

**Welcome to the
December
2022
Digital Edition**



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GEMC
Celebrating the Georgia lifestyle
Georgia[®]
MAGAZINE

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Savor Statesboro



Given a choice between wine-thirty or beer o'clock, gourmet charcuterie boards or slow-smoked barbecue, perusing antiques or boutique clothing shops, enjoying southern family-style meals or elegant fine dining, driving country farmland roads during sunset or paddling through cypress filled waterways... why not choose it all when you Visit Statesboro

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On the cover

The musical performance “A Christmas Tradition” has been a holiday staple at the historic Savannah Theatre since 2002. (Photo by Shannon Zaller.)



Sharing Abbie's story

The article "Continuing the good works" about [Georgia Southern University nursing student] Abbie DeLoach [and the foundation named for her] was excellent. [See January 2022, page 20; bit.ly/gm122ad.] Abbie is my niece and Jimmy DeLoach is my brother. It was an excellent article, and I appreciate that it was included in your magazine.

I do not have a subscription to *Georgia Magazine*, but I thoroughly enjoyed reading it. So many people sent my family the magazine after the article was written about Abbie. Thank you again!

—Pam DeLoach Huff, Winterville

Readers respond!

Thank you for offering the trivia contest—it's informative and fun.

—Barbara Dawson, Dahlonega

My 9-year-old daughter loves to use the trivia contest questions for reading comprehension. She always enjoys reading *Georgia Magazine*. Thank you!

—Jessica Palumbo, Swainsboro

Thank you for the trivia questions. I enjoy *Georgia Magazine* from cover to cover.

—Sharon and Timothy Manley, Zebulon

I enjoy and appreciate so much the very interesting, varied, helpful and informative articles in *Georgia Magazine*. Thank you so much for all your effort in providing this magazine for us.

—Wilma Abney, Kennesaw



If attending a seasonal theater production is on your holiday wish list, then consider your wish granted. Theaters around the state are preparing to spread some holiday cheer with traditional performances that are sure to leave audiences in a festive mood.

Live entertainment can be just the ticket to alleviate the stress of shopping, decorating and entertaining, so turn to page 16 to learn how three theater companies are celebrating the season with productions that have become staples in their communities.

The holiday season is traditionally a time for sharing wishes, and P.K. Beville has helped more than 10,000 of them come true for seniors living in nursing homes and assisted-living centers. Her Roswell-based Second Wind Dreams organization is founded on the principle that people are never too old to dream or to have their dreams come true.

Read "Wishes fulfilled," starting on page 24, to learn how these longed-for experiences—including adventures such as parasailing and going on a ride at an amusement park—have become realities for seniors, changing their lives and those of the people who helped them realize their dreams.

Georgia also is the home base for one of the Southeast's most iconic restaurant chains: Waffle House. The first Waffle House opened in DeKalb County in 1955. Since then, the company has expanded to 400 restaurants in Georgia and nearly 2,000 locations across the U.S.

Open 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, Waffle House serves a menu of American staples in a consistent fashion—offering the same dining experience at every location and to every customer. See "More than waffles," starting on page 20, to find out how these quintessential Southern restaurants provide fast, affordable comfort food to locals and weary travelers alike.

Enjoy!

Laurel
Laurel George
Editor

ATTN: READERS ...

'What brings you joy?'

Share your story and photo and let us know what brings you joy! We will select and publish the best essays, photos and children's art in our August 2023 issue.

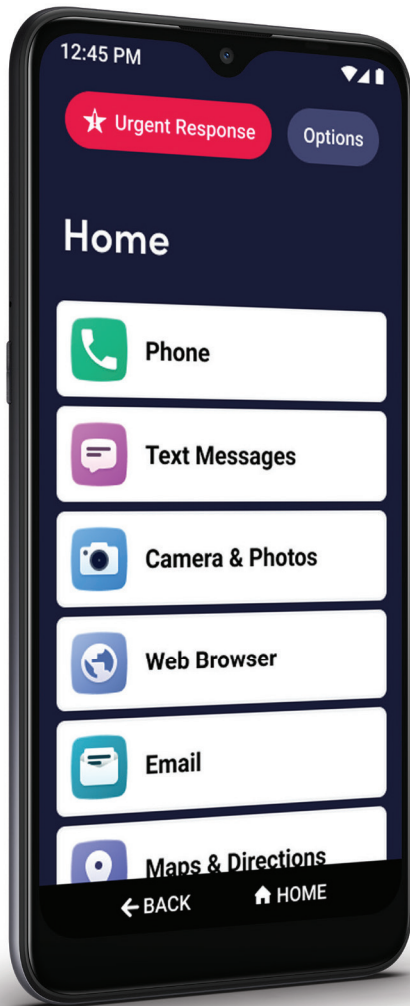
The rules:

1. 200 words or fewer.
2. One entry per person, per household.
3. Photos should be 300 dpi and emailed to magazine@georgiaemc.com; one photo per email, please.
4. Children's art can be produced in pencil, crayon or paint, no larger than 10x12 inches.
5. Include your name, mailing address, phone number, email address and the name of your electric co-op.
6. Email stories to magazine@georgiaemc.com or mail to: Reader Stories, *Georgia Magazine*, P.O. Box 1707, Tucker, GA 30085. *Georgia Magazine* reserves the right to edit published stories for the purposes of space and clarity. **Deadline:** May 1, 2023.

Share your thoughts. Email us at magazine@georgiaemc.com. Please include your name, address and phone number. Letters may be edited for clarity and space.

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Picture this?



Guess where this is and you could win a \$25 gift card!

The reader whose photo is published in “Picture this?” wins a \$25 Target gift card—as does the person who correctly guesses what the photo is and where it was taken in Georgia. The winner’s name (drawn at random from correct guesses) and the answer will appear in a future issue. The winning photo selected by our staff will be published in exchange for a gift card. Georgia EMC claims no right to and will ultimately destroy or delete all photos that are not selected.

If you’re ready to guess or have taken a photo for us to consider, email picturethis@georgiaemc.com or mail to “Picture this?” P.O. Box 1707, Tucker, GA 30085. Submissions should be 300-dpi photos of locations in Georgia that are accessible to the public and easy to identify. Please send photos and guesses separately.

Guesses for the December contest must be received by Dec. 23, 2022. With all correspondence, please include your name, mailing address and phone number.



JULY 2022

Our winners from July 2022 are Lisa Skarda of Albany, who submitted the photo, and Stacy Ortiz of Leesburg, who correctly guessed that it is a picture of Radium Springs Gardens in Albany. We received 140 correct guesses!

Celebrating the Georgia lifestyle
Georgia
MAGAZINE

Georgia Magazine, the largest-circulation monthly magazine in the state, is published by Georgia Electric Membership Corp. (GEMC), the trade association for Georgia’s 41 consumer-owned electric utilities. On average, more than 540,000 members welcome the magazine into their homes each month. Georgia’s not-for-profit electric cooperatives provide reliable, safe and affordable electric service to more than 73 percent of the state’s land area, serving 4.5 million residents. For more information, visit www.georgiaemc.com.

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Article submissions or story ideas are welcome for review; send to the address below. Guidelines are available by emailing magazine@georgiaemc.com.

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Statewide transportation improvements underway

Known colloquially as “the Perimeter,” Interstate 285 in metro Atlanta is one of the busiest highways in Georgia, with an estimate of more than 2 million drivers each day. The Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) recently announced the closure of lanes in both directions on the north side of I-285 to allow for bridge demolition and reconstruction at Glenridge Drive, State Route 400 and Peachtree-Dunwoody Road as part of the Transform 285/400 improvement project.

Although additional congestion and delays are predicted, recently opened connecting lanes should provide some relief. Even so, GDOT officials recommend that travelers avoid I-285 in this area during the project, which is expected to take eight months.

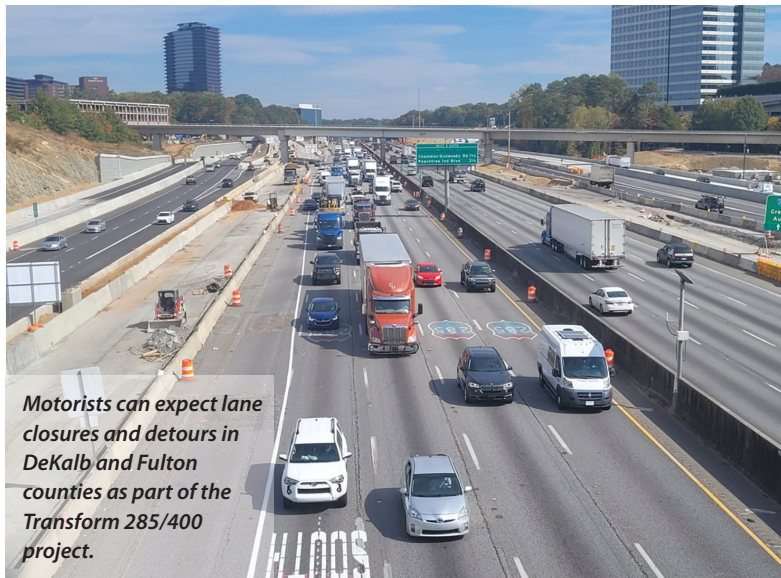
Motorists should exercise caution when entering highways and interstates, as it takes only one stalled vehicle or other incident to create major delays. Motorists also are advised to use smartphone navigation systems or 511 Georgia, GDOT’s travel and traffic information system that can be accessed by mobile app (511 Georgia) or through the website 511ga.org.

Near Savannah, the 16@95 Improvement Projects will reconstruct interchanges on I-16 and I-95 and widen I-16 from I-95 to I-516. The addition of a collector-distributor (CD) lane to I-95 northbound will improve the flow of traffic because CD lanes run parallel to the main travel lanes of a highway and allow for access to roads or entrance ramps.

A new CD lane also will be added to improve traffic safety at the interchange of I-95 and I-16. As Savannah and the coastal region continue to grow, more roads likely will be added.

For more information about traffic conditions and highway projects, visit dot.ga.gov.

—Victoria Chan



Motorists can expect lane closures and detours in DeKalb and Fulton counties as part of the Transform 285/400 project.

GEORGIA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION



GDOT crews prepare to drill under the eastbound lanes of I-285 at Glenridge Drive.

GEORGIA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Georgia glimpses



CARLY MIRABILE

- Report Joro spiders.** Researchers at the University of Georgia in Athens are asking citizen-scientists to gather data on where Joro spiders can be found across the Southeast. The Joro Watch project will jumpstart an online monitoring program that can be used for public awareness, education and to better understand the current spread and distribution of the arachnid. Visit jorowatch.org for information and to submit photographs.
- Continuing a musical legacy.** Officials broke ground in September for the new Otis Redding Center for the Arts in Macon, a 15,366 square foot space for musical education. The center, named for the legendary musician and Macon native, will include learning labs, collaborative spaces, practice rooms and a stage for performances by students ages 3 to 18. Learn more about the Otis Redding Foundation at otisreddingfoundation.org.

Space rock in the spotlight

COURTESY TELLUS SCIENCE MUSEUM



Above: Astronomer Ed Albin captured the Sept. 26 meteorite on film as it entered the Earth's atmosphere. **Right:** Tellus Science Museum curator Ryan Roney holds a fragment of the recovered meteorite.



TELLUS SCIENCE MUSEUM

The Tellus Science Museum in Cartersville has added one more space rock to its Georgia Meteorite case in the Weinman Mineral Gallery. On Sept. 26, a meteorite fell to the ground over Junction City in Talbot County. Astronomer Ed Albin of Atlanta and fellow meteor hunters Carl Dietrich of South Carolina and Pat Branch of Simi Valley, Calif., found the fragments after Albin's camera recorded the event.

"It was estimated that the meteor coming through our atmosphere was maybe the size of a washing machine or a small refrigerator," Albin says.

Dietrich spoke with Tellus curator Ryan Roney to get one of the recovered fragments displayed at the museum. Roney says that museum director Jose Santamaria had a big hand in getting the donor money to purchase the rock for the museum's permanent collection.

"When Carl came in, I talked to him about the circumstances, and I started taking care of [the fragment] and getting it ready to go on exhibit," Roney says. "I [checked its condition], photographed it, sketched, measured it, weighed it—all those things."

Nine members of the Tellus team helped get the rock ready and create the museum display, including interviewing Dietrich so the meteorite's story could be archived and the unveiling publicized.

"It's a thing so small, you wouldn't think it would take [so many] people to take care of it, but it does," Roney says.

Once the rock's report is verified by The Meteoritical Society, an international organization that studies meteorites and other extraterrestrial materials in our solar

system, it becomes official. When verified, this will be the 27th meteorite in Georgia and the 11th piece on display in the Georgia Meteorite exhibit at the Tellus. This meteorite has been tentatively identified as a chondrite, commonly known as a stony meteorite. Further classification is underway.

For tickets and more information about the Tellus' Georgia Meteorite exhibit, visit tellusmuseum.org.

—Tara Woodin

TELLUS SCIENCE MUSEUM



Meteor hunter Carl Dietrich, right, delivers the meteorite fragment to Ryan Roney.

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Make merry at Callanwolde's Winter House

The Callanwolde Fine Arts Center in Atlanta will be open to the public Nov. 25-27, Dec. 1-4 and 8-10 for **Winter House 2022** to celebrate the holiday season.

"Callanwolde is so excited to host Winter House 2022! We have planned this event with the Callanwolde mission of art for all at the forefront," says Ellen Harb, marketing and special projects manager. "What I'm most looking forward to is our schedule of art and pottery workshops."

The open house will feature a variety of events, including an artist market, mug and ornament clay-glazing workshop, opportunities to write letters to Santa, photos with Santa, board games and s'mores by a fire pit. Holiday workshops for adults and children will include candle-making, clay snowmen and calligraphy.

Guests can explore the beautifully decorated 27,000-square-foot mansion at their leisure or join a formal, historic tour for a fee.



While admission is free, several ticketed musical and dance performances will be held in the indoor courtyard, where beer, wine and snacks will be available for purchase.

For more information, visit callanwolde.org/winterhouse2022 or call (404) 872-5338.

— Victoria Chan

Please call or check event websites to ensure that these events are taking place before you go.

North Georgia

15th Annual Christkindmarkt on the Marktplatz, Nov. 26-27, Dec. 3-4, downtown, Helen. Traditional German celebration with arts and crafts, music, food. (706) 878-1908. helenchamber.com.

Christmas at Reinhardt, Dec. 1-4, Falany Performing Arts Center, Waleska. Annual Christmas concert from Reinhardt University's School of Performing Arts features the University Choir and the University Wind Ensemble. (770) 720-9167. bit.ly/xmasrein.

ChristmasFest and Lighting of the Christmas Tree, Dec. 2, downtown, Toccoa. Live Nativity, Santa's Express train rides, carriage rides, Christmas carolers, ice skating, lighted trees, Santa. (706) 282-3309. mainstreetoccoa.com.

Christmas Market on Candy Cane Lane, Dec. 2-3, 9-10, Community House, Dahlonega. Arts and crafts, themed gift baskets, home-baked goods. (770) 715-8710. bit.ly/dahlingwc.

Victorian Christmas Tours, Dec. 2-3, 9-10, Oak Hill and The Martha Berry Museum, Rome. Celebrate holiday traditions from the late 19th century. (706) 368-6789. bit.ly/victctbc.

Victorian Christmas, Dec. 2-3, 9-10, 16-17, Hardman Farm State Historic Site, Sautee Nacoochee. Historic holiday decor, storytellers in period dress, horse-drawn wagon rides, twinkling lights, live music, homemade

sorghum Christmas cookies, s'mores and St. Nicholas. (706) 878-1077. bit.ly/hrdmnfrm.

"Disney's Beauty and the Beast," Dec. 2-4, 9-11, Historic DeSoto Theatre, Rome. Broadway classic musical tells the story of Belle and the Beast, a young prince under the spell of an enchantress. (706) 295-7171. romelittletheatre.com.

"White Christmas," Dec. 2-4, 9-11, Elbert Theatre, Elberton. Stage adaptation of the classic film with Irving Berlin holiday tunes, including "White Christmas" and "Happy Holiday." (706) 283-1049. elberttheatre.org.

Toccoa on Ice, Dec. 2-4, 9-11, 16-18, 24, 26, 30-31, downtown, Toccoa. Public ice skating for all ages. (706) 282-3309. mainstreetoccoa.com.

34th Annual Service of Lessons and Carols, Dec. 3, Piedmont University Chapel, Demorest. Traditional holiday program featuring the Piedmont Chorale, the Brass Choir and the Sewell organ with readings, carols and choir anthems. (800) 277-7020. bit.ly/piedmtxmas.

Christmas in the Mountains and Lighted Parade, Dec. 3, downtown, Cleveland. Lighted evening parade, holiday market, tree lighting. (706) 865-5356. whitecounty-chamber.org.

Georgia's Rome Winter Art Market, Dec. 3-4, Rome Civic Center, Rome. Indoor/outdoor Christmas market featuring artists, crafters and growers. (706) 295-5576. bit.ly/romwmrkt.

Mistletoe Market, Dec. 3-4, Helen Arts and Heritage Center, Helen. Handcrafted art and fine crafts, artist demonstrations. (706) 878-3933. helenarts.org/festivals.

Small Town Christmas in the Country, Dec. 3-4, Rolater Park, Cave Spring. Downtown parade on



Margaritaville's Lakeside Lights Spectacular, Dec. 2-Jan. 4, 7-8, 14-16, Lanier Islands, Buford. Walk through a holiday light display beside Lake Lanier, plus enjoy License to Chill Snow Island with carnival rides, seasonal music. (470) 323-3440. bit.ly/marglanier.

Dec. 3, plus arts, crafts, Santa and Mrs. Claus. (706) 331-3005. bit.ly/scitccavspr.

Lindale Christmas Trolley Tour, Dec. 6, Lindale train viewing platform, Lindale. Carolers and tour highlight the town's history and holiday decor. (706) 295-5576. romegeorgia.org.

"A Christmas Carol," Dec. 9-11, 16-18, Cherokee Theatre Company, Canton. Charles Dickens' Christmas tale about a miserly old man and the three ghosts who turn his life around. (770) 591-0282. cherokeetheatre.org/shows.

Discovery Saturday, Dec. 10, Elachee Nature Science Center, Gainesville. Seeing Stars planetarium program, animal showcase. (770) 535-1976. elachee.org.

Helen Christmas Parade, Dec. 10, downtown, Helen. Handcrafted floats, fire trucks, dirt buggies, German characters, music and dance. (706) 878-2181. helenga.org.

■ Atlanta Metro

Garden Lights, Holiday Nights, through Jan. 14, Atlanta Botanical Garden, Atlanta. Illuminated metal sculptures, a moving curtain of lights, light show in the trees, plus the popular Ice Goddess and Orchestral Orbs. (404) 876-5859. atlantabg.org.

Avalon on Ice, Nov. 20-Jan. 16, Avalon, Alpharetta. Outdoor ice skating against a backdrop of holiday decorations. (770) 765-1000. experienceavalon.com.

Stone Mountain Christmas, Dec. 1-31, Stone Mountain Park, Stone Mountain. Holiday music, light displays, seasonal shows, holiday characters. (800) 401-2407. stonemountainpark.com.

Christmas Parade & Tree Lighting, Dec. 2, Marietta Street and Thurman Springs Park, Powder Springs. Enjoy the parade, then head down to Thurman Springs Park to see the Christmas tree come to life. (770) 943-1666. bit.ly/ctypdrsp.

Artists Holiday Market, Dec. 2-3, Alpharetta Arts Center, Alpharetta. Small original art, no larger than 16 inches, offered in a festival setting. (678) 297-6165. awesomealpharetta.com.

"A Christmas Story, the Musical," Dec. 2-4, 9-11, 16-18, Act 1 Theater, Alpharetta. Stage adaptation of the popular movie about 9-year-old Ralphy Parker's quest for an official Red Ryder BB gun. (770) 663-8989. act1theater.org.

The New Apostles of Bluegrass, Dec. 3, Everett's Music Barn, Suwanee. Atlanta-based band performs. (770) 722-1276. everettmusicbarn.net.

Georgia VegFest, Dec. 4, Gas South District, Duluth. Food vendors, apparel, crafts, educational seminars and panel discussions. (984) 900-6800. georgiavegfest.com.

"The Lion in Winter," Dec. 8-11, 15-18, Lionheart Theatre Company, Norcross. The story of the English Plantagenet family's infighting and ambitions to inherit the throne. (404) 919-4022. lionhearttheatre.org.

Bellpoint Gem Show, Dec. 9-11, Gwinnett County Fairgrounds & Expo Center, Lawrenceville. Gems, minerals, fossils and jewelry. bit.ly/bpgemshw.

Ghost of Christmas Eve, Dec. 11, Gas South District, Duluth. Trans-Siberian Orchestra celebrates the 26th anniversary of their album "Christmas Eve and Other Stories." (770) 626-2464. gassouthdistrict.com.

Christmas with the Atlanta Pops Orchestra, Dec. 17, Buford Community Center, Buford. Former Celtic Woman singer Chloe Agnew joins the orchestra. (770) 904-2740. bit.ly/bufcctr.

■ Central Georgia

Christmas at the Mansion, Nov. 20-22, 29-Dec. 21, Old Governor's Mansion, Milledgeville. Share the holiday traditions from the 1800s through holiday decorations in the former governor's mansion; candlelight tours on Dec. 3, 17. (478) 445-4545. visitmilledgeville.org.

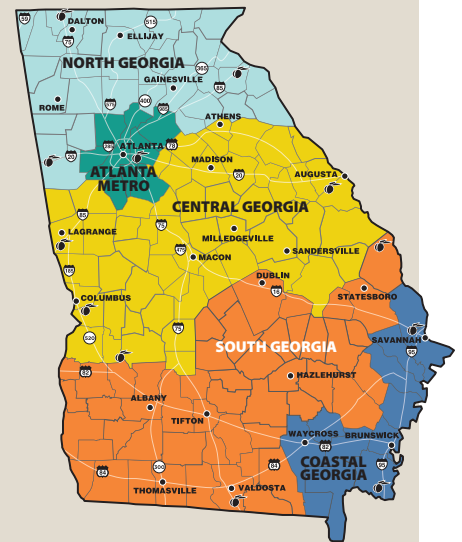
"Jacob Marley's Christmas Carol," Nov. 30-Dec. 4, 7-11, Main Street Theatre, Griffin. Charles Dickens' "A Christmas Carol" reimagined from Jacob Marley's perspective. (770) 229-9916. mainstreetplayers.org.

Parade of Lights, Dec. 1, downtown, Athens. Lighted night parade with floats, music, tree lighting hosted by Santa. (706) 613-3800. bit.ly/athdtp.

Josh Turner, Dec. 2, City Auditorium, Macon. Country music star presents his King Size Manger Tour with songs from his first Christmas album. (478) 803-1593. maconcentreplex.org.

Holiday Tours, Dec. 2-30, Hills & Dales Estate, LaGrange. Tour this historic home decorated for the season with fresh plants, greenery and a tinsel-laden Christmas tree. (706) 882-3242. hillsanddales.org.

"Drinking Habits," Dec. 2-4, 9-11, 16-17, Warner Robins Little Theatre, Warner Robins. Stage comedy about two nuns at the Sisters of Perpetual



Regions are determined by the Georgia Department of Economic Development. See its online calendar at www.exploregeorgia.org for additional events.

Sewing Convent who secretly make wine to keep the convent's doors open. (478) 929-4579. wrlt.org.

Christmas Festival, Dec. 3, Centerville United Methodist Church, Centerville. Arts and crafts, music, food trucks, photos with Santa, quilt raffle. (478) 953-3090. bit.ly/centumccf.

MORE ▶



Christmas Tours, Dec. 1-24, 26-Jan. 4, Hay House, Macon. Visit the historic 1859 Italian Renaissance mansion decorated for the holidays. (478) 742-8155. hayhousemacon.org.

Christmas Traditions House Tour, Dec. 4, 9-11, 16-18, Jarrell Plantation State Historic Site, Juliette. Tour the two historic farmhouses decorated for the season and learn about Christmas traditions from the 1800s and early 1900s. (478) 986-5172. bit.ly/gspjarp.

Black Violin Give Thanks Tour, Dec. 6, The Classic Center, Athens. Storytelling, whimsical string melodies and holiday favorites by this four-member ensemble that includes classically trained string players, a drummer and a DJ. (706) 208-0900. classiccenter.com.

Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols, Dec. 6, Sacred Heart Cultural Center, Augusta. English Christmas program that originated in King's College Chapel at Cambridge University, England, features local choirs singing hymns and carols and community leaders reading the nine lessons. (706) 826-4700. sacredheartaugusta.org.

Live Nativity, Dec. 9-11, Oakland Baptist Church, Warner Robins. Outdoor drama portraying the birth of Jesus and featuring a large cast and live animals. (478) 923-3533. oaklandwr.com.

Everyone Knows It's Christmas, Dec. 10, Bell Auditorium, Augusta. Guitarist and singer-songwriter Chris Isaak performs music from his new holiday album. (706) 722-3521. bit.ly/augentcp.

The Most Wonderful Time of the Year, Dec. 17, UGA Performing Arts Center, Athens. Take 6, a group of six male singers, combines gospel, jazz, R&B and pop for its holiday music program. (706) 542-4400. pac.uga.edu.

Joy to the World! Dec. 20, UGA Performing Arts Center, Athens. Classical violinist Jenny Oaks Baker and her four children present sacred and beloved Christmas carols featuring Irish soprano Alex Sharpe, formerly of Celtic Woman, plus performances by the Ballet Conservatory of Atlanta, Carpenter Academy of Irish Dance and Athens Interfaith Choir. (706) 542-4400. pac.uga.edu.

■ South Georgia

Winter WonderLyons & Christmas Parade, Dec. 2, downtown, Lyons. Lighted evening parade with floats, plus music, children's activities and Santa at the gazebo. (912) 526-6445. lyonsmainstreet.com.

"Merry & Bright: A Swamp Gravy Christmas," Dec. 2-3, 9-10, Cotton Hall Theater, Colquitt. Original play telling true Yuletide stories from the community. (229) 758-5450. swampgravy.com.

Victorian Christmas, Dec. 8-9, downtown, Thomasville. Carolers, performers and musicians



GEORGIA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

158th Annual Winter Muster, Dec. 10, Fort McAllister State Park, Richmond Hill. Step back in time to December 1864 to find out how soldiers prepared for Sherman's arrival. Enjoy tours, infantry demonstrations, blacksmithing. (912) 727-2339. bit.ly/gspftmc.

dressed in period costumes, reindeer carriage rides, a live Nativity, marshmallow toasting, chestnut roasting, plein-air artists. (202) 227-7020. bit.ly/tvillievictorianchristmas.

"Christmas Belles," Dec. 8-11, Averitt Center for the Arts, Statesboro. Experience Christmas in Fayro, Texas, with the Futrelle Sisters as they create a Christmas program for the town. (912) 212-2787. bit.ly/avrtctr.

4th Annual Country Christmas, Dec. 10-11, Pope's Museum, Ochlocknee. Musicians, storytellers, dancers, vendors and tours of the historic Pope's Museum. (229) 307-0037. popesmuseum.org.

■ Coastal Georgia

In Search of the Golden Fleece, Dec. 1-30, Jewish Educational Alliance, Savannah. Exhibition and sale by members of the Fiber Guild of the Savannahs, featuring weaving, knitting, quilting, felting, dyeing, crocheting. (912) 355-8111. fiberguildsav.com.

Plum Orchard Christmas Tour, Dec. 3, Plum Orchard Mansion, Cumberland Island National Seashore. Ride the ferry to the mansion to stroll through rooms filled with early-1900s holiday decorations, plus volunteers in period costumes, Christmas carols, old-fashioned lawn games. (877) 860-6787. bit.ly/plumorchtour.

A Christmas Story at Oakwell, Dec. 3-4, Oakwell on the St. Marys River, Kingsland. Live

Nativity, hayride, holiday decor, Santa and Mrs. Claus. (912) 270-0391. bit.ly/xmasatoakwell.

A Snowy Kingsland Christmas, Dec. 8, downtown, Kingsland. Snow play area, entertainment, holiday refreshments, Santa Claus. (912) 729-5999. visitkingsland.com.

"Miracle at the North Pole," Dec. 9-11, St. Marys Little Theatre, St. Marys. A small child in St. Marys brings new life to misfit toys forgotten at Santa's workshop. (954) 290-9873. stmarylslittletheatre.com.

"A Christmas Carol," Dec. 9-11, 16-18, Historic Ritz Theatre, Brunswick. A retelling of Charles Dickens' holiday classic about the transformation of a miserly old man. (912) 262-6934. goldenislesarts.org.

"Christmas Tour of Lights," Dec. 13-24, 26-27, St. Simons Fishing Pier, St. Simons Island. 90-minute tour of light displays throughout St. Simons Island. (912) 638-3333. bit.ly/lhxmastour.

Holly Jolly Jekyll Fireworks, Dec. 22, 29, Great Dunes Park, Jekyll Island. Celebrate the holidays with vibrant fireworks over the ocean. (912) 635-3636. jekyllisland.com.

Events for the March 2023 issue are due by **Dec. 15**.

Email calendar@georgiaemc.com. See more event listings at georgiamagazine.org.

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Habersham EMC tops co-op division at annual rodeo

Georgia's electric membership cooperatives (EMCs) took home several prizes at the 38th Annual International Lineman's Rodeo in Overland Park, Kan., Oct. 12-15.

Carroll EMC in Carrollton, Cobb EMC in Marietta, Flint Energies in Reynolds, GreyStone Power Corp. in Hiram, Habersham EMC in Clarkesville, Jackson EMC in Jefferson and Snapping Shoals EMC in Covington sent three-person journeyman teams and/or apprentice linemen, who compete as individuals, to the event.

Habersham EMC was the winner of the journeyman division just for the 35 participating teams from electric cooperatives. Both Habersham EMC's team of Dillon Welborn, Tucker Dyer and Robert Morris and Snapping Shoals EMC's team of Dylan Davis, Caleb Nix and J.C. Bradshaw finished with 400 points and zero deductions, but the Habersham team edged out first place by completing the challenge in less time.

Also in the top 10 among EMC teams were two teams from Cobb EMC, which finished fourth and ninth. Just out of the top 10 were a team from Flint Energies at No. 11 and another Cobb EMC team at No. 12.

Among apprentices competing in the EMC division, Hunter Walton of Flint Energies finished fourth.

For more information about the rodeo and complete results, go to linemansrodeokc.com.



Inset: Habersham EMC's team of, from left, Robert Morris, Dillon Welborn and Tucker Dyer won the journeyman division for cooperatives. **Above:** Habersham EMC linemen compete at the rodeo.

Walton EMC remains dominant in solar

For the fourth consecutive year, Walton Electric Membership Corp. (EMC) in Monroe is a leader among Southeast utilities in solar-power development, according to a recent report by the Southern Alliance for Clean Energy (SACE).

Walton EMC is included on the alliance's SunRiser list, which recognizes seven Southeast utilities experiencing the greatest solar-power growth. The co-op ranks first among all Georgia electric utilities.

The co-op distributes 1,750 watts of solar power per member. By 2025, that number is expected to rise to 4,064 watts per member. All together, electric utilities in Georgia produced 2,970 megawatts of solar energy last year.

Walton EMC's continued expansion of its solar portfolio for Meta (formerly Facebook) represents a large percentage

of solar-energy development for the state. The cooperative is providing 100 percent renewable energy for Meta's advanced, energy-efficient data center in Newton County.

In collaboration with Nashville, Tenn.-based Silicon Ranch, one of the nation's largest independent power producers, Walton EMC generates carbon-free, renewable solar energy at six solar facilities in the state. A seventh facility is expected to be completed by the end of the year.

Walton EMC also offers its members the opportunity to buy blocks of solar power through its Cooperative Solar program, which launched in 2015.

Walton EMC ranked second in the Southeast for the highest increase in solar watts per customer last year. The SACE region includes electric utilities in Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina and Tennessee.

In focus: The Wrens Fire Department used a grant of \$8,990 from Jefferson Energy Cooperative in Wrens to purchase thermal-imaging cameras that will help firefighters locate humans and animals in need of rescue from burning buildings. The funds came from Jefferson Energy's Operation Round Up program, in which members opt to round their monthly bills to the nearest dollar and the difference goes into a fund that supports charitable causes in the community.

Scholarships awarded: North Georgia Electric Membership Corp. (EMC) in Dalton presented nine local students with the cooperative's \$2,500 Chairman's Memorial Scholarship in July. The scholarship is named for former board members Howard Baker and Gerald Lowery.



COURTESY CALLAWAY HIGH SCHOOL

Members of the Callaway High School marching band in Hogansville perform in their new uniforms. The uniforms, which replaced worn-out hand-me-downs from another high school, were bought with donations that included \$10,000 from the LaGrange-based Diverse Power Foundation.

Diverse Power Foundation helps high school band suit up

When Lisa Booth, executive assistant at LaGrange-based Diverse Power, read a news story about the need for new uniforms for a local high school's marching band, it touched her heart.

"Callaway High School [in Hogansville] was given the old band uniforms from LaGrange High School about nine years ago. They literally took off the LHS patches and sewed on CHS patches," she says. "The uniforms were already old and about to be discarded. After 20 years of use, the uniforms had become threadbare and unusable."

Booth, who had fond memories of her own time in the marching band at Troup County High School in LaGrange, began looking for ways to support the CHS band and reached out to the Diverse Power Foundation for a possible donation using Operation Round Up funds.

The foundation's board agreed to donate \$10,000, which was presented at a pep rally in November 2021. Thanks to the donation, along with money raised by band members and a matching grant from the Callaway Foundation, the band achieved the necessary total of \$34,000.

The band performed in the new uniforms for the first time at a game against Redan High School from Stone Mountain on Sept. 23.

"Not saying the uniforms had anything to do with it, but ... Callaway won the game, 44 to 12. Go Cavaliers!" Booth says.

Donations like this are made possible by electric membership cooperative members who opt to round their monthly bills to the nearest dollar, with the difference going toward charitable causes in the community.

The foundation's board agreed to donate \$10,000, which was presented at a pep rally in November 2021. Thanks to the donation, along with money raised by band members and a matching grant from the Callaway Foundation, the band achieved the necessary total of \$34,000.



COURTESY WALTON EMC

▲ Victory formation: Walton Gas, a division of Monroe-based Walton EMC, makes a charitable donation of \$1,000 for every regular-season win by the University of Georgia (UGA) football team and \$5,000 for every bowl win through its Champions for Charity program. Thanks to UGA's national championship last year, Walton Gas divided \$37,000 among three organizations: Children's Healthcare of Atlanta, Camp Twin Lakes and the Salvation Army. To vote for which charity should get the largest slice of the total donation, go to wالتongas.com/uga.

Home renovation: The Central Georgia EMC Foundation in Jackson donated \$2,000 in Operation Round Up funds to the Griffin Area Habitat for Humanity. The organization will use the money to make necessary repairs to the home of a disabled veteran. 🏠



Holiday traditions

Celebrate the season with live theater *By Pamela A. Keene*



Two male actors play all the characters in “A Tuna Christmas.” Left: The late Ron Anderson portrays the character Stanley Bumiller, and Paul R. Pierce portrays Aunt Pearl Burrus. Above: A few quick costume changes transform Pierce into Bertha Bumiller, left, and Anderson into Charlene Bumiller, her daughter.

For many Georgians, there’s a certain comfort in knowing that some long-standing concerts, theater productions and Christmas parades come around each holiday season.

Professional theater companies in at least three Georgia communities take this to heart. These companies bring back long-running hits every year, and devoted fans say the holidays wouldn’t be the same without these shows.

A visit to Tuna, Texas

As it has for the last 20 years, the Springer Opera House again brings the hilarious residents of the fictitious town of Tuna, Texas, to Columbus to celebrate “A Tuna Christmas.”

“It’s the story of a small town with bigger-than-life characters—all portrayed by just two actors with lightning-quick costume changes and nonstop one-liners. [It is] an endearing

story of hope,” says Paul R. Pierce, producing artistic director of the State Theater of Georgia at the Springer Opera House.

Written by Jaston Williams, Joe Sears and Ed Howard, the play was conceived to be performed by just two actors. Pierce began performing half of the roles in “A Tuna Christmas” 20 years ago; he also directs the play. The late Ron Anderson portrayed the remaining roles for 18 years. In recent years, other pairs of male actors have been cast.

“Each actor plays 11 characters apiece—men, women, boys and girls,” Pierce says. “The first time audiences see the show, they can’t believe that only two actors are doing all the roles, and that’s part of the fun.”

More than 50,000 people have seen the play at the Springer; about 50 percent have seen it multiple times. After the performances, both actors come out to the lobby to interact with the audience. Pierce says it’s not unusual to hear people say, “Aunt

'Christmas can be a stressful time with traveling, family visits, meals to prepare and shopping. For us and our audiences, Tuna, Texas, is a place where people can come to be relieved of all that stuff and just feel like everything's going to be all right.'

—Paul R. Pierce



Pearl is like my Aunt Susan” or “I have a cousin like Stanley.” They even admit to seeing parts of themselves on stage.

“Christmas can be a stressful time with traveling, family visits, meals to prepare and shopping,” Pierce says. “For us and our audiences, Tuna, Texas, is a place where people can come to be relieved of all that stuff and just feel like everything’s going to be all right.”

A seasonal staple

Twenty years ago, nationally known theatrical producer/director Michael Meece came to Savannah to revive the city’s art-deco-style theater, which was built in 1818.

“With its rich history, the restored Savannah Theatre once again provides the perfect venue for live performances,” Meece says.

“Our holiday production, ‘A Christmas Tradition,’ was born

Above: Santa shares the stage with jazz/blues singer Huxsie Scott during a performance of “A Christmas Tradition” in Savannah. Below: The production includes a Rockette-style high-kick number featuring Santa and his dancing reindeer.



SHANNON ZALLER

SHANNON ZALLER



Above: Soloist India Tyree Takes the stage during a performance of "Christmas Canteen" at the Aurora Theater. **Left:** The production includes a performance by Santa's Dancing Elves.

in 2002, our inaugural season, with the vision of creating a music, dance and comedy show that would appeal to families every Christmas."

The production features dancing reindeer, a singing Santa and a mix of seasonal classics such as "Frosty the Snowman," "White Christmas" and "Rudolph, the Red-Nosed Reindeer," along with more contemporary sounds including 'STOMP,' an all-percussion number, and Santa dancing to rap artist MC Hammer's "U Can't Touch This."

High-kick dancers, singers in small ensembles and an on-stage band create a diverse and fast-paced show that continues to draw audiences from as far as 150 miles away.

"The show also includes an aerialist and a solo performance by Savannah's diva of jazz and gospel, Huxsie Scott, whose career has spanned 50 years," Meece says. "She's always one of the highlights."

Meece says it's important to keep the show familiar yet fresh.

"As the title suggests, the most enjoyable and exciting parts of the show have become a tradition," he says. "But we always find a way to include something new to surprise our audiences."

A holiday card

The Aurora Theatre's "Christmas Canteen" has staying power. The musical play was the professional theater's inaugural holiday show during its opening season in 1996-97, and it has been produced every year since.

"Originally conceived by our co-founders, Anthony Rodriguez and Ann-Carol Pence, 'Christmas Canteen' captured the hearts of our audiences from the start," says Katie Chambers,

director of production for Lawrenceville-based Aurora Theatre. "From a USO-show format set on Christmas Eve in the 1940s, it has evolved into a variety special filled with holiday classics and popular music that's different every year."

This year's eight-actor production is led by Russell Alexander and Galen Crawley. As Aurora's music director, Pence has added songs and created original arrangements for the show. New sets, costumes and a fresh storyline come together this year in three sections: a disco-era/Motown segment; a military tribute, which harks back to the original show; and an overview of multicultural holiday favorites. Former Aurora staff member Shelli Delgado wrote the script; Chambers directs the production.

"'Christmas Canteen' showcases our actors being themselves on stage, letting the audience into their lives by sharing their own stories," Chambers says. "It's personal and authentic as well as nostalgic, and that's what brings our audiences back year after year. It's our holiday card to the community." 🍷

Pamela A. Keene is a freelance writer living in Flowery Branch.

When you go

- **"A Tuna Christmas,"** Dec. 15-18, 20-23, Springer Opera House/McClure Theatre, Columbus. (706) 327-3688. springeroperahouse.org.
- **"A Christmas Tradition,"** Dec. 1-4, 6-11, 13-18, 20-24, Savannah Theatre, Savannah. (912) 233-7764. savannahtheatre.com.
- **"Christmas Canteen,"** Nov. 25-27, Dec. 1-4, 7-11, 15-18, 20-23, Aurora Theatre, Lawrenceville. (678) 226-6222. auroratheatre.com.



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AMBER LANIER NAGLE

More than waffles

Waffle Houses invite hungry folks to take seats at the counter

By Amber Lanier Nagle

Lauretta Hannon of Rome loves the aroma of coffee wafting through Waffle House in the morning. The clink of utensils on plates, the sizzle of bacon frying and the banter of the staff are music to her ears.

“[Waffle House] is definitely one of my happy places,” the bestselling author says. “Everyone is welcomed, everyone is accepted, and it’s an authentic place where folks can be themselves. The food is made right in front of you. They’re not hiding anything at Waffle House, and I love that.”

In the last 20 years, Hannon has visited these iconic Georgia eateries two to four times a week. Though the locations differ, the same order rolls off her tongue: “order over well, hold the yolk; hash browns, scattered and smothered—grill the onions first, but don’t burn ‘em; dark wheat toast; and sweet tea.”

A decade ago, she edited her book “The Cracker Queen: A Memoir of a Jagged, Joyful Life” at a Waffle House in Mableton. The attentive waitstaff often began preparing Hannon’s order when they saw her car roll into the parking lot.

“Hands down, the best perk of being a regular is the relationships you form with the staff and other regulars,” she



COURTESY WAFFLE HOUSE INC.

says. “On the acknowledgments page [of my memoir], I recognized the waitresses who supported me through [the editing process], and they, too, were celebrated at my book-launch events.”

She shares the story of a fun, full-throttle singalong as every person in the diner belted out every syllable of Johnny Cash’s “Ring of Fire.” More than once, she witnessed a server rush out to the parking lot to help an elderly patron walk into the restaurant. Another time, she watched a cook cut up an elderly customer’s order into tiny pieces because the man had difficulty swallowing and was no longer able to use a knife. She’s seen the staff care for the homeless, give advice to the heartbroken and extend kindness to the distressed.

“I’ve witnessed the best of humanity under the Waffle House roof—everyday acts

Top: Writer Laretta Hannon, right, of Rome chats with Waffle House District Manager Kerry Grier at the Waffle House on U.S. Highway 441 in Rome. **Above:** Since its founding in 1955, Waffle House has expanded to nearly 2,000 restaurants around the country. The company’s yellow sign is recognized as a familiar landmark.



Left: Patrons line up to order from the Waffle House food truck at a special event at the Waffle House Museum in DeKalb County. Below: Cooks prepare food made-to-order at Waffle House.



of charity, love and courage,” Hannon says. “Of course, Waffle House is a place to grab a bite to eat, but it’s also the place to go when you’re seeking shelter from the storm, whatever that storm might be.”

Once upon a time in Georgia

The very first Waffle House debuted on Labor Day in 1955 just outside of the Avondale Estates community in DeKalb County. Neighbors and friends Joe Rogers Sr. and Tom Forkner launched that first restaurant and named it after what would be the most profitable item on the menu: waffles.

The founders envisioned a casual, sit-down dining experience with consistent fare and fast, friendly, around-the-clock service.

“Our menu items are best described as traditional comfort foods,” says Njeri Boss, vice president of public relations at Waffle House Inc. in Norcross. “Our menu today offers most of the same foods as the menu from 67 years ago, though the prices have increased with time. Back then, a bowl of warm chili cost just 45 cents.”

Even in the company’s early days, the business philosophy embraced strong, long-term partnerships with other respected, mostly Southern brands.

“Coca-Cola has been with us since the doors opened,” Boss says. “That relationship started with a handshake, and all these years later, we still consider them family, and vice versa.”

Other loyal partners include the Kraft Heinz Co. (condiments), Jimmy Dean (premium pork sausage), Smithfield Foods (bacon) and Baldwin-based Springer Mountain Farms (chicken).

“We are known for providing food that’s both fast and affordable, but we don’t cut corners,” Boss says. “Every meal starts with quality ingredients. It’s about bacon, eggs and fun.”

Rogers and Forkner opened their second location in 1957. By 1960, the empire began spreading beyond metro Atlanta. Today, there are 400 locations in Georgia and nearly 2,000 locations throughout the U.S. The chain employs 35,000 hourly workers and managers, and Boss says Waffle House is looking

to hire even more hourly workers and managers in the coming months.

Waffle House’s commitment to serving communities goes beyond waffles and hash browns. The company’s philanthropic arm awards millions of dollars in grants to health and human services organizations and youth and educational programs around metro Atlanta each year, and the company encourages associates to volunteer time to local causes.

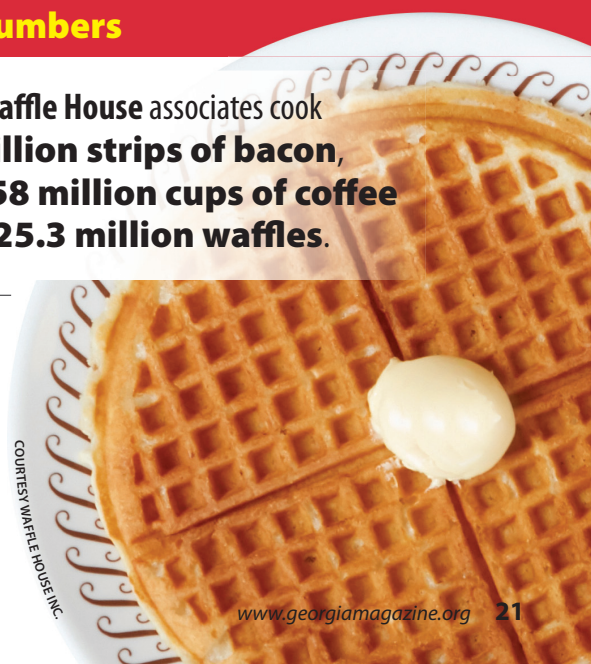
“We strongly believe in giving back and taking care of one another—taking care of people on both sides of the counter,” Boss says. “In fact, Joe Rogers Sr. once said: ‘We aren’t in the food business. We’re in the people business.’ It’s part of our culture.”

MORE ►

By the numbers

Each year, Waffle House associates cook **303.5 million strips of bacon**, pour about **58 million cups of coffee** and serve **125.3 million waffles**.

Batter for the Waffle House’s classic waffle is made in small batches from a proprietary waffle mix, eggs and half-and-half.





Left: Popular tunes play on the jukebox including Waffle House original songs.

Above: Associates at Waffle House serve 299.2 million eggs every year, equaling 3.9 billion eggs in the company's history. "We serve 2 percent of all eggs used in the industry," says Njeri Boss, Waffle House vice president of public relations.

Waffle House whimsy

The full Waffle House experience involves more than eating.

"Music is a big part of the atmosphere," Boss says. "Our diners select songs from a huge catalog of jukebox music—music for whatever mood they're in at the time. We also have our own record company [Waffle Records] with 40 or 50 songs. Joe Rogers Sr. started it in 1984."

On any given day or evening, customers balance on counter stools to devour eggs and grits while nodding along to jukebox standards like Chris Stapleton's rendition of "Tennessee Whiskey" or Waffle House originals, such as "Good Food Fast" by Eddie Middleton. At the end of last year, the company released a music video on social media featuring Kim Cruse singing "Don't You Wanna Go?"

The somewhat-encrypted language used to call in orders adds to the ambiance, too. For example, customers who order hash browns "scattered, smothered and chunked" expect their shredded potatoes to include sauteed onions and pieces of grilled hickory-smoked ham. "Covered" indicates melted cheese; "peppered" adds spicy jalapeño peppers; "topped" adds the company's iconic Bert's Chili; "capped" is with grilled mushrooms; and "country" means sausage gravy is poured over the top.

For the thousands who have become super fans of all things Waffle House, a museum at the site of the original diner in DeKalb County makes for an interesting road trip. The museum, a re-creation of the first restaurant, features photos, menus and memorabilia. Tours can be booked through the website.

There's so much more to the Waffle House experience than waffles. At counters in Georgia and beyond, associates serve heaping helpings of comfort food, good times and, most of all, love. ☺

Amber Lanier Nagle is a freelance writer living in Adairsville.

'The Waffle House Index'

Known for its dependability and reputation of "always being open," Waffle House is associated with an informal metric used by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to help assess the severity of disasters.

In 2004, former FEMA administrator Craig Fugate coined the term "The Waffle House Index" to categorize and color-code emergency situations when he was serving as director of the Florida Division of Emergency Management.

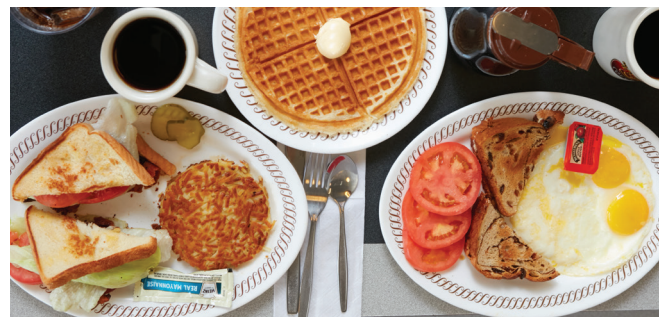
He's credited with saying, "If you get to [the scene], and the Waffle House is closed ... that's really bad ..."

The index is as follows:

Green: The restaurant has power and offers full service and a full menu.

Yellow: The diner offers a limited menu with low food supplies or lack of power.

Red: The Waffle House is closed.



When you go

- **Waffle House**, wafflehouse.com
- **Waffle House Museum**, 2719 E. College Ave., Decatur, wafflehouse.com/museum

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Second Wind Dreams creates special moments for seniors

By Cameron Whitlock • Photos courtesy of Second Wind Dreams



Second Wind Dreams fulfills a range of seniors' wishes, including a ride on a carousel (top), a horseback ride (above left), the opportunity to earn a degree for a woman who had dropped out of college (above center) and a ride-along with a police officer for a retired New York police officer (above right). (The organization does not release names or specific information about dream recipients for privacy reasons.)

A former U.S. Air Force pilot dreamed of once again taking flight. A lifelong fan dreamed of watching Elvis Presley perform. A woman in a wheelchair yearned to parasail over the Atlantic Ocean. A University of Georgia superfan fantasized about seeing the Dawgs play live. And an animal lover from North Georgia simply wanted to feel the warmth of a cat on her lap once more.

These dreams and 10,000-plus more have become realities for senior citizens thanks to the Roswell-based nonprofit organization Second Wind Dreams.

Founder and CEO Emeritus P.K. Beville established Second Wind Dreams in 1997. Beville, a geriatric specialist with a master's degree in clinical psychology, began working with elders in 1983. Her early inspiration for the blueprint of her organization came during a routine test in which she asked some of her patients to finish incomplete sentences.

One of those sentence prompts was "I wish ..."



A former Tuskegee Airman was granted his wish to relive his past through a flight simulator.

Beville still recalls her astonishment at the simplicity of some of the responses she heard.

"I wish I could have a steak dinner. I wish I could visit the gravesite of my mother. I wish I could go on a ride at Six Flags. And the list went on and on. So, you know, it occurred to me even at the time: These are such doable things," Beville says. "Why in the world are we not doing them?"

That question stuck with Beville throughout her decades-long career working in senior care. Through consulting, training staff and co-authoring a book called "Second Wind" (later the organization's namesake), Beville hoped to highlight the humanity and joy that comes from spending time with and taking care of elders.

Yet despite all her success, she yearned for a larger societal shift in the perception of aging.

"When I wrote the book, I had hoped that it would create some sort of groundswell because it is based on true stories that are hilarious and fun and upbeat," Beville says. "But nothing really changed."

Dream seekers

That's when Beville decided to focus her efforts on building a worldwide, grassroots organization—one that could organize, train and motivate elder-care communities to find out what their residents dream about and, using local communities as a resource, make those dreams come true.

Since its founding, Second Wind Dreams has been involved in more than 1,000 elder-care communities in 20 countries. To date, the organization has helped fulfill more than 10,000 dreams—an average of six per day.

Second Wind Dreams utilizes a vast network of volunteers to sit down and converse with elders, mostly in long-term-care communities. There, with the guidance of a "dream discovery form," the volunteers are trained to uncover hobbies, passions,



Second Wind Dreams' Gifts of Light program brightens the holidays for seniors through donated presents and greeting cards.

hopes and aspirations.

"I've actually had administrators say to me, 'We don't have any residents here who have dreams,'" Beville says. "But if I sit down with an elder for 10 minutes and just start a conversation using our form, I can usually find one in a very short period of time.

"People don't lose their hopes and dreams. We're going to carry those right up to the very end. It's an integral part of who we are."

Once an elder's dream is discovered, it is promoted online and in other media in order to raise funds for its fulfillment.

Both Beville and current Second Wind Dreams CEO Gwenyth Johnson believe that it's impossible to pick a favorite fulfilled dream after 25 years of service. But they do point to a special moment at the organization's 25th anniversary conference this year.

A couple in their 90s renewed their wedding vows in front of an audience and relived their first dance together to a live Elvis cover band.

"I've got goosebumps just thinking about it," Beville says. "The gentleman was in a wheelchair. And he struggled to stand up. But the two of them embraced and danced, and they were giggling and they were talking sweetly. Each time a dream comes true, it opens up something in each of us. There couldn't have been a person in that room who didn't realize clearly that love never dies."

Virtual Dementia Tour

While its Dreams program is the headliner of the organization, over the years Second Wind Dreams has grown to provide a plethora of programs and services geared toward helping elders and the long-term-care community.

One of its most celebrated programs is the Virtual Dementia Tour (VDT).

MORE ►



Since its founding, Second Wind Dreams has been involved in more than 1,000 elder-care communities in 20 countries. To date, the organization has helped fulfill more than 10,000 dreams—an average of six per day.

Residents at New Jersey Veterans Memorial Home at Vineland renew their wedding vows.

Beville pioneered the VDT in order to provide a window into the world of a person living with dementia. Using patented sensory tools, trained facilitators can guide participants through a virtual-reality tour that alters their senses while they try to complete everyday tasks.

Beville notes that while the VDT provides caretakers with a vital way to experience the physical and mental challenges of their patients, it can be just as important for friends, family members and colleagues to gain better understanding and empathy for those with dementia.

The VDT is available for emergency first responders, local businesses, community groups, houses of worship and private households.

Second Wind Dreams also offers the Dementia Aware Competency Evaluation (DACE), which is used to train staff members and caregivers. The DACE assesses a caregiver's ability to engage positively with people who have cognitive impairments.

"We work very hard to ensure that we have a footprint with all different kinds of credentialing organizations," Johnson says.

Gifts of Light

This holiday season, Second Wind Dreams will continue its annual Gifts of Light program, in which individuals or groups can purchase and donate gifts and send holiday greeting cards to residents of nursing homes.

"There are so many individuals in long-term care who don't



The Virtual Dementia Tour alters participants' senses to simulate what it is like to live with dementia. The tool is used to train caretakers at nursing homes.

have families and who don't have someone to share their love with during the holiday season," Johnson says. "And we all know it can be a difficult season, psychologically, for any one of us. So to have gifts for those who do not have families or family resources is so very important."

Johnson says one of the goals of the Gifts of Light program is community engagement. Student groups, church groups, local businesses and individuals all are invited to participate, whether they are sponsoring an elder, wrapping presents or playing "Santa" and delivering gifts to a local nursing home's residents.

Second Wind Dreams also provides a Cards of Light program, in which sponsors and donors can craft creative cards to be delivered to their "adopted" elders. While this program runs during the holiday season as well, it isn't limited to any one time of year.

"Coming out of this pandemic, people wanted a way to give back where they didn't have to be face to face with people," Johnson says. "[During] the first event in 2020, we had over 20,000 cards go out across the country to elders but also to long-term-care workers to thank them for their dedication.

"The need to do good during bad times is there. And we give people an outlet, a way to give back to the community [and] a way to think about their own mental health and well-being while taking care of others."

For more information about Second Wind Dreams and its programs, visit secondwind.org.

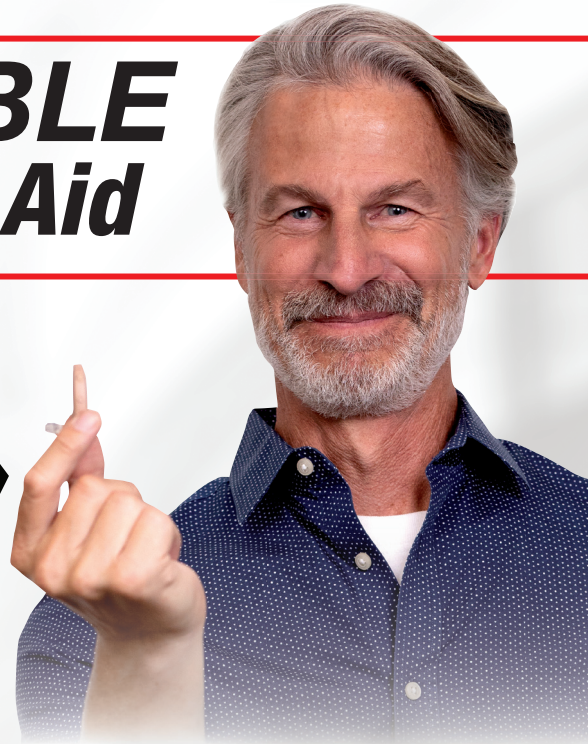
Cameron Whitlock is a freelance writer who lives in Douglasville.

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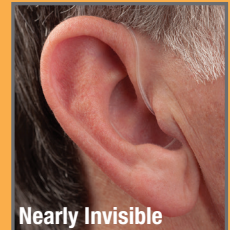
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History comes to life

Nativity performances bring peace, meaning to the faithful

The holiday season is upon us, bringing its usual whirlwind of concerts, parties, crowded stores and family gatherings. For Christians, the busyness sometimes can distract from the sacred origin of the religious holiday: the birth of Christ.

Groups and churches throughout Georgia are gearing up for their annual re-enactments of the biblical story of the baby in the manger and hope to give visitors a sense of wonder and peace.

Thomasville First Baptist Church, Thomasville

(229) 228-6800, bit.ly/tvillevictorianchristmas

For 36 years, Thomasville's downtown has transformed into a winter wonderland of carriage rides, reindeer and more for its Victorian Christmas. Amid all the bustle, however, Thomasville First Baptist Church stages a simple Nativity with live animals, actors, special music and narration—and always a live “baby Jesus.”

“It’s a Thomasville tradition, and it’s nostalgic for so many people here,” says Kristin Long, director of missions and evangelism for the church.

The hundreds of people who attend each year were especially delighted when the event returned last year, after bad weather and the pandemic shut down the Nativity in 2019 and 2020.

“People had been so disappointed [by the cancellations],” she says. “The response was unbelievable.”



Mary and Joseph cradle an infant Jesus in the final scene of “The Journey,” presented by Compassion Christian Church in Savannah. Inset: The production features live animals and “Bethlehem villagers.”

COURTESY COMPASSION CHRISTIAN CHURCH



COURTESY THOMASVILLE FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH

Shepherds from Thomasville First Baptist Church's live Nativity warm themselves at the fire in downtown Thomasville. The annual presentation is held in conjunction with the Victorian Christmas celebration.

Performances last about 15 to 20 minutes, and spectators can interact with the cast, who remain in character, or visit a prayer station to share their prayer requests after each performance.

This year, the Living Nativity is moving a block off Main Street to accommodate the growth of Victorian Christmas, which takes place Dec. 8-9.

“It’s a momentary escape from all the hustle and bustle of everything,” Long says. “It’s so easy to lose focus; sitting back and enjoying the program gives you a minute to reflect on the reason for the season.”

Compassion Christian Church, Savannah

(912) 925-9657, compassionchristian.com/

journey

Compassion Christian Church has been staging “The Journey” on its campus since 1987, inviting visitors to experience the first Christmas in a realistic setting while walking through the woods behind the church. This year, the cast and crew of more than 1,000 people and animals are eager to return for the first time since the start of the pandemic.

“We are expecting to see about 30,000 people over nine nights,” Associate Pastor Harrison Huxford says.

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Generations of Bethlehem First United Methodist Church members have staged their Nativity on the town square since 1963.

event to include live music, voice actors and interactive scenes.

“In this modern day, everything is such a quick pace,” Bernat says. “This gives people a chance to slow down and remember the reason for the season.”

North Georgia Wildlife & Safari Park, Cleveland

(706) 348-7279, northgeorgiazoo.com

The North Georgia Wildlife & Safari Park has a unique spin on a Christmas Nativity performance: telling the story in the presence of some of the animals that

appeared in the narrative.

This year, the wildlife park will present “Animals From the African Safari Recall the Greatest Story Ever Told” on Dec. 11, with a rain date set for Dec. 18. The 30-minute production features animal handlers and children of park staff members as well as participants from ConnectAbility, a nonprofit organization in Dahlonega that serves special-needs children and adults.

The play begins with an actor portraying a wise, older lion telling a young cub an old story that teaches him how to be a good friend to all—and about a special star that foretold the birth “of the One who taught us to love.” From there, the actors will perform a traditional Christmas pageant, complete with donkeys, sheep and more.

“There will be some interactive elements for the audience,” says Kate McElliott, a longtime volunteer with ConnectAbility who wrote and will direct the pageant. “Last year we recruited three children from the audience to be the three wise men.”

The event is free, but optional donations will benefit ConnectAbility.

“It’s not your traditional Nativity,” North Georgia Wildlife & Safari Park founder Hope Bennett says. “It’s a great way to honor the reason we celebrate Christmas, and we’re really passionate about it.”

Simpsonwood United Methodist Church, Peachtree Corners

(770) 441-2181, simpsonwoodumc.org

Simpsonwood United Methodist Church has been staging “Walk Through Bethlehem” in Simpsonwood Park in Peachtree Corners since 1992, with just one year’s pause for COVID in 2020. Last year, weather limited the walk to one night, which drew 2,000 people.

“It was incredible,” says the Rev. Susan Allen Grady, senior co-pastor. “From the city [the Bethlehem scene], you couldn’t even see the end of the line.”

Continued from page 28

“The Journey” will be held Dec. 2-4, 9-11 and 16-18. Visitors will walk through 10 scenes that explain the story of the birth of Christ, from the angel’s greeting to Mary to the menacing King Herod to shepherds who point them to the manger to see the Christ child.

“It gives people the opportunity to experience the story of Jesus. There’s a difference [between] hearing a story over and over and getting to be a part of it,” Huxford says.

He says it’s just as inspiring to the volunteers, who spend months preparing for the event.

“Every year, about 10 percent of the people who come through have never heard the Christmas story,” Huxford says. “It’s something special to be part of that and something special that we as a church get to do this together.”

Bethlehem First United Methodist Church, Bethlehem

(770) 867-3727, bethlehemfirstumc.org

Every year since December 1963, Bethlehem First United Methodist Church has staged a live Nativity on the city’s town square. And every year, hundreds are drawn to the town that shares its name with the city that witnessed Christ’s birth.

It’s part of a long-standing partnership between the church and the city. The star shining above the manger was built at the church in 1951 by the Rev. L.G. Marlin, who wanted to see a large, lighted star in a public place. It was moved to the town with the inception of the live Nativity.

This year the Nativity will take place Dec. 22-23. Up to 60 people—some of whom are not even church members—stage the Nativity each night. Their commitment runs deep.

“Some of the women who were ‘tiding angels’ [who stand atop the Nativity scene] when they were young have seen their children and now their grandchildren in those roles,” says the Rev. Frank Bernat, senior pastor at Bethlehem First United Methodist. “It’s a special tradition.”

Last year, the church started streaming the event on its Facebook page. In the future, the church plans to expand the

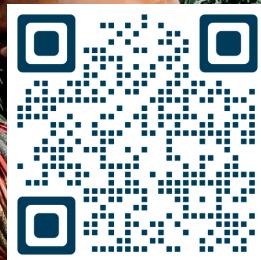
Continued on page 32

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Mountain View United Methodist Church in Marietta also presents a matinee performance of Bethlehem Walk for schoolchildren.

COURTESY MOUNTAIN VIEW UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

Continued from page 30

This year's event is scheduled for Dec. 9-11. The walk is the church's largest community outreach, and members spend long hours researching their roles for authenticity. It's appreciated by visitors, like the parents who told Grady that they attended as children and are eager to experience the scene through their children's eyes.

Visitors approach the city along a path lined with flickering luminaries, then walk through the city, listen to the shopkeepers and peek at their wares. The path turns by the animal stall, revealing the rustic Nativity.

"One of our actors overheard a child telling his mother: 'Oh, now I get it. Now I know who Jesus is,'" Grady says. "We are so glad to tell the Christmas story in such a personal and tangible way."

Mountain View United Methodist Church, Marietta

(770) 928-0050, mvumc.org

Mountain View United Methodist Church builds a replica of the biblical city on its Marietta campus every December for Bethlehem Walk.

Visitors walk through tall, torch-lit city gates to browse rows of shops "selling" goods such as fish, perfume and live birds. They also can sign Caesar Augustus' census and observe as intimidating Roman soldiers pause their patrols of the city to demand tax payments from the shopkeepers.

This year marks the 30th anniversary of Bethlehem Walk, and cast members often are told by visitors that the event is an annual family tradition.

"Everywhere I go, people say, 'That's the church that does Bethlehem Walk,'" Senior Pastor Joe McKechnie says. "It's humbling to think that, over the years, more than 300,000

Drive-thru Nativities

Don't want to stand in the cold or walk in a crowd? Here are some drive-thru options that let you experience the first Christmas from the comfort of your car.

- **"The Road to Bethlehem,"** Dec. 2-3, Mt. Moriah Baptist Church, Blue Ridge. (706) 632-3453. bit.ly/fbmtmoriah.
- **"Christmas Alive,"** Dec. 2-4, High Point Baptist Church, Covington. (770) 786-5985. hpbccovington.com.
- **"One Night in Bethlehem,"** Dec. 4-6, First Baptist Church Thomson, Thomson. (706) 595-4252. fbcthomson.org.
- **"A Night in Bethlehem,"** Dec. 9-11, Spring Creek Baptist Church, Rome. (706) 234-1220. springcreekrome.com.
- **Live Drive-Thru Nativity,** Dec. 9-11, Gray United Methodist Church, Gray. (478) 986-3668. grayumc.com.
- **"3rd Annual Best Christmas Pageant Drive Thru Ever,"** Dec. 11, Trinity Presbyterian Church, Atlanta. (404) 237-6491. trinityatlanta.org.
- **Live Drive-Thru Nativity,** Dec. 16-17, Wesley Chapel United Methodist Church, Marietta. (770) 993-4919. wcumc.info.

people have been on our campus to see this."

This year Bethlehem Walk is scheduled for Dec. 3-5. As visitors make their way through the city, shopkeepers direct them to the live Nativity, where they see angels, the holy family and the arrival of the three wise men. After touring the city, visitors can stop in the sanctuary to hear music, light candles and share prayer concerns with the church.

When COVID canceled the 2020 performance, the church produced a virtual Bethlehem Walk that still is accessible on its website. The live experience, however, is more meaningful for both cast and visitors.

"In a day and age where there's so much focus on being entertained and on the 'latest and greatest,' the fact that something as simple as this is so heartfelt to folks speaks to the timeless message of Jesus," McKechnie says. ☪

Rosalyn Dunn is an Atlanta-based freelance writer and has been part of Bethlehem Walk at Mountain View United Methodist Church for almost 15 years, primarily portraying a perfume shopkeeper.



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- 1) According to Njeri Boss, how much did a bowl of Waffle House chili cost when the restaurant first opened?
- 2) How many seniors' dreams has Second Wind Dreams fulfilled since its founding?
- 3) Which Georgia co-op won the 2022 International Lineman's Rodeo in the journeyman division for all electric cooperatives?
- 4) What happens to the leaves and flowers if you plant hellebores in an area with too much sun?
- 5) Hans Rueffert says that Kaiserschmarrn is "a dish that looks like what might happen if you flung a pancake into a _____."

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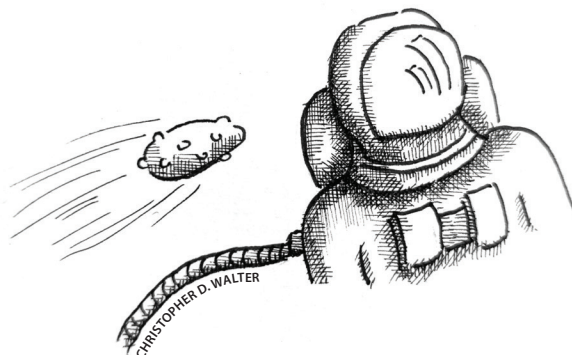
The Tater Tosser 3000

There will be a time in the future when an astronaut or alien will be floating around in space, working on something, when a potato goes whizzing past his or her head. The potato will have been in orbit for decades—passing every planet in the solar system, making it to the far edges of the Milky Way and approaching the speed of light in some parts of its journey before turning and heading back toward Earth.

How do I know this? I was there when it launched.

In the early '90s, there was a craze that swept many rural communities. The potato gun became synonymous with backwoods, Friday-evening fun. I wish I knew how the idea for this contraption came up. More than likely it was a bunch of drunk guys with some rotten produce and too much time on their hands.

I don't even know if there is an actual plan for a potato gun; it's really just loose guidelines. You need a PVC pipe, a gas propellant, a potato and an igniter. Put those all together and you have something that can launch a spud half a football field or more.



Then my dad came into the picture. He couldn't just construct anything normal. It had to be over-the-top. If he was going to make a gun, he was going to make sure it did what a gun is supposed to do: maim or kill. This is how the Tater Tosser 3000 was born.

This lethal device was about 5-1/2 feet long. There was a 3-foot pipe on the front that connected to a wider, 2-foot-long combustion chamber in the back. On the sides were two tubes. One had an electric igniter ripped out of a gas grill. The other had a pressure gauge on it and was to be connected to a propane tank.

Yes, that is correct. A propane tank.

I was there for the maiden launch of the first potato in our yard in Barnesville. We nestled the potato gun in some cinder blocks and extended the igniter cord a good 100 feet in case it were to explode. The target was a playhouse in the backyard, a sturdy little building constructed with pressure-treated lumber.

When that thing went off, it rattled windows half a mile away. The potato shot out so quickly that we never even saw it, but we sure did hear it.

A few minutes later, when we were sure there was no gas leak, we went to inspect the damage. All that was left of the playhouse were split 2-by-4s covered in mashed potatoes. The power was incredible, and it was only a matter of hours before every single potato in my hometown was purchased and riding in my dad's big, red, utility van to be stored in our pantry, aka the armory.

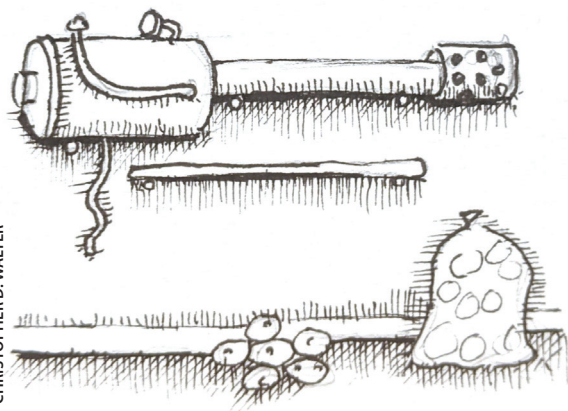
The next couple of months we experimented every evening to see what would be the best combination of potato species and propane pressure. The goal was to launch to the railroad tracks about 3 acres away from the house. Dad would launch, and we kids would go running to mark where the potato would land and to warn pedestrians of incoming mortars.

Then one day it happened. We picked the fattest, roundest potato we could. Dad cranked up the pressure, and "Whoom!" The potato went straight up and never came back down. That is how I know that, sometime in the early '90s, a perfectly round Yukon Gold left this earthly plane and began its journey to deep space.

I don't know what ever happened to the Tater Tosser 3000 and its custom accessories, including a ramrod and silencer. I do know that my father loved that thing so much that the idea was floated to shoot his ashes out of it after he died. And as much as I like awkward situations, I'm really glad that didn't happen.

I do hope, though, that I am still around when the news report comes in that an astronaut got hit by a Yukon Gold from deep space. 🍠

Christopher D. Walter is an artist and writer who lives in Lawrenceville and is a member of Monroe-based Walton Electric Membership Corp. To see more of his work, go to kudzuanclay.com.



CHRISTOPHER D. WALTER

Heavenly hellebores

Christmas and Lenten roses brighten the winter landscape



NATIONAL GARDEN BUREAU



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'Flower Girl'



WALTERS GARDENS

'True Love'

When just about everything else in the garden has been tucked in for the winter, blooming hellebores can provide splashes of color in the landscape. These plants, which are also known as Christmas roses or Lenten roses, have blossoms in a variety of colors, including white, deep purple, light green and rich burgundy.

"Hellebores are wonderful winter and early-spring bloomers suited for direct planting into the landscape or growing in containers," says Laura Root, merchandise manager with Greenwood, S.C.-based Park Seed Co. "This evergreen perennial prefers shade and well-drained soil, and their foliage provides yearlong interest in the garden even when they're not in bloom."

The term "hellebore" refers to several varieties of plants with similar growing habits. The two most common are the Christmas rose and Lenten rose.

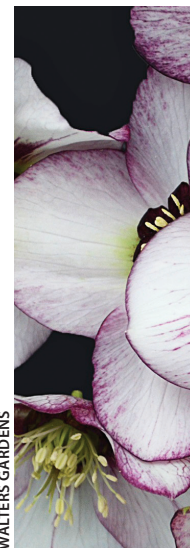
Growing 12 to 24 inches tall, depending on the variety, hellebores have upright, palmate-shaped foliage interspersed with blooms.

The Christmas rose's white or light-pink, upward-facing blossoms appear in late November and last through early March. Lenten roses start opening in mid- to late February, and their downward-facing flowers have a much wider range of colors. Both varieties are available with single or double blossoms. The petals are smooth and can be a single color or marked with spots and contrasting edges.

"Most hellebores on the market today are hybrids," Root says. "Typically, they are purchased as mature, potted plants that can be planted directly into the landscape in the fall or spring"

Hellebores in the landscape

"There are many reasons to add hellebores to your garden," Root says. "They are deer- and rabbit-resistant, cold-hardy [and]



WALTERS GARDENS

'French Kiss'

drought-tolerant and provide long-lasting cut flowers.”

Growers are introducing hybrids with ruffled flower petals and new color combinations. The Wedding Party series includes *‘True Love,’* with double maroon- and wine-colored blossoms; *‘Flower Girl,’* which features slightly ruffled white or light-pink, lavender-edged petals; and *‘Confetti Cake’* with burgundy-speckled, white blooms. The single-form *‘French Kiss’* has white petals sporting maroon edges and color splashes and is part of the Honeymoon series.

Piccadilly Farm Nursery and Gardens in Bishop sells hybrid varieties of hellebores, such as *‘Candy Love’* and *‘Snow Love’* Christmas roses with pink or white flowers and the Brandywine mix of double- and single-flowered Lenten roses in colors such as dark red, spotted pink and apricot, some with contrasting petal edges.

“We order different varieties every year to ensure that people can have new choices to add to their gardens,” says Valerie Hinesley, landscape architect and co-owner of Piccadilly Farm.

Propagation and care

Because hellebores tend to self-seed, gardeners may want to transplant seedlings to new spots in the landscape.

“The reality is that growing them from these tiny seedlings can be an arduous and time-consuming process,” Hinesley says. “We suggest that people wait until the seedlings are 4 to 5 years old before transplanting them to other locations. This will help avoid damage to their tender root systems.”

The easiest way to propagate hellebores is by division in the early spring after they’ve finished blooming.

“If you have large, mature plants that are well-established, dig the clump, gently remove the soil from the roots and use a clean, sterile knife to divide them,” Hinesley says. “When you replant them, space them at least 18 to 24 inches apart. This will help provide good spacing between the plants and allow air to better circulate.”

Choose a shady location, as too much sun will scorch the leaves and flowers. Once they are transplanted, water them regularly until they are established.

“Spring is also a good time to practice good plant hygiene by removing all the spent leaves and blossoms and cleaning up around the plants as they enter the growing season,” Hinesley says.

Making the most of winter color

Hellebores can be low-maintenance with the right planting conditions and care.

“They’re considered very hardy, long-lived perennials, but they are not entirely bulletproof,” Hinesley says. “For the past few years, Georgia has experienced long periods of cool, wet weather from winter through early summer, leading to an outbreak of hellebore downy mildew in some gardens throughout the South, including our gardens at Piccadilly Farm.

“To limit the spread of the disease to other gardens, Piccadilly Farm no longer propagates from plants in our gardens to sell to customers. Instead, we only sell hybrid varieties purchased from out-of-state suppliers and maintain careful disease precautions in the nursery.”

Hinesley offers several suggestions to help homeowners avoid diseases. Plant hellebores in places with good drainage—such as raised beds, berms or slopes and in containers—so that water does not collect around plants.

Avoid overhead watering. Water in the mornings to allow the foliage to dry off during the day. Keep mulch at least 6 to 8 inches away from the base of the plant to discourage root or stem rot.

Hellebores and other winter-bloomers—such as camellias, Chinese paper plants and daphnes—give gardeners a reason to visit their landscapes when it’s cold outside.

“These flowers not only offer color in the landscape [but also] make beautiful cut flowers to bring indoors,” Root says. “When you bring in the blossoms, add some foliage as well, or combine them with a bough or two from an evergreen to brighten up the season.”

Pamela A. Keene is a freelance writer and Master Gardener living in Flowery Branch.



‘King White’

‘Confetti Cake’

Embracing brunch

CAROLYN RICHARDSON / GSU

Chef Hans Rueffert prepares brunch at the Old Mulehouse restaurant in Jasper.

Shoehorned between breakfast and lunch is a meal that doesn't quite fit in: brunch. Even the name is a bit of a Frankenstein's monster—a mash-up that borrows pieces from both meals that bookend it.

I'll be the first to admit that I'm a latecomer to the brunch party. I was raised by a pragmatic German father, and brunch didn't fit neatly into our family's structured lives: an early breakfast, large midday lunch, 4 p.m. tea, light dinner, sleep and repeat. My only memory of a childhood brunch is a character buffet at Walt Disney World, but calling that slice of chaos "brunch" seemed like a justification to command a higher price for breakfast. I formed a negative opinion of brunch before we'd even been properly introduced.

It took my teenage daughter to sell me on the concept of brunch. The morning after a late-night concert, Ella recommended we seek out a brunch spot she'd read about online. After a little arm-twisting, I said "yes," and we set out to find the restaurant, a trendy spot that was once a service station. Vintage, galvanized-metal feed troughs overflowing with culinary herbs lined the walkway, local folk art filled every available inch of wall space and a "help yourself!" coffee station with mismatched mugs stood ready to caffeinate the lengthening line of late-morning guests.

It was the kind of place that I *thought* would annoy me,

but it was magical. It had great coffee, curious-yet-comfortable cocktails, engaging service and an inviting menu. The experience opened my eyes to the full potential and unapologetic allure of brunch.

Just as brunch lives on the border between breakfast and lunch, it flirts with the intersection of sweet and savory. Offerings like chicken and waffles, sausage biscuits with sorghum syrup and bacon-studded cornmeal hoecakes are right at home on a Georgia brunch menu but might seem out of place at any other meal.

A Champagne and fresh orange juice Mimosa seems a bit over-the-top at breakfast but feels just right at brunch. It's that playful spirit that makes brunch a state of mind, a mood and an unhurried, joyful social occasion worth sleeping in for.

Best of all, you can create a bit of that brunch bravado in your own home anytime the mood strikes you. You can even eat brunch in your pajamas!

This month I've asked a few of my friends to share their favorite brunch recipes, and I've included one of my own. Enjoy!

Hans Rueffert is a chef, author and gastric-cancer advocate who has spent his entire life working with food. He serves as the culinary ambassador at the Old Mulehouse restaurant in Jasper. Learn more about food history and culture by listening to his food-focused podcast, "But I Digest," at butidigestpodcast.com.

This easy and fabulous-tasting casserole is made a day or two ahead and baked later. For a family, making two casseroles is the trick. Serve one after baking and freeze the other to maximize time. Serving with a green vegetable makes it a whole meal.

NATHALIE DUPREE'S OVERNIGHT BRUNCH CASSEROLE

Recipe courtesy of Nathalie Dupree, nathalie.com

- 2 pounds pork sausage
- 2 sliced peaches or apples
- 2 cups chopped broccoli, optional
- 9 slices bread
- 3/4 teaspoon dry mustard
- 9 eggs, beaten
- 3 cups milk
- 1-1/2 cups (6 ounces) grated sharp cheddar cheese
- Butter, for greasing pan(s)

Fry the sausage in a skillet, breaking it up as it cooks. Remove and drain on paper towels. Add the sliced peaches or apples to the sausage drippings and saute until lightly browned. Remove and set aside. In the same pan, saute the chopped broccoli briefly, if using. Remove and set aside.

Remove the crusts from the bread and cut the bread into cubes. In a large bowl, whisk together dry mustard, eggs, milk and cheese. Add the sausage, bread cubes, broccoli (if using) and peaches or apples. Mix well. Put mixture in a large plastic zip-top bag and seal. Put this bag into another zip-top bag, with the seal facing the opposite way, to catch any spills. Refrigerate overnight or up to 2 days.

When ready to use, butter 2 (8-inch) square pans (or 1 larger pan) and add the mixture to the pan(s). Cover loosely with aluminum foil. Preheat the oven to 350 degrees. Bake,



COLLEEN DUFFLEY / ANDIAMO LODGE

covered, for 30 minutes. Uncover and bake another 30 minutes. Remove and serve hot. *Note: Casserole reheats well but may lose a little of its "poof." Yields 2 casseroles; each serves 4-6.*

Dupree's variations: I prefer sweet Italian sausage, but go with what your family likes. The same thing is true of the cheese. For upscale meals, gruyere might be used, but for family gatherings, cheddar is usually the most popular. Granny Smith is a good apple to start with, but there are many new varieties on the market that are worth trying.

ASPARAGUS FRITTATA WITH PRESERVED LEMON, MINT AND FETA

Recipe courtesy of Nathan Lyon, chefnathanlyon.wordpress.com

- 3 tablespoons unsalted butter
- 1 tablespoon finely chopped preserved lemon,* peel only (rinse lemon before chopping)
- 1 medium yellow onion, peeled, diced small
- 1/4 teaspoon kosher salt
- Freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- 1 pound asparagus, bottom of stems trimmed, stalks cut on the bias into 1/2-inch slices, tips kept whole
- 7 large eggs, whisked with a fork
- 3/4 cup crumbled feta cheese
- 1 packed tablespoon chiffonade (sliced very thinly) fresh mint leaves

**Note: Preserved lemon can be found at some local grocery stores, at Whole Foods and online.*

Move oven rack to the middle position. Preheat oven to 325 degrees. Set a large, oven-safe, nonstick saute pan over

medium heat and add butter, preserved lemon, onions, salt and some black pepper. Cook, stirring occasionally, until onions become soft and transparent, about 8 minutes. Add asparagus stems, stir and let cook for 2 minutes. Add asparagus tips to pan, stir and cook for 1 more minute. Add eggs and sprinkle the feta and mint evenly over them. Shake the pan to distribute the ingredients, if needed. Cook for 30 seconds.

Transfer the saute pan to the oven. Bake, uncovered, for 11-13 minutes or until eggs are just set. Remove frittata from the oven, slide out onto a cutting board, slice into 6 pieces and serve. *Serves 6.* **MORE** ▶



NATHAN LYON

For this recipe, make the roasted pear puree ahead of time so you'll be ready to serve these Bellinis when your brunch guests arrive.

ROASTED PEAR BELLINI

Recipe courtesy of Steve McDonagh, from his cocktail book "The New Old Bar" (Agate Midway, 2012)

Roasted pear puree

2 pears

1 tablespoon honey

Preheat oven to 375 degrees. Arrange 2 pieces of aluminum foil on a flat surface and place 1 pear in the center of each. Drizzle both with the honey and loosely wrap them in the foil, leaving the top open. Place the pears in the top half of the oven and roast until they are buttery soft, about 50-60 minutes. Remove them from the oven and let them cool. Peel the skin off and pull the flesh away from the core. Place the peeled pears in a blender with any accumulated juices and puree until smooth. Pour into a container and refrigerate until ready to use. Store in the fridge for up to 1 week. *Optional: Add 1 or 2 tablespoons of vodka to thin the mix and preserve. Yields 3/4 cup.*

For the Bellinis

Roasted pear puree

1 (11-ounce) can pear nectar

1 (750-milliliter) bottle Champagne

Put 1 tablespoon of the roasted pear puree into a Champagne flute and add pear nectar 1/4 way up the glass. Top very slowly with Champagne, as this may cause fizzing. Serve immediately. *Serves about 8.*



HANS RUEFFERT

▲ On a recent trip to Germany, I fell in love with Kaiserschmarrn, a dish that looks like what might happen if you flung a pancake into a ceiling fan. The name roughly translates to "emperor's nonsense," and it's a no-fuss dish that can be easily customized. Here's a simple recipe that is perfect for brunch and requires no ceiling fan. This dish is sometimes served during brunch at the Old Mulehouse restaurant in Jasper.

KAISERSCHMARRN

Recipe courtesy of Hans Rueffert

1/2 cup golden raisins

3 tablespoons rum

4 eggs, separated

2 tablespoons sugar

1 cup milk

1 cup flour

Pinch of salt

Pinch of sugar

1 tablespoon butter

Sliced almonds or pecan pieces

1 tablespoon confectioners' sugar

Soak raisins in the rum. Whisk together the egg yolks and sugar. Slowly whisk in milk and then flour, whisking out any lumps but not over-beating. Let this mixture sit.

In a separate bowl, beat the egg whites to stiff peaks. Slowly fold the beaten egg whites into the egg-yolk mixture and add the pinches of salt and sugar.

In a medium skillet, melt the butter. When the butter is hot, pour or ladle enough batter to cover the bottom of the pan. As the bottom begins to brown and the pancake begins to take shape, flip the pancake. Cook on other side. Right when the pancake finishes, turn the heat to low and tear the pancake up inside the skillet using two forks or the edge of a spatula. Add the rum-soaked raisins and nuts to the toasty pieces, then transfer the mutilated pancake to a plate, top it with a dusting of confectioners' sugar and serve. *Serves 2-4.*

Rueffert's variations: For something savory and sweet, try adding some crumbled, cooked bacon or cubed ham when the raisins and nuts are added. 🍷



COURTESY STEVE MCDONAGH

A Roasted Pear Bellini is a great alternative to the traditional brunch mimosa, which combines orange juice and Champagne.

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Beth Lange: a family legacy of serving others

Beth Lange stands with Everly Pope, 7, a young volunteer who often helps her at FOR the 478 ministry events.



CRYSTAL POPE

Want to help?

Join Beth Lange in supporting two of her favorite Middle Georgia charities:

- **Baskets of Joy**, Macon, c/o Kids Yule Love, (478) 741-3032, kidsyulelove.com
- **Blessing Bags Ministry**, Warner Robins, c/o Southside Baptist Church, (478) 953-9388, southside.church/blessingbags

Beth Lange of Warner Robins enjoys blessing people. She believes that service to others provides an opportunity to reflect God’s love.

She grew up in a family that struggled financially and understands the fear and anxiety that often accompany hard times. But she also witnessed extraordinary acts of kindness and compassion and experienced the joy of giving back.

“It was a different time back then—a time when people helped each other,” she remembers. “My grandmother was always helping [the less fortunate], and our church helped people in need, too. When someone died, everyone in our neighborhood pitched in to cook meals for the grieving family. I saw how much those small gestures meant to people when they were hurting. I think those experiences led me to devote my life to lifting up others.”

She serves alongside her brother and sister-in-law, Clay and Katie Jones, with Baskets of Joy, a project affiliated with Macon-based nonprofit Kids Yule Love. In the last 26 years, Lange and other volunteers have packed 6,000 Easter baskets with Bibles, books, stuffed animals, chocolate bunnies, candy and other treats before delivering them to shelters and foster homes in nine counties in Middle Georgia.

“It’s important that those children feel loved,” she says.

For five years, Lange has donated her time and efforts to Blessing Bags, a summer food-assistance program sponsored by Southside Baptist Church in Warner Robins. She and other helpers stuff sacks with healthy snacks and microwavable macaroni-and-cheese cups and distribute the “blessings” to children (and their families) identified by school social workers.

“We meet them in their own community and let them know we care,” she says.

In one of those communities, a non-English-speaking family approached Lange with their young son.

“The boy was having some pains in his legs, and his parents were scared,” she says. “We drove them to the hospital, and I stayed with them and comforted them. Afterward, we purchased Tylenol for the child because they couldn’t afford the medication. They thanked us, hugged us; we connected as humans. That’s what it’s all about.”

Lange has also volunteered with Relay For Life, a project of the American Cancer Society, working alongside the late Thaina Brown-Brake, a well-known volunteer and community leader in Warner Robins who nominated Lange as a Hometown Hero. Brown-Brake passed away in 2019.

Lange serves as the secretary for Awana, a youth discipleship group, and is a familiar face at FOR the 478, a ministry in Warner Robins that mobilizes volunteers to help others by painting, picking up litter, mowing grass and building wheelchair ramps in the community.

“Serving others is the most impactful work I’ve ever done,” Lange says. “In my giving, I receive so much more in return. Blessing others is a blessing to me.” ☺

Amber Lanier Nagle is a freelance writer living in Adairsville.

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