

FRIDAY

ON THE FLINT

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FALL ON THE FLINT

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 21 6PM
VETERANS PARK AMPHITHEATRE

Perspectives
Thomas Knapp
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The Albany HERALD

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Cost of living up
Most Georgians struggling
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ALBANYHERALD.COM

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 29, 2026

Job-seekers check out employment opportunities at Southwest Georgia Career Expo

By Alan Mauldin
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ALBANY – After taking time to be with daughter Saya, who is now 9 months old, Shaniya Swanigan is looking to explore job opportunities, and the fourth Southwest Georgia Career Expo seemed

to be a good place to start. Swanigan, who was at the Albany Civic Center on Thursday with her husband Kyree and hundreds of others, was using the annual event to learn more about what kind of jobs are available in the region. Prior to her maternal break, she had worked

mostly in retail. “I’m just trying to get a career, just anything that might spark my interest, really,” she said. “I just want to see what’s out there. I took a year or so off because I had a baby, now I’m looking to get back in.” Swanigan and her husband had seen videos of past expos

and the crowds that came out and thought it would be a good experience. “This is my first time coming to one of these,” she said. “I’m just looking for a new path.” Forty employers were set

See EXPO, 2A



Staff Photo: Alan Mauldin
Jazmine Jennings, left, and James Jennings speak with Stancil Tootle, executive director of Bain Inc. at the Southwest Georgia Career Expo. Jazmine Jennings, 23, was among hundreds of job seekers who attended the annual event that connects area employers with individuals looking for a job.

Family roots, customer connections fuel Kim’s Kitchen & Noodle Bar expansion

By Kathryn Crockett
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ALBANY — Timothy Lee Kim grew up in restaurants the way some children grow up around a second language. He was surrounded by it, and he absorbed it before he ever chose it. Kim’s father spent his working life behind a hibachi grill. He trained under the original owners of Shogun before the

family built its own chain of Japanese steakhouses, the much-loved Mikata. They ran it for more than 36 years. “One turned into two, two turned into three, three turned into four,” Kim said. At its peak, the family had about seven locations, including restaurants in Atlan-

ta, Dothan, Ala., and Enterprise, Ala. His father sold the Dothan location a couple of years ago. A Columbus restaurant still carries the family name, and Kim’s brother has worked as a hibachi chef for 15 years after training in the family business. For Kim, firsthand experi-

ence removed the romantic notions that often accompany aspirations of restaurant ownership. “I always knew the restaurant industry was really tough, seeing my dad do it for so many years and seeing him hustle every single day,” Kim said. “This is not for the weak.”

Now, however, Kim is writing his own recipe for success using the same ingredients his parents fostered in his own character development. Several Albany food businesses have shut their doors this year. Harold’s Chicken closed in March after less than a year in business, and Milkster Nitrogen Creamery closed on North Westover Boulevard. Kim, 41, is going the other way. His Kim’s Kitchen & Noodle Bar, at 717 N. Westover Blvd., is expanding into the space Milkster left empty next door, and Kim is aiming to open it Oct. 10. Gathering the ingredients Kim did not go straight into the family trade, but he never really left it behind, either. The years in between became a gathering of skills, ideas and connections that he would later bring to his own table. He worked retail, selling jewelry and fitting women’s shoes in New York City. He lived in California, South Carolina and Texas and traveled abroad, taking note, often without realizing it, of dishes and dining experiences that small-town Georgia did not have.



Staff Photo: Kathryn Crockett
Timothy Lee Kim stands in front of the logo he designed for Kim’s Kitchen & Noodle Bar in Albany. The restaurant is expanding into the former Milkster space next door, with a grand opening scheduled for Oct. 10.



Staff Photo: Alan Mauldin
Kyree Swanigan, left, holds daughter Saya Swanigan, at the Southwest Georgia Career Expo where his wife Shaniya was exploring employment opportunities.

Republican Matt Day pitches business-minded challenge to Sanford Bishop in Georgia’s 2nd District

By Kathryn Crockett
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Editor’s Note: This feature on U.S. House District 2 candidate Matt Day kicks off *The Albany Herald’s* campaign coverage leading up to the Nov. 3 midterm elections.

ALBANY — Matt Day is running for Congress as a Republican, but some of the positions he is taking into one of Georgia’s most reliably Democratic con-



MATT DAY

See DAY, 2A

Periodical — Mail Label

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From 1A KIM’S

Then he spent nine years in law enforcement, most recently as a lieutenant with the Lee County Sheriff’s Office. He always figured he would find his way back to restaurants eventually, just not yet. “I always pictured my life like, ‘OK, I’m probably going to get into the restaurant industry, but I don’t want to do that right now,’” Kim said. “I want to kick in doors, chase people, pull over cars. That interested me.” The relationships he built as an officer also played a pivotal role in his journey. Kim said he was a regular at a small Vietnamese pho restaurant on Westover Boulevard and became friends with its owners. He used to joke that he would buy the place someday. In 2020, during the COVID-19 pandemic, the owners called to ask if he had meant it. Kim had just been promoted but recognized he would not have an opportunity to rise past lieutenant for a while. He spent a couple of months

thinking it over before making his decision. He left the department and bought the restaurant. His bet was shaped partly by what he had seen on patrol. During the lockdowns, he said, domestic violence calls climbed as stress levels at home increased. He figured that once Albany re-opened, people would be eager to get out of the house and socialize again. “I saw that, when Albany opened back up, everybody was flocking to restaurants because they were so tired of being at home,” he said. “When we opened our doors, man, we killed it.” **Almost throwing in the towel** But the early wave of success did not last. Undeterred, Kim added marketing and focused on building a following, and sales rose about 10%. Then they leveled off. The menu was the problem. Pho sold well, but many of the other traditional Vietnamese dishes cost a lot to make and did not sell. “People were afraid of what they got in those bowls that they’d never heard of,” Kim said. “The moment you say,

‘You get a cup of fish sauce,’ people start getting scared.” After about 2 1/2 years under the original name, he was ready to throw in the towel. “I was ready to say, ‘This ain’t working out for me,’ and go back in uniform,” he said. But Kim could not quite let go of the idea that there might still be a solution. “I thought we just needed to try something different as a last resort and see what happens,” he said. He took his family’s name for the restaurant and widened the menu. Pho stayed. He added hot pot, Korean-style fried noodles and other dishes that drew on the growing popularity of Korean culture. “I knew if you put the word ‘Korean’ with a Korean dish that even if people might not know what the dish is, they’ll come in and try it,” he said. It worked. Kim said he made as much in the first year as Kim’s Kitchen as he had failed to make in the two years before it. **Built around a bowl** Kim spent about six months designing the restaurant’s logo. It is a clean, bold design with a circular frame, black-

and-white lettering and a distinct red border highlighting the core of the concept — a simple bowl. “The bowl is the foundation,” he said. “What we sell and who we are is going to revolve around a bowl. That’s very common in Asian culture — not even just noodles, but the bowl itself.” Hot pot brought its own story, and its own trouble. Kim tells customers the dish goes back to soldiers who turned their helmets upside down over open fires and cooked whatever they could find. He wanted to keep that tradition by putting burners in the middle of the tables. The fire department briefly shut the tables down, but Kim’s persistence paid off when a letter to the mayor got them up and running again. **Room to grow** Kim’s growth has been steady, and while many local businesses are feeling the squeeze, Kim says his restaurant has felt the pressure increasing in other ways that are both good and bad. His kitchen is small, and on weekends the dining room fills up. The new space will add seating and more kitchen room.

It will also let Kim add a new category he calls Korean-style craft bowls, which customers can build to order. “I want us to be looked at as a place where you can get anything,” Kim said. “With our custom bowls, you can come in and order what you want instead of being told you can’t do that.” The bar will grow as well, but it will stay beer only. Kim found a distributor that can supply beers he says are hard to find in the area, and Sapporo will be on draft. “We’re able to sell beer from Laos, Vietnam, Korea, China, Japan and Okinawa,” he said. “We can do things others can’t, and I’m excited about that.” **People buy from people** Kim says along the road back to his roots he’s brought pieces of every stop along the way with him to a growing footprint on Westover Boulevard. Gathering diverse ideas into one cohesive brand came naturally to him, and it carries a cohesive vibe that extends beyond the menu. “I can pretty much do anything I want under the name Kim’s Kitchen & Noodle Bar where other restaurants can’t,” he said.

Ask him for his secret, though, and he does not start with the recipes. “Quality food and customer service. Building a connection with your customer behind your product, to me, are the two most important things,” Kim said. “I actually, I think the relationship with your customer is more important, because nobody likes to buy stuff from someone they don’t have a connection with.” His father’s business grew one grill at a time and was held together by family. Kim’s version keeps that foundation but makes room around the family table for a wider definition of belonging. What began as a Vietnamese restaurant is now a place where Korean noodles share the menu with pho and a beer from Laos, enjoyed by folks who have spent their whole lives in Albany. Kim’s family includes the staff he chooses with care and the regulars who make themselves at home. Tradition taught him the business. Relationships keep people coming back.

From 1A EXPO

up in the floor area of the civic center to speak with prospective employees during the event hosted by the Albany-Dougherty Economic Development Commission. In addition, Southern Point Staffing was on site to help job seekers review and prepare resumes, and Ashley’s Business Solutions provided copies of resumes to present to employers in the future. A new feature for 2026 is the swgajobs.com website, EDC President and CEO Jana Dyke said. “On that website, businesses can list job openings they have available,” she said. “And those who are looking for employment can upload their resumes. This website is going to stay live after this event, and it can be a resource for the community. It’s been great. We’ve had a constant flow of people coming in.” More than 211 individuals used the website ahead of the expo to register for the event, she said. The resume-building and printing services also are a big benefit. “That’s great because it allows job-seekers to go to the employer with something,” Dyke said. Among the employers participating in the expo were better-paying jobs for the region like mechanics and medical positions, she said. Also making his first appearance at the expo was Stancil Tootle, executive director of Bain Inc., an organization dedicated to helping disabled individuals live independent and satisfying lives. The Bainbridge-based center recently opened a second office in Albany at

2303 Dawson Road, Suite 2, and requires that at least 51% of staff and board members be disabled. “We assist people with disabilities with living in the community of their choice with the least amount of barriers,” said Tootle, who has been blind since birth. “We are hiring, and we primarily try to hire disabled people. We need to be practicing what we preach.” Bain Inc. currently is seeking to hire three individuals to work in Albany and two in Bainbridge. It provides advocacy, information and referral to resources, peer support, independent-living skills training and transition support. Among the job-seekers who checked out Bain Inc. was Jazmine Jennings. “I’m just really open to any jobs, retail or office jobs,” the 23-year-old said. “I’m considering the health field as well.” The previous afternoon the Albany Area Chamber of Commerce held its Business Expo. That event brought together 47 vendors at the civic center. The highlight was the first business-to-business hour that gave company representatives a chance to socialize and network, Chamber interim President and CEO Matt Reed said. “We were very pleased with it,” he said. “We had a good turnout. We had great energy, a great atmosphere.” Jazmine Jennings, left, and James Jennings speak with Stancil Tootle, executive director of Bain Inc. at the Southwest Georgia Career Expo. Jazmine Jennings, 23, was among hundreds of job seekers who attended the annual event that connects area employers with individuals looking for a job.

From 1A DAY

gressional districts don’t fit neatly into the party’s standard playbook. The south Georgia businessman supports tougher immigration enforcement but says undocumented immigrants should have a path to legal work visas. He argues wages at the bottom of the economy are too low to live on. He opposes making money from incarceration. He says Republicans don’t do enough to address pollution. And despite running to unseat Democratic U.S. Rep. Sanford Bishop, Day repeatedly declines to make the 17-term incumbent the villain of his campaign. Instead, Day says he is running on the premise that the business experience that took him from installing glass on relatively small projects to operating nationwide construction companies can be applied to some of southwest Georgia’s most persistent problems. “We always say that if it makes sense, it can make dollars, and if it don’t, it don’t,” Day said during a recent interview with The Albany Herald. Day, a retired construction executive now living part-time in Georgetown in Quitman County, is making his first run for elected office. He spent much of his career in Coffee County, where his businesses remain, and describes himself as a “son of south Georgia,” despite acknowledging he did not originally live within the 2nd District. Quitman County is within the district; Coffee County is not. He faces a formidable opponent Nov. 3. Bishop, an Albany Democrat first elected to Congress in 1992, is seeking an 18th term. The district stretches across much of southwest Georgia and includes Albany, Americus and portions of Columbus and Macon. Nonpartisan Inside Elections currently rates the race “Solid Democratic,” with a partisan baseline favoring Democrats by 7.3 percentage points. Day also enters the general election with a significant financial disadvantage. Federal Election Commission records show his campaign reported about \$142,700 in receipts through June 30 and about \$1,768 in cash on hand, with \$50,000 in outstanding campaign debt. Of his contributions, about \$68,700 came from Day himself. But Day’s argument to voters is that money and conventional political experience are precisely what he is trying to run against.

A businessman confronting an industry he helped build Perhaps the clearest example of Day’s unconventional campaign is his position on data centers. His own construction companies have worked on the centers. Now, as southwest Georgia communities weigh massive proposed data-center developments and the energy infrastructure needed to power them, Day has become one of their more vocal critics. “Well, I built them,” Day said when asked why he had focused so heavily on the issue. Day said his company has paused on data-center work while he examines the industry’s effects more closely. He is not an advocate for banning the developments outright. Instead, he argues communities should receive far more information before local governments approve them, including what the facility will be used for, how developers will make money and whether automation associated with the project could displace workers. “We believe that the community needs a choice first and foremost, and the community needs to have transparency,” he said. That position puts him squarely into a debate already unfolding across the district. Day strongly opposes a proposed 1,500-megawatt natural gas power plant in Mitchell County intended to help serve data-center demand in Lee, Dougherty, Baker and Early counties, describing it as both a major polluter and heavy water user. He says he is also skeptical of converting large amounts of farmland and timberland to utility-scale solar. Day instead advocates for greater use of biomass energy produced from timber, arguing it could provide renewable energy while supporting south Georgia’s forestry industry. His position on environmental issues is one of several places where Day openly distances himself from many other Republicans. “As a Christian, I pay attention to where the Bible tells me that it’s our job to take care of the garden, the world,” he said. “And I don’t think our party does enough to fight pollution.” **Agriculture at the center** Any candidate hoping to represent the 2nd District must also contend with agriculture, one of southwest Georgia’s dominant industries and a cornerstone of Bishop’s tenure. Bishop is not a member of the House Agriculture Committee, which writes much of federal farm

policy. He is, however, the ranking Democrat on the House Appropriations subcommittee overseeing funding for the U.S. Department of Agriculture, rural development programs and the Food and Drug Administration. Day says he has developed a 20-point agriculture plan, although a complete written version was not available on his campaign website when The Herald reviewed it. The proposals he described center on changing the economics of farming rather than eliminating federal support. Day argues farmers are squeezed between relatively low commodity prices and increasingly expensive inputs such as fertilizer, chemicals, fuel, equipment and labor. One proposal would allow farmers to form cooperatives that import commodities when domestic production cannot meet demand, keeping some of the profits within agricultural communities rather than leaving the importing business to outside companies. He says he also wants greater scrutiny of the prices agricultural suppliers charge U.S. farmers, contending fertilizer, chemical, seed and equipment companies can charge American producers substantially more than customers elsewhere. Day said he also supports regenerative agricultural practices aimed at protecting topsoil. On immigration, another issue closely tied to agriculture and construction in the district, Day again takes a position he acknowledges differs from some Republicans. He opposes amnesty and a pathway to citizenship for people who entered the country illegally but supports creating a pathway for them to obtain work visas. “We know we need workers in this country,” Day said. **An ‘Albany Resurrection Plan’** Day’s campaign is also making an unusually specific pitch to Albany, the political center of Bishop’s Democratic base. He calls it the “Albany Resurrection Plan,” a proposal he says could eventually serve as a model for struggling communities elsewhere. Day described beginning with East and West Oglethorpe Boulevard, using government grants and private investment to rehabilitate abandoned properties and improve the appearance of the corridor. He said he would pair those improvements with a criminal justice program allowing some people convicted of misdemeanors to work full-time while completing 10 to 15 hours of community service rather than going to jail.

Participants could maintain properties and public spaces while learning to operate equipment and developing job skills. “We’re trying to keep these kids out of the system, and we’re trying to keep them working with mentors,” Day said. Another component would involve the Small Business Administration helping entrepreneurs without significant collateral gain access to abandoned commercial property, giving them an asset around which to build a business. Day also envisions a mentorship network connecting new businesses with accountants, lawyers, insurers and other professional services at negotiated rates. The proposals reflect a theme running through much of his campaign: Day is not necessarily arguing that federal money should stop flowing into communities such as Albany. He argues that public dollars should be structured to help recipients eventually become less dependent on them. “We want to bring the funds back, but we want to help these people be more self-sufficient,” Day said. Day also has proposed creating a privately operated transitional facility outside Albany for people experiencing homelessness or, in some cases, entering the criminal justice system. His concept combines housing, transportation to jobs, a working farm and employment assistance, with residents eventually paying toward their own housing. Some of Day’s approach is rooted in his own history. He told The Herald that he struggled with drugs and alcohol as a young man and credited employment and mentors, rather than rehabilitation, with helping him change direction. “When I was 18 until age 21, I did all kinds of stuff,” Day said. “I was hooked on drugs. I was hooked on alcohol, and I was not living correctly. The way that I got straight is, I didn’t go to rehab, I went to work.” **Recruiting industry to Albany** Economic development is where Day most clearly tries to translate his private-sector network into a congressional argument. He said he would use relationships developed through decades in construction to recruit employers to the district, particularly companies offering wages capable of moving families into the middle class. Among his ideas is using robotics to build a textile man-

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See **DAY**, 11A

Daily Horoscopes

ARIES (March 21-April 19): Push for deeper meaning, don't keep things shallow. An old, limiting belief about money could arise and become more understandable — unpack and heal these kinds of things so they can't hold you back.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20): You could be more reactive today that some days, or at least your reactions could be more visible. How you feel can be different than how you present — decide how much you want to reveal.

GEMINI (May 21-June 20): Your subconscious mind could be paging you with an important announcement if you're listening. Do listen. Your inner self is where many of your most revelatory and most pivotal answers lie.

CANCER (June 21-July 22): Emotions could come out in a friendship, or an old, fond memory could surface, bringing a smile. Build your roots even stronger — within yourself, within family, within friendships, within community.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22): Infuse your work not just with technical skills, but with heart too. Bring all of yourself to whatever you do for maximum impact and maximum satisfaction. An important new insight could be on its way.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22): The next few weeks could sow important seeds for financial growth, keep track of ideas that could add up to making a difference. Just because something feels familiar doesn't mean it's good for you.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22): Don't be afraid to shine out your light, as long as you stay in your own lane. As your thinking progresses you have more to offer others. Someone could react emotionally to an idea or proposition.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21): Sift the sand for more buried treasure, your subterranean realm holds your most important insights and answers. A personal mentor/therapist/coach could appear fairly soon to help with the

digging.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21): Friendships can be a vehicle for growth as well as a source of helpful connections — curate your circle to keep it filled with people who share similar values and objectives as well as honesty and warmth.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19): You could feel torn between the need to get things done and a desire to break free, create, and express. In a perfect world, there could be enough time for both. Do what you must, try for a little time for joy.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18): A fave source of inspiration could have magic to share, take the knowledge into your heart and let it open things up. Feel your own magic today if you can, it's strongly present in your home space today.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20): Lining everything up so dots connect might not happen despite overall-favorable Universal stars today. While one side may be ready, the other side could be distracted by infighting or something similar in vibe.

IF TODAY IS YOUR BIRTHDAY: Pay close attention to your thoughts through October, new ideas and wisdom flowing in can be something of a line of demarcation between the earlier part of 2026 which brought more challenges, and the remainder of the year, bringing more opportunities. A chance to buy into something calls for assessment before you join up. Early November could bring an increase in cash flow along with artistry and grace. Don't let good fortune tempt you to bad behavior for a minute. Later in the month, a nice little win could come as a prelude to a much bigger success story: Many of the elements you've been waiting for, including more money, could drop nearly simultaneously, enabling you to live larger and get closer to your dreams. December could fix something that means a lot. Your talents should bloom and be visible to you and everyone else.



1907 - The cornerstone is laid at the Cathedral Church of Saint Peter and Saint Paul in Washington, D.C. (also known as the Washington National Cathedral - Construction is completed on this day in 1990)
1957 - The Kyshtym disaster in the Soviet Union is the third-worst nuclear accident ever recorded
1971 - Oman joins the Arab League
1988 - NASA launches the STS-26 which is their first mission since the Challenger

disaster
1992 - Brazilian President Fernando Collor de Mello is impeached
2006 - A Boeing 737 and an Embraer 600 collide in mid-air, resulting in 154 people killed
2009 - An 8.1 Mw earthquake in Samoa results in a tsunami that kills 189 people and injures hundreds of others
2013 - Boko Haram kills 42 people at the College of Agriculture in Nigeria

CALENDAR OF OBSERVANCES

- Broadway Musicals Day
- Confucius Day
- Happy Goose Day
- International Coffee Day
- Inventors Day
- MAGS Day
- Michaelmas
- VFW Day
- World Heart Day

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QUOTE OF THE DAY

"There are 350 varieties of shark, not counting loon and pool."

L. M. Boyd,
columnist (1927-2007)

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

Candidate Collins says he's going to make Georgia affordable again. Does he think \$4 a gallon that the Republicans have given us is affordable?

I've been a Republican all my life and have always voted for Republican candidates, but I can no longer watch that insane person in the White House and the other equally ineffective clowns in his cabinet and stand my ground. I won't vote for all Democrats on Nov. 3, but I will vote against Trump's chosen ones ... especially Grand Cyklops Collins.

Mike Johnson sent the House home for a seven-week break, obviously to stave off possible impeachment of Pete Hegseth. By the way, it's a Republican congressman who is making the attempt to impeach the incompetent Secretary of Defense. This is your tax dollars not working for the next seven weeks. That Man Without a Family

Democrats wrecked California with crime, homelessness, open borders, failing schools, crushing costs and one-party rule. Now they expect conservatives across America to look away while they keep their grip on power.

The old Democratic Party doesn't exist anymore. Across the country, the left is throwing out the "moderates" and replacing them with extreme far-left Democratic Socialists of America-aligned candidates ... aka Communists.

Over many years and many mistakes, Carlton has learned to tell folks to go to hell in such a manner that they politely ask directions.

Ahhh, Fletcher, taking a walk down memory lane with the Lyin' King in the White House. You could have expanded your column to fill the entire paper, and you wouldn't have gotten all of this miserable moron's misdeeds in.

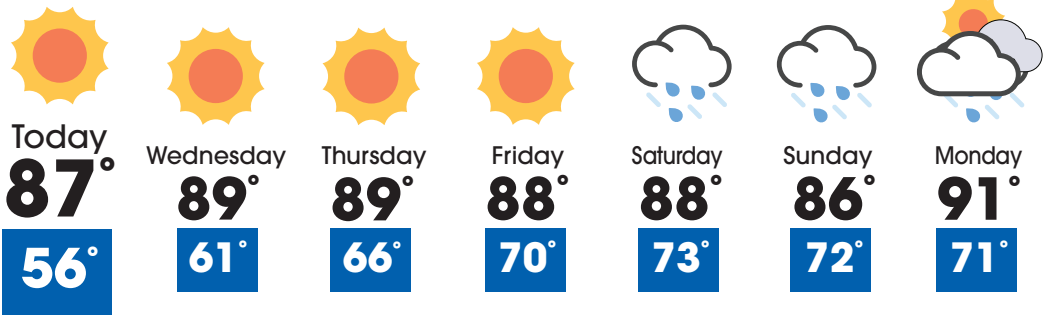
My dog likes to leave a little memento to mark everywhere he has been. I have warned him that if he does not give up this habit, I am going to rename him Donald.

So Preacher Warnock got Phoebe \$1.1 million in tax dollars for medical district housing. A total of 28 units are to be built. But preacher Warnock got preacher Lorenzo Heard \$5 million of your tax dollars to "remodel" 20 apartments owned by heard's church. I wonder how much of that \$5 million is in preacher Lorenzo's private banking account? All of it, I would guess.

Note to anyone watching TV nowadays: That life insurance scam that shows people celebrating when family members die will not go away in the next 24 hours. It will continue as long as you keep sending them your hard-earned money.

Oh, I get it now. Anyone who doesn't bow down and worship Trump -- like the losers who still claim "he's doing what we elected him to do" -- is now officially a Communist. Thanks for clearing that up, all you Trump Lumps.

Weather Forecast

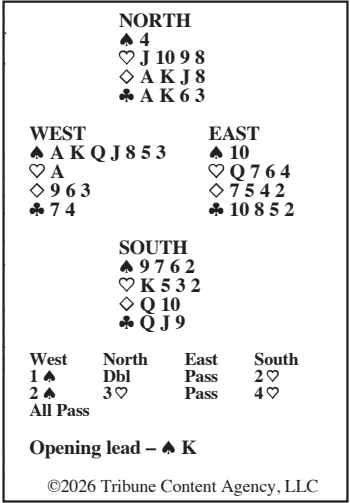


Daily Bridge Club

Change my order!

By Frank Stewart
Tribune Content Agency

After a penny game, some of us went to dinner, and Wendy, my club's feminist, and Cy the Cynic got into a "discussion"



Frank Stewart

"Next time I'll bid four spades," Wendy growled, "and settle for minus 500." To beat four hearts, Cy discards a diamond at Trick Two. When Wendy takes the ace of trumps, she leads a third spade, and Cy's trump holding will be worth two tricks.

DAILY QUESTION

You hold: S 4 H J 10 9 8 D A K J 8 C A K 6 3. You are the dealer. What is your opening bid?

ANSWER: If your hand were weaker - 4,J1098,AJ82,AK63 - you might open one club and bid 1NT over a response of one spade, the least imperfect plan. Your actual hand is too strong for that sequence. Open one diamond and bid two clubs over one spade. If partner returns to two diamonds (maybe with only a doubleton diamond), you can try two hearts next.

West dealer
Both sides vulnerable

Advice Columnist

Girlfriend's career goals are a red flag

By Eric Thomas
Tribune Content Agency

Dear Eric: What might one say (or not say) to our 28-year-old son (and brother) who is in a relationship with a 27-year-old woman about whom we (his siblings and parents) see all kinds of "red flags" with her?

After almost every interaction with her, we come away with a heavy heart. They live together, but their relationship remains undefined. She is extremely ambitious and career driven.

Any talk of marriage is off limits because that would imply she wants to "settle down and have babies," which is the last thing she wants to do. This is because she wants to go back to school, earn a Ph.D, and eventually become a college professor. Which is fine and admirable, of course, but her self-centeredness and self-serving habits always override our son's plans or desires.

He plans to just "hang in there" with her in the hopes that someday she'll be ready to commit to marriage. Our son is handsome, funny, intelligent and hardworking, but he doesn't seem to realize his own self-worth.

We feel like he could do so much better in a life partner. I believe if we tell him we see red flags with her, he will say to us, "Oh, you don't know her the way I know her; she's a wonderful person."

But I've lived long enough to know she would be trouble for him; it's obvious to us. Do we speak up, or just let him live his life as he has currently chosen (with a strong hunch that this will not end well for him)?

- Flaggin Family

Dear Family: It's a little

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



Eric Thomas

canceling headphones.

A high quality, over-the-ears set would help a lot. If the letter writer doesn't want to listen to music, he or she can simply listen to nature sounds. And in the swimming pool he or she can wear earplugs.

- Mile-High Misophonia

Dear Mile High: Yes! A great suggestion.

Dear Eric: I think you left something out of your answer to the person who doesn't like the noise coming from the children ("Trouble in the Suburbs"): Make friends with the children, if they will make friends with you. That has always worked for me.

For 13 years, I've been forced to live in low-income, city-administrated senior housing. No one below age 55, let alone children can live here. I would give anything to be living next door to that family.

I dream of getting an apartment in an all-ages building or buying a condo or house in a family-style neighborhood. I'm probably never going to live my dream of living in an all-ages community. But your letter writer can.

- Appreciate the Gift

Dear Gift: Your perspective is shared by many. Quite a few people replied to this letter by encouraging the letter writer to see the sound of children playing as a gift and enjoy the joyful noise. Now, I will allow that some forms of play are going to sound more joyful than others, and everyone's mileage is going to vary when it comes to seeing this kind of bright side. But it's absolutely worth trying.

Dear Eric: Your advice to "Trouble in the Suburbs", whose retirement lifestyle has been significantly diminished by the screaming children who moved in next door, was great, but you didn't mention noise-

The Albany Herald

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vocate, 475 L' Enfant Plaza SW, Washington, D.C. 20260
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Perspectives

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Carlton Fletcher
EDITOR

—Georgia Trust for—
LOCAL NEWS

TODAY'S
BIBLE
VERSE

"The Lord is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower."
Psalms 18:2

COLUMNIST ■ THOMAS KNAPP

'Blue Wave' or not, expect business as usual after midterms

What I want you to do," the U.S. president told a South Carolina rally audience in August, " is pretend, please, that I'm on the ballot" when it's time to vote in the 2026 midterm election for U.S. House and Senate seats. He repeated the request multiple times in various venues.

Republican candidates likely hope that voters weren't listening. As of late September, Trump's approval rating stood at 29% according to an American Research Group poll. Republican candidates are distancing themselves from him, scrubbing references to his endorsements of them from their websites, and in some cases performatively coming out against him on various issues.

All year we've heard predictions of a "blue wave" in the midterms, with Democrats taking majorities in both houses of Congress.

As of this writing, most forecasts I've consulted say that there's a good chance of a Democratic House come January, but that the Republicans will likely hang on to the Senate.

My own forecast is "don't get your hopes up for substantial change no matter how the midterms turn out." That's just not how American government works. Or at least that's not how American government usually works.

"Americans like to think of themselves as uncompromising," historian Shelby Foote noted in Ken Burns's 1990 documentary "The Civil War." "Our true genius is for compromise. Our whole government's founded on it. And, it failed," leading to Southern secession and four years of brutal war.

While the conventional wisdom holds that America is politically "polarized," its two major political parties have converged over the last few decades.

They'll quibble over the details, but they pride themselves on compromising where big issues are concerned. Their joint *raison d'être* is to keep the jalopy of government moving down the same road, in the same direction, no matter the cost.

Seldom a month goes by that we're not told of negotiations on some "must-pass" bill, saved at the last minute when a handful of members from one party "cross the aisle" to put a little more gas in the jalopy's tank or a plug in one of the jalopy's flat tires.

In fact, it's kind of silly to pretend that the two major parties are separate parties. Since the 1890s,



KNAPP

when they seized control of elections with "ballot access" laws to exclude competitors, they've effectively become feuding factions of a single political party whose mutual hatred of each other is largely fueled by what Freud called "the narcissism of small differences."

And over the last 50 years or so, the party factions in Congress have painted themselves into the corner of servitude to an increasingly imperial and unbridled presidency. Trump may be the most predatory example, but he's hardly sui generis. He's just an extension of a long-term trend.

The Democrats aren't going to secure veto-proof majorities in both houses of Congress ... and even if they did, it's not obvious they'd make any foundational changes to how American government works.

They'd keep spending more and more money. They'd keep borrowing more and more money to spend. They'd keep sticking their noses into every corner of our personal lives and our businesses' operations. They'd keep kicking the Social Security can down the road toward insolvency.

Sure, they might impeach and remove a president, but the next president and the president after that would continue down the same road with, largely, complete congressional cooperation — and with a free hand to engage in foreign military adventures despite the Constitution's assignment of war powers to Congress.

The problem isn't which party controls the House, the Senate, or the White House, or appoints the most Supreme Court justices.

The problem is political government itself. The framers of the U.S. Constitution hoped to bequeath us a system that wouldn't devolve into tyranny, but that hope was obviously in vain. George III ruled his American colonies with a much lighter touch than we've enjoyed from the U.S. government since the revolution.

For all his failings, Abraham Lincoln got it right when he pointed out that "no man is good enough to govern another man without that other's consent."

When we go back to the drawing board, as eventually we must, that should be written across the top as our starting point.

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

COLUMNIST ■ WAYNE FOWLER

Finding the something that's missing

You may know Donnie Wahlberg from his acting roles in "Band of Brothers" or "Blue Bloods." He says he has now become a follower of Jesus. He was baptized at Shepherd Church in Porter Ranch, Calif.

It seems this conversion has been on Wahlberg's mind for a while.

"People in this industry are broken," he said. "I'm realizing in this last year -- I'm broken, too." Most telling was his realization: "I'm missing something in my life."

His wife, Jenny McCarthy, was a few steps ahead of him on this journey toward Christ. One morning he told her, "I have to connect with Jesus. I have to give my life to Him now."

This yearning for completeness looms large in the human experience. Someone wiser than I observed that all human yearnings are ultimately fulfilled in a relationship with Christ Jesus, your Creator and Redeemer. So we should not be surprised that the Bible anticipates this sense that something is missing and offers the solution.

The Bible says in Christ, "all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form, and in Him you have been



FOWLER

made complete." (Col. 2:9-10) To come to Him, admitting your moral failures have left you broken and in need of a Savior, is to be made complete.

Note this is quite different than chasing the will-o'-the-wisp of pop religion offering the latest self-help therapy, rather than a Savior who makes you complete — in Him.

There is an "already, but not yet" look about this. Through faith, God deems you already righteous (complete) and your eternity secure. But living out your humanity, you are yet a work in progress. "He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus." (Phil.1:6)

So, you are complete while God continues to supply what is missing, like love, joy, peace, patience, kindness and goodness.

"Looking back over the past year of my life," Wahlberg said, "the Lord has been renewing my mind and redeeming my life. I don't know where I would be without Jesus."

I do. Still feeling like something is missing.

Wayne Fowler has been a pastor and columnist in Georgia since 1996. His articles appear on Substack@wayne505598

COLUMNIST ■ YONATAN HAMBOURGER

What we promise when the frogs are gone

The doctor's office has a peculiar ability to clarify priorities. A frightening test result arrives, and suddenly the decisions that seemed impossible yesterday become obvious. We will exercise. Change what we eat. Sleep more. Stop postponing what matters. The bargaining disappears because something more important has entered the room.



HAMBOURGER

Then comes the second phone call. The follow-up test is reassuring. The immediate danger has passed. We walk outside grateful, perhaps shaken, determined not to forget what the scare taught us. And then something curious happens: the old life begins to look reasonable again.

Ancient Egypt offers an unexpectedly precise portrait of that moment. The second plague has covered the land with frogs. They are everywhere: inside homes, bedrooms, ovens, even kneading bowls. Pharaoh finally summons Moses and Aaron and asks them to plead with God to remove the plague. In return, he promises to release the Israelites.

Moses prays. The frogs die. Egypt can breathe again. Then the Torah records a small detail that is easy to pass over: "When Pharaoh saw that there was relief, he hardened his heart." (Exodus 8:11)

Not when the pressure increased. When it disappeared. Under pressure, Pharaoh knows exactly what he must do. His problem is not lack of information. He makes the right decision and even announces it aloud. But once the discomfort recedes, the urgency that produced the decision recedes with it. Relief becomes Pharaoh's permission to remain the same.

We usually think crises prevent us from thinking clearly. Often they do. But sometimes a crisis does the opposite: It strips away our excuses. For a moment, priorities become brutally simple. We recognize the conversation we need to have, the habit we need to break, the relationship we need to repair, the life we have been postponing. The difficulty begins when normal life returns.

Consider a marriage that has been deteriorating quietly for years. Resentments accumulate, conversations become transactional, and two people gradually learn to live around rather than with each other. Then one announces that the marriage may be over.

Suddenly everything becomes clear. The neglected conversations matter. The small cruelties matter. Time together matters. Promises are made with an

urgency that would have seemed impossible a month earlier. Perhaps the crisis passes. The marriage survives. There is enormous relief. And that is precisely when the real test begins.

Behavioral science has various ways of describing our preference for familiar patterns. Established habits require less psychological effort than building new ones. But Pharaoh's story points to something deeper than habit. Sometimes we mistake the end of the crisis for the end of the problem.

A marriage can survive the confrontation while the habits that caused it remain. An apology can calm a conflict without changing the behavior that made the apology necessary. A reassuring medical result can remove the fear without removing what the fear briefly taught us. Pharaoh repeatedly mistakes reprieve for resolution.

There is another disturbing feature to this pattern. Every time Pharaoh escapes the immediate consequences without changing, the next refusal becomes easier. What begins as resistance gradually becomes character. The Torah's language eventually shifts: First Pharaoh hardens his own heart; later God hardens it.

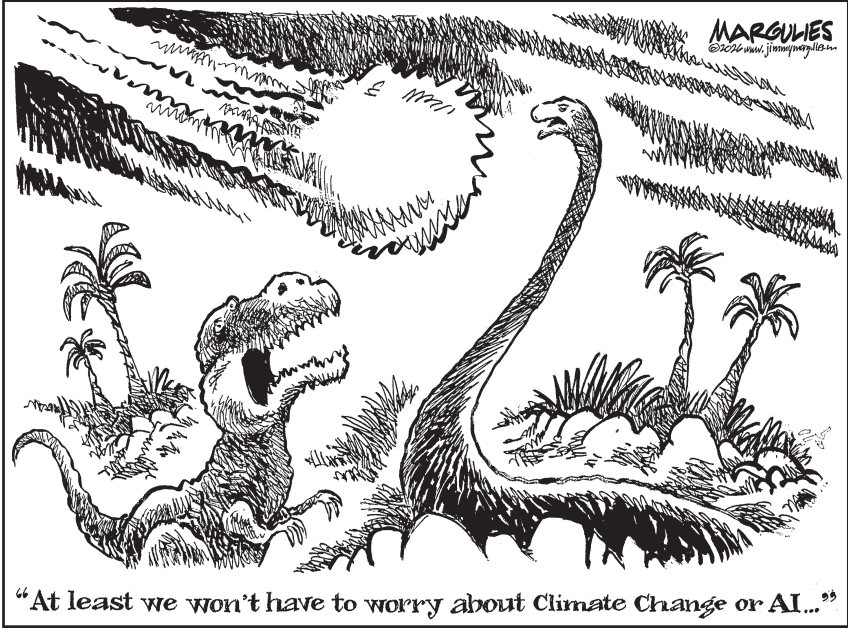
Jewish commentators have wrestled for centuries with what that shift means for human freedom. One powerful reading is that choices have consequences not only in the world around us but within the person making them. Repeated decisions carve pathways. What we choose freely today can become much harder not to choose tomorrow.

Freedom can be surrendered by increments. That makes the moments immediately after a crisis unusually important. We tend to think the great moral moment occurs during the emergency, when fear is high, consequences are visible, and promises come easily. Pharaoh's story suggests that the more revealing moment may come afterward, when nothing external is forcing us to change.

When the frogs are gone. When the doctor's second call is reassuring. When the argument has ended and everyone has gone to bed. Crisis can clarify what matters, but it cannot make us live by what we have learned. That choice comes later, when urgency has faded and the familiar life is quietly inviting us back.

Pharaoh saw that there was relief and returned to who he had been. The harder question is what we do when the frogs are gone.

Yonatan Hambourger is a rabbi, teacher, and author of "Echoes From Sinai: A Torah Voice for All Who Seek." He welcomes questions and comments at y@TasteofTorah.org.



"At least we won't have to worry about Climate Change or AI..."

What to watch

TUESDAY

September 29, 2026

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

MLB Playoffs: Wild Card Series

NBC, beginning at 2 p.m. Live

NBC Sports has exclusive coverage of the MLB playoffs best-of-three-game Wild Card Series beginning with two games today.

The Amazing Race: 25 Years Around the World

CBS, 8 p.m.

Entertainment Tonight presents this one-hour special celebrating 25 years of the reality competition series *The Amazing Race* with memorable moments, never-before-aired footage and new interviews. It offers a behind-the-scenes look at the challenges, destinations and contestants that have defined the series. Host and executive producer Phil Keoghan also reflects on the show's history and shares stories from its journey around the globe.

Best Medicine

FOX, 8 p.m.

When the Port Wenn pharmacy is robbed, Martin (Josh Charles) deduces that the culprit desperately needs his help in the new episode "Breakin' In Is Hard to Do."

Comics Unleashed With Byron Allen

20th Anniversary Special

CBS, 9 p.m.

The groundbreaking comedy series created and hosted by Byron Allen honors its 20th anniversary with a two-hour primetime special that captures two decades of unforgettable laughs, candid stories and a celebration of the show's lasting place in the world of comedy.

From the editors of
TV Weekly and tvinsider.com



'Secret Life of a Vegas Casino'

DISCOVERY CHANNEL

Doc FOX, 9 p.m.

When a horrific accident sends three members of the same family to Westside in critical condition, the entire staff must band together to save them and avert tragedy in the new episode "Ready or Not."

Frontline

PBS, 9 p.m.

The new episode "Scammed" investigates how online crooks steal billions of dollars and ruin victims' lives. The Associated Press and *Frontline* explore the rise of a global criminal industry, the people and technology enabling it, and the efforts to shut it down.

CATCH A CLASSIC

TCM Spotlight: Swashbucklers

TCM, beginning at 8 p.m.

This month's swashbuckling spotlight ends where the genre first flourished, in the silent era. Douglas Fairbanks leads **The Three Musketeers** (1921) and 1920's **The Mark of Zorro** (pictured), using his athleticism to create two of early Hollywood's

Secret Life of a Vegas Casino

Discovery Channel, 9 p.m. ■ **New Series**

What happens in Vegas usually stays in Vegas, but behind the flashing lights and million-dollar jackpots is a world visitors have never seen before. For the first time, Discovery pulls back the curtain on the legendary Golden Nugget, one of Las Vegas' most iconic casinos, to follow the larger-than-life personalities responsible for managing demanding high rollers, millions of dollars and nonstop drama every day. In the series premiere, a VIP host pulls strings to keep a high roller happy and gambling after he goes on a six-figure winning streak.



UNITED ARTISTS

most exciting heroes. The lineup continues with silent adventures including **The Sea Hawk** (1924), **The Beloved Rogue** (1927) and **Scaramouche** (1923).

MOVIES YOU'LL LOVE



SAM URDANK

Role Models (2008, Comedy) Seann William Scott, Paul Rudd **Paramount, 6 p.m.**

Encanto (2021, Children) Stephanie Beatriz, María Cecilia Botero **Freeform, 6:25 p.m.**

Under Wraps (2021, Family) Malachi Barton, Christian J. Simon **Disney, 7 p.m.**

Fuze (2025, Action) Aaron Taylor-Johnson, Theo James **HBO, 7:20 p.m.**

She's All That (1999, Romance-comedy) Freddie Prinze Jr., Rachael Leigh Cook **VH1, 8 p.m.**

Star Wars: The Force Awakens (2015, Science fiction) Harrison Ford, Mark Hamill **Encore, 8 p.m.**

American Gangster (2007, Crime drama) Denzel Washington, Russell Crowe **BBC America, 8:30 p.m.**

Power Ballad (2026, Comedy-drama) Paul Rudd, Nick Jonas **Starz, 9 p.m.**

Captain America: The First Avenger (2011, Action) Chris Evans, Hayley Atwell **FX, 10 p.m.**

The Child They Hid (2025, Suspense) Grace Patterson, Jonathan Stoddard **LMN, 10 p.m.**

The Mummy Returns (2001, Adventure) Brendan Fraser, Rachel Weisz **AMC, 10:45 p.m.**

The Martian (2015, Science fiction) Matt Damon, Jessica Chastain **TNT, 11 p.m.**

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What to watch

WEDNESDAY

September 30, 2026

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

Scrubs

ABC, 8 p.m. ■ **Season Premiere**

Love is contagious at Sacred Heart Hospital when this revival's older (and maybe wiser?) docs JD (Zach Braff), Turk (Donald Faison) and Elliot (Sarah Chalke) return. Patient zero is JD, who has hooked up with the cutie he crushed on in the first season finale, Charlie (Rachel Bilson). In other exciting news, fan fave Scott Foley returns as marine biologist Sean Kelly, who dated Elliot in the original run.

The Floor

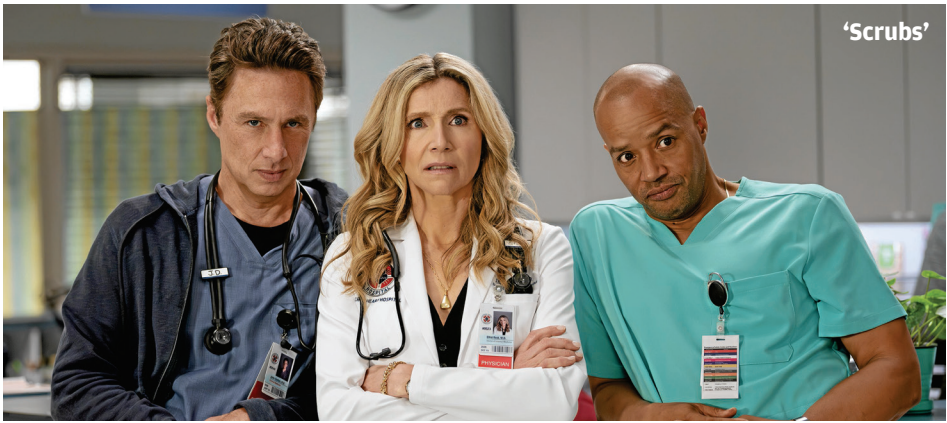
FOX, 8 p.m.

One champion finds a way to use the brand-new Power Shot in a battle to earn \$20,000 in the new episode "The \$20,000 Advantage." Rob Lowe hosts.

Unmasking a Monster: Aileen Wuornos

Investigation Discovery, 8 p.m. ■ **New Series**

This three-part docuseries (all episodes airing tonight) uses advanced digital replication and visual effects to revisit the life, crimes and eventual capture of serial killer Aileen Wuornos. The series brings a new dimension to the story of Wuornos and the investigation that brought her to justice through the perspectives of those who lived through it.



SERGEI BACHLAKOV, ABC

Shark Tank

ABC, 9 p.m. ■ **Season Premiere**

Season 18 premieres with two episodes. "Beast Mode" features social-media megastar MrBeast and Beast Industries CEO Jeff Housenbold as guest Sharks. Entrepreneurs pitch a DIY wedding video service, a finger-shaped caulking tool, an AI-powered ball and a mystery box of returned goods. In "Favorite Daughters," powerhouse producers and entrepreneurs Erin and Sara Foster join as guest Sharks. Business owners pitch an electric stroller wagon that takes the load off parents, a kelp facial oil for a nourished glow and a plastic-free liner for leggings.

99 to Beat

FOX, 9 p.m.

In the new episode "The Gloves Are Off!," 84 contestants remain to compete in five seemingly simple and hilarious games tonight.

NOVA

PBS, 9 p.m.

The new episode takes viewers on a journey into the Chauvet Cave in France, which houses well-preserved prehistoric art of lions, rhinos and mammoths. Join a team of scientists as they unlock the secret history of the cave to challenge our traditional understanding of art history and to connect us intimately with the dawn of human creativity.

Tyler Perry's The Oval

BET, 9 p.m. ■ **Series Finale**

After seven seasons, the story of a family placed in the White House by people of power — and the lies, cheating and corruption that run rampant behind closed doors — comes to an end. Ed Quinn, Kron Moore, Javon Johnson and Ptosha Storey star.

The Amazing Race

CBS, 9:30 p.m. ■ **Season Premiere**

Season 39 begins with a special two-night premiere event concluding tomorrow. Host Phil Keoghan meets the teams in Vancouver, where he immediately surprises them with the first twist of the season: For the first time in *The Amazing Race* history, there are 13 express passes in play. Each team receives one pass, forcing them to think strategically as they must play it by the end of the sixth leg. Teams will travel more than 25,000 miles, visiting five continents, nine countries and 13 cities.

Ages of Ice

PBS, 10 p.m. ■ **Series Finale**

The series concludes with "The Incubator of Life," in which scientists explore glaciers, oceans and frozen frontiers where life flourishes against the odds. They also uncover remarkable clues that may one day help us find life beyond Earth.



MGM

MOVIES YOU'LL LOVE



GLEN WILSON

Whitney (2018, Documentary) Kenneth Babyface Edmonds, L.A. Reid **SHO, 6 p.m.**

Under Wraps 2 (2022, Family) Malachi Barton, Christian J. Simon **Disney, 7 p.m.**

Guardians of the Galaxy Vol. 3 (2023, Science fiction) Chris Pratt, Zoe Saldana **FX, 7:30 p.m.**

Backrooms (2026, Science fiction) Chiwetel Ejiofor, Renate Reinsve **HBO, 7:40 p.m.**

Pumpkin Regatta Romance (2026, Romance) Michael Morgan, Corey Sevier **Hallmark, 8 p.m.**

She's the Man (2006, Romance-comedy) Amanda Bynes, James Kirk **VH1, 8 p.m.**

The Lost Boys (1987, Horror) Jason Patric, Corey Haim **AMC, 8 p.m.**

A Few Good Men (1992, Drama) Tom Cruise, Jack Nicholson **BBC America, 9 p.m.**

The Furious (2025, Action) Xie Miao, Joe Taslim **Starz, 9 p.m.**

Poltergeist (1982, Horror) Craig T. Nelson, JoBeth Williams **AMC, 10 p.m.**

While They Were Sleeping (2025, Suspense) Alicia Leigh Willis, Dakota Volker **LMN, 10 p.m.**

A Perfect Murder (1998, Suspense) Michael Douglas, Gwyneth Paltrow **SHO, 10:15 p.m.**

The High Note (2020, Comedy-drama) Dakota Johnson, Tracee Ellis Ross **VH1, 10:30 p.m.**

From the editors of
TV Weekly and tvinsider.com



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TV - What to watch

CLOSE TO HOME John McPherson



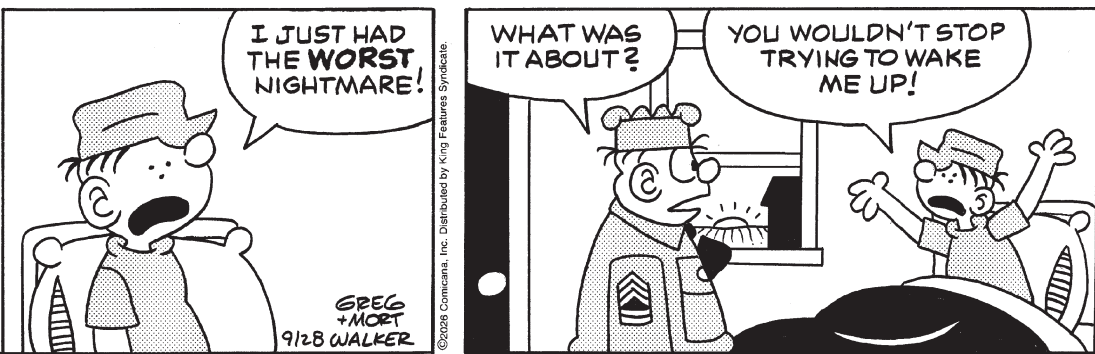
Although Chad was thrilled to be dating Catwoman, the hair balls were becoming a problem.

THE FAMILY CIRCUS Bil Keane



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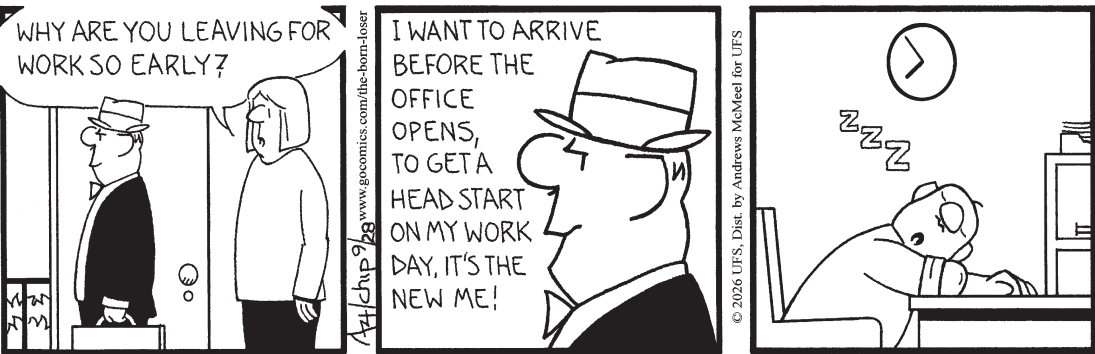
BEETLE BAILEY Mort & Greg Walker



BLONDIE Dean Young & John Marshall



THE BORN LOSER Art & Chip Sansom



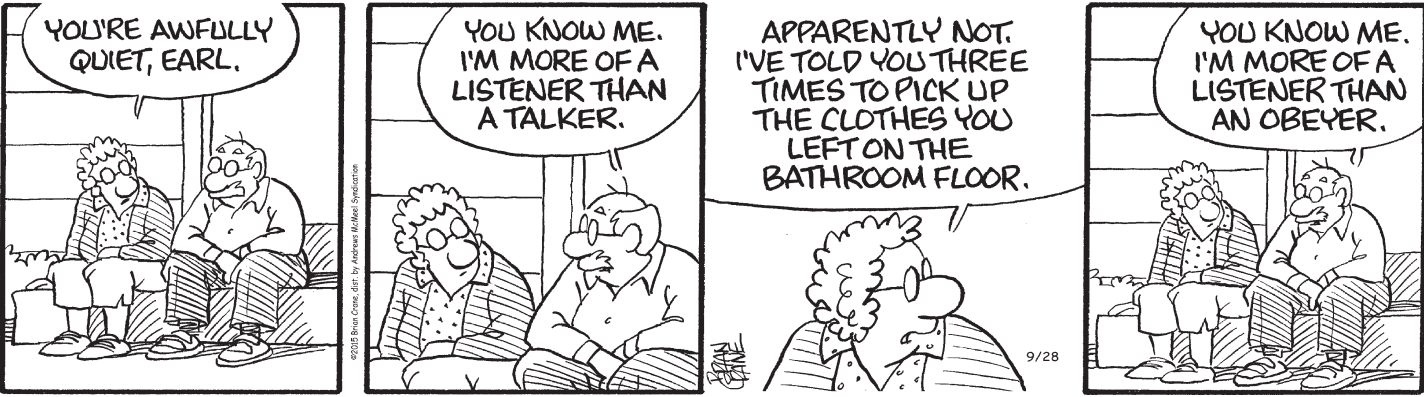
ZITS Jim Borgman & Jerry Scott



GARFIELD Jim Davis



PICKLES Brian Crane



SUDOKU

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★☆☆☆☆

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WHATZIT?

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

2CALL

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: Too close to call

Los Angeles Times Daily Crossword Puzzle

Edited by Patti Varol

ACROSS

1 Game, __, match
4 Piece of cake
9 Granny Smith, for one
14 The "A" of ETA: Abbr.
15 Spanish form of Paul
16 "Get out of town!"
17 Words of support from an abacus?
20 Brainstorming outputs
21 Epitome of slowness
22 Six years for a U.S. Senator, e.g.
23 __ Arabia
25 Pre-K basics
29 Words of support from a rideshare driver?
32 Santa __, California
35 Used a pair of sculls, say
36 Chutzpah
37 Out that gets a runner home, for short
39 Like some evening gowns
40 Invoice amount
41 Rebuff
44 Sault __ Marie
45 Words of support from a crossbody bag?
48 Orange skin
49 Madrid museum
50 Quick inhalation
54 Not united
56 Prefix with -lithic
57 Words of support from a broken elevator?
62 Around, in dates
63 Phone notification
64 Tasseled hat that shares a name with a Moroccan city
65 Leg joints
66 Smallest possible
67 Swim-bike-run race, informally

DOWN

1 "Tell me already!"
2 Slowly wear away
3 More accurate
4 Pros who are busy in Apr.
5 Actor McKellen
6 "SNL" TV network
7 Sense of finality that may be needed after a breakup
8 Pursued doggedly
9 Against
10 Location that may have "No running" and "No diving" signs
11 Dominate, in gaming slang
12 Go on the __: get out of town
13 Organ with a retina
18 Top that's useful in layering, for short
19 Innocent one
23 Mitchell of "Pretty Little Liars"
24 __ Lingus: Irish carrier
26 "Turn! Turn! Turn!" band, with "The"
27 Desire
28 Fuzzy fabric
30 "Pretty in Pink" star Ringwald
31 Sticking straight up, as hair
32 Up and about
33 Two-time Australian Open winner Osaka
34 Follow, as a hunch
38 Burlesque performance
39 Spirit
41 Inexplicably weird
42 Natter (on)
43 Amer. capital
46 Iridescent gem
47 "Good lord!"
51 In midair
52 Underground waste line
53 __ scheme
55 School support orgs.
56 Golf stroke near the hole
57 "How nasty"
58 Take first prize
59 Mine lode
60 Pro vote
61 Surgery ctrs.

TODAY'S SOLUTION:

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09/28/26

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37			38							39				
40						41	42	43				44		
45						46					47			
48						49					50	51	52	53
			54	55						56				
57	58	59						60	61					
62						63						64		
65						66						67		

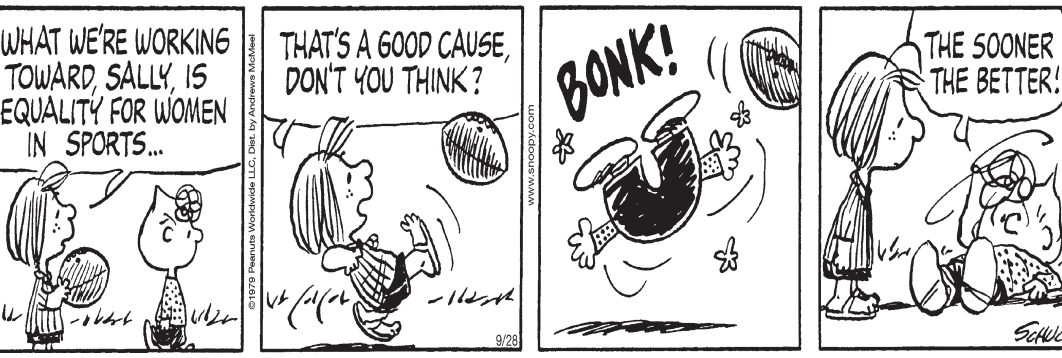
By Hoang-Kim Vu
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09/28/26

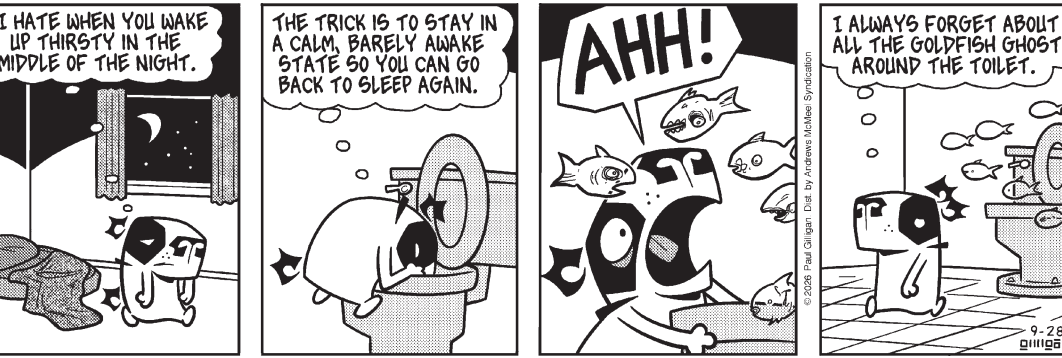
HAGAR THE HORRIBLE Chris Browne



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.

BUFFALO'S NEW HIGHMARK STADIUM Solution: 10 letters

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

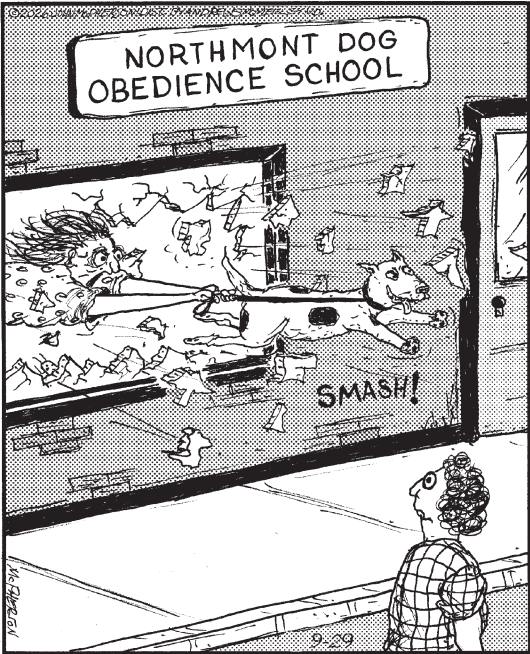
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9/28

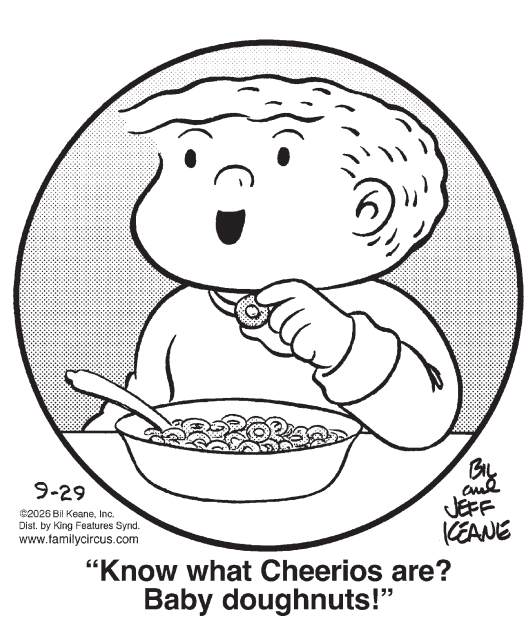
Abbott Road, Allen, Beane, Bison, Bowl, Brandon, Canopy, Closer, Club, Crew, Crowds, Fans, Field, Gameday, Highmark, Kentucky, Kim, Legends, Modern, New York, NFL, Open Air, Orchard Park, Outdoor, Owners, Pass, Pegula, Play, Plaza, Populous, Practice, Roof, Score, Seats, Snow, Steel, Steep, Suites, Team, Terry, Turf, Turner, Western, Wider, Wind, Winter, Yards

TODAY'S ANSWER: Bills Mafia

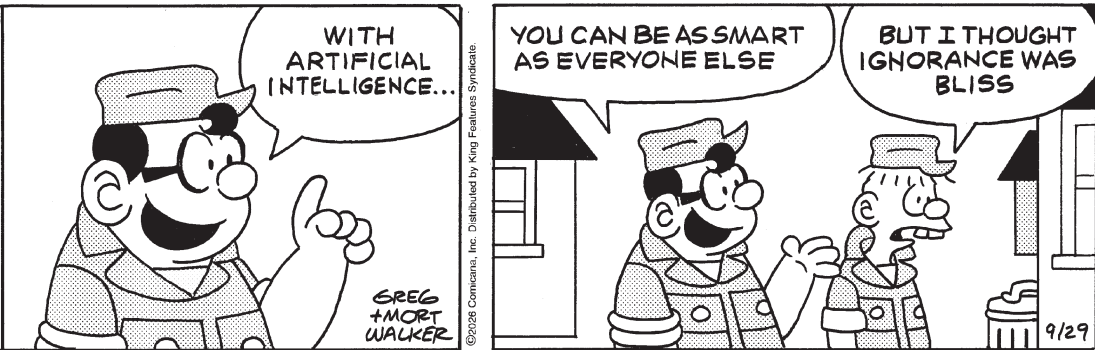
CLOSE TO HOME John McPherson



THE FAMILY CIRCUS Bil Keane



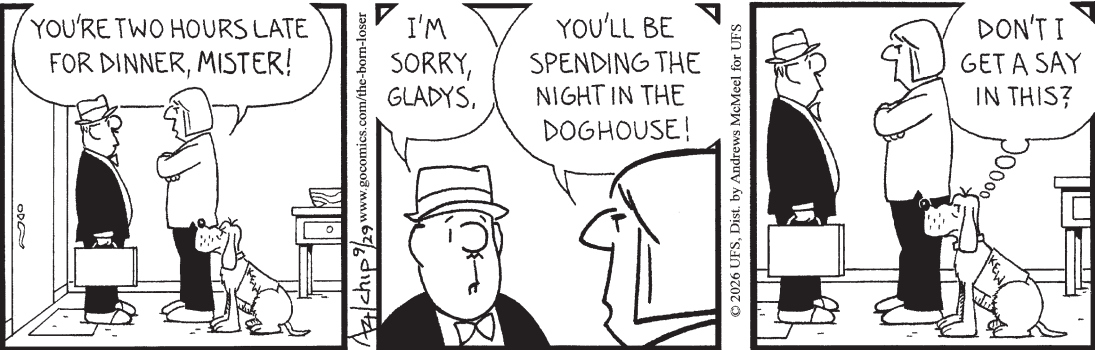
BEETLE BAILEY Mort & Greg Walker



BLONDIE Dean Young & John Marshall



THE BORN LOSER Art & Chip Sansom



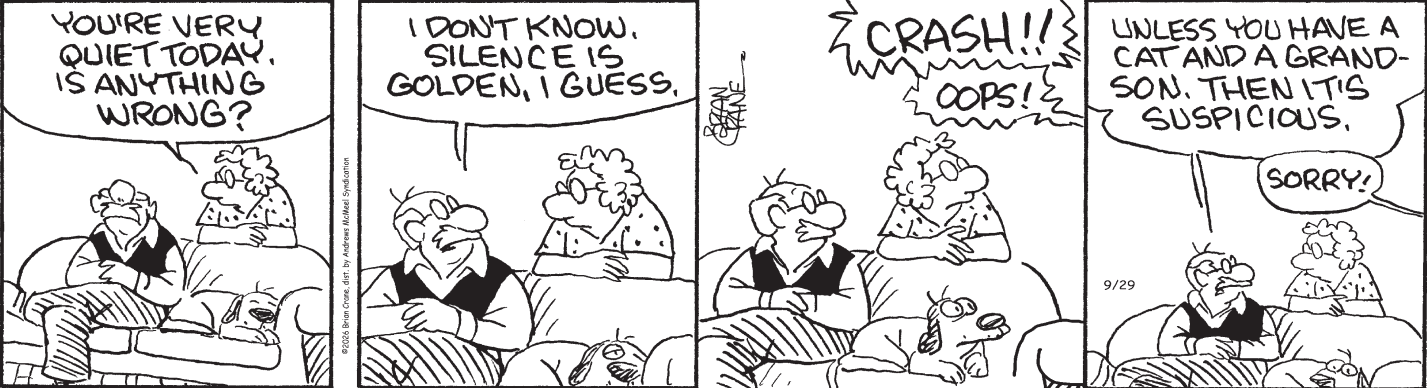
ZITS Jim Borgman & Jerry Scott



GARFIELD Jim Davis



PICKLES Brian Crane



SUDOKU

DIFFICULTY RATING: ☆☆☆☆☆

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

WHATZIT?

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

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

TODAY'S WHATZIT SOLUTION: One-man band

CROSSWORD

ACROSS

1 Metallic element
5 Serpentine letter
8 On — (equal)
12 Cain's brother
13 Texter's guffaw
14 Paella base
15 Three squared
16 Burns like a candle
18 French river
19 Period
20 Soak, as flax
21 Chef's domain
25 Black cuckoo
28 — Coke
29 "— of Eden"
33 Pay attention
35 — Rica
36 Book of maps
37 Affable
38 Witnesses

DOWN

1 Screwball
2 Leggy wader
3 Hawaii's state bird
4 Office worker

39

Future flower
41 Sailor's assent
42 Relatives
45 Frozen water
48 Encountered
49 October birthstone
53 "Have a safe journey!"
56 Liver secretion
57 Lab burner
58 Last letter, in London
59 "Born Free" lioness
60 River duck
61 Ambulance letters
62 Musician — Bridges

5

Brownie
6 Comfort
7 Minor insult
8 Noah's boat
9 Jetty
10 Farm fraction
11 Sleep

17

Middling grade
22 — of March
23 Can
24 Like highlighter colors
25 "Sad to say ..."
26 Evening, informally
27 — of Wight
30 Home to billions
31 Remain
32 Yarn
34 Chore
35 Yield by treaty
37 Jewel
39 Nothing to — at
40 High regard
43 Devilkin
44 Peace Prize name
45 "— a Kick Out of You"
46 — d'Azur
47 Author — Ferber
50 Stack
51 Too
52 Tilt
54 — soda
55 Orthodontist's degree

TODAY'S SOLUTION:

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

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.

SCENTED SOAP Solution: 10 letters

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

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Almond, Aloe, Amber, Aromatherapy, Blend, Cedar, Citrus, Clove, Coconut, Comfort, Cotton, Earthy, Floral, Fresh, Fruity, Gentle, Gift, Hands, Herbal, Ivory, Lavender, Lemon, Mango, Maple, Mint, Mood, Nose, Nutmeg, Ocean, Oils, Orange, Peach, Pine, Relax, Sage, Self-care, Shea Butter, Shower, Smell, Spicy, Sweet, Tea Tree, Tropical, Vanilla, Warm, Wash, Woody

TODAY'S ANSWER: Bubble Bath

Georgia still No. 1 state for business

By Ty Tagami
Capitol Beat News Service

ATLANTA — It might not be a lucky number, but Georgia’s political leaders are celebrating the state’s ranking as the top location for corporate expansions for the 13th year in a row.

The designation was based on a survey of 50 corporate site selection consultants nationwide.

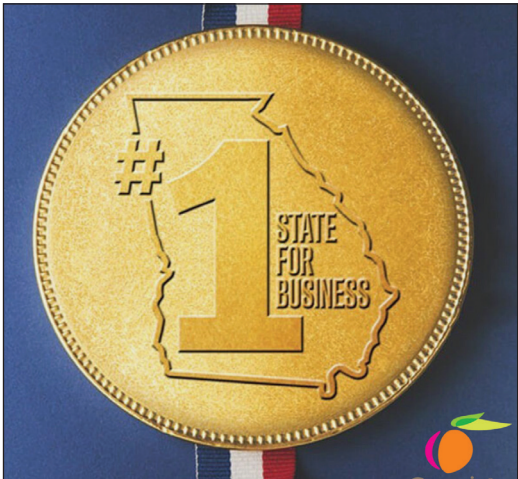
“Georgia’s 13th consecutive year as Area Development’s No. 1 Top State for Doing Business is an extraordinary achievement and reflects a level of consistency that few states have been able to match,” Dennis Shea, president and publisher of Area Development, said in a statement.

The quarterly magazine, founded in 1965, covers corporate site selection and relocation.

States were scored on more than a dozen factors. Georgia took the top spot in several, including access to workers with manufacturing skills, government cooperation and responsiveness, and help in expediting the development process.

“That consistency is exactly what has allowed Georgia to sustain its position as Area Development’s top state for doing business,” Shea said.

Gov. Brian Kemp said in a statement that the ranking showed Georgia was core to “the American comeback story across a wide range of industries, including manufacturing.”



File Photo

For a 13th consecutive year, Georgia has been named the No. 1 state in the country in which to do business.

Fellow Republican, Lt. Gov. Burt Jones, credited tax cuts and efforts to develop the workforce. House Speaker Jon Burns, R-Newington, echoed those sentiments and noted the Legislature’s investments in early literacy.

This year, Kemp signed House Bill 1193 into law, giving schools \$70 million a year to put about 1,300 literacy coaches into classrooms.

Kemp’s office credited \$28 million in funding to help rural communities prepare industrial sites.

Last month, German industrial giant Siemens announced plans to create 1,400 jobs in northeast Georgia. Siemens Group USA already employs more than 1,700 people at two plants and six offices across Georgia. The company said it planned to invest \$185 million to establish a half-million-square-foot facility near Pendergrass.

Georgia Democrats like their chances of flipping state House this year

By Ross Williams
Georgia Recorder

ATLANTA -- Georgia House Democrats say 2026 is the year they’re going to take control of the state House, ending more than two decades of Republican rule.

“We are 10 winnable seats away from a majority for the first time since 2004.” House Minority Leader Carolyn Hugley of Columbus said during a press conference. “The state House decides what happens to Georgia families on the issues that matter most: property taxes, how schools are funded, whether their votes are protected.”

Republicans say they’re not worried.

“I’m pretty sure they said the same thing in 2024, 2022 and 2020,” Carmen Bergman, director of the Georgia House Republican Caucus, said. “We’ve heard this line before. We feel very confident about our ability to not just keep the majority, but grow the majority.”

Democrats picked up 11 seats in 2018, when frustration with the first Trump administration led to higher Democratic turnout and organization. Party leaders say the nation is in a similar mood and that population growth has made Georgia younger and more diverse.

Hugley’s confidence also comes from a new report from Democratic pollster Z to A Research.

Pollsters talked to Georgians in 13 highly competitive legislative districts and found that, after respondents were given a description of each candidate and “heard the case against” the Republican candidate, the Democratic candidate finished ahead in 12 of the 13 races.

Before hearing the information, Democrats only won one of the districts.

Democrats control 81 seats in the 180-member chamber, which means a gain of ten members would put them in the majority, allowing them to elect leaders like speaker and committee chairs and set the agenda for the upcoming legislative session.

The party in charge also leads the usually once-a-decade effort to revise legislative maps, which means many districts are drawn to be safe for either party. That’s why even if statewide Democratic candidates like U.S. Sen. Jon Ossoff win more than 50% of the vote in Georgia, Republicans – who drew the current political maps – could continue to dominate the Legislature.

Nonpartisan political observers aren’t convinced that Georgia’s House chamber is in play, though. The University of Virginia’s Center for Politics, for example, acknowledged Georgia Democrats’ optimism after winning a pair of seats on a state regulatory



Special Photo: Ross Williams/Georgia Recorder

Georgia House Minority Leader Carolyn Hugley says her party will win control of the state House after November’s election.

board last year. But the center still classified both chambers of Georgia’s Legislature as “likely Republican” earlier this year.

The national party also may still need convincing. Will Rusche, vice president of marketing and communications at the Democratic Legislative Campaign Committee, which seeks to elect Democrats to state legislatures, said his organization is targeting 500 seats in 27 states, including Georgia, but he declined to say how much the committee is spending in Georgia.

“Right now we’re kind of in the phase in the last few weeks before the election of tracking this polling information, figuring out where resources in the final week are going to be spent, and I think it is a fluid situation,” he said. “We’re going to keep an eye on things.”

Democrats see their best shot at flipping seats in the north Atlanta suburbs

The first step on what Democrats call their path to taking the House includes four Republican districts in northern metro Atlanta won by Democrat Kamala Harris in the 2024 presidential election.

Buford Republican state Rep. Sandy Donatucci, who narrowly defeated Democratic state Rep. Farooq Mughal by just 80 votes in 2024 and is now facing a rematch with Mughal.

Republican state Rep. Matt Reeves of Duluth, who was first elected in 2022 and narrowly won re-election in 2024, defeating Democrat Michelle Kang, who leads a nonprofit, by 621 votes out of more than 29,000. Kang is running for the seat again.

Sandy Springs Republican state Rep. Deborah Silcox, who won by more than 1,300 votes in 2024, but Harris took 53% of the vote in that election. Democrat Beth Fuller, a former contractor with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, is hoping to take her down this year.

Peachtree Corners Republican state Rep. Scott Hilton, who outperformed President Donald Trump in 2024, taking nearly 55% of the vote in a district where Harris won 50.6%. He’s facing Democrat Adam Cleveland, an attorney.

Longer shot opportunities The other six seats Democrats say will bring them to the majority are likely to be significantly tougher. Each of the Republican incumbents won by around 15% in 2024, but Democrats say their new polling predicts they are flip-pable.

District 44 in Cobb County where Republican state Rep. Don Parsons of Marietta faces Democrat Danielle Bell, a healthcare advocate.

District 34 in Cobb County where Republican state Rep. Devan Seabaugh of Marietta faces Democrat Titus Nichols, an attorney and Army Reserve officer.

District 19 in Cobb and Paulding counties where state Rep. Joseph Gullett of Dallas faces Democrat and educator Cynthia Starke-Jones.

District 147 in Houston and Peach counties where Repub-

lican state Rep. Bethany Bal-lard of Warner Robbins faces Democrat Renita Duncan, a retired U.S. Army command sergeant major and federal worker.

District 81 in Henry County where Republican state Rep. Noelle Kahaian of Locust Grove faces Democrat Mishael White, a commercial truck driver.

District 45 in Cobb County where Republican state Rep. Sharon Cooper of Marietta faces Democrat Michelle Schreiner, a psychologist.

Lauren Groh-Wargo, CEO of left-leaning voting rights organization Fair Fight Action, said Democrats have some wiggle room if some of these races don’t go their way. She said at least 10 other districts appeared promising in Democratic polls or saw a strong performance by Harris in 2024.

“These six, were we to win them, would bring us a majority, but we have room to miss,” she said. “We have additional seats that are competitive.”

Republicans planning their own flips

Bergman with the House Republican caucus said the Georgia GOP will not rest on its laurels this November.

Even if voters are frustrated with Republicans at the federal level, Georgians largely report satisfaction with the party at the state level, she said.

“Voters are smarter than I think some politicians give them credit for,” she said. “They can separate out different levels of government, different levels of responsibility and will take action in the voting booth to support the good common sense governance they’re seeing at the state level.”

Bergman said several Democratic seats are ripe to be flipped, starting with Democratic state Rep. Eric Gisler of Watkinsville, who won his seat in a special election last year in a conservative district after the previous representative stepped down. Gisler defeated Republican Mack “Dutch” Guest, who works for his family trucking business, by around 200 votes.

Republicans blamed the loss on an off-year election during a time when Democrats were more motivated to vote, and Guest is set to face off against Gisler once more this year. Democrats’ new polling shows the race tied.

Bergman said Republicans are eying other Democrat-held seats including:

District 128, represented by Democratic state Rep. Mack Jackson of Sandersville, who is not running for re-election. Jackson won by just 48 votes in 2024. Democrat Tyrone Evans, a certified public accountant, will face Republican Trey Sheppard, co-owner of a family-owned shipping business.

District 145 in Bibb and Houston counties, where Democratic state Rep. Tangie Herring won by just 273 votes in 2024. Former Forsyth Mayor Eric Wilson, a Republican, is challenging Herring.

Pirelli to invest \$1.2 billion in Georgia expansion

Staff Reports
news@albanyherald.com

ATLANTA – Pirelli, a world leader in tire production, will create 1,000 new jobs as part of a multi-year, \$1.2 billion expansion of its existing facility in Rome. Governor Brian and First Lady Marti Kemp previously met with Pirelli’s executives while leading an economic mission to Italy in 2024, laying the groundwork for this announcement.

“For over two decades, Pirelli has been a valued presence in our state, and I’m thankful that our efforts to grow this partnership are paying off with even more jobs for hardworking Georgians,” Kemp said. “This historic investment will expand Pirelli’s footprint with roughly five times more positions than they currently employ across the region, and we wish them continued success here in the No. 1 state for business.”

Headquartered in Italy, Pirelli located its U.S. headquarters and manufacturing facility in Rome in 2002. Pirelli currently employs 234 Georgians through its manufacturing, innovatio, and headquarters operations in the state.

“The U.S. is one of Pirelli’s most important markets and offers significant opportunities for growth,” Claudio Zannardo, CEO of Pirelli North

America, said. “The expansion of our Rome facility strengthens our ‘local-for-local’ strategy, increasing our manufacturing capacity in the U.S. while introducing the latest-generation technologies, such as the Cyber Tyre, and advanced robotics.

“This investment will allow us to better serve the needs of the local market, create new jobs, and further strengthen Pirelli’s presence in North America.”

Pirelli’s Georgia facility is located at 100 Pirelli Drive in Rome. The company plans to expand the factory in two phases: first adding latest-generation Pirelli robotics equipment, followed by the addition of a traditional manufacturing process that will require more hiring. Pirelli expects to begin the bulk of hiring in 2029, with the facility projected to be at full operations in 2033.

“While we always enjoy news of new business and industry coming to Floyd County, it is even more meaningful when an existing industry announces an expansion,” Chairwoman Rhonda Wallace with the Floyd County Commission said. “Pirelli has been a tremendous community partner for more than 20 years, and their new investment and job creation is incredible news for the citizens of Floyd County.”

Senior Regional Project

Manager Lori Dowdy represented the Georgia Department of Economic Development’s Global Commerce team on this competitive project in partnership with the Rome-Floyd Development Authority, Georgia Quick Start and Georgia Power.

“Pirelli’s expansion in Rome is a tremendous investment in northwest Georgia and a powerful example of what can happen when a company and a state build a relationship for the long term,” GDEcD Commissioner Pat Wilson said. “Pirelli was one of the early companies to help build Georgia’s automotive supply chain, and more than two decades later, they are continuing to believe in Georgia and invest in their future here.

“I have had the opportunity to visit Pirelli’s operations in Floyd County and Italy and see first-hand the innovation and advanced technology driving their vision for the future of mobility. This investment brings that future to Georgia, with advanced robotics, next-generation manufacturing, and technologies that are making the automobile increasingly connected and intelligent. Pirelli has been an important part of Georgia’s automotive story for more than 20 years, and we are proud to partner with them as they help write the next chapter.”

NOTICE								
The (City oo Morgan City) Council does hereby announce that the millage rate will be set at a meeting to be held at the (City Hall 54 Court St. Morgan, GA 39866) on (Oct. 5, 2026) at (6:00 PM) and pursuant to the requirements of O.C.G.A. § 48-5-32 does hereby publish the following presentation of the current year's tax digest and levy, along with the history of the tax digest and levy for the past five years.								
CURRENT PROPERTY TAX DIGEST AND 5 YEAR HISTORY OF LEVY								
C i t y w i d e A r e a	CITY WIDE		2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026
	V A L U E	Real & Personal	31,666,754	3,559,506	4,190,435	4,138,658	3,996,849	4,025,533
		Motor Vehicles	162,170	135,370	115,600	102,230	76,990	84,690
		Mobile Homes	102,256	108,466	141,723	137,338	136,853	136,630
		Timber - 100%	48,039	0	0	0	0	0
		Heavy Duty Equipment	0	0	0	0	0	0
		Gross Digest	31,979,219	3,803,342	4,447,758	4,378,226	4,210,692	4,246,853
		Less Exemptions	96,281	97,526	141,676	144,499	204,031	224,971
		NET DIGEST VALUE	31,882,938	3,705,816	4,306,082	4,233,727	4,006,661	4,021,882
	R A T E	Gross Maintenance & Operation Millage	7.0600	5.8690	3.0330	6.0370	6.0400	6.0400
		Less Rollback (Local Option Sales Tax)	4.0400	2.8490	0.0360	3.0170	3.0200	3.0200
		NET M&O MILLAGE RATE	3.0200	3.0200	3.0200	3.0200	3.0200	3.0200
	TAX	TOTAL M&O TAXES LEVIED	\$10,216	\$11,192	\$13,004	\$12,786	\$12,100	\$12,146
		Net Tax \$ Increase	\$262	\$976	\$1,812	(\$219)	(\$686)	\$46
		Net Tax % Increase	2.63%	9.55%	16.19%	-1.68%	-5.36%	0.38%

TCC pulls away from Lee County in showdown

By Joe Whitfield
Sports Editor

LEESBURG — For a while Friday night, Lee County looked capable of trading punches with the best team in the state.

Then Aidan McPherson kept running.

The Thomas County Central quarterback rushed for 266 yards and six touchdowns and threw for another score as the No. 1-ranked and defending state champion Yellow Jackets pulled away from No. 2 Lee County for a 49-26 victory before a sold-out crowd at Trojan Field.

McPherson repeatedly hurt Lee County once he escaped the pocket, turning broken plays and designed runs into big gains. The Trojans often got a defender to him. Getting him to the ground was another matter.

The Duke commit also threw a 45-yard touchdown pass to JD White as Thomas County Central showed why it entered the showdown unbeaten and ranked among the nation's top teams.

Lee County had its chances.

After the Trojans went three-and-out on the opening possession, TCC quickly drove downfield and McPherson scored on a 12-yard run for a 7-0 lead.

Lee answered.

Cohen Lawson connected with Jaden Upshaw for a big gain, and the Trojans moved deep into Yellow Jackets territory before Quay Sheard finished the drive with a touchdown run to tie the game.

That set the tone for a first half in which Lee County refused to let TCC get comfortable.

Every time the Yellow Jackets appeared ready to create separation, the Trojans responded. Lawson found Upshaw and other receivers downfield, while Sheard gave Lee County a threat on the ground.

But McPherson remained the problem Lee County couldn't solve.

At 6-foot-4 and more than 200 pounds, the senior showed both the speed to get outside and the strength to run through contact. Once he cleared the initial wave of defenders, TCC's offense became difficult to contain.

Still, Lee County stayed within striking distance and went to halftime trailing 28-20.

The Trojans needed a stop to begin the second half. They didn't get it.

McPherson and the Yellow Jackets drove for another touchdown, stretching the advantage to 35-20 and putting Lee County in chase mode.

The Trojans continued battling and cut the deficit to nine, but TCC answered again. McPherson broke loose for another score, and the Yellow Jackets eventually pushed the lead beyond Lee County's reach.

It was a frustrating night for a Trojan defense that had played well during Lee County's unbeaten start. The Trojans knew McPherson's legs presented a challenge. Knowing it and stopping it proved to be two different things.

Thomas County Central finished with 49 points against a Lee County team that had entered Friday 4-0 after victories over Hapeville Charter, Carol City, Sequoyah and Colquitt County.



Special Photo: The Lion & The Fox Photography

Thomas County Central quarterback Aidan McPherson breaks into the open field during Friday night's 49-26 victory over Lee County in Leesburg. McPherson rushed for 266 yards and six touchdowns.

The loss was Lee County's first of the season, but it came against a TCC program that has established itself as one of Georgia's premier teams.

For Lee County, the result doesn't erase what the Trojans accomplished during the opening month. It does provide a measuring stick for where they stand against a championship-

caliber opponent.

And Friday night, the biggest difference was wearing No. 2.

McPherson ran for six touchdowns, threw for another and spent much of the night escaping Lee County defenders.

The Trojans had answers for plenty of what Thomas County Central threw at them.

Dougherty breezes past Columbus, 48-0

By Joe Whitfield
Sports Editor

ALBANY — For a late-September football game, Thursday night at Hugh Mills Stadium felt almost too easy.

The temperature was comfortable. A light breeze drifted through the stadium. There wasn't much of a crowd on either side, and there certainly wasn't much traffic to fight on the way in.

Then Dougherty made the football look easy, too.

Quarterback Micah Joyner threw four touchdown passes in the first half, three of them to senior David Burgess, and senior safety Eric Spann returned an interception 55 yards for another score as the Trojans overwhelmed Columbus 48-0 in a Region 1-AAA game.

By halftime, it was 35-0.

By then, about the only Dougherty player who might have worked up much of a sweat was Burgess.

The senior receiver caught two touchdown passes from Joyner in the first quarter as Dougherty quickly grabbed a



Staff Photo: Joe Whitfield

Dougherty senior Eric Spann picks off a Columbus pass during Thursday night's game at Hugh Mills Stadium. Spann raced 55-yards to the end zone for a pick-six and the Trojans blew out the Blue Devils, 48-0.

14-0 lead. Early in the second, Joyner spotted sophomore Jherel Gibson behind the Columbus secondary and dropped the ball to him for a 65-yard touchdown.

That made it 21-0, and the Trojans weren't finished.

In fact, Spann almost had

his touchdown one play before he actually got it.

With Columbus forced to the air, Spann and two Dougherty teammates converged on a pass that seemed destined to be intercepted. Instead, the three Trojans got in each other's way and knocked the

ball harmlessly to the turf.

No problem.

On the very next snap, Spann — a Georgia Southern commit — stepped in front of another pass, secured this one and raced 55 yards the other way for a touchdown.

Just like that, it was 28-0.

Columbus did have some success running the football and eventually pushed into Dougherty territory, but a penalty stalled the drive and brought out senior kicker Isaiah Virgil for an unusual second long-distance field-goal try of the night.

Virgil had come up just short on a 55-yard attempt earlier. This one was from 56.

Same result.

Dougherty took possession at its own 20, and it didn't stay there long.

Joyner flipped a short pass to Burgess, who broke toward the sideline, found open grass and was gone. Eighty yards later, Burgess had his third touchdown reception of the half and Dougherty had a 35-0 lead.

See **DOUGHERTY**, 10A



Staff Photo: Joe Whitfield

Baconton Charter's Eli Morman runs against Sherwood Christian during Thursday's game at Legacy Field in Albany. He scored four touchdowns and intercepted a pass in the game.

Baconton runs over Sherwood

By Joe Whitfield
Sports Editor

ALBANY — Baconton Charter brought plenty of size to Legacy Field on Thursday afternoon.

And not all of it was on the offensive line.

Quarterback Jaxon Beasley looks as though he could line up alongside the big guys blocking for him. On plenty of middle school teams, that's probably exactly where he would be.

Instead, Baconton puts the ball in his hands.

That worked out pretty well Thursday.

Beasley and running back Eli Morman powered a punishing ground attack, and both made game-changing plays on defense as the Blazers rolled past Sherwood Christian 28-6 at Legacy Field next to Sherwood Christian Academy.

"They have a very disciplined, well-coached football team," Sherwood coach Kevin Taylor said. "We really

See **BACANTON**, 10A

Sherwood snaps four-match skid

By Joe Whitfield
Sports Editor

ALBANY — For a Sherwood Christian Academy volleyball team getting close to the postseason, Thursday afternoon wasn't just about finally winning again.

It was about how the Lady Eagles responded when things started going wrong.

Sherwood watched Georgia Christian erase its early momentum and even the match at one set apiece, then came back out and dominated the final two sets for a 3-1 victory that snapped a four-match losing streak.

The Lady Eagles won 25-19, 17-25, 25-15, 25-14 to improve to 17-8 overall and 4-3 in region play with two regular-season matches remaining.

And junior setter Lizzie Hooks was everywhere.

Hooks finished with five aces, 10 kills, three blocks, 15 assists and 10 digs, filling up just about every column on the stat sheet while helping Sherwood regain control after a difficult second set.

"Lizzie Hooks had a great night of volleyball all around the ball," Sherwood coach Braina Collins said.

For a while, it appeared

Sherwood might make quick work of the Lady Generals.

The Lady Eagles jumped out to an eight-point lead in the opening set. Georgia Christian fought back and trimmed the margin to four, but Sherwood steadied itself and finished off a 25-19 victory.

Nothing came as easily in the second.

The teams traded points early, with Sherwood holding a 9-8 lead before Georgia Christian's Jovie Copeland went to the service line. The Lady Generals put together a

See **SHERWOOD**, 10A



Staff Photo: Joe Whitfield

Sherwood senior Maddie Mallard digs for a shot during Thursday's volleyball match against Georgia Christian at Sherwood in Albany. Mallard and the Lady Eagles won the match 3-1.

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Braves’ rotation takes another hit

Media Reports

ATLANTA — The Braves have spent much of the season overcoming injuries to their pitching staff. Their ability to do it again could determine how long their postseason run lasts.

Atlanta placed veteran left-hander Martín Pérez on the 15-day injured list Thursday with lower back inflammation, leaving the National League East champions with just three experienced starters as they prepare for the playoffs.

The move is retroactive to Monday, meaning Pérez cannot return until Oct. 6, the scheduled date of Game 3 of the NL Division Series. Roster rules make it unlikely he would pitch for Atlanta before a potential NL Championship Series.

Pérez has a 3.12 ERA in 26 starts and had been positioned as an important part of Atlanta’s postseason rotation.

“It’s business as usual in there,” Braves manager Walt Weiss said. “We keep marching on. The way things have gone this year, somebody’s probably going to get a little bigger opportunity and make something of it.”

Atlanta’s healthy veteran starters are Chris Sale, Tyler Mahle and Grant Holmes. Rookie JR Ritchie, who owns a 5.66 ERA through his first 10 major league starts, is next on the depth chart.

Mahle, acquired from San Francisco in August, had been one of Atlanta’s best second-half additions before struggling Thursday. Cincinnati scored five runs against him in five innings of a 7-6 Braves loss

at Truist Park. Mahle entered the game with a 1.28 ERA over his previous eight starts.

The immediate postseason plan appears manageable. In the best-of-three Wild Card Series beginning Tuesday, Atlanta could start Sale, Mahle and, if necessary, Holmes.

Advancing to the NLDS could create complications.

If the Wild Card Series goes three games, the Braves could enter the Division Series without an established starter available on regular rest for Game 1. Atlanta could turn to Ritchie or use an opener and rely heavily on its bullpen. Sale could return for

Game 2, with Mahle potentially following in Game 3 and Holmes in Game 4.

Bryce Elder remains another possibility later in October, but he is still recovering after having bone fragments removed from his right knee earlier this month.

Weiss said the Braves have grown accustomed to entering October with pitching concerns.

“There’s been a few of those years where you feel like we went in there with one hand tied behind our back,” Weiss said. “But we’ve shown that we can overcome this stuff.”



File Photo

Atlanta Braves left-hander Martín Pérez has been placed on the 15-day injured list with lower back inflammation, leaving the Braves with another rotation concern heading into the postseason.

From 9A
SHERWOOD

run and moved ahead 12-9, forcing Collins to call timeout.

Sherwood tried to answer with Hooks serving, but Georgia Christian’s Eliza James began making her presence felt at the net. The Lady Generals stretched the lead to 19-12 and eventually took the set 25-17.

Match tied. Momentum gone.

For a team that had lost four straight, it could have been the beginning of another frustrating afternoon.

Instead, Sherwood flipped the match.

The Lady Eagles cleaned up their mistakes, took control of the third set and rolled 25-15. They were even more convincing in the fourth, pulling away for a 25-14 victory that ended any thoughts Georgia Christian had of forcing a fifth set.

That turnaround was exactly what Collins wanted to see.

“We strive to have less than 10 errors in a set, and we accomplished that in three of four sets tonight, and it was enjoyable to watch,” Collins said.

Senior libero Maddie Mallard played a major role in

keeping Sherwood steady when the match turned.

“Maddie Mallard held down the serve receive and defensive line to allow for a strong show from our offensive team,” Collins said.

The timing couldn’t be much better.

Sherwood remains third in the region behind Valwood and Grace Christian and is positioned to host a first-round state playoff match in October. More importantly, the Lady Eagles have stopped a four-match slide before it could follow them into the postseason.

“We are looking forward to ending our regular-season play with more success and look forward to postseason,” Collins said.

There is still some work to do first.

Sherwood closes its home schedule Sept. 28 against HCA before traveling to Macon the following day to face Mount de Sales in its regular-season finale.

Thursday’s victory doesn’t erase the four losses that came before it.

But the way the Lady Eagles responded after dropping the second set might mean considerably more as October approaches.

From 9A
BACONTON

enjoy playing good teams so that we can measure our play against what we think is a good program. Today, we battled until the end, but their run game was too much for us.”

Sherwood found that out almost immediately.

An early Eagles fumble gave Baconton a short field, and Beasley quickly broke a run to the Sherwood 19. The Eagles’ defense appeared ready to turn the Blazers away when it forced fourth-and-6, but an offsidess penalty kept the possession alive and gave Baconton the ball at the 3.

Morman took it from there, powering into the end zone for the game’s first touchdown. Sherwood appeared ready with an answer.

A facemask penalty against Baconton helped the Eagles move into Blazers territory, but Beasley showed he could do more than run the offense. Playing in the secondary, he stepped in front of a Sherwood pass for an interception and abruptly ended the threat.

Then he went right back to work at quarterback.

Beasley connected with Elyn Hayek for a big completion to the Sherwood 36, setting up Morman’s 22-yard touchdown run. Beasley found Hayek again for the 2-point conversion, and the Blazers had a 14-0 lead.

This time, Sherwood answered in a hurry.

Eli Harris found a crease, broke into the open field and raced 70 yards down the visi-

tors’ sideline for a touchdown, giving the Eagles life and cutting the Baconton advantage to 14-6.

But Baconton’s size and running game eventually took over.

Beasley ripped off two big runs on the Blazers’ opening possession of the third quarter to help move the ball to the Sherwood 25. On the next play, Morman swept around the left side and went 25 yards for his third touchdown.

Then Morman took his turn making a play on defense.

The Baconton running back intercepted a Sherwood pass to give the Blazers possession at their own 47. Moments later, Morman broke another long run to the Eagles’ 17. Baconton didn’t bother hiding what was coming next.

Morman lined up in the Wildcat, took the snap and covered the final 17 yards for his fourth touchdown of the afternoon. Beasley ran in the 2-point conversion, pushing the lead to 28-6.

By then, the formula was obvious — and Sherwood still couldn’t stop it.

Behind its big offensive line, Baconton repeatedly put the ball in the hands of Beasley and Morman and dared the Eagles to bring them down. The duo accounted for all four Blazers touchdowns on the ground while also producing an interception apiece on defense.

For Sherwood, Harris’ 70-yard touchdown provided the afternoon’s biggest highlight, but Taylor came away knowing where his Eagles need to improve.

Field Level Media

GREEN BAY, Wis. — Bijan Robinson ran for 194 yards and two scores and quarterback Michael Penix Jr. returned from injury to ignite Atlanta’s stagnant offense, leading the visiting Falcons to a 35-14 victory over the Green Bay Packers on Thursday night.

Penix did not play in Atlanta’s first two games this season as he was still recovering from a torn ACL sustained last November. The third-year QB completed 18 of 25 passes for 256 yards with one touchdown and one interception.

Half of those completions were to Drake London, who had nine catches for a career-high 194 yards.

Robinson, who carried 29 times and had runs of 55 and 31 yards, finished a yard short of his career high of 195 yards, set in 2025 against the Rams.

The loss prevented Green Bay (1-2) from setting a new NFL record for consecutive home-opener victories. The



Special Photo: Jeff Hanisch

Atlanta Falcons quarterback Michael Penix Jr. hands the ball to running back Bijan Robinson during Thursday night’s 35-14 victory over the Green Bay Packers. Penix threw for 256 yards in his return from a torn ACL, while Robinson rushed for 194 yards and two touchdowns

Packers had won 13 home openers in a row, matching the Miami Dolphins’ streak from 1976 to 1988.

Atlanta (1-2), which had scored just 16 points total in its first two games, erased an early 7-0 deficit with 27 consecutive points.

Zach Harrison blocked Trey Smack’s 47-yard field goal attempt that would have brought Green Bay even at

10-all. Penix then directed a 63-yard touchdown drive, hitting Austin Hooper with a 5-yard scoring toss to put the Falcons up by 17-7 with 59 seconds left in the half.

Green Bay’s first drive of the second half ended in the red zone on Jordan Love’s incompletion on fourth-and-1 at the Atlanta 8. The Falcons responded with a 92-yard drive, going in front 24-7 on

Softball Roundup: Lee County sweeps Coffee; Terrell Academy wins; Monroe-Westover split

By Joe Whitfield
Sports Editor

DOUGLAS — Lee County is exactly where it wants to be with the Region 1-6A championship race entering its final stretch — in control of its own destiny.

The No. 3-ranked Lady Trojans swept Coffee 5-0 and 6-4 Thursday, extending their winning streak to six games and improving to 23-2 overall and 14-1 in region play.

“We like being in the driver’s seat, for sure,” Lee County coach Hannah Spencer said.

Lee County hasn’t clinched the region championship. Veterans remains alive but must win its remaining games, including an Oct. 6 makeup doubleheader at Lee County.

Tina Benton dominated the opener, throwing a three-hit

shutout. Brylyn Parsons went 2-for-4, while Izzy Evans, Mac Davis and Jaydynne Frisbee each drove in a run.

Coffee jumped ahead 2-0 in the nightcap before Lee County took the lead with a three-run fourth inning and held on.

Benton went 3-for-4 to lead a 10-hit attack, and Kennady Patrick added two hits. Reese Watkins went the distance in the circle, allowing four runs on seven hits.

Lee County hosts Perry on Monday and Lowndes on Wednesday.

Terrell Academy rolls past Tiftarea

DAWSON — Terrell Academy remained in second place in its region with a 13-3 victory over Tiftarea Academy.

The Lady Eagles improved to

10-6 overall and 4-1 in region play, with their only region loss coming against nine-time defending state champion Westfield.

Alyssa Godwin drove in four runs, including three on a first-inning double, as Terrell Academy scored eight runs in the first and five in the second.

Michaela Zingarelli pitched two scoreless innings for the victory.

“We are playing good softball right now,” Terrell Academy coach Ashley Walker said. “I feel good about where we are.”

Terrell Academy visits Central Fellowship Tuesday before hosting unbeaten region leader Westfield Thursday at 4 p.m. Westfield won the first meeting 6-2.

Monroe, Westover split

wild doubleheader

ALBANY — Four games in three days between Monroe and Westover ended with each team getting something to celebrate.

After Monroe swept Tuesday’s doubleheader, the teams split Thursday, with Monroe winning the opener 30-17 before Westover answered with a 22-20 victory.

Offense dominated the nightcap as Westover collected 15 hits. Lauren Edwards went 4-for-4 with four RBIs, while Sydney Donaldson and Morgan Polite homered.

Monroe nearly erased a 13-run deficit, scoring seven runs in both the fourth and sixth innings. Jamiya Duhart went 3-for-5 and drove in three runs, but Westover held on to earn the split.

From 9A
DOUGHERTY

For a team that spent the previous week thinking about its first loss of the season, it was quite a response.

Crisp County handed Dougherty its first setback last Friday, beating the Trojans 35-14 in Cordele. Six days later, Dougherty looked nothing

like a team still dwelling on it. The Trojans scored through the air. They scored on defense. And after halftime,

with the outcome essentially settled, they went to the ground.

Ja’Darrion Simmons moved the chains on a couple of carries before Zion Johnson broke loose and carried the ball to the Columbus 13-yard line. On the next play, Simmons finished the drive with a touchdown run.

With a running clock in the fourth quarter, Dougherty coach Uyl Joyner began getting some of his younger players onto the field. Sophomore wide receiver Detavi-

ous Poole took over at quarterback and, after the Trojans worked the ball downfield on the ground, showed he could throw it, too.

Poole lofted a pass downfield for a 40-yard touchdown, providing the final points of an evening when just about everything went Dougherty’s way.

The Trojans improved to 4-1 overall and 3-0 in region play, keeping themselves unbeaten in the games that will ultimately determine their postseason position.

The road gets considerably more interesting next week.

Dougherty travels to Columbus to face Shaw, which is 3-2 and already has some familiarity with teams from Albany. The Raiders lost 26-14 to Westover last week at Hugh Mills Stadium.

Thursday night, though, belonged to the Trojans.

Perfect weather. An empty road. A 35-point halftime lead.

And, for Dougherty, a bounce-back victory that looked every bit as comfortable as the night itself.

Credit union announces partnership with Southern Regional Tech

From 2A
DAY

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Release Date: Tuesday, September 29, 2026

Los Angeles Times Daily Crossword Puzzle

Edited by Patti Varol

ACROSS

- 5 Liquefy
- 5 Lima's country
- 9 Pokes (around)
- 14 Fruit with wrinkle
skin
- 15 Greek Cupid
- 16 Disconnected
- 17 Mouse catcher
- 18 "Show us how it
done"
- 20 Some office subs
- 22 Wedding
declaration
- 23 Ascend
- 24 "Quit interfering"
- 28 Britches,
informally
- 29 Pod filler
- 30 Part in four-part
harmony
- 33 ____ carte menu
- 35 Car in the Beach
Boys' "Fun, Fun,
Fun"
- 40 "Don't stoop to
their level"
- 44 Large deer
- 45 Contraction that
typically followed
by "be"
- 46 Fails to be
- 47 Corp. VIP
- 50 House of Lords
title
- 52 "Perfect for me"

- 59 Junior staffer
60 Charcoal grill
residue
61 City with the
Heat and the
Hurricanes
62 Informal
language, or what
18-, 24-, 40-, and
52-Across are
examples of?
66 Out of control
67 "Money ____":
Netflix crime
series
68 Actor Morales
69 "Great" detective
of kid-lit
70 Donkeys
71 Credit report
category
72 Unhappy dogs

DOWN

- 1 Mixed-breed dogs
2 Everglades wader
3 Woolly pack animal of 5-Across

- 4 What a child might stand on to watch a parade
5 Get-up-and-go
6 Chapter of history
7 Finnish game developer that created Angry Birds
8 Depleted
9 Casual refusal
0 "Tosca," for one
1 Welcomed at the door
2 Delete
3 Eyelid irritation
9 Dashed
1 Title for Paul McCartney
5 "Hurt Somebody" singer-songwriter Kahan
6 Christmas season
7 Lattice strip
0 Convenience in many cash-only establishments
1 That neighbor
2 Boxing ref's ruling, for short
4 Tropical tuna
6 Sparkling
7 iPhone platform
8 Tried to get elected

- 39 Pesticide in
Rachel Carson's
"Silent Spring,"
for short
41 ___ support
42 Thing
43 Aussie greeting
48 Coup d'___
49 Removed from
power
51 Smash (into)
52 Ceremonial acts
53 Elba of "Cats"
54 Grown goslings

ANSWER TO TODAY'S PUZZLE:

[illegible]

09/29/26

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67						68						69		
70						71						72		

By Kelly Morenus
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09/29/26

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.

“PWJH Q PZQYJ BDHTB, Q UJJX ...
YWGY Q GXPGB WGLJ G EQZJSYQDH
... GHE G XDY DU SWGXXJHTJB,
ADIHEGZQJB YD AZJGN.” — BGAZQH
SGZRJHYJZ

Previous Solution: "Every movie you do is sort of a leap of faith ... and, for me, it's just about the filmmaker and the material." — Hong Chau

TODAY'S CLUE: *S equals B*

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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.

“ [‘ JUHERBI ’] OPB TWBP JR ZP
GRRXNK TB GPJTWUBRG JK NTMR ...
WP PBIRQ QPNR T IUDR XNUKRG IUZ
UMMRHBRG JR ZP XQPMPVWG NK . ”
— XUBQTHF ZBRAUQB

Previous Solution: "When I write songs, I feel ... that I always have a direction ... and a lot of challenges, boundaries to break." — Sabrina Carpenter

TODAY'S CLUE: *W sɪənbə r*

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NAMI Albany walk raises funds for education, support services

Staff Reports
news@albanyherald.com

ALBANY -- On Oct. 10, NAMI (National Alliance on Mental Illness) Albany will walk in its sixth Albany State University Homecoming Parade. NAMI is a grassroots volunteer organization committed to breaking

down the stigma of mental illness and raising awareness. The annual event raises funds for free educational and support services for family members and people dealing with mental health challenges. Phoebe Putney Memorial Hospital, the

Dougherty County Commission, Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority Delta Eta Omega Chapter, Albany Episcopalians, community churches, college students and key local businesses offer essential support. Walkers show up to celebrate mental health recovery and help stamp out stigma.

Sponsors directly contribute to NAMI Albany's mission of awareness, support, education and advocacy. Walkers will meet at St. Paul's Episcopal Church, 212 N. Jefferson St. Participants will walk together to our spot on the parade route.



Special Photo: Maya Homan/Georgia Recorder

As many as 70% of Georgia residents are struggling to afford basic necessities, such as food, housing, healthcare or childcare.



Special Photo: Justin Taylor/The Current/Georgia Recorder

A pine forest covers the planned future site of the OpenAI data center at the Savannah Gateway Industrial Hub in Effingham County.

Lawsuit alleges secrecy around Effingham data center

By Maggie Lee
The Current via Georgia Recorder

RINCON -- A group of plaintiffs is asking a judge to declare that the Effingham County Industrial Development Authority unfairly did public business in private and to throw out the agency's deals with OpenAI affiliate Octans Georgia for a data center near Rincon.

Five county residents plus the nonprofit environmental group One Hundred Miles allege that the county development authority didn't provide proper notice or a meaningful agenda for the key July board vote that bound the community's land to the maker of ChatGPT software and granted the company a 50% property tax break.

The plaintiffs, represented by counsel from the nonprofit Southern Environmental Law Center, also claim that the authority has failed to publicly discuss the sale of land to Octans or to hand over information about the transaction.

"Georgia's public process rules exist because communities should not learn about major decisions only after deals have been negotiated behind closed doors," SELC attorney Zachary Henneese said in a press release announcing the lawsuit filed in Effingham County Superior Court. "The Effingham County Industrial Development Authority must follow the law and give the public a

real opportunity to be heard." The development authority "respects the legal process and will carefully review the allegations once it receives formal notice," an authority spokesperson said via email, adding, "It would be inappropriate to comment on the claims before the ECIDA and its legal counsel have had an opportunity to review the filing."

The lawsuit comes as the county commission has given itself more time to review Octans' plan for the roughly 1,440-acre site. A vote was originally set for the commission's regularly scheduled meeting on Sept. 15, the same day the conservative AI Data Center Revolt bus rolled into town and speakers protested the secrecy around the deal. Democratic U.S. Senator Raphael Warnock made the same charges about secrecy last month when he visited Effingham County and called for a data center moratorium in the state.

The county development authority has spent tens of thousands of dollars on countering public anger about the data center, which will use as much electricity as about 2 million houses, generated at thirsty and polluting power plants.

A separate lawsuit alleges that the county itself skipped a required public review of the zoning rules that have paved the way for Octans to plan a data center.

Georgia DOT awards 22 projects worth \$54.8 million in August contracts

Staff Reports
news@albanyherald.com

ATLANTA -- The Georgia Department of Transportation awarded a total of 22 projects valued at approximately \$54.8 million at the monthly State Transportation Board meeting held in August. Contracts were awarded to the lowest qualified bidders on Sept. 4.

The largest single investment resurfacing project, valued at approximately \$4.7 million, proposes 4.92 miles of milling, inlay, and plant mix resurfacing on State Route (SR) 8 beginning north of the bridge over Ronald Reagan Parkway and extending to Lawrenceville Suwanee Road in Gwinnett County. This contract and 12 other resurfacing projects total approximately \$38.2 million and represent 69% of the total funds awarded.

The largest single investment construction project, valued at approximately \$4.3 million, proposes the construction of a roundabout on U.S. Highway 29 Business/SR 8/SR 53 at Jackson

Trail Road in Barrow County. This contract and three other construction projects total approximately \$10.9 million and represent 20% of the total funds awarded.

The largest single investment safety project, valued at approximately \$2.4 million, proposes intersection improvements on SR 42 at United Avenue and Skyhaven Road in Fulton County. This contract and two other safety projects total approximately \$3.6 million and represent 7% of the total funds awarded.

The largest single investment bridge rehabilitation contract, valued at approximately \$1.7 million, proposes bridge rehabilitation at various locations in Berrien, Brooks and Lowndes counties. This contract and one other bridge rehabilitation project total approximately \$2.1 million and represent the remaining 4% of the total funds awarded.

The August awards bring the total construction contracts for Fiscal Year 2027, which began on July 1, to approximately \$316.2 million.

Researchers say most Georgians struggle with cost of living

By Maya Homan
Georgia Recorder

As many as 70% of Georgia residents are struggling to afford basic necessities, such as food, housing, healthcare or childcare, according to new data from the Georgetown Center on Poverty and Inequality.

The data were released as part of the center's national family economic well-being index, which measures the economic pressures that families are facing and how severely they are being squeezed by the cost of living. In Georgia, 36% of respondents said they

were burdened by the cost of food, and 48% said they faced challenges related to healthcare costs. Forty percent of respondents said they struggled to afford multiple basic needs.

The data, researchers said, help illustrate how rising costs of living are affecting Americans, particularly as affordability continues to be a central issue in the midterm elections.

"We're hearing stories from people at all income levels who feel squeezed by the costs of those everyday essentials," Lelaine Bigelow,

the center's executive director, said. She added that the goal of the index was "to bring a data frame to this and see how widespread those pressures have become."

One of the most striking results, she added, was the extent to which concerns about the cost of living crossed socioeconomic classes. Ninety-nine percent of respondents in the bottom 20% reported facing at least one economic burden, but nearly half the population in the upper-middle 20% did too.

Economic hardship, Bigelow said, "is not limited to families who are experienc-

ing poverty. It reaches well into the middle class."

Policies at the state level also impact residents' ability to afford things like healthcare and childcare, said Danilo Trisi, one of the researchers behind the index. In many Southern states that chose not to fully expand Medicaid, a higher share of residents reported concerns about healthcare costs.

"The states that didn't [expand Medicaid] have higher insurance costs and therefore show up in our index as having a higher percentage of the population burdened by healthcare costs," Trisi said.

Southwell hospitals have \$1.45 billion impact on local economy

Staff Reports
news@albanyherald.com

TIFTON -- Updated annual economic impact data released by the Georgia Hospital Association show that Southwell's two hospitals have a combined \$1.45 billion impact on the local economy. This includes Tift Regional Medical Center in Tifton and Southwell Medical in Adel.

"Every patient, employer and community member in the area benefits from the life-saving care and economic impact of TRMC and Southwell Medical," GHA President/CEO Caylee Noggles said. "Georgia's hospitals are essential to our state's health and prosperity, and TRMC and Southwell Medical are prime examples of that impact."

GHA's update is based on independent third-party modeling using 2024 data. According to the report, the TRMC economic impact is \$1,086,090,183 and the Southwell Medical economic impact is \$380,790,998.

Southwell's economic reach extends beyond healthcare, sustaining jobs in a range of industries. GHA's data show that Southwell supports 7,154 total jobs across Georgia, including 5,806 jobs in Tift



Special Photo: Southwell

Southwell team members are part of the workforce supporting Tift Regional Medical Center and Southwell Medical, which contribute significantly to the local and regional economy.

and Cook counties, and 2,714 full- and part-time employees at TRMC and Southwell Medical. Together, these direct and indirect jobs generate \$506,282,707 in household earnings statewide.

"Southwell's presence in South Georgia provides more than healthcare – our hospitals contribute to the overall growth, stability and opportunity of the areas we serve," Southwell President/CEO

Chris Dorman said. "Southwell's system of care serves our communities through employment, economic development, philanthropy, wellness support and various other contributions."

