

The Macon Melody

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Bibb County's local source for community news

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Macon's Little Richard festival canceled

More than \$4k intended for celebration misspent on food, property taxes and more, records show

Laura Corley

Senior Accountability Reporter
laura@maconmelody.com

The Little Richard Festival was set to be a lively celebration of one of Macon's most famous and impactful musicians, featuring live blues music performers, vendors and tours of the childhood home of the "founding father of rock 'n' roll." But this year's festival, which was

set for April 26, was quietly called off when the nonprofit board that organizes it realized most of the cash donated to it for the community celebration was spent on other things including hibachi meals, cash withdrawals, an expense at an automotive shop plus purchases at Waffle House and Dollar Tree. Nearly half of it was used to pay overdue property taxes on a house in Jones County.

Documents obtained from

Macon-Bibb County through the Open Records Act show The Friends of The Little Richard House Inc. received \$5,000 from The Griffith Foundation in November to cover the cost of performers, a stage and porta-potties for the festival. Only \$725 remained in the account at the end of the year.

The Friends of Little Richard House Inc. board members said they were unaware of the depleted funds until March, when the

newly-elected treasurer went to the bank to be added to the account.

Public records show Tyrone Anthony Hill, a county employee who worked in the parks department, is accused by the county and the nonprofit board of using the money to pay for personal expenses.

Hill was set to be fired, according to a notice of proposed disciplinary action dated March 21, but he refused to sign the paperwork. The county allowed him to resign on

April 7 in lieu of termination, according to his county personnel file. Hill started working for the county in January 2024.

Meeting minutes for The Friends of The Little Richard House's board show debit cards were issued to two people but only one of the cards had been used. The board requested receipts from Hill for the transactions, but Hill said he needed more time

See RICHARD, Page A3

Bibb Schools still facing \$17M deficit

Casey Choung

Melody Reporter
casey@maconmelody.com

Bibb County Schools still faces a \$17 million deficit after reducing costs and receiving additional state revenue, and the board of education is considering property tax hikes to make up the difference.

The school board also discussed possible hires and salary increases at its second work session Monday afternoon.

The school board began budget discussions in early April, introducing a \$23 million deficit partly due to a \$9 million decrease in equalization funding and new state mandated healthcare changes.

Since the board's first work session last month, the school district received an additional \$2 million in state per-pupil funds. The district also asked departments to cut down on costs and deferred textbook purchases until next year, saving the district an additional \$6 million.

The changes bring the preliminary budget deficit to roughly \$17 million, which would mainly have to be addressed, but additional requests would call for more spending.

Superintendent Dan Sims is asking for a handful of new hires, including a consultant to address truancy, a coach for principals, elementary school coordinator and an assistant athletic director. Sims and the district are also looking to carve out a 3% raise for certified teachers at a cost of roughly \$5.5 million.

Sims said cuts being made by the school district, "pale in comparison" to unfunded mandates from the state, including an increase in state-mandated medical insurance.

Board member Henry Ficklin said he had "consternations" about the timing and need for new hires as the board is trying to reduce the budget. He said the district should look at bumping teacher pay by 3.5% or 4% instead of the 3% suggested by Sims.

"We had 43 teachers leave this school year, and many of them pointed out they were going to another system," Ficklin told the board. "That is critical to me of making sure that teachers are paid and that they feel they are valued in our system."

When asked by Ficklin about the principal coaching position, Sims said it would "accelerate school improvement efforts" on a day-to-day basis, specifically when it comes to individual schools' academic cultures.

"Great teams have great coaches," Sims told The Melody. "The concept of coaching adds value, and education is no exception."

Bibb Schools CFO Eric Bush shared several scenarios,

See DEFICIT, Page A2

Unionville center to get \$2M upgrade



Jason Vorhees / The Melody

Frank Johnson Recreation Center Supervisor Clarence Thomas Jr. speaks at a groundbreaking announcing \$2.05 million in upgrades for the center. Upgrades include pickleball and tennis courts, a baseball field, and pool, playground and more.

Casey Choung

Melody Reporter
casey@maconmelody.com

At the recreation center that would one day bear his name, Frank Johnson was a force of nature.

Known by locals as the "Mayor of Unionville," Johnson hosted monthly meetings at the community center, recruiting speakers to educate residents and encouraging children to visit the facility to play and exercise.

It was part of his lifelong commitment to improving the lives of his neighbors in Unionville, a historic Black

neighborhood deeply damaged by decades of redlining.

Now, county officials are carrying on Johnson's legacy, enlarging the recreation center and making it more accessible with a round of improvements, including pickleball and tennis courts, a baseball field, a pool and renovated pump-house, a playground and two pavilions.

Inside, builders will add a conference room and weight room.

"I know that my father is looking down and smiling because he always said when he was growing up he didn't have anywhere to play," said Cheryl Johnson Knight, Frank Johnson's daughter.

Mayor Lester Miller, commissioners and parks department staff dug their shovels into a pile of dirt Monday morning outside the Frank Johnson Recreation Center to commemorate the start of the center's renovations.

The renovations are projected to be completed in September, said Justin Spiller of Spillers Design & Construction, the company hired for the project. County officials touted special-purpose local-option sales tax dollars for the \$2.05 million project.

Clarence Thomas Jr. has been the

See CENTER, Page A2

Periodical — Mail Label



Photo provided

Blair Greene and husband Ernest with sons (from left) Sid, Miles and Owen.

Reflecting on 'biggest blessing in the world' this Mother's Day

Ed Grisamore

Melody Columnist
gris@maconmelody.com

Blair Sexton Greene always dreamed of becoming a mother.

Three children seemed like the perfect number. After all, she grew up in a three-kid home in Perry. So did Ernest, her husband and high school sweetheart.

Their first child was a boy. They named him Miles. Three years later, along came another boy. They called him Sid. A third son arrived in the world two years ago last month. They named him Owen.

My three sons. Life in a fraternity house. Never a dull moment.

Blair wears motherhood like a badge of honor. The queen's cup runneth over.

"There is nothing more fulfilling than being a mother," she said. "It's the biggest blessing in the world."

Like most families, every day is "wash" day at the Greene house.

Wash clothes. Wash dishes. Wash your hands before you come to the supper table.

Yes, there's also "Washed Out."

That is Ernest's stage and professional name. He is a nationally-known singer, songwriter and record producer. He has been

called a pioneer of the "chillwave" musical genre, a fusion of indie rock and electronic pop music.

Music is what brought Blair and Ernest together. They were students at The Westfield School and members of the same youth group at Perry United Methodist Church, where they were chosen to sing a duet one Christmas.

Ernest was in the 10th grade. Blair was an eighth-grader. They sang "Keep the Faith." They began dating the following year.

They married in 2009, about the time Ernest's musical career with "Washed Out" took off like a rocket. His first concert in New York sold out and was written up in The New York Times.

Blair began helping her husband with the band's scheduling and merchandising. She went on tour with him. She played the keyboard and did some singing.

"Even though it was a grind, we got to travel and see the world," Blair said. "We went to Australia, Japan and Europe. It was a fast-paced life, but I wouldn't give anything for it."

A Washed Out song called "Feel It All Around" became the theme song for the IFC comedy series "Portlandia" for eight seasons.

While the adventures of her 20s afforded her the "coolest opportunity," Blair settled into motherhood when she turned 30.

See MOTHER, Page A2



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Mother, from A1:

Their oldest son was born in October 2015. Having been globetrotting on tour for a decade, it was only fitting that they named him Miles. When Sid was born in 2018, the Greens were living in Decatur.

“Ernest traveled a lot,” Blair said. “He was always at an airport.”

Blair’s father, Jim Sexton, died in August 2020, not long after he retired and sold the family business, Davis Oil Company.

The following year, the Greens relocated to Middle Georgia to be closer to their families. Blair’s mother, Vickie, and her sister and brother live in Perry. Ernest’s parents, Patty and Ernest Greene, also live in Perry.

They bought a house in Macon with 20 acres and a small cabin on the property, where Ernest could do his work. They enrolled the boys at a nearby private school and found a church home. And Ernest was still close to the airport in Atlanta.

Blair was 37 years old when she found out she was pregnant with child No. 3. Because of her age, the doctors ordered blood work.

After the lab results came back, the Greens were told their unborn child would have Down syndrome.

“We were shocked and floored,” Blair said. “But once we grieved and wrapped our heads around it, I began reading all the books I could about it to give me a sense of hope and openness.”

One of those books was “Bloom: Finding Beauty in the Unexpected,” a memoir by Kelle Hampton. It chronicled the first year of the life of the author’s daughter, Nella, who was born with Down syndrome.

“The theme for her first birthday party was ‘Bloom Where You’re Planted,’” Blair said. “When I read that, things finally started to make sense. Then it hit me like a ton of bricks. When I was in high school, that was my senior quote (in the yearbook). I was called to do this.”

She said she now believes you “grow through what you go through.”

Emory Owen Greene was born on April 23, 2023, and celebrated his second birthday two weeks ago. He was given his first name in honor of Ernest’s maternal grandfather, Emory Wilson, who would have turned 97 years old this week.

Blair said her mother is the best role model to help her navigate the



Photo provided

Blair Greene with her mother, Vickie Sexton, and her sons Owen, Sid and Miles. Blair recently told the Melody’s Ed Grisamore “There is nothing more fulfilling than being a mother. It’s the biggest blessing in the world.”

joys and challenges of motherhood.

“Mothering was her superpower,” Blair said. “She was a third-grade teacher at Perry Elementary before she stayed home with us. She thrived and loved to teach little life lessons. I always felt it was that way with us, too.”

“I hope that my boys remember the presence of me during their childhood, just as I do my mom,” she said. “And not just in the physical sense. Reading to them, playing with them and taking up with them in what they enjoy. Caring.”

Vickie Sexton is known as “Meme”

to her grandchildren. Her life revolves around their Little League schedules and other activities.

“She has always been steadfast in her love and had wisdom in her heart,” Blair said. “I pray I can relay that to my children and always provide a sense of ‘home’ for them when they are with me.”

Three weeks ago, on April 15, Blair turned 40... certainly an age of reflection.

“Is it just me, or does it feel as though time goes by faster the more kids you have?” she said. “Or maybe the older you get. In these fleeting

days, time together with my boys and my mom is the ultimate gift.”

The Greens have tried to “keep it on their level” when explaining Owen’s situation to his older brothers. Last year, Blair read a book about Down syndrome to the students in Miles’ second-grade class and explained it in their terms.

“Owen has just been the baby brother, and that’s it,” she said. “The main thing he has given us is patience. Slow down. We’re not worried about milestones. Let’s just enjoy this.”

Happy Mother’s Day.

Deficit, from A1:

plotting out what the budget could look like if a combination of factors were adopted, including a 3% salary increase, increasing the millage rate by one mill — which would raise \$5.9 million — and a salary study.

Board member Barney Hester said he agreed with Ficklin’s concerns about adding positions, and asked Bush directly about how he plans to balance the budget.

The state requires the district to maintain a balance-to-expense ratio between 8% and 15% to ensure the district has enough of a financial cushion in case of any variance. The district currently has \$67.8 million in its general fund and maintained a ratio of 24.9% last year.

According to district projects, implementing a 3% raise and increasing the millage rate would result in the school district running out of money in the 2029 fiscal year, which begins in the summer of 2028.

“I don’t think we can reduce it enough to balance \$20 million out of it,” Bush told board members. “At some point in time we’re gonna have to catch up to our millage rate or either rely on state income.”

The district’s director of elementary services and director of maintenance are set to get a \$16,237 raise and new title under the superintendent’s recommendation. Antonio Simmons, director of maintenance, earns \$125,013 annually and Olena Stadnik, director of elementary services, earns \$110,863, according to the Melody’s salary database.

Bibb Schools also reaped \$1 million from Macon-Bibb County’s school zone speed camera revenue. Sims said the money would pay for more campus officers.

The school board is set to adopt a tentative budget at its regular monthly meeting May 15. It will hold two public hearings in June before they finalize the budget.



Jason Vorhees / The Melody

Macon Mayor Lester Miller speaks at a groundbreaking announcing \$2.05 million in upgrades for the Frank Johnson Recreation Center. Upgrades include pickleball and tennis courts, a baseball field, and pool, playground and more.

Center, from A1:

center’s supervisor since 2014. He said the new improvements are a “complete overhaul” of several facilities that were once unaddressed.

Melvin Flowers, longtime Unionville resident, said he remembered when the site was just a bunch of dirt roads.

“Our recreation centers back in the day weren’t that good,” he said. “Now we’ve got some of the best rec centers in Macon that you’d ever want to see.”

Staff at Frank Johnson consider it to be a “recreation destination” — Thomas said the renovations ought to draw people from outside Unionville.

Johnson co-founded the Unionville Improvement Association in 1974, a community forum for the neighborhood to better access resources and plan for the Unionville Recreation Center — before it became named after him. Johnson Knight said her

father would help people with community enhancement projects. As a steward at nearby Bethel CME Church, he brought many people into the congregation.

“He was a foot soldier,” she said. “He walked everywhere and made himself familiar with the people in Unionville.”

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Roberts Academy service dog is beloved by students

Domonique King
For The Melody

Caroline Grove always knew that she wanted a therapy dog for the Roberts Academy students.

As the school's student information and support specialist, Grove and Joy Wood, head of the school, felt that having a furry friend to support the students would be a beneficial experience. "Our intention was to have a school service dog before the school year even began," Grove said. "And then Joy and I had talked about it, we thought it would be so cool to get a dog and surprise our students at Christmas time with the puppy, but nothing ever worked out."

Roberts Academy at Mercer University, which opened last August, is a transition school for second through fifth grade students with dyslexia. With the help of trained educators, the academy helps students master literacy skills and prepare them to achieve academic success when they return to their home schools. With 37 students, Roberts is the only school in Georgia for students with dyslexia outside of Metro Atlanta and the most affordable in the state.

Grove says it was a "God wink" when in early December, a student spotted a doodle left in the nearby dog park during their daily afterschool activities. When the children and Grove first found Sammie, she was severely underweight, had matted fur and was incredibly skittish. Grove says she and Kelly Refitt, the vice provost, spent most of the day trying to track her down but weren't able to find her again until the next day.

Sammie was initially trying her best to avoid them by wandering in the nearby embankment close to the railroad, but eventually caved in.

"We ended up feeding her a plate of food, and I think that got her attention a little bit," Grove

said. "When we were trying to get her to trust us, we walked around with hot dogs so that she would smell them. I think she just gave up because she had been running from us all day and she was really exhausted."

Grove planned on getting Sammie treated by a vet and finding her owners, but the veterinarians found no microchip on her. Eventually, she realized Sammie was everything the school had been looking for in a therapy dog. Sammie was hypoallergenic and gentle, but she was still nervous around others, severely malnourished and needed treatment for stomach worms. Grove knew that it would be a long process to get Sammie ready to work as a therapy dog.

"Right after we first got her, we took some time for her to just acclimate," Grove said. "Especially with strays and rescues, they need some time, and you really don't see their genuine personality until about a month in. So, it was really great timing because we found her and had a week of school and then Christmas break. That was great, because I had a lot of time to bond with her."

Sammie began living with Grove and spent a month at Serenity Canine Obedience Training in Forsyth. When the kids discovered that Sammie would be gone for a few weeks, many of them were sad to be saying goodbye after forming such a strong bond.

Grove joked that the students made a "shrine" of drawings and letters to Sammie in her office. Sammie was already very close to the students and was beginning to develop a strong relationship with them, but training gave her better discipline and less reactivity.

Grove said that before the training, Sammie understood basic commands but had a lot of energy and constantly wanted to follow new smells and sounds, but she eventually learned how

to refine her obedience skills.

After training, Sammie has become a staple at Roberts. During morning arrivals, her "favorite part of the day," she greets students as they enter school.

"She's really funny, she knows all the cars and she gets more excited at different cars because she knows the different students coming out of each one," Grove said.

Sammie participates in morning activities with the students and spends the rest of the school day stopping by different classrooms during their reading instruction. During the afterschool program, Sammie plays with the students on the playground during their unstructured time and also sits with the students as they practice reading to her in the library.

Grove said that Sammie has been a great addition to Roberts; her presence has made students more comfortable over the past few months.

"Research has shown that therapy dogs improve overall student confidence and decrease anxiety, especially in students with learning disabilities," Grove said. "Often, students with dyslexia are more reluctant to read or even take risks. So, when we can give them the comfort of a service dog, it shows that we care about the whole child: mind, body, and spirit, which definitely helps in the process of education."

Sammie is currently training to become certified as a therapy dog, which will take a few months. This summer, Grove hopes to have Sammie completely certified, and Sammie will participate in Roberts Academy's summer camp.

"She's a part of our community here," Grove said. "Just like the teachers and students, she's just an integral part of what we do. I hope that she's a source of comfort for our students, and that it's a good relationship that helps them grow."



Photo provided Roberts Academy students play with the school's therapy dog, Sammie. The doodle, who was rescued by academy staff, serves an important role with Roberts Academy students. The new school serves students in second through fifth grade with dyslexia.

Richard, A1:

to produce them. At a later meeting, the board asked Hill to refund the money, including overdraft fees.

"It is clear this is a misappropriation of funds," Armand Burnett, assistant director of the county recreation department, said according to notes from another recent meeting. "Will the board take any action?"

Burnett added that "in the future, no Macon-Bibb employee can handle any funds."

It was unclear who authorized issuance of the two debit cards.

The largest expense from the nonprofit's account totaled \$2,597. Records obtained from the county show a receipt dated Nov. 4 for the same amount paid for with the nonprofit's debit card. Property tax records from Jones County show the house is owned by Hill and his wife.

Hill submitted a letter rebutting the notice of termination.

"I strongly dispute these claims and respectfully request a reconsideration of this decision," Hill wrote in the April 1 letter to Burnett. "The items in question were not owned by Macon-Bibb County, any co-worker, or any citizen in a manner that would constitute theft, attempted theft, or unauthorized use under county policies or applicable laws."

Hill said he had no intent to deprive the county of its property and any use of the funds "was done in good faith, without knowledge or belief that it was unauthorized." He also requested a "full and fair review of the facts, including any supporting documentation or witness testimony that confirms the property ownership status and my good faith actions."

Whether the nonprofit will file criminal charges is unclear. Attempts to reach Hill were unsuccessful. The Griffith Foundation did not immediately return requests for comment.

The Little Richard Festival would have celebrated its sixth year in April.

In 2017, one of Richard Wayne Penniman's favorite

childhood homes was moved from the eastside of Interstate 75 to the westside as part of a half-billion dollar interchange expansion project. The small yellow house on Craft Street opened to the public as The Little Richard House in 2019.

The Macon-Bibb Community Enhancement Authority operated the house as a sort of museum and tourist attraction up until last year, when Macon-Bibb County cut ties with the authority after it failed to provide receipts and detailed financial reports showing how it spent

taxpayer dollars.

Macon-Bibb County Commissioner Stanley Stewart, who is Penniman's cousin, said he is going to take a more active role in making sure the Little Richard House is operating with transparency and integrity to make sure "his legacy lives on."

"I'm not satisfied with how the house is being run or how it has been run," Stewart said. "The house was supposed to serve as a resource center for the Pleasant Hill community."

Stewart said he plans to bring up the alleged theft at

the county commission's regular meeting May 20 and ask for the county to "reimburse the house for the money" so the festival can still take place this year.

"Macon-Bibb should do the right thing," he said, adding that he'd like to see finances for other county-funded operations. "There are other places around Macon-Bibb

which are being run and we need some reports. We need reports on Henderson Stadium, Booker T. Washington Center and the Little Richard House."

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Opinion

A Mother's Day ode to Susan Slinkard, the best mom and teacher in the entire world

Mother's Day is Sunday, which means social media feeds will soon be chock-full of sappy posts thanking mothers for all the great things mothers do.

Permit me to add to that deluge, if you will. After all, I do have the World's Best Mother, Susan Slinkard. I submit the following into evidence:

My twin brother Joshua and I were born two months early, as is common with multiples. My mom was in labor for 36 hours (!) before the doctors finally performed a C-section. Josh and I were both in the NICU for weeks — I came



Caleb Slinkard

home first, then Josh two weeks later. Mom will tell you that having both of her baby boys under the same roof for the first time is the highlight of her life.

Mom is incredibly smart — she graduated from Texas A&M summa cum laude — and was recruited out of college by Dallas accounting firms. But she wanted, more than anything, to be a mother. She spent more than 20 years raising and homeschooling me and my two brothers. I think she and Dad did a good job — all three of us are happy and healthy, we all have good jobs and a strong reputation in our communities.

Once my youngest brother Nathan left the house, she began working as a teacher. She's about to wrap up the school year as a fourth grade ELA teacher in the Greenville, Texas, independent school district.

She's "Grams" to her youngest grandson, my 5-year-old namesake CJ. Two more grandsons are on the way this summer and she's certainly in the running to add "World's Best Grandma" to her resume.

I am who I am in large part because of her love and guidance. She read aloud to us when we were children, emphasizing the importance of books to us at a young age. She taught me that learning is a lifelong pursuit, one worthy of my time and energy. She encouraged me to

write, teaching me Latin and Greek roots to improve my spelling.

When I started my first full-time newspaper job at age 19 as a junior in college, she began collecting my stories that were published in the local paper. By the time I left for Norman, Oklahoma at 25, she had thousands of articles in towering stacks of newsprint. My dad and I were able to convince her that collecting everything I wrote for the rest of my career was impractical. But I know she'd still do it, if she could.

Mom is a safe haven for me, someone I run to when I have good news or when I'm heartbroken. She loves to spend time outdoors, loves to hike with me, to take photos of flowers and trees. She loves birds

and dogs and children.

I'm always in awe of just how good of a mother she is, in part because she lost her own mom — my grandmother — to breast cancer when my mom was in college. More than 40 years have passed, but I know Mom misses my grandmother. I never was able to meet her, but Mom has told me stories about her, about how funny and tough she was. She always wanted twins, mom says, and my grandmother would have adored Josh and I.

I don't doubt that. She raised the World's Best Mom, after all.

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

Mommy not-so dearest: Just be thankful for good mothers

In 1887 Martha Canary appeared before a judge in Cheyenne, Wyoming on the charge of public drunkenness. This wasn't an uncommon occurrence for the woman better known as Calamity Jane. She had made quite a name for herself in the Wild West as a sharpshooter, equestrian and cross-dressing-all-around hellraiser. Please pardon my French.

Court records from the period indicate that Calamity Jane appeared before the bench in a "delicate condition." That's the outdated polite way of saying she was pregnant, or expecting or knocked up, if you will. To this day there is little to do in Cheyenne besides tie one on and fool around. A few months later a little girl was born.

Jane tried to curb the restless independence that had made her famous by settling down with the child's father, a Texan most likely of ill-repute. It wasn't long, however, before Calamity took to the road, baby in tow, as drunk and rowdy as ever. Rumor had it she could shoot the pacifier out of the baby's mouth at 50 paces. It's worth nothing that this little girl was Calamity Jane's second child. The first, a boy called "Little Calamity" died of unknown causes. There is plenty of indication that Jane had tried to be a decent mother. But the lawless West was no place for a family, especially if you made your living in Wild West shows, brothels and other places of the like.

In a last-ditch effort to give her daughter a proper upbringing, Jane used fame to raise money to send her off for an education. The



Kyle Dominy

good folks of Deadwood, South Dakota, were eager to give to the cause and gathered a tidy sum to send the child to a convent school. However, the funds were used to host a celebratory party, complete with drunken revelry.

By the time Calamity Jane died in 1903, the two were officially estranged, the daughter having married and started her own life, much quieter than her mother's had been.

No matter how unreasonable you ever thought your own mother was, she was most likely a better parent than Calamity Jane. Curfews, television limits and chores are welcome to multiple arrests, abandonment and theft. I don't have anything to complain about. Thanks mom. My kids certainly have it made. They'll complain from time to time, but they know their mama loves them.

Parenting is a hard game, especially for mothers in this age of trying to balance work, family and all of the other responsibilities that society throws on you. The pressure just hits some folks harder than others, like Calamity Jane. In hindsight her name was more fitting than people knew at the time.

Happy Mother's Day to all the moms out there young and old. Take care of yourselves. Have a little time to relax. You know you've earned it. And always remember, you are appreciated.

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

Insurance bills may balloon thanks to state busy bodies

Lawmakers recently celebrated the passage of Gov. Brian Kemp's top priority: tort reform. Its ratification was a big deal, especially considering that lawsuit abuse has for years ravaged insurers and consumers.

Kemp's legislation was designed, in part, to alleviate undue financial pressure on insurers and insureds. This is important, too. Georgians need insurance of many forms. So, you'd think that officials would be on the same page on insurance regulation. They're not; not even close.

In 2022, Allstate Insurance raised its rates by 25%, which angered Insurance and Safety Fire Commissioner John King. He lambasted the insurer for its "inexcusable actions" and called on the Legislature to give him more power to keep insurance rates artificially low.

While I don't know Allstate's business model, property and casualty insurance rates as a whole fluctuate based on a host of external variables, and premiums are largely based on the risk that insureds will file a claim and the likely payout of such claims. It's a complex business built on predicting risk and insurers regularly lose money doing it. In 2024, for instance, Georgia's homeowners insurers paid out about \$1.42 for every \$1 earned in premiums.

When insurers in 2022 wanted to adjust their rates, they needed to file it with the insurance commissioner and use it, in a system appropriately called "file-and-use." It was an efficient manner of regulating insurers. Yet it seemed at the time that King wanted to cast "file-and-use" aside and give himself the authority to determine what rates are fair — as if bureaucrats know how to run an insurance company better than insurers.

The legislature did not grant him these vast powers, but they did institute what's known as a deemer period of 60-days. This gives King more time to review insurance rate proposals before they can go into effect 60-days later. While not as burdensome as what King appeared to want, it changed how the insurance industry operates and not necessarily for the better. This slows down the process and may create some uncertainty — uncertainty that continues in other ways, too.

When the General Assembly debated Kemp's tort-reform package earlier this year, the minority party was quick to attack insurers, rather than lawsuit abuse, and even introduced amendments that would have harmed the industry and consumers. "My amendment does one simple thing," Sen. Nabilah Islam Parkes, D-Duluth, said in a debate. "It ensures that insurance premiums will not rise any faster than the rate of inflation." That would have made a terrible law.



Marc Hyden

As I wrote in these pages previously, "Inflation affects insurance rates to a degree, but matters entirely unrelated to it greatly influence insurance costs: namely risk [...] A law that binds insurers hands so that actuaries and policy-writers cannot take into account issues that really matter imperils insurers' well-being." Price controls are simply bad Soviet-styled policy.

Such a law could have resulted in insurers fleeing Georgia — leaving Georgians with fewer options — but thankfully the measure never proceeded.

Not long after tort reform passed the Legislature, officials began pondering more insurance reforms. Under the current model, the insurance department does more than just consider insurers' rate change proposals. It also investigates and even fines insurers who are guilty of serious infractions.

Under Georgia law, the insurance commissioner can only fine them \$5,000 for each offense at most. King thinks that is ridiculous. According to WSB-TV, "King said his office receives between 10,000 and 11,000 complaints each year. Now he is asking the General Assembly to give him the power to issue tougher fines to insurance companies that do not cooperate."

Misbehaving insurers no doubt need to be held accountable, but handing a bureaucrat more power to levy increasingly large fines — perhaps arbitrarily — isn't going to help our beset insurance market or ratepayers. If the commissioner levied the \$5,000 fine for each of the 11,000 complaints, which he surely didn't do since many were presumably baseless, that would have resulted in \$55 million in fines.

That's an astronomical number that could have crippled insurers, and they likely would have passed the cost onto ratepayers. Increasing the fine would simply threaten to apply more financial pressure on insurers that are facing dire financial straits, which might make some reconsider operating in the Peach State. Again, misbehaving insurers need to be punished accordingly, but the punishment needs to be appropriate and not constrain the market so that consumers no longer have options.

Georgians ought to be pleased with tort reform's enactment and how it may reflect in their insurance premiums, but there is still room for improvement. My employer ranks states by how well they regulate insurance markets, and Georgia came in at an underwhelming 22 out of 50. With policymakers seemingly in disagreement over insurance regulation and insurers continuing to fall in their crosshairs, expect more uncertainty.

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

Finkelstein, From A5:

chapters in the same story. Jack has always been one to carve his own path. He didn't take the traditional route, and he didn't need to. He flew — literally and figuratively — toward his goals, working early mornings and late nights, making sure he kept up with school while navigating the friendly skies.

Watching him graduate was the culmination of all that effort. No applause light, no mimosas, just a proud dad and a sea of families cheering their hearts out.

It made me reflect on how often we, as parents or mentors or just members of this community, want the world to see what we see in the young people we love. Their resilience. Their humor.

Their drive. And sometimes, if we're lucky,

the world gets a front-row seat.

Jack gave me that moment on a plane. Then he gave me another one on a stage. And yes, I may have gotten a little misty-eyed. Don't judge me.

So here's a toast—in the spirit of those sky-high mimosas—to the dreamers, the doers, the class of 2025, and the ones still figuring it out. May your journeys be as smooth as a Contour landing and your punchlines as sharp as Jack's.

Oh—and if you happen to be flying Contour out of Macon, keep an eye out for a certain flight attendant with a sly smile and a great sense of humor.

He may not admit he knows me—but I couldn't be prouder to know him.

Joe Finkelstein (AI Joe) has been a technology educator for over 20 years.

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

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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.

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Flying high: A father's pride at 3,000 feet

There are moments in life when pride sneaks up on you—quietly, deeply and unexpectedly funny. That happened to me this week, and I wasn't at a graduation or a ceremony. I was up at 30,000 feet, sipping a mimosa and grinning like a man who had just won the lottery.



Joe Finkelstein

Let me explain.

On May 1, Macon launched a brand-new direct flight to Dulles International Airport in Washington, D.C. That's a big deal for our city—a sign of growth, opportunity, and improved connectivity for Middle Georgia. Contour Airlines took the lead, and I had the privilege of be-

ing a passenger on that inaugural flight.

But what made it more than just a historic flight for me was the young man standing in the aisle with a tray of Chick-fil-A minis and a big smile. That flight attendant—poised, professional and pouring mimosas like a seasoned pro—was my son, Jack.

Jack has been working as a flight attendant for Contour while completing his associate's degree at Central Georgia Technical College. Balancing books and boarding passes hasn't been easy, but he's handled it with grace, humor and a work ethic that leaves me in awe. On that flight

from Macon to Dulles, he was in his element. Confident. Kind. Sharp. With a little help from Bernadette—the Macon station manager for Contour and a gem in her own right—he welcomed passengers, handed out breakfast and made sure everyone felt at home in the air.

And he did it all with style. I'm telling you, folks, if you saw the photo of Jack standing between the two pilots after landing, you'd think he was born with wings.

The vibe on the flight was celebratory. There were dignitaries on board, a buzz of excitement, and that unmistakable feeling that something special was happening. It felt like Macon was stepping forward—and Jack was part of that step. I was beaming.

Then came my moment.

After we landed in Dulles, Jack gave his standard "Welcome to Washington" announcement over the intercom. Passengers clapped, and the cabin had that relaxed, we-made-it energy. I turned to the folks sitting near me—fellow Maconites, business travelers, some just along for the ride—and said, "That flight attendant is my son. I'm so proud of him."

Without missing a beat, Jack looked straight at me and said, loud enough for the whole front section to hear:

"I've never seen that man before." Laughter exploded down the aisle.

I couldn't stop smiling. The comedic timing. The deadpan delivery. The perfect deflection of a proud

dad moment into something out of a sitcom. It was classic Jack—funny, quick-witted and just a little too cool to let me get sentimental mid-flight.

That's when I knew—he's not just good at his job. He owns it.

Fast-forward to the very next day. I'm now sitting in the Macon Coliseum, waiting for Jack's name to be called at the CGTC graduation ceremony. The same kid who had the whole cabin in stitches yesterday is now walking across the stage to receive his associate's degree in general studies.

Two days, two unforgettable milestones.

In many ways, they felt like

See FINKELSTEIN, Page A4

There's a special place in heaven for single moms

They were not just single mothers.

They were saints.

They never thought they would have to wear so many hats and juggle so many balls. They never dreamed the double duty of raising children alone would require such a level of ambidexterity.

Full-time mothers.

Part-time sleepers. They were superheroes long before it was a word in the dictionary.

There is a special place in heaven for Magnolia Edwards, Jewell Henderson, Ella Mae Fincher and Lucy Ellington.

They are already there... gone from their earthly lives, having left a legacy of strength and kindness.

I never had the honor of meeting any of these four women. But I knew their sons, all good men. They loved their mamas more than life itself.

Magnolia died the week after Mother's Day in 1981. She is buried in the church cemetery behind Macedonia Baptist on East Broad Street in Sparta. Lucy was laid to rest in Oaklawn Cemetery on Ga. 49 south of Fort Valley. The graves of Ella Mae and Jewell can be found beneath the pines and on the slopes of hills at Macon Memorial Park.

I thought about Magnolia a few weeks ago when city officials renamed part of Millerfield Road after



Ed Grisamore

her son. The late Lonzy Edwards was one of Macon's most respected citizens.

He was pastor of Mount Moriah Missionary Baptist. He was a Bibb County commissioner, an attorney, a small business owner and an author. He died in 2016.

On a wall at his law office, he kept a washboard, a wash tub and the irons his mother once heated with coals from the fireplace. She washed and ironed clothes for folks in Hancock County in the 1950s for \$5 a week.

They served as daily reminders of the sacrifices a single mother made for her only child. Lonzy would look at that wall and never forget the gentle soul they called "Mag."

"That's where I come from," he once told me. "It keeps me humble. Those were the tools of her trade. I put them there to remind me of the sacrifices she made and the values she instilled in me. She always told me to go out and make something of myself."

She truly was a Steel Magnolia.

I remember the emotion on Carl Ellington's face when he told me the story of his mama, who died 16 years ago last month.

Lucy married her high school sweetheart, Wiley Ellington, in Fort Valley on Dec. 7, 1941, the same

day Japan bombed Pearl Harbor. Her newlywed husband soon left for France to serve his country in World War II. After the war, he returned home and worked at a furniture store.

The Ellingtons started a family, but Wiley and another Macon man drowned in a boating accident in 1955 while fishing at Lake Black-shear. Lucy was left with two young boys. She never remarried.

"There are a lot of women raising children on their own, but I just don't see how my mother held up all those years," Carl told me. "She was one of the true heroes in America—someone who accepted her lot in life and made the best of it."

Lucy found work as a secretary and squeezed every red cent when she sat at the kitchen table to pay the bills. She provided for her sons. She never bought a new dress the entire time Carl was in college.

"She never went out or did things for herself," he said. "As we probably would say these days: 'She didn't have a life.' Oh, but she did. Her life was her boys. She had joy in her family."

The youngest of Jewell Henderson's four children went on to become one of Macon's greatest athletes—and later coaches. Her hard work and dedication was a beacon of light for Billy Henderson, who worshiped his mom with every breath he took.

His father died of complications from a ruptured appendix in May 1937, one month before Billy's ninth birthday. Jewell never married again. She found work wherever she could to provide for her family.

She made sure her boys wore clean shirts to school. Although they qualified for a welfare lunch program, she would not accept charity and packed them a sack lunch every day. She read the Bible every day of her life.

Billy died on Valentine's Day in 2018, six years after the interchange at Interstate 75 and Sardis Church Road was named in his honor. He always said his mother could not have had a more fitting first name.

"She taught by example," he said. "I was blessed she was my mother. Every Christmas, she made me think of the less fortunate. I never considered us not being wealthy. She gave me more than wealth."

Her fingerprints were on every page of his life story. And I was honored to later write his biography. An entire chapter was devoted to Jewell.

The same could be said about Ella Mae. I wrote a book about her son, too. Durwood Fincher grew up in the shadow of the cotton mill in Payne City and went on to become a nationally-known comedian known as "Mr. Doubletalk."

Every day was "Mae" day in the village. If the mill had a matriarch,

it was Ella Mae. Her door was always unlocked. There wasn't a mean bone beneath the buttons of her flower-print dresses.

Ella Mae asked her husband, Jack, to leave when Durwood was 8 years old. She told her children that she still loved their father, and she begged them never to hate him. She kicked him out because she could no longer put up with his drinking.

For more than 30 years, she worked in the spinning department at the mill. It left her fingers so calloused and worn that she had no fingerprints with which to hold a deck of cards to play solitaire. She had varicose veins in her legs from standing on her feet all day. She was only 58 when she died of a heart attack.

Ella Mae was described by a neighbor as "one of the grandest women ever born." She made time for her children. They had perfect attendance in Sunday School.

"I didn't know anybody who didn't love my mother," Durwood said.

She was his mom. But in the mill village surrounded by Macon, she was everybody's mom.

You probably know one, too. They were, are and always will be our north stars.

Ed Grisamore is a long-time Macon columnist and the author of nine books.

Gris List: Mother's Day gifts

Ed Grisamore

Melody Columnist
gris@maconmelody.com

10 Things You Could Have Gotten Your Mom for Mother's Day if You Lived in Macon 50 Years Ago (May 1975)

- Blue or pink plaid polyester pantsuit for \$32 at Kiralfy Goldman on Cherry Street.
- Mother's Day buffet with roast beef, vegetables and salads for \$3.95 at the Holiday Inn West at U.S. 80 and Interstate 475.
- 1-pound box of Russell Stover assorted chocolates for \$2.95 at Belk-Matthews on Third Street. Or a 1-pound box of Whitman's Sampler chocolates for \$3.25 at Eckerd's drug store in Napier Square.
- Florsheim white leather sandals for \$27 from the Macon Shoe Co. on Third Street.
- Short-sleeved or sleeveless cotton dress for \$8.99 from Chanin's on Cherry Street.
- Flaming Polynesian assorted appetizers (egg rolls, tempura shrimp, BBQ spare ribs, paper chicken fried wonton) for \$3.50 at the Golden Dragon on Riverside Drive.
- Rival crock pot for \$13.99 from JC Penney on Hillcrest Avenue.
- Synthetic wig (short or long hair) for \$4.84 from Rose's department store on Shurling Drive.
- Mother's Day orchid corsage for \$2.59 from Sears on Third Street.
- A complimentary piece of strawberry pie for mothers at the Shoney's Big Boy Restaurant on Pio Nono Avenue. (Or the whole pie for \$2.90.)

What's in a name?

The Pierce Chapel at Wesleyan College is named after George Foster Pierce, a Methodist bishop and the college's first president. Pierce Avenue, between Vineville Avenue and Riverside Drive, is also named after him. Pierce is credited with planting the live oak trees at the corner of Vineville and Calloway Drive, which have been recognized as the oldest trees in Macon.

The middle school at Mount de Sales Academy was dedicated to Father John Cuddy in September 2014. Cuddy was appointed as pastor at Macon's St. Joseph Catholic Church in 1974, where he led one of the city's largest congregations, as well as being the spiritual leader of the students, faculty and alumni at the school and St. Joseph's Catholic School for 40 years. In January of that same year, the new gym at St. Joseph's Elementary was dedicated as Monsignor John Cuddy Hall.

The downtown bridge at Spring Street is named after heavyweight boxer W.L. "Young" Stribling, one of Macon's most famous and influential sports figures. Stribling lost only 12 times in his 288-bout boxing career in the 1920s and '30s. He twice lost bouts for the heavyweight championship. His most famous was when he was knocked out by Germany's Max Schmeling with 14 seconds left in the final round of the world heavyweight championship fight in Cleveland, Ohio in 1931. He was only 28 years old when he was killed in a motorcycle accident in 1933 while riding to see his wife and newborn son at the hospital. More than 10,000 people attended his funeral at the City Auditorium, making it one of the largest funeral services (along with that of Otis Redding) in Macon history.

The recreation center in Unionville was dedicated to Frank Johnson in 2002. Johnson, who was often known as the "Mayor of Unionville," grew up the youngest of 10 children in the neighborhood where all of the streets are named after flowers. During World War II, he was one of the Montford Point Marines, the first African-Americans to serve in the U.S. Marine Corps. He worked for two years at the Naval Ordnance Plant in Macon, then spent 34 years in civil service at Robins Air Force Base. He was one of the local leaders who was asked to carry the Olympic torch when it came through Macon in 1996.

The interchange at Bass Road and Interstate 75 is named after the Rev. Jimmy Waters, one of Macon's most well-known ministers and a pioneer in religious broadcasting in Georgia with more than 25,000 broadcasts. At Mabel White Memorial Baptist, where he was minister for 31 years, his sermons were broadcast beginning in October 1958. Waters and his family sang gospel on Atlanta's WSB radio in the 1930s, and he was famous for his "Victory Hour" in Macon.

The bridge on Walnut Street crossing I-75 is named after singer James Brown, the "Godfather of Soul." It was dedicated in the Pleasant Hill neighborhood in March 1994 when Brown was in town to perform a concert at the Macon Coliseum during the Cherry Blossom Festival. Brown cut his first record, "Please Please Please," at radio station WIBB in Macon in 1955 with his band, the Famous Flames.

The Shirley Hills neighborhood is one of 12 historic districts in Macon. It was once part of the estate of U.S. Senator Augustus Octavius Bacon. Baconfield gets its name from Bacon, and Shirley Hills was named after the senator's granddaughter.

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Events

“Waitress the Musical” at Theatre Macon

May 9-11
8 p.m., 2:30 p.m.
438 Cherry St.
Catch the last weekend of this state and regional premiere of “Waitress the Musical” at Theatre Macon. Jenna, a waitress and expert pie maker, is stuck in a small town and a loveless marriage. Faced with an unexpected pregnancy, Jenna fears she may have to abandon the dream of opening her own pie shop...until a baking contest in a nearby county and the town’s handsome new doctor offer her a tempting recipe for happiness. Supported by her quirky crew of fellow waitresses and loyal customers, Jenna summons the secret ingredient she’s been missing all along – courage.

“RENT” at the Macon Little Theatre

May 9-18
Show times vary
4220 Forsyth Road
Immerse yourself in the raw, passionate musical that captures the struggles, dreams, and resilience of a group of artists and friends in New York’s East Village. With an iconic rock score, compelling characters, and themes of love, loss, and living for the moment. The show will run for two weekends and is for audiences 5 years of age and older.

Concert at St. Joseph Church

Thursday May 15
Noon
830 Poplar St.
Third Thursday Concert with Gregory Hamilton playing organ and Charles Marie Widor, Symphony Gothique

Coffee & Canvas

Saturday, May 10
2 p.m.
456 First St.
Coffee & Canvas is a fun, beginner-friendly painting workshop at The 567 Center for Renewal where you can relax and hang out with friends while a local artist teaches you how to recreate a beautiful painting. Ages 10-adult. \$30 includes all materials.

Storytellers Macon Presents: The Pen Is Mightier than the Sword

Tuesday, May 13
6:30 p.m.
576 Poplar St.
Join Storytellers Macon for an unforgettable night of storytelling at Grant’s Lounge. As the old adage goes, “The pen is mightier than the sword.” Tell a story about the time your words, grace, or wisdom helped you out of a situation. Whether it is a masterfully done presentation or a spur-of-the-moment confession or a time you simply told the truth, tell us about the moment you realized the power of words.

Senior Cinema “Dream Girls”

Wednesday, May 14
2 p.m.
355 MLK Jr. Blvd.
Presented By The Douglass Theatre, “Dream Girls” is about a trio of Black female soul singers crossing over to the pop charts in the early 1960s, facing their own personal struggles along the way.

Kemp decision to avoid U.S. Senate race scrambles projected field against Ossoff

Stanley Dunlap
Georgia Recorder

Gov. Brian Kemp announced on Monday that he will not run for the U.S. Senate in 2026, a decision that could have a ripple effect on the re-election campaign for Sen. Jon Ossoff.

The Georgia governor announced his decision via social media that he would not run in the pivotal 2026 election in which he was seen as the early favorite to challenge Ossoff, who along with U.S. Sen. Raphael Warnock won historic 2020 elections for Georgia Democrats.

In a move to intensify its efforts to fundraise and campaign for candidates, the Democratic Party of Georgia elected Charlie Bailey as its chair on Saturday as it reenergizes the party’s base following setbacks following the 2020 victories.

Kemp wrote in a statement posted on X Monday he has decided that running for U.S. Senate is not the right fit for him.

“I spoke with President Trump and Senate leadership earlier today and expressed my commitment to work alongside them to ensure we have a strong Republican nominee who can win next November, and ultimately be a conservative voice in the US Senate who will put hardworking Georgians first,” Kemp wrote in the post.

“I am confident we will be united in that important effort, and I look forward to electing the next generation of leaders up and down the ballot here in the Peach State who will keep our state and nation headed in the right direction in 2026 and beyond,” Kemp said.

Political analysts said Kemp’s decision not to run for the Senate makes sense since being a low ranking member of that chamber would be a step down from being governor.

They suggest that Kemp will reap significant financial rewards for public speaking on behalf of the Republican Party while also keeping his options open for a 2028 run for the White House.

Ossoff’s U.S. Senate campaign manager Ellen Foster released a statement Monday following the Kemp announcement.

“As we’ve said for the past few months, Sen. Ossoff is well-prepared to defeat any challenger,”



Ross Williams / Georgia Recorder

Governor Brian Kemp announced this week that he will not run for the U.S. Senate next year. He explained his decision not to run in a statement posted on X.

Foster wrote. “As Republicans scramble in the aftermath, our campaign will continue to build insurmountable momentum needed to win next November.”

Georgia Republican election strategist Brian Robinson said although Kemp was the top tier candidate in the Senate race, other GOP contenders have the opportunity to prove themselves in the primary to become the top candidate.

Robinson said he is not surprised about Kemp’s announcement Monday and dismissed the notion that despite high polling favorability ratings that Kemp was not a “shoo-in” to defeat Ossoff. The Republican senatorial candidate in 2026 will also have the opportunity to raise enough money and build a campaign platform to defeat Ossoff, Robinson said.

“I think (Kemp) would have been miserable if he had won,” Robinson said. “I think he had other calculations as well. I think he can go make a lot of money.

His network after being (Republican Governors Association chair) this year is going to be absolutely incredible and is worth millions of dollars. He can feather his nest to keep his options open for running in 2028. We don’t know what the environment is going to be in 2026 with the White House occupying party always facing headwinds in midterms, and the political environment is one that we can’t predict.”

Robinson said the Republican crop of candidates will have the opportunity to win over the voters necessary to run a strong campaign against the Democratic incumbent.

Charles Bullock, political science professor at the University of Georgia, said the Republican Senate candidate winner next year needs to be a candidate who can compete against Ossoff in November’s general election.

Bullock agreed with Robinson that Kemp’s decision is likely influenced by Kemp’s ability to

generate significant income and the uncertainty of the political climate in 2026.

It is not uncommon for the party in power in the White House to lose ground in the mid-term elections, Bullock said.

Republicans and Democratic candidates are expected to use Trump-focused messages to build support for their party’s candidates this year.

Kemp was successful in securing Democratic votes in his 2022 campaign against Democratic candidate Stacey Abrams, Bullock said.

Bullock said the Ossoff campaign is likely turning “hand-flips” after Kemp turned down the Senate bid.

Bullock said that the Ossoff campaign is most likely hopeful that right-wing U.S. Rep Marjorie Taylor Greene emerges as the top GOP candidate for Senate. Greene will be able to raise large sums of money for her campaign but he said that Greene’s style could be problematic in a statewide race.

A Greene staffer declined to comment on her future political aspirations but said she is honored to have the support of Georgians.

“Governor Kemp has been a great governor for the state of Georgia,” Greene said in a statement. “I wish him and his family well in all their future endeavors.”

Savannah Republican U.S. Rep Buddy Carter is another potential candidate who is well known in the region but will have to fight for name recognition in Atlanta, Bullock said.

“The Atlanta area is where the bulk of the votes that result from the primary is going to come from and they’re going to spend money to get known in the Atlanta area,” Bullock said. “The same thing for Rep. Mike Collins or Marjorie Taylor Greene, who is probably the best known member of Congress but she is the kind of person that will have a harder time than others holding onto the white college-educated voters, which is decisive in Georgia.”

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

Protesters disrupt Warnock town hall over Israel arms vote

Ross Williams
Georgia Recorder

In the latest Georgia town hall meeting turned heated, an event hosted by Sen. Raphael Warnock was twice disrupted by protests over a vote on weapons shipments to Israel.

The first came during a response to a question about funding for Israel.

“I have to ask you about the way we spend our money,” asked a constituent who declined to give his name. “My voice is against using our money to fund what many people would consider a genocide.”

Last month, Warnock and fellow Georgia Democratic U.S. Sen. Jon Ossoff were part of an overwhelming majority of senators who voted to reject a bid to block \$8.8 billion in arms sales to Israel sponsored by Vermont Sen. Bernie Sanders. Sanders said the proposal represented an effort to force Israel to take steps to protect civilians from bombing and to allow humanitarian aid into Gaza.

In November, Warnock and Ossoff joined 16 other senators in supporting a failed resolution to block some weapon sales.

Warnock told the constituent he had been working to support peace and humanitarian aid.

“I believe in the humanity of all God’s children, and that you have to center the concerns of the most marginalized,” he said. “And that’s why I was one of the first in the Senate to call for a ceasefire. In addition to that, I pressed the Biden administration, I pushed the Netanyahu administration around the ways in which humanitarian aid was not even getting into Gaza. I voted to get \$10 billion in humanitarian aid to Gaza. My North Star in this conflict is a world that embraces the children on both sides of this conflict.”

During the answer, several women stood up in the crowd and began shouting things like “it’s our money” and “you’re a liar.”

For a few awkward minutes, the women berated Warnock while staff members tried to continue with the programming and members of the crowd shouted for the

demonstrators to sit down.

Warnock told the protesters he would answer their questions but refused to shout over them.

“We have to decide, as somebody who is an activist myself and who comes from the activist community, you can come and express yourself, it’s a very passionate issue, or we can have a conversation, but we can’t do both of those things,” he said. “We can do one or the other.”

“As incredibly important as this issue is, and it’s a matter of life and death, there are other issues here, and these folks deserve to be heard as well,” he added.

The women left after about six minutes. Several minutes after that, a man began shouting at Warnock over his vote while another audience member who had been called on by the moderator tried to ask a question about high health insurance costs.

The man left after a brief period after being approached by Warnock staff.

For decades, support of Israel was a bipartisan issue, but the matter has become especially fraught for Democrats since Israel’s latest military campaign which began in October 2023 after the militant group Hamas launched a surprise attack on Israel.

According to the United Nations, as of April 22, more than 51,000 Palestinians have been killed in the conflict, including more than 8,000 women and 15,000 children. In addition, the UN finds nearly the entire population faces high levels of food insecurity as Israel has ordered a halt to all aid into Gaza, including food and medicine.

Jawahir Sharwany, one of the demonstrators who shouted at Warnock, said the demonstrations will continue until the policy changes.

“We’re not going to stop protesting and talking about it until they stop sending shipments from all these billions of dollars of weapons bills,” she said. “Warnock is signing onto the deaths of Palestinian children.”

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

Attorney seeks lawsuit against federal government on behalf of students at risk of deportation

Ty Tagami
Capitol Beat

ATLANTA — The lawyer who secured the legal visitor status for 133 international students in federal court last week is seeking to expand his lawsuit to potentially include thousands of plaintiffs.

Charles Kuck filed a motion late last week seeking permission to roll his case into a class action lawsuit. It seeks to add Secretary of State Marco Rubio as a defendant, “challenging the legality of Secretary Rubio to coordinate the mass revocation of student visas without notice.”

The motion added that “Congress delegated the authority to revoke ‘a visa,’ but it could not delegate the authority to revoke all visas at one fell swoop.”

Friday, U.S. District Judge Victoria Marie Calvert of the Northern District of Georgia issued a preliminary injunction in favor of Kuck and his clients, extending the temporary restraining order she had already issued against the administration of President Donald Trump.

The original lawsuit, which named U.S. Attorney General Pam Bondi as lead defendant, argued that the federal government had unlawfully revoked the Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVIS) authority for those 133 current and former students, stripping them of the right to work and barring them from re-entering the country if they happened to leave. Calvert’s order required

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, or ICE, to restore the visitor status of the 27 foreign nationals who were attending a Georgia college or university or doing post-graduate work. It also required ICE to do the same for 106 similar plaintiffs in other states.

Calvert determined that Kuck’s clients had a good chance of winning their case by proving that the government had acted in an “arbitrary and capricious” way against them. She also agreed with Kuck’s request to bundle the cases of the 106 plaintiffs outside the Northern District of Georgia with those within the district to reduce legal costs and the workload on the

court system. Kuck is using similar logic to expand his case to class action status.

A 204-page exhibit to his new motion, which was filed on Thursday, said 4,000 to 8,000 students had their visitor status terminated since March 24, “without due process, without notice, and in violation of the regulations.” It said a class action “is now the only avenue to keep from wasting judicial resources and the protection of the class members’ rights.”

It accused the government of unlawfully subjecting foreign student visitors to the risk of incarceration and deportation.

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From Our Kitchens: Soup's on! (As best as I can remember)

Jake Fincher
Special to The Melody

My grandmother Mimi (Annie Laurie Fincher) made this whenever one of her grandkids didn't feel well.

We all loved it. She never gave anyone the recipe, so for years I have tried to recreate it. This is as close as I can get to the original.

She was an amazing cook who helped create a lot of Fincher's BBQ recipes and helped make Fincher's what it is today.

Every time I eat this I will always think about her, my granddad, Dude Fincher, and their house on Pierce Avenue with the pond in front, where we fished almost every day during the summers.

Mimi's Veggie soup

Ingredients

- 3 cans of diced tomatoes (Italian blend)
- Large can crushed tomatoes
- Package frozen mixed veggies
- 4 potatoes (peeled and diced)
- Small package of frozen green peas
- Small package of frozen small Lima beans
- 2 onions diced
- 3 or 4 carrots diced
- 2 pork chops diced (with bones)
- 1 lb of diced beef tips
- 2 fresh Tabasco peppers or 1 jalapeño pepper diced
- 1 tablespoon of fresh minced garlic
- Bunch of celery diced
- 2 small packages of frozen diced okra or equal amount of fresh okra
- 1 tablespoon of salt
- 1 tablespoon of black pepper
- 1 tablespoon of Italian seasoning
- 2 beef bouillon cubes
- Box of elbow macaroni
- 4 cups of water



Provided by Jake Fincher

Jake Fincher is co-owner of Fincher's Barbecue. He has recreated his grandmother's vegetable soup recipe.

Directions

Saute the onions, celery and garlic for 5 minutes. Add in the beef and pork. Using pork chops with the bones gives it amazing flavor. Cook for about 10 minutes. Add okra, mixed veggies and other vegetables, along with the cans of diced and crushed tomatoes. Let this cook for about 15 minutes, then add water and all the seasonings (salt, pepper, Italian) along with the peppers. Add potatoes and let them cook for 45 minutes to an hour. Add in macaroni noodles and let them simmer until they are tender.

Provided by the Macon Bibb County Cooperative Extension

Georgians face three common tick species in the state. Avoiding ticks and checking for tick bites are necessary steps during the warmer months.



Tips for avoiding tick bites

My 10-year-old son has been labeled as our family 'tick magnet'. Whether it's his short stature or his love of romping through the woods, he rarely comes back inside without one or two ticks. Regular tick checks are a part of our daily routine during the warm months. It is important to always be aware of how to avoid these critters if you enjoy the great outdoors.



Karol Kelly

detecting exhaled carbon dioxide and body warmth, ticks can also sense movement to locate their next meal.

While tick-borne diseases aren't as common in Georgia as other parts of the U.S., it is a good idea to be aware of the symptoms. Common signs include things like confusion, flu-like aches, severe headaches, fever and rashes. Generally, disease transmission requires at least 24 hours of tick attachment, but symptoms usually show up between one to two weeks afterwards. If you suspect a tick-borne infection, see a doctor promptly.

Here are some tips to avoid tick bites and minimize exposure.

- Keep your lawn cut short to deter ticks. When exploring, avoid vegetation that is tall enough to brush your legs.
- Wear light-colored clothing. Prevent easy access to your skin by tucking your shirt into

your pants and your pants into your socks.

- Use repellents containing DEET, which can be applied to the skin. Repellents with the insecticide permethrin (such as Repel) can be sprayed on socks, shoes, and bottom of pants for longer lasting control.
- When working outside, check yourself for ticks at least twice a day, and make a habit of regularly checking your children for ticks when they have been playing outdoors. Lint rollers are useful to rub over socks and pants at the end of treks. Early removal of ticks reduces the chance of disease transmission.

Ticks should not slow you down from your outdoor adventures this summer. Take the necessary steps to protect yourself on your next great outing.

For questions, call Bibb County Extension at 478-310-5350 or email us at bibb.extension@uga.edu.

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PROTECT YOUR JOINTS WITH THESE 5 SAFE AND EFFECTIVE EXERCISES

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



As you get older, staying active can help you maintain your mobility, flexibility, and overall well-being.

However, high-impact workouts can do more damage to aging joints, leading to pain, discomfort, and sometimes even serious injury. Luckily, there are plenty of low-impact workouts you can do that will help keep you strong and mobile without putting too much strain on your joints.

If you're looking for safe, effective, and enjoyable ways to stay fit, here are five great low-impact workouts for you to try today.

Swimming & Water Aerobics

Exercising in water offers a more joint-friendly alternative to traditional workouts. The buoyancy of water acts as a cushion, supporting your body weight and taking the pressure off your knees, hips, and spine, while still providing enough resistance for you to strengthen your muscles. Along with reducing the strain on your joints, swimming and water aerobics also help improve heart health, flexibility, and lung capacity, making it an excellent, well-rounded workout.

How to Get Started

Swim laps on your own for a full-body workout. Consider joining a water aerobics class if you enjoy guided exercises.

Walk or jog in the shallow end of the pool for a gentle cardio session with some resistance.

Chair Yoga

Yoga is great for improving flexibility, balance, and strength, but some traditional poses can be challenging for

people who already struggle with joint pain. Chair yoga offers a modified, low-impact version of traditional poses, allowing you to enjoy the benefits of yoga without having to put too much pressure on your knees, wrists, or back.

How to Get Started

Join a chair yoga class at your local gym, or explore online options.

Focus on gentle stretches to help loosen tight, sore muscles and improve overall flexibility. Incorporate deep breathing exercises to reduce stress and improve relaxation.

Tai Chi

Why It Works

Tai Chi is a slow, flowing exercise that focuses on improving your balance, coordination, and joint mobility. Along with improving flexibility, Tai Chi can help reduce arthritis pain, making it an excellent workout for older adults looking to stay active and improve overall health.

How to Get Started

Sign up for a beginner Tai Chi class at your local gym. Set aside 10-20 minutes each day, focusing on slow, controlled movements. Breathe and focus on keeping your movements fluid, allowing your body to move without too much strain.

Cycling & Stationary Biking

Why It Works

When most people think of cardio workouts, they might first think of running, but cycling is a great alternative. It will still help strengthen your legs and glutes while putting much less pressure on your joints than running. If you prefer an indoor workout, consider trying out a stationary bike.

How to Get Started

Ride for 15-20 minutes at your own pace, and increase the length of time once you're comfortable.

If you need extra back support, consider using a recumbent stationary bike.

Make sure your bike seat is adjusted well so you don't put unnecessary strain on your knees.

Walking

Why It Works

Walking is one of the simplest and most effective exercises for maintaining joint health. Not only is it highly accessible and low-impact, but it also helps improve heart health, strengthen your leg muscles, and improve flexibility. Walking is also good for your mental health, reducing stress and improving your overall mood.

How to Get Started

Start with walking 30 minutes a day, slowly increasing the amount of time as you see fit.

Wear cushioned shoes for extra support.

Walk on softer surfaces, like grass or rubberized tracks, to minimize the impact on your joints.

Staying active doesn't have to cause you pain. Whether you prefer swimming, yoga, Tai Chi, cycling, or simply taking a stroll around your neighborhood, all these exercises will help you stay mobile and healthy without putting unneeded stress on your joints. Make sure you choose exercises that you enjoy and can stick to long-term.

By adding these low-impact activities into your schedule, you'll improve your flexibility and overall well-being, ensuring a longer, healthier life.

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Explore history, visit Macon's birthplace at 20th annual Fort Hawkins Archaeology Day

It's a family-friendly afternoon of exploring history, pre-Macon frontier life and a chance to go up in the Fort Hawkins blockhouse to look around and then out at one of the best views of the city you'll ever get.

It's the 20th annual Fort Hawkins Archaeology Day at the often-taken-for-granted, iconic Macon site at the corner of Fort Hill Street and Emery Highway.

The afternoon is organized by the Ocmulgee Archeological Society and Fort Hawkins Foundation and is free to the public from noon - 4 p.m. There's plenty of free parking onsite and hopefully clear skies.

"Yes, people will be able to tour the blockhouse, have a look around and go up what amounts to several stories to see out over Macon and the surrounding area," said Ashley Quinn, president of the Ocmulgee Archeological Society, board chair of the Fort Hawkins Foundation and collections manager of the William P. Wall Museum of Natural History at Georgia College & State University.

"For a long time, we only featured artifact identification and pottery making during our Fort Hawkins Archaeology Days," Quinn said. "Over the last few years, we've expanded exhibits and activities quite a lot with more education and interactive things to do related to primitive skills, living history highlighting different eras, historical reenactors and Georgia Native American lifeways with a member of the Muscogee (Creek) nation on hand. There's a lot going on to fill the afternoon."

Blacksmithing is another feature of the afternoon, as is something new: an archeology lab in the Fort Hawkins Museum/Visitor Center that will be in operation. Quinn said folks will be able to see the sort of lab work involved in archeology and that soon there will be possibilities for volunteers and anyone interested in preserving history to get involved with the lab and its work.

The center itself presents visitors with history from before Fort Hawkins was established and a look at Native Americans who lived here, through a school once at the site and beyond.

Quinn said this year there will also be



Michael W. Pannell

information regarding a new initiative by the Fort Hawkins Foundation to assess and make needed repairs to the blockhouse.

The blockhouse at the site now is not one of the two original blockhouses at Fort Hawkins, but a replica built in the 1930s through the efforts of the Nathaniel Macon Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution.

Fort Hawkins was established in 1806 with construction completed in 1810 under the oversight of Benjamin Hawkins, its namesake. At the time, it was considered an outpost on the southwestern frontier with site selection on the highest available location amid lands owned by the Muscogee (Creek) Nation. It was an enviable location along the Ocmulgee River along the Fall Line overlooking what was known as the Creek Trading Path and the sacred Muscogee (Creek) earthwork mounds known then as the Ocmulgee Old Fields and now as the Ocmulgee Mounds National Historical Park.

Never considered a battle fort, Fort Hawkins served more as a trading settlement and overlooking what was to become Macon. As for Hawkins, some facts of his life and work are in dispute, but it's clear he was originally a well-to-do North Carolina planter and delegate to the Continental Congress. After serving on George Washington's personal staff during the Revolutionary War and being involved with Native American affairs in the South, Washington appointed him a commissioner to the Creek Nation in 1796.

In 1801, Thomas Jefferson appointed him principal agent for Indian affairs south of the Ohio River, thus making him the principal U.S. Indian Agent to the Creek and bringing him to Georgia.

He spent time at Fort Hawkins but traveled the Southeast and made his home on a large farming-milling complex he created near Roberta, bringing enslaved African laborers from North Carolina to build it.

Hawkins suffered ill health much of his life and died in 1816 at his home along the Flint River. A monument to Hawkins was erected in Roberta's downtown in 1931, commemorating his life and service.



Provided by Ocmulgee Archeological Society

Visitors can learn about Macon's birthplace at Fort Hawkins on Saturday from noon until 4 p.m. The family-friendly event features exhibits and hands-on activities as well as educational opportunities.

Hawkins learned the Muscogee language and two of his seven children were named after Native peoples, Muscogee and Cherokee. His work as an Indian Agent reportedly led to his being called the "Beloved Man of the Four Nations" and gained him respect for his overall consideration of Native Americans, including women and children.

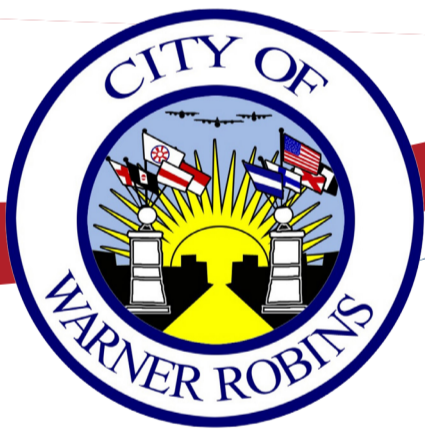
Hawkins' time of service was one of peace, but that co-existence unfortunately ended when President Andrew Jackson tragically led the way toward the illegal displacement of Native nations from their homelands, property and way of life in Georgia, Tennessee and Alabama to Oklahoma, one of many Trails of Tears forced in the Southeast.

An entertaining and independent perspective on Hawkins and much of Fort Hawkins' history is available on a multipart series podcast at middlegapodcasts.podbean.com. The first episode presents a unique ques-

tion-and-answer session with Hawkins as portrayed by Marty Willett. Willett has been an active participant in the goings-on at the modern Fort Hawkins and portrayed Hawkins during the fort's 2006 bicentennial celebrations.

As Quinn has said, Fort Hawkins and days such as the annual Fort Hawkins Archaeology Day offer an important perspective worth learning and understanding regarding Macon and Middle Georgia's roots, why and how it developed as it did and what the future might hold.

Want more information on Fort Hawkins and current efforts toward its preservation and what it offers? Quinn said the best contact for information is via info@forthawkins.com but there's also ocmulgeearchaeology.wixsite.com and forthawkins.org. The organizations are also active on social media.



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While new arena to fix issues, Coliseum nostalgia lingers

Micah Johnston
Sports Editor
micah@macommelody.com

The Macon Coliseum is nothing short of an institution in Bibb County.

The venue has hosted some of the most iconic sporting events in Macon history since it was constructed in 1968. It has most notably been home to the GHSA high school basketball state championships and served various local hockey teams across several

decades.

It has also served as a concert stage for a litany of all-time musicians, including many with Macon ties: the “Godfather of Soul,” James Brown, made an appearance there; The Allman Brothers Band played multiple shows at the venue, including Duane Allman’s last Macon performance before his untimely death in 1971; non-Maconite musical legends who played the Coliseum include Led Zepelin, Prince and even Elvis.

But while the Coliseum’s legacy has

aged gracefully, the years have not been as kind to the physical edifice itself. The nearly 60-year-old building’s concourses are dusty and dated, its amenities somewhat lacking compared to newer venues in Georgia.

When the Coliseum hosted the high school basketball championships in February — arguably the arena’s most crucial event in terms of tourism and local interest — rumors flitted their way through the aisles of the massive concrete bubble, particularly on media row, that the GHSA would relo-

cate the next year’s state title games to an Atlanta venue.

Inextricably linked to this scuttlebutt about the GHSA’s departure from Macon was another rumor: that Bibb County officials were considering demolishing the Coliseum and replacing it with an updated, modern venue.

Mayor Lester Miller and the county as a whole confirmed their intentions to build the new arena last month. The venue’s construction was a focal point during the mayor’s “State of the

Community” address at the end of April.

“We’re starting to fall behind other communities, but we can’t do that because our taxpayers demand it,” Miller told The Melody after the address last month. “Our OLOST is passed and our taxes continue to stay low and we continue to provide the services that we do, but only if we keep up with the Joneses as far as these facilities are concerned.”

See COLISEUM, Page B3



Courtesy Minda Haas Kuhlmann / Omaha Storm Chasers

Austin Cox, an FPD and Mercer alum, hurls a pitch to the plate for a Royals minor-league team last year. Cox, a lefty, signed with the Braves this week.

NOTEPAD

FPD grad signs with Braves, MU lacrosse wins conference title

Micah Johnston
Sports Editor

The Atlanta Braves signed Austin Cox, a Macon native and FPD grad, to a Major League contract Sunday afternoon, optioning him to Triple-A Gwinnett after the signing.

The 28-year-old southpaw was an ace for the Vikings before pitching at Mercer in his collegiate days. Cox was selected by the Kansas City Royals in the fifth round of the 2018 draft and debuted in the Majors in 2023.

Cox began his time in the big leagues by breaking an MLB record when he pitched 12 and 1/3 innings without allowing a run to start his career, but he tore his ACL and damaged his MLC while trying to cover first base near the end of the 2023 season.

The lefty stayed with Kansas City in 2024 and finished his recovery but did not pitch in the Majors again, briefly pitching for the Royals’ minor-league

team in Oklahoma before electing free agency, though he eventually returned to the team and finished 2024 there.

Now Cox will pitch for the Strippers until the Braves call upon the Macon native to make a possible appearance for his home state club.

Mercer women’s lacrosse in NCAA tourney

The Mercer women’s lacrosse team won the Big South conference tournament for the fourth consecutive year last week, defeating High Point in the title game at Five Star Stadium in Macon on Sunday to punch their ticket to the NCAA tournament for the seventh time in program history.

The Bears took down High Point 16-8 in the afternoon championship game, as Kayla Casey made 12 saves in goal against the second-highest

See NOTEPAD, Page B2

A LIST OF LEGENDS

New batch of local athletics icons inducted into Macon Sports HOF



Michael A. Lough / For The Melody

From left: Gene Pollard, Randy Crawford, Eric Manuel, Marcus Grant, Jeremy Wiggins, Morgan Johnson Faulk, Johnny Crawford and Kevin DeMichiel pose for a photo at the Coliseum during the Hall of Fame ceremony. Their talents ranged from playing to coaching to refereeing.

Michael A. Lough
For The Melody

Eric Manuel makes it back to his hometown about once a year, so being around family and some friends is fairly routine.

But this was different. Standing in front of a microphone — and in front of family and friends he hadn’t seen in a good while, as well as familiar faces he’d known for decades — was an adjustment.

“I’m trying to hold it together,” he said only seconds into his speech. “I’m going to get it.”

Manuel was one of 10 inductees to the Macon Sports Hall of Fame who were celebrated Tuesday night in the Monument Room of the Macon Coliseum.

The moment got to him quickly, and more than once, including when thanking his parents, who died in 2019 and 2020.

Manuel’s career was a notable one, from going to Kentucky to leaving after a well-publicized academic and testing issue to winning two NAIA national titles at Oklahoma City University. He had to rely on his mother and the Bible, quoting John 16:33.

“I have told you all this so that you may have peace in me. Here on earth you will have many trials and (tribula-



Michael A. Lough / For The Melody

Northeast head coach and Hall of Fame inductee Jeremy Wiggins (left) poses with a scholarship athlete and his star running back, Nick Woodford, at the ceremony Tuesday night.

tions). But take heart, because I have overcome the world.’ I use that, because when I was at Kentucky ... I was pretty much ‘the heck with basketball.’ I just thought everything was over. But then, my mom would always have a

conversation,” Manuel said.

That led him back to the court, his championships and playing in Europe. “When things are hard in life,” he said,

See MSHOF, Page B3

ACE soccer advances to Final Four



Mark Powell / For The Melody

Scout Jones (15), Edy Powell (26), Laney Bridges (20) and EG Wood (8) celebrate after Powell scored the opening goal in ACE’s 4-0 win over East Laurens. The Gryphons played the Final Four at home Thursday.

For coverage of Thursday’s Final Four game, visit macommelody.com. To read about the Gryphons’ Elite Eight win, see B2.

GIAA baseball and soccer brackets finalized for Friday

Micah Johnston
Sports Editor

The GIAA released the official brackets and matchups for the postseason soccer and baseball, and several Macon teams are in the mix.

On the baseball diamond, Macon had a team reign supreme in the final standings. The FPD Vikings claimed the No. 1 seed in the GIAA Class 4A bracket after finishing the season 26-3, according to the GIAA’s MaxPreps rankings.

Led by ace pitcher Connor Strandmark, top prospect shortstop Keon Johnson and other hitters like Brady McHugh and Tinsley Lewis, the Vikings won the District 6 title in the regular season and have been the team to beat in Macon thus far.

FPD will get a bye in the 12-team tournament and play the winner of No. 8 Tallulah Falls vs. No. 9 Stratford. That series, a best-of-three affair, begins Friday night in Tallulah Falls.

Stratford has a young team, but a talented one. The Eagles fought hard

against top teams like FPD and others, but came up just one spot short of a home playoff game after finishing 17-12 on the year.

Now Stratford must face a Tallulah Falls team that could be more talented than their No. 8 seed indicates. The Indians, with a 21-9 record on the year, beat many competitors handily, with sweeps against George Walton and Loganville Christian academies as well as a resume-boosting win over Gatewood at the end of the year.

The Eagles will travel just over three hours to meet the Indians in the first-round matchup.

The Tattnall Trojans are the No. 3 seed in the Class 4A bracket, finishing just behind FPD and Brookstone on the podium to earn a bye.

The Trojans went 20-6 on the year, according to MaxPreps, sweeping teams like Strong Rock and Stratford along the way. They split their series against the Vikings — Tattnall won the first game between the two teams back

See BRACKETS, Page B3

ACE defeats East Laurens 4-0 in rematch of region title to advance to semifinal matchup

Michael A. Lough
For The Melody

The first time ACE and East Laurens met, it was a low-scoring slugfest.

That was back in early April, when the Gryphons held on to nip host East Laurens in a GHSA Region 2-A Division I battle.

The rematch was that and more, for a while, and bigger.

Sophomore Bayleigh Loosier scored twice and ACE's defense was on point in a 4-0 win Monday night over East Laurens in a state quarterfinal battle at Perkins Field.

ACE improved to 18-3 while East Laurens' season ended at 14-4. The Gryphons will have another home game in the Final Four on Thursday against No. 6 Model.

"We knew that East Laurens was fast and physical," ACE head coach Robby Jones said. "We had to make up for that with skill and teamwork and tactics. They just gelled as a group and kept fighting and just played really gritty."

"We were able to find the net more in the second half."

The bad news for East Laurens was how similar the rematch was to the 2-1 home loss on April 3.

"It was very similar," said Falcons head coach Chris Robinson, comparing Monday's game to the first meeting. "We sit in a low block trying to keep playing for PKs, and we just gave up that first corner. We made a decision at the half we were going to play them straight up."

"They're just better."
Now the Gryphons get to host a semifinal for the first time, coming on Thursday

when Model — a 2-0 winner over Thomasville — visits.

"We've been to the Final Four," Jones said. "We've never hosted it. We're excited."

ACE had a possession edge in the first half and got off eight shots, four on goal. East Laurens' Deanna Lowther turned away three shots.

The Gryphons had a few shots sail over the net. Then there were spells where neither team put the keepers on their toes, including one stretch where they just kicked it back and forth, one kick at a time, for about a minute, with no advantages gained.

The Falcons couldn't muster much of a threat offensively because they were battling so hard on defense. But Jones wanted even more pressure from the ACE offense.

"I challenged them to give up a good shot for a great shot, because that goalie is going to save every good shot," Jones said. "What can we do to put her off balance? Can we go far post? Can we try to set up a teammate a little bit more?"

"Maybe just think about one extra pass."

Lily Bivins' corner kick sailed toward bodies, and in came Edy Powell from outside the box. The ball found her right foot, and Powell softly got it to sail just over Lowther's hands with 31 seconds left in the half.

"We scored on a corner kick against them at their place," Jones said. "Same girl, with her head, from about the same spot. This one, she just put on the inside of her boot and just hit it



Junior captain Lily Bivins jukes a Falcons defender as ACE defeats East Laurens 4-0 in the Elite Eight to advance to the Final Four. The quarterfinal showdown was a rematch of an intense game between the Gryphons and Falcons that eventually decided the Region 2 champion when ACE won 2-1.

far post. A very good touch."

The Gryphons appeared set for another goal in similar fashion 12 minutes into the second half after a corner kick landed in front of the net, inspiring a flurry of action from both teams, only for a shot to sail high again, a lost opportunity for a little cushion.

Not for long. A corner kick was defended, but East Laurens couldn't get it out. A Gryphon and Falcon battled for possession, and Loosier stood ready when the ball

squirted to her. She took a step for better position before zipping it past Lowther for another goal.

Now, ACE led 2-0 at the 54:40 mark of the match, putting that much more pressure on East Laurens. The Falcons' three losses were to Toombs County 4-1, Trinity Christian 2-1 and ACE 2-1, each in a different month.

"Scoring," Robinson said of the Falcons' prime issue in the losses. "We couldn't be consistent scoring. I just feel like their first touch was

better than ours. They're as athletic as we are, and usually we're more athletic than other teams."

"If they get the great first touch in, they're more athletic."

The inevitability of that one-loss-per-month trend continuing came about 10 minutes later when Loosier sent it to the left side of the net, and Lowther lost just enough footing to miss it.

A 3-0 lead with 15:52 left, considering the Falcons still hadn't managed a solid shot on goal, was unofficially in-

surmountable. Some icing was slathered on with Bivins' goal with 3:25 left.

Both teams are win-a-few-games playoff programs historically, with East Laurens playing in a 2017 final and 2018 semifinal. The Falcons lose seven seniors, whose careers ended against a team Robinson is mighty impressed with.

"I think they could win state," said Robinson, who racked up his 250th career win in late April. "They're that good."

Notepad, A1:

scoring offense in the country while Caroline Glus and Sami Lowinger both scored four goals in the contest.

Mercer started slow but eventually took a 10-5 lead before halftime and never looked back. A 13-5 lead late more or less put things on ice before the Bears eventually won 16-8. Casey was named tournament MVP for her performance in the net.

Mercer is now set to travel to Gainesville on Friday to face No. 4 Florida in the first round of the NCAA Tournament. The Gators are 6-0 against the Bears all-time and defeated them 22-9 earlier this season. The game begins at 4 p.m.

ACE selects hoops coach as new AD

Some thought it might be skillful football coach Keith Hatcher taking the reins, but the Gryphons administration selected boys basketball coach Thomas Darrah as their new athletic director last week.

After longtime AD Josh McLendon departed to become the softball coach at Dublin, Darrah will take over while remaining the boys basketball coach. Darrah also serves as the offensive coordinator and quarterbacks coach for the ACE football team.

"I am honored and grateful for the opportunity to serve as the Athletic Director at the Academy for Classical Education," Darrah said in an email. "ACE is very special to me and I look forward to leading the growth and development of our Athletic Department for years to come. We have a great staff of coaches, and I am looking forward to supporting them any way possible."

Darrah graduated from Newnan High School and played for the University of Alabama. He was a member of the 2009-10 National Championship team for the Crimson Tide and finished his playing career at Jacksonville State University. Darrah teaches strength and conditioning at ACE.

Macon athletes head

to state title track meet

Several athletes from Macon's GHSA schools will compete at the state championships over the weekend to complete the track and field season.

The Class A-Division I championships begin Friday in Rome, while the 2A meet is in Commerce and the 3A meet is in Albany.

Here are the students competing and the schools they represent:

CENTRAL

Jazlyn Johnson (1600m), Tafrenya Palmer and Gabrielle Knowlton (800m), Caylin Mathis (triple and high jump), Girls 4x100 and 4x800 relays

SOUTHWEST

Aiden Young (discus), Jaliyah Shelly (100 and 200m), Relay teams (4x200 and 4x800)

ACE

Bryson Vincent (100m), Alexander Tunnell (3200m), D'Nae Francis (high jump)

NORTHEAST

Jacorey Sherman (200 and 400m), Zandrea Glover (200)

WESTSIDE

Anthony Horton (discus), Jorden Billue (shot put)

RUTLAND

Zaylen Tumblin (100m hurdles and high jump), Zipporah Davis (100m hurdles), Karmen Hill (300m hurdles), A'Zharia Lane (400m and high jump), Boys 4x100 and 4x200 and Girls 4x100 and 4x200 Relay teams

MGA softball wins tournament

The Middle Georgia State Knights won the Southern States Athletic Conference championship Sunday after a perfect run through the bracket, sweeping the William Carey University Crusaders in two games to claim the trophy in Decatur, Alabama.

Sunday's games were actually both the semifinals and finals, as some of the conference tournament was rescheduled from Friday.

The Knights defeated the Crusaders 10-2 in the semifinal game, notching 14 hits on

the day with stars Madison Cosgrove and Gabbie Haas each getting four base knocks. The game was tied at 2-2 after three innings, but Middle Georgia State exploded for six runs in the bottom of the fourth and never looked back.

Emily Proctor pitched the first game, going all five innings while allowing only two hits and two walks. She struck out five William Carey batters.

The semifinal win meant the Knights would await their opponent in the championship game later that Sunday. As it turned out, William Carey came out of the bracket to face them again in the title matchup. The Crusaders would need two wins to hoist the trophy, while Middle Georgia State needed to defeat William Carey only once to claim the tournament victory.

The second game was much closer than the first as a pitcher's duel unfolded in Decatur. The Knights had hits in each of the first four innings, but only one batter reached in each of those frames as they were unable to push across any runs.

Proctor pitched again and held up her end of the bargain, playing even better than she did in the semifinal showdown. The pitcher gave up one hit in the top of the first, then did not allow another baserunner until the fifth inning. Even then, Proctor escaped the slight jam and kept things scoreless into the bottom of the fifth.

Middle Georgia State finally broke through in its half of the frame. A leadoff double from Mel Bullock put a runner in scoring position immediately, and Madisyn Riggins grounded out to move Bullock to third right after. Haas then singled to give the Knights the only run they would need.

Proctor went the distance for Middle Georgia State, pitching seven innings of shutout ball while allowing only four hits and a lone walk. Her record on the year improved to 25-2.

The Knights advanced to the NAIA National Championship Opening Round, which begins May 12. They earned a No. 3 seed and will play in San Antonio.

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Coliseum, from A1:

David Aiello is the district general manager for Oakview Group, which manages all the venues under the Macon Centreplex umbrella, including the new Amphitheater off Eisenhower parkway. He said the problems plaguing the Coliseum are more than just cosmetic.

"It's very difficult to maintain hockey ice in a 60-year-old building in Macon where the humidity is high. So that's number one," Aiello said. "Then from a food and beverage standpoint, it's incredibly difficult to be efficient with the current setup... the concourse is very narrow, and you only have two stands that you're really allowed to cook food in. There's not even really a kitchen area."

Aiello also cited a lack of premium seating, difficulties finding ad revenue opportunities and, perhaps most importantly, the outdated accessibility amidst new ADA requirements as other reasons for erecting a new arena.

There's also a competition aspect to the decision to build a new arena, he said. The list of nearby cities constructing new event venues is a veritable who's who of Georgia's key locations, Athens, Augusta and Savannah chief among them.

"In addition to all those cities, you have Atlanta. So what we don't want to do is fall too far behind and then have some of our annual events go elsewhere within the state," Aiello said.

The county advertised the arena construction job on April 18. With the search still on for a contractor, the price tag for the new Coliseum is a work in progress that will depend on the architects and their estimates.

The recently-passed SPLOST should partially fund the new arena, Aiello said, though he and Miller each referenced additional funding from different sources.

"We've got various funds we'll be using for the new arena... certainly we can use some SPLOST but that's not most of it," Miller said. "We're looking at many options including state funding, we hope that we'll be able to convince the state to help us with a new arena."

"We can also look at tourism improvement districts there and some buy-in from developers. We expect people to put up some money themselves to help this project work out with the convention center as well as the arena."

The new convention center Miller referred to is further along in the build process and set to be constructed at 108 First St. The location for the Coliseum is listed in the county's records as 305 Coliseum Drive — not the actual site of the current Coliseum, but a building in the same parking lot.

While the new arena would offer better amenities for fans, athletes, musicians and employees, there are still some complaints surrounding the possibility of a new arena. Commenters on social media voiced concerns about the traffic in the area, how long it would take to build and Macon's ability to sustain a new venue in addition to the Amphitheater.



Mark Powell / For The Melody

A sold-out crowd — mostly in favor of Southwest High School — at the Macon Coliseum cheers as the Patriots hit a buzzer-beater shot at halftime of the GHSA Class A-Division I State Championship earlier this year. The Coliseum, where Southwest won many of its state titles, will likely be replaced by a new arena Macon-Bibb County is planning on building.

Then there's the nostalgia factor, the sometimes illogical but nearly impossible to avoid sentimental feelings attached to the Coliseum. The building carries with it memories of some of Macon's finest moments.

The state championships in February offered a potent dose of that energy when Southwest High School, formerly one of the largest schools in the Southeast and at one time a high school basketball dynasty, returned to its winning ways as the Patriots made the Class A-Division I championship game.

Southwest played in front of a raucous packed house in the Coliseum, evoking scenes of the school's state championships in the '70s and '80s that were some of the most important happenings in Macon's sports history.

Southwest fans chattered about those memories as they squeezed their way into crowded seats, then cheered with admirable fervor, even though the Patriots went on to lose the title game.

Southwest head coach Monquencio Hardnett, a Macon native and Central High School graduate that had family members on Southwest's championship teams decades prior, felt the passion for the venue and its history that day.

"It was wild. It made me feel like I was back in Connecticut again," Hardnett said of the Coliseum's atmosphere after the game in February, comparing it to the energy at the UConn basketball

games he played in as a college student.

"I just wanted them to experience everything that comes along with this. I told them before the game, 'You guys deserve every moment that you're getting right now. Relish it. Enjoy it.'"

Aiello said that the new Coliseum may not necessarily mean the death of the original venue — it could be retrofitted with better seating, given updates and maintained along with the new building, although Macon-Bibb County's website specifically says that the current Coliseum would be "replaced."

There's no official timeline for the completion of the new arena in the RFQ, but the structure appears to be well on its way. The document does say the county will choose a firm to build it by May 27.

There is no timeline on the original Coliseum's patina of Macon history, either.

"The Coliseum will always be a part of the fabric of Macon. It's always going to be part of our culture, and where we are today we wouldn't be without the Centreplex — the Coliseum, the City Auditorium, all of it," Aiello said. "Really for us to take the next steps, we really need a facility that's going to lead us into the future. Whatever happens to the facility, it's always going to be part of the new building. We will find ways to remember it."

Brackets, from A1:

on April 8, although MaxPreps has that game listed as a loss.

Wyatt Still is undoubtedly the leader for Tattnall, as the pitcher has a 2.25 earned run average in 59 innings pitched while also boasting a .419 batting average in 90 plate appearances.

Other key hitters for the Trojans include Tristan Turner and Anson Talcott, both of whom are hitting over .350. Tucker Brown is a big contributor on the mound with a 2.02 ERA in just under 70 innings pitched.

Tattnall will play the winner of No. 6 Calvary Christian vs. No. 11 Strong Rock at home. That series begins Friday in Columbus. Should the Trojans win their second-round game, they would advance and likely play No. 2 Brookstone on the road in the semifinals.

Mount de Sales finished 5-16 and ranked No. 14, two spots shy of a playoff game.

Neither of Macon's teams in Class 2A made the playoffs. Central Fellowship Christian Academy finished No. 14 with a 5-18 mark, while Windsor went 2-18 to finish No. 17.

Covenant is the last Macon team to

make the GIAA playoff field, earning the No. 10 seed in the Class A bracket with a 13-14 season record. Asa Wood, also a football star for the Rams, leads the way at the dish with an eye-popping .526 batting average and 1.495 OPS through 90 plate appearances, according to Covenant's GameChanger stats.

Leading the way on the bump for the Rams are Joseph Christy and Ethan Mills. They and the rest of the Covenant squad will take on No. 7 Vidalia Heritage in the first round Friday in the opening round. The first game is scheduled for 2 p.m.

The Eagles are 10-13 overall with wins against John Milledge, St. Andrews and David Emmanuel Academy.

Stratford and CFCA snag great soccer seeds

Stratford Academy was the highest-ranked Macon team on the boys soccer side of things, finishing as the No. 3 team in Class 4A with a 14-3 regular season record.

The Eagles took care of business against local squads, going 10-0 in region play and allowing just four goals over seven games against fellow Macon schools.

The Eagles get a bye as a result and will face the winner of No. 7 King's

Academy vs. No. 10 Bulloch. That first round game is Saturday, while Stratford's first game will be May 17.

Mount de Sales and Tattnall were the other two Bibb County schools in the GIAA Class 4A playoffs, earning the No. 11 and No. 12 seeds.

The Cavaliers finished 7-4 overall and will travel to face No. 6 Cavalry Christian in Columbus on Saturday. The Knights finished 8-6-1 on the year and defeated St. Anne-Pacelli.

Tattnall finished 7-5-2 and will travel to No. 5 Cristo Rey in Atlanta on Saturday. Cristo Rey went 12-2 in the regular season, losing only to Fulton Science Academy and Eastside.

In Class 2A, CFCA finished No. 3 with a 14-2-1 record. The Lancers were red-hot against region competition all season and lost their two games against higher-class opponents Bulloch Academy and Stratford.

The Lancers get a week off before their second round game May 17, which will be against the winner of No. 6 Augusta Prep vs. No. 11 Georgia Christian at home.

On the girls side, Macon had three teams finish in the top five in their classifications.

Stratford and FPD battled all year for supremacy in District 6 of Class 4A —

the Vikings won their first 14 straight games of the year, a streak broken only by the Eagles when Stratford won its second game against its cross-town rival on penalty kicks.

That win, combined with a 14-1 record and a nine-game winning streak to finish the season, gave Stratford the No. 2 rank in 4A. The Eagles get a bye and will face the winner of No. 7 Strong Rock vs. No. 10 Mount de Sales next week, May 16.

FPD still finished 16-1 to earn the No. 4 spot with plenty of momentum. The Vikings also get a bye and will go up against the winner of No. 5 George Walton vs. No. 12 Loganville Christian in the second round.

Mount de Sales and Tattnall finished No. 10 and No. 11, respectively. The Cavaliers will travel to Columbus to face Strong Rock on Friday at 6:30 p.m., while the Trojans play Brookstone in Columbus on Friday at 5:30 p.m.

CFCA finished on top of Class 2A with a 17-2-1 record, earning the No. 1 seed and a bye. The Lancers will face the winner of No. 8 Heritage vs. No. 9 Robert Toombs on May 16. Covenant is the No. 10 seed and will travel Friday to face No. 7 Gatewood.

MSHOF, from A1:

"you just have to push forward."

He was joined by another former basketball standout in Macon who played in the SEC, Central grad Marcus Grant. Manuel played for the legendary Don "Duck" Richardson, Grant for the mighty successful Randy Brown.

Grant was prepared for a career in the SEC.

"When you go to college, those college coaches, they chew you up and spit you out," said Grant, who still looked like he was capable of some baseline-to-baseline ball. "Fortunately for me, I had been chewed out. I was already used to it."

Both came from afar for the ceremony, Manuel from Oklahoma City and Grant from Starkville, Mississippi, where he has spent a chunk of his life after graduating from Central. He played and then coached at Mississippi State, and now works for an MSU-connected NIL initiative.

The state championship Northeast girls track team of 1979 made its presence known 46 years ago, and several members made their presence known vocally Tuesday night as the team honored by the hall.

Legendary coach Alvin Copeland was all smiles in the middle of so many former athletes, as well as watching longtime protégé and assistant Randy Crawford be inducted.

More than 400 friends, family and fans packed the Monument Room, the festivities starting with the annual honoring of a female and male scholar-athlete from all 14 Bibb County high schools.

Hezekiah Jackson was honored for his decades of work with the Bibb County School District, currently

as the athletics facilities supervisor, with the Bobby Pope Service to Sports Award.

Then came the speeches, which ranged from efficient to lengthy, with some emotion, humor and poignance sprinkled throughout.

Hall of Famer Janet Allman Battcher spoke for her deceased brother Marty, who was her hero growing up as a standout at Lanier.

She was 13 when she had to ride with the family to an out-of-town football game her brother was playing in.

The Lanier team stopped after the game to eat at a steakhouse. But this was the 1960s, and little was simple.

"Marty would not leave the school bus because the restaurant would not let Isaac Jackson, a Black player, in to eat," she said, referencing the legendary running back. "He stayed on the bus, and our parents came out with food for them."

"It never occurred to me at that time how selfless that was, until several years later."

Jeremy Wiggins is one of two inductees (along with shooter Kevin DeMichiel) still active. The former Northeast football standout leads the Raiders' football team. One of his prized pupils was on hand, running back Nick Woodford, on the long list of county scholar-athletes honored.

Wiggins' ability meant a whole lot of travel for his parents, who after roaming around Middle Georgia and the state while he was competing in multiple sports at Northeast expanded the travel experience when he went to Appalachian State.

"All the practices they took me to, my brothers, taking me down ... to play my years of football, all the way up to being at college," he said. "They traveled

everywhere. I don't think they missed but two games throughout my college career and high school career."

Johnny Crawford spent nearly two dozen years taking abuse from football coaches in the SEC and other conferences as an official. Always a quick wit, he drew the biggest laugh of the night when introducing his three daughters, two with husbands alongside.

And then...

"Claire, with her boyfriend," Crawford said, looking to the table. "What's your name?"

He then claimed to know the boyfriend's name, only to offer a different name.

Crawford was on the 1975 Central team that won the GHSA Class 3A state football title and eventually became an official. But there was a setback before he embarked on a long SEC career, showing that adversity even hits the refs, part of his advice to the high schoolers on hand.

"Be coachable, listen to people," he said. "Don't give up, because people are going to tell you you can't do it. Doors are going to close."

He recalled getting a letter in the mid-1990s from the SEC supervisor officials telling him thanks, but no thanks, his services as a ref for that year were not required, and probably wouldn't be.

"Four or five years later, that same supervisor hired me, and put me on my first crew," he said. "Be passionate, be coachable, and keep trucking along, even when you're told 'no.'"

Macon SHOF Class of 2025

Marty Allman, Johnny Crawford, Randy Crawford, Kevin DeMichiel, Morgan Johnson Faulk, Marcus Grant, Eric Manuel, Gene Pollard, Jimmy Seward, Jeremy Wiggins, Hezekiah Jackson

Schedule

Friday, May 9

Baseball:

GIAA Class 4A
State Tournament, Round 1:
· No. 9 Stratford @ No. 8 Tallulah Falls, Best of Three, Game 1 at 4 p.m.

GIAA Class A
State Tournament, Round 1:
· No. 10 Covenant @ No. 7 Vidalia Heritage, Best of Three, Game 1 at 2 p.m.

Soccer:

Girls teams

GIAA Class 4A
State Tournament, Round 1:
· No. 10 Mount de Sales @ No. 7 Strong Rock (in Locust Grove), 6:30 p.m.
· No. 11 Tattnall @ No. 6 Brookstone (in Columbus), 5:30 p.m.

GIAA Class 2A
State Tournament, Round 1:
· No. 10 Covenant @ No. 7 Gatewood

Track and Field:

· GHSA Class A-Division I State Championships Track and Field Meet @ Rome High School/Barron Stadium
· GHSA Class 2A State Championships Track and Field Meet @ East Jackson High School
· GHSA Class 3A State Championships Track and Field Meet @ Dougherty County Schools, Albany/Hugh Mills Stadium

Mercer sports:

· Women's golf in National Golf Invitational @ Maricopa, Arizona
· Women's lacrosse in NCAA Tournament, Round 1: @ #4 Florida, 4 p.m.

Saturday, May 10

Soccer:

Boys teams

GIAA Class 4A
State Tournament, Round 1
· No. 11 Mount de Sales @ No. 6 Calvary Christian
· No. 12 Tattnall @ No. 5 Cristo Rey (in Atlanta), 4:30 p.m.

Tennis:

GHSA Class A-Division I State tournament, Final Four:
· No. 7 ACE Charter vs. No. 3 Bleckley County, in Rome

Mercer Sports:

· Southern Conference Track and Field championships, all day in Birmingham
· Women's golf in National Golf Invitational @ Maricopa, Arizona
· Baseball @ Virginia Tech, 3 p.m.

Sunday, May 11

Mercer Sports:

· Southern Conference Track and Field championships, all day in Birmingham
· Women's golf in National Golf Invitational @ Maricopa, Arizona
· Baseball @ Virginia Tech, 3 p.m.

Monday, May 12

Mercer sports:

· Southern Conference Track and Field championships, all day in Birmingham
· Men's golf at NCAA Regional Tournament, Round 1

Tuesday, May 13

Mercer sports:

· Southern Conference Track and Field championships, all day in Birmingham
· Men's golf at NCAA Regional Tournament, Round 2

Wednesday, May 14

Mercer Sports:

· Men's golf at NCAA Regional Tournament, Round 3

Thursday, May 15

Mercer Sports:

· Baseball vs. Samford, 6 p.m.

Friday, May 16

Baseball:

GIAA Class 4A
State Tournament, Round 2:
· No. 1 FPD vs. winner of No. 9 Stratford/No. 8 Tallulah Falls, Best of Three
· No. 3 Tattnall Square Academy vs. winner of No. 6 Calvary Christian/No. 11 Small Rock, Best of Three, Time TBD

GIAA Class A
State Tournament, Round 2:
· No. 2 Flint River vs. winner of No. 10 Covenant/No. 7 Vidalia Heritage, Best of Three, Time TBD

Soccer:

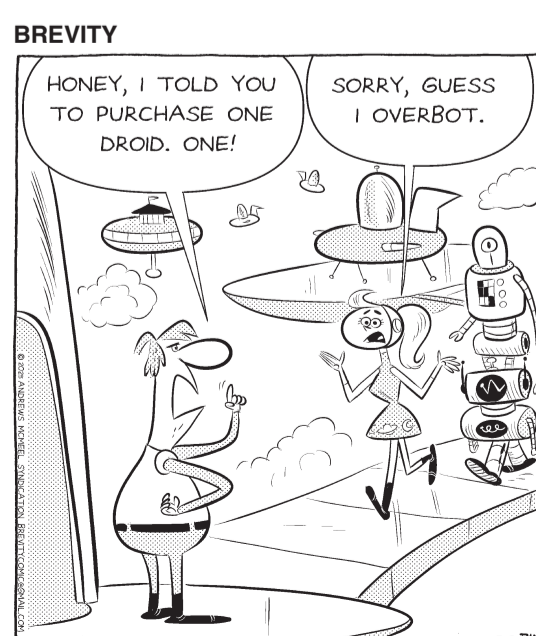
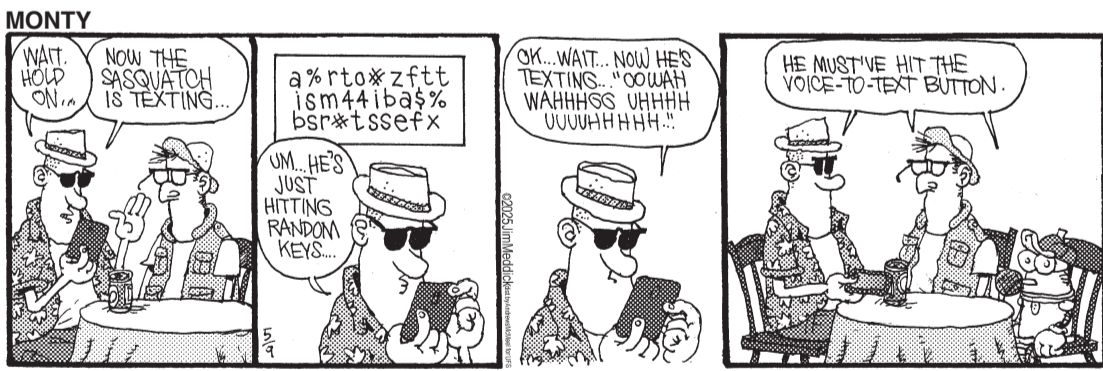
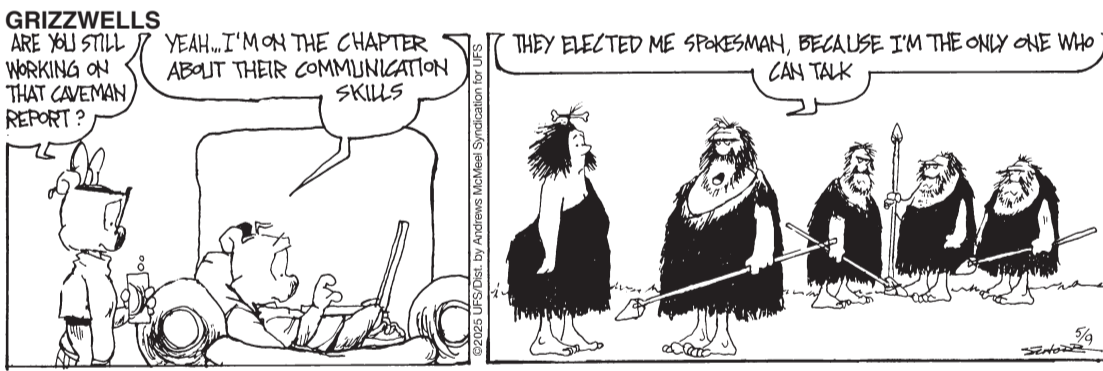
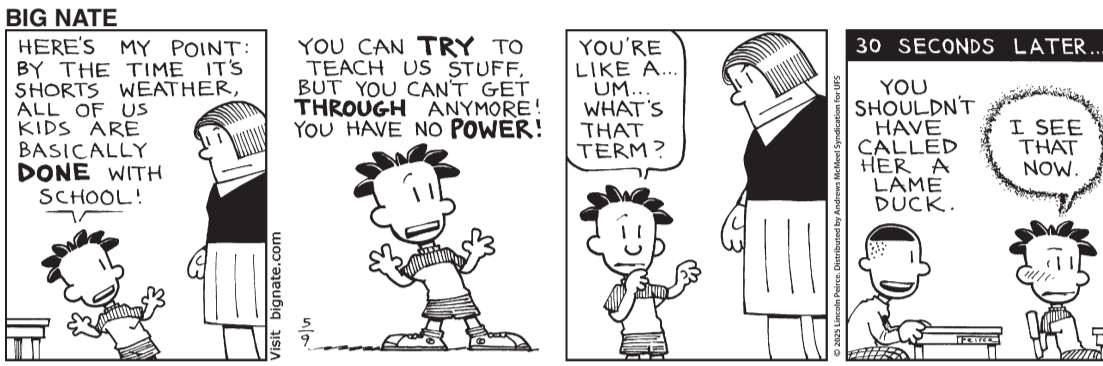
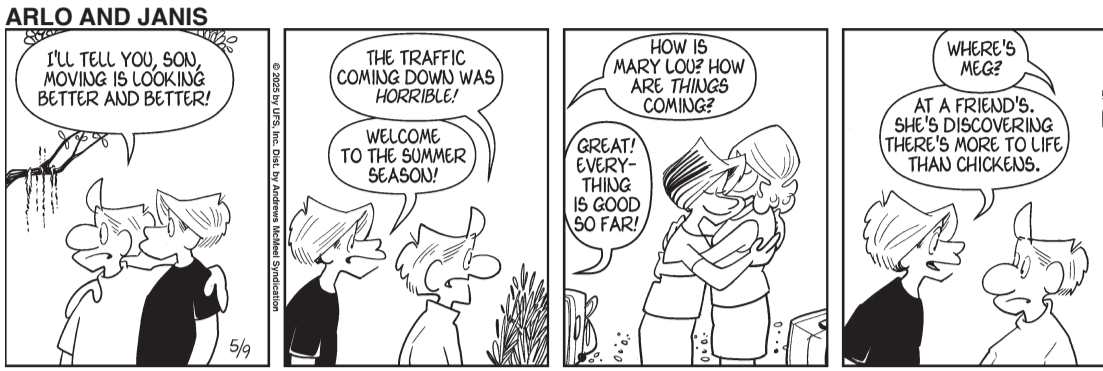
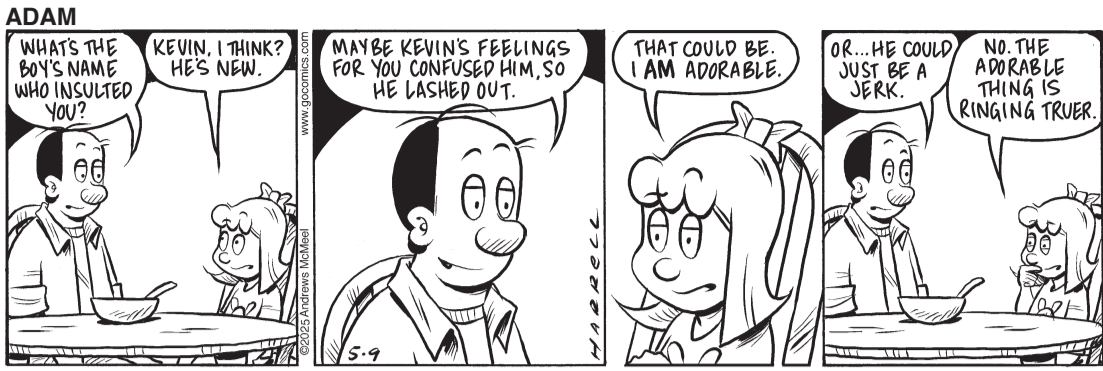
Girls teams

GIAA Class 4A
State Tournament, Round 2:
· No. 2 Stratford vs. winner of No. 7 Strong Rock/No. 10 Mount de Sales, Best of Three, Time TBD
· No. 4 FPD vs. winner of No. 5 George Walton/No. 12 Loganville Christian, Best of Three, Time TBD

GIAA Class 2A
State Tournament, Round 2:
· No. 1 Central Fellowship Christian vs. winner of No. 8 Heritage/No. 9 Robert Toombs, Best of Three, Time TBD
· Winner of No. 10 Covenant/No. 7 Gatewood vs. No. 2 Westminster Christian, Best of Three, Time TBD

Mercer sports:

· Baseball vs. Samford, 6 p.m.



NEA Crossword Puzzle

- ACROSS**
- 1 Half dozen
 - 4 Brewed beverages
 - 8 Coarse file
 - 12 Anger
 - 13 Noble's title
 - 14 Actress — Falco
 - 15 Swindle
 - 16 Stringed instrument
 - 17 Mouthful
 - 18 Small hill
 - 20 Click beetle
 - 22 Fruity dessert
 - 23 Kitchen item
 - 24 Fast musical movement
 - 28 Fresher
 - 32 Ring champ
 - 33 Designer — Cassini
 - 35 "— on a Grecian Urn"
 - 36 Girl
 - 37 Road charge
 - 38 Curved bone
- DOWN**
- 1 Feeling poorly
 - 2 Press
 - 3 Fan of things foreign
 - 4 Bank worker
 - 5 — de parfum
 - 6 Museum contents
- 39 Stockholm native**
- 41 Canadian province
 - 44 Insect
 - 46 Climbing plant
 - 47 Compact and stylish
 - 50 Light brown
 - 53 Ripped
 - 54 — moss
 - 57 Hubbub
 - 58 A single time
 - 59 Raison d'—
 - 60 Actor — Romano
 - 61 Bell sound
 - 62 Mark from injury
 - 63 Bout's end
- Answer to Previous Puzzle**
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- 7 Rest
 - 8 Sales incentive
 - 9 Mine entrance
 - 10 Scene
 - 11 Look
 - 19 Fib
 - 21 Yearn
 - 24 Hangs down
 - 25 Lobster feature
 - 26 Menagerie
 - 27 Stew pot
 - 29 Fearful one
 - 30 Redact
 - 31 Singer — McEntire
 - 34 Old English measure
 - 37 Portable home
 - 40 Weedy rye grass
 - 42 Acerbic
 - 43 Actress — Marie Saint
 - 45 Kinds
 - 47 Halt
 - 48 Fried cornbread
 - 49 Killer whale
 - 51 Minn. neighbor
 - 52 Simple toy (Hyph.)
 - 55 Catchall abbr.
 - 56 Football's — Parsegian

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DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★★

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Almanac

Today is the 129th day of 2025 and the 51st day of spring.

TODAY'S HISTORY: In 1914, President Woodrow Wilson issued the first presidential proclamation calling for a national Mother's Day holiday.

In 1974, the U.S. House of Representatives opened impeachment hearings against President Richard Nixon.

In 2001, 126 soccer fans died in a stampede at the Accra Sports Stadium in Ghana.

TODAY'S BIRTHDAYS: John Brown (1800-1859), abolitionist; J.M. Barrie (1860-1937), author/playwright; Mike Wallace (1918-2012), journalist; James L. Brooks (1940-), director/producer; Candice Bergen (1946-), actress; Billy Joel (1949-), singer-songwriter/pianist.

TODAY'S FACT: When Federal Communications Commission Chairman Newton Minow described network TV programming as a "vast wasteland" during a speech on this day in 1961, the top-rated shows in the United States were "Gunsmoke," "Wagon Train" and "Have Gun - Will Travel."

TODAY'S SPORTS: In 1984, the Chicago White Sox finally defeated the Milwaukee Brewers 7-6 in a 25-inning game that had been suspended from the day before. It was the longest timed game in Major League Baseball to date, at 8 hours and 6 minutes.

TODAY'S QUOTE: "We never understand how little we need in this world until we know the loss of it." - J.M. Barrie, "Margaret Ogilvy"

TODAY'S NUMBER: 27 - current member nations in the European Union. Bosnia and Herzegovina, Ukraine, Moldova, Albania, Serbia, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Turkey and Georgia are candidates for membership.

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

New Ocmulgee boat ramp proposed in East Bibb

Bibb County may get a new boat ramp that would provide access to the Ocmulgee River in the Bond Swamp National Wildlife Refuge in East Macon near land being considered for a National Park.

The Georgia Department of Natural Resources proposed building a concrete boat ramp and gravel parking lot on about an acre of riverfront land at 1900 Bondsvue Road, not far from Brown's Mount off Ocmulgee East Boulevard. The 20-foot ramp would be built on the river's east bank on 674 acres owned by the federal government.

If approved, the project could start as early as August and would be completed by November.

The proposed location on the Fall Line would offer public access to a unique but rarely-seen part of the river where the lower Piedmont meets the upper coastal plain. Fish caught by anglers there include Black Crappie, largemouth bass, shoal bass, catfish, redear and redbreast sunfish, according to an environmental assessment of the area.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service identified the following endangered species that could be affected by construction: Tricolored bat, whooping crane, monarch butterfly, Fringed Campion, Ocmulgee Skullcap, Relict Trillium, Bald Eagle, Atlantic Sturgeon and Altamaha shiner.

The Georgia DNR is seeking comments and feedback from the public on its environmental assessment. Read it at rb.gy/l7sye5 and send comments to fm.comments@dnr.ga.gov by the deadline May 30 at 4:30 p.m.

Two motorcyclists die on same road one week apart

A man driving a motorcycle crashed into another car and died near the Middle Georgia Regional Airport shortly before 3 a.m. Tuesday.

Dana Wayne Redd, 55, was heading north on Hawkinsville Road

when his motorcycle collided with a Saab headed in the same direction. Redd was pronounced dead at the scene near Avondale Circle.

Redd's death occurred exactly a week after 40-year-old David Christopher Lewis was killed in a motorcycle crash about five miles north at the intersection of Allen and Hawkinsville roads.

U Create Macon paints Anthony Road crosswalks

Students and volunteers with the nonprofit U Create Macon painted art and spruced up crosswalks on Anthony Road near Ingram-Pye Elementary School on Wednesday afternoon.

"We are so excited about this interactive project that will not only make a difference to the students creating it, but for other students and families using it to get to school," said Charise Stephens-Merriweather, founder of the nonprofit and director of small business affairs for Macon-Bibb County.

May 7 is "National Bike and Roll to School Day" and U Create Macon's mission is to get youth to bike around safely in the community.

U Create Macon provides various cycling programs, including mountain biking, road cycling and bike safety workshops.

Mercer awards 22 study abroad scholarships

Mercer University's Office of Global Engagement has awarded its latest round of Global Leader Scholarships, providing 22 students with a total of \$51,000 to participate in study abroad programs during the upcoming summer and fall semesters.

The program was launched in 2019 to support students with financial need who want to pursue long-term study abroad opportunities. The latest cohort of Global Leader Scholars includes:

- Clifford Alford, an undeclared freshman, will participate in a summer faculty-led pro-

gram in Spain.

- Maria Bautista, a senior Spanish and political science double-major, will participate in a summer faculty-led program in Spain.

- Xiya Burton, an undeclared freshman, will participate in a summer faculty-led program in Sweden.

- Zachary Carman, a senior neuroscience major, will participate in a summer faculty-led program in Spain.

- Nancy Cifuentes-Martinez, a sophomore kinesiology and Spanish double-major, will participate in a faculty-led program in Spain.

- Willow Crabtree, a senior Spanish and creative writing double-major, will participate in a summer faculty-led program in Spain.

- Giang Doan, a junior chemistry and English double-major, will participate in a summer faculty-led program in Spain.

- Megan Fachisthers, a junior global health studies and Spanish double-major, will participate in a summer exchange program in Argentina.

- Lily Gardiner, a sophomore kinesiology major, will participate in a summer faculty-led program in Sweden.

- Alisha Lalani, a junior psychology major, will participate in summer exchange program in the United Kingdom.

- Ilona Lively, an undeclared sophomore, will participate in a summer faculty-led program in Sweden.

- Cristian Martindale, a junior international business and marketing double-major, will participate in a fall exchange program in South Korea.

- Kristen McLeod, a junior economics and finance double-major, will participate in a summer affiliate program in Spain.

- Madyson McManigle, a fresh-

man public health major, will participate in a summer faculty-led program in Sweden.

- Sreeja Pandiri, a sophomore neuroscience major, will participate in a fall exchange program in South Korea.

- Madeleine Pardue, a sophomore English and history double-major, will participate in a summer faculty-led program in Greece.

- Aaryan Patel, an undeclared sophomore, will participate in a summer faculty-led program in Sweden.

- Anna Stein, a senior music and Spanish double-major, will participate in a summer faculty-led program in Spain.

- Madeline Stewart, a senior neuroscience and Spanish double-major, will participate in a summer faculty-led program in Spain.

- Carolina Stover, a junior history and philosophy double-major, will participate in a summer faculty-led program in Greece.

- Ria Tamrakar, an undeclared sophomore, will participate in a summer faculty-led program in Sweden.

- Hannah Walker, a senior neuroscience major, will participate in a summer faculty-led program in Greece.

SUDOKU ANSWER

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

What to watch FRIDAY

May 9, 2025

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

Nonnas

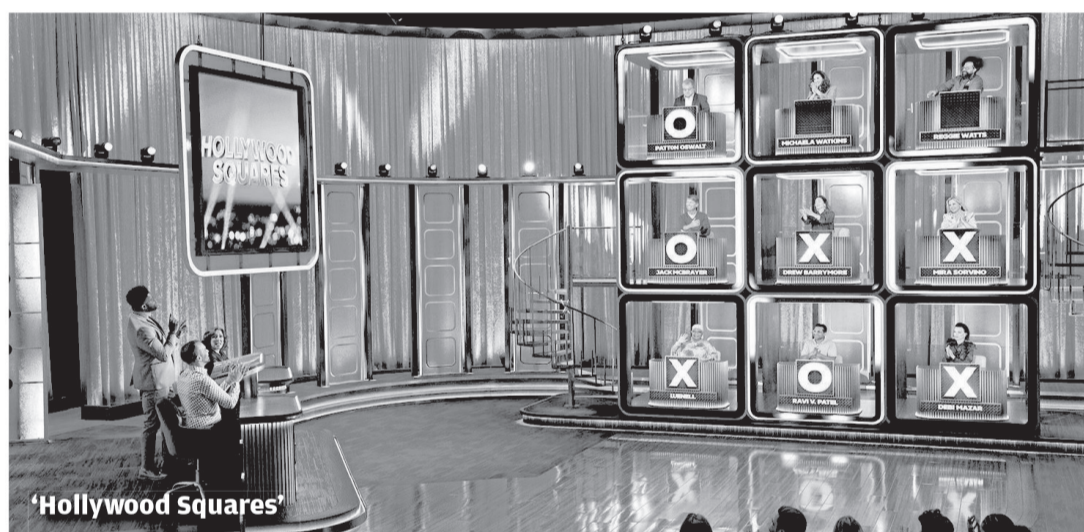
Netflix ■ Original Film

Vince Vaughn leads this comedy as Joe Scaravella, who, following the loss of his mother, risks everything to honor her by opening an Italian restaurant with a group of local grandmothers as the chefs. The cast also includes Lorraine Bracco, Talia Shire, Brenda Vaccaro, Joe Manganiello, Drea de Matteo, Campbell Scott, Linda Cardellini and Susan Sarandon.

The Royals

Netflix ■ New Series

This Indian romantic comedy/drama begins when Aviraaj Singh (Ishaan Khatter), the polo-playing, pleasure-seeking party prince and heir to the royal throne of Morpur, meets high-functioning, tightly wound, ace CEO Sophia Shekhar (Bhumi Pednekar). As sparks and insults fly, they reluctantly come together to save his royally dysfunctional family from financial ruin and to save her



ROBERT VOETS, CBS

own leading startup of luxury homestays in India from ruthless investment bankers.

Hollywood Squares

CBS, 8 p.m. ■ Season Finale

The game show revival wraps up its first season with "I've Been in 12 Sandwiches" and "Between Two Nuts." Nate Burleson hosts with Drew Barrymore as the center square. CBS picked up *Hollywood Squares* for a second season.

Grosse Pointe Garden Society

NBC, 8 p.m.

In the new episode "The Fallow Period," As new details of their night unfold, Birdie (Melissa Fumero), Catherine (Aja Naomi King), Brett (Ben Rappaport) and Alice (AnnaSophia

Robb) reckon with the aftermath of their gala afterparty.

Gold Rush: Mine Rescue With Freddy & Juan

Discovery Channel, 9 p.m.

■ Season Premiere

Gold recovery experts Freddy Dodge and Juan Ibarra are back on the road in North America to help turn small-time miners' pitfalls into profits. In the season premiere, Freddy and Juan face off at a hard rock mine spanning three elevations at 4,000 feet in the Cascades. Battling impenetrable rock, the guys devise an innovative 180-foot chute featuring a spiral concentrator in their first ever Washington state rescue. The season also features visits to mines in Oregon, Arizona, Montana and British Columbia.



CONTINENTAL DISTRIBUTING

MOVIES YOU'LL LOVE



'I Can Do Bad All By Myself' LIONSGATE

Black Widow (2021, Action) Scarlett Johansson, Florence Pugh **FX, 6 p.m.**

Nanny Dearest (2023, Suspense) Kayleigh Anne Ruller, Liz Fenning **LMN, 6 p.m.**

Pulp Fiction (1994, Crime drama) John Travolta, Samuel L. Jackson **IFC, 6:30 p.m.**

F9 The Fast Saga (2021, Action) Vin Diesel, Michelle Rodriguez **Bravo, 7 p.m.**

Stay Out (2023, Horror) Kareem J. Grimes, Dane DiLiegro **BET, 7 p.m.**

Gladiator (2000, Historical drama) Russell Crowe, Joaquin Phoenix **Paramount, 7 p.m.**

The Baby My Husband Lied About (2025, Suspense) Yoshie Bancroft, Clayton James **LMN, 8 p.m.**

The Fifth Element (1997, Science fiction) Bruce Willis, Gary Oldman **BBC America, 8 p.m.**

I Can Do Bad All By Myself (2009, Comedy-drama) Tyler Perry, Taraji P. Henson **VH1, 9:30 p.m.**

The Hillsdale Adoption Scam (2023, Suspense) Keshia Knight Pulliam, Danika Frederick **LMN, 10 p.m.**

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

CATCH A CLASSIC

Friday Night Frights MOVIES!, beginning at 8 p.m.

Cowriter/director George A. Romero's influential 1968 horror classic **Night of the Living Dead** (pictured) not only popularized zombies in pop culture but also remains one of the more terrifying depictions of these flesh-eating ghouls, as they attack a rural farmhouse where seven people have been trapped following the sudden uprising of the living dead. The film's social commen-

tary is also as relevant and affecting as its shocks and chills. Some inspiration for the movie appears to have come from Richard Matheson's 1954 novel *I Am Legend*, so it's fitting that **MOVIES!** follows up *Living Dead* tonight with **The Last Man on Earth** (1964), the first film adaptation of *I Am Legend*, and still one of the most effective. Here, Vincent Price plays a man who becomes a reluctant vampire hunter after a disease apparently turns the rest of humanity into the living dead. Following this, catch David Cronenberg's **Rabid** (1977), starring Marilyn Chambers and Frank Moore, and wrap up the night with Romero's **Day of the Dead** (1985).

SPECIAL FAREWELL ISSUE

BLUE BLOODS:

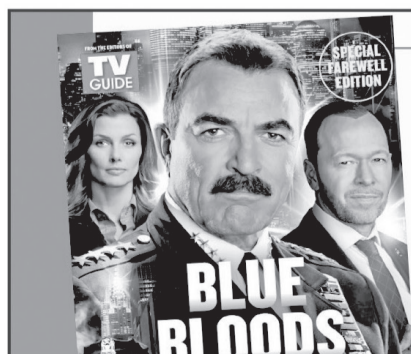
SPECIAL FAREWELL ISSUE

Blue Bloods, the Special Farewell Edition, is your ultimate guide to the beloved, long-lasting CBS series. We also relive our 25 favorite episodes, the drama's best guest stars, and take a walk down memory lane with every exclusive TV Guide Magazine cover story and feature on Blue Bloods.

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Photos by Jason Vorhees / The Melody and courtesy Macon-Bibb County

1: Children jump out of a trailer while picking up bags of trash along Pansy Avenue Saturday during a Keep Macon-Bibb Beautiful and Westside Neighbors United community cleanup. 2: Garrett Thomson and Aaron Alexander toss a mattress into a dumpster along Churchill Street Saturday morning during a community cleanup. 3: Volunteers toss trash into a dumpster in Pleasant Hill during a community cleanup. 4: Anthony Jones picks up trash at the intersection of Mumford Road and West Napier Avenue Saturday morning. The collaborative cleanup between Keep_Macon-Bibb Beautiful and Westside Neighbors United, entitled 'Project Revive Our Blocks', consisted of cleanups in Bartlett Crossing, Bellevue, Kitchen Pride, Napier Heights, Pleasant Hill, and Unionville neighborhoods. 5: Alice Cooper points to the crowd during his performance Saturday night at Atrium Health Amphitheater. 6: Guitarist Nita Strauss performs during the Alice Cooper concert Saturday night at the Atrium Health Amphitheater. 7: Guests watch the 151st Kentucky Derby Saturday at Wesleyan College during the 2025 Cherry Blossom Festival Derby Party. 8: The cast of Macon Little Theatre's production "Rent" rehearses a scene earlier in the week. The show runs March 9-18, and tickets can be purchased at maconlittletheatre.org.

To submit photos to the People page, email them to photos@maconmelody.com

