings.”

“While current revenue projections are expected to be sufficient to meet the state’s mandatory growth obligations, these plans help ensure the state can respond effectively to changing economic conditions or new budget priorities that require the reallocation of existing resources,” Dunn wrote.

The move drew criticism from the Georgia Budget and Policy Institute. According to GBPI, inflation over the past eight years means the state is currently spending less per resident despite budget growth.



Special Photo: Jill Nolin/Georgia Recorder

Gov. Brian Kemp’s office has instructed Georgia state agencies to keep their spending level as they prepare budget proposals ahead of next year’s legislative session.

Organization chief Staci Fox criticized Kemp’s administration for prioritizing tax cuts that will decrease funding to the state’s future budgets instead of spending on healthcare and education.

“While Gov. Kemp has already unilaterally issued budget cuts that will harm the most vulnerable Georgians, the budget instructions issued for the 2027 legislative session make clear that our state cannot afford to continue prioritizing corporations and the wealthy at the expense of everyone else,” Fox said in a statement.

The guidance comes after an income tax cut bill Kemp signed into law earlier this year. The tax cut lowered the rate from 5.19% to 4.99% and exempted some overtime and tips from being taxed and caused a \$1.3 billion revenue shortfall for next year’s budget.

That led to the governor cutting \$300 million in new spending to address the deficit, which included \$9.3 million for services for people with disabilities and \$30.7 million for transportation funding for schools. He said then that not cutting some of those new services would have left the next governor with a “mess.”

FBI offers \$10,000 reward leading to arrest of Atkinson County prison escapee

Staff Reports

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ATLANTA – FBI Atlanta is offering a reward up to \$10,000 for the arrest of escaped murder suspect Pablo Zuriel Miranda.

Miranda escaped the Atkinson County Jail in Pearson early Sunday morning. He was being held on murder and aggravated assault charges in connection with an April 2024 shooting in Atkinson County.

A federal warrant was issued Monday for his arrest on unlawful flight to avoid prosecution. It is believed Miranda may try to flee to Mexico through Atlanta or other paths of escape.

Anyone with information concerning this case is asked to contact FBI Atlanta at (770) 216-300 or tips.fbi.gov.



Pablo Zuriel Miranda