The Macon Melody

Friday, April 11, 2025 | Bibb County's local source for community news | Vol. I, No. 42

Locals frustrated with social security cuts

Trump admin's staffing slash impacting Maconites as services are reduced

Casey Choung
Melody Reporter
casey@maconmelody.com

Maconites are starting to feel the impact of the Trump administration's cuts to the Social Security Administration.

After the SSA began eliminating roughly 7,000 jobs in February to "reduce the size of its bloated workforce and organizational structure," Macon residents say they have found it more difficult to claim benefits, set up appointments and reach employees by phone.

Visit Macon's Social Security office, a brick building just past the intersection of Riverside and Northside drives, and you'll struggle to talk to an employee, much less see one. There's no front desk clerk and folks have to schedule appointments ahead of time and check-in for appointments via a digital kiosk.

Even then, you might struggle to get help. The Melody talked with Maconites outside of the office last week who were frustrated by the lack of service. Macon's Walter Hollinger said he had an appointment scheduled but was turned away and told to return in a couple of weeks.

He was trying to get a Social Security card so he could start working, but hasn't been able to get help set-

See SSA, Page A3

Legislature adjourns with no decision on speed camera bills

Laura E. Corley
Accountability Reporter
laura@maconmelody.com

The Georgia General Assembly adjourned last week leaving two bills related to the controversial school zone speed cameras on the table until next year.

One of the bills, introduced by Rep. Dale Washburn, R-Macon, would ban the cameras.

"I am not giving up on this," Washburn said. "These camera systems are abusing Georgians and taking millions of dollars out of Georgians' pockets."

Though changes were made to the bill he introduced, Washburn said he was prepared to agree to them, but was not permitted to step up to the lectern to do so.

One of the amendments, made without Washburn's input, would allow out-of-state companies that own the speed cameras to continue operating them through 2028.

"I had a conversation with the lieutenant governor about some other changes that might be appealing to him. And so that is where we

See CAMS, Page A3



Jason Vorhees / The Melody

Students from Bibb County School District's team 9260 Built4Bibb Robotics work on their robot in the "pits" where teams stay in between matches at FIRST robotics competitions. Built4Bibb is the only team in the school district.

MWA chair nixes livestream for monthly board meetings

Laura E. Corley
Accountability Reporter
laura@maconmelody.com

The Macon Water Authority Board chairman decided last Thursday to stop live streaming the board's monthly meetings on Facebook, a practice it began five years ago when the governor declared a state of emergency due to COVID-19.

"We had some complaints about not being able to hear everybody and things like that due to the microphones and everything and then they started looking into some drop-down mics," authority board chairman Gary Bechtel told The Melody in a phone call Friday. "I just didn't think that was an expenditure that was necessary. So, rather than expending the money, I made the decision to terminate the livestream."

Instead of continuing to use the existing equipment, which is sometimes faulty but more advanced than some local boards, Bechtel said he decided to do away with the livestream altogether because he recently learned Gov. Brian Kemp's 2020 emergency declaration, which allowed virtual

See MWA, Page A3

Hundreds of students flock to Mercer for robotics showdown

Evelyn Davidson
Melody Reporter
evelyn@maconmelody.com

Georgia high school students carted an assemblage of metal parts, motors and wiring through Mercer University's Hawkins Arena, a blur of bright T-shirts and smudged safety goggles. Announcements echoed over the speakers as some teams began lining up their robots for a match.

It was the second day of the FIRST Robotics Competition Peachtree District Championship, held last Friday through Sunday in Macon.

FIRST (For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology) is an international nonprofit robotics organization designed to foster student interest in STEM through programs for all ages — starting with small LEGO robots and building up to robots that weigh up to 120 pounds.

"It grabs the kids. They're fascinated," Carole Myers, lead coach of the Bibb County School District's Team 9260 Built4Bibb Robotics, said. "Traditional classroom programs don't do everything that robotics does."

She helped launch Built4Bibb, Macon's only FIRST team, after its previous one disbanded during the pandemic. The new team went to the world championship when they first launched in 2023.

Myers, who has a software, coding and systems design background, has been involved in FIRST robotics for

See ROBOTICS, Page A2

Periodical — Mail Label

7 32388 05034 5

$2.00

Jack Castle is king of soap box derby car builders

Ed Grisamore
Melody Columnist
gris@maconmelody.com

By the time the last soap box derby car rolls down the hill on Magnolia Street Saturday afternoon, folks will be asking Jack Castle if he will be back next year.

He often tells them, "Probably not" ... until the proverbial wheels start turning in his head.

So, chances are, he really means, "Yes."

"When they ask me if I am going to build another car, I tell them, 'I haven't thought about it,'" he said. "And then, all of a sudden, I am thinking about it."

Castle has made derby cars for the traditional April races for the past 12 years. The majority have been sponsored by his church, Centenary United Methodist, which is only six blocks down College Street from the starting line on the slope of the hill at Washington Park.

Being a longtime member at Centenary does not make him a "centenarian," although he is closer to triple digits than most. In two weeks, he will be 82 years old.

As an octogenarian derby car engineer, he's almost as old as the storied soap box tradition in Macon, which began in 1936 a few blocks away on Forsyth Street.

Castle's cars compete in the "Shade Tree" division. There is a Professional Division for the serious speedsters, with several corporate-sponsored cars constructed in local body and cabinet shops. And there is the Gravity Racing Challenge for high school students primarily from design and STEM classes. The heats and races start at 11 a.m., and the event is free and open to the public.

Castle has piloted his cars twice in the competition, but he now leaves that

See DERBY, Page A2



Jason Vorhees / The Melody

Jack Castle stands next to his soap box derby car he's entering into the 2025 Magnolia Soap Box Derby. Castle has made derby cars for the traditional April races for the past 12 years.

Robotics, A1:

most of her 20 years as a teacher.

As a district team, any Bibb County high schooler can join Built4Bibb, which operates from SOAR Academy on Riverside Drive.

The program is costly, according to Myers, who said the annual budget — which includes transportation to competitions and build materials — is $30,000. It's an additional $20,000 if the team makes it to the world championships.

In a district where students qualify for free and reduced meals, Myers said she tries to make the experience as affordable as possible with minimal financial burden on students.

Despite qualifying for the playoffs at the district championship last weekend, Built-4Bibb did not make it to the world championship this year.

The team, however, has a lot to look forward to in the coming year, according to Myers, who said robotics classes will be available through Hutchings College and Career Academy for the first time next year. The academy will offer culinary, cyber security and other speciality courses to high schoolers throughout the district.

Built4Bibb will also move into a brand-new build space, a collision center on Eisenhower Parkway donated by Butler Toyota. Myers hopes the new robotics classroom and practice space will allow students with limited transportation to participate on the team.

FIRST robotics' lasting impact

Over 3.2 million students from more than 110 countries have participated in FIRST programs since the organization's inception in 1989.

Community, high school and district teams spend an eight-week "build season" designing, programming and building a robot to compete in a uniquely designed game with objectives and a playing field that changes every year.

Students can design their robot to move autonomously for certain periods of the match and objectives often involve shooting game pieces at targets and using a mechanism to "climb" or lift the robot off the ground.

"I love meeting people and I just love the atmosphere," said Built4Bibb team safety captain Connor Darity. "Every event place is different."

Darity and drive team member Stephen White are both examples of the impact FIRST can make on Georgia's future STEM industry workers.

Darity, a high school senior, will attend Mercer, pursuing the biomedical field. He hopes to work with prosthetics one day.

He spent two years on the team doing everything from making team buttons, building robot bumpers and making sure the first aid kit is on hand. He even plans to mentor Built4Bibb once he leaves.

White, also a senior, programmed the robot's controls. This year's robot has a swerve drivetrain, meaning all the wheels move independently and in all directions. White was recently accepted to Georgia Tech for mechanical engineering.

Students' interest in STEM begins earlier than college, according to robotics competition volunteer Jamie Cook, who said seeing students grow each year and become members of the workforce is a full circle experience.

"This is making an investment in the supply chain for tomorrow's technical workforce,"

he said. "That's why I do it."

For this year's ocean-themed game, REEFSCAPE, students must score points by placing PVC pipes or "coral" on reefs and harvesting "algae" by throwing balls into a suspended net above the field. They end each match by attempting to hang the robot from swinging cages to "ascend to the ocean's surface."

Teams begin the season by competing in district qualifier competitions and some advance to the district championship. For the Peachtree District, teams competed at competitions in Gainesville, Dalton, Gwinnett, Statesboro and Albany before heading to Macon for the district championship. Each event is run by dozens of community volunteers, who help with scorekeeping, field reset, announcing, safety and more.

The FIRST robotics season culminates in hundreds of the top teams — from other U.S. cities and places like China, Turkey and Mexico — traveling to Houston, Texas to compete in the world championship.



Jason Vorhees / The Melody

Maconites unite at 'Hands-Off' protest

Macon was home to one of the more than 1,400 "Hands Off!" mass-action protests that took place Saturday, during which activists decried the actions of President Donald Trump and Elon Musk. National organizers said "millions" showed up across all 50 states.

A local coalition, Macon Rising, is behind the organizing in Macon. They estimate around 500 people attended the protest.

See Page B6 for more photos from Saturday.

Friends of the Library
Macon-Bibb County, GA
BOOK SALE
APRIL 11–13
Friday & Saturday 10-7
Sunday 10-2


ROUND BUILDING - CAROLYN CRAYTON PARK
130 WILLIE SMOKIE GLOVER DRIVE MACON, GA 31201
MOST BOOKS $1-$2 - CHILDREN'S & TEENS' $1
THOUSANDS OF BOOKS - MORE THAN 40 CATEGORIES



Photo courtesy of Jack Castle

The Conestoga wagon built by Jack Castle won "best of show" in the Magnolia Soap Box Derby.

Derby, from A1:

up to younger legs and steadier hands. This year, his car will be driven by Bill Snow, his "grandson-in-law." It may be his fastest car ever, and his wife, Pat, is optimistic about his chances of finally winning in the speed category.

He is already a veteran of placing near the top in the "best of show" competition, which is often as colorful and creative as floats in a parade.

One year, he won first place for his Conestoga wagon entry. He poured 100 hours into the project. It was so large that he had to take it apart to get it out of his workshop.

He turned heads with his "old woman who lived in a shoe" car. Another entry was shaped like a city bus, with drawings of eight passengers in the windows. It was nicknamed "The Ghost of Miss Molly." He was the mastermind behind a dragster with PVC pipes along the back, fueled by water and dry ice to look like exhaust fumes.

Last year, his granddaughter, Haley Snow, was behind the wheel after Castle took a 6-foot aluminum ladder he bought at the Historic Macon Flea Market and repurposed it into the shape of a wedge of cheese. It finished third in "best of show." (He is using that same ladder as the body frame for this year's entry.)

He once asked organizers if anyone had ever entered a "soap box" for the soap box derby. When he was told no, he went right to work.

Castle is retired from Gem Laundry and Dry Cleaning on Vineville Avenue, so leave it to a dry cleaning guy to roll out a car in the shape of a box of Tide laundry detergent. (Of course, it wasn't the most aerodynamically sound vehicle in the race.)

He has enjoyed woodworking most of his life, and he now volunteers doing home repair with Rebuilding Macon. He can make or fix anything, so he is a "Jack" of all trades.

Castle admits he's come a long way since he entered his first car, sponsored by Rodeo Beach, formerly an outdoors store in Mercer Village. He built it on a simple wooden frame with lawn mower wheels.

"When I looked around at the other cars, I realized how backward I was," he said. "They were all fancier. It ran terribly. I could have walked down the hill faster. It was steered with your feet and had a handbrake. You couldn't use your feet to stop. Flintstone brakes were not legal."

He said he did not expect to still be involved with the soap box derby after that rookie experience.

"I hardly expected to be doing it a second time," he said, laughing.

But he did it. And another. And another. Last year, he said this year was going to be his last. No one holds him to his word.

He's already thinking about the next one.

The Macon Melody
Get a copy every week at one of these locations:
JENEANE'S at PINEBROOK
Publix
VILLAGE COFFEE
CIRCLE K
DOLLAR GENERAL
WALTHALL OIL COMPANY
MACON BAGELS
Walgreens
Walmart
Layers
To distribute the Macon Melody at your place of business:
Call 478-200-2419 or email dave@maconmelody.com

Cams, A1:

are," Washburn said, adding that he would continue pushing the bill in 2026.

A bill introduced by Rep. Alan Powell, R-Hartwell, would regulate the use of the speed cameras. Powell's bill would set specific hours and require the use of flashing lights to warn motorists of the radar speed detection.

The speed detection technology has been lucrative for Macon-Bibb County and Altumint, the Maryland-based company with which it contracts. Of the roughly $11.2 million collected from speeding motorists in Bibb County since 2022, the county made $8.9 million and the company kept $2.78 million.

Mayor Lester Miller has been a proponent of the cameras, which are installed in front of public and private schools throughout the county. Some private schools have requested that the county stop ticketing passersby following complaints from parents who were ticketed. The county agreed, but public schools cannot individually opt out.

On March 19, Sheriff David Davis announced he would stop signing off on traffic citations because of the resulting "unequal application of the law."

Traffic violations are still being recorded on the cameras, but Davis said the sheriff's office has stopped signing tickets and has no plan to retroactively ticket drivers.

"I think it needs to be uniform for whatever criteria where we're going to put them," Davis previously told The Melody.

The sheriff said he would wait for guidance from the legislature, but that didn't happen this session.

It is unclear whether the cameras will be reactivated. A spokesperson for the sheriff's office said the sheriff is set to meet with the mayor soon to discuss the matter.

'A whole lot of uncertainty': Federal staffing freeze bodes poorly for Middle Georgia library services

Casey Choung
Melody Reporter
casey@maconmelody.com

The Middle Georgia Regional Library is planning for ways to maintain its programming amid cuts to the Institute of Museum and Library Services, which provides funding to state library services and museums.

IMLS was named in a March 14 executive order as one of the departments to be "eliminated to the maximum extent consistent with applicable law" in President Donald Trump and Elon Musk's efforts to cut down the government.

Staff at the Institute of Museum and Library Services were placed on administrative leave at the end of last month.

The institute's "Grants to States" program is the largest source of federal funding for state library services and gave $5.2 million to the Georgia Public Library Service this past fiscal year.

Funds go toward services like the PINES system, which allows Georgians to access all the books and other materials across participating libraries with the same library card.

"It's really the backbone of all of the public libraries," said Jennifer Lautzenheiser, director of the Middle Georgia Regional Library.

Public libraries in Georgia service millions of people every year, and the Middle Georgia Regional Library has 18 branches across Baldwin, Bibb, Crawford, Jones, Macon, Twiggs and Wilkinson counties.

While it's yet to be announced if the PINES system or any IMLS programs will be discontinued, Lautzenheiser said she and the library system's staff are looking at the different programs funded by IMLS and devising "contingency plans" if those programs are impacted.

"There is a whole lot of uncertainty," she said. "Even the state agency, we haven't really been informed about what happens next."

Grants for the library system's summer reading program and services for the blind have been closed out for the year. The summer reading program will continue through this summer, but the library system "does not know what next year will look like," Lautzenheiser said.

Lautzenheiser also said the state's Galileo program, an even larger searchable database that shares information between K-12 libraries and academic institutions, is made accessible to regional library systems through the institute.

IMLS also offers individual grants for other opportunities, and Middle Georgia Regional Library received $50,000 through an IMLS grant in 2020 to document the oral history of Central State Hospital. The Tubman Museum received $50,000 in 2007 to expand its services through an individual IMLS grant as well.

"A lot of time is invested in making sure that no matter what happens next, libraries will continue to be here and able to serve our community," she said.



Delta, MGA partner to fuel pilot opportunities with $2.5M grant

Mary Helene Hall
Melody Reporter
maryhelene@maconmelody.com

The Middle Georgia State University School of Aviation will receive a $2.5 million grant thanks to the Delta Air Lines Foundation, enabling more students to study to become pilots.

The funds will provide scholarships to graduates of Clayton County's 12 public high schools who show "aptitude for aviation," MGA said in a release. Delta considers the county to be a pipeline for future airline workers due to its proximity to Delta's headquarters and Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport. Students have the opportunity to earn scholarships that award up to full tuition, fees and flying instruction for the four years the student is enrolled.

Over five years, both Delta Air Lines and the Delta foundation plan to invest a total of $16.5 million in Clayton County, where more than 3,000 people are employed by Delta, according to an announcement from Delta earlier this week. Delta has committed more than $33 million to Clayton County in charitable giving over the past six years.

"The aviation industry depends on a strong pipeline of well-trained professionals, and this significant support from the Delta Air Lines Foundation will help us prepare Clayton County students for successful careers as aviation professionals," Adon Clark, dean of MGA's School of Aviation, said.

MGA's School of Aviation is based on the university's campus in Eastman, and it offers a variety of aviation-related associate's and bachelor's degrees, including management, science and flight.

The university also partnered with Delta on its Propel Pilot Career Path Program, which offers streamlined pilot career paths within Delta and its subsidiary, Endeavor Air.

The Delta collegiate program requires participants to build their flight hours by instructing at the university where they trained. MGA is among a handful of universities in the program.

"I commend Delta for investing in a school system poised to transform our local economy with graduates ready to work, lead and thrive," Clayton County Public Schools Superintendent Anthony Smith said. "Our very talented and capable students just need a chance, and this partnership ... will be a game-changer for our community and beyond."



MWA, from A1:

meetings, had expired.

The emergency declaration, which ended in summer 2020, allowed governments to meet virtually and continue meeting the requirements of the Georgia Open Records Act, which guarantees public access.

"I inquired as to our mandate to continue that and I was told that was not a mandate," Bechtel said. "I made the decision to terminate the live stream. As chairman, I have that ability."

The pandemic forced governmental bodies and boards to conduct business online. Virtual public meetings allowed more people an opportunity to engage with decision makers and follow along with public business.

The impact of switching to virtual meetings has been lasting for other governments across the state. For example, the City of Sandy Springs, which had long resisted live-streaming meetings before the pandemic, committed to the practice in an effort to promote a more engaged citizenry, according to a 2021 article on Rough Draft Atlanta.

Bechtel's decision to limit public access to in-person attendees will likely mean fewer eyes on the authority board's meetings, which begin at 2 p.m. on the first Thursday of each month and regularly last four to five hours.

After The Melody made an open records request for the video, the authority board posted the first two hours of its recent meeting on Facebook. It is unclear whether the rest of the meeting will be uploaded or if the authority will continue recording meetings for later posting.

Bechtel did not respond to subsequent requests for additional information.



SSA, from A1:

ting it up. He said he wasn't told why his appointment was rescheduled.

Zareeyah Williams said she tried to claim her disability benefits by phone but waited for about two hours. When she went to the Riverside Drive office, she was turned away and told to make an appointment.

"This is ridiculous, something needs to be done," said one woman, who didn't want The Melody to identify her. "It wasn't like this before."

It could be worse for Maconites. Five Social Security offices in Georgia were slated to be closed — in Brunswick, Columbus, Gainesville, Thomasville, and Vidalia — prompting condemnation from Sen. Raphael Warnock, who said that "permanently closing five Georgia Social Security offices will make it harder for Georgia seniors, especially in rural areas, to enroll in the program, solve payment issues, report fraud, and more."

State Sen. David Lucas, D-Macon, said he has also heard concerns about staff cuts and poor service at Macon's Social Security office. He said his daughter, who works at the SSA, was offered a buyout.

"They can't get anybody at the office," he said. "I understand they had about five offices that closed in Georgia, and now they are supposedly being reopened."

The Social Security Administration also updated its identity verification requirements for new applicants and recipients who want to update their direct deposit information. The verification process requires those applying for benefits by phone or paper to come into the local social security office.

The additional verification process was established to combat fraud, according to an SSA news release.

Social Security recipients will continue receiving their benefits despite staffing cuts, a White House spokesperson said.

Worship and Service Directory

First Baptist Church of Christ at Macon

Baptist | Liturgical

Nurture. Love. Serve. All.
The First Baptist Church of Christ at Macon nurtures authentic faith and belonging, loves and serves courageously, and affirms the image of God in all people.

Sunday School: 9:45 am, Worship: 11:00 am.

(478) 742-6485

511 High Place, Macon

New Heights Church

Baptist | Praise and Worship

Has life gone sideways? Is it all a big mess? Are you out of options? Out of answers? New Heights Church is a community based on BELEIVING and BELONGING.

Worship, Sundays 10:45.

(478) 757-2240

158 Lamar Rd, Macon

List your Worship and Service information here:

Sponsor this column:
478-200-2419

The Macon Melody

Coming soon: Worship and Service Directory!

Coming soon to the pages of the Macon Melody and online at

maconmelody.com

Spread the news.
Sign up today at
maconmelody.com/classifieds
or call Hannah at **478-200-5743**
for more information.

Opinion

Persistent parsley, the power of practice and the importance of getting your hands dirty


Caleb Slinkard

This past weekend, I got my hands dirty. Literally.

My back deck was covered with clumps of spilled dirt, perlite and clay planters cleared of last year's soil and dead roots and plants in square, plastic containers awaiting their new homes.

My girlfriend and I found space for a family of succulents that survived the winter, then planted various lantanas, yarrow and rose bushes in clay pots on my back porch. Oregano, basil and peppers found their way into a beautiful planter that Jake Grisamore (youngest son of Melody columnist Ed Grisamore) built for me last year (check out GrisWorks on Facebook/Instagram).

The herbs and peppers were planted next to three massive parsley plants that, having shaken off heat, rain and frost, have grown at least a foot in the past month, as well as some hardy rosemary that also survived the winter. A small stone birdbath, complete with a laconic carved frog, completed the back porch paradise (for now... I have plans to expand with ferns, morning glories and more).

It's April and the sun is shining. Perhaps you, like me, feel an unquenchable desire to plant and prune and surround yourself with lovely, growing things. (And if you are, you should check out our new weekly gardening column on Page A6 or online at maconmelody.com, written by Karol Kelly and other members of the Bibb County Cooperative Extension office).

*****

My love of growing things began when I was young, both through practice and prose. I learned to coax tall pepper stalks and arching tomato vines from Texas blackland, infusing the heavy clay soil with fertilizer and hard well water and care in desperate defense against baking suns, cow killer ants and insatiable grasshoppers.

I lost more than I won. Peppers seemed to relish the dry heat, but watermelons, squash, strawberries, pumpkins... none survived the interminable summers and insects, the drought and the weak soil. But I shrugged off these losses, much like my mother who manages to kill an ever-growing list of houseplants (other than a seemingly indestructible philodendron).

The dream of a garden full of vegetables, herbs and flowers, a place for hummingbirds and butterflies and running water, was born from repeated readings of Frances Hodgson Burnett's 1911 book "The Secret Garden."

As a child, homeschooled and forced indoors by 100 degree summer heat, I often dreamed of turning a corner or opening a door to a new world, to unexplored forests or flowing gardens. "The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe," "Gone-away Lake" and "The Secret Garden" captured my imagination in enduring, pervasive ways.

This spring, I'm building my own little secret garden in my own little corner of Macon, planting one green thing at a time.

Caleb Slinkard is the managing editor of The Macon Melody. Email him at caleb@maconmelody.com.

Digital distractions but one decent reason for slacking


Kyle Dominy

The first time I laid eyes on an Apple iPhone I wasn't impressed, but more shocked and a little afraid. Like when a secret tribe that has lived deep in the jungle in complete isolation from the world is confronted by outsiders for the first time. There's a little fear, some disbelief and a whole lot of questions to be answered.

It was 2009, or sometime there about, and a then-coworker of mine came into the little office where we worked, eager to show off what I believe was an iPhone 3GS. By today's standards that device is ancient technology. Just stash it away with your typewriters, Betamax tapes and fax machines. Back then though, it was something else. Integrating the 3G technology, it was really the first powerful pocket computer.

As he showed off all the device could do, I became more appalled. I had long been a fan of this company's products, but why would I want a telephone that could check email or play games with? I had a perfectly good computer on my desk where I could check email at my convenience and video game systems dating back to the '80s I could play from the comfort of my own living room sofa. I vowed to never purchase such a machine, calling it a waste of time and money.

Time makes fools of us all, and I've now gone through several of the phones and exclusively buy them when it's time for a new one. (Apple, have your people contact my people regarding sponsorship opportunities. Honda, you've missed your chance.)

I said all that to say that I still hate smartphones. We've never been more connected as humans, yet it has never been seemingly harder to reach someone via telephone. Calls go ignored, sent to spam and everybody's voicemail is always full. The phone not only rings, but it also bombards us with emails and social media notifications – though I would be lying if I said I didn't enjoy conducting business with my thumbs.

Turning it off is easier said than done. Everyone uses some sort of app for communication these days. For work, school and even church in some cases, you need access to a digital platform.

And now my children are armed with smartphones. The era that I dreaded has come. Like most parents, I'm concerned with screen addiction, the flow of inappropriate content on the internet and the phone becoming a distraction from real life.

I try to lead by example, but there is one distraction I welcome. It's taken me longer than normal to write this, because, well, my phone has kept going off. The kids are on spring break, living the good life on a much-deserved educational break. They've been texting me nonstop. I've stopped, read and responded to every single one of them.

Some people are worth being distracted for.

Kyle Dominy is the writer of the column New Southern Dad.

The truth in advertising: Trump's tariffs are taxes


Marc Hyden

If you've driven through Atlanta recently, then you may have come across a billboard or two that reads, "Tariffs are a tax." I generally don't pay much mind to billboards. They are often just silly advertisements featuring personal injury attorneys attempting to out-macho their competitors. It is a bit juvenile, but the ones dealing with tariffs caught my attention. Given their simplicity and naked truth, they should snag yours too.

It turns out the Canadian government is funding the anti-tariff advertisements, and one Canadian official explained that this is "an educational campaign to inform Americans of the economic impacts of tariffs." Yet it seems more than that. Canadians want to blunt President Donald J. Trump's looming tariffs against their country, which may harm their economy, and this appears to be a way to influence public policy. The Canadians' understandable— but self-serving — motives aside, they're right; tariffs are a tax that Americans should be wary of.

Since storming back to power, Trump has proposed additional tariffs — taxes on internationally traded goods — on China as well as nearly all of America's closest allies. He outlined his newest tariff proposal on April 2, which took effect on April 5.

"Under Mr. Trump's plan," The New York Times explained, "the United States will impose a staggering new 34% tariff on Chinese goods, on top of the 10% levy applied to imports from around the world and the 20 percent levy he already imposed on Beijing. Some of Mr. Trump's steepest rates apply to U.S. allies, including a 20% tariff on imports from the European Union and a 24% tariff on goods from Japan. India will face a 26% tariff on its exports to the United States."

This is roiling financial markets and testing longstanding international friendships. Trump's justifications for these proposed tariffs differ by country but include forcing foreign governments to limit illegal immigration, curtail the smuggling of fentanyl or simply to reorient so-called trade deficits. Whatever the reason for them, they are poised to hurt Americans who are already feeling the pinch of an unsure economy.

Before announcing the latest package, the White House had been touting the supposed wonders of tariffs.

"Tariffs are going to raise about $600 billion a year, about $6 trillion over a 10-year period," Trump's trade advisor Peter Navarro boasted.

That may be true, but then Navarro made a laughable claim. "Tariffs are tax cuts," he said. While I did not interview Navarro, if I did, my next question would have been, "Sir, what color is the sky on the planet where you're from?" because he is somehow divorced from reality.

Just as the billboards claim, tariffs are taxes. When governments levy them on imported goods, the costs are subsequently baked into the retail costs of consumer products. So the tax is passed onto Americans, unless they choose to only buy tariff-free goods, which may be even more expensive. It's generally a lose-lose situation for consumers who face inflated costs.

The Wall Street Journal didn't mince words in response to Navarro's claims: "By any definition that is a tax increase, and the $600 billion figure would be one of the largest in U.S. history. It amounts to about 2% of gross domestic product, and it would take the federal tax share of GDP above 19% [...] Democrats, who love tax increases, haven't dared pass such a large revenue heist."

Despite this obvious truth, Trump is married to the notion of tariffs, and he is disregarding commonsense and solid research in the process.

"The first Trump administration imposed tariffs on thousands of products valued at approximately $380 billion in 2018 and 2019," the Tax Foundation reported. "The second Trump administration tariffs now affect more than $1 trillion of imports, and when temporary exemptions for Canada and Mexico expire in April, the tariffs will affect more than $1.4 trillion of imports."

"We estimate the 2018-19 trade war tariffs imposed by Trump and retained by Biden reduce long-run GDP by 0.2% ... and employment by 142,000 full-time equivalent jobs."

That is a terrible return on investment, and with every tariff Trump levies, Americans may face additional tariffs from affected countries, which is a bit like being double taxed. Plus his constantly changing tariff declarations add uncertainty to the markets.

I am not an anti-tariff purist. There are specific cases in which they can make sense, particularly when imposed on America's enemies, but I generally prefer free trade. However, Trump's strategy seems to primarily hammer our allies with tariffs and let Americans feel the pain. After years of dealing with inflation under former President Joe Biden, we may now be treated to manufactured inflation in the form of taxes, but don't take it from me; read Atlanta's billboards.

Marc Hyden is the director of state government affairs at the R Street Institute. You can follow him on X at @marc_hyden.

The Macon Melody

Bibb County's Community News Source

1675 Montpelier Ave., Macon, Georgia 31201

478-200-7403 | news@maconmelody.com

Executive Director — DuBose Porter | dubose@maconmelody.com
Executive Editor — Caleb Slinkard | caleb@maconmelody.com | 478-200-8750
Sr. Development Director — Dave Hedge | dave@maconmelody.com | 478-200-2419
Sports Editor — Micah Johnston | micah@maconmelody.com | 478-200-7893

To submit a letter to the editor or guest column, email caleb@maconmelody.com, mail it to our office or drop it by our front desk. The Macon Melody is located in the Reg Murphy Center for Collaborative Journalism in Mercer Village (1675 Montpelier Ave.). Our office is open Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

The Macon Melody is a community newspaper that connects Maconites to all the stories of Bibb County. Our staff lives, works, and plays here. We know Middle Georgia, and our reporting illuminates and celebrates what makes this area special.

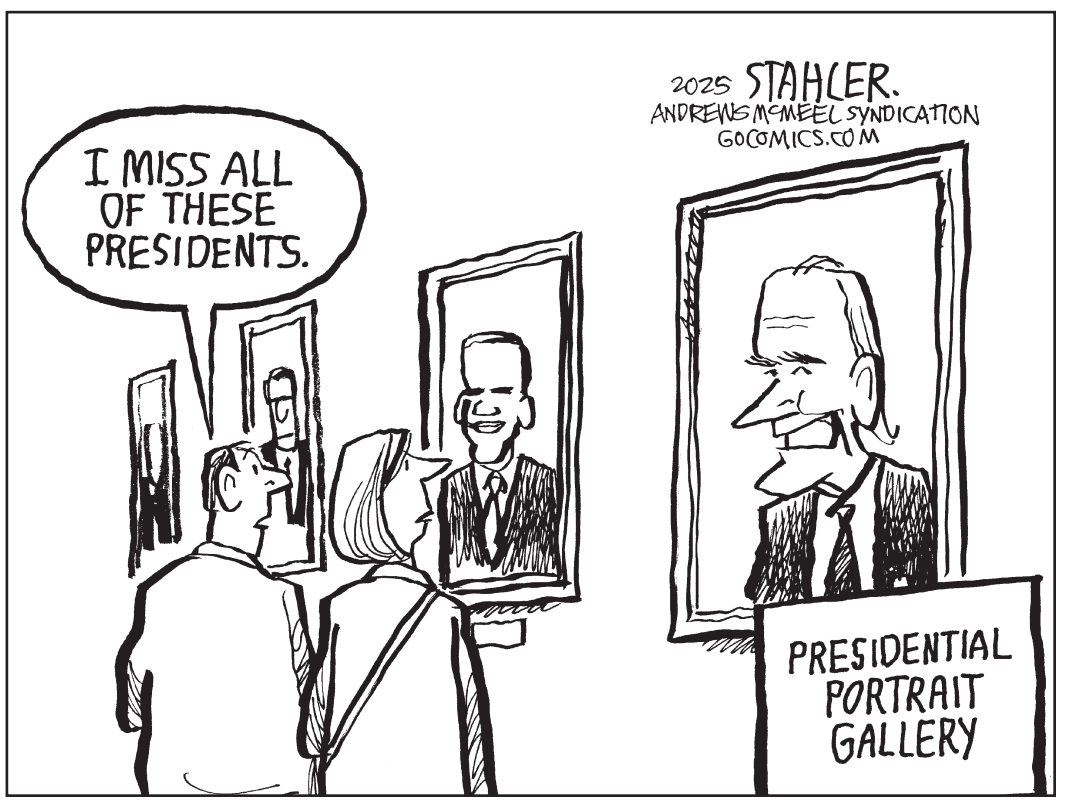
The Melody is part of the Georgia Trust for Local News a subsidiary of the National Trust for Local News, the nation's largest nonprofit newspaper company. We build stronger communities by protecting and growing community news across Georgia. Our 19 newspapers serve one in 10 Georgians.

To subscribe to The Melody, email suscriptions@maconmelody.com, call us at 478-200-7403, visit our website at maconmelody.com/subscribe or come by the office. Print editions of The Macon Melody are delivered via the U.S. Postal Service on Fridays.

Digital subscription..... $6.99/month, $69.99/year
Print subscription..... $9.99/month, $99.99/year
Print + Digital bundle.....$14.99/month,$149.99/year

THE MACON MELODY Issue 42, Volume 1, (ISSN# 93-4710374) is published weekly on Fridays for $99.99 a year by Georgia Trust for Local News. Periodicals Postage Rate paid at Macon, GA 31201.

© 2025 The Macon Melody, a product of the Georgia Trust for Local News



Birthday bucket list half full, never half empty


Ed Grisamore

When someone sends you birthday wishes, as I have been receiving this week, there is the obligatory clever comeback to explain getting older.

Another trip around the sun. Another ring around the tree. Another spin cycle on the washing machine. Another lap around the yard with the lawn mower. Another trip to Home Depot for duct tape to hold it all together.

I was born in the spring, and I am now in the autumn of life. The self-reflection of advancing age — hopefully with accumulated wisdom — is to read the tea leaves and look over your shoulder without getting whiplash.

A "bucket list" is a wish list of desires before you "kick the bucket." This year, mine includes going on my first mission trip (to Costa Rica) with my church, starting a podcast with my youngest son, reading the Bible from cover to cover (already thrilled to have made it through Leviticus) and hopefully having a variety of camellia with my name on it.

Not all buckets are created equal. They can be planned or serendipitous. They are not always calculated or premeditated. I am like any other accidental tourist, willing to meet life in the moment and see what happens.

Some of the boxes I have checked have been one-hit wonders. Others I would gladly bring back for a curtain call. I consider all of them candidates for the archives.

Preached a sermon. ... Been kissed by a camel. ... Performed on stage with a band (Grapevine). ... Spoken at a graduation commencement. ... Dressed as a 7-foot Yak and stuffed into the back of an SUV. ... Received a write-in vote for lieutenant governor in 2002. ...

Had a sandwich named after me at a cafe in downtown Macon. ... Stood in the two-room shack in Tupelo, Mississippi, where Elvis was born. ... Had a pie thrown in my face at a high school pep rally. ... Ridden on an elevator with Jane Fonda. (Could not stop thinking about Barbarella.) ... Driven a tractor. ... Hiked part of the Appalachian Trail. ... Been to a hog killing and stayed for lunch. ...

Worked a shift at the Waffle House. ... Been a guest on the pregame radio show with Larry Munson before a Georgia football game. ... Stood on a glacier in Alaska and, on a trip to Canada, watched one-fifth of the world's fresh water rush over the top of Niagara Falls. ... Cut the ribbon at the grand opening of the Barnes & Noble at River Crossing. ... Judged beauty pageants, parade floats, poetry recitals and chili cook-offs. ...

Extradited fruitcake to six different states. ... Written a musical for the Youth Actors Company at Theatre Macon. ... Had a flag flown in my honor at Camp Phoenix in Afghanistan during Operation Enduring Freedom. ... Covered The Masters, Final Four, World Series, Super Bowl and Summer Olympics. ... Munched on a piece of toast in Chillicothe, Missouri, the home of sliced bread...

Been nominated for a Grammy. ... Watched an Apollo space launch. ... Traveled way down upon the Suwannee River on an overnight boat trip. ... Autographed two of my books for Bill Clinton and Garth Brooks. ... Proposed to my wife on April Fools Day. ... Stepped inside the "world's smallest police station" (a phone booth) in Carrabelle, Florida. ...

Danced to the waltz and the cha-cha as a contestant in the Central Georgia Dancing with the Stars at the City Auditorium. ... Been in a cave. ... Delivered newspapers on a bicycle. ... Crossed the border (legally) into Mexico and back. ... Been given keys to the city of Macon and Dog Crossing. ... Did 600 sit-ups to get an "A" in my eighth-grade P.E. class. ... Shook hands with Jimmy Carter. ...

Flown in a helicopter over the Grand Canyon. ... Had my picture taken with two Dallas Cowboy cheerleaders. ... Watched Herschel Walker help "carry" our suitcases at the Atlanta airport baggage claim. ... Climbed the steps to the tops of the Eiffel Tower, Washington Monument, Statue of Liberty and lighthouses in Georgia and North Carolina. ....

Played in two 100-hole golf marathons. ... Slept on a train. ... Met a munchkin (Karl Stover) from "The Wizard of Oz" and one of the Tarleton Twins (Fred Crane) from "Gone With the Wind." ... Stood in the front yard of a house off Route 66 in Commerce, Oklahoma, where Mickey Mantle learned to throw a baseball. ... Eaten rattlesnake in Arizona, escargot in France and C-rations in the woods at Fort Benning. ... Seen Rock City and Stonehenge.

The birthday boy always tries to look at the bucket as half full, never half empty.

Ed Grisamore received the 2024 John Holliman Lifetime Achievement Award from the Grady College of Journalism and Mass Communication at the University of Georgia. He was the recipient of the 2010 Will Rogers Humanitarian Award, presented by the National Society of Newspaper Columnists.

A look at how language models handle public figures


Joe Finkelstein

If you've spent time exploring artificial intelligence tools like ChatGPT, you may have noticed something odd: the same question can get very different answers depending on which language model you ask. This is especially true when the topic is sensitive — like asking for a description of a politician, a celebrity, or even requesting a simple poem about a public figure.

That inconsistency isn't just quirky — it raises meaningful questions about bias, transparency and how much we can trust these tools.

Recently, I tested how several popular AI models responded to a straightforward prompt. I wasn't trying to spark controversy. In fact, I kept things light and positive. I asked each model to write a short, flattering poem about a well-known public figure. Not a roast or a critique — just a brief, upbeat verse.

Some language models delivered glowing tributes. Others declined, saying they weren't able to provide content about political figures, citing neutrality policies or safety guidelines.

Interesting, right?

These weren't obscure tools. I was using the most widely available AI platforms out there — some names you've probably heard of, and others quietly gaining traction. Here are a few of the big players I tested:

- ChatGPT (from OpenAI, currently the most widely used)
- Claude (created by Anthropic, with a reputation for being thoughtful and cautious)
- Gemini (Google's revamped AI, formerly known as Bard)
- Copilot (Microsoft's offering, integrated with Word and other Office tools)
- Meta AI (Facebook's entry, recently showing up in apps like Instagram and WhatsApp)
- Perplexity (a new, search-driven AI that tries to back up its responses with sources)

All of these models are designed to be helpful, conversational and smart. But they're not built the same way. Each one reflects the decisions made by the team behind it — decisions about what it should say, what it shouldn't and how much flexibility it has when engaging with the world.

That's not necessarily a flaw. But it is something we should be aware of. When one model declines to generate a poem because it might be interpreted as politically biased — and another goes ahead with an enthusiastic ode — you start to wonder: what are the rules here? Who decides what's appropriate, and are those decisions being shared with us?

The answer is: not always.

Most language models are trained on massive datasets from the internet — books, articles social media, news sources and more. But they're also refined using human feedback and safety layers that aren't fully disclosed. And the specifics of those filters? They're usually kept behind the curtain.

That can make things confusing for everyday users. Imagine a student working on a school project. They ask for a summary of a historical figure's accomplishments. One AI gives them a quick, clear answer. Another says, "Sorry, I can't help with that." Now they're left wondering: was the question inappropriate? Did they break some rule without realizing it? Or is the model just being overly cautious?

It's a bit like using a GPS. Imagine if one app sent you across town on the highway, another took back roads and a third just said, "No directions available." You'd want to know why, right?

That same thinking applies to AI.

To be clear, I'm not suggesting these tools be stripped of filters or caution. Far from it. I appreciate when AI tools are mindful about topics like hate speech or misinformation. But I do believe users should have a clear sense of what kind of experience they're stepping into. If an AI avoids politics entirely, just tell us. So what can you do as a user? Start by trying more than one language model. Think of it like checking multiple news sources.

You'll often get different angles, tones and insights. That's not just helpful — it's educational.

And don't be afraid to ask follow-up questions. If a model says it can't respond, ask why.

Joe Finkelstein (AI Joe) has been a technology educator for more than 20 years. For questions and comments visit askaijoe.com

Gris Lists: Easter, baseball and other facts of Macon life

Ed Grisamore
Melody Columnist
gris@maconmelody.com

If Easter Sunday (April 20) seems late this year, that's because it is tardier than usual. The latest Easter can ever fall on the calendar is April 25.

It was on March 31 last year, and on April 9, April 17, April 4 and April 12 the four previous years.

The last time Easter was on April 20 was in 2004. It won't happen again until 2088.

Here are the most recent dates Easter was (or will be) on April 20: 1930, 2004, 2025, 2088, 2099.

Five price tags in Macon from 50 years ago

1. An aluminum web lawn chair for $3.97 from K Mart on Riverside Drive.

2. A dozen eggs for 49 cents at the Food Fair on the corner of Second and Arch streets.

3. A steak platter (6-ounce steak, french fries, tossed salad and toasted Grecian bread) for $2.19 at Shoney's on Pio Nono Avenue.

4. A 100-count bottle of Bufferin for $1.09 from Eckerd's Drug Store at Napier Square.

5. Three 20-ounce loaves of Colonial, Merita and Sunbeam bread for $1 at the Piggly Wiggly in Shurlington Plaza.

Four baseball movies/TV series filmed in Macon

1. "The Bingo Long Traveling All-Stars & Motor Kings" starring Billy Dee Williams, Richard Pryor and James Earl Jones (1976)

2. "Trouble With the Curve" starring Clint Eastwood, Amy Adams, Justin Timberlake and John Goodman (2012)

3. "42" starring Chadwick Boseman and Harrison Ford (2013)

4. "Brockmire" (IFC series) starring Hank Azaria and Amanda Peet (2017-20)

Five takeaways from General Marquis de Lafayette's visit

1. Lafayette was a Revolutionary War hero, a close ally of George Washington and a key figure in the French Revolution. At the invitation of the U.S., Lafayette was part of a 24-state tour from July 1824 to Sept. 15, 1825. Macon was one of his stops on March 29, 1825. (From a bicentennial presentation by Andy Lawson, retired history teacher and member of Macon Palaver Club.)

2. His aide, Auguste Levasseur, described Macon as a "pretty little town that did not exist 18 months ago and emerged as if by magic from the middle of the forests. It is a civilized place, lost in the still immense domain of the first children of America."

3. Lafayette stayed in Macon for two and a half hours. There was a picnic lunch with the townspeople.

4. Lafayette was greeted by Mayor Edward Dorr Tracy, who spoke to him in three languages, including French and the Muscogee language. Lafayette noted it was the only time in America that he was spoken to in an Indigenous language by a white man.

5. Lafayette received a beaver skin hat, which must have suited him far more than the crown of leaves put on his head in northern cities.

Nine 'Inmates' for Saturday's 'Jail & Bail'

Here are the nine "inmates" for Saturday's "Jail & Bail" fundraiser for Critical Care for Animal Angels dog rescue from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. at Byron Baptist Church. The "inmates" are being handcuffed, issued bright orange jailhouse T-shirts and having their mug shots taken. They are asking for donations so they can be "released back into society." (Call 478-972-1161 for more information.)

1. Jim Russell, deputy director for production and operations at Robins Air Force Base.

2. Dr. Samer Othman, owner and dentist at Advanced Dental Arts in Macon.

3. Toby, the Mercer Bears mascot.

4. Angela Hambrick, principal of Peach County High School.

5. Jesse Davis, assistant superintendent, Peach Board of Education.

6. Jennifer Smith, family nurse practitioner at Hometown Health Care in Byron.

7. Martin Moseley, Post 4 Chairman Byron/Fort Valley Peach Board of Commissioners.

8. Matt Edwards, owner of On-The-Mark Printing in Byron.

9. Connie Holland, CEO of Vision Savers.

Three things named after former Macon mayors

1. Luther Williams Field was built in 1929 and is the second-oldest minor league baseball park in the country. Luther Williams was mayor from 1928-29 and a champion of sports and recreation in the city. He was originally from South Wales and once worked for the British civil service commission. He moved to Macon to work for Western Union Telegraph Company and contributed to the city's economic growth late in the 19th century as president of the Bank and Trust Company.

2. The convention center at the Macon Centreplex is named after Edgar H. Wilson, a former mayor from 1959-63. Wilson also served in the state legislature. He was an Air Force veteran of World War II, dean of Mercer's law school and chairman of the Macon-Bibb County Water and Sewer Authority.

3. The Lee Robinson Memorial Bridge on Riverside Drive was dedicated in 2017 to former mayor Lee Robinson, who died of cancer in 2015. It crosses Interstate 75 at Riverside Cemetery. Robinson was a Vietnam veteran and an avid runner. He was a Georgia state senator from 1974-82 and mayor from 1987-91.

NOW OPEN!
ZEBULON Rx PHARMACY
Local and Family Owned
Your local hometown pharmacy for:
- Quick service! 15 minutes or less
- Same Day Delivery
- Convenience
- Website or Instore ordering
- Let us handle your prescription transfers from the "big box" stores

Your path to lifelong wellness
"We Care for YOU!"
478-254-3255
www.zebulonpharmacy.com
6451 Zebulon Road,
Macon 31210

After state legislature's Sine Die comes signing time for Governor Brian Kemp

Stanley Dunlap
Georgia Recorder

The Georgia General Assembly concluded its 2025 legislative session on Friday with the passage of roughly 400 bills and resolutions combined.

The abrupt end of the session gave way to a 40-day window that runs through May 14 when Gov. Brian Kemp can veto or sign legislation, or do nothing and automatically let it become law.

The last day of the session, when House and Senate lawmakers usually crank out legislation right up until midnight and celebrate at the end of the night by throwing torn-up pieces of paper into the air, was unexpectedly cut short.

In previous years, the Republican governor has vetoed about 10 bills each year, signed hundreds of pieces of legislation into law, and hosted a few ceremonies to ink some noteworthy bills with a keepsake pen. Last year, Kemp vetoed a dozen bills.

Kemp signed six bills before the General Assembly's final gavel of fell, including a controversial so-called religious freedom bill.

Kemp is expected to hold a public ceremony prior to May 14 to sign his priority legislation for 2025 that is intended to limit the amount of damages juries award in civil lawsuits.

Kemp successfully fought off robust opposition to the civil litigation overhaul outlined in Senate Bill 68 and the more narrowly written Senate Bill 69 that requires transparency when third-party groups finance civil suits.

Kemp will also have the opportunity to publicly sign off on a school safety plan in the wake of September's deadly shooting at Barrow County's Apalachee High School. That high-profile measure creates deadlines to transfer student records to new school districts, establishes a statewide school threat alert system and requires Georgia schools to install panic buttons.

Kemp will also decide how he will handle a slate of culture war bills, including a ban on transgender athletes in girls' sports in K-12 and college and another measure banning gender-affirming care in the state's prisons.

Culture war issues, including new restrictions on transgender Americans, have been a priority of President Donald Trump's administration since he took office in January.

Georgia's legislative smorgasbord awaiting Kemp includes next year's nearly $38 billion budget as well as the accelerated income tax cut he championed and one-time income tax refunds set to be distributed to Georgia taxpayers later this year.

Usually, a statement from Kemp's office explains why he vetoed a particular measure.

This story was originally published by the Georgia Recorder on georgiarecorder.com.



Ross Williams / Georgia Recorder
Lack of funding prompted Gov. Brian Kemp to veto a bill that increased needs-based grants for college students. Kemp signed dozens of new laws and vetoed 14 bills in 2023. Following the end of the 2025 legislative session, Kemp has a 40-day window to veto, sign or do nothing.

Measles outbreak spreads from Texas, but Georgia still unaffected

Ty Tagami
Capitol Beat

ATLANTA — The surge of measles infections in West Texas connected with the death of two children is prompting Georgia health officials to stress the importance of vaccination against the highly contagious disease.

"It's a really very unique and very, very large outbreak," State Epidemiologist Dr. Cherie Drenzek said Tuesday. "I think that we can expect that this Texas outbreak will likely go on for months more as well."

Two children have died during the outbreak in a largely unvaccinated religious community, Drenzek said at a briefing for the Georgia Board of Public Health, adding that a U.S. adult has died of measles as well.

The infections have resulted in nearly two dozen calls to the Georgia Department of Public Health from concerned medical providers about potential measles infections here, but so far Georgia officials have identified only three cases.

The infections were all in one family and resulted from international travel, with no connection to Texas.

But the Texas infections appear to be spreading to nearby states, with New Mexico recently reporting 56 cases and Kansas reporting 24.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported on Friday that there have been 607 documented measles cases in the country so far this year, up from 285 in all of 2024. This year, 12% of the infected have been hospitalized.

Children and adults under 20 have been the most affected age group, with a fifth of those hospitalized being under age 5.

The CDC reports that 97% were either unvaccinated or their vaccination status was unknown.

Measles was declared eliminated in the Unted States in 2020, meaning there was no spread within the country and new cases developed only after travel abroad.

But infections started climbing during the COVID-19 pandemic, with 49 cases in 2021 and 121 in 2022. Infections fell to 59 in 2023 but then started rising sharply last year.

"Every single one is a public health emergency," Drenzek said.

She said the measles vaccine is the most effective prevention and urged Georgians to ensure they've been vaccinated unless they contracted the disease as children and that children get the vaccine in preschool.

Drenzek also urged medical providers to continue calling the state hotline with suspicious cases, at 866-PUB-HLTH.

Eight candidates running for seats on Ga. Public Service Commission

Emily Jones
WABE

This coverage is made possible through a partnership between WABE and Grist, a nonprofit environmental media organization.

Eight candidates are running for two seats on the Georgia Public Service Commission in a long-delayed election taking place this year. The qualifying period ended Thursday.

The commission oversees utilities including some gas and electric companies in Georgia; its biggest job is governing Georgia Power's plans and rates.

It was the PSC that voted to proceed with the construction of new nuclear reactors at Plant Vogtle in 2017 after bankruptcy of the lead contractor on the project, and the commission who approved two rate hikes to pay for Georgia Power's share of the construction costs.

In recent years, the commission has also approved three rate hikes, a bill increase to cover high natural gas costs, and the construction of new gas-power turbines to meet rising energy demand.

Two of the five seats on the Commission – districts two and three, currently held by Republicans Tim Echols and Fitz Johnson – were due for an election in 2022. But a lawsuit delayed that election. A third seat, the district five post held by Tricia Pridemore, was due for an election last year, but that also didn't happen because of the ongoing legal battle.

In the meantime, all three have continued to serve and vote on the commission. Under Georgia law, the commissioners serve until the next commissioner is elected, so their terms have not legally expired.

Now, elections are resuming, beginning with districts two and three. Both Echols and Johnson are running for reelection.

In district two, Republican Lee Muns is challenging Echols for the party's nomination. Democrat Alicia Johnson of Savannah is also running for that seat.

Four Democrats are vying for their party's nomination in district three: Daniel Blackman, Keisha Sean Waites, Peter Hubbard and Robert Jones. The winner of that primary will face incumbent Johnson in November.

The candidates have to live in their districts. That's a swath of east and southeast Georgia that includes Athens, Augusta and Savannah for district two; and the Metro Atlanta counties of Fulton, Dekalb and Clayton for district three. But the elections are statewide, meaning voters throughout Georgia can vote in both races.

This election arrangement was the focus of the legal challenge, but a federal appeals court upheld it and the US Supreme Court declined to take the case.

The primaries are June 17, followed by a general election Nov. 4.

Under a state law passed last year, all the current commissioners' terms have been extended. The next to face reelection will be Pridemore, whose district five seat will be up next year. Elections for the remaining two seats, currently held by Republicans Jason Shaw and Lauren "Bubba" McDonald, will be held in 2028.



Jason Vorhees / The Melody
U.S. Sen. Jon Osoff, D-Ga. shown here in a Melody file photo, recently boasted of fundraising successes for the state, alongside Georgia Republicans during an off-year for state elections.

Ossoff, Republicans tout fundraising successes

Dave Williams
Capitol Beat

ATLANTA – Democrats and Republicans are boasting of their fundraising success early in what is an off-year for elections in Georgia.

U.S. Sen. Jon Ossoff, D-Ga., raised more than $11 million during the first quarter of this year, the most ever raised by a Senate incumbent in the first three months of an off-year.

Meanwhile, the Georgia Republican Party brought in President Donald Trump's daughter-in-law Lara Trump to its Spring Gala, which raised more than $300,000.

Ossoff received donations from 156 of Georgia's 159 counties, with an average contribution of $32 from nearly 260,000 donors. Ossoff will be up for re-election to a second six-year term in the Senate next year.

"I'm grateful to the hundreds of thousands of record-shattering supporters who have already joined what will be the biggest and most relentless turnout effort in Georgia history," he said.

Republicans have yet to field a challenger to Ossoff. Potential GOP candidates are waiting to see whether term-limited Gov. Brian Kemp enter the race. If he does, he would be the clear frontrunner on the Republican side.

Last week's Spring Gala was the Georgia Republican Party's largest fundraiser in the last two years. More than 300 attending the event heard from GOP luminaries including Lt. Gov. Burt Jones, state Insurance Commissioner John King, and a host of Republican state lawmakers.

Headliner Lara Trump is a former co-chair of the Republican National Committee.

"I want to extend my heartfelt thanks to Lara Trump for joining us in Georgia, just as she did so many times in 2024," Georgia Republican Chairman Josh McKoon said. "I also want to recognize all of our sponsors and donors whose generosity made this incredible night possible."

Events

Friends of the Library Book Sale
Friday-Sunday, April 11-13
10 a.m. - 7 p.m. & 10 a.m. - 2 p.m.
130 Willie Smokie Glover Drive
Come around to The Round Building to find great bargains for readers of all ages and interests. Book Sale prices are standard in more than 40 categories: $1 for paperbacks and $2 for hardcovers. All books for children and teens are $1. DVDs and audiobooks are $2. Don't miss hundreds of individually priced books in the Choice, Collectible, Old & Quaint, Genealogy and Vintage Children's sections. Cash, checks, credit and debit cards accepted. Sunday is half-price day.

Macon Bike Party: The 'Stache Bash
Thursday, April 10
6 p.m.
830 High St.
Get ready to ride in style – mustache style! Join Bike Walk Macon for the 'Stache Bash ride where the only rule is: you must have a mustache! Whether you grow it, glue it, or draw it on, Bike Walk has plenty of mustaches to share if you come unprepared. Participants will cruise through downtown flaunting their finest facial hair, from handlebar 'staches to villainous twirls. Dress the part with barbershop stripes, cowboy hats, or full-on 70s flair – bonus points for the most creative 'stache!

South of Atlanta Fest
Saturday-Sunday, April 12-13
Events are held throughout Macon over a two day period
Brent Cobb has put together a jam-packed itinerary of music friends and activities for the inaugural South of Atlanta Fest. This two-day festival includes a day party at The Big House, a studio tour and songwriter round with Capricorn Sound Studios and an album signing at Fresh Produce Records.

Honor & Hustle: Disabled Veterans fundraiser
Saturday, April 12
10 a.m
6400 Forsyth Road
Join 411 Sportsworld Foundation and the Howard High School Cross Country Team as they walk and run to support disabled veterans! Every step counts — lace up, give back, and show appreciation for our heroes. General Registration $15.

Macon Film Guild presents: "I'm Still Here"
Sunday, April 13
2 p.m. & 5 p.m.
355 MLK Jr. Blvd.
Brazil, 1971: a country in the tightening grip of a military dictatorship. A mother is forced to reinvent herself when her family's life is shattered by an act of arbitrary violence. Based on Marcelo Rubens Paiva's best-selling memoir. Eunice Paiva investigates her husband Rubens' disappearance while maintaining family stability. Rubens is a former Brazilian Labor Party deputy who has gone missing.Presented by Macon Film Guild at Douglass Theatre. $5 General admission.

Pretty Woman: The Musical
Apr 22-23
7:30 p.m.
651 Mulberry St.
Pretty Woman: The Musical delivers on all the iconic moments you remember. Get ready to experience this dazzling theatrical take on a love story for the ages. Based on one of Hollywood's most beloved romantic stories of all time, this show springs to life with a powerhouse team led by Tony-winning director and choreographer Jerry Mitchell. Presented by Piedmont Grand Opera House. Tickets $59-79.

"OCMULGEE RISING"
Thursday, April 24
11 a.m.
5098 Romeiser Drive
Georgia Humanities presents "Ocmulgee Rising: A Celebration of Muscogee Creativity with Joy Harjo." This event celebrates the history, artistry and legacy of the Muscogee (Creek) people in Georgia through the voice of internationally renowned poet, musician, and the first Native American U.S. Poet Laureate, Joy Harjo. Harjo will appear at Middle Georgia State University for a poetry reading and conversation. Following the reading, a small group of invited guests will accompany Harjo on a guided tour of the Ocmulgee Mounds National Historical Park. This event is free and open to the public, but RSVP is strongly encouraged.

Music, from A8:

the songs themselves evolved as we played them show after show after show. Some even became almost unrecognizable as the band and I continued to make them better. We had plenty of time to really get to know the songs before the final record which was mixed and mastered at Capricorn Sound Studios as 'Roasted.'"

Taylor's last album, "Modern Nostalgia," was the first full album to be recorded at the newly refurbished and reopened Capricorn Sound Studios.

Taylor said the new album reflects his personal growth as a songwriter/guitarist and for his band as a stable unit.

"For the first time, I've been able to write songs that can highlight and use each instrument more fully instead of always just my guitar, though, of course, the guitar is always front and center. But it's like, instead of having just one song when we play live where each player gets the spotlight in a solo, I can write songs and arrange them so each instrument can have an important part that's integral to the song as a whole. It's been great."

"Roasted" will be available on all streaming services Friday, on CD, vinyl and as a limited-edition vinyl version that looks like a coffee mocha swirl with cream poured in but not yet mixed.

Taylor plays the Society Garden on Friday from 8 p.m. to 11 p.m. More information is at thesocietygarden.com and hughestaylormusic.com.

***

Autism Rocks Music Festival Saturday from 3 to 9 p.m. at the Museum of Arts and Sciences Amphitheater

Autism Rocks presents some of the best Macon players in support of the work of Central Georgia Autism, the all-volunteer non-profit organization founded in 2006 to provide general and financial support to people with autism and their families.

"We love Autism Rocks not just because it raises most of our budget for the scholarships and other services we provide each year but because it's a chance for our friends and neighbors to come to hear good music and get together with us to have fun," said Shelley Price, Central Georgia Autism president and co-director of Autism Rocks. "Most of our events are just for us because we need that safer, quiet space, but here we can all have a great time spinning and twirling and enjoying the music and other things going on during the afternoon."

On average, Price said Autism Rocks and its accompanying silent auction bring in an average of $15,000 each year, about what the group gives out in aid to individuals and families up to $500 and programs and events geared to individuals with autism and their families, such as field trips to places like nearby High Falls State Park, a day at the Museum of Arts and Sciences, parents only events and an annual Christmas party.

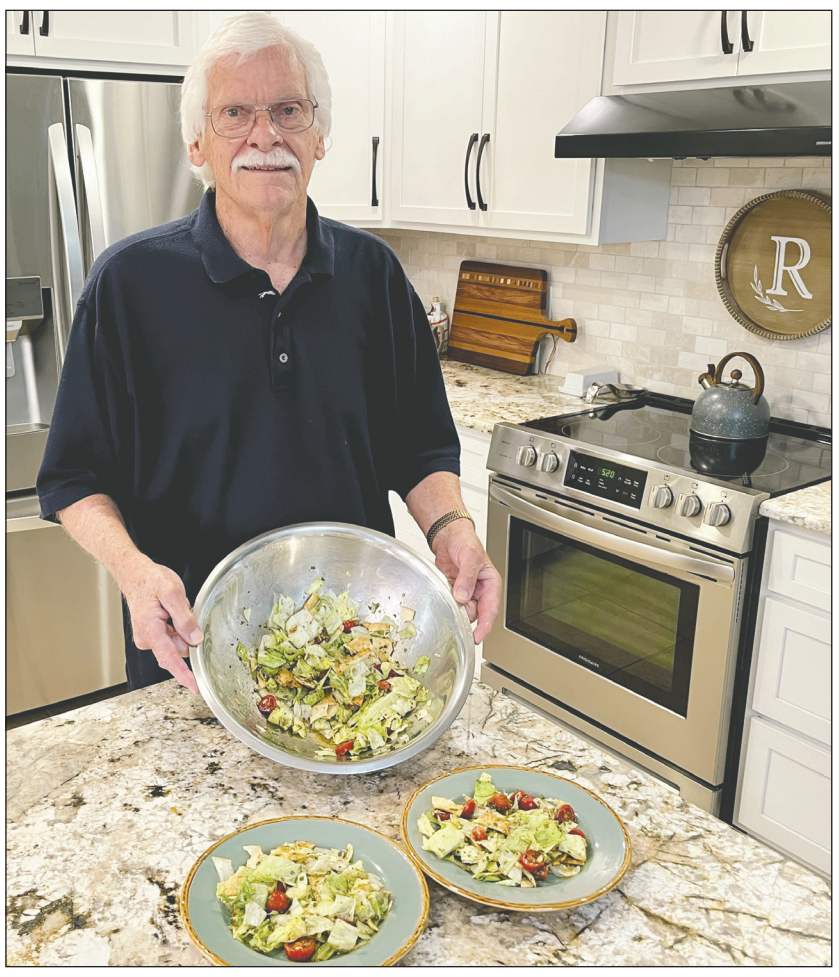
Overall, the organization has given out over $100,000 through the years.

This year, the Macon Music Revue headlines Autism Rocks with Shy Company and Erica Carr as added performers. The day includes food trucks, games and other activities for families and children. The cost of entry is $25 benefiting Central Georgia Autism, kids enter free.

Autism Rocks and all its activities are at the museum amphitheater at 4182 Forsyth Rd. Find Autism Rocks and Central Georgia Autism online at centralgaautism.org for ticketing and more on the group and their work.

Contact writer Michael W. Pannell at mwpannell@gmail.com. Find him on Instagram at @michael_w_pannell.

From Our Kitchens: Legendary 'Green Jacket' is ace of all salads



Ed Grisamore / The Melody
Ronnie Rowe holds a bowl of Green Jacket salad. He first had the salad at the Green Jacket Restaurant and Lounge in downtown Macon.

Ronnie Rowe
Special to The Melody

I moved to Macon from Griffin in 1976 to join Macon Bank as a loan officer. Being young, single and not the cook I am today, I frequented several of the nicer restaurants in Macon.

I soon discovered that only a block from my office on Second Street, near the Bibb County courthouse, was the iconic Green Jacket Restaurant and Lounge, named for the green sports coat given to all winners of The Masters golf tournament.

My first dinner at the Green Jacket was memorable. Stepping through the street-level, ordinary doors, I entered a long hall with portraits of Masters' winners in their green jackets lining both walls.

I felt transformed, like I was with royalty, and visions of lush, green fairways and banks of beautiful azaleas danced in my head.

I felt that the meal was rather royal, too. The food was great, but the Green Jacket salad was outstanding. The way it was prepared made you feel special. It was standard procedure for the restaurant to serve its signature salad by having a server roll a cart to the patron's table and, with flair and finesse, have them observe as they prepared the salad.

After moving to Albany because of my job, I came back to Macon in 1987 and found the Green Jacket in a new location across from the Terminal Station. While having lunch there with a friend, the salad came up in conversation and I expressed my fondness for it.

My friend told me he had the recipe. It had been given to him by the chef. To my surprise, he gave it to me.

I have prepared this delicious, unique salad for family and friends for the past 38 years. My wife, Kaye, loves it and has learned to make it. She enjoys it every time it is served.

One of my closest friends, the late Joe Sandefur, used to say it was his favorite. He was crazy about that salad. Every time we got together for dinner, at his house or mine, he would ask me to prepare it.

Our friends, Frank and Pat Horne, are the same way. Frank loves that salad, and I have given the recipe to several friends who have asked for it.

Green Jacket salad (serves 4)

Ingredients
- 1 large head iceberg lettuce, chopped fine
- 3 or 4 large green onions, chopped fine (some stems optional)
- 1 medium tomato, chopped fine
- 3 tablespoons red wine vinegar
- 6 tablespoons vegetable oil
- 1 teaspoon powdered oregano
- 1 ¼ teaspoons seasoned salt
- 1 teaspoon Accent (monosodium glutamate)
- 6 tablespoons parsley
- 6 tablespoon chives
- 1-2 cups Stacy's Simply Naked Pita Chips

Instructions

Salad: Chop or break lettuce into a large mixing bowl, discarding hard white and yellow parts. Sprinkle freshly chopped or dried parsley and chives. Add pita chips broken into 1-inch pieces. Just prior to serving, add prepared dressing and mix well until lettuce is well-coated. Serve immediately.

Dressing: Prepare 2-24 hours ahead of time and refrigerate. In a small mixing bowl, combine red wine vinegar, oregano, seasoned salt and Accent. Stir well. Add vegetable oil and stir well. Add onions and tomatoes and stir well. Refrigerate in a closed container. Stir before adding to the lettuce mixture.

Mulch: Benefits, how to choose best type, mulching tips, more



Karol Kelly

While dropping my kids off at school one morning, I heard a radio ad encouraging homeowners to get out and garden this spring. This ad was focused on mulch with the general idea that you can never have too much of a good thing. Mulch is definitely an important thing to have in the landscape!

Mulch is a soil cover that has several significant benefits for plants. It moderates soil temperature fluctuations and reduces soil erosion. Mulch conserves water – which will be especially important during our often hot, dry months ahead. It cuts down on weeds and reduces some disease problems. As mulch decomposes, it builds soil quality and structure, improving the habitat for beneficial soil organisms. Finally, it can protect plants from equipment damage while providing attractive, neat landscape beds.

Mulching can be as simple as raking up fallen leaves, which are free and natural. There is an array of mulching materials out there. Hardwood mulches come in a variety of colors such as red, black and brown. Another common source for mulch is pine trees. Pine straw is lightweight and economical. Pine bark comes in regular or mini nuggets. Occasionally, if a utility company is working nearby, you can ask them to drop a load of chipped-up trees for you. While it is not as uniform as store bought materials, it is free.

How do you choose the best mulch? Cost could be one deciding factor, as well as how quickly the materials decompose and need to be replaced. Finer textured mulches will need to be refreshed more often than coarser mulches. Pine straw might be more economical, but this type of mulch is likely to be replaced more often. While our nurseries and garden centers have a variety of bagged products, bulk mulch is also available. If you need a trailer or truckload, do a quick online search for 'bulk mulch' in Macon. Some even offer delivery.

The general rule of thumb is to mulch 3-4 inches deep, maybe a little deeper for pine straw. In areas where new beds are established or weeds are particularly problematic, thicker mulch can be used. However, be sure to avoid 'volcano mulching', or piling extra mulch around the base of plants. This is often seen in trees. Volcano mulching may cause problems related to insects, disease, and decay. In fact, it is always good to pull the mulch back 3-4 inches from the base of the plant.

One more gardening hack is the use of cardboard boxes underneath the mulch. Break down boxes and layer cardboard to improve weed suppression and water retention. Remove any tape, stickers, or other adhesives and be sure to cover the cardboard thoroughly.

As the garden centers beckon us with aisles of beautiful plants, don't forget to pick up mulch to get that new planting started. You'll be happy with the results.

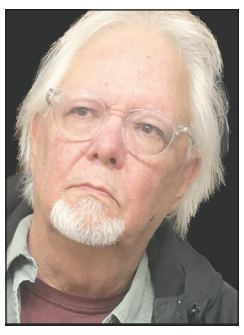
If you have any questions, please call Bibb County Cooperative Extension at 478-751-6338 or email us at bibb.extension@uga.edu

Karol Kelly is the Agriculture and Natural Resources Extension Agent in Bibb County. She is a proud Macon native and has served in this role since 2007.



Photo courtesy Bibb County Cooperative Extension
Two trees with volcano mulching, which means extra mulch is piled around the base of the trees. Excess mulch can lead to insect, disease and decay problems

This weekend: South of Atlanta Fest, Autism Rocks Music, Society Garden album release



Michael W. Pannell

Brent Cobb is coming to town and bringing friends.

The Americus-born, Ellaville-raised country music star is hosting what's being called the Inaugural South of Atlanta Music Fest Saturday and Sunday.

"My family's been throwin' festivals at my grandma's place for years and now we're bringing it to my second home: Macon," Cobb said. "We'll be hitting some of my favorite spots in town. To name a few, we've got a songwriter's swap at Capricorn and Fresh Produce Records is hosting us for some storytellin', record signin' and music playin'. Ben Chapman, Silverada, The Band Loula and I will be playing at the Capitol Theatre and afterward, I can't think of a better way to close out each night than at Grant's. I'm real excited to see all of y'all this weekend."

Along with Cobb playing and holding down hosting and emcee duties, Saturday's music is from Ben Chapman and Silverada. Sunday, it's The Band Loula with Brent Cobb and The Fixins.

These shows are at the Capitol Theatre, 382 2nd St. Doors open at 7 p.m. and shows start at 8 p.m.

Each evening after the Capitol shows, there are afterparties at Grant's Lounge, 576 Poplar St. They're from around 11 p.m. until – well – until late. On Saturday, JB Strauss & Friends are featured and on Sunday it's jam night.

But that's not all.

Festivities begin Saturday at 2 p.m. at The Big House Museum at 2321 Vineville Ave. There'll be live music on the Big House outdoor stage and what organizers are calling a "BBQ Band Day Party."

Of course, the Allman Brothers Band museum will be open, too.

On Sunday, drop by Fresh Produce Records, 567 Cherry St., where there's no telling who you might see talking music, telling stories, signing records and maybe even making some music.

Also Sunday, there's a special tour at Capricorn Sound Studios followed by a songwriter round. But sorry — tickets appear to have sold out early in the week. The Capricorn event is sponsored by the Georgia Music Foundation which is a beneficiary of some of the weekend's proceeds and sales of a special, South of Atlanta Fest weekend lager named Shade Tree, created by Piedmont Brewing.

There's a special relationship between Cobb and the Georgia Music Foundation.

"Brent is a long-time friend of the Georgia Music Foundation and has been a big part of our Georgia on My Mind fundraisers in Nashville which raise money for music programs at schools, after-school programs and summer camps," said Macon's Lisa Love, executive director of the foundation. "Along with the Indigo Girls' Amy Ray, he's co-hosted benefit concerts for the Georgia Music Foundation and now is graciously making a donation from proceeds of the Capricorn event as well as from the sale of Shade Tree beer."

Love said the weekend festival is important and says a lot.

"It's important because as more and more significant music events are held in Macon, the more our reputation as a music destination grows," she said. "It's important because it's getting so many diverse music organizations involved. And I want to point out how important Brent has become as a songwriter and performer and what a big deal it is that he's remained a huge champion and brand ambassador for Macon. I can't overstate how musicians are the ones who have singlehandedly put Macon on the map. To have Brent Cobb continue to embrace Macon is wonderful."



Provided by Brent Cobb

Brent Cobb in Capricorn Sound Studios' control booth in front of the studio's early 1970s sound baffling wall hanging, still in use today. Cobb is hosting the weekend's first-ever South of Atlanta Fest at Macon's Capitol Theatre with events at other venues as well.

There's Macon music everywhere you turn this weekend. Besides Cobb bringing the festival to town, here are two more options to get out and hear great local music with one in support of a truly great cause.

***

Hughes Taylor album release show Friday at the Society Garden

Macon-born and guitar-bred on the likes of Eric Clapton, Jimi Hendrix, Stevie Ray Vaughn, Duane Allman and other classic players, Taylor's new album highlights both light and dark blues.

And Taylor's love of coffee.

"It's been three years in the making and it's called 'Roasted,'" Taylor told me. "In 2024, we released an EP called 'Dark Roast.' It was pretty intense with lots of distortion on guitar. We had other songs a little more upbeat with less distortion we were going to release as a 'Light Roast' EP but the whole thing evolved into one long-play album as

See MUSIC , Page A7



Macon native Henley set for Masters again

Michael A. Lough
For The Melody

On one hand, Russell Henley has momentum — he won his fifth PGA Tour tournament, the Arnold Palmer Invitational, only a month ago.

On the other hand, maybe not.

It's been a full month since he turned in that clutch and efficient performance to win the Arnie, but he followed that with a tied-for-30th finish at The Players Championship.

He then sat out Valspar, the Houston Open and the Texas Open.

It's anybody's guess what to expect from Henley when he tees off in his ninth Masters on Thursday.

Henley is grouped with Brooks Koepka and Sungjae Im, and they'll cut loose at 12:50 p.m. in one of the final half-dozen trios.

Of seven people on a Golf Digest panel, Henley is the dark horse pick for four of them at 50-1.

He's never really been in this position, sitting among the top golfers in the world.

Henley is behind only Rory McIlroy and Sepp Straka in the FedExCup rankings, ahead of Collin Morikawa and J.J. Spaun.

Scottie Scheffler is No. 10 in the FedExCup table but still No. 1 in the Official World Golf Rankings, where Henley is seventh, after ending last year 17th. McIlroy is second.

The Arnold Palmer win was huge, as Henley avoided all of the pitfalls and disasters that sabotaged him the past few years. He had developed a trend of playing three quality rounds and started Sunday in contention only for something to go awry.

Nothing bad happened in a win that qualified as an "It's about time" victory to many, with Henley unable to finish other tournaments despite plenty of stellar play and a rise in the rankings to a consensus top 20 reputation.

The iffy follow-up a week later wasn't overly shocking, considering it had been a while since Henley went into a tournament off a win, but a triple bogey in the Players' third round was a surprise.

His general play and consistency the last year or so, hiccups aside, again have him on the general "players to watch" list this week.

From Golfdigest.com: "Henley's not the flashiest name, but his consistency is lethal. ... In his win at the Arnold Palmer Invitational, he excelled in all the areas he will need to if he wants to find the first page of the leader board here in Georgia.

From Golf.com: "He's always played OK here (four top-25s in eight starts) and is just starting to play the best major golf of his career — his three major top-10s are all from the past two years, including his past two majors played. ...

"If he's seventh in the world right now, is he really a sleeper pick? He also has incredible touch on and around the greens — which will come in handy while navigating Augusta's punishing greenside bunkers."

See HENLEY, B3

NOTEPAD

Mayhem done, Mercer tennis wins SoCon title

Micah Johnston
Sports Editor

The Macon Mayhem played their final series of the season last weekend, falling 5-1 on Friday and 4-0 in Sunday's season finale against the Huntsville Havoc.

Macon finished the year 20-31-3, good for 45 points and the ninth place spot in the final SPHL league standings. The Mayhem were one place short of the playoffs, though they stayed alive until the final stretch of the season.

Jake Goldowski and Dan Winslow tied the most points for the Mayhem with 34. Though newcomer Zach Nazzarett did have 36 points total on the season, only 13 of those came with Macon, the others notched during his time with the Peoria Rivermen this season.

Another key contributor was Yaroslav Yevdokimov, who signed on with the Mayhem in January. Yevdokimov scored 17 points in just 21 games, making an impact in multiple games in the second half of the season.

Tickets are on sale for the 2025-26 Macon Mayhem season.

Mercer men's tennis gets share of conference title

Mercer defeated Wofford 7-0 to clinch a share of the Southern Conference title for the first time in the program's 33-year history.

The victory was the Bears' seventh win in a row, as Mercer remains undefeated in SoCon play at 6-0. The Bears won the No. 1, 2 and 3 matches with relative ease to get in great position for the win before the rest of the team rounded out a sweep.

Mercer will close out the regular season in Macon with a Saturday match against Samford at 11 a.m. The Bears can win the regular conference championship outright if they defeat the Bulldogs, who are in second place with a 5-1 conference mark.

ACE baseball loses first region game

The ACE Gryphons lost in blowout fashion to the Bleckley County Royals in a key region game Tuesday, as the Royals scored six runs in the first two innings to cruise to a 13-3 win.

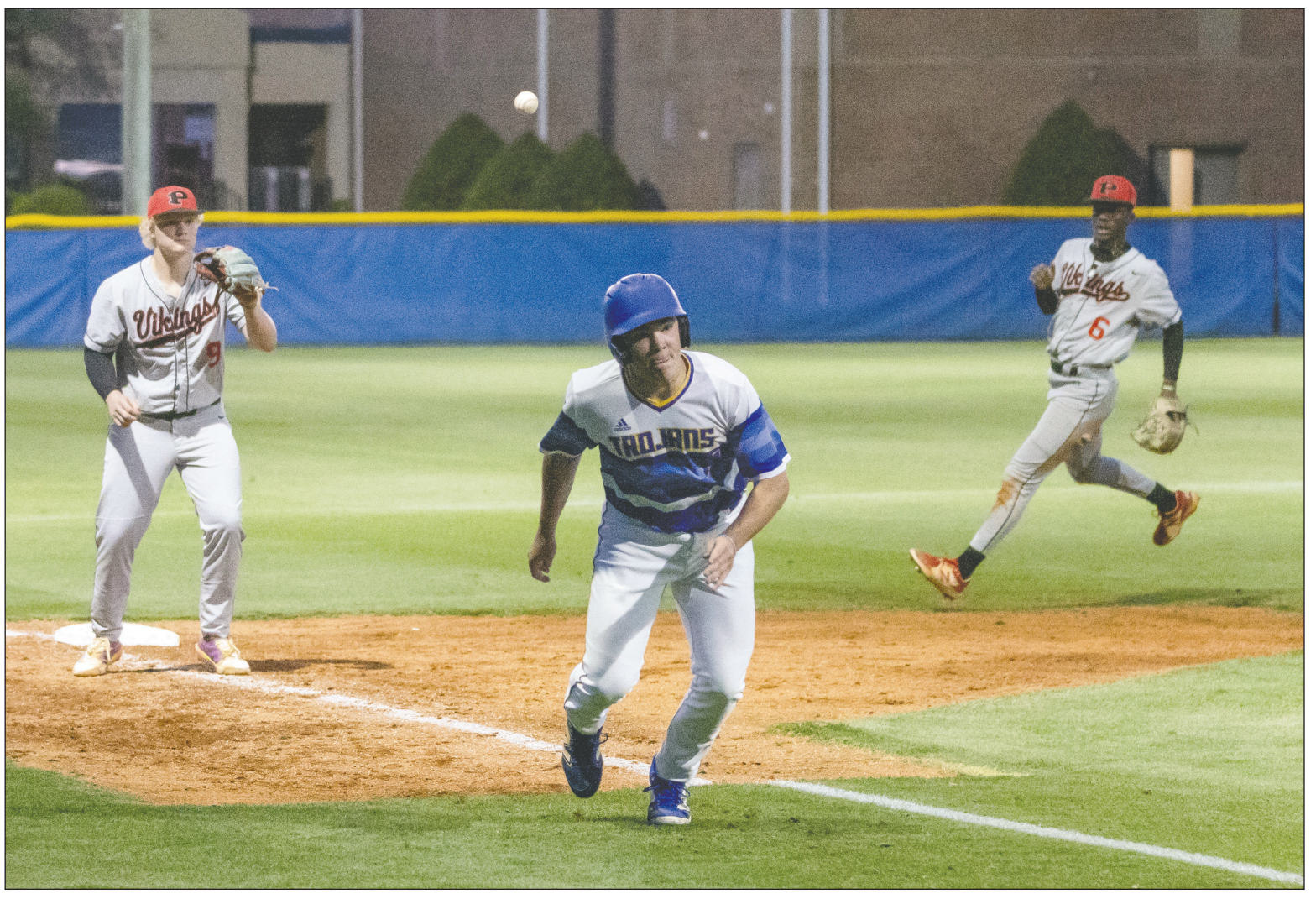
Gavin Cole stole the show for Bleckley County, driving in four runs for the Royals on three hits. Walker Boatright also had three hits for Bleckley County at the top of the order. Austin Yourn and Jay Johnson also had three hits each.

The Royals tallied 16 hits and won by mercy rule after going up by 10 runs in the bottom of the sixth inning.

It was a surprising outcome, as the Gryphons had been atop the Region 2-A Division I standings all season. ACE only mustered three hits. One of those was a double by Aiden Sanderson to drive in two runs in the fourth, but by then it was already 8-2 in favor of Bleckley County.

Sanderson drove in one more run in the

See NOTEPAD, B2



Jessica Gratigny / For The Melody

Tattnall's Boone Fyke (11) runs toward home plate during a game against First Presbyterian Day School at Tattnall Square Academy in Macon on Tuesday. The Trojans defeated the Vikings 3-2 despite FPD scoring both of its runs in the first inning. The two teams played again Thursday, after The Melody went to print.

Tattnall defeats FPD in key GIAA region showdown

Michael A. Lough
For The Melody

The first pitch of the game?

A solid liner to deep center from FPD's Keon Johnson, who sends a lot of solid liners to deep somewhere.

The seventh pitch? A nice shot from Brady McHugh that allowed Johnson to score easily.

Before Tattnall ace Wyatt Still had thrown 15 pitches, the Trojans were down 2-0.

But then Still found a groove on the mound, limiting the Vikings while the Tattnall offense turned things around to give the Trojans a 3-2 win Tuesday over FPD in a key region showdown.

"Baseball is kind of a crazy game," said FPD head coach Greg Moore. "There were a lot of things going on there. Ultimately, they had some good at-bats when they needed to have them, and some kids did some good things for them in some important situations. And we didn't match it, honestly."

The Vikings fell to 16-4 overall and 2-1 in GIAA District 6-4A/3A play, the Trojans improving to 17-2 and 3-0 with their 10th straight win. Tattnall improved to 7-0 in one-run games.

Tinsley Lewis ended a seven-pitch at-bat to bring in McHugh for the second run of the first inning after a steal and throwing error pushed him to third. That put FPD up 2-0 after just 23 pitches by Still.

On the hill for FPD was Mercer-bound Conner Strandmark. The Trojans started battling immediately, as Still turned a stellar nine-pitch at-bat before drawing a two-out walk. Anson Talcott followed with a single before Strandmark ended the inning with a strikeout on his 30th pitch.

Still needed only 23 pitches to get out of the next two innings, while Tattnall kept pushing Strandmark on a night where the Trojans had at least two baserunners in all but one inning.

Tattnall stranded two in the second and two in the third before finally breaking through, after four of seven Trojans struck out. Chandler Cook and Boone Fyke singled from the 8 and 9 spots in the order, and an infield single on a superb bunt by Marquez Wilson loaded the bases.

Cook came in on Tristan Turner's single to right, but Fyke was tagged out after a rundown when he slipped after passing third, a situation head coach Jordan Brooks took the blame for.

"I was actually stopping him and when he put on the brakes, he slipped," Brooks said. "It's on me, trying to see the guy field the ball, make sure he fields it cleanly. That's me trying to get a little greedy."

The inning ended a batter later on a hard shot to first baseman Grant Martin.

See BASEBALL, B3



Mark Powell / For The Melody

Freshman pitcher William Makowski strolls off the field after tagging out a Baconton Charter runner at home in last year's matchup at Truist Park. The Gryphons face the Blazers at Truist again this Friday.

ACE baseball to play at Truist Park

Mark Powell
For The Melody

The ACE Gryphons baseball team will play in the Atlanta Braves' Truist Park north of Atlanta this Friday in the second installment of a series at the MLB stadium.

ACE faced off against Baconton Charter last year — the Gryphons won the game at Truist 6-4 over the Blazers — and will rematch with them at 7 p.m. Friday in an event organized by parents, teachers and coaches at the school.

The path to playing in Truist isn't easy, as the Braves only partner with a few high school teams each year. Teams must sign up early before those spots fill up and commit to selling 2,000 tickets to a regular season Braves game.

The ACE baseball booster club and team, in addition to having to sell the tickets, raised the necessary funds to send the team to Atlanta. The memories made are worth it, according to head coach Josh McLendon.

"Getting on the field and seeing the guys light up getting to live out a dream is something you never forget, and putting together a three-run fifth inning to take the lead was a great moment," McLendon said.

Current senior Brice Whitley's favorite memory from last year was a no-brainer: his laser-beam throw from center field to pitcher William Makowski covering home plate to shut down a potential Baconton rally was the highlight for him.

ACE shortstop Jake McLendon said he'll never forget his three-run triple to give his teammates the lead.

"The rally we had coming from down to win the game and getting to compete at a high level on a major league baseball field with my teammates was one of the coolest experiences of my life," he

See ACE B3



Jason Vorhees / The Melody

Stratford's Fiona Leary and FPD's Bella Fritz chase down the ball during the Vikings' 3-1 win over the Eagles earlier this year. FPD is still undefeated, while the Stratford girls' only loss came against the Vikings.

Notepad, from B1:

sixth for the Gryphons, their third and final score. ACE dropped to 14-1 in region play, as it was their first loss against a Region 2 opponent. Bleckley moved to 13-2.

The two teams meet again Thursday, this time in Macon, after The Melody goes to print. If Bleckley County defeats ACE a second time, they will hold the tiebreaker and go into a deadlock for first place with Washington County, which is also 14-2.

All four teams have already clinched a playoff spot regardless.

Soccer teams remain unbeaten in region play

The FPD girls soccer team continued their dominance Tuesday, defeating Lamar County 10-2 on the road.

The Vikings are now 10-0 on the season, the only undefeated team left in their region, GIAA District 6-4A/3A. FPD defeated Stratford earlier this year to give the Eagles their only loss. The Stratford girls are 8-1 on the year.

Stratford's boys team has been solid as well, as it remained undefeated in the district with a 5-0 win against John Milledge on Tuesday to move to 6-0 in the region and 9-2 overall. It was a much-needed victory, as both of the Eagles' two losses came in their last two games against Mary Persons and Westminster-Augusta.

Both ACE soccer teams remain on top of the public school regions.

The girls have a stranglehold on the region, especially after defeating East Laurens 2-1 in what was a defacto region title game earlier this month.

East Laurens' lone goal is still the only score the Gryphon girls have allowed in Region 2-A Division I games all season. The ACE girls are 12-2 overall and 7-0 in the region after defeating Central 7-0 on Tuesday.

The boys team is 7-0 in region play as well, with a 9-4 overall mark. The Gryphons defeated their closest competitor for the region, Dodge County, 1-0 earlier this year and have control of the region as a result. They also defeated Central 7-0.

Other Bibb County soccer programs have, for the most part, struggled. The Central girls have the most promising program, as the Chargers are 4-9 on the year with a 3-4 region record good for fifth place in Region 2. The Rutland girls also look solid, as they earned a playoff spot thanks to the power rankings.

BUY 4 TIRES Any Brand
GET 50% OFF ALIGNMENT



OFFER EXPIRES 4/31/25

MICHELIN BFGoodrich Tires

MACON

486 MLK Jr. Blvd. 478-743-1525

120 Riverside Pkwy. ...478-474-4119

793 Shurling Drive 478-743-7488

7020 Peake Rd. 478-405-5588

RAFFIELD TIRE-MASTER AUTO SERVICE CENTER

WWW.RAFFIELDTIRE.COM

AAA Approved Auto Repair · BBB ACCREDITED BUSINESS · ASE We employ ASE certified technicians

Special Content furnished to the Macon Melody.

HOW TO START A GARDEN IN RETIREMENT.

Sponsored by: Carlyle Place
A Life-Plan Community of Atrium Health Navicent



With the warmth of spring and longer days comes a return to the outdoors. Gardening is the perfect hobby to start this season, and it's especially perfect for new retirees and older adults who have extra time to tend their plots.

Gardening for Your Health

Gardening is more than just another hobby. In addition to being fun, relaxing, and interesting, it's also great for your overall well-being.

Physical Benefits

Gardening is a form of exercise! By the time you kneel, dig, water, walk, prune, and harvest, you've done quite a lot of work. Any kind of physical activity helps reduce stress, but working in the garden is especially beneficial. Being in the sunshine can also help reduce muscle tension and lower blood pressure.

Mental Benefits

We know that being in nature can improve mood and mental well-being. Gardening builds on this positive association and adds another dimension: a sense of purpose and accomplishment. Watching your vision come to life and creating a routine around the garden helps add interest and depth to a life that sometimes feels a bit off balance with the absence of daily work in the office.

Social-Emotional Benefits

Research shows that older adults have a lot to gain from being in natural spaces, especially if they share the experience with others. Gardening can be an individual hobby, but many seniors enjoy bonding over their gardens as part of a community. Being outside means you're more likely to run into neighbors and start a conversation. Even if you tend your garden alone, you can share the fruits, vegetables, and flowers with friends and family to strengthen these relationships.

Tips for Starting a Garden

Gardening is a great hobby because it has lower barriers to entry — with just a few tools, some soil, and seeds, you can get started. If you'd like to make the most of this activity, though, it's important to take a little bit more time to really plan your plot.

Investigate Your Space and Resources

Gardens can be big, small, and every size and shape in between. Many retirees, especially those who have downsized, may not have a large plot of land for gardening. The good news is that container gardens are perfect for patios, balconies, and shared spaces, so you don't need an entire lot to have a robust garden. You'll also want to think about money, time, and available shade/sun. Choose a location for your garden that has easy access to water and that you can tend several times a week without difficulty.

Decide What to Plant

Would you like to grow vegetables or flowers? Do you prefer things that flower all season long or a more muted approach? Deciding what to plant in your garden is one of the most important (and fun!) parts. But the good news is that you don't have to worry about being too committed; the best gardens undergo change every year, so you can adjust as you discover more about what you enjoy growing.

If you're growing vegetables, you can find the recommended planting times for your area by following the Farmer's Almanac guide. You'll also want to make sure that you include as many native species as possible. Check agricultural colleges in your area for the best lists of native plants, trees, and shrubs.

Start Small

It's easy to get excited and try to plant everything all in one season. Unfortunately, gardening can be more work than some people anticipate, so start small and scale up. Choose just a few things to plant the first year, then see how incorporating more into the routine would work in the following seasons.

Beyond Simple Gardens

Many retirees find that gardening becomes a central part of their routine after just a few months. If you're ready to move beyond the initial setup stages, here are a few ideas to take your outdoor space to the next level.

Build a Rain Barrel

One of the benefits of gardening is the critical thinking you'll do as you make changes and adjust to natural elements. Challenge yourself even more (and keep those mental faculties sharp) by building a simple rain barrel collection system for your garden. Adding special projects and upgrades like this can turn your garden into an impressive undertaking.

Create a Wildlife Habitat

If you're ready to go beyond a simple garden, think about creating a space that qualifies as a certified wildlife habitat in your area. Even small spaces like patios can qualify, so check these guidelines for the kinds of plants and resources that you'll need to include.

The best way to begin gardening is to jump right in with your first few plants. Once you feel the dirt and smell the fresh air, you'll be hooked on this new hobby for the long term.



Baseball, from B1:



Jessica Gratigny / For The Melody

Tattnall players celebrate a hit that gave them the lead over FPD at Tattnall Square Academy in Macon on Tuesday. The Trojans defeated the Vikings 3-2 despite falling behind early when FPD scored two runs in the opening frame off of ace pitcher Wyatt Still.

FPD wasted a leadoff double in the fifth by Johnson, which was followed by an intentional walk. After a double-play and hit batter, Still got a strikeout to end the threat.

"We really never were much of a threat after the first inning until the seventh," Moore said. "(Still) settled into a really nice job pitching. I thought our guy did a great job pitching. You tell me (Strandmark) is going to hold them to two or three runs, I feel like we got a chance to win the ballgame."

The lefty Still retired eight of 10 batters at one point in the middle of the game.

"I thought Wyatt settled in, and nerves got kind of flushed," Brooks said. "He was able to command his own and kind of settle into who he's been this year. I thought we played defense behind him."

Tattnall battling at the plate finally paid off in the bottom of the sixth.

Anson Talcott worked hard for a walk and Griffey Gorman singled. After a couple of steals on different pitches, Braxton Collins delivered a two-run single to center through a short infield.

Collins, Cook and Fyke from 7, 8, and 9 combined to go 5-for-9 for Tattnall, with Collins driving in two runs.

"The bottom of our lineup was great," Brooks said of the trio that came up with half of Tattnall's hits. "They were a big part of us scoring three runs."

FPD's tamed bats were revived in the top of the seventh, as Strandmark opened the final frame with a walk before Johnson reached an out later on a grounder that ate up Tattnall second baseman Wilson.

But Wilson — who had come up with a big leaping catch to end the sixth — made a huge play two pitches later when he dove to his left to stab a grounder and get the second out, keeping Strandmark from scoring the tie run.

"Hats off to the kid," Moore said. "He doesn't make that play, we may tie the ballgame right then. And the very next batter hits a missile."

Brooks was impressed by the play as well.

"It wins us the game, for sure," he said.

McHugh drilled Still's 112th pitch, but it went straight to centerfielder Mason Cullars for the final out.

Still fanned seven and walked four while allowing five hits — three to Johnson — to improve to 6-0 while Strandmark struck out 11 and walked two while surrendering five hits in the loss.

"We tell our guys, 'just give me everything you got,' and I thought we did that," Brooke said. "We battled and we competed, and they were gutsy."

Henley, from B1:



Jason Vorhees / The Melody

Macon native Russell Henley watches as his shot flies during an event last year. Henley, a Stratford Academy and University of Georgia grad, is the No. 7 player in the world coming into the Masters this week.

From Sporting News (ranking him 15th): "Henley flies a bit under the radar, but he's solid across the board. ... Henley's a great value at +5500."

From Rotoballer.com: "Other than off the tee (-0.059), he ranks inside the top 25 for every other strokes gained metric. Having success at Augusta National from tee to green revolves around hitting as many greens as possible, and taking advantage of par-5s. Henley does both extremely well,

One story listed Henley as one of 10 golfers to root for.

"He was once among the world's best amateurs and a potential rising star, but he did not fulfill his potential during his 20s. Instead, he's found a career renaissance in his mid-30s, most recently winning the Arnold Palmer Invitational against a loaded field. Considering Henley's candidacy at a similar age, the idea that someone can find a new peak in their 30s is an attractive proposition."

Two years ago, Henley had the week off before the Masters, and had finished in the top 20 in his two previous events, after a rough visit to the Arnold Palmer Invitational.

Still, Henley fine-tuned things and finished tied for fourth in Augusta.

Last year, he entered the Masters with the solid momentum of a fourth-place finish and three sub-70 rounds at the Valero Open in Texas.

He left last year's Masters frustrated with a 7-over, 295, the weekend disrupted by a second-round 77 en route to a tie for 38th, his worst finish in Augusta.

Henley's average finish in Augusta is 21st in seven four-round tries. He didn't play in 2019, 2020 or 2021.

In 30 rounds, he's shot 70 or less seven times, and opened his past four visits with a 73.

He followed a third-round 76 in 2022 with a 70. Of the seven full tournaments, his fourth round has been better than his third round six times.

Henley, who turns 36 on Saturday, is in the top 10 on the Tour in going for the green/birdie or better, greens in regulation percentage, birdie average, putting from 15-20 feet, scoring average, shots gained and putting average.

An oddity: he's fifth in putting from 20-25 feet and 12th from 10-15, but 139th from 15-20 feet.

He's 19th in putting, solid in approach, but so-so around the green and scrambling.

The consistency he's gained from confidence gained the past few years, plus his ability to maintain both in the Arnold Palmer, is a reason eyes will be on him this week.

"I don't know if I'd describe a five-time winner on the PGA Tour as being under the radar, but Russell Henley sure isn't getting much credit for being the No. 7 player in the world," wrote ESPN's Mark Schlabach. "If a Masters winner has to find fairways and execute second shots, there aren't many golfers in the field better than Henley."



PHOTOGRAPHER/NEWSPAPER

ACE baseball's 2024 team, coaches, parents and others post with the Phil Niekro statue in front of the third base gate at the Atlanta Braves' Truist Park last season. The Gryphons played Baconton Charter last year and will face them again Friday.

ACE, from B1:

said.

And for William Makowski, one of ACE's star pitchers, just the experience was enough to be memorable.

"Being surrounded by my teammates after making the last out was the greatest moment," Makowski said.

Each player and coach had a special moment, something McLendon was hoping for. More memories will be made Friday when the team returns to Truist.

Last year's game

After the pregame introductions, the ACE offense couldn't get any runners on base against Blazers starter Reid Shiver. Gryphons senior Jack Corrigan took the mound for ACE, but the Baconton bats were ready. The Blazers had multiple hits, though the Gryphon defense held them to a single run. ACE couldn't answer in the bottom of the first.

Neither team scored in the second inning.

ACE tied the game in the top of the third, but the Baconton offense erupted in the bottom half of the frame, plating three runs. In the top of the fourth ACE cut the lead in half to 4-2.

Makowski, then a freshman, took the mound for the Gryphons in the bottom of the 4th, and the Blazers had multiple runners reach base. Current senior Brice Whitley gunned down a runner at the plate to end any hopes of adding insurance runs.

Whitley's play ignited the Gryphon bats in the top of the fifth, as ACE plated three runs and took its first lead of the game. After the Gryphons loaded the bases, Jake McLendon delivered a three-run scoring triple.

Makowski and the Gryphon defense held in the bottom of the fifth as ACE clung to a 5-4 lead heading into the sixth inning. An insurance run extended the lead to two, and Makowski closed out the final frame for the win. The Gryphons flocked to the mound, surrounding the freshman and savoring the victory.

Baconton enters this year's matchup 22-1 overall and 14-0 in region play, ACE is 16-8 overall and 14-1 in its region. First pitch is scheduled for 7 p.m. Friday evening.

Friday, April 11th
Baseball
- Rutland vs Pike County 4:30 pm
- Rutland vs Pike County 7 pm
- Ace vs Baconton Charter 7 pm
- Northeast @ Dodge County 5 pm
- Mount de Sales vs Piedmont Academy 6 pm
- CFCA @ Windsor Academy 4 pm

Soccer
Boys teams:
- Rutland @ Callaway 7:30 pm
- Northeast @ Houston County 7:30 pm
- CFCA vs Covenant Academy 8 pm

Girls teams:
- Rutland @ Callaway 5:30 pm
- Northeast @ Houston County 5:30 pm
- FPD vs Northside 5:30 pm
- CFCA vs Covenant Academy 6 pm

Mercer Sports
- Track & Field at (1) South Florida Invitational
- Track & Field at (2) Duke Invitational
- Men's Golf vs Rounds 1/2
- Beach Volleyball vs Jacksonville TBD
- Beach Volleyball @ North Florida 4 pm
- Baseball vs Charleston Southern 6 pm

Saturday, April 12th
Mercer Sports
- Track & Field at (1) South Florida Invitational
- Track & Field at (2) Duke Invitational
- Men's Golf vs Round 3
- Beach Volleyball vs Jacksonville 10 am
- Men's Tennis vs Samford 11 am
- Women's Lacrosse vs High Point Noon
- Beach Volleyball @ North Floida Noon
- Men's Lacrosse at Bellarmine Noon
- Softball vs Charleston Southern 2 pm
- Softball @ ETSU 3:30 pm

Sunday, April 13th
Mercer Sports
- Baseball @ Charleston Southern 3 pm
- Softball @ ETSU 3:30 pm

Monday, April 14th
Baseball
- Northeast @ Baldwin 5 pm
- FPD @ Mount de Sales Academy 6 pm
- CFCA @ Covenant Academy 6 pm
- Windsor Academy @ Crisp Academy 4 pm
- Windsor Academy @ Crisp Academy 6 pm

Soccer
Boys teams:
- Westside @ Jackson 7:30pm
- Northeast @ Dodge County 7:30 pm
- CFCA vs David Emmanuel Academy 7 pm

Girls teams:
- Westside @ Jackson 5:30pm
- Northeast @ Dodge County 5:30 pm
- FPD @ John Milledge Academy 5:15 pm
- CFCA vs David Emmanuel Academy 5 pm
- Windsor vs Robert Toombs Christian 5:30 pm

Mercer Sports
- Women's Golf vs 1st Round

Tuesday, April 15th
Baseball
- Central vs Bleckley County 4:30 pm
- Southwest vs Jefferson County 4:30pm
- ACE vs Washington County 6:30 pm
- Northeast @ East Laurens 6 pm
- Stratford vs Piedmont Academy 7 pm
- Tattnall Square Academy vs John Milledge Academy 7 pm
- CFCA vs Brentwood 4:30 pm
- Windsor @ Gatewood 6 pm

Soccer
Boys teams:
- Westside vs Windsor 7 pm
- ACE @ Morgan County 7:30 pm
- Howard @ Harlem 7:30 pm
- Stratford vs CFCA 7:30
- Mount de Sales vs John Milledge 7:30 pm

Girls teams:
- Westside vs Windsor 5 pm
- ACE @ Morgan County 5:30 pm
- Howard @ Harlem 5:30 pm
- Stratford vs CFCA 5:30
- Mount de Sales vs John Milledge Academy 5:30 pm

Mercer Sports
- Women's Golf vs 2nd Round
- Baseball @ Georgia Southern 6 pm
- Softball @ Georgia Southern 6 pm

Wednesday, April 16th
Baseball
- Rutland vs Crawford County 4:30 pm
- Howard vs Mary Persons 5 pm
- Northeast vs Jefferson County 4 pm
- FPD vs Mount de Sales Academy 7 pm
- Stratford @ Athens Christian 5:55 pm

Soccer
Girls teams:
- Central vs East Laurens 5 pm

Mercer Sports
- Women's Golf vs 3rd Round
- Beach Volleyball vs Wesleyan 10 am
- Beach Volleyball vs Wesleyan 12:30 pm

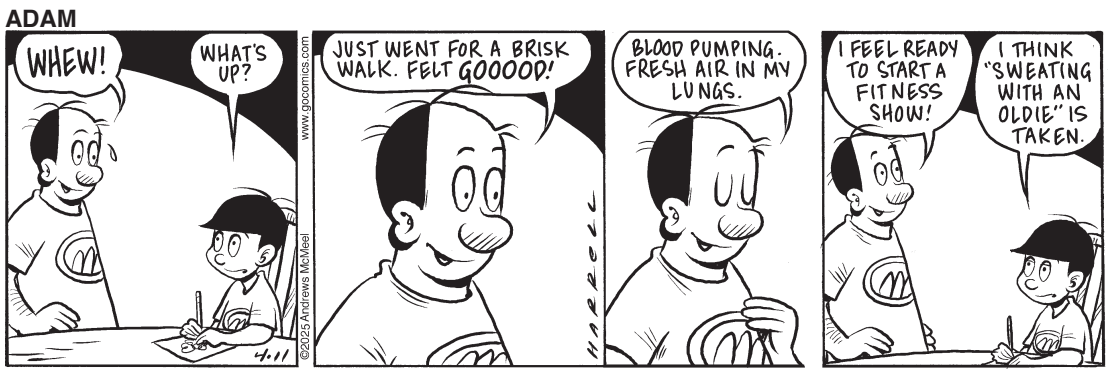
Thursday, April 17th
Baseball
- Southwest @ Rutland 4:30 pm
- ACE vs Lake Oconee Academy 6 pm
- Howard @ Cross Creek 5:30 pm
- FPD @ St. Anne-Pacelli 6 pm
- Stratford @ Piedmont Academy 4 pm
- Tattnall Square Academy @ John Milledge Academy 4 pm
- CFCA @ Community Christian Academy 6 pm

Soccer
Boys teams:
- Rutland vs Jackson 7:30 pm
- ACE @ Dublin 7:30 pm
- Howard @ Baldwin 7:30 pm
- Northeast @ East Laurens 7 pm
- FPD @ Upson-Lee 7:30 pm
- Stratford vs Tattnall Square Academy 7:30 pm
- CFCA vs Sherwood Christian Academy 7 pm

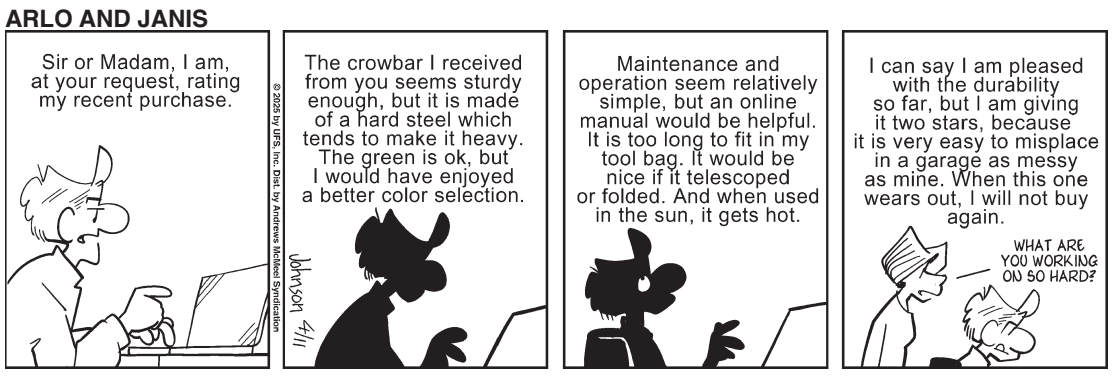
Girls teams:
- Rutland vs Jackson 5:30 pm
- ACE @ Dublin 5:30 pm
- Howard @ Baldwin 5:30 pm
- Northeast @ East Laurens 5 pm
- FPD @ Upson-Lee 5:30 pm
- Stratford vs Tattnall Square Academy 5:30 pm
- CFCA vs Windsor Academy 5:30 pm

Mercer Sports
- Women's Tennis vs Southern Conference Championship
- Men's Tennis vs Southern Conference Championship
- Baseball vs East Tennessee State 6 pm

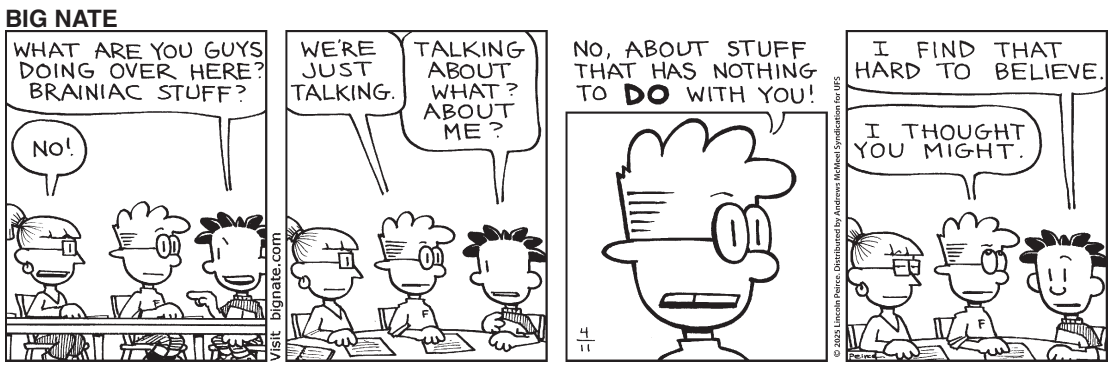
ADAM



ARLO AND JANIS



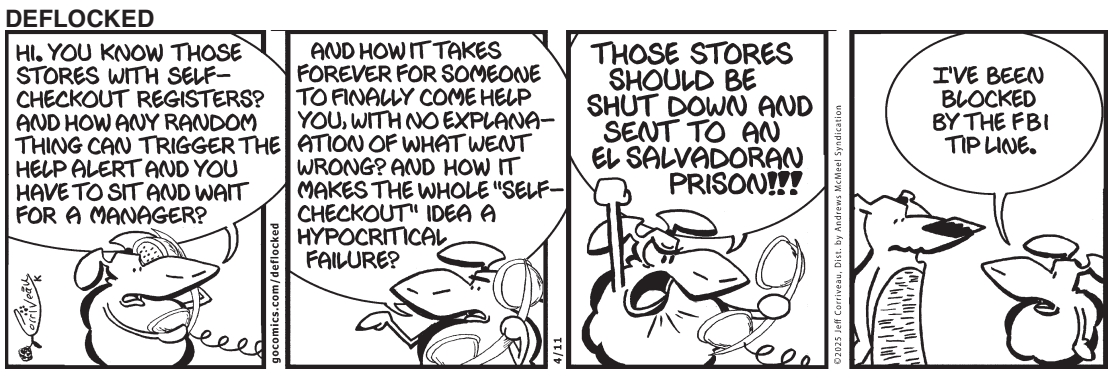
BIG NATE



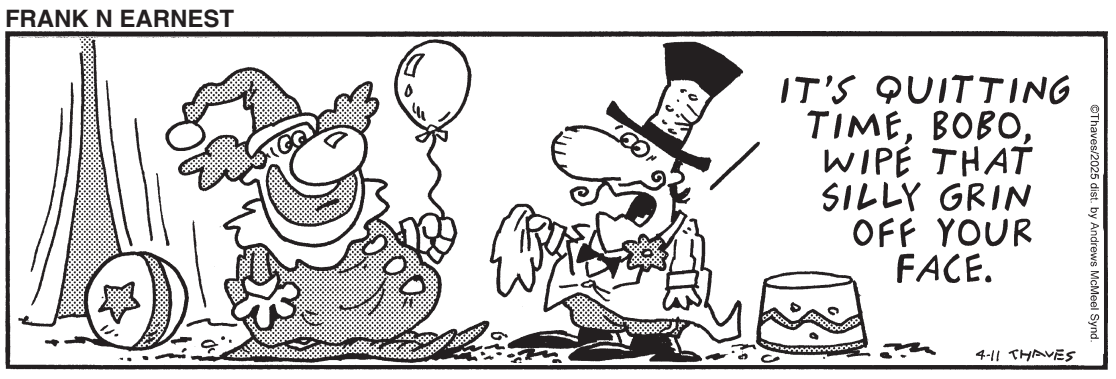
BORN LOSER



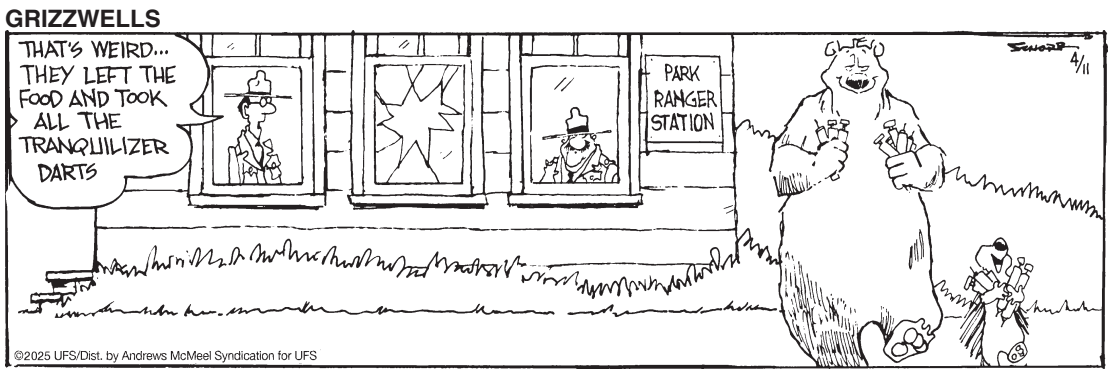
DEFLOCKED



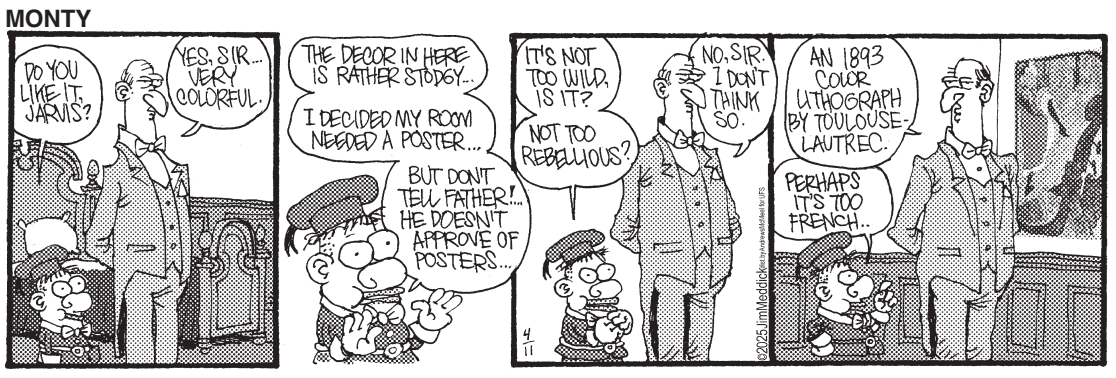
FRANK N EARNEST



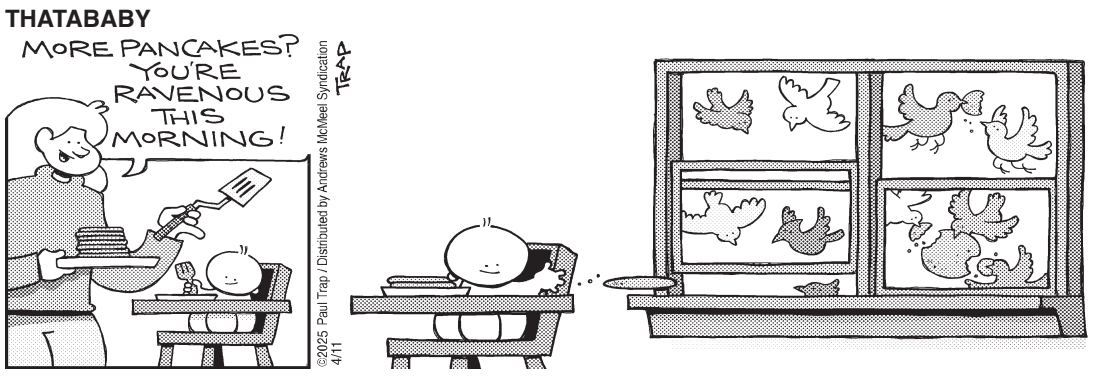
GRIZZWELLS



MONTY



THATABABY



MODERATELY CONFUSED



BREVITY



NEA Crossword Puzzle

ACROSS

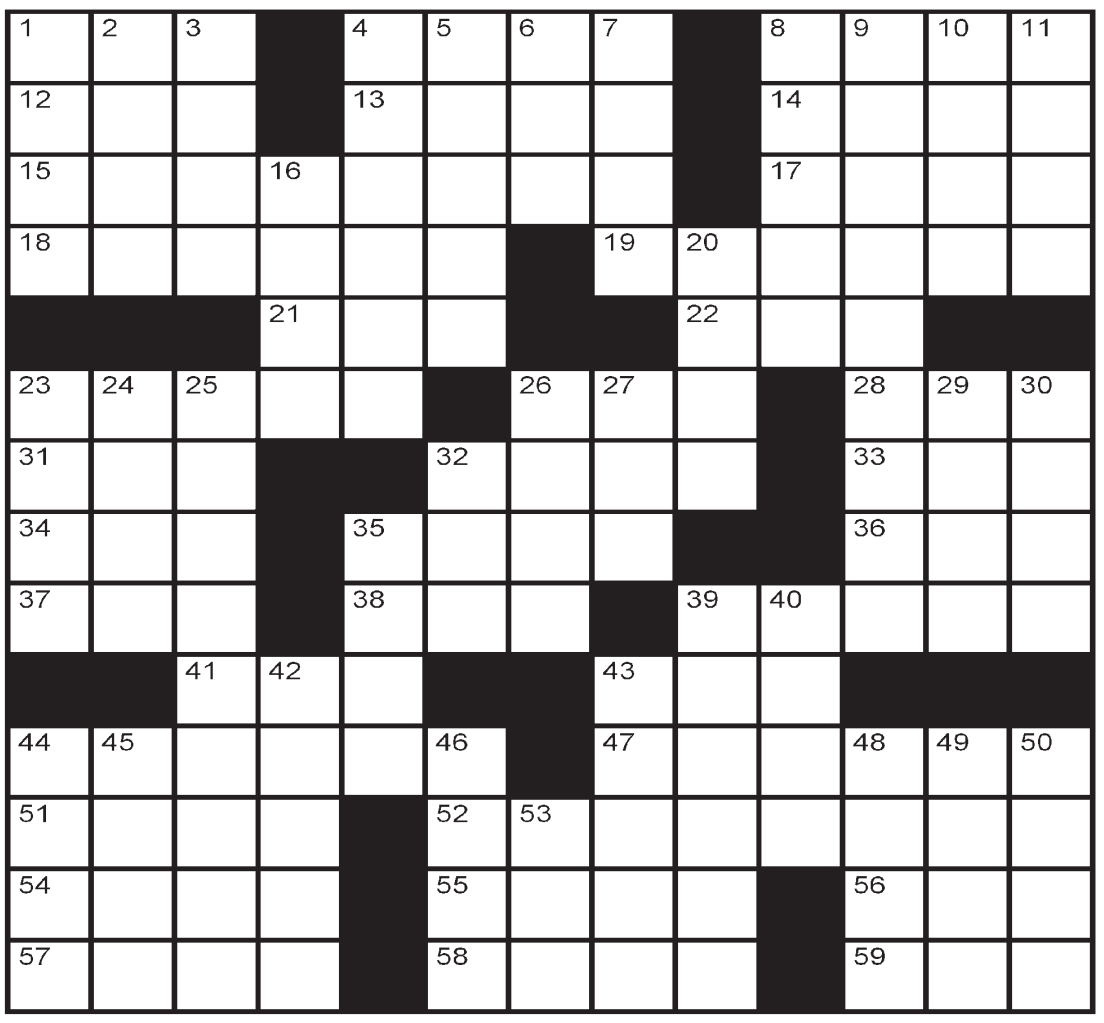
1 Butter serving
4 Detest
8 French cleric
12 Guitar's little cousin
13 Statue in Piccadilly Circus
14 Type
15 Chewing gum flavor
17 Tresses
18 Salad plant
19 Come into view
21 Directed
22 "Come — get it!"
23 Group of witches
26 Harvest deity
28 Joke
31 Physicians' org
32 Singer — Kahan
33 Homer Simpson's dad
34 Fond du —, Wisconsin
35 Shiftless
36 Not talking
37 Calendar abbr.
38 Get older
39 Encounters
41 — Vegas
43 Edge
44 Rock salt
47 Egyptian god of the dead
51 Dutch cheese
52 Funny poem
54 Appraise
55 Wild swine
56 Luau fare
57 Watched carefully
58 Curry and Landers
59 Med. specialty

DOWN

1 Purple shade
2 Related
3 Incline
4 Paradise
5 Carrying weapons
6 Overly
7 Feudal serf
8 Pallid
9 Checkers, e.g. (2 wds.)
10 Jail on a ship
11 Raison d'—
16 Long river
20 Make pulpy
23 Part of the leg
24 — Khayyam
25 Go back and forth
26 Seep
27 Remuneration
29 Border on
30 Valuable stones
32 Pester
35 "The — of Us"
39 Tightwads
40 Arab ruler
42 Had as an intent
43 — numeral
44 "Present!"
45 "Call it — —"
46 Place of exile
48 Ready to eat
49 Desktop picture
50 Short play
53 Charged particle

Answer to Previous Puzzle

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



4-11

© 2025 UFS, Dist. by Andrews McMeel Syndication for UFS

SUDOKU

DIFFICULTY RATING: ☆☆☆☆☆

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

Almanac

Today is the 101st day of 2025 and the 23rd day of spring.

TODAY'S HISTORY: In 1814, French Emperor Napoleon Bonaparte abdicated the throne and was banished to the island of Elba.

In 1945, U.S. forces liberated the Buchenwald concentration camp.

In 1951, President Harry Truman relieved Gen. Douglas MacArthur of his command in Korea.

In 1979, Ugandan dictator Idi Amin was overthrown.

In 2006, Iran announced that it had successfully enriched uranium.

TODAY'S BIRTHDAYS: Dale Messick (1906-2005), cartoonist; Oleg Cassini (1913-2006), fashion designer; Louise Lasser (1939-), actress; Hattie Gossett (1942-), playwright/poet; Jennifer Esposito (1973-), actress; Joss Stone (1987-), singer.

TODAY'S FACT: The population of Uganda is the second-youngest in the world, with a median age of 16.1 years old. Only Niger's population, with a median age of 15.1, is younger.

TODAY'S SPORTS: In 1989, Ron Hextall of the Philadelphia Flyers became the first NHL goaltender to score a goal in the playoffs, leading the Flyers to an 8-5 victory over the Washington Capitals.

TODAY'S QUOTE: "If we learn the art of yielding what must be yielded to the changing present, we can save the best of the past." – Dean Acheson

TODAY'S NUMBER: 3 – Nobel Prize recipients among the prisoners freed from Buchenwald concentration camp. Union leader Leon Jouhaux was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1951, author Elie Wiesel was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1986 and author Imre Kertesz received the Nobel Prize in literature in 2002.

TODAY'S MOON: Between first quarter moon (April 4) and full moon (April 12).

Community Briefs

Fresh Produce Records to release exclusive vinyl pressing

A downtown record store is marking a dozen years of business with its first store-exclusive vinyl pressing.

Fresh Produce Records, an indie music store on Cherry Street, has only 500 special records of the Panic album, "Life from Austin, Texas." The album was chosen by store owners because of the Athens-born band's strong ties to Georgia. The album features band member Michael House, who died from pancreatic cancer less than two years after the recording.

Panic also has ties to Macon. Its albums " "Widespread Panic," "Everyday" and "Ain't Life Grand" all were released by Capricorn Records and Warner Brothers Records.

Panic played in Macon regularly from the 80s to the late 2000s. Its first show was in Washington Park in 1986. The band has also performed at the Macon Centreplex, Macon City Auditorium and The Rookery.

Autism Rocks Music Festival announces band lineup

The Autism Rocks Music Festival is just around the corner on April 12 from 3-9 p.m. at the Museum of Arts & Sciences. This year's lineup features Macon Music Revue , Shy Company and Sisters of the Blue Moon.

The event includes a full day of live music, local food and community, all to raise awareness for autism.

Proceeds benefit Central Georgia Autism, Ltd., a nonprofit that provides essential resources, therapy, scholarships and social events for individuals and families affected by autism.

Macon Violence Prevention mural unveiled

The Macon Violence Prevention program unveiled a new mural at SOAR Academy on Wednesday alongside the Community Foundation of Central Georgia, Bibb County Schools Superintendent Dan Sims, the Communities in Schools of Central Georgia (CIS) and Erin Hawkins of Mama Hawk Draws.

About 10 students worked with artist Hawkins to come up with a design that would be uplifting and fit the mission of the Communities in Schools classroom. Students created designs, developed a business plan and then presented their pitches.

"They have already shown so much growth throughout this project," said Hawkins. "Watching each of them take the lead in different aspects has been incredibly rewarding. By the time we finish the mural, these students will have gained more than artistic skills—they will have learned the power of working together toward a common goal."

The mural was paid for with part of a $30,000 grant from the county to Communities in Schools.

The county has granted more than $2.5 million to local nonprofits through the MVP program.

Bragg Jam lineup released ahead of 26th annual festival

Bragg Jam announced its lineup for this year's festival, headlined by rock bands American Aquarium and Susto.

The downtown concert crawl is set for July 26. Tickets cost $50, and VIP tickets cost $125.

The festival is also introducing Muddy Mystery Shows, pop-up performances by surprise artists held at "unconventional" locations around Macon and announced only a few hours before showtime, according to a news release.

Bragg Jam began a little over 25 years ago to commemorate the lives of musicians Tate and Brax Bragg, who died in a car accident in Texas while driving back to Macon on July 3, 1999.

The festival is also introducing Muddy Mystery Shows, pop-up performances by surprise artists held at "unconventional" locations around Macon and announced only a few hours before showtime, according to a news release.

Here are the bands set to perform this year:

- Billy Allen + The Pollies
- Ashes
- The Sensational
- Barnes Brothers
- Sisters of the Blue Moon
- The Buckleys
- Tré Burt
- Jackson Griffith
- Hanna Jadagu
- Leon Majcen
- John R. Miller
- The Psycodelics
- Chatham Rabbits
- Jackson Tanner
- Trio
- Jonathan Scales Fourchestra
- Shy Company
- Bo Staloch
- Tier Blue
- Lunar Vacation
- Cha Wa
- Hans Williams

Bill aims to safeguard human rights in Georgia's prisons

Sens. Jon Ossoff (D-GA) and John Kennedy (R-LA) introduced the Family Notification of Death, Injury, or Illness in Custody Act to help notify family members in a timely and compassionate manner in the event of a death, serious illness or injury of a loved one in custody.

The bill would require the U.S. Department of Justice to implement policies and procedures for family notifications by issuing central guidance to the Federal Bureau of Prisons. The bill would also direct the Attorney General to develop and distribute model notification policies and procedures to state and local detention agencies.

"Too often, the families of those incarcerated never find out about a serious illness, a life-threatening injury, or even the death of a loved one behind bars. That's why Senator Kennedy and I are introducing this bipartisan reform legislation," Ossoff said.

Elton John, Brandi Carlile sing about Little Richard, Macon on SNL

The musical act on the latest episode of Saturday Night Live began with a song that pays homage to Little Richard and his pioneering spirit and persistence as a queer Black artist in the Jim Crow South.

Elton John and Brandi Carlile performed "Little Richard's Bible" to celebrate their new collaborative album "Who Believes in Angels?"

The song begins, "Penniman and Macon go together singing loud sweet Georgia, ooh, my soul."

The episode marked John's first time on the show in more than a decade.

SUDOKU ANSWER

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

What to watch

FRIDAY

April 11, 2025

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

Your Friends & Neighbors

Apple TV+ ■ New Series

Jon Hamm is peak Jon Hamm playing Andrew Cooper, a recently divorced hedge fund manager who gets abruptly fired and resorts to stealing from his wealthy neighbors to make ends meet in this hilarious, compelling thriller. Yes, he could sell his fancy car rather than spend his time sneaking into nearby mansions, but the loss of his job so shortly after losing his wife has resulted in a bit of a midlife crisis – which is unfortunate for him, but a fun watch for us. Author Jonathan Tropper – who was also behind the film *This Is Where I Leave You* and the unique crime drama series *Banshee* – is at the wheel as showrunner and director, so you can expect greatness.



'Your Friends & Neighbors'

JESSICA KOURKOUNIS

The Great American Baking Show

The Roku Channel ■ Season Premiere

In the six-episode third season, hosts Zach Cherry and Casey Wilson welcome eight talented bakers from all corners of America and challenge them to whisk, knead and frost their way to baking stardom. From decadent pastries to show-stopping cakes, their baking skills will be put to the ultimate test by judges Paul Hollywood and Prue Leith.

Pets

Disney+

Debuting on National Pet Day today, this documentary directed by Bryce Dallas Howard explores the extraordinary relationship that exists between animals and their people all around the world. Humorous and heartfelt, the film profiles a diverse cast of characters, from everyday pet guardians to dedicated animal rescuers and beyond, highlighting the uniquely vital connections they share with their dogs, cats, pigs, goats and even birds of prey.

NCIS: Sydney

CBS, 8 p.m.

The discovery of a sailor who has been drained of blood leads NCIS into the world of modern-day vampire culture in the new episode "Blood Is Thicker Than Vodka."

Grosse Pointe Garden Society

NBC, 8 p.m.

In the new episode The Frost," the garden clubbers wake to a perilous frost; Catherine (Aja Naomi King) hosts an unexpected guest; Alice (AnnaSophia Robb) vies with Patty (Nancy Travis) for Doug's (Alexander Hodge) favor; Connor's (Josh Ventura) support of Brett's (Ben Rappaport) car business comes with strings; and Birdie (Melissa Fumero) backs Ford's (Felix Wolfe) baseball dreams, but faces heat from his mom.

Fire Country

CBS, 9 p.m.

The Station 42 crew responds to a ski resort accident after a chair lift malfunctions. Country music star Jelly Roll guest-stars in the new episode "Fire and Ice."

Titanic: The Digital Resurrection

Nat Geo, 9 p.m.

This special presents a groundbreaking look at history's most famous maritime disaster in unprecedented detail. Using cutting-edge technology and more than 700,000 digitally scanned images, researchers have assembled the most precise *Titanic* model ever created – a 1:1 digital twin of the wreck, accurate to the rivet. Scientists and historians examine the model to challenge long-held assumptions about the ship's final moments on that fateful night in 1912.

CATCH A CLASSIC

Skippy the Dog Tribute

TCM, beginning at 6 a.m.

Happy National Pet Day! Turner Classic Movies is celebrating with several films featuring Skippy, the wire fox terrier who was as familiar a big-screen presence in the 1930s and '40s as Bette Davis or Clark Gable (especially his appearances in the *Thin Man* movies as "Asta," which were so popular that Skippy was often referred to as "Asta" offscreen). Nearly a decade of Skippy's roughly 20-year life (he lived circa 1931-51) was spent as an actor in films like these that are airing today on TCM: **The Kennel Murder Case** (1933), **The Half Naked Truth** (1932), **Fog Over Frisco** (1934), **The Firebird** (1934), **I'm Still Alive** (1940), **Call It a Day** (1937), 1938's **Bringing Up Baby (pictured), The Thin Man** (1934) and **After the Thin Man** (1936).



RKO PICTURES, INC.

MOVIES YOU'LL LOVE



'Black Panther: Wakanda Forever'

MARVEL STUDIOS

A Few Good Men (1992, Drama) Tom Cruise, Jack Nicholson **BBC America, 6 p.m.**

The Life I Can't Remember (2024, Mystery) Morgan Bradley, Gabriel Pranter **LMN, 6 p.m.**

Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade (1989, Adventure) Harrison Ford, Sean Connery **AMC, 7 p.m.**

Split (2017, Suspense) James McAvoy, Anya Taylor-Joy **VH1, 7 p.m.**

Raiders of the Lost Ark (1981, Adventure) Harrison Ford, Karen Allen **Paramount, 8 p.m.**

The Jane Mysteries: Inheritance Lost (2023, Mystery) Jodie Sweetin, Stephen Huszar **Hallmark Mystery, 8 p.m.**

There's No Way Out (2025, Suspense) Elizabeth Longshaw, Stafford Perry **LMN, 8 p.m.**

White House Down (2013, Action) Channing Tatum, Jamie Foxx **TBS, 8 p.m.**

Sister Act (1992, Musical comedy) Whoopi Goldberg, Maggie Smith **Bravo, 9 p.m.**

Black Panther: Wakanda Forever (2022, Action) Letitia Wright, Angela Bassett **FX, 10 p.m.**

Glass (2019, Suspense) Bruce Willis, James McAvoy **VH1, 10 p.m.**

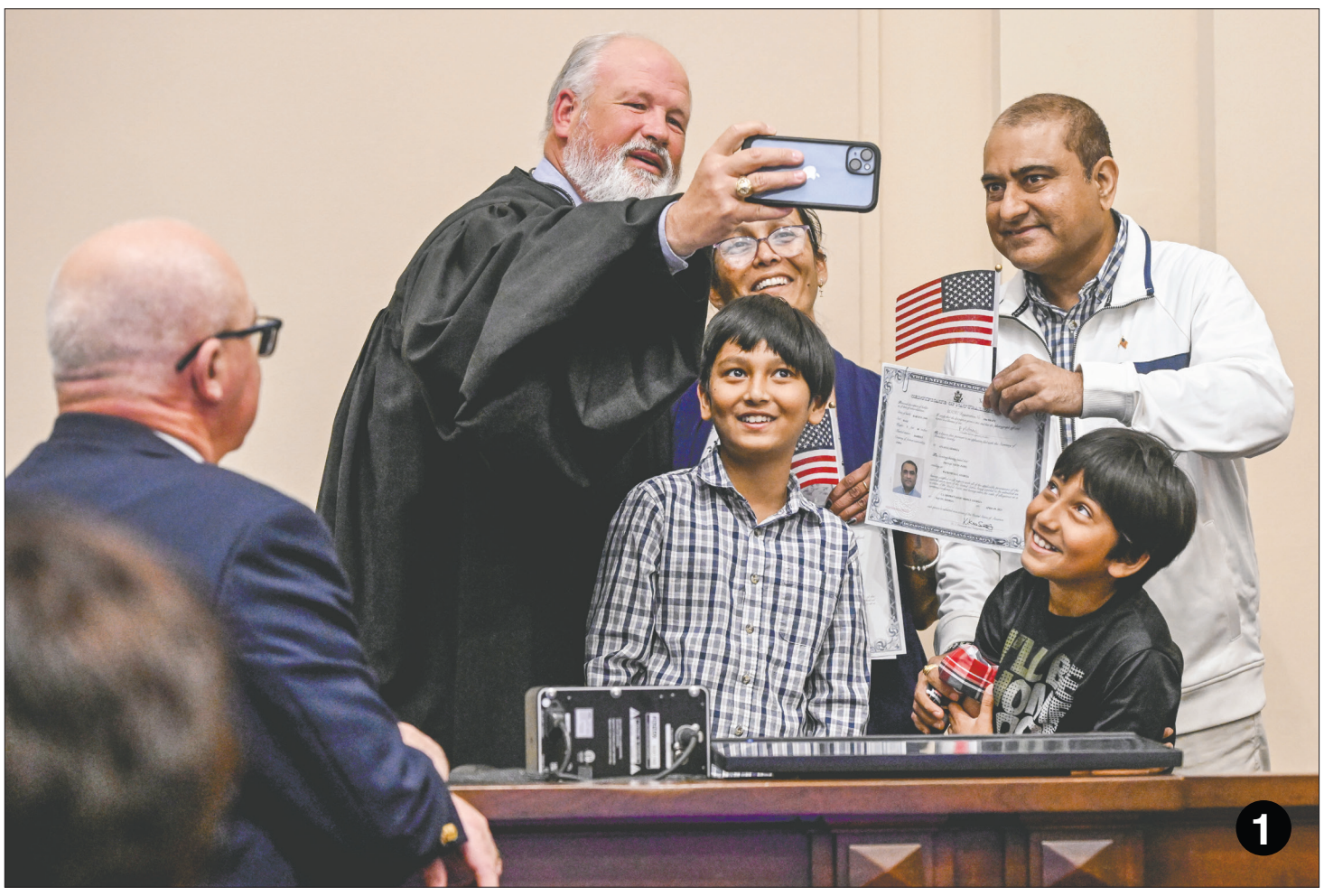
From the editors of TV Weekly and tvinsider.com



Photos by Jason Vorhees / The Melody

Twenty-two applicants from 15 countries were sworn in as U.S. citizens Wednesday during a naturalization ceremony at the William Augustus Bootle Federal Building and U.S. Courthouse in Macon.

1: U.S. District Court Judge Tilman E. "Tripp" Self III takes a selfie with a family after Wednesday's naturalization ceremony.
2: Members of the Howard High School Junior ROTC color guard stand at attention during a naturalization ceremony.
3: Applicants raise their hands while being sworn in during a naturalization ceremony.
4: Kinnika Watts holds her daughter, Lillian, 14 months while being sworn in during a naturalization ceremony Wednesday at the U.S. Courthouse in Macon.


1


2


3


4

Photos by Jason Vorhees / The Melody

Hundreds of people from Middle Georgia gathered along Poplar Street in downtown Macon Saturday for a 'Hands Off' rally. The rally, organized by the local coalition Macon Rising, was part of a National Day of Action, protesting the Trump administration's recent dismantling of several programs and services.

5: A sign comparing President Donald Trump to the Eye of Sauron from "Lord of the Rings" is held up during a "Hands Off" rally in Macon.
6: Demonstrators hold up signs while listening to speakers at the "Hands Off" rally.
7: DeMarcus Beckham speaks to the large crowd gathered in downtown Macon during the "Hands Off" rally Saturday afternoon.
8: Demonstrators hold up signs while listening to speakers at the "Hands Off" rally.



5



6



7



8