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ALBANYHERALD.COM

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 10, 2026

Crime in Albany is flat. Residents' fear of it isn't

By Kathryn Crockett
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ALBANY — When The Albany Herald recently asked its Facebook readers a simple question — “How safe do you feel in your own city?” — the responses captured a widening gap between official crime data and public perception.

The post reached more than 16,500 people in three days and drew 117 comments. Some readers described changing the times when they leave home, where they drive and how closely they watch their surroundings.

“Yes it has increased,” Beverly Sutton wrote of crime in a comment on The Herald’s page. “No, I do not feel safe anywhere. Bolt up the doors at dark and stay in. Period.”

But others saw a different Albany.

“I never feel unsafe when I’m out,” Susan E. Bowser wrote. “Just keep your eyes open, and don’t ask for trouble.”

Thomas Charles Gieryc landed between the two. “I feel relatively safe, most of the time,” he wrote. “However, I do take precautions and try to be aware of my surroundings.” He pointed to a recent shooting near the Riverwalk as the incident that unsettled him.

Those experiences are real. But the Albany Police Department’s monthly crime reports as reported to the National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS) to comply with statewide directives from the Georgia Bureau of Investigation through July do not show a city in the middle of a broad



Albany Police Chief Michael Persley speaks during a media briefing at Albany Police Department headquarters. Persley has used the briefings to discuss crime trends, investigations and the department’s relationship with the community.

surge in violent crime.

They show something more complicated: a total that has barely moved, a mix of offenses that appears to change substantially underneath it, property crime falling, drug enforcement rising — and residents encountering police activity more often than the crime count alone would suggest.

A flat total, a different mix

Albany police recorded 1,200 crimes against persons from January through July. In the same seven months of 2025,

APD recorded 1,202 — a difference of two incidents.

Across all offenses reported through the FBI’s NIBRS, the department logged 3,619 Group A incidents through July, down 1.4% from 3,672 a year earlier. Group A covers crimes against people, property and society. Adding less-serious Group B incidents, the total fell from 5,204 to 5,077, a decline of 2.4%.

But that flat headline number conceals a nearly even trade.

Assaults and killings fell across the board. Homicides dropped



Special Logo: FBI National Incident-Based Reporting System. FBI Crime Data Explorer figures show Albany Police Department aggravated-assault reports from August 2021 through August 2026. During that five-year period, APD reported 2,576 aggravated-assault offenses and 579 clearances.

from 10 to eight. Aggravated assaults fell from 290 to 254, a decline of 12.4%. Simple assaults fell from 702 to 622, or 11.4%. Together, those three

categories actually accounted for 118 fewer incidents than in the same period last year.

Three other categories rose by almost just as much. Reported

sex offenses climbed from 42 to 70, an increase of nearly 67%. Intimidation reports rose from 138 to 219, or almost 59%. Kidnapping or abduction reports went from 18 to 20. Those three added 111 incidents.

The result is a category that looks unchanged in total while the experience inside it has shifted considerably. Albany reported meaningfully fewer beatings and shootings this year — with significantly more sexual offenses and threats.

That comes with a caveat that cuts both ways. NIBRS counts crimes reported to police, not crimes committed. A sharp rise in a category can reflect more offenses, more willingness to report them, or a change in how a department classifies and records them. The same is true of a decline.

Property crime is down

Property crime showed a similar disconnect between citywide statistics and individual experience. APD reported declines in burglary and theft through July, but some residents responding to The Herald described repeated property crimes close to home. One commenter cited “porch pirates” and break-ins in her neighborhood, while another said his business had been burglarized four times since December. Others said they routinely lock their cars and remain cautious but had not personally experienced break-ins.

Robberies dropped from 44 to 36 through July, a decline of 18.2%. Burglaries fell from

See **CRIME**, 2A

Dougherty Commissioner Gloria Gaines to serve as honorary sponsor of 2027 international conference in Atlanta

By Alan Mauldin
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ALBANY — In 1898, academic and sociologist W.E.B. Du Bois traveled to southwest Georgia during his summer break from teaching to investigate the lives of black residents in the “Black Belt” and later covered his sociological studies of the region in two chapters of his book “The Souls of Black Folk.”

The academic and peace activist’s visit and subsequent account was more than an intellectual exercise, however, according to Dougherty County Commissioner Gloria Gaines. Du Bois’ account inspired South Carolina native Joseph Winthrop Holley to move to Albany, where he founded the Albany Bible and Manual Training Institute. The institute later



File Photo: Carlton Fletcher
Gloria Gaines

became part of the University System of Georgia and became a four-year college in 1943 before its last renaming in 1996 as Albany State University.

Holley was inspired by Du Bois’ writing, said Gaines, who

See **GAINES**, 2A

Phoebe Foundation invests \$2.3 million to enhance surgical waiting experience

Staff Reports
news@albanyherald.com

ALBANY -- The Phoebe Foundation has invested \$2.3 million to support renovations

to SurgiCare and the Surgical Family Waiting Area at Phoebe Putney Memorial Hospital, helping create a more comfortable and welcoming envi-

ronment for families waiting while a loved one undergoes surgery.

For families, the time spent waiting during a surgical procedure can be filled with anxiety. These renovations are designed to make that experience a little easier by creating spaces that feel warm, inviting and supportive, hospital officials said.

“Whether someone is coming in for a minor procedure or facing a more complex surgery, we understand there can be uncertainty for the patient and for the people who love them,” Parker Douglas, the director of the Phoebe Foundation, said in a news release. “Through the generosity of our



Special Photo: Phoebe

The Phoebe Foundation has invested \$2.3 million to support renovations to SurgiCare and the Surgical Family Waiting Area at Phoebe Putney Memorial Hospital, helping create a more comfortable and welcoming environment for families waiting while a loved one undergoes surgery.

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From 1A

PHOEBE

donors, we have the opportunity to create spaces where families feel comfortable, supported and cared for while they wait.”

The renovations will focus on enhancing the areas where families gather before, during and after a loved one’s procedure, creating an environment that provides comfort and reassurance when it is needed most.

“The SurgiCare and Surgical Family Waiting areas are often among the first places our patients and families ex-

perience when they come to us for surgery, so we want it to feel warm, welcoming and reassuring,” RN Amy Atchison, the director of Surgical Services at Phoebe, said. “For families, waiting while someone they love is in surgery can be incredibly stressful. Creating a more comfortable space can help ease some of that anxiety and provide a better experience during a difficult time.”

The investment reflects the Phoebe Foundation’s commitment to supporting the entire patient and family experience. Made possible through the generosity of donors, projects like this help ensure families

feel cared for not only at the bedside, but in the moments spent waiting, hoping and supporting the people they love, Phoebe officials said.

Work on the project began Tuesday and will likely take several months to finish. It will be completed in phases to minimize disruptions, but there will be times when detours will be required and seating capacity will be reduced.

Anyone interested in donating to the Phoebe Foundation to support projects like this one that benefit patients at Phoebe may visit www.supportphoebe.org.

From 1A

CRIME

207 to 184, or 11.1%. Larcenies

NOTICE OF APPLICATION FOR PACK-AGE OF BEER AND WINE LICENSE

Notice is hereby given that **BP 2026 LLC**, doing business as One Leaf, located at **1629 Clark Ave., Albany, Georgia 31705**, has made application for an **Alcoholic Beverage License** for the **off-premises package sell of beer and wine** for consideration and approval by the appropriate governing authority. This notice shall be published in the Albany Herald on **September 3rd, 5th & 10th**, in compliance with applicable law.

and thefts, the largest single category in the report at more than 1,000 incidents, fell from 1,102 to 1,056, a decline of 4.2%.

The exception was motor vehicle theft, which was essentially unchanged at 137 incidents compared with 136 a year earlier. Overall, crimes against property fell from 2,298 to 2,205, a decline of 4%.

What went up

Two measures rose, and neither is a count of people being victimized.

Crimes against society — a NIBRS category made up largely of drug and weapons offenses, which are typically discovered by officers rather than reported by victims — rose from 172 to 214 through July, an increase of 24.4%. Drug offenses drove nearly all of it, climbing from 74 to 102, or 37.8%. Weapon law violations were nearly flat, rising from 85 to 87.

Because many crimes against society are detected through police activity rather than reported by victims, the increase raises another possibility: Are officers finding more drug offenses because of more aggressive or more effective enforcement, rather than because drug activity itself has increased at the same rate?

The second measure was calls for service. Albany police received 50,014 calls from January through July, compared with 47,509 in the same seven

months of 2025 — an increase of about 5.3%. Calls were higher this year in six of the first seven months. February was the exception.

A call for service is not a crime. It can involve a disturbance, a suspicious person, an alarm, a welfare check, a traffic matter, a domestic complaint or a situation that produces no criminal offense at all.

But both measures track something residents can see, and for many, that visibility becomes part of their lived experience of public safety. More drug offenses recorded and more calls for service can mean more patrol cars on neighborhood streets, more officers outside businesses and more police activity unfolding in public — even without a corresponding increase in the number of people victimized.

Residents do not experience public safety through a NIBRS spreadsheet. They experience it through what happens on their street, what they see on the way to work and what shows up on their phones.

Michael Moses, commenting on The Herald’s Facebook post, said he believes much of Albany’s crime is targeted or opportunistic. “Your everyday civilian is safe,” he wrote. “Of course that depends on what part of the city you’re in, too.”

The department’s own call data suggest he has a point about geography.

From 1A

GAINES

will be an honorary sponsor of The International Conference on W.E.B. Du Bois: Race, Democracy and Global Justice in 2027. The conference is scheduled for April 9-11 in Atlanta.

“I am in admiration (of) his impact on the founding of Albany State University,” Gaines said. “I also appreciate his political philosophy as well. He was clearly identified with Atlanta University and education.”

During her time at Albany State, Gaines worked in the

Geography matters — but the numbers are calls, not crime rates

Albany police divide the city into 15 beats.

In July, Beat 8 recorded 1,179 calls for service, by far the most of any beat and nearly seven times the 174 calls in Beat 13. The department’s map places Beat 8 in central Albany, immediately south of downtown. Nearby central-city beats also carried heavy loads: Beat 2 recorded 626 calls, Beat 3 recorded 625, Beat 7 had 578 and Beat 9 had 551.

Nine of the 15 beats recorded more calls in July 2026 than their listed 2025 monthly average. Beat 15, on the city’s southeast side, logged 307 calls against a 2025 monthly average of 235. Beat 8’s 1,179 compared with a 2025 average of 1,059.

Those comparisons are not neighborhood crime rates. They count calls for police service, and the department’s report provides a 2025 monthly average rather than a July-to-July figure. Still, the spread helps explain how two Albany residents can live in the same city and describe two different levels of safety.

Crime now arrives on residents’ phones

There is another difference between today’s Albany and the city many residents remember.

Police no longer wait for a newspaper or a television station to report an incident. The department publishes photographs of wanted suspects and persons of interest, asks followers to identify people, posts shooting updates and broadcasts Police Chief Michael Persley’s regular “Media Monday” briefings directly to the public. It also operates its own mobile app.

Persley has repeatedly argued that Albany’s violent-crime problem is more concentrated than the city’s reputation suggests. After a November 2025 shooting at 509 North Apartments, he said random violence was “rare,” noting that many shootings grow out of disputes or relationships with a history behind them.

That same thinking underpins APD’s Repeat Offender Initiative, launched this year to focus resources on the relatively small number of people police believe are driving much of the city’s gun violence. “We’re talking about that 1% that is actually committing crimes,” Persley said in January. At the same time, the department has expanded the way it communicates those incidents directly to the public.

In February, Persley promoted APD’s mobile app as “a reliable way to stay connected without relying on rumors or second-hand information that may be found on social media.” Together, those points sharpen the central tension in Albany’s crime picture: Police say much of the most serious violence is concentrated among a relatively small group of people, while the information about those incidents is distributed instantly and broadly across the city.

That change could matter. A single Albany shooting can now generate an initial police alert, a department Facebook post, a news story, a television report, a follow-up seeking a suspect, an arrest update and a stream of resident posts discussing each development.

Those are not seven shootings. There may be seven separate encounters with information about the same shooting — multiply-

office of civil rights attorney C.B. King. She holds a master’s degree in community development and worked as an assistant general manager for MARTA.

Her travels also have taken her to Africa, where she worked and met Nelson Mandela and Archbishop Desmond Tutu.

For the 2027 conference, Gaines has collaborated with individuals, including professor Preston King, C.B. King’s youngest brother..

Last year she traveled to Accra, Ghana, where DuBois died after he was forced out of the United States for his opposition to nuclear weapons and

had his passport renewal denied, for his 157th birthday celebration.

The conference will feature discussions of democracy, equality and human dignity, Gaines said

“Those are issues that were important to him,” she said. “Now is a good time to talk about democracy. Some may see it as under threat. I think this conference will be timely. It’s a timely issue, not just for black folks as well as human dignity and equality within the country. I am very pleased and very honored to be an honorary sponsor.”

ing the number of times one incident enters a resident’s field of view and potentially making isolated events feel more frequent than the underlying crime data show.

Access to historical Facebook data from other news outlets is limited, making determining outright whether the overall volume of crime-related posts actually increased a complex issue, but an in-depth review of recent material from several news outlets’ social media presence does show how fast a single incident can travel.

When \$30 outruns a shooting

One such example occurred on Aug. 18, when Albany police posted a photograph seeking help identifying a man who officers said picked up \$30 that another shopper dropped at the North Slappey Boulevard Walmart and did not turn it in. It exploded online.

By Aug. 24, a local television station reported that the original police post had drawn nearly 3,000 reactions, about 4,400 comments and 600 shares. The public reaction became a news story of its own. Current Sociality.io tracking of the post shows thousands of additional interactions.

Its reach dwarfed much of the serious crime material posted around it. Recent department posts seeking suspects in shootings, aggravated assaults and a homicide drew hundreds of interactions. The \$30 post drew thousands.

The episode illustrates the problem with treating social media visibility as a measure of public danger: What spreads is not necessarily what is serious. Humor, outrage and novelty can carry a minor incident much farther than a killing. And once news organizations cover the viral response, the original event gets another cycle of exposure.

One Herald commenter, Yaz Johnson, argued that Albany’s reputation is shaped by what residents continuously see and hear, saying “negativity” leads people to expect something bad to happen.

Those are opinions, not evidence that coverage causes fear. But they point toward a question that can be measured.

A seemingly local feed can carry crime from far beyond Albany

A snapshot of local news reporting feeds shows how geography blurs online.

Among 21 recent posts from well-known sources of local news media captured in a Sept. 6 review, eight involved crime, alleged crime or criminal investigations. Most of that crime was not in Albany. The posts included a fatal shooting in Americus, a shooting in Cordele, arrests after a mall shooting, a workplace shooting in Florida, a sexual assault conviction in Wisconsin, an alleged murder in Colorado, a financial crime case and a law enforcement pursuit in Quitman.

A one-day sample cannot establish that more crime is being posted about now than it did in 2025, but it does illustrate the breadth of geographical content the information environment facing someone scrolling Facebook in Albany presents: Violence from Albany, from surrounding counties, from elsewhere in Georgia and from across the country, often arriving within minutes of one another.

The open question is whether readers consciously differentiate between those locations,

or simply absorb the repeated message that another person has been shot, arrested, robbed or killed.

Bad information spreads, too

Locally, Police have already had to confront the other side of fast crime communication.

After a June 30 shooting in which a 15-year-old was wounded while playing basketball, the department addressed online claims that three people had died. “At this time, reports circulating on social media claiming three people are deceased are false,” it said.

Social media has become more than a place where Albany residents talk about crime. It is now part of how police investigate it, how newsrooms report it, how residents learn about it and, sometimes, how rumors about it spread.

Two pictures of the same city

That leaves Albany with two accounts of public safety that don’t fit together neatly.

One comes from the police department’s own data. Through July, total reported crime was down 2.4%. Property crime fell 4%. Robberies, burglaries and thefts all declined. Crimes against people came within two incidents of last year’s count — while the offenses inside that category shifted from assaults toward sex offenses and threats.

The other comes from residents. Some, particularly those who are typically considered more vulnerable, “lock themselves inside after dark”. Some avoid particular parts of town. But some say Albany is no more dangerous than comparable cities.

Michael Druckenmiller Jr. argued that most local violent crime involves people who know one another rather than random attacks. “If you stay away from known problem areas and don’t involve yourself with the wrong crowd,” he wrote, “you are generally safe.” The available crime data do not directly measure whether victims and offenders knew one another, but they are consistent with that broader picture: Through July, homicides were down 20%, aggravated assaults fell 12.4% and robberies declined 18.2%, even as residents continued to report concern about shootings and public safety. Persley has made a similar distinction, repeatedly describing random violence as relatively rare and saying many shootings have a prior dispute or “backstory.”

Others make no such distinction when deciding whether they feel safe.

“I don’t feel safe at all, especially when the sun goes down,” NaCole Stripling Knutson wrote. “Even during the day I am constantly looking around.”

Both can be true while the overall count holds steady.

The unresolved question is no longer simply whether Albany has more crime. It is which crimes residents are encountering, where they are concentrated, how often police activity itself shapes what people see — and how many times a single act of violence reaches them again through a screen.

Information is no longer scarce. The harder task now belongs to Albany residents: separating frequency from visibility, reputation from reality and perception from the broader picture the data provide. If Albany is to reclaim confidence in its long-time identity as the “Good Life City,” that distinction may actually matter as much as the crime numbers themselves.

CONNECT WITH US ON THE APP

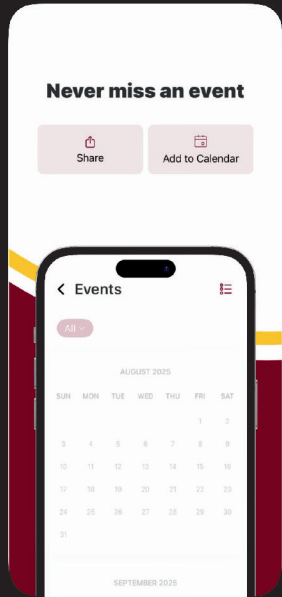
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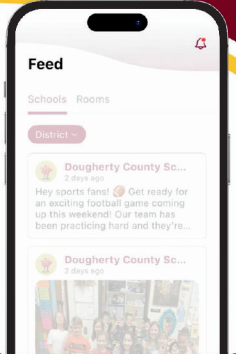


Stay up to date

District news

School updates

Live feed posts



Download the DCSS app for important updates, school information, announcements, and everything you need to stay connected with your child’s education.

Daily Horoscopes

ARIES (March 21-April 19): Today is a much more helpful day than tomorrow, the more urgent and important it is, the better to get it handled today, or wait until Saturday, which is another above-zero day at least.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20): If you can break away even for a short time, do it. You could be craving a reset and some fresh air. Grab freedom when you can, you'll likely need to buckle down again soon.

GEMINI (May 21-June 20): Your roots are what keep you grounded while you learn to fly. Build your foundation strong so you can soar. Time at home can give a respite and a recharge when the world presses in.

CANCER (June 21-July 22): If your mind feels sufficiently clear, today offers better odds for a significant communication than tomorrow. However, do be sure you're not reacting and just telling yourself that you're being logical.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22): A lot could feel aligned to make a money move, but it's not recommended today: Stars are barely above zero and sink again tomorrow, plus too much emotion could be in play.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22): You may want to offer yourself up heart and soul — but not every person or situation is prepared to receive this gift in kind. Consider what's wanted and also what you need to keep for yourself.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22): A couple of days of silence or whatever reasonable facsimile you can provide for yourself could be just the refreshment you need. If you use the time to do inner work, you'll return to deck with more to offer.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21): Friends, colleagues, allies, networking acquaintances — your group associations and platonic relationships could be highlighted now. Understand where each person best fits and place

them there.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21): A good boundary for yourself is to keep over-emotionality out of the workplace. Use your instincts, experience, and proven habits to prevail in the moment and grow your future.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19): When you've reached a certain point, it's important to give back. Teach what you've learned through structured settings; but also just help people here and there in the moment as you go through life.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18): You might want to get to the bottom of a situation but despite an above-zero day score, it's unlikely you'll be able to make all the chess pieces move today. Craft your plan and await a day with better odds.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20): A specific relationship or relationships in general could be top of mind today, but it's not a time to make any big decisions for another week or two. Notice patterns, they're your telltale.

IF TODAY IS YOUR BIRTHDAY: The next 30 days or so are for thinking and planning. Integrate the past, learn all lessons, and consider the future, so you'll be ready for the opportunities lining up for you in the remainder of 2026. October could bring something almost to your doorstep, you might need to make a final push to get it in your hand. Once grasped, a new source of income could arrive combined with a new sense of ease and grace. This could even restore some lost belief in life's goodness. November continues the parade of assistance with a nice little surprise. Later, many needed resources could land just in time, including more financial support. A lot could get put into motion as needed ideas, people, and things arrive. December could bring improved health, significant success and real recognition, just in time for the holidays.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

"Never confuse movement with action."

Ernest Hemingway,
writer (1899-1961)

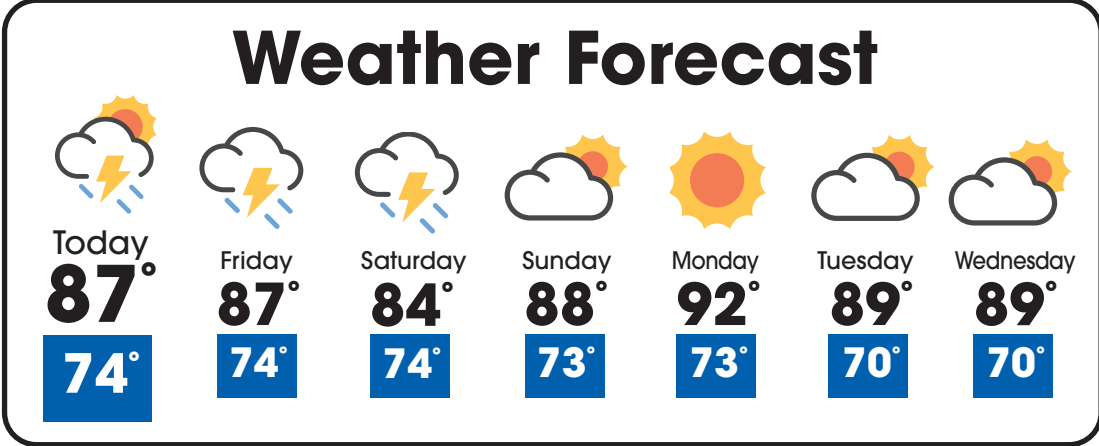
CORRECTION

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

The Founding Fathers envisioned citizen legislators serving their term(s), then going home and back to work ... not getting all kinds of freebies. Term limits: Two terms and then treat them like a regular citizen.



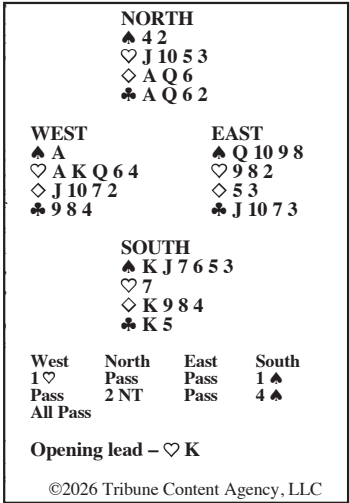
Daily Bridge Club

Louie's memory loss

By Frank Stewart
Tribune Content Agency

"I'm afraid I'm getting older," Unlucky Louie told me in the club lounge.

"It's not a big concern un-



less you're a cheese," I shrugged.

"I don't remember things as well as I did," Louie said. "When you get older, memory is easier to store than to retrieve."

Louie played at today's four spades, and West led the king of hearts and shifted to a club. Louie won with the king, led a diamond to dummy and returned a trump: eight, jack, ace. He won the next club and led a second trump to his king. West showed out, and East got two trump tricks.

ATTENTION

I doubt that Louie is suffering from memory loss; his problem is lack of attention -- in this deal, to the bidding. West surely has the ace of trumps for his bid, so



Frank Stewart

at Trick Three Louie should lead a low trump from his hand. When West's ace appears, Louie finesses with the jack later, losing two trumps and one heart.

If the defense won the first trump with a card lower than the ace, Louie would lead to his jack next.

DAILY QUESTION

You hold: S A H A K Q 6 4 D J 10 7 2 C 9 8 4. You open one heart, your partner responds one spade, you bid two diamonds and he rebids two spades. The opponents pass. What do you say?

ANSWER: Your partner has six (rarely, seven) spades but fewer than 10 high-card points. Chances for game are almost nil, and unless spades are trumps, partner's hand may provide no winners. Pass. Players who are tenacious and insist on fighting a misfit ask for trouble.

West dealer
Both sides vulnerable

Advice Columnist

Friends constantly cancel on plans

By Eric Thomas
Tribune Content Agency

Dear Eric: Over the years people have said things to me such as, "I can't go to lunch with you today after all. I'm going to go to lunch with John instead."

Or at the last minute, "I can't go to see the play with you this evening. My boyfriend says we're going someplace else."

Sometimes people fail altogether to show up for plans made in advance, without a word of apology or explanation ever. Upon next seeing them, they behave as though nothing had ever happened. If I gently inquire what had happened to our plans, they start in with the defensive, manipulative psychobabble, and gaslighting.

I have heard excuses made for people who can't be counted on. I have been called petty and rigid. I have been told I take these things too personally.

After being treated shabbily at the hands of others, I say and do nothing further and remain civil and decent to them but from a low-contact distance, and I no longer reach out to them with friendly gestures until if and when they can prove that it is a genuine, mutual, responsible and courteous friendship.

What are your thoughts on the matter? Any suggestions concerning what I could or should be saying and doing, or not saying and not doing, concerning people who behave like this?

behavior of others, I wonder if there are commonalities in some of the people with whom you've had conflict about showing up in the past. Might you pour more of your energy into friendships with people who see you for who you are and can respect your desire to be more attentive to keeping plans?

It may also help, in the future, to tell prospective new friends that you sometimes have issues with people canceling at the last minute or for no reason and that it's something about which you're sensitive. This gives new friends helpful information that can guide their actions. Ideally, a new connection, knowing this, would choose to communicate with you differently should they need to reschedule.

Dear Eric: I am one of four adult siblings. "Kelly" is the only sibling who does not live locally. In April, another sibling, "Betty," sent a text to the group saying that Kelly and her family would be coming for a visit and that everyone was invited to Betty's lake house.

I knew immediately that the proposed date would not work for my family because we already had prior commitments. However, since no one asked whether the date worked for my family -- or for our fourth sibling -- I didn't say anything at the time.

As the date got closer, more specific plans were discussed on the group text. At that point, I let them know that the date didn't work for my family, while also saying that we appreciated the invitation.

After the gathering at the lake house, I texted, "Hope you had a fun weekend. Sorry our schedules didn't align and have a safe trip home."

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



Eric Thomas

Betty responded that because the plans had been made in April, there had been plenty of time for us to make it work.

I understand that they chose a date that worked for them, and I accept that my family was not able to attend. What frustrates me is the implication that we should have rearranged (unchangeable) plans that were already made months in advance of the announcement in April.

Am I being unreasonable in thinking that I should have a say in choosing a date when the intention is for all of us to get together? If I want to make plans with someone, I ask about their availability, and we find a date that works for everyone involved. I don't choose a date unilaterally and then put the responsibility on the other person to rearrange their existing commitments.

- Didn't Get a Vote

Dear Vote: You're not wrong here. Group planning 101 involves at least attempting to achieve consensus around availability before setting plans in stone. It makes sense that Betty would defer a bit to Kelly's schedule, since she was traveling from out of town. But if the desire was to bring everyone together, it would have made sense to poll the group.

It's interesting that this pushback is coming from Betty and not Kelly, since Kelly was the person who didn't get to see everyone. Betty might have an opinion about what you should have done with your schedule, but you don't need to give it any more time or attention. Your efforts might be better spent finding a time and place to connect with Kelly.

It is important to scrutinize and reevaluate your support of elected leaders. People surprise for the better and worse. If you still find evidence that this Dougherty County Commission chair still deserves your support, you need to start paying attention. The collective bad behavior of the Dougherty County Commission has scared away good jobs, wasted your hard-earned tax dollars, and kept down the lowest income citizens in our county. Pure evil at work.

Oh Brother! The National Register-listed Second Empire building at 126 N. Washington St. as Rosenberg's Dept. Store, and not Davis Brothers, a favorite restaurant.

I guess those cameras have caught too many politicians or their supporters doing something wrong.

Sorry about the \$12 million transportation center not having bus service. Greyhound decided to pick up their customers at a Cordele Road and Clark Avenue truck stop. And those taxpayer city buses that run all over town empty or maybe two people on them is not smart. It would be cheaper for the city to buy those passengers a car. The squawker that defended the transportation center may be the one that does not get out too much. I bet that squawker wants more sidewalks, too.

The Dougherty County Commission chair is defending the tax assessor appointee who voluntarily gave up her law license and was jailed after she "lost" funds intended for victimized families. So when we appeal our property valuations, this lady gets to be the judge? There is a very special place in hell for these kinds of scumbags.

Why isn't J'Nita Lane's house on QPublic? All the other houses on Stonegate Lane are except hers?

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 preparing parsnips, perhaps (8)	_____
2 in a friendly way (8)	_____
3 operating a plane (6)	_____
4 place to record a brainstorm (10)	_____
5 from Osaka, maybe (8)	_____
6 computing pioneer Charles (7)	_____
7 open area for driving (7)	_____

JA

FLY

ING

CH

UMM

OPP

EBO

FAI

ING

PAN

ILY

ESE

ARD

CH

BB

BA

AY

AGE

RW

WHIT

Tuesday's Answers: 1. STOCK 2. ROCKETS 3. SPARINGLY 4. SAPPED 5. NOAH 6. ADMIRALS 7. GUTTERING 9/9

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 "mulligan" on an exam (6)	_____
2 heedlessly (11)	_____
3 roofing supporters (7)	_____
4 Bluey's family breed (7)	_____
5 starts a Model T (6)	_____
6 medieval Spanish fortress (8)	_____
7 portmanteau of laughter (7)	_____

ORT

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Wednesday's Answers: 1. CHOPPING 2. CHUMMILY 3. FLYING 4. WHITEBOARD 5. JAPANESE 6. BABBAGE 7. FAIRWAY 9/10

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Carlton Fletcher

EDITOR

—Georgia Trust for—

LOCAL NEWS

TODAY'S
BIBLE
VERSE

*“Be strong and of a good courage, fear not, nor be afraid of them:
for the Lord thy God, he it is that doth go with thee; he will not fail thee, nor
forsake thee.”*

Deuteronomy 31:6

COLUMNIST ■ MICHAEL FERGUSON II

Georgia’s Education formula, Part II: Show me the money

Editor’s Note: Second in a three-part series.

Poverty should never determine destiny. That belief should be non-negotiable. But pretending poverty has no effect on the cost of educating a child is something entirely different.

Georgia’s Quality Basic Education formula, commonly known as QBE, already recognizes that different students require different levels of support. The state assigns additional funding weights to certain programs and student populations. Yet poverty itself still has no permanent weight in the formula. That matters.

Dougherty County School System Superintendent Kenneth Dyer has carried that message before the Georgia Legislature’s Education Committee. His argument is straightforward: Schools serving large numbers of economically disadvantaged children need predictable, sustainable support, not temporary programs that disappear when a grant ends.

Education researchers have repeatedly identified Georgia as one of only six states without a permanent poverty or opportunity weight in its main school-funding formula. Some newer counts place the number at five because states classify funding differently and Georgia approved a limited, one-time pilot for high-poverty schools. But the central fact has not changed: poverty still has no permanent weight in QBE.

Georgia expects children living in concentrated poverty to meet the same academic standards as children in far wealthier communities. I agree with that expectation. Our children should never be assigned lower standards because of their ZIP code, family income or the circumstances into which they were born.

The problem comes when we demand equal outcomes while pretending every community begins at the same starting line. They do not. A school serving a large population of economically disadvantaged students may need more reading intervention, mathematics support, counselors, social workers, after-school programming, attendance intervention, family engagement, health services and stronger incentives to recruit and retain experienced teachers.

Those needs are not excuses. They are costs. Anyone who has operated a business understands the principle. Producing the same result under more difficult conditions usually requires a greater investment of resources. Education is no different.

We should also be careful about reducing school performance to the familiar story of one district being good and another being bad. Our neighbors in Lee County provide an instructive example. Lee County is widely viewed in southwest Georgia as the stronger school system, particularly when compared to Dougherty County. Yet the Governor’s Office of Student Achievement’s 2025 Beating the Odds designations present a more complicated picture.

Four Lee County schools were classified “Below Expected Range;” two were “Within Expected Range.” and one was designated “Beating the Odds.” That is not something to celebrate, and it does not mean Lee County is failing. It means education data require context.

Beating the Odds does not simply compare raw test scores. The state’s model compares a school’s actual performance with the performance statistically expected after accounting for characteristics of its students and school environment. A district can post stronger raw proficiency numbers while some of its schools perform below what the model predicts.

A high-poverty district can have lower absolute proficiency numbers while producing schools that meet or exceed what the model expects under more difficult conditions.

That distinction matters when evaluating Dougherty County.

In the 2025 analysis, 17 of 20 rated Dougherty County schools met or exceeded their statistically expected performance. Eleven were designated “Beating the Odds,” while six were Within Expected Range. Let us be precise about what that means. It does not mean all 17 schools met every statewide proficiency target. It means they performed at or above the level predicted by the state’s statistical model.

Dougherty County still has academic gaps that must be confronted. Accountability does not disappear because progress deserves recognition. The lesson is not that Dougherty County is better than Lee County. The lesson is that the data are more sophisticated than the reputations we attach to school systems.

If the state can consider poverty when judging performance, it should also consider poverty when funding the work required to improve that performance. Georgia already acknowledges this reality indirectly. The state funds intervention programs, provides additional resources for selected student groups, measures progress and closing gaps, and has invested heavily in literacy. Yet the basic funding formula still stops short



FERGUSON

of permanently recognizing poverty as a condition requiring additional support.

There is the contradiction. Georgia can account for socioeconomic conditions when evaluating schools, but it will not fully account for those same conditions in the permanent formula used to fund them.

Dougherty County lives with that contradiction every day. Economic disadvantage is not confined to a small group of students. It reaches across much of the district, and the needs extend far beyond textbooks, desks and classroom instruction.

Social workers matter. Counselors matter. Attendance support matters. Health services matter. Early intervention matters. Extended learning matters. Teacher recruitment and retention matter.

DCSS has relied partly on grants to provide some of those supports. Grants can launch important work, but they are a weak foundation for a long-term strategy. The grant expires. The child remains. The family crisis remains. The attendance problem remains. The need for counseling remains. The reading deficiency remains.

Georgia’s limited pilot funding for high-poverty schools was movement in the right direction. But a pilot is not a permanent change to QBE. School systems cannot responsibly hire staff, build programs and measure results over several years when the money may disappear after one budget cycle. Permanent funding creates predictability. Predictability creates the opportunity for measurable accountability.

Additional funding should never become a blank check. If Georgia establishes a permanent poverty or opportunity weight, taxpayers should be able to follow the money from the state budget into the schools it was intended to support. The public should know how much money a district received, which schools benefited, what positions were created, which programs were expanded and what academic results followed.

If additional reading interventionists are hired, reading performance should be tracked. If more counselors and social workers are funded, attendance, behavior and student retention should be measured. If extended-day programs are expanded, their academic results should be evaluated. That is not simply spending more money. That is spending money with purpose.

Dougherty County has already concentrated additional resources in several historically struggling schools. Those schools did not merely receive another slogan or another program for appearance’s sake. They received more intensive support, and the academic numbers began to move. That makes this debate more than theoretical. We have local evidence. We have measurable outcomes. We have the beginning of a proof of concept.

Georgia should pay attention. Show me the money. Then show me what happened when the money reached the children.

COLUMNIST ■ DAVID CARROLL

The lessons of 9-11, 25 years later

The events of Sept. 11, 2001, are still fresh in my mind. It’s hard to believe that today’s 30-year-olds were in kindergarten when terrorists took so many lives, and changed everyone else’s.

A few years ago, I was asked to speak to a group of high school students about 9-11. I thought it might be helpful to show video of the news coverage from that morning, as it unfolded on live TV. The first plane hit the north tower of the World Trade Center in New York City. We all hoped and prayed it was just a random accident.

Seventeen minutes later, our worst fears came true. Another hijacked plane crashed into the south tower. America was under attack, in its busiest, most populated city. Cameras captured it all: the smoke, the debris, the brave rescuers, the horrified onlookers and survivors. Bodies seemingly falling out of the sky. I was showing the video in a packed school auditorium. I had seen it many times. They had not.

Many of them were visibly shaken, and they began to cry. I know they had heard the term “9-11,” but perhaps they felt it was ancient history. It is not unlike how many of us learned about the Civil War, or the Great Depression. With the passage of time, they had become black-and-white pictures in a history book. I doubt that I was alone in wondering if these events were relevant to our lives.

As the video revealed the images of the later attacks of 9-11, from the Pentagon to Pennsylvania, all of which happened within minutes, we had soon seen enough.

It was time to talk about it. Just like America’s prior traumas, that day was, and is, relevant. What have we learned, and how have our lives changed in the past 25 years?

It’s hard to imagine today, but in the aftermath of 9-11, we all came together. We overcame our differences. Churches, businesses, neighbors and strangers helped rebuild many broken lives. First responders were rightly hailed as heroes. We can never ever thank them enough.

Our nation sent a message

in the aftermath of 9/11. We told the world we would defend the freedom for which our parents, grandparents, and previous generations had fought.

It was heartwarming to see so many young people send cards and letters to police officers and firefighters, and collect money for those who had lost everything. I saw elementary and middle school students react to the unsettling events in a nation where they had previously felt so safe.

Now, more than ever, young people must learn about the world and how we got to this point. I often regret that I paid less attention to world history than other subjects in school. You may not approve of other countries’ religions and cultures, but it helps to understand why they believe as they do.

Some 3,000 Americans lost their lives on 9-11. Most of them were just regular folks, at work or on a plane. In the blink of an eye, they were gone, leaving behind grieving families. We all started hugging our children more often, letting them know we love them.

My most vivid memory was on the evening of the attacks, comforting my sons, who were then 14 and 11. They were “big boys,” unafraid to swing at a fast ball or swim in the deep water. But that night, they felt small in a big, terrifying world. “Is our school safe?” “Will the terrorists return tomorrow, or even while we’re sleeping?” “What’s their next target?”

I gave my most reassuring answers. “We’ll be all right. The worst is over. Soon, everything will be back to normal.” Of course, I really had no idea, and neither did anyone else.

It’s never been back to normal, as anyone who has passed through security at an airport or a ball game can testify. We’ve been forced to live our lives more cautiously, with uncertainty lurking around every corner.

If your children or grandchildren view the events of 9/11 as ancient history, make sure they understand the loss, the sacrifice, and the lessons. We’re still standing 25 years later, but we should never forget.



CARROLL

GUEST COLUMNIST ■ WILL COOPER

The risks of weaponizing justice

In a healthy democracy, political disputes are settled at the ballot box. In failed states, they are fought in criminal courtrooms. As Donald Trump targets political enemies – from James Comey to Adam Schiff to Lisa Cook – America is spiraling in the wrong direction. The risks of weaponizing the legal system against political rivals are profound.

First, politicizing prosecutions violates the core principle that the rule of law applies equally to everyone. Blending political zeal with criminal justice leads to treating individuals differently based on their party affiliation rather than their actual guilt or innocence.

In modern American politics, the messenger often outweighs the message, and the actor matters more than the act. A simple example illustrates the point. Republicans demanded Hillary Clinton be jailed over her email server, while Democrats pushed to indict Donald Trump for storing classified records at Mar-a-Lago. Few people applied a single, uniform standard to both cases.

This hyper-partisanship directly contradicts the foundation of equal justice under the law, which demands that individuals be judged solely on their actions, not who they are.

Justice Robert Jackson warned of the power of prosecutors to manipulate the law long ago in 1940: “The prosecutor has more control over life, liberty, and reputation than any other person in America. His discretion is tremendous. He can have citizens investigated and, if he is that kind of person, he can have this done to the tune of public statements and veiled or unveiled intimations.”

This is still true today. Second, using the courts to pursue opponents fuels the destructive cycle of political polarization. It escalates everyday debates from a contest between political rivals to a war between existential enemies.

Intense political conflict is nothing new, of course. It has always been part of American democracy. Yet we remain a single nation in a perilous world. Domestic infighting should not drain our national energy or weaken our ability to confront global threats. Viewed from a global standpoint, the common interests of Americans far outweigh their differences.

Political energy is far better spent winning elections and shaping policy than trying to imprison partisan adversaries.

Finally, targeting political opponents deters capable leaders from public service. The federal government already struggles to attract top-tier talent, to put it mildly. Just look at the top: In recent years, the presidency has swung from a reality-television figure (Donald Trump) to a veteran politician well past his peak (Joe Biden) and then back to Trump.

The leader of the free world ought to be among its most capable people. Obviously.

Americans should avoid discouraging talented individuals from entering public life out of fear that minor legal ambiguities will be twisted into partisan prosecutions. The cost of losing a political battle should be a lost election, not a prison sentence.

These concerns must be weighed carefully. Holding office should never grant immunity for past crimes or serve as a pass to commit new ones. Prosecutors have a duty to hold the powerful accountable, not just the powerless.

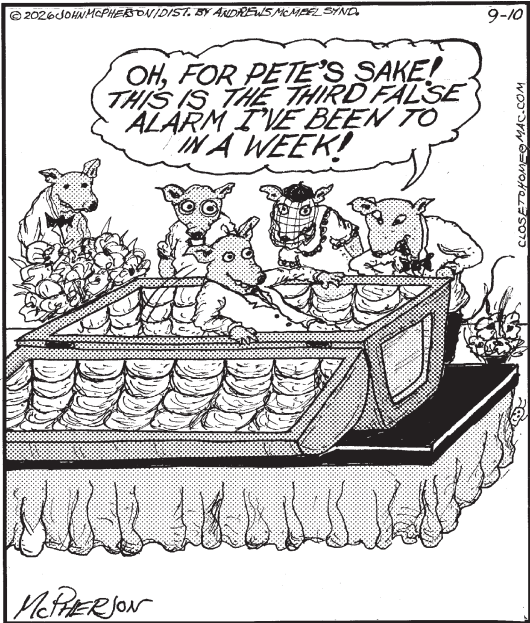
Striking this balance is delicate, but there must be a heavy bias toward keeping partisan bias out of the courtroom. Turning politics into a criminal sphere doesn’t just corrupt the justice system, it jeopardizes American democracy.

William Cooper is an attorney and the award-winning author of The Trial of Donald H. Rumsfeld.

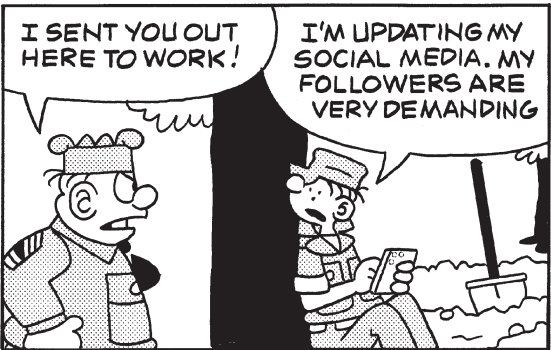


COOPER

CLOSE TO HOME John McPherson



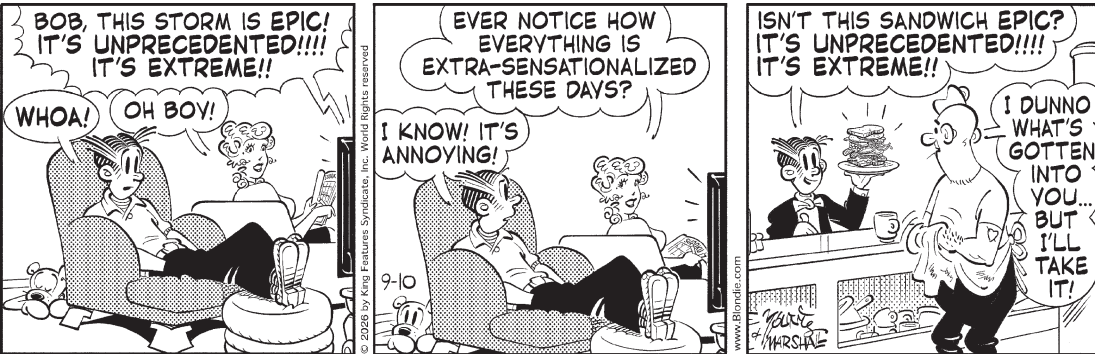
Possum funerals.
BEETLE BAILEY Mort & Greg Walker



THE FAMILY CIRCUS Bil Keane



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: ★★★★★

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

WHATZIT?

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

ONE
TWO
THREE
FIVE

END

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:

Foregone conclusion

CROSSWORD

ACROSS

1 — as a fiddle
4 Coarse file
8 French priest
12 Exist
13 Essays of —
14 Implement
15 Actor — McKellen
16 “Gone —”
17 Colleen
18 Set aside
20 Wash
21 Born (Fr.)
22 Mal de —
23 Quite a lot
26 Inept one
30 Dog — -dog
31 Aquatic mammal
33 Money in Madrid
34 About (2 wds.)
36 High cards
38 Connor or Harington

DOWN

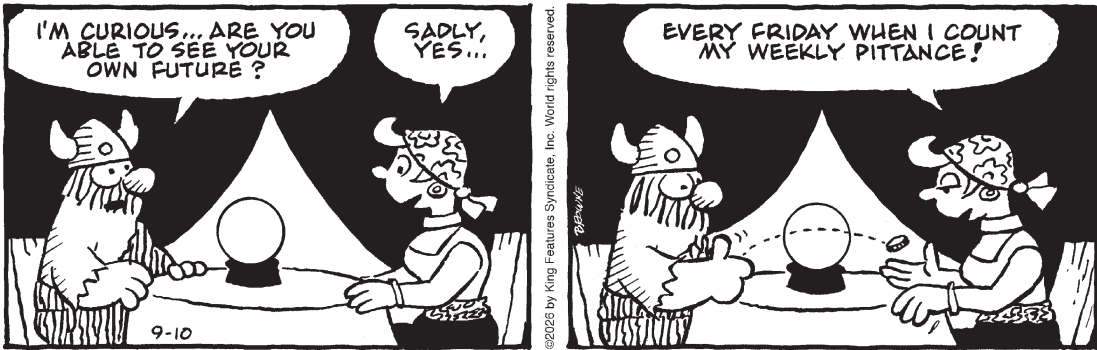
1 Light in complexion
2 “Dies —”
3 Sawbucks
4 Devolve
5 — and well
6 Beget

39 Chic
41 Fragment
43 Parched
44 Is able to
45 Written media
48 Session at a gym
52 Engrossed
53 Costly fur
54 Wood used for baseball bats
55 Gothic arch
56 Spoken
57 Oolong is one
58 Equal
59 Island goose
60 — Lanka

TODAY'S SOLUTION:

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

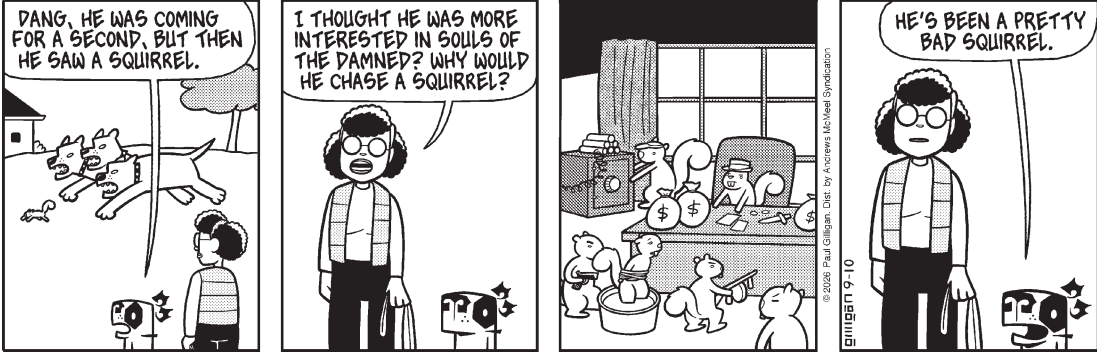
HAGAR THE HORRIBLE Chris Browne



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.

NIKKEI CUISINE

Solution: 7 letters

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

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Amarillo, Ankimo, Anko, Anticucho, Azuki, Causa, Dashi, Ebi, Edamame, Gari, Goma, Hamachi, Hojicha, Ikura, Itamae, Izakaya, Japanese, Kabocha, Kombu, Leche de Tigre, Maguro, Maki, Matcha, Miso, Mochi, Nori, Okonomiyaki, Ramen, Shichimi, Shiso, Shoyu, Soba, Soy, Taiyaki, Tako, Tamago, Tantanmen, Tempura, Tobiko, Toro, Udon, Umami, Uni, Yakitori, Yuzu

TODAY'S ANSWER: Donburi

Phoebe urges precautions against West Nile Virus

Staff Reports

news@albanyherald.com

ALBANY – Physicians with Phoebe Putney Health System are urging south Georgians to be aware of the dangers posed by mosquitoes and to take precautions to protect themselves against mosquito-borne illnesses, including West Nile virus. Currently, two patients with confirmed West Nile infections are hospitalized at Phoebe Putney Memorial Hospital, and care teams suspect a third patient has the virus as they await test results.

“The good news is severe complications from West Nile virus are exceptionally rare,” Dr. James Black, Phoebe’s medical director for Emer-

gency Services, said. “Eighty percent of people infected with the virus never show any symptoms, and 20% develop mild symptoms. Less than 1% suffer severe illness, so it is unusual that we have several patients who are sick enough to require extended hospital stays at the same time.”

People at high risk of severe illness should take extra precautions to protect themselves. Those at high risk of severe illness include:

- Older adults
- People with weakened immune systems
- People with chronic or underlying health issues such as cancer, diabetes, high blood pressure and kidney disease.

Mild symptoms of West Nile

virus may include fever, headache, body aches, joint pain, vomiting, diarrhea and a rash. Severe illness can affect the central nervous system and may cause inflammation of the brain (encephalitis) and the membranes around the brain and spinal cord (meningitis). Symptoms of severe illness can include high fever, neck stiffness, disorientation, tremors, convulsions or paralysis.

“Unfortunately, there is no vaccine or specific antiviral treatment for West Nile virus,” Dr. Joseph Watson, Phoebe pulmonologist and critical care intensivist, said. “When a patient is hospitalized, we focus on supportive care for their symptoms. That’s why

it’s so important for people – especially those at high risk for severe illness – to focus on prevention.”

West Nile virus is spread through the bites of infected mosquitoes. Particularly during the warm and wet summer months when mosquitoes flourish, it is important to protect yourself from mosquito bites. Prevention tips include:

Use insect repellent with EPA-registered ingredients like DEET;

Avoid being outside around dawn and dusk when mosquitoes are most active;

Wear long sleeves and pants; Eliminate standing water around your home to reduce mosquito breeding.



Special Photo: Phoebe

Physicians with Phoebe Putney Health System are urging south Georgians to be aware of the dangers posed by mosquitoes and to take precautions to protect themselves against mosquito-borne illnesses, including West Nile virus.

In south Georgia, West Nile cases typically peak in August and September, but the ill-

ness can continue to spread well into the fall while mosquitoes remain active.

Georgia Southwestern ranked third-best rural college in nation

Staff Reports

news@albanyherald.com

AMERICUS — Georgia Southwestern State University has been named the third-best college in rural America in a national ranking by Washington Monthly, recognizing GSW for its affordability, social mobility and impact on Georgia’s work force.

The ranking began with more than 1,000 rural colleges across the country, focusing on four-year nonprofit colleges and universities that provide students with strong educational and economic opportunities while serving the needs of their states and communities.

The methodology highlights areas central to GSW’s mission: providing an affordable, accessible and high-quality education while preparing graduates to strengthen southwest Georgia and communities across the state.

Rankings were based on social mobility, percentage of students from in-state, percentage of graduates who remain in the state and the number of degrees awarded in high-demand fields in short supply in rural areas, such as teaching and nursing.

“This national recognition reinforces what we have long

known at Georgia Southwestern: Rural universities can have an extraordinary impact on the students and communities they serve,” GSW President Kerry J. Palmer said. “With half of our students being the first in their families to attend college, the education they receive at GSW has the power to change not only their lives, but the trajectory of their families for generations to come.”

“We are proud to provide an affordable, high-quality education that prepares students for successful careers while developing the talent needed to strengthen communities across Georgia. To be ranked No. 3 in the nation is an incredible honor and a testament to the work of our faculty, staff, students, alumni and community partners.”

Affordability is an important part of that impact. By keeping the cost of earning a degree within reach, GSW helps reduce financial barriers to higher education with its low-cost tuition and generous scholarship program, which creates greater opportunity for students to graduate and build successful careers. This contributes to social mobility, a graduate’s ability to improve their economic circumstanc-



Special Photo: GSW

Georgia Southwestern State University has been named the third-best college in rural America in a national ranking by the Washington Monthly publication.

es through education and increased earning potential.

GSW’s success in this area also has been recognized by U.S. News & World Report, which ranked among top performances on social media in its 2026 Best Colleges rankings.

According to Washington Monthly, the highest-ranked rural colleges recruit and graduate significant numbers of in-state students from modest-income backgrounds and prepare them to earn salaries that outperform expectations based on their demographics. GSW’s strong graduate outcomes reflect that mission, with the university ranking No. 3 in median earnings one

year after graduation among University System of Georgia institutions for graduates employed in the state.

Approximately 80% of GSW graduates remain in Georgia, joining the workforce and contributing to the state’s economy. GSW graduates also earn more four years after graduation than predicted based on student demographics, another key factor contributing to the university’s high ranking.

Ranking third from an initial pool of more than 1,000 rural colleges nationwide is indicative of GSW’s impact being felt far beyond the region the university is proud to call home, GSW officials said.

ABAC, UGA College of Veterinary Medicine formalize partnership

Staff Reports

news@albanyherald.com

TIFTON — Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College and the University of Georgia College of Veterinary Medicine formalized a partnership recently to help address Georgia’s shortage of veterinarians serving rural communities and the state’s food-animal agriculture industry.

The institutions commemorated the signing of a memorandum of understanding at Tift Hall on the ABAC campus, establishing the Georgia Rural Practice Veterinary Incentive Program, or Georgia Rural Practice VIP. The five-year agreement creates a collaborative pathway for ABAC students interested in pursuing mixed animal and food-animal veterinary medicine and ultimately serving rural communities in Georgia. Food animals are domesticated or farmed animals raised primarily for human consumption and animal-derived food products.

The need for veterinarians who specialize in food-animal medicine is significant. According to statistics reported by the American Veterinary Medical Association, of the 90,219 veterinarians in the United States involved in clinical practice in 2025, only 3.1% were dedicated solely to food-animal practice. The percentage of veterinarians dedicated to food-animal practice also declined from 3.4% in 2024.

In Georgia, the shortage of food-animal and mixed-animal veterinarians presents a chal-

lenge for rural communities and the agricultural industry.

“Years from now, the success of today’s agreement will not be measured by the signatures on this memorandum,” ABAC President Tracy Brundage said. “It will be measured by the students who choose to answer this calling. It will be measured by the veterinarians serving our rural communities, supporting Georgia agriculture, and caring for the animals that sustain one of our state’s most important industries.”

The Georgia Rural Practice VIP will provide selected ABAC students with specialized advising and mentoring throughout their undergraduate education. Students will be advised by an ABAC faculty member in the Animal Science track and mentored by a UGA College of Veterinary Medicine faculty member with expertise in food-animal medicine.

Eligible applicants must be Georgia residents, demonstrate a strong interest in animal agriculture, pursue the practice of mixed- or food-animal veterinary medicine, and have completed their first full academic year in ABAC’s Animal Science track within the bachelor of science in Agriculture major.

Students accepted into the program will be expected to complete the required coursework for ABAC’s Animal Science track, the prerequisites for admission to the UGA College of Veterinary Medicine and specific hands-on experiences designed to prepare them for careers in rural veterinary medicine.

“We recognize that the via-



Special Photo: ABAC

Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College and the University of Georgia College of Veterinary Medicine officials formalize a partnership to help address Georgia’s shortage of veterinarians serving rural communities and the state’s food-animal agriculture industry.

bility of Georgia’s food-animal agriculture industry depends directly on having skilled veterinarians who can meet the demands of our rural farming communities,” Lisa K. Nolan, dean of UGA VetMed, said. “By aligning ABAC’s strong undergraduate program in animal science with UGA’s clinical veterinary education, we are establishing a sustainable source of veterinarians dedicated to serving our rural regions for years to come.”

The first students accepted into the program are Maylee Barnes of Bartow and Lainey Kate Harris of Folkston. Both students have experiences that fostered their love of caring for animals.

“My love for animal care began with one of my family’s animals, a pot-belly pig named Rosie,” Harris said. “Rosie got in an accident with a neighbor’s dog and was really hurt. We went to my papa, and he told us to put burnt motor oil on its back to help with the infection. That inspired me to learn as much as I can so I can provide better care for animals and not have to rely on homemade remedies.”

“I grew up in Florida but

moved up to Georgia and my family’s farm during COVID,” Maylee said. “Working on the family farm started my love for animal care, and over the past three years I’ve gotten to work at a veterinary practice, which has strengthened my love for animals.”

Participation in the Georgia Rural Practice VIP does not guarantee admission to the UGA College of Veterinary Medicine. Students who choose to apply must complete the regular UGA VetMed admissions process and meet all application requirements. However, the program is designed to provide students with focused preparation, advising, mentoring and experiences that align with careers in rural veterinary medicine.

The partnership also is intended to help participating veterinarians pursue additional financial assistance. Veterinarians who complete the program will be eligible to apply for the Georgia Veterinary Education Loan Repayment Program, according to the MOU.

The MOU became effective June 1 and has a five-year term through June 1, 2031, unless canceled or renewed by mutual agreement.



Valdosta State University Logo

Area students recognized by colleges, universities

By Carlton Fletcher

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Valdosta State University -- Dean’s List

VALDOSTA -- More than 500 students were named to Valdosta State University’s summer 2026 Dean’s List. To qualify for Dean’s List at VSU, students must achieve a semester grade-point average of 3.50 or higher on nine or more semester hours with an institutional grade-point average of 3.00 or higher. Area students on the list include:

Margaret Williams of Sylvester
Quantavious Christian of Albany
Mikayla Simmons of Leesburg
Daelin Johnson of Albany
Jacqueline Rohan of Albany
Camille Corker of Camilla
Kajuana Smoak of Leesburg
Kadance Flowers of Leesburg
Jaylen Harden of Albany
Kayte Odum of Pelham
Steffi Lee of Leesburg
Madalyn Burnum of Pelham
Princy Patel of Sylvester
Anna Mayer of Leesburg
Isabella Stokes of Pelham
Hannah Hudson of Camilla

Georgia State University -- Graduation

ATLANTA -- Genese Man-

douma of Leesburg graduated from Georgia State University during the summer 2026 semester with a Master of Public Health degree and a concentration in Health Promotion & Behavior. More than 2,000 students earned certificates and degrees at the undergraduate and graduate levels during the summer semester.

Beulah Heights University -- Dean’s List

ATLANTA -- Carla Jefferson of Albany was named to the Beulah Heights University’s spring 2026 Dean’s List. Jefferson was among more than 61 students named to the Dean’s List.

Troy University -- Provost’s List

TROY, Ala. -- Troy University recognized students who have been named to the Provost’s List for the Summer Semester and Term 5 of the 2025-2026 academic year. Full-time undergraduate students who are registered for at least 12 semester-hours and who have a grade-point average of at least 3.65 qualify for the Provost’s List. Among the students on the list was Jennifer Mitchell of Dawson.

Thomasville looking for Victorian Christmas sponsors

Staff Reports

news@albanyherald.com

THOMASVILLE – The city of Thomasville recently announced plans for its 40th annual Victorian Christmas, a beloved holiday tradition taking place on Dec. 10-11 in historic downtown Thomasville.

As planning continues for this milestone celebration, the city is seeking community partners to support the event through sponsorship opportunities.

Drawing an average of more than 30,000 attendees each year, Victorian Christmas transforms downtown into a festive, Victorian-era holiday experience filled with live entertainment, seasonal attractions and family-friendly activities. This year’s 40th anniversary promises to be an especially memorable event, celebrating four decades of holiday tradition in Thomasville.

The city is currently offering a limited number of Victorian Christmas Entertainment

Sponsorships. Sponsors will receive recognition in advertising and promotional materials including:

- Logo displayed on A-frame signage at main entertainment locations and information booths throughout the event.

- Logo placement in the official Victorian Christmas event brochure (online digital brochure and in more than 5,000 printed brochures).
- Logo placement on Victorian Christmas event website page.

For more information or to secure a sponsorship, contact the city of Thomasville

Marketing Department at (229) 227-4015 or events@thomasville.org. Applications can be found online at Thomasville.org/event-sponsorship.



Staff Photo: Joe Whitfield

Westover running back Malik Young breaks into the open field. Young rushed for 139 yards and four touchdowns in the Patriots’ 49-8 win over Columbus last week.

No. 9 Westover gets shot at No. 4 Cairo

By Joe Whitfield
Sports Editor

ALBANY — A year ago, Westover went to Cairo trying to figure out who its quarterback was. Thursday night, the Patriots get the Syrupmakers again. A lot has changed. Westover is undefeated. The Patriots are ranked No. 9 in Class 4A. They’re coming off a 41-point victory and have begun looking like a team capable of making some noise well beyond Albany. Now comes the measuring stick. No. 4 Cairo visits Hugh Mills Stadium Thursday night for an early Region 1-4A showdown between two unbeaten teams with designs on a region championship. Westover is 3-0. Cairo is 2-0. And while nobody is winning a cham-

pionship in September, the winner will take an awfully important first step toward one. “This is a big game because it is a region game, and it is a big game because of power ranking for playoff seed,” Westover coach Corey Joyner said. “It is also a big game because it is a measuring stick to see how well Westover competes.” That’s really what Thursday night is about. Westover has spent three weeks showing what it can do. Now the Patriots get to find out how it looks against one of Class 4A’s best. Cairo went unbeaten in region play last season, finished 10-3 and reached the state semifinals before losing to Jefferson. One of those victories came against Westover. But it wasn’t easy. The Syrupmakers escaped with a 22-14

victory in Cairo against a Patriots team that was dealing with remarkable instability at the game’s most important position. Gabriel Hopper had only recently taken over as Westover’s fourth quarterback of the season. A year later, Hopper is the established starter. There’s just one problem. His status for Thursday night is uncertain. Hopper sat out Westover’s 49-8 rout of Columbus on Friday while nursing an ankle injury. In his place stepped Jordan Joyner. How unusual was that? Joyner hadn’t played quarterback since seventh grade. Then again, maybe Westover knew exactly where to look.

See **WESTOVER**, 10A

Lawson returns as the enemy

By Joe Whitfield
Sports Editor

LEESBURG — Cohen Lawson knows exactly what Friday night at Mack Tharpe Stadium feels like. He knows the roar from the stands. He knows the coaches on the Colquitt County sideline and many of the players wearing black and gold. For two years, Lawson was the guy those people were cheering. Friday night, they’ll be trying to beat him. Lawson returns to Moultrie as Lee County’s quarterback when the undefeated, No. 2-ranked Trojans collide with Class 7A powerhouse Colquitt County in a South Georgia showdown. Welcome home, Cohen. Just don’t expect much of a welcome. “He’s excited to take on the challenge this week,” Lee County coach Dean Fabrizio said.

There’s plenty to be excited about. Colquitt County escaped Leesburg with a wild 43-36 victory last season. Now the 3-0 Trojans head to Moultrie looking to return the favor against the 2-1 Packers. Lawson isn’t the only Trojan going back. Lee County defensive coordinator Bull Barge starred on Colquitt County’s 2017 state championship team and later coached for the Packers. Lawson arrives on a roll, too. He threw for 277 yards against Sequoyah last week. “Cohen is coming off a big game for us,” Fabrizio said. “He’s getting better each week.”



Special Photo: Noah Erwin

Lee County quarterback Cohen Lawson looks downfield during last week’s win over Sequoyah. Lawson threw for 277 yards and will return to Mack Tharpe Stadium Friday night to face his former team, Colquitt County.

So is Lee County. The Trojans have been punched. Twice. And twice they’ve punched back. Lee County trailed nationally ranked Carol City 20-8 at halftime before storming back for a 23-20 victory. The Trojans faced adversity again last week at Sequoyah before rallying to win. “We’ve got a veteran team, and we’ve

got a team that has a lot of grit,” Fabrizio said. “They do a great job of keeping their composure and correcting mistakes as a game goes on.” Colquitt County coach Sean Calhoun has noticed. “They are finding ways to win and finding ways to win in the fourth quarter,” Calhoun said. “So we know we will have to fight our hardest for four quarters.” The Packers counter with quarterback Khi Mitchell, receiver Antwann Lockett and running back Denim Lewis. Lee County surrounds Lawson with plenty of firepower, including Jaden Upshaw, Carter Blackwell, Jordyn Bush and Dominique Ball, while Gregory Batson, Jace Murray, Montavious Clay, Champ Brown and Trey Bush lead a talented defense. Then there’s Mack Tharpe. The noise. The black and gold. The history. “Colquitt is one of the best atmospheres to play,” Fabrizio said. “Mack Tharpe Stadium is just an electrifying place.” Fabrizio knows what it will take to leave that place with a victory. “They play extremely hard. They’ve got great athletes. They’re well coached,” he said. “It’s going to take a great effort on our part to beat them.” A year ago, Lee County came seven points short. Now comes the rematch. Under the lights in Moultrie. No. 2 Lee County against Colquitt County. Lawson back at Mack Tharpe. Only this time, he’ll be trying to beat the Packers.



Special Photo: Noah Erwin

Lee County’s Jaden Upshaw heads to the end zone on a 55-yard punt return that gave the Trojans the lead against Sequoyah Friday night in Canton.

Friday Night Five: Upshaw is Player of the Week

By Joe Whitfield
Sports Editor

Editor’s note: Several local schools had a bye Friday night and several others did not report or post stats so finding five in each category was challenging. For most players, 12 catches and two touchdown receptions would be enough for a pretty good Friday night. Jaden Upshaw wasn’t finished. With Lee County trailing Sequoyah in the final minutes Friday night in Canton, the Texas A&M commit fielded a punt and raced 55 yards for the touchdown that gave the Trojans the lead in an improbable 43-32 comeback victory. That was the exclamation point on a huge night for Upshaw and makes the Lee County senior the Albany Herald Friday Night Five Player of the Week. Upshaw caught 12 passes for 143 yards and two touchdowns and added a two-point conversion before delivering the biggest play of the night on special teams. Lee County trailed 32-21 with three minutes remaining before scoring a touchdown to pull within four. After the Trojan defense forced a punt, Upshaw took care of the rest, racing 55 yards for the go-ahead score. Montravious Clay followed with a pick-six to complete the stunning comeback and keep No. 2 Lee County unbeaten at 3-0. Upshaw’s performance highlighted a week in which several Southwest Georgia teams had byes and statistics were unavailable from several others. That left this week’s Friday Night Five a little short of five in a couple of categories, but there was no shortage of big performances.

Passing
1. Micah Joyner, Dougherty — 18-of-24, 333 yards, 5 TDs
The sophomore put together a remarkable night in Dougherty’s 42-19 victory over Spen-

cer. Joyner completed 75 percent of his passes and threw five touchdowns to three different receivers as the Trojans improved to 2-0.
2. Cohen Lawson, Lee County — 24-of-36, 277 yards, 2 TDs
Lawson threw for 277 yards and two touchdowns in Lee County’s comeback victory over Sequoyah, with Upshaw serving as his favorite target.
3. Lyndon Worthy, Worth County — 13-of-19, 161 yards, 4 TDs
Worthy made his completions count. The Worth County quarterback threw four touchdown passes as the defending Class 3A state champion Rams rolled past Early County 31-0.
4. Khi Mitchell, Colquitt County — 11-of-15, 132 yards, 2 TDs
Mitchell completed better than 73 percent of his passes and threw two touchdowns as Colquitt County cruised past Cook 38-6.

5. Jordan Joyner, Westover — 4-of-6, 65 yards
With regular starter Gabriel Hopper not playing, Joyner stepped in at quarterback as the Patriots remained unbeaten with a 49-8 rout of Columbus.

Rushing
1. Braylen Hundley, Baconton Charter — 30 carries, 189 yards
Hundley was the area’s workhorse, carrying 30 times for 189 yards as Baconton Charter blanked Brookwood 27-0.
2. Malik Young, Westover — 17 carries, 139 yards, 4 TDs
Young turned 17 carries into four touchdowns in Westover’s rout of Columbus. He averaged more than 8 yards per carry as the Patriots improved to 3-0.
3. Jordan Bush, Lee County — 11 carries, 50 yards
Bush led Lee County’s ground attack during the Trojans’ 43-32 victory over Sequoyah.
4. Kody Crutchfield, Worth

See **FIVE**, 10A

Falcons to induct Abraham and Fralic into Ring of Honor

Staff Reports
news@albanyherald.com

FLOWERY BRANCH, Ga. - The Atlanta Falcons today announced that John Abraham and Bill Fralic will become the 15th and 16th members of the club’s Ring of Honor. Abraham will be honored during the Falcons Week 5 game against the Baltimore Ravens. Fralic will be inducted when Atlanta hosts Tampa Bay in Week 16. Abraham spent seven seasons in Atlanta and was a critical member of the teams that defined an era for the franchise. He spent the first six years of his career in New York after being selected by the New York Jets with the 13th overall pick in the 2000 NFL Draft. During that time, Abraham established himself as one of the league’s top pass rushers, totaling 53.5 sacks in 73 games. When the Jets used the Franchise Tag on him following the 2005 season, Atlanta came calling. At the time, ESPN’s Len Pasquarelli reported the Falcons — led by current CEO of AMBSE Rich McKay — so coveted Abraham they employed the rarely used three-team trade to bring him to Atlanta. That trade would prove wise, as he would go on to help the Falcons reach the postseason in 2008 and

secure three straight postseason bids for the first time in team history (2010-2012), as well as a second NFC Championship Game appearance. The Predator — a nickname he earned for his relentless pursuit of opposing quarterbacks — tallied 68.5 sacks in 102 games as a Falcon, the fourth most by any player over that seven-year span. Pro Football Hall of Famer and his soon-to-be fellow Ring of Honor member, Claude Humphrey, is recognized as the team’s all-time leader with 99.5 sacks. However, Humphrey played his entire career before sacks became an official statistic in 1982, which gives Abraham the honor of being the team’s official sack leader in the NFL record books. Abraham didn’t only hunt quarterbacks. He also preyed on the ball. During his tenure with the Falcons, the Timmonsville, S.C., native forced 25 fumbles. According to Tru Media, 19 of those forced fumbles were strip sacks, tied for the fourth most by any player during that span. Abraham had three such plays that resulted in defensive touchdowns, tying Elvis Dumervil, Dwight Freeney and Osi Umenyiora for the league lead. Since 2000, his 115 quarterback hits rank second in club annals



Special Photo: Submitted

Former Atlanta Falcons standouts Bill Fralic, left, and John Abraham will become the 15th and 16th members of the franchise’s Ring of Honor. Abraham will be honored in Week 5, while Fralic will be inducted in Week 16.

behind Grady Jarrett (126), and while he played during the nascent days of analytical tools like Pro Football Focus, he totaled 412 pressures, accounting for all sacks, hits and hurries. Over seven seasons in Atlanta, Abraham posted double-digit sacks four times and was a two-time All-Pro — a first-team selection in 2010 and second-team pick in 2008 — he also earned Pro Bowl honors in 2010. Abraham finished his career as one of the best pass rushers of his generation, with 133.5 sacks, which ranks 14th in NFL history. Overall, he boasted three All-Pro selections and five trips to the Pro Bowl in a career that spanned 15 seasons. Abraham helped usher in an unprecedented run of suc-

cess for the Falcons, with the team reaching the postseason in four of his final five seasons, and he made his mark as one of the dominant pass rushers of his era. Bill Fralic played an unheralded position for an unheralded team, appearing in just one postseason game during his tenure, but he created an archetype for his position through the tenacity and toughness he displayed. Fralic came to Atlanta as the No. 2 overall pick of the 1985 NFL Draft after leaving an indelible mark at the University of Pittsburgh. He was a three-time All-American and the first offensive lineman to boast two top 10 finishes in Heisman Trophy

See **FALCON**, 10A

From 9A

FALCON

voting, whose proclivity for putting defenders on their backs inspired the staff at Pittsburgh to create the “pancake block.”

The 6-foot-5, 280-pound lineman lived up to his lofty billing and made an immediate and lasting impact both on and off the field during his career. As a rookie, Fralic started 14 of the 15 games he played in and finished third in the Associated Press Offensive Rookie of the Year voting. He would follow that with three-straight All-Pro selections — first team in 1986 and 1987 and second team in 1988 — and four consecutive trips to the Pro Bowl.

In total, Fralic spent eight of his nine NFL seasons in Atlanta and started 115 of the 116 games in which he played. Fralic was a member of the Pro Football Hall of Fame All-1980s team honoring the best players of the

decade. While Fralic’s imposing stature and mean streak were well known in the NFL, he also caught the eye of the WWE, participating in a 20-man Battle Royal at WrestleMania 2 in 1986.

Unable to surmount Andre the Giant in the ring, Fralic would take on another battle off the field during his playing career, fighting against the use of steroids in the NFL. In 1989, he went before the Senate Judiciary Committee on the subject and supported a bipartisan bill to designate steroids as a controlled substance.

Fralic moved from the field to the broadcast booth after his career, serving as the Falcons radio analyst from 1995 to 1997 and later in the same role at his alma mater from 2004 to 2010. Sadly, he passed away in December 2018 at the age of 56 after battling cancer. His inclusion in the Falcons Ring of Honor is a fitting tribute for a player synonymous with the decade he played in and the team he played for.

From 9A

FIVE

County — 8 carries, 36 yards
Crutchfield contributed on the ground as Worth County remained unbeaten with a 31-0 victory over Early County.

Receiving

1. Jaden Upshaw, Lee County — 12 catches, 143 yards, 2 TDs
Upshaw’s receiving numbers alone would put him atop this week’s list. Add a two-point conversion and the 55-yard punt-return touchdown that gave Lee County the lead in the closing minutes, and it became a Player of the Week performance.

2. Detavious Poole, Dougherty — 6 catches, 101 yards
Poole topped the century mark and caught one of Micah Joyner’s five touchdown passes in Dougherty’s victory over Spencer.

3. Jherel Gibson, Dougherty — 3 catches, 88 yards
Gibson averaged more than 29 yards per reception, giving Joyner another explosive op-

From 9A

WESTOVER

Quarterbacking apparently runs in the Joyner family.

Jordan’s older brother, Jaylen, is Westover’s offensive coordinator and a former quarterback. His uncle, Uyl Joyner, is Dougherty’s head coach and also played the position. His cousin, Dougherty sophomore quarterback Micah Joyner, threw five touchdown passes Friday night against Spencer.

So when Hopper couldn’t go, another Joyner went behind center.

“I think Jaylen Joyner, our offensive coordinator, did a great job in preparing Jordan to play and managing Jordan during the game,” Corey Joyner said. “Jordan did a great job managing the game and not turning the ball over.”

He completed 4 of 6 passes for 65 yards while Westover leaned heavily on its running game.

Malik Young took care of much of the rest, rushing for 139 yards and four touchdowns on 17 carries.

Now the question is whether Hopper will be ready for Cairo.

If not, Joyner isn’t panicking. “He had not played QB since seventh grade, but he comes from a line of QBs,” Joyner said. “I believe strongly if we need him to play, he will definitely be ready.”

He’ll need to be.

Cairo represents a substantial jump in difficulty.

The Syrupmakers are coming off a 52-13 demolition of Hardaway and feature one of the state’s most dangerous two-way players in senior Bryan Duncan.

tion in a Dougherty passing attack that produced 333 yards.

4. Carter Blackwell, Lee County — 5 catches, 73 yards

The Clemson commit complemented Upshaw with five receptions for 73 yards as Lee County’s passing game helped the Trojans erase an 11-point deficit.

Player of the Week: Jaden Upshaw, Lee County

There were plenty of worthy candidates.

Joyner threw five touchdown passes. Young ran for four. Hundley rushed for 189 yards.

But Upshaw did a little bit of everything — and when Lee County desperately needed somebody to make a play, he made the biggest one of the night.

Twelve catches. Two receiving touchdowns. A two-point conversion.

And one unforgettable 55-yard trip to the end zone.

That’s a Friday night worthy of Player of the Week.

The West Virginia commit can change a game from either side of the football, lining up at running back and defensive back.

Joyner didn’t need a lengthy scouting report to explain the problem.

“He is a great player,” Joyner said. “He is unbelievably fast. We will have to get him before he gets started.”

Stopping Duncan, however, won’t be enough.

Joyner believes one of the game’s defining battles could happen well away from the football.

Up front.

“Cairo has a great defensive line,” Joyner said. “Those guys are quick and physical, but so are we on the O-line. It will be a great fight Thursday between the two.”

Westover has earned the right to be confident.

The Patriots are 3-0 and just dismantled Columbus 49-8.

Cairo has plenty of reason for confidence, too.

The Syrupmakers are 2-0, ranked fourth and just beat Hardaway by 39.

Something has to give Thursday night.

And for Westover, there’s something else at stake beyond a region victory or playoff positioning.

A year ago, the Patriots went to Cairo with their fourth quarterback of the season and battled the eventual state semifinalists to within eight points.

Now Cairo comes to Albany. Westover is unbeaten.

Westover is ranked.

And Westover believes it’s a different football team.

Thursday night, the Patriots get to find out just how different.

Kromah shines in FSU loss

Field Level Media

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. — Ousmane Kromah keeps running.

And the former Lee County star keeps piling up 100-yard games.

Kromah rushed for 116 yards and a touchdown Monday night, topping the century mark for the second consecutive game to begin the season, but No. 19 SMU spoiled his performance with a 27-24 victory over Florida State.

Nick Reed kicked a 20-yard field goal with 21 seconds remaining to give the Mustangs the win in the Atlantic Coast Conference opener for both teams.

Kromah’s performance continued an impressive start to his sophomore season.

After rushing for a career-high 115 yards on 14 carries in Florida State’s season-opening 34-17 victory over New Mexico State, the former Trojan was even more productive against the nationally ranked Mustangs.

Kromah’s 116 yards gave him 231 rushing yards through Florida State’s first two games.

His biggest moment Monday came in the third quarter.

With Florida State trailing 17-10, SMU returner Yamir Knight muffed a punt and the Seminoles recovered.

Eight plays later, Kromah finished the drive with a 6-yard touchdown run to tie the game.

Florida State’s ground at-

tack proved to be its most effective weapon throughout the night.

The Seminoles rushed for 199 yards and two touchdowns. Quarterback Ashton Daniels added 71 yards and a score on the ground while completing 12 of 23 passes for 125 yards and a touchdown.

But Florida State had difficulty sustaining drives through the air.

The Seminoles converted only 2 of 15 third downs and were outgained 585-324.

Still, they found themselves tied in the closing minutes thanks largely to four SMU turnovers.

Mustangs quarterback Kevin Jennings threw for a career-high 430 yards and three touchdowns but was intercepted twice. SMU finished with a 4-1 deficit in turnovers despite controlling most of the statistical categories.

The Mustangs took a 17-10 lead into halftime after piling up 328 yards to Florida State’s 165.

Jennings connected with Jalen Cooper for a 50-yard touchdown with 9:32 remaining in the first quarter to open the scoring.

Florida State answered with a 14-play, 75-yard drive.

Daniels kept the possession alive by finding Jayvan Boggs for 5 yards on fourth down and eventually scrambled 8 yards for a touchdown to tie the game.

Jennings put SMU back in front with a 10-yard touch-



Special Photo: Alicia Devine/Tallahassee Democrat

Former Lee County star Ousmane Kromah, 32, breaks away from the SMU defense Monday night in Tallahassee, Fla. Kromah rushed for 116 yards and a touchdown in Florida State’s 27-24 loss to the No. 19 Mustangs

down pass to former Florida State tight end Randy Pittman Jr. with 5:35 remaining in the half.

Gabe Panikowski’s 46-yard field goal pulled Florida State within 14-10 before Reed answered with a 22-yarder to send SMU into halftime leading 17-10.

Kromah’s third-quarter touchdown tied it at 17.

Then things got wild.

Jennings connected with Yannick Smith for a 79-yard touchdown in the fourth quarter, putting SMU back in front 24-17.

Florida State responded.

Daniels found Samuel Singleton Jr. for a 39-yard touchdown with 8:17 remaining, tying the game at 24 and setting up a finish that ultimately belonged to the Mustangs.

SMU drove into position

for Reed, whose 20-yard field goal with 21 seconds left provided the final margin.

Jennings finished 24-of-33 passing for 430 yards and three touchdowns with two interceptions. Smith caught five passes for 107 yards and a touchdown.

Florida State fell to 1-1 overall and 0-1 in the ACC, while SMU improved to 1-0 overall and in conference play.

For Kromah, however, an impressive start continues.

The former Lee County standout has opened the season with consecutive 100-yard performances — 115 yards in Week 1 and 116 against the nation’s No. 19 team.

Two games.

231 rushing yards.

And an increasingly prominent role in Florida State’s offense.

Fuentes emerges as key piece of Braves’ postseason bullpen

Staff Reports

news@albanyherald.com

ATLANTA — Most 21-year-olds aren’t being asked to protect late-inning leads for a team chasing a division championship.

Didier Fuentes isn’t most 21-year-olds.

The Atlanta Braves rookie has emerged as one of baseball’s most effective relievers and a key piece of a bullpen that could become especially formidable when the postseason arrives.

“Most guys his age are living on ramen and sleeping on couches,” Braves ace Chris Sale said. “He’s pitching high-energy, big-leverage innings in the big leagues right now, and doing it at a very high clip.”

Fuentes has posted a 2.27 ERA through 51 appearances, including one start. Remove that start, and his 1.79 relief ERA ranks third among National League relievers.

His performance has been remarkable for his age.

Among pitchers who made at least 50 relief appearances in a season at age 21 or younger, Fuentes’ 1.79 ERA ranks



File Photo

Atlanta Braves rookie Didier Fuentes has emerged as one of the National League’s top relievers and a key piece of the Braves’ bullpen heading toward the postseason.

second, trailing only Huston Street’s 1.72 mark with Oakland in 2005. Fuentes’ 30.5% strikeout rate also ranks second among that group.

“You don’t even think of him being just 21 years old,” Braves utility man Mauricio Dubón said. “He’s going out there against the game’s best lineups and just shoving. He’s a big reason we’re here.”

Fuentes has accumulated 2.0 fWAR, tying him for seventh

among major league relievers and fourth in the NL. He and Dylan Lee entered Sunday tied for the Braves’ bullpen lead in that category.

His emergence has been particularly important with Robert Suarez sidelined by an elbow injury and Lee recently going through a rough stretch.

Suarez was scheduled to throw a 25-pitch bullpen session Monday and could return before the end of the regular

ABAC Golf Classic set for Oct. 9

Staff Reports

news@albanyherald.com

TIFTON — The Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College (ABAC) School of Agriculture and Natural Resources (SANR) will host its annual SANR Golf Classic on Friday, Oct. 9, raising funds to support student scholarships and professional development opportunities.

The tournament will be held at Forest Lakes Golf Course, with flights beginning at 8 a.m. and 1 p.m. The event will feature a four-person scramble format with a shotgun start.

Hillery Culpepper, development officer, said the tournament offers an opportunity for alumni, community members, businesses and friends of ABAC to support SANR students while enjoying a day on the course.

“We encourage everyone who loves ABAC, agriculture and our students to come out

and play or consider sponsoring this year’s tournament,” Culpepper said. “Every sponsorship and every team helps us invest in the students who will become the next generation of leaders in agriculture.”

Dr. Andrew Thoron, dean of the School of Agriculture and Natural Resources, said proceeds from the tournament will directly enhance the educational opportunities available to SANR students.

“These funds help us provide our students with hands-on experiences that extend learning beyond the classroom and strengthen their preparation for careers in agriculture,” Thoron said. “Supporting the SANR Golf Classic is an investment in our students and in their overall experience at ABAC.”

Several sponsorship and participation opportunities are available:

Presenting Sponsor, \$5,000: Includes two teams, or eight players, with team participa-

tion optional; premier recognition on promotional materials, event signage, social media, the tournament program and golf carts; year-round signage in the SANR Leadership Hall; an ABAC Homecoming Rodeo VIP package with two parking passes and eight tickets; a premier vendor location at SANR Career Connections; invitations to select SANR special events with the option for a company display; and lunch, snacks, beverages, cart and green fees and a tournament gift.

Stallions Sponsor, \$2,500: Includes one team, or four players, with team participation optional; recognition on promotional materials, event signage, social media, the tournament program and golf carts; an ABAC Homecoming Rodeo VIP package with one parking pass and four tickets; invitations to select SANR special events with the option for a company display; and lunch, snacks,

beverages, cart and green fees and a tournament gift.

Fillies Sponsor, \$1,000: Includes one team, or four players, with team participation optional; recognition on event signage, the tournament program and golf carts; and lunch, snacks, beverages, cart and green fees and a tournament gift.

Green and Gold Hole Sponsor, \$200: Includes logo signage at a designated hole.

Friends of SANR Sponsor, \$100: Includes recognition in the tournament program.

Team of Four, \$500: Includes four players, lunch, snacks, water, soft drinks, cart and green fees and a tournament gift.

Mulligans, \$5: Players may purchase up to four mulligans each.

Sponsorship opportunities are available through Sept. 18. Teams of four may register through the day of the tournament, as space remains available.

Obituary Announcements

Kathy Lee Barron Bullock

Kathy Lee Barron Bullock, 74, of Albany, Georgia, passed away peacefully on Thursday, September 3, 2026, at Phoebe Putney Memorial Hospital. A visitation will be held on Friday, September 11, 2026, from 6:00 p.m. until 8:00 p.m. at Mathews Funeral Home. A private service will be held by the family. Kathy was born in Columbus, Georgia, on March 3, 1952, to the late James Owen Barron and Ammy Polk Barron. She spent most of her life caring for others and operated a childcare in her home for many years. Caring for children was more than a job to Kathy—it was something she truly loved. Her home was always a welcoming place, and her door was open to everyone. Kathy had a loving and giving spirit and was known for making sure everyone felt welcome. She loved to cook and took great pride in preparing meals for her family and friends. If you ever told Kathy that you didn't like something, she was determined to make sure you at least tried it. Her love was often expressed through a home-cooked meal and a seat at her table. She enjoyed crocheting, watching game shows on television, and decorating her home for Christmas. Christmas was especially meaningful to Kathy, and she loved filling her home with decorations and making the season special for those around her. If you asked Kathy a question, you could always count on getting an honest answer. She was a woman who spoke her mind, loved deeply, and cared greatly for the people in her life. Kathy was preceded in death by her parents; her son, Eddie W. Bullock, Jr.; her granddaughter, Gabrielle Grace; and her brother James O. Barron, Jr. Survivors include her loving husband of 55 years, Eddie W. Bullock, Sr., of Albany; her daughter, Tina B. McQuiston and her husband John of Albany; her daughter-in-law, Angel M. Bullock of Albany; grandchildren, Samantha Schryver, Raven Bullock, Kalissa Bullock, and Trinity Bullock; great-grandchildren, Kayden, Riley, Abel, Delilah, and Zyr; and her sisters, Betty Rowell of Lee County and Mary Finch (Butch) of Centerville, Georgia, and numerous nieces and nephews.



Joni Dewanna Driver

Joni Dewanna Driver, of Fernandina Beach, Florida, passed away on September 6, 2026, at a local healthcare facility. She was born on October 11, 1956, in Moultrie, Georgia, the daughter of the late John Winston Driver and Laura Fincher Wiley. Joni worked as a concierge at the Ritz-Carlton on Amelia Island for eleven and a half years. She absolutely loved her job and was exceptionally good at it. Her warm personality, dedication, and genuine love for helping others made her well-suited for a career in hospitality. The Ritz-Carlton and Amelia Island held a special place in her heart. Survivors include her son, Brandon Brown; sisters, Becky Queen, Ginger McKinzie (Tim), Gina O'Hearn (Jeff), and Joy Spilman (Mike); brothers, Wendell Driver (Dawn), Steve Wiley, and Mike Wiley (Debbie); and grandchildren, Kylie Brown and Brianna Schultz. In addition to her parents, Joni was preceded in death by her stepmother, Lura Driver, and stepfather, Albert Wiley. A celebration of Joni's life will be held at a later date on the beach at the Ritz-Carlton on Amelia Island, a place

she loved so dearly. Service details will be announced once arrangements have been finalized.

Megan Elizabeth Rigsby

Megan Elizabeth Rigsby, 38, of Albany passed away on Sunday, September 6, 2026 at Willson Hospice House in Albany. Visitation will be held 10:00 - 11:00 a.m. Saturday, September 12 at Pebble City Baptist Church, 2144 GA Hwy 37, Sale City, GA. Memorial service will be 11:00 a.m. at the church. Born September 25, 1987 in Albany, Megan was the daughter of James R. Rigsby, Jr. of Perry and Roslyn Andrews Rigsby of Albany.

Megan studied culinary science and worked for a number of years at Fort Benning. For the past nine years she was employed by the Doublegate Country Club in Albany where her work family became near and dear to her.

In addition to her parents, Megan was survived by her brothers, James R. Rigsby III (Ren) of Athens and Taylor Rigsby (Megan) of Perry; her niece, Harper; her nephew, Henry; and numerous aunts, uncles, and cousins.

Memorials may be made to the Mitchell-Baker Service Center, 65 Industrial Boulevard, Camilla, GA 31730 and Willson Hospice House, 320 Foundation Lane, Albany, GA 31707. Parker-Bramlett Funeral Home is in charge of arrangements.

To sign the online guest registry, visit our website at www.parkerbramlett.com.



Mr Karl "Bucky" Hunter Thomas

Karl Hunter (Bucky) Thomas of St Simons Island passed on August 29, 2026. Born in Johnson City, Tn to George Hunter and Irene Johnson Thomas and hailed from Wheelwright, Ky. A gifted athlete he was recruited to Statesboro, Ga. to play basketball and continue his education at Georgia Southern University. It was there that he met on a double blind date, the love of his life Rosalyn Applegate. They married in 1957 and moved to Lexington, Ky to complete their education at the University of Kentucky. After graduating they moved back to Statesboro and eventually settled in Albany, Ga. Then upon retirement they moved to St. Simons Island, Ga.

Bucky was an avid golfer and a huge University of Kentucky Wildcats fan. He was also a member of The Honorable Order of Kentucky Colonels.

Bucky is survived by his wife of 68 years Rosalyn, two sons Hunter (Carla) of Leesburg, Ga and Karl (Leslie) of St Simons Island, Ga. Three grandchildren Jay of Grapevine, Tx, Joanna (Cayce) of Wellington, Fl, Bradley (Hunter) of Sylvester, Ga. Five great grandchildren Noah, Samuel, Lyla Grace, Ace and Kole. A sister Carolyn (Jim) Rhodes. Three brothers in law Jim (Diane), Richard (Rose), and Steve (Janice) Applegate. And a sister in law Mary Alice Applegate.

No service is planned. Anyone who wishes may make a donation to the Hospice of the Golden Isles 1692 Glynco Pkwy Brunswick, Ga 31525.

Douglas Tomlinson

Douglas J. Tomlinson of Athens, Georgia, passed away peacefully after a brief illness on September 5, 2026.

After graduating from Alcovy High School, where he was a senior superlative and first chair in the state of Georgia, Doug began a brief career as a retail manager before attending the University of Georgia. He graduated cum laude with a Bachelor of Arts degree in 1973 and an MBA in 1974.

Doug was employed with Reliance Electric for more than 25 years and with Silgan White Cap for 15 years. He was a longtime member of Prince Avenue Baptist Church.

Doug was preceded in death by his parents, J.G and Beverly Tomlinson; his sister, Kitty Ann Tomlinson, and his brothers, Dennis and Charles Tomlinson.

He is survived by his wife of 62 years, Linda Campbell Tomlinson; his children, Sean, Kimberly, and Douglas Tomlinson; his sister, June Staines (Roy); his brother-in-law, Roy Campbell (Trish); and several grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

Doug will be remembered by his family and friends for the life he shared with them and the many memories he leaves behind.



Betty Wingate (Gregory)

Betty Gregory Wingate September 2, 1942 - March 19, 2026

Betty Gregory Wingate, 83, of Winder, Georgia, and formerly of Albany, Georgia, was called to be with our Lord and Savior on March 19, 2026. She attended Albany High School in Albany, Georgia. As family and friends prepare to celebrate her life, they reflect on the love, faith, and memories she shared with so many.

Her love for God was apparent and visible in the way she approached life and treated others. She loved gospel music and listening to Elvis Presley.

Betty dedicated many years of her life to the grocery store industry. Betty valued excellent customer service and was known for her strong leadership as a front-end manager. She was loved by everyone, and many close and lifelong friendships were formed during these years. After many years of service, she began a new career path working for the Internal Revenue Service, until retiring in 2008.

Love and family connections were important to her. Betty cherished nothing more than time spent with her family. She loved taking trips to Panama City Beach, Florida, with her sisters and gathering family together for days filled with laughter. She delighted in telling stories of growing up alongside her sisters and raising her children, while maintaining close relationships across generations throughout her life. Betty also loved visiting the Smoky Mountains every chance she could, and planned multiple trips each year and especially enjoyed the scenery and activities the mountains had to offer.

Betty is survived by her son, Keith L. Wingate; daughters, Cynthia Moore (Charles) and Kimberly Greve (Brian). Her legacy continues through her grandchildren: grandsons,

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Release Date: Wednesday, September 9, 2026

Los Angeles Times Daily Crossword Puzzle

Edited by Patti Varol

ACROSS

- 1 Insensitive
- 6 Not out
- 10 Apple variety
- 14 ___ Productions: media company founded by Oprah
- 15 West Coast sch. that joined the Big Ten in 2024
- 16 Team with a lot of pull?
- 17 All over
- 18 Birds whose oil is used in Aboriginal medicine
- 19 Super Serum seller
- 20 Soccer player who shares every little detail online?
- 23 ___-di-dah
- 24 Blubber
- 25 Accident report?
- 28 "What a gimme!"
- 31 Mail
- 34 King topper in a game of war
- 35 Singer Halliwell
- 36 Leave in a fit?
- 38 Soccer player from a Florida archipelago?
- 41 Like steak, but not cake
- 42 Reasons to go to extra innings
- 43 Jazz (up)
- 44 Rookie gamer
- 45 Speck on a map
- 46 Sign
- 47 Long fish
- 49 "Truthfully" initials
- 51 Soccer player who doesn't pull their weight?
- 58 Lean
- 59 Within reach
- 60 Eaglet home
- 61 Avant-garde style
- 62 Small bird of prey
- 63 "You almost guessed it!"
- 64 Staircase part
- 65 "Now!"
- 66 Respected leader

DOWN

- 1 Fella
- 2 Robusto! sauce brand
- 3 Many an Eid celebrant

- 4 Lets the cat out of the bag
- 5 Ketanji colleague
- 6 Sought compensation
- 7 Height
- 8 Nickname for comedian Gabriel Iglesias
- 9 Stand for artistic freedom?
- 10 Bible
- 11 Wheel spinner
- 12 Father of Goneril, Regan, and Cordelia
- 13 Flexible amount
- 21 Joyful
- 22 Italy's third-largest city
- 25 National trees of the United States
- 26 Place where people cruise through life?
- 27 Get to
- 29 Preferring platonic relationships, for short
- 30 Searches (through)
- 32 Iron output
- 33 Herb in jerk seasoning

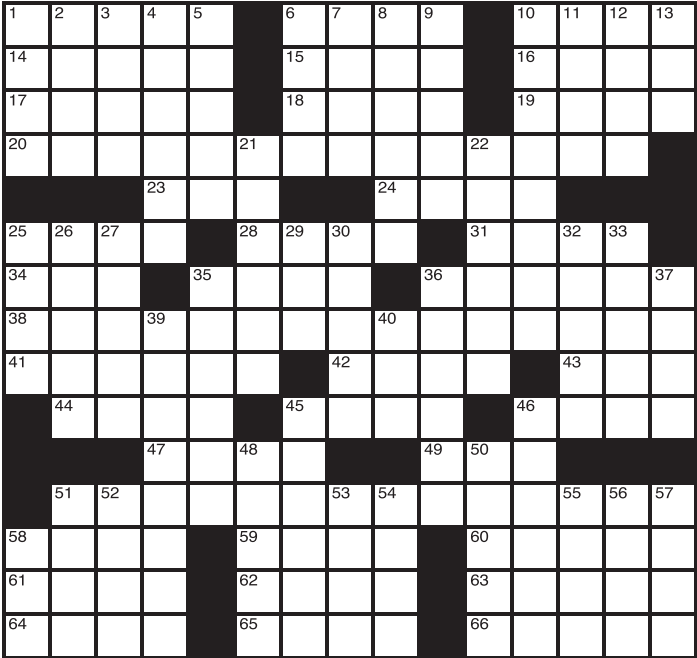
- 35 Company with an annual search for a spokesbaby
- 36 Flamin' Hot puff
- 37 "College GameDay" network
- 39 Short time out
- 40 From dawn — dusk
- 45 Finder's cry
- 46 "Such is life"
- 48 Spot for a tee party?

- 50 Knee protector
- 51 Small talk
- 52 Deputy
- 53 Spreadsheet input
- 54 Guitar ridge
- 55 Yankee nickname of the 2000s
- 56 "___ and shine!"
- 57 Lots of bucks
- 58 Some 37-Down highlights: Abbr.

ANSWER TO PREVIOUS PUZZLE:

V	N	N	V	S	E	H	L	S	L	L	O	D
X	O	O	R	X	N	I	S	V	W	O	N	O
I	H	G	I	N	E	L	V	D	N	Y	W	E
I	d	e	e	B	e	r	n	t	e	d	v	r
S	T	E	E	L	C	I	D	E	W	V	H	V
S	O	I	L	S	E	R	V	W	E	L	I	
S	E	T	N	E	H	L	E	N	I	X	V	E
d	I	T	d	O	L	V	V	W	H	E		
I	B	E	L	O	N	V	W	E	V	E	E	L
H	E	M	O	N	M	V	T	A	B	V	E	H
N	O	O	M	S	V	N	O	W	S	E	O	
I	N	V	E	L	E	D	O	C	E	L	I	H
N	O	E	L	V	H	O	O	A	E	E	E	H
O	E	W	V	C	S	W	V	D	A	T	E	V

09/09/26



By Rena Cohen

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09/09/26

For there is nothing covered that will not be revealed, nor hidden that will not be known.

Luke 12:2

CELEBRITY CIPHER

by Luis Campos

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

" X U C S S L K X I U Z Q V H B Y L L H X I V D U A C U X U A X I W L G L F B Z I L I C U Q F C H H B A C D . . . X R C I U L K U Z A Q P C I X J L U A L P X I U A X D A B S L F E Z H X O D U C U L . " — X I K L I C G C F F L U U L

Previous Solution: "It's funny how roles come to you at a time in life when you are ready to look at things in a different way." — Anna Gunn

TODAY'S CLUE: 7 sjenbe H

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CELEBRITY CIPHER

by Luis Campos

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

" X P ' K Z M F B J M H U Z P X U F X Q C Y K P B J L J Q Z P Y B F . . . Z Q C X ' M F Z U D Z J K A X Q C H I P B X F C P H B X C F P N Z P D Z M F Z K H O O H K F C P H I X T N P X P . " — K F P N B H T F Q

Previous Solution: "I tapped into ugly feelings that I think everyone naturally has ... I wanted to humanize them in this hyperbolic state." — Inde Navarrette

TODAY'S CLUE: 1 sjenbe O

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To place an obituary announcement in the Albany Herald, go online to <https://legacy.memoriams.com/network/albanyherald/obituary> Fill out form online and submit payment.

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Americus mayor proclaims Thursday GSW’s Day of Giving

Staff Reports

news@albanyherald.com

AMERICUS — Americus Mayor Travis Rush signed a proclamation last week officially recognizing Thursday as Georgia Southwestern State University’s eighth annual Day of Giving.

GSW faculty, staff and students gathered on the front steps of Wheatley Administration on Gold Force to witness Rush signing the proclamation alongside GSW President Kerry Palmer. Rush also presented his own personal contribution to the Day of Giving and expressed his appreciation for GSW’s impact on Americus.

“A university isn’t who they are without support from their city. The town-gown relationship is incredibly important,” Palmer said. “Our job [at GSW] is to make this region of the state in southwest Georgia,

a better place to live, a better place to work, a better place to raise a family, and hopefully, an attractive place for industry to come and locate.

“We appreciate the support the city gives us for things like our Day of Giving and other activities we have, and in turn, we want to support the work that they do.”

GSW’s Day of Giving is an annual 24-hour giving challenge that raises essential funds to support the university and its students. This year, GSW aims to rally at least 700 individual donors and receive contributions from all 50 states in a quest to “turn the map gold.”

On Thursday, Hurricanes across the country and around the world, including alumni, community members, parents, friends, neighbors, faculty, staff and students, will come together to support GSW. Donors may

give to any area of the university that resonates with them, with five funds highlighted for this year’s Day of Giving:

Southwestern Promise: These scholarships automatically provide \$1,000 and \$3,000 to all eligible GSW freshmen who meet certain academic requirements.

President Jimmy Carter Leadership Program: These contributions will bolster the existing program and enhance additional opportunities and involvement.

General Athletics: Contributions to GSW athletics include, but are not limited to, support for athletic facility improvements, scholarships and recruiting enhancements.

Southwestern Annual Fund: This general-purpose fund provides support for students as needs arise including conference expenses, extracurricular

learning programs, scholarship funding, emergency expenses and textbook assistance.

Hurricanes Back-on-Track: This fund provides students with the financial support they need to overcome an unanticipated financial hardship that inhibits their ability to finish a degree.

Rush helped kick off this year’s giving.

“I’m giving a unique donation,” he said. “I want to give \$50 for all 50 states because I know that you guys are committed to reaching all 50 states. On behalf of the city of Americus, we commend you. Echoing Dr. Palmer, we stand with you. We stand beside you. Whatever we can do as a city to come together to bridge this great community to move forward. We are just a phone call away, we are here for you. Go Canes.”

Donations can be made Sept.



Special Photo: GSW

Americus Mayor Travis Rush signed a proclamation last week officially recognizing Thursday as Georgia Southwestern State University’s eighth annual Day of Giving.

17 through GSW’s online fundraising platform, Give Campus, at gsw.edu/DayOfGiving. Gifts also may be dropped off at the Newman Alumni Center on campus or mailed in advance to the GSW Foundation. Checks should be made pay-

able to the GSW Foundation and mailed to P.O. Box 926, Americus, GA 31709.

In celebration of GSW’s 120th anniversary, donors who make a gift of \$120 or more will receive an exclusive commemorative felt pennant featuring the 120th anniversary logo. Donors who make a gift of \$250 or more will receive the pennant and a 500-piece puzzle featuring a custom GSW design by British artist Julia Gash.

The community also can support GSW by shopping and dining locally on Day of Giving. Participating restaurants will donate a portion of sales during designated hours to GSW’s Day of Giving.

Thank you to 2 Duke’s BBQ, Baker’s Dozen Donuts and Diner, Café Campesino Community Coffeehouse, Carter’s Fried Chicken, Chick-fil-A Americus, Gyro City Mediterranean Grill, Horne Pecan Company, La Esquina Cubano, La Hacienda, Little Brother’s Bistro, Monroe’s Hotdogs, Pat’s Place, Roman Oven Pizzeria, Scoops Americus, Sweet Georgia Bakery & Café, The 1800 Mexican Restaurant, The Alley, The Fish House, The Sheppard House, The Spot, The Station, The Sweet Spot and Toboggan Steve’s. Local retailers Lily’s Boutique, Minick Interiors and Southfitters also are donating a portion of their store sales toward GSW.

Report: Cordele, Cuthbert among America’s most overlooked destinations

By Hostinger

news@albanyherald.com

CORDELE/CUTHBERT

-- America’s tourist hotspots seldom have to work hard to attract visitors. But journey a little off the well-trodden paths, you will find under-the-radar towns with stunning scenery or fascinating histories, with independent businesses that are worth far more attention than they get.

Some sit in the shadow of a flashier neighbor, whereas others have become places you pass through. However, if you give them the right investment, a bit of promotion, or just a shift in where people choose to stop, plenty of them could be the destinations everyone’s talking about a few years from now.

AI-powered business growth platform Hostinger surveyed 3,000 travelers to identify the towns they think have the most untapped tourism potential.

Ranked outside the Top 10 but among the hidden gems were southwest Georgia’s Cordele and Cuthbert, which came in at Nos. 12 and 31, respectively.

12. Cordele: Known for its watermelon-growing heritage, Cordele offers a relaxed introduction to rural south Georgia. The SAM Shortline Excursion Train departs from the community, taking passengers through the surrounding countryside and connecting several regional attractions. Nearby Lake Blackshear adds opportunities for boating, fishing, golf and waterfront stays, broadening the area’s appeal beyond its agricultural identity. Cordele’s location beside a major interstate (75) means that plenty of travelers already pass close by, although many currently stop only for fuel or food.

31. Cuthbert: Victorian homes, historic churches and broad, quiet streets give Cuthbert a

strong sense of its past. The town also has a notable musical connection as the birthplace of Fletcher Henderson, the influential pianist, arranger and bandleader who played an important role in the development of big-band jazz. That story gives Cuthbert a distinctive cultural angle that could complement its surviving architecture and traditional courthouse square. The top 10 were:

1. Lake Placid, Florida: The top spot nationally went to Lake Placid in tourism-heavy Florida. Bright murals and an easy lakeside pace give Lake Placid a character all its own, a world away from Florida’s big resorts.

2. Eastport, Maine: Right at the far eastern edge of the country, Eastport has a rugged, working waterfront that feels nothing like Maine’s busier coastal stops. The town is marked by historic buildings, fishing boats, and beautiful views over Passamaquoddy Bay.

3. Roanoke Rapids, North Carolina: Sitting right on Interstate 95, Roanoke Rapids already sees plenty of travelers, most of whom never make it past the exit ramps.

4. Amsterdam, New York: The Mohawk River passes straight through Amsterdam, and this former mill city is slowly making it the centerpiece of the town’s nascent tourism industry.

5. Turners Falls, Massachusetts: On the banks of the Connecticut River, Turners Falls combines industrial history with a genuinely artsy, independent streak you won’t find in more established New England tourist towns.

6. Lake Arthur, Louisiana: In Lake Arthur, everything comes back to the water. The lakeside park, the open views, and the quiet shoreline make an easy setting for fishing, boating, or a slow weekend. The whole place comes alive at sunset or when the community gathers by the lake.

7. Big Spring, Texas: Big Spring State Park rises over the west Texas plains, and the views go on seemingly forever.

8. Arcadia, Florida: Arcadia is a window into old Florida with a historic downtown, antique stores, and a ranching culture that runs deep.

9. Paris, Idaho: Nestled into the Bear Lake Valley, Paris pairs pioneer history with quick access to one of Idaho’s prettiest recreation areas. The Paris Tabernacle is a striking architectural landmark and a direct link back to the settlers who built the valley.

10. Ontario, Oregon: On the Snake River, right where Oregon meets Idaho, Ontario has a cultural mix and farming identity that set it apart from towns further west. The Four Rivers Cultural Center digs into the Native American, Japanese American, Basque, Hispanic and European communities.

Good News: Your Savings Are Growing

Thanks to Georgia’s continued growth, we announced increased savings expected to reach \$180 per year for the typical residential customer beginning in 2029. Learn more at georgiapower.com/goodnews.

